

# NEW CONSIDERATIONS ON MAMLŪK HERALDRY

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When my book on the coinage of the Mamlūk sultans of Egypt and Syria appeared,<sup>1</sup> I was under the impression that Mamlūk heraldry was, to a large extent, governed by rigid rules in the same way as European heraldry, which must have inspired it. I naturally profited by the extensive information in L. A. Mayer's *Saracenic Heraldry*.<sup>2</sup> The oldest known Muslim blazon is probably the fleur-de-lis carved in stone in the Damascus māristān built by Maḥmūd b. Zangī in A.D. 1154, when the Muslims had already been in contact with the Crusaders for 50-odd years; it is a faithful replica of a European heraldic fleur-de-lis.<sup>3</sup>

The armorial roll of Mamlūk amīrs in Mayer's work is based on blazons from buildings, such as mosques, madrasas, mausoleums, cenotaphs, castles and palaces; and from glass objects such as mosque lamps, flasks, bottles, and vases; and from such metal objects as chandeliers, candlesticks, basins, plates, dishes, pen boxes, chamfrons (headpieces of horse armor), and doorfittings. Blazons can be found carved in or painted on woodwork, woven into textiles, and on thousands of pottery fragments. The latter are seldom of any use, however, as they are rarely accompanied by identifying legends. Mayer also included a few copper coins with blazons of six Mamlūk sultans in his armorial roll.

As I had a large quantity of coins at my disposal while writing my book on Mamlūk coinage it seemed useful to continue the study of the heraldry of their sultans, which was barely approached by Mayer, and include the result in the book. Since then, my prolonged work with

<sup>1</sup> P. Balog, *Coinage of the Mamlūk Sultans of Egypt and Syria*, NS 12 (New York, 1964) (hereafter cited as *MSES*); "The Coinage of the Mamlūk Sultans: Additions and Corrections," *ANSMN* 16 (1970), pp. 113-72 (hereafter cited as *MSESAdd*).

<sup>2</sup> L. A. Mayer, *Saracenic Heraldry* (Oxford, 1933).

<sup>3</sup> Mayer, pp. 22, 152, pl. 19, 1.

Mamlūk coinage has resulted in changes in my ideas on the nature and aspects of the Mamlūk nobility, their rules and usages, and their attitude toward the blazon. I have also realized that heraldic figures on the coins had to be considered more cautiously, with a different point of view from that used in judging a European coat of arms. However, I am still firmly convinced that the figures are all intended to represent the sultan on whose coins they are engraved.

The personal objects on which the owner's blazon was engraved or depicted were always under the eyes of the proprietor. We can therefore assume that the coat of arms was executed exactly and faithfully according to the original model. But personal objects, and even tombs, are seen by few people, while a mosque or other public building has an official character. Therefore, the blazons on public buildings should more reliably be of correct design.

Official written documents on which the blazon of the appointee may have been depicted, such as firmans, and appointments to court office, governorship or an even higher office, no longer exist. It is on coins that we have the most official and widely-advertised documents of sultanic authority which reached the eyes of the entire population. I believe that, in consequence, the blazons on Mamlūk coins can be relied on as official emblems of the sovereign who had them struck. Copper coins are not manufactured with the greatest care, but even when their execution is inartistic or outright careless, I am convinced that they bear one or another of the devices adopted by the sultan. Puzzling details remain, like the seeming irregular multiplicity of the emblems for a sultan but Muslim heraldry is not based on rules as rigid as those of its European counterpart, a point which will be considered below.

In a paper published in 1970, J. W. Allan criticized my views on Mamlūk heraldry.<sup>4</sup> Stimulated by his objections and conclusions, I took up an extended study not only of the coinage, but also of the literature touching upon the subject of Islamic blazons. Mediaeval Arabic literature concerning heraldry is, however, scanty and descriptions of blazons are either non-existent or unsatisfactory. Only Abū'l-Fidā presents use-

<sup>4</sup> J. W. Allan, "Mamluk Sultanic Heraldry and the Numismatic Evidence: A Reinterpretation," *JRAS* 2 (1970), pp. 19-112.

ful notes on court offices and the heraldic signs which represent them on the blazon. Mayer remarks briefly on what he believes to be the oldest Saracen blazons, but his sources are not always reliable. The fleur-de-lis already mentioned is the oldest existing Islamic blazon. Other emblems, in the main mosque at Hims and attributed by Mayer to the same sultan, are much later, while the only authentic Ayyūbid blazon is on the Harrān gate of Urfa, built by al-Muẓaffar Ghāzi b. al-ʿĀdil I. According to Mayer, the rosette is the oldest Ayyūbid heraldic device, and is found in the north tower of Qalʿāt al-Mudīq, but it seems to me to be only an ornament, not a blazon. Although the coat of arms of Abū'l-Fidā and his grandson, ʿAlī b. ʿImād al-Dīn, are true Ayyūbid family shields, they should be relegated to the Mamlūk period. As they are absolutely different from the only authentic Ayyūbid blazon from the time when the Ayyūbids ruled, the latter belonged to the prince of Mayāfārigīn, al-Muẓaffar Ghāzī and consisted of a walking lion facing a man. When comparing the various blazons of the Ayyūbids with each other, the question arises to what extent they can be considered true family blazons. Finally, the copper coin with heraldic fleur-de-lis which Lane Poole attributed to al-Zāhir Ghāzi of Aleppo and I proved to belong to the Circassian sultan al-Zāhir Barqūq,<sup>5</sup> has been transferred to his issues by the British Museum keeper, N. M. Lowick.

Mayer's armorial roll contains the names of 243 amīrs, the description of almost all their blazons, and as complete biographical details as possible. Although in a few cases there is no information other than the amīr's name, Mayer stresses the importance of historical and biographical inscriptions accompanying the blazons. The number of devices contained in the 243 shields, either composite or simple blazons, or even without a shield (a usage accepted in Saracen heraldry), are as follows: cup or chalice, 128; *buqja* (napkin), 89; pen box, 88; horns or trousers of nobility, 43; scimitar, 15; fleur-de-lis, 12; rosette, 10; fesse, 7; eagle, 7; polo sticks, 6; *khānjā* (table), 4; bends, 3; lion, crescent (horseshoe?), crossbow, ceremonial saddle and shield with lower part bendy, 2 each; keys and palmette, 1 each; and various emblems resembling tamghas, 13.

Before reviewing Allan's comments on the heraldic devices on *MSES* coins and his opinion about their heraldic value, it may be useful to

<sup>5</sup> *BMC Oriental* 4, no. 321; *MSES* 603.

consider an aspect not analyzed in Mayer or elsewhere. (The coins of the six sultans incorporated into Mayer are excluded from the following evaluation.) The majority of Mamlūk amīrs had a clear preference for composite blazons: about 70 percent of the coats of arms are composed of several devices, and only 30 percent are simple emblems. The three-fielded shield without inscription or device, which according to Mayer and Allan represents the fesse, occurs on only seven blazons, five percent of the 154 three-fielded shields which include additional charges in one or more segments. Moreover, the seven shields with plain fesse are only three percent of the 243 amīral blazons in Mayer's armorial roll, an indication that the low-ranking office of the royal courier was bestowed sparingly. The remaining blazons are twofielded (the upper field occupies one third, and the lower two thirds of the shield) for 14 amīrs; 46 amīrs have a single-field shield or their device stands without a shield. It appears that the most popular emblem by far was the cup or chalice, which occurs on 128 blazons. Two other devices, the *buqja* (89) and the pen box (88) appeared almost as frequently. Trousers or horns of nobility occurred on 43 blazons, all Circassian and then only as an additional device, never on their own.

Mediaeval Arabic literature (mainly Abū'l-Fidā) indicates that certain devices represent court or government appointments. Although they are well known and amply described in the introductory pages of Mayer, I repeat the list here: cup or chalice, *buqja*, pen box, fesse, scimitar, crossbow and arrows, and polo sticks.<sup>6</sup> Heraldic signs which do not point to any specific charge are the lion, eagle, fleur-de-lis, and rosette. Some doubt exists about the crescent, which might be interpreted as a horseshoe, and may signify the office of master of the stables.

The frequency in the blazons of certain signs of office may depend on two circumstances. It is possible that once the new amīr received or selected his blazon, he retained the original device or devices even as he advanced in his career. Retaining the original charges on the shield might have been due to a custom which called for the blazon to remain unchanged during the whole service of the Mamlūk. This, however, does not seem to be the case; it is more likely that the amīr preserved the blazon which he received at his first installation because he was proud

<sup>6</sup> Mayer, pp. 10-18.

of his elevation to the amirate. There are indications that the heraldic components of the shield could be changed partially or completely when the owner attained a higher post.<sup>7</sup> It also seems that some of the signs of office were not only given to holders of a specific office, but also represented high standing in a general sense.

Mayer noted coins of six Mamlūk sultans with heraldic devices and considered the emblems sultanic blazons. Allan rejects that idea, wondering if they are heraldic devices at all.<sup>8</sup> He argues that if they are blazons they may belong either to the amīr in charge of the mint or to the provincial governor.<sup>9</sup>

Before I reply to Allan's final conclusions, it will be necessary to review the devices which occur in Saracenic heraldry (excluding the tamghas). The discussion below on various devices is based on evidence offered by buildings and objects described in modern works. These devices are usually related to those on coins.

### FESSE

Mayer's identification of the fesse reads: "A three-fielded shield without any emblem occurs several times as blazon of the Bahri Mamlūks... In view of the early date of this blazon it seems obvious that the disk divided into three horizontal bands is in itself the emblem displayed, as it were, on an undivided round shield, and the question to be decided is what object it was meant to represent. Among the insignia of officers of low rank the emblem of the *dispatch rider* (*barīdī*) suggests itself at once, consisting, as it does, of a small plate of copper or silver, *inscribed on one side with the creed formula... and on the other with the name and titles of the sultan*" (italics mine).<sup>10</sup> This three-fielded disc is just what we see on the Mamlūk coins with three horizontally-inscribed or partially-ornamented segments or bands. The three-fielded empty round shield

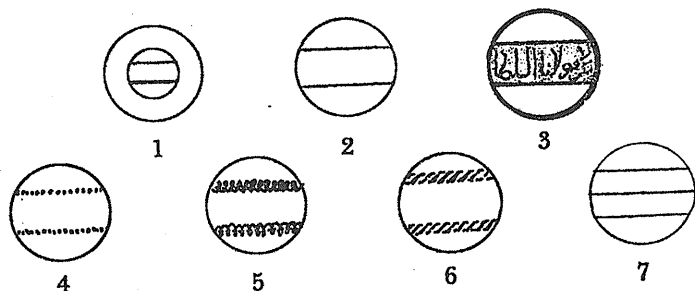
<sup>7</sup> See the three blazons on Mughbil al-Rūmū's chamfron (Mayer, pp. 167-68, pl. 60). The two lateral blazons contain all the emblems of the central shield, plus an inkstand when he became chief-dawadār.

<sup>8</sup> Allan, p. 108.

<sup>9</sup> Allan, p. 102.

<sup>10</sup> Mayer, p. 17.

is nothing but the simplified version of the originally-inscribed object: when provided with coin legends, it simply signifies the return to its original state. The main component of any Islamic coin is, of course, the legend, which is either peripheral and circular, horizontal, or both. In the case of the fals of Lājīn (*MSES* 166), the inscriptions are peripheral and the round shield of the fesse occupies the center; therefore the edge of the shield is well within the surface of the flan, within the peripheral legends. On other coins the round three-fielded shield extends over the entire surface of the flan so that the border of the shield coincides with the edge of the coin. Evidently the division of the shield into three horizontal bands, each band with its inscription or ornament, equally occupies the whole flan (see fig. 1 for the first category and fig. 2 for the second). Large numbers of copper coins belong to the second category, as do silver dirhams and gold coins. The latter, however, start only in 810 H. with the second monetary reform of Faraj. It is instructive to compare these coins with the "inscribed shield" of the sultans on many glass mosque lamps (fig. 3). Allan does not seem to have paid sufficient attention to important and easily-perceived details on some Burji gold coins, confusing the straight linear separation lines of the three-fielded shield described above with various ornamental separations (on non-heraldic coins) composed of rows of small pellets or of tiny fleur-de-lis lines linked together by minute arches, or with the chain separation lines (figs. 4-6).<sup>11</sup> Yet all these ornamental separations are clearly designated in *MSES*. To these non-heraldic separations belong the three plain horizontal lines which separate the four horizontal legends on some coins (*MSES* 741, 745, 750, 793 and 831; fig. 7).



<sup>11</sup> Allan, p. 100.

A variation of the three-fielded shield is the central segment bendy (figs. 8-9), a characteristic heraldic device which Allan considers an ornament not related to heraldry. Proof that it is a heraldic device is the blazon of the de Pons family with one fesse bendy of three pieces, no. 128 of the armorial roll of the Vicomte L. de Magny's *La Science du Blason* (Paris, 1860), an authoritative work on the European blazon.<sup>12</sup> Allan seems to rely entirely on Mayer in his opinion that the fesse (French *fasce*) is a three-fielded shield without any additional devices. De Magny's armorial roll contains the blazons of five families whose shields display three fesses (nos. 63, 225, 618, 877 and 1272). Six families have two fesses (nos. 137, 317, 323, 453, 1407 and 1471), and there are those who have a fesse charged with three stars (no. 1431); one star (no. 588); a lion (no. 595); two stars and a conch (no. 298); or one conch (no. 375). No. 1245 shows a cabled-fesse. These are only samples, the material is extensive. From the variety of devices which are called the fesse in European heraldry, it can be concluded that Mayer did not study the question thoroughly enough and that his definition of the fesse is erroneous.

It may be useful to raise a question here in connection with the fesse: in Mayer's armorial roll of 243 blazons, 154 are three-fielded shields, but only 7 of these are plain, without additional device, and can therefore be called a true fesse according to Mayer's definition, which Allan accepts. Yet the number of barīdī amīrs could not have been this rare, when during the same period the same number of blazons represent 128 cup bearers, 89 masters of the robe, and 88 secretaries. Would it not be possible, if we presume that the blazons were not established for the whole life of the owner but could be modified according to the progress in the amīr's career, that the former amīr barīdī added further emblems to his original blazon whenever he received a higher appointment? If so, the great number of the three-fielded composite shields would be satisfactorily explained.

On metal objects, ornamentation of the background generally denotes that the original field or device was colored; several examples are pre-

<sup>12</sup> See also J. B. Rietstap, *Armorial Général* (The Hague, 1950) and numerous additions.

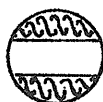
sented in Mayer.<sup>13</sup> Ornamentation of the upper and lower segments on the reverse of *MSES* 250 may have the same meaning, or it could simply be use of empty space (see also figs. 8-10; fig. 11 is a sketch of Aydamur's second shield, *bugja* on ornamented field).



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There is evidence from non-numismatic material that inscriptions in heraldic devices are perfectly admissible, in spite of Allan's objections.<sup>14</sup> The question will be dealt with more fully in the paragraphs below on the pointed shield and the chalice, and briefly mentioned in the paragraph on the *bugja*. Another peculiarity of the Saracen blazon is that, unlike the European coat of arms, it is never partitioned vertically.

### BUQJA (NAPKIN)

Allan contends that the hollow inscribed rhomboid on the coins *MSES* 242-44 (fig. 12) is not a heraldic device, but rather a simple frame. He argues that the mint-date formula which ends inside the rhomboid annuls its value as a blazon.<sup>15</sup> This view can be discarded after examination of two copper coins published in *MSESAdd* (244A and B), struck in Tripoli and very similar to the original issues *MSES* 242-44. They differ from the Cairo and Damascus fulūs of *MSES* in that the entire

<sup>13</sup> 'Alī b. Shāhīn (Mayer, pl. 56, 4); Khairbak min Aynāl (Mayer, pl. 62, 4); Aḥmad b. Buraq (Mayer, pl. 47, 1).

<sup>14</sup> Inscriptions on the shield are frequent in European heraldry. The blazon of the city and duchy of Rome contained the letters SPQR and a small cross after the "Renovation Senatus" of 1144. The city of Alba had A.L.B.A. Tivoli shows LIBERTAS, NOBILITAS and TIBUR SUPERBUM. Many Italian noble families display letters or mottoes on the shield: the counts of Fagnana, CON LIMPIDEZZA; Arrigoni, AR and others. The Spanish dukes of Infantado have AVE MARIA. The Portuguese dukes of Loulé have four lines on their blazon.

<sup>15</sup> Allan, p. 100.



mint-date formula is in the marginal legend and the *buqja* in the center is plain but filled in (figs. 13–14). The rhomboid on all three issues, of Cairo, Damascus and Tripoli, whether hollow and inscribed or filled in and plain, is meant to represent the same heraldic device, the *buqja*. In other words, the writing does not change the nature of the emblem, and the problem of other inscribed rhomboids is settled at the same time (fig. 15). With regard to the coin SS.9 (*MSES*, pl. 44, E), Allan would easily have understood my hesitation over the nature of that rhomboid had he examined the illustration on the plate with more attention. The rhomboid here is not isolated from the border of the coin but is connected with it by four straight lines (fig. 16) and constitutes a structure which functions as a separation line for the various parts of the legend.



Allan admits the existence of *buqjas* containing charges and ornaments — there are several examples of them on buildings (fig. 17).<sup>16</sup> However, he objects that the Aleppo fals of Jaqmaq (*MSES* 751) contains a rosette. He could have found a similar *buqja* charged with a rosette on pl. 67, 6 in Mayer as an authentic part of a composite blazon on a copper plate in the collection of the Freiherr Max von Oppenheim Foundation in Berlin (fig. 18).

Figs. 19–26 illustrate some frames which cannot be mistaken for heraldic shields. They are mostly ornamented, but even no. 25 cannot be mistaken for a *buqja*, as it is a double linear square which touches the edge of the coin.

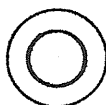
<sup>16</sup> E. Herzfeld, *Matériaux pour un corpus inscriptionum arabicarum*, pt 2: *Syrie du Nord. Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, vol. 2 [Planches], *Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie du Caire*, 78 (Cairo, 1954), pl. 165.



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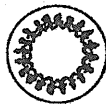
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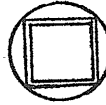
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### POINTED SHIELD

(also called GOTHIC or NORMAN SHIELD)

According to Allan: "The 'Gothic' shield appears on a copper issue of Sultan Ḥasan dated 762 (no. 373) but there is no reason for thinking it to be any more than a frame like those we have just mentioned. Mayer only mentions it in his book on *Saracenic Heraldry* as a variation shape for a shield; he never interprets it as a blazon in its own right. And again, as with the rhomb, it has an inscription inside it. It can therefore be dismissed as a blazon."<sup>17</sup>

The pointed shield cannot be dismissed so lightly as a blazon. Mayer considered it, with "close diaper pattern" (in reality a criss-cross pattern) to indicate on the metal surface that the original shield was colored) to be a blazon, that of Aḥmad b. Buraq, viceroy of al-Malik al-Nāṣir (fig. 27). It is the typical example of a plain pointed shield of a simple color or enamel, with no other emblem on it. Mayer then presents the blazon of Aḥmad al-Mihmandār, commander of the army and leader of the Mecca caravan: "Upper and lower fields white, on a red middle field a white disk *charged with a golden pointed shield*" (italics mine) (fig. 28). Further on, he describes the *white pointed shield* as the blazon of Saif al-Dīn Qulunjaq, amīr of a thousand, on a bronze plate from a Paris collection.<sup>18</sup> Finally, a plain pointed shield is among Mayer's simple charges (not as a variation shape for a shield).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Allan, p. 100, para. (d).

<sup>18</sup> Mayer, p. 40 and pl. 42, 1; p. 50 and pl. 41, 3; p. 190.

<sup>19</sup> Mayer, p. 8, no. 34.

Further evidence that these pear-shaped shields without further emblem or charge are an heraldic blazon appears on several glass mosque lamps which bear the names of the Bahri sultans al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and al-Nāṣir Ḥasan. In the catalogue of glass lamps and bottles of the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, one mosque lamp of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad described and illustrated shows three plain pointed shields placed at regular intervals on the under side of the bulbous body of the lamp.<sup>20</sup> Six mosque lamps of Sultan al-Nāṣir Ḥasan are also described and illustrated in the same catalogue, each with a certain number of similar pointed shields. The lamps of Sultan Ḥasan carry round, inscribed shields at the same time, illustrating that the conventional blazon and the round, inscribed shield could be used simultaneously.<sup>21</sup> Thus, in the same way that the *buqja* with an inscription in it is a valid heraldic device, the pointed shield with inscribed legends is a true blazon (see *MSES* 373; fig. 29).

As further proof that the pointed shield containing inscriptions was a normal heraldic device, the inscribed, pointed shield of Dawlātbāy, presumably one-time governor of Ghazza, should be mentioned here. However chaotic the political situation may have been at his time, he certainly could not have assumed regal attributes as a functionary of a not very important province of the empire.



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### CHECKERBOARD

I agree with Allan that this may in some cases be a heraldic sign, but in others only a primitive ornamentation.<sup>22</sup> It seems to be a simple background filler on Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī's copper coin (*MSES* 898), while

<sup>20</sup> G. Wiet, *Lampes et bouteilles en verre émaillé* (Cairo, 1929), pl. 6, 313.

<sup>21</sup> Wiet, nos. 285 (pl. 29); 301 (pl. 37); 316 (pl. 42); 319 (pl. 46); 320 (pl. 47); and 330 (pl. 56).

<sup>22</sup> Allan, p. 101.

on the fals *MSES* 834 it could have a heraldic meaning, though I am not now convinced of the latter possibility. In European heraldry it is a frequently-used device, and is part of the shield (or the entire blazon) of many French families.<sup>23</sup> The checkerboard of 20 white and red squares was Croatia's national coat of arms before that country's annexation by Hungary in A.D. 1091. However, recent study of several sources on Saracen heraldry leads me to doubt whether this emblem was part of Mamlūk heraldic devices at all.

### LION

It is difficult to comprehend why Allan separates the lion of Baybars I (fig. 30) and of his son Baraka from the lion of his successors.<sup>24</sup> The repeated mention of the Baybars I blazon by historians and the sculptured lions on several stone monuments, sometimes accompanied by a legend, are proof of the lion's heraldic status which can be adduced from coin evidence as well. The fact that the lion of Baybars is identified by Maqrīzī as his emblem is proof positive; but the fact that similar lions on the coins of other sultans are not noted in the chronicles does not necessarily mean the contrary, particularly when one considers how little importance heraldry was given by mediaeval Arabic authors. In a similar case, no one wrote about the bronze weights of the later Fāṭimid caliphs until my article appeared in 1970, yet they exist.<sup>25</sup> Sultans were not alone in having a lion on their blazon; two amīrs in Mayer's armorial roll also display it on their shields.<sup>26</sup>

The lion on Mamlūk blazons and coins is always depicted as walking, with right or left paw raised and tail swishing across his back. Allan cited the lion on Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's Mesopotamian issues as a counterargument. What he did not observe is that, on Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's coins, the lion is presented lying down, in sleeping attitude, surrounded by four stars—the characteristic figure of the *constellation of the lion*—which

<sup>23</sup> See the *armorial général* in L. de Magny, *La Science du Blason* (Paris, 1860).

<sup>24</sup> Allan, pp. 99, 104.

<sup>25</sup> P. Balog, "Islamic Bronze Weights from Egypt," *JESHO*, vol. 13, no. 3 (1970), pp. 233-56.

<sup>26</sup> Aydamus (Mayer, p. 84, pl. 30, 1); Yashbak min Mahdī (Mayer, p. 251-52).

has nothing in common with the heraldic lion. (For the heraldic lion, see figs. 30–35.) With regard to Allan's remark that there are differences in the attitude of the animal, or that there is a second object (such as the small bush behind the lion in *MSES*, pl. 25, 597b), these are probably present because of the whim of the die engraver. They do not alter the fact that the lion is always a "walking lion."



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The question of whether the feline on Baybars's shield is a lion or a panther can be answered. Maqrīzī called it a lion, Max van Berchem thought it a panther because of the word *bars* (panther) in the sultans' names (Barsbāy and Baybars), for this could be *armes parlantes*. However, the feline on Baybars's well-preserved coins shows the characteristic curls of the lion's mane, while the felines on the other sultans' coins have no mane. Saracen heraldry ignores the rampant sitting or facing lion of European blazons. It also ignores that the lion, when its head is facing, is called a leopard by some European heraldists. On many coins of Baybars I the head of the walking lion is in profile (*MSES* 28–38, etc.) while on others (*MSES* 42, 44, 49, 50b, 54), the head is facing (see *MSES*, pls. 2–4).

### CUP or CHALICE

One hundred twenty-eight blazons in Mayer's armorial roll include the cup. It occurs in a variety of shapes, either alone as a simple charge or as part of a composite blazon. As a simple blazon, it may be enclosed in a shield, but since the shield is not an essential part of the Saracen blazon, the cup can also stand free in the field. When it stands thus on the coins it is surrounded by legends. On some coins it may also stand in a three-fielded shield (*MSES* 808) similar to any such amiral blazon.

Since the shield is not required by Saracen heraldry, I cannot understand Allan's objection to the cup as an heraldic device on the silver

coins *MSES* 721–25 (fig. 36).<sup>27</sup> According to him, “the cup has no shield and is so small and insignificant as to be almost invisible.” One wonders what size standards must be applied to qualify a chalice as an heraldic emblem. I have measured the cup on al-Mansūr Muhammad’s fals (*MSES* 392; fig. 37) and Jaqmaq’s silver coins (*MSES* 746 and *MSES Add* 746 and 746A; fig. 38) and found that the first is three mm high, the second is three and one half mm, and Barsbāy’s chalice (*MSES* 721–25) measures four mm. Small or large, it is perfectly visible.

The shape of the cup is almost always indicative of the sovereign who issued the coin. Kitbugha’s cup on the fals (fig. 39), which Allan admits is a true blazon, is just as characteristic as those of al-Manṣūr Muḥammad, Barqūq (*MSES Add* 595B; fig. 40); Jaqmaq (*MSES* 746, 754 and *MSES Add* 800A; figs. 38, 41–42); al-Ghūri (*MSES Add* 902A; fig. 43); and Temirbughā (*MSES* 806; fig. 44).

All the cups on the coins are closely related to the cups in Mayer’s armorial roll. That on Barqūq’s fals (*MSES Add* 595B) is flanked by the trousers of nobility and this coin therefore seems to bear a composite blazon (fig. 40). On *MSES* 902, al-Ghūri’s name is written across the surface of a cup, and the cup is flanked by ‘azza-naṣrahu (fig. 45). Mayer describes the cenotaph of Khudābirdī al-Ẓāhiri, on whose headstone is Khudābirdī’s blazon, a cup inscribed with his name in a round shield (fig. 46). At the foot of the tomb is another cup, also in a round shield, but plain (fig. 47).<sup>28</sup> Al-Ghūri’s coin and Khudābirdī’s cenotaph are proof of the admissibility of inscriptions on Mamlūk blazons.



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<sup>27</sup> Allan, pp. 105–6.

<sup>28</sup> Mayer, p. 141, pl. 25, 1–2.

## FLEUR-DE-LIS CHALICE

Allan notes on p. 105: "There is, however, no example of such a chalice on a historical blazon and since, once again, the device has no shield, it seems unlikely that it is any more than a decorative device..." He does not seem to know the glass sherd in the Victoria and Albert Museum on which a plain chalice in the middle field of the blazon is flanked by two fleur-de-lis chalices (fig. 48), even though it is illustrated in Mayer's work. He must also be unaware of the transition figures from the fleur-de-lis to the fleur-de-lis chalice in Mayer (fig. 49)<sup>29</sup> and the coins (*MSES* Add 845A; fig. 50), which prefigure the contested coins of Barqūq and Faraj (*MSES* 590-91 and 647-49; fig. 51).



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## FLEUR-DE-LIS

This emblem occurs frequently on Mamlūk coins, in unmistakable heraldic shape, but is poorly represented in Mayer's armorial roll. The blazon in the mārīstān of Maḥmūd b. Zangi in Damascus is a royal emblem; it cannot, therefore, be considered an amīral shield. Only ten amīrs are known to have had the fleur-de-lis in their blazon. Aḥmad b. Ismā'il al-Kujukī, of whose career nothing is recorded, displays a single fleur-de-lis on his round shield. Two others, Ḥaydar b. al-'Askarī and Maḥmūd b. Shirwīn, have a two-fielded shield with fleur-de-lis in the lower, larger section. This blazon is identical with the one on the copper coin of al-Ṣāliḥ Ḥājji II (*MSES* 525; fig. 52). The remaining six amīrs show composite blazons in which the fleur-de-lis always occupies the lower segment.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Mayer, pl. 12a, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Aynāl al-'Alā'i, later sultan (Mayer, p. 87); Aynāl al-Ḥakīm (Mayer, p. 88); Barsbāy al-Sharafi (Mayer, p. 104); Jānībak (Mayer, p. 130); Shadbak (Mayer, p. 199); Tānībak (Mayer, p. 217); Timirāz al-Shamsī (Mayer, p. 267).

Since the fleur-de-lis is a rare amīral device, it may be a sign of high office. In fact, all the holders occupied commanding posts: the recorded career of Maḥmūd starts with his vizirate in Baghdad. The seven composite shields may signify that the owners started in a low-ranking office, possibly as *barīdī* amīrs (because of the three-fielded shield), then, advancing in successive appointments, added the corresponding insignia to the initial blazon and, upon reaching the height of service, put in the fleur-de-lis. This is only speculation, but is reasonable. As noted earlier, there is nothing to exclude the possibility that the Mam-lūk blazon could have been subjected to changes during the amir's advancement.

The fleur-de-lis appears on the fulūs of five Baḥrī sultans and of four Circassian sovereigns and in a transitional form between fleur-de-lis and fleur-de-lis chalice on a coin of Qā'itbāy (*MSESAdd* 754C). Its design is always highly stylized and is that of the European and Saracen heraldic lily. However, there are several varieties and the delicate details lend a special personal note. In most cases the sultan can be recognized from the coins. The fleur-de-lis, like the other emblems on the coins, is not some nebulous symbol of royalty, but rather a well-defined personal device (figs. 53–64).



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It is surprising that Allan should mention the presence of the fleur-de-lis on the coins of such Crusader princes as Bohemund and Henry of Champagne as if this were an argument against the heraldic nature of the same device on the Mam-lūk coins.<sup>31</sup> The fleur-de-lis only indicates

<sup>31</sup> Allan, p. 104.



where the Mamlūks learned that the blazon of the sovereign has its place on the coinage. The Crusader coins were not the only currency displaying this symbol with which the Syrian Muslims came into contact, for the Sicilian coinage of Charles I of Anjou (1266–85) shows an ample collection of them.

The pellets around the fleur-de-lis of some Crusader coins which Allan observed appear also on three Mamlūk issues. They cannot have any bearing on the heraldic or non-heraldic nature of the Mamlūk coins, especially since some 200 years had passed since the striking of the Crusader issues.

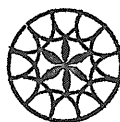
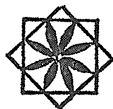
### ROSETTE

Mayer remarks that one of the oldest devices in Islamic heraldry is the seven-petalled rosette, which was discovered on a capital in the main mosque of Ḥimṣ, adjoining a fleur-de-lis on another face of the same capital. He believes that the capital belonged to the original structure built by Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Zangī. However, the capital, which stands upside-down, is not on top of the column to which it belongs but forms its base, and the fleur-de-lis on it is also upside-down. This means that the column with this capital must have been put up during repairs after the mosque was constructed. Judging from the shape of the fleur-de-lis, which is a perfect copy of the device on the blazon of the amīr Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl al-Kujukī, both emblems on the capital should be attributed to the Circassian Mamlūk period.<sup>32</sup>

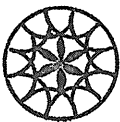
In the same paragraph, Mayer considers the rosette as the heraldic emblem of the early Ayyūbids. I have been able to find only one instance of rosettes around an inscription: in the name of an Ayyūbid prince of Aleppo, al-Ẓāhir Ghāzi b. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, found on the inner wall of the north tower of the ruined fortress of Qalʿāt al-Mudīq (Fāma, Apamea). The inscription is dated 604 H. and flanked by two six-petalled rosettes (fig. 65); a third, over the inscription, has eight petals. The rosettes are, therefore, not uniform. Furthermore, they are neither free-standing without a shield nor in any kind of shield. Both the flanking rosettes

<sup>32</sup> Mayer, pp. 24, 49 and pl. 19, 3–4.

are surrounded by an ornamental arabesque frame, whereas the rosette over the inscription is in a different ornamental frame.<sup>33</sup> The diversity of the rosettes and their different ornamental frames indicate that they are simple decorative patterns and not heraldic emblems.



Ornamental rosettes around al-Zāhir Ghāzi's inscription in Qal'āt al-Mudīq



The rosette is a rarely-used amīral device which occurs on only eight blazons. On two, the six-petalled rosette stands without a shield. On three others it is in a round shield, and on a sixth the round shield contains an eight-petalled rosette.<sup>34</sup> The last two are composite blazons, with two rosettes flanking a cup on one and a yellow vase on another.<sup>35</sup> This vase closely resembles a glass mosque lamp and I suspect Mayer's description may be erroneous. It will be discussed again below.

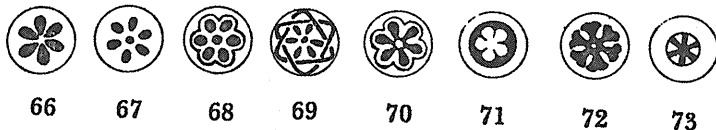
In view of its scarcity on amīral blazons, the rosette seems to be one of the emblems which denote high standing. Here again, half the owners of the blazon retained their original shield and added the rosette as an afterthought, but the other half abandoned the original blazon and adopted the rosette alone as their new arms. It is interesting to note that one, Maḥmūd al-'Ainī, who was not a Mamlūk, but the son of a qādi, had a varied career: chief of police more than once, inspector of pious foundations, qādi, and even chief qādi. Hence the pen box and the vase flanked by two rosettes. The vase may be a mosque lamp and may symbolize the owner's post as inspector of pious foundations.

<sup>33</sup> M. van Berchem and E. Fatio, *Voyage en Syrie*, Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 37 (Cairo, 1913), pp. 189-90, pl. 27, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Mayer, pp. 64, 73, 93, 135, 163, 171.

<sup>35</sup> Mayer, pp. 111, 149-50.

The rosette is a popular, often-used blazon on coins (figs. 66-73). Several five-, six-, and eight-petalled varieties occur on the fulūs of Baḥrī and Burjī sultans. The *buqja* charged with a rosette is a true composite blazon according to Mayer's concept (MSES 751). The presence of the rosette on a mosque lamp is also testimony that the device is a true blazon.



### WHIRLING ROSETTE

Although the whirling rosette (water wheel) is displayed prominently, and inside a circle on some coins, I now have some doubts that it is an heraldic device at all, because it appears on buildings, intricately connected with ornamental patterns, where it could not be considered a blazon.

### EAGLE

According to Allan, the eagle on coins is not a blazon but an expression of regal authority in general.<sup>36</sup> As evidence for his argument he recalls the bicephalic eagles on coins of the Zangids and the Artuqids of Ḥiṣn-Kaifā. However, these eagles have nothing to do with the heraldic eagle on Mamlūk blazons or coins, which was borrowed from the European heraldic eagle. The elaborately drawn, much-ornamented eagles on Turkoman coins are evidently decorative figures, originating directly from the Sasanian and post-Sasanian eagles from Persia which occur as repetitive decorations on Samānid, Saljūqid and Byzantine silks.<sup>37</sup> In this regard, it will be sufficient to refer to the plates in a

<sup>36</sup> Allan, p. 105.

<sup>37</sup> BMC Oriental 3, ncs. 346, 351; S. Lane Poole, *Coins of the Urtukl Turkumāns*, Numismata Orientalia (London, 1875), pls. 1 and 5; G. Migeon, *Manuel d'art musulman*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Paris, 1927), p. 295.

Wiet publication which show rows of these double-headed eagles.<sup>38</sup> The eagles on Zangid and Artuqid coins are in no way related to the crudely-engraved eagles on the much later Mamlūk coins and on the amīral blazons taken over from the Crusaders. The heraldic eagle of the Palaeologi and that of the Bulgarians was directly transmitted by the Crusaders. The only animals found on Turkoman coins other than the eagle copied from embroidered silks are a lion mounted by a human figure and a fantastic four-footed mythical animal. The Zangid and Artuqid coins are otherwise only epigraphic or display human heads copied from classical coins, or Byzantine scenes or groups of people.

The facing eagle on coins is very similar to those on the blazons of the luxury objects and glass mosque lamps made for the amīrs, except that the coins are engraved with less skill than the objects. The prototype for the eagles on the coins is, without doubt, the gold coinage of the Swabian dynasty in Sicily, whose earliest issues are of Frederick II (1197–1220) during the first period of minting. There seem to be no rigid heraldic rules either for the Sicilian or the Mamlūk die engraver; on both coinages the eagle's head may look right or left, or the eagle may be double-headed. There can be no doubt that the eagle on Mamlūk coins is a true blazon, because Qalāwūn's grandson owned the same blazon as his grandfather.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, the eagle on al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's coins is in a certain sense a family blazon. The eagle on Barqūq's fals (*MSES* 608) is also derived from the Swabian eagle, as is *MSES* 599, in spite of the mint name Ḥamāh across its breast. The question of inscription on the blazon has already been dealt with. Used infrequently, like other emblems which are not signs of office, the eagle appears on the blazon of only six amīrs.<sup>40</sup>

I called the walking eagle a bird in *MSES* but noted several times that it probably is an eagle. Allan may not have observed the details in my description of the fals of al-Ṣāliḥ Ṣāliḥ (*MSES* 338) and misquoted me, positively attributing to me a statement that the small ornament over the back of the walking bird is a small swan. My words are (*MSES*

<sup>38</sup> G. Wiet, *Soieries persanes*, Mémoires de l'Institut d'Égypte, 52 (Cairo, 1947) pls. 9, 10 and 11.

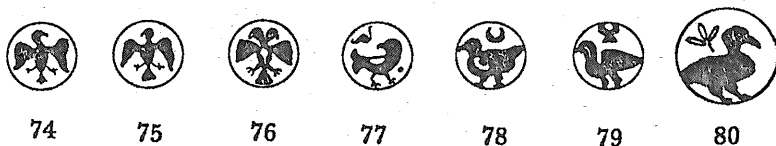
<sup>39</sup> Mayer, p. 169 and pl. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Mayer, pp. 71–72, 95, 112, 169, 235; pl. 15, pl. 16; the last example is at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo.

p. 190): "bird walking to right, head turned straight back. Above the bird's back, swan-like body, *so far unidentified*" (italics added; fig. 77). I write further, facing the drawing (*MSES*, p. 29): "The bird... walking to right, its head turned back towards a small ornament, either a leaf or a small swan (?)." On pp. 103-4, Allan bases his deductions on a positive identification I never made.

Although Mayer's armorial roll does not contain a walking eagle, the bird does exist in the blazon of an amīr on a wooden beam from a ceiling of a demolished house in Cairo. I have forgotten the amīr's name, not having seen the blazon for more than 20 years, and I do not believe the blazon is published in the catalogues of the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, where the beam is kept. The eagle is skillfully painted in its natural colors and stands in profile. Eagle in profile would probably be a more appropriate name than walking eagle.

On *MSES* 395 a small crescent is visible over the back of the eagle, and on *MSES*, pl. 15, 395b we can see Mayer's emblem no. 26. Both coins draw criticism from Allan (p. 103), though the presence of a main device with a second charge is the same idea as a composite shield. The coin *MSES* Add 595B, on which a large cup is flanked by two primitive trousers of nobility, should also be considered as exhibiting a composite blazon (figs. 40, 78, 79). Qā'itbāy's coin (*MSES* 845) is further evidence that the small ornament over the back of the eagle in profile is only a decorative element, in this case a small twig with three leaves (fig. 80).



#### SCIMITAR (also BOWS and ARROWS and DAGGER)

One would think that in a society of military caste, arms and armor played a prominent role in heraldry, but among Mayer's 243 amīral blazons, only 15 amīrs display the scimitar, 1 a couple of daggers, 1 a

pair of crossbows, and 1 a bow and two arrows.<sup>41</sup> It seems remarkable that only 8 of the 15 amīrs who use the scimitar as a blazon are recorded as having served as *silāhdārs*, although all 15 reached the highest office connected in some way with military power. This proportion may also indicate that the Mamlūk blazon was not as rigidly unchangeable as one would think. The 7 amīrs who effectively held the office of *silāhdār* in the early stages of their career have a sword in a three-fielded shield. Only one shows two scimitars on a two-fielded shield. Those who are not known to have been *silāhdārs* fall into two groups: 3 amīrs have the scimitar only, which may mean that they dropped their original blazon at the height of their service and adopted the scimitar as a new, representative blazon; the other 4 retained their former composite blazon but added the sword.

It should be noted that no arms ever appear as a blazon on Mamlūk coins. One wonders whether this is not connected with the fact that the sultan Baybars al-Bunduqdārī chose the lion as his blazon and not the crossbow.

### PEN BOX

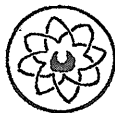
This is the third most popular device on amīral blazons, present on 88, yet there is only a unique copper coin (*MSESAdd* 152B) of the sultan Khalīl b. Qalāwūn which displays it. A better preserved coin, recently published by Ariel Berman (Exhibition of the L. A. Mayer Memorial Institute, Jerusalem) casts some doubt on the attribution to Khalīl. There is no doubt about its heraldic status; it is so plain and ungainly that it could never have been used as an ornament.

<sup>41</sup> Asanbughā (Mayer, p. 79); Asandamur (Mayer, p. 79); Aslam (Mayer, p. 81); Aynāl al-Yūsufī (Mayer, p. 90); Bahādūr al-Badrī (Mayer, p. 94); Jānibak (Mayer, p. 131); Malaktamur (Mayer, p. 152); Manjak al-Yūsufī (Mayer, p. 153); Qānībāy al-Jarkasī (Mayer, pp. 176-77); Qijlis (Mayer, pp. 189-90); Timur min Maḥmūdshah (Mayer, p. 231); Tughaylamur an-Najmī (Mayer, p. 232); Yalbughā an-Nāsūrī (Mayer, p. 248); Yūsuf al-Bajāsi (Mayer, p. 257); Yūsuf az-Zāhirī (Mayer, p. 258). I have since discovered two more amirs with the scimitar at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo: Saif al-Dīn Bahādūr Manjahī (no. 7229) and Sanqur al-Takritī (no. 7949).

## CRESCENT

The crescent is an emblem rarely used by the amīrs. Mayer suggested that it represented an oriental horseshoe and signified the office of master of the stables because the device was drawn as a smaller circle inside a larger one, the smaller touching the larger at the top.<sup>42</sup> However, the crescent or horseshoe is on the blazon of only two amīrs, although there must always have been a master of the horse. Furthermore, one of the nobles was called 'Alī b. Hilāl al-Dawla; in his case the blazon would be a crescent as *armes parlantes*. Finally, in de Magny's *Science du Blason*, the Bizet family of Guyenne, listed at no. 1282, has three crescents in their blazon over a Negro's head. The crescents are just like those on the two Mamlūk blazons. In France the oriental closed horseshoe was not known and the objects over the head cannot be anything but crescents. In European heraldry the crescent was widely used; it is visible as *armes parlantes* on the coat of arms of the Spanish counts of Luna.

There is no doubt that the crescent on the coins is a real one, since it is always open at the top (figs. 81-83). It occupies a prominent place in the center of the coin, without a shield, enclosed in a loose decorative frame. It is clearly heraldic, since it has been used as an Islamic ornamental device only in modern times. Only two Bahri sultans had crescents on their fulūs, and Barqūq and Faraj show a small crescent as part of a curious composite blazon on the reverse of their coins (MSES 598, 659). It is probably the same reverse reused by Faraj. I cannot explain this unusual grouping; some of the amīral blazons pose equally puzzling devices.



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<sup>42</sup> Mayer, p. 25.

## UNUSUAL AND UNCONVENTIONAL EMBLEMS

Not only conventional and well-known devices are employed on amīral blazons. Caution should therefore be used before condemnation of a peculiar emblem. One of these is an object which Mayer called a vase on a composite blazon on the wooden ceiling of the madrasa of Maḥmūd al-ʿAinī.<sup>43</sup> Closer inspection reveals the device is more likely the drawing of a glass mosque lamp than a flower vase. It is round-bellied, with a large and wide funnel-shaped neck and an inverted funnel-shaped foot or rim. No suspension loops are painted around the convex body of the object but it would have more justification on the blazon of an inspector of pious foundations (Maḥmūd al-ʿAinī's appointment) than a simple flower vase. If the object on Maḥmūd's blazon really is a mosque lamp, then the heraldic status of the mosque lamp on the coins of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (*MSES* 374A) and al-Ghūrī (*MSES* 898, 899, 901) could also be justified.

Another surprising but undoubtedly authentic heraldic device is seen in the mausoleum of Baybars Jāliq in Jerusalem, flanking the inscription on the wall that commemorates his name. Mayer described it (p. 110) as a "fleur-de-lis with eleven leaves, instead of three." The illustration shows clearly that it is a stylized palmetto or date-palm with 12 (not 11) ribbed, arched leaves and a central bud standing up.<sup>44</sup> Instead of having roots, the palm is emerging from the treble stem of the conventional fleur-de-lis bound together by a transverse ribbon (fig. 84). It is evident that this lower end of the device induced Mayer to make his mistake. If such a palmetto were on a coin, one could understand a critical eye's rejecting it as a blazon.

<sup>43</sup> Mayer, p. 150 and pl. 61, 3.

<sup>44</sup> M. van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un corpus inscriptionum arabicarum*, pl. 2: *Syrie du Sud*, vol. 1 *Jerusalem "Ville,"* Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 45 (Cairo, 1922), pp. 223–24 (no. 72); vol. 3, pts. 1–2 (Cairo, 1920), pl. 55.



## CEREMONIAL SADDLE

A drawing of the only amīral blazon with this device is presented (fig. 85) to assert that it is a legitimate blazon of 'Alī b. Baktamur.<sup>45</sup> It is so rare a device that its use as a decorative example by the die engraver is difficult to imagine. I mention it because Allan noted on p. 105 the inclusion of coins with a horseman in *MSES* but there are no Mam-lūk coins with a horseman. He is, however, correct in pointing out that the lion with rising sun on *MSES* 392 is a decorative device borrowed from dirhams of the Rūm Saljūqids.



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## MULTIPLE BLAZONS FOR SOME AMIRS

In most cases the amīrs have only one heraldic shield. It does happen, though seldom, that an amīr owns more than one shield, and with different blazons. Thus Aydamur, viceroy of Syria, shows one round shield with *buġja* at the beginning of the inscription in his name on a copper basin, and a second shield with walking lion at the end of the inscription (fig. 86).<sup>46</sup> The upside-down capital in the Ḥimṣ main mosque shows a rosette and a fleur-de-lis on two adjoining faces; both emblems belong to the same owner.<sup>47</sup> Muqbil al-Rūmī also has two different blazons on the chamfron of his horse's armor; the two lateral shields hold

<sup>45</sup> Migeon, fig. 292.

<sup>46</sup> Mayer, p. 84 and pl. 30, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Mayer, pl. 19, 3.

the signs of his offices as *khāṣṣaqi* and *rā's nawbat al-jamdāriya* (two cups and a *buqja*); the central shield contains the same insignia, with a pen box added, a new blazon when he became second *dawadār* and later grand *dawadār*.<sup>48</sup> Yashbak min Mahdī, vizīr, amīr *silāh* and rege had one conventional blazon and a second with lion.<sup>49</sup> Over the doorway of a modern building near the mausoleum of the amīr Qaymarī, a Ṣālihiya in Damascus, there is an ancient lintel with three adjoining but separate round shields which evidently belonged to one and the same person. The central shield has a fleur-de-lis and the two flanking shields each carry a lion facing the center (fig. 87).<sup>50</sup>

There exists an example on a glass mosque lamp showing that the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had at least two heraldic emblems simultaneously: a six-petalled rosette on one, and a plain-pointed shield (at the same time as the usual "inscribed round shield"), on another. Al-Nāṣir Ḥasan shows the plain-pointed shield simultaneously with the "inscribed shield" on several of his mosque lamps.<sup>52</sup>

I have come to the conclusion that the rigid principles of European heraldry cannot be applied to Saracen heraldic concepts. The main idea is identical: the blazon serves to identify the nobleman and denote his amīral status. However, whereas the Europeans had title and blazon bestowed with the principle of heredity, and the European blazon could not be changed except by grant of the sovereign, it is probable that the Saracen amīr chose his own emblems from early times. It was formerly believed that the blazon of the amīr (and probably that of the reigning prince) was hereditary. I must now conclude that the son probably not so much inherited as took voluntarily his father's or ancestor's emblem because of the prestige of his forebear. All those cases where there is continuity of the blazon concern princely families. I have yet to find an amīral blazon which passed from father to son; it is true that the armorial roll contains too few known men.

<sup>48</sup> Mayer, p. 168 and pl. 60.

<sup>49</sup> Mayer, p. 251.

<sup>50</sup> Mayer, pl. 5, 2.

<sup>51</sup> Wiet, *Lampes*, pl. 12, 4070; pl. 6, 313.

<sup>52</sup> See note 19 and Wiet, *Lampes*, 4259 (the last either al-Nāṣir Muḥammad or al-Nāṣir Ḥasan).

## SIGNS OF OFFICE

Although certain signs of office doubtless represent the appointments which they symbolize, some, like the scimitar, also have a general value indicating high rank. The specific value of the symbols of office cannot always be absolute, as there were, especially at later times, more amīrs than emblems. Therefore, in order to create an individual blazon the devices had to be combined and often multiplied on the shield. Then there are heraldic signs which are not related to any specific appointment (lion, eagle, fleur-de-lis, rosette, crescent) which are probably status symbols.

## SULTANIC BLAZON

Allan is convinced that the devices on the coins, except the lion of Baybars, the cup of Kitbughā and the fesse of Lājīn, are neither heraldic emblems of the sultan nor heraldic emblems at all, but rather ornamental figures derived from heraldic elements (p. 102). He points out a well-known feature, the inscribed shield, which he says replaced the blazon for the sultans, excluding it completely. It is true that the inscribed round three-fielded shield bearing the sultan's name and accompanied by a short panegyric protocol on one, two, or all three segments of the shield became the standard manifestation of the sovereign on public buildings and on such objects as mosque lamps, pen boxes, and plates. The inscribed shield changed from a personal heraldic badge to a sign of authority and only the sultan's name indicated the change of sovereignty. However, it seems to me that even this stereotyped inscribed shield developed from the fesse, the popular and widely-used three-fielded shield.

The inscribed shield was used on the coinage from al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reign onward, simultaneously with the various personal, traditional, heraldic devices. This same coexistence is observed on various objects. The presence of the pointed shield and the six petalled rosette

on al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's mosque lamps has been mentioned.<sup>53</sup> The pointed shield on similar lamps of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan was also described (p. 193 above). The caliph-sultan al-Mustaʿin Billāh put a pointed inscribed shield on the wall of the main mosque in Gaza; this emblem is very similar to the pointed inscribed shield on the fulūs of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan. A pointed inscribed shield used by a Mamlūk nobleman, Dawlāthāy, according to van Berchem a governor of Gaza, further confirms the relationship between the sultanic inscribed shield and the amīral blazon.<sup>54</sup>

I wish to add one more proof that the ordinary Mamlūk blazon was not necessarily abandoned once an amīr became sultan. The copper platter (no. 3169) in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, engraved with the sultanic protocol *al-Malik al-Ashraf Qānṣuh al-Ghūrī* and the designation *bi-rasm al-maraqqhāna*, shows the collective blazon of the Circassian Mamlūks on its face, seven times repeated. There can be no doubt about the person of the sovereign, nor that the plate was part of the royal dinnerware.

Allan admits that the lion of Baybars, the cup of Kitbughā and the fesse of Lājīn are true blazons on the coins; at the same time he states that the identical devices on the coins of all the other sultans are either the badges of the local governor, or of the amīr who was in temporary charge of the mint (or somebody else?), but not of the sultan. However, he does not present proof for this revolution which should have taken place in the principles of Islamic minting at the time of Qalāwūn or his immediate successors. Such a novelty would have uprooted the rules dominating the coinage of any Islamic country, an idea so unlikely that it does not merit discussion.

There may be another reason for the seemingly inconsistent use of various emblems at the same time on the coins. The rules of Saracen heraldry and the outlook on blazons, indeed the very concept of the nature of nobility in Islamic society in Syria and Egypt, are very different from those in Europe. They are important in a general sense, but not rigid in detail. It is probable that a descendant freely chose a famous ancestor's badge because of its prestige, rather than for its

<sup>53</sup> Wiet, *Lampes*, pl. 12, 4070.

<sup>54</sup> Mayer, p. 39.

hereditary connections. It would seem that the badges could be changed during the active life of the owner. In the case of a sultan, there is, of course, no further advancement; but only limited importance was given to the blazon and consequently the die engraver had more liberty. Yet the devices on the coins are so characteristic that one can recognize the sultan from most coin blazons without having read his name. However loose the regulation of Mamlūk heraldry, the devices on the coins must be considered the personal badges of the sovereign. I cannot find a single point in Allan's argument with documented proof to show that the devices on the coins are not heraldic devices and that they belong to anyone except the sultan.