Archives in Medieval Islam

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I N A CHAPTER of his *Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, which deals with royalty and government, Ibn-Khaldūn (1332–1406) observes, "Royal authority requires soldiers, money, and the means to communicate with those who are absent. The ruler, therefore, needs persons to help him in the matters concerned with 'the sword,' 'the pen,' and finances; and among them the pen ranks high."[1] It may have been thought to rank even higher than the sword and finances, for, according to Muslim tradition, the pen was the first object God created.[2] Of its power and creativeness in Islamic culture there can be no doubt, and those who wielded the pen enjoyed great esteem. Poets and literati lent their talents to the business of government and, according to Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, achieved "with the pen what the sword and the lance over a long period of years had been unable to produce."[3]

Unfortunately, the use of the pen as an instrument of Muslim policy and the preservation of the products of the pen, namely official documents, have received too little attention so far. As a result, archives-keeping in the Muslim states during the Middle Ages has not been fully recognized as a continuation of preceding prac-

[1] Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 1:23, trans. from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal (New York, 1958).

[2] Kurt Holder, "Der Islam," in Fritz Milkau, ed., *Handbuch der Bibliothekswissenschaft*, rev. ed. by Georg Leyh, vol. 3, pt. 1:195 (Wiesbaden, 1955).

[3] Ibn el-Çaïrafî, "Code de la chancellerie d'état (Période fâṭimide), traduit par M. Henri Massé," in *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, 11:65–120 (1914); hereafter cited as Massé. This is a translation into French of Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Qānūn dīwān al-rasā'il*, 'Ali Bahjat, ed. (Cairo, 1905). It should be pointed out that Massé's translation is not entirely satisfactory, partly because the terminology of Islamic diplomatics is not yet standardized. The reference in the text is to p. 80.

tices and as a connecting link between these practices and archives-keeping in the emerging national states and other institutions in the West.   To the extent that such an important story can be told without access to sources in Arabic, this study will attempt to fill a serious gap in the history of archives administration from the collapse of the Sassanian Empire in the middle of the seventh century to the fall of Constantinople in 1453.[4]

It is indeed doubtful whether the time has arrived to make the attempt.   In fact, for a number of reasons a discussion of archives-keeping in the Muslim states is beset with particular difficulties. First of all, the archives of the period, with the exception of records of lower levels of government in Egypt and of a few religious institutions, have vanished, and so, when we discuss the archives of the Muslim world, for the most part we are speaking of archives that

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[4] As a rule, the Western scholar does not possess a graphic picture of the course of Muslim history during the Middle Ages, for the academic treatment of the medieval period to which he has been exposed has customarily been focused on the history of Europe, to the near exclusion of the Byzantine and the almost total exclusion of the Muslim worlds. To form and retain the requisite frame of reference is particularly difficult because of the many dynasties that, at one time or another, ruled the Arab Empire and the different parts into which that empire fell. And yet these dynasties, whose life expectancy according to Ibn-Khaldūn averaged not more than 120 years, will have to be referred to frequently in the following pages. To assist the reader, there are briefly indicated below the names and periods of rule of the most important Muslim dynasties whose archival arrangements will be touched on.

The Orthodox or Rightly Guided Caliphs	A.D. 632–661	
The Umayyad Caliphs	661–750	
The 'Abbāsid Caliphs in 'Irāq and Baghdad	749–1258	
The Spanish Umayyads	756–1031	
The Aghlabids in North Africa and Sicily	800–909	
The Fāṭimids in North Africa and later in Egypt and Syria	909–1171	
The Ayyūbids in Egypt and Syria	1169–end of 15th century	
The Mamlūks in Egypt and Syria	1250–1517	
The Great Seljuks in 'Irāq and Persia	1038–1194	
The Seljuks of Rūm in Anatolia	1077–1307	
The Ottomans in Anatolia, the Balkans, and the Arab Lands	1281–1924	
The Mongol Great Khans in Mongolia and Northern China	1206–1634	
The Il-Khanids in Persia	1256–1354	
The Ghaznavids in Khurasan, Afghanistan, and Northern India	977–1186	

The listing is based on Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Handbook* (Edinburgh, 1967), an indispensable source of pertinent information.

must have existed rather than archives now available for research. True, there are other sources of information about Muslim record-keeping. Historians have occasionally referred to, and have copied documents from, archival institutions. Epistolaries have preserved for us the texts of documents to be used as models; and manuals for secretaries and financial officers tell us a great deal about the organization of government agencies for the making and keeping of records. These manuals belong to the category of style treatises, commonly called the *inšā'*-literature, that were designed to teach the secretaries what they should know about drafting and writing formal documents and letters.[5] First consisting of collections of model letters, they were later broadened in scope to include discussion of the subject matter a secretary should know. Thus they became veritable manuals of state administration. Ibn al-Ṣayrafi's code for the Fāṭimid State Chancery can be considered the most important representative of the fully developed *inšā'*-literature.

The knowledge we can derive from these sources is, however, no satisfactory substitute for tangible information of the kind we owe to the excavations of ancient Mesopotamia, where remnants of archival institutions, often with their holdings, have been found *in situ*. The situation confronting us in regard to Muslim medieval archives also compares unfavorably with that in the countries of the West, where medieval secular as well as ecclesiastical archives have survived in great numbers.

In another respect, too, the historian of Western European archives is in a far better position than someone wishing to describe archival arrangements of the Muslim countries during the Middle Ages. In the West, ever since the criticism of sources resulted in a discipline devoted to identifying and defining the various kinds of documents available for research, determining their components and characteristics, and exploring their genesis, the study of medieval diplomatics has developed its highly refined and specialized techniques. No such penetrating study of medieval Muslim diplomatics exists; nor can one be expected before more specialized studies

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[5] Hans Robert Roemer, *Staatsschreiben der Timuridenzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1952) includes on p. 1–20 an authoritative discussion of the *inšā'*-literature. He compares its specimens with those of the *ars dictandi* or *ars dictaminis* of the West and (p. 7) considers the possibility of identifying Monte Cassino as a point of contact between Muslim and Western didactic literature of this type. Its oldest Western representative, the *breviarium de dictamine,* was written by the monk Alberich who lived in Monte Cassino about 1075, at the same time as Constantinus Africanus, Muslim renegade from Tunisia and famous translator of Arabic medieval literature. Roemer feels his conjecture deserves detailed investigation. On *inšā'*-works, see also Walther Björkman, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Staatskanzlei im islamischen Ägypten*, p. 7–16 (Hamburg, 1928).

have been published because in the past orientalists were chiefly interested in the literary works of the period and slighted its documentary remains,[6] which can tell us so much about the social, economic, and financial conditions.[7]   In developing the field of Muslim diplomatics, scholars should increasingly avail themselves of the methods of Western diplomatics[8] and should, like the masters of that discipline, also examine the techniques of controlling and preserving documents for future reference.   In recent years, some important studies of the diplomatics of certain periods have indeed been published.   Outstanding among them is S. M. Stern's *Fāṭimid Decrees: Original Documents from the Fāṭimid Chancery*.[9]   As an indispensable adjunct to Arab diplomatics, Adolf Grohmann has published an admirable study of Arab paleography, which includes a thorough discussion of the writing materials used.[10]

The retardation of Islamic diplomatics is the more surprising because the documents that have come down to us, although few in number, are the witnesses of a civilization vastly superior to that of contemporary Europe, a civilization whose literary and artistic monuments are of the highest order and whose *savoir-faire* is also reflected in its administrative arrangements.   They were based on practices

[6] Jean Sauvaget and Cl. Cahen, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Orient musulman* (Paris, 1961).   The reference is to p. 19 of the English translation of the work (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965).

[7] Roemer, *Staatsschreiben*, p. 18.   To support the statement in the text, I should like to quote from S. D. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 1:26 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967):   " 'Business letters and therefore valueless'—this remark about a Geniza paper, appearing in the printed catalog of a most distinguished library about thirty years ago—betrays the attitude of former generations. Things not connected with theology or literature or, at least, referring to a famous personality, were not regarded as worthy of the attention of the serious scholar."   See also Roemer's critique of the present status of Muslim diplomatics in his "Christliche Klosterarchive in der islamischen Welt," in Wilhelm Hoenerbach, ed., *Der Orient in der Forschung: Festschrift für Otto Spies*, p. 543–556 (Wiesbaden, 1967).

[8] Heribert Busse, "Persische Diplomatik im Überblick: Ergebnisse und Probleme," in *Islam*, 36:204 (1961).

[9] (London, 1964).   Other important studies include Heribert Busse, *Untersuchungen zum islamischen Kanzleiwesen an Hand turkmenischer und safawidischer Urkunden* (Cairo, 1959) and Hans Ernst, *Die mamlukischen Sultansurkunden des Sinai-Klosters* (Wiesbaden, 1960).   The components and style of private letters have been explored by Karl Jahn, "Vom frühislamischen Briefwesen," in *Archiv orientální*, 9:153–200 (1937).

[10] *Arabische Paläographie*, pt. 1 (Graz, Vienna, and Cologne, 1967).   See also his *Einführung und Chrestomathie zur arabischen Papyruskunde* (Prague, 1955).   According to Grohmann (pt. 1, p. 98), in Egypt at least, the use of paper began to increase toward the end of the 8th century, until in about the middle of the 10th century it became the predominant writing material.   Grohmann (pt. 1, p. 66) estimates the number of Arabic papyri we have at about 16,000, with half of them now in the Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer collection in Vienna, and the number of Arabic paper documents at about 33,000, with 28,000 of them being in the Erzherzog Rainer collection.

that the Arabs inherited from the preceding regimes of the Byzantines and Persians and adapted to the governance of a farflung empire. These practices, however, have not been satisfactorily explored in a comprehensive and comparative study of Muslim administrative institutions that would cover the entire period from the expansion of Arab rule into Persia, Syria, and Egypt to the establishment of the Ottoman Empire.[11] Such a study, if available, would be immensely useful to the historian of Muslim archives because it would identify more clearly for him the administrative centers whose recordkeeping practices deserve particular study.

The vastness of the subject matter to be dealt with in an inclusive administrative history of the Muslim states is obvious. Yet such a history would not lack unity and continuity. After the empire of the 'Abbāsids (A.D. 749–1258) had fallen apart, the semi-independent and independent regimes that emerged were ruled by non-Arabic dynasties. When they conquered Persia and Egypt, the newcomers, like the Arabs, were untaught in the art of administration and forced to rely on the use of existing institutions and personnel, if they wanted to exploit the newly acquired lands. In so doing, they had to use the administrative techniques and the records of their predecessors.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF MUSLIM ARCHIVES-KEEPING

It is the obvious continuity of administrative practices that suggests the possibility of developing a conspectus of Muslim record-making and recordkeeping in spite of the diversified and often stormy and erratic character of Muslim medieval history. Such a conspectus must proceed from the moment, about A.D. 650, when the Arabs had overrun the Sassanian and Byzantine regimes in the Near East and in Egypt and found themselves unable to establish a governmental structure of their own. Instead, below their central authority based on military power, they maintained the lower level administrative institutions and, for at least 50 years, retained Persian and Greek, respectively, as administrative languages before the process of Arabization was completed. Local authorities composed of local personnel served the conquerors; and in turn, the Arabs did not attempt to convert and integrate the native populations into an Arab

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11 This is said with due respect for such important works as Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Muslim Institutions*, trans. from the French by J. P. MacGregor (London, 1950); Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. from the German by Salahuddin Khuda Bukhsh and S. D. Margoliouth (London, 1937); and Dominique Sourdel, *Le Vizirat 'abbaside de 749 à 936 (132 à 324 de l'Hégire)*, (2 vols.; Damascus, 1959–60). A. Q. Husaini's *Arab Administration* (Lahore, 1949), although not without merit, does not meet the needs of the administrative historian.

state.   Under their rule, Arabs enjoyed a tax-exempt status, and the conquered paid land and capitation taxes assessed on the basis of existing records.   Thus few changes were made in the taxation system, which, like the preceding one, was aimed at the exploitation of the country.   To "milk the cow until it runs dry and drain the blood till it stops running" was the order that Caliph Suleimān gave to 'Usāmah b. Zaid upon his departure for Egypt.[12]

For the management of expenditures, however, the Arabs had to establish procedures and records of their own.   Muster rolls specifying the names of Arab warriors and pension records had to be created to serve as the basis for paying "stipends and pensions, almost as if they were dividends;"[13] and these, at the beginning, were the only genuinely Arab records.   Although the system must have originated in the days of the Prophet, it was formalized under 'Umar (A.D. 634–44), the second and most prominent of the "Rightly Guided Caliphs."   To serve that purpose, the first of the central departments or *dīwāns*, the Military Board (*dīwān al-jund*), was organized.   Its registers had to be kept up to date by periodic censuses.

The term *dīwān* calls for comment at this point.   It is of Persian origin, thus indicating early use of Persians in administrative posts. Second, because the term originally meant a register of troops, then a register of any kind, and only later an office, it was a subsidiary function of the office—recordkeeping—that gave its name to an entire agency, a development comparable to that of the term *scrinium* in the late Roman Empire.[14]   The term *daftar*, which originally may have been used interchangeably with *dīwān*, remained confined, however, to "a stitched or bound booklet or register, more especially an account or letterbook used in administrative offices."[15]   Derived from the Greek word for hide (διφθέρα), the *daftar*, in the days of the 'Abbāsids, came to be the normal recordkeeping medium, especially when paper superseded other writing materials.

Under the Umayyad dynasty (A.D. 661–750) "the patriarchal character of the Caliphate" evolved in the direction of a monarchy "corresponding to the well-known characteristics of ancient oriental monarchies."[16]   From its seat at Damascus, a structured government

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[12] Sir Harold I. Bell, "The Administration of Egypt Under the Umayyad Khalifs," in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 28:285–286 (1928).

[13] Francesco Gabrieli, *The Arabs: A Compact History*, p. 55, trans. from the Italian by Salvatore Attanasio (New York, 1963).

[14] See the article "Dīwān," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2:323 (new ed.; Leiden and London, 1965). In accordance with established practice, hereafter the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia* will be cited as *EI* and the new edition *EI²*. On the *scrinia*, see my *Archives in the Ancient World*, p. 194–196, 207–209 (Cambridge, Mass., 1972).

[15] See Bernard Lewis's article "Daftar," In *EI²*, 2:77–78.

[16] See Gabrieli, *The Arabs*, p. 73.

began to run the farflung empire. Its business necessitated "the means to communicate with those who [were] . . . absent" and led to the organization of the chancery, the *dīwān al-rasā'il*, and its establishment was an incisive step toward the creation of Muslim bureaucratic government. The *dīwān* handled all incoming and outgoing correspondence and, under the direction of the *wāzīr*,[17] served as the central chancery office of the caliphs. Its volume of business must have been considerable, seeing that, "at intervals of three years, letters and documents were sent to the great store (*al-khizāna al-'uẓma*) to be finally classified and indexed."[18] In Fāṭimid Egypt Ibn al-Ṣayrafī praised the great storehouse as a model of good archival practice. In addition to the records of the chancery, the *wāzīr* of the 'Abbāsids kept copies of the most important documents in an archives office of his own. In one case, the records turned over to the succeeding incumbent of the office "filled up a whole house to the ceiling."[19]

There were other *dīwān*s that either processed or produced records:[20] the *dīwān al-faḍḍ*, which "received letters and documents, opened and classified them, put indications of their contents on the back, presented them to the *wāzīr* and kept a record of them";[21] the Office of the Seal, which registered, sealed, and dispatched outgoing correspondence; and the *dīwān al-kharādj*, which, as the central finance office, administered the assessment and levying of taxes and, consequently, had to maintain voluminous records. Neither the administration of the empire in general nor communications between Damascus and the provinces could have functioned without the *dīwān al-barīd*, the very effective General Post Office, which had its roots in the days of Achaemenid Persia. As was the practice at that time, the postmasters in the Muslim states served as spies of the central government.

THE IRANIZATION OF GOVERNMENT UNDER THE 'ABBĀSIDS

Persian precedent and experience became even more influential when the 'Abbāsid Caliphs (A.D. 749–1258) came into power, overthrowing and practically extinguishing the Umayyad dynasty. The movement that led the 'Abbāsids to victory had had strong support

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17 Although it now appears that the term is not, as had been assumed, of Persian origin, the post as such seems to go back to the Sassanian period.

18 In *EI²*, 2:325.   19 Mez, *Renaissance*, p. 41.

20 In *EI²*, 2:320–325. In addition to *dīwān*s with general competence, there were at Baghdad other *dīwān*s dealing with the affairs of individual provinces; and "no sharp line of division between the Central and Provincial offices was ever drawn." Mez, *Renaissance*, p. 76.

21 Originally this *dīwān* may have been just a section of the *dīwān al-rasā'il*. Later it was combined with the *dīwān al-khātam*, the Signet Office (in *EI²*, 2:325).

in Persia and resulted in the Iranization of Islamic civilization that also found expression in the area of government and administration. When more and more Muslims of Persian extraction began to fill responsible government posts, the character of the state changed ever more drastically from one dominated by an Arabian aristocracy to a multinational state, held together by a common religion and by a bureaucracy whose traditions reached back into the days of the Achaemenid kings.

This process of Iranization constitutes one of the most fascinating examples of historical continuity. As we now know, writing for record purposes and recordkeeping came to the Persians through scribes from Elam; it was perfected by the Achaemenids and the Greco-Macedonian rulers and continued by the Arsacids and Sassanians. Drafting and copying official documents developed into an elaborate literary style and became a highly praised art in the hands of the secretaries who, under the 'Abbāsids, actually administered the empire. Its characteristics have been aptly described by Arthur Christensen:

The Iranians have always been great formalists. Official documents as well as private letters must be composed in an accepted artificial form. Learned citations, moral and religious precepts, verses, subtle riddles, etc., are combined to create an elegant ensemble, and in the manner in which a letter is composed and addressed, all the nuances of the relationship between sender and recipient must appear with minute exactness.[22]

Expected to meet these requirements, the secretaries became one of the most educated and cultured bureaucratic elites that the world has seen. A modern counterpart may be found in the group of eminent French authors who, in the 19th century, filled the positions of *rapporteurs* in the ministries, somewhat pompously called *le berceau de la gloire*, the "cradle of glory."[23] The secretaries (*kuttāb*), who were responsible for the preparation of official issuances, had to be in command of "a vast culture,"[24] and, from the ninth century onward, qualifications for such posts were spelled out in the secretarial manuals referred to above.

Naturally the number of departments[25] increased as, in the hands

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[22] *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, p. 132 (2d rev. ed.; Copenhagen, 1944). Khosru II (591–628) even required that reports be submitted on parchment tinged with saffron and sprinkled with rosewater (*ibid.*, p. 477). On recordkeeping in the Parthian and Sassanian Empires, see *Archives in the Ancient World*, p. 224–230.

[23] Henri Noëll, *L'administration centrale: Les ministères, leur organisation, leur rôle*, p. 118 (Paris, 1911).

[24] Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes and S. F. Platonov, *Le monde musulman et byzantin jusqu'aux Croisades*, p. 389 (Paris, 1931).

[25] On the evolution of the departments, see in *EI2*, 2:324–326.

of able administrators, the character of the state changed.   Baghdad, near the former Sassanian capital of Ctesiphon, became the capital of the ʿAbbāsids—a move to the East that accentuated the return to the traditions of the last Persian dynasty.   In Baghdad the departments (dīwāns) functioned as the mainstay of an often erratic and spendthrift Government.   Their bureaucratic techniques were far advanced, and the State Chancery, the dīwān al-rasāʾil, played an ever-increasing and much admired role as the center of Government paperwork.   Actual compliance, however, may have fallen short of regulations.   "Thus at the death of [Hārūn] ar-Rashīd [A.D. 786–809] four thousand unopened mail-bags were found, left by sluggish officials."[26]   If this could happen, the provision for sending documents every 3 years to the great storehouse for final classification and indexing,[27] probably was not effective, although later Ibn al-Ṣayrafī praised the Baghdad archives as a model.[28]   Government officials, it appears, were quite conscious of the importance and potential usefulness of their records.   They must have needed them because those deprived of office were obliged to render their accounts.   For this purpose they were taken to a quiet place and forced to disgorge their illegal gains, the assumption being that "much of their property stemmed from extortion and embezzlement."[29]   A special office, established under al-Muʿtamid (A.D. 870–92) and euphemistically called the Bureau of Heritages, received the fruits of this procedure. Fear that an outgoing official would destroy or screen his records might prompt his successor to get possession of them by means of a quick coup or maneuver.   In this highly literate and sophisticated society the importance of having the right records handy at the right time seems to have been quite obvious to the administrative elite.

RECORDKEEPING IN THE FĀṬIMID STATE CHANCERY

The impressive level of competence this elite achieved finds its clearest expression in Ibn al-Ṣayrafī's *Code of the State Chancery*

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26 Frede Løkkegaard, *Islamic Taxation in the Classic Period, With Special Reference to Circumstances in Iraq*, p. 155 (Copenhagen, 1950).

27 In *EI2*, 2:325.   28 In *EI2*, 2:304.

29 Adolf Grohmann, "Der Beamtenstab der arabischen Finanzverwaltung in Ägypten in frühharabischer Zeit," in Horst Braunert, ed., *Studien zur Papyrologie und antiken Wirtschaftsgeschichte Fr. Oertel zum achtzigsten Geburstag gewidmet*, p. 134 (Bonn, 1964). See also Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Monde musulman*, p. 345–346. At times the position of a Muslim official must have been rather precarious, for subjects might promise the ruler a certain sum of money for his delivering up to them an official who had fallen from grace. G. E. von Grunebaum, *Der Islam in Mittelalter*, p. 507, n. 48 (Zurich and Stuttgart, 1963), mentions as probably the earliest example the case of a man who offered Caliph al-Walīd II (743–44) 5 million dirhams for the person of the former governor of ʿIrāq, with the obvious intention of extorting money from him or taking his vengeance in a more drastic manner.

(*Fāṭimid Period*), referred to already, which deals in detail with the chancery organization and procedures under the Fāṭimids and the duties of its staff.   From their seat in Tunisia, the Fāṭimids (A.D. 909–1171) gained control of Sicily,[30] which the predecessor dynasty, the Aghlabids, had conquered.   In 969, they entered Fusṭāṭ, later known as Old Cairo, soon building themselves a new capital in Cairo (al-Qāhira, "the Victorious") and extending their rule into Palestine and Syria.   Under the Fāṭimids, Egypt became the center of a commercial empire that extended from the shores of the Mediterranean to the coast of India.   Building on existing institutions and favored by Egypt's strategic position, the Fāṭimids developed an elaborate system of administration that was organized with almost scientific precision, though it was probably still riddled by corruption and not supported by administrative morality.   It owed its origin to the first two Fāṭimid caliphs and to the ingenuity of their vizier Ya'qub ibn-Killis, a Jew from Iraq.[31]   Within this system, the State Chancery was responsible for handling the dynasty's foreign relations and, except for finances, the country's internal affairs.   It was for this office that Ibn al-Ṣayrafī composed his code or manual, which well reflects the life-long experience of a Muslim career official in a highly articulated bureaucracy.

The author of this manual, born on May 25, 1071, was the grandson of a clerk and the son of a banker.   Trained in the Department of the Army, he was transferred to the State Chancery (*dīwān al-inšā'*) and later served as its chief until his death on July 21, 1147.   His official duties apparently left him enough time to produce historical writings and several poetical anthologies.   In fact, his literary eminence qualified him for positions in the public service in which not only knowledge and experience but also "eloquence, power of persuasion, beauty of expression, and stylistic precision" were considered indispensable assets of a secretary.[32]

It is safe to assume that Ibn al-Ṣayrafī wrote his manual after he had become the chief of the State Chancery.   It was clearly meant as a guide for Chancery employees, who were urged to memorize its contents: it was to be "their professor, as it were."   As we read this remarkable document, we breathe the air of early bureaucratic administration.   True, the chief of the Chancery and its key officials

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[30] After their transfer to Egypt, the Fāṭimids' power in Sicily declined, and the local dynasty of the Kalbites succeeded in weakening Sicilian links with Egypt.

[31] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 1:33. See also Walter J. Fischel, *Jews in the Economic and Political Life of Mediaeval Islam*, p. 45–68 (New York, 1969).

[32] The preceding is based on Massé's introduction to Ibn al-Ṣayrafī's manual, p. 68–72, and on the article "Ibn al-Ṣayarafī, in *EI2*, 3:932 (1969), where a tentative list of his works is given.

must be faithful Muslims, and Allah's name and blessings are invoked throughout the manual, but the emphasis is clearly on efficiency, promptness, and careful documentation of administrative action.[33] With good records management there need be no time-consuming searches; all letters must be dated; incoming letters should be answered the same day; and negligent officials will be "fired"—for where there is disorder, "the clerks become the real sovereigns."

After explaining purpose and use of the Manual, Ibn al-Ṣayrafī deals with the duties and qualifications of the head of the Chancery— "the tongue through which the Sultan speaks and the hand through which he writes." Given the magnitude of his job, he had to have two assistants to whom he could delegate some of his supervisory responsibility. According to what amounts to a table of organization, the main work of the Chancery is divided among a number of secretaries, with the following tasks: foreign correspondence, grievances, appointments of higher officials and public edicts, correspondence with officials in the provinces and appointments of lesser officials, and the issuance of feudal titles. Separate sections deal with the duties of the registrar and the archivist of the State Chancery; and these undoubtedly are our oldest professional "job descriptions."[34]

The registrar's most important duty was, of course, keeping a register of incoming mail. In it he entered, under the name of the sender of each letter, the date of arrival and either the text or an abstract of each communication. A similar register was to be kept for outgoing mail, and both registers were later to be delivered to the archivist for permanent preservation. Furnished by the secretaries with memoranda of the most important transactions and receiving from them all incoming letters and all replies, the registrar was to condense them into précis with a heading such as: "Abstract from a letter of so-and-so, the *walī*, the inspector, or the governor; arrived on such-and-such a day, has been answered as follows . . . , or has not been answered." Preparation of these précis was to relieve the registrar of the necessity of consulting the files themselves. The registrar

33 The "modern" character of Ibn al-Ṣayrafī's work becomes very obvious when one attempts to compare it with the other important administrative treatise of the 12th century that we have, The Dialog About the Exchequer, by Richard, Bishop of London, Treasurer of Henry II of England; it was last translated from the Latin and edited by Charles Johnson under the title *The Course of the Exchequer by Richard, Son of Nigel* (London, 1950). One of the officials of the "Upper Exchequer" was Thomas Brown who had been on Sicily in the service of Roger I; there he may have absorbed some of the Muslim know-how in financial matters.

34 Sections XII and XIII on p. 104–108 and p. 108–112, respectively, of Massé's translation. They have been dealt with in greater detail in my article "Twelfth-Century Job Descriptions for the Registrar and the Archivist of the Fāṭimid State Chancery," in *Festschrift für Hanns Leo Mikoletsky*, to be published as the 1972 issue of the *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs* (vol. 25).

was also to keep a record of ceremonies and of the honorary garments, swords, neckchains and belts there conferred and to prepare chronicles of "the great events and their consequences" and "occurrences in the entire kingdom," both with precise dates.

If the registrar did his work, then, in Ibn al-Ṣayrafī's opinion, everything would be in good order and "searches would require a minimum effort in the shortest possible time." And, needless to say, the archivist would benefit from the registrar's labors. The archivist's main task, of course, consisted of organizing and controlling the records. Incoming letters he was to receive marked, presumably by the registrar, as follows: "This letter arrived from such-and-such a region on such-and-such a date; a reply to it was written on such-and-such a date." These letters were to be assembled in monthly aggregates established on a geographical basis and labeled, for example, as follows: "Correspondence arrived from the provinces of Lowei Egypt in such-and-such a month." Similarly, copies of outgoing letters, marked "Copy of a letter of such-and-such an origin, of such-and-such an epoch, of such-and-such a date (day, month, and year)," were to be filed in annual series according to the originating department, with subseries for each month.

What kind of person should be employed as an archivist? He must be honest, judicious, and trustworthy; his loyalty must be clear beyond any doubt, for "the archivist has the reigns of everything in his hands," and no bribe must ever sway him from his duties. To stress his point, Ibn al-Ṣayrafī tells the story of adjunct archivist Ibrāhīm who served in "the great storehouse to which records in 'Irāq were transferred every three years." One day a man of noble extraction offered him a huge sum of money to move a certain paper register from its regular location to another place, obviously with the idea that, as a result of such planned misfiling, the register could not be found again. The frightened Ibrāhīm dutifully reported the incident to his superiors, who immediately started an investigation. The register, it appeared, was a hitherto unnoticed report from a former tax-inspector. It revealed that the property of Ibrāhīm's would-be briber had not been assessed according to the legal rates and that this irregularity had cost the Government a huge sum of money. The culprit now received condign punishment and was forced to repay the money he owed the Government. Except for his good faith—and the purity of his soul—adjunct archivist Ibrāhīm might well have succumbed to a tempting offer, professing not to see anything wrong "in transferring a register from one place to another, so long as it remained in the archives." As one reads the story, one cannot fail being impressed by the apparent size and control tech-

niques of the Baghdad archives. That an outsider deemed it possible to make an item disappear simply by misplacing it implies extensive holdings, systematic arrangement, and control by location.

Is what Ibn al-Ṣayrafī tells us about the Fāṭimid Chancery an idealized picture of its practices? Björkman is inclined to believe that things were not as rosy as our author wants us to believe.[35] Be that as it may, his manual was widely known and used and actually served as the basis of the most extensive and inclusive secretarial handbook that has come down to us, al-Qalqašandī's *Ṣubḥ*. Al-Qalqašandī, who served in the State Chancery of the Mamlūk sultans and died in A.D. 1418, has left us a manuscript that, although incomplete, covers more than 2,000 pages of small handwriting.[36] Though Ibn al-Ṣayrafī does not cite any records except documents he had composed himself, the drafts of which he retained in his collection, Qalqašandī transcribed many documents from the archives to support his opinion in dubious cases.[37] Most of them are drafts of outgoing issuances of the sultans and documents of mediocre interest. On the other hand, the limited number of letters from Christian princes that Qalqašandī copied suggests that those letters were sent to the sultan but not returned to the archives. And this again seems significant. To medieval governments, and, in fact, to the chanceries of the early modern period, the retained copy of the outgoing document was more important than the incoming correspondence because it contained the record of policy adopted and action taken, and it could serve as a model for later correspondence.[38]

As the original documents in the archives of Mount Sinai and in that of the Franciscans in Jerusalem suggest, on the whole, the practices of the Fāṭimid Chancery were maintained under the succeeding dynasties of the Ayyūbids and the Mamlūks. A certain deterioration, however, seems to have set in. The careful technique of registration was abandoned, and the functions of the archivist—no longer a "full-time job"—were taken over by the secretary in charge of confidential correspondence. It was even reported that during disturbances in 1392, documents of the chancery archives were sold by weight.[39]

It is interesting to speculate about the roots of the Fāṭimid record system. Of the influence of Persian practices on recordmaking

35 *Beiträge*, p. 20.
36 H. Lammens, "Correspondence diplomatique entre les sultans mamlouks d'Egypte et les puissances chrétiennes," in *Revue de l'Orient chrétien*, 9:155 (1904). The *Ṣubḥ* has been published in 14 volumes (Cairo, 1913–19).
37 Lammens, "Correspondence diplomatique," p. 155.
38 Rightly so, Lammens, "Correspondence diplomatique," p. 368.
39 Björkman, *Beiträge*, p. 39.

under the Umayyad and 'Abbāsid dynasties there can be little doubt. In Egypt this influence made itself felt toward the end of the ninth century.   There a tradition that went back to the days of the Byzantines, the Romans, the Ptolemies, and possibly the Pharaohs had remained alive.   Björkman has come to the conclusion that "the procedures and activities (*Arbeitsgebiete*) of the chancery of the Ptolemies have a number of characteristics that closely correspond to those of the *dīwān al-inšā'* [from the Fāṭimids to the Mamlūks]."[40] In Egypt certainly the Fāṭimid era signifies "the peak and the apogee of the Arabic-Persian period."[41]

RECORDKEEPING IN MUSLIM SPAIN AND SICILY

Persian administrative experience, as utilized by the 'Abbāsids, also had its impact on developments in other Muslim countries. After the defeat and extinction of the Umayyads in the East, a branch of the dynasty retained control of Arabic Spain.   Naturally there was bitter hostility between the Spanish Umayyads and the 'Abbāsids. Such must have been the renown of 'Abbāsid administrative efficiency, however, that, in spite of the traditional enmity, the government of Cordova under 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān II (796–822) became in principle at least a copy of the 'Abbāsid model[42] and thus a continuation of the traditions of Persia under the Sassanians.   As Lévi-Provençal has phrased it: "As a result of a long and unique detour, the heritage of Persia and Constantinople that is so often transparent in the management of the 'Abbāsid State soon can also be seen at the western extremity of the Muslim world."[43]   Lack of sources, especially the lack of secretarial manuals, prevents us from forming a satisfactory picture of recordmaking and recordkeeping in Muslim Spain. We can detect many features, however, that we encounter in the East: documents must be couched in elaborate literary style; they must be carefully dated and numbered; and, under pain of punishment, the parchment and ink must be of good quality.[44]   In spite of the absence of concrete evidence, Lévi-Provençal feels justi-

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[40] "Die Bittschriften im *dīwān al-inša*," in *Islam*, 18:207 (1920).

[41] Björkman, *Beiträge*, p. 19.

[42] Évariste Lévi-Provençal, *La civilisation arabe en Espagne: Vue générale*, p. 66 (new ed.; Paris, 1948).

[43] *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, 3:8 (new and enl. ed.; Paris, 1950–53). Hussain Mones, "The Umayyads of the East and West: A Study in the History of a Great Arab Clan," in *Orient in der Forschung*, p. 495–496, questions Lévi-Provençal's thesis of the influence of the 'Abbāsid model on the Spanish Umayyads; but see Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, p. 55 n. 1 (Oxford, 1964), who believes that "the theory and practice of law in Islamic Spain . . . was to all intents and purposes identical with that of the 'Abbāsid empire."

[44] Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne*, 3:26.

fied in speaking of the veritable administrative beehive of the Cordova offices and of "the archives service of whose existence one has only some vague indications in the reign of al-Ḥakam II."[45]   Like Fāṭimid Egypt, Muslim Spain also developed an elaborate communication system, which, in addition to a regular official mail service, probably included the use of carrier pigeons and a primitive semaphore system.

These advanced arrangements did not carry over into the practices of the succeeding Christian regimes in Spain.   In that regard, developments in post-Muslim Sicily differed markedly from those on the Iberian Peninsula.   The Muslim dynasties of Tunisia that conquered and ruled the island—the Aghlabids, the Fāṭimids, and the Kalbites—brought their administrative personnel and, leaning on the use of Byzantine institutions found *in situ,* established an advanced system of public management that had no parallel in Western Europe.   Taken over and further developed by the Norman and Hohenstaufen rulers, this system radiated to the emerging state and city governments of the Continent.   The island served indeed as "an important centre for the diffusion of Islam culture to Christian Europe."[46]

If, through the medium of the Norman-Hohenstaufen dynasties, the Arabic rule of Sicily left a mark on administrative developments in the West, in the East the Persians, great masters of the art of administration, continued to make themselves indispensable to the inexperienced conquerors who overran that part of the 'Abbāsid empire.   They furnished not only the needed personnel and experience, but they succeeded in making Persian, although written in Arabic characters, the official language, and this, in turn, contributed to the flowering of Persian literature.   Because of the lack of archival remains and specialized studies, it is not possible to give a coherent account of recordkeeping practices under the Seljuks, the Mongols, and the Ottoman Turks.   A few cursory comments must suffice.

RECORDKEEPING UNDER THE SELJUKS, THE MONGOLS, AND THE NATIONAL PERSIAN DYNASTIES

Despite the violence and slaughter that so often accompanied barbarian invasions, what had been the practice of the Arabs in the seventh century remained true of the later conquerors of the Near East.   Untaught in the fine art of government, they left to natives

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45 Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne,* 3:27.

46 Bosworth, *Islamic Dynasties,* p. 25. See also Rudolf von Heckel, "Das päpstliche und sicilische Registerwesen in vergleichender Darstellung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ursprünge," *Archivalische Zeitschrift,* 1:375–394 (1908).

the only governmental function of interest, that of collecting taxes and other revenue.   This, for instance, was the practice of the Seljuk Turks, who overran Persia, 'Irāq, Syria, and Anatolia about the middle of the 11th century and continued their rule in Anatolia until 1307.   The Great Seljuk state in 'Irāq and Persia "evolved into a hierarchically organized state on the Persian-Islamic pattern, with the supreme sultan supported by a Persian bureaucracy and a multinational army directed by Turkish slave commanders."[47]   A study by Heribert Horst has thrown considerable light on the practices of the Seljuk State Chancery.[48]   Because not a single original document has survived and because there are no administrative manuals of the period, Horst had to use collections of model documents whose value, of course, does not equal that of original documents.   They teach us, however, that the organization and practices of the State Chancery, the Seljuks' *dīwān-i inšā'*, closely resembled those of predecessor regimes.   Headed by a chief who had to be a master of literary accomplishment and who had responsibility for the procedures of the office, the staff included "poets of rank."   Much emphasis was placed on the entrance of all issuances in a register as a permanent and reliable record.   According to one of the documents appended to Horst's treatise, the chief of the State Chancery had to make sure "every decree (*misāl*), every letter (*kitāb*), and every communication (*hiṭāb*) that went out was in perfect order and without any mistakes, that it was registered according to date, month, and year (*mazkūr wa-masṭūr hamīnāmad*), and that the register (*daftar*) for it was preserved."[49]   In the same vein, the supreme financial counselor was instructed to keep "available all lists (*daftarāt*) and registers (*ǧarā'id*) of the contracts that governed tax farming (*mu'ālamāt*) and the documents relating to drawing up contracts (*qawānīn-i muhā-sabāt*)."[50]   Recording of issuances and administrative data in general implies a concern for their archival preservation, even if the existence of installations for that purpose cannot be proven, so that we

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47 Bosworth, *Islamic Dynasties*, p. 117.

48 *Die Staatsverwaltung der Grosselǧuquen und Horazmšahs (1038–1231): Eine Untersuchung nach Urkundenformularen der Zeit*, p. 14–98, especially p. 31 (Wiesbaden, 1964). A. K. S. Lambton, "The Internal Structure of the Saljuq Empire," in *Cambridge History of Iran*, 5:257–258 (Cambridge, At the University Press, 1968), mentions the following departments: the *dīwān-i inshā;* a *dīwān* in charge of revenue, which handles "the revenue accounts, tax assessments, collection, and expenditure"; a *dīwān* that acts as an auditing agency; and a *dīwān* that keeps the military registers, the records of military fiefs, and the records relating to the pay of the regular army.

49 Horst, *Staatsverwaltung*, p. 103.

50 Horst, *Staatsverwaltung*, p. 106. Lambton, "Internal Structure," p. 207, suggests that the *dīwān* "was mainly staffed by men who were not Turks and had inherited the administrative tradition of the preceding dynasties."

are justified in presupposing the continuation of the archival arrangements found by the Seljuks in the conquered lands.

This assumption is supported by the fact that the Seljuks were speedily absorbed into the Iranian-Muslim civilization that had a period of flowering during the second half of the 11th century.[51] The invasions of the Mongols, however, characterized by mass killing and systematic devastation, which led to a period of great economic decline, resulted in a lengthy break in the administration of the conquered lands. But in the case of the Mongols, too, the necessity of restoring law and order, if only for financial reasons, made itself felt. During the reign of the Il-Khanid Maḥmūd Ghazan (1295–1304), there occurred a return to the old Iranian conditions and a restoration of the Iranian economy, stimulated by administrative reforms that were accompanied by a revival of the ancient arts of correspondence and recordkeeping. Rašīd al-Dīn, historian and statesman of that era, could base his writings on "the best and rarest sources of the empire such as the national archives of the Mongols."[52]

Institutions and practices created over the centuries continued under the national Persian dynasties. Walther Hinz has acquainted us with the organization and procedures of the Persian Privy Chancery, headed by the Imperial Privy Secretary "whose office can be traced back in unbroken line to the ērān-dibhērbadh of the Sassanids."[53] Archivists constituted a special group within the Chancery. They, together with the registry personnel, kept a careful record of the arrival and dispatch of foreign ambassadors and of the purpose of the mission and its results; and in their chests they preserved in good order the diplomatic correspondence, the treaties of the Shahs, the correspondence with the governors of the provinces, and other records. In addition to their daily register, they kept the lists, with the appropriate expressions of courtesy, of the names and titles of imperial dignitaries and foreign rulers and also a daily record of events in the empire and abroad. The daily record served as the basis of the official chronicle that was read on March 21 of each year to the Shah before his "court solemnly assembled."

Many of the above provisions remind one of those in Ibn al-Ṣayrafī's manual for the Fāṭimid State Chancery. Rightly, Hinz speaks of the extraordinary persistence and endurance of public and court institutions, referring to the clay tablets of the Susa Superin-

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51 Bertold Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit,* p. 129 (Wiesbaden, 1952).

52 *Histoire universelle de Rašīd al-Dīn Fadl Allāh Abul-Khair,* p. 2, K. Jahn, ed. (Leiden, 1951). On Rašīd al-Dīn, see *Cambridge History of Iran,* vol. 5 passim (1968).

53 "Die persische Geheimkanzlei im Mittelalter," in Fritz Meier, ed., *Westöstliche Abhandlungen; Rudolf Tschudi zum siebzigsten Geburstag überreicht von Freunden und Schülern,* p. 342–354 (Wiesbaden, 1954).

tendency of the Achaemenids, which let us "surmise that the Elamites of the 7th century B.C. had already organized the administration of their court in a manner similar to that of the Persians of the later Middle Ages." The Persian Privy State and Court Chancery remained essentially unchanged during the Islamic period, that is from about A.D. 650 to the beginning of modern, superficially European institutions in the 19th century. Such lasting phenomena of oriental thinking, feeling, and acting Hinz considers the true subjects of Islamic history.[54]

FISCAL AND JUDICIAL RECORDKEEPING

Persian administrative competence remained particularly useful in the areas of Muslim taxation and the disbursement of revenue. In conquered Egypt, Byzantine practices, at the beginning, were little changed, although the Arabs simplified the complex and oppressive system of imperial taxation, which was "unjust in its incidence, inefficient in its method, divided in its authority, and overwhelmed by red tape in its operation."[55] They also eliminated the baneful influence of the *autopract* lords, while retaining the existing taxes and many of the former employees and the established techniques. Under a well-implemented system, locally prepared tax registers, frequently accompanied by the tax assessors, were sent to the capital and undoubtedly preserved there for future reference. In the 10th century methods of Persian bookkeeping and accounting began to supersede the Byzantine-Coptic methods, and, when one century later "the Seljuks established their vast empire from the Jaxartes to the Mediterranean, Persian administrative know-how followed the Seljuk sword."[56] Undoubtedly, in Egypt at least, the Government kept a close watch on the taxpayer: a traveler had to carry a receipt certifying that he had paid his tax, i.e., the poll tax.[57] Obviously records had to be carefully kept for this purpose.

In 'Irāq the Persian tax system remained unchanged,[58] practically as it had been instituted by Khosru I (A.D. 531–79): that is, taxes were levied by the *qāḍis*, who seem "to have kept extensive archives —copies of official documents sent to them from the central admin-

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[54] Hinz, "Persische Geheimkanzlei," p. 342.

[55] David C. Dennett, Jr., *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam*, p. 95 (Cambridge, Mass., 1950).

[56] Walther Hinz, "Das Rechnungswesen orientalischer Reichsfinanzämter im Mittelalter," in *Islam*, 29:3 (1949–50). On the growing influence of Persian techniques, see also Subhi Y. Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter*, p. 234 (Wiesbaden, 1965).

[57] S. D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, p. 297 (Leiden, 1966).

[58] Dennett, *Conversion*, p. 14.

istration—relating to fiscal matters."[59] A special *dīwān* dealt with officials who were held accountable for their behavior, and its methods ranged all the way from polite discussion to torture. Officials would often attempt to destroy dangerous documents in their files because they were well aware of what might be in store for them, whereas a successor might try to gain control of the office by a *coup de main* in order "to seal up the archives and the bureaus."[60] Outgoing officials must have been acutely aware of the necessity of keeping records, but only the right records.

For centuries the reputation of the Persians in money matters remained high: in 1259 the Rūm Seljuks returned to bookkeeping in Persian, and later the Ottoman Turks kept their accounts in that language.[61] Persian administrative manuals of 1309, 1364, and 1440, designed to serve in the training of candidates for higher financial offices, afford us an impressive idea of the level attained by that branch of the service and the elaborate system of recordkeeping on which it was based.[62] The system operated with no less than seven registers. The oldest of them was the daybook or journal, also called the Book of Official Decrees, actually a copybook of issuances of the financial office that made it unnecessary to consult the documents in the archives. There were other registers: a daily record of funds on hand; a record of payments, regular as well as one-time (*einmalig*) payments; a later separate record of extraordinary expenses; a register of city, regional, and provincial budgets; a central record of receipts and expenses (*Reichshauptbuch*); and the estimate of imperial revenue (*Reichshebebuch*), which was reorganized under the Il-Khanid Maḥmūd Ghazan (1295–1304). During his reign the local reports that furnished the basis for this estimate were kept in an archives building erected by Ghazan next to his mausoleum in a suburb of Tabriz. Through funds set aside for the purpose, he provided for employing the necessary staff—a secretary, an archivist, and a janitor—for the care of the documents in the archives, and for making copies.[63] It was in this establishment that, as we have noted, the historian and statesman Rašīd al-Dīn had at his disposal "the best and rarest sources of the empire such as the national archives," including the official history of the Mongols.[64] Actually the holdings of the archives seem to have reached back into the pre-Mongol period, for among them the historian and geographer Ḥamd Allāh Mustaufī found the summary roll of his grandfather Amīn al-Dīn

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[59] See Løkkegaard, *Islamic Taxation*, p. 146. This is the basic work in the field.
[60] Løkkegaard, *Islamic Taxation*, p. 162. [61] Hinz, "Rechnungswesen," p. 4–5.
[62] The system is analyzed by Hinz in his article "Rechnungswesen," p. 1–29, 113–141.
[63] K. Jahn, ed., "Rašīd al-Dīn," in *Gibb Memorial*, N.S. 14:211, 261–262.
[64] Jahn, *Histoire universelle de Rašīd al-Dīn*, p. 2.

Nāṣir, former head of the financial administration of the Seljuk sultans of 'Irāq.[65]

What we know about the making and keeping of financial records is supplemented, for Egypt at least, by surviving records of the lower echelons of government. In that country the *pagarchy,* the equivalent of the old nome,[66] had become the main unit of administration directly under the Arab governor in Fusṭāṭ (Old Cairo). Although now dispersed, the letters and accounts of Basilius, pagarch of Aphrodito, afford us an insight into the workings of Arab administration on the local level. Elaborate registers specifying the names of taxpayers, their properties, and their obligations were prepared locally and sent to the capital at Fusṭāṭ to be used in the assessment of taxes. According to H. I. Bell, the tax system and procedures clearly show that the Arab invaders "took over the existing organization almost intact . . . until they had learned the technique of administration,"[67] after which they were able to make certain improvements.

Another area of Muslim recordkeeping calls for consideration and seems to be of particular interest, namely the handling and preservation of records establishing pious foundations (called *waqfs*). To set up such a foundation, a *waqfīyah* or *waqf-nāmah* had to be "signed and sealed in the presence of witnesses and certified by the *qāḍi* or judge in a solemn form"—supervision of the *waqfs* being one of the main duties of the *qāḍi*. "The official copy was either left with the *qāḍi* or registered in an appropriate departmental office."[68] For obvious reasons the Muslim state kept a check on the establishment of *waqfs* because they withdrew considerable amounts of property from circulation[69] and probably also from taxation; the state therefore made provision for keeping pertinent records. As early as A.D. 736, Tawba Ibn-Namir, *qāḍi* of Egypt, set up a register

[65] E. P. Petrushevsky, "The Socio-Economic Condition of Iran Under the Il-Khans," in *Cambridge History of Iran,* 5:497, n. 5 (1968).

[66] Bell, "Administration of Egypt," p. 279.

[67] Bell, "Administration of Egypt," p. 282, n. 1. See also Bell's edition of the *Greek Papyri of the British Museum,* Vol. IV, *The Aphrodito Papyri* (London, 1910) and Carl Heinrich Becker, "Historische Studien über das Londoner Aphroditowerk" in his *Islamstudien,* 1:242–262 (2 vols., Strassbourg, 1967).

[68] Muhammed Ahmed Simsar, *The Waqfiyah of 'Ahmed Pāša,* p. 169 (Philadelphia 1940). On the *qāḍi*'s role in the administration of *waqfs,* see also Løkkegaard, *Islamic Taxation,* p. 146. Roger Le Tourneau, "Les archives musulmanes en Afrique du Nord," in *Archivum,* 4:175–177 (1954) deals briefly with the various types of Muslim religious archives in North Africa, namely those of the great mosques, the administrations of religious properties, and the foundations established at the site of holy persons' tombs. According to the author, even Muslims find it difficult to obtain access to these archives. No *fonds* of the medieval period are mentioned specifically.

[69] Schacht, *Introduction to Islamic Law,* p. 125.

of *waqfs*.[70]   Under the Fāṭimids, al Mu'izz gave instructions in A.D.
974 to deliver to the State Treasury, the *bait al-māl*, the property of
the pious foundations or endowments and the pertinent documents.[71]
The number of such documents must have been very great; and it
must have called for effective control and careful preservation.   It
is not now possible to make any useful statements about the *waqfs*.
Recent legislation in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Tunisia has abol-
ished the private or family *waqf*, the assets becoming property of the
state;[72] and in Egypt a Ministry of *Waqfs* has been placed in charge
of them.[73]   Should *waqf* records survive anywhere in official custody,
they would be important research material for the social historian,
comparable in value to the holdings of the Cairo Genizah to which
as the most important assemblage of original documents of the me-
dieval period of Islam we now turn.

NON-MUSLIM ARCHIVES IN MUSLIM LANDS

"The Hebrew word *genizah* means 'safekeeping,' 'hiding,' 'ar-
chive,' 'treasury,' 'hiding place.'   Specifically it means a depository
where worn-out, heretical or disgraced books, written or printed,
useless documents and letters, or other objects of pious solicitude
are stored."[74]   The genizah, a common Jewish institution, was in-
tended to serve as a temporary storage place, its contents to be pe-
riodically removed and solemnly buried in hallowed ground; in
Jerusalem, for instance, as late as the 19th century, removals were
to be made "every second year and also in a year of drought."[75]   In
a sense the genizah could be compared to a modern record center,
with the understanding that its holdings were all earmarked for ul-
timate disposal and that none of them were to be kept indefinitely.

The Cairo Genizah is the only such institution whose contents
have been preserved, at least partly.   By the Cairo Genizah we un-
derstand the documentary material found in a synagogue in Fusṭāṭ
(Old Cairo) and in the nearby cemetery of al-Basātīn.   In the syna-
gogue, formerly a Christian church, the Genizah occupied a good-
sized room at the end of the women's gallery.   The room was in
fact so large that it would serve as a storage place for centuries.   It
had neither doors nor windows and could be entered only by climb-

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[70] Noel J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law*, p. 32 (Edinburgh, 1964).

[71] In *EI*, 4:1098.   [72] Schacht, *Introduction to Islamic Law*, p. 103, 108.

[73] Stanford J. Shaw, "Cairo's Archives and the History of Ottoman Egypt," in The
Middle East Institute, *Report on Current Research*, p. 67–68 (Spring 1956).

[74] *Fragments From the Cairo Genizah in the Freer Collection*, p. xi, Richard Gottheil
and William H. Worrell, eds. (New York, 1927).

[75] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 1:17. A study of the Genizah as a repository of
documents must proceed from the relevant parts of this work and of the same author's
Studies in Islamic History and Institutions.

ing a ladder and crawling through a hole.[76]   Until the end of the
19th century the Genizah remained in "living use,"[77] with people
slipping into the room, helping themselves in the darkness and with-
out any supervision to records, books, and paper, and thereby turn-
ing the contents of the depository upside down.   The process of
"dissolution was enhanced by the way in which the Genizah trea-
sures were dispersed among many libraries all over the world."[78]

Goitein has estimated the number of items of documentary charac-
ter retrieved at approximately 10,000, compared with some 250,000
leaves covered with texts of literary content.[79]   The largest part
stems from the period from about A.D. 1000 to about 1250 and per-
tains to the rule of the Fāṭimid and Ayyūbid dynasties of Egypt.   At
least 80 percent of the documents that have come down to us are
written "not in Hebrew, but in Arabic, the lingua franca of the
time."[80]

Given the chaotic condition of the Genizah material now, there
does not exist, and cannot for a long time, a catalog or other finding
aid that covers the entire mass of the nonliterary items.   A valuable
beginning has been made in the *Tentative Bibliography of Geniza
Documents,* prepared by S. Shaked under the direction of D. H.
Baneth and S. D. Goitein (Paris and The Hague, 1964), which con-
tains a list of all published Genizah records and an additional list
of books and articles in which such records are published or dis-
cussed.   This "absolutely indispensable tool of research"[81] assists in
reconstituting, on paper at least, bodies of archives that were depos-
ited in the Genizah.

Foremost among them are the papers of Nahrai b. Nissim, a Tu-
nisian merchant, banker, and scholar who lived between 1048 and
1095.   The approximately 200 letters received that have been iden-
tified reflect his farflung business interests.[82]   Goitein, the greatest
expert on the Genizah records, has traced additional bodies of an
archival nature in the Genizah, such as the records of Abraham ben

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[76] Paul E. **Kahle,** *Die Kairoer Genisa,* p. 4 (Berlin, 1962).   The setup resembles that of
ancient Mesopotamian archives rooms accessible from the roof of the building only;
see *Archives in the Ancient World,* p. 54.

[77] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society,* 1:9.

[78] Goitein, *Studies,* p. 287. On the process of dispersal, see *Fragments From the
Cairo Genizah,* p. xi–xii; Kahle, *Genisa,* p. 4; and Goitein, *Studies,* p. 279, who says:
"All in all, nineteen libraries are known to possess Geniza documents, and there may
still be papers in private hands."

[79] *Studies,* p. 282.   [80] Goitein, *Studies,* p. 297.   [81] Goitein, *Studies,* p. 295.

[82] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society,* 1:154, enumerates the kinds of merchandise Nahrai
b. Nissim dealt in, arranged in approximately descending order of volume. On his
archives, see Murad Michael, "The Archives of Nahrai b. Nissim, an 11th-Century
Trader and Social Figure in Egypt" (Ph. D. diss. in Hebrew, Hebrew University of
Jerusalem, 1965). I owe this information to the kindness of Alexander Bein.

Yiju of al-Mahdiyya in Tunisia, who was a resident of India from 1132 to 1149.[83] He has also pieced together the dossier of the court case of Joseph Lebdi, a merchant from Tripoli in Libya, with records of 11 court sessions from November 9, 1097, to August 18, 1098.[84]

Clearly the Cairo Genizah had a character quite different from that of similar Jewish institutions: it became a permanent repository, and it comprised much material of an entirely secular character. Generally speaking, Jewish businessmen and courts were inclined to keep their records over long periods of time because "neither Muslim nor Jewish law of that time knew forfeiture by the statute of limitations, and, as an Arab proverb has it, 'the bankrupt rummages the business papers of his father' (in order to find a forgotten claim against a debtor)."[85] Long-term preservation of their records may have been particularly important to the Jewish businessmen who, from Tunisia, once the commercial hub of the Mediterranean, followed the Fāṭimids to Cairo and made it the center of their operations, which spanned the Indian and Mediterranean Oceans. Goitein is inclined to believe that originally the Genizah served the needs of these former Tunisian merchants and that they planned its use as a permanent records repository, not actually administered as an archives but in its nature contradicting the true idea of a genizah.[86]

Mention must be made of other non-Muslim archival accumulations in Muslim lands,[87] the most important being the archives of the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. Unknown until Carl Schmidt and Bernhard Moritz undertook their ill-fated expedition to the mountain,[88] the core of the archives consists of the decrees or charters of liberty granted the monks, beginning with a limited number of decrees in the form of paper scrolls of the Fāṭimids and Ayyūbids and continuing into the 19th century. There are also treaties of the monastery with the Bedouin tribes and other documents relating to them; a large collection of deeds and indentures, mostly issued by a judge in court; administrative issuances of Muslim authorities; and inventories, accounts, and other business

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[83] *Studies,* p. 337; and see also p. 331.

[84] *Studies,* p. 330, 336. See also Goitein's "From the Mediterranean to India: Documents on the Trade to India, South Arabia and East Africa From the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *Speculum,* 29:181–197, especially p. 191–195 (1954).

[85] Goitein, *Studies,* p. 332–333.   [86] *Mediterranean Society,* 1:20.

[87] On monastic archives in Muslim countries, in general, see Roemer, "Christliche Klosterarchive," in *Orient in der Forschung,* p. 543–556.

[88] See Carl Schmidt and Bernhard Moritz, "Die Sinaiexpedition im Frühjahr 1914," in Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, *Sitzungsberichte, 1926,* p. 26–34 (Berlin, 1926).

records of the monastery.[89]   The monastery must have enjoyed a reputation as a safe place, seeing that a Bedouin entrusted to it a document pertaining to his divorce case.   The holdings of the archives are now housed in a fireproof library building.

Other Christian institutions in Muslim lands that appear to have had an organized archives are the Franciscan Custodia Terrae Sanctae in Jerusalem;[90] the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, also in Jerusalem; the Abbey of Our Lady of Josaphat, east of Jerusalem; the branch of the Franciscan Order at its seat in Cairo; and the *metoxion* of the Sinai Monastery in the Balat District of Istanbul.   We shall not consider here the originals of Arab documents that went to European recipients, for their story is part of the story of archives-keeping in the West.

The student of archives-keeping is bound to be deeply impressed by the role it played in Islamic medieval civilization, whose vast superiority over that of contemporary Europe is apparent in so many other fields.   Well developed as it was, did it have a palpable influence on Muslim historical writing?   In his discussion of "The Use of Documents, Inscriptions, and Coins" by Muslim historians, Franz Rosenthal has come to the conclusion that men in influential positions turned to records when writing the history of their own times.   Those who dealt with earlier phases of history, however, obtained their facts from literary sources because either original records were no longer available to them, or else they did not try to discover them.[91]   Indeed, they seem to have overlooked opportunities for research that the official archives would have afforded them. Some gained access to, and obtained documents from, the archives of families, as did a writer for his History of Beirut and the Family

[89] The holdings of the Sinai archives have been described by Aziz Atiya in *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai: A Handlist of the Manuscripts and Scrolls Microfilmed at the Library of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai* (Baltimore, 1955).   See also Elias Khedoori, "Charters of Privileges Granted by the Fāṭimids and Mamlūks to St. Catherine's Monastery on Tur Sinai" (M.A. thesis, University of Manchester, 1958) and Ernst, *Die Mamlukischen Sultansurkunden,* p. xxii.

[90] The following have been published in the series Ex Archivis Custodiae Terrae Sanctae: P. Eutimio Castellani, *Catalogo dei firmani ed altri documenti legali emanati in lingua araba e turca concernenti i santuari, le proprietà e diritti della Custodia di Terra Santa, conservati nell'archivio della stessa Custodia in Gerusalemme* (Tipografia dei PP. Francescani, 1922), which specifies 2,644 items, the oldest from 1247; and P. Roberto Risciani, *Documenti e firmani* (Tipografia dei PP. Francescani, 1936).   See also Girolamo Golubovich, *Serie chronologica dei . . . Superiori di Terra Santa . . . già Commissari Apostolici del Oriente e sino al 1847 in ufficio* (Jerusalem, 1898).   Some 1,500 documents of Armenian monasteries, 1449–1848, among them documents of the Monastery of Echmiadzin, are to be found in the Matenadaran State Archives of Old Manuscripts at the Council of Ministers of the Armenian Soviet Republic in Erevan.

[91] *A History of Muslim Historiography,* p. 118–128 (2d rev. ed., Leiden, 1968).

of Buhtur.[92]   Also, students of geography made use of itineraries available at postal headquarters in Baghdad.   One of them, Ibn-Khurdādhbih (d. about 912), who held high positions in the postal service, availed himself of the state archives in his famous geographical work.[93]

As pointed out at the beginning of this essay, it is not yet possible to do justice to the development of Muslim archives-keeping in all of its phases and facets.   To the obstacles we mentioned before—retardation of a discipline of Muslim diplomatics, lack of a completely satisfactory history of Muslim institutions, and destruction of archival holdings—a further factor should be added: the lack of a survey that would show what medieval records are possibly still in the hands of all kinds of public authorities and institutions.[94]

Finally, once these impediments have been wholly or partly removed, a history of Muslim archives-keeping during the Middle Ages by its very nature calls for the efforts of someone able to use primary and secondary sources in Arabic.   From the results of an outsider's study of the subject, it should be clear, however, that any history of archives administration is incomplete unless it includes the story of the Muslim archives; for, as Goethe has warned us in his *Westöslicher Diwan:* "Orient und Occident sind nicht mehr zu trennen."   "East and West can nevermore be put asunder."

[92] *Muslim Historiography*, p. 121.

[93] Philip Khûri Hitti, *History of the Arabs From the Earliest Times to the Present*, p. 323 (5th ed., New York, 1951), and in *EI2*, 3:839–840 (1968).

[94] Emir Fathy al-Akermi, "L'activité archivistique dans le monde Arabe," in *Archives et bibliothèques de Belgique,* 39:64–77 (1968), presents, as a first installment of a survey of present-day Arab practices, the data obtained from Syria and the Sudan in reply to a questionnaire of his. From Oct. 18 to Nov. 15, 1969, Giovanni Antonelli, Secretary General of the International Council on Archives, visited Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, the United Arab Republic, and the Sudan on a mission principally designed to explore the organization and present situation of the archives of these states.   His *Rapport sur la mission dans les pays arabes* (26 pages, proc.; Jan. 1972) does not deal with record holdings of archival institutions and other agencies in the countries visited.   On subsequent trips Antonelli visited Lebanon and Syria (May 4–19, 1970) and 'Irāq (Dec. 3–7, 1970).   He reported to the Council on his findings in Feb. 1972 (14 p., proc.).