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COLUMNS AND HIEROGLYPHS: MAGIC *SPOLIA* IN MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE OF NORTHERN SYRIA

Medieval Islamic architecture in Northern Syria is unthinkable without the use of *spolia*. Despite the abundance of local building material—there are ample limestone quarries in the area and even basalt occurrences both northwest and south of Aleppo—numerous buildings from the Zangid (1127–1183), Ayyubid (1171–1260), and also the Mamluk (1260–1516) periods exploited older architectural elements to a great extent. In Northern Syria, it is extremely easy to make use of already existing building materials. The architectural heritage of this region, with its numerous ruined and abandoned sites from not only the early Christian but also the classical and ancient Near Eastern periods, is exceptionally rich, which must have been very convenient, especially for the ambitious building projects undertaken by the Zangid and Ayyubid rulers. During their reign, entire towns, castles, and city walls were refurbished completely or at least in great part, mosques were either renovated or newly constructed, and new building types, such as law schools (sing. *madrasa*), Sufi monasteries (sing. *khānqāh*), and hospitals (sing. *māristān* or *bīmāristān*) appeared for the first time.[1] That architects regularly returned to abandoned sites within reach is confirmed both by literary sources and architectural studies: the minaret of the Great Mosque in Aleppo was built with stones from the former cathedral nearby,[2] the Great Mosque in Harran incorporated elements from the neighboring Sabaean temple of the moon,[3] and the Great Mosque of Diyarbakır, too, exploited its predecessor church.[4] The new fortifications were especially in need of good-quality stone material: the citadel of Aleppo boasts numerous ancient column shafts, mainly in the glacis but also in the citadel wall, as well as heavy, monolithic Jewish tombstones, which

were skillfully recycled in various parts of the enormous defense system.[5]

However, secondhand material was not only cheap and easily available—it was also often charged with additional meaning, and there were many instances in which medieval craftsmen clearly reused ancient architectural fragments on purpose. An important motive seems to have been the desire to refer to a specific event or period in the past: Zangid and Ayyubid architecture frequently contained historical allusions and commemorated certain ancient sites: for example, the Shu'aybiyya madrasa was built by the Zangid ruler Nur al-Din (d. 1174) on the location of the first Umayyad mosque of Aleppo.[6] The stones from a tower built by the Umayyad general Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik (d. 738), reused in the late Ayyubid Aleppine Qinnasrin Gate (*bāb Qinnasrīn*), are an explicit historical reference to the famous warrior, whose siege of Constantinople between 715 and 718 earned him lasting fame. It would have been more than appropriate to commemorate him by including remnants from one of his towers in a gate that was to protect the city against the infidel foes.[7] In addition, we also find a large number of Crusader *spolia*, whose political and ideological implications have recently been reexamined.[8] The Crusader capitals, deliberately turned upside down and flanking the mihrab of the Abu 'l-Fida' madrasa in the Nur al-Din mosque in Hama,[9] are well-known examples of war trophies, as is the much more illustrious portico of the Crusader church of St. Jean d'Acre, splendidly integrated into the Cairene madrasa of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad.[10] There are plenty of other Crusader *spolia* in Northern Syria, mainly columns and capitals reused in various mihrabs in mosques, madrasas, and

khanqahs, which remain to be studied in detail.[11] So far, there has been no serious examination of the origins of all the Crusader *spolia* in Northern Syria. Some were certainly taken from the various Crusader castles: many columns and capitals, for example, are missing from the chapel of Qalʿat Marqab (Margat). Apart from their propagandistic value, they were certainly also selected for their beauty and precious material—all Crusader columns are of extremely good-quality marble, in different colors and shades.[12]

While the political and symbolic implications of reused architectural elements have increasingly raised the interest of Islamic art historians, this paper will examine another attribute of *spolia*: their magical qualities, a highly underestimated aspect, no doubt because the entire subject of magic is generally relegated to the field of Islamic folklore and popular religion. However, both ethnographic and medieval literary data strongly suggest that talismanic and apotropaic *spolia* were enormously important and also widespread in the Middle East. Reading the literary sources, one might even argue that the presumed magical properties of *spolia* represented a major reason for their usage. An entire branch of medieval Islamic literature is dedicated to the topic of such talismans (*ṭilasmāt*), a term of Greek origin that basically covers ancient "magic" inscriptions and figural sculptures that are meant to avert danger, ward off destruction, keep away evil, manipulate natural forces, heal the sick, or simply bring good luck.[13] As we shall see below, special chapters were devoted to such *ṭilasmāt* in medieval topographical works. Talismanic *spolia* are, in a way, fixed versions of portable amulets, with exactly the same magical potential. Like amulets, they were part of the vast network of magical rites and beliefs practiced and well established in the everyday life of medieval Middle Eastern society, despite regularly recurring theological reservations.

Talismanic *spolia* are not particular to Northern Syria but have survived in many parts of the Middle East. Viktoria Meinecke-Berg and, more recently, Désirée Heiden have repeatedly demonstrated the significance of apotropaic pharaonic *spolia* for medieval Egyptian architecture,[14] and there were and still are numerous folk tales and popular traditions attached to them. Finbarr B. Flood has noted the use of talismanic

spolia in Syria, Yemen, Iran, India, and Pakistan.[15] In fact, the phenomenon is not restricted to the Islamic Middle East. Magical *spolia* seem to have also existed in the Byzantine world and in medieval Europe, although the subject has hardly been studied systematically in either area.[16] Talismanic sculptures, statues, and figurines were common in the classical world and, of course, even before then, in the ancient Middle East, although there are obviously no examples from those periods of architectural elements being reused for their presumed apotropaic or talismanic qualities such as are under discussion here.[17]

This article will concentrate on the evidence from Northern Syria, an area unusually well represented in both the literary and ethnographic traditions. It will also look at archaeological evidence, which provides unique insights into how *spolia* were chosen, a process about which very little is otherwise known. Quite a number of the talismanic *spolia* mentioned in historical sources still exist today. They can be found in the context of religious, domestic, and fortification architecture, and include all sorts of building elements, such as ancient inscriptions, stone reliefs with figural depictions, and freestanding figural sculptures. As for their historical origin, there seems to have been no preference for any particular era: Syrian talismanic *spolia* might be of either ancient Near Eastern, classical, or even Byzantine origin. It will, in fact, be argued that the specific historical origin of the *spolia* used is actually irrelevant.

TALISMANS, MIRACLES, AND HOLY SITES: THE LITERARY EVIDENCE

Maybe more than any other area in the Middle East, Northern Syria is astonishingly well covered in medieval historical and geographical literature. The Ayyubid and Mamluk chroniclers Ibn al-ʿAdim (d. 1262), Ibn Shaddad (d. 1285), Sibt b. al-ʿAjami (d. 1479), and Ibn al-Shihna (d. 1485) in particular are exceptionally rich and valuable sources on the region, providing us with detailed information on its landscape, history, building heritage, and, what is important for us, the use of *spolia* in medieval architecture. In a certain way, it might come as a surprise that architectural *spolia* were considered important enough to be mentioned in the first place.

Indeed, not only are they referred to at various points throughout the historical accounts but entire chapters are even devoted to them, with titles such as "Talismans, Marvels, and Places to Visit" (*ṭilasm, karāmāt, mazārāt*).[18] Another important source is the pilgrimage itinerary by 'Ali b. Abi Bakr al-Harawi (d. 1215), which lists the principal shrines of his age and also mentions *ṭilasmāt*.[19]

The sources refer to a wide range of *spolia* in different locations. For Aleppo, for example, we find mention of a Greek inscription on the Ayyubid Gate of Victory (*bāb al-Naṣr*)[20] (fig. 1), a Hieroglyphic-Luwian inscription (fig. 2) and a Hebrew inscription in the Mamluk mosque of al-Qayqan in the al-'Aqaba quarter,[21] and a "black column" on the no longer extant al-Afris Street that was probably made of basalt and hence of pre-Islamic origin.[22] We have references to serpent "talismans" in Mayyafariqin (Silvan),[23] Diyarbakır,[24] Aleppo,[25] and Ma'arrat al-Nu'man.[26] We do not know what they looked like. In Harran, they apparently resembled

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Fig. 1. The talisman-*spolium* in the Gate of Victory (*bāb al-Naṣr*) in Aleppo. The Greek inscription is to the right of the cavities, darkened by use, where the afflicted placed their fingers. It is turned vertically and barely recognizable. (Photo: Julia Gonnella)

Fig. 2. The Hieroglyphic-Luwian inscription-*spolium* in the Mamluk mosque of al-Qayqan in Aleppo. (Photo: Julia Gonnella)

jinns with two heads,[27] and thus remind us of the many dragon effigies known from various city gates.[28]

These *spolia* were valued primarily for their healing qualities, which are surprisingly specific: each one is depicted as curing a particular malady. Consider, for example, the Hieroglyphic-Luwian inscription—described as a "black stone with figures"—which is still *in situ* and well known among Near Eastern archaeologists: it is an imperial foundation inscription for a temple dating back to the early thirteenth century B.C.[29] According to medieval historians, it was apparently very efficient at fixing dislocated jaws, which could be remedied by coming to the mosque on three successive mornings before sunrise. The Hebrew inscription in the al-Qayqan mosque, an epitaph, was said to cure back pains. The Greek inscription on the Gate of Victory,[30] again fragments of an epitaph, is still visited today by those suffering from hand and fingernail problems: the afflicted person is meant to stick his or her fingers into little cavities, now darkened after years of frequent usage (fig. 1).[31] The black basalt column on Afris Street has unfortunately disappeared. It was described as having been particularly good at curing prostate problems.[32] The serpent *ṭilasmāt* were effective against snakebites, and there were also numerous scorpion talismans against scorpion bites.[33] Rather curious is a charm, not further specified, in the Hayyat mosque in Aleppo. It was meant to cure wild animals (sing. *waḥsh*) stricken with a colic.[34] Throughout the Islamic Middle East, wild animals are generally considered unclean and are thus avoided.[35] Local inhabitants perhaps hoped that the *ṭilasm* would help them to ward off epidemics. The Hayyat mosque was originally a synagogue and the charm was possibly associated with the Hebrew inscription still *in situ*.[36]

Of course, it was not the intention of medieval chroniclers to provide the reader with a topographical map of the major centers for various cures. *Spolia* were part of a whole range of extraordinary, supernatural phenomena—and there were other "non-architectural" oddities described alongside, such as the rather awkward report of a gentleman who threw a pottery shard into a pool in a place called al-Khannaqiyya outside Aleppo that was apparently grabbed by a strange hand appearing out of nowhere from behind a door under the water.[37]

There were also descriptions of unusual lights flaring up at certain locations, such as the one over a village near Rawandan.[38] Very much like the *mirabilia* in medieval Europe, such remarkable phenomena were highly regarded in many parts of the Middle East and in fact belong to the "marvels" (*ajā'ib*) that were collected more systematically by Arab geographers from around the twelfth century onwards, eventually forming a literary genre of their own, the *Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt* (Marvels of Creation) by the famous cosmographer and geographer Zakariyya' b. Muhammad al-Qazwini (d. 1283) being the most illustrious oeuvre of this kind.[39] These marvel stories described curiosities to a certain extent, but were concerned above all with miracles, wonders, and signs of supernatural power. These signs could be positive, as described above, but also negative. With respect to the *spolia*, they might very well be regarded as unpropitious omens of impending disasters. Such was the case with the basalt lion—quite certainly of ancient Near Eastern origin—that appeared in the course of restorations in the Great Mosque of Aleppo, making people feel very uneasy about continuing work there.[40] Another basalt lion was discovered when the Ayyubid palace on the citadel of Aleppo was being built: it was taken as an omen portending the destruction of the fortification walls.[41] Stories like these certainly were recurrent topoi, but as we shall later see, there were also some documented, "real" discoveries, such as the citadel lion, which almost certainly belonged to a predecessor site and was possibly even identical with one of the two *spolia* lions that were integrated into the fountain house near the palace (fig. 3).[42]

It is noteworthy that of all the *spolia*, literary sources seem to pay particular attention to ancient inscriptions: among those mentioned are a reused Hebrew inscription in the town of Qinnasrin, and Greek inscriptions in Tarsus, Adana, and Nasibin, as well as Damascus.[43] Rather odd is the reference to a "three-thousand-year-old" Greek inscription on an antique marble altar, apparently bearing the Roman emperor Diocletian's name. It was brought from Apamea to the Hallawiyya madrasa in Aleppo by Nur al-Din and became the object of much admiration.[44]

One might be tempted to interpret this preoccupation with ancient inscriptions as a manifestation of a
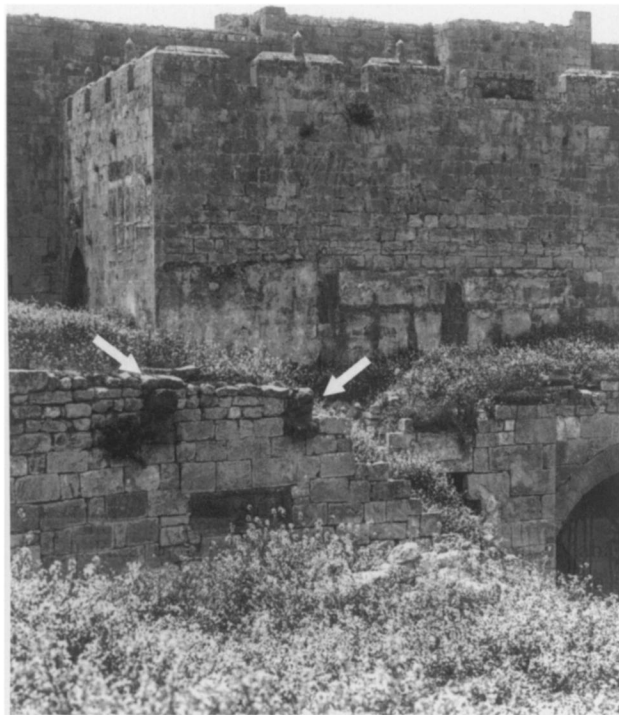
Fig. 3. Two reused basalt lions in the fountain house near the palace on the citadel of Aleppo (detail of photo by Gertrude Bell in Ernst Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, 2 vols., Matériaux pour un Corpus inscriptionum Arabicarum, Deuxième partie, Syrie du Nord (Cairo, 1954–56), vol. 1, pt. 3, pl. IVe). Both lions no longer exist.

fascination with history—the study of the past being, after all, an important research category of medieval Islamic scientific literature. This concern for the past also included an interest in ancient sites, and we know of several rulers who eagerly investigated archaeological remains, such as the Ayyubid sultan Salah al-Din (d. 1193), who went to see the pyramids in Cairo and also paid a visit to Alexandria, the ancient Hellenistic venue of learning and science.[45]

But did one really hope to extract historical information from the ancient inscriptions? Instead, the fascination with inscriptions seems to have been connected with the magical mysteries they supposedly revealed. The emir Sayf al-Din 'Ali b. Qilij, for example, had someone translate a Greek epitaph that came from a cemetery famous for its unusual light phenomena. The text, read by one of Aleppo's Greek scholars, turned out to be a religious note proclaiming that this light was a present from God.[46] The emir was certainly not interested in this inscription for its historical value but rather because he hoped to make use of its talismanic properties. The beautiful, "three-thousand-year-old" altar, with its white, translucent marble patina, which was brought to the Hallawiyya madrasa in Aleppo, was also not appreciated for its historical significance alone. It was reused for serving pastries to the jurists residing in the madrasa. Significantly, the service took place on a specific night, the blessed *Laylat al-Qadr*, the twenty-seventh night of Ramadan, a particularly propitious date in the Muslim calendar. The altar was evidently considered to be auspicious.[47] Above all, the ancient inscriptions were obviously cherished because of their close association with magical formulas and invocations, as one also finds them on portable amulets and handwritten charms, which often made use of pseudo-alphabets and Kabbalistic letters—seemingly "foreign" scripts. Letters (*ḥurūf*), like numbers, were generally believed to possess occult properties, and particular religious specialists were cherished for their apparent knowledge of such secrets and for their presumed expertise in accordingly influencing the supernatural spheres.[48] Magicians also employed foreign scripts to keep their knowledge of the occult secret; they likewise made use of special magical ink.[49]

THRESHOLDS AND COLUMNS: THE ETHNOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

In examining the use of *spolia*, it certainly is of value to study more closely what are often labelled as the "popular," local traditions of Islam. Especially in the ethnographic accounts of the veneration of saints, one finds plenty of practices and beliefs directly relevant to our subject. Particularly rich are the fascinating reports of the widely travelled Bavarian ethnographers Rudolf Kriss and Hubert Kriss-Heinrich, who in the late 1950s assembled numerous oral traditions on popular pilgrimages, saints' tombs, and amulets in the Balkans, Greece, Syria, Turkey, Palestine, Egypt, and Ethiopia.[50] A great number of the holy places they encountered have since disappeared. Others continue to exist and

Fig. 4. Detail of the Ayyubid iron doors with horseshoe decoration from the main entrance gate of the Aleppo citadel. (Photo: Klaus-Peter Kohlmeyer)

are still today potent sites of visitation, at least for parts of the present populations of these regions.

Many of the so-called folklore customs and beliefs described are of great antiquity. Such is the case with the particular significance of doors, thresholds, and gateways, which represent dangerous, permeable openings into safe, domestic spaces and thus need additional magical protection through charms, shrines, or talismanic statues. Assyrians and Hittites used "guardian" figures, both full statues of lions, sphinxes, and griffin demons and little terracotta figurines that were buried under thresholds, to prevent evil from entering.[51] Stelae with moon and bull aspects secured entrance gates in ancient Israel.[52] In Greece, talismanic statues protected cities and citadels.[53]

Islamic folklore tradition as well has several potent magical rites to secure endangered architectural apertures, such as the hanging of special herbs, mounted animals such as crocodiles, or other charms above the doorway, and even today numerous houses are safeguarded by amulets and other protective measures, both in the countryside and in urban settings.[54] Such protective measures were by no means taken only in the context of vernacular architecture, as is perfectly illustrated by the formidable design of the three heavy Ayyubid iron gates of the mighty Aleppo citadel, with its regular layout of horse shoes, an impressive example of a visually satisfying, apotropaic decoration making use of an old amulet type still common in Syria and Turkey today (fig. 4).[55] Ethnographic reports from nineteenth-century Cairo relate that it was still common to guard the entrance to one's residence with hieroglyphic inscriptions. They also mention herbal and handwritten amulets as well as talismanic *spolia*.[56] City gateways were and still are often protected by shrines and talismans—the city wall shielding the inhabitants from both natural and supernatural hostile incursions. There are numerous ancient traditions and miracles associated with gates. For example, Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich recorded that at Zuwayla Gate (*bāb Zuwayla*) in Cairo people used to stick nails in the doors, place teeth in the joints, and bind threads around the nails, all to find relief from headaches and toothaches (fig. 5).[57] In Syria, many of these ancient beliefs and traditions are still very much alive.[58] At Aleppo's western gate, the Gate of Antakya (*bāb Anṭākya*), one can still admire the large iron cannon ball of Shaykh Ma'ruf, who is said to have fended off the Crusaders.[59] At the Gate of Victory to the north, both the shrine of al-Khidr and the aforementioned fingernail talisman, the ancient Greek inscription (fig. 1), are regularly visited for their healing qualities, as is the *maqām* (shrine) of the "flying" Shaykh al-Tayyar at the southeastern Gate of Qinnasrin, which was recently renovated by private initiative. Even Aleppo's citadel boasts a potent gateway saint, again al-Khidr, in its heavily fortified entrance complex, which is still visited on a regular basis.[60]

The magical qualities of the gateways might have also played a role in how doors themselves came to be regarded as a worthy trophy: there is a long record of doors having been translocated as booty, not only in Islamic but also in Byzantine and medieval European contexts.[61] The robbing of doors certainly represents

Fig. 5. People visiting the Zuwayla Gate (*bāb Zuwayla*) in Cairo. (Photo: Rudolph Kriss and Hubert Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube im Bereich des Islam*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1960–62), 1: pl. 18)

Fig. 6. Stone columns and piers at the popular shrine of Sahwat al-Khadr in the Hawran region of Syria. (Photo: Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube*, 1: pl. 104)

one of the most sophisticated ways to symbolically display victory, leaving behind the defeated enemy, frail and unprotected not only physically but also visually. One prominent example is the odyssey of the famous Byzantine iron doors of ʿAmmuriyya, which were carried off to Samarra by the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Muʿtasim (r. 833–42) after he captured the Byzantine stronghold in 838. They were then brought via al-Raqqa to Aleppo, where the Ayyubid sultan al-Nasir Yusuf II (r. 1236–60) integrated them into the newly restored Qinnasrin Gate.[62] This conscious statement against his Christian enemies was further reinforced by his decision to complement the doors with the aforementioned remains from the Umayyad tower built by Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik, who was remembered not only for his famous siege of Constantinople but also for defeating the Byzantine army near ʿAmmuriyya.[63] These doors were thus

certainly charged with a strong political significance, but one might well assume that they were also believed to have numinous powers.

Apart from thresholds, gateways, and doors, ethnographic data further reveal the significance of stones and columns, which play a key role on saintly premises (fig. 6).[64] The attribution of magical qualities to natural stones, stone blocks, and columns is again a well-known pre-Islamic phenomenon: they were often believed to be inherently numinous or animated. Stone sanctuaries (Gr. *baityloi*) were built by the Phoenicians, the Greeks, and the Israelites, as well as the ancient Arabs. They served as either abodes or aniconic images of a deity, and were even sometimes considered divine themselves.[65] In his book on the religion of the early pagan Arabs, the Muslim historian Ibn al-Kalbi (d. ca. 819) describes some of the rites that surrounded such sanctuaries: visitors circumambulated the sites, sacrificed animals, and smeared their blood over the stones.[66] The Greeks also had "sacred" columns, which were said to have "fallen from the sky" (*diopetēs*, lit. "fallen from Zeus"), a possible indication of their meteoritic origin.[67]

In Northern Syria, one encounters columns ancient and new, some cut from rock and others fashioned from *spolia*, as well as pillars and piers. In both literary and oral traditions, there were plenty of columns and pillars boasting specific healing abilities. The remains of a column shaft in a cemetery near Jerusalem, for example, were believed among the locals to cure headaches

Fig. 7. Column with strings in the Petrus grotto of 'Akura. (Photo: Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube*, 1: pl. 142)
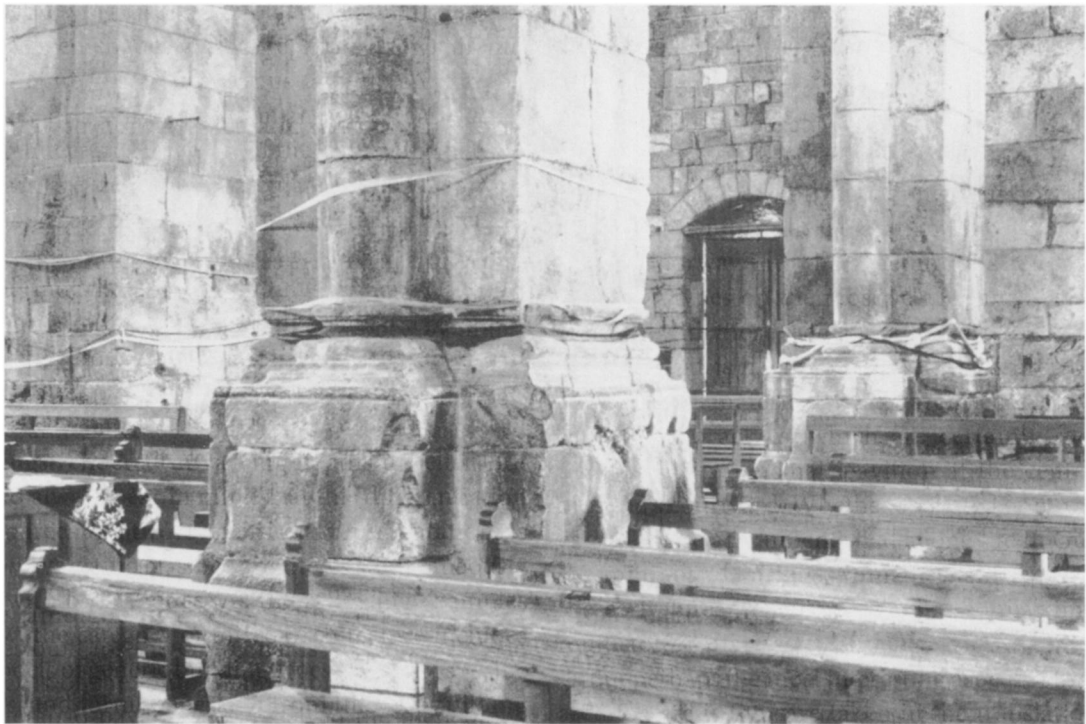

Fig. 8. Piers with strings in the church of Mar Yuhanna in Jubayl. (Photo: Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube*, 1: pl. 141)

Fig. 9. "Fake" column shafts at the Gate of Victory (*bāb al-Naṣr*) in Aleppo. (Photo: Julia Gonnella)

when circumambulated seven times,[68] and the "sweating" column in the Hagia Sophia—also known among Muslims as the "column of al-Khidr"—was, and by some still is, said to be rather efficacious against eye problems and infertility: the afflicted are supposed to stick their thumbs in a small cavity of the shaft.[69] Ibn Shaddad mentions a beneficent pillar that was visited by both Muslims and Jews, illustrating perfectly that such beliefs were not confined to one religious community alone.[70] People came, and still come today, to bind strings around particular columns as a way to confirm personal vows (fig. 7)[71]—again a practice known among not only Muslims but also local Christians—as is likewise made clear by reports from the chapel of St. Ananias in Damascus and the church of Mar Yuhanna in Jubayl, in present day Lebanon (fig. 8).[72] In the latter case, Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich were told that the strings

had been wrapped around the piers after a major cholera outbreak. There were also, and still are, miracles associated with columns: a column in a local *maqām* near Skopje in the Balkans, for example, is said to have arrived there by flying through the air from Khorasan.[73]

These magical qualities might indeed account for the very common practice of reusing column shafts in architecture. Fortifications in particular make significant use of column shafts in various parts of their defensive systems. In most cases, they are vertically set into the wall constructions as header ties, leaving the round section of the columns visible on the outside wall.[74] While it is commonly argued that column shafts were mainly employed for stability reasons—the columns are meant to hold the walls together to protect foundations against sapping[75]—Michael Greenalgh has recently pointed out that the layout of the shafts within the fortification walls was very often too regular and overly decorative.[76] Indeed, many of the shafts are fixed on a very high level and are thus hardly functional for defensive purposes. Recent architectural studies on the citadel of Aleppo and the city walls have further revealed not only the existence of large numbers of reused column shafts but also "fake" columns, that is, roundels cut into the masonry as a way to mimic the originals (fig. 9). Instead, there seems to be a magical raison d'être behind their frequent usage. This is certainly strongly suggested by the wall decoration of the small Mamluk mosque of al-Qayqan in Aleppo, where column shafts are conspicuously displayed on both façade sides, together with the aforementioned talismanic Hebrew and Hittite inscriptions and other non-epigraphic *spolia* (fig. 10).[77] In this case, concern for stability most definitely could not have been a factor in their inclusion.

It certainly is surprising how many of the smaller, local shaykhs' tombs are furnished with columns. In most cases, these columns originated from more ancient constructions nearby and sometimes even directly from predecessor buildings. Muslim shaykhs' tombs were often built on more ancient holy sites, Christian churches and/or pagan temples. The reemployment of older building material created a visual continuity of sacred space—both in Northern Syria and in other places as well. In some cases, shaykhs' tombs not only made use of single *spolium* but were even integrated into the ruins of the predecessor building, as with the

Fig. 10. Reused column shafts at the Mamluk mosque of al-Qayqan in Aleppo. (Photo: Julia Gonnella)

Fig. 11. The shrine of "Nabi Huri" in Cyrrhus. (Photo: Klaus-Peter Kohlmeyer)

Fig. 12. The "antique" entablature of the Shuʻaybiyya madrasa in Aleppo. (Photo: Julia Gonnella)

local *maqām* within the Roman temple ruins on Barakat mountain, near the famous Byzantine monastery of St. Simeon, or the *maqām* of Uriya b. Hannan ("Nabi Huri") on the antique site of Cyrrhus near the Turkish border—until today one of the most important shrines for local Kurds—in a nearly intact Roman tomb (fig. 11).[78] This manner of using predecessor buildings is in no way confined to so-called vernacular architecture: the Hallawiyya madrasa in Aleppo preserves part of the ancient cathedral, and the cella of the Baal temple in Palmyra was first turned into a church and then into a mosque in the twelfth century, without many changes to the place.[79] Of course, ancient inscriptions, *spolia*, and archaeological ruins emphasize the antiquity of a religious site. They imply that the site has always been worshipped, evoking a sort of timelessness, as do indeed the Muslim saints themselves, whose historical personality has in general long been forgotten and who are simply remembered for having lived "a long time ago" (*min zamān*). In anthropological terminology, one would say that both saints and shrines were removed from the

"natural circle of life," and instead belong to a "sacred," permanent time.

RECUTTING *SPOLIA*: THE "CLASSICAL REVIVAL"

It would be incredibly fascinating to look at so-called classical revival architecture from a "magical" perspective. This architectural phenomenon, which was rather unusual for Islamic art, appeared in Northern Syria in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It makes deliberate use of antique forms, including pilasters, pediments, and cornices with different types of moldings.[80] In fact, these occurrences of classicisms are restricted to single architectural details such as friezes or capitals, rather than to entire buildings. In a way, one could say, therefore, that we are dealing here with architectural elements made to look like *spolia*. A well-known example is the ornate entablature of the Shuʻaybiyya madrasa in Aleppo, built in 1150 by Nur al-Din, which

Jean Sauvaget mistook for recut antique material (fig. 12).[81] The phenomenon of fabricating stones *all'antica*, i.e., of fabricating one's own *spolia*, is, of course, also known from other parts of the world, such as medieval Europe, where one deliberately tried either to finish off a decorative arrangement with already existing antique elements or to produce new, prominent, antique-looking eye-catchers for selected parts of the buildings.[82]

Terry Allen has argued that these classicizing motifs in Northern Syria were employed in places that had appropriate—albeit rather general—"antique" associations and where there were already antique monuments or remains.[83] The Shu'aybiyya madrasa, for example, commemorated the first mosque in Aleppo and was built near a now-lost Greek arch that might have served as a model, and both the minaret of Aleppo and the mosque of Harran have associations with the prophet Ibrahim.[84] Allen has also pointed out that these classical motifs seem to have appeared mainly on religious and not on secular buildings,[85] although this is a rather speculative observation, considering how little secular architecture has survived from this period.

It is extremely tempting to theorize that these classical motifs, the so-called pseudo-*spolia*, were also meant to evoke magical associations. If this was the case, they would have enhanced the sanctity of the respective building, not unlike the fake saint's tomb of the Aleppo suq, which was specifically installed during the pilgrimage period in order to attract additional customers.[86] A magical association would certainly require us to revise the traditional interpretation of the "classical revival." The appearance of classical motifs on religious buildings, for example, would then have to be seen as yet another way of emphasizing the antiquity of the sacred site rather than the antiquity of the site having been the source of inspiration for this exquisite workmanship, as has previously been argued. It would also explain the different antique styles used within the framework of "classical revival" architecture that have always puzzled art historians, making it difficult to interpret this phenomenon as a conscious attempt to recreate a specific historical period. *Spolia* were used to make buildings look "ancient" in a very general sense rather than to evoke a specifically "Byzantine," "Umayyad," "early medieval," or even "classical Roman" past. Of course,

these preceding remarks remain highly theoretical and should be studied further.

CHOOSING *SPOLIA*: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

I would like to conclude with archaeological evidence that not only testifies to the significant magical role of *spolia* per se, but also provides us with a rare insight into the process of choosing *spolia*. Between 1996 and 2006, Syrian-German excavations at the citadel of Aleppo yielded an important Bronze and Iron Age temple dedicated to the storm god, one of the major cultic places in the entire Middle East.[87] The temple was decorated not only with various sets of spectacular reliefs depicting the storm god himself and his entourage, but also with an exceptional portrait of King Taita, a potent but yet little-known ruler of the eleventh century B.C. These reliefs were added to the temple at various stages and are currently dated between 1400 and 900 B.C.

Before the excavations started, a series of single ancient sculptures and reliefs dispersed on the citadel and in the local museum were already important harbingers of the future discovery.[88] Of those, a group of five limestone and basalt blocks is particularly striking. One of these blocks is reused as a *spolium* next to the entrance gate of the upper Ayyubid mosque (fig. 13). The others are presently exhibited as isolated pieces in front of the citadel museum. They, too, had apparently been integrated into the same mosque, but were extracted once the mosque was dismantled for restoration during the period of the French Mandate. These blocks, which are around 85 to 95 centimeters tall and 1.5 meters wide, all show a grid- or knot-like pattern in two registers. They date to the period of the Hittite Empire (fourteenth–thirteenth century B.C.) and are meant to depict "false windows" with carved window grilles resembling lattice woodwork screens (*mashrabiyya*s), as corroborated by miniature house models in clay.[89]

The excavations revealed that these blocks belonged to the original decoration of the former temple when, in 2003 and 2004, the practically intact interior of the eastern and southern walls of the temple was exposed, yielding nine further *mashrabiyya* blocks still *in situ* (fig. 14).

Fig. 13. A "false window" reused in the upper mosque of the Aleppo citadel. (Photo: Julia Gonnella)

From this it was clear that the other five blocks originated from the western wall, which had been completely destroyed in the Ayyubid period during the construction of a series of storage rooms. These storage rooms still exist to the east of the lower mosque and now—after clearing—expose the foundation of the temple wall. When the Ayyubid workmen had this wall demolished, they evidently removed the decorated stone blocks from their original location and incorporated them into the upper mosque, which was completely rebuilt under the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Zahir (r. 1186–1216) after it burned in a fire in 1212.[90]

The knot-like patterns of the so-called false windows probably induced the Ayyubid architects and workmen to reuse the Hittite stone blocks as talismanic *spolia* near the mosque entrance. The motif fits very well with Ayyubid apotropaic decoration. Knots are known for their magical associations: it is an ancient Arab custom to spit on knots, for example, and knotted threads are thrown upon saints' tombs.[91] Knot motifs are common not only on Ayyubid pottery and metalwork[92] but also in Ayyubid architecture, the most famous example being the two intertwined dragons sitting over the main entrance of the Aleppo citadel. The choice to integrate a "false window" next to the mosque entrance, therefore, seems plausible within both the Ayyubid magical and aesthetic contexts.

Lion figures were also obviously reused on the citadel, as seen in the aforementioned photograph by Gertrude Bell (fig. 3).[93] It shows two basalt lion sculptures flanking the entrance of a building, which can probably be identified as the fountain house next to the Ayyubid palace. Unfortunately, it is impossible to date this building activity precisely and the lions have since

Fig. 14. The reliefs of the eastern wall of the temple of the storm god in Aleppo. (Photo: Kay Kohlmeyer)

disappeared, too. However, the two Ayyubid three-quarter profile lions (the "laughing" lion and the "weeping" lion) on both sides of the third gateway in the large entrance complex are clearly conscious reminders of the important pre-Islamic tradition associated with this site.

Not all reliefs from the ancient temple were equally appreciated by the Ayyubids. The famous one previously discovered by the French archaeologist Georges Ploix de Rotrou in 1929, with two winged genii and a sun and moon motif, was reused as an ordinary cornerstone in a medieval foundation, hiding the figural decoration.[94] In the course of repair work by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in 2004, the remains of a massive, ancient Middle Eastern sculpture were discovered as a foundation stone of the second gate in the large Ayyubid entrance complex.[95] The sculpture, representing either a sphinx or a griffon, had been turned upside down and cut into shape. Its head was missing, making it difficult to identify the creature with certainty. In both cases, the buried sculpture demonstrates that the Ayyubids were seriously concerned about displaying it in public, despite the fact that griffons and sphinxes do regularly appear in medieval decorative Islamic art and neither has explicitly negative associations.[96]

For the final set of reliefs, we do not have any actual remains, although one might assume that they also ended up as foundation material in medieval buildings. The original temple decoration discovered in the excavations shows not only "false windows" but also alternating "bullmen" with lifted arms. These ancient mythical creatures evidently produced strong feelings of anxiety, certainly for their hoofs alone, which made them appear to be jinns. Until today, none of the bullmen, which must have embellished the western wall of the temple, has been recovered. The excavations on the citadel, however, demonstrate very well that medieval architectural *spolia* were chosen with the greatest care and attention.

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NOTES

1. For general accounts on Zangid and Ayyubid architecture in Northern Syria, see Terry Allen, *Ayyubid Architecture*, 6th ed. (Occidental, Calif., 1996–99), http://www.sonic.net/~tallen/palmtree/ayyfront.html, retrieved from the Internet Archive www.archive.org, December 1, 2009; Yasser Tabbaa, "The Architectural Patronage of Nur al-Din (1146–1174)" (PhD diss., New York University, 1982); Yasser Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo*, 2 vols. (University Park, Pa., 1997). Lorenz Korn also remarks upon the importance of *spolia*: Lorenz Korn, *Ayyubidische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien: Bautätigkeit im Kontext von Politik und Gesellschaft, 564–658/1169–1260*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg, 2004), 2:234–36. For the Mamluk buildings in Syria, see mainly Michael Meinecke, *Die mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien (648/1250 bis 923/1517)*, 2 vols. (Glückstadt, 1992). For an overview of the immense fortification projects in the entire area during this period, see the various contributions in *La fortification au temps des croisades*, ed. Nicolas Faucherre, Jean Mesqui, and Nicolas Prouteau (Rennes, 2004); *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden, 2006); and, more recently, *Burgen und Städte der Kreuzzugszeit*, ed. Mathias Piana (Petersberg, 2008).

2. The historical text actually mentions that the kadi Abu'l-Fadl Ibn al-Khashshab took stones from a fire temple for the minaret. The Aleppo cathedral was originally believed to have been a fire temple before it was christianized: 'Izz al-Dīn Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn Shaddād, *al-A'lāq al-khaṭīra fī dhikr umarā' al-Shām wa'l-Jazīra = La description d'Alep d'Ibn Shaddād*, vol. 1, pt. 1, ed. Dominique Sourdel (Damascus, 1953), 34. See also Terry Allen, *A Classical Revival in Islamic Architecture* (Wiesbaden, 1986), 23–24.

3. David Storm Rice, "From Sîn to Saladin: Excavations in Harran's Great Mosque, with New Light on the Babylonian King Nabonidus and His 104-Year-Old Mother," *The Illustrated London News* 231 (September 21, 1957): 466–69; and, more recently, Allen, *Classical Revival*, 41–42. The use of architectural fragments from the cathedral of St. Sophia in the mosque of Harran is discussed in Mattia Guidetti, "The Byzantine Heritage in the *Dār al-Islām*: Churches and Mosques in al-Ruha between the Sixth and Twelfth Centuries," *Muqarnas* 26 (2009): 13.

4. Max van Berchem and Josef Strzygowski, *Amida: Matériaux pour l'épigraphie et l'histoire musulmanes du Diyar-bekr, Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte des Mittelalters von Nordmesopotamien, Hellas und dem Abendlande* (Heidelberg, 1910), 144; Allen, *Classical Revival*, 37–41.

5. Julia Gonnella, "La citadelle d'Alep: Les périodes islamiques," *Archéologie Islamique* 11 (2001): 188–94. These historically very interesting tombstones, which probably originate from a former cemetery nearby, were recently published by Nathanja Hüttenmeister, "Mittelalterliche jüdische Grabsteine aus Aleppo—ein Nachtrag," in *Memoria-Wege jüdischen Erinnerns: Festschrift für Michael Brocke zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Birgit E. Klein and Christiane E. Müller (Berlin, 2005), 217–42.

6. For full references, see n. 80 below.

7. According to the literary sources, the stones of the tower were brought from al-Naʿura, a small site between Aleppo and Balis. Ibn Shaddād, *La description d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 9–20; Muḥibb al-Dīn Abūʾl-Faḍl Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Durr al-muntakhab li-taʾrīkh Ḥalab = "Les perles choisies" d'Ibn ach-Chihna*, trans. Jean Sauvaget, Matériaux pour servir à l'histoire de la ville d'Alep 1 (Beirut, 1933), 32–33; Ernst Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, 2 vols., Matériaux pour un Corpus inscriptionum arabicarum: Deuxième partie, Syrie du Nord (Cairo, 1954–56), vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 59–65; Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety*, 21–22. See also n. 62 below.

8. Crusader *spolia* in Muslim architecture have lately been discussed by Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999), 382–86, and Finbarr B. Flood, "The Medieval Trophy as an Art Historical Trope: Coptic and Byzantine 'Altars' in Islamic Contexts," *Muqarnas* 18 (2001): 43–72. Both have stressed the propagandistic value of the reused Crusader handiwork. Flood also demonstrated the important regional differences in the cultural associations of *spolia* and called for the need to historicize the particular instances of reuse. As such, Crusader *spolia* have not been dealt with systematically, but are only mentioned in the treatment of single buildings, mainly for Palestine (e.g., Robert W. Hamilton, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque* [London, 1949]; Michael Burgoyne, *Mamluk Jerusalem* [London, 1987]; Miriam Rosen-Ayalon, "Art and Architecture in Ayyubid Jerusalem," *Israel Exploration Journal* 40, 4 [1990]: 305–14) and Egypt (e.g., K. A. C. Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, 2 vols. [Oxford, 1959], 1:234–40; Viktoria Meinecke-Berg, "Spolien in der mittelalterlichen Architektur von Kairo," in *Ägypten, Dauer und Wandel: Symposium anlässlich des 75-jährigen Bestehens des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo* [Mainz, 1985], 141). Ernst Herzfeld is really the only one who has studied reused Crusader material in Syria: Ernst Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies in Architecture–II," *Ars Islamica* 10 (1943): 13–70, and Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*. See also Flood, "Medieval Trophy," 43–72, esp. n. 56; Finbarr B. Flood, "An Ambiguous Aesthetic: Crusader Spolia in Ayyubid Jerusalem" in *Ayyubid Jerusalem: The Holy City in Context, 1187–1250*, ed. Sylvia Auld and Robert Hillenbrand (London, 2009), 202–15.

9. Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies in Architecture–II," 46–47; Hillenbrand, *Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, 384; Flood, "Medieval Trophy," 57–58.

10. See Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, 1:234–40; Meinecke-Berg, "Spolien in der mittelalterlichen Architektur von Kairo," 141.

11. It would be interesting to find out whether some *spolia* were not in fact reworked copies. In Aleppo, it is very conspicuous that all the so-called Crusader columns flanking the various Ayyubid and Mamluk mihrabs always appear in pairs. They always fit perfectly in their position, never look cut or damaged, and also go very well with the rest of the marble decoration on the mihrabs (e.g., greyish marble columns and greyish marble decoration in the Aleppine Shadhbakhtiyya madrasa, greenish marble columns and mihrab decoration in the Sultaniyya madrasa, red marble in the Farafra khanqah, etc.). This perfect arrangement makes one wonder whether the columns were in fact not booty but rather conscious reworkings in Crusader style executed together with the rest of the prayer niche. Strangely enough, the only dodgy pair of columns is in the Firdaws madrasa, which is otherwise noted for its superb mihrab. These columns do not fit in very well in their position, and the color of the marble differs from the overall decoration. They may be later additions.

12. Cf. Jaroslav Folda, *The Art of the Crusades in the Holy Land, 1098–1187* (Cambridge, 1995), 442–43, 596.

13. For the literary use of *ṭilasmāt*, see J. Ruska and B. Carra de Vaux [C.E. Bosworth], *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition* (henceforth *EI2*) (Leiden, 1960–2004), s.v. "Ṭilsam"; Manfred Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Leiden, 1972), esp. 362 and 378–81. Ullmann also explores the strong Greek tradition in Islamic magic. For example, a direct link can be seen between the figure of the magician Balinas, who in magical literature is described as "the master of talismans" (*ṣāḥib al-ṭilasmāt*), and the philosopher-magician Apollonios of Tyana (first century A.D.), who was responsible for the fabrication of talismans in ancient Greece. Comparable magical literature also existed in the Byzantine world. See, for example, Richard P. H. Greenfield, "A Contribution to the Study of Palaeologan Magic," in *Byzantine Magic*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, D.C., 1995), esp. 123–30, also with references to the lore connected with the name of Apollonius of Tyana.

14. Meinecke-Berg, "Spolien in der mittelalterlichen Architektur von Kairo," 139–40; Desirée Heiden, "Pharaonische Baumaterialien in der ayyubidischen Stadtbefestigung von Kairo," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 57 (2001): 60–61. On the magical use of *spolia*, see also Desirée Heiden, "Die Beschützerin der Pforten: Zur apotropäischen Verwendung pharaonischer Spolien in der Moschee des ʿUtman Katkhuda (1147/1734) in Kairo," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 65 (2009): 191–211; Georg Stauth, *Ägyptische heilige Orte: Konstruktionen, Inszenierungen und Landschaften der Heiligen im Nildelta*, vol. 2, *Zwischen den Steinen des Pharao und islamischer Moderne: Fuwa - Sa al-Hagar (Sais)* (Bielefeld, 2008).

15. Finbarr B. Flood, "Image against Nature: Spolia as Apotropaia in Byzantium and the Dār al-Islām," *The Medieval*

History Journal 9, 1 (2006): 143–66. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference on "Byzantine *Spolia* in Islamic Monuments" held in Berlin in November 2003. See also Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften*, 379.

16. See, for example, Richard H. L. Hamann-Maclean, "Antikenstudium in der Kunst des Mittelalters," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 15 (1949–50): 157–250; Arnold Esch, "Spolien: Zur Wiederverwendung antiker Baustücke und Skulpturen im mittelalterlichen Italien," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 51 (1969): 1–64.

17. Little research has been conducted on the topic of *spolia* in classical and ancient Middle Eastern architecture. For talismanic statues in ancient Greece, see Christopher A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses: Guardian Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (New York, 1992).

18. See the chapter "Les particularités et les talismans, les lieux miraculeux d'Alep, dans les murs, hors-les-murs, et dans sa province," in Abū Dharr Aḥmad Sibṭ ibn al-ʿAjamī, *Kunūz al-dhahab fī taʾrīkh Ḥalab = "Les trésors d'or" de Sibṭ ibn al-ʿAjamī*, trans. Jean Sauvaget, Matériaux pour servir à l'histoire de la ville d'Alep 2 (Beirut, 1950), 1.

19. Abū 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt ilā maʿrifat al-ziyārāt = Guide des lieux de pèlerinage*, trans. Janine Sourdel-Thomine (Damascus, 1957).

20. Sibṭ ibn al-ʿAjamī, *"Les trésors d'or,"* 3. See n. 30 below for other references.

21. Sibṭ ibn al-ʿAjamī, *"Les trésors d'or,"* 2; Julia Gonnella, *Islamische Heiligenverehrung im urbanen Kontext am Beispiel von Aleppo (Syrien)* (Berlin, 1995), 225. On the mosque, see Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 407–8, fig. 132.

22. Ibn Shaddād, *La description d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 123; Sibṭ ibn al-ʿAjamī, *"Les trésors d'or,"* 1; Ibn al-Shiḥna, *"Les perles choisies,"* 136; Gonnella, *Islamische Heiligenverehrung*, 236.

23. al-Harawī, *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage*, 145.

24. Van Berchem and Strzygowski, *Amida*, 82.

25. In the *burj al-thaʿābīn* (serpents' tower) in Aleppo. See Ibn Shaddād, *La description d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 123; Sibṭ ibn al-ʿAjamī, *"Les trésors d'or,"* 2; Ibn al-Shiḥna, *"Les perles choisies,"* 135–36.

26. Ibn Shaddād, *La description d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 128. The antique stone column in Maʿarrat al-Nuʿman is also described by Nasir-i Khusraw (d. 1088): see Guy Le Strange, ed. and trans., *Palestine under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650 to 1500* (orig. pub. Boston and New York, 1890; repr. Beirut, 1965), 495.

27. Sibṭ ibn al-ʿAjamī, *"Les trésors d'or,"* 2; Nikita Elisséeff, *Nūr ad-Dīn, un grand prince musulman de Syrie au temps des Croisades (511–569 h./1118–1174)*, 3 vols. (Damascus, 1967), 1:145.

28. For various examples of dragon reliefs in Anatolia and Mesopotamia, including the famous knotted dragons on the entrance of the Aleppo citadel, see Joachim Gierlichs, *Mittelalterliche Tierreliefs in Anatolien und Nordmesopotamien: Untersuchungen zur figürlichen Baudekoration der*

Seldschuken, Artuqiden und ihrer Nachfolger bis ins 15. Jahrhundert (Tübingen, 1996), 28–40.

29. For the Hieroglyphic-Luwian inscription, see Annelies Kammenhuber, *Hethitisch, Palaisch, Luwisch, Hieroglyphenluwisch und Hattisch: Altkleinasiatische Indices zum Handbuch der Orientalistik* (Munich, 1969), 168. This inscription was originally reintegrated upside down. It was later turned around 180°, probably during the French Mandate period. The Hebrew inscription is recorded in Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, 2:407–8, fig. 132.

30. For the Greek inscription, see Louis Jalabert and René Mouterde, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie* (Paris, 1929), vol. 1, 107. Another "(tomb?)stone" with healing qualities in the same city gate is mentioned by al-Harawī, *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage*, 9. It has not survived, however. For the gate, see Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 29–39. For references to a *maqām* of al-Khiḍr in the same gate, see Gonnella, *Islamische Heiligenverehrung*, 162–63.

31. Gonnella, *Islamische Heiligenverehrung*, 163.

32. Cf. a similar column near the Umayyad mosque in Damascus that, once circumambulated three times, enabled horses and donkeys to urinate again: al-Harawī, *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage*, 56.

33. For a discussion of the various medieval scorpion and serpent talismans, see Almut von Gladiss, "Medizinische Schalen: Ein islamisches Heilverfahren und seine mittelalterlichen Hilfsmittel," *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 11 (1999): 147–61; Flood, "Image against Nature," 146–66, also notes numerous talismans against reptiles, pigeons, spiders, and other creatures.

34. Sibṭ ibn al-ʿAjamī, *"Les trésors d'or,"* 1–2; the talisman is described as being on Nasiriyya Street. On the mosque, see Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 309–12; Meinecke, *Die mamlukische Architektur*, 2:145, no. 33/34.

35. For example, see the article on dogs in F. Viré, *EI2*, s.v. "Kalb."

36. On the synagogue and its inscription, see Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, 2:312, no. 165, pl. CXIIb.

37. Sibṭ ibn al-ʿAjamī, *"Les trésors d'or,"* 4.

38. Lights descending from the heavens are a common topos for designating shrines or holy places. Ibn Shaddād, *La description d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 128.

39. See C. E. Dubler, *EI2*, s.v. "Adjāʾib."

40. Ibn Shaddād, *La description d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 123; Ibn al-Shiḥna, *"Les perles choisies,"* 136. For other miraculous incidences in the Great Mosque, see Gonnella, *Islamische Heiligenverehrung*, 209–11.

41. Ibn Shaddād, *La description d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 23–24.

42. The two lions have disappeared. Bell's detailed picture of one of the lions has been published by Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 3, pl. IVe; for the pair as seen from afar, see pl. XXXIXd.

43. Sibṭ Ibn al-ʿAjamī, *"Les trésors d'or,"* 4; Ibn Shaddād, *La description d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 31–34.

44. Ibn Shaddād, *La description d'Alep,* vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 110; Ibn al-Shiḥna, *"Les perles choisies,"* 89; Sibṭ Ibn al-'Ajamī, *"Les trésors d'or,"* 4; Zakariyyaʾ b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, *Kitāb Āthār al-bilād,* ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1848), 123. For a full discussion of this altar, see n. 47 below.

45. Shihāb al-Dīn Abū ʾl-Qāsim Abū Shāma, *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn al-Nūriyya wa ʾl-Ṣalāḥiyya,* ed. M.Ḥ.M. Aḥmad and M. M. Ziyāda, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1962), vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 689.

46. Ibn Shaddād, *La description d'Alep,* vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 128.

47. For the multi-layered significance of Nur al-Din's installation of this altar table in the converted former cathedral of Aleppo, see Flood, "Medieval Trophy," 52–64. The great age of the table obviously played an important role in underscoring the antiquity of the place: see also Allen, *Classical Revival,* 60. Flood considers the Christian associations of the *spolia* to be more important; in his opinion, they were explicitly intended to reassert Nur al-Din's propagation of a newly ascendant Islam.

48. For an introduction to Islamic onomatomantic magic, see T. Fahd, *EI2,* s.v. "Ḥurūf"; D. B. MacDonald [T. Fahd], *EI2,* s.v. "Sīmiyāʾ." See also Toufic Fahd, *La divination arabe: Études religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l'Islam* (Strassburg, 1966); Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften;* Emilie Savage-Smith, ed., *Magic and Divination in Early Islam* (Aldershot, 2004).

49. On cryptographic alphabets, see Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften,* 2–4.

50. Rudolf Kriss and Hubert Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube im Bereich des Islam,* 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1960–62), vol. 1, *Wallfahrtswesen und Heiligenverehrung,* and vol. 2, *Amulette, Zauberformeln, und Beschwörungen.*

51. See Walter Farber, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East,* ed. Jack M. Sasson et al., 4 vols. (New York, 1995), 3:1903; Dessa Rittig, *Assyrisch-babylonische Kleinplastik magischer Bedeutung vom 13.–6. Jh. v. Chr.* (Munich, 1977); A. R. Green, "Neo-Assyrian Apotropaic Figures: Figurines, Rituals and Monumental Art with Special Reference to the Figures from the Excavations of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq at Nimrud," *Iraq* 45 (1983): 87–96.

52. Monika Bernett and Othmar Keel, *Mond, Stier und Kult am Stadttor: Die Stele von Betsaida (et-Tell)* (Freiburg, Switzerland, 1998).

53. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses,* 7–9.

54. Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube,* 1:37, 38, 41, 109.

55. Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube,* 2:7, 12, pls. 12, 27, 51. It would also be interesting to conduct further studies on the magical properties of metals. Iron was quite certainly considered to possess numinous powers.

56. Meinecke-Berg, "Spolien in der mittelalterlichen Architektur von Kairo," 139.

57. Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube,* 1:80–81; for traditions connected with the doors of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, see p. 320.

58. For Aleppo, see Gonnella, *Islamische Heiligenverehrung,* 158–64.

59. Ibid., 158–59 and 184–85.

60. Ibid., 259.

61. For doors as trophies, see especially Beat Brenk, "Türen als Spolien und Baureliquien: Nova construere, sed amplius vetusta servare," in *Künstlerischer Austausch = Artistic Exchange: Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte, Berlin, 15.–20. Juli 1992,* ed. Thomas Gaehtgens, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1993), 1:43–51; Rebecca Müller, *Sic hostes Ianua frangit: Spolien und Trophäen im mittelalterlichen Genua* (Weimar, 2002), 204–5. For Islamic examples, see Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt,* 1:32.

62. The history of the journey of the large 'Ammuriyya iron doors is very complex and its details are subject to discussion. From Samarra they were first brought to al-Raqqa, where they were probably reused in one of the city gates, and then to Aleppo, by either the Hamdanids or the Ayyubids. In Aleppo, the doors were damaged when the Mongols captured the city gate in 1260; the Mamluk sultan Baybars (r. 1260–77) finally had them transferred to Cairo, where they disappeared without a trace. For the literary sources, see n. 7 above. For a recent discussion and also a full bibliography, see Stefan Heidemann, "Die Geschichte von ar-Raqqa/ ar-Rāfiqa: Ein Überblick," in *Die islamische Stadt,* ed. Stefan Heidemann and Andrea Becker, Raqqa 2 (Mainz, 2003), 49.

63. See also Julia Gonnella and Lorenz Korn, "Zwei neue Inschriftfragmente des an-Nasir Yusuf II. aus Aleppo," in *Al-Andalus und Europa: Zwischen Orient und Okzident,* ed. Martina Müller-Wiener et al. (Petersberg, 2004), 273–74.

64. Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich mention numerous shrines with columns, among others, the remains of a column in the grotto in Mar Thekla (Maʿlula) reused as a water basin (Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube,* 1:236, pl. 126), and several columns clustered around the tomb of Shaykh Faraj near Salamiyya (Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube,* 1:283–84, pl. 162).

65. Henri Lammens, "Le culte des Bétyles et les processions religieuses chez les arabes préislamites," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 17 (1919–20): 100–101; Henri Lammens, *L'Arabie occidentale avant l'hégire* (Beirut, 1928), 100–180. See also T. Fahd, *EI2,* s.v. "Nuṣub."

66. See the German and the English translations: Ibn al-Kalbī, *Das Götzenbuch Kitāb al-Aṣnām des Ibn al-Kalbī,* trans. Rosa Klinke-Rosenberger (Leipzig, 1941), and Ibn al-Kalbī, *The Book of Idols, Being a Translation from the Arabic of the Kitāb al-Aṣnām,* trans. Nabih Amin Faris (Princeton, 1952).

67. See Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses,* 5.

68. People also took small stones from the column and placed them under their heads: Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube,* 1:169.

69. Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube,* 1:321; Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Life of an Imperial Monument: Haghia Sophia after Byzantium," in *Haghia Sophia from the Age of Justinian to the Present,* ed. Robert Mark and Ahmet S. Çakmak (Cambridge, 1992), 201.

70. Ibn Shaddād, *La description d'Alep,* vol. 1, pt.1, p. 54.

71. As one of the numerous examples cited, see the column in the grotto near the Ibrahim River (the former "Adonis"

river) in Lebanon: Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube*, 1:262.

72. Ibid., 1:215, 255.

73. Ibid., 1:337.

74. See also Michael Greenalgh, "Spolia in Fortification: Turkey, Syria and North Africa," in *Ideologie e pratiche del reimpiego nell'alto Medioevo,* Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo 46 (Spoleto, 1999), 785–932, esp. 869–75.

75. K. A. C. Creswell, "Fortification in Islam before A.D. 1250," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 38 (1952): 113–14.

76. Greenalgh, "Spolia in Fortification," 870.

77. Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 407–8, pl. CLXXIIIa–c.

78. Arab tradition associates this site with the Biblical episode of David and the Hittite Uriya. The present cenotaph dates to the Mamluk period. For full reference, see Janine Sourdel-Thomine, "Note sur le cénotaphe de Qurus (Cyrrhus)," *Annales Archéologiques Syriennes* 2 (1952): 134–36; al-Harawī, *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage*, 10.

79. The Burids of Damascus turned the temple of Baal into a fortress in 1132–33 and installed a mosque in its cella. For the Burid works, see Jean Sauvaget, "Inscriptions arabes du Temple de Bèl à Palmyre," *Syria* 12 (1931): 143–53. See also Allen, *Classical Revival*, 58–59, for a discussion of the new fortress gate with its reused antique reliefs of Hermes and Heracles.

80. This abundant use of classicizing motifs in early medieval Northern Syrian architecture was first remarked upon by Ernst Herzfeld, who considered them to be a survival of classical architectural decoration: Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies in Architecture–II," 13–70; Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 222–27. Michael Rogers noted the conscious use of such forms and interpreted this phenomenon as a revival rather than a survival: Michael Rogers, "A Renaissance of Classical Antiquity in North Syria, 11th–12th Centuries," *Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 21 (1971): 347–61. Allen elaborated on this theory in his famous book *Classical Revival*. Yasser Tabbaa, "Survivals and Archaisms in the Architecture of Northern Syria, ca. 1080–ca. 1150," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 29–41, again sees these classicisms as archaic survivals in a regionally isolated place with a strong attachment to local architectural tradition. For the latest discussion, see Julian Raby, "Nur al-Din, the Qastal al-Shu'aybiyya, and the 'Classical Revival,'" *Muqarnas* 21 (2004): 289–310.

81. Ibn Shaddād, *La description d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 44; Jean Sauvaget, *Alep: Essai sur le développement d'une grande ville syrienne, des origines au milieu du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1941), 47 n. 113. See also Allen, *Classical Revival*, 1–7, 17 n. 12.

82. See Esch, "Spolien," 14–16; Müller, *Spolien und Trophäen*, 189–91; Arnold Esch, *Wiederverwendung von Antike im Mittelalter: Die Sicht des Archäologen und die Sicht des Historikers* (Berlin, 2005), 16–17.

83. Allen, *Classical Revival*, 101.

84. Ibid., 81.

85. Ibid., 101.

86. This story circulated in the suq of Aleppo: Gonnella, *Islamische Heiligenverehrung*, 78.

87. On the excavations on the citadel of Aleppo, see Kay Kohlmeyer, *Der Tempel des Wettergottes von Aleppo* (Munster, 2000); Julia Gonnella, Kay Kohlmeyer, and Wahid Khayyata, *Die Zitadelle von Aleppo und der Tempel des Wettergottes: Neue Forschungen und Entdeckungen* (Munster, 2005).

88. Kohlmeyer, *Tempel des Wettergottes*, 18–21.

89. For a precise description of these blocks and also literary references, see Wahid Khayyata and Kay Kohlmeyer, "Die Zitadelle von Aleppo—Vorläufiger Bericht über die Untersuchungen 1996 und 1997," *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 10 (1998): 76.

90. For the rebuilding of the mosque, see Allen, *Ayyubid Architecture*, chapter 8; Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety*, 102–3; Korn, *Ayyubidische Architektur*, 2:229.

91. See, for example, Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volksglaube*, 1: 323.

92. For examples, see von Gladiss, "Medizinische Schalen," pl. 25a–c; *L'Orient de Saladin: L'art des Ayyoubides* (exhibition catalogue), ed. Sophie Makariou (Paris, 2001), 161, no. 147.

93. Both published in Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, vol. 1, pt. 3, pls. IVe and XXXIXb. See also the comments in Khayyata and Kohlmeyer, "Die Zitadelle von Aleppo," 77. Cf. n. 42 above.

94. The relief is now in the National Museum of Aleppo. See Khayyata and Kohlmeyer, "Die Zitadelle von Aleppo," 76–77.

95. The repairs in this case involved a complete renewal of the ramp up to the inside of the citadel. The remains of the creature, which were exposed on the right side of the gate, were covered immediately after the work was finished.

96. On the griffon and sphinx in Islamic art, see *L'étrange et le merveilleux en terres d'Islam* (exhibition catalogue), ed. Marthe Bernus-Taylor (Paris, 2001), 34–41.