

Book Review

Muḥammad al-Shishtāwī. *Khayrāt al-sulṭān Qāyṭbāy wa-munshaʿātuḥu al-mawqūfa ʿalā al-ḥaramayn al-sharīfayn min khilāl kitāb waqfihi al-maḥfūẓ bi-l-maktaba al-aḥliyya bi-Bārīs* (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-ʿArabiyya, 2018). ISBN 9789773443832. 282pp. \$12.50 paper.

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The large endowments made by the Mamluk sultans of Cairo have earned considerable fame. Using the legal mechanism of *waqf*, sultans—alongside senior emirs and wealthy women of the ruling classes—placed enormous amounts of property in endowments that were intended to last for all eternity. These endowments funded projects whose purposes spanned a cross-section of social, religious, and cultural life under the Cairo Sultanate (1250–1517 CE). The largest endowments paid for the construction of extensive building complexes performing diverse functions: mosque-madrasas for prayer, Friday sermons, and legal education; hospitals for treating the sick; hostels for the accommodation of travellers and Sufis; primary schools for the education of orphan boys; and drinking fountains to provide water to the wider urban community. The rapid and ambitious construction of these complexes can be seen as a central aspect of the political, religious, symbolic, and indeed financial projects of Mamluk-era elites, especially during the final century of the Sultanate which has been characterized as the “heyday” of *waqf*.¹ Deeds of endowment, preserved in large numbers, have come to be recognized as some of the most important sources for historians working on this period. These documents have, among many other things, enabled us to understand better the strategies of the Mamluk elites and their relationships with the society they ruled over, as well as to contextualize and elaborate the histories of the many *waqf*-funded Mamluk-era structures that still stand today in Cairo and elsewhere.²

1. Lucian Reinfandt, “The Administration of Welfare under the Mamluks,” in *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung, 263–72 (London: Routledge, 2011), 264.

2. For the importance of endowed buildings in the popular imaginary of “medieval” Cairo, see Paula Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo: Empire, Religion, and Architectural Preservation in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 19–57.

The title of Muḥammad al-Shishtāwī's 2018 book translates loosely as *Sultan Qāyṭbāy's Good Deeds and Foundations to Support the Two Noble Sanctuaries as Seen through Its Endowment Deed Preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris*. As such, this book deals with several such endowments, providing a deep dive into the content of a single *waqf* deed. As the title of the book makes clear, this deed, recording several foundations made by sultan Qāyṭbāy (r. 872–901/1468–1496), was not preserved in the main collections of Mamluk-era material in Cairo: the historical archive (*daftarkhāna*) of the Ministry of Religious Endowments (Wizārat al-Awqāf) and the “sultans and emirs” collection at the Egyptian National Archive (Dār al-Wathā'iḳ al-Qawmiyya).³ Instead, this particular deed was preserved in Paris at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (shelfmark: Suppl. Arab. No. 471). This deed has been the topic of study before in a short article by Doris Behrens-Abouseif published in 1998 in the then quite newly established *Mamlūk Studies Review*.⁴ The reader of English can find most of the important information on this endowment laid out in Behrens-Abouseif's article. The principal contribution of al-Shishtāwī's book is in the further detail it provides about the content of the document, including extensive verbatim extracts and facsimiles of several pages of the deed itself: a large codex of around four hundred pages.⁵ Indeed, al-Shishtāwī's book largely takes the form of a summary edition of parts of the text of the document, framing this with an overview of the practicalities and precise organisation of Qāyṭbāy's endowment project.

Consonant with this, the book's organization follows the structure of the *waqf* deed itself. It begins with an outline of the main causes Qāyṭbāy's endowment was founded to support: the beneficiaries of the endowment or the *mawqūf 'alayhi* in the legal language of *waqf* (pp. 5–36). This particular *waqf* deed is almost exclusively concerned with endowments made for the holy city of Medina, with only minimal reference to the sultan's endowments in Mecca, for which separate deeds do not, to my knowledge, survive.⁶ His endowments in Medina were substantial, covering the construction of a madrasa there as well as commercial buildings containing accommodation spaces, a public drinking fountain, a primary school, and a library. In addition, these buildings housed kitchen space and a mill for the preparation of bread and *dashīsha*, a porridge-like dish comprising wheat and fat, to be served to the needy and to those visiting Medina on pilgrimage. The organization for this charitable kitchen was a central aspect of the endowment, which included specific payments to those overseeing

3. For a concise summary of the collections, see Emad Abou Ghazi, “Egyptian Archives and the Rewriting of the Mamluk's [sic] History,” *Journal of Islamic Area Studies* 10 (2018): 5–16, at 7. See also Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, *Fihrist wathā'iḳ al-Qāhira ḥattā nihāyat 'aṣr salāṭin al-mamālīk, 239–922 H/853–1512* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1981), in French: xiii–xiv; in Arabic ٥; and Daniel Crecelius, “The Organization of Waqf Documents in Cairo,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2, no. 3 (1971): 266–77, at 275–76, though some of the documents have been moved since the publication of this article.

4. Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “Qāyṭbāy's Foundation in Medina, the *Madrasah*, the *Ribāṭ* and the *Dashīshah*,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 2 (1998): 61–71; see also idem, “Qāyṭbāy's *Madrasahs* in the Holy Cities and the Evolution of Ḥaram Architecture,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 129–47.

5. The number of the last page of the codex, which is reproduced on page 248, is regrettably cut from the image, so I am uncertain of the precise number of pages.

6. Behrens-Abouseif, “Qāyṭbāy's *Madrasahs* in the Holy Cities,” 132.

the transportation of wheat from Egypt as well as the endowment of two boats to move this produce across the Red Sea.

In this part of the book, al-Shishtāwī follows the *waqf* deed in also laying out the personnel who were to be paid with the proceeds of the endowment (pp. 16–22).⁷ Qāyṭbāy’s madrasa in Medina is a clear illustration of the fluidity of terminology applied to religious buildings in the later Mamluk period, not being intended, as far as the endowment stipulations show, for the teaching of law, as one would ordinarily associate with the term madrasa.⁸ Instead, those receiving stipends in the madrasa were Sufis and others who were to recite Qur’an and hadith there. Al-Shishtāwī takes particular note of the salary of the librarian (*khāzin al-kutub*), which at thirty dinars is higher than that of the shaykh of the madrasa, and certainly one of the higher salaries included in this endowment. This might indicate the level of responsibility that this individual assumed; the librarian’s tasks—keeping the books safe and clean, recalling books that had been borrowed, and putting them in their correct places—were time-consuming and required a certain level of expertise. The staff of Qāyṭbāy’s endowment also included those charged with the cleaning and maintenance of the buildings, and those overseeing the endowment, its accounts, and its records.

The way that *waqf* deeds such as this one show how institutions like Qāyṭbāy’s madrasa were intended to run on a day-to-day level is certainly one of their features that has been drawn on heavily by historians.⁹ Yet, the largest section of al-Shishtāwī’s book is taken up with summaries of the properties that were endowed, the *mawqūf*, whose proceeds were expected to generate the income that would keep the *waqf* going (pp. 37–218). Again, this reflects the deed itself. As those familiar with Mamluk-era *waqf* deeds will be well aware, this part of these documents can be extremely lengthy, providing detailed descriptions of individual properties as well as extended explanations of the trajectories through which the properties came into the endower’s private ownership. As this book shows us, the sources of funding for Qāyṭbāy’s endowment were drawn from urban real estate and agricultural land in Egypt and in Syria. Al-Shishtāwī begins this section with two properties that can be firmly identified and in fact still stand in Cairo today. The first of these is a commercial inn or caravanserai (*wakāla*) that Qāyṭbāy himself had constructed near Bāb al-Naṣr within the boundaries of the old Fatimid city. This building, in fact, still preserves an endowment inscription in which the beneficiaries in Medina are mentioned, which al-Shishtāwī cites at length in a footnote (pp. 45–46).¹⁰ The second of these extant properties is a domestic building located in the street behind the mosque of al-Azhar and known today by the name of its eighteenth-century owner, Zaynab Khātūn. In this case, al-Shishtāwī provides a nice summary of the trajectory of this property and how it came into Qāyṭbāy’s own hands, pieced together in part from Mamluk-era chronicles. It is a shame that the photographs of

7. For this see also Behrens-Abouseif, “Qāyṭbāy’s Foundation in Medina,” 70–71.

8. For this terminological fluidity, see Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 16.

9. See, for instance Leonor Fernandes, “The Foundation of Baybars Al-Jashankir: Its Waqf, History, and Architecture,” *Muqarnas* 4 (1987): 21–42.

10. See also Max Van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1894), 495.

these buildings included at the end of the book are not better reproduced in print, since it is difficult to make out any of the details described in the *waqf* deed from these pictures.¹¹ The remaining properties in the endowment cannot be identified with surviving buildings or known parcels of land, but their descriptions in the deeds, cited at length by al-Shishtāwī, provide the reader with a strong indication of what kinds of properties these are: in Egypt they consist of shops, inns, mills, and residences in and around Cairo, and parcels of land located in the Delta and Nile valley (pp. 59–195); and in Syria, inns and shops in Damascus and Aleppo, a sesame press in Damascus, and agricultural land scattered across the province (pp. 197–218).

The details of the endowments, then, as they emerge from this book, are consistent with what one would expect of a large *waqf* made by a prominent ninth-/fifteenth-century Mamluk sultan. As al-Shishtāwī mentions, Qāyṭbāy was one of the longest reigning sultans, presiding over a period of relative economic and political stability. He was also one of the few sultans to actually perform the pilgrimage himself, and his charitable contributions in the Hijaz, as well as in Jerusalem where he constructed another madrasa, were lauded by contemporary chroniclers.¹² It was very common for the *Ḥaramayn*—the sanctuaries in Mecca and Medina—to appear in *waqf* stipulations as a final beneficiary, the location where the proceeds of an endowment would go once all the other beneficiaries had been exhausted. Such a stipulation was an easy indication of the pious intentions of the *waqf* founder, even if in many cases proceeds would be exhausted well before making it that far. Qāyṭbāy's endowment recorded in this deed, however, represents a different phenomenon: a dedicated *waqf* centred on the city of Medina which involved diverting a large amount of funds from Egypt and Syria to this holy city. The position of Qāyṭbāy's madrasa actually overlooking the Prophet's Mosque further speaks to the ambition of this project, which took an unusually long time to build by the standards of the time. According to the chronicle literature, the madrasa was completed in Ramaḍān 887/October 1482.¹³ The endowments recorded on the deed commence five months later, with the earliest being made on 24 Ṣafar 888/3 April 1483, and a second two months later on 15 Rabī' II 888/23 May 1483. The most part of the property described in this deed was, though, endowed on 24 Rabī' II 890/10 May 1485, and further additions were made on 9 Rabī' II 894/12 March 1489 and 15 Dhū al-Ḥijja 895/30 October 1490. As with the endowment deeds of other sultans, then, this document provides a clear chronology of how Qāyṭbāy grew his endowment over time, and the revenues of this *waqf* must have been substantial.¹⁴

11. For clearer images, see Qāyṭbāy's *wakāla* and the house of Zaynab Khātūn.

12. Behrens-Abouseif, "Qāyṭbāy's Foundation in Medina," 61–62; idem, "Qāyṭbāy's *Madrasahs* in the Holy Cities." For the reign of Sultan Qāyṭbāy and his endowment activities, see Amy Newhall, "The Patronage of the Mamluk Sultan Qā'it Bay, 872-901/1468-1496," (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1987); Carl F. Petry, *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamlūk Sultans al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy and Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī in Egypt* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), 15–118; idem, *Protectors or Praetorians?: The Last Mamlūk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

13. For the window between the madrasa and the Prophet's Mosque, see Behrens-Abouseif, "Qāyṭbāy's *Madrasahs* in the Holy Cities"; for the chronology of the madrasa's construction, see idem, "Qāyṭbāy's Foundation in Medina," 67–70.

14. Similar to, for example, the endowment deeds of the penultimate Mamluk sultan Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī

Al-Shishtāwī's treatment of Qāyṭbāy's endowment deed offers a valuable tool for those wishing to get to know the internal language and structure of these kinds of documents. *Waqf* deeds are notable for their extreme verbosity and length, in part a product of the extensive descriptions of the endowed property. This book's verbatim transcriptions of these descriptions are, then, helpful, allowing the reader to become easily familiar with the "virtual tour" effect that these documents provide. Buildings in Cairo, Damascus, and Aleppo are situated within their environment with outlines of their boundaries at each point of the compass. But the text also walks the reader through the building, commenting on the layout of the rooms and their functions, the positions of doors, windows, staircases, and water facilities. In these dense texts, there is a glut of technical architectural vocabulary, which al-Shishtāwī explains well in his footnotes, making reference to entries in Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn and Laylā 'Alī Ibrāhīm's indispensable dictionary of architectural terminology drawn from Mamluk-era documents.¹⁵ He also sometimes provides modern terminological equivalents, something that is of substantial assistance to those of us for whom Arabic is not our mother tongue. This attention to the precise vocabulary of a *waqf* deed makes the content accessible in a way that will certainly be of interest to students of the history of the Cairo Sultanate.

Given the extent to which this book is shaped by the *waqf* deed, it is unfortunate that it does not contain a full critical edition of the whole deed. Al-Shishtāwī has selected passages from the document that are of most relevance to his project, centering the "content" of the endowment and the description of the buildings and land that constituted it. Nonetheless, there are aspects of the document that might be of interest to readers which cannot be found here, and for which one would thus have to go to Paris to look at the deed in person. The notarial aspects of the document are one such feature. The practices of testimony by witnesses and certification by qadis were central to the recording of *waqf* endowments and left abundant traces on the extant documentation.¹⁶ Elements of these can be seen on the facsimiles reproduced at the end of this book (illustrations 8 and 11, pp. 237 and 248), yet these receive no comment from the author. A reader armed with a magnifying glass might be able to access more of the text from the facsimiles, especially as the script of the document is extremely clear and consistent, but only a few select pages are reproduced in edition. Had al-Shishtāwī elected to edit this document in full, this book could have become one of a growing (albeit slowly) number of published Mamluk-era endowment deeds, which are all the more essential for students and researchers in the field given the significant challenges of accessing these documents in situ.¹⁷

(r. 906–922/1501–1516). See Petry, *Protectors*; Daisy Livingston, "Documentary Constellations in Late-Mamlūk Cairo: Property- and *Waqf*-Related Archiving on the Eve of the Ottoman Conquest of Egypt," *Itinerario* 44, no. 3 (2020): 528–51.

15. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn and Laylā 'Alī Ibrāhīm, *al-Muṣṭalaḥāt al-mi'māriyya fī al-wathā'iq al-mamlūkiyya 648–923/1250–1517* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1990).

16. See, for example, 'Abd al-Laṭīf Ibrāhīm 'Alī, "al-Tawthīqāt al-shar'īyya wa-l-ishhādāt fī zahr wathīqat al-Ghawrī," *Majallat Kulliyat al-Ādāb – Jāmi'at al-Qāhira* 19, no. 1 (1957): 293–420.

17. For one researcher's experience of Cairo's archives, though not with Mamluk-era materials, see Lucia Carminati, "Dead Ends in and out of the Archive: An Ethnography of Dār al Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya, the Egyptian

In fact, in my view a major shortcoming of the book is the lack of attention al-Shishtāwī gives the deed itself as an object: its form, material features, origins, and historical trajectory. For some of these he can be excused, since the book is not centered on questions of archival or documentary practice. The practice, for instance, visible from the facsimiles, of writing marginal headings next to the main text in order to ease the location of specific information from the lengthy document may well seem rather arcane and inconsequential unless one is particularly interested in such things.¹⁸ More significantly, though, I think it extremely likely that this document is a copy of Qāyṭbāy's deed made sometime after the fall of the Cairo Sultanate in 1517. Though the Mamluk sultans did sometimes have codex-form *waqf* deeds produced, there is also a recognisable phenomenon of Mamluk-era scroll-form deeds being transmitted by their successors in codex-form copies. These copies transmuted older *waqf* deeds into a different form by copying multiple deeds made on different occasions into a single codex.¹⁹ This had the effect of producing a version of the endowment deeds that was very complete and coherent. From al-Shishtāwī's presentation of this document, this is certainly what appears to be happening here. The inclusion of records of several endowments made on a series of dates, almost all concerned in different ways with Qāyṭbāy's endowments in Medina, speaks to this. So too does the extreme consistency in scribal practice, with the whole document (at least judging from the pages that are reproduced in facsimile) seemingly written in the same hand. Documents assembled in this way are attractive to the historian interested in drawing a lot of content from such records. Yet this detail would certainly be worthy of note in a publication of this type.

Al-Shishtāwī also neglects to discuss the subsequent transmission history of this document, something that is of particular interest given the unusual site of its present preservation. As far as I'm aware, the preservation of this codex in Paris has not been discussed in any published work, and at present I have little to add on this count. Yet

National Archive," *Rethinking History* 23, no. 1 (2019): 34–51.

18. As I am. This practice can be found, for instance, in another of Qāyṭbāy's endowment deeds housed in the Ministry of Endowments in Cairo: shelfmark 886 qadīm; no. 475 in Amīn, *Fihrist*. This feature is also reproduced in the edition in L. A. Mayer, *The Buildings of Qāyṭbāy as Described in His Endowment Deed* (London: A. Probsthain, 1938).

19. For instance, the *waqf* deeds of Sultan al-Ghawrī which were copied from several scrolls into a single codex in 987/1579. For a reproduction of some of the content of that codex see Khālīd al-Hamzah, *Late Mamluk Patronage: Qansuh al-Ghuri's Waqf and His Foundation in Cairo* (Boca Raton, FL: Universal Publishers, 2009). For the Ottoman scroll-to-codex shift in relation to various different documentary materials, see Mathieu Eychenne, Astrid Meier, and Élodie Vigouroux, *Le waqf de la mosquée des Omeyyades de Damas: Le manuscrit ottoman d'un inventaire mamelouk établi en 816/1413* (Beirut: Presses de l'IFPO, 2018); Tomoki Okawara, "Reconsidering Ottoman Qadi Court Records: What Are They? Who Produced, Issued and Recorded Them?," in *Lire et écrire l'histoire Ottomane*, ed. Vanessa Guéno and Stefan Knost, 17–22 (Beirut: Presses de l'IFPO, with the Orient-Institut Beirut, 2015); Christian Müller, "The Power of the Pen: Cadis and Their Archives. From Writings to Registering Proof of a Previous Action Taken," in *Manuscripts and Archives: Comparative Views on Record-Keeping*, ed. Alessandro Bausi et al., 361–85 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 380; Francisco Apellániz, *Breaching the Bronze Wall: Franks at Mamluk and Ottoman Courts and Markets* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 96–99. For the phenomenon of document "transmediation," see Benedikt Reier, "Documents in Books: Archival Practices in Medieval Arabic Biographical Dictionaries" (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 2022).

there are tantalising hints in the facsimiles at aspects of transmission history that are so conspicuous to the reader that it is surprising the author did not choose to comment on them. Namely, the title page of the codex shows two notes that were added to the document, and which offer insight—if rather enigmatic—into its preservation history.²⁰ The first of these does not offer a lot of detail but does present several points of interest. For one, the first two lines of the note are written in Ottoman Turkish, for the decipherment of which I have had to seek help.²¹ At first glance, the content of this note seems to have little to do with the content of the *waqf* deed. The opening lines present a formulaic request for intercessory prayers on behalf of their author. Switching to Arabic in the final line, the author of the note names himself: a certain Muṣṭafā, the other parts of whose name are difficult to make sense of. The date of this note has caused me some puzzlement, since if read in the *hijrī* calendar it appears to be dated sometime in the twenty-third century CE, which seems unlikely. Unless the numerals were written incorrectly by the scribe, then, it seems to have been written using the *mīlādī* calendar, dating the note to 1680 CE. While it would be tempting to consider the author of this note as the scribe of the codex, thus making this a late-seventeenth-century copy of Qāyṭbāy's deed, the handwriting is rather different from the rest of the document, so this is unfortunately not an argument that can be sustained. This note does not, then, provide a lot of insight into the history of this codex, yet it does offer a curious glimpse of a moment in its transmission history.

The second note is rather easier to interpret. Dated to the month of Muḥarram 1156/February-March 1743, it explains in Arabic that the document was at that time in the possession of an individual nicknamed Maḥmūdah. This man is named as the son of a certain Saʿd Niʿmat Allāh, designated as the now deceased secretary (*kātib*) of Qāyṭbāy's endowment (*waqf al-dashīsha al-kubrā*: literally, “the endowment for the most eminent porridge”), performing this role in Būlāq in Cairo. This note, then, as well as illustrating the longevity of Qāyṭbāy's endowment, tells us something about the archival conditions in which this codex was kept. While it is known that some endowment deeds associated with specific building complexes were preserved within the premises of these sites, this was clearly not the case for this particular document. Instead, at least in the mid-eighteenth century, it was kept in the hands of the endowment's secretary in Egypt. This is perhaps predictable given that it ended up in Paris, a translocation that probably occurred during the nineteenth century. There is no indication from the ownership note that Maḥmūdah took over his father's role as *kātib* of the endowment, rather that he simply took possession of the document. These conditions of preservation evoke the array of decentered archival practices that have been commented on by historians working on different parts of the medieval and early modern Islamicate sphere.²²

20. The title page is reproduced on page 221, a page that is peculiarly duplicated in the print version of the book.

21. I am grateful to Nimet İpek for transcribing and translating the text of this note for me and for helping me to make sense of the date. Thanks also to Murat Bozluolcay and Christopher Bahl for their thoughts on this.

22. See Konrad Hirschler, “From Archive to Archival Practices: Rethinking the Preservation of Mamluk Administrative Documents,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 136, no. 1 (2016): 1–28; Nandini Chatterjee, *Negotiating Mughal Law: A Family of Landlords Across Three Indian Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Interrogating the transmission of our source material—whether it be in manuscripts containing literary works or document collections with convoluted histories—is a task that is increasingly being taken on by historians of the premodern Middle East, and whose importance is recognized more and more. While it is undoubtedly not of equal interest to all those engaged in the history of the region, I would argue that it is of critical importance, as the material transmission histories of the objects containing our historical texts have played a vital role in shaping what is known to us and how. In a discussion of the details of Qāyṭbāy’s endowments such information might seem little more than a mildly interesting sideshow. Yet in a book as focused on the endowment deed as al-Shishtāwī’s is, attention to the broader history of the document in question would have allowed the book to offer a more profound contribution to current scholarship and to situate itself more compellingly alongside present research agendas.

That said, if al-Shishtāwī’s book is assessed on how it achieves more limited goals—of providing a summary of the content of a single very detailed endowment deed—it succeeds in this. Al-Shishtāwī is to be applauded for contributing to the growing number of published extracts from *waqf* deeds, and this book will offer a helpful and informative point of entry into the peculiarities of this fascinating genre of source material.

Press, 2020); Paolo Sartori, “Khiva 1873: The «Archive» That Never Was,” *Quaderni Storici* 167, no. 2 (2021): 439–70.