

HELENA HALLENBERG
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

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

QĀYṬBĀY'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 Qāyṭbāy (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."¹ However, what we are discussing here is more than a mosque. This article discusses the *waqfīyah* in which Qāyṭbāy, in 886/1481, established a pious endowment to support the shrine of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī (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.² On the basis of the document, we can form a picture of the various activities that took place in Dasūq.

The *waqfīyah*, 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. Qāyṭbāy's decision to endow a large religious complex in a rural area was due to a variety of reasons which will be discussed below.

©Middle East Documentation Center. The University of Chicago.

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

²Waqfīyah 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 *waqfīyah* with no specific folio citations.



©2000 by Helena Hallenberg.

DOI: [10.6082/M1GQ6VWP](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1GQ6VWP). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1GQ6VWP>)

DOI of Vol. IV: [10.6082/M1ZP4468](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1ZP4468). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/88JJ-2P31> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.

THE EARLY CULT OF IBRĀHĪM AL-DASŪQĪ

We know nothing about the Sufi saint Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī prior to the fourteenth century, and how he became a saint is obscure.³ The cult most likely reflects a local agricultural festival, since even today his *mawlid* is celebrated according to the agricultural calendar.⁴ 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-Dasūqī's shrine little is known. Su'ād Māhir Muḥammad mentioned, without citing her sources, that after al-Dasūqī'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 [*ṭarīqah*]) built for Ibrāhīm where the latter "could teach his students (*murīdūn*) and educate them in the principles of their religion."⁵ 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-Dasūqī.

However, from Qāyṭbāy's *waqfiyah* we learn that by the fifteenth century there was an edifice on the tomb site in Dasūq, 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*.⁶ We can thus see that the shrine had by that time become the vital focus of al-Dasūqī'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*,

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-Dasūqī was visited to obtain blessings, since al-Dasūqī was described as being "possessor of mystical states." Shams al-Dīn ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* (Beirut, n. d.), 5:319. On Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī and the evolution of his cult, see Helena Hallenberg, "Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī (1255-96)—a Saint Invented" (Ph.D. diss., Institute for Asian and African Studies, University of Helsinki, 1997).

⁴Al-Dasūqī's *mawlid*s 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-Badawī. Hallenberg, "Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī," 169-73. See also Edward B. Reeves, *The Hidden Government: Ritual, Clientelism and Legitimation in Northern Egypt* (Salt Lake City, 1990), 15; 'Alī Bāshā Mubārak, *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfiqīyah al-Jadidah li-Miṣr al-Qāhirah wa-Muduniḥā al-Qadimah wa-al-Shahīrah* (Bulaq, 1306/1890), 11:7:8.

⁵Su'ād Māhir Muḥammad, *Masājid Miṣr wa-Awliyā'uhā al-Ṣāliḥūn* (Cairo, 1971-80), 2:307-8.

⁶Waqfiyah 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 (*wazīfah*).⁷ 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*.⁸ 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.⁹

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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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

⁷ Leonor Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt: the Khanqah* (Berlin, 1988), 1-8. Fernandes quotes Ibn Khaldūn writing about the Mamluks' keen interest in establishing Sufi institutions: he remarked that "khanqahs increased especially in Cairo and became a source of income for Sufis." *Al-Ta'rīf bi-Ibn Khaldūn* (Cairo, 1979), 304; quoted in Fernandes, *Evolution*, 17.

⁸ A *waqf*, in the strict sense, means the act of endowment, but "in popular speech [it] became transferred to the endowment itself." W. Heffening, "Waḳf," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed., 4:1096.

⁹ On the reasons for establishing religious institutions, see Th. Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Fāriḍ, his Verse, and his Shrine* (Columbia, S. C., 1994), 60; idem, "Saving Muslim Souls: The Khānqāh and the Sufi Duty in Mamluk Lands," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 74 f.; E. M. Sartain, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī* (Cambridge, 1975), 1:118.

¹⁰ Carl F. Petry, *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamlūk Sultans al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī in Egypt*, Occasional papers no. 4, Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, The Middle East Center (Seattle and London, 1993), 80.

¹¹ Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr*, ed. P. Kahle and M. Mustafa with M. Sobernheim, *Bibliotheca Islamica* 5, c, d, and e (Istanbul, 1931-36), 3:156.



complex.¹² 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.¹³

The shrine was intended for mendicant Sufis (*fuqarā’*), with no attachment to a particular order stipulated, for visitors (*wāridūn*, *mutaraddidūn*) to the shrine (*maqām*), and for other Muslims connected with it (*murābiṭūn*), 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 *nāhiyah* [according to Carl F. Petry, fiscal area, sometimes but not always equal to a village]¹⁴ 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 (*quṭb al-ghawth*), Sīdī Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī—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].¹⁵

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 Qāyṭbāy was a congregational mosque (*jāmi‘*), which was “added (*mulāsiq*) to the shrine (*maqām*) of Sīdī Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī.” From the congregational mosque there was a door leading to “the mausoleum-mosque (*masjid wa-maqām*) of al-Dasūqī.” Sometimes the whole complex is referred to as “the graves” (*maqābir*), since it included the tombs of both Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī and his brother Mūsá. Because of these and many other

¹²Qāyṭbāy 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-Ḥaḳīqah wa-al-Majāz fī al-Riḥlah ilá Bilād al-Shām wa-Miṣr wa-al-Ḥijāz*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Majīd Harīdī (Cairo, 1986), 294. The Burhānīs are the same as the Burhāmīs; their name refers to Ibrāhīm (=Burhān al-Dīn) al-Dasūqī.

¹³Waqfiyah document no. 810.

¹⁴Oral communication from Carl F. Petry.

¹⁵The 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.



overlappings in the terminology it becomes difficult to draw a clear picture of the area.¹⁶ 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'īyah*)."

The renovations made by Qāyṭbāy 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 (*wājīhah*) of the shrine-mosque (*masjid*) with eleven new doors, a garden, the interiors of the stores (*ḥānūts*) reserved for livestock, and two large domes above the tombs (*darīḥ*) of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī and Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh al-Dasūqī (d. ca. 850/1446), the third *khalīfah* of the Burhāmīyah 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 Qāyṭbāy 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 khitābah*), 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 Qāyṭbāy.¹⁷ Within the area, on opposite sides of the mosque, there were also residences for the superintendent (*nāzīr*) 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 sulṭānī*), which suggests that Qāyṭbāy 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 (*mudda'á*) where texts of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) were recited and learned by heart in front of the teacher. For children there was a *kuttāb-sabīl*, 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 Qāyṭbāy'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.¹⁸ The total of the salaries paid to the staff, including the two witnesses of the document, amounts to 4960 *dirhams* per month (=16.5 *dīnārs*, one *dīnār* equaling 300 *dirhams*),¹⁹ which makes 198.4 *dīnārs* 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 *niṣf* of silver, should be used.

The new donor (*wāqif*) of course wanted to change the key personnel, and Qāyṭbāy thus nominated a new *nāẓir* (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 *nāẓir* was also responsible for distributing the salaries, "taking into consideration what the 'ulamā' have stipulated about the paying of the alms-tax (*zakāt*)." This left the *nāẓir* 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

¹⁸As a comparison, the *jāmi'ah* of Azbak (890/1485) had a staff of over forty, including twenty Sufis. Barsbāy's desert *khānqāh* (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 Qāyṭbāy's *khānqāh-jāmi'* (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-Sha'rānī housed two hundred residents—we do not know the nature of the residents—and that of his teacher, Ibrāhīm al-Matbūlī, "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 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī*, 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 *khānqāhs* as calculated based on *waqfiyah* documents, see Fernandes, *Evolution*, 47 ff., esp. 69 f; on the different *waqīfahs* in *khānqāhs*, see Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, *Al-Awqāf wa-al-Ḥayāh al-Ijtimā'iyah fī Miṣr 648-923/1250-1517* (Cairo, 1980), 184-204.

¹⁹See 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 (*darīh*) 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 *waqfiyah* 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.²⁰ 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 (*mawā'iz*) perhaps composed by Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī, the subtleties of Sufi rhetoric (*raqā'iq kalām al-qawm*), and the virtuous deeds, or *manāqib*, of Ibrāhīm. The *manāqib* were to be recited by the teacher "on evenings of gathering (*layālī al-jam'*) and on festive days (*mawāsim al-a'yād*)." He was appointed to instruct not children but students (*ṭalabah*), of whom the majority likely consisted of Sufis, especially since he was to teach them the *manāqib* of the saint.²¹ The identity of the teacher-shaykh is revealed in an addition in the margin as Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad al-Karakī al-Shāfi'ī, the *khalīfah* of the Dasūqī shrine (*al-maqām al-Dasūqī*). Thus, while no specific *ṭarīqah* 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 *fuqarā'*," "mendicants," "the Sufis," or "the *ṣūfiyah*," the Sufi

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

²¹Secular 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 (*yaḥḍurū al-shaykh*),” that is, received instruction. Clothing, normally provided by *khānqāhs*, 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 *waqfiyah*, 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 *ḥuḍūr*, 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-Dasūqī, 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 *ḥuḍūr 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 Sīdī Ibrāhīm, his parents and brothers, to "the protector of the shrine (*mawlá 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.²² 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 maqāmāt al-awliyā'*).²³ 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.²⁴ 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 *waḥīfat al-taṣawwuf*, the Sufi duty, or office, which was their main task in a *khānqāh*.²⁵

Qāytbāy, 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*

²²By the fourteenth century, the institution of *mashyakhāt taṣawwuf*, or "group of Sufis who met daily with their shaykh for the *ḥudūr*," 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 *mashyakhah* and the Sufis who belonged to it received a salary. Fernandes, *Evolution*, 33, 54.

²³A *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.

²⁴In 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.

²⁵Homerin, "Saving Muslim Souls," 71.



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 *maqṣūrah*, “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 Burhāmīyah Order in the 1980s as among the most flexible as far as the relations between the sexes is concerned.²⁸

Further, al-Sakhāwī has a special section about holy women in his *Al-Daw’ al-Lāmi’*, and Huda Lutfī, 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 (*khalāwá*). This could be an

²⁶On how, e.g., Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī treated those practicing alchemy, see Winter, *Society and Religion*, 174-75.

²⁷Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī, *Al-Baḥr al-Mawrūd fī al-Mawāthīq wa-al-‘Uhūd* (Cairo, 1321), 207; quoted by Winter, *Society and Religion*, 131.

²⁸Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics and Saints*, 119, 247-48.

²⁹Huda Lutfī, “Al-Sakhāwī’s Kitāb al-Nisā’ as a Source for the Social and Economic History of Women during the 15th C. AD,” *Muslim World* 71:2 (1981): 104-24.

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."³¹ 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.³² With Qāyṭbāy 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 (*mu'addib*) who taught children to read and write in the *kuttāb-sabīl* 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 *waqfiyahs* 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-maṭbakh*) 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 *waqfiyah* also contains instructions concerning surplus income, expenses, and other points vital to the functioning of the institution. The surplus of the

³¹Winter, *Society and Religion*, 129.

³²Ibid., 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 (*ray'*) remaining after the salaries had been paid was to be spent on lunch and supper for the *fuqarā'*, those visiting the shrine, and the laymen, and on meals to be served on festive days and during *mawlid*s. Here the plural *mawālīd* is used with no reference as to whose *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.³³ If something was still left over from the income, the *nāzīr* 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 *fuqarā'* and the poor (*masākīn*) Muslims wherever they are."

AMIR MUGHULBĀY, THE SUPERINTENDENT

From an addition in the margin we learn that the *nāzīr* of the *waqf* was Amir al-Sayfī Mughulbāy al-Muḥammadī al-Bahliwān al-Malikī al-Ashrafī, who also was the witness (or notary, *shāhid*) of the *waqfīyah*. 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.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.³⁵

Mughulbāy probably received his military training from an amir of the sultan Qāyrbāy, after which he was manumitted and entered the service of the sultan. He was thus called Qāyrbāy's personal mamluk, as revealed by his title al-Malikī al-Ashrafī, "Belonging to the Malik, or King, al-Ashraf" (Qāyrbāy'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 *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 *nisbah* al-Sayfī. The "Muḥammad" in his

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

³⁴On the hierarchy of the Mamluk state, see Sartain, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, 1:1-9.

³⁵David Ayalon, "Names, titles and 'nisbas' of the Mamlūks," *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975): 189-232. Repr. in David Ayalon, *The Mamlūk Military Society*, Collected Studies (London, 1979), 219f.



name refers to the person to whom Mughulbāy belonged before Qāyrbāy. 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 Qāyrbāy, which was not usual.³⁶

One of the conditions set by sultan Qāyrbāy 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 Qāyrbāy 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.³⁷ In fact, the shrine had earlier been controlled by another Mamluk amir named al-Sayfī Abū Yazīd, for whom prayers were to be recited at the tomb. It would be interesting to speculate as to how much influence Mughulbāy as *nāẓir* 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 Qāyrbāy 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

³⁶Ibid., 191-92, 213-14. Ibn al-Sayrafī 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 (*sāqī*). 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 *waqfiyah* 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-Sayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-al-Abdān fī 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, "Iḳṭā'," *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-Suyūfī*, 1:5-6.



stipulations in the *waqfiyah*, Qāyrbāy in fact remained in control of the *waqf*. Qāyrbāy was facing a war with the Ottoman sultan Bāyezīd II, and in order to raise money, seven months' income was demanded of all *awqāf*.³⁸ It was under these financially troubled circumstances that Qāyrbāy's *waqf* in Dasūq was established.

SULTAN QĀYTBĀY'S SPIRITUAL ADVISORS

All of this does not mean, of course, that Qāyrbāy'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, Aḥmad 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, Qāyrbāy 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 Qāyrbāy's life, such as 'Abd al-Qādir al-Daštūṭī (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 Malāmatī Sufi with a convent (*zāwīyah*) 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 Aḥmad al-Badawī.³⁹ 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'*).⁴⁰

³⁸The same recklessness continued during Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī's reign, and the pious foundations remained under a heavy burden: one year's income was demanded, but due to rioting it was reduced to seven months' income. Sartain, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, 1:16-17.

³⁹'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā = Lawāqīḥ al-Anwār fī Ṭabaqāt al-Akhyār* (Cairo, 1343, 1355/1925, 1936), 2:77-80.

⁴⁰Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi'*, 1:85-86; Winter, *Society and Religion*, 95 f. and 271; Boaz Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge, 1993), 76.



Al-Sakhāwī, however, did not mention anything of al-Matbūlī's connection with Qāyṭbāy, but only said that many notables (*akābir*) came to see al-Matbūlī in search of blessing (*tabarruk*)—this in spite of his illiteracy. If we can rely on al-Sha'rānī's words about the role of al-Matbūlī in Qāyṭbāy's life—which he may have exaggerated since he himself had high appreciation for his teacher al-Matbūlī—we can believe that the sultan was influenced by Aḥmadī ideas. For the Mamluks to support the Aḥmadīs 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 Ṭanṭā in 903/1498 and ordered al-Badawī's tomb to be enlarged.⁴²

THE HANAFI IMAM

The Mamluks favored the Hanafī school of law, and the personal imam of Qāyṭbāy was a Hanafī judge by the name of Ibrāhīm (also called Burhān al-Dīn) ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Karakī. Ibn al-Karakī was an educated and learned man, among whose teachers were some members of the famous al-Bulqīnī family. He had much influence on Qāyṭbāy and received many high posts; he was, among other duties, responsible for reciting the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī in the Citadel of Cairo.⁴³ The tie between Sultan Qāyṭbāy and Imam Ibn al-Karakī was perhaps made closer by the fact that both had Circassian mothers. Al-Sakhāwī says that Ibn al-Karakī was in favor with Qāyṭbāy already when the latter was still an amir, and when al-Matbūlī died in 880/1475, Qāyṭbāy 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 Qāyṭbāy said that he wanted Ibn al-Karakī to recite the Quran at his tomb and visit it after his death.⁴⁴

⁴¹See, e.g., Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, *Al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Badawī: Un grand saint de l'islam égyptien*, Textes arabes et études islamiques, 32 (Cairo, 1994), 751.

⁴²Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 3:199, 330; also summarized in Shoshan, *Popular Culture*, 77.

⁴³During the Mamluk era, the recitation of *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* took place every year at the end of Ramaḍān in the Citadel, and during times of crisis also at the tombs of Imam al-Shāfī'ī and Sayyidah Nafīṣah. Annemarie Schimmel, "Kalif und Kadi im spätmittelalterlichen Ägypten," *Die Welt des Islams* 24 (1942): 78-79.

⁴⁴Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi'*, 1:59-64; 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ibn al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār Man Dhahab* (Beirut, n. d.), pt. 8, 103. Ibn al-'Imād gives the complete name as Burhān al-Dīn Abū al-Wafā' Ibrāhīm ibn Zayd al-Dīn Abī Hurayrah 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Majd al-Dīn Ismā'īl al-Karakī, also known as Ibn al-Karakī. He was born on 9 Ramaḍān 835/10 May 1432 in Cairo. Al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) states that Ibn al-Karakī died in 898/1492-93. It is therefore strange to read of his "resurrection" in the *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr* of Ibn Iyās (d. 930/1524), who writes that Ibn al-Karakī was dismissed from his post as Hanafī judge in 906/1501. Summarized in Petry, *Twilight of Majesty*, 146.



Ibn al-Karakī's important position is revealed in the stories describing the conflict between Sultan Qāyṭbāy and the learned but arrogant scholar Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505). Al-Suyūṭī 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 Qāyṭbāy 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-Suyūṭī's biographer, Ibn al-Karakī was doing

his utmost to provoke [the sultan] . . . , and kindling fires which will burn against [al-Suyūṭī] 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 Qāyṭbāy, who listened to his advice and acted accordingly. However, from Ibn al-ʿImād (d. 1089/1679) we learn that the good relationship between Qāyṭbāy and his imam lasted only until 886/1481, when "the sultan's opinion about him and his company deteriorated (lit. became miserable)." Ibn al-ʿImād gave no reason for this sudden change. Imam Ibn al-Karakī thus did not recite the funerary prayers for Qāyṭbāy as the latter had wished. Instead, he kept to his house and concentrated on his studies, until he was appointed as the Hanafī qadi of Cairo in 903/1497, the year following Qāyṭbāy's death, during the short reign of the deceased sultan's minor son al-Nāṣir. 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 Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī for sheltering one of this new sultan's political opponents. Therefore, Ibn al-Karakī was dismissed and a favorite of Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī, Sarī al-Dīn ʿAbd 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.

⁴⁵See, e.g., Schimmel, "Kalif und Kadi," 56-57.

⁴⁶Sartain, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, 1:89, quoting ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Shādhilī's biography of al-Suyūṭī, "Bahjat al-ʿĀbidīn bi-Tarjamat Jalāl al-Dīn."

⁴⁷Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, pt. 8, 103. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr*, 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 Qāyṭbāy.⁴⁸

THE IMAM WHO FELL INTO DISGRACE

Why should Qāyṭbāy, 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-Sakhāwī is that in the end of Jumādā I 886/end of July 1481—thus two months before the signing of the *waqf* document in Dasūq—the *muhtār*⁴⁹ of Qāyṭbāy 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-Fīl; 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-Sakhāwī 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 Qāyṭbāy, 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-Fīl was bought for him by Qāyṭbāy in the early years of the latter’s sultanate (thus some time after 872/1468), on Ibn al-Karakī’s previous residence, see al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw’ 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*.

⁵⁰Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw’ al-Lāmi’*, 1:63.



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 Shafī‘ī qadi, and the matter was settled, the man receiving 100 *dīnārs* as compensation.⁵¹ 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.⁵² The sultan then saw to it that the insulted *muhtār* 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 Hanafī 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.⁵³

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.⁵⁴ His final absolution took place when Qāyṭbāy gave him permission to participate in the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday in the Citadel.⁵⁵ There, on the night of the *mawlid* (12 Rabī‘ I 895/2 February 1490), the sultan publicly spoke of his affection for him.⁵⁶

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²“The 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 (*istimrār 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*.

⁵⁶Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw’ al-Lāmi’*, 1:63-64.



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 Qāyrbāy—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 Qāyrbāy's life as a spiritual advisor.

From the day when Qāyrbāy's imam Ibn al-Karakī fell into disfavor and was dismissed, until he officially regained royal favor again, nine years elapsed. Since Qāyrbāy 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 Qāyrbāy made the shrine the beneficiary of a religious endowment. Fifteen years passed between the establishment of the *waqf* and the death of Qāyrbāy 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 Sīdī 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 Qāyrbāy's heart for the Deltan saint Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī and his shaykh, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Karakī. It was perhaps at Qāyrbāy's initiative that Jalāl al-Dīn wrote the biography of Sīdī 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.

QĀYTBĀY IN SEARCH OF IMMORTALITY

The study of Qāyrbāy'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. *Qā'imāt al-Ḥaṣr al-Makhṭūṭāt al-'Arabīyah bi-Dār al-Kutub wa-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīyah* (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 Dasūq was endowed by Qāyṭbāy 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 Sīdī Ibrāhīm 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.⁵⁸ Qāyṭbāy also sought to manifest his power by adding a congregational mosque (*jāmi‘*) to what was already a popular religious center. His name would be mentioned not only in the Friday *khuṭbahs*, but also in the prayers of the Sufi gatherings in the mausoleum-mosque (*maṣjid wa-maqām*) of al-Dasūqī. This way, Qāyṭbāy 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 Dasūq Qāyṭbāy had perhaps witnessed the great number of visitors coming to the shrine and bringing votive offerings. Inspired by the example of Ṭanṭā and its flourishing Badawī cult, he incorporated the earlier *waqf* in Dasūq 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 Bāyezīd II.

However, being a pious man and inclined to Sufism, Qāyṭbāy 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 Sīdī Ibrāhīm, 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.⁵⁹ The construction of a religious complex in itself would bring immortality to its constructor by preserving his name and memory.

The reasons why Sultan Qāyṭbāy established a pious endowment in Dasūq 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, Qāyṭbāy helped to develop and activate the cult of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī, 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.

⁵⁸As 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.

⁵⁹This may have been the primary purpose of the whole *khānqāh* establishment, as suggested by Emil Homerin. Homerin, “Saving Muslim Souls,” 77 f., esp. 83.

