Al-Franj: the Crusaders in the Levant | Two Mamluk Sultans against the Franks

‘Qalawun was probably the most prolific instigator of architectural projects.’

Out of the two Mamluk Sultans discussed here, Qalawun was probably the most prolific instigator of architectural projects. The scale of his complex in Cairo, which marks a new phase in Mamluk architecture, is truly imposing, comprising a madrasa, mausoleum (qubba) and hospital (bimaristan). The bimaristan was built following Qalawun’s experience in the Bimaristan Nur al-Din, a hospital in Damascus. So impressed was he by the treatment he received, that he vowed that if he recovered to take the throne he would build a similar one in Cairo. Soon after his reign began in 682 / 1283 he initiated the project. The bimaristan was unusual for its time being dedicated to Muslims of both sexes and from any social position.



Name:
Ribat of al-Mansur Qalawun

Dynasty:
Hegira 681 / AD 1282–3 Mamluk

Details:
Jerusalem

Justification:
Ribat al-Mansuri in Jerusalem, commissioned by Sultan Qalawun in 681 / 1282–3.



Name:
Tower of al-Zahir Baybars

Dynasty:
Hegira 658–76 / AD 1260–77 Mamluk

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
Detail of a figurative relief-carving on Baybars' tower in Cairo.



Name:
Tower of al-Zahir Baybars

Dynasty:
Hegira 658–76 / AD 1260–77 Mamluk

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
View of Sultan Baybars' tower.



Name:
Complex of Sultan al-Mansur Qalawun (Mausoleum, Madrasa and Hospital)

Dynasty:
Hegira 684 / AD 1285 Mamluk

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

There is a close resemblance between the glass vine-frieze mosaic in Qalawun's complex in Cairo and that seen in the Mausoleum of al-Zahir Baybars in Damascus, suggesting that the same workshop carried out both cycles.



Name:
Complex of Sultan al-Mansur Qalawun (Mausoleum, Madrasa and Hospital)

Dynasty:
Hegira 684 / AD 1285 Mamluk

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
The vine-frieze mosaic at the Complex of Sultan Qalawun.



Name:
Madrasa al-Zahiriyya

Dynasty:
Hegira 676 / AD 1277 Mamluk

Details:
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
The vine-frieze mosaic in the Baybars' Mausoleum in Damascus.



Name:
Hospital (Bimaristan) Nur al-Din

Dynasty:
Hegira 549 / AD 1154 Atabeg

Details:
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
Qalawun was treated and cured of a fatal illness at this hospital in Damascus, which inspired him to build his bimaristan in Cairo.
