

Jean-Michel Mouton, Dominique Sourdel, Janine Sourdel-Thomine: Gouvernance et libéralités de Saladin d'après les données inédites de six documents arabes (avec un appendice de Jean Richard), Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres 2015, 146 S.: Ill., ISBN: 978-2-87754-323-1 (br.).

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This volume presents the edition, translation and discussion of six documents related to the rule of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. The importance of the documents in this volume goes back to three aspects: they refer to the Middle Period (for which we have few edited documents so far), they originated in Syria, specifically Damascus (most documents that we do have come from Egypt) and most importantly they are part of a coherent corpus (the vast majority of known documents – apart from the Gheniza – are decontextualized ‘papyri’). All documents are part of the *Ṣām evrakları* held in Istanbul in the *Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi*. In Damascus they had been part of the ‘Gheniza’-style storehouse for disused documents and books, the Umayyad Mosque’s *Qubbat al-khazna*. The *Ṣām evrakları* have not been made accessible for research in the last decades, which is – to put it mildly – regrettable. They simply form the most important known collection of documents from Syria for the Middle Period and the fact that they are kept behind closed doors seriously impedes historical research. It can only be hoped that the *Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi* changes its attitude and opens up this splendid collection.

For the time being, we only have photographs of documents that fall into two main collections. One is held in Berlin and goes back to the early twentieth century when a German-Ottoman expedition opened the *Qubbat al-khazna* and photographed mostly non-Arabic material. The second collection goes back to the early 1960s when Dominique SOURDEL and Janine SOURDEL-THOMINE had the opportunity to work on the *Ṣām evrakları* and took numerous photographs. The material in this second collection has led to numerous articles and more recently two books, the first on pilgrimage certificates (*Certificats de pèlerinage d'époque Ayyoubide*, Paris 2006) and the second on legal documents related to marriage and divorce (*Mariage et séparation à Damas au Moyen Âge: un corpus de 62 documents juridiques inédits entre 337/948 et 698/1299*, Paris 2013). The present volume is thus the third major publication of material with a *Qubbat al-khazna* – *Ṣām evrakları* – Paris photographs *isnād*. As the marriage and divorce contracts have been integrated into *The Arabic Papyrology Database* (Prof. A. Kaplony, University of Munich) the present material will hopefully be added as well so that they can be widely used in future scholarship.

The six documents are very different animals: 1) a private letter by a merchant sent from Cairo to Damascus (565/1170); 2) a petition to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn by the eunuch Iqbāl (570/1174?); 3) a petition for an *iqṭā'* (?) by the officer Mankalān (570/1174–571/1176); 4) a pilgrimage certificate for Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn; 5) an account for works on a bathhouse (577/1182); 6) the draft of a petition to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn concerning teaching in the Mālikiyya madrasa in Damascus (580/1184–589/1193). In contrast to the previous two books based on *Qubbat al-khazna-Ṣām evrakları*–Paris photographs, the thematic bracket of the present volume is not very accentuated: The bathhouse account has no link with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn at all, and the merchant's private letter is much more concerned with family and business matters than with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. The three-page appendix by Jean RICHARD on “Saladin's Frankish Slaves” only adds to the impression of a thematically not entirely consistent publication. However, the book's main strength lies in making available new documentary material for the Middle Period, and this is sufficient ground to praise the editors' efforts. There is only one other original document unequivocally linked to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn known so far (from the Gheniza collection).

Doc. 1, the private letter, is of highest value as it is one of the few Middle Period private letters, which is from a Syrian context and clearly dated – the letters in Werner DIEM, *Arabische Privatbriefe des 9. bis 15. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, Wiesbaden 1996 come from Egypt and are mostly not dated. Apart from the Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn-related lines this letter gives – as discussed by the editors – fascinating insights into trading patterns between Egypt and Syria in the late 6th/12th century – and it would be wonderful material for a history of emotions with the writer deploring in length the separation from his children and the low number of letters he receives. The letter is written in an informal style shifting between various language codes and dialects. Its philological richness (and challenges) is not fully brought out in the current edition and there is little doubt that work remains to be done on it. The few instances where a '(sic)' is inserted do not help to clarify the different codes used in this text. One of the fascinating Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn-related issues in this letter is that he is repeatedly referred to as 'al-Sultān' (ll. 3, 28), which would not be too surprising if this had occurred after he had become ruler of Egypt. However the letter is dated, according to the editors, to the year 565/1170 when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was a Fatimid vizier. 'al-Sultān' is a title rarely used in early Ayyūbid titular – for instance none of the other documents in this volume employ this term – and the use of this term so early in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's career is startling.

The petition to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn by the eunuch Iqbāl, doc. 2, is philologically a much more straightforward affair. In the same vein the editors' dating of this petition is fully convincing, and they do a wonderful job in placing it in its historical context. It is here that we see a member of the (by-then) old Zangid elite making

his transition to the new Ayyūbid ruler's entourage. However one might disagree with the editors' assertion that the petition's mis-en-page and language shows that Iqbāl belonged to the 'gens lettrés' (40). As they underline elsewhere (105), petitions were more often than not written by specialist scribes so that inferring an individual's learnedness on the basis of a petition's presentation is highly speculative. It is a pity that the note on top of the petition, written in another hand, is not discussed at all.

The doc. 3 is another petition, which is philologically also largely unproblematic, and the editors again situate it very convincingly in its historical context. Here we see the Kurdish officer Mankalān, who belongs to the same tribe as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, petitioning the ruler for increased remuneration for his military service. The exact form of remuneration however is not easy to understand, and I am not entirely convinced that the editors' attempt to present it as part of an 'iqṭā'-system' – the term *iqṭā'* is not mentioned in the petition – does full justice to what is going on here. Mankalān was seemingly receiving a payment (*khubz*) from income of lands (*'ushr*) that had been granted to two of his close relatives. With the petition Mankalān tried to get Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn to grant him another *khubz* in Egypt – probably one that was not mediated via a third party. The very messiness of the arrangement in place alludes to practices of grants that do not fit well a well-established *iqṭā'*-system and rather invites a look at 'proto-*iqṭā'*' arrangements in a period of transition.

The pilgrimage certificate, doc. 4, certifies a pilgrimage of substitution, i.e. a ritual pilgrimage (*Ḥajj* or *'umra*) in Mecca performed by person A for the benefit of person B and that were testified by persons C, D, etc. This certificate for the benefit of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was edited previously (*Certificats de pèlerinage d'époque Ayyoubide*, no. 13) and the reading of the text has remained unchanged with some minor modifications of the translation. It is nevertheless included in the present volume because the 'person A' has now been identified as the mystic al-Qushayrī (d. 576/1180). In consequence the dating and the historical context of the certificate, the early years of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's reign, are now much more apparent. The editors rightly underline that the certificate shows one strategy of how Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn inserted himself into the existing religious and cultural landscape of Damascus: Such certificates seem to have been specifically popular in Damascus, and this document closely follows the Zangid-period style of decorating them. One minor quibble with the document's discussion is that it matter-of-factly states that such certificates were displayed on the walls of the Umayyad mosque (67). The 2006 book had already included such speculation, but a more cautious wording would have been more appropriate as we have no evidence whatsoever, either on the certificates or in narrative sources, of such practices.

Doc. 5 is a ‘memorandum’ on repair works undertaken in the Ḥammām Kullī, which is known from narrative sources. This document is a chronological – and often carefully dated – list of these repairs’ successive phases, most importantly on the water supply and the heating system. It contains a fascinating array of details on manual labour in medieval Damascus such as prices, working shifts (which very well could include the night) and crafts (mentioning an otherwise unknown ‘*shāwī*’ as the one responsible for the canalisation). The editors call this document rather vaguely a ‘memorandum’, but in my view it can be called a ‘bill’ as the costs for each step are carefully detailed. The editors’ attempt to insert this memorandum/bill into Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s and the Ayyūbids’ building activities in the city is not entirely compelling.

The final document, doc. 6, is of interest as it is the draft of a petition to be submitted to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, i.e. here we can see the early stages of how such petitions were produced. Seemingly a ‘later document’ (89) is on the verso, but the editors regrettably give no information as to what this document is. In order to understand the life cycle of such a draft it would have been fascinating to get at least a rough indication. This draft is significantly more challenging than the finished petitions of docs. 2 and 3. It is clear that the students of the Mālikiyya madrasa in Damascus petitioned Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn to take a decision as two (?) scholars are in dispute as to who is entitled to be the *madrasa*’s shaykh. However, who the contenders are remains vague (the documents mentions three scholars) and the editors’ translation does not elucidate the matter. For instance, line 2 assumes that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had appointed two scholars at the same time (“il (al-Malik al-Nāṣir) aurait aussi fait don de la madrasa à ‘Umar ...”). Yet, the ‘aussi’ is not in the Arabic text, and there is every reason to assume that this passage simply summarises the successive early post holders.

The edition is repeatedly somewhat inconsistent: there does not seem to be a system when the *hamza* is added and when it is left out. In the same vein the translation inserts words which would have been better placed in brackets to alert the reader (e.g. doc. 2, l. 8 ‘disposer’) and unsystematically substitutes personal pronouns with the name. In some rare cases the translation requires correction. The writer of the private letter (doc. 1) relates for instance that he had petitioned Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (most likely to obtain a post in the administration). Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn responded, according to the letter’s writer, by asking him for patience. Immediately afterwards the writer states that on the day he wrote “*hādḥā l-kitāb*” (l. 7) he was finally granted this post. Now, the editors translate this term with ‘this petition’ (though the writer previously referred to ‘petition’ with its standard term *qiṣṣa*, l. 6) so that he would have received the post on the same day Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was asking him for patience. Much more likely, the *kitāb* refers rather to the letter itself (as in l. 18), which was precisely written in order to convey the good news of his appointment.

The concluding two chapters very briefly take up the title's 'governance and magnanimity'. This is not the strongest section of the book as it hardly engages with the existing secondary literature on the topic. The discussion sees these documents, especially the petitions, as expression of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's 'original policy' (105) that relied on personally knowing those involved in military and administration – a claim of historical change that could have been developed in more detail. In the same vein the discussion entirely focuses on Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and the documents are exclusively read in a top-down fashion so that they are again and again presented as tools of 'control'. Historical scholarship, such as in Ottoman Studies, has started to regard these petitions rather as expression of a two-way relationship that often allow to understand social strategies and social agency by a wide array of actors. For instance, Iqbāl's petition is summarised as illustrating "Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's preoccupation to personally choose the men in his entourage" (46). We are here in the period just after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had established himself in Damascus and thus in a period of political transition. Members of the old Zangid elite strove to preserve their position and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was obviously dependent on some degree of continuity to manage this transition. Iqbāl's petition is thus at least as much a fascinating example of the strategies adopted by members of the city's elite to preserve status and wealth.

However, the nature of the thematic bracket is not meant to be the book's main contribution. It is first and foremost a work of edition, translation and historical contextualisation. Some of the problematic passages (especially in docs. 1 and 6) are far from being conclusively solved, but the editors have done the field an enormous service with this work, which (in combination with the previous two books and the forthcoming book on documents related to property and real estate transactions) will have a far-reaching impact on the study of Middle Eastern history for decades to come.