13. THE IDEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DAR AL-'ADL IN THE MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC ORIENT

Medieval Islamic architecture presents the scholar with a fascinating set of historiographical problems. Some are methodological, others are related to the nature of the sources, and they are shared by various other branches of research in medieval history such as urban history, topography and the history of arts and crafts whose inquiries depend on the same sources. Still others are peculiar to the specific domain of architectural history. These last are the most challenging, for they require particular strategies that take into account the disparities in our knowledge of the two basic components needed to reconstruct the history of any architectural object: the physical remains and the contemporary documents related to them. There are three possible kinds of disparity: in the best cases, buildings that are still standing and in fairly good shape can be studied in light of relevant contemporary documents. In more difficult cases, the structures still exist, but supportive documents, written or otherwise, do not. Most difficult of all is when we have documents describing, or referring to, a structure or a group of structures for which we have no visible trace.

The medieval structure known as the Dar al-'Adl belongs to this last category. This unique Islamic institution, which may be best translated in today's context as 'palace of justice', was initially conceived for the *qada' al-mazalim* service, that is, for the public hearings held once or twice each week and presided over by the ruler himself or his appointed deputies to review and redress grievances submitted by his subjects.[1] The earliest known *dar al-'adl* was built *c.* 1163 by Nur al-Din Mahmud ibn Zanki in his capital Damascus, and the last one was constructed by the Mamluk Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun (1294–1340, with two interruptions) at the Citadel of the Mountain (Qal'at al-Jabal) in Cairo in 1315 (it was rebuilt in 1334). Three more *dur al-'adl* are known to have been constructed between these two dates: one in Aleppo in 1189 by al-Zahir Ghazi, the son of Salah al-Din, and three in or next to the Citadel in Cairo beginning in *c.* 1206 and ending when the last one was erected by al-Nasir Muhammad. After this no more *dur al-'adl* seem to have been built until modern times, when the palace of justice was introduced.

The period when *dur al-'adl* flourished corresponds to the age of Crusader and

Mongol attacks on the central Islamic lands. The geographic area in which they appeared is also well defined. The three cities in which they were built had been capitals of separate realms from the late eleventh to the mid twelfth century, but by 1171, they had all fallen under the control of Nur al-Din, the first unifier of the Islamic front against the Crusaders. After Nur al-Din's death, the three cities were taken over by Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (1174–1193), Nur al-Din's general, his deputy in Egypt and his nemesis in his last years, and were integrated into his empire. They became loosely united and hotly contested Ayyubid capitals after Salah al-Din's death, and, later, centres of Mamluk government, with Cairo leading as the sultan's seat. From Nur al-Din's time onwards, the three cities had been joined by a highly popular common cause: fighting the Crusaders. The Zankids, Ayyubids and early Mamluks were intensely engaged in the counter-Crusades, and the latter also repelled the Mongol forays into Bilad al-Sham.

No trace of any of the five palaces of justice remains today. Their existence is known to us only from textual references, except for the last one, torn down in 1825, for which we have several plans, façades and a few views drawn by European visitors to Cairo in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nor can archaeology help in investigating the history of *dur al-'adl*, for the areas the buildings stood in have been built over several times. The written sources, do, however, provide a substitute for this lack of material remains, because for Egypt and Syria, the medieval period is unusually rich in historical writing. Annals, biographical compendia, manuals for the chancery, geographical treatises (*masalik*) and topographical tracts (*khitat*) all exist in abundance for the period between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries.[2] The problem is that, numerous as they are, medieval Islamic sources rarely deal directly with architec-

ture or urban projects. Scattered in the texts, however, are little details about dates of buildings, locations, patrons, the reasons for building, the functions and ceremonies that took place in the structures once they were built and passing remarks about specific spaces or features inside them. By collating and analysing these clues, or indices, one can reconstruct a historical account of the *dur al-'adl* and propose an explanation for both their emergence and their disappearance.

The *dar al-'adl* was not simply a development of the *qada' al-mazalim* institution. It was an original product of an extraordinary time: the period of the counter-Crusade and the ideological revival that went with it, as ideal Islamic qualities were promulgated by both the ruling and religious classes and demanded by the people. The *dar al-'adl* visually represented one of these qualities, justice, and provided the rulers with a forum to publicly claim their adherence to proper Islamic codes. That religious ardour, ignited by external threats and internal schisms, had withered away by the middle of the fourteenth century, after the Crusader and Mongol offensives had been thwarted and Egypt and Bilad al-Sham had been securely united under the rule of the Mamluks. The *dar al-'adl*, along with other innovations of the period, such as the *fada'il* of the Holy Land and jihad literature, lost its *raison d'être* and vanished altogether when the circumstances that prompted its development had passed.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE *QADA' AL-MAZALIM*

The *qada' al-mazalim* or *al-nazar fi-l-mazalim*, which literally means 'to consider or to look into acts of injustice', is an Islamic judicial institution with a complex history. It has been identified as the organisation that 'brings the litigants to an agreement by fear and prevents the contestants from rebuffing

judgment by awe. It is a position that combines the authority of the ruler and the impartiality of the judge.'[3] This definition implies that the supervisor of the *mazalim* must be a person who has greater executive power than a judge: he is able also to enforce his decisions. Most Islamic sources attribute the conception of the *qada' al-mazalim* to some revered early caliphs, such as 'Ali, Mu'awiya, 'Abd al-Malik and 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz, or even to Sasanian, pre-Islamic precedents.[4] But some modern scholars have questioned whether the formal division between simple general *qada'* and the *qada' al-mazalim* appeared so early. They argue that during both the Rashidi and Umayyad periods, there was no clear-cut separation between the political and judicial authorities. The caliphs and their provincial governors (*wulat*) were also judges. They could exercise their judiciary authority either directly in public or delegate it to an appointed *qadi*.[5] It was not until the consolidation of the Islamic legal corpus that became known as the *shari'a* in the early Abbasid period (the second half of the eighth century), that a practical need for religiously qualified judges had arisen. Gradually thereafter, the caliphs had to cede their judicial authority to the *qadis*. But because they considered themselves to be the leaders of all Muslims and the successors (*khulafa'*) of the Prophet Muhammad, the Abbasids upheld the claim to be the protectors of the *shari'a* and the ultimate administrators of justice.[6]

This political motive helps to explain why the *qada' al-mazalim* was detached from the nascent judicial system and retained under the caliph's jurisdiction: it was seen as one of the symbols of the Abbasid right to rule.[7] The third and fourth Abbasid caliphs, al-Mahdi (775–785) and al-Hadi (785–786), both supervised *mazalim* sessions in person. They also introduced the office of *sahib al-mazalim*, which was occupied either by a high-ranking official or a special *qadi* responsible for the regular sessions of *maza-*

lim.[8] The next step was the institutionalisation of *qada' al-mazalim*, proposed by Abu Yusuf (d. 798) in his book *al-Khiraj*, which he wrote for the fifth Abbasid caliph, Harun al-Rashid (786–808).[9] Abu Yusuf, who was the *qadi al-qudat* (chief judge) of al-Rashid, recommended that the caliph regularly preside over *mazalim* sessions, obviously not to undermine his own position, but because he saw the legitimising potential of supervising *mazalim* sessions and advised his caliph accordingly. That political function was not lost on the ambitious usurpers of Abbasid authority, whether they were in the provinces or in the capital, for they almost always took over the *qada' al-mazalim* as part of their acquired power. Thus, Ibn Tulun (868–884), the first governor of Egypt to break away from Baghdad successfully and to expand his domain into Syria, was also the first to hold *mazalim* sessions regularly.[10] The Shi'ite Buyids, who overpowered the caliphate and its Iranian provinces, including Baghdad between 945 and 1055, and reduced the Abbasid caliphs to figureheads, took control of the *qada' al-mazalim* and passed it on to the Shi'ite *sharif*s, whom they considered to be the imams.[11]

In the middle of the eleventh century, the *qada' al-mazalim* became for the first time an integral part of a comprehensive political theory of Islamic rule. In his *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya*, Abu al-Hasan al-Mawardi (974–1058), a legist and a high officer in the Abbasid court, developed a full discussion of *mazalim* jurisdiction and its relationship to *qada'*, and decreed it to be one of the fundamental duties of Muslim rulers or their appointed deputies.[12] It has been suggested that Mawardi's theoretical formulations had direct political relevance.[13] Mawardi's career fell between two phases in the turbulent history of the Abbasids, the Buyid dominance and the Seljuq sultanate. He served two successive caliphs, al-Qadir (911–1031) and al-Qa'im (1031–75), who were trying in the ensuing hiatus to regain some of the caliphate's political

authority, and was directly involved in that attempt. Seen in this context, *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* represents a model structure for a true Islamic government and reflects the high hopes of the period that such a goal was finally at hand. But the Abbasid resurgence project did not fully succeed. The Seljuqs did wrest Iraq from the Buyids and restored the caliphate and Sunnism to religious supremacy, but they obliged the caliphs to delegate their political power (*sultan*) to them.

Nizam al-Mulk al-Tusi (r. 1063–1092), the great vizier of the Seljuq sultans Alp Arslan (1063–1072) and Malikshah (1072–1092) who ingeniously planned their administration, realised the imperative political function of *mazalim* sessions and stressed the importance of regularly convening them in his treatise on politics, *Siyasat-Namah*.[14] Some of the Seljuq sultans must have heeded Nizam al-Mulk's advice, for they are reported to have held *mazalim* sessions, with their viziers and *qadi*s present, while others delegated the responsibility to their viziers. In the late Abbasid period, when the caliphate managed for a short while to recoup some of its lost political authority with the weakening of the Seljuq overlords, individual caliphs, such as al-Muqtafi (1136–1160) and al-Nasir (1180–1225), resumed the duty of selecting *mazalim* supervisors, and one, al-Mustanjid (1160–70), is even reported to have presided over *mazalim* sessions personally.[15] The practice was maintained, at least informally, by many rulers of other Islamic states, especially of the Zankid, Ayyubid and Artuqid dynasties, whose dominions were carved out of the vast Seljuq empire and who inherited many of its political and bureaucratic structures. Sitting for two days a week to look into acts of injustice seems to have become part of the ruler's routine. Sessions were held in different places depending on ruler and locale, but usually took place in a major hall in the palace of government.[16]

THE DAR AL-'ADL OF DAMASCUS

In the late twelfth century, Nur al-Din Mahmud ibn Zanki (1146–1174) introduced an innovation that had no precedent in Islamic history. He built a special palace for *mazalim* sessions in Damascus, and named it the *dar al-'adl* or *dar kashf al-mazalim* (house of justice or of *mazalim*'s inquest).[17] We know very little about this structure for it is rarely mentioned in the sources and it entirely disappeared around the middle of the seventeenth century.[18] This led a recent study to doubt its very existence on the basis of uncertainties regarding its location, history, and contradictory reports on exactly where Nur al-Din held his *mazalim* sessions.[19] But all the chroniclers who report the building of the Dar al-'Adl, including the great historian of Damascus Ibn 'Asakir (1105–1176) who was Nur al-Din's contemporary, are clearly speaking about a specific structure.[20] They do not record the date of its construction, however. Some scholars have suggested that it must have been built shortly after Nur al-Din took the city in 1154, but the wording of the sources does not support this suggestion.[21] Dar al-'Adl was certainly built after 1160, possibly around 1163 when the prince finally settled on Damascus as his capital after a period of domestic political troubles in which he constantly moved between Damascus and Aleppo, his old seat.[22]

Nur al-Din sat in his Dar al-'Adl to review *mazalim* at least twice a week. Salah al-Din also held *mazalim* sessions there when he was in Damascus, albeit intermittently.[23] Later Ayyubids apparently maintained this custom, for there are at least two references to princes holding sessions in the Dar al-'Adl, one in 1195, the other in 1198.[24] Early Mamluk sultans, who based their legitimacy on their claim of loyalty to the Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub (1240–1249), all headed *mazalim* sessions in the Dar al-'Adl whenever they were in Damascus.[25] Otherwise, the vicegerent

(*na'ib*) of the city was the one who regularly presided over *mazalim* sessions there as part of his normal duties.[26]

In the mid-Mamluk period, however, textual evidence becomes more complicated because the contemporary sources start using two names, Dar al-'Adl and Dar al-Sa'ada, interchangeably to designate what appears to be the same complex, without specifying how or when they merged.[27] The Dar al-Sa'ada (the Palace of Felicity) was the viceregal palace in Damascus throughout the Mamluk period. It was initially called the Dar Farrukhshah, after a nephew of Salah al-Din's who was vicegerent (*na'ib*) in Damascus until his death in 1182. It was ostensibly maintained as the private residence of his son al-Amjad Bahramshah until 1230.[28] Its transformation from private property to the *na'ib*'s official residence in Damascus and its connection with the Dar al-'Adl are not very clear.[29] After Bahramshah's death, the palace inexplicably passed to his cousin al-Ashraf Musa, the king of Damascus (1229–1237), who deeded it to his only daughter Malaka Khatun upon his death in 1237.[30] The sources are silent about the palace's legal status thereafter, but it presumably passed to the Mamluk state treasury at some point, perhaps in 1287, when Malaka Khatun was striped of some of her possessions, though the palace had already been the official viceregal residence for twenty years before that date.[31]

The Dar al-Sa'ada appears to have preserved its official aura from the days when it was the residence of Salah al-Din's *na'ib* Farrukhshah, even when it was still privately owned in the late Ayybid period. The Ayyubid kings of the city normally lived in the palaces of the citadel but twice at least they moved to Dar al-Sa'ada as a temporary residence whenever the sultan, whose capital was usually in Cairo, was in town.[32] This notion of hierarchy in domicile whereby the citadel's palaces were reserved for the sultan and the Dar al-Sa'ada for the *malik* (king)

was apparently institutionalised in the early Mamluk period, probably as early as the reign of Qutuz (1259–1260).[33] The sultan and his retinue were housed at the citadel whenever they came from Cairo, until al-Zahir Baybars constructed a royal palace in 1269, the Qasr al-Ablaq (the Striped Palace), to the west of the city along the river Barada, which was reserved for the sultan's visits.[34] The Dar al-Sa'ada was designated as the viceregal palace, where the *na'ib* resided and conducted business, while the citadel became the base of a different official, *na'ib al-qal'a*, who reported directly to the sultan in Cairo. Though not recorded in any source, the Dar al-'Adl must have been incorporated with the Dar al-Sa'ada during that time, for its function complemented those under the jurisdiction of the city's *na'ib*. After the merger, Dar al-'Adl seems to have been used for a wide range of services, such as the ceremony of pledging allegiance (*bay'a*) to the sultan, the reception of foreign envoys and the appointment of officials and *qadi*s, although the sitting for *mazalim* sessions remained predominant among all these uses.[35]

The site of the Dar al-'Adl is not mentioned in any of the sources, but the Dar al-Sa'ada's location is well established.[36] The entire governmental complex, including the Dar al-'Adl, occupied a block south of the citadel, across the street from its southern postern, and slightly to the east of the city's Bab al-Jinan (Gate of Gardens), which later became known as the Bab al-Nasr (Gate of Victory), and still later, in the Mamluk period, as the Bab Dar al-Sa'ada (fig. 13.1).[37] The sources supply little information about the architecture of Dar al-'Adl as an independent unit inside the *na'ib*'s complex.[38] We know only that it was a grand *qa'a* that had an iwan, in the centre of which sat the *na'ib* when the court sessions were convened; next to him was an empty seat covered with yellow silk (the official colour of the Mamluk sultanate) representing the sultan.[39] These references allow us to suggest that the Dar
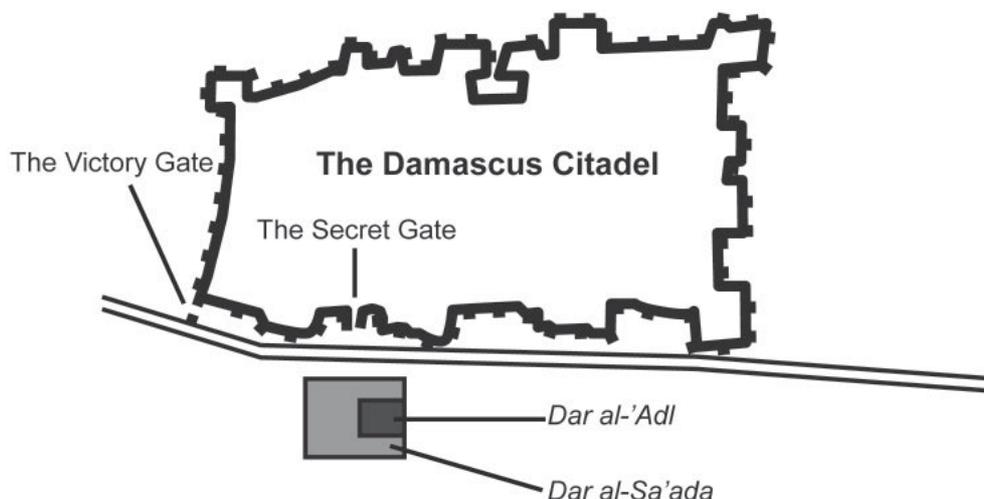
FIG. 13.1. The Location of the Dar al-'Adl in Damascus.

al-'Adl might have been similar to most private and princely reception halls of the period, for they had *qa'a* plans with one, two, three or even four iwan*s* flanking a central space.[40] The form of the iwan and the appearance of the *qa'a* are impossible to determine since the two words were used in generically in medieval times to designate any type of arched opening and hall respectively. The Dar al-'Adl was destroyed by fire and rebuilt a few times along with the rest of the Dar al-Sa'ada, until the latter was moved to another place, *extra-muros*, at the end of the sixteenth century. By that time the term *dar al-'adl* ceased to be used by chroniclers to refer to any part of the *na'ib*'s palace.

The Dar al-'Adl of Aleppo

Although Aleppo had been Nur al-Din's capital before Damascus, it appears that neither he nor Salah al-Din after him established any palace for justice there.[41] Aleppo's Dar al-'Adl, the second such palace after that of Damascus, was not started until 1189. It was built by the Ayyubid king al-Zahir Ghazi (1186–1216), the son of Salah al-Din, who ruled the city during his father's reign.[42] Located south of the citadel, which was being refurbished at the same time, the Dar al-'Adl was a separate structure integrated within what may be considered the extension of the citadel's royal complex outside the walls and towards the city. In what seems to have been a planned act, Ghazi enclosed the Dar al-'Adl and the surrounding area, which contained the *maydan* (training field) built earlier by Nur al-Din for equestrian exercises, between the old walls of the city and new ones he had added especially for that purpose further to the east. The character of exclusivity of this new royal enclosure was conveyed through the control of its access and the establishment of a private passage leading to it from the royal palaces in the citadel (fig. 13.2). At the citadel end of this passage, Ghazi constructed a new gate, called the Bab al-Jabal (the Gate of the Mountain), while the gate at the other end was appropriately called the Bab Dar al-'Adl. This passage was reserved only for the king when he rode out of the citadel to the Dar al-'Adl or the city beyond. The petitioners coming from the city used another gate called the Bab al-Saghir (Little Gate) to gain access to the
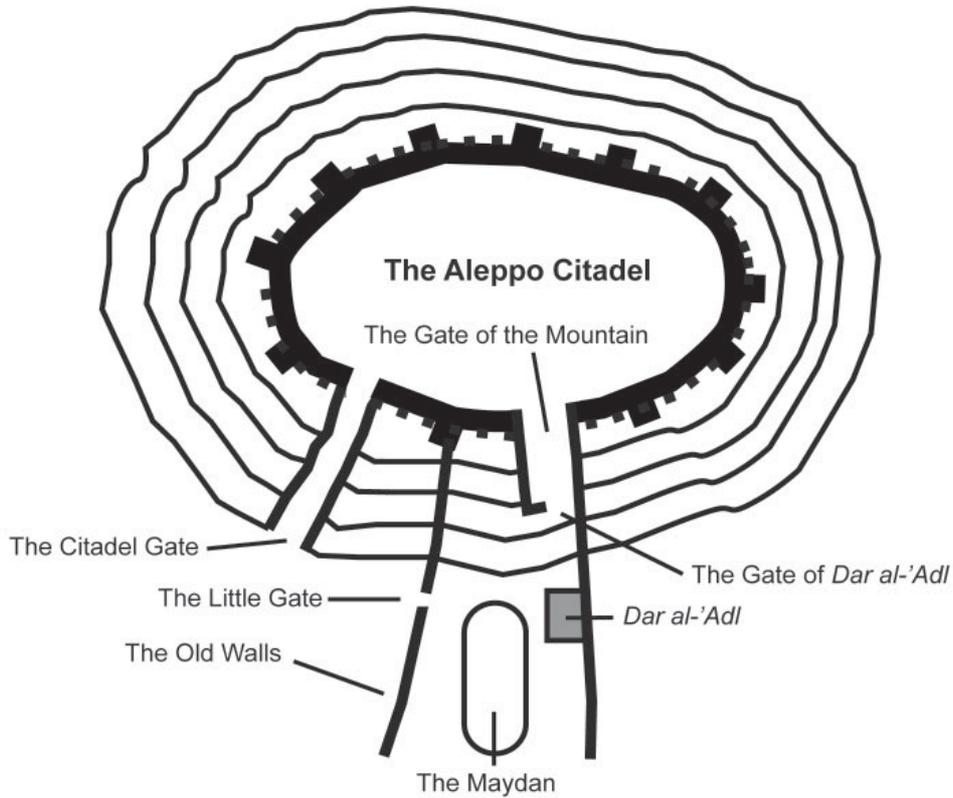
FIG. 13.2. The Location of the Dar al-'Adl in Aleppo.

enclosure of the palace. Construction of all the gates and fortifications around the Dar al-'Adl ended in 1214.[43]

It is clear that the construction of the Dar al-'Adl was initiated by Ghazi as a major step in a general plan of organisation devised to renovate the Citadel of Aleppo and to redefine its relationship to the city. The king, his officials and his army resided in the citadel or around it, while the population was restricted to the city extending to the west at the foot of the hill. The Dar al-'Adl represented the transitional zone between the city and the citadel where the ruler and the ruled meet, and it visually and spatially underlined the pivotal role of the king in the state administration. This urban programme should be seen in the larger context of al-Zahir Ghazi's reign: his involvement in the insidious world of Ayyubid politics, his constant struggle to maintain his independence and to consolidate his hold on his territories, and his policy of administrative centralisation.[44]

From the beginning, Ghazi used his Dar al-'Adl for many court ceremonials other than *mazalim* sessions; these included the reception of foreign envoys and learned debates among scholars presided over by the king. The day after his death, 200 slaves he had freed as an act of devotion were assembled in Dar al-'Adl before they were to be released.[45] This report indicates that the structure also played a role as a way station between the citadel and the city. The official mourning services after Ghazi's death and the assembly that gathered to discuss the arrangement for the transition of power to his son took place in the Dar al-'Adl as well.[46] Ghazi's two successors, al-'Aziz Muhammad (1216–1237) and al-Nasir Yusuf (1237–1260), are reported to have main-

tained the custom of holding *mazalim* sessions in the Dar al-'Adl twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays.[47] We know next to nothing about the appearance of the palace. Ibn Wasil (d. 1298) states in a passing reference that the caliph's envoy to Ghazi was accommodated in the iwan of the Dar al-'Adl.[48]

As in Damascus, the Dar al-'Adl in Aleppo was built next to the citadel, which constituted the government centre and the royal residence in both cities. Like the Dar al-'Adl of Damascus, the Dar al-'Adl of Aleppo was enlarged in the Mamluk period to include the residence of the *na'ib* of Aleppo and ultimately acquired the name Dar al-Sa'ada as well.[49] It was used for various court ceremonials, among which the biweekly *mazalim* ceremony remained prominent.[50] However, unlike Damascus, where the spatial link between the citadel and the palace of justice was ambivalent, the relationship of the Aleppine Dar al-'Adl with the royal complex was made more pronounced by enclosing it between two parallel city walls and joining it to the citadel by a direct passage. This line of development reached its logical conclusion in Cairo. After two trials, which applied similar solutions to the one used in Aleppo, the last Mamluk Dar al-'Adl was moved into the southern enclosure of the citadel, which was simultaneously rearranged and partitioned to accommodate both private and public functions of the sultan.

Dar al-'Adl al-Kamiliyya

Of the three major capitals of the Ayyubid realm, Cairo, Damascus and Aleppo, Cairo was the last one to have its own Dar al-'Adl. We have no straightforward reference to the building of a Dar al-'Adl in Cairo prior to the coming of the Mamluks in 1250, but a few remarks indirectly indicate that one existed in Ayyubid times. When two Mamluk sources report the disobedience of

an amir in 1310 who barricaded himself in his residence, they refer to that structure as the Dar al-'Adl al-Kamiliyya, and place it inside the citadel.[51] This attribution to the Ayyubid al-Kamil (1200–1238) is very plausible, for we know that he was the one responsible for the completion of the citadel and its endowment with palatial and administrative structures.[52] The Dar al-'Adl seems to have been located in the narrow end of the northern enclosure where today it meets the southern enclosure not very far from the Qulla Gate which separated the two enclosures (fig. 13.3). It probably belonged to the first stage in the construction of the citadel's administrative section since we know that, in the Mamluk period, this area contained many other administrative buildings such as the Dar al-Niyaba (viceregal palace) and the Qa'at al-Sahib (hall of the vizier). It is impossible, however, to fix a date for the construction of any of al-Kamil's structures since the sources speak of them only in passing without even providing their names.

There is no mention of the Dar al-'Adl al-Kamiliyya having been used as a palace of justice during al-Kamil's time, although the name implies that it was, but during the reign of al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub (1240–1249), al-Kamil's second son, the structure appears to have been used as it was intended. This is deduced from a vague account stating that in 1239, Sultan al-Salih delegated the authority to hold the sessions of *mazalim* in an unidentified *dar al-adl* to a triad of military men (*jund*). Two of them are further identified: the first was al-Sharif Shams al-Din, the judge of the army (*qadi al-'askar*), and the second, named *al-faqih* 'Abbas, was the preacher (*khatib*) of the citadel's mosque.[53] Both must have resided in the citadel in order to attend to their work, which implies that the *dar al-adl* they sat in may have been that of al-Kamil. The structure was apparently neglected after al-Salih's death, for the sessions of *mazalim* were held in the madrasa*s* he had built in Fatimid al-Qahira (1239–45) rather than at

Northern Enclosure

Dar al-'Adl of al-Kamil

The Cairo Citadel

The Gate of the Citadel

The Mosque

The Gate of the Sultan

The Iwan

Southern Enclosure

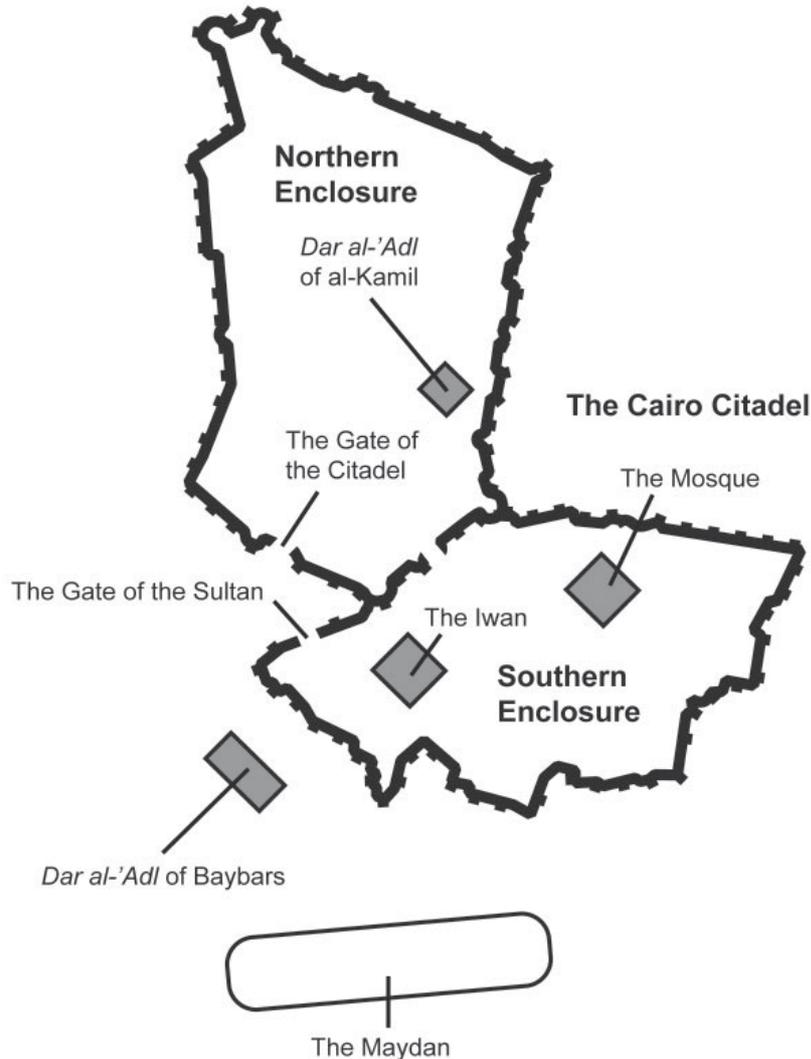*Dar al-'Adl* of Baybars

The Maydan

FIG. 13.3. The Location of the Three Dur al-'Adl in Cairo.

the citadel during the reign of the first Mamluk Sultan al-Mu'izz Aybak (1250–1257). They were presided over by the amir Aydakin al-Bundaqdari, Aybak's vicegerent and the master of the future sultan al-Zahir Baybars, who was assisted by a number of *qadis* and administrators.[54] The Dar al-'Adl al-Kamiliyya was turned into a residence after the end of the Ayyubid period, for the sources we have speak of it as the living quarters of an amir who had official duties that required his permanent presence at the citadel.[55]

DAR AL-'ADL AL-ZAHIRIYYA

The second Cairene Dar al-'Adl was the one built or renovated by the Mamluk sultan al-Zahir Baybars. His two biographers, Ibn Shaddad and Ibn 'Abd al-Zahir, give inadequate reports about this structure, although they elaborate on his ardour to uphold the principle of justice and to attend *mazalim* sessions. Ibn Shaddad speaks only of a fenced, square *mastaba* (platform) installed in the middle of the court in front of the citadel gate, covered by a canopy to protect it

from the sun and the rain and designated for the public sittings of the vicegerent and the vizier. In the same list of structures, he mentions a *dar al-'adl* under the citadel, without attributing it to Baybars.[56] Ibn 'Abd al-Zahir reports in 1262 that Baybars ordered the renovation and remodelling of a building under the citadel and the establishment of the *dar al-'adl* in it, suggesting that the structure existed prior to Baybars.[57] Casanova, who wrote a history of the Citadel of Cairo, demonstrated that the structure was a mausoleum (*turba*) of a Fatimid family of princes, the Banu al-Muhtar, but mistakenly assigned its refurbishing and transformation into the Dar al-'Adl to al-Kamil without any historical basis.[58] Baybars is the patron who restored that *turba*, which was probably in disrepair like many other Fatimid remains, put it to a new use as the Dar al-'Adl and added the canopied mastaba in front of it for less formal ceremonies.[59] He is credited in the sources with sitting in the Dar al-'Adl on Mondays and Thursdays, both to inspect *mazalim* petitions and to review the Mamluk army.[60] After Baybars' death, his structure became known as the *dar al-'adl al-qadima* (the old), and was occasionally used for official events presided over by high-ranking administrators.[61] It was eventually converted into the Tablakhana (Drummery, the place where the military band plays at specific hours as a sign of royalty) in 1322 during the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad.[62]

The site of Baybars' Dar al-'Adl is difficult to ascertain today, after the major changes in the topography of the area during the reign of Muhammad 'Ali (1805–1848), when the new carriage route was completed in 1825. Al-Nasir's Tablakhana, or Baybars' Dar al-'Adl, was reportedly located between the Bab al-Silsila (Gate of the Chain) and the Mudarraj Gate.[63] The Gate of the Chain (probably the present Katkhuda Gate) was the main royal entrance to the citadel from the *maydan*. The Mudarraj Gate, also named the Citadel Gate, was the public

entrance to the citadel and stood at the end of a stepped path that ascended from a spot near the Gate of the Chain to an elevation 40ft above the *maydan*. Baybars' Dar al-'Adl was somewhere along this path of nearly 600ft, probably in a spot high enough to permit the sultan seated in the royal stand to review the parades that took place in the *maydan*. A brief reference in the waqf of the *zawiya* of Hasan al-Rumi, built in 1522, further establishes the location of al-Nasir's Tablakhana, or Baybars' Dar al-'Adl. The waqf, dated to 1535, states that the Tablakhana was above the *zawiya*, which still stands today on the eastern side of the road leading to the original Mudarraj Gate.[64] The waqf also specifies that the *zawiya* is situated between the Mudarraj Gate and the Chain Gate, exactly the site given in al-Maqrizi's *Khitat* as that of al-Nasir's Tablakhana. Baybars' Dar al-'Adl, then, might have stood where Muhammad 'Ali's Dar al-Mahfuzat (Archives Administration) stands today.

THE IWAN OF THE CITADEL

By 1280, when Qalawun (1280–1290) acceded to the throne, Baybars' Dar al-'Adl had ceased to be the setting for *mazalim* sessions. It may have been replaced by the iwan, which was the principal royal audience hall in the citadel, but the date of the transfer is not known. The iwan is first mentioned in the sources at the time of Baybars' crowning ceremony in 1259.[65] Chroniclers do not credit anyone with its building, but its most probable patron is al-Kamil, as he is the only sultan who undertook major works at the citadel. Baybars, however, built a domed hall as a replacement of, or addition to, the earlier iwan.[66] In 1284, Qalawun ordered the demolition of Baybars' hall to build a new one, named the Iwan al-Mansuri (of Qalawun).[67] Al-Ashraf Khalil (1290–1294) rebuilt, or perhaps only refurbished, the iwan of his father as the sources

are very imprecise about the kind of work he ordered at the citadel.[68] This last structure was in turn destroyed by Khalil's brother and successor, al-Nasir Muhammad, to be replaced by his famous hall, the Iwan al-Kabir al-Nasiri (the Great Iwan of al-Nasir). The Great Iwan is better known to us. We have its plan, elevations and sections as documented by the savants of the French Expedition (1798–1801). We also have its location on the map of the *Description de l'Egypte*, where it is labeled as *le divan de Joseph*.[69] From that map we can note that the Great Iwan stood where the court extending to the north-east of the Mosque of Muhammad 'Ali towards the Police Museum is located today (fig. 13.4).

The successive building and rebuilding of the main audience hall in the citadel in such a short period could be explained by the zeal of the sultans to be the patrons of the most visible, and most publicly accessible, structure in the citadel. We know that the hall of Baybars was not intended as a Dar al-'Adl, since there was another one outside the citadel. We know also that the Great Iwan of al-Nasir Muhammad was the stage of *mazalim* sessions twice a week during his reign. The sources are silent as to whether Qalawun or his son Khalil ever used their halls as settings for *dar al-'adl*, although we encounter a few references to the practice as being sporadically observed during their reigns.[70] In the case of Qalawun, we can assume that he never personally presided in this office, for the sources tell us that his Arabic was very poor, which would have prevented him from communicating with his subjects on *dar al-'adl* days.[71] He, on the other hand, sat in his

FIG. 13.4. Location of the Divan de Joseph on the Map of the *Description de l'Égypte*.

iwan to review troops and distribute warrants of *iqta'* to amirs and soldiers, or to receive foreign dignitaries and ambassadors on official occasions.

AL-IWAN AL-KABIR AL-NASIRI

Al-Nasir Muhammad came to the throne as a boy of eight in 1294. His long reign was interrupted by two periods of usurpation (1295–1299, and 1309–1310), and it was not until 1310 that he finally became the supreme ruler of the Mamluk sultanate. In 1311, less than a year after he assumed the rule for the third time, al-Nasir demolished the iwan of his brother Khalil and built a new one.[72] At the same time, he decided to regularly preside over *mazalim* sessions in the new iwan, which became known as the Dar al-'Adl: a fundamental shift in policy from the one established under Qalawun, Khalil and even al-Nasir himself in his first two reigns when *mazalim* supervision was the duty of the vicegerent.[73] He also elevated the event to a formal ceremony where all the important amirs of the realm and the members of the sultan's inner circle had to be present and seated around him in a set order.

These ceremonial innovations had their immediate roots in the political circumstances of the time.[74] They tallied with the implementation of changes in the structure of the Mamluk hierarchy and the consolidation of the sultan's role at its apex as if to engender them and give them their physical manifestations. When al-Nasir Muhammad returned to the throne in 1310, he orchestrated drastic shifts of power to ensure his throne. He pitted the strong amirs against each other, replaced most of them with his own Mamluks and systematically weakened the authority of many top-ranking officers by assuming some of their duties himself. Consequently, he not only controlled the internal affairs of the state, he effectively became the state. As such,

al-Nasir surpassed all his predecessors in Mamluk Egypt, who were extreme autocratic rulers themselves. At the beginning of his reign, the sultan was also interested in strengthening the support he had enjoyed among the common people (*al-harafish* or *al-'amma*) of Cairo and Damascus in his struggle to maintain his throne.[75] Appearing as a ruler concerned with the fair application of justice helped al-Nasir in maintaining this positive popular sentiment towards him. It is from within these two sets of considerations, dominating the Mamluk hierarchy and pleasing the populace, that rebuilding the iwan and holding *mazalim* sessions in it should be seen.[76]

The Great Iwan of al-Nasir Muhammad was a monumental stone structure made to impress and to inspire awe. The illustrations of the *Description* show it to have been open with arcades on three sides: the north-east, which formed its main façade, the southeast and the north-west. The southwestern side was built up with a thick wall pierced with five doors which led to the sultan's private quarters (*al-dur al-sultaniyya*) through the *dihliz al-'ubur*, or the passageway, behind the iwan.[77] The plan of the iwan consisted of a wide, central aisle flanked by two lateral ones formed by rows of red granite columns which were taken from ancient Egyptian temples. The central aisle was surmounted by a huge wooden dome covered on the outside with green tiles. That dome – which had already collapsed when the French drawings were made – had been the most striking feature of the iwan.[78] A broad inscription band, with characters made of large gilded-wood units, ran around the perimeter of the inner square under the dome. Its text seems to have consisted of the full titulature of al-Nasir Muhammad and probably the construction date.[79]

We have a detailed account of the *dar al-'adl* ceremony during the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad written by Ibn Fadl-Allah al-'Umari (1301–1349), who was a high administrator at the court.[80] On *dar al-'adl*

days, usually Mondays and Thursdays except in Ramadan, al-Nasir would come out of his inner palaces through the vestibule behind the iwan and enter through the central door with the *muqarnas* conch.[81] He would sit on a wooden chair covered with a silk cloth (*dast*) next to his marble throne, in the centre of the iwan's back wall (fig. 13.5). The marble throne, which resembled the *minbar* of a mosque, was only used on official occasions when foreign envoys were received.[82] The sultan's place lay at the apex of a concentric circle of dignitaries surrounding him in a strict hierarchical order. Nearest to him were those officials directly involved in the proceedings. To the right were the four supreme judges (*qudat al-qudat*) of the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence in the order of their importance: the Shafi'ite judge closest to the sultan, followed by the Hanafite, the Malikite and the Hanbalite. Next to the Hanbalite judge came the treasury controller (*wakil bayt al-mal*), then the market inspector (*muhtasib*) of Cairo. To the left of the sultan sat his secretary (*katib al-sirr*), who between 1329 and 1332 was Ibn Fadl-Allah al-'Umari himself,[83] followed by the army supervisor (*nazir al-jaysh*). The circle would be completed by a group known as the clerks of the chair (*kuttab al-dast*), after the royal *dast*, who sat facing the sultan. Their job was to record the minutes of the sessions. These functionaries were probably seated under the dome, with the sultan close to the centre, some distance from the back wall, as both court protocol and the sultan's safety required sufficient space behind him for two rows of guards to his right and left, the *silahdariyya*, *jamadariyya* and the *khassakiyya* Mamluks (fig. 13.6).

The great amirs of hundred, the highest rank in the Mamluk system, were seated in a row opposite each other on either side of the sultan and some fifteen cubits (approximately 15ft) from him. They were called amirs of the council (*umara' al-mashura*), and they functioned as the sultan's official advisers. There were twenty-four of

them in al-Nasir Muhammad's army, so they probably sat twelve on each side (fig. 13.7). The less important amirs of forty and other civil servants would be placed further away from these high-ranking amirs, completing the rows towards the entrance to the iwan, but these amirs and administrators had to remain standing. Behind this first row stood several other rows of amirs of ten and of Mamluks. Attendants and clerks of the chancery formed the outermost circle around the three open sides of the iwan. The rows of important amirs probably reached as far as the first row of columns which supported the dome; the lesser amirs and Mamluks stood in the space between the inner and outer rows of columns. The attendants stood in the wide space in the front of the iwan and escorted the petitioners there to face the assembly (fig. 13.8).

The order of seating in *dar al-'adl* sessions matches almost exactly the plan of the Great Iwan (fig. 13.9). Whether this means that the *dar al-'adl*'s ceremony was designed to follow the logic of the iwan's spatial arrangement, or that al-Nasir Muhammad rebuilt the iwan to accommodate the ceremonial he had introduced we do not know. But the latter alternative is the more plausible one since the plan of the iwan was radically different from the common hall type in Islamic Egypt, generally known as a *qa'a*.[84] It may have been inspired by its four direct predecessors at the Citadel in Cairo, but this is impossible to ascertain for we have no idea what they looked like. Yet analysis of the iwan's architecture suggests that, although it appears to be a synthesis of a variety of elements taken from existing and familiar structures, its plan bore a manifest resemblance to a specific type, the basilica, with its central nave and two arcaded side aisles. In the Great Iwan, however, the typical basilical plan is modified by opening the sides to provide an unobstructed view to the outside and to suggest the accessibility of the sultan sitting within, who could be seen from all sides when he sat
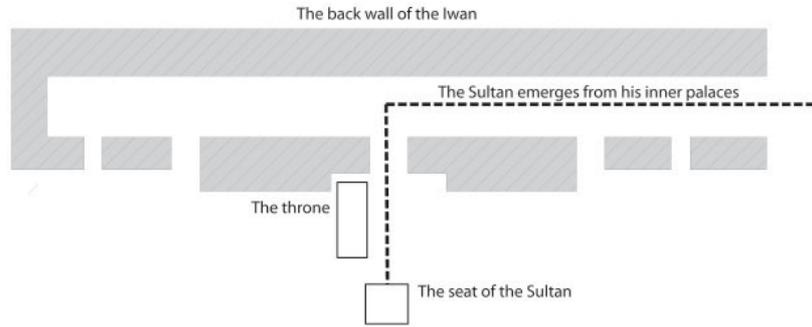
The back wall of the Iwan

The Sultan emerges from his inner palaces

The throne

The seat of the Sultan

FIG. 13.5. Diagram of the Sultan Entry into the Great Iwan on the Dar al-'Adl Days.

The Sultan

The *Shafi'i* Judge

The *Hanafi* Judge

The *Maliki* Judge

The *Hanbali* Judge

The Treasuey Controller

The Market-Inspector

The Secretary of the Sultan

The Army Supervisor

Clerks of the Bench
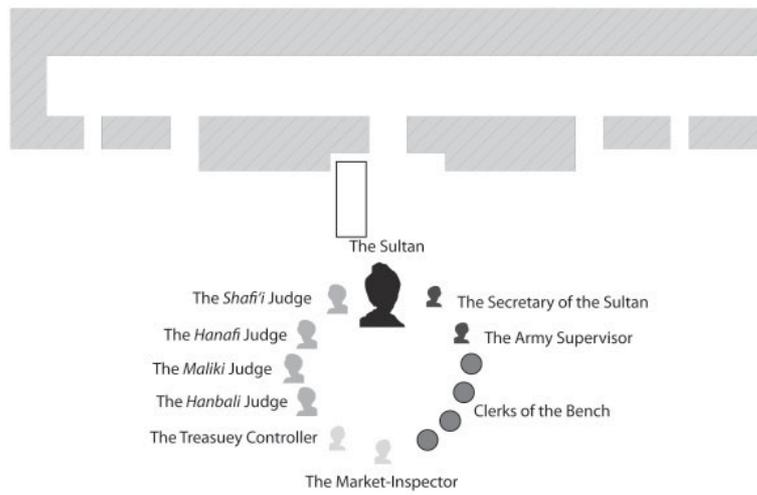
FIG. 13.6. Diagram of the Circle Forming around the Sultan on the Dar al-'Adl Days.

Mamluks of the
Privy Chamber
(Khassakiyya)

Mamluks of the
Privy Chamber
(Khassakiyya)

Amirs
of
Hundred
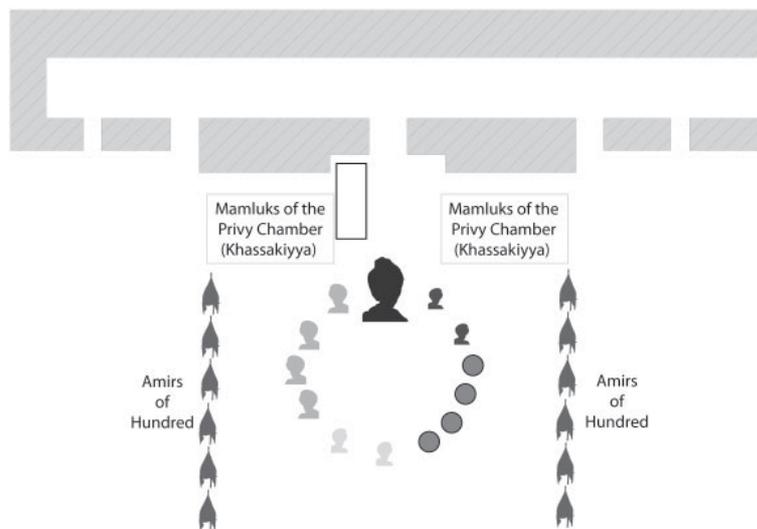
Amirs
of
Hundred

FIG. 13.7. Diagram of the Circle around the Sultan and the Amirs of Hundred.

Amirs
and
Mamluks

Amirs
and
Mamluks

Amirs
of
Forty

Amirs
of
Forty

Attendants
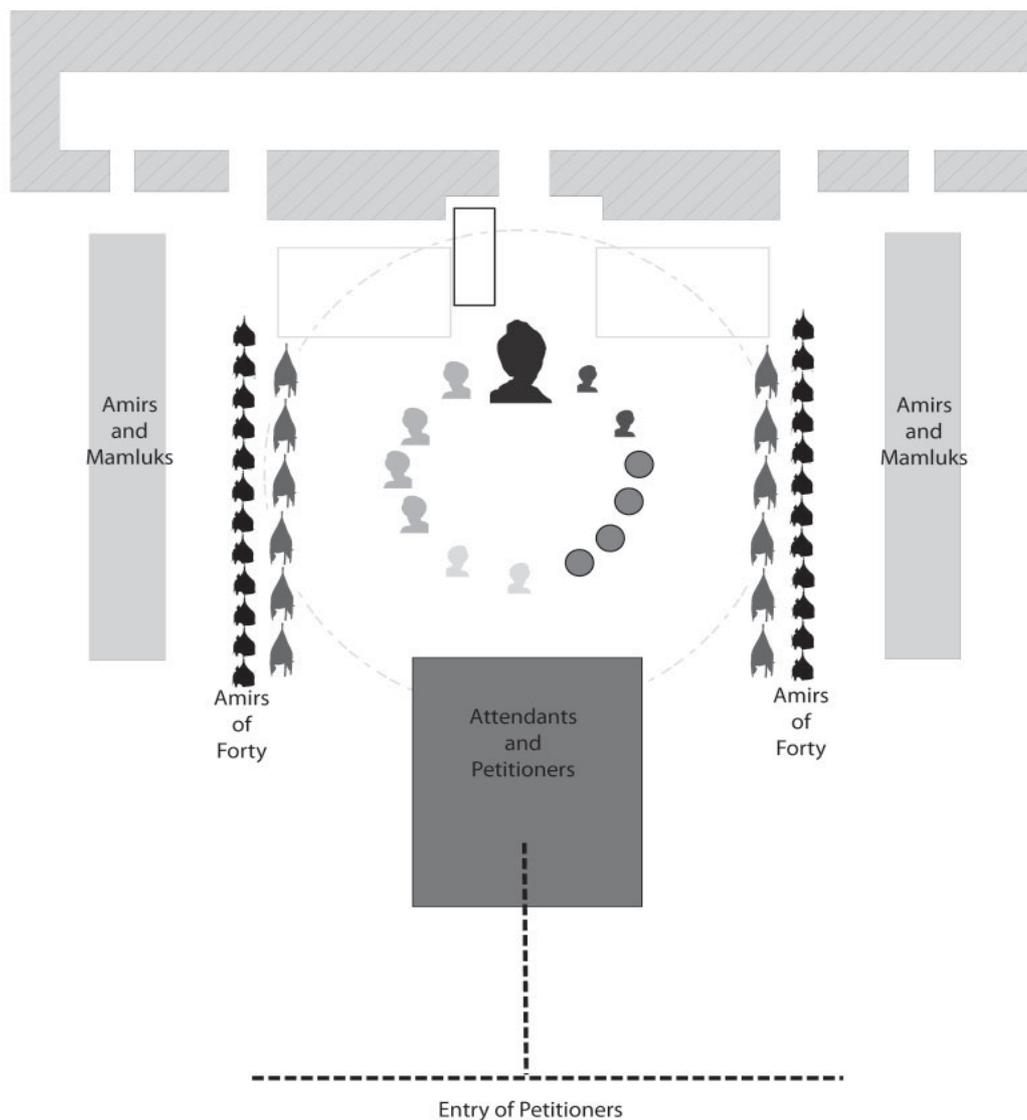and
Petitioners

Entry of Petitioners

FIG. 13.8. Diagram of the Complete Seating Layout on the Dar al-‘Adl Days.

for *mazalim* sessions on *dar al-’adl* days or for embassy receptions.[85] The formal affinity of the Great Iwan’s plan with the basilica type may have been a consequence of a functional one, for although basilicas are usually connected with early Christian churches, the original Roman functions as a royal hall of justice and for public audiences symbolism of this widespread type was never lost or forgotten.[86]

The Great Iwan began to lose its prominence as the official Dar al-’Adl during the undistinguished rules of al-Nasir Muhammad’s twelve powerless epigones who succeeded one another in a frantic turnover between 1341 and 1382. Their vicegerents became the effective power brokers in the sultanate, and their residence in the northern enclosure of the citadel, the Dar al-Niyaba, which was rebuilt in 1343,
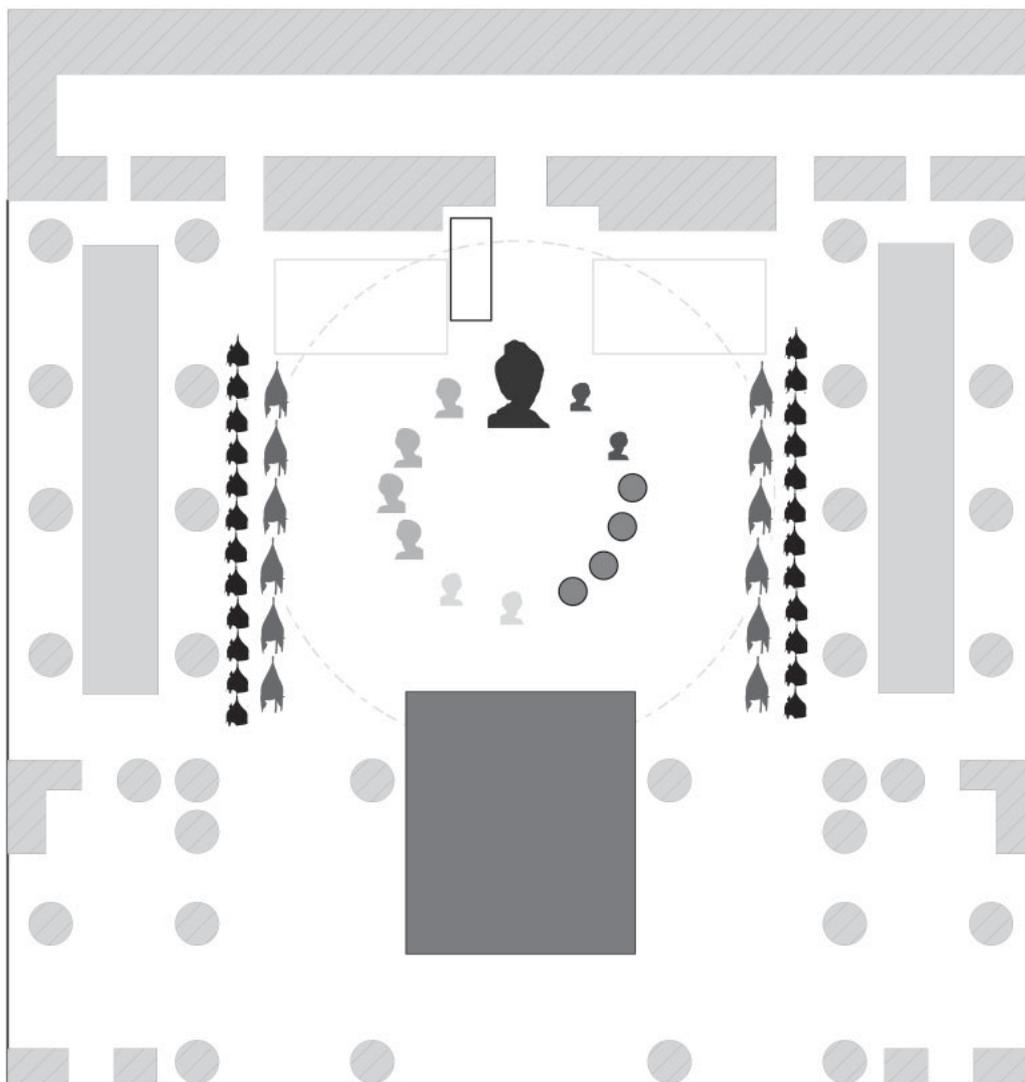
FIG. 13.9. Plan of the Iwan with the Seating Layout of the Dar al-'Adl superimposed on it.

became the real centre of government.[87] Officially, the iwan had remained the throne hall where coronations and receptions of foreign envoys took place, but the day-to-day reviews of troops, the administration of *iqta'* and the biweekly *dar al-'adl* sessions were transferred to the Dar al-Niyaba. With the advent of the Burji period, the Great Iwan regained some of its glory for a short while. After he acceded to the throne, Barquq (1382–1389, 1390–1399), the first Burji sultan, started to sit in the iwan for *dar al-'adl*

sessions, probably as a sign of kingship and as an attempt to associate himself with established royal customs.

The definitive shift in focus came upon in 1387, when Barquq completely broke with the Qalawunid tradition. He replaced the Great Iwan as the setting for *dar al-'adl* with an unspecified place in the royal stables (most probably the hall called al-Harraqa), and changed the days of the service to Tuesdays and Saturdays.[88] This choice was probably dictated by Barquq's first official

position as *amir akhur* (stable master), and by the general mistrust that dominated this struggle-ridden transitional period, when controlling the stables meant blocking the movement in and out of the palatial area of the citadel. The ceremonial changes instituted by Barquq signaled his intention to restructure the sultanate, and his introduction of a new site and different days for the ceremonies consecrated these changes.

The convention of holding *mazalim* sessions in the royal stables was intermittently followed by Barquq's immediate successors, but eventually the *dar al-'adl* ceremony was downgraded, and at times totally suspended. The Great Iwan was still occasionally used to receive foreign embassies, undoubtedly because its size and spatial arrangement made it the most impressive structure at the citadel. Otherwise, it too had fallen into disuse by the middle of the Burji period, although a few sultans attempted for short periods to revive the biweekly review of Mamluks (*khidma*) in it, and at least two, Barsbay and Qaytbay, had it restored.[89] The Great Iwan was still standing in ruins at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when it was documented for the *Description de l'Egypte*. It was razed by Muhammad 'Ali in 1825 to clear the ground for his new mosque.[90]

INTERPRETING THE
DAR AL-'ADL PHENOMENON

The Great Iwan of al-Nasir Muhammad was the last Dar al-'Adl built in Islamic central lands. Although *qada' al-mazalim* continued to be a duty of Muslim rulers, they appear to have reverted to the old practice of holding its sessions in a non-specific hall in their palaces. This conclusion leaves us with a few historical puzzles, such as why did Dar al-'Adl come into existence in the first place? And why did it fade out of use 160 years after it was introduced? Why did it appear only in the three capital cities of Bilad al-Sham and Egypt? Elucidating these questions would help us better situate this unique and peculiar Islamic institutional structure in its wider cultural context.

As already noted, building *dur al-'adl* coincided with the height of the Crusader and Mongol attacks on the Islamic world. The five structures were established in the Syrian and Egyptian capitals of the Islamic states that conducted the counter-offensives to these attacks: the Zankid, Ayyubid and Mamluk sultanates. The founders of these *dur al-'adl* were all rulers of non-Arabic origin who belonged to a recently Islamised and staunchly Sunni military caste that dominated the political scene in the Eastern Mediterranean after the eleventh-century Seljuqid expansion.[91] They led armies made up mainly of Turkish and Kurdish free and manumitted cavalry, expanded their principalities through war, conquest and intrigue, and distinguished themselves in jihad against a host of enemies: the Byzantines, splinter Shi'ite groups, the Crusaders and, later, the Mongols. It is probably no historical coincidence that the first known Dar al-'Adl was built by Nur al-Din, the first organiser of an Islamic front against the Crusaders. It is no coincidence either that the last palace was constructed by al-Nasir Muhammad, in whose early years of rule the Crusaders finally were driven out of the Orient, with the conquest of the island of Arwad off the Syrian coast in 1302, and the Mongols checked in 1303 on their last incursion into the country until Tamerlane's invasion at the end of the fourteenth century.

Evidently, however, the relationship between the upsurge of jihad and the building of *dur al-'adl* was not simply causal or reciprocal. After all, many great warriors of the period, such as Salah al-Din and Qalawun, did not sponsor any such structures, and at least two *dur al-'adl* builders, al-Zahir Ghazi and al-Nasir Muhammad, were better known for their diplomatic skills than their fighting abilities. The explanation for

the connection lies in the wider context of the religious awakening in that time of intense ontological crisis. The fierce encounters between Christian Europe and the Islamic East during the Crusades generated a combative religious passion among all classes of society in the Islamic Orient. It also heightened the rulers' awareness of their ideological obligations and, at the same time, provided them with a political platform around which popular approval and support would surely coalesce. A number of energetic rulers, notably Zanki, his son Nur al-Din, Salah al-Din and later Baybars, Qalawun and al-Ashraf Khalil, were able to channel the immense moral repercussions of the Crusades and Mongol attacks to mount their counter-offensives. They, and others, also consciously used their image as defenders and supporters of Islam to advance their political agenda both on the external and internal fronts.[92]

The emphasis on their achievements in furthering the cause of Islam can be observed in the diplomatic letters they sent to announce their conquests, to ask for military, financial and logistic support, to berate their opponents and competitors, and to request diplomas of investiture (*taqlid*s) from the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad, who represented the ultimate legitimising authority in the land of Islam. The letters of Nur al-Din, Salah al-Din and later Ayyubids addressed to the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad are replete with references to their jihad, their veneration of the caliphate and readiness to defend it, and their emphasis on applying the *shari'a* rules in their realms.[93] Similarly elaborate discourses on jihad, *shari'a* and the requirements of Islamic rule appear in the *khutba*s of investiture delivered and the *taqlid*s written by the titular caliphs installed in Cairo by Baybars after the fall of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. The *khutba* of investiture written in 1261 by the first Egyptian Abbasid caliph, al-Mustansir II, recognised Baybars not only as the sultan of Egypt and Syria but also as the universal

sultan of Islam, the deputy of the universal caliph and the leader of jihad.[94] From that point on, the Abbasid caliphs, kept in Cairo with no real political role to play, were employed as legitimising figureheads in ceremonies of investiture throughout the Mamluk period, and even, in some instances, as tools in the hands of the sultans to bestow religious recognition on the rules of allies elsewhere in the Islamic world.[95]

The early Mamluk sultans also used the caliphal ratification of their rule, along with their jihad credentials, to boost their position in their correspondence with their bitter enemies, the Ilkhanid Mongols, during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.[96] They deliberately contrasted their services to Islam and their instituted legitimisation by its utmost legal authority, the caliph, with the Ilkhanid history of destroying the caliphate and wrecking havoc in its eastern territories. This image must have been quite effective, not only in the Mamluk sultanate itself, where we have ample evidence of the pride felt by the Mamluk intelligentsia in the pivotal role played by their rulers in defending Islam but also, and most surprisingly, among some of the intellectuals who served in the Ilkhanid court. Sharaf al-Din Wassaf al-Hadra (1264–1330), the Persian historian who dedicated his treatise, *Tajziyat al-Amsar wa Tazjiyat al-A'sar*, to the Ilkhan Öljeytü (1304–1317), dared in the same text to praise the Mamluks for their steadfastness in jihad and their adherence to the tenets of Islam.[97]

On the home front, although most Ayyubid and Mamluk rulers of the period depended heavily on their repressive power, they still sought acceptance by, and perhaps popularity among, their subjects. To this end, they allied themselves with, employed and patronised the religious class, including both the learned *fuqaha'* and popular sheikhs who sometimes served them as propagandists and apologists.[98] They endowed civic structures to prove their piety and

their support for religious activities: madrasas to educate a new class of *fuqaha'*, *ribats* and *khanqahs* to lodge the Sufis, and mausolea to commemorate themselves and to aggrandise their deeds. They actively publicised their enactment of religious regulations regarding social organisation and relied heavily on elaborate titulatures that stressed their religiously glorifying actions and qualifications which they inscribed on their buildings and objects.[99]

The introduction of new attributes in royal protocols is a strong case in point. Nur al-Din's titulature changed drastically early in his reign, following the decisive battles he won against the Crusaders between 1146 and 1150.[100] When the titles in his inscriptions are compared with those of his father and predecessor, what is notable is that, unlike his father's protocol which mixed Turkish, Persian and Arabic titles, his were all Arabic and concentrated on Islamic virtuous traits as seen through the prism of traditional Sunnism. Out of the thirty-eight preserved inscriptions on structures built by Nur al-Din, the epithet *al-mujahid* (the jihad fighter) is present in sixteen. The title *al-'adil* (the just), which was his regnal title, is to be found in all of them.[101]

There is no doubt that the adoption of these two titles by Nur al-Din was intended to accentuate his qualifications as a good Muslim ruler. His building of the first Dar al-'Adl at the same time should be regarded as part of the same concern. Like later rulers, who all adopted titles with some reference to justice, such as *al-'adil* or *muhiyy al-'adl fi al-'alamin* (the reviver of justice in the world), building a palace of justice was a magnificent propaganda tool. It was intended as another of their legitimising acts.[102] 'A just ruler is a legitimate ruler' seems to have been the slogan embodied in the building of a palace of justice and the establishment of a ceremonial for its usage. The masses driven by religious fervour in that period of danger to Islam and to its lands was prone to appreciate such an endowment and laud its patron. This is evidenced not only in the special places reserved in Islamic historiography for the rulers who combined jihad and justice, such as that assigned to Nur al-Din as the exemplary just ruler comparable only to the Rashidi caliphs,[103] but also in the tales that developed from the popular lore concerning the same princes. Even today, we have songs, epics and stories that celebrate the heroism and justice of Nur al-Din, of Salah al-Din and of al-Zahir Baybars.[104]

By the time al-Nasir Muhammad acceded to the throne for the third time in 1310, the Crusaders were already routed and the Ilkhanid Mongol menace had been repeatedly thwarted; the Mamluk sultanate had finally achieved political maturity and regional supremacy. Al-Nasir's third reign, stable and prosperous, proved to be a turning point in Mamluk history and in the character of the Mamluk state. Unlike his predecessors, al-Nasir was a better tactician and diplomat than a fighter and leader of armies. He preferred alliances and clientage bonds and, at times, relied on *fidawiyya* (hit men of the Assassin sect) to eliminate his political opponents. He used limited military force only on rare occasions to reach a prominent position among the rulers of his time. He had his name pronounced in the Friday *khutba* and sometimes struck on coins in various regions in North Africa, Nubia and Anatolia without sending in his troops (both acts were considered signs of recognition of sovereignty).[105]

Because both external and internal threats had been removed and because al-Nasir relied mostly on negotiation and intrigue in his foreign policy, the military function of the state and the emphasis on the role of the ruling Mamluks as the warriors of Islam were slowly softening.[106] The first sign of change surfaced in the 1330s when al-Nasir Muhammad formed a new circle of hand-picked great amirs who, contrary to established procedures, were not all accomplished fighters. The two most influ-

ential among them, Qawsun and Bashtak, came to Egypt as free men and sold themselves to the sultan who raised them to the highest ranks without their having to endure the prerequisite military training.[107] Other signs of disintegration were soon to follow, but the effect of this shift on the elite's character did not spread among the entire Mamluk class until the Burji period, for the structure of the army remained more or less intact during the reigns of al-Nasir's twelve Qalawunid successors. Mamluks were still bought at a young age and lodged in special barracks at the citadel where they were put through rigorous training and a thorough religious education that inculcated upon them a military mentality and respect for Islamic tenets before they were manumitted and enlisted in the army.[108]

Barquq maintained the same strict programme that governed the Mamluks' training during his first reign, which marked the transition between the Bahri and Burij periods, but relaxed it tremendously in his second reign. From then on, Mamluks were permitted to live in the city and to fraternise with the local population through marriage and business transactions. The system deteriorated even further after Barquq, when new Mamluks were brought at a fairly advanced age, after their character had already been formed, and were no longer required to undergo an extensive religious education before their manumission. Consequently, the once fiercely proud and strictly segregated Mamluks began slowly to adopt an urbane culture in which few of their glorified military and political attributes were still operative. By the beginning of the fifteenth century the Mamluks' acculturation was discernible not only in their attitudes, tastes and preferences, but most of all, in the lack of interest they showed in emphasising their jihad role

or their pro-religion stances in their political image making.[109] Their contemporary observers no longer saw in them the deserving leaders they once were, skilfully and thoughtfully managing a great empire and fighting for the cause of Islam.[110] It was during that same period that the *dar al-'adl* ceremony lost its significance and the Great Iwan succumbed to neglect and was abandoned.

This interpretation of the *dar al-'adl* phenomenon is clearly influenced by the scope and nature of our written sources. Since they mostly wrote about the political, military and religious state of affairs, with the social and material conditions touched upon only as they became relevant to the narration of political events, our view of the same period is conditioned by these idiosyncrasies. It has to be stressed, however, that the general historical and ideological context of the period and the almost perfect concurrence of the upsurge in the jihad movement with the appearance of *dur al-'adl* strongly support the politico-cultural interpretation.

Finally, it is appropriate to note that the only short-lived attempt to revive the role of the Great Iwan as a Dar al-'Adl during the Burji period was initiated by the one sultan, Barsbay (1422–1437), who also tried to instigate a revival of the jihad mentality among his troops in order to conquer one of the last Crusader footholds in the Orient. Barsbay sent three successive flotillas against the Kingdom of Cyprus in 1424, 1425 and 1426, the last of which occupied the island, captured its king Janus, and brought him to Cairo where the sultan imposed on him tough terms of vassalage. Barsbay is also reported to have refurbished the Great Iwan in 1427 and reinstituted the *dar al-'adl* ceremony in it for a short while in 1431.[111] Was it just a coincidence?