

DAVID NICOLLE

INSTITUTE FOR MEDIEVAL RESEARCH, NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY

## The Iconography of a Military Elite: Military Figures on an Early Thirteenth-Century Candlestick

### The History and Provenance of the Candlestick

While working as an archaeologist in the Yemen in the early 1970s, Professor Paolo Costa found in the *sūq* or old bazaar of Ṣan‘ā’ a battered but apparently medieval inlaid brass candlestick-base.<sup>1</sup> The tube or holder for this candlestick was missing, but the base was abundantly decorated with abstract patterns, inscriptions and—somewhat unusually—a running frieze of horsemen in combat (photographs 1 and 2). This remarkable object was then displayed at the Museum of Mankind’s<sup>2</sup> *Nomad and City* exhibition in a section entitled *The City of San‘a*, which itself formed part of London’s *Festival of Islam* in 1976.

Amongst those who saw and, insofar as possible, studied Paolo Costa’s candlestick-base in the *The City of San‘a* exhibition was Professor Eva Baer, a renowned scholar of medieval Islamic metalwork who subsequently noted with regret that she was not permitted to take photographs of the object.<sup>3</sup> Another of the visitors was myself, then a student at London University’s School of Oriental and African Studies, who was undertaking research for a short Master’s thesis on medieval Islamic military technology.<sup>4</sup> Similarly denied permission to take photographs, or indeed to make detailed sketches, I contacted Professor Costa. He was then working as an archaeological advisor to the Ministry of National Heritage in the Sultanate of Oman. Not only did he give me permission to photograph the candlestick-base; he even allowed me to make “careful pencil rubbings” of its decoration—especially those military figures which I already considered to be significant for the study of medieval Islamic military technology.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Information provided by Professor Costa’s wife, Professor Germana Graziosi (email, 10 October 2012).

<sup>2</sup>From 1970 until 2004 the Ethnographical Department of the British Museum established what was in effect a separate museum in Burlington Gardens; this was known as the Museum of Mankind from 1970 until 1997.

<sup>3</sup>Eva Baer, *Ayyubid Metalwork with Christian Images*, Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture, Supplements to Muqarnas, vol. 4 (Leiden, 1989), 46.

<sup>4</sup>This mini-thesis, entitled “Early Medieval Islamic Arms and Armour,” was done under the supervision of Professor Geza Fehervari of SOAS and was eventually published in a very modified form as *Islamische Waffen* (Graz, 1981).

<sup>5</sup>In a letter to Dr. Brian Durrans, Keeper of the Ethnographical Department, dated 13 July 1977.



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.

At that time the candlestick was in the care of Professor R. B. Sergeant and it was at his house outside Cambridge that I was able to take the photographs and make the rubbings which contributed to my subsequent doctoral thesis at Edinburgh University.<sup>6</sup> Here my supervisor, Professor Robert Hillenbrand, was the first to suggest that, on the basis of the inscriptions and abstract decorations, the candlestick might be from the Ayyubid period, if not necessarily of Ayyubid manufacture, rather than being Mamluk as originally thought.

Throughout my correspondence with Professor Costa he made it clear that he intended to publish his candlestick-base as soon as other commitments allowed him to do so. His letters also invited me to contribute to such a publication where the military figures, their military equipment, costume, horse-harness, and combat techniques were concerned. Sadly this project never came to fruition. Instead, Professor Costa decided to sell the candlestick-base at Sotheby's in London. It came up for sale in an auction entitled *Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures* on 30 April 1992, though I was unaware of this fact until many years later.

By then I had, with Professor Costa's permission, published photographs and drawings of the military figures, and have continued to do so in a variety of both academic and non-academic books and articles. However, the most significant description of this candlestick-base was in the catalogue which accompanied the Sotheby's sale of 1992. Here it was described as "An Ayyubid or Early Mamluk Brass Candlestick-base, North Mesopotamia or Syria, mid-13th century." The unnamed author of this catalogue entry also expressed his thanks to Dr. Marian Wenzel for her assistance. The catalogue then stated that the object had "truncated conical concave sides, torus mouldings at the top and bottom, the drip holder recessed, the cylindrical shaft missing but originally secured on the inside with a star-shaped bolt, decorated with engraved designs and additional copper and silver inlays. 23cm; 9 in. high, 34.2cm; 13in. diameter at base."<sup>7</sup> At the auction Professor Costa's candlestick-base was purchased by the Qatar Museums Authority and is now understood to be in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha.

Before looking at the decoration of the candlestick-base it might be worth noting that the star-shaped bolthead or rosette in this particular object has fifteen points or leaves (photograph 3). Dr. Julian Raby has elsewhere noted that one of two similar candlestick-bases—the one he dates to ca. 1225—has a rosette bolthead

<sup>6</sup>Undertaken in Edinburgh University's Department of Fine Arts, under the supervision of Professor Robert Hillenbrand, and eventually resulting in a doctoral thesis entitled "The Military Technology of Classical Islam" (presented in 1982).

<sup>7</sup>Sotheby's London, *Islamic and Indian Art, Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, April 29–30, 1992, p. 28, item 52 [auction catalogue].



with twelve such “leaves.” The second, which dates from 1248, has ten.<sup>8</sup> There does, indeed, seem to have been a tendency for such securing rosettes to be simplified with fewer “leaves” as the years went by, perhaps indicating an early date for the Costa candlestick. There are also eight rivet holes or remaining rivets around the broken hole in the top, which once secured the now missing candle holder.

Abundant decoration on the sides and top of this candlestick-base may be divided into three categories: abstract motifs, inscriptions, and the naturalistic representations of armored horsemen in combat. Having described the object as being of great rarity and importance, the Sotheby’s catalogue went on to state that:

The piece is decorated with both engraving and inlays, the copper and silver hammered into minute lines of “wriggle-work,” of which some is lost but a considerable amount remains.... Above and below [the horsemen, photographs 4 to 12] are ornamental bands of plaited kufic script, broken at a number of points by round medallions containing arabesques, and octagonal medallions with interlace designs. The horizontal shoulder has a narrow band of naskhi script, and within is a plaited guilloche framing four quatrefoils alternating with four roundels. Two of the quatrefoils contain birds of prey on top of their catches, and two single figures manipulating animals or birds [photographs 13 and 14]; the roundels are filled with interlacing patterns.<sup>9</sup>

As already stated, the inscriptions are in two distinct locations and two different forms of script. Those on the sides are in a style known as Knotted Kufic in which the vertical lines of the Arabic letters *alif* and *lām* were intertwined with each other. Professor Robert Hillenbrand has suggested that in several regions of the medieval Middle East, notably the Fertile Crescent during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, patterns of “knotting” on public buildings and on smaller portable objects may have had a talismanic purpose, as a form of protection against the forces of evil. He further suggested that the use of Knotted Kufic inscriptions may similarly have had a talismanic purpose over and above, or even superseding, their literal content.<sup>10</sup> He went on to note that the eleventh to thir-

<sup>8</sup>Julian Raby, “The Principle of Parsimony and the Problem of the ‘Mosul School of Metalwork,’” in *Metalwork and Material Culture in the Islamic World*, ed. V. Porter and M. Ross (London, 2012), 33–34.

<sup>9</sup>Sotheby’s London, *Islamic and Indian Art*, 28 [item 52].

<sup>10</sup>Robert Hillenbrand, “Between Iran and Syria: the architecture of Mosul c.1150–1250” (paper presented at the 21st International Colloquium on the History of Egypt and Syria in the Fātimid, Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Eras, Ghent, May 10, 2012).



teenth centuries saw an extraordinary number of what were then seen as astrological portents. Reported by chroniclers at the time, these have been historically or astronomically identified by modern scholars. Of course the Islamic Middle East was at the same time also under serious threat from both east and west—from Latin Christendom in the form of Crusades and the Iberian Reconquista, and subsequently from Central Asia in the form of devastating Mongol invasions.

The question of Knotted Kufic has also been discussed by Dr. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani.<sup>11</sup> Given the dating and provenance which will be suggested for the Costa candlestick below, attention should be drawn to the carved decoration of the Bāb Mūṣil gate in ‘Amādiyah (Iraqi Kurdistan) which dated from 1233–59.<sup>12</sup> This gate and its once magnificent carvings were very similar to the better-known gate at al-Khān in the Jabal Sinjār. The latter dated from 631/1233 and was credited to Badr al-Dīn Lu’lu’, the Turkish ruler of Mosul. Here it is also worth noting that Dr. Joachim Gierlichs suggested that the knotting decoration at al-Khān had parallels with knot-work relief ornament seen in Syria.<sup>13</sup> More immediately, both these stone gates are decorated with highly realistic relief carvings of warriors fighting dragons, and although the men on the gates are equipped and clothed as foot soldiers, they nevertheless incorporate several features which can be seen on the horsemen of the Costa candlestick.

An agreed or conclusive transliteration and translation of the inscriptions on the Costa candlestick has yet to be published. Unfortunately those that appeared in the Sotheby’s sale catalogue seem unreliable. According to this catalogue, the inscription in *naskhī* script around the edge of the upper surface or shoulder of the candlestick-base was transliterated as: “*al-‘izz ... [unclear] al-da‘im wa al-‘umr al-tawil al-salim wa al-iqbal (wa) al-za‘id al-jadd al-sa‘id al-dahr al-musa‘id wa al-ni‘ma al-khalid wa al-‘aysh al-raghid wa al-khayr al-waqid wa al-a‘mr al-nafidh wa al-nasr al-ghalib wa al-dawla al-baqiya wa al-salama al-‘aliya wa al-ni‘ma al-salim / wa al-salama [uncertain] kajla wa al-sa‘ada wa ... [unclear] wa al-waqar wa al-‘iffa wa al-‘ifafa.*” This was then translated as: “Perpetual Glory, and Long Safe Life,

<sup>11</sup>A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World 8th–18th Centuries*, Victoria and Albert Museum Catalogue (London, 1982), *passim*.

<sup>12</sup>Dr. Gierlichs recorded that the Bāb Mūṣil was intact as late as 1955 but it had collapsed by 1992; see Joachim Gierlichs, “Das Mosul-Tor von ‘Amādiya in Nordirak,” *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 26 (1995): 200, photographs 2–4. When I visited ‘Amādiyah in 1976 the gate was in the same condition as it would appear in the 1992 photograph. I was then informed that the Bāb Mūṣil had fallen “recently” as a result of heavy snowfall, though it remains possible that the structure was weakened if not actually overthrown during the prolonged Kurdish uprising against the Iraqi central government. Dr. Gierlichs also recorded that the stones which formed the gate had been reassembled since that date, though the photographs in his article indicate considerable damage to the carved reliefs (photographs 5, 7, and 10).

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 200–1.



and Increasing Prosperity, and Rising Good-fortune, and Favourable Existence, and Eternal Grace, and Joyous Life, Approaching Goodness, and Penetrating Authority, and Triumphant Victory, and Lasting Wealth, and High Well-being, and Perfect Grace, Perfect Well-being, and Happiness, and ... [unclear], and Dignity, and Virtue, and Righteousness.”<sup>14</sup>

According to this catalogue, on the sides of the candlestick-base the upper band of inscription in Kufic script (separated by decorative motifs which are here indicated by “/”) was transliterated as: “*al-‘izz al-da’im wa / al-‘umr al-salim wa al-a/ ... [unclear] wa al-d/awla al-baqiya wa al-salama (wa) al-‘aliya wa al-ni’ma al-salim / al-jadd al-sa’id al-da[hr] / al-musa’id wa al-na’im ... [unclear].*” This was then translated as: “Perpetual Glory, and Safe Life, and Al-A ... (unclear) and Lasting Wealth, and High Wellbeing, and Rising Good-Fortune, and Favourable Existence, and Excellent ... [unclear].”<sup>15</sup> The lower band of inscription, again in Kufic script, was transliterated as: “*al-‘izz al-da’im wa al-‘umr (ar)/ al-salim wa-al-iqbal al-za’id wa / al-jadd al-sa’id wa al-dahr wa / wa al-yumn al-khalid wa ... (unclear) al-yumn / al-firaqa al-salama / al-‘aliya wa al-ni’ma al-sabigha / wa al-da’ima al-s’ada.*” It was translated as: “Perpetual Glory, and Safe Life, and Increasing Prosperity, and Rising Good-Fortune, and Existence, and Eternal Good Fortune, and ... [unclear] Good-Fortune, ... [unclear], Inner-Calm, High Wellbeing, and Abundant Grace, and Perpetual Happiness.”<sup>16</sup>

My colleague Dr. Niall Christie has kindly proposed what I believe to be more reliable transliterations and translations.<sup>17</sup> In his communication of 10 December 2012, Dr. Christie agreed that the catalogue should be viewed with some suspicion and went on to state that: “I also wasn’t entirely convinced by the transcription of the inscriptions that it included.... I think that a significant portion of them are correct, but I also think that there may be some errors, with some of the transcriptions that I sent you also filling in some of the gaps that were given in the catalogue’s transcriptions.” In his first communication of 31 July 2012, Niall Christie identified the Arabic terms *shahādah* (testimony, or martyrdom) and although he was unable to identify specific personal names, he did locate what he described as the standard titles *al-mujāhid*, *al-‘ālim*, and *‘izz al-dunyā wa-al-dīn*. The latter he described as a long form of *‘izz al-dīn*, though he was not as yet prepared to be definitive about the latter title. Following up in an email on 14 October 2012, Niall wrote: “In the meantime, the inscriptions that I have been able to make

<sup>14</sup>Sotheby’s London, *Islamic and Indian Art*, 28 [item 52].

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>N. Christie (emails on 31 July, 14 October, and 10 December 2012). He has nevertheless pointed out that working solely from photographs and pencil rubbings is far from ideal. An opportunity to study the inscriptions on the candlestick at first hand is required.



out ... are as follows. (Included in the) Upper register ...: *al-‘ālim khalīṣat amīr al-mu‘minīn* ... ‘the learned, sincere friend of the commander of the faithful ...’ (Included in the) Lower register ...: *‘izz al-dunyā wa-al-dīn* ... ‘power of the world and the faith ...’ (Included in the) Lower register ...: *bi-al-shahādah* ... ‘by testimony [martyrdom] ...’ (Included in the) Lower register ...: *khālīd lahu bi-al-marūwah* ... ‘everlastingly his with chivalry ...’ (Included in the) Lower register ...: *al-salīm, qāhīr al-kuffār, al-‘ālim, al-mujāhid* ... ‘the flawless, conqueror of blasphemers, the learned, the *mujāhid* [fighter for the Faith] ...”

I am also indebted to Dr. Linda Northrup for her assistance and guidance concerning the title *al-‘ālim khalīṣat amīr al-mu‘minīn*. She noted that, according to Ḥasan al-Bāshā’s book *Al-Alqāb al-Islāmīyah fī al-Tārīkh wa-al-Wathā’iq wa-al-Āthār*, the *laqab* of *al-‘ālim khalīṣat amīr al-mu‘minīn*, “the learned, sincere friend of the commander of the faithful,” can be traced back to 465/1072–73 in Aleppo.<sup>18</sup> It was noted by Ibn Shīth in his *Ma‘ālim al-Kitābah* at the end of the Ayyubid period among the *laqabs* of some elite *kuttāb* secretaries in government service. He also pointed out that al-Qalqashandī used it in conjunction with the title *al-jānab al-karīm* among the *laqabs* of *wazīrs* and such senior administrative figures. Both these sources also indicated that the title appeared in Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī’s *Al-Ta’rīf bi-al-Muṣṭalah al-Sharīf*.<sup>19</sup>

This article will look at the military figures on the candlestick in some detail (see parts 2 and 3, to appear in forthcoming issues of *MSR*) but, before doing so, they need to be seen in the context of the use of such figures in various forms of Islamic art from this and earlier periods. The most obvious parallels are between the horsemen on the Costa candlestick and those on another large piece of inlaid metalwork with a similar date and provenance, the famous Freer Gallery Canteen (photographs 15a–c). In my opinion the clear representation of Christian scenes on the candlestick—itself not surprising given the size and importance of the Christian community within the region where it was made—has led to a profound misunderstanding of the military figures which also feature prominently on the Freer Gallery Canteen.

Clearly Christian manuscript illustrations had a substantial influence upon figural representation and several other aspects within Islamic art of the period. This is obvious and barely disputed where Islamic metalwork of the first decades of the thirteenth century is concerned.<sup>20</sup> As Dr. Julian Raby has pointed out, “Christian miniature painting and objects from the Mosul area permit us to assign to Mosul the most studied of the silver-inlaid vessels, the canteen in the Freer

<sup>18</sup>Ḥasan al-Bāshā, *Al-Alqāb al-Islāmīyah fī al-Tārīkh wa-al-Wathā’iq wa-al-Āthār* (Cairo, 1957), 200.

<sup>19</sup>I am indebted to Dr. Linda Northrup for both these references, supplied in her emails of 27 October and 3 November 2012.

<sup>20</sup>Raby, “Principle of Parsimony,” 45–48.



Gallery of Art.”<sup>21</sup> However, as Raby also noted, the Canteen is usually attributed to Syria, a provenance which partially stems from a claim made by M. S. Dimand that some of its military figures are Crusaders and that this, in turn, points to the vessel having been made by a Christian craftsman who had emigrated from Mosul to Syria.<sup>22</sup> A chain of arguments was thus established which had, as an essential element, the identification of some of the Canteen’s warriors as Westerners if not specifically as Crusaders.

Yet a close study of documentary, pictorial, and archaeological evidence concerning the military technologies and practices of the medieval Islamic peoples indicates that there is nothing about any of the mounted combat figures on the Freer Canteen which precludes them from being Muslims—still less indicating that they represent Crusaders.

Iconographic similarities between the mounted figures on the Costa candlestick and the Freer Canteen are none the less undeniable, even if the identification of some of them as Crusaders continues to be misleading. It was certainly emphasized in the Sotheby’s catalogue’s description of the candlestick, along with a profoundly incorrect focus upon the supposed presence of Crusader or Western European warriors (see Appendix 1 for a full transcription of this catalogue description). In contrast to the view that such figures in Islamic art reflected Western influence, it is worth noting Erica Cruikshank Dodd’s argument that early medieval Islamic art itself had a significant influence upon the motif of a mounted horseman in many aspects of medieval European art.<sup>23</sup>

While the Sotheby’s catalogue confidently ascribed the candlestick “to the final years of Ayyubid rule in Syria, before the break-up of the Crusader kingdoms, and the Mamluk ascendancy in 1260 A.D.,” Julian Raby was more cautious and came down in favor of early thirteenth-century Mosul as its date and place of manufacture. Even when a generalized dating is agreed upon, there is continuing scholarly disagreement about the precise locations where such pre-Mongol inlaid brass or bronze work was actually made.<sup>24</sup>

Putting aside the question of the identity of those supposedly Crusader fighting men on the Freer Canteen and the Costa candlestick, I believe that Raby is correct in urging caution when using the names of dedicatees, which are pres-

---

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 46–52.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Erica Cruikshank Dodd, “On the Origins of Medieval Dinanderie: The Equestrian Statue in Islam,” *The Art Bulletin* 51 (1969): 225–29, pls. 17–31.

<sup>24</sup>J. W. Allan, “From Tabriz to Siirt—Relocation of a 13th century Metalworking School,” *Iran* 16 (1978): 182–83; idem, “Originality in Bronze—A thirteenth century Persian school of metalworkers,” *Iran* 15 (1977): 156–64; Raby, “Principle of Parsimony,” 11–85.



ent on some of this metalwork, as an indication of manufacturing provenance, though of course they are of great help when it comes to dating. He is particularly insistent upon the need to “update” the ideas of D. S. Rice:<sup>25</sup> “Rice and many others have tended to deduce provenance from two generalized assumptions. One is that a dedicatee’s name indicates that he was the ‘patron’ of an object. In other words that he actively commissioned the item rather than passively received it. By blithely referring to dedicatees as ‘patrons,’ we subconsciously ignore the possibility of gifts. The second assumption is that Mawsili metalworkers were active where their patrons were located. Taken to its logical conclusion, this would mean that for every ruler for whom we have a surviving inlaid metal object there would have been a local workshop.” In other words there would have been production centers ranging from Yemen, through Egypt, around the Fertile Crescent to Mosul and perhaps beyond—an idea that Raby firmly rejects.<sup>26</sup>

Instead Raby tends towards a much simpler explanation, namely that Mosul may well have been the only significant center of production and export during the early thirteenth century. He then explores the possibility and indeed likelihood that, in the wake of the Mongol invasions and conquests during the mid-thirteenth century, craftsmen who still referred to themselves as *Mawṣilī* (from Mosul) moved to Syria and Egypt, establishing new workshops in Damascus from the 1250s onwards and in Cairo from the 1260s. The evidence, however, clearly points to the Costa candlestick having been made before the Mongol catastrophe. This makes Raby’s study of the first known period of production, from ca. 1220 onwards, particularly relevant.<sup>27</sup> These years saw the rise to power of Badr al-Dīn Lu’lu’ and his rule over the amirate of Mosul from 1234 until 1259. It would seem clear that Badr al-Dīn Lu’lu’ was a keen purchaser of such decorated metalwork and that this was a time of considerable production in Mosul.

But who might the Costa candlestick have been made for, or at least to whom might it have been dedicated? As no name has yet been teased out of the singularly difficult inscriptions on the flanks and top of this object, we appear to be left just with the honorific title of *‘izz al-dunyā wa-al-dīn*. This slightly unusual title may prove key to identifying candidates for the role of dedicatee. The latter may, of course, have been deceased by the time the candlestick was commissioned as

<sup>25</sup>D. S. Rice, “The Brasses of Badr al-Dīn Lu’lu’,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13 (1950): 627–34; idem, “Inlaid Brasses from the Workshop of Aḥmad al-Dhakī al-Mawṣilī,” *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957): 283–326; idem, “Studies in Islamic Metalwork,” Part 1, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 14 (1952): 564–78, Part 2, 15 (1953): 61–79, Part 3, 15 (1953): 229–38, Part 4, 15 (1953): 489–503; idem, *Le Bapistère de Saint Louis* (Paris, 1951); idem, *The Wade Cup in the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Paris, 1955).

<sup>26</sup>Raby, “Principle of Parsimony,” 20–21.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 23–37.



a funerary gift or a piece of furniture for a tomb. Indeed the person whom I consider to be the strongest candidate on the basis of the available evidence is likely to have been dead by the time someone else had the candlestick made, almost certainly for political reasons (see below). Niall Christie not only noticed that we have someone called *‘izz al-dīn*, but that this person was also a *khalīṣat amīr al-muʾminīn* or “sincere friend of the commander of the faithful,” in other words the caliph. Furthermore, he was apparently regarded as having been martyred or at least to have died for the faith.<sup>28</sup>

The honorific of *‘izz al-dīn* probably points to a Sunni context because, from the eleventh century onwards, the use of the word *dīn* was normally associated with service on behalf of Sunni orthodoxy, or at least with the adoption of an anti-Fatimid position. As H. Busse noted, the *laqab* of *‘izz al-dīn* was not used under the rule of the Buyids, who were of course Shiʿi, but was also relatively rare in later times, despite the changes seen when the Shiʿi Buyids were replaced by the emphatically Sunni Seljuqs. The candlestick’s inscription uses the longer *laqab* of *‘izz al-dunyā wa-al-dīn* which recalls the Seljuq sultan Ṭughril Beg’s title of *rukn al-dunyā wa-al-dīn*. Here the Buyids’ use of the more typically Shiʿi term *dawlah* had been simply replaced by *dunyā*. However, there is no suggestion that the candlestick dates from Ṭughril Beg’s time. Furthermore the *laqabs* of his Seljuq successors only used the word *dīn*, as did most of the minor dynasties which emerged from the fragmentation of the Great Seljuq empire during the twelfth century. Even the emphatically Shiʿi Ismaʿilis of northern Iran did so from 1166 onwards.<sup>29</sup>

Although *‘izz al-dīn* remained a relatively unusual *laqab*, during the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries there were enough men of differing social, political, and military ranks with this title to reduce its usefulness as a means of identifying the dedicatee of the Costa candlestick. Only when it is used in combination with other evidence is it helpful. As the candlestick was found in Yemen, the possibility of it being made for, or dedicated to, an *‘Izz al-Dīn* in this part of the Arabian peninsula needs to be investigated. Here it is worth noting that the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York possesses a fine example of such metalwork, an inlaid brass tray made by Aḥmad Ibn Ḥusayn al-Mawṣilī and dedicated to the Rasulid ruler al-Malik al-Muʾayyad Dāwūd of Yemen (r. 1296–1321). It was, however, almost certainly manufactured much farther north, probably in Mamluk territory. Furthermore, this tray is decorated with military figures which have a number of features in common with those of the candlestick (figures 18a–c).

Might the candlestick have been similarly dedicated to one of this ruler’s predecessors, Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd Allāh ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Nāṣir of the Rassid dynasty

<sup>28</sup>Niall Christie in his email of 14 Oct 2012.

<sup>29</sup>H. Busse, “Izz al-Dīn,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 4:294.



of Zaydī imams who ruled the southern districts of highland Yemen (r. 1217–26) (Appendix 2)? If so, might it have been kept in a tomb or shrine associated with the Rassids? If such a place existed, might it have been looted by anti-Zaydī Republican forces during the Yemeni civil war and thus have ended up in the *sūq* of Ṣanʿāʾ? These are fascinating but currently unanswered questions.

Fascinating as the possibility of a dedication to a Yemeni ruler might be, the evidence is largely in favor of a dedicatee much closer to the candlestick's place of origin, namely Mosul and the Jazirah region of northern Iraq, northeastern Syria, and southeastern Turkey. The *laqab* of *ʿizz al-dunyā* remains very rare but sources such as the *Chronicle of Bar Hebraeus* mention several men with this *laqab* during the later twelfth and first half of the thirteenth century, some of whom operated in or near the city of Mosul. Meanwhile the *laqab* of *ʿizz al-dīn* seems to have been particularly popular in this region during this period. Masʿūd Ibn Mawdūd ʿIzz al-Dīn (Masʿūd I), the Zangid ruler of Mosul from 1180 until 1193, is surely too early to have been the dedicatee of the Costa candlestick. Before becoming ruler he had commanded the army of Mosul during the reign of his brother Ghāzī. Both men were opponents of Saladin's rise to domination in the Middle East and Masʿūd ʿIzz al-Dīn was actually in control of Mosul when it was attacked by Saladin in 1182. For a brief period he also took control of Aleppo. When Masʿūd Ibn Mawdūd ʿIzz al-Dīn died, he was buried in a mausoleum inside a madrasah that he himself had established in Mosul.<sup>30</sup> So it remains possible that the candlestick was made at a later date for this mausoleum, perhaps during the reign of his son and successor Nūr al-Dīn Arslan Shāh (r. 1193–1211).

In my opinion, however, a much more likely dedicatee was a similarly named but short-lived and far less prominent ruler of Mosul, Masʿūd Ibn Arslan Shāh al-Malik al-Qāhir ʿIzz al-Dīn (Masʿūd II), who reigned, at least nominally, from 1211 to 1218. He was the eldest son of Arslan Shāh of Mosul and his designated successor though, being very young at the time of his father's death, he was to have a senior mamluk, Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu', the commander of Mosul's army, as a powerful advisor. So it was that, when Arslan Shāh suddenly died in 1211, Lu'lu' supervised a process whereby Masʿūd received the title of al-Malik al-Qāhir while his younger brother, ʿImād al-Dīn Zangī, received the title of al-Malik al-Manṣūr along with control of two strategic fortresses in the mountains of Kurdistan.

Little is known about Masʿūd Ibn Arslan Shāh al-Malik al-Qāhir ʿIzz al-Dīn's reign, which appears to have been largely peaceful. Nevertheless he—or more likely in reality Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu'—did send troops to help the Abbasid caliph Aḥmad Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Nāṣir of Baghdad suppress a revolt in western Iran dur-

<sup>30</sup>Ibn Khallikān, *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary*, trans. B. Mac Guckin de Slane (Beirut, 1970), 3:356–62.



ing 1215. This latter fact could be the reason why the dedicatee of the Costa candlestick appears to be referred to as *khalīṣat amīr al-mu'minīn* or “sincere friend of the commander of the faithful” and as a *mujāhid*. The fact that Mosul was currently under Ayyubid suzerainty does not seem to be reflected in the inscriptions.

To quote the historian Douglas Patton, who specializes in this period: “All that can be said of al-Qāhir (Mas'ūd II) himself is that he appears to have been popular with his subjects. When he died, on 27 Rabi II 615/22 July 1218 (footnote 24, the date is uncertain), the people of Mosul manifested a degree of mourning unprecedented in the city's Atabegid history.”<sup>31</sup> Perhaps this outpouring of popular grief on behalf of a relatively unimportant ruler reflected widespread fear for the future because the young Mas'ūd Ibn Arslan Shāh al-Malik al-Qāhir 'Izz al-Dīn's own infant sons were clearly much too young to rule alone.

Several years of political and military uncertainty would indeed follow before the powerful army commander and regent of Mosul, Lu'lu' Ibn 'Abd Allāh Abū al-Faḍā'il al-Malik al-Raḥīm Badr al-Dīn took legal as well as actual control of the state, being recognized as such by the Abbasid caliph in 631/1233–34. According to Ibn Khallikān's biographical dictionary, al-Malik al-Qāhir was born in Mosul in the year 590/1194 and died there suddenly on the eve of Monday, 26 Rabī' II 615/22 July 1218. “He also erected a college [madrasah] and was interred within its precincts.”<sup>32</sup>

R. S. Humphries described the problems which Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' faced when Mas'ūd II 'Izz al-Dīn so unexpectedly died, to be nominally succeeded by his ten-year-old son Nūr al-Dīn Arslanshāh II: “The education of this youth and the conduct of affairs of state were in the hands of a mamluk of the first Arslan-shah —Badr al-Din Lu'lu'. The [younger] brother of the late Mas'ud, 'Imad al-Din Zangi, was furious that the throne had not been bequeathed to him, and his revolt against Badr al-Din in Ramadan 615/December 1218 threw the whole region into turmoil.” Although these rivals for power in and around Mosul did not pose a real threat to neighboring Ayyubid rulers, “when the hard-pressed Badr al-Din Lu'lu' called for (al-Malik) al-Ashraf to intervene on his behalf, the latter willingly did so, and it was only due to his efforts that the atabeg (Badr al-Din) of Mosul was able to retain his position.”<sup>33</sup> After a brief struggle, 'Imād al-Dīn Zankī al-Malik al-Manṣūr was placed in the custody of al-Malik al-Ashraf, the Ayyubid ruler of the Diyār Bakr and Jabal Sinjār regions west of the amirate of Mosul. After be-

<sup>31</sup>Douglas Patton, *Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu': Atabeg of Mosul, 1211–1259* (Seattle, 1991), 15.

<sup>32</sup>Ibn Khallikān, *Biographical Dictionary*, 3:361.

<sup>33</sup>Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus 1193–1260* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), 167.



ing freed, he seems to have finally abandoned his political ambitions and instead went to Irbil, where he remained for the rest of his life.<sup>34</sup>

These somewhat localized events would soon be followed by the looming threat and then the horrific reality of Mongol invasion, coupled with the passage of the effectively stateless but still very powerful army of the defeated Khwarazmshah Jalāl al-Dīn as it fled westward from those same Mongols. In fact Jalāl al-Dīn would be assassinated in the mountains north of Mosul on 15 August 1231. Thus Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' of Mosul ruled during one of the most hazardous and chaotic periods in Middle Eastern history. The fact that he held effective power for over forty years, until his death on 26 July 1259 at eighty-plus years of age, is tribute to his extraordinary political and diplomatic skill.

Might the Costa candlestick have played a small part in Badr al-Dīn's political maneuvering? During the decade which followed the death of Mas'ūd II 'Izz al-Dīn, during which Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' gradually usurped authority, it would have been natural for him to emphasize his loyalty to the memory of his legitimate predecessor—namely Mas'ūd II 'Izz al-Dīn. Perhaps the candlestick, which was almost certainly made in Mosul around this period, was commissioned by Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' for 'Izz al-Dīn's mausoleum.

Other less likely candidates as dedicatee on the Costa candlestick include 'Izz al-Dīn Abū Bakr al-Dubaysī, the governor of Jazīrat Ibn 'Umar (now the Turkish frontier town of Cizre) on the Tigris River. He, however, was appointed to this position by the Zangid ruler of Mosul in 541/1146 and must surely be too early to be the dedicatee for this piece of inlaid metalwork. Then there was 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak whose dates are more suitable, having been a mamluk military slave apparently given by Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' to the Ayyubid al-Ashraf of Diyār Bakr and Jabal Sinjār around 1219. He eventually became lord of 'Amādiyah in the Kurdish mountains east of Mosul, where he was still in place at the time of the Mongol invasion.

'Izz al-Dīn Kay Kāwūs, the son of the Seljuq sultan Kay Khusraw of Anatolia, is another possibility, though his dates are perhaps a few years too late. He is, in fact, better known as the supposed patron of the Turkish epic *Dānīshmendnāme* poem, written in its original but now largely lost form around 1245, immediately after the Mongols had defeated the Seljuqs of Rūm (Anatolia). 'Izz al-Dīn 'Īsā, the lord of Qal'at Ja'bar on the Euphrates River in northern Syria, is a further—if unlikely—possibility. He is again somewhat too early, having fought for Saladin, and was in any case probably not important enough to have such a splendid piece of inlaid metalwork dedicated to him.

Then there is 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak, a mamluk of the senior Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Ādil, who made him governor of Şalkhad in 1215. His dates are there-

<sup>34</sup>Ibn Khallikān, *Biographical Dictionary*, 3:361–62.



fore more suitable, but he died in prison, having been removed from office and disgraced by al-ʿĀdil’s successor, Sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ in 1246–47. When this ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak died in Cairo in August 1248, he was initially buried outside the Bāb al-Nāṣr in the madrasah of Shams al-Dawlah. Later his body was reportedly transferred to a mausoleum in a madrasah which he had commissioned on a hill called al-Sharaf al-ʿĀlin outside Damascus, overlooking the city’s Green Maydan.<sup>35</sup> So perhaps ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak of Ṣalkhad could be regarded as the second most likely candidate, after ʿIzz al-Dīn Masʿūd II of Mosul, for the role of dedicatee on the Costa candlestick.

A final candidate is ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Malik al-Muʿizz Aybak al-Turkumānī, the first Mamluk sultan of Egypt (r. 1250, 1254–57). Here it is perhaps worth noting that one of the few uses of the phrase *al-dunyā wa-al-dīn* in a *laqab* is found on an inlaid basin dedicated to al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, the Ayyubid sultan of Syria (r. 1239, 1245–49) and Egypt (r. 1240–49).<sup>36</sup> Here the sultan is referred to as “the triumphant Najm al-dunyā wa’l-dīn.”<sup>37</sup> Niall Christie has suggested that the phrase *khalīṣat amīr al-muʿminīn* (sincere friend of the caliph) might suit a Mamluk sultan because these rulers of Egypt and Syria acknowledged the theoretical superiority of the Abbasid caliph and presented themselves as his deputies. But he also recognized that it was not until 1261 that an enfeebled Abbasid caliphate was re-established in Cairo under Mamluk protection, which is after the death of ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Malik al-Muʿizz Aybak. Nor does it seem clear that Mamluk rulers used such a title before Sultan Baybars resurrected the caliphate in Cairo.

Although the Mamluk sultan ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Malik Aybak’s dates do seem a bit late for the Costa candlestick, it is interesting to note that in 1257 he started negotiations to marry one of the daughters of Badr al-Dīn Luʿluʾ of Mosul, in the hope of forming an alliance. This caused such tension with Shajar al-Durr, Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ’s widow and ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Malik Aybak’s co-ruler, that ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak was assassinated. Even so, the late ruler was not disgraced. Instead his body was laid to rest in a madrasah he had commissioned to be built in Cairo—the Madrasah al-Muʿizzīyah. This leaves open the possibility that the Costa candlestick may have been made in Mosul on the orders of Badr al-Dīn Luʿluʾ for the mausoleum of his anticipated but never-to-be concluded ally. Perhaps the piece was initially being made as a diplomatic wedding gift, and the inscription was then altered to include the term *shahādah* or “martyr” in the light of the circumstances.

[To be continued]

<sup>35</sup>Ibn Khallikān, *Biographical Dictionary*, 2:428–30.

<sup>36</sup>Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 15043.

<sup>37</sup>W. ʿIzzī, “An Ayyūbid Basin of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn,” in *Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture in Honour of Professor K. A. C. Creswell*, ed. Charles Geddes (Cairo, 1965), 255.



## List of Illustrations

### *Photographs*

Photographs of an inlaid candlestick-base, purchased in the Yemen but probably made in early thirteenth-century Mosul (ex-Paolo Costa collection; now in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).

1. The candlestick-base from the side, showing side figures 1 and 9.
2. Part of the top of the candlestick-base, showing quatrefoils containing birds of prey with their catches and two figures holding animals or birds; also where the candle-holding tube has been broken off and some of the rivets which originally secured this tube to the base.
3. The interior of the candlestick-base showing the fifteen-pointed “rosette” which originally secured the candle-holding tube.<sup>1</sup>
4. Side figure 1 (see also line-drawing 1).
5. Side figure 2 (see also line-drawing 2).
6. Side figure 3 (see also line-drawing 3).
7. Side figure 4 (see also line-drawing 4).
8. Side figure 5 (see also line-drawing 5).
9. Side figure 6 [torn negative] (see also line-drawing 6).
10. Side figure 7 (see also line-drawing 7).
11. Side figure 8 (see also line-drawing 8).
12. Side figure 9 (see also line-drawing 9).
13. One of the top quatrefoils containing a huntsman killing an animal or bird.
14. One of the top quatrefoils containing a huntsman killing an animal or bird.
- 15a–c. Details of horsemen in combat on an oversized, inlaid brass flask known as the Freer Canteen, probably Mosul, early thirteenth century (Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, USA, inv. no. 41.10).

---

<sup>1</sup>Julian Raby, “The Principle of Parsimony and the Problem of the ‘Mosul School of Metalwork,’” in *Metalwork and Material Culture in the Islamic World*, ed. V. Porter and M. Ross (London, 2012), 33–34.



*Line Drawings* (gray tone indicates surviving inlays)

1. Figure 1 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).
2. Figure 2 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).
3. Figure 3 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).
4. Figure 4 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).
5. Figure 5 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).
6. Figure 6 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).
7. Figure 7 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).
8. Figure 8 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).
9. Figure 9 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



Above:

Photograph 1. The candlestick-base from the side, showing side figures 1 and 9.

Next page, top:

Photograph 2. Part of the top of the candlestick-base, showing quatrefoils containing birds of prey with their catches and two figures holding animals or birds; also where the candle-holding tube has been broken off and some of the rivets which originally secured this tube to the base.

Next page, bottom:

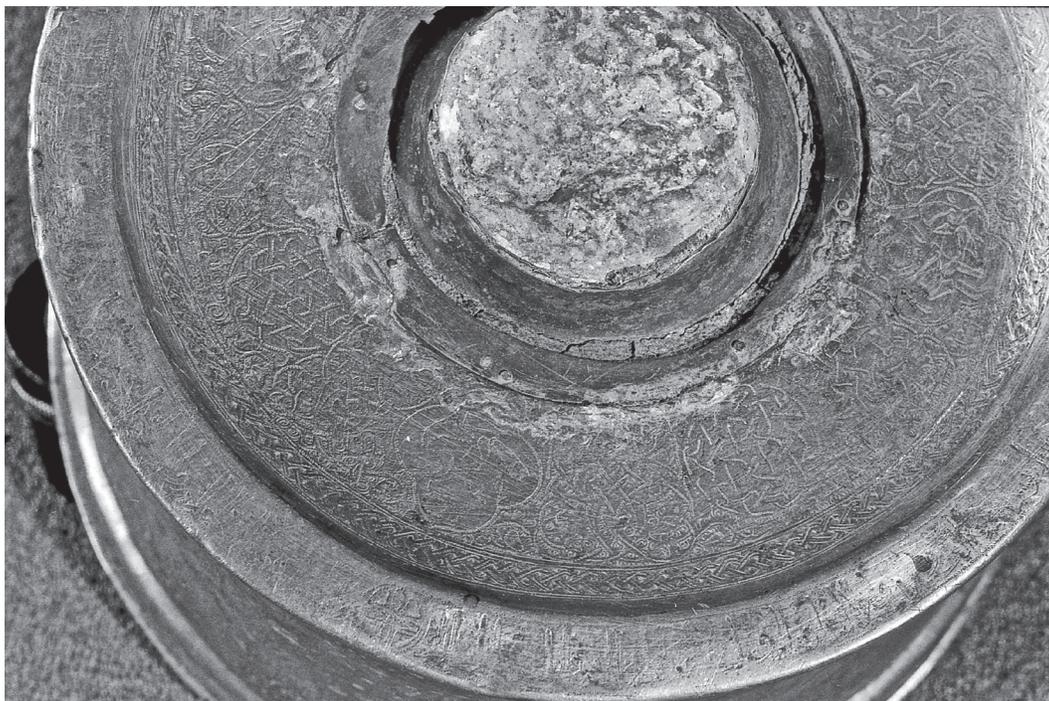
Photograph 3. The interior of the candlestick-base showing the fifteen-pointed “rosette” which originally secured the candle-holding tube.



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

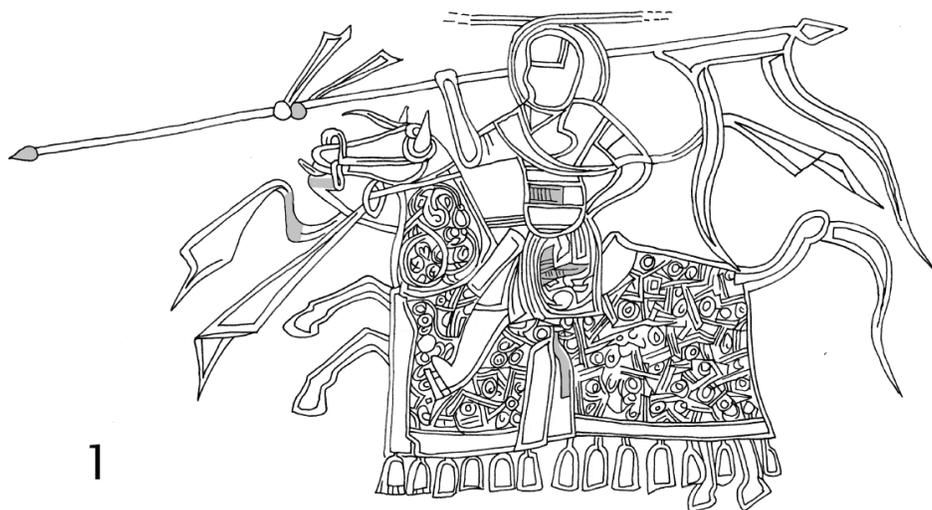
DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



1

Top: Photograph 4. Side figure 1 (see also line-drawing 1).

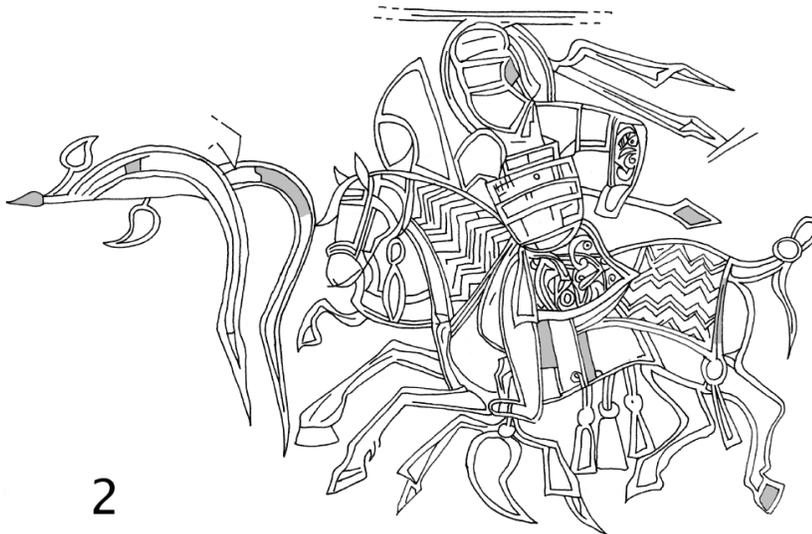
Bottom: Line Drawing 1. Figure 1 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



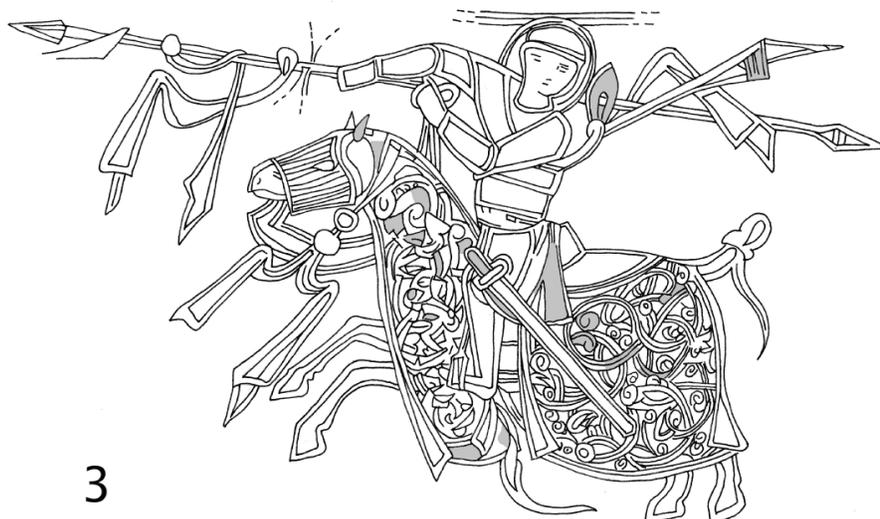
Top: Photograph 5. Side figure 2 (see also line-drawing 2).  
Bottom: Line Drawing 2. Figure 2 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen,  
probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



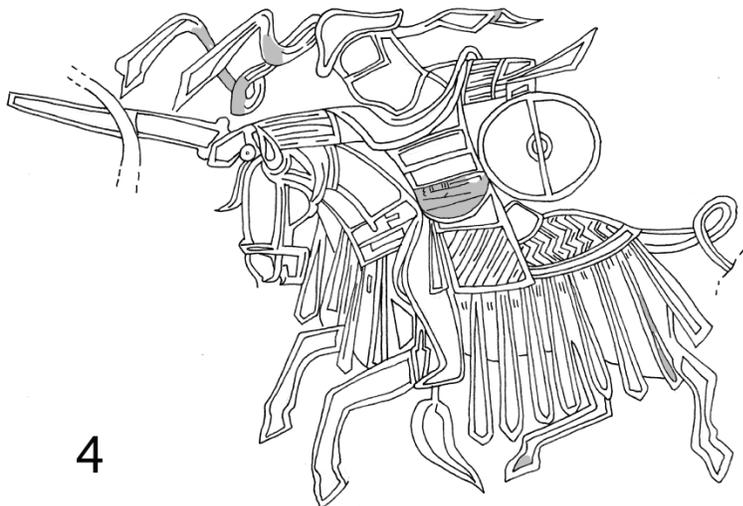
Top: Photograph 6. Side figure 3 (see also line-drawing 3).  
Bottom: Line Drawing 3. Figure 3 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



4

Top: Photograph 7. Side figure 4 (see also line-drawing 4).

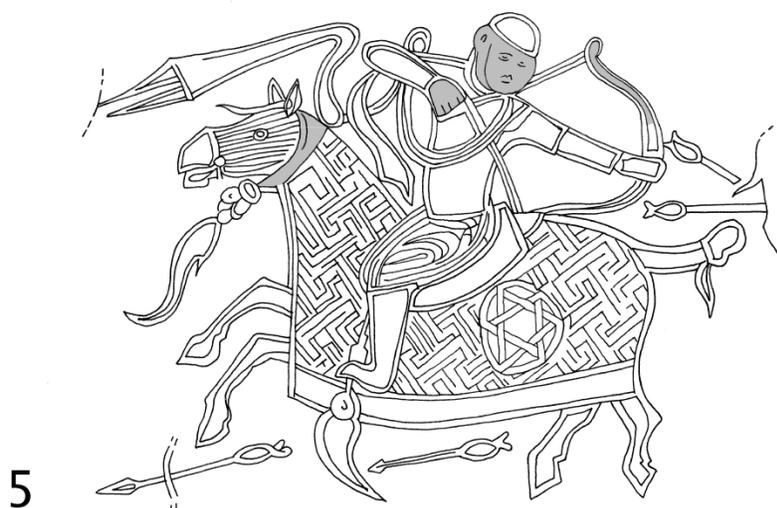
Bottom: Line Drawing 4. Figure 4 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



Top: Photograph 8. Side figure 5 (see also line-drawing 5).

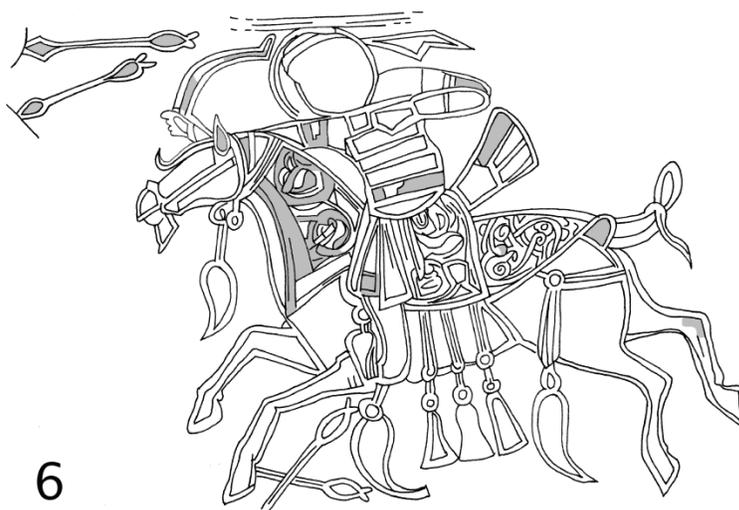
Bottom: Line Drawing 5. Figure 5 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



6

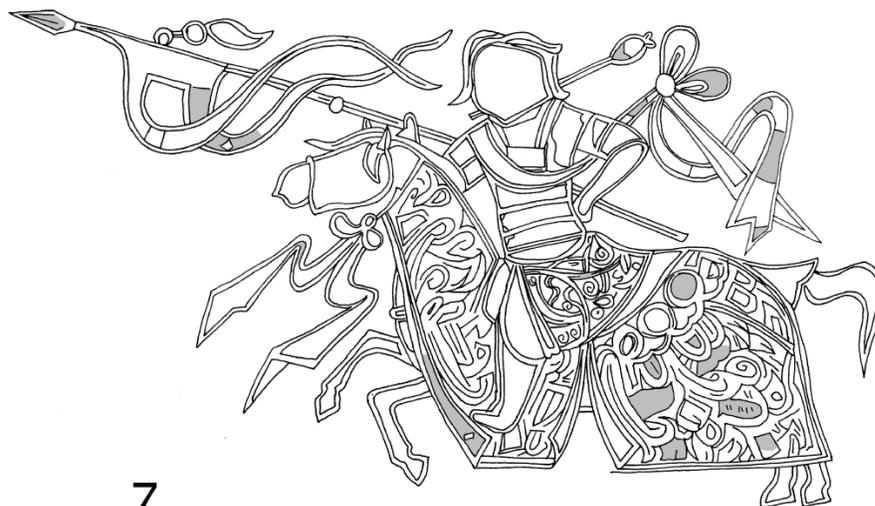
Top: Photograph 9. Side figure 6 [torn negative] (see also line-drawing 6).  
Bottom: Line Drawing 6. Figure 6 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen,  
probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



7

Top: Photograph 10. Side figure 7 (see also line-drawing 7).

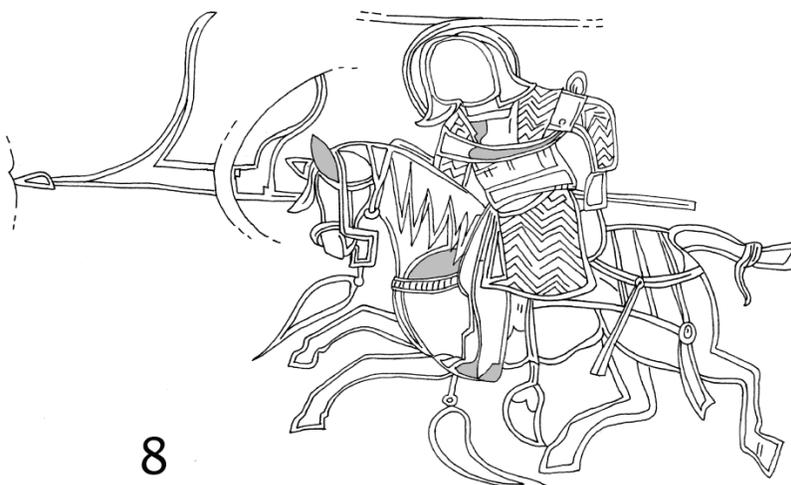
Bottom: Line Drawing 7. Figure 7 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



8

Top: Photograph 11. Side figure 8 (see also line-drawing 8).

Bottom: Line Drawing 8. Figure 8 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



Top: Photograph 12. Side figure 9 (see also line-drawing 9).

Bottom: Line Drawing 9. Figure 9 on a candlestick-base purchased in the Yemen, probably early thirteenth-century Mosul (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar).



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



Photograph 13. One of the top quaterfoils containing a huntsman killing an animal or bird.



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



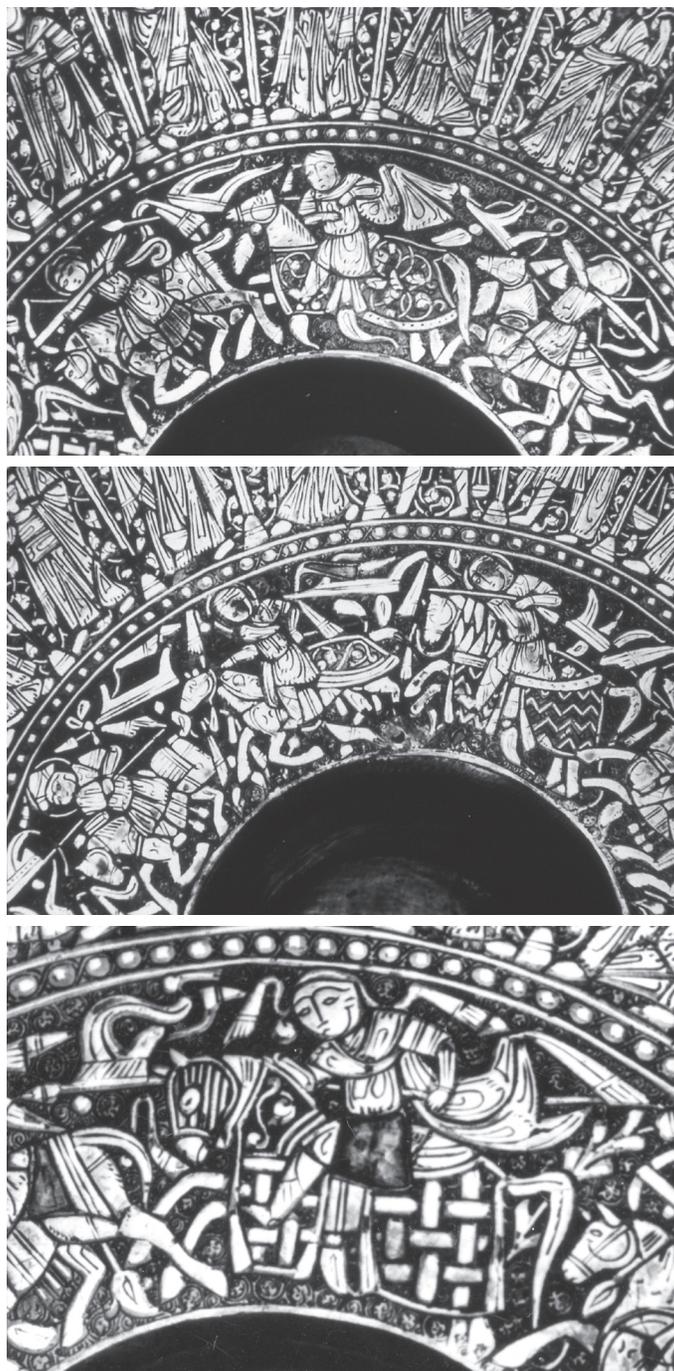
Photograph 14. One of the top quaterfoils containing a huntsman killing an animal or bird.



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.



Photographs 15a–c. Details of horsemen in combat on an oversized, inlaid brass flask known as the Freer Canteen, probably Mosul, early thirteenth century (Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, USA, inv. no. 41.10).



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.

**Appendix 1. Extract from the Sotheby's Sale Catalogue *Islamic and Indian Art, Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*. London, Wednesday 29th and Thursday 30th April 1992 [item 52] (London, 1992), page 28.**

“This remarkable candlestick base is obviously a piece of great rarity and importance. It is a virtually unique record of the impression Western men-at-arms made on Muslim craftsmen around the middle of the thirteenth century.

The piece is decorated with both engraving and inlays, the copper and silver hammered into minute lines of ‘wriggle-work,’ of which some is lost but a considerable amount remains.

The decoration of the main portion consists of a broad frieze of nine mounted horsemen..., progressing to the left between plant sprays against a plain background. They wear a variety of armour, headgear and costume. The appurtenances include what at first glance appear to be western armour and western-style horse caparisons, and if one distinguishes between ‘European’ and Muslim warriors in the frieze, they fall into two categories, each group following and attacking a group from the opposite camp. Only the Muslims carry bows while mounted on horses, and only Christians wear helmets and the kettle helmet or ride with their legs straight rather than bent, and these are the distinctive features of each group. Both Christians and Muslims in this dramatic scene brandish further weaponry, including swords, shields and spears with floating banners. Both arrows and birds ... fly about between the horsemen, and two dogs run between the horses’ feet...

Above and below are ornamental bands of plaited kufic script, broken at a number of points by round medallions containing arabesques, and octagonal medallions with interlace designs. The horizontal shoulder has a narrow band of naskhi script, and within is a plaited guilloche framing four quatrefoils alternating with four roundels. Two of the quatrefoils contain birds of prey on top of their catches, and two single figures manipulating animals or birds; the roundels are filled with interlacing patterns.

The closest parallel for the central iconography is another inlaid brass object, a canteen in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington (Atil 1975, pp. 69–75), also with a frieze of nine armoured horsemen, and further figures drawn from Christian iconography including the Virgin Mary and the Archangel Gabriel and scenes from the life of Christ. The Freer canteen is assumed to be an Ayyubid piece made by Syrian Muslim craftsmen for Christian patrons (Baer 1983). The style is somewhat rigid and lacks the freedom of observation of typical Jaziran workmanship (Nassar 1985, pp. 85–98).

Even so, with a slight rearrangement of the warriors, the two pieces would appear to have a common model. A comparison of the horse caparisons and the



pennants swinging on the lances, as well as the positioning of the horsemen (both pieces have two horse-archers, each shown twisted round to shoot behind him) indicate a close connection between the two. There was conjecturally a third piece, probably in another material, which was the inspiration for both. It seems unlikely that the candlestick was copied from the canteen, the candlestick being certainly more detailed and probably closer to the original.

Although the candlestick has no elements of Christian iconography, it is not impossible that there was once a row of Saints on the missing shaft. An Islamic glass canteen, in the Diözesanmuseum, Wien—dating from around the mid-13th century—has horsemen and revellers on the body and a frieze of saints round its neck, continuing the ‘earth-heaven’ arrangement of some Ayyubid metalwork which places Christian motifs above more worldly designs below. (Baer 1983, Pl.50: a ewer in Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst).

The frieze on the candlestick is presented with an amplitude and richness of detail absent from the Freer canteen. Rather than the single plaques of silver which make up major garment panels on the riders on the canteen, small pieces on the candlestick were assembled for every image; of these two survive forming the faces of riders, and these have the subtlety of facial rendering characteristic of certain examples of Jaziran metalwork. Like them, this feature is combined with a lively originality of subject matter.

Baer (p. 242) regards the candlestick of the greatest importance: *‘In Mesopotamian metalwork ... only a very few battle scenes are as yet known. Of particular interest is [this candlestick] where this theme constitutes the principal decoration... nine warrior horsemen are seen galloping to the left [with] long-sleeved shirts which, to judge by the incised pattern, must be of plate mail. A scarf is wound around their shoulders, and a band flies from their helmets [which] are rounded, and an attached visor covers either the forehead or the entire face of the warrior. Some riders, armed with round shields, flat or embossed, and bows, turn to shoot, while several shapely pointed arrows fly in the air. Others have a sword hanging at their sides, while a few carry a lance, or a banner on a long pointed staff ... some of the horses, too, appear to be wearing armour, at least the head protection is clearly visible, and the body is protected either by a kind of jacket or by a long saddle cloth with a slit at each side. Two or three tassels are suspended from the edge of this cloth ...’, the accuracy of this portrayal is so far unique for early thirteenth century Mesopotamian metalwork, and can only be compared with illustrations in contemporary manuscripts such as the *Kitab al-Diryaq* (Book of Antidotes) in Vienna, and in particular the *Varqa* and *Gulshah* manuscript in Istanbul’.*

Mosul, one of the chief cities of the Jazira, was particularly noted for metalwork and manuscript illumination in the 13th century. Merchants from Mosul (known elsewhere as Mossolini, Mosolins or Mosserins) regularly visited Acre,



even in times of open warfare between Christians and Muslims, and traded in luxury merchandise.

The piece was discovered in the Yemen, and along with another related piece was exhibited in an exhibition at the Museum of Mankind, London, in 1976 (*City of Sana'a*, The Ethnographic Department of the British Museum, 1976).

As already noted, parallels for various aspects of the decoration suggest that the piece was probably made by craftsmen in the Jazira, the area between the Tigris and Euphrates including east Syria, south-east Anatolia and northern Iraq, the most likely centre of production being Mosul. Although the style would suggest an Ayyubid date round the mid-13th century, the western helm and kettle-helmets would suggest a slightly later date. On the other hand, the fact that only copper and silver were used for the inlay would indicate an earlier date, for by the mid-13th century only silver or gold were used. The candlestick can thus be confidently ascribed to the final years of Ayyubid rule in Syria, before the break-up of the Crusader kingdoms, and the Mamluk ascendancy in 1260 A.D.”



©2015 by David Nicolle.

DOI: [10.6082/M1RX9977](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1RX9977>)

DOI of Vol. XVIII: [10.6082/M1CR5RFN](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1CR5RFN). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/RSZY-X709> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.

## Appendix 2: The Rassid Zaydī Imamate of Yemen in the Late Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries

Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd Allāh ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Nāṣir, of the Rassid line of Zaydī imams of Yemen, dominated the southern districts of the Yemen highlands from the death of his father al-Manṣūr ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Ḥamzah in 1217 until 1226. Thereafter he may have controlled Ṣan‘ā’ until the Rasulid takeover in 1229. Following the Ayyubid conquest of much of Yemen in 1174 A.D., al-Manṣūr ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Ḥamzah clearly had negotiations with the Ayyubid ruler of Yemen, al-Malik al-‘Azīz Tuḡtigin, in 1196–97.<sup>1</sup> The Rassid-Zaydī dynasty were Shi‘i while the Ayyubids were of course Sunni, and it is unclear how Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd Allāh ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Nāṣir dealt with the Ayyubid rulers of Yemen. The latter were replaced by the nevertheless essentially friendly Rasulid dynasty around 1228–29—that is, during the life of Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd Allāh ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Nāṣir. The Rassid-Zaydī’s main power base was also Sa‘dah rather than Ṣan‘ā’. Nevertheless, “they revived somewhat under the first Rasulid rulers of Yemen.”<sup>2</sup>

If the Costa candlestick was indeed dedicated to a local Yemeni religious and political leader, might the titles included in its inscriptions indicate some form of at least nominally shared authority with the last Ayyubid or first Rasulid rulers of Yemen? In the context of its military iconography it is worth noting that the Yemeni chronicler Ibn Ḥatīm regarded the Rasulids as non-Arabs, possibly as having Turcoman origins, though other sources consider them “pure” Arabs.<sup>3</sup> In reality the family may have been of Arab origin, but was then Turkified while they retained their Arab genealogy before reappearing under Abbasid domination in the mid-twelfth century and then passing under Ayyubid patronage. Others regarded them as simply Turks who stemmed from the Manjik tribe.<sup>4</sup> Again bearing in mind the heavily armed and armored cavalymen on the Costa candlestick, it should be noted that there are numerous references to elite Ayyubid mamluk cavalry known as *tawāshī* serving in Yemen during this period, alongside lower status mamluks called *qaraghulām*.<sup>5</sup> Local cavalry were of course more numerous, while the bulk of Yemeni armies still consisted of either tribal or city-based militias.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibn Hāṭim, *A Critical Edition of Kitāb al-Simṭ al-Ghālī al-Thaman fī Akhbār al-Mulūk min al-Ghuzz bi-al-Yaman: The Ayyūbids and Early Rasūlids in the Yemen*, ed. and tr. G. R. Smith, vol. 1, *Gibb Memorial Series 26* (London, 1974), 80.

<sup>2</sup>Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties* (Edinburgh, 1996), 98.

<sup>3</sup>Ibn Hāṭim, *Kitāb al-Simṭ*, 91.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 85–86.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 125–26.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 71–73.

