

The Mamluks | Cairo, Damascus and Jerusalem: Centres of Mamluk Intellectual Life

‘The Bimaristan of Sultan Qalawun taught a diversity of subjects such as surgery and ophthalmology.’

As the seat of the caliphate, Cairo took the lead in Islamic teaching and intellectual endeavour. Its religious institutions, al-Azhar University and the Sultan Hassan Complex foremost among them, received generous waqfs from the sultans and senior officials, to support both Sunni religious studies and the sciences, particularly medicine. Thus, the exemplary Bimaristan (hospital) of Sultan Qalawun in Cairo, built in 683 / 1284, provided teaching facilities for a diversity of subjects such as surgery and ophthalmology, in addition to the provision of 100 beds for the sick, a comprehensive library and a pharmacy.



Name:

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

Dynasty:

Hegira 684 / AD 1285 Mamluk

Details:

Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

Bimaristan Qalawun was groundbreaking in its excellent medical care and teaching.



Name:

Madrasa al-Gawhariyya inside Al-Azhar Mosque

Dynasty:

Hegira 844 / AD 1440 Mamluk

Details:

Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

The madrasa was added onto the mosque through the patronage of amir Gawhar al-Qunquba'i, treasurer to Sultan Barsbay (825–41 / 1422–38). Today it is known as al-Azhar Mosque and University.



Name:

Medical prescription

Dynasty:

Hegira 9th century / AD 15th century Mamluk

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art

Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

A medical prescription issued by the director of the Bimaristan Qalawun.
