The Sultan Who Loved Sufis:
How Qāytbāy Endowed a Shrine Complex in Dasūq

Qāytbāy’s Shrine Complex in Dasūq

During the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, rulers often patronized individual saints and religious institutions. In Egypt, the rural saint Aḥmad al-Badawī of Ṭanṭā (596-675/1200-76), for example, was popular among the Mamluk elite. Sultan Qāytbāy (872-901/1468-96), one of the last Mamluk rulers, is portrayed as a pious Muslim, active in building religious and public welfare institutions. One of his lesser-known establishments is a religious complex in Dasūq, in the Delta area, mentioned briefly in Heinz Halm’s register, and later by Carl F. Petry in his list of the sultan’s building activities, as “a mosque.” However, what we are discussing here is more than a mosque. This article discusses the waqfiyah in which Qāytbāy, in 886/1481, established a pious endowment to support the shrine of Ibrāhīm al-Dasuqī (ca. 653-96/1255-99) and several other buildings, and stipulated the whole complex to serve as an abode for Sufis and to perpetuate the memory of Sīdī Ibrāhīm. On the basis of the document, we can form a picture of the various activities that took place in Dasūq.

The waqfiyah, together with other sources, gives us a chance to understand something of the complex motives that lay behind the establishment of pious endowments, while at the same time providing us with a view on the intertwined connections between Mamluks and ulama. It is only rarely that we have descriptions of rural cult centers. Qāytbāy’s decision to endow a large religious complex in a rural area was due to a variety of reasons which will be discussed below.

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1Heinz Halm, Ägypten nach der Mamlukischen Lehenregistern (Wiesbaden, 1979), 2:497-98; Carl F. Petry, Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt’s Waning as a Great Power (Albany, 1994), 213, n. 28.

2Waqfiyah document no. 810, al-Majmū’ah al-Jadīdah, Wizārat al-Awqāf, Cairo. I am grateful to Carl F. Petry for providing me with a copy of the document. The document is in the form of a continuous long roll and, therefore, in the following, references will be made to the waqfiyah with no specific folio citations.
THE EARLY CULT OF IBRAHĪM AL-DASŪQĪ

We know nothing about the Sufi saint Ibrāhīm al-Dasuqī prior to the fourteenth century, and how he became a saint is obscure. The cult most likely reflects a local agricultural festival, since even today his mawlid is celebrated according to the agricultural calendar. For centuries, Ibrāhīm remained an obscure figure, and it is only in the sixteenth century that a wealth of writings concerning him emerged. Of the early history of al-Dasuqī’s shrine little is known. Su’ād Māhir Muḥammad mentioned, without citing her sources, that after al-Dasuqī’s death a large sum of money and property was invested in a religious foundation, and that the revenues were spent on his mosque and on those working and studying there. She stated that this was done by Baybars, whom she credited with having a zāwiyah (a Sufi institution formed around a shaykh or a Way [tarīqah]) built for Ibrāhīm where the latter “could teach his students (murādīn) and educate them in the principles of their religion.” Though Sultan Baybars al-Bunduqdārī (r. 658-76/1260-77) was very much involved with Sufism, there is no evidence that he endowed a zāwiyah or khānqāh for al-Dasuqī.

However, from Qāyṭbāy’s waqfiyah we learn that by the fifteenth century there was an edifice on the tomb site in Dasuq, and that the complex was supported by a religious endowment (waqf), though the original patrons are unknown. The staff of the shrine consisted of at least nine persons, who received salaries from the waqf. We can thus see that the shrine had by that time become the vital focus of al-Dasuqī’s posthumous cult and miracles. All these constructions remained as part of Qāyṭbāy’s shrine complex.

By the fifteenth century, Sufi practices had been incorporated into the religious ceremonies of the Mamluk sultans, who established numerous Sufi khānqāhs,

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3The grammarian Ibn al-Mulaqqin briefly mentioned him in 1385 in his Sufi genealogy; a little later, he was also mentioned by al-Maqrīzī, who like Ibn al-Mulaqqin stated that the tomb of al-Dasuqī was visited to obtain blessings, since al-Dasuqī was described as being ‘possessor of mystical states.’ Shams al-Dīn ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sakhawī, Al-Daw’ al-Lāmi’ li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsī’ (Beirut, n. d.), 5:319. On Ibrāhīm al-Dasuqī and the evolution of his cult, see Helena Hallenberg, ‘Ibrāhīm al-Dasuqī (1255-96)—a Saint Invented’ (Ph.D. diss., Institute for Asian and African Studies, University of Helsinki, 1997).

4Al-Dasuqī’s mawlids were celebrated in the spring at harvest time and in August around the beginning of the flood. The latter celebration, called the big mawlid (al-mawlid al-kabīr), is nowadays celebrated in November, coinciding with the end of the cotton harvest and following the big mawlid of al-Badāwi. Hallenberg, ‘Ibrāhīm al-Dasuqī.’ 169-73. See also Edward B. Reeves, The Hidden Government: Ritual, Clientelism and Legitimation in Northern Egypt (Salt Lake City, 1990), 15; ‘Ali Bāšā Mubārak, Al-Khiṭṭat al-Tawfiqiyah al-Jadīdah li-Miṣr al-Qāhirah wa-Mudunihā al-Qadīmah wa-al-Shāhirah (Bulaq, 1306/1890), 11:7:8.


6Waqqirayh document no. 810.
which operated independently of the Sufi orders. The Sufis were paid a monthly salary in addition to the food and shelter they received, and thus had a post (waṣīfah). The awqāf, including Sufi khānqāhs, served as public welfare institutions and thus could potentially increase a ruler’s popularity. In addition, the donor was able to safeguard his own economic interest by nominating himself or one of his family members as supervisor of the waqf. The sultan may have sought political support from influential Sufi circles in this way, but we should not ignore spiritual motives; some sultans were greatly influenced by their Sufi shaykhs, to the extent that they built establishments for them.

Qāytbāy Establishes a Shrine Complex in Dasūq
During the Mamluk era, the sultans thus had both economic and spiritual motives for patronizing a saint, whether living or dead. The patron of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī and his shrine, Qāytbāy, is described in contemporary sources as a just and pious ruler, and his construction activities included many charitable projects not only in the capital but in the outlying provinces. This may have made him popular among the peasants. The historian Ibn Iyās recorded that in 884/1479, Qāytbāy visited Dasūq and the tomb of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī. Two years later he made the shrine (maqām) of al-Dasūqī the beneficiary of a pious endowment consisting of real estate in Dasūq. In doing this, he incorporated the old waqf into his new endowment. He also added a number of constructions (as alms, ṣadaqah), and these renovations gave new prestige to the site and turned the shrine into a shrine

complex. The document (waqfiyah) confirming this was signed on 29 Sha‘bān 886/23 October 1481, and is preserved in the Ministry of Pious Endowments (Wizārat al-Awqāf) in Cairo. The description below is based entirely on this document.

The shrine was intended for mendicant Sufis (fuqara‘), with no attachment to a particular order stipulated, for visitors (wāridūn, mutaraddidūn) to the shrine (maqām), and for other Muslims connected with it (murabītūn), most likely referring to the staff and local laymen who performed tasks for the shrine and received food as compensation, so that “they would benefit from sitting there during their visitation (ziyārah), have a rest, and find shelter.”

First the document states the location of the premises:

> It is located in the nāḥiyah [according to Carl F. Petry, fiscal area, sometimes but not always equal to a village] of Dasūq in the West, close to Rosetta on the blessed river Nile. It is known for the tombs (maqābir) of our lord and master, the God-knowing helping axis saint (qutb al-ghawth), Sīdī Ibrāhīm al-Dasuq—may God bless him. According to what is told, he—may God grant him victory—was a servant (jārī) in the hand of God and in [? unclear].

Then follows a description of the endowment and the premises maintained by its revenues. The waqf consisted of houses (duwar) outside the shrine complex, on the other side of the street, and of fields outside the village, which were leased to peasants. The rent of these properties was the source of income for the endowment.

The most important of the additions made by Qāytbāy was a congregational mosque (jāmi‘), which was “added (mulāsiq) to the shrine (maqām) of Sīdī Ibrāhīm al-Dasuq.” From the congregational mosque there was a door leading to “the mausoleum-mosque (masjid wa-maqām) of al-Dasuq.” Sometimes the whole complex is referred to as “the graves” (maqābir), since it included the tombs of both Ibrāhīm al-Dasuq and his brother Mūsā. Because of these and many other

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12 Qāytbāy seems to have established an abode for Sufi scholars called Bayt al-Barāhinah, “The House of the Burhānīs,” in Cairo as well. See the seventeenth-century travel account of ‘Abd al-Ghanī ibn Ismā‘īl al-Nābulusī (1050-1143/1641-1731), Al-Ḥaqiqah wa-al-Majāz fī al-Riḥlah ilā Bilād al-Shām wa-Miṣr wa-al-Ḥijāz, ed. Ahmad ‘Abd al-Majīd Harīdī (Cairo, 1986), 294. The Burhānīs are the same as the Burhānīs; their name refers to Ibrāhīm (=Burhān al-Dīn) al-Dasuq.

13 Waqfiyah document no. 810.

14 Oral communication from Carl F. Petry.

15 The signing of the waqfiyah took place in the presence of two witnesses (or notaries, shāhid) and a man who probably was an expert appointed by the Dīwān al-Awqāf to inspect the premises. On building experts, see Fernandes, Evolution, 6.
overlapping in the terminology it becomes difficult to draw a clear picture of the area. The congregational mosque, also called jāmi’-masjid, was intended “for prayers, the Friday prayer, and gatherings, and for reciting the Book of God and the hadith of the Prophet.” As for the maqām of Sīdī Ibrāhīm, it was endowed “as a mosque (masjid) to God in order [for people] to devote themselves to all legal forms of worship (‘ibādāt shar‘iyyah).”

The renovations made by Qāytbāy in the establishment—specifically mentioned in the document as renovated (mustajaddah)—include a maydanah (?mydnh), which presumably refers to a large square or opening, the façade (wājiḥah) of the shrine-mosque (maṣjid) with eleven new doors, a garden, the interiors of the stores (ḥānuṭs) reserved for livestock, and two large domes above the tombs (darīḥ) of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī and Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd Allāh al-Dasūqī (d. ca. 850/1446), the third khalīfah of the Burhāmiyyah Order. Then there is a long list of buildings for which there is no indication as to who built them. A very detailed list indicates a variety of activities which Qāytbāy helped to maintain by instituting a religious endowment, the income of which was partly used to support these activities.

The whole area belonging to the shrine complex was surrounded by a brick wall, and one entered the complex from the street on the western side. In the east the complex was bounded by the Nile. The total space of the enclosed area was ca. 4132.67 square meters which equals approximately one faddān (4200.83 m²). The mosque had a total area of ca. 363.31 square meters, and included a lecture room (bayt khitḥah), which was long and narrow, probably because the students would sit in one row. Two marble pillars at the entrance of the mosque were engraved with the name of Sultan Qāytbāy. Within the area, on opposite sides of the mosque, there were also residences for the superintendent (nāẓir) of the waqf on the western side, and for the shaykh/khalīfah of the shrine on the eastern side. In the superintendent’s residence there was also the loggia of the sultan (maq’ad sulṭān), which suggests that Qāytbāy expected to spend some time in the complex whenever he came for a visit. Close to the residence of the shaykh (since he also acted as the teacher [mudarris]) were the teaching premises: a Quran school and a

16The word maqām used in waqfiyahs does not necessarily refer to a shrine alone but to the whole complex of buildings around a tomb and thus to the institution. The inconsistency of the terminology in the waqfiyahs is also pointed out by Fernandes, Evolution, 9. J. Chabbi notes that in medieval Egypt, khānqāhs often “became part of complexes containing several institutions, e.g. masjid-madrasa-mausoleum. Nevertheless, terminology remained still imprecise, and medieval historians could not always agree on the name for such and such institution.” J. Chabbi, “Khānqāh,” Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd. ed., 4:1025-26.

17Unfortunately, during my visits to Dasūq I was not yet familiar with the waqfiyah and therefore cannot say whether the pillars still exist.
recitation hall (*muddaʿá*) where texts of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) were recited and learned by heart in front of the teacher. For children there was a *kuttāb-sabil*, also referred to as *maktab*.

**The Staff of the Shrine Complex**
To maintain such a complex required staff as well, and we obtain a clear picture of its activities from the list of the salaries paid to the staff as well as of the duties prescribed for them. The salaries paid by Qāytbāy’s *waqf* in Dasūq seem to be in proportion with those of other similar institutions of the time, which varied a great deal from one to another. The staff consisted of twenty-six persons and a number of Sufis—how many is not told.\(^1\) The total of the salaries paid to the staff, including the two witnesses of the document, amounts to 4960 *dirhams* per month (=16.5 *dīnār*, one *dīnār* equaling 300 *dirhams*),\(^2\) which makes 198.4 *dīnār* a year, excluding the stipends paid to the Sufis. Additions in the margins of the document discuss extensively which value of the *dirham* should be used, coming to the conclusion that the silver *dirham*, the value of which is three *nisaf* of silver, should be used.

The new donor (*waqif*) of course wanted to change the key personnel, and Qāytbāy thus nominated a new *nāzir* (superintendent, or general supervisor or controller), whose tasks are not mentioned in the document though from other sources we know that he was in charge of finance and administration. An addition in the margin indicates that the *nāzir* was also responsible for distributing the salaries, “taking into consideration what the ‘ulama’ have stipulated about the paying of the alms-tax (*zakāt*).” This left the *nāzir* considerable liberty. He received the highest salary, 1000 *dirhams* a month, and also had a separate residence in the area. He had two administrative staff members under his command to help him to

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\(^1\)As a comparison, the *jāmiʿah* of Azbak (890/1485) had a staff of over forty, including twenty Sufis. Barsbāy’s desert *khanqāh* (840/1436) had twenty-nine persons, of whom seventeen were Sufis. But even larger institutions may have had only a small number of Sufis, such as Qāytbāy’s *khanqāh-jāmiʿ* (884/1479) in Cairo with its one hundred twenty persons, of whom forty were Sufis and twenty orphans. (Fernandes, *Evolution*, 85-87). Michael Winter gives much higher numbers from the sixteenth century: the *zāwiyah* of al-Shaʿrānī housed two hundred residents—we do not know the nature of the residents—and that of his teacher, Ibrāhīm al-ʿAlā al-Matbūʿi, “provided food and shelter for five hundred people, not all of them necessarily Sufis.” Michael Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī*, Studies in Islamic Culture and History, the Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University (New Brunswick, 1982), 127. For a detailed description of the different positions and their respective salaries in *khanqāhs* as calculated based on *waqfiyah* documents, see Fernandes, *Evolution*, 47 ff., esp. 69 f; on the different *wazīfahs* in *khanqāhs*, see Muhammad Muhammad Amīn, *Al-Awqāf wa-al-Ḥayāh al-ʿIjtimāʿiyyah fi Miṣr 648-923/1250-1517* (Cairo, 1980), 184-204.

\(^2\)See Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians?*, 227.
collect the revenues from the waqf’s leased lands, to register its income and expenditures, to keep accounts, and see to other administrative and financial tasks.

Some of the staff members of minor importance hired by the old waqf kept their positions, such as the imam and the two muezzins. Through Qāyṭbāy’s stipulations three Quran reciters were added, one of whom recited the Quran at the tomb (darāh) of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī. The second reciter together with the shaykh was responsible for recitations during the dhikr, and a third one was to recite every day after the evening prayer by the window of the dome (qubbah) of al-Dasūqī.

The waqfīyah contains no separate information about the shaykh of the complex, which one usually finds in such documents. Normally, his duties are listed along with the qualities he should possess and the law school he must represent. Instead, we find his duties listed under the title of teacher, mudarris, also called muḥaddith. This combined shaykh-teacher was explicitly told to instruct the students in Shafi’i law, which was favored by the majority of the Egyptian population. The teacher was further expected to provide instruction in mī’ād (public reading sessions with commentaries on religious texts), exegesis of the Quran (tafsīr), and hadith—thus the whole apparatus of conventional Sunni doctrine—but also in exhortative sermons (mawaṣīm) perhaps composed by Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī, the subtleties of Sufi rhetoric (raqqāʾiq kalām al-qawm), and the virtuous deeds, or manaqib, of Ibrāhīm. The manaqib were to be recited by the teacher “on evenings of gathering (layāli al-jamʿ) and on festive days (mawāsim al-aʿyaḍ).” He was appointed to instruct not children but students (tālabah), of whom the majority likely consisted of Sufis, especially since he was to teach them the manaqib of the saint.21 The identity of the teacher-shaykh is revealed in an addition in the margin as Shaykh Jāfāl al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās Ahmad al-Karakī al-Shāfīʿi, the khalīfah of the Dasūqī shrine (al-maqām al-Dasūqī). Thus, while no specific ṭariqa affiliation is mentioned, the Burhāmīyah stood to profit.

**The Sufis of the Shrine Complex**

The absence of any mention of the Burhāmīyah Order (there is no stipulation that the Sufis need be affiliated with the Burhāmīyah) tells us that the order was still evolving and did not play a vital role in the shrine complex. The Sufis are collectively referred to as “the fuqārāʾ,” “mendicants,” “the Sufis,” or “the ṣūfiyān,” the Sufi

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20 Compare this with the detailed description of the duties of the shaykh of the khānqāhs. Fernandes, Evolution, 47 f., see also 30-31.

21 Secular subjects were not taught among the Sufis even during the early Ottoman period, and it is therefore no wonder that subjects such as grammar are not listed. Winter comments that many Sufis had a reserved attitude towards even al-Azhar, since its curriculum included subjects they considered secular. Winter, Society and Religion, 229.
brotherhood. This was thus a complex not reserved for any particular ṭarīqah but serving general religious needs and Sufi aspirations, while at the same time perpetuating the memory of Sīdī Ibrāhīm. Most of the Sufis seem to have been temporary visitors, and the number of visitors was likely very high, since they were provided with various facilities and services. The number of permanent residents was likely less than twenty, perhaps as few as ten, to judge from what we know of other establishments of similar size. They were to receive free lunch and supper, provided that there was surplus in the income of the waqf, plus a sum of fifty dirhams each month on the condition that they were in the presence of the shaykh (yahdurū al-shaykh), that is, received instruction. Clothing, normally provided by khanqaḥs, is not mentioned. In addition both the shaykh and the Sufis, probably collectively, received each day fifty dirhams after the afternoon prayer.

On the basis of the waqfiyyah, we can reconstruct how in the complex most of the day, from early afternoon till dark, was spent in religious practices, the length of time varying according to the season of the year. After the dawn prayer, which in January in Egypt falls around 5:20 A.M. and in the summer around 3:30 A.M., some of the Sufis sat in Ibrāhīm’s dome and started reciting the Quran at his tomb. There was a window opening to a street outside, so that the voice of this “window reciter” (qārī’ al-shubbāk) would carry out to people passing by and bring blessings to them. He was to recite the same prayers as stipulated for the ḥudūr, described below, and to conclude with a prayer for the late nāẓir of the shrine, al-Sayfī Abū Yazīd. Teaching took place in the early morning in the lecture room and recitation room provided for that purpose. Among the students were perhaps also people other than Sufis. After the midday prayer, around noon, those not engaged in the window recitation likely assisted visitors or were absorbed in private worship. The early afternoon in Egypt is still today normally spent resting, and we can imagine visitors taking their nap in the cool interior of the mosque. The Sufis probably retired to their solitary cells and chambers of retreat (the words khalāwá and ma‘āzil are used), but what kind of meditation or recitation they practiced can only be guessed. They probably used the invocations composed by Ibrāhīm al-Ḍasūqī, recited the Quran, or practised ascetic exercises consisting of fasting and vigilance. Their residences were likely very spartan, but at least some of them were located on the second floor of the mosque, with a view overlooking the garden, and seeing the lemon, orange and pomegranate trees and the fountain with ornamented tiles may have encouraged them to contemplate beauty and God’s grace in creation.

The daily communal service was called ḥudūr al-taṣawwuf, and it lasted from the afternoon prayer (from around 3:00-3:30 p.m.) until the sunset prayer at 5:15-7:00 p.m. It took place in Ibrāhīm’s dome, where the presence of the saint could be felt,
and started with Quran recitation, of “whatever [parts of the Quran] they take delight in.” The shaykh then read a fourth part of the Quran, which was followed by various prayers: to the Prophet, to Sidi Ibrāhīm, his parents and brothers, to “the protector of the shrine (mawlā al-maqām), the donor (wāqif), whose name be praised,” to the shaykhs of the shrine, and to all Muslims. Visiting shaykhs perhaps also came to organize ḥudūr sessions for Sufis, as can be concluded from the plural used (mashāyikh), which of course may also refer to senior Sufis at the shrine. The daily ḥudūr was followed by a short break, after which they gathered again after the evening prayer, which took place around 6:45-8:30, and possibly stayed up until late at night. Some Sufis would recite again by the window of the dome.

The only exception was Friday night, when they would perform the dhikr and spend part of the night reciting the ḥizb, or invocation, of Ibrāhīm and praise the Lord “in the Sufi manner” (‘alā ‘ādat maqāmat al-awliyā’). This was followed by a public recitation of religious texts, and the night was concluded by prayers for the Prophet and others, as mentioned above. In this, the shaykh was assisted by some of the Sufis. Except for the dhikr, the reciters were free to choose whatever surahs from the Quran they preferred. We do not know how the Sufis of Dasūq performed the dhikr: whether they were sitting or standing, whether they used instruments or chanting, whether men and women were together, or whether they attained ecstasy. We see from the stipulations that in the ḥudūr, the Sufis were free to recite any surahs they desired, whereas in many khānqāhs’ waqfiyahs the parts of the Quran to be recited were specifically mentioned, as were other recitations and incantations. As shown by Emil Homerin, this ritual of the ḥudūr formed the wazīfat al-taṣawwuf, the Sufi duty, or office, which was their main task in a khānqāh.

Qāyybāy, or the shaykh in charge of writing down the stipulations, considered it important that all the residents as well as the visitors should perform the dhikr according to the Sunnah. Therefore, “a pious and knowledgeable man” (rajul min

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22 By the fourteenth century, the institution of mashyakhat taṣawwuf, or “group of Sufis who met daily with their shaykh for the hudur,” had appeared in mosques and madrasahs. The shaykhs were free to move from one place to another, and this made it possible for Sufis to practice the rituals without belonging to any institution. By the fifteenth century, most mosques and madrasahs had a mashyakhat and the Sufis who belonged to it received a salary. Fernandes, Evolution, 33, 54.

23 A ḥizb is a prayer asking God for spiritual blessings and may be recited at any time. Most Sufi orders have more than one ḥizb, of varying length. Valerie Hoffman, Sufism, Mystics and Saints in Modern Egypt (Columbia, S. C., 1995), 131-32.

24 In the fifteenth century sessions of readings with commentaries on religious texts (mī‘ād ‘āmm) were opened to the public after the Friday jum‘ah prayer. Fernandes, Evolution, 50.

ahl al-khayr wa-al-dīn wa-al-‘ilm) was to instruct the fuqarā’ and other Muslims in the Sunnah and other information necessary in order to learn the dhikr. During the Mamluk period, Sufis were sometimes accused of practicing alchemy in their convents; any such attempts were severely punished, and it was partly in order to avoid such accusations that Sunni practices were stressed.²⁶

The Sufi Sisters

In the shrine complex in Dasūq, there were places for women to relax, referred to as a maqsūrah, “a closed area,” which is typically reserved for female visitors to mosques and shrines and “keeps them from mixing with men.” Women had separate toilets as well. These may also indicate the presence of female Sufis residing at the shrine. During the Mamluk period there were convents or hospices, called ribāṭs, for women, and some women acted as shaykhahs; the sixteenth-century al-Sha’rānī took it for granted that women performed dhikr as well.²⁷ Even if we cannot necessarily draw conclusions from today’s practices to describe the past, it is worth noting that Valerie Hoffman mentioned the Burhāmiyah Order in the 1980s as among the most flexible as far as the relations between the sexes is concerned.²⁸

Further, al-Sahkāwī has a special section about holy women in his Al-Ḍaw’ al-Lāmi’, and Huda Lutfi, in her study of that section, has drawn conclusions about the social and economic status of women in the fifteenth century. She focuses attention on the large number of widowed women and on the fact that many were left without any family to look after them; therefore the ribāṭs established by wealthy men or women were a welcome asylum for many. The Sufis were especially active in patronizing orphans and widows.²⁹ It is possible that the shrine of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī also hosted some women who probably were family members of those employed by the shrine. In that case they lived either outside it or within its premises, in the residences of the shaykh and the superintendent.³⁰ The term “ribāṭ for ladies” is used in the document once but its meaning is ambiguous. It seems to have been a two-winged room or building with vaults located beside the mosque, and from it there was access to the cells (khalāwā). This could be an

²⁶On how, e.g., Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī treated those practicing alchemy, see Winter, Society and Religion, 174-75.
³⁰Those employed by khānqāhs were allowed to have their families with them, and sometimes even married Sufis were accepted to reside on the premises. Fernandes, Evolution, 31, 34, 43.
indication that there were female Sufi residents who had their own cells. On the other hand, the *ribāṭ* is said to be separated by a “painted silk,” by which a curtain is obviously meant, and this could rather refer to a separate ladies’ section in the mosque itself and not to a separate residence. All this points to women participating in the life of the shrine.

Michael Winter assumes that in the sixteenth century, “the Sufis who were active in the countryside formed a much more homogeneous group socially than did those in Cairo.” In the case of a small agricultural village such as Dasūq it almost certainly was so. The people residing in or visiting the shrine consisted probably of local fellahs, fishermen, craftsmen and the like, and their wives, sisters and daughters, with a limited number of educated people. Urbanization was not a large-scale phenomenon, and even many Sufis of Cairo had their background in the villages and provinces. With Qāytbāy patronizing this rural cult, it gained status, and perhaps on his initiative, the traditions on Sīdī Ibrāhīm were recorded. This made the cult and the shrine more acceptable to the urban, literate ulama, and incorporated the cult into the larger religious topography of Egypt.

**Other Activities of the Shrine Complex**

A religious endowment of this size naturally would have staff for the service of the public as well; it was, after all, an institution meant for public welfare. For that purpose, there was a gate-keeper (*bawwāb*), servants (sing. *khaddām/khādim*, both forms used) in charge of maintaining the facilities, a caretaker of the waterwheel (*sawwāq*) who also filled the ablution basins and watered the garden, and a teacher (*muʿaddib*) who taught children to read and write in the *kuttāb-sabil* or *maktab*. For the riding animals of the visitors, there was a *wakālah* (caravanserai). Since providing public meals was often one of the functions of pious endowments, there was a separate bakery to provide “bread for the shrine (*maqām*) and the visitors.” Bread was the staple food then as it is now; in some *waqfīyahs* the amount of bread the Sufis were to receive daily is mentioned, and decreasing the daily rations was used as a means of punishment. Meals were also served, and there was an inspector of the kitchen (*mushrif al-matbakh*) and a cook (*ṭabbākh*), who was also expected to know how to knead dough and bake bread. Storehouses and an oil press were located close to the kitchen.

Our *waqfīyah* also contains instructions concerning surplus income, expenses, and other points vital to the functioning of the institution. The surplus of the

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32 Ibid., 131 and 276-77. On the relationship between the orders and various guilds, see idem, *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule, 1517-1798* (London and New York, 1992), 155.
income (\textit{ray})' remaining after the salaries had been paid was to be spent on lunch and supper for the \textit{fuqarā}, those visiting the shrine, and the laymen, and on meals to be served on festive days and during \textit{mawlid}s. Here the plural \textit{mawālid} is used with no reference as to whose \textit{mawlid} is meant, but we may take it that Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī’s saint’s day and the Prophet’s birthday celebration are indicated. The latter was an established practice by then, and by no means limited to observance by Sufis but rather a state festival financed by the government.\textsuperscript{33} If something was still left over from the income, the \textit{nāzir} was instructed to invest it in real estate, according to detailed advice given in the document, and to use it for repairs needed at the shrine complex. In case this could not be done or was not needed, and some income still remained, it was to be divided ‘among the \textit{fuqarā} and the poor (\textit{masākīn}) Muslims wherever they are.’

\textbf{Amir Mughulbāy, the Superintendent}

From an addition in the margin we learn that the \textit{nāzir} of the \textit{waqf} was Amir al-Sayfī Mughulbāy al-Muḥammadi al-Bahlīwān al-Malikī al-Ashrafī, who also was the witness (or notary, \textit{shāhid}) of the \textit{waqfiyah}. The name of the superintendent gives us some clues about his life, even if his genealogy remains unclear—for Mamluks, as slaves, are given no lineage. He belonged to the highest rank of the Mamluk military hierarchy, officers who were given the title of amir.\textsuperscript{34} The name Mughulbāy, “the Mongol lord,” implies Mongol origin, which would not be unusual. But, as pointed out by David Ayalon, especially during the late Mamluk period, names had sometimes lost their function of indicating origin.\textsuperscript{35}

Mughulbāy probably received his military training from an amir of the sultan Qāytbāy, after which he was manumitted and entered the service of the sultan. He was thus called Qāytbāy’s personal mam luk, as revealed by his title al-Malikī al-Ashrafī, “Belonging to the Malik, or King, al-Ashraf” (Qāytbāy’s honorific). The “al-Sayfī” is short for Sayf al-Dīn, “the Sword of Islam.” The Mamluk historian al-Qalqashandī wrote that most Mamluks had this title, or \textit{laqab}, in their names, due to its association with power and forcefulness. Towards the end of the Mamluk period almost every amir was given the \textit{nisbah} al-Sayfī. The “Muḥammad” in his

\textsuperscript{33}On the \textit{mawlid}s during the sixteenth century, see Winter, \textit{Society and Religion}, 177 f. The first mention of al-Dasūqī’s \textit{mawlid} comes from Ṭāb al-Wahhāb al-Sha’rānī (d. 973/1565), \textit{Latā’if al-Minan} (Cairo, 1357/1938-39), 2:207; quoted by Winter, \textit{Society and Religion}, 181. We may, however, assume that it had been celebrated earlier.

\textsuperscript{34}On the hierarchy of the Mamluk state, see Sartain, \textit{Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī}, 1:1-9.

name refers to the person to whom Mughulbāy belonged before Qāytbāy. This could be the slave merchant or the amir who had bought him for the sultan, or it could be the master who had taught him his military skills. He must have been a man who had influenced Mughulbāy greatly or for whom he had great respect, since he decided to keep his name as a nisbah even after entering the service of Qāytbāy, which was not usual.  

One of the conditions set by sultan Qāytbāy was that the guardianship (walāyah) of the waqf was to be in his own name as long as he lived; after him in the name of Amir Mughulbāy; and after him in the name of whoever was the sultan. The second condition concerns the expenditures and income of the waqf, and Mughulbāy was assigned his fair share of the profit. This is further stated in an addition in the margin, which indicates that he had the right to dispose freely of everything that was contained in the shrine, including all the votive offerings (nudhur) brought there. We can be sure that Qāytbāy wanted to favor his amir for one reason or another, and that the naẓr, or control, of the waqf was assigned to him as a reward and a means of income. On the basis of our evidence, it seems at first that Mughulbāy was not left penniless. However, his control over the waqf was not hereditary; this means that it was not within his power to transfer it to his descendants. In fact, the shrine had earlier been controlled by another Mamlik amir named al-Sayf| Abū Yazid, for whom prayers were to be recited at the tomb. It would be interesting to speculate as to how much influence Mughulbāy as naẓir really had on the affairs of the waqf, but on this we have no information.

Looking at the matter more closely, Mughulbāy’s position may not have been as personally lucrative as it first appears, for even if Qāytbāy favored his amir, his motives for establishing an endowment were at least partly economic. It is worth remembering that the revenues of the waqf benefited the sultan himself as long as he lived, and only after his death did they benefit Mughulbāy. Through the

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36Ibid., 191-92, 213-14. Ibn al-Sayrafı mentions a person by the name of Mughulbāy who was a commander of ten (amīr ‘asharah), later the nā‘ib (governor) of Jerusalem and the sultan’s cupbearer (sāqi). However, the information about this person’s activities concern much earlier years (813/1410, 816/1413 and 823/1420), and he is said to have been appointed to a post already in 813/1410. From that time until the signing of the waqf, there are seventy-one years (seventy-three lunar years). If he was around twenty years old at the time of his appointment, he would have been over ninety at the time of the signing. This makes it unlikely that he is our man. Ibn al-Sayrafı, Nuzhat al-Nuṣūs wa-al-Abdānī Tawārīkh al-Zamān (Cairo, 1971), 1:287, 330, 478.

37The situation was similar when a professional army officer was granted an iqṭā’, a form of administrative grant, because “the area granted and the grantee were constantly changed.” Cl. Cahen, “Iquette,” Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed., 3:1088. Sartain has pointed out that “an emir held his fief (iqṭā’) in the province in which he served and if transferred to a different province he received a new fief.” Sartain, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, 1:5-6.
stipulations in the waqfiyah, Qāytbāy in fact remained in control of the waqf. Qāytbāy was facing a war with the Ottoman sultan Bāyezīd II, and in order to raise money, seven months’ income was demanded of all awqafoods. It was under these financially troubled circumstances that Qāytbāy’s waqf in Dasūq was established.

**Sultan Qāytbāy’s Spiritual Advisors**

All of this does not mean, of course, that Qāytbāy’s motives for establishing the endowment could not have been spiritual as well. He was influenced by several religious persons, even if we cannot always prove that they directly advised him. Among the spiritual advisors who surrounded him were his personal imam, Ibn al-Karakī, who had a great impact on him, and a Sufi saint, Ibrāhīm al-Matbūlī, who roused the sultan’s interest in the local saint of Ṭanṭā, Ahmad al-Badawī. We shall now focus on the relationship between the sultan and his imam, which changed from a close friendship to the latter’s dismissal. The scope of the influence that the imam had on the sultan’s affairs will be discussed, as well as the colorful circumstances of his dismissal. As a result, the sultan was drawn to Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn al-Karakī for comfort and advice. This shaykh was a follower of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī, and although we do not know the precise nature of their relationship, Qāytbāy appointed Jalāl al-Dīn as the shaykh of the shrine complex in Dasūq.

**The Sufi Shaykhs**

Al-Sha’rānī noted in his Ṭabaqāt that there were Sufi shaykhs in Sultan Qāytbāy’s life, such as ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Dashṭūṭī (d. 923/1517), whom the sultan admired to the extent that he kissed his feet and asked him to bless his army. Another was Ibrāhīm al-Matbūlī, who was an illiterate Malāmaṭī Sufi with a convent (zāwiyyah) of his own, and who performed miracles such as foretelling the future. According to al-Sha’rānī, who was his student, he guided the sultan for many years. Al-Matbūlī wore a red garment as a token of his affiliation with the followers of Ahmad al-Badawī. Al-Matbūlī’s biography is given by al-Sakhāwī, who met him personally and wrote that before moving to Cairo, the saint used to live at the tomb of al-Badawī in Ṭanṭā, where he later established a large mosque (jāmi’).
Al-Sakhaνw, however, did not mention anything of al-Matbuνl’s connection with Qaνytbνy, but only said that many notables (akaνbir) came to see al-Matbuνl in search of blessing (tabarruk)—this in spite of his illiteracy. If we can rely on al-Shaνran’s words about the role of al-Matbuνl in Qaνytbνy’s life—which he may have exaggerated since he himself had high appreciation for his teacher al-Matbuνl—we can believe that the sultan was influenced by Aνmadν ideas. For the Mamluks to support the Aνmadνs was not in itself strange, since the cult had gained root in society, especially among the ruling elite.41 During his many trips to the Delta the sultan visited Ɂaνtα in 903/1498 and ordered al-Badawν’s tomb to be enlarged.42

THE HANAFI IMAM

The Mamluks favored the Hanafi school of law, and the personal imam of Qaνytbνy was a Hanafi judge by the name of Ibrαhιm (also called Burhαn al-Dιν) ibn ‘Abd al-Rαhμαν ibn al-Karakι. Ibn al-Karakι was an educated and learned man, among whose teachers were some members of the famous al-Bulqιnι family. He had much influence on Qaνytbνy and received many high posts; he was, among other duties, responsible for reciting the Ɂανhι of al-Bukhαrι in the Citadel of Cairo.43 The tie between Sultan Qaνytbνy and Imam Ibn al-Karakι was perhaps made closer by the fact that both had Circassian mothers. Al-Sakhaνw says that Ibn al-Karakι was in favor with Qaνytbνy already when the latter was still an amir, and when al-Matbuνl died in 880/1475, Qaνytbνy was drawn even closer to his imam. While accompanying him on the pilgrimage in 884/1480, the imam composed poetry in honor of the sultan. They were so close that it was recorded that Qaνytbνy said that he wanted Ibn al-Karakι to recite the Quran at his tomb and visit it after his death.44

41 See, e.g., Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, Al-Sayyid Aνmad al-Badawν: Un grand saint de l’Islam égυpytien, Textes arabes et études islamiques, 32 (Cairo, 1994), 751.
42 Ibn Iναs, Badα’i’ al-Zυhυr, 3:199, 330; also summarized in Shoshan, Popular Culture, 77.
43 During the Mamluk era, the recitation of al-Ɂανhι took place every year at the end of Rαmαν in the Citadel, and during times of crisis also at the tombs of Imam al-Shαфиι and Sayyιdah Nαfιsαh. Annemarie Schimmel, “Kalιf und Kαdι im spαтιmalterlichen Αγυпten,” Die Веlt дes Ιsλαms 24 (1942): 78-79.
Ibn al-Karakī’s important position is revealed in the stories describing the conflict between Sultan Qāytbāy and the learned but arrogant scholar Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī (d. 911/1505). Al-Suyūtī had refused to pay the official monthly visit to the sultan, until finally, on 1 Muḥarram 899/12 October 1493, he appeared in the Citadel wearing a cloth called ṭaylasān over his shoulders. Ṭaylasān was a cloth of honor worn by the learned only, covering the turban and shoulders and hanging down the back.45 Qāytbāy was offended by this, taking it as a Maliki tradition, and in this he was supported by his imam Ibn al-Karakī, who was angry about the incident even though he himself was not present. During another incident, according to al-Suyūtī’s biographer, Ibn al-Karakī was doing

his utmost to provoke [the sultan] . . . , and kindling fires which will burn against [al-Suyūtī] in his grave. . . . He persuaded him [the sultan] that the sultan’s order was to be obeyed, that obedience to him was obligatory, and that anyone who disobeyed him, sinned and rebelled.46

Ibn al-Karakī thus had considerable influence on Qāytbāy, who listened to his advice and acted accordingly. However, from Ibn al-‘Imād (d. 1089/1679) we learn that the good relationship between Qāytbāy and his imam lasted only until 886/1481, when “the sultan’s opinion about him and his company deteriorated (lit. became miserable).” Ibn al-‘Imād gave no reason for this sudden change. Imam Ibn al-Karakī thus did not recite the funerary prayers for Qāytbāy as the latter had wished. Instead, he kept to his house and concentrated on his studies, until he was appointed as the Hanafi qadi of Cairo in 903/1497, the year following Qāytbāy’s death, during the short reign of the deceased sultan’s minor son al- Naughty. Ibn al-Karakī stayed in this position for only three years, after which he was dismissed (Shawwāl 906/May 1501) because, as Ibn Iyās (d. 930/1524) tells us, he had earned the ire of Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī for sheltering one of this new sultan’s political opponents. Therefore, Ibn al-Karakī was dismissed and a favorite of Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī, Sarī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Barr ibn al-Shiḥnah, was appointed in his place.47

At this point Ibn al-Karakī was 68 years old and withdrew into seclusion, perhaps exhausted by the rapid succession of sultans and their changing whims.

46Sartain, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, 1:89, quoting ’Abd al-Qādir al-Shādhilī’s biography of al-Suyūtī, ”Bahjat al-’Abidīn bi-Tarjamat Jalāl al-Dīn.”
47Ibn al-‘Imād, Shadharāt al-Dhahab, pt. 8, 103. Ibn Iyās, Badā’i’ al-Ẓahīr, 3:367; summarized in Petry, Twilight of Majesty, 146. Schimmel, based on Ibn Iyās, gives a detailed description of how Ibn al-Karakī and Sarī al-Dīn were each nominated for the post and, after a few months or even days, were replaced by one another. Schimmel, ’Kalif und Kadi, ’103-4.
He lived on to be 84 and met a sad but pious death. He used to climb down stairs to a pool for his ablutions in his wooden clogs; on 5 Sha‘bān 922/2 September 1516 his clog slipped and he fell into the pool, with no one to help him. When people came to look for the old man, they found one of his clogs on the stairs, his turban on the water, and later his dead body. As an honor to him he was buried close to Qāytbāy.48

THE IMAM WHO FELL INTO DISGRACE

Why should Qāytbāy, after such a close relationship, have dismissed Imam Ibn al-Karakī in 886/1481, only one year after they had performed the pilgrimage together? The reason given by al-Sakḥāwī is that in the end of Jumādá I 886/end of July 1481—thus two months before the signing of the waqf document in Dasūq—the muhtār49 of Qāytbāy lodged a complaint against Ibn al-Karakī. He claimed that the imam had insulted him by polluting his clothes with excrement. This had happened at Ibn al-Karakī’s home in Birkat al-Fil; though we are not told the details about the heated discussion that led to such an extreme outburst of anger, we can imagine the sight, and what was probably involved: the imam threw his chamber pot at the muhtār (a severe insult indeed, which leads to a state of ritual impurity). As the victim came, likely rushing, out of the house, a crowd of curious people gathered around him to hear about the outrageous behavior of the imam. Al-Sakḥāwī describes the scene:

The complainant (mushtakī) explained vividly what is not proper to be mentioned, and hastened to send [Ibn al-Karakī] his garments because there was excrement on them. . . . Then he [Ibn al-Karakī] forbade him to enter his house, and at that moment his [Ibn al-Karakī’s] status among the spectators sank because of this, and people eagerly discussed the matter.50

Then the son of Shaykh al-Shumunnī, who together with Ibn al-Karakī was in charge of the mashyakhah of the mosque of Qāytbāy, where the latter taught Hanafi fiqh, interceded in the matter. He was probably horrified by such conduct

48Ibn al-‘Imād, Shadharāt al-Dhahab, pt. 8, 103-4. Ibn al-Karakī’s residence in Birkat al-Fil was bought for him by Qāytbāy in the early years of the latter’s sultanate (thus some time after 872/1468), on Ibn al-Karakī’s previous residence, see al-Sakḥāwī, Al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmi’, 1:63.
49< Turkish mehter, meaning “a doorkeeper at the Sublime Porte; official who announced the award of promotions or decorations; a soldier in charge of setting up the Sultan’s tent; or Ottoman military musician.” Tuncer Gülensoy, ed., Doğu Anadolu Osmanlıcası: Etimolojik Sözlük Denemesi (Ankara, 1986), s.v. mehter.
by a religious scholar, and as al-Sakhāwī says, he “was agitated to make complaints as well.” He took the insulted man to see a Shafi‘i qadi, and the matter was settled, the man receiving 100 dinārs as compensation. After such behavior, Ibn al-Karakī was not deemed worthy of reciting in the Citadel, and Qāyṭbāy expelled him because to allow him to continue would have meant a disgrace to his own authority—though al-Sakhāwī implies that the sultan did this reluctantly and tried not to put Ibn al-Karakī to shame. The sultan then saw to it that the insulted muḥtār received new clothes. He nominated other persons for the posts formerly held by Ibn al-Karakī, but the post of imam was left empty, since he “held back the imamate (waffara al-imāmah).” Years passed, and so eager was Qāyṭbāy to have his favorite imam back that he asked one of his amirs to find out if there could be any excuse made for the Ibn al-Karakī’s behavior. But since nothing came of this, in 895/1490 the sultan simply pardoned his former imam and began to associate with him again. He made Ibn al-Karakī sit in front of him in the Citadel among the Hanafi officials of the executive secretary (dawādār)—thus in a place of very high rank and respect. But the matter had not been forgotten in the nine years that had passed. The public appearance must have been painful to Ibn al-Karakī, but he seems to have controlled himself bravely, for al-Sakhāwī writes:

He was pointed at and talked about, and nobody wanted to show him any signs of approval, but he showed very firm persistence at this trial he had to face, and he behaved very intelligently.

After Ibn al-Karakī was restored to his former position, he still had considerable influence on the sultan; the case of al-Suyūṭī, mentioned earlier, took place after the reconciliation. His final absolution took place when Qāyṭbāy gave him permission to participate in the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday in the Citadel. There, on the night of the mawlid (12 Rabī‘ I 895/2 February 1490), the sultan publicly spoke of his affection for him.

51Ibid.
52The sultan was extremely angry at this, and he threatened the Imam, but his nature was good to the extent that the matter was suppressed/concealed (ikhtafā) and he began to reconcile through [the intercession] of some of his amirs. But this did not have a wholesome effect (mā anja‘a) on the continuation of his authority (istemrār jihātihī), and he therefore expelled him from reciting the Tradition in the Citadel and employed the shaykh’s nephew instead.” Ibid.
53Ibid., 64.
54Ibid., 63-64.
55Here only the word mawlid is used, and I have interpreted it to refer to mawlid al-nabī.
What would the imam who in anger throws a chamber pot at the sultan’s high official have to do with the establishment of a religious foundation in Dasūq? Perhaps more than is evident at first sight. The waqfiyah stipulated that a man called Jalāl al-Dīn al-Karakī—not to be confused with Ibn al-Karakī, the imam of Qāyṭbāy—was to act as shaykh and teacher of the shrine complex. Jalāl al-Dīn acted as the teacher and khalīfah of the Burhāmīyah Order, following his father Khayr al-Dīn, from 888/1483 until his own death in 912/1506.57 His salary as a teacher was as much as 400 dirhams a month; what he received on the basis of an earlier waqfiyah, if anything, is obscure. His status was well established, and he may have had an important position in Qāyṭbāy’s life as a spiritual advisor.

From the day when Qāyṭbāy’s imam Ibn al-Karakī fell into disfavor and was dismissed, until he officially regained royal favor again, nine years elapsed. Since Qāyṭbāy could not be in touch directly with his polluted imam, and since his former Sufi advisor al-Matbūlī had died, he most likely felt the need for a new spiritual advisor. During this period (886-96/1481-90) the sultan may have consoled himself through a friendship with Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn in Dasūq. This is speculation, but we know for certain that the imam was dismissed in July, and in October of the same year Qāyṭbāy made the shrine the beneficiary of a religious endowment. Fifteen years passed between the establishment of the waqf and the death of Qāyṭbāy in 901/1496, and there was thus ample opportunity for him to go and visit Dasūq. We know that between 875 and 891/1470 and 1486 the sultan made several trips to the Delta, and it is easy to believe that he also on those occasions performed a ziyārah to Sūrah Ibrāhīm’s tomb and consulted Shaykh al-Karakī. The content of their conversations or the advice al-Karakī may have given to the sultan are lost to us, but there may have been a soft spot in Qāyṭbāy’s heart for the Deltan saint Ibrāhīm al-Dasuqī and his shaykh, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Karakī. It was perhaps at Qāyṭbāy’s initiative that Jalāl al-Dīn wrote the biography of Sūrah Ibrāhīm. Since rulers are known to have built zāwiyahs and mosques for their favorite shaykhs, the shrine complex in Dasūq was perhaps established to honor Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn.

Qāyṭbāy in Search of Immortality
The study of Qāyṭbāy’s connections with his religious advisors shows us how intertwined politics and religion were during the late Mamluk period. It provides

57His name is given in the catalogue of manuscripts in the library of Dār al-Kutub in Cairo as Jalāl al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Khayr al-Dīn al-Karakī (d. 912/1505), which makes Jalāl al-Dīn a son of Khayr al-Dīn. This is very possible. Q̣it̜amat al-Ḥaṣr al-Makhtū́tah al-‘Arabiyyah bi-Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Watthā’iq al-Qawmiyyah (Cairo, n.d.), s.v. Lisān al-Ta’rīf. The waqfiyah gives the name of Jalāl al-Dīn’s son as well: ‘Abbās.

us with a glimpse of what was going on behind the façade of establishing religious institutions, and of how complex the motives of the donors could be.

The shrine complex in Dasuq was endowed by Qaytbay for various reasons. The stress in the waqfiyah on formal Islamic education and on following the Sunnah suggests that the shrine was meant not only to preserve the memory of Sidi Ibrahîm but to consolidate the status of Islamic education in the rural Delta area—and thus to bring it within the power of the urban ulama. Qaytbay also sought to manifest his power by adding a congregational mosque (jâmi‘) to what was already a popular religious center. His name would be mentioned not only in the Friday khutbahs, but also in the prayers of the Sufi gatherings in the mausoleum-mosque (masjid wa-maqâm) of al-Dasuqî. This way, Qaytbay took advantage of the fame of a local holy man to promote his own fame. The shrine complex acted as a constant reminder of the sultan’s power all over Egypt, and may have helped to legitimize his status among the rural population.

During his first trip to Dasuq Qaytbay had perhaps witnessed the great number of visitors coming to the shrine and bringing votive offerings. Inspired by the example of Tanâ and its flourishing Badawî cult, he incorporated the earlier waqf in Dasuq into his new endowment and enlarged the shrine complex—making sure that he remained in control of the revenues that helped him to finance his war with Bayezid II.

However, being a pious man and inclined to Sufism, Qaytbay may have had genuine spiritual motives as well: his decision to promote the memory of a seemingly minor rural saint was perhaps due to his own personal devotion to Sidi Ibrahîm, the shrine serving as a token of this devotion. And in the constant presence of death cause by plague, the need to have staff to recite prayers for his immortal soul must have influenced his decision. The construction of a religious complex in itself would bring immortality to its constructor by preserving his name and memory.

The reasons why Sultan Qaytbay established a pious endowment in Dasuq were thus a combination of economic and spiritual ones. He may have been seeking spiritual consolation in times of crisis, while at the same time safeguarding his economic interests. Whatever the reasons, Qaytbay helped to develop and activate the cult of Ibrahîm al-Dasuqî, and it was in the sultan’s interest to promulgate the fame of this saint to attract more people to the site and to make it the famous center of pilgrimage which it remains today.

As Vincent Cornell has pointed out, in pre-thirteenth-century Morocco, Sufi institutions served as efficient means to spread Islamic doctrine to rural areas. Vincent J. Cornell, Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism (Austin, 1998), esp. 3-31.

This may have been the primary purpose of the whole khânqâh establishment, as suggested by Emil Homerin. Homerin, “Saving Muslim Souls,” 77 f., esp. 83.