

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-52912-9 - Charity in Islamic Societies
Amy Singer
Frontmatter
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Charity in Islamic Societies

Muslim beliefs have inspired charitable giving for over fourteen centuries, yet Islamic history has rarely been examined from this perspective. In *Charity in Islamic Societies*, Amy Singer explains the basic concepts and institutions of Muslim charity, including the obligation to give on an annual basis, as well as an array of voluntary activities undertaken at every level of society and across the span of individual lifetimes. Charitable endowments – bestowed by rulers, wealthy individuals, and even those of more modest means – shaped Muslim societies and cultures in every era. This book demonstrates how historical circumstances, social status, gender, age, and other factors interacted with religious ideals to create a rich variety of charitable practices, from the beginnings of Islam to the present day. Using written texts, buildings, images, and objects to anchor the discussions in each chapter, the author explores the motivations for charity, its impact on the rich and the poor, and the politicization of charity, arguing that the study of philanthropy affords a unique prism through which to examine the past. This lucidly written and accessible book will capture the attention of anyone who is interested in the nature of Islamic society and the role of philanthropy throughout history.

AMY SINGER is professor of Ottoman History in the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University, Israel. Her recent publications include *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials* (Cambridge, 1994), *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem* (2002), *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts* (ed., 2003), and *Feeding People, Feeding Power: Imarets in the Ottoman Empire* (ed., 2007).

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THEMES IN ISLAMIC HISTORY comprises a range of titles exploring different aspects of Islamic history, society and culture by leading scholars in the field. Books are thematic in approach, offering a comprehensive and accessible overview of the subject. Generally, surveys treat Islamic history from its origins to the demise of the Ottoman Empire, although some offer a more developed analysis of a particular period, or project into the present, depending on the subject-matter. All the books are written to interpret and illuminate the past, as gateways to a deeper understanding of Islamic civilization and its peoples.

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To the memory of Mine An Ener (1965–2003),
friend and colleague

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Acknowledgments

I began this book convinced that the study of charity and philanthropy offers profound insights into the nature of human societies and historical change. At its conclusion, I remain equally persuaded that this is the case. In 1994, Michael Bonner, Mine Ener, and I began a partnership to organize a first panel on charity in Middle Eastern societies at the Middle East Studies Association annual meeting. Other panels followed that one and our joint efforts culminated in a National Endowment for the Humanities (USA) conference on Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts held at the University of Michigan in 2000, and published under the same title in 2003. Our conversations, the papers of scholars at all those meetings, and new research since then have inspired the present study.

The research and writing of this book have stretched over many years and benefited from the financial, intellectual, and emotional support of several institutions, and countless colleagues and friends. This research was supported by The Israel Science Foundation (grants no. 888/01 and 730/04). It has also benefited from the support of the American Research Institute in Turkey and the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations at Koç University, Istanbul. Final revisions of the manuscript were accomplished during a year as a senior research fellow at RCAC-Koç during the 2006–2007 academic year. I would like to thank in particular the director, Professor Scott Redford, for his collegial welcome and to acknowledge how much I have learned from him. My fellow fellows and the RCAC-Koç staff created a most supportive and congenial intellectual community. I would also like to thank the staffs of the Sorasky Library at Tel Aviv University, the library of the İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi (Istanbul), the Başbakanlık Arşivi, Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi, and Duygu Kızılaslan at the RCAC-Koç Library.

For a decade, I have taught undergraduate and graduate seminars on different aspects of charity in the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University. My students in those courses have been an important part of this project, contributing immeasurably to my work with their questions and their papers, and by sharing from their own experiences. You are too numerous to name here but I extend my sincere thanks to you for your hard work and your

x Acknowledgments

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Mine Ener has continued to be a source of inspiration even after her death, as her enthusiasm echoes through her own writings and my memories of our conversations. Her direct contribution to this manuscript is missing, and her absence too great for words.

Note on spellings and foreign words

Non-English words have been written in the most familiar form, to the extent possible, for example: Qur'an, qadi, Mecca. Arabic words have been transliterated without diacritics above and below the letters. However, the 'ayn character (‘) has been retained. Turkish words have been written as they are written in Turkish; where possible, they have been written in familiar forms (for example, pasha). In some cases, they retain Turkish characters, including c (like the j in jam), ç (like the ch in cheese), ğ (silent), ş (like the sh in ship), ı (like the u in cushion), ö (like a German ö), ü (like the French ü). Only the first occurrence of a foreign word is italicized. Brief definitions will appear at the first use of a word and in the index.

Abbreviations

d.	died
<i>EI</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 1st edition, 4 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1913–1936)
<i>EI</i> ²	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , new edition, 11 vols. plus supplements (Leiden, London: E. J. Brill, 1954–2003)
<i>İA</i>	<i>İslâm Ansiklopedisi</i> , 13 vols. (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1945–88)
<i>TDVİA</i>	<i>Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi</i> (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi Genel Müdürlüğü, 1988–)
USC-MSA	University of Southern California, Muslim Students Association

In this sense, *Charity in Islamic Societies* adds as much to the study of philanthropy itself as to the study of charity in Islam. Singer's analytical framework raises critical questions equally pertinent to our understanding of philanthropy in today's world: relationships with power and political struggles; motivations; expectations between donors and recipients; how norms are created and furthered through charity; entitlement and dependency; relationships with class, gender, and other forms of identity; the ability of charity to achieve its stated goals; and the influence of. Email rcelal@chrestfoundation.org. *Charity in Islamic Societies* Amy Singer Cambridge University Press £15.99 ISBN 9780521821643. To order <http://www.cambridge.org/uk/catalogue>. Share this page. / *Charity in Islam*. Being caring and compassionate for one's fellow human beings is a central part of Islam. When reading the Qur'an, one cannot help being struck by the number of times charity is mentioned: Feeding the poor and needy, supporting orphans, relatives and travellers, spending in the way of Allah; All of these references emphasise the importance of charity for every Muslim. Several ahadith "sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW)" refer to this deep affection and brotherhood. In addition to the indisputable benefits for those receiving charity, Islam also highlights the spiritual to give your wealth away selflessly to remember that every blessing they have in this life comes from Allah (SWT).

The Islamic Charitable Society is a non-profit charitable organisation located in Hebron in the West Bank. The charity was founded in 1962 to take care of orphans and expanded through years. It is now responsible for two orphanages, three schools for boys and girls, dairy, sewing workshop, two bakeries, a large mall and a 30-apartment building. According to a 2006 episode of the BBC's series