

Book Review

Wakako Kumakura. *Chusei Ejiputo no Tochiseido to Nairukangai [Nile Irrigation and Land System in Medieval Egypt]* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2019). ISBN: 9784130261609. 304 pp. ¥9680 cloth.

Daisuke Igarashi

Waseda University

(igarashidaisuke@waseda.jp)

From ancient to modern times, Egyptian society has been supported by irrigated agriculture that took advantage of the Nile's regular flood. In recent years, Egypt has been attracting more attention as research into environmental history, focusing on the relationship between the environment and human society, gains prominence.¹ The author of this book, Wakako Kumakura, is a historian in this field who has published numerous studies in both Japanese and English on the land and irrigation systems and agricultural practices of Islamic Egypt. This book is based on her doctoral dissertation, submitted to Ochanomizu University in Tokyo, Japan, in 2011, with significant editorial revisions and updated with her subsequent publications. This book has been highly acclaimed in Japanese academic circles and received the Collegium Mediterranistarum Herend Prize 2020 and the Japan Consortium for Area Studies Award 2020.

The book covers the period of institutional transformation from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century, during which the *iqṭā'* system, the basic military and land system of the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt (1250–1517) declined and collapsed due to demographic changes following the Black Death epidemic of the mid-fourteenth century. During the upheaval of the *iqṭā'* system, the Circassian Mamluk regime (1382–1517), established by Sultan al-Ẓāhir Barqūq was forced to remodel the military, financial, and administrative systems of the sultanate.² In 1517, upon their conquest of Egypt, the Ottomans initially maintained the Mamluk system of governance but gradually consolidated it into their own system. The regime change from the Mamluks to the Ottomans has attracted much academic interest in recent years. Accordingly, this book examines, through a detailed review of historical

1. Nicolas Michel, “Recent Publications on the Environmental History of Egypt,” *EGY Landscape Project*, Working Paper 3 (December 2020).

2. Daisuke Igarashi, *Land Tenure, Fiscal Policy, and Imperial Power in Medieval Syro-Egypt* (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, University of Chicago, 2015).

© 2023 Daisuke Igarashi. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, which allows users to copy and distribute the material in any medium or format in unadapted form only, for noncommercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the original authors and source.

documents, the changes to the Mamluk land and Nile irrigation systems brought about by the Ottomans. The sources consulted include Ottoman records in the National Archives in Cairo, such as the *Daftar jayshī* (Military register), a land register, and the *Dafātir jusūr*, a survey of irrigation dikes; *al-Tuḥfa al-saniyya* by Yaḥyā b. al-Jīʿān (d. 885/1480), a Mamluk-era land survey; Ottoman-era laws and ordinances; and narrative sources, such as geographies and chronicles, including manuscripts, from both dynasties.

The book is structured as follows:

Introduction: Toward a Continuous Understanding of the Transition of Rule

Part 1: Continuities and Discontinuities in the Administration of Records

Chapter 1: Establishment of the *Daftar Jayshī*

Chapter 2: From Dynasty to Dynasty: The Transfer of Land Records and Their Custodians

Chapter 3: Transferred Land Registers

Chapter 4: Rewritten Land Records

Part 2: Continuities and Discontinuities in Land Systems and Irrigation

Chapter 5: The Realities of *Iqtāʿ* Holdings

Chapter 6: Irrigation and Its Maintenance

Chapter 7: Fayyum Villages in the First Year of Ottoman Rule

Chapter 8: The Establishment of the Ottoman Governance System and Changes in Water Administration

Epilogue: Transformation of the Ruling System during the Period of Transition

The Introduction outlines the history of the land system in Egypt and presents the three principal topics of the book: (1) the administration system of the records concerning the *iqṭāʿ* system, (2) the characteristics of the *iqṭāʿ* holders and form of the *iqṭāʿ* holdings during the *iqṭāʿ* system's transition, and (3) the irrigation system's maintenance and management.

Part I, "Continuities and Discontinuities in the Administration of Records," consisting of four chapters, focuses on the *Daftar jayshī*, the principal historical source of the book, and examines the documentary administration of land under the Circassian Mamluk regime and the transfer of Mamluk land records to the Ottoman government. The first chapter examines the process of compiling the *Daftar jayshī* and its contents. After conquering Egypt, the Ottoman government proceeded with land surveys, dispatching officials to the provinces and scrutinizing land rights in Cairo: claimants' rights to private, *rizaq* (allocated by the government for charitable purposes or to families of military personnel, etc.), and *waqf* (Islamic endowment) lands were either confirmed or confiscated.³ Then, in 1552–53, thirty-five years after the conquest, a new rule (S. J. Shaw called this the Land Law)⁴ was

3. The author uses the term "land rights holder" to refer collectively to holders of *iqṭāʿ*, owners of private lands, recipients of *rizaq* lands, and the beneficiaries of *waqf* lands. The essential point is those with the beneficiary right to income from these lands, but some explanation for key terms such as "land rights" and "land rights holders" is required.

4. Stanford J. Shaw, "The Land Law of Ottoman Egypt (960/1553): A Contribution to the Study of Landholding in the Early Years of Ottoman Rule in Egypt," *Der Islam* 38 (1963): 106–37.

promulgated, establishing the procedure to review and determine land rights by referring to the rediscovered Circassian Mamluk registers. The results were compiled in a register, the *Daftar jayshī*, which recorded lands determined by the Ottoman government to be *waqf* or private lands.

The form and contents of the records in the *Daftar jayshī* are then explained. The *Daftar jayshī* is composed of the records from the Mamluk registers and those from the Ottoman cadastral survey of 1527–28. Each village record starts with a summary that includes the total area of arable land in the village and percentage shares of tax incomes assigned to each type of land rights (e.g., a *qīrāt* or 1/24 for a *waqf*, three *‘ushurs* or 3/10 for two *iqṭā‘*s, etc.), followed by details of the rights holders' names and deed dates for *waqf* and private lands. The information transferred from Mamluk registers includes dates for when an *iqṭā‘* was conferred and purchased from the treasury and names of the purchasers.⁵

Chapter 2, through careful analysis of contemporary narrative sources, identifies who managed Egypt's land records at the time of the Ottoman conquest and reveals that only two bureaucratic families, the Jī‘ān family, and their relatives by marriage, the Malakī family, performed this “official duty” during the Circassian Mamluk period, as a family business.⁶

Chapter 3 presents records from the *Daftar jayshī*, revealing that ten different Mamluk land registers were referred to in the examination of *waqf* and private land rights. This is valuable in demonstrating one aspect of Mamluk land management and record keeping as well as significant in identifying one of the sources of *al-Tuḥfa al-saniyya* by finding a partial match between a single register from the reign of the Mamluk sultan al-Ashraf Sha‘bān (r. 1363–77) and a record in *al-Tuḥfa al-saniyya*.

Chapter 4 is a study of *al-Tuḥfa al-saniyya*, which records the names of villages, area of cultivated land, tax revenues, and names of land rights holders throughout Egypt. It was edited by B. Moritz and published in 1898, and although it has been used in many studies, the author highlights problems with this edition; by researching three existing manuscripts, she concludes that the Bodleian Library manuscript (MS. Huntington 2) is the authentic copy prepared and presented in 1478 by order of Yashbak min Mahdī, the chief executive (*dawādār kabīr*) responsible for local and financial administration. Then, by comparing the records with those in the *Daftar jayshī*, she verifies that the information on the area of cultivated land in each village reported in *al-Tuḥfa al-saniyya* is from the *Nāṣirī* cadastral survey (1313–25), while the amount of tax revenues from each village reported in *al-Tuḥfa al-saniyya* are based on the 1376 records; thus, if the amounts have since been revised, the most recent figures as of 1478 are listed. This is important for future researchers using this historical source.⁷

5. An introduction to the *Daftar jayshī* is also given in Kumakura's English article, “Patterns of Women's Landholding in the Late Mamluk Period: A Statistical Study Based on the Ottoman Land Register *Daftar Jayshī*,” *Orient* 54 (2019): 7–22, at 8–9.

6. The English version of this chapter was published as “Who Handed over Mamluk Land Registers to the Ottomans? A Study on the Administrators of Land Records in the Late Mamluk Period,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 18 (2016): 279–96.

7. The English version of this chapter was published as “Mamluk Land Records Being Updated and

Part 2, “Continuities and Discontinuities in Land Systems and Irrigation,” extracts specific insights into the mechanisms for maintaining and managing land and irrigation systems from these historical sources. Chapter 5 examines the form of *iqṭāʿ* holdings in the Circassian Mamluk land records in the *Daftar jayshī*. From the summary records, it is inferred that the *iqṭāʿ* system established in the *Nāṣirī* cadastral survey, such as the holding and transfer of an *iqṭāʿ* according to the rank and office of Mamluk military officers and the dispersed holding of multiple *iqṭāʿ*s, was maintained during the Circassian period. A subsequent analysis of 707 detailed records shows that 60% of the *iqṭāʿ*s were held by *awlād al-nās* (descendants of Mamluks) and civilians, while 214 were held in multi-ownership, in which many of the co-holders of an *iqṭāʿ* were related by blood (such as parents, children, and siblings). The author then concludes that the expansion of the “*iqṭāʿ* of beneficence,” held by these *awlād al-nās* and civilians and not involving military service, facilitated the privatization and “waqfization” of state lands.

While Chapter 5 focuses on land ownership in the *Daftar jayshī*, Chapters 6–8 center on irrigation and its maintenance, using the *Dafātir jusūr* as the principal historical source. Chapter 6 examines the maintenance and management system for *jusūr* (sing. *jīsr*, dike) and the relationship between the government and village communities in the Gharbiyya Province of the Nile Delta. The location of and area irrigated by each Sultani *jīsr* (government-managed irrigation dike) is mapped, demonstrating that between ten and thirty villages shared a single *jīsr*. Specifically, the *Dafātir jusūr* reveals that each Sultani *jīsr* was divided into several administrative districts (*darak*); the number of personnel to be provided for working on the *jīsr* was allocated to the villages in charge of each administrative district; the *khawālī* (administrator) of the *jīsr* was selected from neighboring villages; and their duties were passed on among certain clans. In addition, details are provided of others involved in the maintenance of the Sultani *jīsr*, such as the government-appointed *kāshif* sent to maintain the *jīsr* and *shaykhs* of the local Arab tribes; thus, *iqṭāʿ* and other land rights holders were not directly involved in maintaining the *jīsr*.⁸

Chapter 7 analyzes the tax collection records for Fayyum Province during the first year of Ottoman rule, found in the Ayasofya manuscript of *Taʾrīkh al-Fayyūm* (Suleymaniye Library, MS. Ayasofya 2960), by an official of the Ayyubid dynasty, ʿUthmān b. Ibrāhīm al-Nābulusī (d. 660/1262). The author discovered that these records were specifically for the *dīwān al-dhakhīra*, which administered the revenue sources that were directly assigned to the sultan during the Circassian Mamluk period. She also learned that land rights of the villages of the Fayyum were not related to parcels of land with clearly defined boundaries in specific locations, but allocated as a proportion of the tax share, which raises an important issue concerning the land tenure system.⁹

Distributed: A Study of *Al-Tuḥfa al-Sanīya bi-Asmāʾ al-Bilād al-Miṣrīya*,” *Journal of Islamic Area Studies* 10 (2018): 17–29.

8. An earlier version of this chapter was published as “To Where Have the Sultan’s Banks Gone? An Attempt to Reconstruct the Irrigation System of Medieval Egypt,” *Journal of Asian Network for GIS-based Historical Studies* 2 (2014): 11–21.

9. The English version of this chapter was published as “The Tax Survey Record of the First Year of Ottoman Rule in Egypt,” in *The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition: Continuity and Change in Egypt and Bilād*

Chapter 8 analyzes how the centralization of administrative power under the Ottoman sultan Suleiman I (r. 1520–66) affected the irrigation system in the Egyptian provinces, using the Cadastral Survey Registers (*Daftar al-tarbī*⁶) and the Registers of the Amount of Water (*Daftar irtifā^c al-miyāh*). During this period, the various irrigation records previously maintained by specific local households and individuals were now compiled into government registers, to which the *qāḍīs* dispatched from the central administration to Egyptian local courts referred in order to carry out their duties systematically. This suggests a single process by which Egypt was incorporated into a centralized Ottoman system of governance.¹⁰

The final chapter summarizes these findings: after the Ottoman conquest, the land system was regulated through the Ottoman legal code, the *Qānūnnāme*, as well as the promulgation of new ones, and “a systemic shift from governance based on personal social relations to an institutional system of governance through administrative agencies” (p. 270) was advanced through the parallel compilation and maintenance of various registers.

To sum up, the most important feature of this book is the novelty and importance of the historical sources used. Although the significance of the *Daftar jayshī* has become well known in recent years, its nature as a historical document has yet to be clarified, and there are a limited number of studies in which it has been used due to difficulty with scripts and access. The author’s ability to use such a challenging historical document as a source is astonishing, allowing her to undertake a meticulous analysis to elucidate the important issue of the nature of documentary administration: how Mamluk land records were preserved, conveyed, and then transferred to the Ottoman government. Her primary achievement is that, through statistical analysis, she empirically clarifies the changes to the *iqṭā^c* land system where military personnel were awarded land for their military service, which was then inherited by their descendants and eventually converted to *waqf*.

As agricultural irrigation in Egypt depended on the Nile, the management of *jusūr* was critically important, but the details have remained unclear due to the limitations of the historical sources. However, the author addresses this issue by using both the *Dafātir jusūr* and the Registers of the Amount of Water, also held by the National Archives of Egypt, as historical sources. Her foresight in consulting these registers, which have been far less thoroughly explored than the *Daftar jayshī*, is admirable. Her second achievement is in going beyond a meticulous analysis of these documents and identifying the *jīsr* locations by field research in rural Egypt, using GIS technology to perform position measurement and digital mapping of the *jīsr*, then comparing the results with the written descriptions to clarify the administration of *jīsr* management. Such a cutting-edge study that combines fieldwork and digital technology with archival analysis demonstrates not only originality in historical research but also the author’s extraordinary skills as a researcher.

al-Shām in the Sixteenth Century, 2, ed. S. Conermann and G. Şen, 273–306 (Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2022).

10. The English version of this chapter was published as “The Early Ottoman Rural Government System and Its Development in Terms of Water Administration,” in *The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition: Continuity and Change in Egypt and Bilad al-Sham in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. S. Conermann and G. Şen, 87–114 (Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2017).

This book, as already stated, is an excellent piece of research, but it is not without some problems, which I am obliged as a reviewer to point out.

First, Chapter 5 is in an unsuitable position; since it covers the process of *iqṭāʿ* transition to *rīzaq* and *waqf* holdings in the late Mamluk period, most of the discussion, including causes and implications, lies within the framework of Mamluk history. This detracts from the book's theme: continuity and change during the regime transition from Mamluks to Ottomans. Further, the author's discussion in the concluding chapter about the changes in the ties between the Mamluk sultans and their military officers, which she believes is the cause of the *iqṭāʿ* transitions, is confusing due to its abruptness. A different approach, such as treating this section independently as a supplementary essay, would have been preferable. Because, instead, the transition period is the theme of this book, it would have been better to compare the Mamluk and Ottoman records, using the *Daftar jayshī*, and analyze how the land rights holders of the Mamluk period were or were not replaced in the Ottoman period. This would have enabled the author to test the merits of and deepen the debate on the view of ʿImād Abū Ghāzī, who, as a pioneer in the study of the *Daftar jayshī*, concluded that although the *awlād al-nās* emerged as a landowning class in the late Mamluk period, they were eradicated during the regime change, never to develop into a new social group, which brought about change to Egyptian society.¹¹

Second, although the author provides a thorough analysis of the contents of the register records, her awareness of what was *not* recorded is relatively weak. This may be in part due to the author not considering the question of whether a considerable part of the Mamluk land records was lost before or after the Ottoman occupation or the Mamluk records were incomplete in the first place. The author states that the surviving *Daftar jayshī* covers approximately 30% of all villages in Egypt but also points out that there could be lost volumes of the *Daftar jayshī* (pp. 51–53); however, if the register was “records of lands administered by the *dīwān al-jaysh* (Army Bureau) during the Mamluk period that were determined (by the Ottoman government) as *waqf* lands or private lands” (p. 42), then it is possible that neither information on lands not under the *dīwān al-jaysh* nor information on villages not including *waqf* or private lands were originally recorded. It is not surprising that there is little information on Giza and Manfalūṭ in the *Daftar jayshī*, though, as lands in both provinces were designated as financial resources for the *dīwān al-dawla* or *dīwān al-wizāra* (the Finance Bureau or the Vizier's Bureau) during the Mamluk period. Moreover, rather than stating that “much of the land that became *waqf* or private land during the Mamluk period was originally *iqṭāʿ* or military *rīzaq* lands, including a large amount of beneficence *iqṭāʿ*” (p. 162), it would be more accurate to say that most of the private and *waqf* lands recognized by the Ottoman government were originally converted from *iqṭāʿ* and military *rīzaq* lands during the Mamluk period. In addition, the fact that the 1552–53 Land Law detailed the method of examination when land rights could not be verified in the Circassian Mamluk registers may indicate that not all private and *waqf* lands were recorded. The author also notes in Chapter 7 that a land rights holder only held a village's

11. ʿImād Badr al-Dīn Abū Ghāzī, *Taṭawwur al-ḥiyāza al-zirāʿiyya fi Miṣr zaman al-mamālīk al-jarākisa* (Cairo: ʿAyn li-l-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buḥūth al-Insāniyya wa-al-Ijtimāʿiyya, 2000), chap. 3.

share of taxes, not a specific parcel of land (p. 230). However, Mamluk *waqf* documents I have studied indicate that parcels of land enclosed by clearly marked boundaries (north, east, south, and west) were often owned or set aside as *waqfs*, while only land rights to a percentage share of taxes may have been ascertained and recorded by the government. Thus, further comparisons with other historical sources, such as *waqf* documents and *sharīʿa* court registers, is necessary.

Despite some issues, this is undoubtedly an outstanding piece of research that will influence a wide range of fields, including medieval Arab and Islamic history, the history of the Ottoman Empire, documentary research, administrative history in the Islamic world, Egyptian agricultural history, and human and environmental history related to water use and irrigation, to name a few. Although some chapters have already been translated into English and published, I hope that the entire book will be translated into English and published as a monograph to disseminate its findings among the academic community abroad.