

THE ROLE OF THE DOCUMENTS AND MANUSCRIPTS CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN IN PRESERVING RECORDS RELATED TO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE THROUGH ELECTRONIC COMPUTING

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Abstract

The establishment of the Documents and Manuscripts Center at the University of Jordan was a response to a need felt by university's founders since its establishment. In 1972/1973, the Royal Decree was issued to establish this center, which became a pioneering landmark of the university that plays its role in encouraging scientific research, preserving heritage, and providing a conducive environment for students. The center's mission includes collecting documents, manuscripts, records of Sharia courts, Islamic endowments, newspapers, in addition to collecting reports, maps, narratives, files, memoirs and photos, preserving and documenting them in accordance with scientific standards.

Sharia Documents are also considered one of the most important historical sources, and these documents include laws, decrees, proclamations, appointments, transactions, personal status cases, marriage contracts, divorces, inheritance inventories and endowments.

Therefore, Sharia records chronicle historical facts about social, economic, administrative, and cultural life, which do not exist elsewhere, unveiling the ambiguity surrounding the Ottoman era in the Levant.

Based on the aforementioned, this study aims to highlight the role of the Documents and Manuscripts Center at the University of Jordan in preserving the history of the Levant during the Ottoman era by digitizing all the relevant records, manuscripts and documents related to this period, and thus allows researchers and specialists in modern and contemporary Levantine history to access rich scientific material previously scattered, consolidating historical knowledge within an electronic cloud, facilitating study of this period.

Introduction

The establishment of the Documents and Manuscripts Center at the University of Jordan in 1972 came in response to an urgent need to raise the level of scientific research, and to provide the appropriate environment for researchers and scholars. It is a desire of the University of Jordan to achieve this goal and was keen to collect what was available from the Arab and Islamic heritage, and what is related to the history of this nation from the various libraries of the world and place them in this center to make them known and disseminated.

Since its establishment, the center's founders have been keen to develop it, in order to keep pace with

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the expansion of Jordanian universities in the fields of graduate studies and scientific research. Therefore, the center has witnessed a qualitative development acquiring tens of thousands of documents and manuscripts, especially the period related to the Ottoman Empire.

Documents have been collected about Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and the Arab and Islamic countries, including correspondence, personal memoirs, official and private files, manuscripts of all kinds, and everything that is printed, manuscript, or photocopied and recorded in a computer in the form of microfilm, photostat, or micro flash, and has been indexed and classified in accordance with the established scientific principles.

The Documents and Manuscripts Center is also committed to maintaining the confidentiality of documents and recordings if the interest so requires. The Center is also committed to preserving heritage materials of historical, economic, social, or scientific significance.

Establishing the Documents and Manuscripts Center at the University of Jordan

The idea of establishing the Documents and Manuscripts Center at the University of Jordan began in the spring of 1972 AD, after beginning to collect and publish papers related to the Guerrilla Movement in Jordan. Dr. Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit was assigned to be the secretary of this center. He traveled in the summer of 1973 AD to the United States of America to photocopy Arabic Manuscripts from its libraries [1].

Through the files maintained by the Documents and Manuscripts Center, we find that the Center was called at the beginning of its establishment "the Center for Documentation and Authentication", due to the Center's acquisition of huge quantities of documents and Manuscripts. In 1977, the Deans' Council at the University of Jordan decided in its session No. 48/77 to change its name to "The Documents and Manuscripts Center." This was accompanied by an expansion of the collection of documents and Manuscripts to serve graduate students on the one hand and serve faculty members on the other hand [1].

The first meeting of the Council responsible for the Documents and Manuscripts Center was on January 11, 1978, AD, in which Dr. Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit was chosen as Secretary of the Center.

The University hoped that the Documents and Manuscripts Center would achieve the ambitions it had set to advance graduate studies at the university and serve the history of Jordan. It insisted that the Center have its legal status

that represents it inside and outside Jordan, therefore, the university sought to issue a Royal Decree to establish the center at the university. The president of the university at that time addressed a letter to the secretary of the Documents and Manuscripts Center and attached a copy of the Prime Minister's letter containing the issuance of the Royal Decree approving the establishment of a center at the university called "The Documents and Manuscripts Center [1, 2].

The Center's Experience in Photocopying Ottoman Documents and Manuscripts

Dr. Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit, the Secretary of the Documents and Manuscripts Center, has placed among his priorities the photocopying of various Ottoman documents related to the history of the Levant in general, and Jordan and Palestine in particular, due to the great historical importance of these documents. The Center has achieved remarkable success in this field.

In order to achieve this goal in the best possible way, the officials at the University of Jordan decided, with the efforts of Dr. Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit, to address the highest levels in the Republic of Turkey, where His Highness Prince Hassan bin Talal addressed the Prime Minister of Turkey, Suleyman Demirel, requesting that the Documents and Manuscripts Center at the University of Jordan shall be allowed to photocopy documents, books, legal records, and Ottoman salnamat¹ in the provinces of Damascus, Aleppo, Tripoli, Sidon, and Hijaz during the Ottoman era. The response came via the Jordanian Ambassador in Ankara that officials in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed to the arrival of Dr. Muhammad Al-Bakhit to photocopy the documents related to the provinces of Aleppo, Damascus, Tripoli, the Levant, Sidon, and the Hijaz in Ottoman era.²

In July 1975, the Center began to photocopy the required documents. In File No. (12) of 1975, most of the documents were signed by Dr. Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit, Secretary of the Documents and Manuscripts Center. The Center photocopied the Ottoman records, papers, and books related to the Levant and the Hijaz. The Center also obtained a quantity of noble royal rulings contained in the mission books and appointments.³ It is worth mentioning that Dr. Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit referred to these books, records and documents while preparing his doctoral thesis "The Ottoman Province of Damascus in the 16th Century" at the University of London, and he included much of their information in his thesis.

[1] Salnama is a word of Persian origin consisting of two syllables "Sal" which means "year" and "Nama" which means "book" so the meaning of "Salnama"

Table 1.

City	Number of legal records	Marriage Contract Records	Endowment Records
Irbid	23	41	
Jericho	29	45	
Jerash	13	28	
Jenin	11 (film)	219	613
Aleppo	27 (film)		
Haifa	91		
Hebron	142	356	
Damascus	38 (film)		
Ramallah	9 (film)	179	24 (film)
Salt	42		
Tafila	7	43	
Tulkarm	7 (film)	231	11 (film)
Ajloun	17	25	
Aqaba	1	3	
Acre	25		
Amman	55	241	
Jerusalem	82 (film)	21 (film)	Includes the endowments of Jerusalem, Gaza, and the North
Qalqila		64	
Karak	27	108	
Meanings	10		
Nablus	266	806	1058
Nazareth and Tiberias	98	782	
Jaffa	363	691	

is "Yearbook." It is considered as general information and statistics about the state's organizations, its cadres, senior government figures, office holders, and the administrative, military, judicial, and educational organizations in each of the states or provinces directly affiliated with the Sublime Porte. There were a large number of salnamat, some of which were issued by the Prime Minister in Istanbul, some of which were issued by the Ottoman Ministries, and some of which were issued by the states. There were a large number of salmanat, some were issued by the Great Leadership (the Prime Minister's Office) in Astana, some issued by the Authorities (Ottoman Ministries), and some issued by the states. Official Salnamat are considered one of the important sources of information through which one can determine the central state's conditions, the states and administrative units affiliated with the states, including provinces, districts, and areas, in addition to other information about the activities of the state or province in various fields.

He also copied many of these books, photocopied and translated some of the noble rulings [1].

A. Mission Books

Mission Books are the books in which the royal rulings were written and sent from the Diwan al-Humayuni [2] (Imperial Council) to the concerned authorities at the center of the state and outside it. They are also called "important matters books, given that the provisions regulating them is related to important matters pertaining to the state and its nationals, and are dealt with in Diwan al-Humayuni" [3].

Dr. Al-Bakhit had photocopied many of the mission books and placed them in the Documents and Manuscripts Center. After his return to the University of Jordan, and his assumption of the presidency of the Levant History Committee in 2001 AD, Dr. Al-Bakhit set his sights on translating these rulings and provide them to those interested and Researchers in the Levant history during the Ottoman era. He commissioned Dr. Fadel Bayat, a researcher in the Levant, to translate quite a few of these. Thus, he added a new foundation in establishing the foundations of Ottoman studies in the Arab countries on sound scientific foundations, and three volumes have been published so far under the title "Bilad al-Sham fi al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya.

- The first volume included the years 951 AH / 1544 AD - 973 AH / 1566 AD and included 243 rulings.
- The second volume covered the years 975 AH / 1567 AD - 977 AH / 1570 AD and included 225 rulings.
- The third volume covered the years 977 AH / 1570 AD - 979 AH / 1572 AD and included 220 rulings [1].

In order to provide more knowledge about the contents of Ottoman Archives

of the Prime Minister's Office in Istanbul of the documents of the Ottoman Empire, Dr. Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit made great efforts to have "the Documents and Manuscripts Center" in cooperation with "The Research Centre For Islamic History, Art and Culture in Istanbul" to issue the book "The Ottoman Archives": A comprehensive index of the Ottoman Empire documents preserved in the Archives of the Prime Minister's Office in Istanbul, prepared by Najati Aqtash and Ismet Benariq, translated by Saleh Saadawi Saleh, the Documents and Manuscripts Center at the University of Jordan, Amman, 1986 AD [2].

B. Liberation Books (Title Deed books) for all provinces of the Levant and Hijaz.

It included the detailed and general records and the financial books of the Levant provinces. These records and books date back to the beginning of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and their importance lies in the fact that they contain the records of various lands, and the designation of their races from Timar, private, leadership, King, and endowment, and determine the sources of state revenues. These books were organized within the liberation (registration) of lands after the Ottoman conquest [3]

These books were reopened every 30 years when a new liberation is made, and the financial books are the ones that control all the expenses and revenues of the provinces [4].

Dr. Al-Bakhit photocopied the books belonging to the State of Damascus-Levant and its provinces, the State of Tripoli-Levant and its provinces, as well as the books of the state of Aleppo and its provinces, and placed them in the Documents and Manuscripts Center, in addition to the documents of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially those related to the events of Mount Lebanon in 1860 AD, and the subsequent [1].

As we talk about the Ottoman books and records and their importance in studying the history of the Levant in the Ottoman era, it is worth mentioning another important Ottoman source whose information is reinforced by what was stated in these books and records, which is the "the Nama's Laws", and Dr. Khalil Sahili Oglu translated some of these laws during his stay at Yarmouk University into Arabic, the credit for this goes to Dr. Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit, when he was Dean of Scientific Research, who was keen to publish these translations in the "Dirasat Journals" issued by the Deanship of Scientific Research at the University of Jordan, and these laws:

1. The Nama's Law of Al Ottoman by Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror.
2. The Nama's law of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.
3. The laws of Al Ottoman by Ain Ali Effendi.

4. The Message of Ain Ali Effendi in Timar.
5. The laws of Al Ottoman by Ali Jawoosh Sufi [2].

Due to the importance of these books and being a primary source in the historical, economic and social studies of the various regions of the Levant, Dr. Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit has been interested in conducting a number of studies that dealt with several cities in the Levant, and some of these books have been published in accordance with scientific principles, as the following books have been published:

1. Special detailed book for the Emir of the Levant Province: Tabou Daftary 275 AH / 1551 AD, Study, Translation and Investigation by Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit, Petra Bank Press, Amman, 1989.
2. Detailed book of the Ajloun Province, Tabou Daftary No. 970, Study, Investigation and Translation by Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit and Nofan Raja Al-Hamoud, University of Jordan Amman Publications, 1989.
3. Detailed book of Marj Bani Amer district and its dependencies that were at the disposal of Emir Tora Bey in 945 AH / 1538 AD, University of Jordan Amman Publications, 1989.
4. Detailed book of Al-Lajjun Province: Tabou Daftary No. 181 of 1005 AH / 1596 AD, Study, Investigation and Translation by Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit and Nofan Raja Al-Hamoud, University of Jordan Amman Publications, 1989.
5. Detailed book of the Ajloun Province: Tabou Daftary No. 185 (Ankara) in 1005 AH / 1596 AD, Study, Investigation and Translation by Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit and Nofan Raja Al-Hamoud, University of Jordan Amman Publications, 1991.
6. Al-Quds Al-Sharif Province from the Liberation Book (427) 932 AH / 1525 1526 AD -934 AH / 1527 1528 AD), An Analytical Study of the Ottoman Text and its Translation into Arabic with Explanations, by Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit and Nofan Al-Sawariya, Al-Furqan Foundation for Islamic Heritage, London, Amman, 2005.
7. Al-Quds Al-Sharif Province from the Liberation Book (131) 932 AH / 1525 AD - 938 AH / 1531 - 1532 AD, An Analytical Study of the Ottoman Text and its Translation into Arabic with Explanations, by Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit and Nofan Al-Sawariya, Al-Furqan Foundation for Islamic Heritage, London, Amman, 2007.¹

In order to help those interested in this material and benefit from it in their studies, the Center has prepared a guide to these books, including the book number, its location, the province name and the number of book pages. Some students of the Levant history from different nationalities have benefited from this subject in their master's and doctoral studies.

Photocopying the records of Sharia courts and endowments records in the cities of the Levant.

These records are an important local source for the study of various social, economic, and cultural conditions and their development during the period of Ottoman rule. It is not possible to read the Ottoman material that the editorial, financial and mission books provide us with in isolation from the valuable documentary information that the Sharia court records provide us with. In fact, they represent the daily record of the life of the Levantine community throughout its life under Ottoman rule.

Dr. Muhammad Adnan Al-Bakhit had paid attention to the importance of these records in historical studies when he used these records in his doctoral thesis on Damascus State. He also photocopied what is related to his study of these records and made them accessible to researchers and scholars by photocopying and preserving them in the Documents and Manuscripts Center, which are in chronological order as follows:

1. Jerusalem/ Hama, Damascus, Aleppo, Gaza, Nablus.
2. The period of Egyptian Organization and rule: Jaffa, Hebron, Haifa, Salt, Acre, and Ma'an.
3. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Amman, Karak, Nazareth, Tiberias, Jenin, Tulkarem, Irbid and Ajloun [1].

Most of these records were microfilmed on 35 mm and 16 mm films, while others were photocopied by photostat, and the Documentation Center became the only center among similar centers in the Arab countries that combines Ottoman books and records and records of Sharia courts. Therefore, this Center became a unique center for academic researchers to prepare documented scientific studies on the history of modern Arabs, whether they were prepared from Jordan, Arab countries, or other nationalities. In order to complete the usefulness of the records, they were indexed chronologically in a chronological statistical archive in which these records were arranged

alphabetically in accordance with the cities from which the photocopies were taken, taking into account the chronological order in the records.

Photocopying the Municipality's Records.

The municipal records represent an essential source for the development of the Arab city from various aspects. The center was able to photocopy the records of the municipality of Nablus, the municipality of Salt, the municipality of Jenin, and the municipality of Madaba because of the importance of these records.

Conclusion

The importance of the Documents and Manuscripts Center at the University of Jordan is highlighted as a vital center for preserving cultural and historical heritage, which reflects the establishment of the center as a commitment to documenting documents and Manuscripts of scientific and cultural value and contributes to the promotion of scientific research and academic studies. The center embodies the spirit of interest in heritage and history and is considered a valuable resource for knowledge and learning, because the knowledge of history and its events is one of the components of civilization, and the conscious mother who cares about its history and takes lessons from it, to be landmarks of illumination to guide them. The preservation of documents for future generations is one of the important manifestations of state sovereignty and development.

Results

1. Massive amounts of documents and Manuscripts of historical significance have been documented.
2. The documents have been classified and archived scientifically and accurately.
3. Expanded document collection has been achieved to serve students and faculty.
4. The center was developed to keep pace with the expansion of universities in the fields of graduate studies and scientific research.

Recommendations

1. Increase cooperation with international institutions to share knowledge and resources.
2. Enhance efforts to maintain confidentiality and honesty in dealing with documents.
3. Expand the collection of documents to include more topics of cultural and historical significance.
4. Developing strategies to promote the Documents and Manuscripts Center and raise awareness of its importance.
5. Providing continuous training for the center's team to enhance their efficiency in dealing with documents.
6. Using modern Technology to improve the documentation and preservation of documents.

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