Muslim rulers have always endowed the shrines of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, competing, and even fighting, for the privilege to be titular custodians of the Haramayn. With the annual pilgrimage caravan, gifts and donations of all kinds were sent to maintain, enlarge, and embellish the shrines, sponsor various religious and philanthropic institutions, support the inhabitants of the holy cities, and assist the pilgrims and the sojourners (muṣāhirūn) settled there. Pious as well as private endowments, i.e., waqf, from the entire medieval Muslim world generally include a clause stating that in case the primary beneficiary of the endowment or the designated alternatives, whether individuals or institutions, no longer exist, the waqf revenue should revert to the Haramayn. Another endowment possibility frequently used was the allocation of a share of a waqf revenue, whether a family or a philanthropic waqf or a combination of both, for the benefit of the Haramayn in order to provide a specific service, such as the supply of water, the purchase of candles, or the distribution of alms or food. But there were, of course, also direct endowments which were intended primarily for the benefit of the holy cities. The Mamluk sultans, who considered themselves the heirs of the Abbasid caliphs as guardians of the Haramayn, and who did not allow other Muslim rulers to share this prerogative with them, constantly contributed to the architectural, philanthropic, and scholarly promotion of the Holy Cities, including Jerusalem and Hebron, which they had reconquered from the Crusaders.

One of the most prominent sponsors of Muslim holy places all over the Mamluk empire was Sultan al-Ashraf Qāyyūbāy, the only sultan of the Circassian period to have performed the pilgrimage.¹ His endowments for Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, and Hebron have been emphasized in contemporary sources,² and some of them

are also documented by extant waqf documents. The waqf deeds of Qāytbāy’s madrasahs in Jerusalem and Gaza have been published, while that of the madrasah in Mecca is not yet known. Qāytbāy’s opulent endowment for Medina is the subject of this study.

The substantial waqf deed of Qāytbāy at the Bibliothèque Nationale (BN) in Paris, which has so far not been taken into consideration, opens up a new perspective for a study of Qāytbāy’s pious works. It describes an endowment made for the benefit of a madrasah, a ribāt, and a charitable kitchen in Medina. But of course the value of the document goes beyond the religious and charitable aspects. The considerable real estate alienated in Cairo to finance this foundation reveals another interesting aspect of waqf administration in this period, and, moreover, the architectural descriptions of secular and religious buildings can significantly contribute to our knowledge of late Mamluk architecture.

Like his earlier waqfiyah endowing his religious-funerary complex in Cairo, Qāytbāy’s waqfiyah (235 fols.) at the BN consists of a collection of consecutive endowments dated between 889 and 899.

Qāytbāy’s charitable works in Medina received particular attention in the chronicles because of the circumstances that accompanied this initiative and the way Qāytbāy himself advertised it. The sultan was deeply moved during his pilgrimage in 884/1480 by the poverty and deprivation he saw there. A few months later, in Rabī’ I 885/1480, during the traditional banquet given by the sultan for the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday and in the presence of the four chief qaḍīs and the great amirs, six slaves came in carrying dishes on their heads. When the dishes were uncovered, heaps of gold dīnārs were revealed to the guests. According to Ibn Iyās’s account, Qāytbāy asked the Shāfi’i qaḍī to keep the money (60,000 dīnārs) in trust, but he declined. Jawharī adds that none of the four qaḍīs was willing to keep this amount in trust, nor the three highest amirs, the great dawādār, the atābak, and the rās al-nawbah. Finally it was the treasurer, or khazindaṛ, who agreed to take it in order to conduct the transactions necessary for the waqf. This is confirmed by the waqf deed which mentions the name of the khazindaṛ, Barsbāy al-Mahmūd, as having purchased estates in his function as proxy for the sultan.

4Bibliothèque Nationale, Suppl. Ar. No. 471.
5See my forthcoming article “Qāytbāy’s Real Estate in Cairo: Waqf and Power.” The architecture of the Ashrafiyah of Medina will be discussed in another study now in progress.
6BN waqf, fol. 22.
Jawhari reports, furthermore, that the sultan urged his officials to acquire any decaying estate they might find, even by the means of istibdāl, i.e. exchange, and to restore it and invest it for the waqf. The Hanafi chief qādī, however, aware of the abuses that an istibdāl transaction usually led to, warned the sultan that this should not be practiced, unless it were fully justified. Istibdāl is the exchange or sale of an alienated estate that is no longer profitable, in order to allow the endower to substitute for it another more lucrative estate. Alienated or waqf estates were not allowed to be objects of transactions under normal conditions. In case the estate had deteriorated to the extent of no longer yielding a revenue, it could be sold in order to allow the acquisition of a better investment. This device was, however, regularly misused to release alienated estates for other purposes, for example when a sultan or an amir became interested in it.

Jawhari praised Qāytbāy for having established a waqf in the first instance for the benefit of Medina, and not as “other kings and people nowadays do” who dedicate the waqf to themselves, their family, and descendants in the first place, leaving to the holy cities only the remainder. The sultan meant to support the people of Medina by making them the first beneficiary of the waqf before its yield was consumed, and Jawhari adds: “if only it remains safe from istibdāl!” It is interesting to note that the sultan himself in his own waqf deed strictly prohibited the use of istibdāl without his permission, at any time and not even after his death. This did not prevent him, however, from making use of istibdāl in order to acquire the plot he wanted for his complex in Medina; a madrasah, a ribāt, and a house had to be demolished and rebuilt elsewhere to make place for Qāytbāy’s constructions.

The Mawqūfāt or Alienated Estates
When Qāytbāy pledged to donate the sum of 60,000 dinārs to the people of Medina, he stressed that this entire sum came from his own private account, not from the bayt al-māl. This is interesting because his previous endowment, dedicated to his funerary complex in Cairo, included both personal property as well as estates from the bayt al-māl. Some of the agricultural land alienated for the Medina foundation was arāḍi kharājiyyah, that is, it belonged to the bayt al-māl, which means that Qāytbāy did not finance his philanthropic works exclusively with his private funds, but used also property of the bayt al-māl. The inclusion of kharāj land that had not been purchased in a waqf meant that only its tax revenue

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7 Ibn Iyās, 3:164f.; Jawhari, 480.
8 BN waqf, fol. 17.
9 Samhūḍī, 2:643.
10 Ibn Iyās, 3:165.

was alienated, not the land itself which remained in the possession of the state. Without entering into the discussion over the complex subject of land property in medieval Islam and its evolution, one may generally say that in medieval Egypt land was considered property of the state. The kharāj or tax revenue of land was thus the property of the bayt al-māl, held in trust by the ruler for the community. The ruler had the right to lease the land in the name of the bayt al-māl, leasing only its usufruct to the holder who would pay the kharāj tax. Under the military iqtṣā’ system applied in Egypt since the Ayyubid period, the tax revenue of the land belonging to the bayt al-māl was granted as iqtṣā’ to the amirs as remuneration for maintaining the army.

Theoretically the alienation of an estate as waqf could take place only when the estate had been acquired as private property, otherwise it was not waqf but Ḭirṣād. The latter was applied prior to the Ayyubid period, whenever the rulers financed institutions for the public interest or for philanthropic purposes. According to Muhammad Amīn it was Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn who began to alienate bayt al-māl property for the benefit of members of the ruling establishment and their descendants. From that time on, the line between bayt al-māl and the sultan’s private property was blurred; the Mamluk sultans alienated bayt al-māl estates and included them in their waqfs in which they themselves and their families were beneficiaries. The sultans were also authorized to sell property of the bayt al-māl, which officially opened the way for its alienation as waqf. At the end of the Mamluk period, half of Egypt’s kharāj land was alienated in waqfs. Even when the purpose was a philanthropic one, the alienation of a bayt al-māl estate was subject to criticism because of its detrimental effect on the iqtṣā’ system and thus on military potential. As a result, it happened that in times of military emergency the state treasury was found empty, and the sultans had to request from the religious and administrative establishment authorization to confiscate waqf funds in order to pay the soldiers, a measure which was of course illegal. Sultan Qāytbāy himself, during his wars with the Dhū al-Qadr, found himself in such a situation and had to confront the violent opposition of the ‘ulamā’. Thus when he declared that the 60,000 dinārs he had sponsored came exclusively from his private purse, he was probably aiming

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11BN waqf, fol. 13v.
13Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, al-Awqāf wa-al-Ḥayāh al-Ijtima’īyah fī Miṣr (Cairo, 1980), 32f., 300f.
14Amīn, 326ff.; Jawhari, 33ff.

to avert criticism from this side. He did, nonetheless, alienate kharāj land for his Medina foundation, as he had done earlier for his funerary complex.

Concerning the legal problems involved in the alienation of bayt al-māl property in waqfs, Jawharī reports a heated debate between the jurists of the four rites in which Qāytbāy himself participated. It dealt with the question of the extent to which the endower was allowed to modify the stipulations of a waqf in which bayt al-māl estate is included. He does not inform us, however, about the outcome of the debate.15

Apart from the agricultural land, the sultan alienated substantial commercial complexes within the city of Cairo, which shows that he did acquire buildings previously alienated and included them in his own waqf. There were also a few estates in Damascus, Aleppo, and in Medina itself.16 In Medina there were shops, a hammām, an apartment complex (rab’), as well as individual apartments, a house for rent, and three orchards whose revenue served the trust.17 A wakālah with a mill and a bakery were dedicated to the storage and preparation of the wheat for the dashīshah.

**STIPULATIONS**

The BN waqf document states that this endowment should follow the same stipulations established in the sultan’s previous great waqf for his funerary complex.18 This seems to suggest that no other important waqf was established by Qāytbāy between that of the funerary complex dated 879, 881, and 884, and the Medina endowment. As supervisor (nāzīr) of the foundation, Qāytbāy nominated himself, to be succeeded by future sultans.19 The deputy-supervisors (nā‘ib nāzīr) were to be the Chief of the Armies (atābak), the Chief Secretary (dawādār kābir), and the Privy Secretary (kātib al-sirr). In his first endowment for the funerary complex there is no mention of future sultans as succeeding supervisors. As for the deputy supervisors, they are the same in both endowments. The four chief qādīs were to act as shāhids or notaries of the endowment.

**THE DASHĪSHAH**

Qāytbāy employed his public kitchen in Medina for the distribution of the dashīshah, a dish made of wheat and fat, following the model of the Hebron kitchen. The sultan had restored the shrine of al-Khalīf, or Hebron, but his chroniclers do not

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15Jawharī, 354f.
16BN waqf, fols. 13v.-15.
17Ibid., fols. 30ff.
18Ibid., fols. 8v., 16v.
19Ibid., fol. 15v.
provide details about a public kitchen there. Muṣīr al-Dīn, however, writes that Sultan Barqūq (r. 1382-1399) had made an endowment specifically for the simāt in Hebron, i.e., for the distribution of food, and that he inscribed the endowment text at the doors of the shrine of Abraham. This simāt was still going on during the reign of Sultan Jaqmaq (r. 1438-1453). This could have been the model for Qāytbāy’s dashīshah. In his earlier endowment in Mecca, Qāytbāy also included a kitchen for the distribution of dashīshah. The word dashīshah derives from the verb dashsha meaning to crush. The dashīshah was thus a kind of porridge made of wheat and fat, perhaps something like the harīsah common in Syria today.

Qāytbāy commemorated his endowments for the dashīshah in Medina in a long inscription at the entrance of his wakālah near Bāb al-Nāṣr, which is unique in Cairene epigraphy. It states that the sultan alienated this structure to serve bread and dashīshah to the pilgrims and the needy of Medina. It ends with a kind of prayer written as a poem in the first person, in which the sultan beseeches God to acknowledge his piety and reward him. This poem, of mediocre quality, could have been composed by Qāytbāy himself, for Ibn Iyās writes that he was the author of religious poems which were recited in mosques.

The waqf stipulates, furthermore, that six hundred ardabbs of Upper Egyptian wheat should be sent every year for dashīshah and bread to be distributed at Qāytbāy’s madrasah in Mecca, also called al-Ashrafiyah, and that funds should be added to the endowment of the Meccan foundation whenever necessary. This madrasah is not included in this deed; it was begun in 883/1478-1479 and completed by the time Qāytbāy arrived in Mecca.

Seventy-five hundred ardabbs of wheat were to be shipped yearly to Medina for the preparation of dashīshah and bread (two loaves daily per person), to be distributed to the poor and the visitors (al-ghurarāʾ wa-al-fuqaraʾ al-āfaqīyah). Also the community of the madrasah was to benefit from this wheat, which was to be distributed indiscriminately to all of these people, whether rich or poor, big or small, male or female, free or slave, so that no one would need to buy food, “as is the case for the simāt of Hebron.” Whatever remained of the wheat was to be stored in order to be used when needed. The reference to women in this stipulation

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20Muṣīr al-Dīn, 2:94.
21Ibid., 2:97.
22Quṭb al-Dīn, 106.
23Max van Berchem, Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, vol. 1: Égypte (Cairo, 1894-1903), 4:494ff.
24Ibn Iyās, 3:326.
25Quṭb al-Dīn, 225.
26BN waqf, fol. 15.
is noteworthy, but because of its singularity it does not allow more than speculation about a possible presence of women among the madrasah’s community.

The waqf was responsible for the transportation costs of the wheat from Suez to Yanbu’, through Jiddah and on to Mecca and Medina, including the cost of its storage, the purchase of oil and kitchen utensils, the upkeep of mills and bakeries, and the cooking and the distribution of the dashashah. It seems that the wheat was to be processed in Cairo, as the waqf mentions among the alienated estates a large wakalah for wheat and its processing south of Bāb Zuwaylah. Qāytbay moreover alienated two ships (markab mismar) for the transportation of the wheat. The one was called Abū Salāmah, the other Abū al-Sā‘ādāt. The first was twenty-nine dhirā‘ bukhār long, and the other twenty-six. \(^{27}\) One thousand ardabbs of wheat were to be granted yearly to the amir of Medina.

**THE TAX EXEMPTION**

A decree dated 890/1485 is included in the BN waqf document stipulating that the amir of Medina should free the city from all taxes.\(^ {28}\) The tax exemption was not an innovation of Qāytbay; al-Nāsir Muḥammad and his son Sultan Ḫasan, as well as al-Ashraf Sha‘bān, had coupled their endowments in the Holy Cities with a tax exemption.\(^ {29}\) It is interesting to note that the text of Qāytbay’s decree included in his deed is almost identical with the one in Sultan Sha‘bān’s endowment deed for the Haramayn, with one important difference, however. Sha‘bān’s decree excludes from this privilege persons adhering to Shi’ism (zaydiyyah wa-al-rāfiḍiyyah). There is no such exclusion in Qāytbay’s endowment.

**THE RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION**

Qāytbay’s buildings at Medina consisted of a madrasah, a ribāţ, and a so-called ‘imārah, which is described as a public kitchen and its annexes.\(^ {30}\) They were built as a complex adjoining the mosque of the Prophet. According to Ibn Iyās the building of the madrasah had already begun in Rabī‘ I 883/June 1478 and it was completed in Ramaḍān 887/October 1482,\(^ {31}\) which, by Mamluk standards, is a long period. The reason for the delay could have been the fire which destroyed the

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\(^{28}\) BN waqf, fol. 98v.


\(^{30}\) BN waqf, fols. 28v.- 31v.

\(^{31}\) Ibn Iyās, 3:145, 196.
prayer hall of the Prophet’s Mosque and his funerary chamber in 886/1481, which Qāytbāy began immediately to rebuild. The earliest date mentioned in the waqf deed is 889/1484, two years after the date of the madrasah’s completion as reported by Ibn Iyās.

The restoration works were completed at the end of 887 and cost as much as 100,000 dinārs. A second fire which broke out in Rabī‘ II 898 was followed by a new restoration. The rebuilding of the mosque, which required craftsmen and funds from Egypt, may have delayed the construction of the madrasah. Another, though less likely, reason for this delay was the legal problem that obstructed the acquisition of the land for the madrasah. To build this complex, Qāytbāy, as stated in the waqf deed, purchased and demolished several buildings, including houses. This did not occur without difficulty, however. Ibn Iyās reports that the qādī who authorized, or rather forced, the transaction was eventually killed by a Shi‘ite (rāfī’dī) who owned one of these houses. Similarly, the sultan had to dismiss a qādī in Mecca who tried to stop construction because the new madrasah encroached upon a public passage.

Next to the madrasah, which adjoined the Prophet’s Mosque, was a majma‘ described as a shelter for the poor and the visitors coming to the madrasah (ma‘wa‘n lil-fuqarā‘ wa-al-wāridin min zuwwār al-madrasah). The complex also included a sabīl, and a ribāṭ consisting of eighty cells to be used as a hostel for visitors (al-fuqarā‘ wa-al-wāridin), “as is the custom in the arbiṭah.” It included an ablution fountain and a small bath (mustahamm). Opposite the madrasah was a second building consisting of a wakālah with ten rooms for storing wheat above which was an apartment complex (rab‘) with ten living units. The building included also a sabīl with a primary school (maktab) above it. The vestibule of this ‘imārah opened on to a mill, a bakery, the dashishah kitchen, and a stable.

Unlike his madrasah in Cairo, Qāytbāy’s madrasah in Medina was not a Friday mosque; neither a khaṭīb to preach the Friday sermon nor an imām to lead the prayer were appointed. The staff consisted of thirty Sufis and their shaykh who were to perform the daily ḥudūr al-taṣawwuf and to dedicate the thawa‘b, that is, the blessing, to the founder and his descendants, as well as a reader of

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32Ibid., 3:187, 188, 294.
33Ibid., 3:145.
34Qutb al-Dīn, 104f.
35BN waqf, fol. 29.
36Ibid., fol. 229v.
The Quran reader appointed in this *waqf* was to perform in the Prophet’s Mosque. The Sufis were to meet daily in the afternoon with their shaykh in the *madrasah* and to perform the ḥudūr, dedicating their prayers to the Prophet, to the founder and his descendants, and to all Muslims. The shaykh of the *ribāṭ*, who was not identical with that of the *madrasah*, was required to have scholarly qualifications (*min ṭalabat al-ʿilm*), to assist visitors, and to perform the *dhikr* ceremony with them.

The functions of the *majmaʿ* and the *ribāṭ* seem to have been complementary. The first is described as a shelter but without living units, perhaps only a gathering place like the *majmaʿ* at Qāyṭbāy’s *madrasah* in Jerusalem.38 The *ribāṭ*, however, was a complex of living units with domestic facilities but does not seem to have included a gathering room. The complex thus hosted a permanent *madrasah* community which consisted of the thirty Sufis and their shaykh who all received allowances, and served visiting scholars and Sufis for whom the *majmaʿ* was the meeting place. These were entitled to food but they received no stipend.

It is noteworthy that the term *ribāṭ* here does not refer to a well-defined Sufi institution but rather to a boarding facility connected with the *madrasah* and the *majmaʿ*. The *madrasah* itself, as far as the stipulations indicate, did not include the teaching of *fiqh*, as in earlier academic institutions, as none of the four rites of Islamic law is mentioned in this context, but only ḥudūr and ḥadīth reading. The only reference to *madhhabs* is made in connection with the ablution fountains, one consisting of a basin and called *shafiʿiyah*, and the other a fountain with running water of the *hanafiyah* type. The *madrasah*, however, had a library for the use of students and scholars (*ṭalabat al-ʿilm*).

The term *madrasah* here should not be taken in its classical sense, but rather in the sense of a *khānqaḥ*. The fact that it did not include a *khutbah* may be explained by its close vicinity to the Prophet’s Mosque, because the community could attend the Friday sermon and prayer there. In the Ashrafīyah of Jerusalem, however, the shaykh of the Sufis was in charge of teaching (*tadrīs*) as well as reading the ḥadīth; at the same time, he held the office of the *mashyakhah* of the Sufis. This *madrasah* included, according to the original stipulations of 878/1473, sixty Sufis and ten students, but later in 896/1491 the sultan changed the stipulations and appointed only Sufis.39 However, at the *madrasah* in Mecca, which was planned to house forty students, the curriculum included the four rites of Islamic law.40

The program offered by Qāyṭbāy’s *madrasah* in Medina could be found in any mosque of this period and was no longer that of the thirteenth and fourteenth

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38Mujīr al-Dīn, 2:238.
39ʿAbd al-Latīf Ibrāhīm, 505, 525.
40Qutb al-Dīn, 225.
century orthodox institutions of this name. The loosening of the madrasah curriculum in favor of Sufi rituals was a development of the late fifteenth century.  

**The Expenditures**

The revenue of the waqf was to cover all expenses of the alienated agricultural land, including the expenses for peasants, fertilizers, dams, bridges, water ways, and waterwheels. The salaries of the staff appointed in Egypt were paid in silver dirhams on a monthly basis; the Medina staff was paid yearly in gold dinârs. The latter must have received their pay upon the arrival of the Egyptian pilgrimage caravan. Allowances of the Cairene staff were paid in dirhams on a monthly basis:

2,000 each of the four chief qâdis of Egypt  
3,000 each of the two prime deputy-supervisors, the atâbak Azbak and the dāwîdâr Aqbarî; their successors were to receive only 2,000 dh. each  
2,000 the Privy Secretary for his function as second deputy-supervisor  
2,000 the secretary Abû al-Baqâ ibn al-Jîân (mubâshir)  
3,000 the intendant of the waqf (shâdd al-waqf) Janbalât min Yashbak (his successors were to receive only 2,000 dh.)  
1,000 an administrator to collect the rents and oversee the craftsmen (shâdd al-mustakhraj wa-al-‘îmârah)  
1,000 an overseer of the silo (mubâshir al-shînah)  
500 a clerk (muwaqqi’)  
1,500 two notaries (shâhid ‘adl) to oversee the maintenance of the buildings (tasqî’[?] al-musâqqafat)  

Allowances of the staff of Medina paid in gold dinârs, on a yearly basis:

44 the four chief qâdis of Medina as notaries (shâhid) of the endowment  
20 the shaykh šûfiyâh  
6 each of the thirty Sufis  
24 a reader of Ḥadîth al-Bukhârî in the madrasah  
24 a Quran reciter in the Prophet’s Mosque  
10 a custodian for the Quran (khâdim al-muṣḥaf) in the Prophet’s Mosque  
36 a shaykh of the ribâṭ

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42 BN waqf, fols. 184v.-186v.  
43 I was not able to find the exact meaning of tasqî’ in this context.  
44 BN waqf, fols. 187ff.  
45 The sums indicated for several persons were to be shared equally among them.
10 a custodian for the Qurans in the Prophet’s Mosque (khādīm)
rab’a)
30 a librarian (khāzin kutub)
20 a teacher in the primary school for orphans (mu’addib aytām)
90 thirty orphaned schoolboys
32 four mu’adhhdhīns
8 a chief mu’adhdhin and time-keeper (mu’aqqit)
50 the shaykh of the Prophet’s Mosque to supervise the madrasah and the
ribāṭ
30 a eunuch to supervise the trust in Medina (shādd al-madrasah wa-
al-awqāf)
20 two attendants for the two fountains (muzammilātī)
84 cost of refilling the cisterns
32 two overseers of the dashīshah (amīn)
32 two accountants for the bakery (shāhid makhbāz)
16 an accountant for the warehouses in Medina (amīn ḥawāṣil)
12 a rent collector (jābī)
20 two sweepers for the madrasah (farrāsh)
8 a sweeper for the ablution fountain of the madrasah (farrāsh mīḍā)
4 a sweeper around the madrasah (kannās)
20 two persons in charge of the lighting (waqqād)
32 two doormen (bawwāb)
6 a craftsman to repair the marble of the madrasah (murakhkhīm)
6 a plumber (sabbāk)

The expenditures enumerated in the waqfīyah do not indicate the salaries of the personnel working in the bakery and the dashīshah kitchen, or the staff in charge of transportation of the wheat and its processing and the maintenance of the wakālah and its kitchen, all of whom were to be remunerated by the waqf.

Less than a century later, Quṭb al-Dīn (d. 988/1580) wrote that the funds of the Meccan endowment were already exhausted; the pots of the dashīshah kitchen as well as waqf real estate were being sold.46 A few years after these words were written, in 997/1589, another sultan, the Ottoman Murād III (r. 1574-1598) made a large endowment for Medina for which he alienated large plots of Egyptian agricultural land, to sponsor renovations at the mosque of Medina and a large public kitchen which served not just dashīshah, but an extensive menu including meat and sweets.47

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46Quṭb al-Dīn, 106, 226.
47Wizārat al-Awqāf, Cairo, waqf deed no. 906.