2013

Mamluk Jerusalem: Architecturally Challenging Narratives

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Mamluk Jerusalem:
Architecturally Challenging Narratives

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Abstract

Narratives abound concerning the religious and political positioning of Jerusalem in the past as well as the present and have been used in a variety of ways to serve various ideologies or political ends. One such narrative (which can be found even in some academic treatises of the history of Jerusalem) states that following the Muslim re-conquest of the city after the Crusades Muslim rulers neglected the city entirely, leading to its decline into obscurity and ruin. This narrative asserts that the city remained as such until Zionism, Jewish immigration, and, most especially, the establishment of the state of Israel rescued Jerusalem and resituated it in its preeminent position as the Holy City. This paper argues against such a narrative by examining the architectural contributions and growth of the city religiously during the rule of the Mamluk Empire (1250-1517). While it is true that in some ways the political prestige of Jerusalem waned under the Muslim rule of this time, its religious importance grew beyond what it had seen prior to the Crusades. This will be illustrated by a discussion of certain political and religious factors and practices that influenced the development of the city, as well as a discussion of several examples of buildings and structures that illustrate the extent to which the Mamluks prized the city and were interested in both its growth and prestige in religious, albeit not political, terms.

Jerusalem stands today as one of the cities of the ages: a city cherished by many differing nations, empires and peoples throughout the history of the world. Through those millennia, it has been ruled by various strains of polytheists (Greeks and Romans) and monotheists (Jews, Christians and Muslims) alike. Each of the ruling empires has shaped the city to fit the needs of the people as well as putting their own cultural, religious and political stamp on its landscape. The city has been rebuilt and restored, repaired and refurbished many times and each new ruling elite accumulated their own additions and embellished their previously established holy locations and buildings.

In the modern context, the religious or holy nature of the city has combined with the political sensitivity surrounding its place within international affairs and conflicts. Jerusalem, as a city, a place of worship, and a holy entity, has been adopted by various ideologies and the underlying narratives associated with them. The city's eclectic and storied history has been used and sometimes abused in defense of these narratives. Many of these narratives bear distinct ideological or religious imprints. Sometimes these imprints are the results of deliberate attempts to 'massage' the truth into a more palatable or acceptable forms. Other times they are simply the results of assumptions and/or lack of facts (either through distortion or simply the result of

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paradigms of understanding or methodology). However, in today's political and religious environment, even if they are perceived or transmitted innocently, these narratives can have vast implications and effect policy and actions of state and non-state actors. As such, the narratives that inform us about the volatile topic of Jerusalem need to be informed by facts. Any narratives that are based upon faulty assumptions or specious understandings of the facts, need to be reexamined thoroughly.

One such narrative involves Muslim development of the city after the Crusades. Specifically, certain political facts have led some to see neglect and outright disdain for the city at the hands of the medieval Muslim rulers. One of the ruling powers of that time period that left a most distinct mark on the both the skyline and the street level of the city (as is seen today) was the Islamic Mamluk Empire, which ruled all of greater Syria and Egypt. This paper will provide a comprehensive, albeit somewhat brief, overview of the lasting architectural influence the Mamluks exerted upon Jerusalem by recounting quickly their rule over the city and its environs, explaining the effect of their socio-political system and historical context on their architectural projects and programs in the city and review some of the most inspiring and important architectural structures that were erected during their reign, while discussing the unique architectural characteristics and attributes used by the Mamluks to beautify the city. This will all be done to establish that while certain facts point to a fall in prestige for Jerusalem politically after the Crusades, religiously, the city enjoyed an immense importance under Mamluk rule. This should be kept in mind in any discussion of narrative and ideology in the modern era.

The Mamluks: Early Foundations

Following the rule of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs, the whole of the Islamic empire fell under the sway of the Umayyad Caliphate—a series of caliphs who ruled their territory from Baghdad. The Abbasid Caliphate which followed, lasting roughly from 750 to 1250, sowed the seeds of its own defeat by certain specific policies of military control and conscription. In order to form a military structure loyal solely to the person of the Caliph, one of the Caliphs (al-Mu'tasim, 833-842 CE) instituted a "slave" system in order to create a military unit exclusively under his control and thus solidify his rule. This slave system became known as the Mamluk system, as "*mamluke* in Arabic is a past participle meaning owned."[1] Under this system, the Caliph literally owned the soldiers who became his personal army. This new "system was merely a modification of the common system of hiring foreign mercenaries,"[2] and it must be pointed out that the word "slave" in this context is in many ways a complete misnomer because "although Mamluks were indeed purchased as children, they spent their lives as free, powerful and privileged men. They were trained as horse archers, a highly skilled avocation requiring many years of training; during this time they became Muslims and were freed at the age of eighteen."[3] To go beyond that, "they were certainly not to be confused with slaves for menial and lowly tasks, who might often be black, and for whom the word *'abd* was used."[4]
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[1] Glubb, John, *Soldiers of Fortune: The Story of the Mamlukes,* (London; Camelot Press Ltd., 1973), 36.

[2] Glubb, *Soldiers,* 36-37.

[3] Isichei, Elizabeteh, *A History of African Societies to 1870,* (Cambridge, UK; Cambridge University Press, 1997), 192.

[4] Burgoyne, Michael H., *Mamluk Jerusalem: An Architectural Study,* (London; Jolly and Barber Ltd., 1987), 53.

[5] Burgoyne, Michael H., *Mamluk Jerusalem: An Architectural Study,* (London; Jolly and Barber Ltd., 1987), 53.

These "slaves" formed an important element within the court and political life of the Caliphate as well as serving as the military backbone of the empire. They were fiercely loyal to the Caliph's person because "a freedman was thought to be under a moral obligation to remain as a loyal retainer of his patron… This devotion to the man who had brought him up and freed him was an obligation of honour on which the whole Mamluke system was founded."[6] This contributed largely to the political and military capital of a Caliph and allowed him to gain unprecedented powers over his domain.

This power though became a liability when the Caliphs relied too heavily upon their Mamluk power base. "The Ayyubids relied on Mamluks, who later supplanted them"[7] in order to create their own Mamluk dynasty or "self-perpetuating junta of military rulers in Egypt and Syria."[8] This coup' d'état, as was common, occurred "once this body-guard became conscious of its corporate powers as armed men, [and] turned against their masters…and established the rule of their own leaders."[9]The Mamluks then succeeded in halting the progression of the Mongol invasions and finally expelling the Crusaders from the region.[10] These two major military achievements, along with the "legitimacy" provided by the retention of an Abbasid puppet-Caliph, helped secure strong legitimacy for the regime that lasted until the middle of the 16th Century. Subsequently, the Mamluk regime, as early as 1260, came to exert a strong (and lasting) cultural and political hold over the development of medieval Jerusalem.

Mamluk Influence on Jerusalem

During the reign of the Mamluks, Jerusalem as a city underwent a period of significant change, which would affect its development in many different ways. Salah al-Din and the Ayyubids had successfully regained control of the city from the Crusader powers, but following the years of Christian control in the city, the period that would follow would see the city's importance fall to near non-existence within the political scene of the region. This fall in political import would be mirrored inversely by a large rise in Islamic religious resurgence in the region characterized largely by "defensiveness" regarding Jerusalem.[11] Both of these changes would contribute dramatically to the future of the city, affecting specifically the physical appearance of the city.

Political Factors and Changes

The Crusaders had naturally made Jerusalem the center of their political kingdom because of its theological and religious importance. To the Muslim Mamluks though, Jerusalem failed to retain the same political power. One scholar points out "there was little apart from its status in religion to keep the city in the forefront of mens' (*sic*) minds."[12] Following the re-conquest, the city "had limited political, strategic or administrative importance"[13] and notably

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[6] Glubb, *Soldiers,* 37.
[7] Isichei, *Societies,* 192.
[8] Bloom, J and Blair, Sheila, *Islamic Arts,* (London; Phaidon Press Ltd., 2006), 133.
[9] Avi-Yonah, *Saga,* 38.
[10] Isichei, *Societies,* 193.
[11] Armstrong, Karen, *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths,* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005), 305.
[12] Burgoyne, *Mamluk,* 58.
[13] Kroyanker, David, *Jerusalem Architecture,* (New York; Vendome Press, 1994), 45.

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"guards no great trade route and no great source of commercial wealth."[14]   Significantly, the Mamluks at the time refrained from fully rebuilding the protective wall of the city after the defeat of the Crusaders. This "absence of a wall surrounding the city completely, and the local governors failure to recognize the need for it, was not solely a result of the absence of the real military challenge or of the minimal strategic importance of the town; it was also a result of Jerusalem's political status and prestige at the time."[15] The political insignificance within the realm of the greater politics of the Mamluk Empire is also illustrated by the lack of mention in the records of any part taken by Jerusalem in a number of large-scale political intrigues (some reaching the level of civil war) during the time period. While speaking of one coup attempt, occurring in 1387 in the area of greater Syria and involving a large number of Syrian cities, one historian points out that "the silence of contemporary historians over the role of al-Quds in this coup strongly suggests that the city was outside the military and political battle over the sultanate. It may also indicate that al-Quds did not harbor a significant military force that might enable it to become involved in this military strife."[16]

The apparent insignificance of the city politically within the Mamluk empire overall is made clear by a few practices that were introduced due largely to social and political aspects of the Mamluk governance system.

The Mamluks effectively divided their kingdom into many different political divisions in order to better govern such a large area of land. First, there was a great division of the kingdom into two large areas: Cairo with the lands surrounding it and Syria. "Syria was the less important province, and was dependent to a large extent on the Sultan of Egypt," one historian explained. He continued, recounting that

> greater Syria was divided into seven areas (*mamlaka*): Damascus, the largest and most important one; Aleppo; Triplo; Hamat; Safed; Gaza (some of the time); and Karak. Jerusalem was one of the many subdistrics ('amal or wilaya) in the administration which received its orders from Damascus, as were Hebron, Nablus, Salt, 'Ajlun, Beit shean and Banias.[17]

Yet, even this arrangement was understood to be so low in the scope of governance that at times it was shifted (depending on the whims of the rulers to be certain) so "for most of the Bahri period Jerusalem was dependent in terms of administrative organization on the governor of Gaza,"[18] a step down again as Gaza, for some of the time, was still under the overall control of Damascus.

The fall of Jerusalem as the capital of the Latin Kingdom of the Crusaders to a lowly position within the overall hierarchy of the Mamluk Empire was a political blow to the city. The city was further hit by the politics of rule at the highest levels of Mamluk hierarchy and the arbitrary changing of leadership of the city. "One striking facet is the number of persons sent from time to time to govern Jerusalem and in many cases the brevity of their stay…[Resulting in] a change of governor on average about every 17 months…. What this implied for the good

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[14] Burgoyne, *Mamluk,* 58.

[15] Joseph Drory, "Jerusalem During the Mamluk Period", Levine Lee I (ed.), *The Jerusalem Cathedra,* (Jerusalem, 1981), 193.

[16] Lutfi, Huda, *Al-Quds al-Mamlukiyya: A History of Mamluk Jerusalem Based on the Haram Documents,* (Berlin; Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1985), 113.

[17] Drory, "Jerusalem", 193.

[18] Burgoyne, *Mamluk,* 59.

governance of Jerusalem can only be guessed at."[19] This was more than likely exacerbated since "in the time of the Mamluks, as in previous periods, ministers who were foreign to the country and knew nothing of its particular problems were appointed to rule, because of their military achievements or their ties with the sultan and not because of their ability to deal skillfully with local urban problems."[20]

As a further blow, "Jerusalem's limited political significance was also apparent from the absence of a regular and direct line of communication between it and the center of the state."[21] In the 1260s, one of the most important of the Mamluk sultans, Baybars, had undertaken to establish a network of roads and bridges to span the empire in order to facilitate the transfer of news (specifically of security concerns) from the provinces. "These communication lines were not used by merchants, nor were they planned for economic interests; [nor for] the convenience of the local residents...the communication routes were created solely to serve the ruler and his government" and despite reaching to the farthest ends of the empire they did not reach Jerusalem.[22]

This review of the political importance (or lack thereof) of Jerusalem during the period of Mamluk control could be somewhat misleading because in actuality Jerusalem did play a political role throughout the Mamluk period. However, this role was very minor in the internal affairs of the empire. The political use to which it was put most commonly was as a place of exile for members of the court who had fallen out of favor with the Sultan or perhaps as a place of retirement for those voluntarily leaving political life. Describing this aspect of Jerusalem, Michael Burgoyne writes that

> Jerusalem features prominently in the Mamluk period as a place to which individuals were sent when *battal.* This term meant 'being on the inactive list'. It was normally applied to men in the military sphere but not exclusively. The term could be used of administrative cadres… An individual could receive this status because he was out of favour. Illness or incapacity could also be the reason. It was, however, possible in the right circumstances to return to full service… If in the *battal* status there was at times an element of wishing to remove individuals from the political scene into a quiet backwater, that could explain why Jerusalem was so often selected. On the other hand, it was clearly deemed preferable to other places…and people requested transfers to Jerusalem.[23]

Whereas some might interpret this as a negative aspect of Jerusalem's political expediency,[24] given the general climate and relevance of the city to the greater empire, it should rather be seen as a boon; "contemporary Mamluk chronicles contain frequent references to military officials who retired to al-Quds for peace and quiet…The religious attraction of the city, its pleasant climate and the absence of strong military force must have made it a haven for those seeking a quiet life."[25]

All of these political factors combined to affect the architectural development of Jerusalem in a variety of ways. The city's lack of political influence within the empire would

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[19] Burgoyne, *Mamluk*, 60.

[20] Drory, "Jerusalem", 191.

[21] Drory, "Jerusalem", 194.

[22] Drory, "Jerusalem", 194-195.

[23] Burgoyne, *Mamluk,* 61.

[24] Drory, "Jerusalem", 196.

[25] Lutfi, *Al-Quds*, 113.

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have significantly hampered any kind of funding for administrative or public development of the city from the royal coffers. The city's relevance to the overall well being of the kingdom (i.e., none) would not have helped at all in any attempt on the part of the local residents to obtain the resources necessary for large-scale secular building plans (religiously motivated building plans are a different story, which will be handled separately in the next section). Thus, secular building projects within the city would not have found royal funds easily forthcoming. This accounts for the lack of governmental administrative buildings within Jerusalem along with the fact that there was nothing administered from the location thereby negating any need for administrative building projects on a large scale. Royal funds were being used to expand secular building projects elsewhere in the kingdom, particularly in the capital Cairo and to a lesser extent in provincial capitals such as Damascus.

Yet, despite all this, Jerusalem would see a magnificent increase in building projects at the time period with a number of them being non-religious. This was a function of the fact that the city housed a relatively large number of the high-ranking members of court, who had either fallen out of favor or retired to the city, and who would subsequently beautify it. These people had been fairly wealthy (in some cases probably very wealthy) and had been accustomed to an extravagant lifestyle and level of living that could not have been supported in such a "backwater" area without extensive efforts on their parts to remake the city in the image of Cairo, or any other former metropolitan home. Thus, many of these people undertook private building projects in order to fulfill this goal of improving the level of existence, to prove their willingness to serve the Sultan better and regain their former status, or as a religious expression. The most prominent example of these inhabitants would be the Lady Tunshuq, who would eventually construct a magnificent palace and a prominent mausoleum within the city limits.

While Jerusalem lacked the political capital to be within the scope of major royal building projects, it would have been one of the few places within the kingdom of the Mamluks that could have boasted large-scale architectural projects, whether funded by royal coffers or by private individuals. One such individual was Amir Tankiz, who having "accumulated a vast fortune during his 28 years as governor of Damascus and viceroy of Syria (1312-40), he spent much of it in beautifying Jerusalem."[26] His influence was felt in many areas of the city as he, either using public (acting on behalf of the Sultan) or private funds, provided financial backing for a number of projects and being "particularly noted for the series of urban works he carried out in Damascus, Jerusalem and elsewhere, founding religious institutions, building caravanserais and baths and ensuring water supplies." [27] One of the major building projects he was associated with of specific note is the Cotton Merchants' market with its monumental entry

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[26] Murphy-O'Connor, *Holy Land*, 44.

[27] Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 224. Amir Tankiz also stands as a good example of the rapid ups and downs of development possibilities, as well as political fortunes within the Mamluk system. Tankiz was appointed to positions of power granting him rule over all of Syria. He used his power to construct many buildings. However, Tankiz apparently fell prey to swift undercurrents in the Mamluk political system, halting his architectural advancements when "for reasons that are far from clear but in a manner that can be often paralleled, the mighty subject fell suddenly and was arrested on the…20 June 1340. He was taken to Alexandria and imprisoned there for less than a month before he was put to death." Tankiz's experience illustrates well the political shifting and problems that would have plagued the leadership of the time and given reason for abrupt starts and stops to building projects at the times. See Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 224. For more info on the Cotton Merchants' Market, see Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 273, and Kroyanker, *Architecture,* 50.

onto the Haram al-Sharif or Temple Mount. The complex provides a most important example of secular building within Jerusalem with governmental backing.[28]

Another private individual who spent much to improve the image and architecture of the city is known as Lady Tunshuq, who resided in Jerusalem for a number of years previous to her death and interment in the tomb she had erected in the year 1398 CE.[29] It is recorded that the Lady Tunshuq was residing in Jerusalem at least by the year 1391 because she is mentioned in the records of the Islamic historian Mujir al-Din.[30] She was a lady of no little importance and wealth, as is especially shown by the palace that she was able to erect for herself in the city. The palace occupies a place of honor along the street now referred to as 'Aqabat al-Takiyya. This area would have been a prized spot as it was "sufficiently high on western slope of town's central valley (al-Wad) to have enjoyed a clear view of the Dome of the Rock (sic)."[31] The building itself is rather large, comprising two floors with three different entrances on the same street. The palace was built some time during the years 1391-1392, and was sufficiently large and impressive that "by 795/1393 a Haram document names 'the Lady's Hill', which means that her presence and her 'grand edifice' had already made their mark on the city by then."[32]

Sadly, the palace retains almost none of its initial form. Subsequent renovations and building projects, particularly of Ottoman origin, have rendered the original palace indistinguishable: "repairs and alternations, mostly undocumented, [occurred] that make it difficult now to establish with precision the initial layout of the palace."[33] Thus our knowledge that a magnificent edifice once stood is maintained mainly by Haram and *waqf* documents.

The palace, like the tomb she also constructed, is evidence of a certain aristocratic population within the city that was willing to construct palaces and other edifices in order to retain a higher standard of living. It is also noteworthy that the Lady Tunshuq used her wealth to provide for certain Sufi orders- "she favoured a Shaykh Ibrahim of the Qalandariyya Order, whose zawiya was in the middle of the Mamilla cemetery…She also constructed a precinct around the zawiya."[34] This indicates that these wealthy gentry acted out of religious inclinations as well as personal desires to beautify the Holy City.

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[28] Increasing cotton trade within the entire Syrian region of the empire probably prompted the royal backing of this project. See Lutfi, *Al-Quds,* 118. While this complex was constructed for distinctly non-religious purposes (mercantile activities as well as living space, water sources and toiletry functions), it was still subtly incorporated into the overall religious overtones of the city by the use of some of its revenues as upkeep for religious endowments, and some religious buildings. See Murphy-O'Connor, *Holy Land,* 43.

[29] Little is known of the origins of Lady Tunshuq. While "her full name, Tunshuq, daughter of 'Abdallah, cerainly (sic) suggests that she may have been at some time a Turkish slave," other factors, such as her *laqab* (nickname or honorary name) al-Muzaffariyya suggests possible connections to either Mamluk royalty, such as Sultan al-Muzaffar Hajji (1346-47), or even to the Muzaffarid dynasty of West Persia. (Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 485) This second possibility seems to have greater credence, as there are certain Iranian influences present in the architectural techniques of both her palace and her tomb; "Iranian influences are otherwise virtually unknown in the Mamluk architecture of Jerusalem and there must be some reason for it." (Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 509.)

[30] Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 485.

[31] Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 485.

[32] Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 485.

[33] Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 485.

[34] Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 485.

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The Religious Factors and Changes

Religiously, Jerusalem retained much of its importance, and even made gains as an international center of religious activity during the period of the Mamluk control. The city had long been regarded as a sacred religious locale of the three major monotheistic religions. The Jews anciently had held it as their capital, and still revered it as the City of David and the home of the Temple Mount. The Christians had just fought a number of well-planned and well-financed (as well as some not-so-well-planned and not-so-well-financed) wars to regain control of the city and redeem it. The Muslims rulers following the Crusades would spare no expense to put their own stamp on the city and prove their own commitment to their own religion by doing so.

Prior to Mamluk rule, Jerusalem was given great emphasis within Islamic thought. Muhammad was "quick to realize the city's religious significance for the great monotheistic religions of Judaism and Christianity. Considering Islam to be a continuation in the tradition of these two religions, he wanted to re-enforce its legitimacy by establishing strong spiritual links to the Holy City."[35] This was accomplished from the Muslim perspective in a couple of different manners. First, Jerusalem was established as the first *qibla*, or direction of prayer (later to be changed to Mecca, as referenced in only one of two sections that seem to refer to Jerusalem in the Quran).[36] Later Muslims placed even more spiritual and religious emphasis on the city as they relate that "it was from al-Quds that [Muhammad] had ascended to Heaven in his Night Journey."[37] This claim is based on interpretation of Quran 17:1: *al-masjid al-haram* indicating the Ka'ba, while *al-masjid al-aqsa* is equated with the place of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. However, some scholars are hesitant to accept this interpretation seeing "there is nothing in the Qur'an to link the Remote Mosque [*al-masjid al-aqsa*] with Jerusalem."[38] Indeed, it seems that the Arab Muslims from the Arabian Peninsula were slow to fully appreciate and accept Jerusalem.

The process of integrating the town's holiness into Muslim consciousness was, in the first generations, slow and at times even controversial. However, military changes and political pressures in later centuries helped establish Jerusalem as a generally accepted emotional symbol in Islam, not subject to argument or internal disagreement.[39]

Building upon these "ancient" associations within Islam to the city of Jerusalem and because of certain "contemporary" military challenges and political pressures, "the Mamluks endeavored, with some success, to make Jerusalem an international Muslim religious center."[40] To truly understand their efforts it is necessary to discuss somewhat the general themes of religiosity contemporary among the Mamluks as well as the religious context of the time. As has been noted above, the Mamluks formed a self-perpetuating "military class of former slaves who converted to Islam."[41] As converts, the Mamluks would conceivably have felt societal pressures from other sections of society resenting their rule under the assumption that they were not true believers, and instead were solely using the religion to attain a false legitimacy for their rule. The Mamluks would combat such potential resentment by means of massive building projects undertaken to further Islamic learning, study and religiosity. Discussing the needs for these

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[35] Lutfi, *Al-Quds,* 110.
[36] Quran 2:142-143
[37] Lutfi, *Al-Quds,* 111.
[38] Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 224.
[39] Drory, "Jerusalem", 197-198.
[40] Kroyanker, *Architecture,* 45.
[41] Kroyanker, *Architecture,* 45.

building campaigns, Joseph Drory notes two reasons distinctly related to their religious nature. The first was "the need felt by the Mamluks, the descendents of poor, anonymous, pagan families to express their loyalty and gratitude to the Muslim culture which had offered them protection, had given meaning to their life and had helped them gain social standing which they would not have attained in their lands of origin."[42] Their conversion to Islam and their subsequent military service would have changed the lives of the young men who were 'pressed' into servitude. As a freedman, with considerable power and prestige in their new culture, it would have been only natural for them to attempt to give something back.

The second reason for the apparent "mania for building religious institutions may be attributed to the Mamluk's desire to eradicate any doubts in the hearts of their subjects that they were converted by Islam against their will."[43] This was very likely one of the greatest deterrents to the Mamluk power base, and something they would have desired to control as much as possible. Even though they headed a "militocracy," to allow their subjects to harbor even the slightest resentment over a "supposed" conversion to Islam would have been to invite cracks into the base of their rule. Rulers and dynasties through the ages have been dethroned for less.

Having defeated a religiously minded kingdom (the Latin Kingdom of the Crusaders) as they consolidated their power, the Mamluks must have been well aware of the power of religious expression. The Crusades, as a Christian effort to relieve the Holy Land from control of the Muslims, quite expectedly had an opposite effect in the long-term perspective. Whereas before the Crusades, Jerusalem had had simple and tenuous ancient connections to the traditions of Islam (after all, the *qibla* had been moved to Mecca, and what was the place where Muhammad ascended to Heaven when compared to the most holy places of Mecca and Medina?) after the Christians successfully had attacked and retaken land from the *Dar al-Islam*, a surge of nationalist[44] fervor swept the Muslim world and urged their subsequent interest in the city and land of Jerusalem. "It was after the successive threats of the Crusades that Muslim interest in al-Quds and Palestine was heightened," one historian notes,

> throughout the Ayyubid and especially the Mamluk period this interest was manifest in the counter-propaganda literature (Fada'il al-Quds) as well as the continuous provision of revenue and facilities for the city by Muslim rulers. As a result, *the city was to experience during the Mamluk period a surge of Muslim architectural and intellectual activities, ensuring for al-Quds a strong Muslim character.* [45]

As was noted previously, the royal coffers were not so interested in endowing and funding Jerusalem building projects from a political standpoint. Yet, because of the intense revival in religious importance, the dynasties of the Mamluks felt a great pull to fund religiously motivated projects.

This "re-Islamizing of city" was a large part of the religious legacy that followed the defeat of the Crusaders by the Mamluks. "Churches were destroyed or transformed into mosques and the two main sanctuaries on the Haram were systematically cleansed of as many

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[42] Drory, "Jerusalem", 208.

[43] Drory, "Jerusalem", 208.

[44] I admit, this is a very anachronistic use of this term, but in the context of the times and the feelings expressed it seems appropriate in some respects.

[45] Lutfi, *Al-Quds,* 111. (emphasis added).

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traces of Christian occupation as possible."[46] The Mamluks took this beyond Saladin's early efforts (which were confined mainly to the Haram al-Sharif), "launching one of the most sustained and impressive campaigns of construction in the city's history."[47] This building campaign was characterized by two defining characteristics: first, its locality, and second, its continuity. The building activity "was almost entirely concentrated on the Haram proper and on its western and northern sides, either alongside the sanctuary itself or along the streets leading to it…and it was a continuous activity."[48]

As religious interest in the city grew, the number of pilgrims to the city also increased. Muslims from all over the empire wanted to visit and feel of its spirit; "the city of sacred buildings, mosques and areas of solitary meditation, was like a magnet attracting mystics, God-fearing people, religious teachers and pious people from all corners of the Muslim world." [49] The Mamluks quickly recognized that "in order to make al-Quds an important Muslim religious and pilgrim centre, accommodations for pilgrims, sojourners, visitors and mystics had to be made available."[50] Thus the Mamluks actively built many hostels (*ribats)*, caravansaries (*khans*), *khanqahs* (a monastery or hostel for sufis or dervishes[51]), *ziwayas* ("the place where a holy man both lived and was buried"[52]) and necessary auxiliary structures, such as *hammamat* (baths) and water sources. These were necessary for the upkeep of the city, "whose raison d'etre was its religious function, and whose economy depended on its ability to play the role of pilgrim city."[53] Indeed, analyzing the records of the Arab historian Mujir al-Din, one historian concludes that within Jerusalem "there were more *ribats* and *zawiyas* than *khanqahs*…[for] though Mujir al-Din mentions only one *khan* (Tankiz), the documents reveal that the city had four more, indicating that there were more accommodation for traders than we know of…[and] the appearance of five monasteries in our sample indicates that the city may have contained many more."[54] This reasserts the fact that the city was primarily a religious destination, housing many more pilgrims, Sufi or otherwise, than merchants.

The connection of the Holy City with eschatological events of Judgment Day also affected the architectural fortunes of the city by greatly increasing the number and prominence of Muslim tombs in the city. This belief seems to have entered Muslim thought from Jewish sources sometime before the advent of the Mamluks (probably around the 10th century) but played a role in the architectural tradition of Jerusalem throughout their rule.[55] This belief, "that the Holy City was to be the site of the Last Day of Judgement (sic)," was to have a curious effect on the population of the city as "those who could arranged for their burial there." One wonders if this also had an influence on the city as a place of refuge and retirement. It would make perfect sense for the city to be seen, not only as a good place to leave behind court life and retire, as was discussed above, but also as a place to live out the rest of one's life in peace and be buried. This would also affect the architecture as "this particular theme permeated the religious significance

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[46] Grabar, Oleg, *Jerusalem: Constructing the Study of Islamic Art (vol IV),* (Hampshire, England; Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2005), 125.
[47] Kroyanker, *Architecture,* 45.
[48] Grabar, *Jerusalem,* 126.
[49] Drory, "Jerusalem", 199.
[50] Lutfi, *Al-Quds,* 114.
[51] Petersen, *Dictionary,* 147.
[52] Petersen, *Dictionary,* 318.
[53] Lutfi, *Al-Quds,* 112.
[54] Lutfi, *Al-Quds,* 116-117.
[55] Lutfi, *Al-Quds,* 112.

of many of the city's architectural structures."[56] For this reasons, there are built throughout the city a number of mausoleums to commemorate the dead who were buried there as well as a large Muslim cemetery on the western side of the Haram al-Sharif. Two of the more prominent are the Turba (mausoleum) of Barka Khan[57] and that of Sitt Tunshuq as already mentioned.

These tombs (as well as many other religious structures) were connected in many respects to charitable institutions or endowments (*waqf*) that could be set up by individuals for a variety of reasons, yet essentially are meant for the caring for others. Religious giving in order to care for the poor and widows has a long history (back to Muhammad himself) within Islam. Thus, endowments were enacted to fulfill certain social needs and functions in accordance with religious wishes and general charity. This legal system of giving was undertaken to both bless those in need as well as secure for the donor a legacy, especially considering that, as far as popular religion is concerned (ignoring the views of formal religion), "charitable acts continue to win merit after a person's death, and prayers for his soul and pious readings done in his name can store up benefit."[58]

The reputation that Jerusalem had gained as a holy city did nothing but expand on the practice within the area.

> If a person was moved to make an endowment to meet a social need, to provide for the poor, to support students in an institution dedicated to Islamic learning, and such like, then there was a whole tradition to persuade him that Jerusalem was an especial place to do so. A good action done there was multiplied many times in its effect and reward, it was said.[59]

This ability to finance an institution that contributed to the good of society and people's souls would serve as a major impetus for the establishment for buildings such as mosques, *madrasa*s (Islamic schools) and other social and religious institutions.

In the sphere of social interactions and inheritance though, the practice became influenced by specific political factors that enhanced its meaning beyond that of giving to the poor and those in need to that of caring for one's dependents and descendents. Laws restricting inheritance by the "slave-soldiers" offspring affected the political underpinnings of the Mamluk rule. The practice of endowing *waqfs* became a way to protect a personal fortune and to provide for family after the death of the father. "Family waqfs (*waqf ahli*) met the needs of sons and future descendents. Tying up one's property in this way was an attempt to avoid the exactions of the authorities…and, generally, to circumvent the provisions of the law which tended to lead to the fragmentation of property."[60] These family waqfs not only allowed them to demonstrate their commitment to Islam and caring for the poor, but "could also be a way of providing for descendants by designating them as inspectors (sing. *nazir*) of the waqf, for which employment a

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[56] Lutfi, *Al-Quds,* 112.

[57] A good example of the tendency of people during the Mamluk rule to build mausoleums in Jerusalem for those who die elsewhere, As "one of the four chiefs, and the most important one, of the Khwarizmian [Tartar] bands who operated in Mesopotamia, Syrian and Palestine in the 1230s and 1240s," (Murphy-O'Connor, *Holy Land,* 47) it is highly unlikely that Barka Khan considered Jerusalem his home. It is an indisputable fact though that his *turba* was built by someone else, probably his son, Badr al-Din Muhammad Bey, who had married into the family of Mamluk Sultan Baybars, sometime between 1246 and 1280. (See Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 110.

[58] Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 65.

[59] Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 65.

[60] Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 65.

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salary was drawn or the surplus income could be assigned to them."[61] High-ranking Mamluk officers and other rulers were enabled to create for themselves and their families a basic trust fund that would continue to function as a source of income for generations.

Because of these laws and practices, the political system once again influenced the architectural buildings and projects within Jerusalem. Because of a conflux of these forces, the religious (in the form of charitable giving, coupled with Jerusalem magnifying the blessings received from these actions) and the political (the necessity of *waqfs* in the passing of family wealth), the number of *waqf* territory and building in Jerusalem was vastly increased during the reign of the Mamluks. These social factors merged with the aforementioned religious factors necessary to re-Islamize the city and create an international pilgrimage center as well as to reinforce the Muslim nature of the city.

This re-Islamization occurred within the religious sphere by the construction, in addition to the tombs/mausoleums and pilgrim amenities previously mentioned, of many *madrasas* (Islamic religious schools), beautifications added to the Haram al-Sharif, and minarets throughout the city. [62] Of the many *madrasas,* the most prominent and important historically is the al-Ashrafiyya *madrasa,* which occupies a position of prominence on the western edge of the Haram al-Sharif portico, with the Bab al-Silsila (Chain Gate) just to its south and the *madrasa* 'Uthmaniyya to its north. This building was completed in 1482 CE by Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Sayf al-Din Abu Nasr Qaytbay al-Mahdudi al-Zahiri (Qaybay for short), from whom the *madrasa* would gain its name, and "when new," was apparently so beautiful that it "had the reputation of being 'the third Jewel of the Haram' (Mujir al-Din)"[63] behind the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock.

This *madrasa* was made especially important for three reasons.[64] First, it held the honor of patronage and even personal visitation by the Sultan Qaytbay (something quite uncommon for provincial *madrasa*s). Second, the *madrasa*'s physical positioning would have lent it great prestige- "its location in a favoured site along the inner façade of the Haram al-Sharif would confer *baraka* (blessing) on it to an unusual degree."[65] Thirdly, Qaytbay had recently also raised *madrasa*s in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, thus giving this *madrasa* the distinction of being linked with the holiest sites in Islam directly. It is also of note that Qaytbay "took the major step of sanctioning the extension of the madrasa façade, which until then had remained flush with the open arcade fronting the inner side of the Haram enclosure, so that it projected well beyond the arcade. It was a brutally simple way of drawing attention to his new foundation."[66] This provided the *madrasa* with a never before seen prominence among the other buildings on the Haram, as well as among all the other Muslim buildings throughout the world. It seems that Qaytbay took very seriously the religio-political mission of re-Islamizing Jerusalem, probably both to glorify Islam, as well as to prove himself true to its tenets. Considering all of Qaytbay's other building projects (in Jerusalem, Cairo, Medina and Mecca), it

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[61] Burgoyne, *Jerusalem*, 65.

[62] It would be well beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to account for all of the examples of the building types and functions that will be discussed here. For a more comprehensive treatment, the reader is referred to Michael Burgoyne's *Mamluk Jerusalem.*

[63] Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome, *The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700 (5ᵗʰ ed.),* (Oxford, UK; Oxford University, 2008), 99.

[64] For more in-depth treatment, see Hillenbrand, *Architecture,* 204-206.

[65] Hillenbrand, *Architecture,* 204.

[66] Hillenbrand, *Architecture,* 204.

can easily be seen that "the Ashrafiya falls into place as one component in a religio-political master-plan expressing imperial Mamluk involvement in the holy places of Islam."[67]

Another addition to the Haram al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary) that seems to be a component of this plan is the Sabil Qaytbay. Sultan Qaytbay was dealing with a particular tumultuous time economically and politically, and as well as consolidating power in those spheres, "his reign was also a time of great revival of the arts, in which architecture was characterized by elegance and harmony rather than size."[68] The *sabil* (Turkish: fountain) is one of the best examples of such; essentially a three-tiered construction consisting of a square room for a base with transition elements forming a middle section and crowned with a pointed dome, the building itself is rather small (especially as it is overshadowed by the Dome of the Rock nearby), but constitutes a "superb example of Mamluk decorative architecture"[69] and is "one of the finest examples of the Mamluks' use of highly ornate stone-engraved calligraphy."[70] It is also a good example of arabesque elements (both inside and out) of both geometric and floral patterns.

The Noble Sanctuary was also further beautified by the Mamluks by renovations to the North and West porticos, reconstructions of the various colonnades surrounding the Dome of the Rock, as well as the addition of the Well of Ibrahim al-Rumi (a small structure over a cistern to provide water to visitors to the Haram) and the Summer Pulpit (a *minbar* set on the west side of the southern colonnade of the Dome of the Rock terrace).

The Mamluks also adopted the tradition of adding minarets to a city to further Islamize it following the expulsion of the Crusaders. In the century and a half after their retaking the city, the Mamluks built anew or refurbished 8 major minarets in the Holy City. The Mamluks in Jerusalem followed the trend of the greater empire placing the new minarets not only on mosques, but also on *madrasa*s (such as the Muazzamiyya minaret), on *khanqah*s (such as the Salahiyya minaret), on the gates leading to the Haram al Sharif (such as Bab al-Silsila or the Bab al-Asbat minarets), and even just somewhat freestanding (such as the Ghawanima or the 'Fakhriyya minarets). [71]

This flowering of minarets in Jerusalem attests strongly to their efforts to create a more intense Muslim flavor within the city and assert the dominance of Islam. Their efforts also were staged to enforce their dominance specifically over the minorities in the city as certain of the minarets (as well as other buildings) were constructed deliberately in the non-Muslim quarters of the city. In addition to adding minarets to the Haram al-Sharif and Muslim Quarter, the Mamluks also "erected two more in the Christian Quarter and a third near the site of the Hurvah Synagogue in the Jewish quarter. All three stood in non-Muslim sections, probably intentionally, to stress the Islamic presence in the city."[72] Some historians see deliberate efforts on the part of the Mamluks to cow their minority populations. By connecting the Mosque of Omar minaret and that of the Khanqah Salahiyya with a direct line reveals that the "mid-point…drawn between the minarets falls approximately at the entrance of the tomb of Christ in the Holy Sepulchre. There can be no doubt that this arrangement was intentional. The Mamluks may have desired to

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[67] Hillenbrand, *Architecture,* 204.

[68] Archnet: Islamic Architecture Community, "Sultan Qaytbay Sabil," Archnet Digital Library, http://archnet.org/library/sites/one-site.jsp?site_id=5267, (accessed April 7, 2009).

[69] Murphy-O'Connor, *Holy Land*, 99.

[70] Kroyanker, *Architecture,* 51.

[71] For further information and in-depth discussion of each of these minarets, their particular styles and architectural peculiarities, the reader is referred to Michael Burgoyne's *Mamluk Jerusalem*, in which each minaret is discussed in detail.

[72] Kroyanker, *Architecture,* 47.

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'nullify' the Holy Sepulchre, which is the only site associated with Christ that the Muslims do not accept."[73] Indeed, it is generally assumed that many of the minarets were placed deliberately and "appear to have been built mainly as symbolic gestures against the non-Muslim population."[74]

Conclusion

The Mamluk Empire left a lasting impression on the architectural history of Jerusalem. This influence was largely a product of their historical context and their socio-political system, which drew its underlying foundation from the "slave-soldier" structure. The historical context of the rise of the Mamluks to power by defeating both the Crusader armies as well as those of the invading Mongol hordes combined with the overall militaristic outlook of the converted Mamluk soldier-class to form a society and political system heavily steeped in military pomp and prowess, but also one that was strongly involved with the Islamic ethos of the "holy warrior," a warrior committed to the propagation and teachings of Islam.

In Jerusalem, this socio-political system which relied heavily on the influence and power of Islam turned the city from the political center of the Latin Kingdom into a relative political backwater, while at the same time building it into an international religious capital. Because of its lack of political might, it was used as a city of exile and refuge. Because of its large amount of religious importance, it was a city of pilgrimage and holiness. Thus, the architecture reflects this lack of political influence by the lack of administrative buildings and low amount of royal involvement in non-religious building projects. But the religious import is shown in the veritable explosion of religiously motivated building funded and built by individuals (including Sultans and Amirs) seeking greater heavenly influence in their lives as well as a religious way of circumventing political realities of the time (non-hereditary inheritance laws for Mamluk officers, political instabilities, etc.)

The Mamluks soldier class also relied on these building projects to solidify their rule in the eyes of their subject. This was to appease the masses by providing social services needed as well as to convince them of the solid conversion of their rulers to Islam. This mass support of building projects also served as a reflection of personal desires to glorify the religion and the God who had rescued them from a life of veritable poverty.

The inherent tradition of Jerusalem as Holy City proved to reinforce this religious preponderance as it combined with the desires of the ruling class to build religious institutions to increase (almost exponentially) the number of religious buildings and *awqaf* (plural of *waqf*) within the bounds of the city. Jerusalem's connection with Judgment Day also boosted the architectural tapestry of the city by the creation of many mausoleums and monuments to the righteous dead.

In short, the socio-militaristic and socio-religious underpinnings are largely responsible for the Mamluk interest in and drive to build, re-Islamize, and glorify Jerusalem. In no way is it factual that the period after the Crusades witnessed Muslim neglect within the Holy City. On the contrary, the period illustrates a heavy religious concern for the city. This fact should be kept in mind in any discussion of narratives and ideologies related to the Muslim rule of the city.

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[73] Murphy-O'Connor, *Holy Land,* 63.
[74] Burgoyne, *Jerusalem,* 89.

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