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Nureddin Zengi, Arslansah (140585)

THE SELJUQS AND THEIR SUCCESSORS ART, CULTURE AND HISTORY

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CHAPTER SEVEN

The Politics of Patronage in Medieval Mosul: Nur al-Din, Badr al-Din and the Question of the Sunni Revival

Yasser Tabbaa

Introduction

MOSUL WAS RULED during the twelfth and first half of the thirteenth century by the Zangids, a Turkish dynasty that drew its legitimacy from its affiliation with the Great Seljuqs, its political alignment with the Abbasid Caliphate and its pursuit of the sectarian policies of the so-called Sunni Revival. In many respects, the Zangid dynasty of Mosul was the quintessential Seljuq successor state, having been founded by the Atabeg Aq Sunqur, after whom it was often referred to as *al-Dawla al-Atabikiyya* (the Atabeg State), and then ruled more-or-less independently by his son 'Imad al-Din Zangi (r. 1127-46) and his successors. Zangi quickly filled the vacuum between the weakened tribal Arab dynasties in the Jazira and the Crusaders in the Levant, becoming the ruler of a substantial region extending from Mosul to Aleppo.

Following Zangi's assassination in 1146, his domain was divided between his two eldest sons, Sayf al-Din Ghazi I and Nur al-Din Mahmud. Ghazi was granted the province of Mosul, and his progeny would rule it until the Mongol invasion, although only nominally during the reign of Badr al-Din Lu'lu' (r. 1233-59). Nur al-Din was given Aleppo, from which he would expand southwards to Damascus in 1154 and eventually Egypt in 1168. Nur al-Din's southward turn and his increasing preoccupation with Fatimid Egypt did not divert him from the affairs of Mosul, for he was directly involved in confirming his nephew's role and reorganising the city's administrative structure. In fact, as I hope to demonstrate, Nur al-Din continued to enjoy considerable influence, verging on outright control, over the entire Zangid domain until his death in 1174.¹

In spite of their commonalties as post-Seljuq sovereigns, Nur al-Din and Badr al-Din could not have been any more different in terms of their religious policy and architectural patronage. Comparing their

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