

FRÉDÉRIC BAUDEN

UNIVERSITÉ DE LIÈGE

Mamluk Era Documentary Studies: The State of the Art*

INTRODUCTION

Manuals on historiography routinely say that the discipline of history is shaped by documents. In this context, the word "document" is interpreted in a broad sense as the traces left behind by the thoughts and actions of men. More pragmatically, what is understood in the field of history as a document are the authentic traces of tools necessary for the needs of daily life (thus administrative and private documents, coins, buildings, etc.), or put in other words "everything that has remained immediately and directly of the historical facts or events."¹

All these materials are the subjects of particular disciplines, that is to say papyrology, epigraphy, numismatics, and archeology, better known as the auxiliary sciences of history. Each one studies a documentation defined as impartial, because documents are not reckoned to lie (although forgeries are sometimes found); that must be the starting point for research, "the historian's choice morsels" to quote one documents expert.² It is thus clear that in speaking of documentary studies, one could expect this article to treat all these disciplines. It does not, but rather aims at presenting the state of actual research on handwritten documents from the Mamluk period. I do not say papyrology because I think this word is unfortunately misleading. Although influenced by the discipline developed by scholars of antiquity, Arabic papyrology does not deal exclusively with documents written on papyrus. In the Islamic context, this would be nonsensical, as other writing materials

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*To Donald Little for the countless hours he has devoted to Mamluk documents. This article is the revised version of a paper presented at the Conference on Mamluk Studies organized by the University of Chicago (7–8 May, 2003). On various occasions, I benefited from the help and information provided by several colleagues, among whom are Gladys Frantz-Murphy, Anne Regourd, Donald Little, Geoffrey Khan, Johannes Pahlitzsch, and Christian Müller. I wish to express to all of them my gratitude for having shared with me their experience and their knowledge.

¹Ahasver von Brandt, *Werkzeug des Historikers*, 15th ed. (Stuttgart, 1998), 52, cited in Klaus U. Hachmeier, "Private Letters, Official Correspondence: Buyid *Inshā'* as a Historical Source," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 13 (2002): 127. Von Brandt names this category *Überreste* and divides it into three classes, which comprise the written *Überreste*, that is private and official documents, as well as some literary works not primarily intended as historical evidence.

²Hans Robert Roemer, "The Sinai Documents and the History of the Islamic World: State of the Art—Future Tasks," in *Studia Arabica et Islamica: Festschrift for Iḥsān 'Abbās on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Wadād al-Qāḍī (Beirut, 1981), 386.



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were used together with papyrus (ostracum, parchment, and at a rather early stage paper, but also cloth, and such odd materials as ostrich eggs, etc.). On the other hand, as we will see, archives have been preserved in institutions for which the documents had been issued. If we were considering only papyrology, they would not be included in this survey since they were not discovered through excavation, or in a cave.³ Numismatics,⁴ epigraphy, and archeology are thus left aside even though they clearly involve documents and some of them are of great help in corroborating information found in handwritten documents. I particularly think of the Mamluk decrees found on monuments in Egypt and Syria which reproduce originals that once were written on paper.⁵ Documents, in the sense just defined (handwritten), are thus the exclusive focus of this article.

Students of medieval Islamic history are confronted with a leitmotiv that until the sixteenth century Islamic civilization has left only a few documents. This calamitous statement, somewhat tempered for Egypt, which historically, even in antiquity, has preserved more documents than other areas like Syria, the Arabian peninsula, or even North Africa, has been reassessed recently, particularly by R. Stephen Humphreys, who judged the situation to be encouraging,⁶ and Donald Little, who said some time ago that "original documents [for the Mamluk period] or remnants of archives are exceedingly important."⁷ I do not know if this is a problem of the bottle being half full or half empty, but I am rather optimistic, too.

³Arabic papyrologists generally consider that their discipline covers all the documents from the dawn of Islam until the emergence of Ottoman rule on the grounds that official archives prior to this period have not been preserved. I agree that it is difficult in Islamic studies to trace a border line between papyrology and diplomatics, which in Western studies defines archival materials in a broad sense, but I tend to believe that differences remain between the study of a papyrus of the first century of Islam and a document of the late Mamluk period, and the criteria invoked by papyrologists are not relevant, in my opinion.

⁴Numismatics has lately been the subject of a review article: Warren Schultz, "Mamluk Monetary History: A Review Essay," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 183–205.

⁵Jean Sauvaget, "Décrets mamelouks de Syrie," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 2 (1932): 1–52; 3 (1933): 1–29; 12 (1947–48): 5–60; Gaston Wiet, "Répertoire des décrets mamelouks de Syrie," in *Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud* (Paris, 1939), 2:521–37; Janine Sourdel-Thomine, "Deux décrets mamelouks de Marqab," *BEO* 14 (1952–54): 61–64; Gaston Wiet, "Un décret du sultan mamelouk Malik Ashraf Sha'ban à La Mecque," in *Mélanges Louis Massignon* (Damascus, 1957), 3:383–410. Recently an important tool has been published by the Fondation Max van Berchem that puts at the disposal of searchers a database of all Arabic, Persian, and Turkish inscriptions, published or unpublished, up till 1000 A.H. The latest update covers Egypt and now includes more than 20,000 searchable items. See *Thesaurus d'épigraphie islamique*, ed. Ludvik Kalus and Frédérique Soudan, CD-ROM (Paris and Geneva, 2003).

⁶*Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Cairo, 1992), 40.

⁷"The Use of Documents for the Study of Mamluk History," *MSR* 1 (1997): 9.



Of course, compared to medieval Europe or China, the situation is not so good and it has led some scholars to allege that medieval Islamic civilization (not the Ottoman one) was less bureaucratic than, say, Sung China or the Italian states.⁸ This statement is based on the surviving evidence, but is a non sequitur. It is as if Assyriologists, prior to the discovery of thousands of tablets through excavations, would have said that the chancery of the Assyrian kingdom was not fond of red tape. The problem, for medieval Islam, lies in the fact that few official documents which have been preserved are the original documents that were issued by the chancery and given to the beneficiary. What we lack are the state archives, because we know that for every original document issued, a copy was made in the various bureaux in charge of the affair treated. These state archives have completely disappeared, except for one item, almost a hapax, going back to the Fatimid period,⁹ which offers us the opportunity to imagine how the registers prepared by chancery clerks must have looked.

To explain the disappearance of the state archives, different scholars have offered various explanations. One of the most repeated is that, unlike what happened in Europe, Islam had no legally organized social bodies which could have preserved archives, the unique exception being the *waqf* documents, as shown by Carl Petry. This means that only state archives could exist. Secondly, it has been argued that written documents do not establish the law (*kitābun yushbih kitāban*: one writing looks like another writing and can be exchanged with it), but if so why would non-Muslim communities have held for centuries documents that had no legal value and that were referred to in case of necessity? Thirdly, it has been alleged that in Europe most of the documents are of a judicial nature, while in Islam, on the other hand, these kinds of documents were kept by the qadis. When they became useless or obsolete, they were discarded. Whatever the case may be, my feeling is that an answer must be found in the sources, considering both state archives and private documents, including original documents issued by the chancery and handed over to the beneficiaries. In the first case, an important protagonist of the Mamluk sultanate, who experienced the transition between the Qipchak and Circassian regimes, witnessed a decisive event for our purpose: al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442). Speaking of his experience as a secretary in the chancery, he notes that in 791–92/1389–90, during Sultan Barqūq's reign, all the documents kept in the

⁸Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge, 1994), 13 ff.

⁹Geoffrey Khan, "A Copy of a Decree from the Archives of the Fāṭimid Chancery in Egypt," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 49 (1986): 439–53. According to the author (oral communication), other documents originating from the archives of the Fatimid chancery are preserved in the Geniza papers.



room of the *dīwān al-inshā'* at the Citadel of Cairo were removed and sold by weight,¹⁰ probably to paper merchants. Clearly, the disappearance of the state archives of the first Mamluk dynasty may be explained by this testimony, and this behavior must have been repeated in the periods that preceded and followed. As for private archives, the sources remain silent, although we may surmise that the same conduct prevailed. Original documents were often recycled and used as scrap paper. A unique case of this phenomenon, for the Mamluk period, has recently been discovered in several autograph manuscripts of al-Maqrīzī.¹¹ To conclude with this crucial problem, documents were obviously no longer valuable after a given period of time, and depending on various circumstances (political events, need for money, etc.), they were either destroyed, or more appropriately, reprocessed due to economic reasons.¹²

SURVEY

In what follows, the reader will find a census that aims at surveying quite exhaustively the collections that hold documents from the Mamluk period.¹³ Two approaches to the subject may be employed: either to take into account the venue of the collections, or to consider the nature of the documents as described above. I chose the first because it gives a more unequivocal idea of the number of documents preserved and their location.

Islamic documents, generally speaking, whatever their nature may be, are to be found in two different forms: copies preserved in historical or literary sources,

¹⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā'iz wa-al-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* (Bulāq, 1853), 2:225–26. See now Frédéric Bauden, "The Recovery of Mamlūk Chancery Documents in an Unsuspected Place," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. Michael Winter and Amalia Levanoni, *The Medieval Mediterranean*, no. 51 (Leiden, 2004), 74.

¹¹ See Bauden, "The Recovery of Mamlūk Chancery Documents," and below, pp. 56–57. Other examples may be found in the Geniza papers, as shown previously (see n. 9).

¹² Interestingly, it could be added that Islamic civilization has been described as the civilization of the book. No other civilization for the medieval period has produced such a vast quantity of works and manuscripts. Among those preserved, estimated at 3 million, how many of them come from the Abbasid, Fatimid, or Ayyubid periods, with the exception of Qurans? Here too, undoubtedly, political events entailed looting which caused destruction of material.

¹³ For previous presentations of Muslim documents in general, see Claude Cahen, "Du Moyen Âge aux temps modernes," in *Les Arabes par leurs archives*, ed. Jacques Berque and Dominique Chevallier (Paris, 1976), 9–15; Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 40–49, 170–72, 217–21, 261–65. As for Egypt in particular, see Hans Robert Roemer, "Über Urkunden zur Geschichte Ägyptens und Persiens in islamischen Zeit," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 107 (1957): 519–38; idem, "Documents et archives de l'Égypte islamique," *Mélanges de l'Institut dominicain d'études orientales du Caire* 5 (1958): 237–52. Regarding the Mamluk period, see Little, "The Use of Documents," 1–13.



and original documents held in different institutions in various countries, mostly in Europe, North America, and the Middle East. None of these categories are sufficient due to the limited number of documents, but placing them side by side and examining them does allow the raising of questions, and even the verification of their respective value. From this starting point, a more detailed investigation will be carried out, which will lead to broader conclusions.

SOURCES

The literary and historical sources from the Mamluk period are renowned to be, if not comprehensive, at least plentiful in comparison with other periods of Muslim history. It is one of the features that has attracted many of us to Mamluk studies. Critical editions of important sources are becoming more available, even if some gaps remain, as Li Guo noted in his state of the art article on historical sources.¹⁴ It is a well-known fact that some of them have preserved in one form or another copies of official or private documents and it is easily understandable why these have been the source of numerous studies on treaties concluded with other Muslim rulers or Christian rulers. However, we must insist on the fact that historical and literary sources be used with the greatest caution. They raise numerous problems, particularly that of authenticity. The historian must always bear in mind that what he has in hand is only what the author wanted to transmit, adding to this the problems of the accuracy of the copy, and sometimes of falsification. When several authors quote a document from different sources, it is possible to establish the discrepancies between the versions,¹⁵ and this calls once more for caution. Generally speaking, we must keep in mind that these copies are important for their content. As for diplomatics, it realizes little benefit from this kind of source because most of the authors systematically disregard the less interesting parts, in their eyes; yet elements such as preamble formulas, customary expressions of the various bureaux of the chancery, dates, names of persons, mottos, as well as paper sizes, may be crucial in terms of diplomatics.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Confronted with the apparent scarcity of archives from the Mamluk period, historians first settled for documents quoted in the narrative sources. Their works mainly dealt with the edition, translation, and analysis of the correspondence exchanged between the Mamluk sultans and their counterparts or others. The result is a quite detailed knowledge of the nature of the relations between the Mamluk sultanate

¹⁴Li Guo, "Mamluk Historiographic Studies: The State of the Art," *MSR* 1 (1997): 15–43.

¹⁵A clear example of this is to be found in William M. Brinner, "Some Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Documents from Non-Archival Sources," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 117–43.



and other states and how this was expressed in diplomatic terms. The copies of these documents have been retrieved from sources the nature of which may vary greatly. They may be classified as follows:

I. Historical and Literary Works

Among the most widely-used sources of this type are the *Tashrīf al-Ayyām wa-al-‘Uṣūr fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Manṣūr* by Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir,¹⁶ *Al-Faḍl al-Ma’thūr min Sīrat al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Manṣūr* by Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī,¹⁷ *Zubdat al-Fikrah* by Baybars al-Manṣūrī,¹⁸ all three of them dealing with Qalāwūn’s reign; and finally Ibn al-Furāt’s *Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk*¹⁹ for the other periods. As we will see, documents are sometimes found in European archives in translation and this allows a comparison with the Arabic versions. The stage of inventory and study of these texts is well advanced and it can be said that no surprises are awaiting us, even if some sources are still available only in manuscript form. Among these studies, P. M. Holt’s are particularly noteworthy. These are devoted to the treaties concluded with Christian states,²⁰ and his pioneering book on those concluded

¹⁶Edited by Murād Kāmil (Cairo, 1961).

¹⁷Šāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī’s *Biography of the Mamluk Sultan Qalāwūn*, ed. Paulina B. Lewicka, *Orientalia Polona*, no. 2 (Warsaw, 2000).

¹⁸*Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah*, ed. Donald S. Richards, *Bibliotheca Islamica*, no. 42 (Beirut, 1998).

¹⁹Vols. 7–9, ed. Quṣṭanṭīn Zurayq and Najlā‘ ‘Izz al-Dīn, [American University of Beirut] Publications of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Oriental Series, nos. 9, 10, 14, 17 (Beirut, 1936–42).

²⁰“Baybars’s Treaty with the Lady of Beirut in 667/1269,” in *Crusade and Settlement: Papers Read at the First Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East and Presented to R. C. Smail*, ed. P. W. Edbury (Cardiff, 1985), 242–50; “The Mamluk Sultanate and Aragon: The Treaties of 689/1290 and 692/1293,” *Tārīḥ* 2 (1992): 105–18; “Mamluk-Frankish Diplomatic Relations in the Reign of Baybars (658–76/1260–77),” *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 32 (1988): 180–195; “Mamluk-Frankish Diplomatic Relations in the Reign of Qalāwūn (678–89/1279–90),” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1989): 278–89; “Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s Letter to a Spanish Ruler in 699/1300,” *Al-Masāq* 3 (1990): 23–29; “Qalāwūn’s Treaty with Acre in 1283,” *English Historical Review* 91 (1976): 802–12; “Qalāwūn’s Treaty with Genoa in 1290,” *Der Islam* 57 (1980): 101–8; “Qalāwūn’s Treaty with the Latin Kingdom (682/1283): Negotiation and Abrogation,” in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, vol. 1, *Proceedings of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1992, 1993 and 1994*, ed. U. Vermeulen and D. de Smet, *Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta*, no. 73 (Leuven, 1995), 324–34; “The Treaties of the Early Mamluk Sultans with the Frankish States,” *BSOAS* 43 (1980): 67–76; “Treaties between the Mamluk Sultans and the Frankish Authorities,” in *XIX. Deutscher Orientalistentag*, ed. Wolfgang Voigt, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Supplement III (Wiesbaden, 1977), 474–84.



mainly with Crusader states has remained unsurpassed.²¹ He translated them and made an historical and diplomatic commentary, comparing them with other sources, in particular Christian ones. The Muslim sources to which he traced these treaties are Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, Ibn al-Furāt, and al-Qalqashandī. Beside Holt, other studies are useful, such as the one carried out by Daoulatli²² on an exchange of letters between Qalāwūn and rulers of Ifrīqīyah on the basis of Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s text. It is this same source which recently gave Reuven Amitai-Preiss the opportunity to examine the correspondence between the Mongol ruler Abagha and Baybars.²³ Despite the numerous articles published on the subject, some sources have been neglected, particularly the *Tārīkh Bayrūt* by Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá (fl. 1424–37). He was a member of a family of amirs in Lebanon (the Buhturids) and his text was available to scholars as early as 1898,²⁴ although a more accurate edition, by Francis Hours and Kamal Salibi, appeared in 1969.²⁵ This is a special case in the category of historical sources because the author reproduced archival documents of his family, such as nomination documents to the rank of amir. This is not

Michele Amari also studied a peace treaty preserved in Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s *Tashrīf al-Ayyām* regarding the King of Aragon and the King of Sicily: Michele Amari, *Bibliotheca arabo-sicula ossia raccolta di testi arabi che toccano la geografia, la storia, le biografie e la bibliografia della Sicilia* (Lipsia, 1857), 342–52. See also Francesco Gabrieli, “Trattato di Qalawūn coi Templari di Tortosa,” in *Storici Arabi delle Crociate*, ed. idem, Scrittori di storia, no. 6 (Turin, 1957), 305–12, 314–21.

²¹Early Mamluk Diplomacy (1260–1290): *Treaties of Baybars and Qalāwūn with Christian Rulers*, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts, no. 12 (Leiden-New York-Cologne, 1995).

²²Abdelaziz Daoulatli, “Les relations entre le sultan Qala’un et l’Ifriqiya d’après deux documents égyptiens (680 Hg/1281 J.C.-689 Hg/1290 J.C.),” *Revue de l’Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 17 (1974): 43–62.

²³Reuven Amitai-Preiss, “An Exchange of Letters in Arabic between Abaya Īlkhān and Sultan Baybars (A.H. 667/A.D. 1268–69),” *Central Asiatic Journal* 38 (1994): 11–33. Very early, de Sacy published a similar letter exchange between Baybars and Timur’s son on the basis of the evidence found in Khalīl al-Zāhirī’s *Zubdat Kashf al-Mamālik*: “Lettre du Sultan Mélic-alaschraf Barsébaï, à Mirza Schahrokh, fils de Timour,” in *Chrestomathie arabe* (Paris, 1826; repr. Osnabrück, 1973), 2:71–87 and Arabic text, 11–17. Furthermore, documents regarding private affairs may also be found in this kind of source, as demonstrated by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, “Marsūm mamlūkī šarīf bi-mukhālafat ‘aqīdat Ibn Taymīyah,” *Majallat al-Majma‘ al-‘Ilmī al-‘Arabī/Revue de l’Académie arabe de Damas* 33 (1958): 259–69 (document found in Ibn al-Dawādārī’s *Al-Durar al-Fākhīrah*).

²⁴*Tārīkh Bayrūt wa-Akhhbār al-Umarā’ al-Buḥturīyīn min Banī al-Gharb*, ed. Louis Cheikho as *Histoire de Beyrouth et des Bohtor émirs d’al-Gharb par Salih ibn Yahya* (Beirut, 1902). First appeared in several fascicles of *Al-Mashriq* 1 (1898).

²⁵*Tārīkh Bayrūt: Akhhbār al-Salaf min Dhurriyat Buḥtur ibn ‘Alī, Amīr al-Gharb bi-Bayrūt*, ed. Francis Hours and Kamal Salibi, Recherches publiées sous la direction de l’Institut de lettres orientales de Beyrouth, série 4: Histoire et sociologie du Proche-Orient, no. 35 (Beirut, 1969).



exceptional, but what makes it valuable is that in this particular case he indicated in great detail all the elements appearing on the documents, which were commonly disregarded by others, and if we now have a good knowledge of which motto was used by which sultan, it is largely thanks to his work.

Besides Egyptian sources, it must be kept in mind that other sources may be useful. Although copies of Mamluk correspondence are rarely found in the works of Andalusian historians, in one instance they are (al-Maqqarī, d. 1632).²⁶ Christian sources may also prove interesting and reliable in this respect as was demonstrated by Marius Canard,²⁷ who found a copy of a letter sent by al-Nāṣir Ḥasan to the Byzantine emperor John VI Cantacuzene (dated 1349), a document which gives valuable information on the fate of Christians in the Mamluk sultanate, events about which Mamluk chronicles remain silent. The letter was found in the chronicle written by the emperor himself at the end of his life, and although it is preserved only in its Greek translation, it undoubtedly reflects the Arabic original as Canard was able to prove by a comparison of the epithets reserved for the Byzantine emperors according to Muslim chancery manuals.

II. Chancery Encyclopedias and Manuals

Among all the sources, this kind of work is one of the most useful in tracing the evolution of diplomatics, particularly in the Egyptian context. Written by several authors at various periods, they offer the possibility to recreate the functioning of the Egyptian chancery over several centuries. The most famous of these manuals is unquestionably al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī Ṣinā'at al-Inshā'*. Available in a rather good edition with an index,²⁸ its value has been quickly recognized and it is no surprise if we find it frequently utilized in the studies published so far. Its major shortcoming lies in the fact that it is not practical to use, even with the indexes, and Björkman is to be commended for having given a clear account of its contents,²⁹ although he failed to supply the required diplomatic commentary. Since that time, several parts of the *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā* have been translated, the most recent

²⁶Marius Canard, "Les relations entre les Mérinides et les Mamelouks au XIVe siècle," *Annales de l'Institut d'études orientales* (Algiers) 5 (1939–41): 41–48.

²⁷Marius Canard, "Une lettre du Sultan Malik Nāṣir Ḥasan à Jean VI Cantacuzène (750/1349)," *Annales de l'Institut d'études orientales* (Algiers) 3 (1937): 27–52.

²⁸Cairo, 1913–20, repr. 1963. Muḥammad Qindīl al-Baqī, *Fahāris Kitāb Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī Ṣinā'at al-Inshā'* (Cairo, 1970).

²⁹Walther Björkman, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Staatskanzlei im islamischen Ägypten*, *Abhandlungen aus dem Gebiet der Auslandskunde*, vol. 28, Reihe B: Völkerkunde, Kulturgeschichte und Sprachen, vol. 16 (Hamburg, 1928).



being Maria Pia Pedani's book on the *dār al-ṣulḥ*,³⁰ where the section dealing with truces (sing. *hudnah*) is translated into Italian. The *Ṣubḥ* is renowned for the great number of documents it has preserved, and these have been the subject of various articles. In addition to Holt's studies already mentioned, the articles of Canard on the relations with the Merinids in the fourteenth century and with the Byzantines³¹ are important, and also those of Urbain Vermeulen concerning the correspondence exchanged between the Crusaders and the Mongols.³² Unfortunately, most of these lack a diplomatic commentary.

Besides al-Qalqashandī, other works, some of which he used extensively, have been made available in critical editions. Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī's *Al-Ta'rīf bi-al-Muṣṭalaḥ al-Sharīf*,³³ Ibn Nāzīr al-Jaysh's *Tathqīf al-Ta'rīf bi-al-Muṣṭalaḥ al-Sharīf*,³⁴ and al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* are now completely

³⁰Maria Pia Pedani, *La dimora della pace: Considerazioni sulle capitolazioni tra i paesi islamici e l'Europa*, Quaderni di Studi Arabi, Studi e testi, no. 2 (Rome, 1996).

³¹"Les relations entre les Mérinides et les Mamelouks au XIVe siècle," *Annales de l'Institut d'études orientales* (Algiers) 5 (1939–41): 41–81; "Le traité de 1281 entre Michel Paléologue et le Sultan Qalā'ūn," *Byzantion* 10 (1935): 669–80; "Un traité entre Byzance et l'Égypte au XIIIe siècle et les relations diplomatiques de Michel VIII Paléologue avec les Sultans Mamlūks Baibars et Qalā'ūn," in *Mélanges Gaudefroy-Demombynes* (Cairo, 1935–45), 197–224. On this subject, see also Franz Dölger, "Der Vertrag des Sultans Qalā'ūn von Ägypten mit dem Kaiser Michael VIII. Palaiologos (1281)," in *Byzantinische Diplomatie* (Ettal, 1956), 225–44; also published in *Serta Monacensia: Franz Babinger zum 15. Januar 1951 als Festgruss dargebracht*, ed. Hans Joachim Kissling and Alois Schmaus (Leiden, 1952), 60–79. On the relations between Byzantium and Mamluk Egypt, see now Mohamed Tahar Mansouri, *Recherches sur les relations entre Byzance et l'Égypte (1259–1453) d'après les sources arabes*, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de la Manouba, Série Histoire, no. 1 (Tunis, 1992); and Dimitri A. Korobeinikov, "Diplomatic Correspondence between Byzantium and the Mamluk Sultanate in the Fourteenth Century," *Al-Masāq* 16 (2004): 53–74.

³²Urbain Vermeulen, "Le traité d'armistice entre le sultan Baybars et les Hospitaliers de Ḥiṣn al-Akrād et al-Marqab (4 Ramadan 665 A.H./29 mai 1267)," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 19 (1988): 189–95; "Le traité d'armistice relatif à al-Marqab conclu entre Baybars et les Hospitaliers (1 Ramadan 669/13 avril 1271)," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 8 (1990): 123–31; "Timur Lang en Syrie: la correspondance entre le Mamlūk Farāğ et le Mérinide Abū Sa'īd," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, vol. 2, *Proceedings of the 4th and 5th International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1995 and 1996*, ed. U. Vermeulen and D. de Smet, *Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta*, no. 83 (Leuven, 1998), 303–11. Add to these William Brinner's study already quoted. See also Henri Lammens, "Correspondances diplomatiques entre les Sultans Mamlouks d'Égypte et les puissances chrétiennes," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 9 (1904): 151–87 and 359–92; idem, "Relations officielles entre la Cour Romaine et les sultans mamlouks d'Égypte," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 8 (1903): 101–10.

³³Ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, 1988); ed. Samīr al-Durūbī (al-Karak, 1992).

³⁴Ed. Rudolf Veselý, *Textes arabes et études islamiques*, no. 27 (Cairo, 1987).



published.³⁵ Other minor works may still prove useful for specific subjects, as is shown by Rudolf Veselý, who published a short treatise by the same Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī: the *‘Urf al-Ta‘rif*, one of the sources used by al-Qalqashandī, which was considered lost, and of which he discovered a unique copy in the Chester Beatty Library (no. 3849). He provided an edition of this notable work on official letters to which he added the text of another treatise ascribed to the same author and dealing with the same subject,³⁶ providing an essential supplement to the references available on this subject.

III. *Munsha’āt*

Compared to the manuals which have a wider aim, these anthologies of models are more restricted. Their authors had a different aim, that is collecting various models of documents issued by the chancery, so that they could be used by uninspired clerks. Once again, caution is required for the use made of them. Few of them are available in published form, although manuscripts have been identified for a long time. A quick glance in catalogues of manuscripts arranged according to themes will inform students of the work that remains to be done. Among the most valuable, let us note the Paris Ms. 4439, entitled “*Al-Maqṣid al-Rafī*’.”³⁷ Already described by Max van Berchem at the beginning of the last century,³⁸ its interest has diminished since most of its sources (al-Qalqashandī, Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī, Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh) have been published. However, it remains important for the documents issued under the last sultans. Another manuscript, held by the same institution under shelfmark 4440, is also noteworthy.³⁹ Anonymous and with no title recorded, it is divided into two parts: one containing examples of letters written by high government officials, and another preserving samples of letters addressed by the Mamluk sultans to other Muslim rulers. The manuscript is undated, but the most recent document goes back to 1468. Despite its value, since it supplements previous sources for the correspondence exchanged with other Muslim powers, it has not been thoroughly studied. Colin studied five letters among which

³⁵ Cairo, 1964–97.

³⁶ Rudolf Veselý, “Zwei *Opera Cancellaria Minora* des Šihābuddīn Aḥmad b. Faḍlullāh al-‘Umarī,” *Archiv Orientální* 70 (2002): 513–57.

³⁷ William MacGuckin Baron de Slane, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1883–95), 708.

³⁸ Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum: Égypte* (Cairo, 1894–1903), 441–53.

³⁹ Baron de Slane, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*.



one had been issued by Baybars,⁴⁰ while Darrāj published two letters exchanged with the Indian sultanate of Malwa⁴¹ (one was issued by Qāyṭbāy's chancery).

Less known but nonetheless significant, the *Qahwat al-Inshā'* of Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī (lived beginning fifteenth century) is preserved in several manuscripts. It deals with another kind of model (writs of investiture) and Veselý called our attention to its value in 1991.⁴² As early as 1967, Rose di Meglio studied a copy held by the Naples library. She published one of these deeds dealing with the governorship of Tripoli under the rule of Khushqadam (866), confirming that in this case too the chancery rules as prescribed in manuals had been applied.⁴³

Other texts of this kind are still waiting to be discovered and studied. Recently, Veselý published⁴⁴ new data about a Leiden manuscript whose title ("Zumrat al-Nāzirīn wa-Nuzhat al-Nādirīn") reveals nothing about its contents. After having examined the whole manuscript, which contains more than 100 documents and letters all connected to the Qaramanid princes of Larende, he was able to demonstrate that these were original documents, not models, and that the volume was a copy of documents found in the Qaramanid archives by a professional clerk. As for the Mamluk period, 31 letters regarding international affairs (letters exchanged with Barqūq about Timur's threat) as well as private matters (e.g., demand for the return of a young kidnapped boy) complete our knowledge of the relations established between these two powers. It is to be hoped that Veselý will complete an edition of this important text in the near future.

⁴⁰Georges S. Colin, "Contribution à l'étude des relations diplomatiques entre les Musulmans d'Occident et l'Égypte au XV^e siècle," in *Mélanges Maspero*, vol. 3, *Orient islamique*, Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, no. 68 (Cairo, 1935–40), 197–206. At the same time another article dealing with a similar subject was published: Ḥabīb Zayyāt, "Athar Unuf: Nuskhāt Qiṣṣah Waradat ilā al-Abwāb al-Sharīfah al-Sulṭānīyah al-Malakīyah Ināl min al-Muslimīn al-Qāṭi'īn Lishbūnah," *Al-Machriq* 35 (1937): 13–22.

⁴¹Aḥmad Darrāj, "Risālatān bayna Sulṭān Mālwah wa-al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy," *Majallat Ma'had al-Makhtūṭāt al-'Arabīyah/Revue de l'Institut des manuscrits arabes* 4 (1958/1377): 97–123.

⁴²Rudolf Veselý, "Eine neue Quelle zur Geschichte Ägyptens im 9./15. Jahrhundert," in *XXV. Deutscher Orientalistentag*, ed. Cornelia Wunsch, Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Supplement X (Stuttgart, 1994), 136–43; idem, "Eine Stilkunstschrift oder eine Urkundensammlung? Das *Qahwat al-inšā'* des Abū Bakr ibn Ḥidjdja al-Ḥamawī," in *Threefold Wisdom: Islam, the Arab World and Africa: Papers in Honour of Ivan Hrbek*, ed. Otakar Hulec and Miloš Mendel (Prague, 1993), 237–47. He is currently preparing a critical edition of this work which will be published by the German Institute in Beirut in the "Bibliotheca islamica" series.

⁴³Rita Rose di Meglio, "Un decreto di nomina alla *niyāba* di Tripoli di Siria al tempo del Sultano mamelucco Khushqadam (10 Sha'bān 866 Eg.)," *Rivista degli studi orientali* 42 (1967): 229–40 + pl. I–II.

⁴⁴"Ein Briefwechsel zwischen Ägypten und den Qaramaniden im 14. Jahrhundert," *Asian and African Studies* (Bratislava) 9 (2000): 36–44.



PRIVATE DOCUMENTS

As for private documents, Muslim scholars devoted various works to their composition. The most important ones for our purpose are those dealing with the judicial formularies (*shurūt*), whose main aim was to provide judges with models of legal documents so that their own could withstand scrutiny and legal challenges. Donald Little has shown, on several occasions, that a serious study of legal documents cannot be undertaken without the help of these works, which provide indispensable help in the deciphering of technical terms. The restriction put forward regarding documents found in historical sources and chancery manuals is confirmed for this kind of source: these manuals offer to the reader models where the scholar finds interesting information on the formularies used in a great variety of circumstances illuminating judicial and *a fortiori* social life, but no genuine documents.⁴⁵ Some of these valuable texts have been published, mainly for periods preceding the Mamluk sultanate. For this period, Mamlukists have had at their disposal, for a long time, al-Asyūṭī's treatise,⁴⁶ one of the most important in this genre. There is still new material which requires study and publication. To this end, Gabriela Linda Guellil published in 1985 a study of al-Ṭarsūsī's *Kitāb al-I'lām*, an important *shurūt* work for the judicial system of Damascus in the fourteenth century.⁴⁷

Private documents may also be found in historical sources, as Carl Petry has shown.⁴⁸ He discovered an account of a divorce case mentioned in al-Ṣayrafī's *Inbā' al-Ḥaṣr bi-Abnā' al-Aṣr*. In his capacity as deputy judge, al-Ṣayrafī used to record the proceedings of the court, and it is on these notes that he relied to report this case, giving quite a detailed account of it, and in particular the text of the petition. The value of this example lies mainly in the information it provides on the status of women in medieval Egypt and their rights in marriage. Another significant source of this type of data lies in the many collections of judicial

⁴⁵On the discrepancies noted between these theoretical treatises and the surviving evidence, see Monika Gronke, "La Rédaction des actes privés dans le monde musulman médiéval: théorie et pratique," *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984): 159–74; Wael B. Hallaq, "Model *shurūt* Works and the Dialectic of Doctrine and Practice," *Islamic Law and Society* 2 (1995): 109–34.

⁴⁶Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Minhājī al-Asyūṭī (*adhuc viv.* 889/1484), *Jawāhir al-'Uqūd wa-Mu'īn al-Quḍāt wa-al-Muwaqqi'īn wa-al-Shuhūd*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥ. al-Fiqqī (Cairo, 1374/1955).

⁴⁷Gabriela Linda Guellil, *Damaszener Akten des 8./14. Jahrhunderts nach al-Ṭarsūsīs "Kitāb al-I'lām": eine Studie zum arabischen Justizwesen*, Islamwissenschaftliche Quellen und Texte aus deutschen Bibliotheken, no. 2 (Bamberg, 1985).

⁴⁸Carl F. Petry, "Conjugal Rights Versus Class Prerogatives: A Divorce Case in Mamlūk Cairo," in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety*, ed. Gavin R. G. Hambly, The New Middle Ages, no. 6 (Basingstoke, 1998), 227–40.



decisions (*fatāwī*), very numerous for the period under consideration. They allow us to get a glimpse of various social strata in their disparate circumstances.⁴⁹

DOCUMENTS

NON-MUSLIM COUNTRIES

I. Archival Collections

Dozens of documents from the Mamluk period are preserved in the archives of the contemporary Latin states (mainly Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Florence, Ragusa, and Barcelona).⁵⁰ This figure is however less than what one might expect in view of the close relations between some of these states over the centuries and even more so when one takes into account that European institutions kept well-organized archives. This is partly explained by the fact that Arabic documents, as well as others in foreign, exotic languages, were translated and their content transcribed into the official records (*Libri commemoriali*, *Libri iurium*). Some of them, however, have survived despite this practice. As expected, these collections contain above all else documents regarding diplomacy, and they throw some light on the nature of the relations that two states, one being Muslim, could establish. Despite this, it is not surprising to discover documents of a private nature, such as those regarding European merchants in the Levant. But here again, these deliver more information on the conditions of *dhimmīs* in the Muslim country than on the country itself. A Mamlukist might therefore believe that their benefit is less than other documents, but he must keep in mind that thanks to them we know how the Mamluks treated citizens from the *Dār al-Ṣulḥ* or the *Dār al-Ḥarb*. Moreover, if these documents have been preserved in their original form, they permit us to see how these chancery or private documents issued for foreign non-Muslim countries looked and how the chancery operated.

The majority of these documents may be classified in two categories: one comprising original documents, and the other translations (into Latin, Italian, or Spanish) of Arabic documents. The historian of the Mediterranean world must be able to handle both types, because those of the second type turn out to be helpful,

⁴⁹See for instance Aziz Suryal Atiya, "An Unpublished XIVth Century *Fatwā* on the Status of Foreigners in Mamlūk Egypt and Syria," in *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Nahen und Fernen Ostens: Paul Kahle zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. W. Heffening and W. Kirfel (Leiden, 1935), 55–68 (includes edition and translation of a judicial decision dated to 754 A.H. and found in British Library MS Or. 9509, fols. 1–4); Benjamin O'Keefe, "Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya: *Mas'alat al-kanā'is* (The Question of the Churches)," *Islamochristiana* 22 (1996): 53–78.

⁵⁰A general assessment of this kind of source was proposed in the following article, which was however too brief to be useful: Aḥmad Darrāj, "Les documents arabes sur l'Égypte islamique dans les archives européennes," in *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire/Al-Nadwah al-Duwalīyah li-Tārīkh al-Qāhirah*, Cairo 27 March–5 April 1969, ed. André Raymond et al. (Cairo, n.d.), 131.



above all when the translation is faithful to the original (rather than a paraphrase, as in most cases). Comparisons with other preserved documents of the same sort (either original or copies in manuals) afford us the opportunity to complete their study. Finally, the bulk of preserved archives regarding merchants and their business illuminates their trading practices in the Levant, and correspondingly commercial activities under Mamluk rule. The last example is eloquent: Georges Jehel's study of the Genoan trade in the eastern Mediterranean is based exclusively on such documents.⁵¹

Under the influence of Occidental diplomatics, the study of documents preserved in these countries, in particular Italy, began as early as the nineteenth century. The great Arabist de Sacy took an interest in these kinds of documents and published some of them.⁵² However, it was Amari, above all, who should be considered the founder of the study of Arabic documents preserved in Europe, which were the basis of several of his works.⁵³ A summary work, always valuable, is that of L. de Mas Latrie, who gathered in a thick volume all the peace and commercial treaties concluded by Latin states with the Muslim countries of North Africa (Egypt included).⁵⁴ The majority of the documents he gathered had already been the subject of studies by other scholars, but it would be erroneous to believe that their work does not call for revision. Firstly, the diplomatic commentary is frequently defective or obsolete. On the other hand, for the period we are considering, reproductions are rarely provided. These remarks are based on personal experience, although others, like John Wansbrough, had already noticed it. Recently, I have been charged with the task to reexamine in the light of recent research documents

⁵¹*Les Génois en Méditerranée occidentale (fin XIème–début XIVème siècle): Ébauche d'une stratégie pour un empire* (Amiens, 1993). For the Mamluk field, such studies as the following were based on both types of material: Subhi Y. Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter (1171–1517)*, Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Beihefte, no. 46 (Wiesbaden, 1965); Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1983).

⁵²A. I. Silvestre de Sacy, "Pièces diplomatiques provenant des Archives de Gênes," *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale* 11 (1827): 1–96.

⁵³Michele Amari, *I diplomati arabi del R. Archivio fiorentino* (Florence, 1863); idem, *I diplomati arabi del R. Archivio fiorentino: Appendice* (Florence, 1867); idem, "De' titoli che usava la cancelleria de' Sultani di Egitto nel XIV secolo scrivendo ai reggitori di alcuni stati italiani," in *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, 3rd ser., 12 (1884–85): 194–224; idem, "Il trattato stipulato da Giacomo II d'Aragona col sultano d'Egitto il 29 gennaio 1293," in *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, 3rd ser., 11 (1883): 423–44.

⁵⁴*Traité de paix et de commerce et documents divers concernant les relations des Chrétiens avec les Arabes de l'Afrique septentrionale au moyen âge: Introduction historique* (Paris, 1865), *Documents* (Paris, 1868), *Supplément et tables* (Paris, 1872). De Mas Latrie reproduced documents in their original language, when it was an Occidental one, and only the translation of the Arabic documents.



published by Amari.⁵⁵ These documents consist of two peace treaties concluded between the Banū Ghāniyah amirs of Majorca (one dated to 1181 and the other to 1188) and Genoa.⁵⁶ Along with another one issued in favor of Pisa,⁵⁷ these are rare witnesses, almost unique, of the existence and functioning of the Almoravid chancery in these islands which were to be conquered a couple of decades later by the Christians. This work allowed some corrections to Amari's readings, but more essentially the reinterpretation of the texts in the light of the latest developments in the field. Anxious to compare both documents with the only other surviving example of this chancery bureau (the document issued in favor of Pisa), I was soon disappointed to learn that the original had been destroyed during the World War II bombing of Naples in 1944, where the document had been sent for an exhibition. No facsimile or photograph is known for this document and this means that the unique third witness of the activity of Almoravid chancery practice in Majorca has definitely been lost.

Among the most important archives from the Mamluk period in European countries, the collection of Venice is undoubtedly the one that holds the most value for Egypt and Syria. Almost 20 commercial treaties were concluded and are preserved in the State Archives. Most of them are in Latin or Venetian, which is explained by the fact that original documents were commonly held by the Signoria in Alexandria while the translations were sent to Venice. The whole collection was published by Tafel and Thomas in the nineteenth century.⁵⁸ However, Wansbrough, who devoted his Ph.D. thesis to the commercial relations between the Italian states and Egypt in the Mamluk period,⁵⁹ discovered several Arabic documents from the Circassian period that he published in several articles (a letter

⁵⁵Michele Amari, "Nuovi ricordi arabi su la storia di Genova," *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria* 5 (1867): 549–635 + 1–39 (Arabic).

⁵⁶Frédéric Bauden, "Due trattati di pace conclusi tra i Banū Ġāniya, signori delle isole Baleari, e il comune di Genova nel dodicesimo secolo," in *I trattati del comune di Genova in età consolare*, ed. Maddalena Giordano, Frédéric Bauden, and D. Russo, *Fonti per la storia della Liguria* (Genoa, forthcoming).

⁵⁷Amari, *I diplomi arabi del R. Archivio fiorentino*, 230–36, 274–75.

⁵⁸G. L. F. Tafel and G. M. Thomas, *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig, mit besonderer Beziehung auf Byzanz und die Levante*, pt. 2: 1205–1255 (docs. CLXI–CCCXXX) (Vienna, 1856), pt. 3: 1256–1299 (docs. CCCXXXI–CCCXCII) (Vienna, 1857; repr. Amsterdam, 1964). See also G. M. Thomas and R. Predelli, *Diplomatarium veneto-levantinum* (Venice, 1880–99); and more recently Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, "Gli ultimi accordi tra i sultani mamelucchi d'Egitto e la Repubblica di Venezia," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 12 (1994): 49–64.

⁵⁹John Wansbrough, "Documents for the History of Commercial Relations between Egypt and Venice, 1442–1512," Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1961.



of Qāyṭbāy dated 1473 and a study of the embassy of Taghrībirdī in 1507).⁶⁰ More recently, Rossi studied Venetian documents regarding an embassy sent to the Mamluk sultan in 1490,⁶¹ even if in this case they are less important for our field. But more documents are to be discovered. Thus, Benjamin Arbel has discovered, in a manuscript held by the Marciana library, a copy of an Italian translation of a letter written by the *dawādār*, who was in 1473 at the head of an expeditionary force in Northern Syria, directed to the Venetian authorities.⁶² This document, although it has been preserved only in a translation, is important in that it bears witness to the fact that official correspondence was exchanged between functionaries other than rulers.

Moreover, some time ago, Maria Pia Pedani,⁶³ Professor at the University of Venice, who probably knows better than anyone else the Arabic and Turkish documents preserved at the State Archives as she worked there as an archivist for many years, brought to my attention the existence of 15 Arabic documents pertaining to the Mamluk period. A first examination reveals that we are dealing with documents of a private nature (lease contracts, purchase deeds, sworn declarations, etc.)⁶⁴ as well as official documents concerning the Venetian community in Alexandria. They owe their preservation to the fact that they were found in the archives of a former Venetian consul in the harbor city and were sent to Venice with the rest of his estate.

⁶⁰John Wansbrough, "A Mamluk Ambassador to Venice in 913/1507," *BSOAS* 26 (1963): 503–30; idem, "A Mamluk Letter of 877/1473," *BSOAS* 24 (1961): 200–13 (also studied by Subhi Labib, "Ein Brief des Mamluken Sultans Qā'itbey an den Dogen von Venedig aus dem Jahre 1473," *Der Islam* 37 (1957): 324–29); and also published by Francis Hours, "Fraude commerciale et politique internationale: Les relations entre l'Égypte et Venise d'après une lettre de Qayt Bay (1472–1473)," *BEO* 25 (1972): 173–83; idem, "Venice and Florence in the Mamluk Commercial Privileges," *BSOAS* 28 (1965): 483–523.

⁶¹*Ambasciata straordinaria al sultano d'Egitto (1489–1490)*, ed. Franco Rossi, Fonti per la storia di Venezia, Sez. 1, Archivi pubblici (Venice, 1988).

⁶²Benjamin Arbel, "Levantine Power Struggles in an Unpublished Mamluk Letter of 877 AH/1473 CE," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 7 (1992): 92–100.

⁶³Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, "The Oath of a Venetian Consul in Egypt (1284)," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 14 (1996): 215–22.

⁶⁴Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens*, 501–3 (with several mistakes in the identification, dates, and location); Maria Pia Pedani, "The Mamluk Documents of the Venetian State Archives: Historical Survey," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 20–21 (2002–3): 133–46; Frédéric Bauden, "The Mamluk Documents of the Venetian State Archives: Handlist," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 20–21 (2002–3): 147–56; idem, "The Role of Interpreters in Alexandria in the Light of an Oath (*qasāma*) Taken in the Year 822 A.H./1419 A.D." (forthcoming); idem, "L'achat d'esclaves et la rédemption des captifs à Alexandrie d'après deux documents arabes d'époque mamelouke conservés aux Archives de l'Etat à Venise (ASVe)," in *Mélanges à la mémoire de Louis Pouzet, Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 58 (2005) (forthcoming).



Documents are also held in Florence, Pisa, and Genoa. They were the subject of two books published by Amari in the nineteenth century, scarcely available for consultation these days.⁶⁵ The main critique to be made with regard to these studies concerns the fact that almost no reproduction of the documents is provided. Their reconsideration by modern scholars has revealed that part of the work must be revised in light of the most recent research. Wansbrough republished in 1971 a safe-conduct granted by Qānṣūh to the Republic of Florence in 1507,⁶⁶ adding to his edition and translation a complete study of *amāns* in Islam, and particularly those issued by the Mamluk chancery. He also discovered unpublished material in Arabic in Florence at the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana consisting of Mamluk treaties dated 1489⁶⁷ and 1497.⁶⁸

These were the main Republic cities in Italy, but the less important Republic of Ragusa, competitor of Venice in the late Middle Ages, also had contacts with other Mediterranean powers and it is not surprising to find within the holdings of the State Archives of this city (now Dubrovnik) three Mamluk documents, all of which have been published.⁶⁹

Closing this panorama of the main archives collections in Europe, a word must be said about the Archives of Castilla and Aragon (Barcelona). Mamluk documents preserved in this collection reveal the extent of the relations established between the Mamluk state and the West. These consist of nine treaties concluded with the King of Castilla and Aragon. Some of them were examined by Atiya for his study on the relations between Aragon and Egypt during the second and third

⁶⁵ Amari, *I diplomi arabi del R. Archivio fiorentino*; idem, "Nuovi ricordi arabi su la storia di Genova"; Joseph Karabacek, "Arabische Beiträge zur genuesischen Geschichte," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 1 (1887): 33–56. See also Charles Clermont-Ganneau, "Explication d'un passage du traité conclu entre le sultan Qelaoun et les Génois," in idem, *Recueil d'archéologie orientale*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1888), 219–23.

⁶⁶ John Wansbrough, "The Safe-Conduct in Muslim Chancery Practice," *BSOAS* 34 (1971): 20–35.

⁶⁷ John Wansbrough, "A Mamlūk Commercial Treaty Concluded with the Republic of Florence 894/1489," in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, ed. S. M. Stern (Oxford, 1965), 39–79, pl. XX–XXIX.

⁶⁸ John Wansbrough, "Venice and Florence in the Mamluk Commercial Privileges," *BSOAS* 28 (1965): 483–523.

⁶⁹ Gliša Elezović, *Turski spomenici* (Belgrade, 1952), 1:2:168, 175–76; Besim Korkut, *Arapski dokumenti u državnom arhivu u Dubrovniku* (Al-Wathā'iq al-'arabīyah fī Dār al-Maḥfūzāt bi-madīnat Dūbrūwnīk), vol. 1, pt. 3, *Osnivanje Dubrovačkog Konsulata u Aleksandriji*, Posebna Izdanja (Orientalni Institut u Sarajevu) no. 3 (Sarajevo, 1969).



reigns of Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn,⁷⁰ but not without mistakes in the dating and reading, as has been demonstrated.⁷¹ Later, these documents were published extensively in a general catalogue of the archives collection.⁷²

II. Library Collections

Besides these archival collections where the documents have been kept since their issue, there exist other small collections in Europe, particularly in libraries, where important collections of papyri are preserved.⁷³ The most important collection of Arabic papyri outside Egypt is the Erzherzog Rainer Sammlung at the National Library in Vienna. Here, 235 documents on paper have been discovered and studied by Werner Diem in three different catalogues according to their subject (business letters, private letters, and state letters).⁷⁴ A few of them are dated, but most are not and pose a problem since their identification as belonging to the Mamluk period must rely mainly on paleographical elements and philological

⁷⁰Aziz Suryal Atiya, *Egypt and Aragon: Embassies and Diplomatic Correspondence between A.D. 1300 and 1330*, *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 23:7 (Leipzig, 1938). See also Amari, "Il trattato stipulato da Giacomo II d'Aragona;" Peter M. Holt, "The Mamluk Sultanate and Aragon: The Treaties of 689/1290 and 692/1293," *Tārīḥ* 2 (1992): 105–18 (reprinted in his *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*).

⁷¹Peter M. Holt, "Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's Letter to a Spanish Ruler in 699/1300," *Al-Masāq* 3 (1990): 23–29.

⁷²*Los documentos árabes diplomáticos del Archivo de la Corona de Aragón*, ed. and trans. Maximiliano A. Alarcón y Santón and Ramón García de Linares, Publicaciones de las escuelas de estudios árabes de Madrid y Granada, series C., no. 1 (Madrid, 1940). The following publication is now useless: Antonio de Capmany y de Montpalau, *Antiguos tratados de paces y alianzas entre algunos reyes de Aragón y diferentes príncipes infieles de Asia y África, desde el siglo XIII hasta el XV* (Madrid, 1786).

⁷³For an overview of the collections and their contents, with specific references to the published material, see Adolf Grohmann, *Einführung und Chrestomathie zur arabischen Papyruskunde*, vol. 1, *Einführung*, Monografie Archiv Orientalní, vol. 13 (Prague, 1954); *Chrestomathie de papyrologie arabe*, ed. Adolf Grohmann and Raif Georges Khoury, *Handbuch der Orientalistik* (Leiden, 1993).

⁷⁴Werner Diem, *Arabische Geschäftsbriefe des 10. bis 14. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, *Documenta Arabica antiqua*, no. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1995); idem, *Arabische Privatbriefe des 9. bis 15. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, *Documenta Arabica antiqua*, no. 2 (Wiesbaden, 1996); idem, *Arabische amtliche Briefe des 10. bis 16. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, *Documenta Arabica antiqua*, no. 3 (Wiesbaden, 1996); idem, "Dringende Bitte aus dem bedrängten Aleppo um Truppen: Anmerkungen zur Form des mamlükischen Dienstschreibens," in *Urkunden und Urkundenformulare im klassischen Altertum und in den orientalischen Kulturen*, ed. Raif Georges Khoury (Heidelberg, 1999), 143–45 (study of doc. 37 already published in his *Arabische amtliche Briefe*); idem, "Vier arabische Rechtsurkunden aus dem Ägypten des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts," *Der Islam* 72 (1995): 193–257.



analysis. Diem has been criticized for his working method by Yūsuf Rāḡib, as too hasty. Rāḡib's critiques⁷⁵ may be accepted to a certain extent, but there is no doubt that what is involved here is a settling of scores which goes beyond scientific work. Diem may be criticized for his classification (some documents that appear in a given volume are not really of this nature), his readings, and/or his translations,⁷⁶ but he must be commended for having published each time a volume of plates which illustrates all the documents, giving the reader the opportunity to verify his results. Hasty as he may have been, his work has the merit of putting at the disposal of scholars the majority of the Mamluk documents held in Vienna in a relatively short time.

The Cambridge University Library is known for its large collection of Geniza documents. Besides this, it also holds the Michaelides collection of papyri and papers. It was among these that Richards discovered a scroll acquired from Christie's in 1971, the origin of which is unknown. The document is the product of a series of court procedures in Damascus with various acts stretching over a period of one hundred eighty years from 1366 to 1546. As Richards has shown in his study,⁷⁷ it deals essentially with a *waqf* in favor of the Yūnusīyah Sufi order in Damascus, the terms of which were confirmed during this long period. Later on, he published an article about a rare type of document issued by the army bureau⁷⁸ (called *murabba'*: square decree) of which only nine examples were attested in the Ḥaram collection.

Undoubtedly, some documents, small in number, must have found their way into other library collections. Even the Cyril and Methodus Library in Sofia, which preserves several hundred Arabic and Turkish documents dating to the Ottoman period, owns a copy of a *daftar* regarding *waqf* properties in Beirut, stretching over a period of 250 years (1274–1544).⁷⁹ Ottoman copies of documents pertaining to the Mamluk period are as such significant and cannot be disregarded on the basis of chronology.

⁷⁵*Bulletin critique des Annales islamologiques* 14 (1997): 171–79; *ibid.*, 15 (1998): 194–97; *ibid.*, 16 (2000): 185–86.

⁷⁶To state that a reading and the translation offered, whoever did them, are never definitive is probably depressing for young students, yet unavoidable.

⁷⁷Donald S. Richards, "A Damascus Scroll Relating to a Waqf for the Yūnusiyya," *JRAS* (1990): 267–81.

⁷⁸Donald S. Richards, "A Mamlūk Emir's 'Square' Decree," *BSOAS* 54 (1991): 63–67.

⁷⁹Doc. F.278, a.u. 1. See Stoyanka Kenderova, *Opis na dokumentite na arabski ezik, zapazeni u orientalskiya otdel na narodnata biblioteka 'Kiril i Metodii' u Sofiya XIII–XX v.* (Fihris al-wathā'iq bi-al-lughah al-'arabīyah al-mahfūzah fī al-qism al-sharqī ladá al-maktabah al-waṭanīyah "Kīrīl wa-Mītūdī"—Šūfyā: al-qarn al-thālith 'ashar–al-qarn al-'ishrīn) (Sofia, 1984). It was studied by Vera Mutafchieva, "On the problem of landowning in Syria in the XIV–XVI c.," *Vizantijski vremennik* 26 (1965): 58–66.



III. Museum Collections

Museum collections undoubtedly hold Mamluk documents. However, they are seldom catalogued and known (Louvre, British Museum, etc.).⁸⁰ Recently, D. S. Richards learned of the existence of a scroll preserved at the Oriental Institute Museum of Chicago, which obtained it in 1929 from Bernhard Moritz.⁸¹ His study has shown that it deals with Frankish commercial practice at Tripoli in 1513. It is quite a rare chancery document as it was addressed to a Muslim official. Another document, still unpublished (OIM 13789), was issued in the reign of Ṭūmān Bāy (dated to 12 Muḥarram 922/17 February 1516) and regards the trade of the Venetians in Alexandria and other ports.⁸²

The University of Pennsylvania Museum is also worthy of mention as it holds four letters written by Mamluk officers. These are scattered in the middle of a collection of Arabic papyri catalogued by Levi della Vida.⁸³ The author provided in an appendix a reproduction of one of these letters, which served as the basis for an edition by Diem.⁸⁴ However, the remaining three still await study.

IV. Private Collections

Some documents find their way into private hands. To get a clear idea of these is almost impossible. If one surfaces, it is always by chance and depends on the collector's good will. Most of the time, the collection has to be sold and bought by an official institution to get an exact accounting of its contents. One example of the first reality is illustrated by Denise Rémondon, who owned a Mamluk document. This was fortunately published by Cahen, who got a photograph from the owner before her death.⁸⁵ The document is interesting as it deals with a short news item of a type rarely reported by the chronicles regarding the murder of three persons

⁸⁰In addition to the census of libraries and museum collections of papyri surveyed by Grohmann and Khoury (*Chrestomathie de papyrologie arabe*), consult now for the U.S.A. Petra M. Sijpesteijn, "North American Papyrus Collections Revisited," *Al-Bardiyyat, Newsletter of the International Society of Arabic Papyrology* 1 (2002–3): 11–19, where references to documents on paper, some of them from the Mamluk period, are found.

⁸¹Donald S. Richards, "A Late Mamluk Document Concerning Frankish Commercial Practice at Tripoli," *BSOAS* 62 (1999): 21–35.

⁸²Gladys Frantz-Murphy, who shared this information with me, intends to publish the document in question.

⁸³Giorgio Levi Della Vida, *Arabic Papyri in the University Museum in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania)*, Atti della Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, no. 378 (Rome, 1981).

⁸⁴Werner Diem, "Ein mamlūkischer Brief aus der Sammlung des University Museum in Philadelphia," *Le Muséon* 99 (1986): 131–43.

⁸⁵Claude Cahen et al., "Un fait divers au temps des Mamluks," *Arabica* 25 (1978): 198–202.



in the countryside of Egypt. An order is given to arrest the perpetrators and bring them to Cairo, but the accused prefer to pay blood money instead. Since the death of its owner it has been impossible to discover what has become of this document.

MUSLIM COUNTRIES

I. Non-Muslim Collections and Archives

A. Egypt

1. Geniza (Ben Ezra Synagogue, Cairo)

The word *geniza* designates in Hebrew a repository of discarded writings. It was a common feature among certain Jewish communities not to discard papers where the name of God was written. This explains why, for centuries, the Jewish community of Old Cairo gathered all the documents considered obsolete in a particular repository. These consist of religious manuscripts as well as private documents regarding merchants, although some official documents from the chancery were also recovered among them.⁸⁶ This huge trove was packed into a room (Geniza) during a period that stretches from the tenth to the fifteenth century (mainly to the thirteenth century). After this time, its existence was forgotten until 1890, when it was rediscovered. It gave an extraordinary impetus to Jewish studies in general, not only for Egypt, but also for all the Mediterranean area and even Asia (India). Almost half a million scraps of papers and manuscripts, sometimes almost complete, were retrieved from this room.⁸⁷ The majority are written in Hebrew or in Judaeo-Arabic. However, some 10,000 scraps of paper are in Arabic characters. Unfortunately for researchers (or fortunately, because who knows what would have happened to these documents otherwise?), most of them were bought by private collectors who gave them, or bequeathed them, to libraries in Europe and North America. Among these, two took the lion's share: the Firkovitch collection (St. Petersburg), which is not relevant for our topic, and the Taylor-Schechter collection in Cambridge (Cambridge University Library).⁸⁸ This dispersal does not facilitate their consultation as well as the fact that, being mostly scraps of paper, the cataloguing work is still in progress. Be that as it may, study has begun and to date has thrown new light on the religious, economic, and social life of the

⁸⁶For this last category, it remains questionable how they found their way into private hands, in this case Jewish. A convincing answer would be the reason invoked in the Introduction, pp. 17–18.

⁸⁷Shlomo Dov Goitein, "The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a Source for Mediterranean Social History," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80 (1960): 91–100.

⁸⁸For a good introduction to the Cambridge collection of Genizah papers, see now Stefan C. Reif, *A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo: The History of Cambridge University's Genizah Collection* (Richmond, 2000), and idem, "A Centennial Assessment of Genizah Studies," in *The Cambridge Genizah Collections: Their Contents and Significance*, ed. idem and Shulamit Reif, Cambridge University Library Genizah Series, no. 1 (Cambridge, 2002), 1–35.



medieval Jews in the Orient, and more particularly on the middle class which is rarely mentioned in the contemporary chronicles.⁸⁹ Some dated, or datable, documents go back to the Mamluk period, as has been demonstrated by S. D. Goitein in an article published in 1972, which has remained little known because it is in Hebrew.⁹⁰ Undoubtedly, Goitein is the scholar most familiar with these Geniza documents of a private nature, and his masterly study in several volumes is a prerequisite for anyone working on the Mediterranean societies in the Middle Ages (mainly eleventh–thirteenth centuries).⁹¹ This work is essential reading, even for Mamlukists, as the author makes reference here and there to documents from this period.⁹² A similar assessment can be made of Ashtor's book on the evolution of prices.⁹³ Unfortunately, most of the documents relevant for us are still awaiting publication and are not easily available for consultation. A list of these documents would be most welcome. Meanwhile, the researcher has at his disposal bibliographies

⁸⁹Besides the essential study of S. D. Goitein (see below), the most recent results are to be found in David Marmer, "Patrilocal Residence and Jewish Court Documents in Medieval Cairo," in *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication and Interaction: Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner*, ed. Benjamin H. Hary et al., Brill's Series in Jewish Studies, no. 27 (Leiden, 2000), 67–82; Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, *Karaite Marriage Documents from the Cairo Geniza: Legal Tradition and Community Life in Mediaeval Egypt and Palestine*, Etudes sur le judaïsme médiéval, no. 20 (Leiden, 1998).

⁹⁰Shlomo Dov Goitein, "Geniza Documents from the Mamluk Period" (in Hebrew; English summary), *Tarbiz* 41 (1972): 59–81. For a more recent, but general, assessment of the Arabic documents for all periods in the Geniza collection, see Geoffrey Khan, "Arabic Documents in the Cairo Genizah," *Bulletin of the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo* 21 (1997): 23–25.

⁹¹Shlomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: the Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley, 1967–93); Werner Diem and Hans-Peter Radenberg, *A Dictionary of the Arabic Material of S. D. Goitein's "A Mediterranean Society"* (Wiesbaden, 1994).

⁹²See also Shlomo Dov Goitein, "The Exchange Rate of Gold and Silver Money in Fatimid and Ayyubid Times: A Preliminary Study of the Relevant Geniza Material," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 8 (1965): 1–46, where, despite the chronological span indicated in the title, nine documents from the Mamluk period are studied.

⁹³Eliyahu Ashtor, *Histoire des prix et des salaires dans l'Orient médiéval*, Monnaie, prix, conjoncture, no. 8 (Paris, 1969). See also idem, *History of the Jews in Egypt and Syria under the Rule of the Mamluks*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 1970), which studies 74 documents that are undated, but that Ashtor was able to date to the Mamluk period due to exchange rates between dinars and dirhams; and more recently, Avraham L. Udovitch, "L'énigme d'Alexandrie: sa position au moyen âge d'après les documents de la Geniza du Caire," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 46 (1987): 71–79; idem, "Medieval Alexandria: Some Evidence from the Cairo Genizah Documents," in *Alexandria and Alexandrianism: Papers Delivered at a Symposium Organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and held at the Museum, April 22–25, 1993* (Malibu, 1996), 273–84.



published regularly for the Cambridge collections (the most recent was published by Reif in 1988 and covers the period stretching from 1896 to 1980),⁹⁴ albeit the main criticism I would make is that the material is arranged according to the shelfmark of the documents studied. This means that it allows one to know whether a document has been published or not, but it presupposes that one knows what one is searching for. It is thus like squaring the circle. Fortunately, in 1993, Geoffrey Khan published a book devoted to the study of 159 administrative and legal documents in Arabic in the Cambridge collection.⁹⁵ Among them, some are dated or datable to the Mamluk period (business and personal correspondence, wills, contracts of all kinds, bills of account, etc.), the most recent one being dated to 697/1298. The only criticism to be made, for which the author must surely not be blamed, rather the commercial editor, regards the small number (22) of documents reproduced, which does not facilitate further study by other scholars. Other documents from the Mamluk period are still awaiting publication.

2. Monastery of Saint Catherine (Mount Sinai)

This is an old story, too, in the sense that the discovery of the treasures it holds goes back to the nineteenth century. In fact, the first who paid attention to it was a traveller, Konstantin Tischendorf. During his travels in the East in 1844 and 1859, he visited the monastery, where he was shown a manuscript which was to revolutionize the field of Biblical studies, and was to be known later on as the *codex sinaiticus* (Greek translation of the Bible dated to the fourth century A.D.). Afterwards, a Prussian mission was sent in 1914 under the direction of Carl Schmidt and Bernhard Moritz. Photographs were taken not only of manuscripts, but also of documents in Arabic and Turkish. Unfortunately, despite the publication of the results of this mission,⁹⁶ all the photographs were destroyed in St. Petersburg during the First World War. The treasures of the monastery had to await an American mission in 1950 which resulted in the microfilming and measuring of all the manuscripts and documents which were presented to the staff by the librarian, some of them being discovered by A. S. Atiya. Atiya published a handlist

⁹⁴*Published Material from the Cambridge Genizah Collections: A Bibliography, 1896–1980*, ed. Stefan C. Reif et al. (Cambridge-New York, 1988).

⁹⁵Geoffrey Khan, *Arabic Legal and Administrative Documents in the Cambridge Genizah Collections* (Cambridge, 1993).

⁹⁶See particularly B. Moritz, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Sinaiklosters im Mittelalter nach arabischen Quellen*, Abhandlungen der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, no. 4 (Berlin, 1918).



(this is not the only one⁹⁷) in 1955 where 1,072 Arabic documents (from the Fatimid down to the Ottoman period) are mentioned, which makes it the most important collection of chancery documents for Islam.

However, there is a caveat, since these documents deal exclusively with the affairs of the monastery, meaning that they were issued for the benefit of non-Muslims by the successive chanceries. Nevertheless, this is a remarkable group of different kinds of official and private documents for the dynasties which succeeded each other in Egypt. Fortunately, in this case, the whole collection has been made widely available to researchers as various sets of the microfilms were distributed (Egypt, North America, and Europe). On the other hand, scholars drew attention to the importance of this collection very early, like Hans R. Roemer, who wrote at least four articles on this topic from 1957 to 1981.⁹⁸ He also succeeded in convincing some of his students to prepare Ph.D. theses on various aspects (Ayyubid and Ottoman documents in Arabic and Turkish⁹⁹). What immediately attracted scholars were the decrees issued by the chancery bureau in answer to petitions sent by the monks to the sultan regarding problems they faced with the local authorities or populations. Their interest lies in the fact that some of the petitions have been preserved as the decree was sometimes written on the back of it. Decrees of the Mamluk period are particularly significant in this collection since they were issued

⁹⁷ Aziz Suryal Atiya, *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai: A Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts and Scrolls Microfilmed in the Library of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai* (Baltimore, 1955); Kenneth W. Clark, *Checklist of Manuscripts in St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, Microfilmed for the Library of Congress, 1950* (Washington, D.C., 1952); Kamil Murad, *Catalogue of All Manuscripts in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai* (Wiesbaden, 1970). See further Aḥmad Muḥammad 'Īsá, "Makḥṭūṭāt wa-Wathā'iq Dayr Sānt Kātarīn," *Majallat al-Jam'īyah al-Miṣrīyah lil-Dirāsāt al-Tārikhīyah* 5 (1956): 105–24, where reproductions of several of the sultans' mottos ('*alāmah*) are provided, completing those published by Atiya, *Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai*.

⁹⁸ Roemer, "The Sinai Documents," 381–91; idem, "Sinai-Urkunden zur Geschichte der islamischen Welt: Aufgaben und Stand der Forschung," in *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Vorderen Orients: Festschrift für Bertold Spuler zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. idem and Albrecht Noth (Leiden, 1981), 321–36; idem, "Über Urkunden zur Geschichte Ägyptens und Persiens in islamischen Zeit," *ZDMG* 107 (1957): 519–38; idem, "Documents et archives de l'Égypte islamique"; idem, "Christliche Klosterarchive in der islamischen Welt," in *Der Orient in der Forschung: Festschrift für Otto Spies zum 5. April 1966*, ed. Wilhelm Hoenerbach (Wiesbaden, 1967), 543–56.

⁹⁹ Horst-Adolf Hein, *Beiträge zur ayyubidischen Diplomatie*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, no. 8 (Freiburg, 1971); Klaus Schwarz, *Osmanische Sultansurkunden des Sinai-Klosters in türkischer Sprache*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, no. 7 (Freiburg, 1970); Robert Humbsch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des osmanischen Ägyptens nach arabischen Sultans- und Statthalterurkunden des Sinai-Klosters*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, no. 39 (Freiburg, 1976); and also Elias Khedoori, "Charters and Privileges granted by the Fāṭimids and Mamlūks to St. Catherine's Monastery of Tūr Sinai (ca. 500 to 900 A.H.)," M.A. thesis, University of Manchester, 1958.



under the rule of no less than 20 sultans and cover quite comprehensively the whole period, with only a few small gaps. This gives us the opportunity to follow how a particular kind of document evolved over time through the different Egyptian dynasties. Thanks to this, the system of *mazālim* in Egypt during the three periods (Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk) is better understood.¹⁰⁰ S. M. Stern's pioneering work on the study of this kind of document, within a broad context which took into account other periods and countries, especially for the diplomatic commentaries, has led the way.¹⁰¹ The decrees from the Mamluk period were studied by Hans Ernst in his Ph.D. thesis, published in 1960. He edited and translated all the decrees of the given period he had knowledge about, basing himself on Atiya's catalogue (although, as already mentioned, others exist).¹⁰² However, in some cases, Atiya misread the dates of documents, which means that some of them were not considered by Ernst. Qāsim al-Sāmarrā'ī published in 1990 an article on one of these neglected decrees which was in fact issued by the first Mamluk sultan, Aybak!¹⁰³ Besides this, Ernst's book has been the object of criticism mainly for his meagre diplomatic commentary, due to the fact that he was unable to read most of the confirmation formulas of the various bureaux, and for the lack of reproductions (this last is less fair as Ernst had to publish his thesis at his own expense before presenting it). His work must be read in the light of Stern's review article,¹⁰⁴ where he carefully studied three of the petitions and gave a full diplomatic commentary. Since Stern's premature death, other scholars, like D.

¹⁰⁰Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Secular Justice in an Islamic State: Mazālim under the Bahrī Mamlūks, 662/1264–789/1387*, Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te İstanbul, no. 55 (Leiden, 1985).

¹⁰¹Samuel Miklos Stern, "Two Ayyūbid Decrees from Sinai," in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, ed. idem, Oriental Studies, no. 3 (Oxford, 1965), 9–38 + pl. I–XIX; idem, *Fāṭimid Decrees: Original Documents from the Fāṭimid Chancery* (London, 1964).

¹⁰²Hans Ernst, *Die mamlukischen Sultansurkunden des Sinai-Klosters* (Wiesbaden, 1960). Doc. XXI was also published later by Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, "Marsūm al-Sulṭān Barqūq ilā Ruḥbān Dayr Sānt Kātarīn bi-Sīnā': Dirāsah wa-Nashr wa-Taḥqīq," *Majallat Jāmi'at al-Qāhirah bi-al-Kharṭūm* 5 (1974): 83–113. A comparison with Ernst's reading of the decree shows that Amīn's work is not trustworthy, although it was published fourteen years later.

¹⁰³Qāsim al-Sāmarrā'ī, "A Unique Mamluk Document of al-Malik al-Mu'izz Aybak al-Turkumānī al-Šāliḥī, the first Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, from the Monastery of Sinai," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 21 (1990): 195–211 + pl. IV–VII. The document was dated by Atiya (*The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai*, no. 29) to 701 instead of [6]51. According to al-Sāmarrā'ī, no. 964 in Atiya's handlist (dated to 861 instead of 860) is also missing in Ernst's book.

¹⁰⁴Samuel Miklos Stern, "Petitions from the Mamlūk Period (Notes on the Mamlūk Documents from Sinai)," *BSOAS* 29 (1966): 233–76; reprinted in idem, *Coins and Documents from the Medieval Middle East*, Collected Studies, no. 238 (London, 1986).



S. Richards and Geoffrey Khan, have followed in his footsteps and have shed new light on the system of petitions.¹⁰⁵

This aspect of the royal chancery (*dīwān al-inshā'*) has thus been revealed, even if our knowledge of it is based only on *dhimmī* petitions. The functioning of other bureaux, less prestigious than the chancery, remains less known as documents issued by them have rarely survived. This is the case, for instance, for the *dīwān al-jaysh*, the army bureau, which was responsible for the granting of fiefs (*iqṭā'āt*) and their control. But here, documents of the monastery can provide some relevant information. Richards studied a petition regarding a problem encountered by the monks with the beneficiary of a fief.¹⁰⁶ On the back of it, he found a report from the army bureau connected to the fief in question where previous attributions of it are mentioned. This significant document shows that the clerks updated their records regularly and that accurate records were available when required.

The Saint Catherine Monastery documents are probably the best studied so far. The significance of these studies for the history of the Mamluk sultanate is limited, as they essentially give us important historical and economic information on the monks (relations with the surrounding populations, the bedouins, and also their properties elsewhere, like Cairo). However, unlike the Geniza documents, they are an invaluable source of chancery practice and provide us with a unique opportunity to study the diplomatics of the Egyptian *dīwān al-inshā'*. Nonetheless, much remains to be done. Private documents have so far received little attention. Only recently, Richards has studied three of them (Muslim and Christian documents), two dating from the Mamluk period.¹⁰⁷ They are related to a *waqf* made in favor of

¹⁰⁵ Donald S. Richards, "A Fāṭimid Petition and 'Small Decree' from Sinai," *Israel Oriental Studies* 3 (1973): 140–58; Geoffrey Khan, "The Historical Development of the Structure of Medieval Arabic Petitions," *BSOAS* 53 (1990): 8–30, where a comparison with papyri held at Cambridge is provided.

¹⁰⁶ Donald S. Richards, "A Mamlūk Petition and a Report from the *Dīwān al-Jaysh*," *BSOAS* 40 (1977): 1–14.

¹⁰⁷ Donald S. Richards, "Some Muslim and Christian Documents from Sinai Concerning Christian Property," in *Law, Christianity and Modernism in Islamic Society: Proceedings of the Eighteenth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants Held at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (September 3–September 9, 1996)*, ed. U. Vermeulen and J. M. F. Van Reeth, *Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta*, no. 86 (Leuven, 1998), 161–70. Similar documents regarding properties of the monastery located mainly in Cairo, but also in Alexandria, Gaza, and Siryāqūs, have been studied by the same scholar: "Documents from Sinai Concerning Mainly Cairene Property," *JESHO* 28 (1985): 225–93.



the monastery and they enabled him to demonstrate that the Christians followed the Muslim legal system for the redaction of documents of this nature.¹⁰⁸

Beside the private documents, official ones, the decrees, as I said, were not all studied by Ernst and still await publication. More worrisome is the fact that probably not all the documents were microfilmed. This is evidenced by the fact that Atiya catalogued 17 decrees from the time of Qāyṭbāy although Schmidt and Moritz described more than 20 during the 1914 mission.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, new discoveries have been made since the American mission of 1950. In 1976, cases were discovered by the librarian and their contents were placed in 47 boxes. The material consisted of papyri, parchment, and scraps of paper and was described as being mainly of a liturgical nature, but it remains unknown whether Arabic documents are among them.¹¹⁰

3. Karaite Community (Cairo)

The Karaite community in Cairo holds a small collection of Arabic documents preserved in their old synagogue, situated in the old Fatimid city (Shāri‘ Khurunfish). As early as 1904, these drew the attention of Gottheil, who published (1908) a Fatimid decree issued under the Caliph al-Zāhir (415/1024) and a Mamluk document (*ḥukm tanfīdhī* = order confirming previous documents) dated 860/1456, which deals with the permission to lawfully repair the synagogue which had been damaged in the course of recent riots.¹¹¹ In 1969, D. S. Richards had the opportunity to study the entire collection and he presented the results of his researches carried

¹⁰⁸Furthermore, see for a study of two juridical documents (purchase deeds) from this collection ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Ibrāhīm, “Min Wathā’iq Dayr Sānt Kātrīn: Thalāth Wathā’iq Fiqhīyah,” *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts (Cairo University)* 25 (1963): 95–133 + 4 pl.

¹⁰⁹It is essential to mention here that Moritz sold a private collection of manuscripts and documents to various institutions around the world, and particularly to the University of Chicago. Surprisingly, some of these documents may originate from the Monastery of Saint Catherine and the question must be raised how he got them (see above, p. 34) Other documents were found in Istanbul, Cairo, and even in the Ägyptisches Museum in Berlin. See Stefan Heidemann, Christian Müller, and Yūsuf Rāḡib, “Un décret d’al-Malik al-‘Ādil en 571/1176 relatif aux moines du Mont Sināi,” *Annales islamologiques* 31 (1997): 81–107, particularly 81.

¹¹⁰Roemer, “The Sinai Documents,” 381.

¹¹¹Richard J. H. Gottheil, “Dhimmi and Moslems in Egypt,” in *Old Testament and Semitic Studies in Memory of William Rainey Harper*, ed. Robert Francis Harper, Francis Brown, and George Foot Moore (Chicago, 1908), 2:353–414. He also published another document from the fifteenth century which was at that time in the possession of the Cattaoui Brothers: see idem, “A Document of the Fifteenth Century Concerning Two Synagogues of the Jews in Old Cairo,” in *Jewish Quarterly Review* 18 (1927–28): 131–52.



out on the spot in an article published in 1972.¹¹² This detailed catalogue describes the contents of 27 documents running from the early eleventh century to the mid-nineteenth century, all of which focus on the Karaite community. With the exception of the Fatimid decree just mentioned, they are all of a private nature (deeds of conveyance, grants of ownership, deeds of *waqf*, sworn declarations, etc.). Among them, 18 pertain to the Mamluk period. Working on such collections often requires that the researcher, after having received permission to study the documents, must still bring with him all the necessary tools (camera, rule) so as to be in a position to study them properly. One should not be surprised that Richards could not measure all the documents nor photograph them completely. While he intended to return to several issues in connection with these documents, and to fully publish the texts with facsimiles, to my knowledge such a study has never appeared, so that they still await complete publication.¹¹³

4. Orthodox Coptic Patriarchate (Cairo)

This institution in Cairo holds several *waqf* documents concerned with Copts. They were catalogued by Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn and will be dealt with together with the archives collections in Cairo.¹¹⁴

5. Centre of Oriental Studies/Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land (Cairo)

Our knowledge of the documents preserved in this center relies completely on articles published in 1956, where 69 items are described.¹¹⁵ According to the first of these, only one document pertains to the Mamluk period (dated 914 A.H.).

B. Palestine

1. Franciscan Monastery of the Custody of the Holy Land (Jerusalem)

The Franciscan Monastery of the Custodia di Terra Santa (Mount Zion) in Jerusalem, like the Saint Catherine Monastery, is another important repository of documents,

¹¹²Donald S. Richards, "Arabic Documents from the Karaite Community in Cairo," *JESHO* 15 (1972): 105–62.

¹¹³With the following exception: Donald S. Richards, "Dhimmi Problems in Fifteenth Century Cairo: Reconsideration of a Court Document," *Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations* 1 (1993): 127–63.

¹¹⁴See below, pp. 44–45.

¹¹⁵E. Boers, "Arabische Documenten in het Archief van het Studiecentrum in Muski," *Studia Orientalia* (Cairo) 1 (1956): 177–79. Martiniano Roncaglia, "Catalogus documentorum Muski," *Studia Orientalia* (Cairo) 1 (1956): 165–75, presents the contents of a manuscript which consists of a catalog of Arabic and Turkish documents held by the Center ("Manoscritto degli Archivi del Centro di Studi Orientali del Muski"). They are all dated after the Mamluk period (the oldest is from 942 A.H.) and are thus irrelevant for our purposes.



although in this case too we are speaking of documents issued for Christians. The whole collection amounts to 2,644 documents dated from 1219 to 1902. Among them, 83 pertain to the Mamluk period, consisting mainly of decrees and legal documents (court records). As one would expect, the majority belong to the last period of the Mamluk sultanate (43 from 1427 to 1513). A study of 12 of them (dated 1309 to 1472) was published by Pourrière as early as 1898,¹¹⁶ but it was not until 1922 that a general catalogue, by Eutimio Castellani, appeared.¹¹⁷ This catalogue, published by the Franciscan monastery and printed in Jerusalem, was not put on the market and is as inaccessible as the documents themselves. In 1936, another Franciscan, Norberto Risciani, published a book¹¹⁸ where he studied 28 Mamluk documents (21 decrees and 7 court records), all belonging to the Circassian period. This is a landmark study, due to the nature of the documents, the quality of the analysis, and the facsimiles provided, but is unfortunately as unobtainable as the preceding one. Produced under the same conditions, it even seems that the copies preserved in very fortunate libraries lack the title page, which does not facilitate research. Allusions to these studies are seldom found in the scientific literature, except from those who are fortunate enough to own a copy (Stern and Little, who made reference to some of the documents published by Risciani) or to have access to it in a library (Richards).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶Leone Pourrière, "Appendice I: Firmani e documenti arabi inediti estratti dall'Archivio della procura di T. S. in Gerusalemme colla traduzione italiana," in Girolamo Golubovich, *Serie cronologica dei reverendissimi superiori di Terra Santa: ossia dei provinciali custodi e presidenti della medesima già Commissari Apostolici dell'Oriente e sino al 1847 in officio di Gran Maestri del S. Militare Ordine del SS. Sepolcro attuali prelati mitrati, provinciali e custodi di T.S. guardiani del S. Monte Sion e del SS. Sepolcro del N.S.G.C. ecc.* (Jerusalem, 1898), 123–87 (12 documents dated from 1309 to 1472 published).

¹¹⁷Eutimio Castellani, *Catalogo dei Firmani ed altri documenti legali emanati in lingua araba e turca concernenti i Santuari, le proprietà, i diritti della Custodia di Terra Santa conservati nell'Archivio della stessa Custodia di Gerusalemme* (Jerusalem, 1922) (docs. 1–83 dated from 1247 to 1523).

¹¹⁸Norberto Risciani, *Documenti e firmani* (Jerusalem, 1936). See also *Custodia di Terra Santa, 1342–1942*, ed. Virgilio Corbo (Jerusalem, 1951), 82 (regarding doc. VI in Risciani = decree issued by Barqūq in 1396).

¹¹⁹The Library of the University of Leiden (the Netherlands) is particularly fortunate to possess two original copies of this work. Aḥmad Darrāj, *Wathā'iq Dayr Ṣahyūn bi-al-Quds al-Sharīf* (Cairo, 1968), is the only work so far in which the documents held by the Franciscan monastery are extensively studied on the basis of the above-mentioned catalogs. Its main focus is on Mamluk-Christian relations in Jerusalem during the period covered by these documents, with the help of other kinds of documents preserved in other places (historical sources, epigraphy).



2. Greek Orthodox Patriarchate (Jerusalem)

Jerusalem seems to be a good place for Mamlukists interested in documents. This is due to the numerous Christian institutions which were developed over time and which were eager to maintain good relations with the Muslim authorities by negotiating treaties. Until a few years ago, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate was not particularly known for the collection it inherited from the Monastery of the Holy Cross at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Recently, Johannes Pahlitzsch was fortunate enough to gain access to it and discovered several documents, some of which date to the Mamluk period.¹²⁰ Among these is a missive addressed by Baybars to one of his amirs (665/1266), which sheds light on his relations with the Georgians.¹²¹ The remaining items will be published progressively in chronological order. The arduous circumstances in which he had to study the documents is also symptomatic of the difficulties met with by researchers: lengthy negotiations with the Franciscan authorities, lack of adequate tools on the spot (camera, ruler), etc.

II. Muslim Collections

A. Egypt

1. Archives Collections (Cairo)

What is meant by the Cairo archives are the National Archives of the Citadel¹²² which, if my information is accurate, are now held by the Dār al-Wathā'iq, close to the Dār al-Kutub, the Ministry of *Waqf* (*Daftarkhānah*), the Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīyah, and finally the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate. Consisting of private legal documents (court records, deeds of *waqf*, contracts on subjects of all kinds [marriage, sale, partnership, lease, etc.]), they were estimated at 2,000 by a pioneering scholar in this field, 'Abd al-Laṭīf Ibrāhīm 'Alī. Dating mainly from the thirteenth century to the sixteenth century, their importance has

¹²⁰For a provisory evaluation of these, see Johannes Pahlitzsch, "Georgians and Greeks in Jerusalem from the End of the 11th to the Early 14th Century," in *East and West in the Crusader States: Context, Contacts, Confrontations: Acta of the Congress Held at Hernen Castle in September 2000*, ed. Krijnie N. Ciggaar and Herman Teule, *Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta*, no. 125 (Leuven, 2003), 35–51.

¹²¹Delivered at the conference *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society* organized by Tel Aviv and Haifa Universities in May 2000. The article will be published in a forthcoming issue of *Arabica*.

¹²²Maḥkamah Shar'īyah, which became Maḥkamat al-Aḥwāl al-Shakhṣīyah wa-al-Wilāyah 'alā al-Nafs.



been quickly recognized,¹²³ and Daniel Crecelius and Carl Petry¹²⁴ have drawn the attention of Mamlukists to these documents *in tempore non suspecto*, before the publication of Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn's catalogue.¹²⁵ This catalogue, published in 1981, gave for the first time a clear overview of all these documents held by the various institutions mentioned above. It inventories 888 numbers, but documents are more numerous as one number may contain more than one document. Among these, I would like to call attention to one in particular that is identified as a chancery document. This is in fact a *manshūr iqtā'ī* (grant of a fief) dated to the reign of Qānṣūh.¹²⁶ Many studies have dealt with the feudal system of Egypt,¹²⁷ but they lacked original documents of this kind. The survival of this almost unique (see Unsuspected Places, below) witness provides the opportunity to compare its structure to the models in chancery manuals like al-Qalqashandī's, written a century before, and to study the evolution which it underwent.

Yet the most impressive, no doubt, of these documents are clearly the several endowment deeds that have survived. In a rather provocatively entitled article,¹²⁸ Carl Petry has emphasized the various issues that can be addressed thanks to the Cairene *waqf* documents. *Waqf* documents offer the greatest challenge for future study, and the recently announced foundation of a journal devoted entirely to this topic reinforces this impression.¹²⁹ The recently published article "Waqf" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*¹³⁰ and the bibliography to be found in it relieve me from

¹²³Leo A. Mayer, *The Buildings of Qaitbay as Described in His Endowment Deed* (London, 1938). Endowment deeds may also be found in historical sources. For a good example taken from ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's work, see Axel Moberg, "Zwei ägyptische Waqf-Urkunden aus dem Jahre 691/1292 (nebst Bemerkungen zur mittelalterlichen Topographie Kairos)," *Le Monde Oriental* 12 (1918): 1–61 + 3 pl.

¹²⁴Daniel Crecelius, "The Organization of *Waqf* Documents in Cairo," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2 (1971): 266–77; Carl F. Petry, "Medieval *Waqf* Documents in Cairo: Their Role as Historical Sources," *American Research Center in Egypt Newsletter* 118 (1982): 28–33; idem, "Research on Medieval *Waqf* Documents: Preliminary Report from the Field," *ARCE Newsletter* 133 (1986): 11–14.

¹²⁵Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, *Catalogue des documents d'archives du Caire de 239/853 à 922/1516*, Textes arabes et études islamiques, no. 16 (Cairo, 1981).

¹²⁶Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, "Manshūr bi-Manḥ Iqtā' min 'Aṣr al-Sultān al-Ghūrī," *AI* 19 (1983): 2–23.

¹²⁷Hassanein Rabie, *The Financial System of Egypt A.H. 564–741/A.D. 1169–1341*, London Oriental Series, vol. 25 (London, 1972); Tsugitaka Sato, *State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam: Sultans, Muqta's and Fallahun*, Islamic History and Civilizations, Studies and Texts, no. 17 (Leiden, 1997).

¹²⁸Carl F. Petry, "A Geniza for Mamluk Studies? Charitable Trust (*Waqf*) Documents as a Source for Economic and Social History," *MSR* 2 (1998): 51–60.

¹²⁹*Waqf: An Annual Journal for the Study of Islamic Endowments and Charitable Foundations*.

¹³⁰Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Waqf," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 11:63–69.



giving a complete list of all the publications regarding Egyptian *waqf* documents, save for the latest of them. Undoubtedly, endowment deeds provide answers to a lot of questions and this has been understood by scholars. So far, the main studies carried out on this material have dealt with architectural,¹³¹ social,¹³² and economic issues.¹³³ I am quite confident that things will proceed smoothly and that the state of research in this matter is far from giving cause for concern. My main concern is that we need more text editions.¹³⁴ It is in this sense that I would like to mention an important project of the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (IFAO) in Cairo. This project, under the direction of Mustafa Taher, Sylvie Denoix, and Michel Tuchscherer, aims at cataloguing all the microfilmed archival documents of Cairo (thus not only the endowment deeds, but also the sale contracts, court records, etc.), as well as those of the Saint Catherine Monastery, so as to provide researchers with a catalogue, to be published on the Internet or on CD-ROM, which would foster further research on this material, particularly editions and studies of technical terms (legal, and not just architectural). So far, since the work began in 1995, 88 reels out of 129 have been analyzed.¹³⁵

2. Museum Collections

We have seen that European and American museums hold in their collections some Mamluk documents and we would expect the same for Muslim countries.

¹³¹Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn and Laylā Ibrāhīm, *Al-Muṣṭalaḥāt al-Mi'mārīyah fī al-Wathā'iq al-Mamlūkīyah* (Cairo, 1990).

¹³²Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, *Al-Awqāf wa-al-Ḥayāh al-Ijtimā'īyah fī Miṣr, 648–923/1250–1517: Dirāsah Tārīkhīyah Wathā'iqīyah* (Cairo, 1980); Ulrich Haarmann, "Mamluk Endowment Deeds as a Source for the History of Education in Late Medieval Egypt," *Al-Abḥāth* 28 (1980): 31–47; Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt, 1250–1517* (Cambridge, 2000); Jonathan P. Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, 1992).

¹³³Jean-Claude Garcin and Muṣṭafā A. Taher, "Enquête sur le financement d'un *waqf* égyptien du XVe siècle: les comptes de Jawhar al-Lala," *JESHO* 38 (1995): 262–304.

¹³⁴This seems to have been understood only recently. See particularly *The Waqf Document of Sultan Al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn for his Complex in Al-Rumaila*, ed. Howayda N. al-Harithy, *Bibliotheca Islamica*, vol. 45 (Beirut and Berlin, 2001) (with Julien Loiseau's critique, however, in *Bulletin critique des Annales islamologiques* 19 (2003): 129–31); and Stephan Conermann and Suad Saghbini, "Awlād al-Nās as Founders of Pious Endowments: The *Waqfīyah* of Yahyā ibn Ṭūghān al-Ḥasanī of the Year 870/1465," *MSR* 6 (2002): 21–50.

¹³⁵See Bernard Matheu, "Rapport d'activités," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire* 102 (2002): 536. The database created is already searchable and accessible to students and scholars visiting this institution.



a) Maṭḥaf al-Fann al-Islāmī (Cairo)

The museum seems to hold several documents from the Mamluk period, although it is not possible to obtain a complete census of the holdings at this time. I have had to rely on the published material to determine approximately what one can find in this museum. I found an article published in 1964 by Āmāl al-‘Umarī where she wrote about a collection of 27 documents dealing with the purchase and sale of horses and fabrics. She only published those contracts related to the horses,¹³⁶ announcing her intention to study the remaining items (I may have missed some Arabic publications, but I have not found anything for the latter documents). There are 15 published contracts which date back to the very end of the Circassian period.

Besides these, the museum also has preserved an important group of marriage contracts written on cotton. Most of them are available to researchers through the study carried out by Su‘ād Māhir,¹³⁷ a book hitherto rather neglected. It was generally thought that all the contracts had been published by her, but this was a false impression. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq studied one of these regarding the marriage of two slaves in 1343.¹³⁸ These documents are important as far as social and economic history is concerned because they shed light on the nature of the dowry, and in this particular case on the conditions applied to slaves. Other contracts are still unpublished.

The above documents reached the museum under obscure circumstances, as is often the case. But material pertaining to the Islamic period unearthed during excavations is presented to the museum. This is the case with the material found on the site of Quṣayr al-Qadīm. Located on the Red Sea coast, approximately 100 km. from Qūṣ, this ancient seaport, in which activity is attested since the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, was still active in the Ayyubid period and began to lose its importance under the Mamluk sultans with the emerging port of ‘Aydḥāb as the main departure point for travel to Jedda. Digs were carried out by a team from the University of Chicago under the direction of Donald Whitcomb and Janet Johnson in 1978, 1980, and 1982. Besides the archeological discoveries, some 500 scraps

¹³⁶ Āmāl al-‘Umarī, “Dirāsah li-Ba‘ḍ Wathā’iq Tata‘allaq bi-Bay‘ wa-Shirā’ Khuyūl min al-‘Aṣr al-Mamlūkī,” *Majallat Ma‘had al-Makhṭū‘āt al-‘Arabīyah/Revue de l’Institut des manuscrits arabes* 10 (1964): 223–72.

¹³⁷ *Uqūd al-Zawāj ‘alā al-Mansūjāt al-Atharīyah* (Cairo, n.d.).

¹³⁸ Ahmad ‘Abd ar-Raziq, “Un document concernant le mariage des esclaves au temps des Mamlūks,” *JESHO* 13 (1970): 309–14. It is unknown whether the two marriage contracts concluded in Aswan and studied in the following article are part of this collection or of another, as no information is given by the author: ‘Abd Allāh Mukhlīṣ, “‘Aqdā Nikāḥ Kutibā fī Awāsiṭ al-Qarn al-Thāmin,” *Majallat al-Majma‘ al-‘Ilmī al-‘Arabī* 21 (1946): 419–26. Both were written on silk and are dated to 734/1334 and 740/1339 respectively.



of paper were found, most of them undated. Those which were dated go back to the beginning of the thirteenth century, thus clearly Ayyubid, while numismatic evidence has shown that the remaining fragments must be from the same period. These documents consist of business and private letters, all coming from a merchant's house, and are important in this respect and will no doubt throw light on trade in this remote region. Studied by Thayer in the context of her thesis,¹³⁹ they were not classified or catalogued prior to the works of Li Guo, who has devoted his attention to them.¹⁴⁰ Since these documents have now been clearly identified as Ayyubid they are not relevant to our subject. But since 1999, new expeditions by the University of Southampton under the direction of David Peacock and Lucy Blue have taken place. The site excavated is somewhat different. Among medieval rubbish and in the Muslim necropolis, they brought to light 300 paper fragments stretching from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. They also consist of business and private letters, but the period is clearly Mamluk. On the other hand, the funerary context has revealed a hitherto unknown practice: Arabic inscriptions on ostrich eggs. The whole material discovered during these campaigns will now be studied in the framework of a project called "Reconstructing the Quseiri Arabic Documents."¹⁴¹ Edition, translation, analysis, and interpretation of all the documents within their context will be done by a recently constituted team made up of Arabists and computer specialists. There is no doubt that this project will elicit important new data on the commercial and religious activities of this peripheral community of merchants.

b) Egyptian Museum (Cairo)

This renowned institution for Egyptology has received excavated material, mainly going back to antiquity. Nonetheless, useful discoveries for our field can be made

¹³⁹Jennifer Thayer, "Land Politics and Power Networks in Mamluk Egypt," Ph. D. diss., New York University, 1993; idem, "In Testimony to a Market Economy in Mamlūk Egypt: The Qusayr Documents," *Al-Masāq* 8 (1995): 45–55.

¹⁴⁰Li Guo, "Arabic Documents from the Red Sea Port of Quseir in the Seventh/Thirteenth Century: Part 1: Business Letters," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 58 (1999): 161–90; idem, "Arabic Documents from the Red Sea Port of Quseir in the Seventh/Thirteenth Century: Part 2: Shipping Notes and Account Records," *JNES* 60 (2001): 81–116. Li Guo has just published a detailed study of all the fragments unearthed by the Chicago team: *Commerce, Culture, and Community in a Red Sea Port in the Thirteenth Century: The Arabic Documents from Quseir*, Islamic History and Civilization, 52 (Leiden, 2004).

¹⁴¹See <http://www.rqad.leeds.ac.uk>. For a preliminary presentation of these documents, announcing a thorough study to come, see Anne Regourd, "Trade on the Red Sea during the Ayyubid and Mamluk Periods: The Quseir Paper Manuscript Collection 1999–2003, First Data," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 34 (2004): 277–92.



among its holdings. Two private letters on paper, discovered by specialists in Greek papyri, were brought to the attention of Diem, who studied them in an article published in 1993.¹⁴² One of these letters, consisting of an invitation to a meal, has been dated by this scholar as being from the fourteenth century, and improves the knowledge we have of private letters in the period under consideration.

In an old study, Charles Bachatly brought to the attention of scholars the existence of a particular document held by the then Société Royale de Géographie (Cairo). This specimen concerns an Egyptian pilgrim who made an agreement with a camel dealer.¹⁴³

B. Palestine

1. Islamic Museum (al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf, Jerusalem)

This is the latest significant and sizeable discovery that has been made in the last decades, and shows that we must be optimistic regarding future finds. The story is well known. Discovered, as often happens, more or less by accident, by the curator Amal Abul-Hajj, in 1974 and 1976, these 883 documents from the Mamluk period could have returned to their dusty cupboards if she had not enlisted the help of one of Donald Little's students, Linda Northrup. This demonstrates once more the need for international cooperation in regard to archival research. Announced in 1979 in an international journal,¹⁴⁴ the discovery received a cool, or at least indifferent, reception in the scientific world, as Donald Little noticed in 1980.¹⁴⁵ But things were to change with the publication of his catalogue in 1984.¹⁴⁶ The documents had been measured and photographed during a mission and it is on this basis that he could prepare his work. The classification revealed that the majority of the documents were of a private nature and consisted of the papers of a judge, Ibn Ghānim, who died at the end of the fourteenth century, which makes

¹⁴²Werner Diem, "Zwei arabische Privatbriefe aus dem Ägyptischen Museum in Kairo," *Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik* 25 (1993): 148–53.

¹⁴³Charles Bachatly, "Document sur un pèlerinage à la Mecque au début du Xe siècle de l'hégire (907/1501)," *Bulletin de la Société Royale de Géographie d'Égypte* 21 (1943): 23–27.

¹⁴⁴Linda S. Northrup and Amal A. Abul-Hajj, "A Collection of Medieval Arabic Documents in the Islamic Museum at the Ḥaram al-Šarīf," *Arabica* 25 (1978): 282–91.

¹⁴⁵Donald P. Little, "The Significance of the Ḥaram Documents for the Study of Medieval Islamic History," *Der Islam* 57 (1980): 189–219; and also idem, "The Judicial Documents from al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf as Sources for the History of Palestine under the Mamluks," in *The Third International Conference on Bilad al-Sham: Palestine, 19–24 April 1980*, vol. 1, Jerusalem (Amman, 1983), 117–25.

¹⁴⁶Donald P. Little, *A Catalogue of the Islamic Documents from al-Ḥaram aš-Šarīf in Jerusalem*, Beirut Texts and Studies, no. 29 (Beirut, 1984). See more recently Robert Schick, "Arabic Studies of Mamluk Jerusalem: A Review Article," *MSR* 5 (2001): 159–68.



the discovery even more crucial. It had previously been maintained by Ottomanists that the Ottoman judges were the first to institute the principle of the *dīwān al-qāḍī* (*sijill* as they call it), on the basis that Ottoman *sijills* alone had been preserved. Wael Hallaq has recently tackled this question¹⁴⁷ and demonstrated that the *dīwān al-qāḍī* truly existed in earlier Islamic times and that the qadi had to keep his records up to date. The Ḥaram documents provide another proof for this, showing that it is nonsensical to believe that an administration was not full of red tape only because the documents have not survived.¹⁴⁸

This material has given scholars the opportunity to study various issues. This has been the case for some official documents, as some of them are clearly unique items: the square decrees (*murabba'āt*, documents issued by the army bureau), have been dealt with by Richards¹⁴⁹ and the petitions and their associated decrees have been addressed by Little.¹⁵⁰

Yet the private documents obviously present the greatest challenges. They are of an incomparable richness for the history of Jerusalem and its environs during the given period, although it must be kept in mind that it is a short period of time. This richness is particularly noted for social and economic life. This is due to the fact that they include a great variety of deeds, the main category being represented by estate inventories (almost half of the collection) and court records. Thus, unsurprisingly, this kind of document has received first attention. An initial attempt to publish several of them in their context and to draw more general lines was provided by Kāmil Jamīl al-'Asalī in a three-volume work.¹⁵¹ Later on, Huda Lutfi based her study¹⁵² on them, trying to draw conclusions on a statistical basis for the social history of the city. Later, Little published a study devoted to three of these

¹⁴⁷Wael B. Hallaq, "The *qāḍī*'s *dīwān* (*sijill*) before the Ottomans," *BSOAS* 60 (1997): 415–36.

¹⁴⁸The Ḥaram documents have recently been appraised at their true value for the understanding of the *qāḍī*'s role in Jerusalem during the Mamluk period. See Muḥammad Ḥusayn 'Alī Abū Ḥāmid, "Quḍāt al-Quds fī al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī," M.A. thesis, Jāmi'at al-Qiddīs Yūsuf, 1998.

¹⁴⁹Richards, "A Mamlūk Emir's 'Square' Decree."

¹⁵⁰Donald P. Little, "Five Petitions and Consequential Decrees from Late Fourteenth Century Jerusalem," *Arab Journal for the Humanities* 54 (1996): 34–94.

¹⁵¹Kāmil Jamīl al-'Asalī, *Wathā'iq Maqḍisīyah Tārīkhīyah: Ma'a Muqaddimah ḥawla Ba'd al-Maṣādir al-Awwalīyah li-Tārīkh al-Quds* (Jerusalem historical documents), vol. 1 (Amman, 1983) (edition of 44 documents pertaining to the Mamluk period among 60); vol. 2 (s. l., 1985) (edition of 61 documents from the Mamluk period among 104); vol. 3 (Amman, 1989) (of the 156 documents edited, 1 is from the Mamluk period).

¹⁵²Huda Lutfi, *Al-Quds al-Mamlūkiyya: A History of Mamlūk Jerusalem Based on the Ḥaram Documents*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, no. 113 (Berlin, 1985). See also idem, "A Documentary Source for the Study of Material Life: A Specimen of the Ḥaram Estate Inventories from al-Quds in 1393 A.D.," *ZDMG* 135 (1985): 213–26.



inventories,¹⁵³ and more recently, Müller has published one of these to illustrate how the record of an estate was drawn up by the qadi's court.¹⁵⁴ His study fits into the framework of a larger project dealing with the functioning of the judicial system in Jerusalem in the fourteenth century¹⁵⁵

As far as the court records are concerned, Little gave an overview of their contents¹⁵⁶ and has lately published two of them.¹⁵⁷ In this study as well as in previous ones, he has followed the way paved by Stern for official documents, which consists of comparing the private documents to models as they are preserved in *shurūṭ* manuals, showing that there is a correspondence between the principles prescribed there and the documents.¹⁵⁸

Attention has been paid to other categories of documents, although in a less systematic manner. Contracts were the subject of one of Little's articles in 1981 devoted to the question of slaves.¹⁵⁹ Richards, in 1990,¹⁶⁰ has been able to define more precisely a particular kind of document called *qasāmah* (sworn declaration) and to study the evolution of the term from Fatimid times until the early Ottoman period, proving its persistence through the successive chanceries. More recently, he studied two pieces (a statement of account and an order) related to a *maktab* in charge of the education of children.¹⁶¹ This unique document offers the possibility

¹⁵³ Donald P. Little, "Ḥaram Documents Related to the Jews of Late Fourteenth Century Jerusalem," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 30 (1985): 227–64, 368–70. See also idem, "Documents related to the Estates of a Merchant and His Wife in Late Fourteenth Century Jerusalem," *MSR* 2 (1998): 93–193.

¹⁵⁴ Christian Müller, "Contrats d'héritages dans la Jérusalem mamelouke: les témoins du cadī dans un document inédit du Ḥaram al-Šarīf," *AI* 35 (2001): 291–319. Recently Donald S. Richards published a study on fourteen of them, with special emphasis on two of this group with edition and translation. See Donald S. Richards, "Glimpses of Provincial Mamluk Society from the Documents of the Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. Michael Winter and Amalia Levanoni, The Medieval Mediterranean, no. 51 (Leiden, 2004), 45–57.

¹⁵⁵ See also Rūksī ibn Zā'id al-'Azīzī, "Min Tawṣiyāt wa-Mawāthīq al-Mamālīk lil-Ruhbān fī al-Quds wa-Ḍawāḥihā," *Al-Dārah* 7 (1981): 208–32.

¹⁵⁶ Donald P. Little, "Two Fourteenth Century Court Records from Jerusalem Concerning the Disposition of Slaves by Minors," *Arabica* 29 (1982): 16–49.

¹⁵⁷ Donald P. Little, "Two Petitions and Consequential Court Records from the Ḥaram Collection," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2001): 171–94.

¹⁵⁸ See now Hallaq, "Model *shurūṭ* Works."

¹⁵⁹ Donald P. Little, "Six Fourteenth Century Purchase Deeds for Slaves from Al-Ḥaram Aš-Šarīf," *ZDMG* 131 (1981): 297–337.

¹⁶⁰ Donald S. Richards, "The *qasāma* in Mamlūk Society: Some Documents from the Ḥaram Collection in Jerusalem," *AI* 25 (1990): 245–84.

¹⁶¹ Donald S. Richards, "Primary Education under the Mamlūks: Two Documents from the Ḥaram in Jerusalem," in *Proceedings of the 20th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et*



of examining how a modest provincial foundation such as this one could exist. Legal depositions (*iqrār*) have also been the subject of detailed study.¹⁶²

Account records may also reveal unexpected results as in the study of Richards¹⁶³ which shed new light on the Mamluk postal service, particularly in Jerusalem, some years before the collapse of the whole system after Tamerlane's invasion.

A less-expected aspect of these documents is the philological one. As is generally done for papyrological studies, Diem has recently done a thorough study of philological notes based on the various editions provided by Little, Richards, and others.¹⁶⁴

Significant as they are in themselves, all these documents provide further revealing data on Mamluk society, specifically lower levels neglected by historical sources, in Jerusalem and its surroundings. These aspects have been emphasized in the various studies on individual documents as well as in broader perspectives.¹⁶⁵

To conclude with this part, the Ḥaram documents have clearly received greater attention since the publication of the catalogue. Various issues have been approached and answered. Various types of legal documents have been systematically examined together with the functioning of the judicial system connected to them. Nevertheless, many documents still await editing, translation, and analysis.¹⁶⁶

Islamisants, part 1, *Linguistics, Literature, History*, ed. Kinga Dévényi, *The Arabist: Budapest Studies in Arabic*, nos. 24–25 (Budapest, 2002), 223–32.

¹⁶²Huda Lutfi, "A Study of Six Fourteenth Century *Iqrār*s from al-Quds Relating to Muslim Women," *JESHO* 26 (1983): 246–94; idem and Donald P. Little, "Iqrār from al-Quds: Emendations," *JESHO* 28 (1985): 326–30.

¹⁶³Donald S. Richards, "The Mamluk *Barīd*: Some Evidence from the *Haram* Documents," in *Studies in the History and Archeology of Jordan*, vol. 3, ed. Adnan Hadidi (Amman, 1987), 205–9.

¹⁶⁴Werner Diem, "Philologisches zu den mamlūkischen Erlassen, Eingaben und Dienstschriften des Jerusalemer al-Ḥaram aš-šarīf," *Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik* 33 (1997): 7–67. In this article, Diem also edited, translated, and analyzed documents on the basis of the reproductions provided by D. Little in his catalogue.

¹⁶⁵Donald P. Little, "Relations between Jerusalem and Egypt during the Mamluk Period According to Literary and Documentary Sources," in *Egypt and Palestine: a Millennium of Association (868–1948)*, ed. Amnon Cohen and Gabriel Baer (Jerusalem-New York, 1984), 73–93; idem, "The Ḥaram Documents as Sources for the Arts and Architecture of the Mamlūk Period," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 61–72; Donald S. Richards, "Saladin's Hospital in Jerusalem: Its Foundation and Some Later Archival Material," in *The Frankish Wars and Their Influence on Palestine: Selected Papers Presented at Birzeit University's International Academic Conference Held in Jerusalem, March 13–15, 1992*, ed. Khalil Athaminah and Roger Heacock (Birzeit, 1994), 70–83.

¹⁶⁶In an oral communication, Donald Little informed me that other Mamluk documents, probably originating from the same collection, are being offered for sale by a private owner. This evidence proves, if necessary, that other such documents have survived.



C. Syria

1. Umayyad Mosque of Damascus (Istanbul)

Mosques commonly owned libraries containing manuscripts, and not exclusively of the Quran. Some of them are even renowned for the antiquity of their collections (Qarawīyīn/Fez, Qayrawān/Tunisia). It would have been surprising if the Great Mosque of Damascus, one of the oldest in the Muslim world, had not been in the same position. In fact, this was the case, but unfortunately it suffered from several fires which destroyed most of its original structure. The last one happened in 1893 and at that time the Ottoman authorities decided to transfer to Istanbul all the manuscripts that had survived, even incompletely. They were installed in the collections of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts where a rough handlist was drawn up (Şamdan gelen evrak: Damascene papers). Nobody studied them until 1963 when the Sourdels heard of their existence. They were presented with thousands of fragments of manuscripts and documents written on parchment or paper, most of which had been damaged by the fire or water. Going through them, they soon realized that they mainly consisted of religious works, but surprisingly some archival material of a private nature was noticed. They soon published the results of their discovery in two articles describing the contents of the collection.¹⁶⁷ If the Quranic fragments, some of which go back to the first centuries of Islam, were examined quite quickly, the other documents have not so far been fully considered. The Sourdels published some of them, mainly dealing with the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods.¹⁶⁸ Two of their articles dealt with three documents going back to the beginning of the thirteenth century.¹⁶⁹ One example concerns a particular kind attested from the Fatimid period: the certificates of pilgrimage by proxy. These have been the subject of several articles by the Sourdels covering different periods,¹⁷⁰ and recently the documents pertaining to the Mamluk period were

¹⁶⁷Janine Sourdél-Thomine and Dominique Sourdél, "Nouveaux documents sur l'histoire religieuse et sociale de Damas au Moyen Âge," *Revue des études islamiques* 32 (1964): 1–25; idem, "A propos des documents de la Grande Mosquée de Damas conservés à Istanbul: Résultats de la seconde enquête," *REI* 33 (1965): 73–85.

¹⁶⁸Janine Sourdél-Thomine and Dominique Sourdél, "Biens fonciers constitués waqf en Syrie fatimide pour une famille de šarīfs damascains," *JESHO* 15 (1972): 269–96; idem, "Trois actes de vente damascains du début du IVe/Xe siècle," *JESHO* 8 (1965): 164–85.

¹⁶⁹Janine Sourdél-Thomine and Dominique Sourdél, "Un acte de vente arabe portant sur la région d'Ahlat au VIIe/XIIIe siècle," *Tarih araştırmaları dergisi* 6 (1968): 51–60; Dominique Sourdél, "Deux documents relatifs à la communauté hanbalite de Damas," *BEO* 25 (1972): 141–49.

¹⁷⁰Janine Sourdél-Thomine and Dominique Sourdél, "Une collection médiévale de certificats de pèlerinage à la Mekke, conservés à Istanbul: Les actes de la période seljoukide et bouride (jusqu'à 549/1154)," in *Etudes médiévales et patrimoine turc* (Paris, 1983), 167–93; idem, "Une collection médiévale de certificats de pèlerinage à la Mekke: II: Les actes de la période zengide et ayyoubide" (forthcoming).



studied.¹⁷¹ This article focuses on 21 of the certificates that have survived. Some of them are dated, others are not but can be dated quite precisely thanks to the study of the stylistic evolution noticed by the Sourdels. They all go back to the Qipchak period (the oldest dated 1282, the most recent 1304–5). Written on the same kind of scroll used by the chancery (the longer measures 1.60 m., but was originally bigger [2 m.]), these certificates were displayed by their owners. These documents might seem anecdotal as they give little historical information (rather religious formulas, few names, except that of the beneficiary). However, once more, it is the study of the evolution of this kind of document over the centuries that is more meaningful for history. Indeed, the Sourdels demonstrated that a comparison with other periods clearly indicates that in the Mamluk period this kind of document was no longer produced for prominent figures of Damascene society (princes, etc.), but rather only for other classes. This could indicate that during the Mamluk period, the military aristocracy of governors and officers who succeeded one another at a frenetic pace had little concern for their local reputations, since the role of capital city had been transferred from Damascus to Cairo. The ruling amirs in Damascus had no incentive to make a show for the local population of the importance that the pilgrimage to Mecca held for them.

2. Maktabat al-Asad (Damascus)

The recent publication of a book gives me the opportunity to speak about a kind of document rarely mentioned by the sources: reading certificates. This is perhaps due to the fact that this kind of document is only found in manuscripts, yet these certificates are authentic documents, important in many respects. It was Georges Vajda who first studied the collection of manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale, the result of which was published in book form.¹⁷² Others of his articles were devoted to manuscripts held in Damascus (the then *Zāhirīyah*) and Tunis.¹⁷³ The *Zāhirīyah* library (now at the al-Asad Library) was known to have rich holdings of this sort of document, given that an important part of its manuscripts came from the library of an influential Hanbali family, the Maqdisīs, who were originally

¹⁷¹Janine Sourdel-Thomine and Dominique Sourdel, "Certificats de pèlerinage par procuration à l'époque mamlouke," *JSAI* 25 (2001): 212–33.

¹⁷²Georges Vajda, *Les certificats de lecture et de transmission dans les manuscrits arabes de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris*, Publications de l'Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes, no. 6 (Paris, 1956).

¹⁷³Georges Vajda, *Le Dictionnaire des Autorités (Mu'ğam aš-Šuyūh) de 'Abd al-Mu'min ad-Dimyātī*, Publications de l'Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes: documents, études et répertoires, no. 7 (Paris, 1962); idem, "La mašyaħa d'Ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb al-Rāzī: Contribution à l'histoire du sunnisme en Egypte fāṭimide," *BEO* 23 (1970): 21–99.



from Jerusalem and settled in Damascus in the twelfth century.¹⁷⁴ Most of these manuscripts were read during recitation sessions and the names of all the participants were written at the end of the work read on that occasion. The structure of the reading certificate is invariably the same: it provides the names of the participants, the shaykh who listens (*musmi'*), the reader (*qāri'*), the writer of the certificate (*kātib*), the date, and finally the place. These certificates are thus significant documents for social history: they provide us with precious information on the way texts were transmitted, the education system, the biographies of scholars, the culture of Damascene inhabitants, the families, their occupations, the toponyms, and last but not least the role played by women in this particular case. This important collection has finally been studied at length by Stefan Leder with the help of other researchers.¹⁷⁵ They went through 86 manuscripts collecting 1,350 certificates that appear on 524 folios and date from 1155 to 1349. The results are impressive: more than 10,000 names and 250 toponyms listed. The work is to be commended given the difficulties presented by the discouraging scripts, but also because a volume of facsimiles for all the certificates was published subsequently.¹⁷⁶ There is no doubt that such a book will foster further research on the ulama in Damascus, and in this sense it is to be hoped that other studies will be published for the remaining certificates held in the Maktabat al-Asad, as well as elsewhere in Cairo, Istanbul, India, and in European and North American libraries.

3. Private collections

Private collections which hold family archives must exist in the Middle East. Most of them date from the Ottoman period, though even in this case they can still be useful for Mamlukists as some of them consist of copies made during the Ottoman period of earlier specimens. An interesting example of this was recently studied by Marco Salati,¹⁷⁷ who edited and studied a document dated 1066/1656, but dealing with matters of the Mamluk period, preserved in the private archives

¹⁷⁴Stefan Leder, "Charismatic Scripturalism: the Ḥanbalī Maqdisīs of Damascus," *Der Islam* 74 (1997): 279–304.

¹⁷⁵Stefan Leder, Yāsīn Muḥammad al-Sawwās, and Ma'mūn al-Ṣāgharjī, *Mu'jam al-Samā'āt al-Dimashqīyah: al-Muntakhabah min Sanat 550 ilá 750 H./1155 ilá 1349 M.* (Damascus, 1996). See also Stefan Leder, "Hörerzertifikate als Dokumente für die islamische Lehrkultur des Mittelalters," in *Urkunden und Urkundenformulare*, 147–66.

¹⁷⁶Stefan Leder, Yāsīn Muḥammad al-Sawwās, and Ma'mūn al-Ṣāgharjī, *Mu'jam al-Samā'āt al-Dimashqīyah: Ṣuwar al-Makhṭū'āt: al-Muntakhabah min Sanat 550 ilá 750 H./1155 ilá 1349 M.* (Damascus, 2000).

¹⁷⁷Marco Salati, "Un documento di epoca mamelucca sul *waqf* di 'Izz al-Dīn Abū l-Makārim, Ḥamza b. Zuhra al-Ḥusaynī al-Ishāqī al-Ḥalabī (ca. 707/1307)," *Annali della Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere di Ca' Foscari* 33 (Serie Orientale 25) (1994), 97–137.



of the Kawākibī family in Aleppo. Such discoveries will probably be made in the future, depending on the good relations established by a scholar with a local family.

UNSUSPECTED PLACES

I will finish this census with an account of the most recent and challenging discovery in terms of Mamluk documents. These have been found in what might be called an unsuspected place. As early as the nineteenth century, it was known that Islamic documents could have been recycled as new writing material in Europe, at a time when paper was still rare in this part of the world. A unique example of this reuse was published at that time by Michele Amari.¹⁷⁸ In this case, the fragments were found in the notarial records of Giovanni Scriba of Genoa, where contracts dating from 1154 to 1166 constitute a *terminus ante quem* for the reuse of these fragments of an Arabic document. In Amari's eyes, it could be nothing other than an official document from the Fatimid period, though the surviving parts of it did not allow a reconstruction of a coherent text or precise date.

This example makes us wonder if such reuse of old documents was not also prevalent in Islam for the same reason (scarcity of paper).¹⁷⁹ I have answered this question with the discovery of an unpublished autograph manuscript of al-Maqrīzī.¹⁸⁰ One of the main features of this notebook is that it was partly written on Mamluk chancery documents (scrolls) that were cut into pieces at a given period due to the high cost of paper. Put together to form quires, they were used by this historian as scratch paper for his drafts and notebooks. The greatest challenge was to develop a technique that would allow a coherent reconstruction of the original documents, hoping that they could be dated quite accurately. Fortunately, this was the case, and among the five documents reconstructed, I was able to precisely date three of them from 1344, demonstrating, thanks to the sources, that these were grants of fiefs (sing. *manshūr iqtā'ī*).¹⁸¹ This sort of document was previously attested only by a unique example from the reign of Qānṣūh.¹⁸²

While the document discovered by Amari was of no great interest, the fragments preserved in al-Maqrīzī's autograph manuscripts are undoubtedly valuable and

¹⁷⁸ Amari, "Nuovi ricordi arabici," 633–34 and plates II–IV.

¹⁷⁹ See above, pp. 17–18.

¹⁸⁰ Frédéric Bauden, "Maqriziana I: Discovery of an Autograph MS of al-Maqrīzī: Towards a Better Understanding of His Working Method: Description: Section 1," *MSR* 7, no. 2 (2003): 21–68.

¹⁸¹ Bauden, "The Recovery of Mamlūk Chancery Documents," 59–76.

¹⁸² Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, "Manshūr bi-Manḥ Iqtā'," 2–23.



current research should be directed to the other autograph manuscripts of al-Maqrīzī, where more than 400 leaves have been identified as recycled documents.

CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

We may conclude that the situation of documents for the Mamluk period is not as disastrous as it has generally been presented. An approximate figure would be meaningless given that, as we have seen, several collections still remain to be studied. Compared to other periods and areas in Islam, Mamluk documents offer the researcher more than expected at first sight. Rather than lamenting our situation, research should proceed in various ways: edition with translation and diplomatic commentary, thematic studies, and searching for new documents.

The first of these issues should receive more attention: the temptation to study large sets of documents rather than editing, translating, and commenting on individual documents prevails in some cases. One should keep in mind that published documents, besides the fact that they enlarge the corpus and offer new elements for the comparison of formularies, provide not only data for further research on a subject, but also for related topics like diplomatics, paleography, the history of paper, and other matters unsuspected by the editor.

In this sense, the following *vade mecum* should be observed step by step by any person wishing to publish a document:

(1) physical description: description of the support material and of the physical appearance. Paper is preeminent for documents from the Mamluk period. Our knowledge of the paper of this period, and of Arabic paper in general, limits itself to a few certitudes. For sure, codicology and all related topics are still in their infancy and will not grow without detailed analysis of individual items. Careful description of the paper found in Mamluk documents will make it possible to distinguish it from paper used in manuscripts of this period.¹⁸³ If possible,¹⁸⁴ paper should be described in detail, indicating its color, the presence of chain lines (number, assembled or not, distance between groups) and laid lines (thickness, space occupied by 20 of them). Furthermore, the physical appearance provides a mass of information on the nature of the document itself, especially in the case of chancery documents where strict rules prevailed. The document should be accurately

¹⁸³For a first attempt to study this kind of paper, see Geneviève Humbert, "Le manuscrit arabe et ses papiers," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 99–100 (2002): 55–77, particularly 68–74 for papers used by the chancery.

¹⁸⁴It is true that most scholars studying Arabic documents usually work with a reproduction (photograph, microfilm) which does not allow this kind of analysis.



measured¹⁸⁵ and different measurements taken into consideration (width of the space between two lines of text and between introducing and concluding formulas, width of the right and upper margins).

(2) paleographical description: Arabic paleography has also been quite neglected although Greek, Latin, and Western scripts have been categorized for a long time. The editor should not forget to mention all the peculiarities of the script as well as orthographical features.

(3) grammatical commentary: all the inconsistencies noted in comparison with the standard rules of Arabic grammar. Philological notes will help future editors to understand some seemingly incoherent readings, as well as linguists working on the various levels of Arabic in the Middle Ages.

(4) diplomatic commentary: due to the lack of a manual of diplomatics for the Mamluk period, this kind of commentary is a must and should not be neglected. Comparison with the sources (manuals and chancery anthologies) and evidence preserved from all periods, due to the relative continuity of formularies through the various dynasties, allow an improved knowledge of the features of diplomatics in Islam.

(5) historical commentary: the editor must consider all the data provided or not by the document itself (identification of persons, places, explanation of technical terms, study of the context, of what is implied by the document, etc.).

(6) reproduction: Reproduction is essential for many reasons. A reproduced document will be available to all and for centuries. Furthermore, all the descriptions made and the readings proposed by the editor can be checked by anyone else wishing to study the document for another purpose. Several systems have been developed, some being preferable to others. The best solution, I believe, is to be found in Risciani's book,¹⁸⁶ where the document is reproduced in the left margin with the proposed reading in the other part of the page, respecting the spacing between lines, the disposition of words (horizontally and vertically), and even the size of characters noticeable in some parts of the document.

Besides this, there are urgent requirements which must be met. It remains true that few students are interested in the study of Arabic documents. Perhaps the difficult handwriting commonly used by careless clerks¹⁸⁷ discourages them. Courses devoted to paleography are not to be found in the curricula of most universities. In

¹⁸⁵In the case of scrolls, the approximate measurements of a single sheet should be indicated as well as the width of the glued part.

¹⁸⁶Risciani, *Documenti e firmani*.

¹⁸⁷As quoted by Richards, "The qasāma in Mamlūk Society," 251, "al-Asyūfī strongly recommended that clerks, especially the clerk of the court, should write well and not curtail letter shapes nor run



this respect, the project of the Arabic Papyrological School¹⁸⁸ could help as a first step to attract students, but a more profound reflection on the necessity of reintroducing this discipline in the programs of universities is required.¹⁸⁹

There is a pressing need for a microfilming project for various reasons. Firstly, it allays the danger of destruction of documents. Secondly, we can see that once a collection is put at the disposal of the scientific community (via printed catalogues, microfilms, or photographs), the documents are studied by a wide range of scholars and research moves forward quickly. The foundation of an institute for Arabic archives, similar to the Institute of Arabic Manuscripts in Cairo, would be most welcome. Before this ever happens, an easy way to foster research would be the use of the Internet. Collections that have already been microfilmed could easily be made available to the scientific community through this medium (at least those already published).

An intermediate measure would be the publication of an analytic bibliography classified according to the different kinds of documents published with mention of the place of conservation, date of the document, content, and type. What we need is something similar to what Roemer did in 1966 for the Mamluk official documents,¹⁹⁰ a work which has to be reexamined in view of the new discoveries made since that date.

Finally, there is an urgent need for a manual of diplomatics for the Mamluk period. In 1966, Hans Roemer already stressed this lacuna in these words: “. . . die Diplomatie der Kanzleien des islamischen Orients den Kinderschuhen noch nicht entwachsen ist.”¹⁹¹ It is not at all scientifically acceptable that this matter has been dealt with for other periods and areas for which fewer or an equal number of documents have been preserved.¹⁹² Since that statement, substantial contributions to the field of diplomatics have been made, but always on specific types of

them one into another, all of which produces error. He recalls that a certain Qadi in Egypt chastised careless clerks, with the result that legal documents of all sorts in his time were written accurately and clearly.”

¹⁸⁸<http://www.ori.unizh.ch/aps/>

¹⁸⁹Good introductions to the study of documents were proposed by Muḥammad Aḥmad Ḥusayn, *Al-Wathā'iq al-Tārīkhīyah* (Cairo, 1954); ‘Abbās Maḥmūd Ḥammūdah, *Al-Madkhal ilā Dirāsāt al-Wathā'iq al-‘Arabīyah* (Cairo, 1984).

¹⁹⁰Hans Robert Roemer, “Arabische Herrscherurkunden aus Ägypten,” *Orientalische Literatur Zeitung* 61 (1966), columns 325–43.

¹⁹¹*Ibid.*, column 343.

¹⁹²Heribert Busse, *Untersuchungen zum islamischen Kanzleiwesen: an Hand türkmenerischer und safawidischer Urkunden* (Cairo, 1959); M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, *Osmanlı paleografya ve diplomatik ilmi* (Istanbul, 1979); Valeri Stojanow, *Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der osmanisch-türkischen Paläographie und Diplomatie*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, vol. 76 (Berlin, 1983).



documents and in scattered publications.¹⁹³ Thus, a major contribution which would embrace the various issues implied by this field would be most welcome by both scholars and students. Let us hope that this call will be heard.

¹⁹³First attempts to foster research in this direction will be found in Claude Cahen, "Notes de diplomatique arabo-musulmane," *Journal asiatique* 251 (1963): 311–25; to which must be added the following bibliography: Martiniano Pellegrino Roncaglia, *Essai bibliographique de diplomatique islamique (arabe-persane-ottomane)*, Subsidia Bibliographica Historica, no. 1 (Beirut, 1979). In addition to Stern's and Khan's publications on the petition already quoted, see also Walther Björkman, "Die Bittschriften im *dīwān al-inšā*," *Der Islam* 18 (1929): 207–12; Jørgen S. Nielsen, "A Note on the Origin of the *Ṭurra* in Early Mamlūk Chancery Practice," *Der Islam* 57 (1980): 288–92. For the nomination deeds of amirs, see Annemarie Schimmel, "Einsetzungsurkunden mamlukischer Emire," *Die Welt des Orients* 1, no. 4 (1949): 302–6 (based on al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*). The following reference on the *dīwān al-inshā* is too general to be taken into consideration: S. Imamuddin, "*Diwān al-inshā* (Chancery in Later Medieval Egypt), (with Special Reference to Later Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Decrees Dated 528–894 H/1134–1489 A.C.)," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 28 (1980): 63–77. On private documents, see more specifically Rudolf Veselý, "Die Hauptprobleme der Diplomatik arabischer Privaturkunden aus dem spätmittelalterlichen Ägypten," *Archiv Orientalni* 40 (1972): 312–43; idem, "Die richterlichen Beglaubigungsmittel: ein Beitrag zur Diplomatik arabischer Gerichtsurkunden," *Orientalia Pragensia* 8 (1971): 7–23, 10 (1977): 99–122; Claude Cahen, "A propos des *shuhūd*," *SI* 31 (1970): 71–79.

