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Cairene Cemeteries as Public Loci in Mamluk Egypt

INTRODUCTION

After the conquest of Egypt, the Arab Muslims located their graveyards in the area beneath the Muqatṭam Mountain, stretching outward from the southeast side of their new capital, al-Fustāṭ. This older and larger cemetery area became known as al-Qarāfah al-Kubrá (the Greater Qarāfah). Subsequently, the cemetery area developed around several famous mausolea, including the mausoleum of Imām al-Shāfi‘i, extended to the Muqatṭam as well, and came to be called al-Qarāfah al-Šughrá (the Lesser Qarāfah). Also, outside the Naṣr Gate, there stretched another cemetery area, eventually swallowed by the so-called al-Šaḥrā’ that prospered most during the Mamluk period, and had stronger ties with the Mamluk ruling elites. There were several other smaller graveyards, and in this article, I include all cemetery areas in the region surrounding Cairo/Fustāṭ in the term “Cairene cemeteries,” although al-Qarāfah al-Kubrá preceded the construction of Cairo.

These cemetery areas were primarily sanctuaries where people came to console the souls of the dead, or to seek help for worldly difficulties and pray for entrance into heaven through the fulfillment (ijābah) of the du‘ā’ (supplicatory prayer). Likewise, crowds including women and children went there on excursions, leading to the depiction of these areas by the historian al-Maqrizī (d. 845/1442) as “the greatest meeting place of the Egyptian people, and their most popular pleasure resort.”

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Literature detailing these cemetery areas and the practice of visitation (ziyārah/ziyarāt) among Egyptian Muslim society were prominent in the Mamluk era and continued even through the nineteenth century. Yet, in vicissitude of time, these works tended to focus on the ahl al-bayt (the Prophet Muḥammad’s holy family), arranging information about them into chapters. Al-Qal‘āwī (d. 1815), al-Shablanji (d. 1883), and al-Mushkī (published in 1919), for instance, composed treatises of this sort, and al-Nabānī’s (d. 1931–32) compilation of karāmāt (miracles and virtues) achieved by “saints” should be recalled in this regard.

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in addition, listed famous mausolea in 1936. Meanwhile, scholarly investigations in the Western academy were initiated by A. F. Mehren in the latter half of the nineteenth century, followed by R. Guest and L. Massignon, primarily focusing on topography. Great breakthroughs were made by Yûsuf Râghi, who, after completing an inventory of ziyârah guidebooks of the cemeteries, published many substantial studies on this subject. Since the 1980s, Christopher Taylor and the present author have engaged this subject from social-historical or historical-anthropological perspectives, detailing customs and the social background and trying to reconstruct the social milieu. More recently, new studies seem to be flourishing in this field.

This article is an attempt to reconsider the historical characteristics and illuminate actual conditions of these cemetery areas, where any Muslim could participate in various activities, each in his or her own way, irrespective of their position in the social strata, place of origin, gender, or age. Particularly, primary consideration is focused on the various ways in which people participated, based on their social positions or strata, and the supervision of that area by the Mamluk government.


3Hasan Qâsim, Al-Mazâraât al-Misrîyah (Cairo, 1936). Also Ahmâd Taymu'r, Qabr al-Imâm al-Suqîfî: wa-Tahâqîq Mawdî'ih (Cairo, 1927) should be added here.

4A. F. Mehren, Câhirah og Kerâfat, historiske Studier under et Ophold i Ægypten 1867-68 (Copenhagen, 1869).


8The main historical sources of this article have already been referred to orally at the Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of Japan in 1991, also partly published in Japanese as "The City of the Dead and Egyptian Society from the 12th to the 15th Century."

Article: http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/MSR_X-1_2006-Ohtoshi-Tetsuya.pdf
As a result, I hope to elucidate the various roles that these cemeteries played in the Cairo/Fuṣṭāt region, and how the public loci in Islamic Egypt functioned for members of Egyptian society, by reconsidering the relationships between cemetery areas and the people of various strata of society in Cairo, as well as the interactions among those people.⁹

**CEMETERIES AS RESIDENTIAL AND LEISURE PLACES**

Cairene cemeteries, including the two Qarāfahs and al-Ṣaḥrāʾ, were primarily huge areas where the dead of Cairo and al-Fuṣṭāt, from sultans to paupers, were entombed. These were graveyards for all Muslims, who probably requisitioned them as their burial land from Coptic Egyptians after the conquest. Copts were allocated a spot near the Ḥabash Lake as their cemetery, although the higher stratum of Copts, such as the pope or some bishops, were buried in churches like al-Muʿallaqah of Old Cairo, or, in some cases, the pope’s body was relocated to the monastery of Abū Maqār in Wādī Ṣaʿr.¹⁰ The main cemeteries for Jews and Samaritans may have stood next to the Coptic ones beside the Ḥabash Lake, which the 56th Coptic Pope Khāʾil III (880–907) sold to them. Perhaps this measure was taken due to the construction of the maydān (square) in a new capital, al-Qtāṭiʾ, by Ibn Ṭūlūn. Other dhimmūs interred their dead within churches, such as the Melikites, who also buried their dead in the Quṣayr Monastery on the Muqtaṭtam, the Armenians, and the Nestorians.¹¹ Thus, Muslim cemeteries were adjacent to dhimmū graveyards, although from a shariʿah point of view, they should have been kept separate by great distances.¹²

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⁹The aim of this article does not lie in social class or stratum analysis; the sectioning of each chapter by headings such as the common people, ulama, or ruling elites, is employed only for arrangement and facilitation of the arguments herein, not for rigid classification of social strata. Through such indices, this article intends to illuminate various aspects of Cairene cemeteries.


¹²Although not written in the Mamlik period, see al-Damanḥūrī (d. 1192/1778), Iqāmat al-Ḥujjah al-Bāḥirah ‘alā Ḥadm Kanāʾ is Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah (Berkeley, 1975), 63 (text).
At the same time, since the Cairene cemetery areas were located on the periphery of the Cairo/Fustat region, they were vulnerable to easy plunder by raiding outsiders. The invasion of the areas of al-Qarāfah or by the Qarmatians and Fatimid Maghribians, and later by the Ottomans, may be recalled in this regard.\(^\text{13}\)

People from all across the social stratum, regardless of gender or age, visited the tombs of their acquaintances or "saints"; these activities were termed ziyařah.\(^\text{14}\) Also, travelers from outside of Egypt came to visit the cemeteries, drawn by such sites as the mausoleum of Imam al-Shāfi‘ī.\(^\text{15}\) Many of them stopped on their Meccan pilgrimages. While visiting famous mausolea, visitors would often form groups, each led by a shaykh of al-ziyārah, an authority and guide, making a circuit of the holy mausolea following their own routes. In 845/1442, for instance, eleven groups went on tours of the two-Qarāfahs simultaneously. The shaykhs of al-ziyārah, who might be considered tour leaders, wrote guidebooks for tomb visitation, termed "kutub al-ziyārah" (books of visit) as well. These treatises, which are utilized in this article, detailed the customs of visitation, and cited abundant anecdotes about the late saints.\(^\text{16}\)

The sanctity of the Qarāfah cemeteries was assumed to be strengthened by their location beneath the holy Muqatātam Mountain. The word al-Qarāfah is employed interchangeably with safh al-Muqatātam (the foot of al-Muqatātam Mountain) in historical sources. The Muqatātam itself attracted the reverence of

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\(^\text{13}\) Ibn Iyās, Badā‘i’ al-Zuhūr (Cairo, 1982–84), 5:154; Ohtoshi, "The City of the Dead and Egyptian Society from the 12th to the 15th Century," 171.

\(^\text{14}\) The term "saint" in this article is employed to denote an analytical concept, which is applied to any person who won veneration from others, including those who were called walā‘awliyā‘, sāliḥ/sāliḥūn, etc. Concerning various terminological problems on "saints," see Tetsuya Ohtoshi, "‘Saints’ and ‘the Cult of the Saints’" (in Japanese), in The Handbook of Islamic Studies (Tokyo, 1995), 240–48.

\(^\text{15}\) Before the Mamluk period, in the middle of the twelfth century, al-Shaykh Ibn al-Šābūnī, who was living in Damascus, asked Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd, the Zangid ruler, for permission to visit Imām al-Shāfi‘ī in al-Qarāfah, and his hope was realized. See Abū Shāmah, Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn (Cairo, 1956–62), 2:68.

\(^\text{16}\) For more detail on the manners and customs which prevailed in Egyptian cemeteries and their visits, and also on the shaykh al-ziyārah and kutub al-ziyārah, see Ohtoshi, "The Manners, Customs, and Mentality"; idem, "The Egyptian City of the Dead and Visits to Holy Graves"; and Taylor, In the Vicinity of the Righteous.

Egyptians of various religions—Copts cherished their own legendary memory of moving the Muqatṭam Mountain. A person entombed in this area may have been believed to have escaped Judgment. Muslim literature often depicted al-Muqatṭam through personification, and every important historical figure was said to have had a relationship with it. Later, the ziya'rarah tract of al-Shu'aybî (seventeenth century) even illustrated its cosmological position by ranking it with Mount Arafat, the Ka'bah, and Jerusalem. Al-Muqatṭam was therefore described as "al-muqaddas" (holy) by both Muslim and Coptic literature.

As a result, a du'a' (supplicatory prayer) performed there was thought more likely to be fulfilled. The fulfillment (ija'bah) of individual du'a' constituted a crucial concern of visitors to graveyards, and its content tended to concentrate on worldly affairs or entering heaven. Moreover, mass prayers conducted by rulers were often held there, mainly in the back enclosure of Sultan Barquq's religious complex in al-Ṣahrah, seeking the abatement of the plague or the rising of the Nile. People, including Copts and Jews, were urged to go there to pray, and huge amounts of bread, meat, and other items were distributed on those occasions.

After the death of a relative, the bereaved family would stay for long periods at the graveyard to comfort the soul of the deceased. Additionally, visitors from in and out of Cairo/Fustat came to visit these cemetery areas. As time went on the infrastructure in al-Qara'fah was improved, with numerous walled tomb structures enabling people to live there, and it consequently became inhabited by the common people.

As early as the Tulunid period, histories already suggest the presence of inhabitants, particularly those who enjoyed the benefits of an aqueduct from the Ḥabash Lake to al-Ma'āfir (al-Qara'fah al-Kubrā), constructed by Ibn Ẓūlūn (d. 720/884). In the Ikhshidid period (935–69), the situation seems to have remained.


20 For a detailed analysis of the content of the du'a' and the logic of its rewards, see Ohtoshi, "The Manners, Customs, and Mentality," 30–39.


the same. From the Arab conquest to the Fatimid period, the development of the al-Qarāfah al-Kubrá area, first as a suburb of al-Fustāt and then as a graveyard area, is evidenced by archeological research as well. When they entered Egypt, the Fatimids were reported to have made al-Qarāfah al-Kubrá a residential area, and they built mosques, large pavilions, monuments, and cisterns, and so many moved there that it eventually became congested. There were, however, also struggles between the Qarāfah resident Egyptians and al-Maghāribah, who came with the Fatimids. Notably, in 363/973, the Maghāribah invaded the Qarāfah district, evicting Egyptians, and plundered or occupied it. In those days, the natives of al-Qarāfah may have been known as al-Qarāf|yah, who went so far as to send robes of honor to a swindler named Shuru|t, possibly a converted Copt, when the Banū Qurrah of the Arab Bedouins supported him as their caliph. Nevertheless, the Fatimids later distributed to the Qarāfah residents a great deal of meat and sweets through the mosque, and built a free mill complete with working beasts and fodder. Sufis were reported to seclude themselves in the Muqqattám, though the reliability of this passage in the text is uncertain. Although it suffered disasters in al-Mustansir’s reign (427–87/1036–94), and in 564/1168, the area revived in the Ayyubid period, with many new buildings, such as Ribāt Fakhṛ al-Dīn and the muṣṣallá (oratory) of Ibn al-Arsūfī. Most famous of all was the rebuilding of the mausoleum of Ima|m al-Shafi|‘ in al-Qarāfah al-Šughrá with an aqueduct built by Sultan al-Ka|mî. The custom of ziyārah seems to have been established in this period, as indicated by the appearance of ziyārah tracts.

25Al-Sakha|w, Tuh|f ah, 180.
Geographical works of this period also confirm the existence of inhabitants in the Qarāfahs.32

The Bahri Mamluk period is considered one of the high points of the Qarāfahs; they are thought to have been fully developed to accommodate both sojourners and inhabitants. The residents of Cairene cemeteries were too numerous to be mentioned. According to the sources, accommodations for residents and sojourners included mosques, khānqahs, zawiyahs, ribāts, madrasahs (colleges), mashhads (mausolea), turbahs (mausolea), maqbarahs (graveyards), and qubbahs (cupolaed mausolea). This situation was made possible through equipment and development of religious institutions in this period based mainly on the waqf (religious endowment) system. Other facilities recorded were a musallā (oratory), suqs, furns (baking ovens), public bathhouses, an aqueduct, and wells. Residents and sojourners consisted of people concerned with religious institutions, Sufis, superintendents and employees of the above-mentioned public facilities, persons related to the cemetery industry such as grave diggers, and so-called ‘fuqarā’, assumed to be living with their families.33 Al-Maqrīzī’s description of this situation is widely known: “Then amirs of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s dynasty rebuilt this cemetery area. . . . The soldiers and the rest of the people followed them, and built mausolea, khānqahs, suqs, mills, and public bathhouses as far as the area from al-Hābāsh Lake to al-Qarāfah Gate, and the residential area of Fustat to Muqatam Mountain became built up.34

Subsequently, as al-Qarāfah also attracted the governing elite of the dynasty, it became inhabited by them, for instance, Vizier Shams al-Dīn Ibn al-Salūs (d. 693/1294), Tāj al-Dīn Ibn Ḥinnā (d. 707/1308), and qāḍī al-qudāh (chief justice) Ibn Bint al-A’azz (d. 695/1295–96). Also, the area began to produce notable scholars of the age, such as Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 682/1283–84), Ahmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Qarāfī (d. 802/1402), and Ibn al-Hā’im (d. 815–1412).35

32 Al-Idrīsī, Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fī Ikhtilāq al-ʿĀfīq (Cairo, n.d.), 324; Yāqūt, Kitāb al-Mushtarak (Göttingen, 1846), 341.
35 Al-Maqrīzī, Al-Muqaffā, 6:207; idem, Al-Sulūk, 1:3:760–61, 2:1:41–42; al-Himyarī, Al-Rawḍ
the *nisbah* "al-Qarāfī," or "native of al-Qarāfah," were recorded in rather large numbers. It is interesting to note that, before around 844/1440–41, visits to the mausoleum of al-Sayyidah Ruqayyah were hindered because people—including Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Taqā—had taken up residence there. In this manner, the commoners were a driving force for the custom of living in the Qarāfahs, and thereafter the elites of the dynasty followed suit.

As places of residence, the two Qarāfahs, al-Kubrā and al-Ṣūghrā, suffered severe devastation due to recurring pestilence, but ironically, at the same time, they expanded as graveyards. In 806/1403–4, the inhabitants were reduced in numbers by a disaster, then in 833/1430 and 864/1460, a huge number of deaths resulted from pestilence reported in the areas included in the two Qarāfahs. Among the dwellers of al-Qarāfah, al-Sūdān al-Takārīrah, who originated in an area which may have stretched from western Sudan to Mali, were well known to have become the greatest victims. According to the sources, only a handful of the three thousand al-Takārīrah survived the pestilence, notwithstanding the fact that they sought refuge in the Muqatṭam Mountain. These al-Takārīrah seem mostly to have settled there on their Meccan pilgrimages, as exemplified in the case of the well-known King Mansā Wali, al-Malik Mūsá ibn Abī Bakr, who stopped in Egypt (724/1324) accompanied by a retinue of ten thousand. He enjoyed the hospitality shown there, famously dispersing a large quantity of gold, and stayed in al-Qarāfah al-Ṣūghrā.

On the other hand, the Ṣahrā’ area developed toward the northeast of the...
citadel in the Mamluk period, and the graveyard, which appeared in the Fatimid period outside the Naṣr Gate, combined with this area. Although this area was famed for its closeness to the ruling elite, who filled the place with religious complexes, people of all classes began to live there over the course of time. We find, since the Bahri Mamluk period, many ulama bearing the nisbah of al-Šahrāwī, such as ‘Abd al-Šamad al-Šahrāwī (d. 879/1475) and Muḥammad al-Abūdarri (d. 844/1440–41). They were born and raised or lived in structures there that included zawiyyahs, turbahs, and houses.

Qubbat al-Naṣr and al-Raydānīyah must have marked the northeast limits, as indicated by the situation of 749/1349: “Graveyards were filled up lengthwise from the Naṣr Gate to Qubbat al-Naṣr, and to the Muqattam Mountain breadth-wise. Also the area from the Ḥusaynīyah cemetery to al-Raydānīyah was filled up...”

Qubbat al-Naṣr, established in the Fatimid era, originated in a zawiyyah where fuqara’ (poor, Sufis) abided. Following the reconstruction by Sultan al-Nāṣir, ruling elites of the dynasty, notably the Mamluks, made much use of this Qubbah. The place became an overnight stop for sultans and amirs, and communal supplicatory prayers (du‘ā’) were conducted here for rainfall or the abatement of pestilence. Al-Raydānīyah was also associated strongly with the ruling elite, and was frequently utilized by them, mainly after Sultan Barquq’s reign. Near the mastabah there, military exercises, such as polo and horse races, were held. The function and characteristics of these two spots bear much similarity; birds for communication or hunting were bred there, and they also marked places for receiving visitors from the north or seeing them off. Since both places offered a suitable gathering place for members of the army and amirs, they became strategic points for rebels as well as rulers. Possibly due to their strong relationship with the ruling elite of the dynasty, and the alienation felt by the common people, these two places seldom appear in ziyārah books, but appear very frequently in the chronicles.


43 Al-Maqrīzī, Al-Sulāfī, 2:3:783.

As has been seen, the custom of living in cemeteries has a long history in Egypt, contrary to what is usually believed. Therefore we need to investigate this custom by extending the span of our study, taking the Egyptian view of the hereafter into consideration. In addition, it can be noted that there was a certain interrelationship between the funeral prayers held at Musţallá Bāb al-Naşr (Bāb al-Naşr Oratory) and burials conducted in the Şahrā’ area.\textsuperscript{45}

Another important aspect relating to cemeteries, shared by the whole population, was pleasure seeking. Since ziyārah books made an effort to situate the visiting of cemeteries within the framework of Islamic pious activities, they never mentioned that visits were often made for pleasure. Yet, if we look at visitors’ behavior, we can easily discern the tendency to pursue pleasure. The common populace (‘āmmah) went on moonlit nights, bringing sweets and drinks, while influential people were fond of enjoying the moonlight of summer nights in the courtyards of mosques in the Qarāfah. In winter, they preferred to stay overnight under the minbar (pulpit). Even women and children could stay out openly until late at night, which was ordinarily quite exceptional.\textsuperscript{46} For travelers from outside Cairo the Qarāfahs, which included the mausolea of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī and al-Sayyidah Nafisah, were the first place to be visited. Egyptians, too, may have ushered travelers there, as in the case of an Ilkhanid mission.\textsuperscript{47} Meccan pilgrims who stopped in Egypt made visits there and left accounts of the Cairene cemetery regions. They include Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Baţţūţah, al-Tujībī, al-Balawī, al-‘Abdarī, and al-Qalşādī.\textsuperscript{48}

The wā‘iz (religious preacher) preached from pulpits in the City of the Dead, and the qāşš (storyteller) narrated Arab heroic epics, such as Sīrat ‘Antar and Sīrat Dha‘t al-Himmah, among the graves or near the Qarāfah Gate. Quran reciters recited in singsong tones, creating additions and subtractions, or stresses, arbitrarily.\textsuperscript{49} From the following account quoted in ziyārah treatises regarding Shaykh Fakhr al-Dīn (d. 622/1225), we can well perceive the situation:

One of the sālihūn (pious men) who resided in al-Qarāfah had died, so his comrades had prepared the funeral ceremony (waqt,

\textsuperscript{47} Al-Maqrīzī, Al-Sulāk, 2:2:397.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibn al-Ḥājj, Madkhal, 1:268.
‘urs) in the Zāwiyah al-Gharābīlī. There a qawwāl (religious singer) named al-Faṣīḥ, handsome and preeminent in singing in that era, was engaged. In their hearts, the people assembled there had come to hear him sing. Then the shaykh Fakhr al-Dīn, who was held in awe, was informed of this event, and arrived on the scene with his attendants, urging al-Faṣīḥ to desist. Al-Faṣīḥ fled, fearing the shaykh, and the audiences were practically dying with deep disappointment at the passing of the reason they had gathered [abridged].

Moreover, the ruling elite occasionally enjoyed singing and drinking at the southern border of al-Qarāfah al-Kubrā. Thus the activity of singing and dancing performed in the cemeteries varied from mere entertainment to more religious appearances. In either event, ulama condemned them for the mingling of the sexes and immorality as a sort of bid’ah (deviation from correct religious practice).

Celebration feasts for saints’ birthdays (sing. mawlid, mawṣīm, waqt, etc.) were held in the cemeteries as well, although this is not reflected in ziyaḥah tracts. In the case of the well-known shaykh Muḥammad Wafā’ (d. 765/1364), his tomb was “famed for hosting a waqt (celebratory occasion), yearly on the twenty-second night of Rabī’ II [for commemorating the deceased]. Plenty of money was spent, and crowds flocked there.” On the other hand, the mawlid of al-Sayyidah Nafṣah at her mausoleum began in 889/1484, and became known as ‘mawlid al-khalifah’ (the caliph’s mawlid), since the caliph, who resided close to this mausoleum, took care of it.

The Attachment of the Common People to the Cairene Cemeteries
One way in which the common people involved themselves in the Cairene cemeteries was through the creation/fabrication of tombs of famous persons, or forging/rewriting their names on tombstones. Among the many objects of cemetery visitors, prominent targets were mausolea of the ahl al-bayt (the Prophet

51 Al-Maqrīzī, Al-Sulūk, 2:2:491–92.
54 Ibn Iyās, Badā’i’, 3:206.
Muḥammad’s family) and ṣāliḥ/ṣāliḥūn (pious figure[s]) who acquired veneration from the masses. Yet, in reality, many popular mausolea which attracted visitors were fake, and the names on tombstones were frequently misattributions. Ziyārah treatises repeatedly made accusations of such inventions.55

Concerning the invention of holy tombs or mausolea, one premise is that the practice of disinterment may have prevailed in Egyptian society in that period, which is supported by this statement from a ziyārah book: “many ṣāliḥūn who were entombed in an Egyptian cemetery were disinterred after several years.”56 People would excavate deserted graves and build new mausolea with purportedly-discovered skulls or relics, such as the robe of the Prophet Muḥammad, with invented anecdotes. Similarly, several mausolea were built based on people’s dreams. Mausolea built on the basis of skulls were called mashāḥīd al-ruʾs, while those based on dreams were known as mashāḥīd al-ruʿyā.57

The following is the gist of an anecdote concerning the invention of mausolea, which occurred in the first half of the fifteenth century. An old man named Mubaṣrak al-Takrūrī (d. 871/1467) retired from his work as a dough kneader at a baking oven located in Bāb al-Lūq, and began living in al-Qarāfah. Then, removing the soil of a mound little by little, he began to construct holy tombs. Whenever he saw grave posts while walking around through the cemeteries, he brought them back to one of his tombs in progress. His first creation was a tomb named Shukrān, and he brought its sitr (cover cloth) from the gate of al-Manṣūrī hospital to al-Qarāfah al-Kubrā, in Barsbāy’s reign. When the mausoleum of al-Sayyidah Fāṭimah al-Ṣughrā was destroyed by malefactors, he took its tombstone and put it on one of his invented graves, calling it “the tomb of Fāṭimah al-Ṣughrā.” Also, he carved stones, naming his tombs whatever he liked. Then he turned to the construction of that area, and as the place of Mubaṣrak’s holy tombs gained fame, even Sultan Jaqmaq and his wife were said to have supported Mubaṣrak.58

Let us now look at examples of Cairene mausolea, which were built upon skulls, dreams, bodies of the deceased, or even complete fiction. If we focus on the periods of creations/fabrications, it is notable that the Fatimids stand out. Specifically, viziers of the later Fatimids or the caliphs themselves were the main inventors. Yet we need to add that this practice continued to occur beyond the Fatimid era. Second, objects of creation tended to center around the ahl al-bayt, chiefly ‘Alī’s descendants, and also great prophets, such as Moses. Among them,

55 For a detailed analysis on the creation and rewriting of holy tombs, see Ohtoshi, “Visits, Holy Tombs and Relics in the Medieval Egyptian Muslim Society,” 231–51.
58 Al-Sakḥāwī, Tuhfah, 180–81.
we have many traces of Moses in al-Muqtam and the Qarafahs, such as the Aqdam mosque, which contained a footprint attributed to Moses.

The reascription of tombstones was another prevailing practice. For instance, someone rewrote the name on a tombstone as al-Mustansir, the caliph, but in fact it was the tomb of al-Mustatir, the onion merchant. Examples of contrived names on tombstones are: the Umayyad Caliph Yazid, Mu‘awiyah, Bilal, the muezzin of the Prophet Muhammad, one of the famous sahabah, Abū Hurayrah, the Prophet Daniel, the son of the Abbasid Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, etc. The pattern of these reascriptions can be summarized as being based on famous historical figures or even fictitious characters. The former includes the Prophet Muhammad’s holy family, persons linked to the Prophet Muhammad like the sahabah, other prophets, “saints,” and historically well-known individuals. The latter category comprises fictitious offspring of famous people, such as Muhammad ibn Zayn al-Abidin. Concerning the way names were invented, it often depended on name similarity, but sometimes this was totally irrelevant. Numerous acts of fabrication and mis-transmission resulted in the production of a huge amount of misnaming, where both the tombstones and their supporting legends were false, and the views of ziyarah books varied as a result.

Thus seen, the list of invented names of “false” mausolea rather represents the wishes and expectations of commoners, and it is in these falsely attached names that we may perceive their mentality and intentions. Through this method of positive participation in the dynamic life of cemeteries, we see an outburst of energy in the common people engaged in visiting cemeteries or inventing tombs.

Next, as stated above, cemeteries provided inhabitable places for the people, where they could enjoy benefits, or could hope for relief from economic hardships in their daily lives. Large scale banquets, for instance, were held on occasions of celebration for the completion of distinguished buildings or to commemorate recovery from illness. Banquets were also held at communal prayers for the rise of the Nile or the abatement of the plague, at funerals, and feasts, where great quantities of food and money would be dispensed. Moreover, through various religious institutions, both waqf income and direct contributions from the state reached Sufis, the needy, and orphans. Numerous visitors to graveyards, needless to say, gave alms and made offerings. Under such circumstances, the masses apparently understood the cemeteries to be a place for sustenance. They could visit cemeteries in times of privation, and were advised to do so. Some of them went even further in order to obtain money or goods from visitors to al-Qarafah.

59 The following argument was detailed in Ohtoshi, “The Manners, Customs, and Mentality,” 34–39.
60 Ibn al-Nāsik, “Miṣbaḥ,” fol. 68.
Thus, “many people desired to live there, because of . . . the frequency of alms and acts of charity toward the people of al-Qarāfah.” It was also recorded that on Fridays, “all the poor of Cairo go there to eat and to receive money which is given to them.”

I have previously analyzed this situation, and have explained it as a symbiotic relationship, wherein the wealth and good deeds of visitors were exchanged for rewards from Allāh, through the intercession of those who received them. Indeed, this exchange was nicely depicted by Shu‘ayb ibn al-Ḥurayfish:

“The poor man is the rich man’s messenger, since when the rich man exercises almsgiving to the poor man with alms on behalf of his [deceased] parents or relatives, it will reach to the deceased; thus the poor man is the rich man’s messenger.”

Tomb robbery would have been committed primarily by the common people. According to ziya‘rah treatises, kafan (the winding sheet for the deceased), tāhūt (coffin), and tomb poles were stolen, and other sources list silver candlesticks, carpets, sīr (cover-cloths of a grave or coffin), copies of the Quran, lumber from a mausoleum’s ceiling, and windows. It was in 827/1427 and 918/1512 that the scandal of selling disinterred corpses to Europeans was publicized. As for the plundering of graveyards, there was great unrest in 864/1459, and again in 901/1495, when natives of al-Ṣahrā’ fled en masse to Cairo, due to plundering by bands of robbers. Some destruction of tombs was carried out as a result of political embroilments or private grudges. In one example, which occurred in 748/1347, a mob opened the grave of Amir Shuja‘ al-Dīn, stripping off his kafan, and burnt his remains. When criminals were apprehended, rulers punished them severely, through methods such as beheading, cutting off their hands, whipping, crucifixion, or flaying of the face.

Since al-Qarāfah comprised large open spaces, it offered refuge in times of emergency. For instance, “in 702/1303, there was a great earthquake in Egypt and

Syria with collapsing houses, and a lot of people died under the debris. A tsunami ensued due to the earthquake, and wrecked many ships. The earthquake lasted for forty days; people fled to al-Qarāfah and pitched tents for themselves. It so affected Alexandria that the sea rose to the middle of the city.\(^67\) Also, in 699/1300, a large number of troops conscripted by the Mamluk government stayed in the Qarāfah and other places due to a shortage of housing.\(^68\) The stopping place for the aforementioned king of al-Takrūr was al-Qarāfah al-Šughrā, and the wāli (governor) of al-Qarāfah and Fustāt, Amir Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Amīr Ḥājib took care of him. Similarly, in 783/1338, the daughter of the Marinid ruler Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī, known as al-Hurrā, stayed in al-Qarāfah with a group of four hundred Meccan pilgrims. These facts reveal that the cemeteries not only contained open spaces, but also were supplied with sources of water and food.\(^69\)

**The Ulama’s Attachment to Cemeteries**

For the ulama, Mamluk society offered more positions in religious institutions than in previous times, and some of them were established in Cairene cemeteries.\(^70\) That is to say, cemetery areas provided places for their employment and education. To take some examples, al-Madrasah al-Nāṣirīyah (or al-Ṣalāḥīyah), near Qubbat al-Imām al-Shāfi‘i, was of crucial importance, as is shown by the fact that al-Qalqashandi regarded it as one of the positions suitable for high-ranking muḍarrisu‘n (professors).\(^71\) Muḍarrisu‘n and shaykhāhs were employed there, as we can see in the historical literature.\(^72\) Names of khānqāhs in the Qarāfahs, whose positions for ulama were known, included those of Tuquztamur, Baktamur, al-Karāmīyah, al-Taydamurīyah, (Arghūn al-‘Alā‘i and Najm al-Dīn Mahmūd), and notably Khānqāh Qawsūn (near the Qarāfah Gate) which comprised a shaykh and fifty Sufis with abundant waqfs at its opening in 736/1335.\(^73\) Also, khānqāhs and turbahs in al-Šahrā’


\(^70\) According to the assertion of I. Lapidus, ulama of relevant age included fuqaha‘ (jurists), judges, scholars, teachers, Qurān reciters, hadith reciters, Sufis, functionaries of religious institutions, professional witnesses, and so on. Moreover, many ulama were appointed by the state as bureaucrats, or could be part-time merchants. Even workers, craftsmen, or people of lower strata could become ulama. Ira Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1967), 107–15.

\(^71\) Al-Qalqashandi, *Ṣubḥ*, 9:256.


included Khānqāh Ṭaybughā al-Ṭawīl, Turbat Khushqadam, and Turbat Barqūq. The shift from a shaykh post in one khānqāh to another was a frequent occurrence. Other institutions in these cemeteries, to which appointments are recorded, included Mashhad al-Sayyidah Nafīsah, zāwiyyahs, turbahs, ribāts, jāmis, etc. In those foundations, ulama found employment in positions such as shaykh (leader), mudarris (teacher), nāzir (administrator), khattāb (preacher), hired Sufis, khādim (servant), and so forth. Further, other institutions in these cemetery areas might have employed ulama in operating positions, such as Jāmi’ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, Ribāt Fakhr al-Dīn ibn Quzul, Jāmi’ al-Afram, and Jāmi’ Ibn al-Labbān.

For ulama as well, Cairene cemeteries were places for visiting tombs, being entombed, and occasionally living, as noted earlier. Even a well-known biographer of the age such as Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282) visited the cemetery frequently, and left eyewitness observations in his Wafayāt. In addition, in his chronicle, Ibn al-Furāt (d. 807/1405) repeatedly cites the words of his comrades who visited al-Qarafah.

Cemetery areas also provided employment for Sufis, as mentioned above, and there were several magnet spots for Sufi practices, centering around certain zāwiyyahs, such as Zāwiyyat Abū al-Su‘ūd and Zāwiyyat (or Ribāt) Sa‘īd al-Dīn Ibn Abī al-Manṣūr, in addition to khānqāhs, turbahs, and zāwiyyahs founded by the ruling elite. These examples were strongly related to the tarīq/tarīqah (way) of al-Shādhiliyyah. Zāwiyyahs in the Qarafahs are thought to have provided places of contact between ulama and visitors to cemeteries, whereby the visitors could participate in the religious gatherings and rituals conducted there. Moreover, ascetic practices in the Muqatṭam region and the cemeteries beneath it were conducted by Sufis.

Furthermore, it was significant that ulama intervened in cemetery areas through


75 Al-Maqrīzī, Al-Sulāk, 3:3:998.

76 Concerning Mashhad al-Sayyidah Nafīsah, see, for instance, Ibn Taghrībīrī, Al-Manhal al-Ṣāfī, 7:135, 189, 403.

77 Al-Maqrīzī, Khīṭat, 2:298, 303, 324, 367. As for the construction activities of the ruling elite, see Chapter 4.


79 For more detail, see Ohtoshi, “Tasawwuf as Reflected in Ziyāra Books and the Cairo Cemeteries.” The meaning of the term ‘Sufi’ widened during this period, and many ulama were encompassed by this term, hence I included Sufis in this section.
their juridical and religious functions; for example, they criticized the manners of visiting tombs and the tombs’ appearance, judged how to inter the dead, and so forth. Ulama could express their judgments based upon shari‘ah (Islamic law), which often took the form of condemning bid‘ah regularly performed by the people, such as visits by women or their mingling with strangers, *nadhr* (an offering often accompanied with a vow), praying to entombed “saints,” leading to their veneration, ostentatious graves, singing and dancing with musical instruments at the cemetery, walking on graves with shoes, etc.  

Through these accusations, the ulama established their “authority,” and retained their sphere of activity. To cite a well-known incident in this regard, al-‘Izz Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām, the sultān al-‘ulama’ (d. 660/1262), criticized the existence of ostentatious tombs in Cairene cemeteries and activities that took place there, and reportedly succeeded in persuading Sultan Baybars to have all such tombs razed, although it was never enforced.

**CEMETORIES AND THE DYNASTIC ELITE**

In this section, I will attempt to show how the ruling elite interrelated with Cairene cemeteries in ways not connected to their supervision, which will be discussed next. First are the *ziyārah* of sultans or their entourages, which had a long history among the Muslim rulers of Egypt. From the time of the legendary Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 270/884) and his son Khumarawayh (d. 282/896), and Kāfūr al-Ikhshīdī (d. 357/968), through the Fatimids (al-Ḥākim, al-Āmīr, Amīr al-Juyūsh al-Afdal, Vizier al-Ma’mūn, al-Ẓāfir, and al-‘Āḍid), to the Ayyubid sultan Kāmil, rulers and their retainers are said to have engaged in the *ziyārah*. The tradition is assumed to have persisted during the Mamluk period, for Sultan Baybars is portrayed as having followed their example. Even if we confine ourselves to the Burji Mamluk period, we can see the *ziyārah* of sultans occurred frequently, i.e., Barquq (786/1384, 796/1394, 797/1395), Faraj (812/1409), Mu’ayyad (*al-du’a’* at al-Ṣāḥra’ in 822/1419), Barsbāy (841/1438), Jaqmaq (845/1442), Inaḥl (865/1461), Ahmad ibn Ināl (865/1461), Khushqadam (866/1462, 870/1465, 871/1466, 871/1467), Ibn ‘Uthmān, *Murshid,* fols. 91b–92a, 163a; Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Al-Kawākhīb,* 67, 72, 84, 126; al-Musabbīḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr,* 40–41; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt,* 4:103–4; Ibn al-Nāṣikh, *Miṣbāḥ,* fols. 103, 115, 164; al-Maqrīzī, *Iltī‘āz al-Ḥunafā‘,* 2:102, 3:118; idem, *Khīṭaṭ,* 1:484, 2:461; al-Sakhawī, *Tuhfah,* 214; Ibn Ma’mūn, *Akhbār Miṣr* (Cairo, 1983), 42, 64.

**Note:** See Ohtoshi, “The Manners, Customs, and Mentality,” 19–44; idem, “The Egyptian City of the Dead and Visits to Holy Graves,” Chapter 1.

**Note:** Ohtoshi, “The City of the Dead and Egyptian Society from the 12th to the 15th Century,” 173–74.

**Note:** Herein, “ruling elites” or “dynastic elites” include sultans, military elites, high-ranking officials, and ‘Abbasid caliphs who immigrated to Cairo, etc.


Qaytbay (872/1468, 874/1469, 874/1470, 876/1472, 882/1478, 885/1480, 885/1481, 886/1482), Muhammad ibn Qaytbay (901/1496), Ghafrî (913/1508, 914/1508, 915/1510, 918/1512, 920/1514, 922/1516), and Tûmân Bây.85 Some retainers followed suit on *ziyârah* activities, or even took the initiative, such as Yûnus ibn ‘Umar, who is reported to have visited al-Qarâfah every Friday.86 Along with these visits, the ruling class performed charitable activities such as distributing *sâdaqah* (alms) and food. Even when they could not visit the cemeteries personally, they arranged for these distributions. Since these cemetery areas contained the sepulchers of the elites’ relatives, frequent reports of visits to them can also be found.

Further, as mentioned above, members of the ruling elite also competed in the building of architectural works in cemeteries.87 They constructed madrasahs, mosques, and *khângâhs* in their names, and *turbahs* for their own entombment. Those buildings and institutions obviously reflect the religious policy or the personal attitude of each member of the ruling elite, and they also can be considered to be closely related to their *ziyârah* activities and the development of the northeast al-Šârâ‘ area.

It is widely known that these religious institutions were administered by the *waqf* system. A large number of tombs in the cemeteries were devastated in the vicissitudes of time, and crumbled into the soil. In order to avoid this, considerable efforts were exerted. The first method taken, under Ṣalaḥ al-Dîn Ayyûbî, was the government’s direct commitment to the administration of holy sepulchers by nominating managers to live there, paying them stipends (*jirâyât*), and also making monthly payments to qaqqîs (poor, Sufis) and awliyâ‘ (“saints”), and enabling


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travelers to stay there.\footnote{Ibn Jubayr, \textit{Al-Rihlah}, 20–24.} Second, the operations of tomb structures were carried out with \textit{waqf} income. The elite and others endowed their property as \textit{waqf} for the maintenance of tombs, mausolea, or \textit{khānqāh}s, and appointed overseers (\textit{nāẓir}, \textit{mutawallī}) of these institutions. \textit{Waqf} endowments were no longer designated exclusively to the public infrastructure, nor to the mausolea of those who had won the veneration of the populace. On the contrary, influential families increasingly administered their own \textit{turbah}s through the \textit{waqf} system, diminishing the social redistribution aspect which this system originally boasted.\footnote{Ohtoshi, “The City of the Dead and Egyptian Society from the 12th to the 15th Century,” 174. In the case of Turbat al-Sūfīyah, the shaykh of \textit{al-khānqāh} took money from those who wished to be entombed there, in exchange for burial. See al-Sakhāwī, \textit{Tuhfah}, 31–32.}

Specifically, the list of persons who were recorded as having established \textit{waqfs} included sultans, high-ranking amirs, qadis, ulama, and so-called saints (\textit{awliyā‘}). We are able to confirm the sources of \textit{waqf} income as \textit{iqtā‘}s of certain lands, or rent from buildings. Structures founded by \textit{waqfs} included the famous mausolea of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī, Ikhwat Yūsuf, and Ibn al-Fāriḍ, \textit{turbah}s of sultans or member of the ruling elite, and the facilities of religious institutions.\footnote{Ohtoshi, “The City of the Dead and Egyptian Society from the 12th to the 15th Century,” 175; Ibn ‘Uthmān, \textit{“Murshid”}, fol. 226b; Ibn al-Zayyāt, \textit{Al-Kawākib}, 178; Ibn Abī al-Fadā‘īl, \textit{Nahj al-Sadīq}, 134–35; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, \textit{Tārikh}, 147; Ibn Taghrībīdī, \textit{Mawrid al-Latāfīfah}, 99; al-Sakhāwī, \textit{Tuhfah}, 382–83; al-Maqrīzī, \textit{Al-Sulūk}, 1:2:638, 2:2:442, 3:2:944–45, 4:1:457.} Sultan Baybars was famed for establishing a \textit{waqf} for the ritual washing, \textit{kafan}, and burial of the dead who had no relatives.\footnote{Ohtoshi, “The City of the Dead and Egyptian Society from the 12th to the 15th Century,” 175; al-Maqrīzī, \textit{Al-Sulūk}, 1:2:638.}

An illustration of tomb management according to the \textit{waqf} system can be found in the mausoleum of Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235). In the days of Sultan Ināl (r. 857–65/1453–61), Amir Tamur and his descendants managed the operation, building a mausoleum with \textit{waqf} donations, holding a banquet, performing charity works, and paying stipends (\textit{jāmakāyih}) to the \textit{khādim}.\footnote{Ohtoshi, “The City of the Dead and Egyptian Society from the 12th to the 15th Century,” 175; al-Sakhāwī, \textit{Tuhfah}, 382–83.}

As for the administration of the mausoleum of al-Sayyidah Nafīṣah, the Abbasid caliphs, who had immigrated to Cairo due to the Mongol invasion of Baghdad, took charge of it. The first caliph to be buried in al-Qarāfah near al-Sayyidah Nafīṣah was al-Ḥākim (d. 701/1302), and afterwards this became the practice.\footnote{Baybars al-Manṣūrī, \textit{Mukhtār al-Akhbār} (Cairo, 1993), 118; Ibn Abī al-Fadā‘īl, \textit{Nahj al-Sadīq}, 585; al-Sakhāwī, \textit{Tuhfah}, 136; al-Suyūṭī, \textit{Ḥusn al-Muḥādarah} (Cairo, 1968), 2:62.} They began to live near the mausoleum of al-Sayyidah Nafīṣah, a holy area suitable for caliphs. This is understandable since she might have been one of the

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\textit{Full volume: http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/MamlukStudiesReview_X-1_2006.pdf}
most admired people in pre-modern Egypt, and also, in a broad sense, they could be regarded as of the same lineage. Then, after the caliph al-Mu'tadīd (r. 753–63/1352–62), sultans began to entrust its nazar (superintendency, controllership) to successive caliphs instead of appointing administrative officials. Since caliphs stood to benefit a great deal from nudhūr (offerings) to this mausoleum, when they were deprived of this post during the years 766–88/1365–87, and after the Ottoman conquest, it caused them a great loss. They benefited from donated objects such as candles and oil, and also from offerings of money placed in the box beneath the head end of al-Sayyidah Naṣīrah’s tomb. Additionally, the mawlid of al-Sayyidah Naṣīrah began to be known as “the caliph’s mawlid,” as he was a main part of this celebration. It should also be noted that, notwithstanding the fact that caliphs were in charge of the mausoleum, the management of its waqf was assigned to the mustawfı (accountant), and one of them might have been a Muslim convert from among the Copts. The names of a khādim and a shāhid al-khizānah employed there are also mentioned in the sources.

Let us now move on to more details of waqf operations in Cairene cemeteries. As shown above, expenses for managing mausolea through the waqf system included specified items, such as sadaqah, banquets for the “poor,” and stipends for supervisors and Quran reciters. It should be added that payments were made from waqf income to visitors to the Qarāfah, as I have detailed elsewhere. For example, the waqf document of Amir Mithqāl mentions stipends of twenty dirhams per month to two reciters at the mausoleum of Ibn Labbān in al-Qarāfah al-Sūghrá. In the waqf document of Sultan Barsbāy, the waqf was reserved for a zāwiyyah, a sabl (public fountain), Quran reciters, etc.

The following case is from the waqf document of a leading historian, Ibn Taḥrīḥīrī (d. 874/1470), through which we attempt to trace the details of administration of a mausoleum according to the waqf system. This was not a

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99Ohtoshi, “The Manners, Customs, and Mentality,” 21; wathiqah waqfīyah, Südūn min Zādā al-Zāhirī, Dār al-Wathī‘iq no. 58, 504 A.H.
100M. Meinecke, Die Restaurierung der Madrasa des Amirs Sābiq al-Dīn Miṭgāl al-Ānūkī (Mainz, 1980), 164; Ḥujjat Waqf al-Askrāf Barsbāy (Cairo, 1963), 45–48, 50–52, 58; etc.
mausoleum of saints, but rather a mausoleum run by an influential family for themselves.

The *waqf* endowments for this mausoleum in al-Ṣaḥrāʾ consisted of several properties, including buildings in the Barjawān quarter of Cairo and on the Nile shore at Būlāq, and shares from two parcels of land in the Gharbīyah district of the Delta. The structures of this mausoleum described in the *waqf* document were *iwan al-qiblah*, used as a mosque, four *fasaq* (family vaults) for the endower’s four families, a wide *ḥawsh* (courtyard, walled enclosure) for burial, a *qāʾah* (hall) and *riwāq* (portico, apartment), toilets, an *istabl* (stable), a *matbakh* (kitchen), *ṭibāq* (living units) and *khalāwī* (Sufi cells) for employees of the mausoleum, a *sabil* (fountain) and a *ṣihrīj* (cistern) under it, and a *maktab* upstairs in the *sabil* as a place for children to study. All of these were to meet the demands of residents of the mausoleum and visitors, particularly the families of the *waqf* endowers.

Regarding duties and allowances for operating the mausoleum, the following conditions were set in the *waqf* document: 400 (dirhams per month; the same monetary unit is employed hereafter) for the *bawwāb* (gate-keeper); the *muzammalātī*, who was in charge of the *sabil*, was given 300, also 300 for the water suppliers, 500 for the *farrāš* (janitor), who would clean up or sweep the mausoleum and prepare the lamps and frankincense, 150 each as scholarships for ten young orphans and sons of needy people, 300 for their teacher, 150 each for two Quran reciters for the tomb of the *waqf* endower; 200 each for the *shādd* (superintendent) of the *waqf* and its buildings, and *khāzin al-kutub* (librarian). The repair and maintenance of the mausoleum cost 200, 500 for the supervisor (*nāzīr*) of the mausoleum and its *waqf*, 300 for shaykhs who recited the Quran every morning in shifts at the *iwan* of the mausoleum; also 150 each for nine other Sufis, and so forth. Moreover, stipulations set by the *waqf* endower reveal that, for instance, Sufis and their shaykh in the mausoleum should not leave their posts or neglect their duties, except in cases of illness or the pilgrimage to Mecca. Likewise, the *bawwāb* and other employees should live in the mausoleum.

As seen from this document, the mausoleum of Ibn Ṭaghribīrīdī combined various functions including a mosque for prayer, locations for Sufi practices and education, and tombs. Thus, it should be pointed out that the number of religious complexes, which were variously known as *khānqāhs*, *ribāṭs*, *zāwiyyahs*, *turbahs*, *qubbahs*, madrasahs, and mosques, expanded in this age. In Cairene cemetery areas the growth of these institutions was widespread, to the point where shaykhs with their disciples, employees, and their families dwelled together, as exemplified in the aforementioned case of the Khānqāh Qawṣūn near the Qarāfah Gate, which comprised a shaykh and fifty Sufis, supported by abundant *waqfs*.

The ruling elite of the Mamluk dynasty would conduct collective prayers in
cemeteries, for the rising of the Nile River, or the abatement of plague. Given that pestilence raged, people in Egypt tended to flee from the land in defiance of fatwās telling them to remain, or rely on talismans, yet there was no better plan than to implore Allāh who presides over all things. Some of them, however, not only considered this prevalence of pestilence as the fury of Allāh, but went so far as to destroy places of amusement, alcohol, and hashish, prohibiting women from going out, and attacking Christian quarters, in the name of eradicating corruption. An account of a communal prayer in the Şahrā’ area is described as follows:

[In 822/1419] the pestilence prevailed and sudden death increased so that people began to tremble. Hence, the sultan Mu‘ayyad Shaykh proclaimed three days of fasting through the muḥtasib. After three days’ fasting, people went out to the Şahrā’. The caliph, fiṣṣarā’, ulama, major Sufis, judges, and common people with the vizier and an uṣṭādār (steward) marched to the mausoleum of al-Malik al-Zāhir (Barquq). They lifted a caliph’s banner and the Quran, raising invocations to Allāh. Groups of Jews and Christians also attended raising the Torah and the Gospels, respectively. The sultan wore wool like a Sufi; on his horse was a plain cloth. As the sultan arrived at the back enclosure of Barquq’s mausoleum, he prayed tearfully, rubbing his face on the ground. Enormous amounts of food and slaughtered beasts were distributed to the poor. More than thirty thousand pieces of bread were also dispensed, and the people kept on praying [abridged].

Similar events were repeated in 749/1349, 775/1373, 806/1403, 818/1416, 822/1419, 823/1420, 833/1430, and 854/1450, whenever the plague was rampant, or the Nile failed to rise. Al-Şahrā’ and the fringe of al-Qarafah, al-Rasād and al-Āthār al-Nabī were spots used for such events. Collective marching and prayer beneath al-

Muqaṭṭam carried out by a combination of Muslims, Copts, and Jews can be traced back to the Tulunid period, in 270/884. The above quotation brings up at least five points at issue, when collated with other historical sources. The first is that the official character of the Ṣaḥrāʾ area, and in particular, the back enclosure of the Barqūq mausoleum should be underscored. Collective prayers led by the ruling elite would have been held in this northeast area, whereas most of the common people would pray in the more southern al-Qarāfah area, except perhaps when they were recruited to the northeast. Second, Jews and Copts were mobilized in these official prayers, without fail. This may have been rational, as many Copts were employed in the financial offices of the government, and this mass ritual itself was held by the ruler and his government. Yet, without the entire set of these dhimmīs, I have suggested, the total image of “Egypt” would not have been complete, which might have made the ritual less effective. Third, related to the second point, the attendance and support of the masses was vital. Their participation was indispensable for the pious deeds of almsgiving and food distribution to gain merits, whether in the mundane world or the hereafter. Viewed from the point of view of the commoners who were associated with this ritual, what they obtained there could be regarded as wages or remuneration for their attendance. Fourth, rituals performed in times of the Nile’s failure to rise and the prevalence of pestilence bore a close resemblance; countermeasures for the plague were considered to be of the same dimension as natural disasters, and all these were believed to be ultimately under the control of Allāh. Fifth, the sultan dressed like a Sufi, expressing himself as sincere and humble; his manner can be interpreted as behaving as an intercessor to Allāh for all the people in the land.

Meanwhile, banquets (walīmah, simāt) on a large scale were often given by the ruling class in the cemetery areas. As stated earlier, rulers and the military elite were ardent in their support of construction activities in cemeteries, and every celebration for the completion of a building such as a khānqāh, for the recovery of health, or collective prayers, was marked by this sort of banquet. It was considered more a religious ritual than an amusement, and included recitation of the Quran, almsgiving on a large scale, and the distribution of food and slaughtered


107 Additionally, Copts performed communal prayers for the swelling of the Nile yearly in churches, holding festivals along the Nile. All this may have created the impression of Copts as having a special relationship with this river. See Abu Šālih al-Armanī (attributed), Tārikh, 75–76, 96; Ibn al-Muqaffā (attributed), Kitāb Siyar al-Ābāʾ al-Batārikah, 2:3:213.
beasts. Many people of influence, those connected to religious institutions, and faqırs assembled there. All these factors, including the above-mentioned ziyārāt and the construction projects of rulers, lead to the conclusion that Cairene cemeteries formed a legitimate stage for rulers to act justly and generously. Moreover, on this stage one could be sanctified through the solemn atmosphere of the Cairene cemetery areas. At the same time, these places offered points of close contact between the ruling class and the common people, on occasions such as ziyārah, ṣadaqah, and walīmah. Through the information networks among people of religious affairs, and hearsay among the commoners, news of the good deeds of the ruling elite may have spread from the cemeteries throughout the domain. If we look at it from the governmental point of view, notwithstanding that they might have sincerely aspired to the fulfillment of their prayers, such banquets could also be taken as a measure to win popularity among the masses.

The Ṣahrāʾ area was included in the itineraries of sultans’ parades, for the area seems to have played a significant symbolic role in solemnifying the parades. Sultans, in their customary parade of enthronement, would first head for the Qubbat al-Nāsır in al-Ṣahrāʾ, then enter Cairo from the northern Naṣr Gate, and after marching through the decorated city, they would go out from the southern Zuwaylah Gate to return to the citadel, traversing a counterclockwise arc. Some of these parades are reported to have included Copts and Jews in their company. The shorter version of this parade, which made a circuit only around the citadel, also attached importance to the parade from the Qarāfah Gate. These courses were proper in a practical sense, but also served to demonstrate dignity, authority, and sanctity. Moreover, in 659/1261, Sultan Baybars held a ceremony of enthronement in the vicinity of al-Qarāfah, which is understandable given the Qarāfah’s function as a solemn stage, and its open spaces. Furthermore, in 677/1278, the ceremony of mourning one year after the death of Sultan Baybars was held in al-Qarāfah, and meals were served in tents, and “people of different classes assembled therein.” Likewise in 814/1411, Sultan Faraj held an appointment ceremony for a caliph, a qadi, and others at the mausoleum of Barquq, indicating the official ceremonial characteristics of this area, as well as recognizing the majesty of his late father (Barquq), and demonstrating legitimacy to his subjects.  

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111 Ibid., 452, 459, 461, 4:1:174–75; Ibn Abī al-Fadāʾil, Al-Nahj al-Sādīd, 424; Ibn al-Dawādārī,
Another important aspect of cemetery areas was military training and the games of horsemen. In the Mamluk period, games combined with military exercises, such as the lancers’ exercises (sing. *la'b rammāh*), polo, and *qabaq* (a game in which a rider shoots arrows at a standing guitar-shaped target), were put in force as the practice of *furūsīyah* (chivalry), and some of their playing fields (*mayādīn*) were located in the cemetery districts. They included Maydān al-Qabaq in al-Ṣāhrā’, Maydān al-Nāṣirī on the periphery of al-Qarāfah al-Kubrā, and the space in front of the mausoleum of al-Ḥarrār in al-Qarāfah al-Kubrā alongside the Ḥabash Lake. Maydān al-Nāṣirī was recognized as the playing field for polo, and Maydān al-Qabaq was known, as the name indicates, for the playing of the *qabaq* game. Notably, at circumcision ceremonies for sons of the ruling class, as well as games of *qabaq*, robes of honor were bestowed on principal figures of the dynasty, and a plenitude of goods was dispensed.

Furthermore, lancers’ exercises were repeated before the mausoleum of al-Ḥarrār. This custom began being conducted at the time of *dawrān al-mahmīl* (the ceremonial city circuit of the pilgrimage palanquin sent to Mecca), and on the first occasion, which was in the month of Rajab (there were two annually), was carried out in al-Qarāfah. Lancers in red garments and their horses, both armored, took part in mock battles. Young troopers standing on clogs fixed on their horses swung lances in both hands in staged combat. Upper class and common people alike would take pleasure in watching the games. This exercise of lancers during the *dawrān al-mahmīl* became established as an annual observance, and as early as in 822/1419, it served to amuse Cairo/Fustāt inhabitants. Consequently, when it was cancelled, such as in 836/1433, 839/1436, and 848/1444, due to demoralization or military expeditions, the people were greatly disappointed and grew indignant. Conversely, their delight in the revival of this event was all the greater, yet when it resumed in 857/1453 after a ten-year interval, the details had already been forgotten, and, in 910/1505 and 920/1514, it was viewed as an old custom.

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Kanz, 8:73.


During lancers’ practices, the mu'allim (commander) of the band of lancers, accompanied by four pashas (bāshāt al-arba’ah), led the army corps. Qāṭībāy, the amir of one thousand, was noted as a master at this practice; he would always perform this exercise at al-Qarāfah al-Kubrā, aside from the maḥmil’s circuits. In addition, he innovated a new ceremony in which the Mamluks, four pashas, and a mu'allim would dismount in the order named and kiss the ground in front of the sultan.\textsuperscript{116}

These exercises of military training and games denote not only that Cairene cemetery zones contained wide open spaces and were located beneath the citadel, which was the base for the troops, but also that they provided a place for contact with the common populace, as in cases of royal parades and rituals, which served as another measure for cultivating personal popularity and for impressing upon the people the rulers’ dignity and legitimacy.

Despite the fact that Cairene graveyards were primarily sanctuaries comprised of sepulchers and religious institutions (as they occupied the area around the citadel, and also contained many open spaces), they became arenas for political actions of the ruling elite, particularly amirs and Mamluks.\textsuperscript{117} Accordingly, one of the several gates of the citadel, Bāb al-Qarāfah, became a strategic point of the dynasty, manned by Mamluks and even blockaded if necessary.\textsuperscript{118} These political actions can be summarized as follows: First, turbahs, madrasahs, and a burj (tower) in the Qarāfahs were utilized for informal confinement. In 678/1280, for instance, after his dismissal, Vizier Burhān al-Dīn was ordered to confine himself in a madrasah in the Qarāfah. Then, in 723/1323, the qadi Kar|m al-D|n was subjected to arrest and confiscation, and was placed under confinement in a mausoleum.\textsuperscript{119} Second, during struggles for supremacy or for other reasons, several members of the elite concealed themselves within mausolea, their fisqiyah, or zawiya, in ways that can be interpreted as a demonstration of the asylum aspect of Cairene cemeteries. Amir Lajiḥ (693/1294), Yashbak (803/1401), and Jarbah

\textsuperscript{116}Ibn Taghrībirdī, Ḥawādith, 3:455–57, 493; idem, Al-Nujūm, 16:268; Ibn al-Ṣayrafi, Inbāʾ al-Haṣr, 332.

\textsuperscript{117}Ohtoshi, "The City of the Dead and Egyptian Society from the 12th to the 15th Century," 190–92.


(865/1461) typify this aspect, and one of them was besieged and arrested there.\textsuperscript{120}

Third, examples of assassinations and murders there are too numerous to count. The two Qarāfahs and al-Ṣaḥrā\textsuperscript{a} were advantageous in that corpses could be buried there immediately after a homicide. In 648/1251, 746/1346, and 748/1348, amirs assassinated sultans and entombed them there.\textsuperscript{121} Fourth, battles in cemetery sections were best exemplified in the case of 804/1402, whereby a force of Amir Nawrūz took up a position near the Habash Lake, were defeated by Sultan Faraj at the periphery of al-Qarāfah, and some major personnel were captured.\textsuperscript{122}

As seen here, Cairene cemetery areas, which had been essentially the sanctuary of Egyptians, took on some aspects of what could be called, in my expression, ‘the courtyard of the Mamluks,’ which the military elite frequented as a result of their location (surrounding the citadel and being situated between the two cities of Cairo and Fustāṭ). Nevertheless, the government made vigorous efforts to supervise graveyard areas, which I will discuss next.

Further, regarding the interrelationships between big merchants and the cemetery districts, they were interred there, visited tombs of acquaintances or mausolea, and might themselves become objects of ziyyārah if they became venerated by the people. What is more, they dispensed alms, or at least the people hoped that they would, as with the aforementioned merchant who was surrounded by the needy in the cemetery.\textsuperscript{123} Some of them might have built religious institutions or shops, yet these sites would not primarily be for profit, but for the spending of profit.

**Government Supervision of Cemeteries\textsuperscript{124}**

Crime, political activities, the reputation of cemeteries as pleasure resorts where people of both genders and all ages and social strata mixed, and vulnerability to outside invasion: all these characteristics may have led rulers to regard Cairene cemeteries as disquieting and dangerous spaces. In addition, their location just beneath the citadel, the focal point of Mamluk rule, containing tombs of the ruling


\textsuperscript{122}Ibn al-Ṣayrafi, Nuzhat al-Nufūs, 2:140–41; al-Maqrīzī, Durar al-‘Uqūd al-Faridah, 1:574–81.

\textsuperscript{123}See note 60. One of the Kārim merchants, Śa‘lah al-Dīn Aḩmad (d. 769/1368), built a large turba‘ī in al-Qarāfah (al-Maqrīzī, Khīṭat, 2:369).

\textsuperscript{124}Ohtoshi, ‘The City of the Dead and Egyptian Society from the 12th to the 15th Century,’ 182–84.
elite themselves and their relatives, made them important. Through the supervision of solemn spaces where people came into contact with holiness, rulers may have endeavored to show their dignity. The Mamluk government, therefore, made strenuous efforts to supervise the cemeteries, and repeatedly took measures such as prohibiting women’s visits.

The memorandum (tadhkirah) of the amir Kitbughā should be reexamined in this context. Issued in 679/1281 by Sultan Qalāwūn to Vice Sultan Zayn al-Dīn Kitbughā, the memorandum was also directed at all subjects by its being read at each minbar (pulpit). It contained directives regarding the two Qaraḥafs, such as ‛mujarradūn (night watches) are to be customarily arranged around both Cairo and Fuṣṭāt, as well as in the district of al-Qaraḥaf. . . . It should not be neglected even for one night, and mujarradūn are not to leave their posts except at dawn or in complete daylight,” or “on Friday nights, men and women should not assemble at the two Qaraḥafs; particularly, women are prohibited from this.”

The muḥtasib (inspector of markets and public morals) should also inspect graveyards and their moral order, as is reflected in the hisbah treatises. Namely, he should oversee the selection of burial sites, methods concerning ablution of the dead, burial, visiting of tombs, as well as the shape of tombs, and he should also prevent women from ostentatious lamentation, visiting graves, and following the bier. The ulama of all the schools of law supported enforcing discipline in cemetery areas, or even took the initiative in enforcement. Some of them cooperated with the governing authorities, and undertook to investigate alleged holy tombs outside the mortuary zones, moving them into a cemetery if they were legitimate.

Furthermore, although executions were ordinarily carried out in the citadel and other places, graveyards, too, could function as execution grounds. This should be reinvestigated in relation to the supervision of cemetery regions. Mainly grave robbers were executed therein; however, in 793/1391, some influential amirs, who had been imprisoned, were beheaded in al-Ṣāḥrā‘. Yet, a more consistent and systematic measure for supervising cemeteries was created: the establishment of the office of wālī al-Qaraḥaf (governor of al-Qaraḥaf).

According to al-Qalqashandi (d. 821/1418), the police districts (wilāyāt al-

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125Ibn al-Furat, Tārīkh, 7:197; al-Qalqashandi, Ṣūbḥ, 8:94; Sato Tsugitaka, State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam (Leiden, 1997), 105–23.

Article: http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/MSR_X-1_2006-Ohtoshi-Tetsuya.pdf
shurṭah) of Mamluk Cairo and its surroundings were divided into three quarters: wilāyat al-Qāhirah (Cairo), wilāyat Miṣr (Fustāṭ), and wilāyat al-Qarāfah. An amīr ‘asharah was appointed as the wālī of al-Qarāfah under the supervision of the wālī Miṣr; nonetheless, at the time Ṣubh was written, the Qarāfah district was incorporated into the Fustāṭ district. After the annexation, the Fustāṭ wālī was upgraded and the office assumed by an amīr tablkhānah, still less than the Cairo wālī.\(^{130}\) We will attempt to collate this account with those in other chronicles of those other occasions in the same period that show some discrepancies.

In 786/1385, “the first” (according to al-Maqrīzī) wālī al-Qarāfah (a separate position from wālī Miṣr) the amīr of ten Sulaymān al-Kurdī, was nominated by Sultan Barquq.\(^{131}\) Perhaps before this, the governors (wālī, mutawallī) of al-Qarāfah were appointed occasionally, as noted in historical sources, such as in the Fatimid period (Ibn Shu’lah al-Kutāmī), 672/1274, 724/1324 (Amir Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Amīr Hājib, who was said to have been wālī of al-Qarāfah and Fustāṭ), and 737/1336–37 (Ibn ‘Usayyah); yet they might have been in lesser positions, or under the superintendence of other wālīs, like the wālī Miṣr.\(^{132}\) Then, in 792/1390, Sulaymān was assigned as wālī Miṣr, so there is a possibility that he might have held both positions concurrently.\(^{133}\) In 801/1399, the two-Qarāfah district was added to the jurisdiction of the wālī Miṣr, Amir Şārīm al-Dīn İbrāhīm, who took the position of Sulaymān, and also in the month of Rajab in 803/1401, Nāṣir al-Dīn Muhammad, the amīr tabar (hatchet), assumed the position of wālī al-Qarāfah.\(^{134}\) Eventually, in the month of Dhū al-Ḥijjah in 803/1401, the Qarāfah district was transferred to the wālī of Cairo, Amir Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Tablāwī.\(^{135}\) It is in this way that the Qarāfah wālī’s position was separated from or united with that of Fustāṭ or Cairo, possibly influenced by the individual situation of persons appointed as wālī, or the intention of the ruler.

After 803/1401, accounts regarding wālī al-Qarāfah disappear from the chronicles. Instead, the function of nāzīr al-Qarāfah (supervisorship or controllership of al-Qarāfah), or its supervisor, nāzīr al-Qarāfah, began to be recorded.\(^{136}\) In 856/1452, for instance, Abū Bakr al-Muṣāri` died; he was “nāzīr of

\(^{130}\) Al-Qalqashandī, Ṣubḥ, 4:23.

\(^{131}\) Al-Maqrīzī, Al-Sulūk, 3:2:525; Ibn al-Ṣayrafi, Nuzhat al-Nuṣūs, 1:106; Ibn Taghrībirdī, Al-Nuṣūm, 11:241. Although Ibn Ḣiyās noted that the Qarāfah district was separate from the Cairo district, this account is not trustworthy. Badā’i’, 2:355–56.


\(^{136}\) Al-Biqā’ī, Iżār al-‘Aṣr, 1:199, 341; Ibn Taghrībirdī, Ḥawādith, 124, 161; al-Sakhāwī, Wajīz
the Imām al-Shāfī’ī mausoleum, the Layth mausoleum, and all of al-Qarāfah. And the sultan had bestowed on him the controllership for mausolea of al-Qarāfah. Abū Bakr al-Mušārī’, mentioned here, was originally one of the awbāsh ( riffraff), but Sultan Jaqmaq promoted him to this position, whereby he was said to have enriched himself. Yūsuf Shāh (d. 876/1471), who was in fact muʿallim al-banāʾīn (the master of royal builders), took over Abū Bakr al-Mušārī’ī’s post of nazar al-Qarāfah in 856/1452 and remained until 857/1453 when the sultan’s son-in-law Amir Burdbak seized it. In 892/1487, a qadi was dismissed from the nazar al-Qarāfayn; meanwhile in 897/1492, anzār (pl. of nazar) and similar offices, such as al-Baybarsīyyah, al-Saʿīdiyyah, waqf al-Šāliḥ, and al-Qarāfayn, were under the jurisdiction of the ustādār Ṭaghribirdī, and then were transferred to the dawādār Ṭaghri Barmish. In 901/1495, (qadi) Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 912/1506) was appointed to the position of nazar al-Qarāfayn (the two-Qarāfahs), as well as nazar of waqfs. If we compare this account side by side with others, we can make the conjecture that the function of this nazar al-Qarāfah (or al-Qarāfayn) would be to inspect or administer mausolea and zāwiyahs in the two Qarāfahs, including those of Imām al-Shāfī’ī and Imām Layth. Thus, this position likely concentrated on the administration of mausolea, but its relationship with fiscal duties and control of waqfs in each mausoleum remains rather obscure. Yet, seen from other nāzir’s duties, nazar al-Qarāfah can be assumed to have dealt in some way with waqf administration and the financial affairs of mausolea in the Qarāfah.

On the other hand, regarding the Ṣahrā’ area, we find only the function of nazar, such as nazar turbat al-Zāhir Barquq (superintendency of Barquq’s mausoleum), but not the wālī. In 856/1452, Sultan Jaqmaq nominated al-Shaykh ʿAlī al-Muḥtasib for nazar turbat al-Zāhir Barquq, following the dismissal of al-Muhībb ibn al-Aṣghar, who was its nāzir according to the stipulations set by the waqf founder. Al-Shaykh ʿAlī (d. 862/1458) had experience as the muḥtasib of Fuṣṭāṭ and of Cairo successively, and al-Muhībb ibn al-Aṣghar, who was kātib al-sirr (confidential secretary), held the nazar of khānqāh Siryāqūs after his dismissal from Turbat al-Zāhir Barquq. The nazar of the Ṣahrā’ area seems likely to have been concerned with supervising mausolea financially and administratively through the management of waqfs, as seen through waqf documents as well as chronicles or biographies.137

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To conclude, nāzīrs of al-Qarāfah and Turbat Barquq, especially the latter, seem more to be involved in the financial and administrative management of mausolea, in contrast to the wālī al-Qarāfah, whose function rather laid stress on the policing and supervision of the districts. The aforementioned nazar of al-Sayyidah Naṣīsah’s mausoleum, which was undertaken by caliphs, should be viewed in this respect.

Women’s Association with Cemeteries

During the Mamluk period, women’s visits to cemeteries can be clearly observed. These visits became a focus of harsh diatribes by ulama and of supervision by muḥtasibs. Their criticism pertained mainly to the mingling of women and men, and moral laxity. According to Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 737/1336), “on Thursdays they go out to the tombs, and stay there on Fridays, then return home on Saturdays; likewise on the day of ‘Āshūrā’ (10th of the month of Muḥarram), two Feasts (‘īdān) and the night of mid-Ramaḍān.” Moreover, they went out visiting the mausoleum of al-Ḥusayn on Mondays, al-Sayyidah Naṣīsah on Wednesdays or Saturdays, and on Thursdays and Fridays to Imām al-Shāfiʿī in al-Qarāfah, and also the tombs of their relatives. It should be recalled that al-Tīfāshī (d. 651/1253) had already portrayed al-Qarāfah in his compilation of anecdotes as a place where women assembled. The Mamluk government repeatedly proclaimed the prohibition of women’s visits to cemeteries, such as in 679/1280, 708/1309, 793/1391, 824/1421, 825/1422, 835/1432, 841/1438, and 864/1460, usually prior to the feast celebrating the end of Ramaḍān. Yet, several records, including frequent criticism and bans on women’s ziyārah, clearly show that women were integral to visiting customs in Cairene cemeteries.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that women of all classes visited cemeteries, and they could be interred therein, as well. Among them, there must have been women who helped with the fabrication of holy tombs, by carrying soil in their veils for instance, and even women of the ruling elite, who would visit, pray, and pledge ample donations to cemeteries, as in the case of the mothers of Sultan Ismāʿīl and Amir Anūk. In fact they acted as the very mediators between the royal elite and the common people by describing the conditions and merits of ziyārah to


their husbands or families.¹⁴²

CONCLUSION
Cairene cemeteries were open to people of all social strata, regardless of ethnic origin, social status, language, gender, age, occupation, disparity in wealth, physical handicap, religion, place of origin, illness, or skin color.¹⁴³ Commoners could participate there through frequent visits and the creation or reidentification of tombs, as is well reflected in the guidebooks of al-ziyārah. Through ziyārah texts, writings on the tombs, and hearsay, people were able to form their own discourses. The ulama also maintained an association with Cairene graveyards through their writings and preachings, while the ruling elite held banquets, communal prayers, or engaged in political struggles there. Everyone could find his own medium through which to relate to the cemeteries, and had the right to visit or be buried there. In this sense, Cairene cemetery areas formed a public locus in which people of any social status participated in their creation or improvement.¹⁴⁴ The public character of al-Qarāfah is well reflected in what al-Shaykh ‘Alī al-Turkī (d. 804/1401–2) was told by Shaykh ‘Umar, while they were walking through al-Qarāfah. “‘Alī, al-Qarāfah is the cemetery for Muslims, and no one individual can possess it, nor is one allowed to take [even] a portion of it for oneself.”¹⁴⁵

Relationships in the cemeteries did not always depend on hierarchy; rather, equality was emphasized. Personal relationships among visitors to Cairene cemetery


¹⁴³This characteristic also held true within the cities of Cairo and Fustat. According to ziyārah treatises, sick persons rushed into cemetery areas to pray for their healing, albeit the hisbah tract warns against the mingling of hermaphrodites with women in funerals. See Ibn al-Ukhūwah, Ma’ālim, 51.

¹⁴⁴In general, the definition of “public” can delineate anything official relating to a nation, such as public education or public enterprise; anything common to all people, such as public welfare or public order; or anything open to everyone, such as information or a space from which no one will be rejected. Additionally, “publicness” is usually placed opposite “community,” and the latter is defined as the relationship unconsciously established between persons, before the emergence of individual consciousness, such as family. If “public” is understood as a notion adoptable only for modern bourgeois society derived from the modern West, any efforts to utilize this conception within the context of Cairene cemeteries are rendered inaccurate from the beginning. Likewise, a simple application of Western concepts to Middle Eastern studies should be avoided in general. This article does not employ directly the recent definitions and arguments on the public sphere, but still reflects them to some extent. The employment of the word and conception of “public” as a framework for reference and comparison can be thought of as stimulating to argument, which helps us to discover new aspects of Cairene cemeteries. In this sense, this article is evocative rather than deductive. See J. Saito, Publicness (in Japanese) (Tokyo, 2000).

¹⁴⁵Al-Maqrizī, Durar al-'Uqūd al-Farīdah, 2:510.
districts were generally not communal, but rather temporal. Institutions such as waqf or shari'ah, then, pervaded the whole of this composition. That is why the government ordered muḥtasibs to supervise these cemetery areas, and wālīs to control them. In addition, they sent their superintendents (nāẓir) to oversee mausolea’s finances through the waqf system, and the government even supported the burial expenditures of commoners through waqf income.

The way people related to Cairene cemeteries, however, would have varied according to their religious beliefs, social status or personal situations, gender, and so forth. Particularly, internalized religious attitudes and values might have affected these relationships greatly; hence Sufis, who were devoted to ascetic practices there, differed from rigid scholars, who tried to prohibit people from visiting holy tombs. Thus the involvement of all classes does not mean that their interests and activities there were always in harmony. On the contrary, they were often in conflict with one another; for instance, the ruling elite undertook to supervise the activities of commoners and women. Ulama, too, harshly condemned them. Hence, Cairene cemetery areas were loci where power relationships were acted out.

Was there, then, any category of society who were excluded from visiting Cairene cemetery areas? As I mentioned above, they were open and accessible to all people, from sultans to commoners. It is worth underlining here that women went there to visit famous mausolea and fulfill their prayers through the mediation of the entombed Muslim saints. This habit was often criticized by scholars and sometimes prohibited by the government, yet women were never actually expelled from the cemeteries, and the Qarāfahs retained their fame as a spot for women to assemble. Nor were people from outside Egypt or Cairo excluded, so that it was a tourist spot not only for Muslims, from Andalusian Spain to Central Asia, but seemingly also for European travelers.

As for religious differences, the issue is rather subtle. Generally speaking, visits by non-Muslims to the Qarāfahs and al-Ṣāhrah’ may possibly be presumed to have been avoided by non-Muslims themselves, and not welcomed readily by Muslims. Nonetheless, we should never forget the fact that the communal prayers in Cairene cemetery areas in the Mamluk period always mobilized a band of Copts and Jews. Additionally, as the cemetery of Coptic Christians was situated on the southern border of al-Qarāfah al-Kubrá, and the Jews’ cemetery was also located close to the Ḥabash Lake, strictly speaking, their cemeteries were on the edge of the Cairene cemetery zones. And it is possible that they made visits to their own cemeteries by passing through Muslim cemetery areas. Moreover, European non-Muslim travelers possibly traversed them and left accounts of their own visits. Since the Cairene cemeteries were popular pleasure spots for Egyptians, there is a possibility that non-Muslims mingled with Muslims, as is frequently
observed during feasts in Mamluk Egypt. Thus we see a contrast between ziyārah to Cairene cemeteries and the Meccan pilgrimage, which prohibits non-Muslims in the holy zone.

Yet people who violated public morals, as expressed in the hisbah tracts, were the first to be excluded from the cemetery areas, at least in theory. Also, thieves, people of shameless behavior, those who insulted Islamic values, and destroyers of tombs were to be excluded. In reality, however, as mentioned earlier, the Cairene graveyards were famed for their thieves and moral laxity.

Finally, it can be seen that there was a difference in function and character between the two Qarāfahs and al-Ṣahrah’. If I may generalize by contrasting them, the Qarāfahs were a burial district for venerated people and commoners, and a visitation site for people of all classes. Meanwhile al-Ṣahrah’ projected a more official character, where members of the ruling elite preferred to be interred, and for the common people it was usually not a place to visit for fulfillment of their prayers, except in instances when they were mobilized. Ziyārah treatises, therefore, seldom depicted tombs of sultans and khānqāhs there.