

# EGYPTIAN ARCHIVES AND THE REWRITING OF THE MAMLUK'S HISTORY

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The sources available to study the history of the Arabs have been numerous and varied since before the use of archival materials and remain so. Traditional sources for historical writings such as annals, biographies, books on jurisprudence and literary materials are abundant, in addition to remnant material antiquities accumulated in the Arab region throughout the ages.

In spite the importance of information derived from these sources, the use of old documents paved the way to new knowledge of the history of the Arab world and altered old ones. Old documents opened the way to new areas of research that were not available using traditional sources only. Subjects such as social, economic and legal history, or urban planning and urbanization's movements became available. Documents presented new details of life in this part of the world.

The last few years witnessed an increased "fascination" for the use of documents by a new generation of historians and archaeologists interested in the period between the rise of Islam and the 20th century. Their research did not depend on the use of Arabic documents solely but used Turkish, European, and American ones as well. Documents also became an added tool to restaurateurs of old artifacts dating from the Middle Ages to the Ottoman period in the Arab region. It became possible for them not only to visualize the past but to reconstruct it as well.<sup>1</sup>

The collection of Egyptian archival documents and those pertaining to the Egyptian history are the richest and most varied among Arab collections. They cover the period from the Arab entry to Egypt in the year 20 Hijra until today. In that regard the

Mamluk period (647-923 Hijra/ 1250-1517 AD) is not different from any other in the Egyptian history. The abundance of documents for that period led to an early interest in using them for historical and archaeological studies.

## **I. When Did the Interest in Archival Documents as a Source of Historical Knowledge Start in the Arab World?**

The beginning of research into Arab documents was linked to the early discovery of Arab papyri in Egypt at the start of the 19th century. The oldest discovery dates to 1824 when peasants in Saqqāra found a pottery jar containing two Arab papyri. They were taken by the French General Consul in Egypt Mr. Bernardo Drovetti who sent them to the well-known orientalist the Baron Sylvester de Sacy who studied then published them at the "Journal des Savants" in 1825 along with other Arab papyri that were presented as gift to king Louis the 18th.<sup>2</sup> There was a remarkable increase to those findings during the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>3</sup> Thousands of other documents were added with the discovery of the Genizah papers pertaining to the Jewish community in Egypt starting from 1896.<sup>4</sup>

Though the attention of the Orientalist towards Arab documents started in 1825, the interest of Egyptian researchers did not start much later. Before the end of the 19th century they were already working on the documents. We can point to three pioneers in that field: Ali Pasha Mubarak (1824 -1893), Amin Sami Pasha (1857-1941), and Ali Bahgat Bey (1858-

1924).

Ali Mubarak, who relied on documents from the Mamluk period for his monumental work, is particularly significant, he was probably the first Egyptian in the modern period to have used archival documents as a source of research and information as seen in his large work “*Al Khiṭāṭ at-tawfiqīyah al-jadīdah*”.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly evident in the second and third volumes in which he describes different structures and buildings in Cairo and follows the development of real estate ownership in the city. He relied on the waqf documents which he had access to due to his position as minister of waqf. He also used the records of acquisition of agricultural lands to survey the surface of villages in Egypt while holding the position of minister of public works. By this research he presented a pioneering work supported by scientific documentation taken from financial registry and deeds.<sup>6</sup>

Although Ali Mubarak used the documents of the Mamluk endowment in his book “*Al Khiṭāṭ at-tawfiqīyah al-jadīdah*” yet he did not publish any of them. Maybe Bernhardt Moritz and Axel Moberg were the first to publish in 1918 documents from the Mamluk period. Moritz published two decrees from the Mamluk Sultan El Ashraf Qaytbey found in the collection of Saint Catherine monastery,<sup>7</sup> while Moberg studied endowments from the 13th century and published some of their documents. This was followed by the pioneering study published by Leo Ary Mayer in London in 1938 about “*The Building of Qaytbay as described in his Endowment Deed*”.<sup>8</sup>

The awareness of the importance of archives in Egypt in the 20th century led to the availability of documents which raised the interest of researchers in the field of history and archaeology to use them as a source of historical knowledge. The scientific interest in documents as a source of historical research was coupled with an academic interest in studying the documents in themselves. The study of Arabic documents in Egypt in a structured academic way started in the middle of the last century with

the establishment of the “Institute for Archives and Librarianship” at the University of Fouad the first in 1951. Since then and for more than half a century later we have had a stream of studies and researches in the science of archives and documents with its three branches: the diplomatic, the archives, and the current record management. With the rise of academic studies of documents new names appeared making a link between the study of history, archaeology, and documents. Prominent among them: Tawfiq Iskandar who relied on European documents in the Italian archives going back to the Mamluk period. Abdel Latif Ibrahim, who is the founder of the Arabic school for the study of archival documents. His work on the documents of the period of Sultan El Ghouri which he finished in the middle of the 50s of the last century, is considered as a new opening in the field of historical and archival studies in Egypt and the Arab world.<sup>9</sup>

From the 1950s we have numerous historical work on the Mamluk period relying on documents as a major source. This was an important step forward for a better understanding of that period. It clarified unknown parts and changed some concepts. Archival collection became an essential source for historical studies.

Foremost among researchers who used documents as a main source in the Arab world since the 1950s: Ahmed Darag in the 1950s and 60s with his work on Barsbay’s period.<sup>10</sup> In the 70s we have the work of Mohamed Mohamed Amin about the “*awqaf*” in the Mamluk period,<sup>11</sup> and Kassem Abdou Kassem on *ahl aldhema* in Egypt in the Middle Ages.<sup>12</sup> Their works were considered as landmarks in the knowledge based on documents. They are not exhaustive examples of the produced Arabic works in that field.

## II. What Are the Most Important Collections of Documents for the Mamluk Period in the Egyptian Archives?

Probably the most important collection we got hold of are the documents dealing with private legal acts that are kept in four places: the historical archives of the ministry for waqf, the national archives, Coptic orthodox patriarchy in Cairo and the library of the monastery of Saint Catherine in the Sinai Peninsula.<sup>13</sup>

The Mamluk period left us with an enormous quantity of documents dealing with waqf and legal acts related to it. They are preserved in different establishments, but a large part remains in the historical archives of the ministry of waqf. This archive contains hundreds of documents of the Mamluk period. The oldest of which is dated to 666 Hijra. Until 1967 only 39 documents were registered. In the same year a large collection of documents dealing with the Ayyubids and the Mamluk period were found. The historian Mohamed Mohamed Amin discovered 97 documents that were neglected at the archive in the 1970s. They contain some of the most important documents in the awqaf such as the oldest kept document dated to the year 666 Hijra. The document of the waqf of the Sultan Qalawon on "Al Bimarestan", many other documents for Sultan Barqouq, and another document of Al Motawakel 'ala Allah the last Abbasid khalif in Cairo. The total number of documents from the Mamluk period kept in the ministry of waqf is around 550. The collection of the ministry is not limited to waqf it also contains documents dealing with other legal acts such as: exchanges, buying, inheritance, compensations, attestations of ownership, rents and procurements. It also includes a unique document that donates a feudal land from the period of the Sultan El Ghouri. The Middle Ages saw the birth of a feudal military system. It was necessary to bestow feudal land on the princes to produce a feudal decree. Yet strangely enough after 5 centuries of feudal system, we only have this sole document which gives us a tangible

example of the kind of documents on which was established the rules of the state in the Islamic east since the Seljuk period until the end of the Mamluk period.<sup>14</sup>

The collection of the ministry of waqf is linked to the collection of deeds in the Egyptian National Archives known as "the Princes and Sultans' Collection". This collection was transferred to the National Archives in 1970. It is not less important than the one in the ministry of waqf, it also contains different legal acts such as waqf, selling, exchanging, owning, and inheritance. The number of documents in this collection is 296 mostly from the Mamluk period. The oldest is a document for selling a property of Beit El Mal from The Fatimid Khalifa Al Faez to his minister al Saleh Tala'a. There are also a few documents from the Ayyubids period most important of which is the waqf of the king Al 'Adel. But the biggest collection is of the Mamluk period which includes waqfs of many Sultans' princes, men of states, sheikhs and merchants.

Both the National Archives collection and the ministry of waqf collection mentioned above complement one another. The subjects are similar, and the personalities are the same in each collection. This explains the reason we can consider them as one collection divided between two institutions because of the circumstances surrounding the transfer of the documents from the persons who had acquired them to the place where they are kept. For example, the collection of the National Archives was taken from the Sharia court and the only explanation is that they were used as evidence in some cases. As for the historical archival collection of the ministry of waqf it was acquired by the ministry with the transfer of the supervision of the waqf to the state.

The Coptic orthodox patriarchate in Cairo keeps in its archives a collection of documents from the 9th and 10th century Hijra. Until few years back all we knew from this collection was 12 waqfs documents and one document dealing with a sale. Later the study made by Magdy Gerges in

those archives brought to the surface hundreds of documents from the medieval period. They include various legal acts among which public documents sealed with the insignia of princes and Sultans stipulating the protection of some of the church's property.<sup>15</sup> The importance of this collection is that it contains material that can show us the life of Egyptian Christians in the Middle Ages and the different legal acts they produced and the size of churches and monasteries under waqf.

In addition to the three official archives in Cairo some museums such as the Coptic Museum and the Islamic Art Museum contain a variety of documents. The national library has also a variety of documents in addition to its collection of papyri that goes back to the first century of the Islamic period. The section of old documents in the National Library includes a collection that goes back to the medieval period. Some were written on leather, some on parchments and others on papers. This collection contains documents of rent, sale, waqfs, procurements. The oldest of which is a document of sale written on leather from 239 Hijra and the most recent is a certificate of inheritance and of emancipation from 916 Hijra. The number of documents in this collection is around 50. In addition, there is another collection from the Ottoman and the modern period. One of the most important document in this collection from the Mamluk period is the summary of the waqf of Barsbay. Some documents were recently transferred from the National Library to the National Archives.

The importance of these collections preserved in the archives and museums is due to the rarity of sources available for this period and for the versatility of its subjects. This gives researchers the possibility to know the diplomatic development of Arab documents and calligraphy in the Middle Ages. It is also a valuable source for analyzing the socioeconomic development and the urban history of the Egyptian city in the Middle Ages. It contains details of what is being bought or put under waqf whether agricultural

land or building structure which provides us with information on city planning and agricultural land such as size and the distribution system of revenues. Some documents are useful for the study of antiquities with their detailed prescriptions of various structures such as houses, palaces, religious or civilian buildings which allow researchers to draw a live image of how things were. They help in the restoration of old buildings and present a description of other monuments that disappeared. They also teach us the terms that were used by builders and craftsmen, the names they gave to different materials and the units that formed the building structure of that period.

With regards to Saint Catherine's collection in Sinai it is considered as one of the most important Arab documents that goes back to medieval and Ottoman period in general and the Mamluk period. The number of documents kept in the monastery is 1742 among which 1072 in Arabic and 670 in Turkish. The largest number of the Arabic document goes back to the Mamluk period.

The importance of Saint Catherine's collection is that it includes the largest collection of public documents in the Middle Ages obtained from the Egyptian archives, most of them were lost. In addition, this collection consists of a unified group of documents that deals with the protection of the monastery and its monks. As for the private documents in the monastery they provide us with a view on legal acts by non-Moslems in the Middle Ages.

In this context one must mention the discovery of documents some of them from the Mamluk period by Japanese explorers in the 90s of last century around Al Tour in Sinai.<sup>16</sup>

Outside of Egypt there is an important collection in Palestine discovered in the 1970s named "Al Haram" many of which are from the Mamluk period. It includes an important number of legal documents in addition to the only collection of financial records from the Mamluk period.<sup>17</sup>

Outside the Arab world there are few

documents kept in some European countries such as the archives in Turkey, Italy, Spain, Croatia, because of relations between Mamluk Egypt and those countries. In addition, there are two large collections distributed among libraries and museums that were gradually taken out of Egypt throughout the last two centuries: Arab papyri and Genizah documents some of which date back to the Mamluk period.

As an example of how the use of documents provided us with new historical knowledge on the Mamluk period, is the contribution of the collection of "Dafatir Al Rizq" that are kept in the National Archives in Cairo. Despite the scarcity of these "dafatir" or registries they provide us with a wealth of knowledge on the history of Egypt in the Middle Ages during the Mamluk period and particularly the Seljuk period. They provided us with new information that changed the common understanding of land ownership in that period. The subject of land ownership in the east is very controversial among historians working on the socio economic and legal development in general and those who are interested in the development of land ownership in particular. It was commonly believed that land ownership in the east during the Middle Ages was limited to the state and that there was no private ownership. This perception was derived from traditional historical sources such as annals or books on conquests and others but the research into the documents gave us a new and different picture.

The National Archives hold a large number of "dafatir" registries on financial administration written in the period from the middle of the (10th century Hijra/16th AD) to the end of the (13th Hijra/19th AD) the Ottoman period and the period of Mohamed Ali's dynasty. One of the known archival units of this collection is the one called "Al Rizq" registry.<sup>18</sup>

The system of "rizq" deals with one type of agricultural land acquisition in medieval Egypt.<sup>19</sup> There are two kinds of rizq: First: Al Rizq Al

Ihbassiya which is the land the state gives the right to use and to derive revenues from to religious charities or service providers such as mosques, khankawats, monasteries, schools and marstans, or to a person who performs public duty to the state or to people such as teachers, jurists, judges, or to someone giving unlicensed services to the state or to their offspring without becoming owners. It resembles in that regard the charity waqf from Beit El Mal (public treasury). It differs in the possibility to recuperate the rizq while it is not possible in most of the cases to cancel waqf. Another difference is that the waqf is owned by Beit Al Mal and issued by the Sultan or by someone given the powers to do so through a decree from one of the legal judges. While the rizq is usually given through a decree from the Emir Dawadar. The waqf comes out of the ownership of Beit El Mal while the Rizq Ihbassiya remains under its ownership from both angles de facto and de jure. Originally the rizq was exempt from taxes and the person taking revenue from it acquires the full benefit. This changed with the end of the Turkish Mamluk period and it was often subjected to taxes. Also, in general, the state had the right to recuperate the rizq anytime. Al Rizq Al Ihbassiya was subjected to the administration of Diwan Al Ahbas. In the case of the death of the beneficiary of the rizq and if his children were not mentioned in the decree than a new one is required.

Second: Al Rizq Al Gayshia which is different from Rizq Al Ihbassiya because it is given from Diwan Al Geioush Al Manssoura, to benefit from its revenues, only to retired princes and families of deceased princes as a retirement benefit. Yet some of the Mamluk documents show that it was not always given to the retired princes, in fact some of them maintained important positions in the state.

The registry relied in its information on two sources: First, the records of the financial administration during the period of the Circassian Mamluk, the last of which was registered in 891 Hijra during the reign of the Sultan El Ashraf Qaytbay. The second, was Dafatir El Tarbe' of 933 Hijra which

Table 1

The era	The era of Governors	Fatimid era	Ayyubid era	The era of Turkish Mamluk	The era of Circassian Mamluk
Number of references	—	2	—	17	580
%	0	0.33	0	2.83	96.82

started at the beginning of the Ottoman period in Egypt. In addition to these two sources was added the changes that occurred in the agricultural land. The notes were mostly written in Arabic with some Turkish.<sup>20</sup>

The importance of this archival unit is not limited to the details it provides with regards to the Rizq system and the development it witnessed during the Ottoman period, it also provides historians important information that. Allows them to rewrite some aspects of the Mamluk period. There is no doubt that the dependence of Dafatir El Rizq on documents from the Mamluk period, taking data from them and using whole sections, made it a reliable source of information.<sup>21</sup>

The study of the collection of documents in the Egyptian archives, either the ones going back to the Mamluk period and before or the financial registries of the Ottoman period, proves that the period of Circassian Mamluk saw an increase in the sale of properties belonging to Beit El Mal in a way that surpasses by far the ratio of the previous period. The documents available during Circassian period regarding selling properties from Beit El Mal constitutes 96.82% of the total number of similar documents since the entry of the Arabs to Egypt until the Ottoman occupation.<sup>22</sup>

The documents prove that Egypt used, marginally, private ownership of agricultural land throughout the Islamic period. Most of land was in the hands of the state until the period of Circassian Mamluk where we have an obvious change. If we still can't be accurately sure of the size of agricultural land whose ownership was transferred from the state to private hands during the Circassian period, the

documents give clear indication as to the scale. Some documents show that whole villages were sold. We also learn from the documents of Rizq Al Ihbassiya and Rizq Al Gaishia that the cases of sale included different sizes from at least 275 village in Egypt and greater Syria.<sup>23</sup>

The careful reading of the registries and analyzing their content derived from documents from the Mamluk period will change our knowledge of the era. The registries help present a detailed picture about land acquisition until the end of the Mamluk period with the socioeconomic proofs it entails. It is our source of information for the understanding of the different types of land ownership in that era and of the owners, the geographical distribution of their acquisitions and the origins of these properties and their developments.<sup>24</sup>

It becomes apparent from reading Mamluk documents and Ottoman registry that there was a significant change in the form of land acquisition during the Circassian Mamluk period. We can safely say that the form of agricultural acquisition in Egypt changed from the beginning of the era in (end of the century 8 Hijra/ 14 AD) to (beginning of the century 10 Hijra/ 16 AD). During 140 years from the beginning of the Circassian rule established by the Sultan Barqouq until the occupation of Egypt by Selim the Ottoman Sultan. During this period two significant trends occurred to understand the situation of agriculture land.

The first: the large increase in the sale of agricultural land owned by Beit El Mal

The second: the widening sphere of waqf on charity work or for a person and his descendants.

More than half the land sold from Beit El

Table 2

2nd Act	Waqf	Donation	Exchange	Agreement	Legacy	Ownership	Transmission	Sale	Unknown
Number of references	335	1	2	3	12	29	40	117	24
%	57.66	0.17	0.34	0.52	2.07	4.99	6.88	20.14	7.23

Mal was put in waqf by those who bought them. If we add what was bought for the waqf and what was reserved to waqf by those to whom the property was transferred, the ratio would reach 63.6%.

But if we look at the facts when the Ottomans occupied Egypt the ratio of waqf land reached 88.89%. Since the land that remained under the ownership of individuals after 923 Hijra is limited to 64 cases of sales that we could trace.

This confirms historians' conclusion that most of Egypt's land at the end of the Middle Ages was put in waqf and that free ownership was rare.

The big change in land acquisition during the Circassian Mamluk period which occurred as a result of sales from Beit El Mal, led to important results: on one hand a large part of agricultural land shifted from state ownership to private ownership. This happened regardless whether the land was run directly from the diwans of the sultans or the diwans of the ministry or whether it was distributed on beneficiaries as rizq to individual private owners. On the other hand, a large part of this land which became privately owned turned to waqf. Some of the waqf were dedicated to various charitable work and others were private dedicated to an individual and his descendants. In both cases this land seemed to be exempt from taxes which meant a large decrease in the state's revenue. It is for that reason and according to what is mentioned in the registry of Al Ihbassiya and Al Geshia Rizq that the waqf of agriculture land often required a new decree from the sultan that would allow the owner to put his land under the waqf.

There is no doubt that this new situation had a negative effect on the feudal system. The size of land available to the state to give to princes diminished.

The negative impact of this change affected the political and social aspect of the feudal system more than it affected the economy since most of the land sold came back to its previous beneficiaries. We cannot say that the fortune of the princes derived from revenues of agricultural land decrease due to the selling of land to Beit Al Mal, but it is sure that the transformation of princes from feudal lords to land owners led, among other things, to the collapse of feudal loyalty and gave the princes a larger independence from the authority of the state.

In spite of the above, we can't say that this change was negative in its totality. The feudal military system of the Mamluk by the end of the Circassian period became an obstacle to the development of the Egyptian society. Its demise was not necessarily a bad thing if a more suitable system was found.

### III. Could the Sale of the Property of Beit El Mal Contribute to the Finding of an Alternative System?

This is what we will try to answer by considering the effects of the sale of properties from Beit El Mal, especially of agricultural land, on the social condition of Egypt during the Mamluk period.

The shift from state ownership of large peaces of land to private ownership of individuals because of large scale sales from Beit El Mal, led to a change in the social structure of the society during the Circassian period. In addition to the shift in the relation with land from acquisition to full ownership, agricultural land (the main source of revenue) became a commodity that easily changed hands, available

Table 3

Category	The number of buyers		The number of sales	
	%	Number	%	Number
Sultans and their families	2.5	14	3.1	18
Mamluk princes	40.6	227	51.1	296
Sons of mamluk princes	23.6	132	18.6	108
Wives mamluk princes	2.0	11	51.1	3
Slaves & ex-slaves women	1.2	7	1.1	6
Shekh Arab & Shekh area	8.4	47	5.3	31
Senior staffs	6.1	34	6.1	35
Judges	5.1	28	4.8	28
Khalifa's family	0.7	4	0.6	4
Sufism	0.3	2	0.5	3
Ashraf	0.2	1	0.2	1
Merchants	0.5	3	0.5	3
Physicians	0.2	1	0.2	1
Waqf	0.2	1	0.2	1
Unknown persons	8.4	47	7.2	42
Total	100	559	100	580

to whoever can afford to buy it regardless of the association with military rulers or the top of the state's administration. Political authority was not anymore, the only way to acquire the revenue of the land.

This led to the widening of private property's base to the extent that it became possible to speak of the very beginnings of a new class of land owner who shared the same interest connected to the land.

We can draw approximatively the main features of this new class that acquired half the agricultural land in Egypt, by considering a representative sample of sales from Beit Al Mal in the diplomatic documents and the references in the Gaishia and Ihbassiya Rizq during the Mameluke Circassian period.

First: more than half the sales from Beit El

Mal went to the ruling class, the princes of the sultan, the mamluke who acquired 54.2% of the sales and represented 43.1% of buyers which means that many of them bought from Beit El Mal more than once.

Second: 20.2% of sellers were people associated with mamluk princes such as Awlad Al Nass, the wives of the mamluks and their slaves. They represent 26.8% of the total of the buyers from Beit El Mal in that period.

Third: the cases of sale from people who do not have mamluk origin is 25.5% while the same group represented 31.1% of buyers.

These indices provide us with an approximate picture of the new class in Egypt that came to own a big part of the land in Circassian Mamluk period. Based on the origin and the social occupation this class can be divided into three groups.



The first: the governing military class composed of the sultan and mamluk princes. They represent the top of the political authority. Selling to them part of the property of Beit El Mal transformed them from users to owners of the land. This includes the sultan's themselves. This allowed that wealth becomes secured in their hands and their legal inheritors.

The second: those affiliated to the first group by either blood relation or marriage. It is formed primarily from "Awlad Al Nass" than the wives of the mamluk princes and their concubines.

The third: is formed of people from completely different origins and professions from the mamluk. They come either from different Arab origins or Egyptians. They are mostly far from any military profession. Their participation in owning lands is a significant change.

If we compare the number of buyer to the number of sellers in every category, it would seem that the concentration of ownership in the first category is higher than the second and third category.

If the first category was very different from the third, the second category formed of "Awlad Al Nass" was moving gradually to merge with the third. Due to the nature of the Mamluk system the Awlad Al Nass were far from learning military training and were in general geared towards mingling with the Egyptian society and to participate in its civilian activities.

Without a doubt the tendency towards amassing the ownership and the wealth of the society in the hand of a class that is not formed of professional fighters and has a better chance for living could have led to a better use of that wealth in a more rational way.

The change in the society's social relations because of the changes in ownership and the first appearance of a new class mostly from "Awlad Al Nass" and Egyptians could have been able to take the country out of its crisis especially with the inability of the Mamluks to respond to the challenges the society faced, becoming themselves an obstacle to the development of the society.

#### **IV. But There Were Several Obstacles to That Important Development during the Circassians Mamluk Period:**

First: the ownership of the land was mostly non-specified. The buyer buys a share in a land or a village without specifying its boundaries. He owns part of the lands profit more than the land itself. Although this did not prevent the owner from acting freely with regards to his ownership, yet he involved the state one way or other as a party to the ownership. It seems collecting the land's revenue used to be done through "Shad Al Nahia".

If we add to this that most were absentee owners except for Arab Sheikh, this weakened the positive social effect of the sale from Beit El Mal.

Second: the confiscation of land and fortune during the Mamluk period made the ownership unsettled. Owners especially princes and high official always worried for their fortunes. This did not encourage the accumulation of wealth.

Third: all the above led many to put their ownership into waqf to protect it from being confiscated. And although the (Al Waqf Al ahly) allowed the previous owner and his descendants to receive the biggest share of revenue, yet the waqf system weakened the social role of private ownership in general.

The Ottoman occupation ended the social transformation associated with the sale of Beit El Mal and delayed the natural development of the new class. The process of ownership came to a halt for years except what was sold through "Diwan Al Mawarith Al Hashriya". Foreign invasion aborted the potentials of the society and delayed the full transformation to private ownership of agriculture land. Private ownership was not seriously established in Egypt until the peasant's decree of Said Pasha in 1858.

An important observation remains with regards to the new social form that came as a result of the sale by the state of land ownership from Beit El Mal. No doubt that the movements of transfer that followed

Table 4

The position of the lands after 2nd act	%	The number
Steel with sultans and their families or as waqf	65.3	379
Moved in the same category	8.6	50
Moved in other categories	13.3	77
Unknown	12.8	74

buying of property from Beit El Mal led to some changes in the features of this social form.

First: most of the land 65.3% remained under the ownership of the buyers or their families or their legal inheritors or was transferred to their waqf which suggests that there was some stability in ownership for few families.

Second: although transfer of ownership through inheritance maintained ownership in the

family yet it changed the picture to the benefit of Awlad El Nass since the inheritors of mamluk princes belong mostly to this category.

Third: with regards to the 34.7% transfers that occurred outside the realm of the family, a lot of it were redistributed 24.9% on people who belong to the same category of the original buyers.

Fourth: most of the cases of transfer between different categories, was from mamluk princes to

Table 5

Category	To		From	
	%	The number	%	The number
Sultans and their families	41.6	32	5.2	4
Mamluk princes	19.5	15	52	40
Sons of mamluk princes	12.9	10	18.2	14
Wives mamluk princes	—	—	—	—
Slaves & ex-slaves women	—	—	—	—
Shekh Arab & Shekh area	3.9	3	2.6	2
Senior staffs	—	—	7.8	6
Judges	5.2	4	3.9	3
Khalifa's family	—	—	—	—
Sufism	1.3	1	—	—
Ashraf	1.3	1	—	—
Merchants	—	—	—	—
Physicians	—	—	—	—
Waqf	2.6	2	—	—
Unknown persons	11.7	9	10.3	8
Total	100	77	100	77

other categories 51.6%.

Fifth: most of cases of transfer between different categories, was to the ownership of the sultans and their families 41.6%. This is an important indication as to the high level of corruption in the sale of ownership of Beit El Mal.

Finally, this study gives us some preliminary ideas about the first signs of an emerging new class of owners of agricultural land in the Circassian Mamluk period. "Awlad Al Nass" were the back bones of this new class. In spite of the obstacles that delayed the development of this class, the increasing sales of the properties of Beit El Mal was done in a way

to strengthen these social changes. The Ottoman occupation of Egypt in 923 Hijra/1517 AD. put an end to this movement and froze the social and political effect of the rise of a new class of land owners for centuries.<sup>25</sup>

It is hoped that this research opens the way for new and thorough research in the development of agricultural land ownership in the Circassian Mamluk period and its social and political effects on the people of Egypt.

#### NOTES

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- 12 Qasem Abdo Qasem used archival documents in his Ph.D. thesis about 'ahl aldhima in Egypt in middle ages, he finished his thesis in the middle of the 70's, and he published it as a book in many editions, the last one was in 2003.  
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