Introduction

Foundations and the Power of Giving *Christian, Jewish and Muslim Perspectives*

Zachary Chitwood

Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, Germany
zchitwoo@uni-mainz.de

Esther Möller

Leibniz Institute of European History, Mainz, Germany
moeller@ieg-mainz.de

The goal of philanthropy is to advance society by providing necessary social, cultural, and educational services which are not provided by the state or the markets for political or economic reasons or which are provided by the state but not in a way that satisfies philanthropists. Philanthropy constitutes a relationship between donor/giver and receiver – or between collectives of donors and collectives of receivers. Both sides gain something in the process of giving – the receiver gains material and financial support; the donor, financial or social advantages. Philanthropy serves as a way to define social distinctions and social classes. The donor provides money, time, and ideas for a project, which he or she alone, or in connection with other donors, attempts to control. Philanthropy always has something to do with power and the shaping of the future of society.¹

¹ Adam 2004: 4–5. We would like to thank Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah for drawing our attention to this definition of philanthropy, which she also employed in her own contribution.

The relationship between philanthropy and power, as emphasized in the last sentence of Thomas Adam's definition of philanthropy cited above, stands at the center of the articles presented in this special issue of *Endowment Studies*. These contributions were originally presented at the workshop "Philanthropy and Foundations in the Eastern Mediterranean: Christian, Jewish and Muslim Perspectives," which was held at the Leibniz Institute for European History (IEG) in Mainz on May 23rd and 24th, 2019. It is to this institution, in particular its Research Area 1, "Pluralization and Marginality", as well as to the Leibniz-ScienceCampus Mainz and Historische Kulturwissenschaften (HSK) of the Johannes Gutenberg University (JGU) of Mainz, more specifically the special body of funding for junior researchers in the social sciences (*junge Kulturwissenschaftler*), that we would like to express our thanks for their generous financial support, which allowed us to organize this scholarly gathering. In addition to these funding bodies, warm thanks are also due to the students of our course on "Philanthropy and Foundations", offered at the JGU in the Summer Semester of 2019, who proved themselves to be engaged and thoughtful course participants, not least of all by writing a report on the conference.² Last but not least, at the IEG Stefanie Mainz deserves special mention for her support in designing the flyer and arranging the delivery of food and all other logistical aspects of the conference.

Prefacing this special issue with a *Dankeswort* to those that financed and made possible the conference from which these contributions stem, as it turns out, represents a fitting entrée for a discussion of one of the central themes of these essays, namely charity or philanthropy. The funding of scholarly gatherings, for example, would probably strike most of us as lying outside the limits of most conventional definitions of charity. Whether the fostering of learning and knowledge constituted charity, and whether such a benefaction was a pious act or not, was judged differently in the three monotheistic traditions which are the focus of our workshop. In the medieval Jewish diaspora, for instance, the financing of religious education was a fundamental task of the community fund, the *heqdes*. Religious teachers who collected no fees from their students were viewed as particularly meritorious, and the support of these teachers in their *yeshivot* (elementary schools), particularly in Jerusalem, was an important form of charity.³ Islam as well viewed the cultivation of learning as a

2 Published online as "Tagungsbericht: Philanthropy and Foundations in the Eastern Mediterranean: Christian, Jewish and Muslim Perspectives, 23.05.2019–24.05.2019 Mainz" at H-Soz-Kult on 29.11.2019 and available at: www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-8441.

3 Kozma 2016: 231–236.

pious act. This is vividly expressed in the famed hadith: “Strive after learning even until China, because striving after learning is the duty [*farīda*] of every Muslim.” A further hadith specified that three things could survive the death of a person and have influence on the hereafter: a pious son who prayed for the soul of his parents, lasting charity and, last but not least, knowledge.⁴

Christians’ response to this question of whether fostering learning could be a pious act was different from that of Muslims and Jews, and indeed underwent a substantial evolution over the course of the Middle Ages. For in the first centuries of Christianity the support of knowledge was not viewed as a *pia causa*, a pious motive, and therefore was not construed as a religiously meritorious act. Indeed, Byzantium’s approach to the fostering of learning never essentially deviated from that of the Primitive Church. While schools and institutions of higher learning were established in the Byzantine Empire, they were never construed as acts of religious devotion or duty.⁵ This only changed after the end of the empire, and under the Greek Enlightenment the patronage of schools came to be viewed as a pious act equal to more traditional measures of charity. To cite one example among many, a recent analysis of eighteenth-century testaments from the Greek Orthodox community of Vienna shows that bequests for schools had by then become a common practice.⁶ In this regard Latin Christianity changed its attitude to the relationship between charity and learning much earlier than its Byzantine counterpart. Already in the second half of the Middle Ages the cultivation of knowledge was increasingly tied to religious endeavors, and by the Late Middle Ages, especially from the fifteenth century onwards, the founding of universities was rationalized in princely and royal charters as a *pia causa*.⁷ Even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, religiously-inspired philanthropic societies often both provided welfare and fostered knowledge.⁸

These brief remarks on education or knowledge as a component of charity in the different monotheistic traditions underline that philanthropy was defined differently in various cultural contexts and, moreover, that concepts of charity were by no means static. Rather than studying philanthropy in all of its forms and guises, we have restricted our inquiry, in the spirit of *ENDS*, to the philanthropic aspect of foundations. The role of foundations as vehicles

4 I rely upon here upon the German translation of the first hadith and the paraphrase of the second in Sánchez 2016: 215.

5 Chitwood 2016: 251–253.

6 See the bequests listed in Saracino 2017: 11–12 (Table 2).

7 Lohse 2016: 195–199, esp. 198.

8 See for example Naguib and Okkenhaug 2007.

of charity is in many respects well-studied, and societies succeeded in developing a number of endowed institutions to advance charitable aims. For the Medieval West, it was the multi-purpose hospital which from Late Antiquity onwards served as an institutionalized conduit for charity. The Byzantine Empire, by contrast, had by the sixth century already developed a range of specialized charitable establishments, including (to an extent medicalized) hospitals, guesthouses and orphanages, and – especially noteworthy – homes for the aged, apparently a Byzantine invention with no concrete antecedents in Graeco-Roman culture.⁹ Nor was the charitable function of endowments confined to the medieval period: for the Islamic world from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, the *waqf* has been described by Gabriel Baer as “a prop for the social system.”¹⁰ The imperial *waqfs* of the Ottoman Empire were not only the main form of state charity, but also major economic actors in and of themselves, constituting what one might call a “*waqfeconomy*.”¹¹

As the choice of anecdotes illustrating the relationship between foundations and philanthropy above suggests, we have further circumscribed our area of inquiry for our special issue to the Eastern Mediterranean. In our estimation, this was a particularly vibrant space of interaction between foundations and philanthropy. Of course, there is already a long tradition of research on the history of foundations, especially in the Islamic sphere. Yet, as an edited volume by Johannes Pahlitzsch, Astrid Meier and Lucian Reinfandt has demonstrated, only recently have endowments been rediscovered as sites for the production and transformation of religious and cultural knowledge, as well as of socio-political relations, through their discourses and practices on and about charity.¹² This focus on charity is of special interest for a recent trend in historical research towards the impact of philanthropy, humanitarianism and development in and on societies.

A novel approach of this special issue is that we have chosen to examine the dynamic between philanthropy and foundations not only across time, but also amongst the three monotheistic traditions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Indeed, philanthropic foundations constituted an area in which the adherents of these religions crossed paths. While beneficence in ancient Greece and Rome, which scholars have tended to designate as “Euergetism,” was restricted as a rule to fellow citizens and at most to other Hellenes and

9 On the Byzantine invention of homes for the aged (*gerontokomeia* / *gērokomēia*), see Roueché 2007.

10 Baer 1997.

11 Orbay 2017: esp. 146–147 (“The *waqfeconomy*”).

12 Meier, Pahlitzsch and Reinfandt 2009.

Romans, monotheistic charity was more broadly conceived: not just the poor of one's own city, culture or religion, but rather the needy more generally, required relief.

However, charity was always embedded within religious, cultural and socio-political power relations of the time. Julian the Apostate (r. 361–3), in a statement perhaps reworked by copyists, famously declared that Christian charity was a ruse to win over converts.¹³ Byzantine monastic tradition called for the hosting not only of fellow Orthodox Christians, but even of heretical Latins and unbelievers. Nikon of the Black Mountain, an eleventh-century canonist and monastic leader, in laying down regulations for the hospice of his monastery, emphasized that: "It is necessary to give all persons blessing, whenever they depart, just bread only. But if the visitor is from among the dignitaries of the world, it is necessary to attend to him and serve him whatever he might be, whether a believer or an unbeliever, as the Apostle says: 'Give all me what is owed, honor to whom honor is due, respect to whom respect is due, tax to whom tax is due' (cf. Rom. 13:7)."¹⁴ In a similar manner, Western missionaries in the Eastern Mediterranean often practiced charity as a means to inspire the confidence of the beneficiaries.¹⁵ Although secular charitable and humanitarian organizations that followed missionaries distanced themselves from any attempt at conversion, they also shared the conviction of their perception and distribution of charity as the best and most efficacious form of aid.¹⁶ Moreover, not only religious and secular institutions, but also different religious associations among themselves copied each other's methods, as the example of Christian missionaries and the Muslim Brotherhood in early twentieth-century Egypt demonstrates.¹⁷ These examples make clear that particularly in the modern period, the Eastern Mediterranean saw the close relationship between charity and politics not only on an internal level, but also directed at other external forces, such as the European powers who increasingly intervened in the Ottoman empire and its successor states.

The charitable establishments of the Ottoman Empire are particularly remarkable in the range of needy they supported. A number of travelogues and historical accounts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries describe the cross-confessional philanthropy that was practiced there.¹⁸ Thus in

¹³ Julian the Apostate, *Letter to a Priest*.

¹⁴ Nikon of the Black Mountain, *Typikon for the Monastery and Hospice of the Mother of God tou Roidiou* 144, English translation 432 (trans. Robert Allison).

¹⁵ See for example Murre van den Berg 2006; Hauser, Lindner and Möller 2016.

¹⁶ See Sanchez and Okkenhaug 2020.

¹⁷ See Baron 2014.

¹⁸ The following examples are cited and discussed in Lowry 2003: 80–81.

1397 Johann Schiltberger, a Bavarian soldier who had been captured by the Ottoman Turks and enrolled in the Janissaries, mentions that Bursa had eight hospitals where the poor, whether Christian, Jewish or Muslim, received relief. Bertrandon de la Broquière in 1432 stated that meat, bread and (rather implausibly) wine were distributed at these same hospitals in Bursa. Finally, Theodore Spandounes notes that a hospital near the tomb of Mehmet II fed Christian, Jewish and Muslim poor three times a day.

In the modern period it is interesting to note that a multitude of charitable associations was founded in the Eastern Mediterranean in the late nineteenth century. In part, they were a reaction to the charitable activities of Christian missionaries, as the establishment of the Maqasid Al-Khayriyya al-Islamiyya in Beirut in 1878 illustrates.¹⁹ Yet, beyond the impact of colonial and Christian charity in the region, there seems to have been a tendency among all monotheistic traditions to establish “modern” structures of charity, other than *waqfs*: this fitted, of course, with the prevailing opinion of colonial authorities and reforming non-European states that the *waqf* system retarded economic growth and development.²⁰ Western and Eastern Mediterranean agencies were thus entwined within a complex relationship, as the example of the *Alliance israélite universelle*, founded in Paris in 1860, shows. Created by the French statesman Adolphe Crémieux, it was guided by the idea of the French civilizing mission towards the Jews of the Eastern Mediterranean, yet at the same time most of its personnel stemmed from the Eastern Mediterranean itself.²¹

Over the course of the workshop and then again in the papers that stemmed from it, we were struck by the power dynamics of charitable foundations: as Thomas Adam noted in the quotation at the beginning of this introduction, “Philanthropy always has something to do with power.” This is an insight that runs throughout all of the contributions in this special issue, beginning with Sarah Epping’s fascinating analysis of the ill-starred student and alumni venture “Michigan in Arabia”, an ostensibly charitable undertaking that was, nonetheless, clearly motivated by larger geopolitical considerations. As the initiative’s press coverage and fundraising efforts underline, Basra, the target landscape of “Michigan in Arabia”, was an ideal location to advance American influence, above all via trade. As such, the story of “Michigan in Arabia” can be read as portentous prelude to more determined American inventions in Iraq a century later, and the reader will

19 See Strohmeier 1993.

20 See in this regard the illuminating study of Çizakça 2018.

21 See Duhaut 2020; Rodrigue 1990.

likely see many parallels, expected as well as unexpected, between these two exertions of American influence in Iraq.

While Epping's contribution details the spectacular failure of a bumbling, bright-eyed charitable initiative, Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah's article deals with the question of what happens when the beneficiaries of charity become donors and founders themselves, as was the case with MENA (Middle Eastern and North African) Jews in the period between the world wars. As rising anti-Semitism in post-war Europe, especially in Nazi Germany, made the situation of the continent's Jews increasingly unsettled and dangerous, MENA Jewry found itself compelled to reverse the direction of centuries of philanthropy directed by Ashkenazi Jews towards their brethren in the Islamicate world.

Mina Ibrahim offers us an anthropological study of the exercise of a Coptic Christian charity in a contemporary Cairene neighborhood. In the process he explores how individuals navigate competing charitable traditions (that of the Coptic Orthodox Church and of local Christian associations), state regulation and even hostile neighbors. Ibrahim constantly questions the motivation of his actors, and in doing so offers a corrective to anthropological studies which downplay the importance of religious belief.

In Astrid Meier's contribution we are treated to a property dispute between a satellite monastery (*metochion*) of St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai and the main convent of the Franciscans in early modern Damascus. Though at first glance a seemingly straightforward Orthodox-Catholic confessional conflict, Meier demonstrates how this rather trivial case was connected with larger ecclesiastical, legal and political issues. *Waqf* – which, as Meier's contribution reminds us, could be employed not just by Muslims, but also by Christians and Jews – in this instance was a means for conflict between confessional groups.

The institution of Ottoman slavery adds an further wrinkle to the dynamic between philanthropic foundations and power in Veruschka Wagner's article. Slaves and freedmen have played an important role in the endowments of their (former) masters since antiquity, and Wagner's contribution demonstrates that foundations within the context of early modern Ottoman manumissions show striking similarities with corresponding ancient and medieval cases: the prominent role of freedmen and freedwomen in the commemoration of the founder; the maintenance of close ties between the master's family and former slaves, even after the master's death; the importance of provisions for the long-term upkeep of former slaves in masters' testaments (e.g. by assigning lodging or stipends), etc.²²

22 For continuity of foundations involving freedmen and freedwomen between antiquity and the Middle Ages, see Borgolte 1982.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Julian the Apostate, *Letter to a Priest* = Ed. and trans. Wilmer Cave Wright. *The Works of the Emperor Julian*. London and New York 1913: vol. 2, 336–337.
- Nikon of the Black Mountain, *Typikon for the Monastery and Hospice of the Mother of God tou Roidiou* = Ed. Christian Hannick. *Das Taktikon des Nikon vom Schwarzen Berge: Griechischer Text und kirchenslavische Übersetzung des 14. Jahrhunderts*. Freiburg 2014: vol. 1, 136–155 (Logos 2). English Translation (based on an older edition): Robert Allison. “Roidion: Typikon of Nikon of the Black Mountain for the Monastery and Hospice.” Ed. John Philip Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero. *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders’ Typika And Testaments*. Washington, D.C. 2000: vol. 1, 425–439.

Secondary Literature

- Adam 2004 = Thomas Adam. *Philanthropy, Patronage, and Civil Society Experiences from Germany, Great Britain and North America*. Bloomington.
- Baer 1997 = Gabriel Baer. “The *waqf* as a Prop for the Social System (Sixteenth-Twentieth Centuries).” *Islamic Law and Society* 4.3: 264–297.
- Baron 2014 = Beth Baron. *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood*. Stanford.
- Borgolte 1982 = Michael Borgolte. “*Felix est homo ille, qui amicos bonos relinquit*. Zur sozialen Gestaltungskraft letztwilliger Verfügungen am Beispiel Bischof Bertrams von Le Mans (616).” Ed. Helmut Maurer and Hans Patze. *Festschrift für Berent Schwineköper: Zu seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag*. Sigmaringen: 5–18.
- Chitwood 2016 = Zachary Chitwood. “Wohltätigkeit und Bildung.” Ed. Michael Borgolte. *Enzyklopädie des Stiftungswesens in mittelalterlichen Gesellschaften. Bd. 2: Das soziale System “Stiftung”*. Berlin: 242–257.
- Çizakça 2018 = Murat Çizakça. “From Destruction to Restoration – Islamic Waqfs in Modern Turkey and Malaysia.” *Endowment Studies* 2: 83–106.
- Duhaut 2020 = Noémie Duhaut. “L’Alliance israélite universelle, les Juifs roumains et l’idée d’Europe.” *Archives Juives* 53. 2: 72–89.
- Hauser, Lindner and Möller 2016 = Ed. Julia Hauser, Christine Lindner and Esther Möller. *Entangled Education. Foreign and Local Schools in Ottoman Syria and Mandate Lebanon (19-20th Centuries)*. Würzburg.
- Kozma 2016 = Emese Kozma. “Wohltätigkeit und Bildung.” Ed. Michael Borgolte. *Enzyklopädie des Stiftungswesens in mittelalterlichen Gesellschaften. Bd. 2: Das soziale System “Stiftung”*. Berlin: 223–236.

- Lohse 2016 = Tillmann Lohse. "Wohltätigkeit und Bildung." Ed. Michael Borgolte. *Enzyklopädie des Stiftungswesens in mittelalterlichen Gesellschaften. Bd. 2: Das soziale System "Stiftung"*. Berlin: 192–205.
- Lowry 2003 = Heath W. Lowry. *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*. Albany.
- Meier, Pahlitzsch and Reinfandt 2009 = Ed. Astrid Meier, Johannes Pahlitzsch and Lucian Reinfandt. *Islamische Stiftungen zwischen juristischer Norm und sozialer Praxis*. Berlin.
- Murre van den Berg 2006 = Ed. Heleen Murre van den Berg. *New Faith in Ancient Lands. Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*. Leiden.
- Naguib and Okkenhaug 2007 = Ed. Nafissa Naguib and Inger Marie Okkenhaug. *Interpreting Welfare and Relief in the Middle East*. Leiden.
- Orbay 2017 = Kayhan Orbay. "Imperial Waqfs within the Ottoman Waqf System." *Endowment Studies* 1.2: 135–153.
- Rodrigue 1990 = Aron Rodrigue. *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860–1925*. Bloomington.
- Roueché 2007 = Charlotte Roueché. "Caring for the Elderly: Creating a New Concept and Practice." Ed. Dionysios Stathakopoulos. *The Kindness of Strangers: Charity in the Pre-modern Mediterranean*. London: 21–35.
- Sánchez 2016 = Ignacio Sánchez. "Wohltätigkeit und Bildung." Ed. Michael Borgolte. *Enzyklopädie des Stiftungswesens in mittelalterlichen Gesellschaften. Bd. 2: Das soziale System "Stiftung"*. Berlin: 205–221.
- Sanchez and Okkenhaug 2020 = Ed. Karène Sanchez Summerer and Inger Marie Okkenhaug. *Christian Missions and Humanitarianism in The Middle East, 1850–1950. Ideologies, Rhetoric, and Practices*. Leiden.
- Saracino 2017 = Stefano Saracino. "'Acatholic' Foundations: The Emergence of Charitable Endowments in the Greek Orthodox and Protestant Communities of Vienna (18th Century)." *Endowment Studies* 1.2: 1–34.
- Strohmeier 1993 = Martin Strohmeier. "Muslim Education in the Vilayet of Beirut. 1880–1918." Ed. Ceasar Farah. *Decision Making and Change in the Ottoman Empire*. Kirkville: 215–241.