

**JONATHAN M. BLOOM**  
*RICHMOND, NEW HAMPSHIRE*

## **Mamluk Art and Architectural History: A Review Article\***

### **INTRODUCTION**

With the publication of a splendid full color luxury book by the noted team of Henri Stierlin and Anne Stierlin, the study of Mamluk art and architecture has finally made it into the Big Time.<sup>1</sup> The Stierlins, who have previously brought us books on Islamic architecture, Mughal architecture, Ottoman architecture, and the Alhambra, have now brought us the first affordable (\$59.50) coffee-table book on Mamluk art and architecture. Dramatic long shots compete with exquisite details for the viewer's attention which, in the tradition of architectural photography, is rarely, if ever, distracted by the presence of people, apart from the picturesque natives populating reproductions of David Roberts's nineteenth-century lithographs. The stunning photographs of Mamluk buildings and objects will explain to even the most sceptical audiences why Mamluk art has had its devotees for over a century; the text, infelicitously translated from the French, is mercifully brief and appears oblivious of the content (although not the titles) of recent scholarship on the subject.

Now that Mamluk architecture has its picture book, it seems an especially appropriate time to undertake the daunting invitation by the Mamluk Studies Workshop to review recent work on Mamluk art and architectural history. Unlike most contributors to this learned journal, I do not consider myself a specialist in Mamluk anything; I have, however, over the last fifteen years written on, edited, and reviewed general and specific aspects of Mamluk art and architecture.<sup>2</sup> I have therefore approached this invitation not from the perspective of Mamluk studies but from that of a historian of Islamic art and architecture, with a particular—but

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<sup>1</sup>Henri and Anne Stierlin, *Splendours of an Islamic World: Mamluk Art in Cairo 1250-1517* (London, 1997).

<sup>2</sup>See for example Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250-1800*, The Pelican History of Art (New Haven, 1994), chapters 6-8. My first published article was on Mamluk architecture: "The Mosque of Baybars al-Bunduqdārī in Cairo," *Annales islamologiques* 18 (1982): 45-78; see also my "A Mamluk Basin in the L. A. Mayer Memorial Institute," *Islamic Art* 2 (1987): 15-26.



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by no means exclusive—interest in the art of the Mediterranean Islamic world. While specialists in Mamluk art may find something of interest in the following remarks, I have intended them as an introduction, guide, and survey for the broader audience of this journal's readers. The increased interest in all aspects of Islamic art over the last two decades has led to an explosion of articles and books on the subject. It is therefore impossible to address all the literature on Mamluk art, and this survey makes no pretense to completeness. Searches in the on-line Mamluk bibliography maintained by the University of Chicago Library, for example, produced nearly one thousand "hits" for the subjects "architecture" and "arts," and the list is admittedly incomplete.

The arts of the Mamluks encompass architecture and the "decorative arts" (for want of a better term) produced between 1250 and 1517 in Egypt, as well as in parts of Syria and Arabia. The evidence comprises hundreds, if not thousands, of buildings surviving *in situ*, as well as thousands of examples of Mamluk manuscripts, metalwares, glasswares, textiles, and ceramics scattered throughout European, American, and Middle Eastern museums and private collections. For the historian of Islamic art, Mamluk art can either be understood diachronically as one phase in the development of Islamic art in the region (usually restricted to Egypt) or compared synchronically with contemporary artistic traditions in the Islamic lands. These include Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Transoxiana under the Ilkhanid and Timurid dynasties; northern India under the Sultanate dynasties—some of which were also "Mamluk"; Anatolia under the late Saljuqs, Beyliks, and Ottomans; and the Islamic West, including the Nasrids in Spain and the Hafsids and Marinids in North Africa. For the historian of medieval art in general, the relationship of Mamluk architecture and art to that of contemporary Europe remains largely unexplored, except in the special field of Crusader studies. For better or—as I believe—for worse, the diachronic approach has dominated scholarship on Mamluk art.

Among all types of Islamic art—with the exception of the Nasrid art of Granada and the Ottoman art of Istanbul—Mamluk art has been unusually accessible to Europeans, who were the first to study it, and until very recently the study of Mamluk art, like all Islamic art, has remained a speciality of European and North American scholars. From almost the moment Mamluk objects of metal and glass were made, they entered European ecclesiastical and private collections, and indeed some, such as the brass basin in the Louvre made for Hugh of Lusignan, king of Cyprus and Jerusalem from 1324 to 1359, were made specifically for Europeans.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>For the brass basin made for Hugh of Lusignan, see D. S. Rice, "Arabic Inscriptions on a Brass Basin Made for Hugh IV de Lusignan," in *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida* (Rome, 1956), 2:390-402; see also the two Mamluk glass vessels in the Dom- und Dioszesan-Museum,



Mamluk buildings—which could not of course be collected—were among the first Islamic buildings to become known to European audiences. The artist from the school of Bellini responsible for the huge sixteenth-century painting in the Louvre, *The Reception of a Venetian Embassy*, for example, was familiar with the Mamluk buildings of Damascus.<sup>4</sup> Far more important for European knowledge of Mamluk architecture were the plates published in the *Déscription de l'Égypte* (Paris, 1802-28), the record of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798-1801, which was followed by a steady stream of publications such as Pascal Coste's *Architecture arabe* (Paris, 1839), Jules Bourgoïn's *Les arts arabes* (Paris, 1873) and A. C. T. E. Prisse d'Avennes, *L'art arabe d'après les monuments du Kaire* (Paris, 1877). Mamluk settings and objects became familiar to a wide audience through the Orientalist works of such painters as Jean-Leon Gérôme (1824-1904), and Mamluk themes became popular for Oriental interiors and exteriors ranging from smoking rooms to factories. The tradition reached its climax in the popular *Street of Cairo* at the Midway Plaisance for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.<sup>5</sup>

British political involvement in nineteenth-century Egypt was—typically—followed by scholarly interest. *The Art of the Saracens in Egypt*, first published in London in 1886, was one of the first serious books devoted exclusively to Islamic art. Written by Stanley Lane-Poole, nephew of the noted Orientalist Edward W. Lane, it largely concerned the Mamluks, as did one of the earliest attempts in English to describe the historical evolution of Islamic architecture, Martin S. Briggs's *Muhammadan Architecture in Egypt and Palestine* (Oxford, 1924).<sup>6</sup> By the time Briggs published his book, K. A. C. Creswell (1879-1974) had begun systematically studying Egyptian Islamic architecture, a task that would continue to occupy him for the rest of his long life and usher in a new era in the study of Islamic architecture.<sup>7</sup>

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Vienna, in the catalogue by Arthur Saliger et al., *Dom- und Diözesan-Museum Wien* (Vienna, 1987), 22-24.

<sup>4</sup>For this painting, see Julian Raby, *Venice, Dürer, and the Oriental Mode* (London, 1982).

<sup>5</sup>Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs* (Berkeley, 1992).

<sup>6</sup>One should remember that Sir Banister Fletcher (1866-1953), the doyen of British architectural history, had considered "Muhammadan" architecture to be one of the "ahistorical" styles in his influential *History of Architecture on the Comparative Method* (London, 1905).

<sup>7</sup>Creswell's initial idea was to write a history of the Muslim architecture of Egypt. Before doing so, he had to investigate the Muslim architecture of Arabia and Syria on which he felt it depended; thus volume 1 of his *Early Muslim Architecture* (Oxford, 1932) was followed by volume 2 in 1940. Only with the publication of the first volume of *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (Oxford, 1952-59), some twenty years after he began, did Creswell begin publishing exclusively on the architecture of Egypt.



Familiarity, of course, is said to breed contempt, and many, if not all, historians of Islamic art would probably confess, albeit somewhat reluctantly, that Mamluk art—with the notable exception of such acknowledged masterpieces as the Mosque of Sultan Ḥasan, the Mausoleum of Qāyṭbāy, and the Baptistère de Saint-Louis—is rather dull. Although Cairo became the center of Arab-Islamic literary culture following the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols in 1258, in this period the center of Islamic *visual* culture shifted to such Iranian cities as Tabriz and Herat, where Mongol and Timurid patrons set the artistic taste in virtually every medium for most of the Islamic lands until the emergence of the imperial Ottoman and Mughal styles in the sixteenth century. Even Mamluk artists themselves looked to Iranian art for inspiration. Whereas the Ottomans and Mughals looked back on Mongol and Timurid art for inspiration, nobody really important (until the Orientalists came along in nineteenth-century Europe) looked to Mamluk art for anything.<sup>8</sup>

Mamluk art may be aesthetically inferior to Persian art of the same period and it may have been less of an inspiration for later developments, but these are not reasons to consider it any the less worthy of study, particularly since there is so much of it and we are blessed with an unusually rich array of contemporary sources about it. This abundance not only helps the art historian to understand the range of Mamluk art in its own time, but it can also provide us with models for interpreting other less well documented periods of Islamic art. The arts of the Mamluk period, such as buildings, manuscripts, textiles, and metalwares, moreover, are important sources of information about the society that produced them. The evidence they provide can supplement and augment that supplied by texts, which were often produced by segments of society very different from those that produced art. The historian of art and architecture, in interpreting such visual evidence, can play an essential role in contributing to a more nuanced reading of the past.

## SOURCES

Apart from the surveys of the arts and architecture of the Mamluk period contained in general works on Islamic art and the recent *Dictionary of Art*,<sup>9</sup> the last (and

<sup>8</sup>For a history of the arts of this period, see Blair and Bloom, *Art and Architecture of Islam*.

<sup>9</sup>See, for example, Blair and Bloom, *Art and Architecture of Islam*, chaps. 6-8, and Jane Turner, ed., *The Dictionary of Art* (London, 1996), 20:226-31, s.v. "Mamluk, II: Mamluks of Egypt and Syria," as well as articles on individual subjects. See, in particular, the articles on "Cairo" and "Islamic Art," the latter including: "Architecture, c. 1250-c. 1500: Egypt and Syria," by John A. Williams, II, 6, (iii), (a); "Painted book illustration, c. 1250-c. 1500: Egypt and Syria," by Rachel Ward, III, 4, (v), (a); "Metalwork in Egypt and Syria, c. 1250-c. 1400; c. 1400-c. 1500," by J. W. Allan, IV, 3, (iii); "Ceramics in Egypt and Syria, c. 1250-c. 1500," by Helen Philon, V, 4, (ii); "Fabrics, c. 1250-c. 1500: Egypt and Syria," by Anne E. Wardwell, VI, 2, (ii), (b); "Carpets and flatweaves, c. 1450-c. 1700: Mediterranean lands," by Giovanni Curatola, VI, 4, (iii), (b); "Woodwork:



first) broad review of the state of research on Mamluk art and architecture was on the occasion of the traveling exhibition of Mamluk art organized by Esin Atil in 1981, which was seen in Washington, Minneapolis, New York, Cincinnati, Detroit, Phoenix, and Hartford.<sup>10</sup> Atil's catalogue serves as a permanent record of the exhibition, although many pieces did not travel to all venues and other pieces were added, notably by the Metropolitan Museum when the exhibition went to New York. Atil also organized a symposium on Mamluk art, and many of the papers presented were published in the second volume of the journal *Muqarnas*.<sup>11</sup> In his introduction to the volume, Oleg Grabar raised several provocative but unanswerable questions about the meaning and interpretation of Mamluk art, which he seemed to imply was interesting because of its immutability.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, Ira Lapidus, in his concluding remarks to the symposium, succinctly summarized what was known about Mamluk art, particularly from the perspective of a social historian. By comparing the Mamluks to the Fatimids and Ottomans, he revealed several essential characteristics of Mamluk art, particularly its lack of universal pretension, its attitude towards religion, and the ranges of tastes it served.<sup>13</sup> The initial excitement generated by the Mamluk exhibition, however, evaporated without generating any great surge of interest in the subject, as the attention of many historians of Islamic art turned in the 1980s and 1990s from the Arab world to the

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Egypt and Syria, c. 1250-c. 1500," by Bernard O'Kane, VII, 2, (ii); "Glass: 12th-15th centuries," by Marian Wenzel, VIII, 5, (ii).

<sup>10</sup>Esin Atil, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks* (Washington, DC, 1981).

<sup>11</sup>*Muqarnas* 2 (1984); among the papers presented at the symposium that were not published in this volume, were 'Alī 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Yūsuf, "Wooden Vessels of the Mamluk Period"; David Ayalon, "From Ayyubids to Mamluks"; Manuel Keene, "Developments in Mamluk Geometric Ornament"; J. M. Rogers, "Mamluk and Ottoman Decorative Arts"; Hayat Salam-Lieblich, "Patronage in the Building of a New Mamluk City"; and John Woods, "East-West Relations in the Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries"; Michael Meinecke's paper was ultimately published as "Mamluk Architecture: Regional Architectural Traditions: Evolution and Interrelations," *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 2 (1985): 163-75.

<sup>12</sup>Oleg Grabar, "Reflections on Mamluk Art," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 1-12; Grabar suggested that traditional art historical strategies, such as stylistic analysis and connoisseurship, seemed to have little relevance to the study of Mamluk art, for Mamluk art hardly seemed to change over the centuries. The real concern of Mamluk patrons, he hypothesized, was not the creation of individual works of art or architecture but the cities they ruled and in the lives of the several social classes that inhabited them. Furthermore, he imagined that the defeat of the Crusaders and the Mongols created an equilibrium in the social climate of the urbanites that would remain unchallenged until the early sixteenth century.

<sup>13</sup>Ira M. Lapidus, "Mamluk Patronage and the Arts in Egypt: Concluding Remarks," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 173-81.



arts of Iran, India, and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the general increase of interest in the study of Islamic art has led a growing number of scholars to investigate the architecture and arts of the Mamluk period.

#### ARCHITECTURE

Architecture was the preeminent art of the Mamluk period, and it is no accident that architecture has received more extensive treatment than the other arts. In comparison to contemporary Iran, Central Asia, or Anatolia, where a single building may represent the artistic activity of the period in a given city, literally hundreds of buildings survive from the Mamluk period in such major cities as Cairo, Damascus, Jerusalem, and Aleppo, and the buildings of the Mamluk period can be said to have defined their urban character. Although scholars continue to write about "the Fatimid city," the historic parts of Cairo are much more a creation of the Mamluk period. Not only did the Mamluks pour considerable sums into building, but their architectural patronage can be said to have defined many of the other arts, which were often conceived and used as fittings and furnishings for their charitable foundations. Thus many manuscripts of the Quran were made for presentation to religious foundations, wooden *minbars* and *kursīs* were presented to mosques, and glass lamps were made to illuminate them.

Creswell's extraordinary presence dominated the study of Mamluk architecture until 1992, largely through his *Brief Chronology* of 1919 and the second volume of his monumental history *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (Oxford, 1959).<sup>15</sup> Creswell's massive tome begins with the advent of Ayyubid rule in 1171 and gives monographic treatment to every surviving work of Egyptian Islamic architecture in chronological order, breaking off in the middle of the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (r. 1294-1340, with interruptions). Creswell is said to have been working on a third volume at the time of his death, but he had only prepared studies of six monuments (still not published). Thus, some of the best known and most important architectural monuments of the Mamluk period remained virtually unpublished.<sup>16</sup> The most accessible publication of the Mosque

<sup>14</sup>See, for example, such "blockbuster" exhibitions of the period as Esin Atıl, *The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent* (Washington, 1987); Stuart Cary Welch, *India: Art and Culture, 1300-1900* (New York and Munich, 1988 [reprinted 1993]); and Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision* (Los Angeles, 1989).

<sup>15</sup>K. A. C. Creswell, "A Brief Chronology of the Muhammadan Monuments of Egypt to A. D. 1517," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 16 (1919): 39-164. For Creswell and his legacy, see *Muqarnas* 8 (1991), the proceedings of a 1987 Oxford conference held in his memory.

<sup>16</sup>I am not including here such cursory surveys of Egyptian Islamic architecture as Gaston Wiet, *The Mosques of Cairo*, photographs by Albert Shoucair ([s.l.], 1966); Dietrich Brandenburg,



of Sultan Ḥasan, for example, was an illustrated section of Michael Rogers's *Spread of Islam*,<sup>17</sup> and the exquisite complex of Qāyrbāy was barely published at all.

All this changed, however, with the publication of Michael Meinecke's *Die Mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien*.<sup>18</sup> Meinecke, director of Berlin's Museum of Islamic Art until his sudden and untimely death in early 1994, had worked on the project for over two decades. During this time he had supervised the restoration of the *madrasah* of Amir Mithqāl in Cairo and had been director of the German Archaeological Institute in Damascus. The second volume of his work, compiled largely by his colleague and wife, Viktoria Meinecke-Berg, is a chronological list of 2,279 Mamluk building activities between the advent of Mamluk rule in 1250 and the Ottoman conquest of Syria and Egypt in 1517. Organized by reign (numbered 0 to 48, in vol. 2) and then by project, each entry gives each building activity a unique reference number (e.g., 19B/13 for the Madrasah of Sultan Ḥasan, corresponding to the thirteenth activity in the nineteenth sultan's second reign) along with a capsule description, indication of relevant contemporary sources including endowment deeds, published inscriptions, and general publications about the building (designated Q, I, and B, respectively). These activities, whether new constructions or restorations, extant or destroyed, have been tabulated for some fifty locations in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Arabia, and Anatolia according to the two main periods of Mamluk history, 1250-1382 and 1382-1517, to give a fascinating graphic representation of the chronological and geographical range of Mamluk architecture. In contrast, a survey of Timurid architecture in all of Iran and Transoxiana discusses a mere 250-odd buildings.<sup>19</sup>

The heart of Meinecke's book is the historical discussion of Mamluk architecture in the first volume, which is based on the data collected in the second. Unlike Creswell, who just discussed one monument after another, or others who followed the stale historical divisions of Bahrīs and Burjīs or Turks and Circassians, Meinecke saw six periods of Mamluk architecture with different characters. The renaissance of early Islamic architecture under Baybars I (r. 1260-77) was followed by a development of local styles under Qalāwūn and his successors (1279-1310) and a golden age under al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (1310-41). He then followed the

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*Islamische Baukunst in Ägypten* (Berlin, 1966); or Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo: An Introduction*, Supplements to Muqarnas (Leiden, 1989).

<sup>17</sup>[J.] Michael Rogers, *The Spread of Islam* (Oxford, 1976), based in part on his "Seljuk Influence on the Monuments of Cairo," *Kunst des Orients* 7, no. 1 (1970-71): 40-68.

<sup>18</sup>Michael Meinecke, *Die Mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien*, 2 vols., Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Islamische Reihe, vol. 5 (Glückstadt, 1992).

<sup>19</sup>Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan* (Princeton, 1988).



internationalization of Mamluk architecture in the period 1341-82, architecture in Cairo from the accession of Barqūq (1382-1517), and architecture in Syria from the invasion of Timur to the Ottoman conquest (1400-1516). Finally he considered the afterlife of the Cairo, Damascus, and Aleppo traditions following the Ottoman conquest in 1516-17.

No book is perfect, and Meinecke would never have claimed that his was. It was, however, as good as he could make it. One may criticize a certain stuffiness in the presentation, in which every photograph is reduced to 3 by 4.5 inches and every building reduced to a plan. Although there are no sections or elevations, the plans are drawn to a consistent scale, and the reader can see at a glance the relative dimensions of Mamluk buildings. It is quite obvious that the Mosque of Sultan Ḥasan (fig. 78), for example, does not cover nearly as much ground as the Great Mosque of Damascus (fig. 69). Far more important than what Meinecke did, however, is what his book now allows others to do. Meinecke's registers and indices alone provide fertile ground for exploration, as it is now possible to see a particular building in the context of all other acts of patronage by a particular individual, or to extract all the building activities in Mecca or Medina and write the history of Mamluk architectural involvement there.

One can only be glad, however, that Meinecke did not live long enough to see how his work was reviewed by friend and foe alike. Oleg Grabar used the occasion to mourn the passing of an immensely knowledgeable and erudite friend, but he criticized the book for what its author had never intended it to have, notably analytical and judgmental themes.<sup>20</sup> Had Meinecke lived longer, he might have turned his attention to such philosophical questions of why Mamluk architecture did not change or whether the Mosque of Sultan Ḥasan is a great building, but he should not have been faulted for not having done what he did not set out to do. As unfashionable as Meinecke's (or Creswell's) work may be, we return to it constantly for accurate reference, while the myriad interpretative works are like so many leaves in the wind. Doris Behrens-Abouseif's review of Meinecke's book barely acknowledges the enormous scope and erudition of Meinecke's work.<sup>21</sup> She criticized his interpretation of the evolution of Mamluk architecture in terms of foreign workers and regional schools, in which he had tried to demonstrate exactly how workmen might have carried architectural ideas around the eastern Mediterranean region, a theme expanded in his posthumous *Patterns of Stylistic Change*.<sup>22</sup> Instead

<sup>20</sup>Oleg Grabar, "Michael Meinecke and His Last Book," *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 1-6.

<sup>21</sup>Doris Behrens-Abouseif, review of *Die Mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien*, by Michael Meinecke, *Mamlūk Studies Review* 1 (1997): 122-27.

<sup>22</sup>Michael Meinecke, *Patterns of Stylistic Change in Islamic Architecture: Local Traditions Versus Migrating Artists* (New York, 1996).



Behrens-Abouseif relied on rather nebulous theories of artistic "influence" to explain Mamluk architecture, but such theories, as the noted art historian Michael Baxandall has demonstrated, seriously confuse the roles of agent and patient.<sup>23</sup> Her conclusion that Meinecke's analytical and synthetic masterpiece does not measure up to Godfrey Goodwin's entertaining narrative history of Ottoman architecture says more about the reviewer than about the relative values of these two works. In contrast, Yasser Tabbaa's review of Meinecke's book in *Ars Orientalis* was more balanced, although he, too, criticized Meinecke for not going "beyond formal analysis and fine points of influence into a broader investigation of the [Mosque of Sultan Ḥasan's] unusual form, its highly original plan, and the peculiar circumstances of its patronage."<sup>24</sup>

Meinecke, the most generous of scholars, would have been the first to admit that his work was based on the labor of others: his bibliography runs to twenty-five closely-set pages, including some thirty citations of his own works. While Creswell and Meinecke attempted to be encyclopedic, other works on particular aspects of Mamluk architecture can be characterized as monographic, topographic, or typological. Monographs on individual Mamluk buildings have been produced for over a century and have ranged from book-length studies to brief articles on specific problems of restoration. A model monograph is the collaborative project on the *madrasah* of Amir Mithqāl directed by the German Archeological Institute in the 1970s.<sup>25</sup> It combines a thorough technical and historical investigation of the building with a study of the urban environment as well as the relevant Arabic documents.

Other monographs have resulted from group or individual efforts and have dealt with a wide range of buildings. A Polish team, for example, published a more modest study of the Mausoleum of Qurqmās in the Northern Cemetery.<sup>26</sup> Saleh Lamei Mostafa has published several monographs on the buildings of Barqūq and his son Faraj,<sup>27</sup> to which J. M. Rogers's brief but qualitative assessment is an

<sup>23</sup>Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention* (New Haven, 1985), 58-62.

<sup>24</sup>Yasser Tabbaa, review of *Die Mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien*, by Michael Meinecke, *Ars Orientalis* 26 (1996): 118-20.

<sup>25</sup>Michael Meinecke, *Die Restaurierung der Madrasa des Amīrs Sābiq al-Dīn Mitqāl al-Ānūkī und die Sanierung des Darb Qirmiz in Kairo* (Mainz, 1980).

<sup>26</sup>Marek Baranski and Bożena Halicka, *Mausoleum of Qurqumas in Cairo: Results of the Investigations and Conservation Works 1984-88*, vol. 3 (Warsaw, 1991).

<sup>27</sup>Saleh Lamei Mostafa, *Kloster und Mausoleum des Farağ ibn Barqūq in Kairo*, *Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Islamische Reihe*, 2 (Glückstadt, 1968); idem, *Moschee des Farağ ibn Barqūq in Kairo*, with a contribution by Ulrich Haarmann, *Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Islamische Reihe*, 3 (Glückstadt, 1972); idem, *Madrasa, Ḥānqāh, und Mausoleum des Barqūq in Kairo*, with a contribution by Felicitas Jaritz,



important addition.<sup>28</sup> Archibald Walls, working under the aegis of the British School in Jerusalem, produced a meticulous study of the largely-destroyed Ashrafiyah *madrasah* in Jerusalem.<sup>29</sup> Careful examination of the remaining structure as well as comparable buildings in better condition allowed him to propose (and draw!) a convincing reconstruction of the original building. Oddly enough, the success of such studies may be inversely proportional to the importance of the building itself, for the great monuments of Mamluk architecture, such as the funerary complex of Sultan Ḥasan, seem to defy or discourage monographic treatment. For example, a recent attempt to elucidate that building's symbolic meaning proposes that it is at once a sign of the rising power of the Mamluks' offspring (*awlād al-nās*), a grand gesture to lift up the spirits of a population depressed by the Black Death, and a symbolic re-creation of the birth canal.<sup>30</sup> Despite R. Stephen Humphreys's bold attempt some twenty-five years ago to assess the "expressive intent" of Mamluk architecture<sup>31</sup> and my own youthful effort,<sup>32</sup> it remains to be proven that Mamluk builders gave a hoot about symbolic meaning.

Cairo was the Mamluk capital and the focus of Creswell's interest, but the buildings of other Mamluk cities have also received scholarly attention. A model of such a topographical study is Michael Burgoyne's publication of the twenty-year investigation by the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem of the Mamluk monuments of that city. This splendid and massive volume comprises a series of interpretive essays followed by a catalogue of sixty-four buildings.<sup>33</sup> Burgoyne's book is notable for its extensive documentation, which includes photographs, plans, sections, and axonometric (three-dimensional) drawings. It also benefits from extensive historical research by D. S. Richards, and shows, as one might expect, that teamwork can produce splendid results.

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Abhandlung des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Islamische Reihe 4 (Glückstadt, 1982), 118 ff.

<sup>28</sup>J. M. Rogers, "The Stones of Barquq: Building Materials and Architectural Decoration in Late Fourteenth-Century Cairo," *Apollo* 103, no. 170 (1976): 307-13.

<sup>29</sup>Archibald G. Walls, *Geometry and Architecture in Islamic Jerusalem: A Study of the Ashrafiyya* (Buckhurst Hill, Essex, 1990).

<sup>30</sup>Howyda N. al-Harithy, "The Complex of Sultan Hasan in Cairo: Reading between the Lines," *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 68-79, based on her "Urban Form and Meaning in Bahri Mamluk Architecture," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1992.

<sup>31</sup>R. Stephen Humphreys, "The Expressive Intent of the Mamluk Architecture of Cairo: A Preliminary Essay," *Studia Islamica* 35 (1972): 69-119.

<sup>32</sup>Bloom, "Mosque of Baybars."

<sup>33</sup>Michael Hamilton Burgoyne, *Mamluk Jerusalem: An Architectural Study*, with additional historical research by D. S. Richards (Buckhurst Hill, Essex, 1987).



The urban development of Damascus, not only in the Mamluk period, has recently been studied by Dorothée Sack,<sup>34</sup> but for many individual buildings one must still consult earlier studies by Watzinger and Wulzinger, Sauvaget, and Herzfeld.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, the urban development of Aleppo has been recently studied by Gaube and Wirth,<sup>36</sup> but the earlier studies of Sauvaget and Herzfeld remain essential reading.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps the most innovative of recent studies on Aleppan architecture is Terry Allen's electronic publication on the Ayyubid and early Mamluk periods.<sup>38</sup> Allen's extraordinarily close reading of texts and examination of masonries has led him to see how individual masons worked and how they moved from one project to another. Not only is Allen's methodology innovative, but so is the electronic form in which he has published his book, although the lack of illustrations (one must read it with copies of Sauvaget and Herzfeld at one's side) makes it difficult going for the uninitiated. The Mamluk monuments of provincial cities have also been made available: Hayat Salam-Lieblich published the monuments of Tripoli and Mohamed-Moain Sadek published those of Gaza.<sup>39</sup> While such studies have made inaccessible monuments available to a wider public, some are methodologically unsophisticated and fail to discern the forest for the trees.

The large numbers of Mamluk buildings in particular cities have also provided invaluable primary source material for writing nuanced urban history, such as the works of Sack, Gaube, and Wirth already mentioned. Compared to contemporary Islamic cities elsewhere, with the possible exception of Fez, the physical and documentary remains for Mamluk cities are extraordinarily rich. This wealth of

<sup>34</sup>Dorothée Sack, *Damaskus: Entwicklung und Struktur einer Orientalisch-Islamischen Stadt*, Damaszener Forschungen (Mainz, 1989).

<sup>35</sup>Jean Sauvaget, *Les monuments historiques de Damas* (Beirut, 1932); Ernst Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies in Architecture," pts. I-IV, *Ars Islamica* 9-13/14 (1942-48): 9:1-53; 10:13-70; 11/12:1-71; 13/14:118-38; Karl Wulzinger and Carl Watzinger, *Damaskus, die islamische Stadt* (Berlin, 1924).

<sup>36</sup>Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth, *Aleppo: Historische und geographische Beiträge zur baulichen Gestaltung, zur sozialen Organisation, und zur wirtschaftlichen Dynamik einer vorderasiatischen Fernhandelsmetropole*, Beihefte der Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B, Geisteswissenschaften (Wiesbaden, 1984).

<sup>37</sup>Jean Sauvaget, *Alep: Essai sur le développement d'une grande ville syrienne des origines au milieu du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1941); Ernst Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep* (Cairo, 1954-55).

<sup>38</sup>Terry Allen, *Ayyubid Architecture*, electronic publication on the Internet: [www.wco.com/~books/](http://www.wco.com/~books/) ISBN 0-944940-02-1 (Occidental, California, 1996).

<sup>39</sup>Hayat Salam-Lieblich, *The Architecture of the Mamluk City of Tripoli* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983); Mohamed-Moain Sadek, *Die mamlukische Architektur der Stadt Gaza*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, 144 (Berlin, 1991).



information has allowed scholars to study even the districts of particular cities, such as Ḥusaynīyah, Būlāq, and Azbakīyah in Cairo<sup>40</sup> or Sūq al-Sārūjā in Damascus.<sup>41</sup>

The great number of buildings to survive from the Mamluk period has also inspired studies of types or parts of buildings. Creswell himself seems to have led the pack, for the last twenty plates of the second volume of his *Muslim Architecture of Egypt* comprise sequences of *mihrābs*, domes and pendentives, and minarets, as if looking at them alone would explain the development of architecture.<sup>42</sup> His unspoken assumption seems to have been that builders of *mihrābs* looked only at other *mihrābs*, while builders of domes looked only at other domes, a premise that may represent a rather simplistic view of architectural history, not to mention human nature. Nevertheless, this approach has been continued by many with greater or lesser success. Among the most successful is Christel Kessler's brief but elegant study of the carved masonry domes of medieval Cairo.<sup>43</sup> She documented an increased sophistication among stonemasons in their ability to combine structural and decorative elements, showing that specialized teams were responsible for building this particular type of dome. Other specialized studies concern the evolution of portals in Cairo,<sup>44</sup> the minarets of Cairo,<sup>45</sup> *sabīls*,<sup>46</sup> and *madrasahs* in Damascus.<sup>47</sup> Leonor Fernandes's studies of the evolution of the institution of the *khānqāh* are notable for combining architectural with institutional history.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "The North-Eastern Extension of Cairo Under the Mamluks," *Annales islamologiques* 17 (1981): 157-89; Nelly Hanna, *An Urban History of Būlāq in the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods* (Cairo, 1983); Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya and Its Environs from Azbak to Ismail, 1476-1879* (Cairo, 1985).

<sup>41</sup>'Abd al-Razzāq Ma'ādh, "Sūq Sārūjā: Bidāyāt Nushū' Ḥayy bi-Dimashq khilāla al-Qarn al-Sādis al-Hijrī," *al-Turāth al-'Arabī* 32 (1988): 89-96; idem [Abd al-Razzaq Moaz], "Suwayqat Sārūgā, un quartier de Damas extra-muros (XIIe-XIXe siècles)," *Bulletin de la Fondation Max van Berchem* 8 (1994): 1-2.

<sup>42</sup>One of Creswell's first forays into this approach was his article "The Evolution of the Minaret, with Special Reference to Egypt," *Burlington Magazine* 48 (1926): 134-40, 252-58, 290-98.

<sup>43</sup>Christel Kessler, *The Carved Masonry Domes of Medieval Cairo* (London, 1976).

<sup>44</sup>Daad H. Abdel Razik, "The Circassian Mamluk Monumental Entrances of Cairo: A Survey and Analysis of Extant Portals 784/1384-901/1496," Master's thesis, American University in Cairo, 1990.

<sup>45</sup>Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *The Minarets of Cairo* (Cairo, 1985).

<sup>46</sup>Sophie Ebeid, "Early Sabils and Their Standardization," Master's thesis, American University in Cairo, 1976.

<sup>47</sup>Abd al-Razzaq Moaz, "Les madrasas de Damas et d'al-Sālihiyya depuis la fin du V/XIe siècle jusqu'au milieu du VII/XIIIe siècle: Textes historiques et études architecturales," Ph.D. diss., Université de Provence, Aix-Marseille I, 1990.

<sup>48</sup>E.g., Leonor E. Fernandes, "The Evolution of the Khanqah Institution in Mamluk Egypt," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1980; idem, "The Foundation of Baybars al-Jashankir: Its Waqf, History,



The history of Islamic architecture is normally studied as the history of religious architecture, because—apart from a few notable exceptions—later generations saw little need to maintain the secular buildings of their predecessors. They concentrated their efforts on maintaining mosques, *madrasahs*, and the like, and so houses and palaces quickly fell into ruin. An unusually large number of domestic buildings from the Mamluk and Ottoman periods has, however, been preserved in Cairo. Creswell published them when they fit into his chronological scheme, but as most surviving buildings postdate the 1330s he never got around to them. Most other scholars consider domestic architecture to be an entirely separate field from the history of religious or monumental architecture, although the patrons of these religious buildings had to live somewhere and builders could construct one as well as the other. Indeed, there seems to have been a distinct convergence in the late Mamluk period between domestic and religious architecture.

The surviving houses of Cairo have been studied, surveyed, and published under the auspices of the Institut français d'archéologie orientale (IFAO), the Egyptian government, and the French Centre nationale de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), which has sponsored research on domestic architecture throughout the north of Africa. Jacques Revault and Bernard Maury, eventually joined by Mona Zakariya, published architectural studies of the remaining mansions; they were joined by Jean-Claude Garcin in a more interpretative and synthetic study using *waqf* documents and other sources to present a more nuanced history of habitation in Cairo.<sup>49</sup> Middle-class housing has been a speciality of Laila Ali Ibrahim, the doyenne of Mamluk architecture in Cairo,<sup>50</sup> and Hazem Sayed has followed her in combining monumental and textual sources in several studies concerning the *rab'*, or multi-family housing, and the evolution of the distinctive *qā'ah*, or central reception hall, in Cairene architecture of the Mamluk period.<sup>51</sup> Some middle-class housing units were combined with *wakālahs*, or urban caravanserais, which Scharabi has studied.<sup>52</sup>

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and Architecture," *Muqarnas* 4 (1987): 21-42.

<sup>49</sup>Jacques Revault and Bernard Maury, *Palais et maisons du Caire du XIVe au XVIIIe siècle* (Cairo, 1975); Jean-Claude Garcin et al., *Palais et maisons du Caire, I: Époque mamelouke (XIIIe-XVI siècles)* (Paris, 1982).

<sup>50</sup>Laila 'Ali Ibrahim, "Middle-Class Living Units in Mamluk Cairo: Architecture and Terminology," *AARP Art and Archaeology Research Papers* 14 (1978): 24-30; idem, "Residential Architecture in Mamluk Cairo," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 47-60.

<sup>51</sup>Hazem I. Sayed, "The Rab' in Cairo," Ph.D. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1987; idem, "The Development of the Cairene Qā'a: Some Considerations," *Annales islamologiques* (1987): 31-53.

<sup>52</sup>Mohamed Scharabi, "Drei traditionelle Handelsanlagen in Kairo: Wakālat al-Bāzar'a, Wakālat Dūl-Fiqār, und Wakālat al-Quṭn," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung*



The abundance of information for Mamluk architecture may lead us to forget that what remains was not necessarily all that was. Important buildings and works of art have been destroyed and lost, or changed so significantly that it takes an archaeologist to disentangle their original aspect. Mecca and Medina, for example, were major foci of Mamluk architectural patronage, but there are virtually no monumental remains, and texts provide the sole means of recreating these activities. Apart from the classic studies, such as Sauvaget's book on the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina,<sup>53</sup> some recent studies begin to explore the possibilities of this material.<sup>54</sup> But there is much more that can be done, as it is now possible, thanks to Meinecke's work, to write the history of Mamluk architectural involvement in these cities. A more archaeological approach has been taken by Nasser Rabbat in his dissertation and book on the Cairo citadel, which judiciously combines textual, architectural and archaeological evidence to reconstruct the center of Mamluk power in the thirteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to the architectural evidence and texts, inscriptions, *waqf* documents, and court records are other important sources for architectural history of the Mamluk period. For inscriptions, the work of Max van Berchem and Gaston Wiet on the *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum* remains essential,<sup>56</sup> although Bernard O'Kane has announced a project to update the portions of the *Corpus* dealing with Egypt. Over one thousand documents in the Cairo archives survive from the period of the Mamluk sultans,<sup>57</sup> and almost nine hundred fourteenth-century legal

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*Kairo* (1978): 127-64; idem, *Industrie und industriebau in Ägypten: Eine Einführung in die Geschichte der Industrie im Nahen Osten* (Tübingen, 1992).

<sup>53</sup>Jean Sauvaget, *La Mosquée Omeyyade de Médine: Étude sur les origines architecturales de la mosquée et de la basilique* (Paris, 1947).

<sup>54</sup>Inscriptions in the Haram at Mecca before 1421 are discussed in Hassan Mohammed el-Hawary and Gaston Wiet, *Inscriptions et monuments de la Mecque, Haram et Ka'ba*, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum*, pt. 4: Arabie (Cairo, 1985). Another approach was taken by Amy W. Newhall, "The Patronage of the Mamluk Sultan Qa'it Bay, 872-901/1468-1496," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1987. See also Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Sultan Qaytbay's Foundation in Medina, the *Madrasah*, the *Ribāt*, and the *Dashīshah*," *MSR* 2 (1998): 61-71.

<sup>55</sup>Nasser O. Rabbat, *The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Royal Mamluk Architecture* (Leiden, 1995); see also my review in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117, no. 2 (1997): 381-82.

<sup>56</sup>Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, I: Égypte 1*, *Mémoires de la Mission archéologique française au Caire*, 19 (Cairo, 1894-1903); Gaston Wiet, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum I: Égypte 2*, *Mémoires de l'Institut français archéologique du Caire*, 52 (Cairo, 1929-30).

<sup>57</sup>Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn and Laila Ali Ibrahim, *Architectural Terms in Mamluk Documents/al-Muṣṭalahāt al-Mi'mārīyah fī al-Wathā'iq al-Mamlūkīyah (648-923H) (1250-1517)* (Cairo, 1990); Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, *Catalogue des documents d'archives du Caire/Fihrist*



records and endowment deeds survive in Jerusalem.<sup>58</sup> These sources are being used increasingly for architectural history. For example, Amīn and Ibrahim used the Cairo documents to create a glossary of architectural terms, but the usefulness of the brief English translation is diminished by the arrangement of terms following the order of the Arabic alphabet. Thus the first column in the English glossary contains such words as *abzin*, *utruja*, *izār*, *iṣṭabl*, and *a'yun*. Their order makes perfect sense only to people who know enough Arabic not to need the English translation.

### DECORATIVE ARTS

As with architecture, the abundance of surviving works of decorative art from the Mamluk period makes easy categorization difficult. For an introduction to the subject, there can be no better place to start than Atıl's 1981 exhibition catalogue, which is readable, generally accurate, well-illustrated, and has an extensive bibliography.<sup>59</sup>

### MANUSCRIPTS

As elsewhere in the Islamic lands, the arts of the book were of primary importance in Mamluk times. The Quran, as in all other times and places in the Islamic lands, was *the* book, and lavish manuscripts of the Quran were produced throughout much of the period. The most important study of early Mamluk Quran manuscripts, that is, those manuscripts produced during the fourteenth century up to the reign of Sha'bān (r. 1363-76), was done by David James, once curator at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin.<sup>60</sup> Scholars had also supposed that the presence in Cairo of a magnificent manuscript of the Quran made for the Mongol ruler Uljāytū had inspired the florescence of Mamluk manuscript production, but James suggested that Cairene production had already begun its distinctive course with the seven-part Quran manuscript commissioned in the early fourteenth century from the calligrapher Ibn al-Wahīd by Baybars al-Jashnakīr for his *khānqāh*. As Ibn al-Wahīd had trained in Baghdad with the great calligrapher Yāqūt al-Musta'ṣimī, James argued that he and his illuminator colleagues were responsible for introducing the new styles of calligraphy and illumination to Cairo.

What is most surprising is that James attributes a group of large-format manuscripts to the patronage of sultan Ḥasan's wife Khawand Barakah and their

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*Wathā'iq al-Qāhiraḥ ḥattā Nihāyat 'Aṣr Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk* (Cairo, 1981).

<sup>58</sup>Donald P. Little, "The Haram Documents as Sources for the Arts and Architecture of the Mamluk Period," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 47-61.

<sup>59</sup>Atıl, *Renaissance*.

<sup>60</sup>David James, *Qur'ans of the Mamluks* (London, 1988).



son, the sultan al-Ashraf Sha‘bān II (r. 1363-76), for most of them were given to their charitable foundations, the Umm al-Sulṭān (Mother of the Sultan) and the Ashrafīyah *madrasahs* in Cairo. Their fine quality and immense scale suggest instead that the manuscripts might have been conceived for Ḥasan’s colossal complex in Cairo, but his untimely death and the abandonment of the project may have led other patrons to take over the original commission and take credit for them.

While there can be no doubt of the importance of Iraqi and Iranian models and calligraphers for the development of early Mamluk calligraphy, it is unreasonable to imagine that there was no indigenous tradition of calligraphy in Egypt, even though no manuscripts have survived (or been identified) to represent this tradition. The religious foundations of such Mamluk rulers as Baybars and Qalāwūn, quite apart from those of their Fatimid and Ayyubid predecessors, would have required manuscripts, and local calligraphers must have continued to produce despite changes in government and patronage. A complete and more nuanced history of the development of Mamluk calligraphy awaits the publication of more manuscripts in public and private collections.<sup>61</sup> The relatively large number of Quran manuscripts to survive in Egypt’s dry climate, however, has allowed scholars to begin the study of Mamluk bookbinding, largely on the basis of collections in Chicago’s Oriental Institute<sup>62</sup> and London’s Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>63</sup>

Mamluk manuscripts of the Quran often rival those produced in the eastern lands, but there can be no question that the arts of the illustrated book were less important and of lower quality in Mamluk lands than they were in Iran. The relatively few illustrated books that exist are not up to the aesthetic or programmatic levels of Iranian illustrated books. Only about sixty illustrated manuscripts can be ascribed to the entire Mamluk period, and Duncan Haldane has prepared a convenient introduction to them.<sup>64</sup> Most of them were produced in the late thirteenth century and first half of the fourteenth, although a few point to a revival at the very end of the Mamluk period.<sup>65</sup> In contrast to Iran, where Mongol and Timurid sultans are known to have ordered illustrated copies of a wide range of Persian classic texts including the “Shāhnāmah,” Niẓāmī’s “Khamsah,” Sa‘dī’s “Gulistān” and the fables

<sup>61</sup>Vlad Atanasiu has announced that he is working, under the direction of François Déroche at the École Pratique des Hautes Etudes IV, on a dissertation on Mamluk calligraphy.

<sup>62</sup>Gulnar Bosch et al., *Islamic Bindings and Bookmaking* (Chicago, 1981).

<sup>63</sup>Duncan Haldane, *Islamic Bookbindings in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London, 1983).

<sup>64</sup>Duncan Haldane, *Mamluk Painting* (Warminster, 1978).

<sup>65</sup>For example, *Kitāb al-Zardaḡ*, a veterinary manual with eleven paintings or diagrams (Istanbul, University Library, A.4689) was produced for Yalbāy, a *mamlūk* of Qanibāy al-Ḥamzāwī (d. 1458), probably in Damascus, ca. 1435. Yalbāy was Keeper of the Horse for the Commander-in-Chief of Damascus during the reign of Barsbāy (r. 1422-37).



in "Kalīlah wa-Dimnah," the only illustrated manuscript known to have been commissioned by a Mamluk sultan is a two-volume Turkish translation of the "Shāhnāmah" with sixty-two paintings copied by Ḥusayn ibn Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Ḥanafī for Qānsūḥ al-Ghawrī at the very end of the Mamluk period.<sup>66</sup> Most illustrated Mamluk manuscripts are scientific treatises and works of belles-lettres popular in earlier periods, such as al-Jazarī's "Automata," al-Ḥarīrī's "Maqāmāt" ("Assemblies"), and "Kalīlah wa-Dimnah."<sup>67</sup>

Scholars have not yet established where these manuscripts were produced, although it is commonly assumed that they were made in Cairo. None of them, however, is known to have been made for a member of the Mamluk elite, and only two fourteenth-century manuscripts contain dedications linking them to high-ranking Mamluk amirs.<sup>68</sup> The most probable patrons seem to have been members of the Arabic-speaking bourgeoisie, such as Aḥmad ibn Jullāb al-Mawṣilī, the inspector of alms in Damascus, who acquired a copy of the "Maqāmāt" in 1375 which had been made a half-century earlier.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, Damascus seems a more likely center of manuscript production, for another copy of the "Maqāmāt" in the British Library (Or. 9718) was written and illustrated by the well-known Damascene calligrapher, Ghazī ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, and the Escorial "Manāfi' al-Ḥayawān" was compiled by 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd al-Faṭḥ ibn al-Durayhim (d. 1360), a prominent member of the Damascene 'ulamā' who taught at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.<sup>70</sup> Other illustrated books, such as manuals on horsemanship (Arab. *furūsīyah*) illustrated from the 1360s onward, may have been owned by Mamluks. They depict the equestrian exercises that

<sup>66</sup>Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Museum, H. 1519; Esin Atıl, "Mamluk Painting in the Late Fifteenth Century," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 159-72.

<sup>67</sup>One exceptional manuscript is a dispersed copy of *Sulwān al-Muṭa'*, for which see *Muhammad ibn Zafar al-Siqillī's Sulwān al-Muṭa' [Prescription for Pleasure]*, commentary by A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, translated by M. Amari (Kuwait, 1985).

<sup>68</sup>Two manuscripts can be associated with the sons of Mamluk officials. The first is a copy (Oxford, Bodleian Lib., Marsh 458) of the "Maqāmāt" made in 1337 for Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad, the free-born son of Ṭurunṭāy (d. 1290), who served as viceroy of Egypt under Qalāwūn. A copy of Ismā'īl ibn al-Razzāz al-Jazarī's "Kitāb fī Ma'rifat al-Ḥiyāl al-Handasīyah" [Treatise on Automata] was transcribed in 1354 by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Izmīrī for the amir Naṣr al-Dīn Muḥammad, the son of Tūlak al-Ḥarrānī, a military judge in the service of sultans al-Ṣāliḥ Ṣāliḥ (r. 1351-54) and his brother al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (r. 1347-51, 1354-61). Most of the manuscript is in Istanbul, Süleymaniye 3606. Both of these patrons were therefore members of the *awlād al-nās*, who presumably could have read Arabic fluently and would have enjoyed doing it. See *The Arts of Islam*, exhibition catalogue, Hayward Gallery ([London], 1976), no. 535; Haldane, *Mamluk Painting*, 55.

<sup>69</sup>London, British Library, Add. 7293.

<sup>70</sup>Haldane, *Mamluk Painting*, 50.



formed a regular part of the Mamluks' training. They contain only simple artless illustrations in which clarity is the dominant consideration.<sup>71</sup> Unlike Mongol Iran, where the richest and most powerful patrons had great interest in having books illustrated,<sup>72</sup> the Mamluks were not, perhaps because they did not participate in the Arabic literary culture of the people they ruled.

### TEXTILES

As in most other parts of the medieval Islamic world, textiles were the mainstay of the Mamluk (and Egyptian) economy, but their inherent fragility has meant that relatively few have survived, either in the relative safety of European treasuries or in the dry Egyptian ground. Mamluk textiles have generally received less attention than those of earlier periods in Egypt (e.g., Abbasid and Fatimid *ṭirāz*) or other regions (e.g., Iranian drawloom silks), although under the Mamluks Syrian and Egyptian looms continued to produce fine fabrics and carpets. Over the course of the Mamluk period, however, the Egyptian textile industry, like the paper industry, faced increasing competition from European exports. It is said that, of the 14,000 looms operating in Alexandria in 1388, only 800 were still in use a half-century later.<sup>73</sup>

Surviving fragments of Mamluk textiles acquired on the antiquities market have traditionally been published as private or public collections,<sup>74</sup> although Louise Mackie has looked at Mamluk silks in the broader international context.<sup>75</sup> Only recently have several scholars attempted to present Mamluk textiles in the archaeological contexts from which most have been taken, but a review of this literature is more properly the purview of the archaeologist. The role of international trade in the textile industry has led to studies of Mamluk drawloom silks as shown in Italian paintings or Indian block-printed cottons discovered in Mamluk Egypt.<sup>76</sup> Apart from the late Yedida Stillman's work on dress as portrayed in the Geniza

<sup>71</sup>For the latest word on the subject, see David Alexander, ed., *Furusiyya: The Horse in the Art of the Near East* (Riyadh, 1996).

<sup>72</sup>Sheila S. Blair, "The Development of the Illustrated Book in Iran," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993).

<sup>73</sup>Anne E. Wardwell, *Dictionary of Art*, 16:441.

<sup>74</sup>E.g., Georgette Cornu et al., *Tissus islamiques de la collection Pfister* (Rome, 1992); *Tissus d'Égypte: Collection Bouvier*, exhibition catalogue, Musée d'art et histoire de Genève and Institut du monde arabe à Paris (Paris, 1994).

<sup>75</sup>Louise W. Mackie, "Toward an Understanding of Mamluk Silks: National and International Considerations," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 127-46.

<sup>76</sup>Ruth Barnes, "From India to Egypt: The Newberry Collection and the Indian Ocean Trade," in *Islamische Textilkunst des Mittelalters: Aktuelle Probleme*, Riggisberger Berichte (Riggisberg, 1997), 79-92; and Ruth Barnes, *Indian Block-Printed Textiles in Egypt: The Newberry Collection in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford, 1997).



documents (which are largely earlier than the Mamluk period), L. A. Mayer's seminal work on Mamluk dress has never been continued.<sup>77</sup> In any event, costume has been woefully underutilized as a tool for dating other aspects of Mamluk art and culture.

Perhaps most attention has been accorded the distinctive group of Mamluk carpets that survives from the very end of the Mamluk period. Texts mention woven and knotted floor coverings earlier in the Mamluk period, but these carpets are the first to survive and seem to have some relationship to those produced in Aqqyunlu Iran and Anatolia.<sup>78</sup> A special issue of the journal *Hali* (4/1 [1981]) was devoted to the subject, and in subsequent years these carpets have been the focus of some wild speculation.<sup>79</sup> Increased interest has led collectors and scholars to explore dusty attics and storerooms. In the 1980s, for example, three previously-unknown Mamluk carpets of great importance were discovered in Italy, and recently many more fragments of an important large carpet were discovered there.<sup>80</sup>

#### METALWARES

Metalwares are among the most familiar of Mamluk decorative arts and the best studied, having a solid foundation in catalogues by Wiet and articles on individual pieces and groups by such noted scholars as D. S. Rice.<sup>81</sup> James Allan has produced some of the most important recent work on Mamluk metalwares, such as his article on the decline of the metalwork industry in the late fourteenth century.<sup>82</sup> It is an art historical fact that the absolute quality of metalwork declines in this period; Allan convincingly argues that the decline can be attributed to inflation, civil wars, Timur's conquest of Damascus, the plague and the resulting scarcity of workers, as well as a shortage of metal, particularly silver and copper. Allan has

<sup>77</sup> L. A. Mayer, *Mamluk Costume: A Survey* (Geneva, 1952); Yedida K. Stillman, "Libās," in collaboration with Norman A. Stillman, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2d ed., 5:732-50. Stillman was at her death in the process of preparing, with the help of Sheila Blair, a new edition of R. P. A. Dozy, *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les Arabes* (Amsterdam, 1845).

<sup>78</sup> Belkis Acar, "New Light on the Problem of Turkmen-Timurid and Mamluk Rugs," in *Ars Turcica*, Akten des VI. internationalen Kongresses für türkische Kunst, Munich, 1979, eds. K. Kreiser et al. (Munich, 1987), 2:393-402.

<sup>79</sup> See R. Pinner and W. Denny, eds., *Oriental Carpet and Textile Studies, II: Carpets of the Mediterranean Countries 1400-1600* (London, 1986), in which one author proposed that features of their design indicated that some Mamluk carpets had to have been woven in Morocco!

<sup>80</sup> Alberto Boralevi, "Three Egyptian Carpets in Italy," in *ibid.*, 205-20; Carlo Maria Suriano, "Mamluk Blazon Carpets," *Hali*, no. 97 (March 1998): 73-81; 107-8.

<sup>81</sup> E.g., Gaston Wiet, *Objets en cuivre*, Catalogue générale du Musée arabe du Caire (Cairo, 1932); D. S. Rice, *The Baptistère de Saint-Louis* (Paris, 1953).

<sup>82</sup> James W. Allan, "Sha'bān, Barqūq, and the Decline of the Mamluk Metalworking Industry," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 85-94.



also published a volume on the Nuḥad es-Said collection, which contains several important objects made for Qalāwūn, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and other sultans.<sup>83</sup> One may, however, be somewhat sceptical of Allan's argument that the radiating inscription on an incense-burner made for al-Nāṣir Muḥammad should be interpreted as solar imagery which suggests that the ruler was the [metaphoric] source of light for the earth. Lapidus, in his 1984 article, reasonably suggested that such interpretations are quite foreign to the Mamluks' view of themselves.<sup>84</sup>

Rachel Ward has approached the study of Mamluk metalwork in a new way by looking at objects from the Nuḥad es-Said collection produced by a single workshop over a period of six decades.<sup>85</sup> She was able to show the transition from earlier styles of engraving to the inlaid decoration typical of Mamluk work. Her careful study is a necessary prelude to distinguishing regional centers, particularly Cairo and Damascus. James Allan has similarly approached the work of a particular metalworker, Muḥammad ibn al-Zayn, with extraordinary care and sensitivity.<sup>86</sup> By meticulously studying the nature and placement of Ibn al-Zayn's signatures on his famous vessels, Allan ingeniously proposed that this craftsman must also have been a maker of thrones and ironwork.

As in many fields of art history, technical analysis holds great promise for explaining much about Mamluk art, but there has been a remarkable reluctance to apply these techniques to metalwork. It is simply unacceptable, for example, not to differentiate brass (primarily an alloy of copper and zinc) from bronze (primarily copper and tin), for they have different working properties, and the presence (or absence) of imported (and expensive) tin can tell us something about the economic circumstances in which a particular piece was made. It is therefore surprising that the author of a recent book on metal lamps writes that it is "not possible within the scope of this study to indicate precisely the material."<sup>87</sup>

## CERAMICS

Ceramics is one of the fields in which scientific analysis is playing a major role in revising received opinion. Considering that Egypt was a major center of ceramic

<sup>83</sup>James W. Allan, *Islamic Metalwork: The Nuḥad es-Said Collection* (London, 1982). A few Mamluk pieces are also published in James Allan, *Metalwork of the Islamic World: The Aron Collection* (London, 1986).

<sup>84</sup>See note 13 above.

<sup>85</sup>Rachel Ward, "Tradition and Innovation: Candlesticks Made in Mamluk Cairo," in *Islamic Art in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford, 1995), 147-58.

<sup>86</sup>James W. Allan, "Muhammad Ibn al-Zayn: Craftsman in Cups, Thrones, and Window Grilles?" *Levant* 28 (1996): 199-208.

<sup>87</sup>Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Mamluk and Post-Mamluk Metal Lamps*, Supplément aux Annales islamologiques (Cairo, 1995), 6.



production in the Fatimid period, when magnificent luster-painted earthenwares were among the most important ceramics made anywhere in the Islamic lands, the apparent decline of ceramic production in Egypt under Ayyubid and Mamluk rule comes as something of a shock. The center of ceramic innovation shifted from Egypt to Syria and Iran in the twelfth century, as potters began to make finer and harder ceramics from an artificial body (known as fritware or stonepaste) which was then painted and glazed. The majority of glazed ceramics produced in Egypt were rather coarse scratched and slip-painted earthenwares. At the same time, fine quality Chinese ceramics were being imported into the Mamluk realm by way of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, and large quantities of blue-and-white porcelain have been excavated at Hama in Syria and at Fustat in Egypt.<sup>88</sup>

The chronology of Mamluk period ceramics has yet to be established with certainty, not only because they are less beautiful and hence less "collectible," but also because the Fustat excavations—the major key to dating Egyptian ceramics from the earlier periods—provide less information about the Mamluk period. On the one hand, most sealed contexts predate the Mamluk period; on the other, the overlying rubbish mounds which presumably contain Mamluk material are not sufficiently stratified to provide dates, although by excavating a cesspit Scanlon has had some success with characterizing the range of wares available in Mamluk Cairo.<sup>89</sup> Approaches other than archaeology and stylistic analysis have been necessary, and these include neutron-activation analysis,<sup>90</sup> which can show chemical similarities between different ceramics, and petrography, which analyzes and identifies the specific clays and minerals from which ceramics are made.<sup>91</sup>

Perhaps the most innovative work on Mamluk-period ceramics has been at the Royal Ontario Museum, where a group of scholars has used petrography, for example, to suggest that all Syrian glazed ceramics of the Mamluk period—whether underglaze-painted in blue and white or overglaze painted in luster—were made from the same body, and they concluded that they were made in one location,

<sup>88</sup>Tsugio Mikami, "China and Egypt: Fustat," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 45 (1980-81): 67-89; Lisa Golombek, Robert B. Mason, and Gauvin A. Bailey, *Tamerlane's Tableware: A New Approach to the Chinoiserie Ceramics of Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Iran* (Costa Mesa, California, 1996), 126.

<sup>89</sup>George Scanlon, "Mamluk Pottery: More Evidence from Fustat," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 115-26.

<sup>90</sup>Marilyn Jenkins, "Mamluk Underglaze Painted Pottery: Foundations for Further Study," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 95-114.

<sup>91</sup>Robert B. Mason and Edward J. Keall, "Petrography of Islamic Pottery from Fustat," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 27 (1990): 165-84; Robert B. Mason, "Defining Syrian Stonepaste Ceramics: Petrographic Analysis of Pottery from Ma'arrat Al-Nu'man," in *Islamic Art in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford, 1995), 1-18.



presumably Damascus.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, they suggested that Timur forcibly took Damascene potters, along with Chinese porcelains that had been imported into the Mamluk realm and Syrian copies of them, to his capital at Samarqand, where the potters established workshops using particularly Syrian techniques to produce Central Asian imitations of Syrian imitations of Chinese porcelains.<sup>93</sup> As provocative as these hypotheses may be, to believe that all glazed ceramics of the Mamluk period were produced in one Syrian center seems to fly in the face of common sense, for economic or historical explanations for such a concentration of industry are lacking.

#### OTHER ARTS

In contrast to Mamluk-period ceramics, Mamluk glass is magnificent: nearly-colorless blown-glass vessels decorated with brilliant enamels and gold. Nevertheless, Mamluk glass had not attracted much scholarly attention after the publication of Wiet's catalogues of the Cairo museum's Mamluk lamps, although recently there has been a revival of interest in the subject. A careful study of glass coin-weights led to a proposed chronology of Egyptian glass,<sup>94</sup> and the excavation of several glass bracelets at the Mamluk-period site of Quseir al-Qadim led Carboni to reattribute several bracelets in the Metropolitan Museum from Coptic to Mamluk.<sup>95</sup> The results of an international conference devoted to the subject in London in 1994 are just about to appear.<sup>96</sup> The art of woodworking, which enjoyed extraordinary importance in Mamluk times, when it was used for doors, shutters, *minbars*, *kursīs*, and chests, has not received the attention it deserves, apart from a few specialized studies.<sup>97</sup> One of the most distinctive features of Mamluk art is the presence of emblems, which have often been likened, incorrectly, to the blazons

<sup>92</sup>Golombek, Mason, and Bailey, *Tamerlane's Tableware*, 32.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 126-27; Robert B. Mason, "Medieval Egyptian Lustre-Painted and Associated Wares: Typology in a Multidisciplinary Study," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 34 (1997): 201-42.

<sup>94</sup>J. G. Kolbas, "A Color Chronology of Islamic Glass," *Journal of Glass Studies* 25 (1983): 95-100.

<sup>95</sup>Stefano Carboni, "Glass Bracelets from the Mamluk Period in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Journal of Glass Studies* 36 (1994): 126-29.

<sup>96</sup>Rachel Ward, ed., *Gilded and Enamelled Glass from the Middle East: Origins, Innovations* (London, 1998).

<sup>97</sup>Gloria S. Karnouk, "Form and Ornament of the Cairene Baḥrī Minbar," *Annales islamologiques* 17 (1981): 113-39.



of medieval heraldry.<sup>98</sup> Recent work on the subject includes an investigation of its origins by the late Estelle Whelan and overviews by Meinecke and Rabbat.<sup>99</sup>

### SPECIFIC TOPICS

While Mamluk art has normally been studied in terms of architecture and the decorative arts, several scholars have addressed topics that transcend these traditional categories. As we have seen, the traditional art historical investigation of "influence" confuses the agent with the patient, for the question should not be, for example, what is the "influence" of Iranian—or Chinese—art on that of the Mamluks but what was it that Mamluk artists saw in the arts of Iran—or China—that they felt was worth borrowing. Nevertheless, the question of foreign "influence" has interested such scholars as J. M. Rogers, who investigated the relationships between Mamluk art and that of Saljuq Anatolia and Ilkhanid Iran.<sup>100</sup> While Rogers rarely specified exactly how these architectural ideas might have been brought to Cairo, Meinecke approached the subject from the perspective of the movement of artists and workshops in his study of a group of tile makers who came to Cairo from Tabriz.<sup>101</sup> More recently, Rachel Ward has investigated the presence or absence of chinoiserie decoration on Mamluk metalwork in terms of Mamluk-Mongol political relations.<sup>102</sup>

Meinecke also turned around the question of "influence" and explored the relationship of Mamluk architecture to that of other traditions in his studies on the dispersal of the workshops assembled to build Sultan Ḥasan's funerary complex to Damascus, Aleppo, Anatolia, and ultimately via Timur, to Turkestan,<sup>103</sup> as well as the legacy of Mamluk marble decoration in Ottoman Turkey.<sup>104</sup> He also explored the relationships between the art of the capital and that of the provinces,<sup>105</sup> and

<sup>98</sup>L. A. Mayer, *Saracenic Heraldry* (Oxford, 1933).

<sup>99</sup>Estelle Whelan, "Representations of the *Khāṣṣakīyah* and the Origins of Mamluk Emblems," in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, ed. Priscilla P. Soucek (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1988), 219-54; Michael Meinecke, "Die mamlukische Heraldik in Ägypten und Syrien," *Der Herold* (N.F.) 13, no. 2 (1990): 38-40, 47; Nasser Rabbat, "Rank," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2d ed., 8:431-33.

<sup>100</sup>J. M. Rogers, "Seljuk Influence"; idem, "Evidence for Mamluk-Mongol Relations, 1260-1360," *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire* (Cairo, 1972), 385-404.

<sup>101</sup>Michael Meinecke, "Die mamlukischen Faiencemosaikdekorationen: eine Werkstatt aus Tabriz in Kairo (1330-1350)," *Kunst des Orients* 11 (1976-77): 85-144.

<sup>102</sup>Rachel Ward, "Mongol Mania in the Mamluk Court," unpublished paper scheduled for publication in 1998, to be edited by Robert Hillenbrand.

<sup>103</sup>Meinecke, *Die Mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien*, 130-52 (chap. 5, pt. E).

<sup>104</sup>Michael Meinecke, "Mamlukische Marmordekorationen in der osmanischen Türkei," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 27, no. 2 (1971): 207-20.

<sup>105</sup>Meinecke, "Mamluk Architecture, Regional Architectural Traditions."



between provincial capitals and local centers.<sup>106</sup> As buildings do not move about, these relationships are fairly easy to study, but it is much more difficult for the decorative arts. In the absence of any specific information to the contrary, historians have tended to attribute most Mamluk art to the capital, but studies have shown, or tended to suggest, that significant numbers of manuscripts, metalwares, glasswares, ceramics, and carpets were made elsewhere, particularly in Damascus.

It is easy for a specialist to distinguish the art of Baybars I from that of al-Ghawrī some 250 years later, but to the non-specialist most Mamluk art looks remarkably alike. Conservatism was an important attribute of Mamluk art, particularly in comparison to the arts of contemporary Iran where styles changed markedly from the Mongols to the Timurids and Safavids. While this conservatism in Mamluk art has not been the focus of particular study, several scholars have investigated the strong dependence of Mamluk art on the past. The mosque of Baybars I in Cairo, for example, has been shown to recreate not only the Fatimid mosque of al-Ḥākīm but also that of Ibn Ṭūlūn,<sup>107</sup> and Baybars's *madrasah* in Damascus is decorated with recreations of the Umayyad mosaics in the Great Mosque nearby.<sup>108</sup> It has long been recognized that the tomb of Qalāwūn is a free quotation of the equally Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem,<sup>109</sup> and even contemporaries knew that the monumental vault in the funerary complex of Sultan Ḥasan surpassed the dimensions of the Sasanian Ṭāq-i Kisrā at Ctesiphon in Iraq.<sup>110</sup>

Because of the Mamluks' peculiar system of succession, their art lacks the dynastic emphasis of contemporary Islamic art, particularly in Iran, where the Chingizid/Mongol-Timurid ideology was particularly important. The subject of Mamluk patronage remains oddly underexplored, although recently it has begun to attract more attention.<sup>111</sup> Amy W. Newhall's study of the patronage of Qāyṭbāy is unusual because it combines architecture and decorative arts.<sup>112</sup> In contrast,

<sup>106</sup>Meinecke, *Patterns*, 43-47.

<sup>107</sup>Bloom, "Mosque of Baybars."

<sup>108</sup>F. B. Flood, "Umayyad Survivals and Mamluk Revivals: Qalawunid Architecture and the Great Mosque of Damascus," *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 57-79.

<sup>109</sup>Michael Meinecke, "Das Mausoleum des Qalā'ūn in Kairo: Untersuchungen zur Genese der mamlukischen Architekturdekoration," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Archäologischen Institut Abteilung Kairo* 26 (1970): 47-80.

<sup>110</sup>Bernard O'Kane, "Monumentality in Mamluk and Mongol Art and Architecture," *Art History* 19, no. 4 (December 1996): 499-522.

<sup>111</sup>Leonor Fernandes, "Mamluk Architecture and the Question of Patronage," *MSR* 1 (1997): 107-20.

<sup>112</sup>Newhall, "The Patronage of the Mamluk Sultan Qa'it Bay, 872-901/1468;" Khaled Ahmad Alhamzeh, "Late Mamluk Patronage: Qansuh al-Ghuri's Waqf and His Foundations in Cairo," Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1993, appears to concern only the sultan's patronage of



most studies of patronage have been restricted to architecture, such as that of the amirs of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad<sup>113</sup> or al-Ghawrī.<sup>114</sup> Al-Harithy has investigated the architectural patronage of women, showing that it was not very different from that of men in Mamluk Egypt.<sup>115</sup> She concludes that members of the Mamluk ruling class erected the buildings and that members of the indigenous population used them. Her study would have been more convincing had she attempted to further identify these female patrons and explain whether this was an Egyptian or a Mamluk phenomenon. As in many other fields, Mamluk patronage in Egypt and Syria might profitably be compared with that of contemporary Mongol and Timurid Iran.<sup>116</sup> The abundance of evidence makes it possible to explore the patronage of many rulers, including Baybars, Qalāwūn, and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and one hopes that more scholars will turn their attention in this direction.

#### CONCLUSION

The great range of work already mentioned in this overly long survey makes it clear that no one scholar or approach dominates the field, and that there is a healthy range of opinion. I do believe, however, that the study of Mamluk art and architecture suffers from several general problems, and I would like to conclude by discussing three.

The first problem is a failure by some art historians to be also good historians. While good historians have learned to treat their written sources with caution, understanding that each document or text represents one particular view of a situation, art historians tend to be more gullible and believe that all written documents are true. At the same time, art historians have failed to convince the larger scholarly community that visual evidence is as valid, if not more valid, than written evidence. These issues are particularly important in view of the textual basis of much scholarship on Mamluk art, which treats al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* as a revealed text rather than as a rich and important selection of earlier works by one fifteenth-century scholar. In my study of Baybars's mosque, for example, I found (much to my surprise) that al-Maqrīzī was not a completely reliable source, probably because

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architecture.

<sup>113</sup>Shāhindah Fahmī Karīm, "Jawāmi' wa-Masājīd Umarā' al-Sulṭān al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn," Ph.D. diss., Cairo University, 1987.

<sup>114</sup>Alhamzeh, "Late Mamluk Patronage: Qansuh al-Ghuri's Waqf and His Foundations in Cairo."

<sup>115</sup>Howyda al-Harithy, "Female Patronage of Mamluk Architecture in Cairo," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 1, no. 2 (1994): 152-74.

<sup>116</sup>See, for example, Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shah-Nama* (Chicago, 1980); Roya Marefat, "Timurid Women: Patronage and Power," *Asian Art* 6, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 28-49; and Noha Sadek, "Rasulid Women: Power and Patronage," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 19 (1989): 121-26.



of his own bias against Baybars.<sup>117</sup> In studying the complex of Sultan Sha‘bān on al-Tabbānah street, Howyda al-Harithy noted that the foundation inscription on the main portal reads: “. . . Our lord the sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Sha‘bān ordered the building of this blessed *madrasah* for his mother . . . in the year 770/1368,” and this statement is repeated at least eight other times in the complex. Nevertheless, Mamluk chroniclers unanimously attribute the construction of this building to the sultan’s mother, Khawand Barakah. What should we then conclude about the relative value of texts and inscriptions? Al-Harithy, believing that later texts were more accurate than the building itself, concluded that the building was funded by and intended for Khawand Barakah and her husband, although her son was buried there as well.<sup>118</sup>

The second problem is the Egyptocentrism of Mamluk studies and the consequent reluctance or failure of scholars to look beyond the confines of Egypt. If Mamluk Egypt was indeed unique, as so many studies conclude, then there is no point in studying it, for it has no lessons to teach us. This is clearly not true, as three examples show. Nasser Rabbat’s recent study of the Cairo citadel concluded that it was a unique response to a unique situation.<sup>119</sup> The Cairo citadel may have had no parallel in the eastern Mediterranean, yet the features that Rabbat reconstructed so deftly find striking parallels in the Islamic architecture of contemporary Andalusia. The Alhambra in Granada, just like the Citadel, was built from the thirteenth century on the remains of an earlier mountain-top fortress linked to the city’s system of defensive walls, dominating the city from above. The Alhambra, too, originally had several enclosures arranged hierarchically, with barracks and defensive works separated from mosques and areas for reception and residence. Although the Alhambra is also considered unique, a comparison of these two “unique” fortresses should reveal important points about urbanism and architecture in the medieval period.

Another example of Egyptocentrism concerns the funerary complex of Sultan Ḥasan (1357-1361), perhaps the most famous of Mamluk structures. Scholars have long noted that it was the first *madrasah* in Cairo to combine a congregational mosque with a *madrasah*, and al-Harithy has suggested that the incorporation of a congregational mosque “reinforces the symbolic reference to society.”<sup>120</sup> While this may or may not be true, the presence of a congregational mosque was not

<sup>117</sup>Bloom, “Mosque of Baybars.”

<sup>118</sup>Howyda al-Harithy, “Female Patronage,” 166; it should be noted, although al-Harithy does not, that this anomaly was discussed nearly a century ago by Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, I: Égypte 1*, 285-86, and more recently by Leonor Fernandes, “Mamluk Architecture and the Question of Patronage,” 114.

<sup>119</sup>Rabbat, *Citadel of Cairo*.

<sup>120</sup>Al-Harithy, “Complex of Sultan Hasan.”



unique. The largest *madrāsah* in Fez, the Bū ‘Inānīyah, which was built in 1355, also incorporates a congregational mosque for the first time. One wonders whether there might be any relationship between the two structures.

A third example of Egyptocentrism concerns the interpretation of the bulbous profile of several domes erected in Cairo in the middle of the fourteenth century, with ribs rising from a *muqarnas* cornice around a high drum. The best examples in Cairo are found in an anonymous mausoleum in the southern cemetery known as the Sulṭānīyah, which probably dates to the 1350s. It consists of two ribbed bulbous domes on high drums flanking a vaulted *īwān*. Some scholars have claimed this to be an Egyptian invention, but the structural system attempts to translate the structural requirements of a brick dome into limestone and clearly shows that this was a foreign type of construction imported to Egypt from the Iranian world. Although the earliest examples there, such as the Gūr-i Mīr in Samarqand, date from the early fifteenth century and postdate the Egyptian examples by some fifty years, the Iranian tradition of brick double domes can be traced back as far as the eleventh century.<sup>121</sup> Clearly all that remains is not all that was.

The final problem I see with the study of Mamluk art and architecture is the failure to exploit art historical techniques. Art history as a discipline is now well over a century old, as is the more specialized study of Islamic art, and scholars have developed varied and sophisticated techniques for studying works of art. The interpretation of the so-called Baptistère de Saint-Louis, the most celebrated example of Mamluk metalwork, illustrates this problem well. A large basin of bronze inlaid with silver, the Baptistère belongs to a well-known type with incurving sides and flaring rim used for the ceremonial washing of hands and made in a set with a matching ewer. It differs from most other pieces of Mamluk metalwork in the absence of epigraphic decoration and the total reliance on the extraordinarily detailed and superbly executed figural compositions which cover most of the exterior and interior surfaces. The maker was justly proud of his work, for the master (Arab. *mu‘allim*) Muḥammad ibn al-Zayn signed it six times: one formal signature is located under the rim and five informal signatures are found on representations of metal objects and thrones within the scenes. The Baptistère bears no date or identification of a specific patron, yet the brilliance of the conception, quality of the execution, and specificity of the detail make it impossible to believe that it was made to be sold on the open market.

D. S. Rice was the first to propose that the scenes were specific representations and identified the bearded figure wearing a short-sleeved tunic and carrying a

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<sup>121</sup>Blair and Bloom, *Art and Architecture of Islam*, 84.



mace as the amir Sālār (d. 1310), thereby dating the basin to the period 1290-1310.<sup>122</sup> Other scholars, while accepting that the scenes depicted real events, proposed different identifications which would put the basin at least thirty years earlier than the date proposed by Rice.<sup>123</sup> While none of Muḥammad ibn al-Zayn's other work is dated,<sup>124</sup> these "historical" attributions disregard the stylistic evidence Rice and others have adduced so carefully. There is no question that figural scenes were increasingly used on metalwork throughout the second half of the thirteenth century and then abandoned during the long reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.<sup>125</sup> Other scholars, working from the appearance of chinoiserie motifs in the decoration, have suggested that the basin might date as late as the mid-fourteenth century, nearly a century after the earliest date proposed!<sup>126</sup> I myself have joined the fray, proposing that Rice's date was right for the wrong reasons: despite their apparent specificity, the images are not narratives but emblems corresponding to the inscriptions that normally appear on early fourteenth-century metalwork.<sup>127</sup> In sum, it seems inconceivable that such a seminal piece could engender such wildly varied opinions, and it shows why historians have often been reluctant to take the work of art historians seriously.

To conclude where I began, now that Mamluk art has finally entered the coffetable book *Big Time*, the gate of innovation has been opened. The new generation of scholars, whose work has focused so assiduously on the minutiae of Mamluk art and architecture, should use their considerable expertise to speak not only to each other but to make this attractive and potentially interesting subject more accessible and relevant to a wider audience of historians of culture as well as the reading public in Egypt and elsewhere.

<sup>122</sup>Rice, *Baptistère de Saint-Louis*; Ettinghausen pointed out in his review of Rice's book that it is unlikely that Sālār was its patron, for he would then have been the focus of the decoration rather than one of the attendant amirs; see Richard Ettinghausen, review of *The Baptistère de Saint-Louis: A Masterpiece of Islamic Metalwork*, by D. S. Rice, *Ars Orientalis* 1 (1954): 245-49.

<sup>123</sup>Elfriede R. Knauer, "Einige trachgeschichtliche Beobachtungen am Werke Giottos," in *Scritti in onore di Roberto Salvini* (Florence, 1984), 173-81; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "The Baptistère de Saint Louis: A Reinterpretation," *Islamic Art* 3 (1988-89): 3-9.

<sup>124</sup>James W. Allan, "Muhammad Ibn al-Zain."

<sup>125</sup>See Robert Irwin, *Dictionary of Art*, s.v. Mamluk II/3.

<sup>126</sup>Rachel Ward, "Mongol Mania."

<sup>127</sup>Bloom, "A Mamluk Basin."

