Enter the medieval walled city of Aleppo by its principal gate on the west, the Bab Antakiyya, and you are almost immediately confronted by the Qastal al-Shuʿaybiyya. The present structure, which is of modest size, consists of little more than a facade comprising a sabil-type fountain and the vaulted entrance to a destroyed madrasa (figs. 1, 2). This facade is crowned by a disproportionately tall entablature that has made the Qastal a key monument in the debate over the “classical revival” in twelfth-century Syria. Michael Rogers featured the Qastal prominently in a major article published in 1971 in which he discussed numerous occurrences of the redeployment of classical buildings—and the less frequent copying of classical decoration—in Syria and Anatolia in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. I offer the following thoughts on the Qastal in admiration of just one aspect of Michael’s unparalleled erudition.

Michael Rogers entitled his article “A Renaissance of Classical Antiquity in North Syria,” and argued that the “localisation of the classicising decoration…and its restriction to a period of little more than fifty years suggests very strongly that it was indeed a revival.” The suggestion I would like to propose here is that we need to distinguish more exactly between adoption and adaptation; that there are only very few structures with ex professo evocations of the classical past, and that the intention behind these evocations differed widely—in short, that we are not dealing with a single phenomenon, but with a variety of responses that call for more nuanced readings.

The term “renaissance” used in the title of Rogers’s article is so semantically loaded that Terry Allen, in his book *A Classical Revival in Islamic Architecture*, published in 1986, opted for the less contentious term “revival.” Nevertheless, problems remain in the interpretation of both components of the phrase “classical revival.” First, what is meant in this context by “classical,” and second, are we in fact dealing with revival or with survival? The answer to the first may help resolve the dispute over the second, between those we might dub the Revivalists and the Survivalists.

Until a publication by Yasser Tabbaa in 1993, “classical” in this context was often indiscriminately used to refer to two distinct architectural expressions in Syrian architecture: what we may briefly refer to as the Greco-
Roman pagan tradition of orders, in which elements were superimposed to create hierarchy and monumentality, and the Early Byzantine Christian tradition of North Syria, which made use of largely unencumbered, planar surfaces enlivened by continuous moldings. In one the moldings are massed; in the other they are, as it were, inscribed. The first is what we might rightly term “classical” or “antique,” the second Early Byzantine or, in Ernst Kitzinger’s parlance, “sub-antique.”

Although there are major gaps in the surviving evidence, Yasser Tabbaa has made a good case for assuming a continuity of tradition and craftsmanship from the sixth-century North Syrian churches to the late-eleventh-century Muslim monuments of Aleppo, most notably the minaret of the Great Mosque—a conservatism that was “an entirely localized phenomenon, centered mainly in the region between Aleppo and Edessa.”

Ernst Herzfeld also regarded the sculptural handling of the Aleppo minaret as a survival, yet at the same time he referred to it as “antique.” A closer look at his wording makes Herzfeld’s intention clearer: “Despite all the transformations it has undergone, this architecture is essentially antique....” The extent of this transformation is obvious from the comparison Herzfeld makes a few lines later, in which he suggests that if one were to draw out the four facades of the lower stories of the Aleppo minaret the result would resemble the facade of a Venetian, presumably Gothic, palace. Given such heavy modifications, what did Herzfeld intend by referring to the decoration of the Aleppo minaret as “antique”? The answer lies in the contrast he wished to draw between late-eleventh- and twelfth-century Syrian architecture and the architecture of Iran, Iraq, and Mosul in the same period. He makes the point clearly: the Aleppo minaret belongs to an architecture that “is the product of Mediterranean civilisation.” Herzfeld’s “antique” is less a chronological descriptor than a regional characterization.

While Herzfeld and Tabbaa fall into the Survivalist camp, there are others who are Revivalists. The “classical revival” argument develops in two forms. One, as advanced by Michael Rogers, is a less coherent phenomenon and lacks a guiding concept. The instances of classical adoption and even adaptation, drawn from Anatolia and Syria, are presented as largely adventitious. Terry Allen’s “classical revival,” by contrast, is more complex, for he identifies two sequences of buildings.

The first comprises four buildings, all in Aleppo and all erected within a short time period on the orders of the Zangid ruler Nur al-Din (r. 1146–74) and his associates: The portal of the Madrasa al-Hallawiyya, dated 544 (1149–50); the Madrasa and Qastal al-Shu’aybiyya, dated 545 (1150–51) (figs. 1, 2); the Maristan of Nur al-Din, dated 543–49 (1148–55); and the Madrasa al-Muqadamiyya, portal dated 564 (1168–69), but redated by Allen to the 1150s.

Allen acknowledges that the only one of these monuments with an expressly classicizing feature is the Qastal
al-Shu‘aybiyya, which has a rich Corinthian-style entablature to which I shall return shortly. The Qastal consists of two principal architectural elements—the entablature and porch vault. The first is overtly classicizing; the second is not. Yet it is the portal, with its flat lintel, discharging arch, and cross vault, that links the Qastal to the other three buildings in Aleppo and to a final building in Allen’s sequence, the Madrasa al-‘Adiliyya in Damascus, which was begun by Nur al-Din but finished much later. They reveal the same taste for neatly cut, plain ashlar, restrained decoration, and complex stereotomy. After this madrasa the Ayyubid style proper begins, with its emphasis on muqarnas and color.\(^{10}\)

Allen’s second sequence is wider ranging in time and place, and the patronage is more diverse:\(^{11}\) the gates of Fatimid Cairo, 1087 (figs. 3, 4); the minaret of the Great Mosque in Aleppo, 1089 (fig. 5, a and b); the west facade of the courtyard of the Great Mosque in Diyarbakir, 1117–18 and 1124–25 (fig. 11, a and b); Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya, 545 (1150–51); the east facade of the courtyard of the Great Mosque in Diyarbakir, 559 (1163–64) (fig. 12, a and b); and the Great Mosque of Harran (1170s).

There is, he argues, a “progressively closer approach to the antique and other pre-Islamic sources in this sequence of buildings.” At the same time, though, he detects a progressively freer use of antique decoration, as illustrated by the work in Harran.

Interweaving these two sequences produces a misleading impression of widespread classicism. The two groups are seemingly linked by the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya, but this is deceptive, because it is the Qastal’s porch that links the building to the first group and its entablature that relates it to the second. In terms of “classical revival” there are difficulties with both sequences.

If we remove the Qastal’s entablature from the first group, there is nothing expressly classical in its architecture. In architectonic and decorative terms this first
group represents an evolution from the late-fifth- and sixth-century traditions of North Syrian church architecture in its taste for plain masonry enlivened with moldings. Among a host of connections, such as jogged voussoirs, one can cite the use of continuous moldings, of cusped moldings, of moldings that terminate in spiral loops, and even of large looped moldings over arched windows. The last is a feature found at the North Church in Brad, dated 561, and appears to be the ultimate source for the elaborate marble facings over mihrab niches that are such a distinctive element in thirteenth-century Aleppo.13

In other words, this first group is not “classical” but derived more directly from what Howard Crosby Butler defined as the “pseudo-classic tendency” of sixth-century North Syrian architecture. Nor is it revival, for there are pointers among the scant post-Umayyad architectural remains in North Syria to the continuance and evolution of this tradition in the intervening five hundred years. This was a living tradition that found new energy in the extensive building campaigns of the twelfth century.

Allen’s second list is also problematic, as it is questionable whether the buildings really cohere as a group, let alone a sequence. It begins with almost contemporary structures in Egypt and Syria—the gates of Fatimid Cairo and the minaret of the Great Mosque in Aleppo—that grow out of the sub-antique tradition of North Syria. In both Cairo and Aleppo the architects were from “Syria,” and they used the telltale signatures of Early Byzantine Syrian architecture—neatly cut ashlar, continuous moldings and modillions, and, in Cairo, arcuated lintels, jogged voussoirs, and arches with stepped extrados, to name a few (figs. 3, 4).14

Fig. 5, a and b. Aleppo, minaret of the Great Mosque, third and fourth stories, 1089. Photographed by Ernst Herzfeld between 1908 and 1930. (Photos: Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Gift of Ernst Herzfeld, 1946. Photo file 15, vol. 1, nos. 114, 113)
conched cornice used in the upper story of the minaret has precedents in the sixth-century churches of Qalb Lauzeh, Qalat Siman, and Arshin (fig. 5a). These sixth-century parallels for the framing of the windows between the second and third stories of the minaret, and for the corner pilasters on the third. The fourth story has a series of round window openings framed by hexafoils in high relief (fig. 5b) that recall the six-lobed rosettes, also in high relief, on the facade of the basilical hall of the Umayyad palace of Mshatta, where the wall and arches are framed by a continuous molding. The fourth story has engaged columns with capitals and bases, but the “leaves” of the capital are closer to muqarnas prisms than to acanthus caula coils, and the arches they support have effloresced into scalloped fantasies of a quite unclassical character (fig. 5b). In short, the connection is with Syrian architecture of the sixth to eighth centuries, and there is no significant antique influence.

On the Cairene gates there are elements, such as triangular corbels (fig. 3), that can be found in Greco-Roman architecture, but the aesthetic as a whole owes more to the “sub-antique” than the antique. The cornice on the Bab al-Nasr, it has been suggested, shows “a clear acquaintance with a tradition of classicising decoration.” It is true that it includes a recognizable ovolo and modillions, but the ovolo is wrongly positioned, taking the place of the corona on a Corinthian cornice, and the modillions are stiff fronds. This suggests that the cornice lies towards the end of a progressive line of deformation, and is not a revival based on the direct copying of antique models.

Remove the Cairene gates and the Aleppo minaret...
from Allen’s second sequence, and we are left with only two, arguably three, buildings that echo a classical sense of composition and proportioning: the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya—and there only in the entablature—and the courtyard wings of the Great Mosque in Diyarbakir. Harran is a more hybrid and problematic case, but in the other two instances a classical idiom was adopted with discerning and intention. The first part of this article deals in some detail with the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya, the second, more cursorily, with Diyarbakir. The intention is to show that the adoption of the classical idiom in these two buildings was motivated by very specific local issues, that the intentions differed widely, and that we should be cautious about assuming that we are dealing with a uniform phenomenon.

THE QASTAL AL-SHU‘AYBIYYA

Far from linking the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya to the other three monuments in Allen’s first sequence, the entablature distinguishes it. In Herzfeld’s words, the Qastal displays “exuberant richness of decoration”; in the other buildings, by contrast, “sobriety reigns.” Where Allen placed the Qastal at the beginning of a sequence through the 1150s, Herzfeld placed it at the end of a tradition. He regarded the Qastal as a continuation—in both sculpture and calligraphy—of an aesthetic best represented by the Aleppo minaret, a tradition brought to an abrupt halt by Nur al-Din’s insistence in the 1150s on a sober manner that reflected an “extreme puritanism” (figs. 6, 7).

Herzfeld connected this new architectural sobriety with epigraphic changes introduced by Nur al-Din in the 1150s. These included changes to protocolary titles—Nur al-Din abandoning Persian forms and Turkish totemic names—and to script, with a move from floriated Kufic to the vocalized “Nurid thulth.” In short, for Herzfeld the architecture that tells us about Nur al-Din’s intentions is the architecture that comes after the construction of the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya in 1150. The architecture of the Qastal, on this reasoning, belongs to a local lineage that was adopted without attention to its implications.

This argument founders on several points. I would...
argue, first, that the entablature of the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya is more classicizing than any of its supposed antecedents, and does not simply belong in a direct line of descent from the Aleppo minaret; second, that the Qastal’s inscriptions indicate a distinct agenda; and third, that the “classicizing” sculptural style of its entablature is consonant with its inscriptive messages.

At the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya we find the superimposition of elements to create an entablature in the Corinthian manner, complete with, in Michael Rogers’s words, “scotia, oblique fillet, cavetto, dentils and modillions, crowned by cyma recta with rich vine and palmette scrolls between narrow uncarved fillets” (fig. 8, a and b). In concept and in the treatment of some of the components it is so classicizing that it deceived Jean Sauvaget and others into thinking it was a reused, albeit reworked, classical sculpture. The tripartite cornice differs, however, from a classical prototype in several respects. First, the architrave projects at an inclination. Second, the frieze is treated as a cavetto. Third, Hellenistic figural decoration or Roman scrolls have been replaced by a monumental inscription in Kufic script, and, on a minor point, the ovolo between the dentils and the modillions has been omitted. The decoration of its components is Islamic: there are Fatimid echoes in the underside of the cornice, and scrollwork on the cyma recta and the fascia that prefaces early Ayyubid carving (fig. 9).

Substantial as they are, these alterations have been relatively well integrated. The structure of the entablature, in the sequence and proportions of the elements, suggests direct copying. With the exception of the inscriptions, what strikes one first about the entablature is its evocation of an antique model and its dominant size in relation to the facade (fig. 7). From a Greco-Roman standpoint, this gigantism might be read as a mark of ineptitude. From the standpoint of Muslim architecture in twelfth-century Syria, it can be read as an emphatic statement about the conscious adaptation of a classical language of architecture.

Two explanations have been advanced for this classicism. The first is that it was prompted by the location of the Qastal just inside the Antioch Gate, near which there was an arch with a Greek inscription that survived until as late as at least 411 (1020). The sec-
ond is that the form of the Qastal portal and the classical style of its entablature were prompted by the victories Nur al-Din had just enjoyed over several Crusader forces, including those of Raymond of Antioch on June 29, 1149, and by the “vocabulary” of the Roman ruins at a site such as Apamea.31

The first explanation appears somewhat inert, but the “arch” may have been a tetrastyle that, as Jean Sauvaget suggested, was transformed into the earliest mosque in the city. Indeed, it is possible that the form of the Qastal’s porch was a reminiscence of this original structure. This mosque had been renovated in the early tenth century by a Shiite of Aleppo, Abu l Hasan al-Ghadairi (d. 313 [925]).32 and in 545 (1150–51) Nur al-Din converted it into a Shafi‘i madrasa for the Andalusi faqih and ascetic Shaykh Shu‘ayb, as part of his policy of promoting Sunni orthodoxy. At the same time, Nur al-Din added the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya. The expropriation of a Shiite mosque was a highly provocative act, converting it to a madrasa doubly so. What is more, the entrance to the madrasa took the form of a projecting portal. Rather than echoing directly a Roman triumphal arch, the projecting portal was an architectural device especially favored by the Fatimids, perhaps because it played on the importance of the concept of the bab in Isma‘ili ideology.33

The notion of the Qastal as a form of victory monument has some merit, but is not fully supported by the inscriptions, which occur on two bands, the upper one religious in character, the lower for the most part historical. These carried a complex of messages, of which jihad against the Crusaders was only one. The primary message was a sectarian polemic against the city’s predominantly Shi‘i population.

Earlier sectarian tension had flared in Aleppo when the Mirdasid Rashid al-Dawla Mahmud had had the khutba read in the name of the Abbasid caliph, which aroused the hostility of the local population, most of whom since the time of the Hamdanids were Imami Shiites.34 As we shall see, the construction of the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya took place at a moment of heightened tension between Sunni and Shi‘a in Aleppo.

The religious inscription on the Qastal (fig. 6) reads:

In the name of God… Never stand (to pray) there! There is a mosque whose foundation was laid from the first day on piety; it is more worthy that thou should stand to pray there. In it are men who love to purify themselves. Allah loves those who make themselves pure (muttahirin) [Qur’an 9:108, Repentance]. And the places of worship are only for Allah, so pray not unto anyone along with Allah [Qur’an 72:18, The Jinn]. He only shall tend Allah’s sanctuaries who believes in Allah and the Last Day and observes proper worship and pays the poor-dues and fears none save Allah [Qur’an 9:18].35

The quote from Qur’an 9:18 is very common on religious buildings in the eleventh and twelfth century AD and appears twice on the minaret of the Great Mosque in Aleppo, for example, among forty-five recorded instances from these two centuries. Qur’an 72:18 is also relatively common.36 By contrast, the longest passage, from Sura 9:108, is recorded in just four other examples, only one of which is on a near-contemporary building, as we shall see.37 Sura 9:108 juxtaposes two themes: the mosque founded on piety, and purity. Both relate to the site known as Quba’, about three kilometers southeast of the Prophet Muhammad’s Medina. We shall return to the theme of the mosque founded on piety later.

The second element—purity—also connects with Quba’, as it was there that Muslims learned to purify themselves with water as well as stones. From ‘Uwaym b. Sa‘ida, a Companion, it was related that the Prophet asked the congregation in the Quba’ mosque about the cleanliness for which God praised them in the verse, and they replied that they had learned abstersion— with water—from their Jewish neighbors.38

For those who failed to recognize the historical background of the twin elements of this Qur’anic verse, the connection with water was made explicit by the location of the inscription: the passage was immediately above a sabil-type fountain or qastal. Nur al-Din undertook the repair of the ancient aqueduct that came in from the north of the city from Hailan via the Bab Arba’in, and he built a new branch, which took water past the Great Mosque to the west of the city, and another to the south. As part of this canalization, Nur al-Din introduced water-fed latrines with small cubicles at the Great Mosque.39

The Qur’anic passage does more than just proclaim Nur al-Din’s public works. The passage on purity can be read as an anti-Shiite polemic. The only other known occurrence of 9:108 on a medieval building is on the mosque of al-Juyushi near Cairo. The foundation inscription of this mashhad is located above the main entrance, and it opens with 72:18 followed by 9:108—exactly the combination, though in a different sequence, that occurs at the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya.40
As the mosque of al-Juyushi stands on the Muqattam hills, the reference there was hardly to water in any literal sense. The passage seems instead to expand on the frequent use of the word *tahir* in Shiite inscriptions to refer to the family of ’Ali, including the Shi'ite imams, and, among the Isma’ili Fatimids, to the Fatimid caliphs, as in the phrase extolling the ancestors of the Fatimid imam: “Pure ancestors and most magnanimous descendants.”

The choice of 9:108 for Nur al-Din’s Qastal seems highly pointed, for it would have had a special resonance for the Shiites of Aleppo. It had a precedent in Fatimid usage but was not used in any other known Zangid or Ayyubid structure. Appropriated and recontextualized, it was placed in prominent fashion on a structure whose location ensured maximum visibility, whose purpose was provocative to the Shiite population, whose portal echoed a favored architectural formula of the Fatimids, and whose construction occurred at a time of marked sectarian tension.

The Madrasa al-Shu’aybiyya was the second madrasa Nur al-Din founded in the city, the first being the Hanafi Madrasa al-Hallawiyya, which he converted from what was almost certainly another Shiite structure, the mosque of the Sarrajin, in either 543 or 544. These two madrasas, founded a year or two apart, were the first madrasas established in Aleppo since the fateful attempt to build the Madrasa al-Zajjajiyya in 1116, when a Shiite crowd broke in on the construction site and tore down the walls. Unlike Damascus, where numerous madrasas were built in the first half of the twelfth century, the introduction of a madrasa in Aleppo was so contentious that work finally finished on the Zajjadiyya in 1123, and then only with the intervention of the authorities.

Sectarian tension in Aleppo became enflamed again in 543, at about the time Nur al-Din appropriated what is now known as the Hallawiyya. The core of this building was the remains of the sixth-century Syriac cathedral of the city, and it was recognized in medieval Aleppo to have ancient origins. In 1124 it was converted into a mosque in retaliation for the Crusader desecration of the Mashhad al-Muhassin, the principal Shi’i shrine of Aleppo in this period, which lay on the Jabal Jawshan outside the Bab Antakiyya. Nur al-Din, in turn, converted the mosque into a Hanafi madrasa. Although Nur al-Din’s action took place soon after major victories over the Franks of Edessa and Antioch and the armies of the Second Crusade, it had, I would suggest, less to do with the Christian origins of the building than with its more recent history: its conversion to a mosque in 1124 was ordered by a Shiite notable, the Uqaylid qadi Abu ’l Hasan Muhammad b. al-Khashshab. The mosque was almost certainly a major center of Shiite activity and lay immediately to the west of the Great Mosque. It is surely no coincidence that the first professor appointed by Nur al-Din to head his new Hanafi madrasa was the person who encouraged him to suppress the Shiite call to prayer.

Nur al-Din introduced a succession of restrictive measures against the Shiite population of the city. He forbade public displays of Shiism, all insults against Companions of the Prophet were to be severely punished, and from Rajab 543 (November–December 1148) he forbade the Shiite call to prayer that had been recited from the minarets of Aleppo for almost two centuries. In the same month, perhaps by way of concession, he allowed pious gatherings in the Great Mosque, which the Shiites had controlled since 1114. Disputes ensued, however, among the different allegiances, and within a month or two, in Sha’ban 543 (January 1149), gatherings in the mosque were banned and recalcitrant Shiite leaders arrested. Some were deported, others fled. The inscription on the Qastal al-Shu’aybiyya is dated 545 (1150–51), somewhere between eighteen and thirty months after the crackdown on the leaders of the Shiite population. Nur al-Din’s restrictions against the Shiites of Aleppo were lifted by his brother Amir-i Amiran in 554 (1159), when Nur al-Din was taken almost fatally ill, and by his son al-Salih Isma'il in 1174.

The location of the Qastal, the function of its madrasa, and the circumstances immediately preceding its construction suggest a deliberate anti-Shi'a tenor. The stroke of genius was to juxtapose the inscription with a cascade of water, and thus to recontextualize a Qur’anic extract that in a Fatimid setting had a quite different resonance.

It seems highly probable that the original inscription of the Qastal al-Shu’aybiyya was considerably longer. The Qastal and entrance porch were appended to a madrasa that disappeared long ago. The complex lay at the western end of an architectural “island,” at the fork of two roads, so that it originally had three street facades, on the west, the north, and the south.

The religious inscription on the western, fountain facade continues around all three sides of the projecting portal. It ends where the north wall of the portal met the main wall of the madrasa, though, most curiously, the last phrases of the religious inscription are demoted from the “frieze” to the lower and smaller...
“fascia” that carries the historical inscription; in fact, they come after the date of 545.\textsuperscript{54} In other words, the inscription did not continue along the northern facade of the madrasa.

The opposite seems to be the case on the southern facade. The first inscriptive block on the western facade begins with the basmala and a vertical border to mark the beginning of the inscription, but it is cut off in the middle of the word Allāh (fig. 9). The next block begins ‘alā taqwā... from 9:108, which means that the first six words of the verse are missing. The inscription must, then, have begun on the southern facade, and the block inscribed with the basmala have been moved at a later date.

Changes in the masonry indicate that the southern facade of the now demolished madrasa originally extended some 17 meters along the gasaba that develops into the Suq al-Hawa. This southern street constitutes the principal thoroughfare from the Bab Antakiyya to the Great Mosque and the Citadel; it was in Nur al-Din’s day the main artery of the city, and in the twelfth century many of the more important monuments were constructed or refurbished in this sector.\textsuperscript{55} An inscription on the southern facade would have announced the building to those coming from the direction of the Great Mosque.

There is no evidence as to what might have been inscribed on the southern street frontage, but an excellent candidate would be the verse that precedes 9:108, inscribed on the southern street frontage, but an excellent candidate would be the verse that precedes 9:108, which means that the first six words of the verse are missing. The inscription must, then, have begun on the southern facade, and the block inscribed with the basmala have been moved at a later date.

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There is no evidence as to what might have been inscribed on the southern street frontage, but an excellent candidate would be the verse that precedes 9:108, which would have neatly fitted the available space.\textsuperscript{56} Qur’an 9:107 reads:

\begin{quote}
And there are those who put up a mosque by way of opposition (disrārān) and infidelity—to disunite the believers—and in preparation for one who warred against God and His Apostle aforetime. They will indeed swear that their intention is nothing but good; but God does declare that they are certainly liars.
\end{quote}

The theme here is the Masjid al-Dirar, which was a tribal mosque erected in or near Quba\textsuperscript{60} in AH 9 by members of the Banu ‘Amr b. ‘Awf for the hanif Abu ‘Amir. The Prophet Muhammad was asked to lead prayer there but received a revelation in consequence of which the mosque was destroyed, probably by fire. Henceforth, it was known as the Mosque of Opposition.\textsuperscript{57}

There is no proof that this was the passage chosen for the southern frieze, but the quotation would have been apt for several reasons. The opening phrase of the inscription on the entrance facade—“Never stand (to pray) there!” (9:108)—presumes the reference to the Masjid al-Dirar. For the literate Muslim the “presence” of 9:107 was real enough; the question is whether it was a mnemonic presence or a physical reality on the southern facade. In the latter case verses 107 and 108 would have formed a continuous sequence along two sides of the building.\textsuperscript{58} The presence of 9:107, implied or actual, was as harsh a condemnation of Nur al-Din’s religious opponents as a Qur’anic extract would allow. Given the historical circumstances the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya can be read as a tropaeon over the Shiites. But that was not all.

The inscription on the main facade then continues with a reference to “the mosque founded on piety.” The significance of this reference will become clearer after we have looked at what little remains of the historical inscription. All that Herzfeld could see of this was “amīr al-mu‘minīn ‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb […] in the year 545.” The reference to ‘Umar was appropriate on one level because it was during his caliphate that Aleppo was seized from the Byzantines in AD 636 and the very first mosque erected inside the Bab Antakiyya, on the spot where the Qastal and Madrasa al-Shu‘aybiyya were to stand.\textsuperscript{59} “The mosque founded on piety on the first day” may refer then to the first mosque of Aleppo, but to assume this was all is to ignore the standard exegesis of this passage.

As we have seen, the “mosque founded on piety on the first day” was asserted by some to be the mosque at Quba\textsuperscript{60} and that was how it was identified to visitors in this period, such as Ibn Jubayr in 1183.\textsuperscript{61} According to the arguments of Max van Berchem and others, Nur al-Din expressed his desire to recap-
that it included a Qur’anic reference to Jerusalem. In neither of these instances, though, was a historicizing style used, and both were commissioned twenty years or more after the Qastal. The late date does not, however, rule out a jihad message at the Qastal al-Shu’aybiyya, as the earliest extant inscription in which Nur al-Din uses the title al-mujahid was in the Hallawiyya, dated to February–March 1149—a year before his construction of the Qastal.

The Qastal is intriguing for several features. It incorporates a Qur’anic quotation that was not common on buildings, and that can be read in both a historical and a contemporary framework. It includes a long-deceased historical personality—‘Umar—in the documentary section of the inscription where Nur al-Din’s name must also have been included. And stylistically the Qastal juxtaposes a classicizing entablature with a vault in the new Zangid style. On several levels, then, an interplay was created between past and present.

Its principal religious quotation referred to the earliest days of Islam: explicitly, to the Mosque of Opposition, to the Mosque Founded on Piety, and to purification, and also to ‘Umar b. al-Khattab; implicitly, then, to the Masjid al-Qiblatayn and to Jerusalem, which had capitulated to ‘Umar, and also to the first mosque built after Aleppo submitted to ‘Umar. ‘Umar’s name occupies a key sector of the frieze, and the monument can be viewed in part as a testimony to his character and achievements.

These historical themes all had contemporary resonances: purification in Nur al-Din’s new water supply and the play on the Shiite and Isma‘ili usage of the word tāhīr; the Mosque of Opposition in Nur al-Din’s fierce opposition to the Shiites; and the Masjid al-Qiblatayn in the cherished recapture of Jerusalem. The Qastal and its madrasa offered material and religious sustenance to the orthodox, while its inscriptions combated the twin enemies of Nur al-Din’s jihad, the Shiites and the Crusaders. The juxtaposition of Nur al-Din’s name with that of ‘Umar invited a comparison, however humbly phrased, between the Zangid ruler and a Muslim paradigm. The comparison was one that continued to form part of Nur al-Din’s image. Historians of the period noted his piety and often compared Nur al-Din to both ‘Umar b. al-Khattab and ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz. Ibn al-Athir’s obituary of Nur al-Din likens him to the Rāshidūn, while a short biography written sometime between 1171 and Nur al-Din’s death in 1174 by Ibn ‘Asakir noted that he wished to imitate the salaf.

Explicitly and implicitly, the references were to the earliest days of Islam, to the hijra when Muhammad and his followers faced opposition, to the first conquests when they established their right to occupy Syria, and to an era before the emergence of the Shi‘a. What better setting in which to enunciate such sentiments than an architectural frieze that echoed the past? Is this, then, the explanation for the classical idiom adopted for this building? The retardataire styling of the entablature provided a visual evocation of a past summoned literally in the inscription.

The Qastal al-Shu’aybiyya was a liminal building astride a threshold, as it were, of the city, on the route to the very heart of Aleppo itself. In size, elaboration, and, of course, inscription, its entablature was declaratory. In form, it was archaizing, an exhortatory evocation of the era of the Rāshidūn. But exhortation...
was accompanied by admonition. The content of the inscription, as well as the confiscation of the mosque for a Shafi'í madrasa, were a rebuke to the Shi'a of Aleppo. The message, then, was Sunni, and distinctively Nur al-Din's. But the voice was one familiar to the local population, for the floriated Kufic of the inscription, and much of the decorative carving, continued the tradition of the minaret of the Great Mosque in Aleppo (figs. 5a, 9).72

This argument assumes that Nur al-Din and his advisors appreciated the manner in which Qur'anic inscriptions could be used to reflect and elaborate on a building's overt function. Proof that they did comes from the choice of Qur'anic passages in the iwans of Nur al-Din's Maristan in Damascus (1154), which refer, appropriately for a hospital, to God's role in sickness and in healing.73 The argument also implies that Nur al-Din and his advisors were conscious of the semiotics of style. On one level this emerges from the changes he made to his titulature, from his avoidance of the title of sultan to his ultimate adoption of epithets such as faqir and in particular zâhid, perhaps also from the even more reduced titles he used in the three holiest cities of Islam: Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem.74 The contemporaneous adoption of a new “ethical” titulature and an overtly sober architectural style was surely intended to convey a moral imperative.75 On another level, Nur al-Din’s appreciation of the force of appearance is reflected in his choice of simple, coarse garments.

The argument further implies that Nur al-Din had a sense of historicism. That this was so, even in the face of practicality, is shown by his decision to oblige his troops to use the baldric. Nur al-Din’s elder brother, Sayf al-Din Ghazi b. Zangi, ordered every one of his cavalry to wear his sword girded about his waist. Nur al-Din took a quite different policy: he ordered his troops to hang their swords from their shoulders—in other words from a baldric—because, according to Abu Shama, he had heard that the Prophet Muhammad, following Arab custom, used to hang his sword from a shoulder belt.76

Nur al-Din evidently had a keen sense of the significance of style and appearance. What, then, are we to make of the Maristan in Damascus (AD 1154), a building whose facade is dominated by the visually awkward juxtaposition of a classical pediment with a stucco muqarnas dome and semi-dome (fig. 10)? The Qastal was one of the first buildings he erected in Aleppo and was used to make a statement. The Maristan was the first major structure Nur al-Din put up in Damascus. Did it carry a comparable statement? The pedimented doorway was a classical remnant of the type of which Syria was full; the muqarnas dome was an innovation in Syrian architecture, an importation from Iraq and the Jazira.77

I would like to suggest that whereas in the Qastal al-Shu’aybiyya the use of a classicizing entablature had a temporal significance, the use of a classical pediment at the Maristan carried a geographical denotation. It was surely not there because it belonged to the pagan past, but because it symbolized Syria. The pediment of the Maristan echoed in minute form the pedimental gable of the Damascus mosque, so it stood as a shorthand for the most recognizable building of Damascus, as well as a more generalized reference to the architectural past of Bilad al-Sham.78
Was this highly visible marriage of Syrian and Iraqi architectural components a visual metaphor of Nur al-Din’s new conciliatory policy or a symbol of the combined resources of the Zangids, the resources of both Syria and the Jazira? Nur al-Din had united Syria for the first time in centuries, and in 544 (1149) his brother Qutb al-Din, ruler of Mosul, conceded Syria to him, granting him, what is more, the entire treasure amassed by Zangi in Sinjar for the jihad Nur al-Din was conducting.79

Neither at the Qastal al-Shu’aybiyya nor at the Maristan in Damascus was a classical idiom adopted expressly for its Greco-Roman associations. The same was true in Diyarbakir.

THE GREAT MOSQUE IN DIYARBAKIR

The courtyard of the Great Mosque of Diyarbakir is flanked by two wings with majestic facades.80 Both facades have two stories, each punctuated by nine arches framed by pairs of free-standing columns with capitals and tall consoles supporting a full entablature incorporating bands of floriated Kufic inscriptions. Both facades make use of antique columns, those on the ground story being hyperextended and fashioned from sections of two or more columns. The sculpted decoration on the western wing is, with the exception of the inscriptions and the arches, ancient, taken from a building of the sixth or seventh century AD. This facade carries two dates—equivalent to 1117–18 on the lower section and to 1124–5 on the upper (fig. 11, a and b).

The east wing is dated some forty years later, to 1163–64, and most of the carving, apart from the columns and capitals, is imitative of the work on the west wing (fig. 12, a and b). Above all, the eastern facade reflects the compositional scheme of the western facade, though there are differences in the treatment of the arcades and in the rendering of details.81 Thus, in one courtyard we have spoliated sculpture of the sixth or seventh century and an imitation of the mid-twelfth century. The inscriptions provide a clue to the motives behind the imitation, though what prompted the construction of the eastern facade has to be deduced from circumstantial evidence.

The mosque was apparently damaged by fire in either 1115, according to Michael the Syrian, or 1119, according to Ibn al-Azraq. The earlier date could explain the need to reconstruct the courtyard riwāq, though neither author expressly states that they were damaged. But the fire cannot explain why the western riwāq was built in such an archaizing manner, and in a style that bore no aesthetic relationship to the mosque. The prov-

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)
ence of the sculpture is a clue. According to Josef Strzygowski, the spolia dated from the fourth to the seventh century; recent research has refined the parameters to the sixth or seventh century, but no one has doubted that the entablature and many of the columns, in particular those with the elaborate shafts on the second story, came from a Christian structure—if not a church, then perhaps an ecclesiastical palace. A candidate is the ecclesiastical complex believed to have stood in the area of the mosque. The mosque is in the center of the city, at the crossing of the former Cardo and Decumanus, a site that was probably first occupied by the principal pagan temple of the city, and subsequently by the cathedral. If the remains used for the west facade were from the former cathedral complex, their large-scale reassembly as an adjunct of the mosque would have been construed as a deliberate affront. In the early twelfth century the metropolitan of Amid/Diyarbakir guided his see from Antioch,
which had fallen into Crusader hands in 1098, and which Count Roger was using as a base for expansion. In 1115 Roger inflicted a major defeat on the forces of Seljuq Sultan Muhammad at the battle of Danith. Any suspicion of collusion between the metropolitan and the Frankish crusaders would have provided justification for appropriating the remains of the cathedral. The circumstances require more investigation, but a polemical intent seems feasible.

The western facade was constructed on the orders of the Inalid ruler of Diyarbakir, vassal of the Great Seljuqs, reference to whom was made in the inscriptions of 1117–18 and 1124–25. The eastern facade too was put up under Inalid rule, but power had shifted dramatically in the intervening forty years. While the nominal ruler was an Inalid, real power lay in the hands of the viziers, the Banu Nisan. The shift in power was signaled in an inscription on the eastern sector of the entrance facade of the mosque dated 550 (1155–56).82 This was a counterpoint to the inscription of 484 (1091–92) in the name of Malikshah on the other side of the main entrance to the mosque, but the 1155 inscription made no reference to any Seljuq overlord, and, most significantly, the first name it contained was that of the Nisanid vizier, Mu'ayyid al-Din Abu 'l Qasim b. Ahmad, the second that of the Inalid lord. This was an inversion of standard protocol, but some deference was observed. Titles were reserved exclusively for the Inalid.83 The Nisanid al-Hasan died in the following year and was succeeded as vizier by his son Jamal al-Dawla Kamal al-Din Abu 'l Qasim b. al-Hasan. He made no such gesture of deference in the inscriptions on the western wing of the courtyard.

Here the Nisanid Abu 'l Qasim b. Ali places his name first, arrogates the title of isfahsālār previously assumed by the Inalids, and grandiloquently announces that he has undertaken the construction of the eastern portico (suffa) “from its foundations to its elevation,” and of the entire maqsūra, from his own finances (min mālihi).84 This was a blunt declaration of Nisanid financial and political superiority, especially in view of the princely associations of the maqsūra. What is more, Nisanid dominance over the Inalids was echoed in the emblematic animal sculpture on this facade.85

In short, then, the eastern was a purposeful imitation of the western facade—rivalry through mimesis. Its classicism was highly specific, a proclamation of the shift in local power in Diyarbakir. Spolia were used on the western facade in what may have been an anti-Christian polemic. Imitation was adopted on the eastern facade, not to refer to a Roman or Christian past, but as a comment on current, intra-Muslim politics in the city.

HARRAN

There are still questions over the date and patronage of the extensions to the Great Mosque at Harran. The prayer hall of the Umayyad mosque was enlarged with the addition of two arcades on the north and a new courtyard facade. The result was appropriately described by Ibn Jubayr in 1184 as “old [and] new.”86 In the northeastern corner of the third arcade one of the capitals is dated 570 (1174–75). There is an inscription dated 588 (1192) on the eastern gate of the complex; whether Saladin was involved in completing the mosque, as Herzfeld and Creswell believed, is unclear.87 The date of 570 (1174) means that construction may be due to Nur al-Din, but as he died on May 15, 1174, the nominal patron may have been his son (al-Malik al-Salih) Nur al-Din Isma‘il (r. 1174–81).

In other instances, though, Isma‘īl merely completed work initiated by his father. Thus, in 570 (1174–75) he “finished” the minbar (tamāmahū) in the Great Mosque in Aleppo commissioned by Nur al-Din in 564 (1168–69), the minbar, incidentally, that Saladin later appropriated for the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Isma‘īl was only eleven years old on his accession, and he relied on the support of a group of courtiers, mainly based in Damascus, though the governor of the Aleppo citadel, Shadbakht, an Indian slave who owed his freedom to Nur al-Din, played a key role.88 “The young al-Salih, surrounded by a self-interested court, was in no position to exercise authority.”89 Shadbakht’s role in expediting, in the name of Isma‘īl, the completion of work begun under Nur al-Din is illustrated by the Lower Maqam on the citadel of Aleppo. An inscription to the right of the entrance is dated 563 (1167–68); another, in the name of Malik al-Salih Isma‘īl and dated 575 (1179–80), expressly states that Nur al-Din ordered the work, and that it was completed under the supervision of Shadbakht (tawallūt).90

Elaborately carved antique columns were incorporated into the new main entrance of the mosque in Harran.91 A Syriac chronicle refers to the demolition of the sixth-century Cathedral of St. Sophia in Edessa in a passage that comes between mentions of Nur al-Din’s death and Saladin’s accession, which suggests a date of about 1174, and it seems likely that the columns came from there.92 Adjacent work was in a clas-
sicizing style, complete with elements such as ovolo, dentils, and modillions.

In the circumstances, it seems unlikely that the eleven-year-old Isma’il would have ordered such a major extension to the Harran mosque in the first year of his rule. Nur al-Din, however, may have envisaged the work as a tribute to his son’s coming of age, for in May 1174, ten days before Nur al-Din’s death, festivities were held for Isma’il’s circumcision. The city of Harran was notorious for its pagan past, but it was also, as Ibn Jubayr emphasized, intimately associated with the prophet Abraham.93 Nur al-Din had already demonstrated in Aleppo his interest in sites associated with Abraham,94 but there could have been no better place than Harran in which to proclaim the ascendence of Islam, to memorialize Abraham the founder of monotheism, and by extension to commemorate Isma’il, who is identified in the Qur’an (2:127) as helping Abraham to found the Ka’ba.

This reading is highly speculative, but it would help explain the use of classicizing decoration, which, as at the Qastal al-Shu’aybiyya, was used to refer to an ancient past, though this time to a Patriarch rather than one of the Rāshidūn. Here, as at the Qastal, we can sense the hand of Nur al-Din.

Allen’s first group of monuments, those commissioned under Nur al-Din in Aleppo, represents neither classicism nor revival, if we exclude, as I have argued, the entablature of the Qastal al-Shu’aybiyya. These buildings were the product of a living tradition that had its roots in the fifth-and-sixth-century structures of the limestone massif of North Syria. That tradition had morphed over time to become a distinct expression. The etymology of some of its vocabulary may have originated in Greco-Roman architecture, but the language had evolved. In genealogical terms, paternity lay in the sub-antique, even if the ultimate ancestry of components can be traced back earlier.

Allen’s second group better merits the terms “revival” and “classical,” but the list as a whole is misleading. It

Fig. 13. Konya, the city walls (After Léon de Laborde, Voyage de l’Asie Mineure [Paris, 1838])
should include neither the gates of Fatimid Cairo nor the minaret of the Great Mosque in Aleppo, as these belong to the architectural lineage of the first group, even if the expression is more embellished and flamboyant than the sober style subsequently adopted under Nur al-Din. The remaining structures in the list—the Qastal, Diyarbakir, and Harran—span a relatively short period of 20 years but do not form a developmental sequence. There are connections in patronage and historicizing intent between the Qastal and the mosque in Harran, but the building of the Nisanid wing of the mosque of Diyarbakir was motivated by mimetic rivalry, not historicism. And there are differences in their employment of classical motifs. By and large, the structure and proportions of the entablatures of the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya and the east wing at Diyarbakir are correct, even down to the use of a fillet on the Qastal cornice, a feature so minor that it argues for direct copying. At Diyarbakir the composition recalls that of a scenae frons. Little of the ornament at the Qastal is classical, however; in Diyarbakir some is, echoing that on the west side of the courtyard. At Harran, by contrast, there are citations from classical ornament, yet with errors in sequence and sizing that suggest they were not taken directly from an antique model but were liberal interpretations.

Masons in Diyarbakir and Aleppo created sculptural ensembles that were classical in proportion and scheme. That they did so rarely is telling: they could when they wanted. This is proven by Hibetullah al-Gurgani, the architect of the east wing of the courtyard of the Great Mosque in Diyarbakir (1163). Eight years earlier, in 550 (1155–56), he had rebuilt the east wall of the main sanctuary facade, but in a style that echoed the west wall of the same facade, which bears an inscription in the name of the Great Seljuq Malikshah and the date of 484 (1091–92). Within eight years, then, he built two adjacent structures in completely different styles. One was classicizing, one was not, but in both cases he achieved symmetry with an earlier construction on the western half of the site. We might deduce from this that the aesthetic of symmetry was the guiding principle, but the inscriptive evidence makes it clear that the patron had more in mind. The point is the ability of architects and their chantier to adopt different styles when called for.

The Nurids used classical or classicizing elements in three buildings—the Qastal, the Maristan in Damascus, and the Great Mosque in Harran, whereas they erected a host of other structures with no hint of classical theme. This suggests that the choice in these three instances was select and purposeful. The intended point differed according to the political context, but the more surprising conclusion is that the frame of reference differed.

The Maristan of Nur al-Din in Damascus may be a rare instance in which an antique element was used to evoke a sense of place rather than of time. The reference to Syria enfolded its Greco-Roman past, but in a generalized rather than a specific way. The Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya, by contrast, was intended to evoke a sense of time, in this case the earliest decades of Islam, not a pagan past. In neither instance, though, was a Greco-Roman referent used per se. The same held true for Diyarbakir and Harran.

These Syrian and Mesopotamian examples thus reflect a situation different from that in Konya, where Alaeddin Keykubad rebuilt the city walls between 1219 and 1221 (fig. 13). Alaeddin included a Roman statue of Hercules, funerary reliefs, and a Roman sarcophagus alongside newly commissioned statuaries of angels, a seated monarch, animals, and mythological beasts, and an equally heterogeneous mixture of inscriptions comprising extracts from the Qur’an, Prophetic Hadith, and the Shāhnāma as well as maxims and proverbs and, presumably, royal protocols. This was an art of “quotation,” both literally and figuratively, a sententiousness akin to that of the “Mirror for Princes” literature. The mixture conveyed the multiplicitious roots of Rum Seljuq court culture—Turkic, Persian, and Arab, religious and secular. It commingled the mythic and recent history of the city and its region: there were images of Crusader foot soldiers, perhaps those who sacked Konya in 1190, while the statue of Hercules, according to Ibn Sa‘id, who visited the city in 1261, was believed to represent Plato, the alleged founder of the city.6

Whereas Nur al-Din Zangi adopted classical elements or a classical idiom to convey the antique, Alaeddin Keykubad was exceptional in making a specific reference to the city’s Greco-Roman past, as befitted a dynasty who prided himself on being Sultān al-Rūm, “The Sultan of Rome.”

**NOTES**

1. On the meaning of qasṭal as a sabit, see Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth, *Aleppo: Historische und geographische Beiträge zur...*


9. Ibn Shaddad, in La Description d’Alep d’Ibn Saddːd: Édition critique de l’œuvre de Nâṣir al-Dīn al-Ma’sūdī, ed. D. Sourdel (Damascus, 1953), p. 116, says that ‘Izz al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Muqaddam founded this madrasa and that construction began in 545 (1150–51). An inscription on a tablet over the door records an endowment to the madrasa in the year 564 (1168–69) by Shams al-Dīn Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. Muhammad al-Muqaddam. Herzfeld (Matériaux, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 235) dated the entire portal to 564, but Allen (Classical Revival, p. 12) believes the building’s association with the other three constructed in the 540s (1150s) warrants the earlier date. Sibt b. al-‘Ajamī, "Les Trésors d’or" de Sibt ibn al-‘Ajamī, Matériaux pour servir à l’histoire de la ville d’Alep, tome 2, ed. J. Sauvaget (Damascus, 1950), pp. 135–36, says that the portal of the church that Ibn al-Muqaddam made into a madrasa was in the Darb al-Kharrāf, but that it was changed to be in the Darb al-Hattabin (Allen, Classical Revival, p. 20, n. 37). It is worth considering, then, whether the present portal dates from this change.


18. See Creswell, Muslim Architecture of Egypt, vol. 1, p. 215, for a brief discussion of the architectural comparanda for such arches. See figs. 4, 5a, and 5b for the use of an inner frame of cusped moldings on the Bab al-Nasr and on the minaret of the Great Mosque in Aleppo.

19. Modillions continued to be used in the Early Byzantine period, as is evident from the modillion cornices on the sixth-century church at Qalb Lauzeh in North Syria: see Butler, Early Churches, p. 223. For the use of modillion cornices in Aleppo in the Ayyubid period, see Herzfeld, Matériaux, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 247, 250.


25. Yasser Tabbaa, "Monuments with a Message: Propagation of
Jihād under Nūr al-Dīn (1146–1174),” in The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades, ed. V. P. Goss (Kalamazoo, 1986), p. 228, likewise sees the entablature of the Qastal as “a rare example of purposeful imitation”; see also Tabbaa, “Survivals and Archaisms,” p. 39.


30. On the inscription, see Ibn al-Shihna, “Les Perles Choisies” d’Ibn ach-Chihna, Matériaux pour servir à l’histoire de la ville d’Alep, tome 1, transl. Jean Sauvaget (Beirut, 1938), p. 11–12. Sauvaget believed the entablature was actually from the triumphal arch that had been converted into the first mosque (Sauvaget, Alep, pp. 74–75; cf. Jean Sauvaget, “Inventaire des monuments musulmans de la ville d’Alep,” Revue des Études Islamiques 5 (1931): 76; Sauvaget, “Notes,” p. 223; see also Allen, Classical Revival, p. 17, n. 12; Tabbaa “Monuments with a Message,” pp. 227–28. Sauvaget (Alep, p. 47) even claimed that the arch had figured reliefs, which he deduced from one of the names of the mosque—Masjid al-Atrash, “The Mosque of the Bucklers.” Sauvaget knew the accounts relating that this was where the Muslim conquerors of the city laid down their shields, but he dismissed them as “historiettes sans valeur historique”: Ibn Shaddad, La Description d’Alep, p. 44, after al-Azimī (AH 483–ca. 538); cf. Herzfeld, Matériaux, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 222; Ibn al-Adim, Zubdat al-Halab min tārikh Halab, ed. Śādi al-Dahlīnī (Damascus, 1951), p. 28.


33. Projecting portals occur, for example, at the Fatimid mosque of al-Mahdiyya, possibly the mosque of al-Azhar, and the mosque of al-Hakim in Cairo: see Jonathan Bloom, Minaret: Symbol of Islam (Oxford, 1989), pp. 102, 129–130, 132, fig. 75. It should be pointed out, however, that there was considerable tension between the Imami Shiites and the Ismailis in Aleppo, which resulted in a massacre of Ismailis by the qadi Ibn al-Khashab in 508 (1114): see Herzfeld, Matériaux, vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 293; Nikīta Elisséeff, Nūr ad-Dīn, un grand prince musulman de Syrie au temps des Croisades (511–569 n./1118–1174), 3 vols. (Damas-cus, 1967), p. 428.

34. Sauvaget, Alep, p. 95, n. 280; p. 98, nn. 290–92, on Isma‘īlis and Shiites in Aleppo.


38. Michael Lecker, Muslims, Jews, and Pagans, Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts, vol. 13, series ed. U. Haarmann (Leiden, 1995), p. 63; ‘Uwaym was reported by one source to be the first Muslim to use water to wash his posterior.


41. The key Qur’anic passage is 33:33: “O People of the House, God only desires to put away from you abomination and with cleansing to cleanse you.” See Williams, “Cult of Alid Saints,” p. 44. For its use in twelfth-century Egypt and Syria, see Dodd and Khairallah, Image of the Word, vol. 2, pp. 96–97. It also occurs in Iran in the early twelfth century, on the Imamzade Yahya b. Zayd at Sar-i Pul: see Sheila Blair, The Monumental Inscriptions from Early Islamic Iran and Transoxiana (Leiden, 1992), cat. 75, pp. 198–201.

42. In general, see Max van Berchem, “Épigraphie des Assassins

45. M. Écochard, “Note sur un édifice chrétien d’Alep,” *Syria* 27 (1950): 270–83. On the ancient identification see, for example, Ibn al-Shihna, *Perles Choises*, p. 120, where it is identified as a construction by Helen, the mother of [Emperor] Constantine.


47. Tabbaa, “Monuments with a Message,” pp. 224–26, claims the purpose was “to symbolically assert Nur al-Din’s subjugation of and victory over the Christians.” It is certainly true that this building sees the first extant occurrence of the title al-mujhît in Nur al-Din’s inscriptions, but Tabbaa’s important article somewhat underplays, I would suggest, the anti-Shiite message in this early stage of Nur al-Din’s career in favor of an almost exclusively anti-Christian message. In fact, in 1149 Nur al-Din was defeated by a combined force of Franks and Assassins at Yaghra, west of Ma’arrat al-Nu’man, and Ellisèffe (Nür ad-Din, p. 428) has suggested that this defeat may have encouraged the Isma’illis and Shiites of Aleppo, and in turn prompted Nur al-Din’s actions against them in 543 (1149).


49. On these measures, see Ellisèffe, *Nür ad-Din*, p. 429; Nikita Ellisèffe, “Un document contemporain de Nur ad-Din: sa notice biographique par Ibn ‘Asikir,” *Bulletin d’études orientales* 25 (1972): 125–40, esp. pp. 128 and 137, II. 11–13. However, one of Nur al-Din’s first acts on assuming control in Aleppo was to add water facilities to the Mashhad al-Muhassin, a shrine that had also received attention from both his grandfather, Aqsunqur, who added a cistern or reservoir, and his father, Zangi: see Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 194–96; Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety*, p. 109. It is noticeable that neither the Mashhad al-Muhassin nor the Mashhad al-Husayn have central pools (cf. Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety*, pp. 151–53). On the latrines added by Nur al-Din, see above, note 39.


53. The Qastal occupies the western end of an architectural “island” that lies in the center of the old Hellenistic street that led from the Antioch Gate towards the tell that is now the site of the Citadel. The “island” divides the broad Hellenistic street into two. On the urban location, see Gaube and Wirth, *Alep*, p. 80. On the gate itself, see Gaube and Wirth, *Alep*, pp. 141–42, 344–45, and p. 163 for a list of its inscriptions.

54. The last block of the main religious inscription has a vertical hand on the left side, marking the end of the inscriptive frieze; it is equivalent to the vertical hand on the right of the basmala block, which marked the beginning of that frieze.

55. Sibt al-Ajamí begins his list of the city’s streets with this thoroughfare: see Sourdel, “Ésquisse,” p. 115, and pp. 128–29 on the importance of this street, and, by contrast, Gaube and Wirth, *Alep*, p. 277 on the north route being a neglected suq, at least in modern times. On the importance of this southeast sector, see Sauvaget, *Alep*, pls. IV and LVIII.

56. Verse 108 occupies most of the fountain facade and the south side of the portal—a stretch of approximately 7.75 meters. The full verse 108 has 86 letters, but an initial section of some fifteen letters must have been placed on the southern facade, as there is no room for them on the western. Thus there are seventy-one letters over some 7.75 meters. The southern facade was over twice the length, and could have accommodated the 116 letters of verse 107, the eighteen of the full basmala, and the fifteen letters from the beginning of verse 108—a total of 149 over some 17 meters. Expressed in ratios, this amounts to 1:9.2 on the western facade compared to 1:8.7 on the southern, though it must be emphasized that the measurements are very approximate.


58. Starting the main inscription at the southern end was perhaps unusual.

59. See above, n. 30.

60. Lecker, *Muslims, Jews, and Pagans*, pp. 78–80. There were two rival claims, depending largely on tribal affiliations: the Aws claiming it was the Mosque at Quba, the Khazrajis that it was the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina, which was on Khazrajî soil. The implied reference in the inscription to Quba is a point noted, but not pursued, by both Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 223, and Allen, *Classical Revival*, p. 4.


62. An account derived from al-Baladhuri is explicit that the first *muqaddima*uilt a mosque in Quba’ and prayed in it in the direction of Jerusalem for one year; the Prophet led prayer there when he first arrived: see Lecker, *Muslims, Jews, and Pagans*, p. 79; A. J. Wensinck, *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition: Alphabetically Arranged* (Leiden, 1927, repr. 1972), s.v.

64. Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus inscriptionum Arabicae* (Leipzig, 1886), pt. 1, pp. 224–26; Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, pp. 150–61. The *ex voto* argument is generally accepted, but there are some reasons to question it; I hope to return to the subject elsewhere.


67. Three inscriptions on the west face of the portal, which was the principal entrance arch from the street leading from the Bab Antakiyya, were arranged, it would seem, to emphasize a Jerusalem, anti-Crusader message that would complement the anti-Shiite message of the passage over the fountain. The main inscription (Qur’an 72:18) was a condemnation of *shirk*; the center of the historical inscription below contained the name of ‘Umar b. al-Khattab; and the roundel in the keystone prominently displayed the name of the architect, who was of Jerusalem origin, Sa‘īd al-Muqaddasi. It was perhaps the importance of coordinating these three themes over the entrance arch that forced the unhappy solution of relegating the end of the religious inscription to follow the date in the historical band. For the architect’s roundel, see Herzfeld, *Damascus: Studies in Architecture–II*, p. 31; Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 224.


72. It would be wrong to assume that the Kufic of the Qastal al-Shu‘aybiyya was deliberately archaizing. It may look so to us, because of the rapid changes that occurred with the introduction of “Nurid thulth.” But that is with the benefit of hindsight. (For the changes, see Van Berchem “Inscriptions arabes de Syrie”, VI; Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 210.)


75. See, for example, Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 212–13.


79. Eliséeff, *Nir ad-Din*, p. 442 on Qutb al-Din of Mosul conceding this to his brother Nur al-Din.


83. Ibid., p. 62.

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85. The Inalid bull protome was used on the western facade, with, in at least one case, a ring in the bull’s mouth. On the eastern facade the bull head reappears, but so does an image of a lion. On both the eastern, entrance side and the western, courtyard side of the central arch a lion is shown dominating a bull. The emblematic aspect of these animals is confirmed by the sculpture on the Aleppo Gate, erected after control of the city passed to Saladin and his vassal allies the Artuqids. Here the Artuqid bird of prey is shown above a bull protome with a ring in its mouth: Van Berchem, Amida, p. 78. On the unconscionable wealth of the Nisanids, see Van Berchem, Inschriften aus Syrien, pp. 91–99.


88. Jackson and Lyons, Saladin, pp. 78–79; Tabbaa, Constructions of Power and Piety, p. 37. Shadbakht’s loyalty to Nur ad-Din’s memory is evident in the inscription on the madrasa he built in Aleppo in 589 (1193), where, almost twenty years after Nur ad-Din’s death, he describes himself as his ‘atig.

89. Jackson and Lyons, Saladin, p. 80.


92. The columns are of fourth-century date, which accords with the fact that the cathedral was originally built in 313–20 and rebuilt as a Melkite cathedral: Mango, “Continuity of the Classical Tradition,” p. 119.


95. Van Berchem, Amida, p. 61, insc. no. 21; cf. insc. no. 18.
