

# 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.

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**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.

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**Name:**  
Tower of al-Zahir Baybars

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

**Details:**  
Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**  
View of Sultan Baybars' tower.

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**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.

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