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Religious Endowments and Succession to Rule: The Career of a Sultan's Son in the Fifteenth Century

No subject attracted Ulrich Haarmann's attention more during the last years of his life than the phenomenon of the Mamluks' sons (*awlād al-nās*) in late medieval Egyptian and Syrian societies.¹ We still know relatively little about this group and its relation to the other sections of society. On these questions Ulrich Haarmann was preparing a monograph which now must remain unfinished due to his premature death. Thus, much still remains unclarified.

A crucial source for further work, which surely has not yet received the appropriate attention, are the numerous private documents of the time, of which the endowment deeds in particular are the focus here.² They give insight into the financial and personal conditions of founders and their families much more than the chronicles and biographical literature do, and thus afford us a glimpse of things that otherwise pass unnoticed in the literature. While we cannot always avoid hypothetical solutions, use of such documents allows us to raise questions and suggest answers which otherwise would not be the case basing ourselves on the traditional sources. This is the case here with our study of the sultan's son al-Mu'ayyad Aḥmad, who in 865/1461 succeeded his father al-Ashraf Īnāl (r. 857/1453–865/1461) to the throne. In keeping with the conventions of that time, he remained in power for only four months before he was deposed by his highest

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¹See Ulrich Haarmann, "Joseph's Law: The Careers and Activities of Mamluk Descendants before the Ottoman Conquest of Egypt," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge, 1998), 55–84; idem, "The Sons of Mamluks as Fief-Holders in Late Medieval Egypt," in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut, 1984), 141–68.

²An introduction to the institution of Islamic foundations (*waqf*) in Egypt as well as an up-to-date summary of research, including editions of endowment deeds, is given in Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Waqf," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 11:63–69. From the time of the Mamluk sultanate there are almost 1000 private documents preserved in three Cairo archives: the National Archives (Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīyah), the National Library (Dār al-Kutub al-Qawmīyah), and the Ministry of Endowments (Wizārat al-Awqāf). They are all described in Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, *Catalogue des documents d'archives du Caire de 239/853 à 922/1516* (Cairo, 1981).



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military officer and successor al-Zāhir Khushqadam (r. 865/1461–872/1467).³ The few events of his short sultanate have so far not been given sufficient attention and we have failed to appreciate their deeper meaning due to our not taking into account the evidence provided by documents. The documentary evidence not only sheds more light on the reign of Aḥmad but also may suggest something about the experiences of other sultan's sons in the fifteenth century.

In his ultimately futile attempt to succeed his father, al-Mu'ayyad Aḥmad had much more favorable conditions than the other sultans' sons of the fifteenth century, and it surely was not certain that he would be overthrown after only a few months. Born in Ghazza in 835/1431, while his father served as governor (*nā'ib*), he studied there in his youth with local scholars and during his father's sultanate gradually moved up the military hierarchy. At the time of his father's death he was already commander-in-chief of the army (*atābak*) and leader of the annual pilgrimage caravan. When he succeeded his father on the throne on 14 Jumādā I 865/25 February 1461, he was already 30 years of age and thus older and more experienced than other pretenders to the throne before him. Yet even such military, political, and administrative experience could not prevent his overthrow on 19 Ramādān 865/28 June 1461 and his several years of detention in the Alexandrian fortress that followed.

His sultanate did not begin without promise; at the beginning he seems to have controlled his father's mamluks effectively and prevented their notorious plundering. This criterion of good rule, seemingly crucial for this late phase of the Mamluk sultanate—i.e. keeping control over the perennially erratic mamluk factions—he at first fulfilled even better than his father had. This earned him the gratitude of the population and the appreciation of contemporary observers.⁴ Such a successful start was only possible because he possessed a sufficient reserve of cash for distribution—a topic which will be discussed below. His luck, however, did not last. Aḥmad could not meet the demands of all the mamluk factions equally so that an opposition soon emerged among those mamluks who had already been disadvantaged under his father and were not willing to accept this situation under another sultan. The commander-in-chief Khushqadam appeared early on as the focus of this dissident group.⁵ Aḥmad tried to defend his position by relying on rank-and-file mamluks, which in turn caused displeasure among his own al-

³For al-Mu'ayyad Aḥmad see his biography in Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* (Beirut, 1934), 1:246. For historical events see Abū al-Maḥāsīn Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, University of California Publications in Semitic Philology, vol. 7 (Berkeley, 1929).

⁴Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, 1:246; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 652.

⁵Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 659–64.



Ashrafīyah mamluks.⁶ Only a few weeks later, civil war broke out in Cairo and Aḥmad's political isolation soon became apparent when his own mamluks deserted to the other side. Even the offer of high state positions failed to appease his opponents and he was forced from office.⁷

He was confined to the fortress of Alexandria where his condition soon improved. In the second half of 865/1461 Aḥmad was released from the dungeon. Complete rehabilitation, however, took place only with Khushqadam's death in 872/1467. One of the first official acts by the new sultan, Timurbughā, was the granting of freedom of movement within Alexandria for Aḥmad as well as restoring the social position and material wealth of the former al-Ashrafīyah mamluks.⁸ Aḥmad appears to have withdrawn from politics at this time. About his life during the following years the narrative sources remain silent with one remarkable exception: already an influential and frequently consulted member of Alexandrian society, in early 887/1482 he became a shaykh, i.e., he was elected to the executive body of the Alexandrian branch of the al-Shādhilīyah Sufi order and led the meetings (*dhikr*) from that time on.⁹ Thereafter he seems to have remained in Alexandria for the remainder of his life with the exception of 884/1479 when he was allowed to travel to Cairo to attend the funeral of his mother Zaynab.¹⁰ After his death in Ṣafar 893/January 1488 his body was sent to Cairo and buried in his father's mausoleum.¹¹

Up to this point the saga of Aḥmad's life seems to be typical of a dethroned and exiled sultan. Fortunately, however, the endowment deed of al-Mu'ayyad Aḥmad which is preserved in the Dār al-Wathā'iq in Cairo¹² allows us fuller

⁶Ibid., 665. See also Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn (1310–1341)* (Leiden, 1995).

⁷Levanoni, *A Turning Point*, 19–25.

⁸Gustav Weil, *Geschichte der Chalifen* (1846–62; reprint, Osnabrück, 1967), 5:288; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 846.

⁹Al-Sakhāwī, *Daw'*, 1:246. The importance of such a leading position in this popular and decentralized order should not be underestimated. It could be a hint that Aḥmad still maintained political influence after his time as sultan. For the al-Shadhilīyah order's social implications see Eric Geoffroy, *Le soufisme en Egypte et en Syrie sous les derniers Mamelouks et les premiers Ottomans: orientations spirituelles et enjeux culturels* (Damascus, 1995); Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden, Boston, 2000), 208ff.; P. Lory, "Shadhiliyya," *EF*², 9:172–75.

¹⁰Al-Sakhāwī, *Daw'*, 1:244.

¹¹Ibid., 246.

¹²The endowment deed of 20 Jumādā II 865/2 April 1461 (called [DW] H in the following) is written on the reverse of an endowment deed ascribed to al-Ashraf Īnāl carrying the number DW 51/346 (Amīn, *Catalogue*, no. 137). The foundations of Īnāl are the subject of my Ph.D. dissertation, now in preparation. It includes an edition and annotated translation of Īnāl's two preserved endowment deeds, which are: Dār al-Kutub al-Qawmīyah MS 63 *tārīkh* from 28 Shawwāl 862/8 September



access to the details of Aḥmad's life and raises questions about the connection between rulership and benefactors' activities, succession to the sultanate, and the aims of rulership. This document tells us that Aḥmad, shortly after his assumption of power, purchased land shares in no less than 37 Syrian and Egyptian villages and then bequeathed them to his family's existing foundation (*waqf ahli*). This family foundation shall be called here (DW). It had been created by Aḥmad's father al-Ashraf Īnāl shortly before his death a few months earlier.¹³ It consisted of 18 properties¹⁴ in Cairo's best quarters as well as shares in 20 Syrian and Egyptian villages.¹⁵ The income from renting the real estate as well as the levy (*'ibrah*) paid annually by these agricultural lands was intended for the maintenance of Īnāl's family, i.e. his only wife Zaynab, his sons Aḥmad and Muḥammad, and his daughters Fāṭimah and Badrīyah.¹⁶ The two important offices of the foundation's inspector (*naẓar*) and administrator (*wilāyah*), who determined the distribution of the foundation's income, resided characteristically with Zaynab.¹⁷ No effort was

1458 (Amīn, *Catalogue*, no. 884) as well as the already mentioned Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīyah MS 51/346 from 10 Šafar 865/25 November 1460 (Amīn, *Catalogue*, no. 137). A third document, which was originally preserved in the Cairo Ministry of Endowments, has only been recently lost: al-Awqāf MS 910q from 17 Dhū al-Hijjah 861/5 November 1456 (Amīn, *Catalogue*, no. 392). Furthermore, several sales documents (*bay'*) are preserved in the Cairo archives, in whose transactions Īnāl was involved as vendor (*bā'ī*): al-Awqāf MS 643j from 13 Jumādā I 863/18 March 1459 (Amīn, *Catalogue*, no. 396; edited in Zaynab Muḥammad Maḥfūz, "Wathā'iq al-Bay' fi Miṣr khilāl al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī," Ph.D. diss., Cairo University, 1977); Dār al-Wathā'iq MS 20/122 from 19 Jumādā I 864/12 March 1460 (Amīn, *Catalogue*, no. 131; edited in 'Imād Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Abū Ghāzī, "Dirāsah Diblūmātīyah fi Wathā'iq al-Bay' min Amlāk Bayt al-Māl fi 'Aṣr al-Mamāmlīk al-Jarākīсах, ma'a Taḥqīq wa-Nashr ba'd al-Wathā'iq al-Jadīdah fi Arshīfāt al-Qāhirah," Ph.D. diss., Cairo University, 1995, 2:169–93); Dār al-Wathā'iq MS 27/176 from 27 Dhū al-Hijjah 864/13 October 1460 (Amīn, *Catalogue*, no. 135; edited in Maḥfūz, "Wathā'iq al-Bay'"). Additionally, the existence and the dating of some former sales documents of Īnāl's and Aḥmad ibn Īnāl's, which are lost today, can be proved by quotations in the preserved documents.

¹³Aḥmad's sales deed dating from 7 Jumādā II 865/20 March 1461 has not survived. However, its date is known by a quotation in (DW) H, line 122. Īnāl's family endowment from 10 Šafar 865/25 November 1460 is documented in (DW) A.

¹⁴(DW) A, nos. 1–11, 13–16, 18, 39. These properties were trading houses and market halls, apartment houses, stores, stables, bakeries and public baths. They were situated in the main Cairo commercial districts Bayn al-Qaṣrayn, Būlāq, and al-Fuṣṭāṭ.

¹⁵(DW) A, nos. 19–38.

¹⁶(DW) H, lines 131–46. Refers to (DW) A, lines 132–42.

¹⁷(DW) A, lines 835–38. The appointment of the founder or a close relative as foundation inspector was fiercely discussed by contemporary observers and considered partly illegal. See Taqī al-Dīn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Kāfī al-Subkī's (d. 1355) unpublished treatise "Al-Qawl al-Mū'ib fi al-Qaḍā' al-Mūjib," in Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Berlin, 1902), 2:87; likewise Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Šafadī, *Al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt*, ed. Josef van Ess (Wiesbaden, 1974), 9:478



made to hide such a conflict of interest. With the additional properties acquired by Aḥmad, the foundation's capital and thus the family's fortune was substantially enlarged. Otherwise, he did not modify the dispositions made by his father.

Aḥmad's maneuver must be seen in connection with his father's earlier foundations. Apart from the family trust just mentioned (DW), Īnāl had endowed another foundation, for which documentary evidence also remains and which will here be designated (DK).¹⁸ This was a foundation with an apparent charitable purpose (*waqf khayrī*), which consisted of a large building complex erected in the northeastern Cairo cemetery (*ṣaḥra'*), which in addition to a mausoleum (*turbah*) for the sultan and his family, contained a college (*madrāsah*), a Sufi convent (*khānqāh*), a Friday mosque (*jāmi'*), and a hermitage (*zāwiyah*).¹⁹ To underwrite the building's construction and permanent expenses he created several additional foundations, the documents for which are unfortunately now lost.²⁰ However, we do know about the endowments of Syrian and Egyptian lands added to the foundation's capital in the years 1458 and 1459.²¹ Īnāl took these additional agricultural lands from both the state treasury (*bayt al-māl*), and from land he had personally acquired earlier.²² The tasks of inspection and administration, including

(both quoted in Haarmann, "Joseph's Law," 72, n. 90).

¹⁸Dār al-Kutub MS 63 *tārīkh*.

¹⁹For the mausoleum, which was erected in 854/1450, see Michael Meinecke, *Die mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien (648/1250 bis 923/1517)*, Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Islamische Reihe, vol. 5 (Glückstadt, 1992), 2:372; Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum: Egypte*, Mémoires de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, vol. 19 (Cairo, 1894–1903), 395–97, nos. 271 and 405. For the convent, finished in 858/1454, see Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:378f. For the college/mosque, which was finished in 860/1456 in seven months and became active shortly thereafter, see Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:379; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Bibliotheca Islamica, vol. 5 a-e (Wiesbaden, Cairo, 1960–75), 2:333.

²⁰The course of events and the dates of the individual endowments cannot be reconstructed. Only the deed for the Friday mosque, dating from 20 Jumādá II 862/5 May 1458 is quoted. See (DK) E, line 46f. Probably these lost documents were written on the similarly lost first part of the document (DK).

²¹The relevant endowment deed is the preserved collective deed Dār al-Kutub MS 63 *tārīkh* (see n. 12 above). The first of these additional endowments is dated from 21 Shawwāl 862/1 September 1458, when Īnāl endowed 14 different fiefs in the Syrian province of al-Ṭarābulus. One week later, on 28 Shawwāl 862/8 September 1458, he endowed a fief located in the Egyptian province of al-Gharbīyah. Two months later, on 3 Muḥarram 863/10 November 1458, he endowed six fiefs located in the Egyptian provinces of al-Jīzah, al-Muzāḥamīyatayn and al-Ushmūnayn. On 18 Ramaḍān 863/19 July 1459 he further endowed three fiefs in the Syrian province of Jabal Nābulus. See documents (DK) A, B, D, E.

²²The lands endowed in documents (DK) A and (DK) D had been part of the state treasury's property previously. In connection with the lands endowed in documents (DK) B and (DK) E



distributing the income, whose purpose was largely unspecified, were performed exclusively by Īnāl himself. He thus exercised virtually complete discretion over the disbursement of funds. After his death these tasks were to be transferred to his son and successor Aḥmad.²³ After 1459 there seem to have been no further endowments for the benefit of the college, at least no further documents in connection with this are known.

Contemporary observers complained that the motive for this sort of charity was really profit for the founders.²⁴ The inseparable connection between charitable motives and clear self-interest was a typical feature of endowments. This subject has been written about in recent academic literature so abundantly that it need not be dealt with again here.²⁵ Perhaps for our purpose, it is only important that this general distrust of endowments is additionally confirmed by the structure of Īnāl's building complex. Its clearly unconventional character—which reminds us of a component system rather than a unified conception of a foundation—tells us

sales-deeds are mentioned dating from 11 Shawwāl 862/12 August 1458 and 24 Sha'bān 863/26 June 1459 respectively. However, neither of these is preserved. See (DK) B, lines 51–54; (DK) E, line 24f. For endowments of lands that had been state property before, see Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Sultan Qāyrbāy's Foundation in Medina, the *Madrasah*, the *Ribāt* and the *Dashīshah*," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 2 (1998): 64.

²³(DK) D, lines 40–42; (DK) E, lines 39–47. For the problems of a single person being both founder and foundation's inspector, see n. 17 above.

²⁴The examples of Ibn Khaldūn and Abū Hāmid al-Qudsī are quoted in Haarmann, "Joseph's Law," 71f.

²⁵See especially Carl F. Petry, "A Paradox of Patronage during the Later Mamluk Period," *The Muslim World* 73 (1983): 182–207. A remarkably apologetic religious explanation for establishing foundations is provided by Khalid A. Alhamzeh, "Late Mamluk Patronage: Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī's Waqf and his Foundations in Cairo," Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1993, 185–90. For the caritative motive for endowing, see Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt, 1250–1517* (Cambridge, 2000), 69–100. For the psychological factor of endowing in times of plague epidemics, wars, and other insecurities, which should from today's point of view not be underestimated, see Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, 1992), 142–46. For political advantages, especially the legitimation of power, for which the foreign-born Mamluk upper class had to pay, see Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge*, 130–34. For economic advantages and advantages in inheritance law for the founder, see Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge*, 134–42. The foundation's contributions to maintenance of communal government in a modern sense are dealt with for Ottoman times by works of İ. Metin Kunt, "The Waqf as an Instrument of the Public Policy: Notes on the Köprülü Family Endowments," in *Studies in Ottoman History in Honour of Professor V. L. Ménage*, ed. Colin Heywood and Colin Imber (Istanbul, 1994), 189–98 as well as André Raymond, "Les grands waqfs et l'organisation de l'espace urbain à Alep et au Caire à l'époque Ottomane (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 31 (1979): 113–28. For the conditions of foundations in Central Asia, which were rather similar, see Richard D. McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia: Four Hundred Years in the History of a Muslim Shrine, 1480–1889* (Princeton, 1991), 37–39.



about the investor's desire for an expandable model. Such a model could be expanded gradually, depending on how the financial situation of the founder permitted or required it. Īnāl not only wanted to promote Islamic culture, but, to a much larger extent, the accumulation of his own fortune.²⁶

Both aspects were inseparably connected. If on the one hand charitable endowments were only established if the founder could have at the same time his hidden profits, then on the other hand, only their public benefit made the acceptance of endowments by society possible. The justification for Īnāl's additional endowments (DK) in favor of his large building complex may have been rising expenses or perhaps a decrease in the foundation's annual income (*'ibrah*). Otherwise the endowment of agricultural lands, a majority of which originally belonged to the government, would have had no legal basis.²⁷

One of the peculiarities of late medieval endowments was a frequent combination of charitable endowments with those whose purpose was to provide for the endower's family (*waqf mushtarak*). This feature was understood as disguising the founder's true motives, which was the enrichment of his family, by presenting it in the guise of charity.²⁸ Often enough, however, there were cases of simple family trusts (*waqf ahlī*), which were not disguised as charitable institutions.²⁹ Īnāl's foundation (DK) was a family type of investment with a charitable veneer. Yet the other foundation (DW) was, perhaps due to time pressure, a simple family trust. Surely such things were legally disputed, yet there must have been good reason why a respectable Hanafī judge, surely incorruptible at 94 years of age, gave this endowment legal validity. He was, interestingly enough, the same judge who had certified the endowment (DK).³⁰

²⁶Īnāl's funerary complex differs remarkably from the complexes of other sultans. Its completion took a long time, and its design is not homogenous. See van Berchem, *CIA Egypte*, 406.

²⁷An examination of the real decrease in the value of currency in the fifteenth century would be revealing. Additional endowments probably had become necessary because of diminished productivity of those lands which had already been endowed for the college/mosque. For inflation at that time, see Subhi Y. Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter (1171–1517)*, Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Beiheft Nr. 46 (Wiesbaden, 1965), 423–40.

²⁸Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, *Al-Awqāf wa-al-Ḥayāh al-Ijtimā'īyah fī Miṣr (648–923/1250–1517): Dirāsah Tārīkhīyah Wathā'iqīyah* (Cairo, 1980), 72–78.

²⁹Legitimation for this was given by a saying of the prophet (hadith), in which he allowed the donor to consume part of the donation's yield on his behalf. See Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Bulūgh al-Marām* (Cairo, n.d.), no. 784 (quoted in Rudolf Peters, "Waḳf," *EI*², 11:59.

³⁰(DW) A, line 663; (DK) H, lines 11–17; (DK) L, lines 8–15; (DK) N, lines 7–12. The chief judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāh*) was Sa'd al-Dīn al-Muqaddasī al-Dayrī. See M. K. Salibi, "Listes chronologiques des grands cadis de l'Égypte sous les Mamelouks," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 25 (1957): 105.



The previous ownership of the properties endowed in (DW) is also interesting. Only the trading house (*wakālah*) mentioned last in the document had been purchased by Īnāl before the endowment was established.³¹ The remaining properties and agricultural lands seem to have come into his possession in a more obscure way. Some were part of earlier foundations whose dates are even mentioned in the document (DW).³² These, it can be assumed, Īnāl had acquired by exchange transactions (*istibdāl*).³³ Such a case was recorded by a chronicler in connection with one of the properties endowed in (DW): in Rabī' I 860/February 1456 Īnāl had acquired several ramshackle apartment houses and shops on the main street of Bayn al-Qasrayn by exchanging them for equivalent buildings. Afterwards, he immediately demolished them and built new apartment houses, shops and a large market hall (*qaysāriyah*) on this valuable piece of land.³⁴ All this then became part of an endowment by Īnāl, whose deed was issued on 25 Rabī' I 861/20 February 1457.³⁵ In this instance, Īnāl showed his business acumen since he had not acquired the properties completely, but only a lower-priced share of 75 percent, which nevertheless made him majority owner with full freedom of action to demolish the buildings. The previous owner, a nearby mosque, still held a quarter of the shares, yet had lost their right to a say in the matter. Īnāl had taken over unprofitable

³¹This is building no. 39, mentioned in (DW) A, lines 760–80. The sales deed from 30 Rabī' II 864/23 February 1460 is lost. However, the date of the purchase is mentioned in (DW) A, line 861f.

³²It remains to be determined whether the former endowment deeds are still extant. In Īnāl's deed (DW) A no information is given concerning the former endowers. Accordingly, no detailed assertions can be made about earlier conditions. Only the previous dates of endowment are given for some of the objects. Hence, village no. 38 had formerly been endowed on 1 Rabī' I 847/29 June 1443. See (DW) A, lines 755–59. Further endowments are supported by documentary evidence from 28 Rajab 859/14 July 1455 (among others, apartment house no. 8a; see [DW] A, line 228f.); 25 Rabī' I 861/20 February 1457 (market hall no. 11 and shops and apartment houses no. 13; see [DW] A, line 289f.); 28 Rabī' II 861/25 March 1457 (apartment house no. 15 together with villages nos. 20–37; see [DW] A, lines 667f., 707f.); 18 Ramaḍān 863/19 July 1459 (two apartment houses no. 7; see [DW] A, line 178f.; on the same day Īnāl also endowed his foundation of deed [DK] B).

³³Contemporary observers bitterly complained about the negative phenomenon of *istibdāl* transactions. See Amīn, *Awqāf*, 241 f.; Behrens-Abouseif, "Qāyṭbāy's Foundation," 63; idem, "Qāyṭbāy's Investments in the City of Cairo: Waqf and Power," *Annales Islamologiques* 32 (1998): 33; Ulrich Haarmann, "Der arabische Osten im späten Mittelalter 1250–1517," *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, ed. Haarmann (Munich, 1994), 251.

³⁴Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Hawādith al-Duhūr fī Madā al-Ayyām wa-al-Shuhūr*, ed. William Popper (Berkeley, 1931), 2:255; *ibid.*, ed. M. K. 'Izz al-Dīn (Cairo, 1990), 573; Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:381. Concerned are the objects in (DW) A, nos. 11–13, erected in 627/1230.

³⁵(DW) A, line 290.



property and ensured at the same time through a majority holding that he alone could determine the means necessary to increase its value.³⁶

On the other hand, other endowed property in (DW) had not been part of earlier foundations.³⁷ Yet the documents remain completely silent about their former ownership. Even if there is the possibility that the beginning of the document, which is lost today, contained the relevant information, doubt still remains. Too many other possible means of acquisition need to be taken into account, such as confiscation or a more or less concealed takeover of properties and agricultural lands abandoned due to recurring plague epidemics, which normally would have reverted to the heirs or to the state treasury.³⁸

A further peculiarity of the foundation (DW) is the timing of its establishment—only three months before Īnāl's death. Perhaps one can assume that Īnāl at that time already knew about his approaching death, for this foundation appears to be a hasty enterprise intended to secure the family's material needs after his death. In contrast, the foundation (DK) was created over a long period of time. By transferring property into the possession of foundations his estate was made secure. Crown land did not have to return to the state treasury, while private family property (*milk*) was to a large extent shielded from the danger of confiscation. An additional precautionary measure by Īnāl was the installation of his wife Zaynab as administrator of the foundation. She had already been involved with all of his earlier foundations and thus had substantial experience in endowment management. Above all, however, as a woman she was in a substantially safer position than was her son Aḥmad, who would have to contend with the difficult task of establishing his rule.³⁹

³⁶Sultan Qāyṭbāy, who ruled only a few years later, regularly used this method for the accumulation of his foundation property. Similar methods are also attributed to Sultan Barsbāy. See Behrens-Abouseif, "Qāyṭbāy's Investments," 33.

³⁷Concerned are objects nos. 2, 5, 6, 8b, 9, 10, 12–14, 16–18.

³⁸Behrens-Abouseif, "Qāyṭbāy's Investments," 33f.

³⁹For women as inspectors of foundations see Carl F. Petry, "Class Solidarity versus Gender Gain: Women as Custodians of Property in Later Medieval Egypt," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven, 1991), 122–42, as well as my article "Was geschah in der Zeit zwischen Barsbāy und Qāyṭbāy? Überlegungen zu einer Neubewertung des späten Mamlukensultanats" (forthcoming). Also in connection with Zaynab, there is documentary evidence of caritative foundations. Accordingly, in 865/1460–61 she began with the construction of a hospice (*ribāṭ*) in Mecca. This project, however, had to be given up after the dethronement of her son Aḥmad on 19 Ramaḍān 865/28 June 1461. Yet an adjacent public well (*bi'r*) was finished. See Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām bi-Akhhār al-Balad al-Ḥarām*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (1859; reprint, Hildesheim and New York, 1981), 2:111; Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:384. Another hospice in the Cairo quarter of Bayn al-Qasrayn, which is seriously decayed today, might also have been erected on behalf of Zaynab.



What was going on inside Aḥmad's head when he took over the sultanate from his father? Possibly he had no illusions about his hopeless situation, having in mind the examples of earlier unlucky sultans' sons.⁴⁰ In that case he would have used the little time remaining to him as sultan to make his possessions (*milk*) secure by endowing them before they could be confiscated. Whether he would also have transferred crown land into foundations like his father did if he had had more time cannot be known. However, that would explain Aḥmad's attempt to put down the rebellion against him and to delay his dethronement. In this case his activities as founder are an important, although largely unseen, aspect of his short sultanate. More plausible, however, is the scenario of Aḥmad figuring out ways to retain the throne. He was more experienced and mature than were his unsuccessful predecessors. Furthermore, the family's endowments provided him with funds which might have enabled him to control the mamluk factions by paying them. In a state like the late Mamluk sultanate, which increasingly suffered from shortages of money, the most important yet at the same time most difficult task of a ruler seems to have been to meet the financial demands of these factions. Only with cash funds could one successfully rule and calm the unrest paralyzing most domestic affairs. The largest endowment entrepreneur was the most powerful ruler too. Consequently, Īnāl had tried to establish a dynasty in order to give the country continuity and stability.

Even if Aḥmad's attempt to permanently succeed his father on the throne bore no success—despite a good beginning—the family's history was still not over. The first years were difficult. Aḥmad's successor al-Zāhir Khushqadam also had trouble maintaining the loyalty of his own mamluks. Because of the empty state treasury, he ordered Īnāl's family foundations to hand over their annual income to the treasury. According to the chronicler Ibn Taghrībirdī, this amounted to a total of one million army dinars (*dīnār jayshī*), which surely is an exaggerated amount. Nevertheless, it gives us an idea of the dimensions of these foundations.⁴¹ For comparison, the annual fief-levy for the highest army offices at that time amounted to 250,000 army dinars.⁴² Under Sultan al-Ashraf Qāytbāy (r. 1468–96), who had married a cousin of Aḥmad's, Fāṭimah bint 'Alī ibn Khāṣṣbak, the family regained

Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, 12:45; Aḥmad 'Abd al-Rāziq Aḥmad, *La Femme au temps des mamlouks en Egypte*, Textes arabes et études islamiques, vol. 5 (Cairo, 1973), 25; Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:386.

⁴⁰The succession of a sultan and the mostly futile attempts of founding a dynasty in the fifteenth century are examined by Agatha Rome, "Die kurze Regierungszeit der mamlukischen Sultanssöhne in der tscherkessischen Phase (784/1382–922/1517)," M.A. thesis, University of Basel, 1995.

⁴¹Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 7:693.

⁴²Haarmann, "Der arabische Osten," 234.



its influence.⁴³ They also had close connections to the powerful state chancellor (*dawādār*) Yashbak min Maḥdī after he married one of Aḥmad's daughters.⁴⁴ When Zaynab died in 884/1479, the supervision of the foundations was turned over to the now-rehabilitated Aḥmad, who, as we already have seen, was to gain a substantial social position in Alexandria as shaykh of a Sufi order.

The documents also show him in later years still actively managing the endowments. Thus in 871/1467 he brought a suit, together with a certain Abd al-Raḥīm al-Barizī,⁴⁵ against the administrators of a foundation of a certain Sayf al-Dīn Qānim Atābak al-‘Askar al-Manṣūr, a former officer of Īnāl's.⁴⁶ In 891/1486 he went to court over a share in the fortune of the deceased Alexandrian Kārimī merchant Sharaf al-Dīn Ya‘qūb ibn Muḥammad.⁴⁷ In 908/1502 a former slave of Aḥmad's named Dilbār bint ‘Abd Allāh added to a foundation which she had established together with him during his lifetime.⁴⁸ Apart from (DW) H, however, Aḥmad created other endowments. This is shown by an entry in a contemporary land register (*rawk*) in which a village named al-Sanjaṛīyah, located in the Egyptian province of al-Daqahliyah, is registered as an endowment of Aḥmad's. This is not mentioned in the available documents.⁴⁹

We furthermore know that the foundation (DW) was administered by Aḥmad's descendants in the sixteenth century. There is documentary evidence of exchange transactions (*istibdāl*) in the years 902/1496, 921/1515, 974/1566, and 997/1589 respectively.⁵⁰ Finally, one may conclude that by examining the documents one gains substantial insight into important aspects of al-Ashraf Īnāl's and his son al-Mu‘ayyad Aḥmad's policies. A more exact analysis of their foundations would support Carl Petry's assumption of a "clandestine economy."⁵¹ However, they did

⁴³For Fāṭimah, see Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i*, 3:157 and 302.

⁴⁴Weil, *Geschichte*, 5:288.

⁴⁵Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, 4:168.

⁴⁶Wizarāt al-Awqāf MS 740j from 25 Jumādā II 871/1 February 1467 (Amīn, *Catalogue*, no. 433). For Sayf al-Dīn Qānim, see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 7:818.

⁴⁷Wizarāt al-Awqāf MS 750j from 7 Rabī' I 891/13 March 1486 (Amīn, *Catalogue*, no. 523). For the merchant Sharaf al-Dīn Ya‘qūb, who possessed a legendary fortune and also was active as founder, see al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, 10:285f.

⁴⁸Endowment deed Dār al-Wathā'iq MS 37/235 from 23 Rabī' II 908/26 October 1502 with additional modification from 8 Rabī' I 909/31 August 1503 (Amīn, *Catalogue*, no. 247).

⁴⁹The land register referred to is Yaḥyá ibn al-Maqarr Ibn al-Jī‘ān's *Al-Tuḥfah al-Sanīyah bi-Asmā' al-Bilād al-Miṣrīyah*, written in the year 885/1480. See Heinz Halm, *Ägypten nach den mamlukischen Lebensregistern* (Wiesbaden, 1980), 2:753.

⁵⁰Documents (DW) C–G.

⁵¹For the notion of a "clandestine economy" see Carl F. Petry's *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (Albany, 1994), 196–219.



not enrich themselves due to greed. On the contrary, in times of a permanent shortage of money and an unsettled Mamluk system, sultans needed cash reserves urgently in order to maintain power. This, in turn, was necessary to restore the country's stability and continuity, and in particular to control and contain the unrest between the different Mamluk factions. This also helps to explain the sultans' regular attempts to establish dynasties. Aḥmad's case was the first time a sultan's son of the Circassian sultanate possessed the necessary prerequisites to succeed his father to the throne. The fact that even he was overthrown seems more surprising than predictable. Thus Aḥmad's short sultanate should be judged not as another futile temporary solution, but as a missed opportunity to improve the situation and to pacify and stabilize internal conditions in Egypt.

