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THE MEDIEVAL TROPHY AS AN ART HISTORICAL TROPE: COPTIC AND BYZANTINE "ALTARS" IN ISLAMIC CONTEXTS

The interests of those researching the history of visual culture are often period- and culture-specific, bound by parameters to which the objects of their study rarely conform. Artifacts, buildings, and cities endure in their entirety or in part, where rulers, dynasties and cultures do not, or change hands as the result of commerce, diplomacy, and war, and in the process are remodeled, reinterpreted, and reinvented. As a recent spate of publications on the incorporation of ancient materials into European monuments of the early Middle Ages has demonstrated, the trans-historical or transcultural qualities of such fragments provide significant insights into the role of the visual in the negotiation, construction, and projection of cultural, dynastic, and religious identities.¹ Yet where reference has been made to the transposition of architectural features from one cultural and historical setting to another in the medieval Islamic world, the phenomenon has (with a few notable exceptions) been ascribed either to utilitarian opportunism or to a triumphalist impulse posited (implicitly or explicitly) on the basis of an essentialized notion of Islam, and often colored by the assumption of a cultural predisposition towards iconoclasm.² Subsumed under the rubrics of convenience or power, the phenomenon thus lends itself to ahistorical interpretations that elide the inevitable differences between instances of reuse taken from different cultural, chronological, and regional contexts.

In order to ascertain whether there are in fact discernible patterns common to the reuse of architectural material at different periods and in different areas of the medieval Islamic world, more detailed regional studies are required. What are offered here are some preliminary observations on the aesthetic attractions and possible iconographic associations of a class of objects reused in the medieval Islamic monuments of Egypt and Syria. Although the antique marble tables which form the subject of this paper were not exclusive to either region, their reuse in

medieval Islamic contexts seems to be restricted to these centers. At least as interesting as the phenomenon itself is the manner in which the recontextualization of these objects has been interpreted by those few scholars who have dealt with it. Despite the strong cultural differences between the two regions, the shared formal features of these tables and a general assumption that they originally functioned as altars have frequently led scholars to assert that they were taken from Christian churches for reuse in Islamic contexts. The consequent ability of the recontextualized "altar" to evoke notions of cultural hegemony by virtue of its status as a kind of trophy has been made particularly explicit by those attempting to explain the frequency with which antique marble tables were reused in the architecture of Nur al-Din ibn Zangi. However, as I will show below, even in the architecture of the counter-Crusade, the phenomenon is considerably more complex than the notion of the altar as trophy suggests.

By demonstrating important regional differences in the cultural associations and functions of these tables in both primary and secondary contexts, even within contemporary and contiguous areas of the Islamic world, these observations are intended to highlight the need to historicize instances of reuse in medieval Islamic architecture. In showing how the trope of the trophy in art-historical writing on a specific group of objects has served to elide the distinction between quite different practices, I want to emphasize the need to be alive to shifts in meaning through time, even where the practice of reuse involves objects with common formal properties.

The starting point for the discussion is provided by Camille Enlart's ground-breaking work on Crusader architecture, *Les Monuments des Croisés* (1925), in which the author drew attention to a number of rectangular and horseshoe-shaped marble tables reused in the bimaristan of Nur al-Din in Damascus (1154; figs. 1, 14, 17). Identifying these objects as

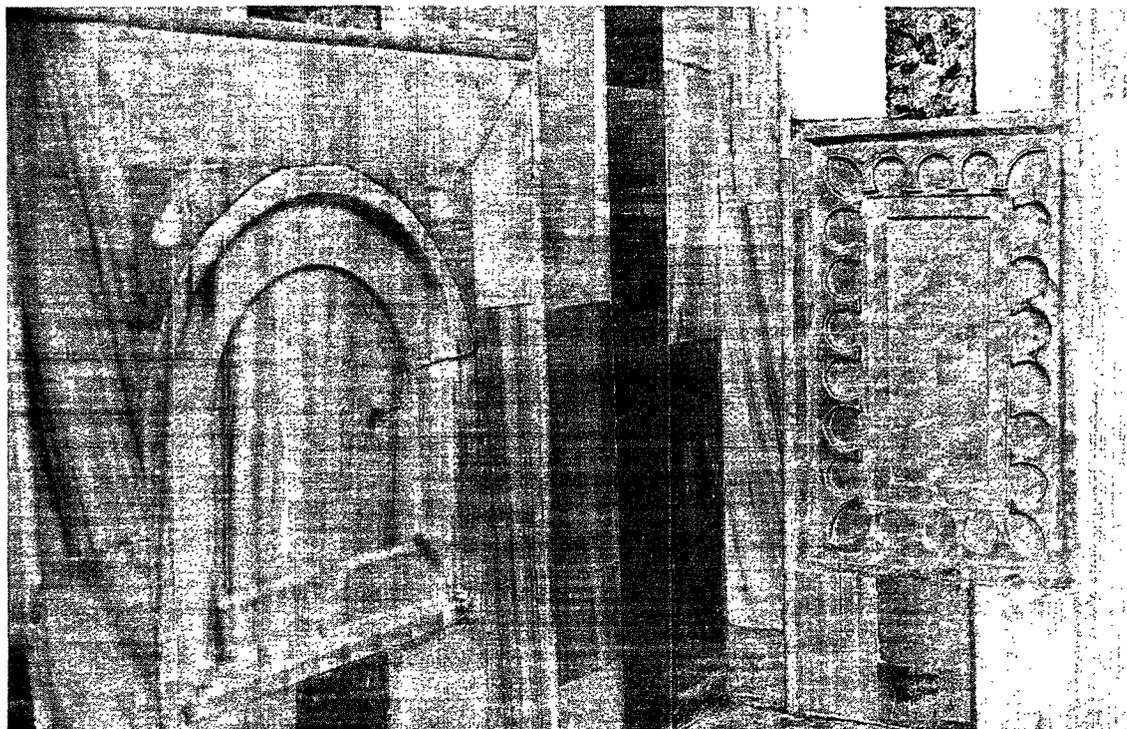


Fig. 1. Reused marble tables in the south iwan of the Bimaristan al-Nuri, Damascus.

Christian altar tables, Enlart asserted that they had been carried off from Crusader churches as trophies during the twelfth-century counter-Crusade.³ Although these intriguing fragments have drawn little subsequent attention, the idea that they were pillaged and reused as Muslim trophies has often been repeated until today.⁴ In an assertion which dramatically illustrates the ahistorical nature of much writing on Muslim reuse of architectural material, Jean Lassus claimed that Salah al-Din (r. 1185–95), having destroyed the churches of the region, carried the altars to Damascus, and had them inserted into the walls of the sixteenth-century madrasa of Sibay.⁵

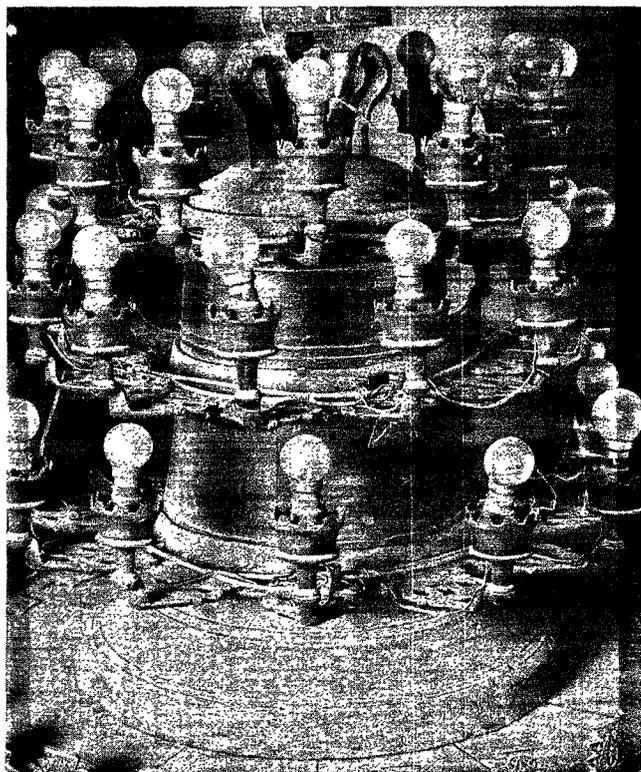
It is not clear whether Enlart's comments on these tables were known to Hugh Evelyn White, who wrote on the monasteries of the Wadi Natrun in the Egyptian Western Desert just a few years later. Referring to the twelfth-century use of a horseshoe- or sigma-shaped table (so called because of its resemblance to the Greek letter *sigma*) as a Muslim funerary stele (fig. 2),⁶ White noted that "it was evidently removed from some ruined or sacked church."⁷ Explicit in Enlart's analysis of the Syrian tables and more implicit in White's comments on their Egyptian coun-

terparts are both the notion of despoliation and the related idea that the recontextualization of the "altars" serves as a visual assertion of Muslim hegemony. There are, of course, parallels for such a reuse of objects with strong Christian associations, most obviously in the many Spanish Christian church bells which were carried off and made into chandeliers for the mosques of the western Mediterranean between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries (fig. 3).⁸ Inscribed with Qur'anic and historical inscriptions, these bells functioned as reminders of the military victories by which they had been acquired.⁹ Despite the fact that such signifiers of religious and cultural identity could indeed be subverted by their recontextualization in the western Islamic world, however, closer examination of the evidence reveals serious problems with the idea that the marble tables which appear in medieval Islamic contexts in Egypt and the Levant served a similar function.

We will start with Egypt, where sigma-shaped marble tables served a variety of liturgical functions, including that of baptismal font (fig. 4) and altar (fig. 5).¹⁰ By far the most common role of the form, however, is as a funerary stele (fig. 6).¹¹ While it is clear



Fig. 2. Sigma-shaped marble slab used as a Muslim grave stele in 1027 and 1168. (after Wiet)



that the size and brilliant white marble of these antique tables, combined with the presence of a broad central recessed field, rendered them attractive for use as epigraphic slabs, it is less certain that their deployment as Christian funerary stele represents a secondary use, as is often assumed. The sigma-shaped table was commonly employed as a dining table in antiquity (fig. 7), a function which underlies its use as a covering on early Christian graves in North Africa and elsewhere, facilitating the celebration of the agape.¹² The use of the altar in funerary contexts may be traced back to pharaonic times in Egypt,¹³ and it seems likely that the appearance of sigma-shaped funerary stele derives from the contemporary use of sigma-shaped altar tables in Coptic churches. With few exceptions, the dimensions of the sigma-shaped tables serving in these two contexts are similar.¹⁴ The popularity of the sigma-shaped table in Coptic contexts appears to be related to the frequency with which

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Fig. 3. Qarawiyyin Mosque, Fez. Church bell made into a chandelier. (Photo: courtesy Oronoz, Madrid)



Fig. 4. Tebtunis. Sigma-shaped marble slab serving as a baptismal font. (after Bagnani)

the form was used for depictions of the Last Supper in Coptic art (and indeed in East Christian art in general; figs. 8–9).¹⁵ The employment of plain sigma-shaped tables as Coptic funerary stele in Egypt may therefore represent, not the reuse of antique altars, but the primary use of a form iconographically related to the altar.¹⁶

Where dated, most published examples of sigma-shaped Coptic stele range between the sixth and eighth centuries, with a concentration at the end of this time scale;¹⁷ the earliest use of a sigma-shaped grave marker in a Muslim context is datable to the ninth century (appendix, no. 1; fig. 10), after which they appear intermittently until the fourteenth century (appendix, nos. 12, 15; fig. 11). Like their Coptic equivalents, it is possible that some of the Muslim grave markers were not reused, but carved specifically for the function that they served.¹⁸ The appearance of sigma-shaped Muslim funerary stele in Egypt is thus more likely to reflect the adaptation of an existing

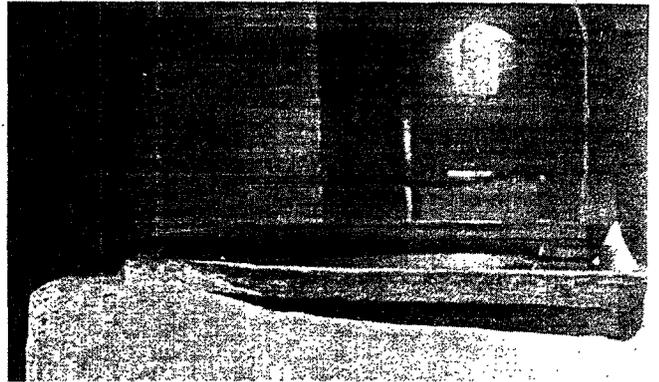


Fig. 5. Church of the Virgin, Dayr Abu Makar, Wadi Natrun. Sigma-shaped marble slab serving as an altar table. (after Johann Georg Herzog zu Sachsen)

Coptic tradition than the reuse of Christian altars, as has usually been assumed.

Although the evidence is incomplete, the fact that the form was used in Egypt (however intermittently) to mark Islamic graves from the ninth century to the thirteenth suggests that this practice was an enduring one among Egyptian Muslims. The Islamic sigma-shaped funerary stelae might even be seen as preserving and perpetuating a Coptic tradition that appears to have died out after the ninth century. It is worth noting here that the areas in which there is a concentration of sigma-shaped tablets used in Islamic contexts are generally those which had, and continue to have, significant Coptic populations. In addition to Cairo itself, there is a very obvious cluster in Nubia, especially in the areas around Derr and Esna (appendix, nos. 2–4, 6, 9, 11). While the former site is now submerged below Lake Nasser, the celebrated Coptic monasteries of Esna, which are still preserved, were flourishing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹⁹ Although no altars have ever been found *in situ* in a Nubian church, it has been assumed that marble tables similar to those that served in the Wadi Natrun monasteries (figs. 5, 12–13) were also imported into Upper Egypt.²⁰ Such churches were provided with multiple altars,²¹ so it is possible that some of the sigma-shaped tables which later served in Islamic contexts came from ruined churches, but there is no evidence for this. Moreover, no negative attitude towards any such antiquities can be inferred from the practice of reuse itself, since in at least one case a sigma-shaped Muslim grave marker was reinscribed

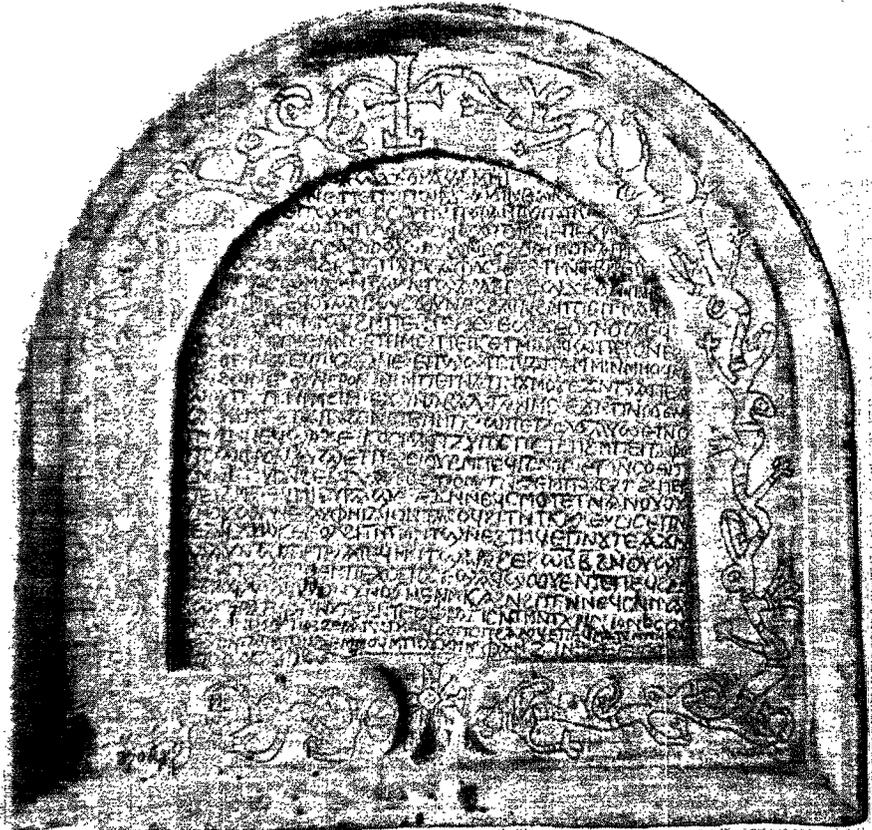


Fig. 6. Eighth-century Coptic grave stele. (after Crum)



Fig. 7. Pharaoh's feast, from the Vienna *Genesis*. (after von Hartel and Wickhoff)



Fig. 8. Church of Abu Sarga, Cairo. Ninth- or tenth-century wooden carving depicting the Last Supper. (after Cramer)

and reused on a later Muslim grave (appendix, nos. 2 and 9; fig. 2). The likelihood that the marking of graves in this way follows a Coptic precedent is further strengthened by the fact that the decoration of certain sigma-shaped stelae marking Islamic graves closely mirrors that of their Coptic counterparts, even down to the nature and placing of figural ornament.²² In other words, the phenomenon which Evelyn White took to be a product of the despoliation of Christian churches is in fact much more likely to indicate a degree of acculturation in Egyptian funerary practices, if not the Muslim adoption of a Coptic tradi-

tion. The impact of pre- and non-Muslim Egyptian art on medieval Islamic art and architecture in Egypt remains a largely unexplored topic, but Coptic art clearly exerted a significant influence well into the Middle Ages.²³

Scholars have tended to discuss the medieval Islamic use of sigma-shaped tables in Egypt and Syria as if it was a single phenomenon. However, in addition to certain formal variations between the sigma-shaped tables found in Egypt and Syria (notably the absence of internal scalloping from the Egyptian examples), there are substantial differences between the context and mode of use and reuse in both regions.²⁴ These include the presence of inscriptions in both primary and secondary contexts in Egypt (contrasting with the rarity of inscriptions in Syria), and the epigraphic content. In Syria, Arabic inscriptions, when present, tend to consist of foundation texts (fig. 14); in Egypt, by contrast, both Coptic and Arabic inscriptions indicate that the tables were used predominantly as funerary stelae, a context for which no parallel seems to exist in Syria. Once again, the impression that Islamic usage in Egypt follows Coptic precedents is unavoidable.

The earliest extant Syrian examples of reused tables are a series of nine sigma-shaped marbles of various colors and sizes which are set into the qibla wall of the early-sixteenth-century madrasa of Sibay in Damascus (appendix, no. 5; figs. 15–16).²⁵ One of these (that to the left of figure 15) is inscribed with the name and titles of the Seljuq prince Abu Sa'id Tutush (d. 1095). Several others are decorated with Qur'anic verses also inscribed in foliated Kufic script, which suggests that most, if not all, were removed from a Seljuq building in the city, probably a mosque or madrasa constructed between 1078 and 1092.²⁶ Nothing more is known about the primary or secondary contexts of the tables, since they are among a chronologically diverse range of (mainly Mamluk) architectural fragments incorporated into the building.²⁷ Nevertheless, their survival not only points to the reuse of such marble tables in Syrian architecture of the late eleventh century, but also provides important incidental evidence for Seljuq patronage of religious architecture in Damascus. That these tables are used in the madrasa of Sibay for at least the third time serves as a reminder of just how complex the life histories of certain architectural fragments can be. More important, they prove that the practice of reusing such tables in the Islamic monuments of



Fig. 9. Byzantine enamel medallion depicting the Last Supper. (after Bréhier)



Fig. 10. Fragment of a ninth-century Muslim grave stele from Egypt. (after Wiet)

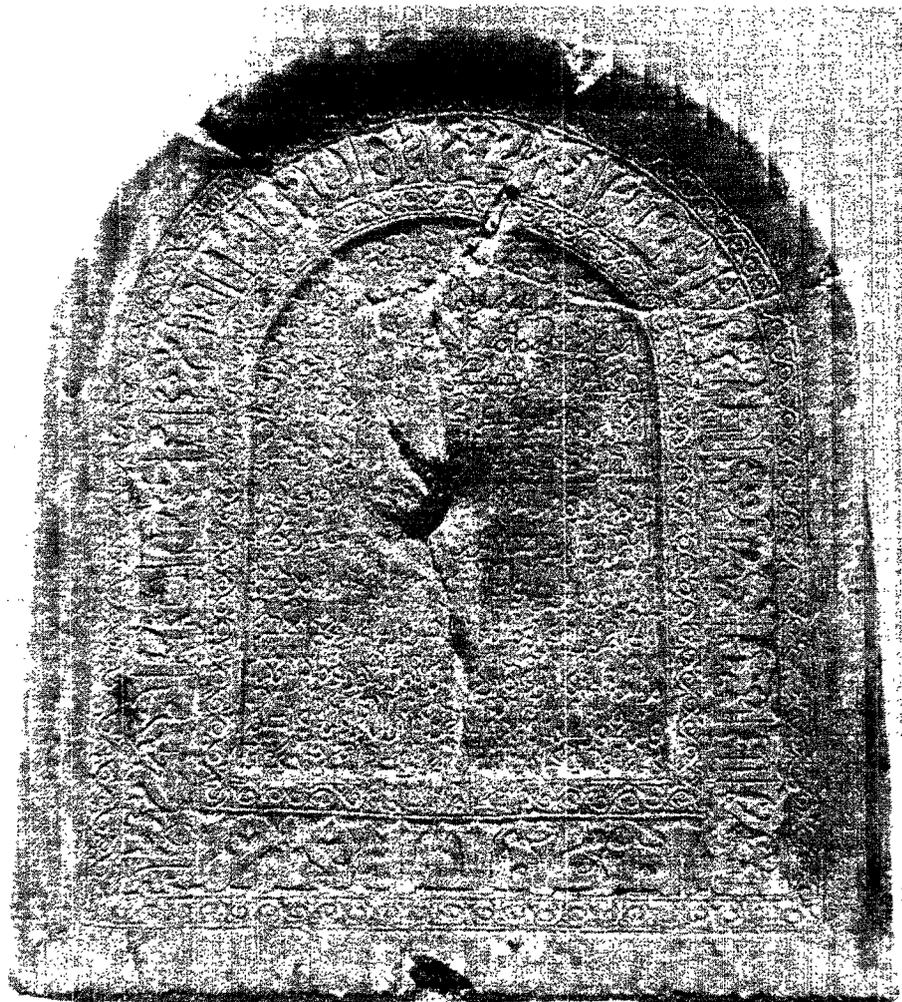


Fig. 11. Muslim grave stele from Derr, ca. 1136–37. (after Wiet)

Syria was established several decades before the advent of the Crusaders.

The arrival of the Crusaders in the Levant in the late eleventh century did, of course, precipitate a dramatic series of sociopolitical and cultural upheavals, and it is possible that the meaning of an established practice changed as a result of these. The scale of reuse in Seljuq Damascus is unknown, but the surviving architectural, textual, and visual evidence does point to a particular concentration of such tables in a number of buildings associated with Nur al-Din ibn Zangi (r. 1146–74), the great champion of the Muslim counter-Crusade. A series of no less than 15 rectangular and sigma-shaped marble tables was, for example, set into the iwans of the hospital built by Nur

al-Din in Damascus in 1154 (fig. 1; appendix, no. 8).²⁸ Of these, one was inscribed with a foundation text (fig. 14), while another, richly carved at a later date (fig. 17), served as a flat mihrab. These extant examples are supplemented by descriptions of what appears to have been a similar table in a madrasa founded by Nur al-Din in Aleppo (appendix, no. 7) and by a photograph taken by Creswell which shows another rectangular table once set into the walls of Nur al-Din's burial chamber in Damascus (fig. 18; appendix, no. 10), but now disappeared. To these might be added the marble tables reported to have been installed in the Great Mosques of Hama and Hims (fig. 19; appendix, nos. 13–14), both of which may conceivably be related to the activities of Nur al-Din.²⁹

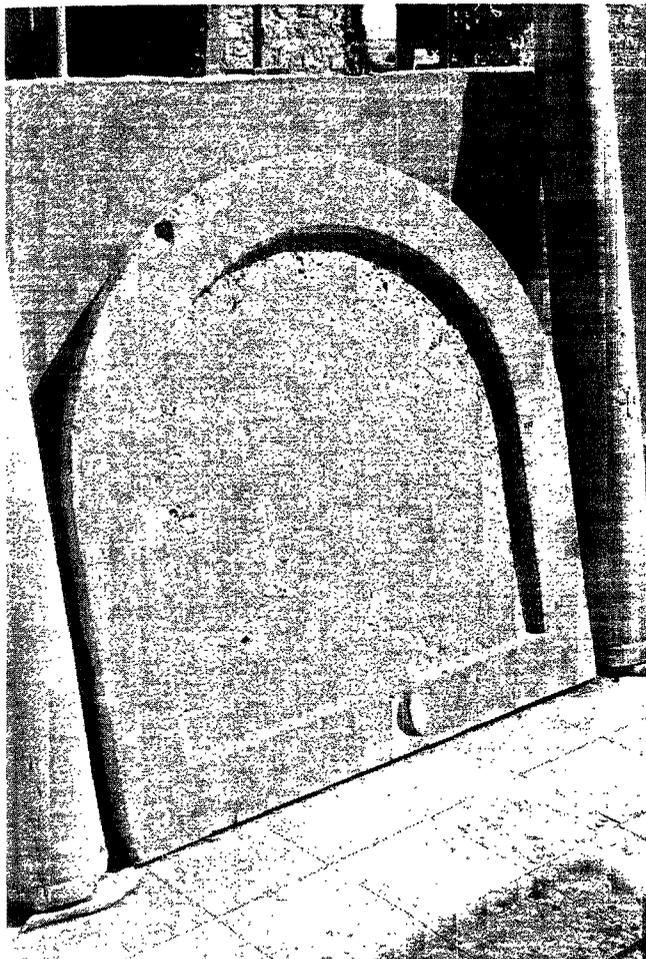


Fig. 12. Sigma-shaped marble table now in the museum of Dayr Abu Makar, Wadi Natrun.

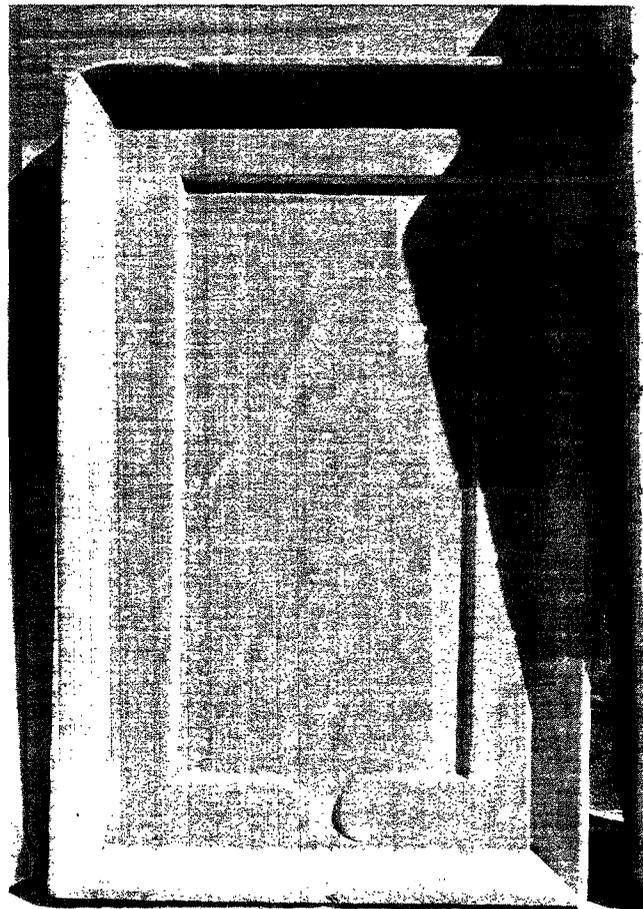


Fig. 13. Rectangular marble table now in the museum of Dayr Abu Makar, Wadi Natrun.

This chronological concentration in Nur al-Din's monuments, contrasting as it does with the use of comparable Egyptian tables over several centuries, and the single known example of Seljuq reuse, may reflect no more than the vagaries of chance, the randomness of survival. Nevertheless, the proliferation of the tables in buildings associated with Nur al-Din is striking, and may equally indicate that they acquired a particular significance around the mid twelfth century, even if similar tables had been reused earlier. As Yasser Tabbaa has demonstrated, the rhetoric of the counter-Crusade championed by Nur al-Din not only encompassed oral and textual propaganda, but a range of visual material which will be considered below.³⁰ The reuse of the tables might therefore be

seen as part of the visual polemics of the counter-Crusade.³¹

The identification of the marble tables reused in Damascus as trophies of Crusader origin rests, however, on two premises: the first is that they originally functioned as altars, or were identified as such by those who reused them; the second, and more implicit, one is that they (like the Iberian bells) were fulfilling such a function up to the point at which they were carried off. While each of these assumptions is problematic, the second, the presumption of contemporaneity, is demonstrably false. Indeed, a hint of unease about it is already present in Enlart's discussion of the tables, for he notes that the sigma shape represents an antique type, and is as likely to have

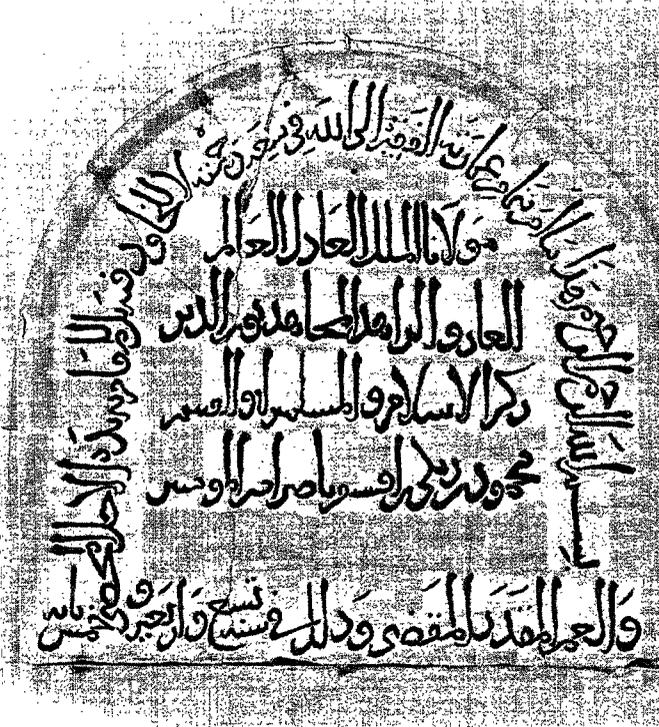


Fig. 14. Damascus. Bimaristan al-Nuri. Foundation text.

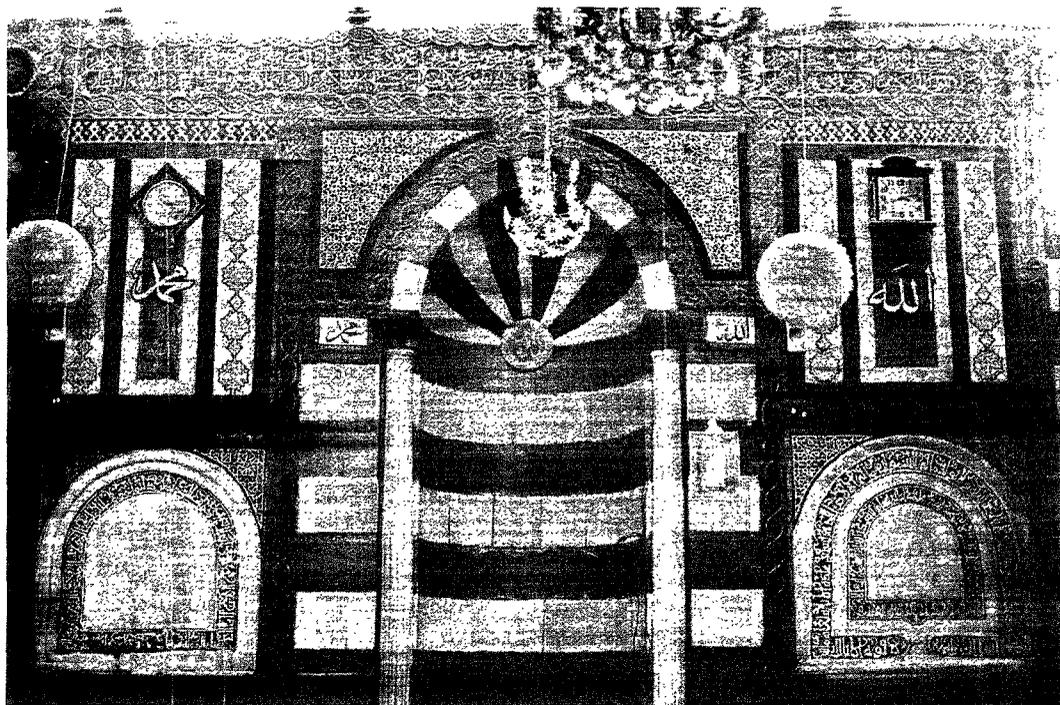


Fig. 15. Damascus. Madrasa of Sibay. Main mihrab.

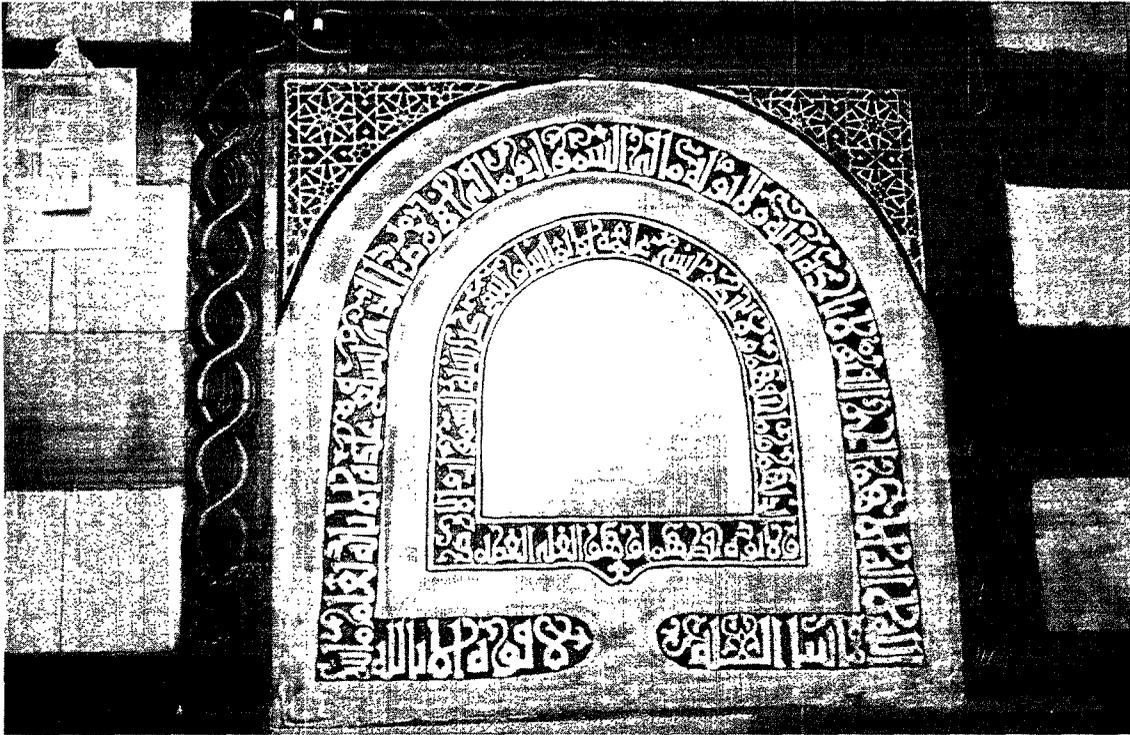


Fig. 16. Reused marble table visible in figure 15.

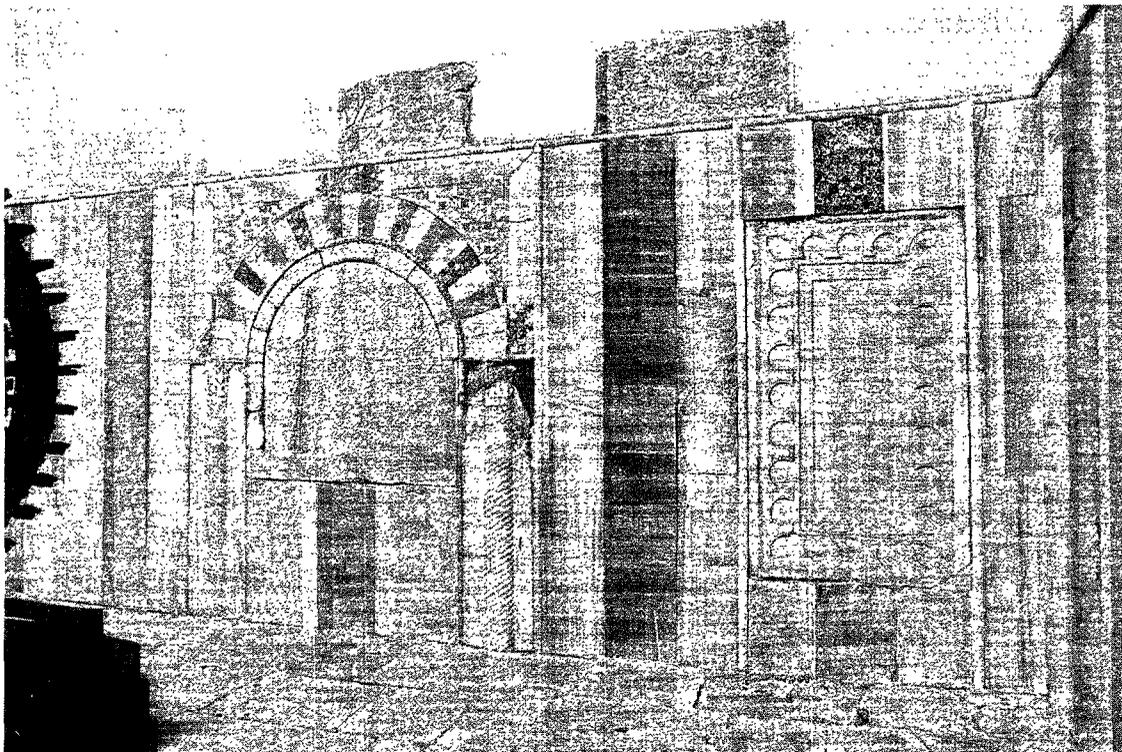


Fig. 17. Damascus. Bimaristan al-Nuri. Mihrab with sigma-shaped marble table, south iwan.

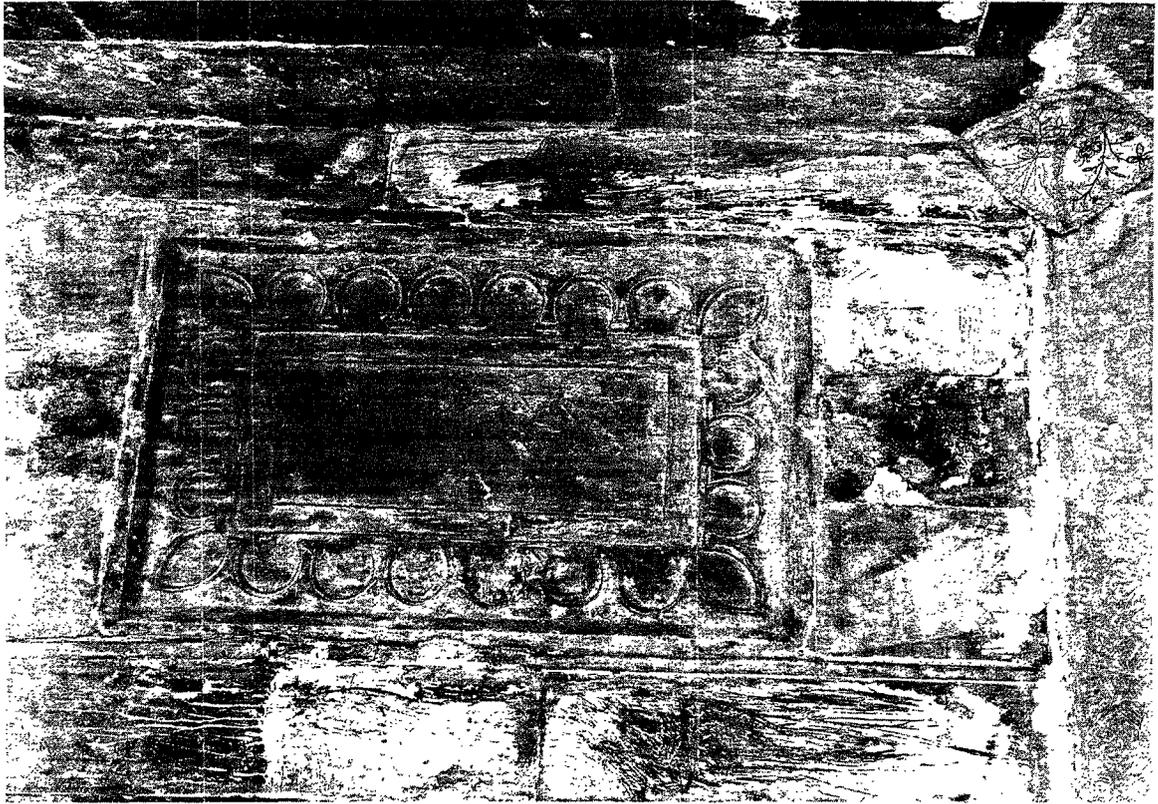


Fig. 18. Damascus. Rectangular marble table formerly in the tomb of Nur al-Din. (Creswell Archive no. 5703. Courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)

belonged to a Byzantine church as a Frankish cathedral.³² More recently, Terry Allen has argued that it was the antiquity of these tables, or their association with particular sites, rather than their Christian connotations, which rendered them attractive for reuse in Zangid architecture.³³

Support for the latter viewpoint may be found in a passage in Ibn al-'Adim's (d. 1262) description of the Madrasa al-Halawiyya in Aleppo, which Ernst Herzfeld recognized as referring to a further example of the tables under discussion:

They show in the Madrasa al-Halawiyya an altar (*madhabah*) on which the Christians used to sacrifice, of royal transparent marble, a stone of exquisite beauty: when a candle is placed under it, one sees its light shining through. We are told that Nūr al-Dīn had it brought from Apamea in 544/1149. The stone bears a Greek inscription which they translated for us: "This has been made for the emperor Faltiyānus, Aquila is at 14° from Scorpio," which would give 3,000 years elapsed before Nūr

al-Dīn. They tell that Nūr al-Dīn used to stuff the professors with sweets (*halāwī*), with which this *jurn* (basin) of marble was filled. . . . And Dakīyanus is the last emperor of Rome, said to have ruled twenty years.³⁴

This report is cited by the fifteenth-century historian Ibn al-Shihna, who adds a series of personal observations worthy of a modern art historian:

I have seen the marble, but it is no *jurn*; *jurn* is a hollow stone used for ablutions or to put something in it, while this is flat, rather long and broad, square or somewhat oblong, with only the border slightly raised, two or three fingers high. He [Ibn al-'Adim] says—God forgive him!—it was made for the emperor Faltiyanus, but in the passage following the translation he speaks of Dakīyanus [Decius, A.D. 249–51]. Whether the first or the second name be right, at any rate he gives two different names. . . . Perhaps he meant to write Daklatīyanus [Diocletianus] and has omitted the initial *d*, but with its *l* and *l*, the name cannot be Dakīyanus.³⁵

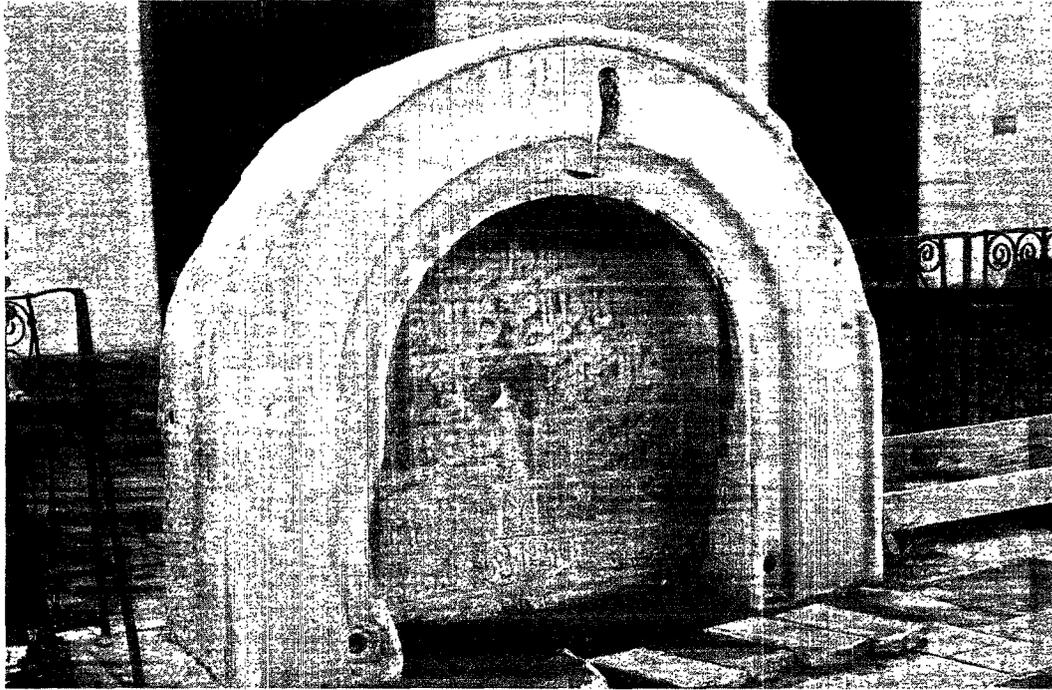


Fig. 19. Great Mosque of Hims. Reused marble table (?) serving as a mihrab in the courtyard.

Providing as they do an insight into the associations which these recontextualized objects had for medieval Muslims, three aspects of these accounts are particularly interesting: first, the emphasis on the aesthetic properties of the object; second, its perceived Christian associations; third, its stated antiquity and affiliations with the ruined classical city of Afamiyya/Apamea. Since this is the nearest to a contemporary account of the phenomenon which we possess, these three interrelated facets of Ibn al-ʿAdim's observations—the aesthetic, iconographic, and chronological—will serve as convenient rubrics under which to discuss the reuse of marble tables in Zangid architecture.

The contemporary emphasis on aesthetics suggested by Ibn al-ʿAdim's account is corroborated by the manner in which the altars are reused in the Bimaristan al-Nuri in Damascus: symmetrically arranged (figs. 1, 17); with a clear gradation in size, and with a preference for white marble, even though different colors were available. The use of the term "royal marble" (*al-rukhām al-malikī*) in the surviving descriptions of the table is also noteworthy, for it suggests

that the marble in question had an iconographic value related to its aesthetic properties.³⁶

The pure white marble from which these tables were carved was not only considered visually pleasing, as Ibn al-ʿAdim notes, but could be used to dramatic effect.³⁷ The letters of the foundation inscription on one of the tables in the Bimaristan al-Nuri are filled with a black paste, so that they are highlighted against the starkness of the stone (fig. 14); the technique first seen here was used in other of Nur al-Din's monuments and may, like the use of cursive or even the placing of the inscription, be seen as reflecting a broader concern with legibility.³⁸

The aesthetic properties of such tables not only facilitated the conveyance of an epigraphic message, but can also be related to the decoration of contemporary Syrian monuments. The internal scalloping characteristic of many of the marble tables reused in Zangid architecture is curiously echoed in the decoration of certain late-twelfth-century Damascene monuments. The interior ornament of the funerary chamber adjoining the Madrasa al-Sha'miyya (1185) provides the most dramatic example of such decora-

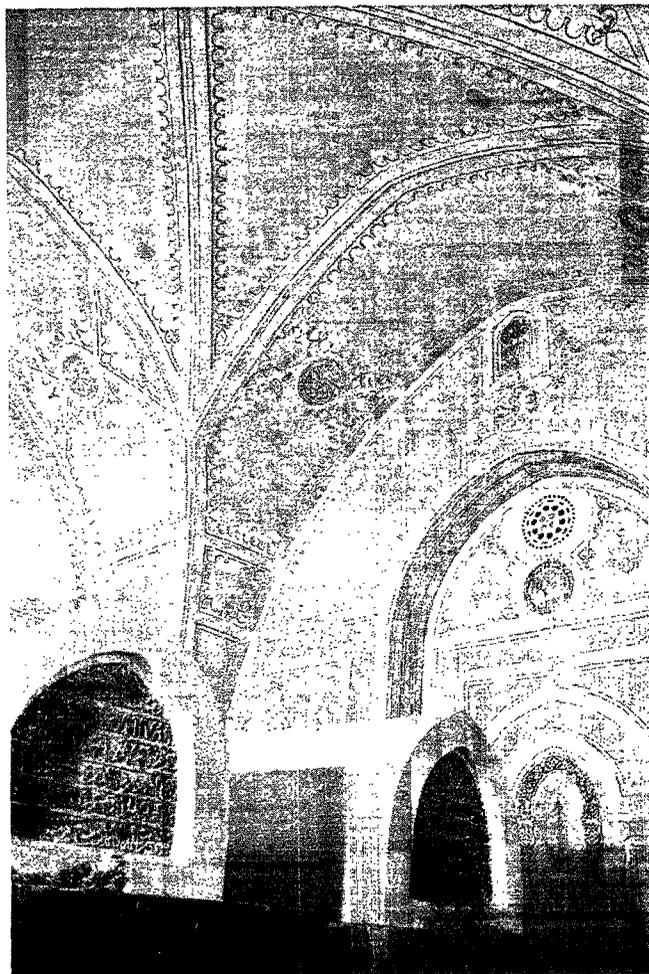


Fig. 20. Damascus. Interior of the tomb chamber adjoining the Madrasa al-Sha'miyya.

tive scalloping, for the entire surface of the carved stucco which covers the walls and superstructure of the chamber is divided into panels of various shapes with scalloped interiors (fig. 20).³⁹ The diagonal placing of ovoid scallops across the corners of such panels (fig. 21) is particularly reminiscent of the manner in which the corners of the rectangular altars reused elsewhere in Damascus are treated (fig. 1). A similar feature occurs on the carved stucco ornament on the cenotaph in Nur al-Din's funerary chamber (fig. 22). The date of the cenotaph is unknown, but it should be borne in mind that a rectangular table bearing analogous patterning was, until recently, set into the walls of the latter tomb (fig. 18). It seems, therefore, that the reuse of these marble tables was

part of more general aesthetic trend in the decoration of contemporary Damascene monuments.

So far as the iconographic aspects of Ibn al-'Adim's remarks are concerned, the ascription of a liturgical function to the reused table also finds some independent support. As a dining table in the Roman and Byzantine world (fig. 7),⁴⁰ the sigma-shaped table had a role in both quotidian dining and ritual feasting, and was frequently the setting for the Last Supper as represented in Byzantine and Coptic art until well into the twelfth century (figs. 8–9).⁴¹ No sufficiently systematic study exists to permit one to draw any statistically based conclusions as to the distribution of actual examples, but there is a clear concentration in the eastern Mediterranean.⁴² Even less information is available on contemporary marble tables of rectangular form but, alongside the more standard sigma-shaped table, fragments of rectangular tables similar to those reused in Damascus have been excavated from a number of late-antique and Byzantine sites in the Levant.⁴³ The precise liturgical function, if any, of the Syrian examples is still a matter of debate, with scholarly opinion ranging from primary or secondary altars (fig. 23) to offering tables or patens for the distribution of the eucharist.⁴⁴ In terms of its reuse, however, the original function of the table in Aleppo (and presumably in Damascus also) is less relevant than the fact that it was believed to have served as an altar, and continued to signal back towards this real or imagined function long after its recontextualization.

Equally noteworthy in the account cited above is the chronological ambiguity associated with the table's functioning as an altar. Given the antiquity of the tables, a fact clearly recognized by medieval commentators, their proliferation in Zangid architecture forms part of that broader archaizing tendency which has been discussed in detail elsewhere.⁴⁵ The altars reused in Damascus appeared in buildings that incorporated other antique materials: a classical pediment in the case of the Bimaristan al-Nuri, late-antique columns in Nur al-Din's tomb.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, there is no reason to assume that all reused material had the same semantic value. The contemporary identification of such tables as altars may well have differentiated them from more generic reused antique material, for the trope of the altar appears frequently in polemical narratives of a slightly later period,

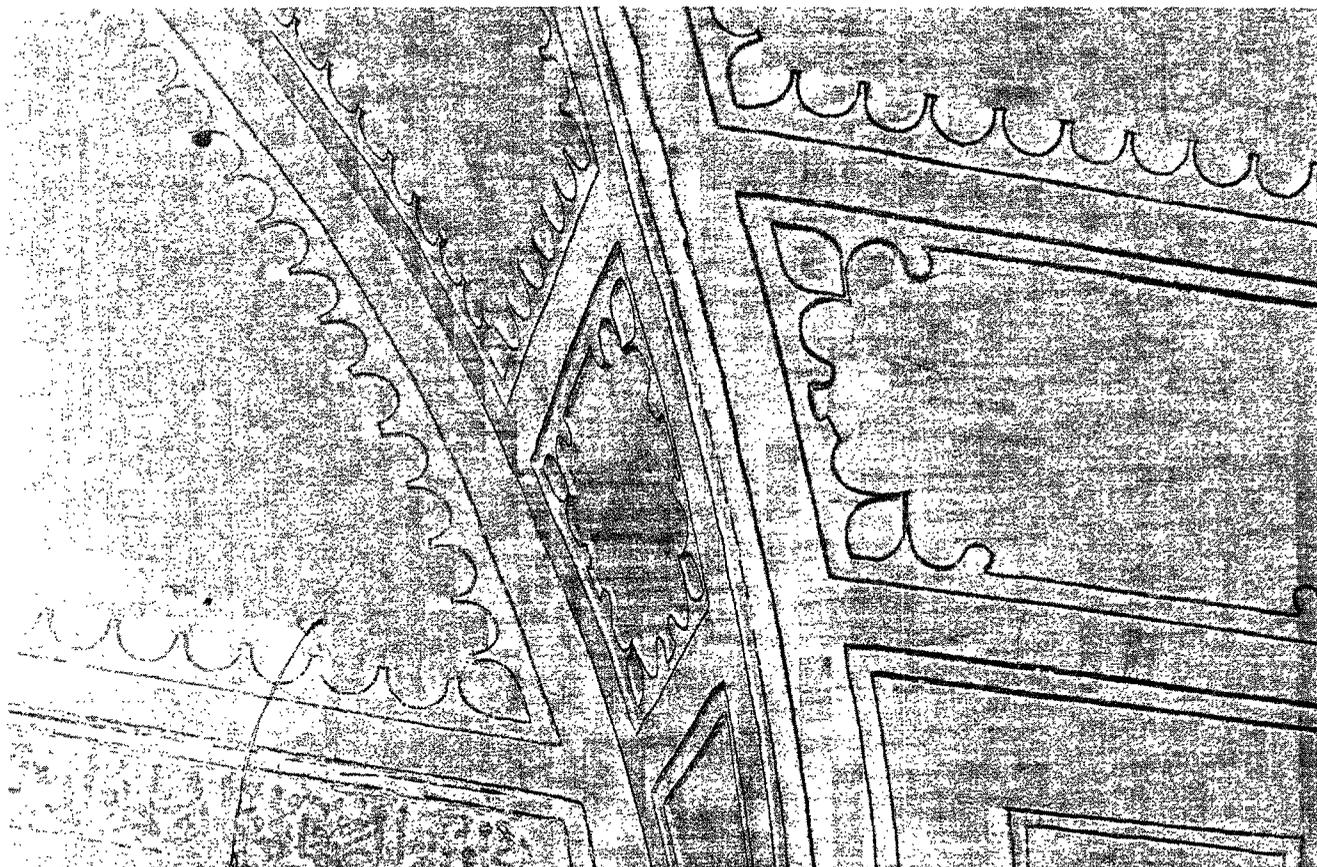


Fig. 21. Damascus. Madrasa al-Sha'miyya. Funerary chamber. Detail of interior ornament.

where it functions as a signifier of cultural identity and religious hegemony.⁴⁷ Consider, for example, a near-contemporary account of the fall of Acre to a Muslim army in 1187. The extract is from a letter purportedly written by Salah al-Din, the Ayyubid sultan and Nur al-Din's successor in the prosecution of jihad:

The standards of Islam flew over Tiberias, the race of unbelievers fled from the walls of Acre, but lived long enough to bear witness to the day of the Muslims, a day less baleful for the impious than will be the other [i.e., the Last Day]. The temples became mosques, restored by those who believe in Him and in His Last Judgment; the altars were transformed into *minbars* for the *khatibs*, under whose footsteps their pavements rang out joyously, as they had formerly trembled under the footsteps of the unbelievers.⁴⁸

Another letter, written in praise of Salah al-Din by

Qadi al-Fadil, one of his advisers, places these particular events in a more general context:

... from their places of prayer he cast down the cross and set up the call to prayer: the altars were replaced by *minbars* and the churches converted into mosques; the people of the Qur'an succeeded the people of the cross. . . .⁴⁹

Just as mosques were converted to Christian use by the imposition of the altar, so the process was frequently reversed by its destruction when a building was returned or converted to Muslim worship.⁵⁰ Although the transformation of the altar in the passage just cited may well have been a literal one, there is little to suggest that altars were actually turned into minbars. Instead, the inverse equivalence between altar and minbar in this passage reflects the metonymic function of both in the visual articulation of religious



Fig. 22. Damascus. Tomb of Nur al-Din. Detail of cenotaph.

and political sovereignty.⁵¹ The conjunction of religious and political authority embodied in the minbar, a major factor in the consistency with which contemporary Muslim authors bemoan its destruction in mosques desecrated by the Franks, also imbued it with the ability to act as a potent signifier of religious and political hegemony. Such visual symbols in relation to the Crusades were used even before the time of Nur al-Din. The breaking of the respective minbars in the mosques of the caliph and of the sultan in Baghdad by a group of Aleppan nobles in 1110 symbolically reenacted the desecration of Syrian mosques in a manner that highlighted very publicly the military and political impotence of the traditional (if symbolic) repositories of religious authority and political sovereignty in the face of the Frankish onslaught.⁵² Conversely, the minbar was used to great effect by Nur al-Din as a site for the oral

and epigraphic promulgation of jihad in the propaganda offensive which accompanied his promotion of a Syrian counter-Crusade half a century later. The magnificent minbar which Nur al-Din commissioned as an ex-voto for the reconquest of Jerusalem in 1169, which was installed in the Aqsa mosque after the reconquest of the city in 1187, is one of the most dramatic examples of Nur al-Din's use of visual symbols in the prosecution of jihad.⁵³ As the counter-Crusade gathered pace, Nur al-Din used a variety of means to promote the idea of jihad. The oral and textual media used in this propaganda offensive (most obviously sermons and inscriptions) were often closely related to visual signifiers of religious identity or political sovereignty such as the minbar.⁵⁴ In many instances all three polemical modes—oral, textual, and visual—were closely associated with architecture; it was, for example, mosques and madrasas often inscribed

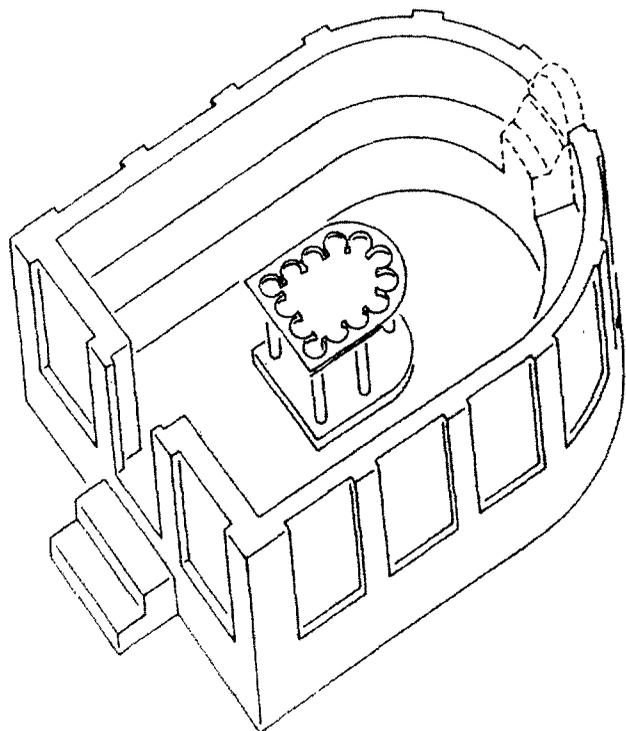


Fig. 23. Reconstruction of how a sigma-shaped table found at Sughane may have served as an altar. (after Baccache)

with polemical texts that housed the minbars from which sermons promoting the counter-offensive were delivered.

Since the realm of the visual, no less than that of the oral or the textual, provided an arena for the exchange of polemical broadsides, the role of the altar as a site for the articulation of cultural difference in Ayyubid literary polemics leaves open the possibility that altars were removed from churches to serve as trophies during the course of the twelfth century, just as Enlart suggested. While we should perhaps be circumspect about anecdotal reports of architectural spoliation, the reuse of architectural material in a manner intended to signal Muslim victory is occasionally reflected in surviving Syrian monuments from the period of the Crusades. For example, in the early-fourteenth-century mihrab of Abu'l Fida in Nur al-Din's mosque in Hama, the semiotic displacement occasioned by the reuse of two Romanesque columns with Corinthian capitals (taken perhaps from St. Jean d'Acres) was expressed in a

physical inversion of the architectural order (figs. 24–25), inversion being a contemporary convention through which the defeat of an enemy was expressed visually.⁵⁵ The placing of these columns is part of a wider practice of locating reused Classical and Romanesque columns around the mihrabs of medieval Syrian monuments (fig. 17).⁵⁶ Until the redeployment of both types of columns is adequately documented, it is difficult to say whether such reuse reflects an aesthetic preference alone or (as seems clear in Hama) also emphasizes the role of columns and capitals as spolia, but the reuse of Byzantine marble altar tables as mihrabs may well be related.

One might therefore view Nur al-Din's installation of the table in the Madrasa al-Halawiyya in 1149 against these slightly later traditions of Syrian textual and visual polemics. Moreover, the madrasa was once the Christian cathedral of Aleppo, the original altar of which had been damaged or destroyed when it was transformed into a mosque in 1124.⁵⁷ The table was brought from Apamea in the wake of a militarily and psychologically important victory over the Franks of Antioch, to grace a building in whose inscriptions Nur al-Din first styles himself *al-mujāhid*.⁵⁸ Whether or not Nur al-Din's reported use of the table to distribute pastries was intended as a parody of the eucharistic liturgy, the architectural and historical contexts offer broad support for Enlart's assumption that the reuse of the altar was intended to assert the triumph of Islam over the Frankish invaders.

When one attempts to move from the general to the particular, from text to object, however, a major difficulty arises, for there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that altars such as those that survive in Damascus (figs. 1, 14, 17) were ever used in Crusader churches. In fact, chronological factors mitigate against this, for the sigma-shaped altars belong (as Enlart admitted) to an antique tradition, with which there is nothing to associate the Crusader churches of the Levant. Whether of local Syrian manufacture or imported, the bulk of the Syrian examples are datable to between the fifth and seventh centuries, with little evidence for continued production much after this date.⁵⁹ We are left therefore with a paradox: on the one hand, we have a series of twelfth-century polemical texts referring to the transformation of Crusader altars; on the other, we have a series of transformed altars from twelfth-century monuments, which

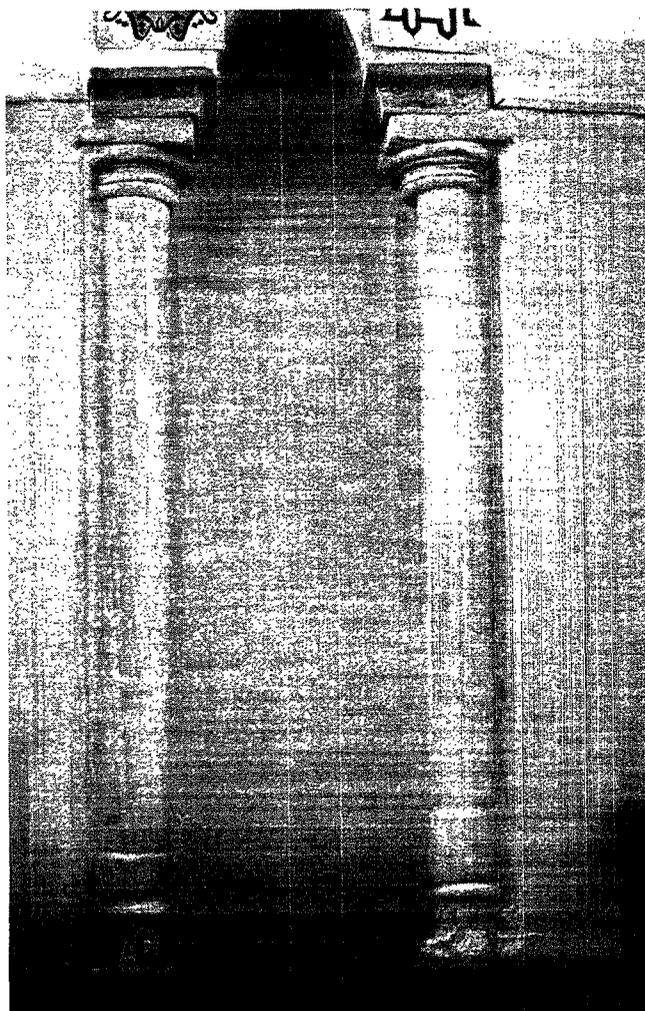


Fig. 24. Hama. Madrasa of Abu'l Fida. Inverted Corinthian columns flanking a mihrab.

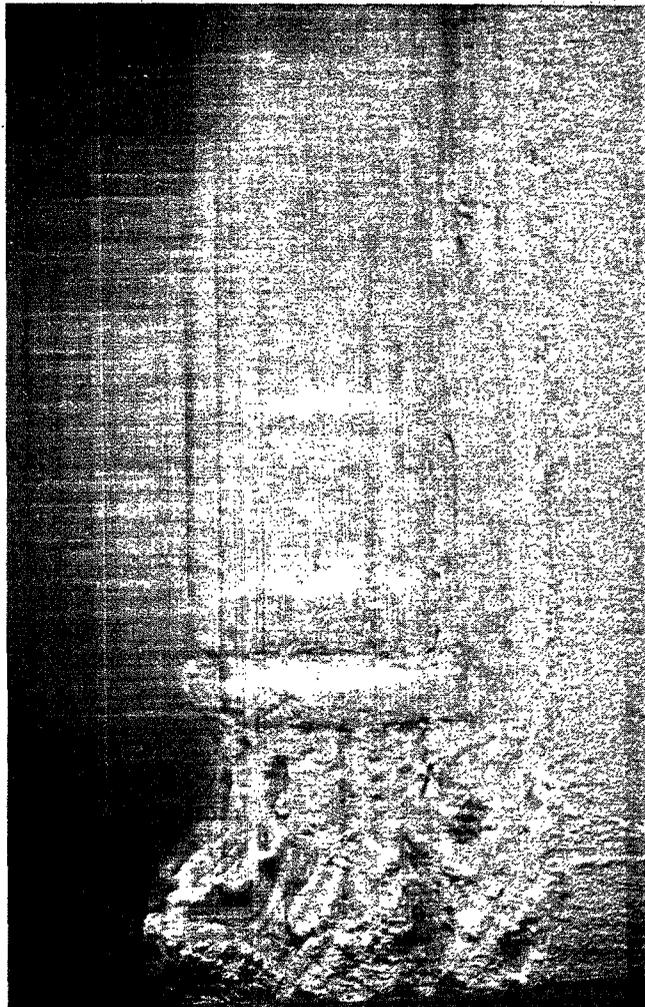


Fig. 25. Detail of one of the capitals visible in figure 24.

predate the Crusades, and which show little to associate with Crusader churches.

A stronger case for Crusader origins might be made for the rectangular tables incorporated into the Bimaristan al-Nuri (fig. 1) and the tomb of Nur al-Din (fig. 18), for the few fragmentary Crusader altars which survive from the Levant are generally rectangular in form.⁶⁰ Although the sigma-shaped table continued to be depicted in East Christian art, the rectangular altar was such a commonplace in contemporary Western churches that in European art from the twelfth century onwards the traditional (but archaic) sigma-shaped table which formed the setting for the Last

Supper was replaced with its contemporary rectangular equivalent.⁶¹ Furthermore, rectangular altars with internal cusping or scalloping do appear in southwestern France and northeastern Spain between the mid tenth and late eleventh centuries (fig. 26).⁶² Whether these altars represent the revival of an archaic type or an independent invention of a form well suited to the distribution of the eucharist is not clear: an association with the antique Syrian tables of similar form is possible, perhaps through the intermediary of pilgrims returning from the Holy Land.⁶³

It is at least conceivable, therefore, that some of

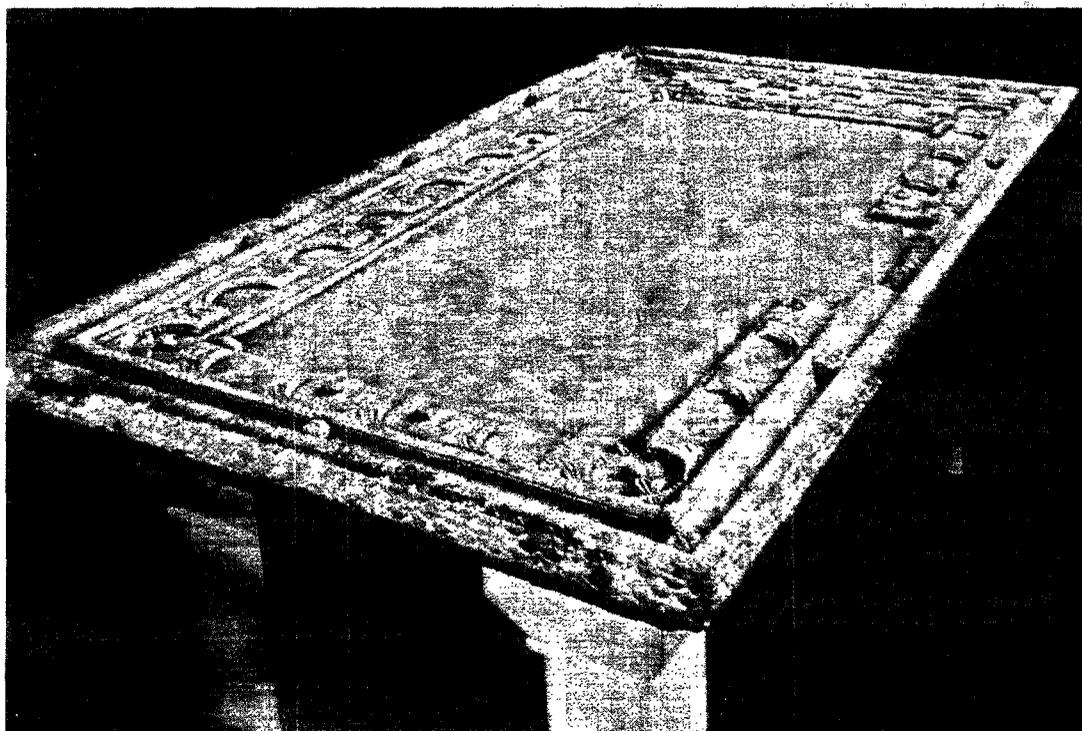
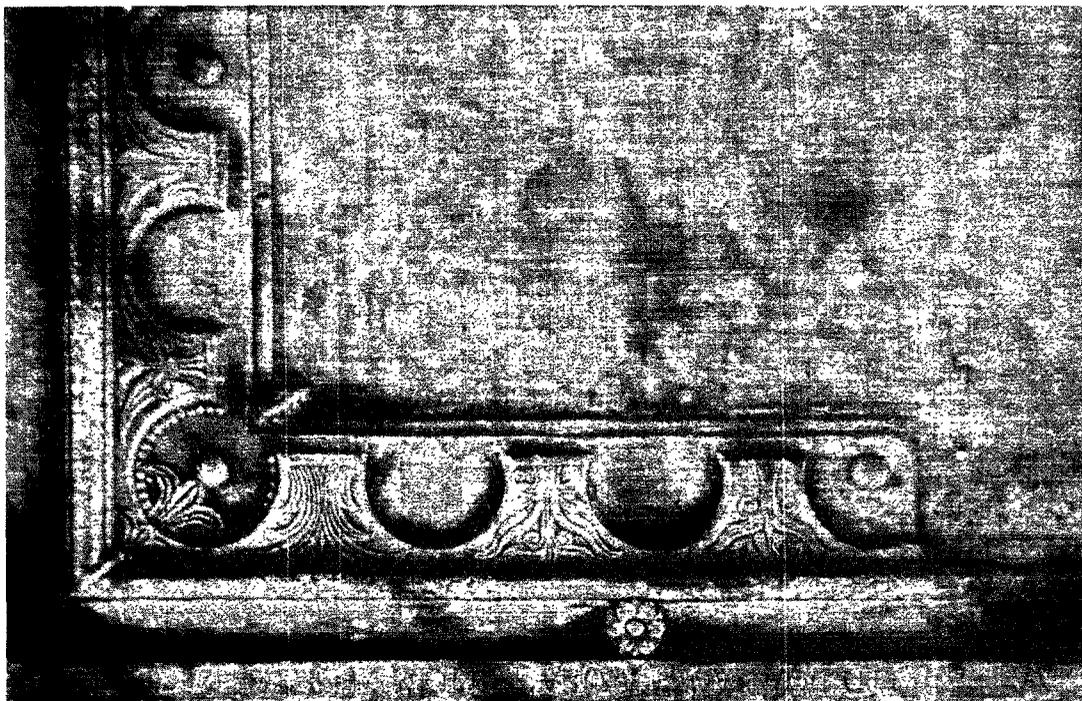


Fig. 26. Toulouse. Church of St. Sernin, 1096. Main altar. (after Deschamps)

the antique rectangular tables in Zangid monuments might have served in secondary contexts as Crusader altars. Against this it should be noted that lobed tables are not represented among the very few surviving Crusader altars of the Levant, the dimensions of which are much larger than those of the two tables reused in Damascus;⁶⁴ the sizes of the latter are instead comparable to various rectangular tables preserved in the Coptic churches and monasteries of Egypt.⁶⁵ It therefore seems likely that all of the altars reused in Damascus and elsewhere predate the advent of the Franks by several centuries.

The antiquity of the table in Aleppo was clearly recognized by Arab commentators, and was apparently a factor in the reuse of this and other examples. Nevertheless, to emphasize the antiquity and inherent aesthetic properties of the tables found in Zangid monuments is not to offer an adequate account of their redeployment, for one must also take into account the contemporary identification of the table in Aleppo as an altar. Perhaps more important, to ascribe the presence of the tables in Aleppo and elsewhere solely to their antiquity, or even to their associations with specific antique sites, is to overlook the fact that even in the twelfth century such antique tables were not necessarily confined to archaeological ruins. Both rectangular and sigma-shaped antique tables continued to be used in some post-Byzantine East Christian churches, as witnessed by the example still serving as the main altar in the church of Mar Sarkis at Maloula, near Damascus (fig. 27).⁶⁶ Similar tables were used (or reused) as altars until very recently in the Coptic churches of the Wadi Natrun in the Western Desert (figs. 5, 12–13), their antiquity presumably enhancing their aesthetic and religious value. The earliest example recorded *in situ* seems to have been set in place in the tenth century, but may itself be reused.⁶⁷ The use or reuse of antique marble tables as altar tables in the contemporary churches of Syria would offer one possible explanation for Ibn al-'Adim's ascription of a liturgical function to what was clearly recognized as a product of late antiquity.

If, therefore, the reuse of a table identified as an altar in Aleppo (and presumably elsewhere) was intended to evoke the altar's role in literary narratives of difference, the terms of reference may have been broader than those allowed for by traditional Crusader-Muslim binaries. However sporadically, indigenous Christian monuments were used as spolia during the twelfth century in contexts related to the

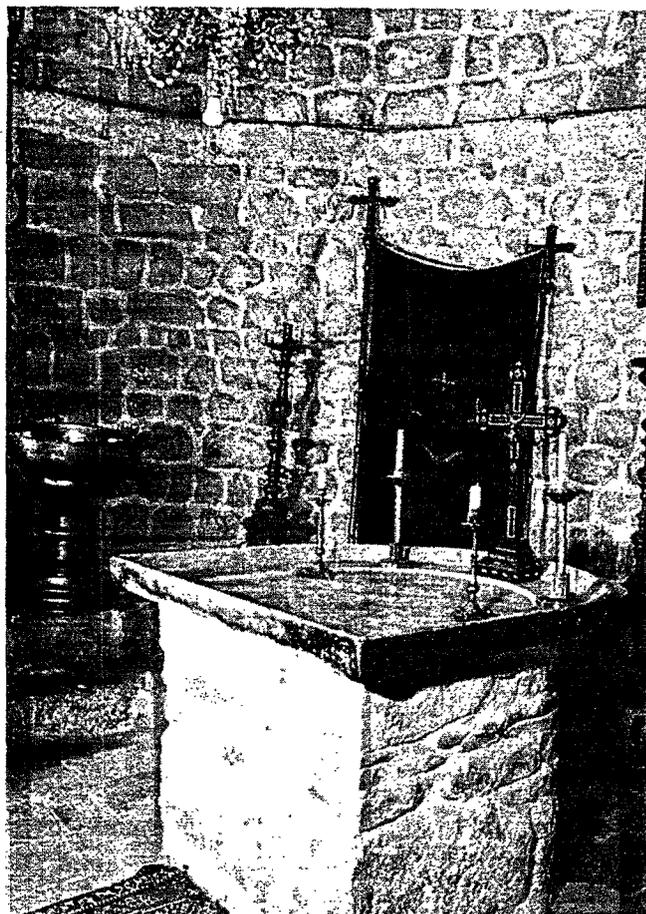


Fig. 27. Maloula. Church of Mar Sarkis. Sigma-shaped slab serving as an altar.

military campaigns of the Crusaders.⁶⁸ The Madrasa al-Halawiyya itself had originally been the Christian cathedral of Aleppo, but was one of four churches confiscated and turned into mosques in 1124 in retaliation for the desecration of Muslim monuments by a Crusader army besieging the city.⁶⁹ In the same year, the Artuqid ruler Balak is said to have destroyed Christian shrines at Khartpert, in eastern Anatolia, in retaliation for an uprising by Frankish prisoners.⁷⁰ There may even have been earlier precedents for such punitive spoliation, for when the Great Mosque of Aleppo was restored by the Hamdanid ruler Sayf al-Dawla in 965, following the severe damage inflicted on it by a Byzantine army, a Christian altar inscribed with a foundation text (now lost) was incorporated into a fountain in the courtyard.⁷¹ We know nothing specific about the altar's origin, but the context of its redeployment is highly suggestive.



Fig. 28. Fragments of a sigma-shaped marble table excavated at Afamiyya, site museum.

Even if Nur al-Din was enlarging upon an existing practice, however, it is highly unlikely that functioning altars were removed from contemporary Syrian churches; neither the Arabic nor Syriac sources refer to any such incident, as they conspicuously do to known cases of punitive spoliation, such as the conversion of the Aleppo cathedral. Just as the table which Nur al-Din installed in Aleppo was brought from Apamea, it is probable that the tables reused in other Zangid monuments were procured from the various ruined sites where they are still found in quantity today (fig. 28).⁷² Once again, it seems to be the antiquity of the objects rather than any Crusader associations which is the common denominator. Two of these monuments in which the tables were reused, the Madrasa al-Halawiyya in Aleppo and the Bimaristan al-Nuri in Damascus, are early examples of Nur al-Din's architectural patronage. This brings to mind Yasser Tabbaa's suggestion that we divide Nur al-Din's use of visual symbols into two distinct phases. In the first, "the architectural vocabulary of the Antique or Christian past" was used "to express the triumph of Islam over Christianity"; in the second, a range of more specific signifiers of Islamic identity (Qur'anic inscriptions, minbars, and minarets) served to affirm

the ascendancy of Islam in the struggle with the Frankish invaders.⁷³

In architectural terms, this initial harking back to earlier precedents finds expression in the madrasa and Qastal al-Shu'aybiyya, erected by Nur al-Din in 1150 on the site of the first mosque built after the conquest of Aleppo by the caliph 'Umar in 637.⁷⁴ The monument was probably intended to commemorate his recent victory over the Franks of Antioch at Inab near Apamea. The location of the building, the reference to 'Umar in its epigraphic program, perhaps even its archaizing decoration (fig. 29) appear designed to suggest an association between Nur al-Din's anti-Frank jihad and 'Umar's earlier victory over the Byzantine foe.⁷⁵ The architectural evidence should be seen as part of a broader phenomenon, for, even before Nur al-Din, Muslim polemicists had cast the mission of reconquering those territories lost to the Crusaders in terms of the original seventh-century conquest of Byzantine Syria.⁷⁶ As far as the treatment of the Christians are concerned, the self-conscious analogies between the two periods reportedly included Nur al-Din's revival or reimposition of the restrictions set in place following the Muslim conquest of Syria and Mesopotamia.⁷⁷



Fig. 29. Aleppo. Qastal al-Shu'aybiyya. Detail of entablature.

If, as seems probable, antique marble tables continued to serve as altars in some Syrian churches into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, their contemporary associations in the eyes of observers such as Ibn al-ʿAdim would have rendered them ideally suited to link the present with the pre-Islamic past. Nur al-Din's installation of an altar in the converted former cathedral of Aleppo in the year before the Shu'aybiyya complex was built seems intended to underscore both the antiquity of the appropriated site and, through its recent Christian associations, to reassert the ascendancy of Islam. The Madrasa al-Halawiyya was not the only former church in Aleppo refurbished by Nur al-Din. In 1168 he renovated the mosque in the Aleppo citadel known as the Maqam Ibrahim, a former Byzantine church marking the site where Abraham's altar was believed to have stood, parts of which survived to be incorporated into Nur al-Din's shrine.⁷⁸ The circumstances in which the church was converted into a mosque by the Mirdasid rulers of Aleppo (1023–79) are unknown, but Nur al-Din's restoration

of a site with a former Christian pedigree serves to link his patronage here with the transformation of the Halawiyya. The inclusion of antique altars in other contemporary buildings might be similarly understood as part of a wider propaganda offensive which invoked the metonymic function of the altar in a manner intended to underline Islam's ability to counter Christian hegemony.

There is one final piece of evidence relating to the early Islamic history of Syria that, although highly circumstantial, might support such an interpretation. Although the practice of hanging church bells in Maghribi mosques offers broad parallels for the contemporary reuse of altars in Syria, in each case the choice of object is culturally specific.⁷⁹ It was not the bell but the wooden or metal gong known as the *semantron* which served in the churches of the Syrian Christians.⁸⁰ Consequently, it is the *semantron* that acted as the intermittent focus of inter-cultural tension in medieval accounts of Christian-Muslim relations.⁸¹ The motif figures prominently in early ac-

counts of a pivotal act in the early relationship between the Christian and Muslim communities of Syria: the appropriation of the Byzantine cathedral of Damascus and its transformation into the Great Mosque of the city in 705 or 706. In one of the earliest versions of this event, Mas'udi reports that it was precipitated by the irritation caused when a semantron was sounded in the cathedral as the Umayyad caliph al-Walid ascended the minbar to give the sermon in the adjoining mosque.⁸² A general perception of the aural pollution consequent on the proximity of mosque and church as an infringement of religious integrity, if not political sovereignty, may be reflected in contemporary poems which refer to the sound of the semantron competing with the voices of the Muslims worshipping at the site.⁸³ Alternatively, implying as it does that the Christians had broken the restrictions in the treaty of conquest governing the use of the semantron, this may be a retrojective rationalization of what was, from a Christian perspective at least, a highly contentious act.⁸⁴

Whatever the significance of the semantron, in later tellings it fades from the story, and insofar as any object is associated with the conversion of the cathedral, it is the altar (*madhbah*) or tabernacle (*shahīd*) and its immediate architectural context that forms the focus of the narrative.⁸⁵ Among the accounts cited by Ibn 'Asakir, the great twelfth-century Damascene historian, the following is typical:

Thus al-Walid decided to demolish the church.... A ladder was brought for him and placed against the apse of the altar (*mihrab al-madhbah*), he mounted it and struck the altar until it was broken into many pieces; then the Muslims fell upon the church and demolished it.⁸⁶

It is conceivable that medieval accounts of this seminal act influenced the role of the altar as a site for the articulation of cultural and religious difference in Zangid and Ayyubid Syria. However, the account just cited is attributed to Ibn al-Akfani, one of the mentors of Ibn 'Asakir, who died in 1129.⁸⁷ That, somewhat unusually, a longer *isnad* is not given leaves open the possibility that this version of events does not in fact predate the late eleventh or early twelfth century. Even in the period before Nur al-Din's counter-Crusade gathered momentum, there are numerous accounts of mosques and minbars being defiled at the hands of the Franks.⁸⁸ This description of the much earlier desecration of the altar in Damascus might therefore have been intended to provide an appropriate counter-narrative, reflecting rather than

inspiring an increasing emphasis on the altar in contemporary visual and literary polemics.

While such an emphasis might provide a context in which to locate the reuse of antique marble altars in Nur al-Din's monuments, these were clearly something other than Crusader trophies. At the very least, the transport of these objects from ruined Byzantine sites reflects an aesthetic appreciation of certain antiquities in twelfth-century Syria. Considered alongside both the use of similar objects in medieval Syrian churches and the role of the altar in twelfth-century literary narratives of cultural and religious difference, the redeployment of these tables may also represent a practice through which the pre- and early Islamic past was brought into constellation with the present in a manner intended to emphasize the hegemonic potential of Islam. It is clear that a primary association of that present was the military conflict between Franks and Muslims, a struggle reflected not only in the intensity and range of contemporary oral, textual, and visual polemics, but in the intense potency with which traditional signifiers of religious and cultural identity were (re)invested. To this extent one might support Enlart's attempt to relate the reuse of the tables to the political, military, and cultural upheavals of the twelfth century, while challenging the ability of Crusader-Muslim binaries alone to offer an adequate account of the phenomenon.

Such an interpretation presupposes not just a retrojective change in the narratives of early Syrian history, but a parallel shift in the meaning of an established practice, however. The reuse of Byzantine tables in Islamic monuments began in Syria before the Crusades, inspired most probably by their aesthetic attractions and relative availability. If the events of the twelfth century led to the reuse of similar objects being governed by an increasing emphasis on their iconographic associations, this would imply an alteration in the semantic value of the tables. Such a scenario is far from certain, but it is clear that the phenomenon of reuse is considerably more complex than has been acknowledged. Although the practice of reusing certain types of object or materials may have endured in a particular region over time, there is no a priori reason to assume that its meaning remained static. The reuse of specific types of artifact may have been influenced by semantic shifts, and even where the reused objects are formally similar, there are clear regional distinctions in the patterns of both primary and secondary use.

In eliding such differences, the striking ahistoricity of the paradigms used to explain the sources and recontextualization of the marble tables that appear in medieval Islamic contexts in Syria and Egypt says more about the preconceptions which Orientalist historians and art historians brought to the analysis of their material in the twentieth century than about the medieval cultures that produced it. The citation nature of much art-historical discourse, the uncritical repetition of certain interpretative tropes as *idées reçues*, has served to ensure that such preconceptions continue to exert an influence on contemporary art-historical writing.⁸⁹ As I hope I have demonstrated, the reuse of material derived from pre- or non-Islamic contexts in medieval Islamic architecture merits much more detailed analysis than it has received to date. One might perhaps start with the development of a vocabulary that is sufficiently nuanced to transcend the standard interpretative tropes of spoliation and trophy.

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APPENDIX: CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF
RECTANGULAR AND SIGMA-SHAPED TABLES
RECORDED IN MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC CONTEXTS

1. Egypt, unknown provenance, datable to the early ninth century (fig. 10)
Fragment of an inscribed white marble sigma-shaped table used as a funerary stele.
Source: Gaston Wiet, *Catalogue générale du Musée arabe du Caire: Stèles funéraires* (Cairo, 1942), no. 8500, pl. 2.
2. Egypt, Esna, dated 412 (1021) and 564 (1168) (fig. 2)
Inscribed sigma-shaped stone table measuring 0.85 m x 0.83 m, twice used as a funerary stele; once in 1021 and again in 1168. Incised birds appear at intervals around the inner rim.
Source: M. Étienne Combe, "Deux Épitaphes musulmanes sur une pierre d'autel copte," *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 10 (1910): 187–90; Gaston Wiet, *Catalogue générale du Musée arabe du Caire: Stèles funéraires* (Cairo, 1939), no. 3710, p. 199, 62, pl. XXXVIII; *RCEA* 2316 and 3279.
3. Egypt, Derr, dated 418 (1027)
Inscribed sigma-shaped table used as a funerary stele.
Source: Strzygowski, "La relazione," p. 62, pl. IV/2; Ugo Monneret de Villard, *La Nubia medioevale*, vols. 1–2 (Cairo, 1935), p. 101, pl. XLVIII; *RCEA*, no. 2358.
4. Egypt, Great Mosque of Esna, dated 474 (1081)
Sigma-shaped marble table measuring 0.65 m x 0.72 m and inscribed with the foundation text of a minaret. Later set into the wall surrounding the mihrab of the mosque.
Source: Gaston Wiet, "Nouvelles inscriptions fatimides," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 24 (1942): 145–47, pl. 2.
5. Syria, madrasa of Sibay, Damascus, datable to between 1078 and 1092 (figs. 15, 16)
A series of nine sigma-shaped tables of various sizes are set into the qibla wall of this late-Mamluk madrasa. Four marble tables flanking the mihrab are inscribed in foliated Kufic of different forms. The two smaller tables are inscribed with Qur'an 25:10 and part of 6:54 respectively. The two largest examples are inscribed with Qur'an 2:256 and part of 18:37, and the names and titles of the Seljuq prince Abū Sa'īd Tutush. Since the inscription refers to Tutush as *al-malik al-mu'azzam* rather than *al-sultān al-mu'azzam*, it seems likely that some or all of the tables had been reused in a mosque or madrasa built by Tutush at some point after he became governor of Damascus in 1078 and before he assumed the title of sultan, upon the death of Malik Shah in 1092. There is some confusion as to the location of the tables in published references to them, with van Berchem placing them in the Darwishiyya and Brandenburg in the Great Mosque of Damascus.
Source: Max van Berchem in von Oppenheim, *Inschriften aus Syrien*, pp. 149–52, ill. 25–26; Brandenburg, *Bericht über eine Reise in Syrien*, p. 26; *RCEA* 2860.
6. Egypt, Great Mosque of Derr, datable to ca. 1136–37 (fig. 11).
Inscribed sigma-shaped table measuring 0.76 m x 0.62 m used as a funerary stele. The shape of the table is somewhat oblong compared to the standard sigma-shaped funerary stele found in Egypt.
Source: Strzygowski, "La relazione," p. 62, pl. IV/3; Monneret de Villard, *La Nubia medioevale*, vols. 1–2, p. 101, pl. XLVIII; Wiet, *Catalogue générale* (1939), no. 2329, p. 190, pl. XXXV; *RCEA* 3088.

7. Syria, Madrasa al-Halawiyya, Aleppo, datable to ca. 1149–50
Marble table of uncertain form (probably sigma-shaped) brought from Apamea for the rededication of this former church as a madrasa in 1149–50.
Sources: see nn. 31–32.
8. Syria, bimaristan of Nur al-Din, Damascus, building datable to 549 (1154) (figs. 1, 14, 17)
A series of rectangular and sigma-shaped patens set into the lateral walls of the northern, southern, and eastern iwans.
Source: Ernst Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies in Architecture," *Ars Islamica* 9 (1942): 3–4, 10, fig. 65; *RCEA* 3164.
9. Egypt, Esna, dated 412 (1021) and 564 (1168). Same as 2 above.
10. Syria, mausoleum of Nur al-Din, Damascus, building datable to 567 (1172) (fig. 18)
Rectangular marble table with scalloped interior set in interior wall. Recorded in a photograph taken by Creswell; the table is not mentioned in descriptions of the tomb, and was no longer there when I visited it in 1997.
Source: Creswell Archive neg. no. 5703 (figure 18 above).
11. Egypt, Great Mosque of Derr, dated 582 (1186)
A fragmentary inscribed sigma-shaped marble table used as a funerary stele and set into an internal wall. The table referred to in the two sources cited below appears to be the same object, but the proportions cited are at variance. Monneret de Villard states that the table consisted of two fragments measuring 0.84 m x 0.85 m and 0.77 m x 0.62 m respectively; Wiet gives the total dimensions of the table as 0.76 m x 0.79 m.
Source: Monneret de Villard, *La Nubia medioeval*, 2 vols., 1: 101; Wiet, *Catalogue générale* (1939), no. 2347, p. 206, pl. XXXV.
12. Egypt, Qarafa Cemetery, Cairo, dated 657 (1259)
Inscribed sigma-shaped table used as a funerary stele. Somewhat unusually, the cursive inscription is carved in relief rather than incised.
Source: Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un corpus inscriptionum arabicarum, première partie, Égypte, fascicule premier: Le Caire* (Paris, 1894), p. 117, no. 73, pl. XXV, no. 2; Strzygowski, "La relazione," p. 62, pl. IV/1.
13. Syria, Great Mosque of Hims, date uncertain (Mamluk?) (fig. 19)
Sigma-shaped table still in place in the courtyard of the mosque, where it serves as a mihrab. The table bears a Mamluk inscription. It is much heavier and thicker than the other Syrian examples, more akin to an industrial artifact, and may originally have served a different function than the sigma-shaped tables of more common type.
Source: Moritz Sobernheim, "Die Inschrift der Moscheen von Hims," in *Festschrift zu C.-F. Lehmann-Haupt's sechzigstem Geburtstag = Janus 1* (1921): 231–32, no. 4; Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et Monuments d'Alep*, p. 208, n. 4.
14. Syria, Great Mosque of Hama (date uncertain)
The destruction of the mosque makes it impossible to verify Herzfeld's mention of such a table or to ascertain the date at which it may have been reused. The table was not in evidence in the early 1940's when Sauvaget surveyed the building.
Sources: Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, p. 208, n. 4; Jean Sauvaget, "Notes sur quelques monuments musulmans de Syrie à propos d'une étude récente," *Syria* 29 (1944–45): 228.
15. Cairo, Arab Museum.
Sigma-shaped Muslim grave stele, reportedly of the fourteenth century.
Source: Combe, "Deux epitaphes," 188.

NOTES

1. There is a vast literature on this subject, but the following are among the most important or most recent publications dealing with architectural material: Friedrich Deichmann, "Säule und Ordnung in der frühchristlichen Architektur," *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Römische Abteilung Mitteilungen* 55 (1940): 30–50; Arnold Esch, "Spolien. Zur Wiederverwendung antiker Baustücke und Skulpturen im mittelalterlichen Italien," *Archiv für Kunstgeschichte* 51 (1969): 1–64; Arnold Michael Greenhalgh, *The Survival of Roman Antiquities in the Middle Ages* (London, 1989): 119–44; Beat Brenk, "Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics versus Ideology," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987): 103–9; Michael Vickers, "Wandering Stones: Venice, Constantinople, and Athens," in *The Verbal and the Visual: Essays in Honor of William Sebastian Heckscher*, ed. Karl-Ludwig Selig and Elizabeth Sears (New York, 1990), pp. 225–42; Henry R. Maguire, "The Cages of Crosses: Ancient and Medieval Sculptures in the 'Little Metropolis' in Athens," in *Thymiama: stē mnēme tēs Laskarinas Boura* (Athens, 1994), pp. 169–72; Joseph Alchermes, "Spolia in Roman Cities of the Late Empire: Legislative Rationales and Architectural Reuse," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48 (1994): 167–78; Lucilla de Lachenal, *Spolia: uso e reimpiego dell'antico dal III al XIV secolo* (Milan, 1995); Helen Saradi, "The Use of Ancient Spolia in Byzantine Monuments: The

- Archaeological and Literary Evidence," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 3 (1997): 395–423; *Ideologia e pratiche del reimpiego nell'Alto Medioevo*, 2 vols., Settimani di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 46 (1998); Bryan Ward-Perkins, "Re-using the Architectural Legacy of the Past, *entre idéologie et pragmatisme*," in *The Idea and the Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. G.P. Brogiolo and Bryan Ward-Perkins (Leiden, 1999), pp. 225–44.
2. A notable exception to the general tendency has been discussion of those rare instances where the sources provide elaborate pedigrees for reused architectural material. See, for example, the doors reused in Abbasid Iraq: Charles Wendell, "Baghdād: *Imago Mundi* and Other Foundation-Lore," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 2 (1971): 113–16; Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven and London, 1987), p. 67. For a short discussion of this issue, see Finbarr B. Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the Makings of an Islamic Visual Culture* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 200–2. The reuse of material in medieval Islamic architecture is usually just remarked upon in passing, with little systematic study undertaken. See, however, Scott Redford, "The Seljuqs of Rum and the Antique," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 148–56. Slightly more attention has been focused on later (Mamluk and Ottoman) buildings: Godfrey Goodwin, "The Reuse of Marble in the Eastern Mediterranean in Medieval Times," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1977): 17–30; Viktoria Meinecke-Berg, "Der Verwendung von Spolien in der mamelukischen Architektur von Kairo," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Supplement 4 (1980): 530–32; Lioba Theis, "Über die Spolienverwendung an der Sultan Ahmet Moschee in Istanbul," *Eothen, Jahreshfte der Gesellschaft der Freunde Islamischer Kunst und Kultur* 2–3 (1991–92): 81–87; Jane Jakeman, "Abstract Art and Communication in 'Mamluk' Architecture," D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1993. A further problem is the lack of dialogue between Islamicists and Classicists or Byzantinists on the reuse of architectural material. As a consequence, reused antique material tends to be discussed with little or no reference to its Islamic context: see, for example, Alessandra Guiglia Guidobaldi, "Scultura costantinopolitana del VI secolo: i capitelli reimpiegati nella medresa delle moschea di Davut Pasha," *Milione* 1 (1988): 231–44.
 3. "Christian altar-tables were carried [to Damascus] from monuments conquered from the Franks": after the French of Camille Enlart, *Les monuments des croisés dans le royaume de Jérusalem. Architecture religieuse et civile*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1925), p. 37, fig. 236. See also p. 162: "Altar tables carried off as trophies by the Muslims were set into the walls of mosques at Damascus...."
 4. Jean Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiennes de Syrie* (Paris, 1947), p. 200; A. A. Barb, "Mensa Sacra: the Round Table and the Holy Grail," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 19 (1956): 44.
 5. Jean Lassus, "Remarques sur l'adoption en Syrie de la forme basilicale pour les églises chrétiennes," *Atti del IV Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana, Città del Vaticano 16–22 ottobre 1938* (Rome, 1940), p. 345.
 6. Gerhart Rodenwaldt, "Sigma," *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, vol. IIA (Stuttgart, 1923), pp. 2323–24; Otto Nussbaum, "Zum Problem der runden und sigmaförmigen Altarplatten," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 4 (1961): 23.
 7. Hugh G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wādi 'n Natrūn*, Part 3: *The Architecture and Archaeology* (New York, 1933), p. 18. The idea that such "altars" were removed from Coptic churches has been accepted in subsequent writing on the topic; see, for example, Maria Cramer, "Ein Beitrag zum Fortleben des Altägyptischen im Koptischen und Arabischen," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Instituts für Ägyptische Altertumskunde in Kairo* 7 (1937): 125.
 8. Anon., "Campanas cautivas," *al-Andalus* 18 (1953): 430–33; Henri Terrasse, *La mosquée al-Qaraouiyyin à Fès* (Paris, 1968), pp. 66–67, 80–81, pls. 115–21; Jerrilynn D. Dodds, ed., *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York, 1992), pp. 272–73, 278–79, nos. 52 and 55. The reuse of church bells is not specific to the Maghrib, for the window grilles of the mosque of Piyāle Pasha in Kadiköy, Istanbul, were made from the bronze of Christian church bells captured in campaigns of military expansion undertaken later by the Ottoman sultans in a quite different part of Europe: Evliya Çelebi, *Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa in the Seventeenth Century by Evliyā Effendī*, trans. J. von Hammer, 2 vols. (London, 1834–50), vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 43. See also Edward V. Williams, *The Bells of Russia: History and Technology* (Princeton, 1985), p. 211. Of course such "Islamicization" of objects with strong Christian associations finds a corollary in the recontextualization of Islamic material (some of it booty or trophies) in medieval European churches: Marilyn Jenkins, "New Evidence for the Date and Provenance of the So-called Pisa Griffin," *Islamic Archaeological Studies* 1 (1978): 79–81; A. Shalem, *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1996), pp. 72–81.
 9. The physical transformation attendant upon the change in identity that such objects underwent was, on occasion, reversed. After the reconquest of Cordoba by Ferdinand III in 1236, the bells which had been taken as booty from the shrine of Santiago de Compostela 140 years earlier by the Umayyad caliph al-Mansur and turned into lamps for the Great Mosque of the caliphal capital were restored to the Christian shrine, allegedly after having been transported on the backs of Muslim prisoners: Ramón Menéndez Pidal, ed., *Primera Crónica General de España*, vol. 1 (Madrid, 1977), p. 734; Jerrilynn D. Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain* (University Park, Pa., 1990), p. 103. That the objects merited such treatment serves to underline the importance afforded to symbols of cultural identity and political sovereignty in medieval cross-cultural polemics.
 10. Alfred J. Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1884), pp. 7–11; Adolf Rucker, "Über Altartafeln im koptischen und den übrigen Riten des Orients," in Franz Fescher, ed., *Ehrengabe deutscher Wissenschaft, dargeboten von katholischen Gelehrten* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1920), p. 212; White, *Wādi 'n Natrūn*, pp. 18–19; Gilberto Bagnani, "Gli Scavi di Tebtunis," *Bollettino d'Arte* 27 (1933): 124–25, fig. 11. See also n. 44 below. On the baptismal associations of the sigma-shaped table, see Ernst Kitzinger, "A Marble Relief of the Theodosian Period," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 14 (1960): 31.

11. Urbain Bouriant, "Notices des monuments coptes de Boulaq," *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes* 5 (1884): 67–68, no. 16; Josef Strzygowski, "Der sigmaförmige Tisch und der älteste Typus des Refektoriums," *Worte und Sache* 1 (1909): 71–72; W. E. Crum, *Coptic Monuments Catalogue générale des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*, nos. 8001–8741 (Cairo, 1902), pp. 144–45, no. 8706, pl. LV (dated 786).
12. Rücker, "Über Altartafeln," pp. 210–21; Rodenwaldt, "Sigma"; Nussbaum, "Zum Problem," p. 29; Alphons A. Barb, "Krippe, Tisch und Grab," *Mullus: Festschrift Theodor Klauser*, ed. A. Stuidber and A. Hermann (Münster, 1964), pp. 20–21; *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann (New York, 1979), no. 576, 637–38.
13. "Altar," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1975), p. 146.
14. The funerary stele are generally about 1 meter square (see Crum, *Coptic Monuments*, no. 8706), whereas the sigma-shaped tables which served as altars in the monasteries of the Wadi Natrun range between 0.92 m x 0.92 m and 1.42 m x 1.42 m; White, *Wadi 'n Natrun*, 3: 62, 79, 186. One slightly smaller sigma-shaped table measuring 0.88 m x 0.88 m was on display in the small museum at Dayr Abu Makar when I visited in July 2000; its source is uncertain. See also nn. 65 and 67 below.
15. On the iconographic links between altar and tomb, see, among others, W. Deonna, "Mobilier Délien," *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 58 (1934): 78–83. There may be an association between such funerary uses and the relative frequency with which the sigma-shaped table is found set into the floor, flanking or serving as the baptismal font in late-antique and Byzantine churches; see Bagnani, "Gli Scavi," pp. 124–25, fig. 11; Georges Roux, "Tables chrétiennes en marbre découvertes à Salamine," *Salamine de Chypre*, vol. 4, *Anthologie Salaminienne* (Paris, 1973), nos. 65 and 162.
16. As pointed out by several scholars, Josef Strzygowski, "La relazione di Salona coll'Egitto," *Bullettino di archeologia e storia dalmata* 24 (1901): 63–64; Kitzinger, "Marble Relief," p. 27, n. 29. Sigma-shaped Coptic stele are occasionally carved with orants, as were Coptic grave stele of more conventional form: Josef Strzygowski, *Koptische Kunst*, *Catalogue générale des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*, vol. 13 (Vienna, 1904): 103, no. 35184, fig. 158.
17. Cramer, "Ein Beitrag zum Fortleben des Altägyptischer im Koptischen und Arabischen," pp. 121–22. See below, n. 59.
18. A fact that has occasionally been noted: Rowena Loverance, "Early Byzantine Marble Church Furnishings: Some Examples from the Episcopal Basilica of Kourion in Cyprus," in R. Morris, ed., *Church and People in Byzantium* (Birmingham, 1990), p. 228, n. 9. I am grateful to Professor Marlia Mango for this reference. Some of the later Egyptian steles (e.g., fig. 11) have an oddly elongated shape compared to the Byzantine tables.
19. Samuel el Syriany and Badii Habib, *Guide to Ancient Coptic Churches and Monasteries in Upper Egypt* (Cairo, 1990), pp. 35–38.
20. William A. Adams, "Architectural Evolution of the Nubian Church, 500–1400," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 4 (1965): 48. Although round-arched Coptic funerary stele existed at Esna and elsewhere in Nubia, sigma-shaped steles are not among the published corpus: H. Junker, "Die christlichen Grabsteine Nubiens," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 60 (1925): 111–48; Serge Sauneron and René Coquin, "Catalogue provisoire des stèles funéraires coptes d'Esna," *Institut Français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, Livre du Centenaire 1880–1980* (Cairo, 1980), pp. 239–77; Johnny Pelsmaekers, "The Funerary Stelae with Crux Ansata from Esna," *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge du Rome* 57 (1987): 23–29. Without further investigation, it is hard to know how widespread the use of the sigma-shaped stele was among the Copts, but the earliest dated Coptic example (fig. 7) certainly predates the earliest surviving Muslim stele (fig. 10).
21. Somers Clarke, *Christian Antiquities in the Nile Valley* (Oxford, 1912), pp. 110, 114–15, 191–94, pl. XXXIII, fig. 2.
22. See, for example, the small stylized birds which appear around the rim of the eleventh-century Muslim stele shown in my figure 2; appendix nos. 2 and 9; see also Wiet, *Stèles funéraires*, p. 62. Compare these to the stylized animals incised in precisely the same position on two late-eighth-century Coptic stele preserved in Cairo and Alexandria (my fig. 6); Strzygowski, "La relazione," p. 61, pl. III/2.
23. See, for example, the adaptation of Coptic niche heads decorated with discs and radial lines in Fatimid architecture; Finbarr B. Flood, "The Iconography of Light in the Monuments of Mamluk Cairo," in *Sacred Architecture in the Traditions of India, China, Judaism and Islam*, ed. Emily Lyle (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 172–73, figs. 3 and 5.
24. For a discussion of variant types of the sigma-shaped table, see Roux, "Tables chrétiennes," pp. 133–96. Barb ("Round Table," p. 43) notes the absence of lobed tables among the Egyptian examples.
25. Most of these tables are of white marble, but two larger examples are yellowish gray. Similar colored marble tables are found elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean (Roux, "Tables chrétiennes," p. 165), and have recently been excavated at Apamaea. The tables were first reported by Max van Berchem in Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, *Inschriften aus Syrien, Mesopotamien und Kleinasien* (Leipzig, 1913), pp. 149–52, figs. 25–26. Van Berchem, however, erroneously located them not in the Sibayiyya, but in the neighboring Darwashiyya, a mistake that has been followed by most later scholars. Oddly, the existence of the tables was mentioned in passing by Enlart, who correctly locates them in Sibay's madrasa (*Les monuments des croisés*, 1: 162).
26. See my forthcoming article, "A Group of Reused Byzantine Tables as Evidence for Seljuq Architectural Patronage in Damascus," *Iran* (2001).
27. These include sections of a vine frieze similar to those which made an appearance in the Qalawunid architecture of Damascus and Cairo, which were ultimately inspired by a prototype in the Umayyad Mosque (F. B. Flood, "Umayyad Survivals and Mamluk Revivals: Qalawunid Architecture and the Great Mosque of Damascus," *Muqarnas* 14 [1997]: 57–65).
28. Nikita Elisséeff, "Les monuments de Nūr al-Dīn, inventaire, notes archéologiques et bibliographiques," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 13 (1949–51): 19.
29. The latter still functions as a mihrab; its deep form and the presence of a Mamluk inscription serve to distinguish it from the other tables reused in Zangid monuments, but it is at

- least possible that it was set in place earlier than it was inscribed. For the suggestion of Nur al-Din's involvement in the mosque at Hims, see Ernst Herzfeld, *Matériaux pour un corpus inscriptionum arabicarum, deuxième partie, Syrie du Nord, Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, vol. I (Cairo, 1955), p. 206; appendix to Moritz Sobernheim, "Die Inschriften der Moscheen von Hims," *Janus* 1 (1921): 234–35.
30. Yasser Tabbaa, "Monuments with a Message: Propagation of Jihād under Nūr al-Dīn," in Vladimir P. Goss, ed., *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1986), pp. 223–40.
 31. For the notion of visual polemics, although largely in the context of intra- rather than inter-cultural exchange, see Kathleen Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge, 1992).
 32. In one passage Enlart notes that the reused sigma-shaped tables "could belong to a Byzantine church as well as those of the Crusaders" (*Les monuments des croisés*, 1: 162). Elsewhere, he notes that "they come from Byzantine or Latin churches" (*ibid.*, 2: 100). Compare these remarks to those cited in n. 3 above.
 33. Terry Allen, *A Classical Revival in Islamic Architecture* (Wiesbaden, 1986), pp. 59–67.
 34. Jean Sauvaget, *Les „Perles Choiesies” d'Ibn ach-Chihna* (Beirut, 1933), p. 89; *idem*, *Les Trésors d'or de Sibī ibn al-'Ajmi* (Beirut, 1950): p. 4; Ernst Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies in Architecture — 4," *Ars Islamica* 9 (1942): 4; *idem*, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, 1: 208; Keiko Ohta, *The History of Aleppo Known as ad-Durr al-Muntakhab by Ibn ash-Shihna* (Tokyo, 1990), p. 300. The name of the madrasa is variously said to be related to its location in the pastry suq, or to derive from the provision made for the distribution of pastries in its waqf (Sauvaget, "Perles choisies," p. 91; Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, 1: 297).
 35. Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, 1: 208; *idem*, "Damascus: Studies — 4," p. 4.
 36. See above, n. 25; the tables reused in the madrasa of Sibay in the early sixteenth century are also arranged symmetrically. For the possibility that the marble reused in the walls of Alanya by the Seljuq ruler Alaeddin Kaykubad (r. 1219–37) also had royal associations, see Redford, "Seljuqs of Rum," p. 150.
 37. It has been suggested that the play on the luminescent properties of its constituent material was intended to invoke the well-known Light Verse, and hence underline the Islamization of the recontextualized table (Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 387). This intention is not, however, noted by contemporary observers.
 38. Ernst Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies in Architecture — 2," *Ars Islamica* 10 (1943): 42; Tabbaa, "Monuments with a Message," pp. 230–35; Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 122, fig. 3.36.
 39. Ernst Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies in Architecture — 3," *Ars Islamica* 11–12 (1946): 41. Although it is reported that a marble plaque "en forme de pierre d'autel" appeared on the southern tomb (dated 582 [1186]), none is now visible (RCEA 3407). It seems likely that the association with the altar was made purely on the basis of the arched form of the steles at the ends of the cenotaph.
 40. Lassus, "Remarques sur l'adoption," pp. 347–48, 353; Rodenwaldt, "Sigma"; Kitzinger, "Marble Relief," p. 23; Nussbaum, "Zum Problem," p. 33. Apart from its role in the iconography of the Last Supper, the best-known example of the sigma-shaped dining table is that depicted in the representation of Pharaoh's feast in the Vienna Genesis (fig. 7); Wilhelm Ritter von Hartel and Franz Wickhoff, *Die Wiener Genesis* (Vienna, 1895), p. 157, pl. XXXIV. Similar tables continued to serve in the refectories of certain eastern Mediterranean monasteries until the last century: Strzygowski, "Der sigmaförmige Tische," pp. 75–80, figs. 5–6; Laura Hibbard Loomis, "The Table of the Last Supper in Religious and Secular Iconography," *Art Studies* 5 (1927): 81; Nussbaum, "Zum Problem," pp. 26–27, fig. 1.
 41. Butler, *Ancient Coptic Churches*, 1: 193–95, fig. 11; Lassus, "Sanctuaires chrétiens," p. 201; 80–81. For specific images, see, among others, Louis Bréhier, *La sculpture et les arts mineurs byzantins* (Paris, 1936), p. 98, pl. LXIII; Giuseppe Bovini, *Mosaici di S. Apollinare Nuovo di Ravenna. Il ciclo cristologico* (Florence, 1958), pl. XIV.
 42. Kitzinger, "Marble Relief," p. 25. Although not complete, the two most comprehensive distribution surveys are those of Nussbaum, "Zum Problem," pp. 38–43; and Roux, "Tables chrétiennes," pp. 181–96. Of the 53 sigma-shaped tables in Nussbaum's catalogue, 35 come from Egypt, the Levant and Greece, 8 from North Africa, and the remainder from the western Mediterranean. The Syrian examples range in size from .90 m x .90 m to 1.70 m x .90 m. (see also nn. 65 and 67 below).
 43. See n. 72 below.
 44. P. B. Bagatti, "Gli altari Paleo-Cristiani della Palestina," *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Liber Annuus* 7–8 (1956–57): 91–92; Kitzinger, "Marble Relief," pp. 29–31; Nussbaum, "Zum Problem," pp. 29–37; Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, p. 637; Loverance, "Early Byzantine Marble Church Furnishings," p. 229. With the possible exception of Sughane, where a fragment of a polylobed sigma-shaped table was found close to the *bema*, there is no evidence for sigma-shaped tables serving as the main altar in any pre-Islamic Syrian church; E. Baccache, *Églises de la village de la Syrie du Nord*, Institut Français d'Archéologie du Proche-Orient, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, vol. 105, Documents d'archéologie: La Syrie à l'époque de l'empire romain d'orient, no. 1 (Paris, 1979–80), vol. 1, fig. 117. Rectangular altar tables have, by contrast, been found in the Byzantine churches of Syria and, where found, supports for altars also suggest a square or rectangular table: Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiennes*, pp. 198–202; Howard Crosby Butler, *Early Churches in Syria Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, ed. and comp. Baldwin Smith (rpt. Amsterdam, 1969), pp. 211–12; Barb, "Krippe, Tisch und Grab," pp. 21–25; Pauline Donceel-Voûte, *Les pavements des églises byzantines de Syrie et du Liban. Décor, archéologie et liturgie* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1988), pp. 507–8. It is, of course, possible that rectangular bases or columns supported sigma-shaped tables; this is the case in Egypt, and in the church of Mar Sarkis at Maloula near Damascus (figs. 5 and 27).
 45. J. M. Rogers, "A Renaissance of Classical Antiquity in North Syria (11th–12th Centuries)," *Les Annales archéologiques syriennes* 21 (1971): 347–56; Yasser Tabbaa, "Survivals and Archaisms in the Architecture of Northern Syria, ca. 1080–ca.

- 1150." *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 29–41; Allen, *Classical Revival*.
46. Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies — 4, fig. 74; Allen, *Classical Revival*, p. 63.
 47. It should be pointed out that, in general, the degree of mutual antagonism evident from the Arabic sources intensified as the Crusades went on: Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 413. Even over the course of Nur al-Din's lifetime, there seem to have been changes in the content and emphasis of Zangid propaganda (see below, n. 73).
 48. From the *Kitab al-Rawdatayn* of Abu Shama: *Recueil des historiens des Croisades, Historiens orientaux* 5 (Paris, 1898), p. 305.
 49. William MacGuckin Baron de Slane, *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1871), p. 524.
 50. See, for example, the altar in the Dome of the Rock: Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 290. Elsewhere, the transformation of mosque into church was accomplished by closing any entrances in the qibla wall and installing an altar in the eastern part of the mosque: Joshua Prawer, "Crusader Cities," in *The Medieval City*, ed. Harry A. Miskimin, David Herlihy, and A. L. Udovitch (London, 1977), p. 184. The removal of such Christian paraphernalia usually required the purification of a mosque or shrine before its reconversion to Muslim worship (Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 308). The installation of a minbar was one of the first acts to follow such purification: 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī (1125–1201), *Conquête de la Syrie et de la Palestine par Saladin*, trans. Henri Massé (Paris, 1972), pp. 33, 35.
 51. The breaking of minbars and the desecration of the mihrab is mentioned along with the destruction of mosques in contemporary accounts of the devastation wrought by the Crusaders (Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, pp. 63, 298, 301). Analogous practices can be found in the Iberian peninsula, where the conversion of mosque into church was usually accompanied by the installation of an altar and the suspension of bells from the minaret (Julie A. Harris, "Mosque to Church Conversion in the Spanish Reconquest," *Medieval Encounters* 3 [1997]: 158). Conversely, after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, Christian sources report that the church of Hagia Sophia was desecrated by the prayer being performed upon the altar (Harry J. Margoulias, trans., *Doukas's Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks* [Detroit, 1975], p. 231).
 52. Tabbaa, "Monuments with a Message," pp. 230–31. This practice seems to have been fairly common, for two decades later the minbar in the sultan's mosque was again the target of the populace, this time protesting the treatment of the caliph by the Seljuq sultan (Amir H. Siddiqi, *Caliphate and Kingship in Medieval Persia* [Philadelphia, 1977], ultimate article, p. 7). Note that the image of the minbar and cross appear as symbols of sovereignty and religious identity even earlier in the anti-Byzantine polemics of the Hamdanid poet al-Mutanabbi (Marius Canard, "Mutanabbi et la guerre Byzantino-Arabe. Intérêt historique de ses poésies," *al-Mutanabbi. Recueil publié à l'occasion de son millénaire* [Beirut, 1936], pp. 108–9).
 53. Elisséeff, "Les monuments," p. 16.
 54. Tabbaa, "Monuments with a Message," pp. 230–35. On the textual and epigraphic propaganda of Nur al-Din, see Emmanuel Sivan, *L'Islam et la Croisade: Idéologie et propagande dans les réactions musulmans aux Croisades* (Paris, 1968), pp. 67–69.
 55. Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies — 2," pp. 46–47, fig. 18. Crusader prisoners were frequently marched in victory processions with their standards inverted: Ernst Herzfeld, "Summa imis confundere," *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 5, 2 (1933): 145; 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī, *Conquête de la Syrie*, p. 158. In earlier victory celebrations at the Byzantine court, captured Arab standards were also inverted (Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* [Cambridge, 1987], p. 166). The whole subject of physical inversion and its complex and rather nuanced significations would repay closer study, for it was relatively widespread throughout the eastern Islamic world. Not only was the body of an enemy inverted when displayed publicly after his defeat and death, but the arms and standards of a mamluk were also inverted to signify defeat by death (Milton Gold, trans., *The Tārīkh-e Sīstān* [Rome, 1976], pp. 164–65; Jean Sauvaget, *La chronique de Damas d'Al Jazari [années 689–698 H.]* [Paris, 1949], p. 52).
 56. In addition to Abu'l-Fida's mihrab in Hama, reused Romanesque capitals appeared around the mihrabs of several shrines in Aleppo. Two distinct mihrabs in the Mashhad al-Husayn are each flanked by Crusader capitals: Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies — 2," fig. 19a; idem, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, 1:242–43, figs. 79–80. Reused Romanesque capitals also appear in the Madrasa al-Zahiriyya (ibid., p. 274, fig. 89, pl. CXIXa; Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies — 2," pp. 46–47, fig. 19b. In Damascus two Romanesque capitals flanked the mihrab in the mosque of Zaynab near the Bab Thouma (Enlart, *Les monuments des croisés*, 2: 101–2, fig. 235). Romanesque columns and capitals also appear around mihrabs in the Dome of the Rock and Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem (ibid., p. 210, figs. 351, 357; Charles Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873–1874*, vol. 1 [London, 1899], p. 151). Elsewhere, a stray figured Romanesque capital was recorded in the citadel of Damascus, while another served as a well head in the Jami' al-Hanabila in Salihyya until recently (Karl Wulzinger and Carl Watzinger, *Damaskus: Die islamische Stadt*, vol. 1 [Berlin–Leipzig, 1921], figs. 82–85). Note that although less commonly mentioned than the minbar, the mihrab occasionally features in accounts of the desecration and reconsecration of sacred space during Crusader-Muslim encounters; Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, pp. 298, 301, 308. For further examples of Crusader material reused in medieval Islamic monuments, see ibid., pp. 382–86.
 57. Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, 1: 205–6; Elisséeff, "Les monuments," p. 8; Allen, *Classical Revival*, pp. 7–9, 18–19; Tabbaa, "Monuments with a Message," p. 225; Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 412. Although the destruction of the *mahārib* mentioned in the sources has sometimes been taken to refer to the altar, it seems more likely that it refers to the apse of the cathedral; in an account of the destruction of the Cathedral of St. John in Damascus cited by Ibn 'Asākir the altar is distinguished from the apse by the use of the term *mihrāb al-madhbah* (see n. 86 below). Nevertheless, Syriac sources refer to the desecration of the ciborium housing the altar: A. S. Tritton, "The First and Second Crusades from

- an Anonymous Syriac Chronicle," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1933, pp. 93–94.
58. Nikita Elisséeff, "La titulature de Nūr al-Din d'après ses inscriptions," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 14 (1952–54): 157, 171–72. For the victory over the Franks at 'Inab in 1149, see Roger Le Tourneau, *Damas de 1075 à 1154* (Damascus, 1952), pp. 305–6.
 59. See the catalogue assembled by Roux, "Tables chrétiennes," pp. 181–96. Some of the sigma-shaped tables may be datable to as early as the third century (Kitzinger, "Marble Relief," p. 32, n. 59). Unfortunately, Roux does not include polylobed rectangular tables in his discussion. In contrast to the sigma-shaped tables, they are rarely discussed in any detail in the existing literature on the Byzantine tables. It is, however, clear from Evelyn White's study that sigma-shaped and rectangular altars were in simultaneous use in the monasteries of the Wadi Natrun (both types of table are today preserved in the museum of Dayr Abu Makar), and this may well have been the case elsewhere.
 60. Bianca Kühnel, *Crusader Art of the Twelfth Century* (Berlin, 1994), p. 83. A rare example of a sigma-shaped table in Crusader art occurs in a depiction of the Last Supper in the Psalter made for Melissende, wife of Fulke of Anjou, probably in Jerusalem: Laura Hibbard Loomis, "Arthur's Round Table," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 41, 4 (December 1926): 784, fig. 6. This, however, clearly shows the influence of Byzantine or East Christian iconography, in which this form of table was standard for representations of the Last Supper.
 61. Loomis, "Table of the Last Supper," pp. 77–88.
 62. Enlart, *Les monuments des croisés*, pp. 162–63, pl. 78, fig. 236; Paul Deschamps, "L'autel roman de Saint-Sernin de Toulouse et les sculpteurs du cloître de Moissac," *Bulletin archéologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques* 2 (1923): 239–50; idem, "Tables d'autel de marbre exécutées dans le Midi de la France au Xe et au XIe siècle," *Mélanges d'histoire du Moyen Age offerts à M. Ferdinand Lot* (Paris, 1925), pp. 140–68, figs. 3–11, pls. I–IV; J. Puig I Cadafach, *La géographie et les origines du premier art roman* (Paris, 1935), pp. 379–81, figs. 585, 587; Joan Evans, *Cluniac Art of the Romanesque Period* (Cambridge, 1950): 39, fig. 46c; Barb, "Round Table," pp. 42–43, pl. 4; Friedrich Gerke, "Der Tischaltar des Bernard Gilduin in Saint Sernin in Toulouse," *Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literature Mainz, Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse* 18 (1958): 453–513, figs. 1–8. The tables range in size between 2.23 m x 1.34 m (S. Sernin, Toulouse) and 1.15 m x 0.75 m (Torreilles, Pyrénées-Orientales). In his discussion of the Romanesque altars, Deschamps ("Tables d'autel," p. 158) refers to the tables in the Bimaristan al-Nuri without comment.
 63. Deschamps ("Tables d'autel," pp. 164–65) relates the form to the distribution of the eucharist, but leaves unanswered the question of why this type of altar seems to have suddenly come into vogue in the region. It has been suggested that Western scalloped altars of circular form were inspired by a relic of the Last Supper kept in the chapel on Mount Sion (Laura Hibbard Loomis, "The Round Table Again," *Modern Language Notes* 44 [1929]: 512–15). The relic, a marble table, is not mentioned by pilgrims visiting the city in the Byzantine and early Islamic period, but is frequently referred to from the twelfth century onwards: John Wilkinson, with Joyce Hill and W. F. Ryan, *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099–1185* (London, 1988), p. 108. Before this, pilgrims refer to the presence of an altar on the site, with no suggestion that this was the very table on which the Last Supper had taken place (John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrimage before the Crusades* [Warminster, 1977], pp. 117, 201). The more general suggestion has also been made that the round altars were inspired by antique prototypes seen in the Holy Land (Nussbaum, "Zum Problem," p. 30; Barb, "Round Table," p. 44). It has already been noted that depictions of the Last Supper in East Christian art show a sigma-shaped or round table rather than a rectangular one.
 64. The rectangular tables preserved in the Bimaristan al-Nuri in Damascus measure 1.0 m x 1.52 m. The fragmentary Crusader altar table in the medieval oratory attached to the church of Saint-Étienne in Jerusalem is more than 2.30 m long, comparable in size to the largest of the Romanesque altars in the Midi and Pyrenees rather than to any of the reused Syrian rectangular tables; Hugues Vincent and F.-M. Abel, *Jérusalem, recherches de topographie, d'archéologie et d'histoire*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1922), pp. 770–71, fig. 320.
 65. Of the rectangular tables recorded by Evelyn White in the monasteries of the Wadi Natrun, the largest of these, in Dayr al-Suryani and Dayr Anba Bishoi, measured 1.0 m x 0.65 m and 1.0 m x 0.83 m respectively: White, *Monasteries*, 3: 158, 186. There is currently a slightly larger antique rectangular table, which measures 1.26 m x 0.76 m, on display in the museum of Dayr Abu Makar. A fragment of what appears to have been a Byzantine rectangular table with internal scalloping was found at Siyagha in Syria, but no dimensions are given (Bagatti, "Gli altari," fig. 2). According to Lassus, the altars in the churches of Byzantine Syria ranged in size from 0.90 m x 0.65 m. to 1.68 m x 0.89 m: Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiennes de Syrie*, p. 200.
 66. Roux, "Tables chrétiennes," p. 167.
 67. For photographs of two sigma-shaped tables serving as altars in the monasteries, see Adolf Rucker, "Über Altartafeln," p. 210, fig. 5; Johann Georg Herzog zu Sachsen, *Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster ägyptens* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1914), p. 39, fig. 101 (reproduced here as my fig. 5). Although none of the tables continues in use, when compared with Evelyn White's accounts of the altars in the various monasteries, the dimensions of those now in the museum at Dayr Abu Makar enable one to deduce the chapels from which they came with relative certainty. An exception is a large sigma-shaped table carved from a black conglomerate stone. This may be the black altar recorded by White in the Church of the Virgin in Dayr al-Suryani, but its dimensions (1.47 m x 1.47 m) are larger than those given by White (1.22 m x 1.22 m) (White, *Monasteries*, 3: 203). The altar in Dayr al-Suryani was apparently the one referred to in a Syriac inscription on the doors of the sanctuary, which recorded the setting up of an altar as part of the benefaction of Moses of Nisibis in 913–14: Josef Strzygowski, "Der Schmuck der älteren el-Hadrakirche im syrischen Kloster der sketischen Wüste," *Oriens Christianus* 1 (1901): 365. Although White (*Monasteries*, 3: 203) assumed that the black table which he saw was carved at this time, it is just as likely to have been an antique table reused in the tenth century; White himself (*ibid.*, p. 62) notes

- various instances of antique tables reused on modern altars in the monasteries. As I have stressed, it seems highly unlikely that the production of such sigma-shaped tables continued much after the seventh or eighth century (above, n. 59).
68. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, pp. 410–14. Note that according to the Hamdanid-Byzantine treaty of 970, destroyed churches in Hamdanid territory were to be rebuilt (Gustave Schlumberger, *Un empereur byzantin au dixième siècle, Nicéphore Phocas* [Paris, 1923], p. 607). Caught between a rock and a hard place, after the advent of the Franks, the Christians of Syria and the Jazira sometimes had to endure the spoiliations of both Crusaders and counter-Crusaders in rapid succession: Joshua Prawer, "The 'Minorities'," in Norman P. Zacour and Harry W. Hazard, eds., *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 5: *The Impact of the Crusades on the Near East* (Madison, Wisc., 1985), pp. 75, 77, 80, 82. The loyalty of Syrian Christians was intermittently questioned after the appearance of the First Crusade. In 1097, for example, the patriarch of Antioch was imprisoned, the cathedral of the city appropriated, and male Christians expelled: Taef Kamal El-Azhari, *The Saljūqs of Syria during the Crusades 463–549 A.H./1070–1154 A.D.* (Berlin, 1997), p. 91. Such events were, however, the exception rather than the rule.
69. Sauvaget, *Les "Perles Choisiées"*, pp. 82–83, 120; Allen, *Classical Revival*, pp. 7–9; Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, pp. 412–13.
70. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 380.
71. Van Berchem in von Oppenheim, *Inschriften aus Syrien*, pp. 35–36; Dominique Sourdel, ed., *La description d'Alep d'Ibn Šaddad* (Damascus, 1953), pp. 31–32; Herzfeld, *Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, 1:143. The altar (*madhbah*) is referred to as a *urn*, a term generally used for a basin or sarcophagus; the same term was, however, used erroneously by Ibn al-'Adim to describe the marble altar in the Halawiyya (above, nn. 34–35). That the object was believed to be an altar from a Christian church is, in any case, the crucial point. It should be mentioned that the roots of much twelfth-century jihad propaganda can be traced to the anti-Byzantine polemics of the Hamdanids (n. 52 above); Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, pp. 101–3.
72. E. Brandenburg, *Bericht über eine Reise in Syrien und Palästina* (Berlin, 1941), pp. 25–26, fig. 21; Sylvester J. Saller, *The Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo* (Jerusalem, 1941), pp. 291–92; Bagatti, "Gli altari," pp. 66–67, fig. 1; Sylvester J. Saller, *Excavations at Bethany (1949–1953)* [Jerusalem, 1957], 119–20; Jean-Ch. Balty, *Guide d'Apamée* (Brussels, 1981), p. 134, fig. 141; Thilo Ulbert, *Resafa II: Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuz in Resafa-Sergiopolis* (Mainz-am-Rhein, 1986), pp. 5–6, pl. 29; Michele Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan* (Amman, 1993), p. 297, fig. 577; Michele Piccirillo and Eugenio Alliata, *Umm al-Rasas Mayfa'ah I: Gli scavi del complesso di Santo Stefano* (Jerusalem, 1994): 304–5, nos. 43–48.
73. Tabbaa, "Monuments with a Message," p. 237. Note the suggestion that Nur al-Din's defeat by the Franks in 1163 was followed by an increasing emphasis on personal piety and asceticism (Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, pp. 134–38).
74. Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies — 2," pp. 30–32; Elisséeff, "Les monuments," p. 10; Tabbaa, "Monuments with a Message," pp. 227–29; Allen, *Classical Revival*, pp. 1–22.
75. Tabbaa, "Monuments with a Message," pp. 228–29. Tabbaa suggests that the ornamentation of the Qastal al-Shu'aybiyya was inspired by the Roman and Byzantine ruins of Apamaea (Tabbaa, "Survivals and Archaisms," pp. 39–40). Since the altar installed in the Madrasa al-Halawiyya came from the same source, the ruins of Apamaea may serve to link the reuse of antique elements in one building with the archaizing decoration of the other.
76. This idea is particularly prominent in the early-twelfth-century sermons of the Syrian imam al-Sulami; Emmanuel Sivan, "La genèse de la contre-croisade: un traité damasquin du début du XIIe siècle," *Journal Asiatique* 254 (1966): 215; Nikita Elisséeff, "The Reaction of the Syrian Muslims after the Foundation of the First Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," in *Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth-Century Syria*, ed. Maya Shatzmiller (Leiden, 1993), pp. 163–65; Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 71–73, 105–8. See also Sivan, *L'Islam et la Croisade*, pp. 62, 64.
77. The restrictions introduced by Nur al-Din in Mosul in 1173 (dress codes, the confiscation of all recent churches and convents) are all in keeping with the provisions in the so-called Covenant of 'Umar which guaranteed the safety of existing churches while prohibiting any new construction (E. Fagnan, trans., *Le Livre de l'impôt foncier [Kitāb al-Kharādī]* [Paris, 1921], pp. 214, 228; J. B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioch [1166–99]*, vol. 3 [Paris, 1905; facsimile ed. Brussels, 1963], pp. 342–44; J. M. Fiey, *Mossoul chrétienne: essai sur l'histoire, l'archéologie et l'état des monuments chrétiens de la ville de Mossoul* [Beirut, 1959], p. 38). Similar restrictions were periodically reimposed on non-Muslim minorities elsewhere in the medieval Islamic world (Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology*, p. 168, n. 93. See also Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 137).
78. Herzfeld, "Damascus: Studies — 2," pp. 47–49; Elisséeff, "Les monuments," pp. 13–14; Sourdel, *La description d'Alep*, p. 39; Allen, *Classical Revival*, pp. 61–62. Note also that Nur al-Din's mosque in Mosul was built on a site on which local Christian tradition held a church had stood (Elisséeff, "Les monuments," pp. 34–35).
79. In the figurative and often literal reinscription of meaning attendant on the use of Christian church bells in Islamic contexts, the latter cross not only cultural frontiers, but sensory boundaries. This alteration is crucial to the secondary meaning of the objects, constituting as it does an inversion in the order of signification, so that what once actively denoted in the realm of the aural, now passively connotes within the domain of the visual. Whether the transformation of Syrian altar tables from horizontal sites for the enactment of dynamic ritual to static components of vertical wall decoration carried the same force is far from clear. In many cases the vertical orientation of the reused slabs was no doubt dictated by their employment as two-dimensional mihrabs.
80. Although from the early seventh century most urban churches in the Levant were provided with semantrons for calling the faithful to prayer, when the Crusaders entered Jerusalem in 1099 they reported that the city contained no bells and noted the absence of their familiar peal from the urban soundscape (Williams, *Bells of Russia*, p. 11). It was only subsequently that bells and bell towers came to be incorporated into Levantine churches (Enlart, *Les monuments des*

- croisés*, 2: 55–57, 181–87). As a culturally alien import, the bell was thus more relevant to the confrontation between Christians and Muslims in the Latin Mediterranean than in the Levant.
81. In the eastern Mediterranean, the single reported use of the bell in the context of cross-cultural polemics of which I am aware only serves to underline the fact that the semi-otic system within which the bell signified (either positively or negatively) was alien to contemporary Syrians. The case is that of Aleppo: in 1098 a bell was suspended in its citadel as a condition of a treaty concluded between Ridwan ibn Taj al-Dawla Tutush and the Crusader army which was then threatening the city. There can be little doubt that the suspension of the bell was intended to evoke in aural terms a symbolic Christian victory that was to be signaled visually by the imposition of a cross atop the minaret of the Great Mosque. That the object was a bell (*jaras*) rather than the semantron (*naqūs*) generally used in Syrian Christian churches explains why its presence caused so little concern to the inhabitants of the city, while the distress caused by the idea of a cross atop the Great Mosque was sufficiently acute as to lead to the renegotiation of this provision. Significantly, the meaning of the bell in the Aleppo citadel was immediately apparent to a visiting Maghribi shaykh who, upon hearing it, brought it crashing to the ground in a state of horrified indignation, crying, "God is great! God is great," thereby opposing the Christian aural narrative with its (implicitly more potent) Muslim equivalent (Sauvaget, "Perles Choiesies," pp. 48, 76–77; Sourdel, *La description d'Alep*, pp. 40–41).
 82. Mas'udi, *Les Prairies d'Or*, vol. 5 (Paris, 1869), p. 381; Baron MacGuckin de Slane, *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1868), p. 622. On the authority of Muhammad ibn Habib, a traditionist who died at Samarra in 859–60.
 83. M. Quatremère, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks de l'Égypte écrite en Arabe par Taki-ed-din-Ahmad-Makrizi*, vol. 2, pt. 3 (Paris, 1845), p. 263; R. Boucher, *Divan de Férzadak*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1870), Arabic, p. 108; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh Madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 2, pt. 1, ed. Salāh al-Dīn Munajjid (Damascus, 1954), p. 27.
 84. On the semantron in the East Christian world, see Williams, *The Bells of Russia*, pp. 10–17. The *naqūs* is something of a cliché of Christian identity in pre- and early Islamic Arabic poetry, and the sounding of the instrument was, like the display of crosses, one of the issues dealt with in the treaties which various Syrian towns concluded with their Arab conquerors. The provisions governing the instrument varied from outright prohibition to restrictions on use or regulation of the volume at which it could be sounded (Leone Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, vol. 3 [Milan, 1910], p. 958; Fagnan, *Livre de l'impôt*, pp. 228, 230; Antoine Fattal, *Le statut légal des non-Musulmans en pays d'Islam* [Beirut, 1958], p. 216; Mark R. Cohen, "What Was the Pact of 'Umar? A Literary-Historical Study," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 23 [1999]: 107). There is little indication that such legal restrictions were systematically or consistently applied, but the *naqūs* provided a potential focus for sectarian tensions in the Islamic world throughout the Middle Ages. With the re-eruption of such tensions after the Frankish incursions of the twelfth century, the *naqūs* reappears in the literature of the jihad. In one of the earliest calls for a coordinated Muslim military campaign to liberate Jerusalem from Crusader hands, the Fatimid vizier Talā'ī ibn Ruzzik lists among the desecrations which the Franks have visited on the holy city the fact that "pigs and wine have dwelt in its midst and the cross has competed with the semantron (*naqūs*) in it" (*Dīwān Talā'ī ibn Ruzzik* [Najaf, 1964], p. 63).
 85. Ibn 'Asakir, *Ta'rikh Madīna Dimashq*, p. 24.
 86. Ibid., p. 20; Nikita Elisséeff, *La description de Damas d'Ibn 'Asakir (historien mort à Damas en 571/1176)* (Damascus, 1959), pp. 30–31.
 87. Ibid., p. xlii.
 88. See above, n. 51.
 89. The general importance of this phenomenon in Western writing on Islam was noted by Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979), p. 116. For a very germane discussion of how it serves to perpetuate interpretative tropes regarding medieval Islamic reuse of Crusader spolia that find little or no corroboration in contemporary sources, see Lobna Abdel Azim Sherif, "Layers of Meaning: An Interpretive Analysis of Three Early Mamluk Buildings," D.Arch. diss., University of Michigan, 1988, pp. 84–111. Sherif not only traces the genealogy of the idea that a Crusader portal from Acre was incorporated into the façade of the madrasa of al-Nasir Muhammad in Cairo as a trophy, but offers a much more nuanced and attractive reading of this well-known instance of reuse. For a brief reiteration of Sherif's reading, see Catherine Harding and Nancy Micklewright, "Mamluks and Venetians: An Intercultural Perspective on Fourteenth-Century Material Culture in the Mediterranean," *Canadian Art Review* 24 (1997): 58–60.