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The Haram Documents as Sources for the Arts and Architecture of the Mamluk Period

Although, for reasons which are not clear to me, few documents or records of any kind—let alone archives—have survived from the Islamic Middle Ages, a number of collections of considerable interest have recently been uncovered in Cairo, in Ardebil, and in Jerusalem. Of these, only those discovered within the precincts of the Dome of the Rock and the Aqṣā Mosque in Jerusalem, the so-called Haram documents, will be discussed here.

As is evident to any reader of the history of Jerusalem written at the end of the fifteenth century by Mujūr al-Dīn al-‘Ulamā, documents dating from as early as the twelfth century were available in the city to scholars of Mujūr al-Dīn’s day. Both in his descriptions of the Islamic monuments of Jerusalem and in his biographies of its scholars, Mujūr al-Dīn frequently refers to legal records (mustanṭāt sharī’iyā) and endowment deeds (waqfiyyāt) that he had consulted for the data they contained and complains on occasion that he cannot locate a particular document that he needs. There are indications that such records were known to exist in Jerusalem into our own century, some five hundred years later: Max van Berchem does not identify his informant, but he does tell us that medieval Islamic archives were said to be extant at the citadel of Jerusalem as late as 1914. Van Berchem chose not to follow up this lead, and therefore we may never know what, if anything, we may have missed, unless those same archives turn up in some neglected corner. In the meantime, we shall have to be content with the almost nine hundred fourteenth-century documents discovered in 1974 and 1976 by Amal Abul-Hajj, at that time director of the Islamic Museum in the Haram al-Sharīf, who found them stuffed into locked drawers of display cabinets belonging to the museum. Recognizing the importance of her find, Abul-Hajj took active measures, in cooperation with a team from the McGill Institute of Islamic Studies, to conserve and photograph the documents so as to ensure their preservation and their availability to scholars. Its state of preservation and variety establish the collection as a discovery of major importance for the study of medieval Islamic history in general and the history of Jerusalem under the Mamluks in particular.

Most of the documents are in Arabic, but twenty-seven are written in Persian. The latter apparently have nothing whatsoever to do with Jerusalem or the Mamluks; they deal with business and legal transactions involving persons and property in Azerbaijan. How these documents happened to be in Jerusalem I do not know, but I favor the explanation that a family of Azerbaijani origin settled in that city sometime in the fourteenth century, bringing the documents with them as records of transactions they conducted in their homeland. Names and dates in the documents indicate that they may emanate from the Jalāyirids, a family prominent in the Mongol dynasty, who ruled western Iran and the Caucasus from 1336 to 1432. Whatever their provenance, the Persian papers are extremely interesting and important, being among the earliest specimens we have of Islamic documents written in Persian.

The Arabic documents pose problems of identification if only because they are so numerous and so varied in type. They consist of roughly 875 pieces of paper or parchment containing various kinds of records and deeds. A few, no more than 14, are so closely related to the Persian documents in form and content that I feel justified in calling them Persianate and in believing that they were deposited in Jerusalem by the same Azerbaijani family who brought the Persian documents there. The
remaining 861 papers are different. Their dates provide a clue to their nature: approximately 80 percent of those that are dated fall between the years 1393 and 1397. A second clue is the recurrence of the same name on so many of them. That name is al-Qādī Sharaf al-Dīn ʿIṣā ibn Abīl-Rūḥ ibn Ghānim al-Anṣārī al-Khazraji al-Shāfiʿī, whom we know from a brief bibliographical reference in Mujir al-Dīn’s history to have been a Shāfiʿī judge in Jerusalem at exactly the time indicated by the dates on most of the documents. 7 I am reasonably sure, therefore, that most of the Arabic documents constitute records of this particular judge, copies of documents that were authorized by him, or documents that were addressed to him, usually in his capacity of chief Shāfiʿī judge of Jerusalem. However, he also served in other capacities in the city, and those functions are equally, if not more, important for our purposes. He was in charge of two institutions founded in Jerusalem by ʿAlā al-Dīn—the Khanqah al-Ṣāliḥiya and the Māristan al-Ṣāliḥi— as well as supervisor of the pious endowments of the city (Nāẓir al-Awqāf al-Mabrūra iʿl-Quds al-Shāriʿ). 8 Accordingly, many of the documents are related to his activities as administrator of waqfs. Although a large number—the ledger accounts, for example—bear neither a date nor Qadi Sharaf al-Din’s name, some provide clues indicating that they could be records connected with pious endowments that he administered. The presence in the collection of documents which either predate or postdate the qadi’s lifetime suggests that his papers may have formed part of a large collection belonging to the Shāfiʿī court of Jerusalem, and that the papers of Sharaf al-Dīn accidentally survived in disproportionate numbers. This hypothesis also accommodates the presence of the Persian and Persianate documents, most of which are legal records that for some reason or other could have been filed in the Jerusalem court by an Azerbajjani family resident there. If the Haram collection does represent the remnants of an archive, one might speculate that these may be a part or the whole of that archive referred to by van Berchem as being in the Jerusalem citadel some eighty years ago. 9 I prefer, however, to think that the citadel collection was even larger and richer and may still emerge more or less intact. Certainly none of the extant Haram documents is among those cited by Mujir al-Dīn.

I have discussed elsewhere what I consider to be the significance of the Haram collection for the study of Muslim diplomacy, the relationship between the theory and practice of Islamic law, and the history of Jerusalem, especially the history of the common men and women of Jerusalem who were not important or famous enough to be mentioned in a chronicle or a biographical dictionary. 10 The importance of this group of documents lies mainly in its significance for the social and economic history of Jerusalem under the Mamluks. Here, however, I shall limit the discussion to a residual asset, as it were—that is, their importance as a resource for students of the arts of Mamluk Jerusalem, by which I mean the arts in the most general sense. At this point, however, I can only discuss the collection from this perspective as a means of indicating possibilities for future research. First, I shall briefly consider the documents as specimens of calligraphy; second, as sources of information about monuments and other buildings in late fourteenth-century Jerusalem; and finally, as sources for data regarding material objects.

From the calligraphic point of view, it is extremely difficult to say much about the scripts in which the documents are written because of the lack of advanced scholarship on chancery and notarial scripts in Arabic and Persian. The several important works on Islamic calligraphy that have appeared in recent years are mainly devoted to books, inscriptions, or displays of calligraphic virtuosity. 11 Thus, while it might be said that virtually all of the Haram documents are written in some form or another of naskh, riqāʿ, taʿliq, diwānī, tawqīʿ, or nastaʿliq, given the great range of observable variations within those types, that does not say anything very significant. In fact, at this stage, problems of legibility are more pertinent than questions of style, and in this respect the documents range from studied clarity to careless scrawls. The range can be illustrated by a royal decree (plate 1) and a death inventory (plate 2).

Plate 1 shows three lines from a decree prepared and signed by the Bahri Mamluk Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāʿūn, dated 3 Rajab 701 (4 March 1302). It provides an example of what I venture to call riqāʿ, and is a model of refined handbook clarity written by a master scribe of the Mamluk chancery in Cairo. In contrast is the clumsy, unornamented, almost undotted scrawl of a notary attached to the Shāfiʿī court in Jerusalem, used for an estate inventory (plate 2). It is dated 12 Dhūl-Hijja 793 (11 October 1391) and was prepared for a poor woman of Maghribi extraction, whose estate was possibly not sufficient to pay a skilled scribe—certainly other court documents from the Haram prove that notaries could write clearly when they wanted to. On
for its impressive seal, a red tamgaha, usually associated with Mongol documents; this is one of the Persianate group, written in Arabic but having no discernible connection with Jerusalem. It is a bill of sale for a slave purchased in the year 784/1382. The presence of the tamgaha and the bold endorsements written in the right margin are enough to establish it as having emanated from a rich source, so that again the choice to write in a "difficult" script must have been deliberate.

Document 875 (plate 5), written in Persian ta'ilq is equally troublesome. From its format alone—a wide right margin, few words to a line, and lines rising toward the left with wide spaces between them—this document, like document 8 (plate 1), is identifiable as a decree. Thanks largely

the other hand, although we might be tempted to assume that legibility was related to the competence of the scribe, this was not necessarily the case. Plate 3, for example, depicts another royal decree, this one signed by the Burji Sultan al-Malik al-Zahir Jaqmaq on 18 Dhul-Qa'da 844 (10 April 1441), in a script which looks like a cross between diwani and ijaza. Though the chancery scribe who wrote it was obviously skilled in his art, his primary concern, in this instance at least, could not have been legibility: the script is sufficiently cursive to cause considerable difficulty.

Occasionally documents were written in a script that virtually defies decipherment. Such is the case with document 78 (plate 4), otherwise notable

PLATE 1. Royal decree.

PLATE 2. Estate inventory.
to the research of S. M. Stern we know that this format was used for Islamic decrees from at least Fatimid times by high-ranking officers of state.\textsuperscript{13} In fact, this document is so similar in appearance to a Jalāyirid firman recently published\textsuperscript{14} that it can almost certainly be identified as a Jalāyirid decree, especially since the date, 9 Jumādā II 754 (12 July 1353) fits. Notice the line of Mongolian in Uigur script written near the bottom, between lines 7 and 8. Several of the Persian documents contain passages written in Uigur Mongolian as well as Armenian, which is not as strange as it might seem if, indeed, these documents did originate in Azerbaijan, where Arabic, Persian, Mongolian, and Armenian, among other languages, flourished simultaneously.

Two more examples of calligraphy illustrate the similarity of many of the Persian documents to the Persianate ones written in Arabic. Number 832 (plate 6), which contains an acknowledgment of a debt and is dated 27 Šafar 723 (7 March 1323), is written in Arabic; number 861 (plate 7), an acknowledgment of the receipt of a loan, is in Persian, with an Arabic heading and date, 30 Jumādā I 716 (20 August 1316). The similarities in the format and script (tawqīf) of the two documents are greater than the differences and point to what I believe is the continuity and mutual influence exercised by the Arabic and Persian diplomatic traditions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Without some basic research on chancery and notarial calligraphy, however, one can only take refuge in Stern’s still valid advice that we avoid “the question of the script of the [chancery] documents, since our knowledge of the development of Arabic writing is still rudimentary.”\textsuperscript{15} Careful analysis of the Haram documents will no doubt advance our knowledge of calligraphy if considered along with the detailed discussion of chancery...
scripts provided by the Mamluk encyclopedist al-
Qilqashandi, but that is a project of some mag-
itude.

A second category of documents contains data
on buildings in Jerusalem. Of these by far the most
impressive are the royal decrees, of which there are
seven, perhaps eight, in the collection. With one
possible exception, all seem to be related to
revenues for the maintenance and personnel of the
two main structures in Ḥaram al-Sharif in Jerusa-
lem. Number 308 (plate 3) is a splendid example of
a royal decree of a type hitherto known only from
chancery and notarial manuals. Signed by Sultan
Jaqmaq, it is called a murabba' by dint of its divi-
sion into four pages. The main text accompanied
by registration notations is on the recto; the date,
summary, signature, and more registration nota-
tions appear on the two pages of the verso. Its
contents provide endowment income for the Aqṣā
Mosque and thus corroborate the evidence in liter-

PLATE 6. Acknowledgment of debt.
ary sources and inscriptions that the Mamluk sultans were interested in providing funds for the buildings and staff of the sacred structures of Islam.

In addition to the royal decrees issued for the benefit of al-Aqṣā and the Dome of the Rock, there are numerous lesser decrees issued by Mamluk amirs and judges for the benefit of lesser religious institutions in the city. Document 14, for example, is another murābba‘a, or squared decree. Though much less pretentious in script and format than Jaqmaq’s decree, its form is essentially the same, with the text written on the recto and the date and authorization on the verso, along with the signature of the authorizing amir written in the form of a motto or ‘alāma. This document, dated 17 Ṣafar 785 (21 April 1383), is a decree issued by a Mamluk amir, the supervisor of the waqf for the tomb and madrasa of Amir Īṣāqī, built in 763/1361–62, appointing a sheikh, one Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Nāṣiri, to recite the Koran and hadith at the tomb for a salary of fifteen dirhams per month.

Number 10 is a similar document, but contains a petition written on the recto with the response written in the form of a decree on the verso. This petition has the same format as all the petitions familiar to us from the research of Stern, with a wide right margin containing the tarjama, or name of the petitioner, in this case al-Shaykh Burhān al-Dīn, the same sheikh whose name appears on the previous decree. In the stereotyped formula, yuqabbūl al-arḍ wa-yunhī, Burhān al-Dīn asks permission to be domiciled in a Jerusalem madrasa headed by a qādi. On the verso appears the response of the judge in the form of a decree, dated 20 Ṣafar 780 (18 June 1378), couched in typically bureaucratic language, promising to assign Burhān al-Dīn lodgings in the ribaṭ of this institution, unless it is already full, in which case he is to be placed on the waiting list.

Besides decrees, several other types of documents contain data on buildings in Jerusalem. For example, number 774 (plate 8), entitled a waraqā (literally “a leaf”), is written on a standard-sized sheet of paper called a daftar, which has been folded in half to form four pages; it contains two holes for a still visible piece of string used to tie it together with related documents. This waraqā contains an itemization of revenues for the year 791/1388–89 in favor of the Ḥanṣaquṭ al-Salāḥiyya, the Sufi convent founded by Salāḥ al-Dīn and headed by the Shāfi‘i judge, Sharaf al-Dīn. Essentially it is an itemization of rental income, arranged in columns, from a bath (ḥamāmat), roofted stalls (muṣāqaṣāt), shops (ḥawānīt), a mill (tāḥīn), and other establishments for the benefit of the hanṣaquṭ. Beneath each entry the amount of rent is recorded, interestingly enough, in the siyāqa script which is, of course, the script best known from the Ottoman archives, though it was used as early as Abbasid times by scribes of financial bureaus for accounting
located in the neighborhood of a mill, Ṭāḥūn al-Bāṣiṭī, in Jerusalem. The house was bought for 450 dirhams on 15 Šafar 777/16 July 1375 by a man named al-Ḥājj Muḥammad ibn al-Marṭūm al-Ḥājj Aḥmad ibn ‘Alīl-Ṣayʿīrī, who was a resident of Jerusalem, from a woman called al-Ḥājja Ṭayyiba bint al-Ḥājj Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Miṣrīyya, zawjat al-Ḥājj Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar al-Miṣrī. The deed specifies that the entire house, not just a part, was sold for this amount, and its components are spelled out in detail: an apartment (ḥayt wāḥid), the roof (sāḥ), a latrine (muraḍaqa), and a courtyard (sūḥa) with a gate (bāb).

The deed also specifies the exact boundaries of the house in terms of the four points of the compass, beginning at the south, because that was the direction of the qibla. On the south the house was bounded by a waqf house belonging to Ibn Fāʾid; on the east by a passable lane (dārb maslūk); on the north by a garden called the Ḥākūrat al-Bāṣiṭī; and on the west by the mill. This deed is accompanied by two ancillary documents. One, written beneath the deed, attests the transfer of the property from the public treasury (ḥayt al-māl); the other, on the back, is a certification of the deed by the Shāfiʿī court in Jerusalem.

Obviously, these data are of considerable interest to students of Mamluk Jerusalem, especially when correlated with other documents and sources. From the nīṣābūs of the parties named in

purposes. This is among the first evidence we have that siyyāqa was used by accountants of the Mamluk period. The total revenues, along with a summary of the document, are written on the verso.

Document 773-A is also a waqf, very similar in format to number 774. It contains an itemization of expenses incurred in 795/1392 for ʿamaʿir—repairs, or perhaps construction—of a bath (al-ḥammām al-mubārak), included in the waqf of the Khaṇqah al-Ṣaḥābiyya. Various materials are listed—limestone (kilās), stone (ḥijāra), salt (mill), sand (ramla), oil (zayt), and a receptacle for ashes (iṣām)—with the cost of each recorded again in siyyāqa script.

The last type of document connected with buildings is the deed, of which three types are represented: purchase deeds, leases, and endowment deeds. But since the data on buildings to be found in all three types tend to be similar, one example should suffice. Document 353 (plate 9) is a purchase deed written on parchment for a house (dār)
legal transactions, for example, it might be possible to deduce information about the ethnic composition of various neighborhoods and quarters. Although the price paid for the house does not mean much in itself, when correlated with prices paid for other properties and objects recorded in other documents and in literary sources it could become significant. For scholars interested in medieval urban housing, the itemization of the components of the building and the definition of its environment are of evident value. Finally, from a different point of view, this document is valuable qua document, providing, as it does, evidence of the continuity of an Islamic legal and notarial tradition for sales which stretches back to Abbasid times and forward to the Ottoman period.  

Some of the Haram documents yield important data on the use to which buildings were put. A copy of the waqfiyya (number 643) for the tomb and zawiya built for Muhammad Bak Zakariyya in 751/1350–51, includes, for example, a list of the persons who lived in the building and used its facilities, along with the functions they were supposed to perform and the stipends they were paid. Unfortunately, this is the only document of that particular sort in the collection, but many others contain incidental information on the use of Jerusalem's buildings, ranging from its noblest edifices to the humblest houses and apartments.

Something can also be learned from these documents about moveable objects, and our knowledge of the Mamluk minor arts can thereby be augmented. In the Haram there are many lists; in fact, the major part of the collection consists of inventories of one kind or another. Some of these inventories were compiled regularly; others were drawn up only once. Number 595 (plate 10) is an example of the latter; labeled a qa'ima mubarakah ("blessed list"), it enumerates the objects placed in endowment for the Madrasa al-Taziyya by a deceased sheikh, 'Abd al-Wahid, in Safar 781/June–July 1379. It is mercifully legible, so that a good idea of objects deposited and used in a madrasa can be gained, beginning, of course, with books—both the Koran itself (rab'atayn kamilayn) and Koranic commentary (Ma'âlim al-Tanzil) and tradition (Jam' al-Uṣūl). Candlesticks are listed, some gilded (mudhikahab) and some made of cheaper materials. Perhaps of chief interest are the carpets, which are identified by the place in which they were woven: both imported varieties, such as Rumi (Anatolian) and Aq Sarai, and domestic, or of Palestinian origin, from Hawran, Karak, and Shwbak, are represented.
Document 76 is a similar list, dated 26 Dhūl-Hijja 790 (26 December 1388), but it is couched in the form of a waqfiyya in which a lady named Suṭra Khātūn endowed objects for the madrasa and turba which we know from Muṣṭir al-Dīn she had established in the city in 768/1367. Like the previous inventory, this one lists a variety of things—household objects, such as copper pots, trays, and wash basins, some of which are designated by weight and material. Carpets that Suṭra Khātūn donated to the building are identified, again, as Rūmī, Aq Ṣarāʾī, and Shawbakī, but they are also designated by numerical terms, rubāʾī (fourfold), suflāʾī (sixfold), ʿushārī (tenfold), which probably refer to dimensions.

Of related interest in the field of textiles and costume under the Mamluks is the inventory of a clothing shop (number 611) owned by a merchant from Ḥamā located in the Sūq al-Khilaʿ (literally, the “Garments Market”). His stock is listed by fabric, color, origin, and sometimes style, and should constitute a valuable source for the study of clothing and fabrics.

The approximately 450 specimens of estate or death inventories (plate 2), the most numerous type of document in the collection, are also valuable for the study of the clothing of common people. They were compiled on a systematic and regular basis with the authorization of the Shāfiʿi court in conjunction with the public treasury and the viceroy of

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PLATE 11. A makhzūma.
Jerusalem, and were made when a person was either already dead or terminally ill. Such an accounting was intended to ensure that the estate would be divided according to the strictures of Islamic law and to guarantee that the state would obtain its legal share of residual estates. The place of residence is often specified; in number 89, for example, a dead woman named Fāṭima bint ’Abd Allāh al-’Ajamiyya was found in a hostel called the Ribāṭ al-Malik at Bāb al-Duwaydāriyya. Frequently, however, the person’s house was described as being located in a particular quarter or in relation to a public building. Such is the case with Āsiya bint Abī Bakr ibn Ḥasan al-Miṣriyya, whose effects, enumerated in document 165 (plate 2), dated 12 Dhūl-Hijja 793 (13 October 1391), were found in a house known as Dār al-Marḥūm Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbālī at Bāb Ẓīṭa.

The inventory mentions all a person’s possessions: if the person was poor, or perhaps a visitor, it might consist solely of the clothes (thiyāb badanīhi) the person was wearing, which is of course a handy indication of what common people in late fourteenth-century Jerusalem did wear. The enumeration often includes fabric and color; sometimes even style is specified. The inventory for a person of considerable means and a permanent resident of the city can include household effects and precious objects—furnishings and cooking utensils, jewelry, cosmetic aids, tools, and the like. Unfortunately these inventories do not include the values assigned to these objects, but public sales of the effects of deceased persons were frequently conducted for the benefit of the heirs by agents of the Shāfi’i court. Accordingly, records, called makhzūmāt, of these sales were kept. They include the price paid for each object, written in siyāqa script. Number 770 kh (plate 11), for example, the record

of sale of the effects of a freedwoman, Nayrūz bint 'Abd Allāh, 'ataqat Naṣir al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Qaramān, zawjat Muqbil(?) al-Ṭawāshī, includes an old Rūmī carpet sold for eight dirhams, a used Rūmī carpet for five dirhams, a striped woolen curtain for twenty-one dirhams, an old white jubb for six dirhams, and so forth. The inventory continues on the verso, with an itemization of the expenses of the sale and signatures of the witnesses.

Another makhzūma, number 768, in exactly the same format, was made for a person whose substantial wealth was in the form of Egyptian, Syrian, and Italian gold; he turns out to have been the Sufi sheikh of Zāwiyyat Muhammad Bāk. A fascinating list (number 61) of a similar type consists almost entirely of books sold for the same Sheikh Burhān al-Dīn mentioned in some of the other Haram documents and gives an idea of the types of books in circulation at the time, the prices they fetched, and, since the names of the purchasers are given, the sort of persons who bought them.6

Finally, the Haram collection includes documents which, though they have defied analysis so far, may well prove significant. Some are rough accounts (plate 12), many of which contain entries consisting of persons' names, each name preceded by the word 'inda (meaning a debit, an amount owed) with a numerical amount and/or the name of a commodity. Occasionally, one of these pages has a heading with a date. They are probably accounts in favor of waqf properties and commodities in Jerusalem administered by the Qadi Sharaf al-Dīn. I do not yet know what their ultimate significance may be, but they may have some bearing on the management of buildings in the city.

Nor can I foresee, for that matter, the ultimate significance of the Haram collection as a whole. Suffice it to say that almost all the Arabic documents—some 860—contain some data bearing on buildings and possessions in late fourteenth-century Jerusalem, and that they constitute a mine of information for students of Mamluk art and architecture. Their nature does pose substantial difficulties, however, since they constitute not a complete archive but only random records with scraps of information that must be retrieved, organized, and analyzed before they can make much sense. Nevertheless, the Haram collection is unique: with the possible exception of the Egyptian papyri, no collection of medieval Islamic documents equals it.

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NOTES

1. Four hundred fifty-nine Mamluk documents were discovered in the Ministry of Pious Endowments in 1967, and an additional 97 documents of the same period came to light in 1978. See Muhammad Muhammad A'min, Al-Awqāf wa-l-Hayāt al-Ijtīmā'iyya fi Miṣr 648–692/1250–1517 (Cairo, 1980), pp. 2–3.


9. See n. 5, above.


15. Stern, Fatimid Decrees, p. 104.


17. Muṣīr al-Dīn, Al-Ums, 2:45.


23. Muḥir al-Dīn, Al-Uṣn, 2:43-44.

24. For data on clothing in the Mamluk period, see L. A. Mayer, Mamluk Costume (Geneva, 1952). Also valuable is Yedida Kalboun Stillman, Palestinian Costume and Jewelry (Albuquerque, N. M., 1979).
