

THE VISUAL CULTURE IN MODERN MIDDLE EAST

RHETORIC OF THE IMAGE

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Visual Culture in the Modern Middle East

Memory and Ideology: Images of Saladin in Syria and in Iraq

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Through its cultural heritage a society becomes visible to itself and to others. Which past becomes evident in that heritage and which values emerge in its identificatory appropriation tells us much about the constitution and tendencies of a society.

—JAN ASSMANN, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” 133.

Since the Middle Ages, Saladin has been one of the most influential figures of historical memory in Eurasia. He was used as a symbol of the noble enemy, of war with the West and Israel, and of peace.¹ In various incarnations he was also a national hero. During the Lebanon War of 2006, even Nasrallah, the Shi'i leader of the Hizbullah in Lebanon, was eulogized by Syrians as the “Saladin of the modern age.”² Moreover, after the fall of Saddam Hussein, the Sunni *Kata'ib Salah al-Din* in Iraq chose Saladin as the eponym for their guerrilla war against the Shi'i government and American troops.

Bernard Lewis, in his 1975 Princeton lecture series *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented*, was one of the first to study the political use of the past in the Middle East.³ Eric Hobsbawm's studies further advanced the analysis of the *Invention of Tradition* (1983) as an attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past, focusing on the deliberate “political mass-producing of traditions.”⁴ Jan Assmann's *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis* (1992) allowed for a more refined comprehensive approach. According to Assmann, any collective memory of a symbol or figure creates orientation within a group and identity for the individual. Cultural memory is reconstructive, as knowledge of the past is aligned anew with contemporary needs.⁵

In the post-colonial states in the Middle East, invented pasts enforce social, “national” coherence where it has not existed before. Historical rhetoric legitimizes current ideologies and identities across religiously and ethnically diverse populations. Symbols and figures of collective memory

must be emotionally meaningful and resonant for the audience; they presuppose knowledge and memory among the targeted groups and require, as Hobsbawm states, "broadcasting on the wavelength to which the public is already tuned in."⁶ In modern states the resonance of such historical rhetoric is established largely by compulsory school attendance.⁷ Political resonance, political orientation, and national identity are fabricated by means of the public presence of these memory figures—represented on monuments, statues, or murals, or transmitted via endlessly reproduced carriers of images and meaning, such as posters, banknotes, stamps, coins, political slogans, popular movies, and television programs.

This essay explores the memory figure "Saladin" and his application across different media, emphasizing the use of his image in contemporary Syria. The first part of this study summarizes the Western origin of the memory figure to explain its emergence in the Middle East, which did not have a visual memorial culture before the late nineteenth century. The second part considers the Iraqi case to contrast it with its Syrian counterpart in the third part. Both states have or had a Baathist government and used the figure of Saladin nearly simultaneously but to different ends.

Similar to other modern memory figures in the Middle East, such as Hammurabi,⁸ Nebuchadnezzar,⁹ and Cyrus,¹⁰ Saladin's memory owes much to Western scholarship and popular culture beginning in the eighteenth century. The reconstructed Saladin figure was appropriated in the Middle East in the age of imperialism and nationalism.¹¹ From the late nineteenth century on, his memory was continually rearranged. Visual political culture emerged in the late Ottoman period slowly, and Saladin was one of the first historical figures to be adopted. The memory figure of Saladin and its role in the construction of collective identities is paradigmatic because its appropriation was different according to predominant state ideology and ethnicity. Its use in different nation-states at the same time allows comparisons that are not possible with more territorially confined memory figures. Other significant strands of appropriation and use of "Saladin" can be seen in Egypt in the 1960s, in the contemporary Kurdish national movement, and in other states and regions.¹² These are largely excluded from the present study because the Egyptian memory reached its apex in the 1960s and the Kurdish memory communicates different issues.

Remembering the Historical Saladin

As a ruler Saladin towered high above his contemporaries. He was born in 1138 to a Kurdish family of Saljuq-Zangid military nobility in

Tikrit, a city in the north of modern-day Iraq. In 1164 he arrived in Egypt as a member of a Syrian Zangid relief force for the Shiite Fatimid caliphate, which he brought to an end in 1169, restoring the sway of the Sunni 'Abbasid caliphate. In subsequent years, Saladin captured Syria and northern Mesopotamia from his fellow Muslim rulers. After Reynald de Chatillon (ca. 1125–87) broke a truce, Saladin defeated the entire Crusader army in the battle at the Horns of Hattin in Palestine in 1187, and took Jerusalem after about ninety years of Crusader rule.¹³ He died in 1193. One of several contemporary panegyric chroniclers and close associate of Saladin, the military judge Baha' al-Din ibn Shaddad (d. 632/1234), eulogized his piety, his respect for Islamic law, his sense of justice, his charity, and his generosity. His work formed the base for subsequent images of Saladin.

Opinions differ about the continuation of Saladin's memory after the fall of Acre in 1291 and the end of Crusader rule in Syria.¹⁴ In pre-colonial times within the Arab-Islamic world at large, Saladin played almost no role as a memory figure. More than Saladin, the Mamluk sultan Baybars (r. 1260–77) was remembered as the pious champion of Islam and jihad. In cultural memory Baybars was the hero who fought Crusaders, Mongols, and infidels.¹⁵ His achievements and adventures, and thus his memory, were orally transmitted in the famous epic collection *Sirat Baybars* (The Life of Baybars). Baybars was certainly more popular than Saladin in Egypt and parts of Syria, but Saladin never fell completely into oblivion: Mamluk chronicles always include the story of the Crusades and his deeds.¹⁶ In Palestine, Saladin remained revered: at the end of the Mamluk period the chief *qadi* of Jerusalem, Mujir al-Din (d. 867/1462–63), wrote a history of Jerusalem and Hebron, *al-Uns al-jalil bi-tarikh al-Quds wal-Khalil* (The Exalted Friendliness in the History of Jerusalem and Hebron). A substantial part of the two volumes chronicles the Crusades and the rise of Saladin, the battle of Hattin, and the taking of Jerusalem. Anecdotes illustrate that the fear of a return of the Crusaders was still alive in Mujir al-Din's lifetime.¹⁷

European Rediscovery and Romantic Invention

Werner Ende, Hannes Möhring, Carole Hillenbrand, Magaret Jubb, Jean Richard, Stefan Conermann, and, more recently, Anne-Marie Eddé have studied the discovery and reception of Saladin in western European and the Arab world.¹⁸ The modern Western discovery of Saladin began in 1732, when Albert Schultens (1686–1750), a scholar from Leiden, Netherlands, published his Latin translation of the Arabic panegyric account of Saladin's deeds written by the military judge Ibn Shaddad. At the beginning of the

rise of Oriental studies and philology, Saladin was the first Muslim ruler of the Middle Ages with whom the European educated classes were familiar. In the nineteenth century, numerous novels about the Crusades and Saladin helped to create his popular European image. In 1825 Sir Walter Scott (1771–1842) turned the enlightened Saladin into a literary monument in his novel *The Talisman*.¹⁹ Between 1870 and 1881 the first statue of Saladin was subsequently integrated into the Scott Monument built in the city of Edinburgh.²⁰

The Hamidian Saladin

Between the 1870s and 1914 Europe saw a wave of invention of political traditions to accommodate the new and transforming European states and societies. These traditions found their expression in a proliferation of public monuments.²¹ The first memorial connected with Saladin in the Middle East was created in 1878. At the end of the political liberalization and modernization of the Tanzimat period (1839–76), Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II (r. 1876–1909) chose an authoritarian path of modernization. More traditional strategies of reaffirming and legitimizing power were replaced by or supplemented with new ideologies such as pan-Islamism,²² which was deemed more suitable to the modern world.²³ As in Europe, a repository for a new, elaborate ideological language was found in memory figures of the past.²⁴ 'Abd al-Hamid repeatedly accused Europe of leading a "Crusade" against the Ottoman Empire. The Crusades became once again a metaphor in the political consciousness of the Middle East.²⁵ The region's population was unfamiliar with historical monuments such as those erected in Europe since the Renaissance. The general Ottoman Islamic avoidance of public images prevented a similar cult;²⁶ in fact, not even the Russian–Turkish War of 1877–78 resulted in the creation of large-scale war memorials.²⁷

Early Ottoman monuments took a different shape: 'Abd al-Hamid erected clock towers throughout his empire and commissioned the restoration and repair of politically and religiously meaningful monuments and tombs, such as those of the founders of the Ottoman dynasty.²⁸ According to Şükrü Hanioglu, 'Abd al-Hamid attempted to establish a form of Ottomanism with a Muslim tinge in order to promote domestically a pan-Islamic ideology that would curb nascent proto-nationalist activities.²⁹

Within Syria, the period between the 1870s and 1908 saw the transition to architectural modernity in Damascus.³⁰ The Wali Diya Pasha had begun with the excavation and reconstruction of the tomb (*turba*) of Saladin in Damascus in 1876, as is recorded by an inscription. Two years later, in 1878,

'Abd al-Hamid commissioned a new marble cenotaph for Saladin's tomb, which today stands adjacent to the medieval wooden sarcophagus (fig. 3.1).³¹ This cenotaph counts among the first historical monuments in the Ottoman Empire, as well as the first memorial honoring Saladin in the Middle East. To emphasize its political meaning, the cenotaph was executed in the Ottoman Baroque style. Much like western European historicism, it was considered a marker of modernity at the time. The memorial dates to the same year as the Ottoman defeat in the Russian-Turkish war and the Congress of Berlin. With this cenotaph, 'Abd al-Hamid wished to proclaim his imperial presence in the Syrian province and connect himself with *al-sultan al-ghazi*³² Saladin, the defender of the faith against the Crusaders. Saladin thus was visually and rhetorically appropriated by the Ottoman sultan during a moment of political confrontation.³³

Like contemporaneous European national monuments erected in honor of historical heroes, the cenotaph displays a conflation of religious and patriotic elements. A golden framed portrait of Saladin still hangs above the entrance within the tomb; it probably dates to the same period and became important for subsequent visual representations of the Muslim hero (fig. 3.2 and plate 7). This portrait of a turbaned Saladin is signed by the otherwise unknown artist 'Abd al-Wahhab. The text below the image praises Saladin as the ruler of Egypt and Syria (*al-Sham*) but does not mention the Crusades. From the time of its restoration onward, the *turba* of Saladin in Damascus received markedly more attention than that of Baybars, which in 1296/1878 was transformed into a library—open to the public in 1297/1880—with bookcases standing over his cenotaph.³⁴

In 1898 the journey of the German kaiser Wilhelm II (r. 1888–1918) to the Middle East attracted greater attention to the figure of Saladin among Ottoman political circles. The kaiser linked himself with several historical figures, including the Crusader emperor Frederick Barbarossa (r. 1155–90),³⁵ who was a contemporary of Saladin and an equally noble and legendary ruler-hero who died on his way to the battlefields of Syria. Wilhelm delivered a famous speech on the Ottoman sultan as well as a eulogy of Saladin that was soon translated into Arabic. While in Damascus, Wilhelm also dedicated a brass laurel wreath to Saladin's tomb.³⁶ The Egyptian poet Ahmad Shawqi (1868–1932) composed an ode (*qasida*) on Wilhelm's praise of Saladin, celebrating the fact that the Kaiser had made the Middle East more aware of the glorious sultan Saladin.³⁷ Henceforth, Saladin became a major memory figure in the Middle East, paving the way for further uses.

In early March 1914, two Ottoman airplanes flew from Istanbul to Damascus with several stopovers on their way to Cairo in demonstration of



FIGURE 3.1. Cenotaph of Saladin, Damascus, commissioned by 'Abd al-Hamid II in 1878. Photograph by the author, November 2006.

modern Ottoman air power after the lost Balkan Wars (1912–13).³⁸ Coming from Beirut, the first plane and its pilots enjoyed a splendid reception in Damascus. After taking off from Damascus, however, the plane crashed east of Lake Tiberias. The young Turkish dictator Enver Pasha (1881–1922) ordered the bodies of the two pilots to be transferred by train to Damascus, where they were buried beside Saladin's tomb to connect their memory as martyrs (*shahid*) with that of the *ghazi* sultan of Islam. About a week later the second airplane arrived in Damascus. On its way to Cairo it, too, crashed—into the sea just off the coast of Jaffa. One pilot died, and he was also buried beside Saladin's tomb.³⁹ An obelisk memorial was erected at the crash site in the Golan,⁴⁰ while a column monument was made in Istanbul.⁴¹ The 1920 visit of the French high commissioner Henri Gourand (1867–1946) to the tomb of Saladin—and his often repeated sentence, “Saladin, nous voilà” (Saladin, here we are)—became a trope in memories of Saladin in Syria, where they came to represent anti-imperialist resistance.⁴² In 1940 the Syrian national leader and resistance fighter against the French mandate, 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar (1880–1940), was also honored with burial beside Saladin's tomb.⁴³



FIGURE 3.2. Portrait of Saladin in the tomb of Saladin, Damascus, presumably ca. 1878. Photograph by the author, November 2007.

Saladin's rising popularity also can be measured by the increasing number of theatrical plays and novels in Oriental languages that explore his deeds.⁴⁴ The first scholarly biography of Saladin was written in Arabic by Ahmad al-Biyali and published in Cairo in 1920.⁴⁵ After World War I—and more so during the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon, as well as the British Mandate in Palestine—the figure of Saladin was employed as a political metaphor in the rhetoric of Arab resistance against imperialism and Zionist expansion. The most memorable occasion for this

usage of the Saladin metaphor was during the Hattin Day rally that was organized by the Istiqlal Party in Haifa on August 28, 1932. Several thousand people attended, coming from the Damascus province, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan. At the rally, Rashid Rida (1865–1935) delivered a historic speech, “Dhikra Salah al-Din wa-ma’rakat Hattin,” condemning the Zionists’ expansionist policy.⁴⁶

After Israel’s foundation in 1948, the victory at Hattin and the retaking of Jerusalem became the dominant themes in the political rhetoric on Saladin. After the unification of Egypt and Syria in 1959, President Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir (1918–70) became for a short period linked to Saladin. The apex of this rhetoric can be seen in the Egyptian film director Youssef Chahine’s (1926–2008) *al-Nasir Salah al-Din* (1963). The movie projected Nasserist secular ideology and the struggle for Palestine through the lens of the Crusades and the heroic exploits of Saladin. The film remains a resonant classic in the Middle East. In Egyptian propaganda and media, however, the Saladin allusion was not further exploited or repeated due to the socialist nature of the Nasserist ideology.⁴⁷

Saddam Hussein as Saladin Reincarnated

Beyond Egypt, Saladin also played a role within the visual rhetoric of Iraqi nationalism, which—beginning around 1968—mainly drew on the heritage (*turath*) of the ancient Orient to connect the Baath revolution to the millennia-old history of the country.⁴⁸ After a final transition of power in 1979, Saddam Hussein instigated a monumental personality cult, identifying himself with various political rulers of Iraq’s past who were meaningful either to all Iraqis or to certain religious and ethnic groups. Saddam Hussein embodied all of them—not only Hammurabi, the wise lawgiver, and Nebuchadnezzar, the enslaver of the Jewish people, but also various early Islamic caliphs, such as ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, or al-Mansur. He even allowed allusions linking himself to the Prophet Muhammad.⁴⁹ The emphasis on ancient Mesopotamia as “Semitic” allowed integrating Iraqi nationalism and superiority into a pan-Arab political discourse.⁵⁰ The depiction of Saddam Hussein as the incarnation of all historic Iraqi rulers was staged as a highly crafted ideological monologue directed at the Iraqi people or groups in order to unite them under one nation, which he himself aimed to embody. In the process, archaeology and the display of largely reconstructed historic sites served to bolster his propaganda.

It is not clear when Saddam first began to incarnate Saladin. However, the former Iraqi president was born in Tikrit, as was Saladin. Saddam’s

adopted birth year of 1937 (instead of his actual birth year of 1939) may have been altered in order to prove that he was born exactly eight hundred years after Saladin.⁵¹ Moreover, the governorate north of Baghdad, created in 1976, was named after the hero.⁵² Nevertheless, until the late 1980s Saladin played only a minor role in Saddam's visual rhetoric. After all, Saladin had never been ruler of Iraq, and other figures were deemed far more suitable for political embodiment.⁵³ For confrontation with the Jewish state, Nebuchadnezzar served as a sufficiently strong national metaphor.⁵⁴ Between 1980 and 1988, the political and military confrontation with Iran was paramount, and accompanied by several other appropriate memory figures, but not Saladin. In 1987, the year of the eight-hundredth anniversary of the taking of Jerusalem, Iraqi propaganda slowly put Saladin into focus and came to equate Saddam Hussein with the hero of the Crusader period.⁵⁵

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (1990–91), along with territorial retaking by American and allied troops, changed the political outlook of the entire region. After 1991, adjustments of state ideology to the new political realities tended to lack a defined focus. Resources remained sparse as well.⁵⁶ A new stress on medieval Arab heritage emerged during the war, at which time Saddam tried to raise pan-Arab sympathies by firing Scud missiles toward Israel, thereby connecting his war with the Palestinian cause.⁵⁷ For the American-led invasion, the term "Crusade" became current on both sides, with different meanings. Saddam viewed Iraqi resistance against international control as part of the greater Arab struggle of liberation from the Christian "Crusaders." As a result, he instantly identified himself with Saladin.⁵⁸ The anti-Israeli theme of the victory of Hattin and the liberation of Jerusalem pictured Iraqi resistance as part of the same "Mother of all Battles" (*umm al-ma'arik*), the Gulf War, which he claimed to have won.⁵⁹ The Hattin theme also supported Saddam-as-Saladin as claiming leadership of the Arab world. The Iraqi stress on Saladin and Jerusalem thus functioned as an answer to similar propaganda systems instigated by Iran.⁶⁰

The visual arts formed part of Saddam's propaganda machine. He commissioned the so-called *Qasr al-Salam* (The Palace of Peace) between 1995 and 1999. Four gigantic bronze busts of himself, each four meters high and mounted on low octagonal plinths, complemented the splendor of a courtyard (Fig. 3.3 and plate 9).⁶¹ Although Saddam wears the uniform of a contemporary military commander in chief, his strange headgear seemingly contradicts modern attire. It recalls a medieval helmet, evoking the age of Saladin, but it alludes in fact to an architectural monument: the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.⁶²



FIGURE 3.3. Three of four busts depicting Saddam Hussein with the Dome of the Rock as a helmet, Baghdad, October 20, 2005. *Photograph courtesy of the U.S. Department of Defense, Jim Gordon no. DA-SD-06-07153.*



FIGURE 3.4. Statue of Saddam Hussein as Saladin in Tikrit, July 18, 2003. *Anonymous photograph.*

In February 2001, Saddam announced the formation of “al-Quds Army,” one of his many private armies, with the propagandistic aim of liberating Palestine from Israeli rule.⁶³ In 2001 a mural in Baghdad depicted him leading tanks into battle against the new “Crusaders,” side by side with Saladin.⁶⁴ In Tikrit two identical equestrian statues were created for the top of a medieval-style domed presidential palace. The statues depicted Saddam with a drawn sword and pennants, guiding four missiles into battle—his accoutrements blurring the distinction between the medieval hero-ruler and the twenty-first-century one.⁶⁵ In an interview in March 2003, the Iraqi sculptor Abdul Jabbar stated: “Saddam and Saladin are the same. Saladin fought the European invaders who came to steal Iraq’s treasures. And now the U.S. is coming to steal our oil.”⁶⁶

Immediately after Saddam’s fall, statues of Saladin as well as those of Saddam Hussein were pulled down and destroyed (fig. 3.4).⁶⁷ A new Saladin rhetoric emerged in Iraq with the formation of the Shiite government. On the one hand, the new regime erased names of sites and places in Baghdad. For example, a Saladin statue was renamed to commemorate a companion of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib.⁶⁸ On the other hand, the Sunni guerilla group of the *Kata’ib Salah al-Din*, the military wing of the Islamic Front for the Iraqi Resistance (*al-Jabha al-Islamiyya lil-Muqawwima al-Iraqiyya*)—operating at least since 2004—combined sectarian violence with a modern publicity campaign against Shiites and Americans in the name of their almost pan-Islamic eponym. A new use of the Iraqi memory figure Saladin had evolved, this time put to sectarian use.⁶⁹

Saladin and Syrian Nationalism

In Syria, the figure of Saladin draws on a different set of memories in the visual cult of rulership.⁷⁰ However, as Carole Hillenbrand has proposed, the simple equation—Saladin, conqueror of Jerusalem, congruent with Hafiz al-Asad (r. 1970–2000) in his war efforts against Israel—is not applicable.⁷¹

The personality cult of Hafiz al-Asad, the first president of Syria to instigate such a rhetorical apparatus, evolved slowly during the mid-1970s. By the mid-1980s, it inflated enormously due to Soviet advisers who were consulted for the public staging of al-Asad’s image, which came to resemble a Soviet-style personality cult.⁷² In endless permutations the image of Hafiz al-Asad—praised as “our leader for eternity [*qa’iduna ila l-abad*]”—occupied every public space.

State propaganda promoted al-Asad's extraordinary abilities as a pharmacist, teacher, doctor, lawyer, and so forth; the ruler more than represented the people, he was "the people."⁷³ In 1984 the first statue of Hafiz al-Asad was inaugurated in front of the new national library in Damascus. There, he is depicted with an open book—the embodiment of learning and erudition.⁷⁴ From 1982 on, visual and political discourses became increasingly a staged dialogue.⁷⁵ City councils, trade unions, and other groups and organizations had to display images of al-Asad while swearing a "binding covenant [*'ahd*]" or an "oath of allegiance [*bay'a*]." These monuments are found all over Syria. The neutral foil of al-Asad images—as officer, statesman, and father of the country—thereby allowed for their widespread use in oaths of allegiance by Christians, Jews, Muslims, socialists, nationalists, and others.

In posters and statues, al-Asad remained always himself and so is never dressed as a historical hero. The conflict with Israel is embodied in the images of the Tishrin War. Having several Palestinian refugee camps and Palestinian militia leaders and fighters within the country, the Asad regime refrained from committing itself too much to the Palestinian cause—by far and large avoiding, for example, a visual "Dome of the Rock" theme. In contrast to the Iraqi personality cult, moreover, al-Asad abstained from monumentality.⁷⁶ But his image was everywhere, and his secret services made him a perpetually vigilant president. Consequently, the historical theme is almost entirely absent from Syrian visual political rhetoric.⁷⁷ However, there exist exceptions to this rule, some of which contain overt references to Saladin.⁷⁸

One of the first publically available images of Saladin in Syria was printed on a banknote series first issued in 1977 (fig. 3.5 and plate 8).⁷⁹ The image of Saladin, quite obviously copied from the late Ottoman depiction in Saladin's tomb (see fig. 3.2), was conflated with a view of Krak de Chevalier, the citadel of the Knights Hospitaller that Saladin besieged in vain in 1188. The Muslim hero is here juxtaposed with one of the famous historical landmarks in Syria without necessarily implying any specific political message.⁸⁰

By the end of the 1980s a new Saladin rhetoric emerged, in large part inspired by the regime's effort to rewrite national history. The Baath party had pursued similar projects in 1965, between 1975 and 1977, and in 1985. In July 1987 a scholarly symposium was held in Damascus to celebrate the eight-hundredth anniversary of Saladin's victory at Hattin. Ulrike Freitag, who attended all of the sessions, concluded that the symposium was clearly intended to legitimize the regime by constructing a historical

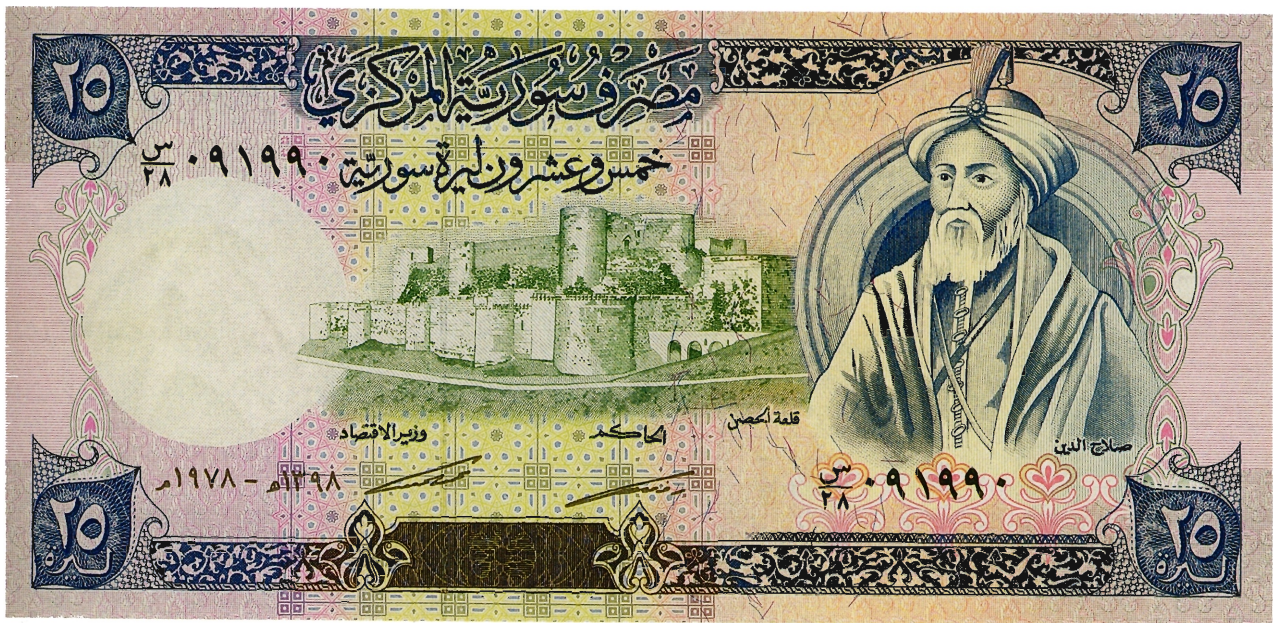


FIGURE 3.5. Twenty-five-pound Syrian banknote, 1978, first issued 1977.

line between Saladin, Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir, and Hafiz al-Asad.⁸¹ Already in the 1980s al-Asad had complemented his office with a painting of Saladin and a reference to the Battle of Hattin. In 1991 a referendum confirmed al-Asad as president; a slogan on a widely distributed poster advertised al-Asad's historical achievement: "*Min Hattin ila Tishrin*." The slogan refers to the decisive victory of Saladin and draws a parallel to the October War of 1973, when Egypt and Syria had attacked Israel on Yom Kippur. After some initial military successes, the October war ended with the total defeat of the Arab armies and a disastrous continuing loss of the Golan Heights for Syria. Nevertheless, in the emphatic political self-praise of Egypt and Syria, the war was declared a historical victory, similar to Saladin's successes at Hattin.⁸² As a result, the slogan was frequently used in Syrian propaganda until the late 1990s.⁸³

The Saladin monument by the Syrian sculptor 'Abdallah al-Sayyid that stands in front of the citadel of Damascus is most likely the best-known modern monument in Syria (fig. 3.6 and plate 10).⁸⁴ The restoration of the citadel of Damascus as a national monument was begun in the middle of the 1980s, and by the end of that decade the last remaining military and police installations had been removed, the curtain walls and towers had been rebuilt, and archaeologists had begun to explore the citadel. In 1992 an equestrian statue of Saladin, made of greenish painted fiberglass,



FIGURE 3.6. Statue of Saladin in Damascus, made by 'Abdallah al-Sayyid, 1992. Photograph by the author, August 2003.

was installed as a complement to the citadel's gate, one hundred meters north of the entrance of the Suq al-Hamidiyya.⁸⁵ The equestrian figure is surrounded by three armed warriors.⁸⁶ Their shields depict the “eagle [al-'aqab] of Saladin,” a heraldic device that is used in Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, and Yemen. The “eagle of Saladin” itself is a modern invention, as Saladin never made use of a specific blazon.⁸⁷ The horseman type is similar to Western equestrian monuments of knights, though the dramatic posture inches closer to modern plastic toys.

The Damascene monument depicts Saladin as a national hero, corresponding to the citadel behind him. The extra figures at the croup of the horse are two enchained Crusaders (fig. 3.7), representing the battle of Hattin and the loss of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The one on the right side, with the crown at his feet, is King Guy de Lusignan (c. 1150–94), and the other figure is Reynald de Chatillon, who caused the fatal battle. Only at the base of the monument can an inscription be found, gilded since 2008, praising “*Jerusalem's Liberation*” in several languages (fig. 3.8).



FIGURE 3.7.
Statue of Saladin
in Damascus,
1992, with the
figures of Reynald
de Chatillon and
Guy de Lusignan.
*Photograph by the
author, November
2005.*

FIGURE 3.8.
Statue of Saladin
in Damascus,
1992, with a
detailed view of
the inscription
praising the libera-
tion of Jerusalem.
*Photograph by the
author, November
1995.*



Despite the references to Hattin and Jerusalem, this monument lacks the typical markers of the personality cult of al-Asad and of the Arab-Muslim conflict with Israel—namely the emotionally resonant standard attribute, the Dome of the Rock⁸⁸—most likely because defeated Christian Crusaders are unsuitable as a symbol for the Zionist state. There is also no allusion to the Syrian attributes of the conflict, namely the Tishrin War or the Golan occupation. The aspect of Jerusalem—the conflict with Israel—recedes behind another useful meaning and memory: Saladin as national hero. This meaning becomes clear in the use of the monument in visual culture. The image of the Saladin monument was introduced on two-hundred-pound banknotes in 1997.⁸⁹ Its reading is specified by its adjacent image, namely the national Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (*darih al-jundi al-majhul*), which occupies the central register (fig. 3.9). The design of the banknote connects the memory of the national hero with the memory of recently fallen national heroes, thereby emphasizing the historical dimension of their sacrifice. Since the early 1990s Saladin has served in public rhetoric as a symbol of national unity with only a moderate religious undercurrent. Within the socialist, secular Syrian state—where conservative Islam attracts increasing attention among the populace—Saladin functions as an Islamic national symbol, without representing modern Islamist discourse per se.

Since his election in 2000, President Bashar al-Asad has receded from the excessive personality cult of his father, although his propaganda, designed by Lebanese advertising agencies, remains ubiquitous. The visual political rhetoric turned increasingly toward national and only cautiously toward Islamic themes starting in about 2005.⁹⁰ Even in the case of the Golan Heights, campaign posters follow more the aesthetics of commercial advertisements, and thus are devoid of images of military confrontation.⁹¹ Despite this more muted rhetoric, Bashar al-Asad's firm stance in the dormant war with Israel remains a cornerstone of his political legitimization.

In Syria, Saladin rhetoric bloomed with several television series.⁹² In 2005 the Australian film director Ridley Scott released a Saladin epic entitled *Kingdom of Heaven*.⁹³ It conveyed exactly the kind of rhetoric that would resonate in Syria. The depiction of Saladin by the popular Syrian actor Ghassan Massoud (born 1958) contributed much to the movie's extraordinary success in the Middle East, especially in Syria.⁹⁴

On May 6, 2005, the film debuted at the same time in the United States and in Syria—a novelty in film history. At the Damascus premiere the audience celebrated the film enthusiastically.⁹⁵ 'Abd al-Nasir Hasu, a columnist for the Syrian daily *al-Thawra*, praised the film for bringing justice to the Arabs, to Islam, and to Salah al-Din (Saladin). He was surprised by the posi-



FIGURE 3.9. Two-hundred-pound Syrian banknote, 1997.

tive portrayal of Saladin, because he was unaware of how the Saladin figure had been romanticized in the West.⁹⁶ Ghassan Massoud explained in an interview that he found inspiration for his depiction of Saladin besides his recent reading largely in his school education and probably his consumption of the recently broadcast television series.⁹⁷ For him, Saladin “has been a role model for us since our youth.”⁹⁸ The politically correct, albeit romantic, Saladin of Ridley Scott thus collided with the resonant national Saladin of Syrian political rhetoric.⁹⁹ This surprising congruence is remarkable because Saladin as memory figure was transferred to and revived in the Middle East more than 120 years earlier.

Conclusion

The current memory figure of Saladin is a product of Western and Middle Eastern imagination. In the eighteenth century, European philology had recovered the historical Saladin but also novelized and romanticized him. He became the archetype of the noble and sage Muslim enemy-hero. In the Middle East, especially in Palestine, Saladin was never completely forgotten, although in the memory of the Middle East he was superseded by Sultan Baybars, a hero who fought Crusaders and infidels. Parallel to the invention of political traditions with historical references in Europe between 1870 and 1914, the memory figure of Saladin was deemed useful

in the Middle East. In the 1870s, with the modernization efforts of 'Abd al-Hamid, the Crusades and Saladin were recalled into political rhetoric. In 1878 the sultan commissioned a cenotaph for Saladin in Damascus, symbolizing Ottoman modernity and the sultan as defender of the faith. In 1898 the visit of the German kaiser Wilhelm II to the tomb of Saladin finally made the political public of the Ottoman Empire aware of the Western image of Saladin while also bolstering the political rhetoric of 'Abd al-Hamid himself. During the Mandate period Saladin was remembered in the political rhetoric against Western military imperialism in general and against Zionist expansion in particular.

At the end of the 1980s, Saladin rhetoric resurfaced in Iraq and Syria. After the Gulf War the figure of Saladin in Iraq was conflated—in a grotesque manner—with the monumental and excessive personality cult of Saddam Hussein. In a staged monologue, Saddam declared himself the incarnation of Saladin, who had resisted and emerged triumphant against “Crusaders.” The combination of references to the Dome of the Rock, which marks Saladin, and the conquest of Jerusalem, attempted to represent Saddam as a hero for the Palestinian, pan-Islamic, and pan-Arab cause.

The political rhetoric in Syria was different. Starting in the mid-1970s, Syria boasted a pronounced Soviet-style personality cult centered on president Hafiz al-Asad. The cult was staged as a dialogue, with responsive oaths of allegiance. At the end of the 1980s, with the attempt of the Baath party to rewrite national history, the figure of Saladin moved into the center of national propaganda for a short time. The military achievements of al-Asad were compared with those of Saladin, “from Hattin to Tishrin,” but he and Saladin were not equated in a blunt manner. The Palestinian and Islamic cause, which was always symbolized by the Dome of the Rock, was carefully avoided in Saladin images sponsored by the Syrian government. Saladin rhetoric in Syria took a distinct national turn, independent from the ubiquitous personality cult. This reading found its most visible expression in the Saladin monument of 1992 in front of the citadel in Damascus, in which Saladin is depicted as a national hero. Although today's political rhetoric of Bashar al-Asad refrains from historical allusions, Saladin has remained a resonant memory figure: the 2005 movie *Kingdom of Heaven*—with the popular Syrian actor Ghassan Massoud as its chief protagonist—transmitted exactly that image of Saladin as a national symbol. History learned through compulsory school attendance had made Saladin a resonant national memory figure, and the film promoted him as such. At the same time, Massoud's Syrian Saladin corresponds to the

Saladin emerging from the Western interpretation and its turn toward “political correctness.”

NOTES

1. See, for example, the wooden statue of Saladin in combination with Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) and the Jewish sage Rashi (1040–1105) located in Latroun Monastery, Israel, inaugurated in 2006. I am grateful to Yisca Harani for this information.

2. Mohjak, “al-Suriyyuna yarawna fi Nasri llahi Salaha l-Dini l-’asra l-haditha,” posted July 2006 at Andareen.com. He reports on the Nasrallah hype in Damascus during the Lebanon War of 2006. The rhetoric ironically blanks out that Saladin fiercely suppressed Shiites.

3. The lectures are compiled in B. Lewis, *History*. For a similar approach see Silberman, *Between Past and Present*.

4. Hobsbawm, “Inventing Tradition,” 1–14; and Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions,” 263–307.

5. J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, and “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity.”

6. Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions,” 263; and Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination*, 9–10, 14–15.

7. Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions,” 263–64; and Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination*, 15. For the case of Iraq see Baram, “A Case of Imported Identity,” 289–290, 293.

8. In 1901 the stele with Hammurabi’s code of law was discovered in Susa, Iran, by the French archaeologist Jacques Jean-Marie de Morgan (1857–1924) and the Assyriologist Jean-Vincent Scheil (1858–1940). It is now on display in the Musée du Louvre, Paris.

9. Before World War I, the Ishtar Gate of Babylon built by Nebuchadnezzar (r. ca. 605–ca. 561 BCE) was discovered by Robert Koldewey (1855–1925) and the German Oriental Society. It is now on display in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin.

10. B. Lewis, *History*; and Ende, “Kollektive Identität und Geschichte in der islamischen Welt der Gegenwart,” 161.

11. Ende, “Wer ist ein Glaubensheld und wer ist ein Ketzer?” 70–94.

12. Other countries that make specific use of the memory figure Saladin are France, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel.

13. Saladin built a memorial known as Qubbat al-Nasr (The Dome of Victory) at the site of Hattin, which soon fell into oblivion. See Kedar, “The Battle of Hattin Revisited,” 190–207.

14. Riley-Smith, “Islam and the Crusades in History and Imagination, 8 November 1898–11 September 2001,” 151–52, 160, supposes the almost complete oblivion of the Crusades in the Middle East after the end of the Crusades.

15. Ende, “Wer ist ein Glaubensheld und wer ist ein Ketzer?”

16. Works that devote almost twice as much space to Baybars as to Saladin include Mamluk chronicles of the fifteenth century, such as al-Maqrizi’s and Ibn

Taghribirdi's histories, and Egyptian chronicles of the nineteenth century, such as al-Jabarti's (d. 1825–26) *'Aja'ib al-athar*, and 'Ali Mubarak's (d. 1893) *Al-Khitat al-jadida al-tawfiqiyya*. Early Syrian chronicles of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, such as works by Ibn Wasil, al-Yunini, and Abu l-Fida', are more in the Ayyubid tradition and thus place greater emphasis on Saladin.

17. Mujir al-Din al-'Ulaymi (d. 867/1462–63), *Kitab al-Uns al-jalil bi-tarikh al-Quds wal-Khalil* (Cairo, 1866). Gerber, *Remembering and Imagining Palestine*, 61–68.

18. Ende, "Wer ist ein Glaubensheld und wer ist ein Ketzer?" and "Kollektive Identität und Geschichte in der islamischen Welt der Gegenwart"; Möhring, "Der andere Islam," 131–56, "Saladin, der edle Heide' Mythisierung und Realität," 160–75, and *Saladin*, 91–104; Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 589–616, and "The Evolution of the Saladin Legend in the West," 497–510; Jubb, *The Legend of Saladin in Western Literature and Historiography*; Richard, "Les transformations de l'image de Saladin dans les sources occidentales," 177–87; Conermann, "Muslimische Ritter," 221–72; Eddé, *Saladin*, 570–82.

19. On the reception of *The Talisman*, see Lincoln, *Walter Scott and Modernity*, 105–108, 116–17.

20. The Scott Monument was built between 1840 and 1846. The Saladin statue was probably produced after 1870, in the second effort to fill the niches, but before 1881, when its description was published; see Colston, *History of the Scott Monument*, Edinburgh, 96, 102. The sculptor was Clark Stanton (1832–94). Saladin is represented with a scimitar in an effort to behead Reynald de Chatillon, who is not represented.

21. Hobsbawm, "Inventing Tradition," 1–14; see also A. Assmann, "Zur Mediengeschichte des kulturellen Gedächtnisses," 54.

22. Karpát, *The Politicization of Islam*.

23. Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 125–27.

24. Hobsbawm, "Inventing Tradition," 6.

25. Karpát, *The Politicization of Islam*, 144, 173; and Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 129. In 1899 the first comprehensive account of the Crusades in Arabic was published in Egypt; this work refers to 'Abd al-Hamid's complaint about the European Crusade (*al-harb al-salibi*) against the Ottoman Empire in the form of politics. See Sayyid 'Ali al-Hariri, *Al-Akhbar al-saniya fi l-hurub al-salibiyya* (Cairo: 1899), 2; Ende, "Wer ist ein Glaubensheld und wer ist ein Ketzer?," 81–82; and Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 592.

26. Kreiser, "Ein Freiheitsdenkmal für Istanbul," 296–314.

27. Syria's first monument in European fashion was the column constructed in Marja Square in Damascus in 1904/1905, commemorating the first telegraph line between Istanbul and Mecca; see S. Weber, "Zeugnisse kulturellen Wandels," 680, no. 419, and *Damascus*, 2:255–56, no. 406. For the culture of monuments in the Ottoman Empire, see also Kreiser, "War Memorials and Cemeteries in Turkey," 184.

28. Karpát, *The Politicization of Islam*, 229–30; and Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 26–35.

29. Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 142.

30. Hudson, *Transforming Damascus*, 17.

31. S. Weber, "Zeugnisse kulturellen Wandels," 666, no. 396, and *Damascus*, 1:242, 420, 2:241–42, no. 388. For the change in style in Damascus in the late nineteenth century, see S. Weber, "Ottoman Damascus of the 19th Century," 731–40.

32. Saladin's title *al-sultan al-ghazi* appears within the inscription on the cenotaph.

33. The first modern biography of Saladin in Turkish, written by the young Ottoman historian Namik Kemal (1844–88), was published in 1872; see Ende, "Wer ist ein Glaubensheld und wer ist ein Ketzer?" 80.

34. As late as 1326/1908 the cenotaphs of Baybars and his son were restored; see S. Weber, "Zeugnisse kulturellen Wandels," 495, no. 57, and *Damascus. Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation*, 2:137–38, no. 196.

35. The mythology of the Hohenstaufen was linked to the rebirth of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation, which the Hohenzollern believed they would fulfill. Only in the second instance, this mythology was connected with the Crusades. For example, the Kyffhäuser monument in Thuringia, Germany, was built between 1890 and 1896 in the spot at which, according to folklore, the emperor Frederick would appear again to rejuvenate the empire.

36. Jaschinski, "Des Kaisers Reise in den Vordenen Orient 1898," 30–31; Hudson, *Transforming Damascus*, 107–108; and S. Weber, *Damascus*, 2:241–42, no. 388.

37. The *qasida* is reprinted in F. Ali, "Šauqi, der Fürst der Dichter," 146. Ahmad Shawqi wrote in the pan-Islamic journal *al-Mu'ayyad* about the effect of the speech: "What concerns us, the entirety of the Muslims, nine-tenths of us were without knowledge [about Saladin] until Wilhelm introduced us to him"; see Ende, "Wer ist ein Glaubensheld und wer ist ein Ketzer?" 84.

38. In August 1914 the Ottoman military owned eight airplanes, while the flight schools had another four. See Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, 228.

39. In Damascus the tombstone of the third Jaffa pilot gives the date as March 8, 1330 (1914). For the Damascus receptions of all three pilots, see al-'Azm, *Mudhakkirat Khalid al-'Azm*, 1:16–18. For the Jaffa crash see also Heikal, "Jaffa . . . As It Was," 20. An Ottoman mural in a Damascus mansion commemorated the arrival of the airplane; see S. Weber, *Damascus*, 2:451–53.

40. A monument was built at the site, east of Lake Tiberias, today eight hundred meters east of Kibbutz HaOn on the Israeli side of the Golan. It is a central obelisk with inscriptions, flanked by two eagles positioned on a globe. The tombstones provide conflicting dates for the crash. Those on the HaOn monument state that the crash occurred on 3 Rabi' II, 1332 AH (March 1, 1914) or 14 Shubat 1329 Maliyya (February 27, 1914). The monument was inaugurated in May 1914. The two tombstones in Damascus, however, give March 3, 1330 Maliyya (1914) as the date of the crash (*tarikh al-suqut*). The tombs in Damascus were first restored in 1340 (1921–22). Schools were named after the leading pilot, Fethi Beg, as was, in 1934, a town in the southern Turkish province of Muğla.

41. Kreiser, "War Memorials and Cemeteries in Turkey," 184–85.

42. Ende, "Wer ist ein Glaubensheld und wer ist ein Ketzer?" 87. Also see Najdad Azour's film *A Vision for Saladin* (2005); and 'Abd al-Nasir Hasu, "Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi shakhsiyyat al-marhala bayna shashatay al-sinema wal-tilifiziyyun," *al-Thawra*, August 9, 2005, <http://thawra.alwehda.gov.sy/>.

43. The fifth person buried in the courtyard was Yasin al-Hashimi (1894–1937), prime minister of Iraq, who in 1936 was deposed in a coup d'état. He escaped to Syria, where he died two months later. His tombstone appears to have been made in the Asad period.

44. Among them is a play by Jurji Zaydan (1861–1914): *Salah al-Din Ayyubi*.
45. See Ende, “Wer ist ein Glaubensheld und wer ist ein Ketzer?” 80.
46. Rida, “Dhikra Salah al-Din wa-ma’rakat Hattin,” 593–606; Ende, “Wer ist ein Glaubensheld und wer ist ein Ketzer?” 86; Gerber, *Remembering and Imagining Palestine*, 124–25; Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 153; and Peled, “Annals of Doom,” 167–68.
47. Halim, “The Signs of Saladin,” 78–94; Shafik, *Arab Cinema*, 169–70, and *Popular Egyptian Cinema*, 43–44, esp. 104–107. The famous authors Naguib Mahfouz, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sharqawi, and Yusuf al-Siba’i contributed to the screenplay.
48. Baram, “Territorial Nationalism in the Middle East,” 425–29.
49. See Baram “A Case of Imported Identity”; Bengio, *Saddam’s World*, 80–85; and Long, *Saddam’s War of Words*, 73–80.
50. Bengio, *Saddam’s World*, 165–66, 168; Davis, *Memories of State*, 151, 152, 164–69, 273.
51. Bengio, *Saddam’s World*, 82.
52. On the introduction of ancient Mesopotamian and medieval Islamic names into the administrative map of Iraq, see Baram, “Territorial Nationalism in the Middle East,” 425.
53. Reid, “The Postage Stamp,” 86.
54. For an early reference, see Baram, “A Case of Imported Identity,” 297, 305. For Saddam Hussein’s pre-1991 fixation on Nebuchadnezzar, see al-Khalil, *The Monument*, 68–77.
55. Bengio, *Saddam’s World*, 82–83; and Long, *Saddam’s War of Words*, 76, 106–10.
56. Davis, *Memories of State*, 221–69.
57. See also Davis, “The Museum and the Politics of Social Control in Iraq,” 95–96, which does not list medieval Iraq as a central focus of the Iraqi museums.
58. Bengio, *Saddam’s World*, 83. The ideological context of the word “Crusade” for the Americans was the phrase “morale crusade” as an emphatic expression of the war’s purpose. See Atkinson, *Crusade*, 4.
59. Davis, *Memories of the State*, 228.
60. Gruber, “Jerusalem in the Visual Propaganda of Iran,” 168–97.
61. At the end of 2003 these busts were removed for smelting; see Atwood, “Looters in the Temple.”
62. For an analysis of earlier, almost “vulgar” monuments, see al-Khalil, *The Monument*. Moreover, in 1998 a postage stamp series was issued on “Jerusalem Day” showing—from the right to the left, in Arabic reading order—Saddam, Saladin, and the Dome of the Rock placed above the Iraqi flag. In stamps issued in 2002 for Jerusalem Day, Saddam appeared in front of the Dome of the Rock with a suit, hat, and gun.
63. Cline, “Does Saddam Think He’s a Modern-Day Saladin?”; and Woods, *The Iraqi Perspectives Report*, 48–51.
64. Appleby, “Jihad Is Not Just a Word for War.” Compare a similar or identical picture in Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 595, plate 9.1.
65. “Shadows of Tikrit: Inside the Presidential Palace with the US Army 4th Infantry Division, Photography by PA McKee III” (site discontinued), <http://www.shadowsoftikrit.com>. Another unfinished bronze equestrian statue of Saddam, also referring to Saladin in its iconography, was discovered in the famous foundry on

the 'Umar Shaykh Street in Baghdad. The reason for the incomplete state of the statue, however, was the death of sculptor some years earlier. See Holmes, "Did Saddam Mimic Saladin."; and McGeough, "A Visit to a Street of Thousand Saddams."

66. McGeough, "A Visit to a Street of a Thousand Saddams." See also Issa, "Despite Oil and Greenery, Iraq Was Still Very Impoverished."

67. The statue in Tikrit was destroyed by explosives on July 18, 2003. Its metal was reused to cast the U.S. 4th Infantry Division memorial in Fort Hood, Texas (<http://www.shadowsoftikrit.com>).

68. A statue of Saladin, erected after the 1990–91 Gulf War, near the site of Baghdad's ancient northern gate, was renamed after the Shiite saint al-Malik al-Ashtar, a companion of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib; see Dagher, "Rewriting History in Bronze."

69. On this subject, see Ibrahim al-Marashi's contribution to this volume.

70. For the general differences between the personality cults in Iraq and Syria, see Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination*, esp. 28–29.

71. See Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 600.

72. On the origin of al-Asad's personality cult, see Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination*, 34–35.

73. Al-Asad came from an underprivileged religious minority of suppressed peasants, the Alawites, and transcended the boundaries of ethnic and religious loyalties in Syrian society with the help of this cult. *Ibid.*, 39–40.

74. *Ibid.*, 35.

75. *Ibid.*, 20–21.

76. The oversized golden statue of al-Asad with a Bedouin *abaya* in al-Raqqa (built between 1985 and 1992, ca. 10 meters high) is a provincial exception to the national rule.

77. Exceptions are found in numerous local monuments that combine historical and touristic monuments with images of Hafiz al-Asad and his family. Most date to the 2000s. For example, at the main entrance to al-Raqqa, a monumental mural made of underglaze painted tiles shows Bashar al-Asad with a turban, referring to Harun al-Rashid, and sitting in front of the famous medieval Baghdad Gate of al-Raqqa. An identification of both rulers does bear little political significance. It is designed by local artists at the entrance of the city to express urban pride in local archaeological monuments and to praise the nation's leader.

78. The medieval fortress Saone, east of Lattakia, with the Arabic name *Qal'at Sahyun* (Citadel of Zion), was renamed *Qal'at Salah al-Din* (Citadel of Saladin) in 1957, after the Suez War and in commemoration of Saladin's seizure of the fortress in 1188. See Grandin, "Introduction to the Citadel of Salah al-Din," 142.

79. See Djaroueh, *Mawsu'at al-'umlat al-waraqiyya al-suriyya*, 474, no. SY 167, for a Syrian twenty-five-pound note.

80. The program of illustration of this series of banknotes comprises historical landmarks and, on the backs of the bills, the achievements of socialism and the state: workers, peasants, ports, dams, and the issuing national bank.

81. Freitag, "In Search of 'Political Correctness,'" 1–16, esp. 10. See also Baram, "Territorial Nationalism in the Middle East," 433–39.

82. This meaning of Saladin was conveyed in the October War Memorial. It lies on the highway Sitta Tishrin to the north, and is difficult to reach and rarely visited except by school classes, army cadets, and military detachments. The panorama

painted in the main rotunda depicts the battles of the October War. Before entering the panorama one encounters a circular hall in which Syrian victories throughout history are depicted in several paintings; one shows Saladin taking of Jerusalem. The panorama was a gift from the North Korean government. It clearly follows the visual aesthetics of Chinese/North Korean propaganda. The People's Democratic Republic of Korea also presented a matching panorama to the Egyptian government, which was inaugurated in Cairo on October 6, 1989. Most of the commemorative activities of the October War are depicted here; see Meital, "Deliberately Not Empty."

83. In 1997 these posters still were seen in Aleppo. Personal communication by Peter Wien, University of Maryland, March 15, 2006.

84. Carole Hillenbrand's supposition that Syria has no tradition of historical statues (Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 596) is not substantiated inasmuch as the statue of 'Adnan al-Malki (1913–55) in Muhajirin, Damascus, is historical. Also, in Aleppo's Christian quarter, numerous bronze busts from the middle decades of the twentieth century commemorate various historical personalities. Other statues or bronze busts in Damascus honor such poets as Abu'l-Ma'arri (973–1057), whose depiction is located close to the statue of al-Malki.

85. In the first decade of its existence, the material of the statue decayed considerably, with several cracks, fading paint, and rusted and bent iron swords. In 2007 the statue underwent a superficial restoration by the Governorate of Damascus. It received new, although unfitting, bright olive green paint, new swords, and gilded inscriptions. The paravent screen was sponsored by DHL Company.

86. Carole Hillenbrand interprets one of the attending figures as a Sufi, an Islamic mystic, an idea the sculptor conveyed to her; see Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 596–97, 600. This idea, however, was not realized. All of the figures wear armor and weaponry and are apparently Muslim warriors. In 2003 a life-size plaster model of the statue still stood in the courtyard of the citadel.

87. An article in the newspaper *al-Thawra* declared him *al-'aqab afdal anwa' al-suqur* (hawk), and distinguished the bird from the Egyptian *nisr* (eagle), which was used during the United Arab Republic, but concedes that Saladin had an *'aqab* on his banner. In the classical language, *'aqab* and *nisr* are synonymous for "eagle." On the subject, see "*al-'aqab shi'ar suriya*," *al-Thawra* (August 6, 2007), <http://thawra.alwehda.gov.sy>.

88. Occasionally Bashar al-Asad, Saladin, and the Dome of the Rock can be found together, such as in the courtyard of the handicrafts market in the Tekkiya, Damascus, above a shop entrance; information (fall 2005) courtesy of Joseph A. Green, Harvard Semitic Museum. This kind of images does not belong to the government's propaganda but to private devotion to the Palestinian cause and al-Asad.

89. Djaroueh, *Mawsu'at al-'umlat al-waraqiyya al-suriyya*, 532–533, no. SY 196. On July 24, 2010, a new series of banknotes (50, 100, 200 SP) were issued, dated 2009. These are almost devoid of any party or national propaganda, depicting famous Syrian archaeological artifacts, historical monuments, the Asad library, and the building of the issuing authority, the Central Bank. Only the statue in front of the library, showing al-Asad as a scholar, on the back of the fifty-pound note, is a reference to the civilian side of the regime. The banknotes were designed by Robert Kalina, designer of the Euro-banknotes, and printed by the Österreichische

Banknoten- und Sicherheitsdruck GmbH. (<http://banknotesworld.net/News/?x=entry:entry100812-125920>). I am grateful to Essam Abou Fakher, Oldenburg, for this reference.

90. Slogans such as “*Suriya Allah hamiha*” (Syria, may God protect her) could be seen in November 2007 at the entrance of the Suq al-Hamidiyya.

91. Posters depicting a marathon as a mass rally for the prisoners of war of Golan were seen August 25, 2005, in Damascus. Moreover, a dove on a Syrian flag as illuminated symbol of hope for the peaceful regaining of the mountain ridge was observed at the headquarters of the Syrian weekly *al-Jawlan* in Damascus on November 6, 2007.

92. In the early 2000s, Saladin was very present in Syrian television. Beginning in 2001, thirty episodes of the series *al-Nasir Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi*, by the Syrian director Hatim ‘Ali (b. 1962) and the writer Walid Sayf, were broadcast, illustrating Saladin’s life based on Arabic sources. More experimental and provocative was the series by the Syrian producer and director Najdat Ismail Anzour, broadcast also in 2001: *al-Baḥth ‘an Salah al-Din* (thirty episodes). It searched for the “Saladin of our time,” exploring the concepts of tolerance, and of dialogue between religions and cultures before the background of contemporary Middle Eastern conflicts. In 2005 Anzour, together with the writer Hassan M. Yousef, produced an art house version of it called *Ru’ya li-Salah al-Din / A Vision for Saladin*, in which the Syrian writer and the American writer Peter Joseph are engaged in an e-mail chat about the possible role of Saladin in the contemporary problem-ridden Middle East. See Hasu, “*Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi shakhsīyyat al-marhala bayna shashatay al-sinema wal-tilifiziyyun*.”

93. For previous Arab film adaptations of the Saladin topic see Shafik, *Arab Cinema*, 169–70. On the pre-release controversy on the film see Robb, *Ridley Scott*, 144–51, esp. 149.

94. Ghassan Massoud is a renowned Syrian actor and the author of several theater plays: (<http://ghassanmasoud.com>). He also portrayed al-Qadi al-Fadil in the television series *al-Nasir Salah al-Din* in 2001.

95. I am grateful to Joshua Landis, who attended the premiere in Damascus, for this information. Personal communication, April 13, 2006.

96. Hasu, “*Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi shakhsīyyat al-marhala bayna shashatay al-sinema wal-tilifiziyyun*.” Although he admitted that the “West” discovered first the importance of Saladin, he considered the West’s image of Saladin basically negative, in light of the confrontation between Muslims and Christians, and the lost Crusades.

97. On the role of Saladin in Syrian and Arab textbooks, and the emphasis on the “Arabs” as opponents of the Crusaders instead of the “Muslims” in Syrian textbooks, see Determann, “The Crusades in Arab School Textbooks,” 208, 211.

98. Interview by Roumani, “A Modern Saladin Speaks His Mind.” Additional interviews with Ghassan Masoud on his role as Saladin can be found in “A Dream Role: Ghassan Massoud on Salah al-Din, Syrian Actor and Making It Big,” and “*Shakhsīyyat Salah al-Din*,” <http://ghassanmasoud.com/ar/>.

99. Lincoln, *Walter Scott and Modernity*, 106, asserts a “clear influence” of *The Talisman* on Ridley Scott’s movie.

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