Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis or dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis or dissertation in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis or dissertation. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis or dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation.

Signature:

____ ________________

Nathan C. Hofer Date

Sufism, State, and Society in Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1309

By

Nathan C. Hofer
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Division of Religion
Jewish Religious Cultures

____
David Blumenthal, Ph.D.
Advisor

____
Vincent Cornell, Ph.D.
Advisor

____
Marina Rustow, Ph.D.
Committee Member

____
Devin Stewart, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Accepted:

____
Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

____
Date

Sufism, State, and Society in Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1309

By

Nathan C. Hofer
M.A., Emory University, 2005
B.A., Arizona State University, 2003

Advisor: David Blumenthal, Ph.D.

Advisor: Vincent Cornell, Ph.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate Division of Religion
Jewish Religious Cultures
2011

Abstract

Sufism, State, and Society in Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1309
By Nathan C. Hofer

This dissertation is a social and religious history of four different groups of Sufis in medieval Egypt. The late twelfth through the early fourteenth centuries witnessed a remarkably creative episode in the religious history of Egypt, which was home to a variety of Sufi groups and charismatic Sufi masters. Specifically, the dissertation closely examines the state-sponsored Sufis of the *khānqāh* Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ in Cairo, the nascent state-sanctioned Shādhilīya brotherhood in Alexandria and Cairo, the non-state-sanctioned Sufis of Upper Egypt, and finally, the subaltern Jewish Sufis of Fustat. While scholars have examined these Sufi groups individually, this dissertation will be the first study to place them together within a larger context and coherent theoretical framework. Using the terminology of institutions and organizations, the argument of the dissertation is that this period was characterized by increasingly organized forms of Sufism. Central to this argument is detailing the institutionalized doctrines, practices, organizational goals, and conceptions of authority for each group. In addition, the dissertation emphasizes the socio-political position of these Sufis and how that positionality helped shape the pursuit of their goals. This will offer a richer and more precise understanding of how these groups operated in their social and political contexts. Finally, it is argued that in pursuing their specific goals, these Sufis directly and indirectly created the conditions that popularized Sufism among large segments of the population all over medieval Egypt.

Sufism, State, and Society in Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1309

By

Nathan C. Hofer
M.A., Emory University, 2005
B.A., Arizona State University, 2003

Advisor: David Blumenthal, Ph.D.

Advisor: Vincent Cornell, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate Division of Religion
Jewish Religious Cultures
2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
ABBREVIATIONS

INTRODUCTION
Four Groups of Sufis 1
Sufism in Egypt before 1173 8
The Contour and Content of This Study 16
Institutions, Institutionalization, and Organizations 21

CHAPTER ONE
State-Sponsored Sufism: The Sufis of the *khānqāh* Sa'īd al-Su'adā' 41
The *khānqāh* in Egypt 47
Sa'īd al-Su'adā' 53
The Office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh 57
Summary and Conclusions 80

CHAPTER TWO
State-Sanctioned Sufism: Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī and the Nascent Shādhilīya 92
The Early Shādhilīya: A Brief Sketch 99
The Hagiographical Image of al-Shādhilī 104
Saintly Authority 108
Juridical Authority 120
Political Reciprocity 128
Authorizing Practices 136
Summary and Conclusions 145

CHAPTER THREE
Non-State-Sanctioned Sufism: The Independent Sufis of Upper Egypt 151
Five Upper-Egyptian Sufis 160
The Social Context of Upper Egypt 168
"Anti-Establishment" Sufis 179
Enforcement of Sunni Norms 185
Monitoring Communal Boundaries 192
The Socio-Political Subtext of Sufi Miracles 198
Summary and Conclusions 208

CHAPTER FOUR
Subaltern Sufism: Abraham Maimonides and the Pietists of Fustat 215
The Nature of the Pietist Movement 228
The Structure of the Pietist Movement 255
The Return of Prophecy 267
Summary and Conclusions 275

CONCLUSION 285

BIBLIOGRAPHY 300

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has taken me a considerable amount of time and energy to formulate and execute this dissertation: my studies have spanned eleven years, three academic degrees, and countless hours of solitary study. I have incurred an incalculable debt to a great many people along the way. I can only hope that seeing their influence and names in the pages that follow might repay them, if only in small measure.

First, I must thank my parents, Layne and Kathleen Hofer and Don and Becky Adams, who have encouraged my intellectual curiosity and reading habits from the earliest days of my childhood. They have been enthusiastic supporters of a project about which they know very little and have pushed me to make this often obscure and arcane topic more relevant to them and those without advanced degrees. To my grandfather, Larry Ashton, a hearty "thank you" for initiating my first intellectual discussions as a young man, teaching me how to work, and teaching me the best maxim about teenage labor I know: "One boy's a boy, two boys are half a boy, and three boys are no boy at all."

My interests in medieval Islam and Judaism were forged in the fires of Arizona State University's Religious Studies program. I cannot imagine a better, more rigorous, or hotter place to study religion critically. Thanks to Barton Lee, who first introduced me to the history and traditions of Judaism and the sheer enjoyment of reading medieval rabbinic texts. To Hava and Norbert Samuelson I owe a great debt for teaching me the intellectual history of rabbinic Judaism and for telling me it was okay for a goy to study medieval Jews. David Damrel deserves a large portion of the credit for this dissertation. If it were not for his patience, encouragement, and "Islamic

Mysticism" survey, I would not be here now. Thanks to Joel Gereboff for more reasons than I can count, foremost among these for teaching me how to think about Judaism as a scholar of religion, for directing my senior thesis, for being willing to meet once a week for an entire year and read *Mishnah* and *hekhalot* texts with me, and especially for pointing me in the direction of the MA program in Jewish Studies at Emory University. I can honestly say that if were not for Joel, I would probably have gone to film school.

I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to be involved with both the Tam Institute for Jewish Studies and the Graduate Division of Religion at Emory University. The faculty and staff of these two programs who have directly contributed to the formation, research, and execution of this project are many and worth mentioning. Arlene Robie, Tobie Ames, Malorie Mibab, and Mary Jo Duncanson of the Tam Institute for Jewish Studies and Pescha Penso and Nancy Caro of the Graduate Division of Religion made it all happen. I would have given up any thought of progress eight years ago if it were not for their patient hand-holding through the various bureaucratic mazes of Emory. Bill Gilders was a wonderful teacher and mentor in the classroom. I can only hope to have gleaned some of his textual acuity for myself. Eric Goldstein introduced me to the giants of Jewish historiography in one of the liveliest seminars in which I have had the pleasure of participating. Benny Hary has been a friend, ally, and Judeo-Arabic guru from the beginning of my studies. He saw to it that I broadened my academic horizons and, perhaps most importantly, always made me laugh while doing it. Don Seeman has been an invaluable conversation partner for the last eight years. From medieval texts to anthropology, from Star Trek to Maimonides, Don can do it all and I will forever be in his debt for sharing with me his knowledge and

wisdom, not to mention his love of scotch. Jeff Lesser has been my (unpaid) professional life coach, and if it were not for his advice I would be street performing next year. Gordon Newby has been an inexhaustible source of knowledge, enthusiasm, and support. Gordon made his seminars and my time as his TA and an instructor in his department fun, enlightening, and an exercise in vocabulary acquisition. Rich Martin has been a wonderful model of scholarship and friendship, always ready with a reference, recommendation, or a drink. Laurie Patton taught me how to be a self-conscious and reflexive scholar of more than one religious tradition and, above all, to pay attention to the history of my fields. Finally, Gary Laderman – while we have never studied together – has been a great supporter of my work and someone I have always enjoyed saluting in the hallways of Callaway.

I count myself lucky to have had a veritable dream team for a dissertation committee. Devin Stewart has patiently and adroitly guided my study of Arabic and medieval Arabic texts for a number of years. His erudition is matched only by his generosity. His comments, suggestions, and edits are in evidence throughout the pages that follow. Marina Rustow has been a friend and mentor for many years and I am so pleased and grateful that our paths overlapped at Emory, even if only for a few short years. Marina introduced me to the world of the Cairo Genizah, its wonders and frustrations, and taught me how to think like a historian. She continues to push me to reexamine and rethink my assumptions and to clarify my otherwise boneheaded attempts to make sense of medieval religion and society. If I ever master the comma and semicolon it will be because of her. Vincent Cornell has been equal measure *shaykh al-taʿlīm* and *shaykh al-tarbīya* in my studies and in writing this dissertation. It was

Vince who provided me with a title, primary materials, and the theoretical framework that made this work possible. When this project was running off the rails, as it tended to do from time to time, Vince deftly got it back on track. Our conversations coupled with his rigorous scholarship, careful guidance, and refusal to accept anything less than the best from me have left me a better scholar and forever in his debt. David Blumenthal has been my *Doktorvater* in every sense of the word for the past eight years, guiding me through the various academic stages and hurdles with grace and acuity. Our time together, often spent in his home reading medieval Jewish texts, has been precious to me. Those sessions of personal instruction and conversation, fueled by snacks from his wonderful wife Ursula, are among my most cherished memories. David has taught me many things for which I am grateful, but above all he taught me what it really means to be a *mensch* and I am incredibly fortunate to call him my friend. These four scholars have saved me from making some truly embarrassing and egregious mistakes. Any errors or oversights in the following pages are mine.

The following pages would have been impossible without a significant amount of linguistic training. Ruthie Stiftel, the faculty of Ulpan Akiva in Netanya, Israel, and Oded Borowski nurtured my love of Hebrew and always pushed me to be more proficient. I had the enormous pleasure of studying Arabic with two people whom I can unequivocally describe as the best teachers of Arabic in the world, Kristen Brustad and Mahmoud al-Batal. Some of my fondest memories of Emory are in their respective classrooms. My summer at Middlebury, though I felt like a prisoner, was invaluable in my training and made bearable by Frank Salameh and Hikmet Faranj. Rkia Cornell guided me through my last year of Arabic at Emory and it was an absolute delight.

Rkia's kindness, encouragement, and high-level discussions in the classroom made me feel proficient in Arabic for the first time. Her genius, I suspect, is making everyone feel like a master of Arabic. My dear teachers at the University of Damascus during my year with the Center for Arabic Study Abroad were my friends and guides to the greatest city in the world. To Manal, Ghada, Bushra, Brahim, and yes, even Kholod, I say *alf alf shukr*. And to the beautiful people of Damascus who welcomed me, fed me, filled me with coffee and tea, and spoke to me in Arabic, *baḥibbkun katīr katīr*.

I could not have completed the research and writing of this dissertation without the generous financial support of a number of organizations. The Tam Institute for Jewish Studies funded a trip to Cairo during which I was able to procure the manuscript that made Chapter Three possible. The Laney Graduate School at Emory University generously provided Professional Development Support funds that paid for a research trip to Paris and money to present my work at a number of conferences. The organizers of the *Mystiques juives, chrétiennes et musulmanes dans l'Égypte médiévale* conference that took place in Cairo in November of 2010 generously funded my travel and accommodation. That conference and its lively participants were critical in developing some of the material in Chapters Two and Four. The Andrew W. Mellon Graduate Teaching Fellowship in cooperation with Dillard University in New Orleans provided me with the financial support and the institutional home that made the writing of this work possible. The travel, research, and writing that went into this dissertation were also supported by a generous grant from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.

I have had the pleasure and great fortune of having a number of friends and colleagues in graduate school who have been my conversation partners, drinking buddies, and pillars of moral support. For Vince Gonzalez, one of my oldest and closest friends, there will always be room on my couch and a space to perform the ritual of the lesser pentagram. Tim DeBold - roommate, partner in crime, and amateur stunt man - taught me never, ever to take myself or graduate school too seriously. Alison Joseph, Jonathan Kaplan, and Bobby Williamson have remained loyal friends and interlocutors, even without the aid of any infernal social media. My comrades in Islamic studies at Emory, Abbas Barzegar, Josie Hendrickson, Amanda Rogers, Manuela Ceballos, Tiffany Hodge, Ahmed Abdel Maguid, and Muhammad Abd al-Aziz are the finest cohort one could ask for. Nick Fabian pulled double duty as departmental insider and good friend. Peter Valdina kept it real for me and always reminded me that "this is really happening." Jean-Paul Cauvin and Lizzy Venell have listened to my mad ravings more times than I care to remember; our porch visits will always be dear to me. Manuel's Tavern in Atlanta, *aka* HQ, has been the scene of a great deal of laughter, tears, and hashing out of future plans. Piggy and Fatty got me away from the computer every day, albeit grudgingly, and forced my pale skin into the light of day.

Finally, above all and with more feeling than I can convey on the page, I thank my beautiful wife and partner, Leah Rosenberg. Leah, more than anyone else mentioned here, made this dissertation possible with her love, patience, and unending support. It is not easy for two people to live under the same roof, especially when they are both writing a dissertation, but she always made it work.

I dedicate this work to you my darling, Eiffel Tower!

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations will be used throughout the dissertation for academic journals and publications:

AnIsl	*Annales Islamologiques*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
EI2	*Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd edition
EI3	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edition
EJ2	*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd edition
GAL	Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (5 vols)
IFAO	Institut français d'archéologie orientale
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle East Studies*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JSAI	*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
MIDEO	*Mélanges de l'institut dominicain d'études orientales du Caire*
PAAJR	*Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*
REJ	*Revue des études juives*

The following abbreviations will be used throughout the dissertation for primary sources in Arabic and Judeo-Arabic (authors are listed as they appear in the bibliography):

A'yān	al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān al-'aṣr wa-a'wān al-naṣr*
al-Bidāya	Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidāya wa'l-nihāya*
al-Dhayl	Abū Shāma, *al-Dhayl 'alā al-Rawḍatayn tarājim rijāl al-qarnayn al-sādis wa'l-sābi'*
al-Durar	al-'Asqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina fī a'yān al-mi'a al-thāmina*
al-'Ibar	al-Dhahabī, *Kitāb al-'ibar fī khabar man ghabar*
al-Kāmil	Ibn Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī 'l-tārīkh*

al-Kawākib	al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durrīya fī tarājim al-sādat al-ṣūfīya*
al-Khiṭaṭ	al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iẓ wa'l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa'l-āthār*
al-Muntaẓam	Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī tārīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam*
al-Nujūm	Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk miṣr wa'l-qāhira*
al-Rawḍatayn	Abū Shāma, *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn al-Nūrīya wa'l-Ṣalāḥīya*
al-Sulūk	al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk*
al-Ṭāli'	al-Udfuwī, *al-Ṭāli' al-sa'īd al-jāmi' li- asmā' nubalā' al-ṣa'īd*
al-Wāfī	al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi'l-wafayāt*
al-Waḥīd	al-Qūṣī, *al-Waḥīd fī sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd*
BT	*Babylonian Talmud*
Durrat al-asrār	Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, *Durrat al-asrār wa-tuḥfat al-abrār*
Fawāt	al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*
Ḥusn	al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara fī akhbār miṣr wa'l-qāhira*
Kifāya	Abraham Maimonides, *Kifāyat al-'ābidīn* [*The High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides*]
Laṭā'if	al-Iskandarī, *Laṭā'if al-minan fī manāqib al-Shaykh Abū 'l-'Abbas al-Mursi wa-shaykhihi al-Shādhilī Abū 'l-Ḥasan*
Mir'āt al-jinān	al-Yāfi'ī, *Mir'āt al-jinān wa-'ibrat al-yaqẓān*
Mir'āt al-zamān	Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān fī tārīkh al-a'yān*
Mukhtaṣar	Abū 'l-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar*
Nihāyat al-'arab	al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'arab fī funūn al-'arab*
Sefer ha-maspiq	Abraham Maimonides, *Sefer ha-maspiq le-'ovedey ha-shem*
Shadharāt	Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*
Siyar	al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*
Ṣubḥ	al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā' fī ṣinā'at al-inshā'*
Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'	Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*
Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'īya	al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'īya al-kubrā*
Ṭabaqāt al-Sha'rānī	al-Sha'rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*
Wafayāt	Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' al-zamān*

INTRODUCTION

> [Sufism] is a name without a reality, but it used to be a reality without a name.
>
> Abū 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Būshanjī (d. 348/960)[1]

> Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness.
>
> Pierre Bourdieu[2]

FOUR GROUPS OF SUFIS

In 1173, two years after flying the black Abbasid flags over Cairo and having the *khuṭba* read in the name of the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaḍīʾ (1170-1180), Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (Saladin, d. 589/1193) converted a former Fatimid palace in the heart of Cairo, known as the Dār Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ, into a Sufi lodge (*khānqāh*).[3] Saladin also created an endowment (*waqf*) that paid for the upkeep of the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ and provided funds to pay for the food, clothing, and shelter of those Sufis from the East who came to live within its walls. In addition to funding the rank and file Sufis, the endowment provided a large salary for a *shaykh al-shuyūkh*, the Sufi "Master of Masters," who was to be in charge of the *khānqāh*, oversee its operations, and serve as a guide and mentor to those in residence. Saladin's endowment of the *khānqāh* Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ and his support of its Sufi residents marked the first appearance in Egypt of any form of state-sponsored

---

[1] Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfīya*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Shurayba (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānijī, 1969), 359.

[2] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, tr. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 164.

[3] The Fatimid Caliph al-Mustanṣir (1036-1094) built the Dār Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ for one of his eunuchs who was nicknamed Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ, "The Happiest of the Happy." See Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa'l-iʿtibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa'l-āthār*, edited by Muḥammad Zaynhum and Madīḥat al-Sharqāwī (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1998), 1:570. On Saladin's overthrow of the Fatimids, see Yaacov Lev, *Saladin in Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 53-107.

Sufism. Indeed, the project was so successful and popular that, after wresting control of Egypt from the Ayyubid dynasty, the Mamluk sultans began founding and endowing new *khānqāh*s all over Egypt in rapid succession.[4]

At the same time that the *khānqāh* Sa'īd al-Su'adā' was drawing Sufis to Cairo from the East, a Sufi master from the West was making his way to Alexandria. Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258) was from the Ghumāra region of present-day Morocco and, as a youth, had set out from his home seeking spiritual enlightenment. His journey eventually led him to Alexandria, where the Ayyubid authorities allowed him to lead a growing circle of disciples. Al-Shādhilī's stripped-down approach to Sufism, his encouragement that his disciples procure employment, and his insistence that they dress in nice clothing helped make him a popular Sufi master. Within 100 years of his death, a trans-regional brotherhood known by his name had emerged in Egypt and North Africa: *al-ṭā'ifa al-shādhilīya*, or "the Shādhilī order." While al-Shādhilī and his nascent brotherhood did not enjoy state sponsorship like the Sufis of the *khānqāh* in Cairo, they nevertheless cultivated the sanction of the state and used it to their advantage. The third Shādhilī master in Egypt, Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309), was the instructor of Mālikī law at the Manṣūrīya *madrasa* in Cairo and a fixture of the local Sufi scene.[5] He used his position and status to spread the teachings of al-Shādhilī and the second Shādhilī master, Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Mursī (d. 686/1287).

---

[4] These *khānqāh*s were almost always named after the Mamluk sultan who funded their founding: the Bunduqdārīya (1274), the Baybars al-Jashankīr (1306), the al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (1324), the Mughultay al-Jamālī (1329), the Shaykhū 'l-'Umarī (1355), the Barqūq (1386), and the Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ustādār (1407); see Leonor Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt: The Khanqah* (Berlin, Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1988), 25-39.

[5] al-Iskandarī was one of the leaders of Cairene Sufis who petitioned the Mamluk ruler to have Ibn Taymīya (d. 1328) imprisoned or exiled. For the details and medieval sources of this event see Donald Little, "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya," in *IJMES* 4 (1973): 311-327.

One of al-Iskandarī's contemporaries was Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī (d. 708/1308), a Sufi from the Upper-Egyptian city of Qūṣ. Ibn Nūḥ belonged to a network of Upper-Egyptian Sufis who saw themselves as the representatives of normative Sunni Islam in the region and a counter to the rapaciousness and shortcomings of the state and its local representatives. In 1307, these Sufis, led by Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī, rioted in the streets of Qūṣ and left thirteen churches destroyed in less than two hours. While the attacks were ostensibly directed against the local Coptic Christian minority, the riots had much to do with these Sufis' criticism of the state and those who led it. The antagonism between state and Sufi became clear in the aftermath of the riots, when ʻIzz al-Dīn al-Rashīdī (d. 708/1309), the *ustādār* of the Mamluk Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, had the Sufis arrested and beaten, and many died from their injuries.[6] Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī vehemently proclaimed his innocence but was nevertheless detained and sentenced to live out the rest of his life under house arrest in Fustat (old Cairo).

Fustat was also the home to the majority of medieval Egypt's Jewish population. In the thirteenth century, some members of the Jewish community were forced to go into hiding after being accused by their co-religionists of introducing overtly Islamic practices into the synagogue. This group of Jews, led by Abraham Maimonides (d. 1237), the son of the famous philosopher Moses Maimonides (d. 1204), called themselves Pietists (*ḥasidim*) and their spiritual method the "way of piety" (*derekh ha-ḥasidut*). This "way" was notably similar to the Sufi *ṭarīqa*, and the Pietists were indeed conversant with Sufi ideas and practices. While Jews had been in conversation with

---

[6] Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad reigned three separate times: 1293-1294, 1299-1309, and 1309-1341. The events described here occurred during his second period of power. The position of *ustādār* (a contraction of *ustādh al-dār* – master of the house) was, as David Ayalon describes it, "grand major domo" and was second only to the vizier in terms of power and prestige in the Mamluk hierarchy. See Ayalon, "Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army – III," in *BSOAS* 16 (1954): 57-90; on the *ustādār*, see pp. 61-62.

Sufism before this time, the Pietist movement marks the first time that Jews took up Sufi thought and praxis in such an overt manner. Not only does Abraham Maimonides speak of Sufis explicitly in his writings, but he also advocated Sufi practices like *khalwa*, the wearing of wool, and the cultivation of master-disciple relationships. It was this overt "Islamization" of Jewish practice that aroused the ire of some sectors of the Jewish community.

These four snapshots portray four very different groups of Sufis in medieval Egypt. In the first place, they were different from one another in terms of their socio-political positionality. Those who lived in the *khānqāh* were a group of elite Sufis whose devotions were explicitly sponsored by the state. The nascent Shādhilīya enjoyed the sanction of the state while remaining independent in order to spread the teachings of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī throughout Egypt. The Sufis of Upper Egypt were antagonistic and even, on occasion, openly hostile to the state. The Jewish Pietists, as a protected religious minority (*ahl al-dhimma*), enjoyed the ostensible protection of the state, although they anticipated its decline and replacement by a Jewish kingdom.[7] Second, these groups were different in terms of their regional origins. The Sufis of the *khānqāh* were from the East, especially Damascus, Baghdad, and even Persian-speaking areas. Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī and most of his early disciples were from the West – the

---

[7] On the protected religious communities in Islam, see Claude Cahen, "Dhimma," in *EI2*. On the Jews of medieval Egypt in particular, see Norman Golb, "The Topography of the Jews of Medieval Egypt," in *JNES* 24 (1965): 251-257 and *JNES* 33 (1974): 116-149; Mark Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt: The Origins of the Office of Head of the Jews, ca. 1065-1126* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); idem, *Poverty and Charity in the Medieval Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Norman Stillman, "The Non-Muslim Communities: The Jewish Community," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume One: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*, ed. Carl Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 198-210; Jacob Lassner's abridgement of S. D. Goitein's *A Mediterranean Society*, *A Mediterranean Society: An Abridgement in One Volume* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003);and Marina Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), especially part one, "The Shape of the Jewish Community," 3-110.

Maghrib and Ifrīqīya – although after settling in Alexandria they attracted large numbers of Egyptian disciples. The Sufis of Upper Egypt were, for the most part, native Upper Egyptians, although the Sufi masters to whom they traced their authority were originally from the Maghrib. Most of the Jewish Pietists were from Fustat and Alexandria, although they thought of themselves as living in exile and looked forward to the redemption of Israel and return to Zion.

These four groups thus represent a broad socio-political and regional diversity in their origins and makeup. But what of their Sufi doctrines? While each of these groups advocated a unique and distinctive approach to the Sufi path, they articulated these approaches within the broader doctrinal and practical world of Sufism that had been formulated as early as the late tenth century. This doctrinal world was largely shaped by the Baghdādī and Khurāsānī traditions of Sufism in the tenth and eleventh centuries, exemplified by the great systematizers of Sufi doctrine like Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 988) in his *Kitāb al-luma' fī 'l-taṣawwuf*; Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Kalābādhī (d. 990) in his *al-Ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*; Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 996) in his *Qūt al-qulūb fī mu'āmalat al-maḥbūb*; al-Sulamī (d. 1021) in his *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfīya*; Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1072) in his *al-Risāla al-qushayrīya*; and especially Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) in his *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*.[8] The Sufis of Ayyubid and early Mamluk Egypt inherited the ideas, terminology, and practices of these earliers Sufis and used them in the creation of new social formations.

---

[8] Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-luma' fī 'l-taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Leiden and London: Brill, 1914); Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Kalābādhī, *al-Ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Yuḥannā al-Jayb Ṣādir (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2006); Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb fī mu'āmalat al-maḥbūb*, ed. Sa'īd Nasīb Mukārim (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2007); al-Sulamī *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfīya*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Shurayba (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānijī, 1969); Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-qushayrīya*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (Damascus and Beirut: Dār al-Khayr, 2003); and Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2004). For an account of the history and development of these Sufi manuals, see especially Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 83-113.

These ideas included an emphasis on the esoteric (*al-bāṭin*) over the exoteric (*al-ẓāhir*) and on experiential gnosis (*ma'rifa*) over discursive knowledge (*'ilm*). They conceptualized spiritual life as a path (*ṭarīqa*) to be traversed (*sulūk*), a path that led directly from the *Sharī'a* (revealed law) to the *ḥaqīqa* (ultimate reality). Their spiritual formation and training revolved around the master-disciple (*shaykh-murīd*) relationship. They conceived of the authority of the Sufi master as stemming from his or her link to an unbroken chain, or *silsila*, of spiritual authority (*walāya*) that connected the master to the Prophet Muḥammad.[9] They placed an emphasis on ascetic praxis (*zuhd*) as a means of subduing the ego-self (*nafs*); practiced invocation on the names of God (*dhikr*); and spent long periods of time in isolation for the purpose of spiritual training (*khalwa*). In short, the Sufis of medieval Egypt shared a common stock of ideas, terminology, and praxis that had been formulated generations earlier. This legacy furnished the structure of practices and relationships from which these groups developed and maintained their new and differing social formations. In other words, these inherited doctrines and practices constituted what Pierre Bourdieu called *doxa*, the self-evident assumptions about the world that govern the limits of social activity.[10]

The increasing standardization of Sufi terminology and praxis, especially in the service of a number of new social formations, has led many historians and scholars of Sufism to refer to the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries C.E., as the period of

[9] While women were usually not counted among the links in traditional *silsila*s, a number of Sufi masters, including the famous Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 1240), had female teachers and Sufi women were included in most biographical dictionaries of Sufism. See, for example, Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī's compendium of women Sufis *Dhikr al-niswa al-muta'abbidāt al-ṣūfīyāt* [The Memorial of Female Sufi Devotees], edited, published and translated into English by Rkia Cornell, *Early Sufi Women* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999). Of particular interest in this respect is the fact that Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1201), a Ḥanbalī jurist and preacher from Baghdad, included large sections devoted to pious women (whom he calls *muta'abbidāt*) in his compendium of ascetics and Sufis, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, ed. Maḥmūd Fākhūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1986).

[10] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 159-171.

"the institutionalization of Sufism." But what, exactly, does this mean? What is institutionalization? Did it occur at the same time all over the medieval Islamicate world? Were the operative processes the same for all Sufi groups in all places? Were the Sufis of the *khānqāh*, the nascent Shādhilīya, Upper-Egyptian Sufis, and so on, all part of the same trends? Or did these groups develop separately and uniquely, only related by temporal and physical proximity? While historians of Sufism have often used the language of institutionalization, most include a wide variety of religious, social, and political developments under the rubric of institutionalization without interrogating the concept itself. Furthermore, much of what would become normative Sufism in the thirteenth century and beyond was actually institutionalized by the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The relatively early institutionalization of Sufism was recognized by Arberry, who noted that, "By the end of the 4/10th century Sufism had become a fairly rigid and clearly definable way of life and system of thought."[11] Likewise, Annemarie Schimmel called the time between the Sufi masters Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 946) and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) "the period of consolidation."[12] More recently, Ahmet Karamustafa has written of this period and the literature it produced that it was less a period of consolidation or systematization than it was a period of "the *building* of a Sufi tradition" (emphasis mine).[13] Whether or not one understands the tenth and eleventh centuries as a period of the "consolodation" or "building" of the tradition, the result is the same. The ideas, terminology, and practices of Sufism were institutionalized between the

---

[11] Arthur J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2002 [1950]), 74.
[12] See *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 77.
[13] Ahment Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 84.

tenth and the early twelfth centuries CE. What, then, of the development of Sufism after that point?

The answer to this question will vary from place to place. The present dissertation will directly address this issue of the institutionalization of Sufism by analyzing the four previously mentioned categories of Sufis in Ayyubid and early Mamluk Egypt. In this work, it will be argued that the "institutionalization of Sufism" most aptly characterizes the earlier period of the systematization and formalization of doctrine, terminology, and practices that occurred, for the most part, in the tenth and eleventh centuries C.E. The period under consideration here, comprising the late twelfth through fourteenth centuries, was characterized by increasingly organized relational structures, and is therefore best described as the period of "the organization of Sufism." This organization can be seen most clearly in the ways in which the Sufis of Ayyubid and early-Mamluk Egypt used the institutions of Sufism in pursuit of their own goals.

SUFISM IN EGYPT BEFORE 1173

A full account of the history of Sufism in Egypt has yet to be written. There are a number of studies devoted to different aspects of Egyptian Sufism but there is no historical or thematic overview of Sufism in Egypt from the conquest until the Ottoman period – in Arabic or any European language. In what follows, then, I only offer the briefest of outlines as context. The history of Sufism in Egypt does not actually begin until the ninth century C.E. As Muḥammad al-Taftāzānī has written, the spiritual trends in Egypt during the first two Islamic centuries were more ascetic than anything

else, and were indebted to what he calls "the Medina school" of asceticism. This he attributes to the large numbers of Medinans who settled in Egypt after the Islamic conquest.[14] For al-Taftāzānī, the history of Sufism in Egypt begins with Dhū 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 244/859).[15] Dhū 'l-Nūn was born in the Upper-Egyptian town of Ikhmīm and spent much of his life travelling in search of knowledge. Not much is known of his life other than that he was a student of *ḥadīth*, was known for dabbling in alchemy, and was arrested and taken to Baghdad during the Mu'tazilī-led inquisition (*miḥna*). He was subsequently released by the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (847-861) and returned to Egypt where he died and was buried in the Qarāfa cemetery in Cairo. Dhū 'l-Nūn is considered to be a central figure in the early development of Sufism and Sufi psychology, although he has not yet received an extended scholarly treatment.[16]

After the death of Dhū 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī, Egypt would not see another major Sufi figure until the Ayyubid era (1171-1250). This is not to say that there were no Sufis in Egypt. In combing through the various collections of biographical dictionaries devoted to the Sufis, I have found approximately sixteen Sufis of renown who lived in Egypt

[14] Muḥammad al-Taftāzānī, *Madkhal ilā 'l-taṣawwuf al-islāmī* [An Introduction to Islamic Mysticism] (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa li'l-Nashr wa'l-Tawzī', 1979), 80.
[15] Muḥammad al-Taftāzānī, *Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī wa-taṣawwufuhu* [Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī and His Sufism] (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglo al-Miṣrīya, 1969), 61.
[16] In English, the only study devoted explicitly to Dhū 'l-Nūn is A. J. Arberry's *A Biography of Dhul-Nūn al-Miṣrī* (New Delhi: Majlis-i Nazr-i 'Arshi, 1965), which is a translation of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's *al-Maknūn fī manāqib Abī 'l-Fayḍ Dhī 'l-Nūn* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1992). See also Roger Deladrière's French translation of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī's hagiography of Dhū 'l-Nūn, *La Vie merveilleuse de Dhû-l-Nûn l'Égyptien* (Paris: Sindbad, 1988). In Arabic there are a few studies devoted to collecting all the medieval material pertaining to Dhū 'l-Nūn; see Kāmil 'Uwayḍa, *Dhū 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī al-ḥakīm al-zāhid* [Dhū 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī The Ascetic Philosopher] (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1996); 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *al-'Ālim al-'ābid al-'ārif bi-llāh: Dhū 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī* [The Scholar, Servant, and Gnostic of God: Dhū 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī] (Cairo: Dār al-Rashād, 2004); and Muṣṭafā Nashshār, *Dhū 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī rā'id al-taṣawwuf al-islāmī* [Dhū 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī: Pioneer of Islamic Mysticism] (Cairo: Dār Qibā', 2006).

before 1171.[17] This list includes six Sufis who flourished before 340/951,[18] and another ten who died after 448/1056.[19] The very noticeable gap between the mid-fourth and mid-fifth Islamic centuries coincides with the installation and flourishing of the Fatimid dynasty in Cairo beginning in 969.[20] The apparent increase in the number of Sufis after the mid-fifth century A.H. may correspond to an influx of Sunni scholars with the Fatimids' growing reliance on Sunni military viziers whom they had brought in from non-Arab regions in the East, beginning with Badr al-Jamālī, who served as vizier from 1074-1094.[21] Where were the Sufis during the early Fatimid era, and why did they begin to gradually appear after the military reforms of Badr al-Jamālī?[22] The answers to these questions lie beyond the scope of the present study and deserve their own treatment. However, it may be that the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* – with its emphasis on

---

[17] I say "approximately" because there are a few Sufis who only appear in one collection and without any biographical information or date of death. I treat these as potential cases and thus do not count them as part of this larger list. Furthermore, I did not count individuals who were known for being ascetics but not Sufis. The collections consulted in compiling the list were al-Sulamī's *Tabaqāt*, al-Iṣfahānī's *Ḥilyat al-awliyā*', al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, al-Munāwī's *al-Kawākib al-durrīya fī tarājim al-sādat al-ṣūfīya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdān (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azharīya li'l-Turāth, n.d.), Ibn al-Mullaqin's *Tabaqāt al-awliyā'*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Shurayb (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānijī, 2006), and al-Suyūṭī's *Ḥusn al-muḥādara fī akhbar miṣr wa'l-qāhirah*, ed. Muḥammad Abū 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: ʿIsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1968).

[18] These Sufis are Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Naṣr al-Daqqāq al-Kabīr (d. 291/903); Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Maghribī (d. 299/911); Abū 'l-Ḥasan Bunān ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥammāl (d. 316/928); Abū 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣā'igh al-Dīnawarī (d. 330/941); Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Rūdhabārī (d. 322/933); and Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Kātib (d. 340/951).

[19] These Sufis are Ibn al-Tarjumān Muḥammad al-Ghazzī (d. 448/1056); Abū Isḥāq al-Qurashī al-Hāshimī (d. 486/1093); al-Ḥasan al-Bishr al-Jawharī (fl. 490/1096); ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan al-Khalʿī (d. 492/1098); ʿAbd al-Muḥsin ibn Aḥmad al-Warrādī (d. 495/1101); Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Zāhid al-Aqṭaʿ (d. 528/1133); ʿUthmān ibn Marzūq al-Qurashī (d. 564/1168); ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī (d. 564/1168); Ḥasan ibn ʿAtīq al-Qasṭallānī (d. 578/1182); ʿAbd Allāh al-Mughāwir al-Maghribī (fl. 580/1184).

[20] For an overview of the Fatimids in Egypt see Yaacov Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1991); Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, *al-Dawla al-fāṭimīya fī miṣr: tafsīr jadīd* [The Fatimid State in Egypt: A New Interpretation] (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣrīya al-Lubnānīya, 1992); and Paula Sanders, "The Fāṭimid State, 969-1171," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 1, 151-174.

[21] On Badr al-Jamālī see Sayyid, *al-Dawla al-fāṭimīya fī miṣr*, 209-219.

[22] There are a very few references to Sufis during the Fāṭimid period, but they are generic and it is unclear who these Sufis were. So, for example, it is reported that before the disappearance of the sixth Fāṭimid caliph al-Ḥākim (996-1021) he was seen "riding a donkey named *qamr*, passing by the people [of Cairo] with a group of Sufis accompanying him and dancing." Who these Sufis might have been is not mentioned. See al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāẓ al-ḥunafā' bi-akhbār al-a'imma al-fāṭimīyīn al-khulafā'*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad (Cairo: Lajnat Iḥyā' 'l-Turāth, 1996), 2:121.

esoteric gnosis and program of spiritual progression – fulfilled the social and religious roles that Sufism would otherwise play.[23] Likewise, the decline of the *da‘wa* that may have accompanied the Fatimid "Great Crisis" (*al-shidda al-‘uẓmā*) from 1066-1073, and the subsequent rise of Sunni military viziers may have provided a more hospitable environment for the Sufis.[24] Again, this topic deserves more attention, but this interpretation may lend support to those scholars who have argued that the collapse of the Fatimid empire and concomitant disappearance of Isma‘īlī esotericism were significant factors in the rising popularity of Sufism after the twelfth Christian century.[25]

Whether or not the Ismā‘īlī *da‘wa* was a factor in the rise of Sufism in Egypt, the fact remains that Sufism became increasingly popular in Egypt after the Ayyubid takeover of 1171. Indeed, perhaps the most fecund period of creativity and growth in the history of Egyptian Sufism was the thirteenth century C.E. ‘Alī Ṣafī Ḥusayn, the

---

[23] For an idea of the Fatimid *da‘wa* and its esoteric teachings, see James Morris, *The Master and the Disciple: An Early Islamic Spiritual Dialogue, A New Arabic Edition and English Translation of Ja‘far b. Manṣūr al-Yaman's* Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa'l-Ghulām (London: I. B. Taurus Publishers, 2001).

[24] On the Great Crisis, see Sayyid, *al-Dawla al-fāṭimīya fī miṣr*, 204-207.

[25] See, for example, ‘Alī Ṣafī Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ al-hijrī* [Sufi Literature in Egypt During the Seventh Islamic Century] (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1964), p. 35-36; and J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998 [1971]), 11, where he argues that "One of [the *silsila*-paths'] functions in Islamic life was to fill the gap left through the suppression of Shī‘ī sectarianism." See also ibid, p. 14 where Trimingham argues that the rise of formal brotherhoods took place within the context of "Sunni triumphs over Shi‘ite dynasties." While I do not see sufficient evidence to posit a historical connection between the development of Sufism and Shi‘sim, a number of scholars have noted significant similarities between Shi‘ite and Sufi doctrines. Ibn Khaldūn explicitly argued that Sufis were influenced by Ismā‘īlī ideas and practices in the *Muqaddima*: "Now what is clear is that when the Isma‘īlī Shi‘ites appeared and spoke of the *imām* and everything that idea includes, the Sufis of Iraq adopted an intermediate position between the esoteric and exoteric [aspects of that doctrine]. … So examine closely the language of those Sufis … it is taken from the language of the Shi‘ites and Rāfiḍites." See *al-Muqaddima*, edited by ‘Abd al-Salām al-Shadādī (Casablanca: Khizānat Ibn Khaldūn, 2005), 3:59-60. While not imputing any causation, Annemarie Schimmel argued that early Sufi and Shi‘i were, at an early stage, "interdependent." See *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 42. For a more thorough discussion of the relationship between Shi‘ism and Sufism, see Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*, transl. Roger Gaetani (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2010), 22-32. There is also the study of Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Shībī, *al-Ṣila bayna 'l-taṣawwuf wa'l-tashayyu‘* [The Link Between Sufism and Shi‘ism], 2 volumes (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1982 [Baghdad, 1963-1966]).

author of a study of Sufi literature during this period, wrote "Sufism in seventh-century Egypt was the most flourishing of the forms of religious life ... and the most widespread. It is not surprising that the people of Egypt and those who moved there at that time all became Sufis – regardless of their social class, ethnicity, sect, creed, and worldly or religious position. The poor and the rich, the ruler and the ruled, the educated and the ignorant, Sunni and Shi'i, even the philosopher; all became Sufis."[26] This is perhaps a bit of an exaggeration, but not by much. This period saw the appearance of the first state-sponsored *khānqāh* in Egypt, the establishment of the most famous Sufi brotherhoods in Egypt, the arrival of the disciples of the Andalusians Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) and Ibn Sab'īn (d. 669/1270), the emigration of Sufis from the Maghrib to Egypt, and the appearance of large numbers of lesser known Sufis all over Egypt, from Alexandria to Aswan. Given this widespread growth, the late twelfth through the early fourteenth century is an exceptional period in which to track the popularization of Sufism in Egypt and examine the nature and extent of its institutionalization and organization.

Perhaps the most important contribution to the history of Sufism in this period was the edition and publication of the *Risālat Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn Abī 'l-Manṣūr* (The Treatise of Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn Abī 'l-Manṣūr [d. 682/1283]) by Denis Gril.[27] Ṣafī al-Dīn recorded the names and short biographical notices for all the Sufis that he knew in Ayyubid and early Mamluk Egypt. This is an indispensible resource for reconstructing the social networks of Sufis living in Alexandria, Fustat, Cairo and even some Sufis of Upper Egypt. In addition to the work of Denis Gril, there have also been important

[26] 'Alī Ṣafī Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, p. 19.

[27] Denis Gril, *La Risāla de Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn Abī 'l-Manṣūr ibn Ẓāfir: Biographies des maîtres spirituels connus par un cheikh égyptien du viie/xiiie siècle* (Cairo: Institut Française d'Archéologie Orientale, 1986).

contributions to the study of individual Sufis of this period. In particular, the biography and poetry of the *sulṭān al-ʿāshiqīn*, ʿUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), have been the subject of much scholarly inquiry.[28] Likewise the life and career of Abū ʾl-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī has been of great interest to scholars, as has al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Badawī, the eponym of the Badawīya brotherhood.[29] The publication of an in-depth study of the endowment deeds of the *khānqāh*s of Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt by Leonor Fernandes was an important contribution to the history of Sufi hospices in Egypt.[30] Finally, in the field of Jewish studies, the Pietists who flourished during the Ayyubid and early Mamluk period have elicited much attention in the past forty years.[31]

While these studies have increased our knowledge of Ayyubid and early Mamluk Sufism in Egypt, a number of questions still remain unanswered. The foremost among them is: *Why* was Sufism so popular at that time? This remains a difficult question to answer, although some explanations have been put forward. Marshall Hodgson argued that the "human outreach" of the Muslim mystics was a powerful antidote for the "strongly kerygmatic approach" of the *ʿulamāʾ* and offered a means of sanctioning

---

[28] To cite only the major studies in English, see R. A. Nicholson, "The Lives of ʿUmar Ibnuʾl-Farid and Muhiyyu ʾDDin Ibnuʾl-ʿArabi," in *JRAS* (1906): 797-824; Issa Boullata, "Toward a Biography of Ibn al-Fāriḍ," in *Arabica* 38 (1981): 38-56; idem, "Verbal Arabesque and Mystical Union: A Study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's ʾAl-Taʾiyya Al-Kubra,'" in *Arab Studies Quarterly* 3 (1981): 152-169; Th. Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Fāriḍ, His Verse, and His Shrine* (Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2001); idem, "The Domed Shrine of Ibn al-Fāriḍ," in *AnIsl* 25-26 (1989-1990): 125-130; idem, "ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ, a Saint of Mamluk and Ottoman Egypt," in *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*, ed. Grace Smith and Carl Ernst (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1993): 85-94; idem, *ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Saintly Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), which is a translation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's wine poem (*al-khamrīya*) and his ode in T (*al-qaṣīda al-tāʾīya*); Giuseppe Scattolin, "Al-Farghānī's Commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Mystical Poem *Al-Tāʾiyyat Al-Kubrā*," in *MIDEO* 21 (1993): 331-383; idem, "More on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Biography," in *MIDEO* 22 (1994): 197-242; and idem, "Realization of Self' (anā) in Islamic Mysticism: The Mystical Experience of ʿUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ (576/1181-632/1235)," in *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 54 (1999): 117-148.

[29] On Abū ʾl-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, see chapter two below. On al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Badawī, see Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, *Al-Sayyid al-Badawī: Un grand saint de l'islam égyptien* (Cairo: IFAO, 1994), especially pp. 546-549, where she recounts the relevant studies.

[30] Leonor Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*; see Chapter One below.

[31] I discuss these in detail in Chapter Four.

religious impulses that were discouraged by the scholars.[32] Spencer Trimingham is less clear on the subject. He merely notes that the popularity of Sufism was spread after the twelfth century by individual wandering Sufi masters and small groups of their disciples.[33] Annemarie Schimmel attributed the rise of the brotherhoods to "a response to an inner need of the community that was not being met spiritually by the scholasticism of orthodox theologians."[34] 'Alī Ṣāfī Ḥusayn attributes the thirteenth century popularity of Sufism to a number of factors, including: widespread feelings of injustice, low moral standards, widespread political upheaval in the West and East, and poor economic conditions. All of these factors, he argues, drove the populace towards Sufism.[35] Finally, Jamil Abun-Nasr attributes the thirteenth century popularity of Sufism to the decline of institutionalized religious authority and a "lapse" in the credibility of the scholars because of their association with the state.[36]

These interpretive models stress the personalistic and spiritual qualities of Sufism as an attractive religious alternative to a populace seeking more than what the jurists had to offer. However, such a model assumes a great deal that cannot be justified. First, it assumes that the populace paid attention to the Islam of the jurists in the first place. Second, it assumes that Muslims (and Jews) in the Middle Ages sought some kind of "spiritual fulfillment." Third, it assumes that these individuals would then naturally gravitate to a personal/spiritual ideal rather than to the alternatives.

---

[32] Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 2 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 201-254 and especially pp. 203-206. Jamil Abun-Nasr attributes the popularity of Sufism to the decline of institutionalized religious authority and a "lapse" in the credibility of the scholars because of their association with the state.

[33] Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 10-14.

[34] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 231.

[35] 'Alī Ṣāfī Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, 23-30.

[36] Jamil Abun-Nasr, *Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 25.

These assumptions seem to me to be particularly rooted in a Protestant understanding of religion and a personal, spiritual fulfillment. I would argue that a more fruitful approach, and one that is truer to the medieval sources, is to turn the question upside down. Rather than seeking to explain why Sufism became so popular among the masses who embraced it, we ought to look to those who actively popularized Sufism and *made* it attractive to the populace in the first place. In doing so, we can see that the groups under consideration in this study actually made Sufism more accessible to the Egyptian population. In doing so, they created the conditions for the popularization of Sufism in Egypt.

In a real sense, the Sufis under consideration here brought Sufism to the masses; the masses did not come to Sufism. By focusing on the groups of Sufis active in medieval Egypt we can reconstruct their social networks and the mechanisms by which they were able to spread their ideas and practices throughout Egyptian society. One of the goals of this study will be to map this social landscape and to explore how the Sufis of Ayyubid and early Mamluk Egypt contributed to the increasing popularity of Sufism in the medieval Islamicate world. Ultimately, it will be argued that it was the organizational goals of these groups themselves that created the conditions whereby Sufism was popularized in medieval Egypt.

At the forefront of mapping this social landscape are questions about the identities of and connections between different groups of Sufis in medieval Egypt. Who, exactly, were these Sufis? Were they local or foreign-born? Did they know each other? How did they conceptualize their own authority and their connection to the founding figures of their Sufi traditions? Was Sufism in Alexandria significantly

different from the Sufism in Cairo, Fustat, or the Upper-Egyptian city of Qūṣ? In order to answer these and related questions, I will examine four different groups of Sufis with an emphasis on their socio-political positionality in medieval Egypt and how that may have informed their approach to Sufism. The four groups chosen are representative of the regional, doctrinal, confessional (i.e., Muslims *and* Jews), and socio-political diversity of Sufism in medieval Egypt during one of the most creative periods in the history of Sufism. In particular, I will focus on the social networks cultivated by these groups, the institutionalized doctrines and practices they inherited and employed, the goals of each group, and the strategies of legitimation they deployed in making their varied claims of authority. While we may not be able to explain definitively why Sufism became so popular in this period, this study seeks to make explicit the strategies, institutions, and organizations that Egyptian Sufis used to spread their teachings and thereby contributed to the larger phenomenon of Sufism.

THE CONTOURS OF THIS STUDY

The beginning point of this study is 1173, the year that Saladin founded the *khānqāh* Sa'īd al-Su'adā' in Cairo. As part of Saladin's larger program to introduce explicitly Sunni organizations into Egypt, the founding of the *khānqāh* also signals the transition of official state ideology from the Ismā'īlī Shi'ism of the Fatimids to the Sunnism of the Ayyubids and Mamluks.[37] The year 1173 thus marks the beginning of a new era for Sufism in Egypt; this was an era in which the state took an active interest in Sufism. The state wanted not only to exercise control over what type of Sunni Islam

[37] This program to introduce the educational apparatuses of Sunni Islam into Egypt is detailed in the dissertation by Gary Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt: *Madrasas* and *Mudarrisūn*, 495-647/1101-1249" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1976).

was taught but also, importantly, to have a hand in what kind of Sufism would be propagated as well. In Chapter One, "State-Sponsored Sufism," I take up this development in the context of the relationship between the state and the Sufis who lived and performed their devotions in the *khānqāh*. A prosopographical study of the officials who oversaw the *khānqāh* (the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh) provides evidence for the argument that Saladin and his successors organized the Sufis of the *khānqāh* in order to spread the ideology of the Ayyubid state. Specifically, this meant promoting a juridically rigorous Sunni Sufism informed by Shāfiʿī jurisprudence and Ashʿarī theology. The Ayyubid and early Mamluk rulers were able to implement such a plan by maintaining strict control of the Sufis who were allowed to live in the *khānqāh*. Each Shaykh al-Shuyūkh who controlled the *khānqāh* between 1173 and 1309 was a foreign-born Sufi from the East and was trained in *uṣūl al-fiqh* (jurisprudence). Surprisingly, most of them were only nominally Sufis. In addition, the Sufis they supervised in the *khānqāh* were all foreign-born as well. Despite the fact that they were not local, the Sufis of the *khānqāh* contributed to the growing popularity of Sufism by virtue of their public performances that drew large crowds from Cairo and Fustat.

The Ayyubid state did not overtly sponsor any other groups of Sufis in Egypt. Nevertheless, the Ayyubid and Mamluk states did sanction the activities of Abū ʾl-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī and his successors. Al-Shādhilī and his deputies were allowed to live and operate in Alexandria and Cairo, they were given the freedom to move about Egypt without restriction, and they were allowed to lead a pilgrimage caravan to Mecca each year. The group around al-Shādhilī would eventually become one of the largest and most popular Sufi brotherhoods in the Islamicate world. How did this happen? The

emergence of organized Sufi brotherhoods or orders is still poorly understood. As Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence have written, "The first and major point to make about Sufi orders is simple but perplexing: We don't understand them, or at least we haven't figured out how to understand them as historical developments."[38] I hope to offer one possible framework for understanding the historical development of Sufi brotherhoods by examining the nascent Shādhilīya in detail.

In Chapter Two, "State-Sanctioned Sufism," I argue that the work of transforming the nascent Shādhilīya from an informal group of disciples to a formal order was undertaken by the third Shādhilī *khalīfa* (deputy) in Egypt, Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 1309). Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh's hagiography of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, *Laṭā'if al-minan* (The Subtle Blessings), was instrumental in creating an institutionalized identity of the Shādhilīya in the figure of al-Shādhilī. I examine *Laṭā'if al-minan* in detail in order to recover the strategies of legitimation that al-Iskandarī employed to create a distinct and reproducible group identity rooted in the personality and teachings of al-Shādhilī. By institutionalizing the doctrines and practices of al-Shādhilī in a hagiography, al-Iskandarī provided the means by which future generations could recreate the conditions necessary for a distinct group identity to continue. The death of al-Iskandarī in 1309 marks the end point of this study as it represents the end of the institutional division between state-sponsored and state-sanctioned Sufis. Al-Iskandarī was himself an employee of the state, teaching at the Manṣūrīya *madrasa* in Cairo, and he worked closely with the *khānqāh* Sufis in their bid to imprison or exile Ibn Taymīya in 1305.

---

[38] Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 11.

Between 1173 and 1309 a large number of Sufis and Sufi groups were active in Egypt. As mentioned above, there were the disciples of the Andalusian hermetist Ibn Sabʿīn, the group that would eventually become the Badawīya, named for al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Badawī (d. 675/1260), the group that would become the Dasūqīya, named for Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī (d. 676/1261), and many others, including the nascent Rifāʿīya operating under the leadership of Abū ʾl-Fatḥ al-Wāsiṭī in Alexandria.[39] However, one group in particular stands out, both for its relative neglect in studies of Sufism and for the marked contrast it provides with the other groups in this study. These are the Sufis of Upper Egypt. The Sufis of Upper Egypt are an important and fascinating chapter in the history of Sufism because they constituted a group who operated completely independently of the state. Upper Egypt was a notoriously difficult region to keep under state surveillance and control. In the absence of a strong state presence in Upper Egypt, these Sufis attempted to mediate the affairs of the local sedentary population according to their normative vision of Sunni Islam.

I take up this issue in Chapter Three, "Non-State-Sanctioned Sufism," by examining a number of influential Upper-Egyptian Sufi masters. Sufism in Upper Egypt was heavily influenced (if not created) by an influx of Maghribī Sufis to Upper Egypt in the wake of the Almohad revolution in North Africa in the mid-twelfth century. Most of these Upper-Egyptian Sufis traced their spiritual authority – through one lineage or another – to Abū Madyan Shuʿayb (d. 594/1198), one of the most influential Sufi saints

---

[39] ʿAlī Ṣāfī Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, has a detailed overview of the major Sufis and Sufi authors of the seventh Islamic century; see especially pp. 34-163. I do not provide a death date for al-Wāsiṭī here because there is too much confusion around him. There seem to have been a couple of men named Abū ʾl-Fatḥ al-Wāsiṭī associated with the early Rifāʿīya or, alternatively, different traditions about a single person. The Abū ʾl-Fatḥ al-Wāsiṭī I intend here died in Alexandria ca. 1234.

of North Africa.[40] These Sufis also inherited the Maghribī model of the *ribāṭ* as a local center for education and outreach in a rural setting. Above all, the Sufis of Upper Egypt enforced a rigorous Mālikī vision of Sunni Islam. They were also instrumental in "ridding" Upper Egypt of Shiʿites and in doing polemical battle with the local Coptic Christians. Ultimately, and despite their prominent religious and social roles, none of these Sufi masters left a formal order as a legacy. I argue that this was due to the fact that there was no al-Iskandarī-like figure in Upper Egypt to institutionalize the doctrines and practices of an Upper-Egyptian Sufi master in an influential biography.

Finally, I turn to the Jewish Pietists in Chapter Four, "Subaltern Sufism." While it is true that the Pietists have received a great deal of attention from scholars of Jewish history, they have been almost completely ignored by scholars of Sufism. This is unfortunate because the Pietists offer a glimpse of just how pervasive the ideas and practices of classical Sufism had become in medieval Egypt, even among non-Muslim populations.[41] Like the other groups under consideration here, the Pietists took up common ideas and practices and used them for their own ends. In this case, the Pietists saw in Sufism a spiritual method that bore a remarkable resemblance to the practices of the biblical prophets and Talmudic sages. They argued that these practices had been lost since biblical times, and they called for their reinstatement. The Pietists hoped that by re-invigorating these ancient practices they would be able to initiate a return of prophecy that would usher in the messianic era. This was an overtly political goal since

[40] On Abū Madyan, see Vincent Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan: The Works of Abū Madyan Shuʿayb* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1996).

[41] A question that still merits investigation is whether or not local Egyptian Christians also took up some of the ideas and/or practices of Sufism at this time. While it is certainly possible, I would venture to guess that the fact that Christianity had such a rich monastic tradition in Egypt mitigated much of the interest Christians may have had in Sufism.

it would mean an end to Islamic rule and the beginning of a new Jewish state. Therefore, I examine the Pietists as a form of subaltern Sufism, emphasizing their agency as interpreters of Sufism and the strategies of resistance that would precipitate political emancipation.

These four groups represent a broad cross-section of medieval Egyptian Sufism. From Alexandria to Qūṣ, urban and rural, state-sponsored to non-state-sanctioned, highly organized to loose networks, elites to *dhimmīs*, these groups provide an overview of the diversity of Sufism in medieval Egypt. The groups in this study were politically, socially, institutionally, and even religiously diverse. Nevertheless, they resembled each other in that they all inherited and worked within a set of institutionalized doctrines and practices formulated in the tenth through the twelfth centuries C.E. In the following section, I turn to the theoretical heart of this study: the institutionalization and organization of medieval Sufism. It will become clear that what is often called "the institutionalization of Sufism" most accurately describes an earlier period during which the doctrines and practices of Sufism were formalized and standardized. It was this institutionalized Sufism that the Sufis in this study inherited and used to organize themselves in furtherance of a wide variety of goals.

Institutions, Institutionalization, and Organizations

The primary theoretical contribution of this dissertation to the field of Sufi studies will be to develop a precise and coherent terminology for the description and analysis of institutional Sufism as it relates to the history of Sufism in medieval Egypt. While the terminology I employ is drawn from modern sociology, I have tried as much

as possible to contextualize these terms in relation to the data drawn from medieval sources. It is hoped that this analysis will not only shed light on the history of Sufism in Egypt, but it may also be brought to bear on other issues in the study of medieval Islamicate societies. At the center of this problematic is the sociological concept of the *institution*, a word that has been somewhat abused in a number of treatments of medieval Islamicate society.

In the following pages, the concept "institution" will be used only in the strict sociological sense of an established custom or practice.[42] Richard Scott provides a good starting point for thinking about institutions: "Institutions consist of cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behavior."[43] Key to this definition is the "stability and meaning" that institutions provide for human behavior. To take a very simple and clear example, language is the fundamental institution of any human society. It provides stability and meaning to social behavior. As George Herbert Mead argued, language is "a principle of social organization which has made the distinctively human society possible." For Mead, who saw the formation and emergence of identifiable human selves as entirely dependent on society, communication and language are the most crucial elements that allow society to function.[44] At a very basic level, then, institutions are socially accepted

---

[42] I should stress here that my discussion of institutions is by no means exhaustive in treating the sociological literature, nor is it particularly representative of one or another school of thought. Rather, I have focused on aspects of sociological literature that are particularly helpful in describing the case of medieval Sufism in Egypt. See Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations* (London: SAGE Publications, 1995), 1-32, for a long list and discussion of the development of institutional theory in the fields of sociology, economics, and political science.
[43] Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 33.
[44] George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 260.

"ways of doing things,"[45] rules (apparent or hidden) that govern social intercourse and "regulate the relations of individuals to each other,"[46] and are indicated by "some regularity of behavior."[47]

Crucially, therefore, institutions are social and normative; they regulate the ways in which human beings interact. This can be seen in one of the more salient examples drawn from medieval Sufism, the *shaykh/murīd* (master/disciple) relationship, which we might call the "institution of *ṣuḥba* (companionship)." This institution is fundamentally social. There can be no *shaykh* without a *murīd* and vice versa. It is also normative. One desiring to become a Sufi must seek out a *shaykh* for guidance and there is an array of behaviors governed by the nature of the relationship itself.[48] The *silsila* – the Sufi chain of authority – is another institution that illustrates this definition. The *silsila* is more than a collection of names, it is a social process whereby one is connected to and authorized by a lineage of socially-sanctioned indicators of Sufi authority. Normatively, the *silsila* is only operative if the links in the chain are recognized by other Sufis; a *silsila* linking generations of unknown persons is not a true *silsila*. In other words, a *silsila* is a *silsila* because it provides stability and

---

[45] Jonn Elster, *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 427.

[46] Talcott Parsons, "Prolegomena to a Theory of Social Institutions," in *American Sociological Review* 55 (1990): 319-333; this is a reprint of the original 1934 article.

[47] Michael Hechter, "The Emergence of Cooperative Social Institutions," in *Social Institutions: Their Emergence, Maintenance and Effects*, edited by Michael Hechter, Karl-Dieter Opp, and Reinhard Wippler (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 14.

[48] The common Sufi expression, for example, that the *murīd* should be in the hands of his or her *shaykh* like a corpse in the hands of the corpse-washer, is a synecdoche for this institution in which the *shaykh*'s directives – no matter how absurd they may seem – are absolutely binding for the *murīd.* Furthermore, note the fact that even in those rare instances in which a Sufi is said to have no human *shaykh*, he or she is said to have Khiḍr as a teacher or is said to be an *uwaysī* (from Uways al-Qaranī [d. 657], the Yemenī contemporary of the Prophet Muḥammad who learned from him by means of telepathic communication). In both cases, the Sufi is still authorized by a *shaykh*, albeit an invisible or absent one. See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 28, 89, and 105; and Julian Baldick, "Uwaysiyya," in *EI2*.

meaning to the social processes related to the construction of Sufism.[49] The fact that the institution has a name is another important feature of institutions, which is that they are formalized terminologically. In other words, institutions have a formalized vocabulary that indicates the regularity of the behavior and acts governed by the institution.

David Bloor has related the linguistic element of institutions to Wittgenstein's discussion of rules and language games. Bloor uses the example of the institution of money:

> We discover the character of a coin ... by seeing how people relate to it. ... We must attend, not to the thing itself, the thing we call a 'coin,' but to the people who call that thing a coin. ... speaking of a thing as a coin isn't meant to refer to a purely verbal act, but to the whole pattern of behavior into which such explicit verbalizations are woven.[50]

For Bloor, analyses of institutions must pay very close attention to the language used by groups to describe and name their social behavior. He introduces the notion that institutions are essentially performative utterances; they come into existence by being openly expressed.[51] Note, therefore, that the object of institutional analysis is not the "purely verbal act" but rather the individuals who perform it. The master-disciple institution of *al-ṣuḥba* is instructive here. While it is true that a *shaykh* is only a *shaykh* when others name him as such, the institution of *al-ṣuḥba* is more accurately encapsulated by the interpersonal "pattern of behavior" evinced by individuals in

---

[49] Notice, for example, the report of the *silsila* of Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī in Taqī al-Dīn al-Wāsiṭī's *Tiryāq al-muḥibbīn fī ṭabaqāt khirqat al-ʿārifīn* (Cairo, n.d.), 3. al-Wasiṭī begins his account (after the obligitory *saj*ʿ opening of praise) thus: "The Rifāʿī *khirqa* is traced through the axial saint and mighty succor, the noble master ... Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī ... son of ..." He provides no explanation for why he is charting the genealogy of al-Rifāʿī because the institution of the *silsila* is understood and comes with its own set of rules; it requires no clarification or justification.

[50] David Bloor, *Wittgenstein, Rules, and Institutions* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 29.

[51] Performative utterances include statements like, "I curse you," "I bless you," and "We mourn the loss of ..." The very act of saying one of these phrases brings into existence the state being described.

relation to acknowledging the *shaykh*. In other words, in Bloor's terms, institutions have "no existence independent of [actors' and participants'] beliefs and utterances about it; hence, it cannot be described 'more closely' by, as it were, getting behind these descriptions. Because they are self-referring there is nothing behind them."[52] Thus, to study an institution is to study the individuals who identify it and the patterns of behaviors governed by that identification.

This reflexivity means that institutions are perpetuated self-referentially by social actors over time and become social realities for successive generations of actors.[53] This dialogic and diachronic aspect of institutions is what Durkheim called a "social fact" and what Berger and Luckman have termed the "social construction of reality."[54] For Durkheim, as individuals interact regularly over time, their repeated actions become common knowledge for the group and become the socially accepted ways of doing things. These actions become "social facts," and the persistence of these facts "has the effect of crystallizing, of instituting outside ourselves, certain modes of action and certain ways of judging which are independent of the particular individual will considered separately."[55] For Durkheim, then, such actions repeated often enough in a social setting become objective facts for the group. These actions will then become the rules that govern future possibilities of social behavior. Importantly, such "facts" are perceived by individual actors to be external to the group. Berger and Luckman call

---

[52] Bloor, *Wittgenstein, Rules, and Institutions*, 35.

[53] This is the quality of institutions that Arthur Stinchcombe stresses in his discussion of sociological theory. His account of historicist explanations of social phenomena pays close attention to the ways in which certain institutional structures perpetuate themselves across time by providing the grounds of possibility (what he calls a "causal structure") for each succeeding generation. See Stinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 101-129.

[54] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1966).

[55] Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 45.

this ever-accumulating store of social acts the "sedimentation of meaning."[56] This sedimentation or accumulation of social knowledge has the effect of externalizing social reality. In other words, while institutions can only exist in and between individuals who participate in their maintenance, they are paradoxically perceived to be "outside" of the social context.

To return to the example of the master-disciple relationship, or *al-ṣuḥba*, the behaviors and relations to which this term refers are the result of an accumulation of mimetically-learned social knowledge. The fact that these behaviors and relations are actually a linguistic/ performative construct does not, however, render the *shaykh*'s authority any less for his or her followers. On the contrary, it is precisely the mimetic, self-referring, and self-perpetuating quality of institutions that gives the *shaykh* his authority. The authority of the *shaykh* is objectively real for his or her disciples because that authority is drawn from a pre-established social repertoire.

Finally, although they are objective facts for individuals, institutions nevertheless change over time.[57] George Herbert Mead argued persuasively that institutions do not "crush or blot out individuality," but rather provide the framework for "originality, flexibility, and variety" of conduct.[58] In this regard, Anthony Giddens has done much to clarify the relationship between human agency and the social institutions that shape human behavior.[59] Giddens attempts to mediate between the poles of what he calls "objectivist" theories, which focus on institutions that constrain

---

[56] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 69.

[57] William Sewell, in his treatment of the concept of "structure" pays particular attention to this aspect of institutions, which he calls structures or schemas. See William Sewell, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation," *The American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1992): 1-29.

[58] George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, 262.

[59] Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1984), xvii.

human activity, and "subjectivist" theories, which place human actors at the center of institutions as repositories of social knowledge. He focuses on the concept of "structuration," the idea that there is a "duality of structure" – the structure and the actor – that continually interact over time.[60] "The *durée* of day-to-day life occurs as a flow of intentional action." Humans do not simply react (like complicated amoebas) but are thinking beings who, at any given moment, can explain why they are doing something. Institutions are the social ideas and forms that provide these possible explanations for behavior.[61]

Like Mead and Bloor, Giddens uses the example of the institution of language. We speak English intentionally and for specific reasons. If someone asks, "Why are you saying that?" we respond, "Because I want X or Y," or "I want to communicate X or Y." These intentional acts have unintended consequences for the institution of language. Small grammatical mistakes, clever turns of phrase, new ways of communicating an emotion or an idea, all feed back into the social matrix and provide the raw data of what is possible for the next set of speakers. A similar process of transformation can be observed in all institutions. Time is of central importance in this regard because institutions arise and are maintained through repetitive acts over time. Thus, for Giddens, "structure is not 'external' to individuals," but is "recursively constituted" (i.e. repeated across time and space) by the individuals who make up the institution. The continual feedback loop of intentional acts and unintentional consequences creates a

[60] Giddens's use of "structure" here indicates a tendency among sociologists to shift between the language of institutions, structures, rules, schemas, and more. This slippage in the field between "institution" and "structure" can be maddening, and it is clear that authors writing of each are in most cases describing the same phenomenon. Thus, what Sewell calls "schemas," and Bourdieu calls "mental structures" and Giddens calls "rules" and Levi-Strauss called "structure" are all, more or less, similar to my discussion of "institution."

[61] Ibid, 8.

dialectical process of institutional change. The duality of structure, or "structuration," is thus the result of this ongoing dialectic of institutions as they are recursively constituted. Thus, structure is neither external nor internal to institutions; it is both.

To summarize, I will use the concept of an institution as a heuristic device to describe and analyze the social activity of Egyptian Sufis. There are five essential elements of the concept as I will use it. First, institutions are *social*. They exist within the interpersonal relationships between members of social groups. Institutions are a social phenomenon, and an analysis of any institution must focus on the individuals performing any given set of regularized behaviors. Second, institutions are *normative*. They regulate the behaviors of actors in a group. Therefore, an institution will be revealed by the presence of an identifiable set of regular behaviors over time. Third, institutions are *mimetic* and *linguistically formalized*. They originate in the accumulation of repetitive and learned social behaviors. Therefore, institutional analysis must pay close attention to the formalized language used by actors in a given collectivity and the behaviors that are linked to that language. Fourth, by virtue of the preceding three points, institutions are *objectively real* for the actors who comprise them. As succeeding generations of social actors accumulate behavioral knowledge, institutions perpetuate themselves by providing the grounds of future social possibility and become objective facts. Fifth, by shifting the focus between the individual and the institutional, one can observe that institutions are *changeable* over time. The continual feedback loop of expected behaviors and unintended consequences will produce changes to any given institution over a period of time.

Given this notion of the institution, the claim by many scholars that medieval

Islamicate society lacked strong or stable institutions is worth reconsidering. After the publication of George Makdisi's *The Rise of Colleges*, in which he argued that education in medieval *madrasa*s was formal and highly institutionalized, some scholars pointed out that in actuality, most educational practices took place outside the *madrasa*.[62] Historians like Jonathan Berkey and Michael Chamberlain have paid close attention to the social practices and the physical locations involved in medieval Islamic education. They focus on the interpersonal relations between those who sought education or on the strategies of social survival of well-educated civilian elites.[63] These studies have revealed how fluid and adaptive medieval education was and that it took place in a wide range of social settings. This fluidity led them to argue that medieval Islamicate society lacked stable institutions and that education was, for the most part, an informal enterprise. However, careful attention to the concept of the institution as outlined here reveals that this argument deserves modification.

While it is true that the educational practices described by scholars like Berkey and Chamberlain were not necessarily tied to a formal physical location, given the previous discussion, their own data suggests the opposite of what they concluded: medieval Islamicate society was in fact highly institutionalized. If one wished to get an education in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, there was a socially-accepted way of doing it. One had to find an authorized teacher, there were unspoken rules that governed the teacher-student

---

[62] George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981). For an in-depth review and summary of the state-of-the-field in studies of the *madrasa*, see Devin Stewart, "The Doctorate of Islamic Law in Mamluk Egypt and Syria," in *Law and Education in Medieval Islam*, ed. Joseph Lowry, Devin Stewart, and Shawkat Toorawa (E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2004).

[63] The primary proponents of this view are Abdul Latif Tibawi, "Muslim Education in the Golden Age of the Caliphate," in *Islamic Culture* 28 (1954): 418-438; idem, "Origin and Character of *al-Madrasa*," in *BSOAS* 25 (1962): 225-238; Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); and Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

relationship, one had to study certain books (these changed depending on the *madhhab*, which is itself an institution), and the process ended with the granting of an *ijāza*, or, more specifically, an *ijāzat al-iftā' wa'l-tadrīs* (authorization to issue legal judgments and teach).[64] One could not expect to obtain a legitimate education outside the limits of these institutionalized practices. By using more precise and sociologically grounded language to talk about institutions and institutionalization, it becomes clearer that medieval Islamic education was in fact both formal and stable in institutional terms. This institutional stability is indicated by the very regularity of behavior described by Berkey and Chamberlain. In addition, their arguments could be further sharpened by insisting on the institutional formality of medieval education while highlighting its organizational informality. Their assertion that medieval Islamic educations practices were informal and institutionally unstable seems due to the ambiguity of the English word "institution" itself.

There are two connotations of the word "institution" that, when conflated, lead to a number of conceptual difficulties. On one hand, the word "institution" is used by social scientists in the sense outlined in the preceding pages. On the other hand, scholars in a number of other disciplines, including history and religious studies, often use "institution" in the sense of an organizational unit tied to a physical structure or set of structures.[65] Thus, scholars often refer to *khānqāh*s, *madrasa*s, and *dīwān*s (government ministries) as "institutions" because they are physical structures that

---

[64] This process is described in detail by Stewart, "The Doctorate of Islamic Law in Mamluk Egypt and Syria."

[65] This connotation of the word is summarized by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as, "An establishment, organization, or association, instituted for the promotion of some object, esp. one of public or general utility, religious, charitable, educational, etc., e.g. a church, school, college, hospital, asylum, reformatory, mission, or the like." *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), q.v. "institution."

house regular and predictable social activity. It is the conflation of these two connotations of the word that have led to confusion in some studies of medieval Islamicate societies. It would be more accurate to describe behavior in terms of institutions and physical structures in terms of organizations.

*Khānqāh*s and *madrasa*s do not exist in the abstract. In fact, they only exist when they are deliberately instantiated in a physical space for a specific purpose. In strict sociological terminology, *khānqāh*s and *madrasa*s are therefore organizations and not institutions. Richard Scott has noted that institutions and organizations have been conflated a great deal in much social analysis and this is certainly the case in the scholarship on medieval Islam.[66] In order to delineate institutions from organizations conceptually, some sociologists have described organizations as the *deliberate and corporate instantiation* of one or more institutions for one or more goals.[67] The *khānqāh* Sa'īd al-Su'adā' in Cairo, for example, was a physical structure deliberately set aside by the Ayyubid and Mamluk states for the organized performance of Sufism. Erik Ohlander is one of the few historians of Sufism to take note of such a distinction by writing of "institutions of place" as distinct from "institutions of process" in his history of the Suhrawardīya brotherhood and the ways in which it developed from the interplay of both.[68] The latter corresponds to the term "institution" as I use it here while the former corresponds to the concept of an organization. While Ohlander's distinction is apropos, his designation of "institutions of place" lacks the theoretical

[66] Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 14.
[67] This discussion is rooted in Jon Elster, *Explaining Social Behavior*, 426-443, whose treatment is drawn from Claus Offe, "'Institutions' Role in the Distribution and Control of Social Power," in *Rethinking Political Institutions: The Art of the State*, edited by Ian Shapiro, Stephen Skowronek, and Daniel Gavlin (New York: New York University Press, 2006).
[68] Erik Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: 'Umar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 28-29.

utilty of the concept of an organization, which can be used to highlight the goals of collectivities and the reasons individuals within it have for coming together. This distinction between institutions and organizations can thus add much to the social history of medieval Egypt.

The second theoretical contribution of this study to the field of Sufi studies will be to develop a more precise vocabulary for the description and analysis of Sufi organizations. The sociological literature on organizations, like that of institutions, is vast.[69] Here, however, it will be sufficient to mention a few of the key analytical distinctions made by scholars of organizations.[70] Following Richard Scott's study of organizations, I will distinguish between "formal" and "informal" types of organizations. *Formal organizations* are those in which "social positions and the relationships among them have been explicitly specified and are defined independently of the personal characteristics and relations of the participants occupying these positions."[71] *Informal organizations* are those in which "it is impossible to distinguish between the characteristics of the positions and the prescribed relations and the characteristics and personal relations of the participants."[72] In other words, social roles in formal organizations are fixed independently of personalities while informal organizations are dependent on the personalities of their constituent elements. This

---

[69] For an overview of this vast literature, see Richard Scott, *Organizations: Rational, Natural, and Open Systems* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2003), 31-101.

[70] One of the problems with using organizational theory to study medieval societies is that, in the modern era, organizations are conceptually quite different from those in the Middle Ages. Scott, *Organizations*, 7, for example, argues that the proliferation of complex organizations is one of the defining features of modernity. James Coleman has likewise argued that, organizationally, the modern world is fundamentally different than the medieval. See Coleman, *Power and the Structure of Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974), 13-31. For this reason, I will keep my discussion of organizations here very basic and avoid trying to understand medieval society entirely through the lens of modern organizational theory.

[71] Scott, *Organizations*, 20.

[72] Ibid., 20.

will become a critical distinction in the chapters that follow. We shall see, for example, that the organization of the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ *khānqāh* was very much a formal one, while Sufi brotherhoods, at least in their early stages, were informal organizations and thus dependent on specific personalities for their functioning and continued existence.

As mentioned above, an essential feature of organizations is that they are created in the furtherance of a specific end or goal. However, not all organizations articulate or pursue these goals in the same way. Richard Scott sees three different trends in the scholarly literature about organizations that deal with this issue. First, theories of "rational system organizations" stress that goals are clearly articulated and pursued almost single-mindedly within the formalized social structures of the organization.[73] This model is particularly adept at analyzing organizations with clearly and explicitly defined goals and means of achieving them. However, if this model works well for organizations with clearly defined goals and structures, it does not work well in describing more loosely structured collectivities. Thus, the second model, that of "natural system organizations," views organizations as "collectivities whose participants are pursuing multiple interests, both disparate and common, but who recognize the value of perpetuating the organization as an important resource. The informal structure of relations that develops among participants in such organizations is more influential in guiding the behavior of participants than is the formal structure."[74] Finally, some organizations seem to be hardly organized at all. Theorists have thus developed models of "open system organizations," which are "congeries of interdependent flows and activities linking shifting coalitions of participants embedded

---

[73] Ibid., 33-55.
[74] Ibid., 28; see especially pp. 56-81.

in wider material-resource and institutional environments."[75] This model is useful when the boundaries of the organization are somewhat porous and individuals within the organization cultivate connections and resources from outside the organization, drawing on technology, natural resources, or other human actors.

These three paradigms (Scott uses "paradigm" in the sense articulated by Thomas Kuhn) provide us with different ways of thinking about organizations and how they function. In the chapters that follow, I will refer to these paradigms whenever they shed light on one or more aspect of a particular Sufi organization. Thus, for example, the *khānqāh* Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ can be effectively analyzed as a rational system organization. The early social formation of the Shādhilīya can be understood in terms of natural system organizations. The Sufis of Upper Egypt, as loosely connected networks of individuals, can be understood in light of open system organizations. I will use these insights drawn from organizational theory as a heuristic device to better understand the distinctions between different froups of Sufis in Egypt. This will not only highlight the diversity of Sufism in medieval Egypt but will aid in fleshing out the precise ways in which these groups pursued their goals.[76]

To reiterate, I will use the term "institution" in this study to describe and analyze those (non-physical) "structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behavior." The term "organization," in contrast, will be used to describe the deliberate and corporate instantiation of one or more institutions in

[75] Ibid., 29; see especially, pp. 82-101.

[76] In this regard, I have tried to keep in mind and in practice one of the guiding principle of Max Weber's sociology, which is that the categories of analysis – the "pure" or "ideal types" do not "refer to an objectively 'correct' meaning or one which is 'true' in some metaphysical sense." In other words, the models and heuristic devices constructed to analyze the data should never be confused for the data itself. See Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, transl. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 89-90.

furtherance of one or more goals. The utility of such an analytical separation becomes clearer by noting that many scholars of Sufism have called the *khānqāh or ribāṭ* a "Sufi institution," and the development of formalized Sufi brotherhoods "institutionalized Sufism."[77] In the former instance, a physical structure and the activites that take place within its walls are being described, and in the latter, a social process; yet both are lumped together under the rubric "institutionalized Sufism." The result is that the *khānqāh/ribāṭ* and the formal brotherhoods are often assumed to be two aspects of the same social process and development. Nehemiah Levtzion, for example, writes that, "The institutionalization of Sufism advanced when rulers began to endow hospices (*khanqah*s) for Sufis."[78] Arberry, in his brief account of Sufism, writes, "With the 6/12th century comes the foundation of the great Sufi Orders (*tarīqa*, lit. 'way'). Hitherto the convents had been isolated oases in the desert of worldly life; the time had come for them to be linked up in a widespread brotherhood of mystics acknowledging a common master and using a common discipline and ritual."[79] Annemarie Schimmel also connected the development of Sufi brotherhoods with the appearance of Sufi lodges. "At the time that the fraternities came into existence, the center of mystical activity

---

[77] Examples of the *khānqāh* as institution include, but are not limited to, Doris Behrens-Abuseif, "Change in Function and Form of Mamluk Religious Institutions," in *AnIsl* 21 (1985): 73-93; Jacqueline Chabbi, "Khānḳāh," in *EI2*; Leonor Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*; Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 2: 213-214; Th. Emil Homerin, "Saving Muslim Souls: The Khānqāh and the Sufi Duty in Mamluk Lands," in *Mamluk Studies Review* 3 (1999), 66; Neil MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo: A Topographical Study* (Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press, 1992); and S. Babs Mala, "The Sufi Convent and its Social Significance in the Medieval Period of Islam," in *Islamic Culture* 51 (1977): 31-52. Scholars who devote space to the development of "institutionalized Sufism" include Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 18-20, 166-181; Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2: 210-214 (while Hodgson does refer to the institutionalization of Sufism, he is careful to call the orders/brotherhoods "organized," a point to which I will return below); and Fritz Meier, *Essays on Islamic Mysticism and Piety*, transl. John O'Kane and Bernd Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

[78] Nehemiah Levtzion, "The Dynamics of Sufi Brotherhoods," in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel Eisenstadt, and Nehemia Levtzion (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002): 109-118; quotation on 111.

[79] A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystics of Islam*, 85

was no longer the private house or shop of the master. A more institutional structure proved to be necessary to cope with the growing number of disciples and adepts."[80] Finally, ʿĀmir al-Najjār argues that the appearance of the *khānqāh* in Cairo in 1173 marked the first appearance of a "practical Sufism" (*taṣawwuf ʿamalī*) that led to the proliferation of Sufi brotherhoods.[81] The development of Sufi lodges and brotherhoods were not necessarily connected in this way, and the two phenomena need to be studied on their own terms. As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, the organization of the *khānqāh* in Cairo had almost nothing to do with the development of Egyptian Sufi brotherhoods.

Having delineated the difference between institutions and organizations, and having proposed coherent theories about using them, I will conclude by highlighting a few additional terms that will be useful in subsequent chapters. First, "social structure" is a phrase that has been used across a wide range of disciplines, given a variety of meanings, and used to perform an assortment of analytical functions.[82] The primary conceptual disagreement in the development of the term is whether it refers to the relationships between individuals or groups.[83] Here, I will propose a very simple

---

[80] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 231.

[81] ʿĀmir al-Najjār, *al-Ṭuruq al-ṣūfīya fī miṣr nashʾatuhā wa-nuẓumuhā wa-ruwwāduhā* [The Sufi Orders in Egypt: Their Growth, Structures, and Pioneers] (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1995 [1975]), 62.

[82] On the history, development, and usage of the concept "social structure," see Charles Crothers, "History of Social Structure Analysis," in *Structure, Culture, and History: Recent Issues in Social Theory*, edited by Sing C. Chew and J. David Knottnerus (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002): 3-41. Crothers notes that the term has been used in four general ways: 1) "Social Organization" – social structure is the concrete relations amongst individuals and groups. 2) "Social Background Characteristics" – social structure is the relations between people with shared social backgrounds. 3) "Institutional Structure" – social structure is relations among people, categories, etc. laid down by ongoing organizations. 4) "Underlying (Deep) Social Structure" – social structures exist and constrain the possibilities of social activity.

[83] Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), s.v. "Structure." Williams summarizes his discussion by noting that "[i]t is clear from the history of structure and structural that the words can be used with this emphasis: to include the actual construction with special reference to its

definition of social structure and use it throughout the dissertation. In this study, social structure will refer to "the ordered interrelationships between the different elements of a social system or society."[84] In other words, social structure will refer to the relationships between the groups of individuals (collectivities) that comprise social units or society as a whole. In this study, social structure will be a useful concept for describing the relations between various Sufi groups active throughout medieval Egypt.

If social structure refers to the relations between collectivities within society at large, then I will use *relational structure* to describe the relations between individuals within collectivities. As Lopez and Scott use the concept, relational structure describes "social relations themselves, understood as causal interconnection and interdependence among agents and their actions."[85] The interconnection and interdependence between a Sufi *shaykh* and his disciple is an example of relational structure. I will also use the concept of *institutional structure*, to describe the "cultural or normative patterns that define the expectations that agents hold about each other's behavior and that organize their enduring relations with each other."[86] In other words, if relational structure describes the actual relationship between the *shaykh* and his disciple, institutional structure refers to the social rules and behavioral expectations inherent in that relationship. Finally, relational structures may take the form of networks or hierarchies. In a network, the relations that connect actors to each other

---

mode of construction; or to isolate the mode of construction in such a way as to exclude both ends of the process – the producers (who have intentions related to the mode chosen, as well as experience from the material being worked) and the product ... much structuralist analysis is formalist in the sense of separating form and content and giving form priority," 357-358.

[84] Marshall Gordon, ed., *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 517.

[85] José Lopez and John Scott, *Social Structure* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000), 3.

[86] Ibid.

are called "ties;" these ties might be "strong" or "weak."[87] Strong ties are generally considered to be those that obtain between family members or close friends while weak ties are those that obtain between acquaintences or coworkers. While the actors in a network are more or less linked horizontally,[88] the actors in a hierarchy are organized vertically with power and prestige at the "top" and those with little or no power and prestige at the "bottom." The contrast between network and hierarchical relational structures will be an important component of my analysis of the Sufis of Upper Egypt in chapter three.

A final word remains to be said about the word "institutionalization." I will use institutionalization in this study to describe the process of knowledge/behavior accumulation over time that results in an institution. In other words, institutionalization describes the processes that result in structures that impart stability and meaning to social behavior. The constellation of knowledge and behaviors subsumed within the institution of *al-ṣuḥba*, for example, is the result of a long process of institutionalization that began with the earliest Sufi relationships in Baṣra and Bagdad and subsequently formalized in Sufi manuals of instruction like al-Suhrawardī's *Ādāb al-murīdīn*.[89] I will call the processes that led to the emergence of organized Sufi brotherhoods, by contrast and not surprisingly, "organization." It is a simple matter, but it will make delineating social processes that much easier.

---

[87] Stanley Wasserman and Katherine Faust, editors, *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 17-21. John Scott, *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook* (London: SAGE Publications, 2000), 1-6. Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited," in *Sociological Theory* 1 (1983): 201-233.

[88] Much of contemporary network theory measures power, prestige, and authority by the number of ties one has, not by any default position within a relational structure.

[89] Abū 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-murīdīn*, edited by. Menahem Milsom (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1978).

According to this model, the formalization of Sufi doctrine and praxis that occurred in the tenth through the twelfth centuries C.E. was a process of institutionalization. The doctrinal works of al-Kalābādhī (d. 990), al-Sarrāj (d. 988), al-Sulamī (d. 1021), al-Qushayrī (d. 1072), and al-Hujwīrī (d. 1077), despite their differences and disagreements, all combined to develop the notion of *al-taṣawwuf*.[90] The Sufi way is conceptualized as a path (*ṭarīqa*) to be traversed (*sulūk*) under the guidance of an authorized master (*shaykh*). The Sufi way was conceptualized as a path (*ṭarīqa*) to be traversed (*sulūk*) under the guidance of an authorized master (*shaykh*). The *ṭarīqa* was also understood in terms of formalized spiritual states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*). The fact that these early manuals of Sufism display such terminological consistency indicates that a high level of institutionalization occurred in Sufism by the late elventh and the early twelfth centuries C.E. If one wanted to be a Sufi, there was a particular way of doing it and a stable terminology that went with it. By the early thirteenth century, these doctrines, practices, and terminologies were taken for granted by Egyptian Sufis. This is not to say that Sufis did not discuss them anymore. On the contrary, a Sufi like al-Shādhilī was able to work with the institution of Sufism in new ways and towards novel ends. Thus, while al-Shādhilī was able to innovate within the *doxa* of Sufism, he did not question or move beyond its basic assumptions and limits.

This being the case, then it follows that the further development of Sufism for specific ends ought to be understood as constituting a process of increasing organization. In the chapters that follow, a major component of the analysis will be devoted to exploring the different ways each of the four Sufi groups in Egypt organized

---

[90] Ahmet Karamustafa describes this process in great detail in *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 83-113.

itself and and modified preexisting institutions for a variety of goals and purposes. The Ayyubid and Mamluk states sought to organize and sponsor Sufism in their own way in order to spread the ideology of the state. Ibn ʻAṭāʼ Allāh al-Iskandarī's hagiography of Abū ʼl-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī was meant to take discursive control of al-Shādhilī's legacy and organize the nascent Shādhilī group under his leadership. The Sufis of Upper Egypt were loosely organized in networks in competition with the state. Finally, Abraham Maimonides attempted to organize a preexisting Pietist movement and its institutions in order to effect the return of prophecy and usher in the messianic era. In each case, the previously institutionalized doctrines and practices of Sufism provided the raw materials from which to create and sustain new social formations that were deliberately organized in furtherance of some goal or goals.

CHAPTER ONE

STATE-SPONSORED SUFISM:
The Sufis of the *khānqāh* Sa'īd al-Su'adā'

> The Sufis of the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' *khānqāh* used to go to the al-Ḥākim mosque[1] for Friday prayers, and the people of Fustat would come to Cairo to gain blessing and benefit by watching them. [The Sufis] had a dignified appearance on Friday: The Shaykh of the *khānqāh* would lead, and the most important of the servants would carry the noble *rab'a*[2] on his head. They walked in silence and demureness to the door of the al-Ḥākim mosque that is near the *minbar*. They would enter a compartment – which was on the left as one entered the aforementioned door – known as the compartment of the *basmalah* even today because of the *basmalah* written in large letters on it. Then the Shaykh would make a prayer of greeting to the mosque from under a canopy (*saḥḥāba*) that he always had with him and the people would pray [in turn]. Then everyone would sit, and the sections of the Qur'ān [from the *rab'a*] would be distributed amongst them, and they would read the Qur'ān until the sound of the *mu'adhdhin*. Then the copies would be collected and they would busy themselves with the *rak'a*s and listening to the *khuṭba*, all of them listening humbly. When it was time for prayer and invocations, one of the readers of the *khānqāh* would get up and read something appropriate from the Qur'ān and then bless the Sultan Saladin, the endower of the *khānqāh*, and the rest of the Muslims. When he had finished, the Shaykh would get up from his prayers and then walk from the mosque to the *khānqāh*, the Sufis [walking] with him in the same way they had come to the mosque. This is one of the most beautiful customs of the people of Cairo.[3]

The preceding account, reported by the Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 846/1442) in his description of the Sa'īd al-Su'adā, the first *khānqāh* (Sufi hospice) in

---

[1] The al-Ḥākim mosque was a Fāṭimid congregational mosque. Construction began in Ramaḍān 990 by the Fāṭimid caliph al-'Azīz (975-996) and was completed by his son al-Ḥākim (996-1021). The mosque was originally outside Cairo (near Bāb al-Futūḥ), but when the military vizier Badr al-Jamālī (d. 487/1094) enlarged Cairo, it was incorporated inside the new walls; see *al-Khiṭaṭ* 3:222-230.

[2] This was originally a leather covered box used to carry perfume. It came to be used to carry a copy of the Qur'ān that has 30 volumes, one for each *juz'*; probably not leather, but silver, maybe encrusted with jewels or at least decorated with engravings.

[3] As reported by Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Tamīmī al-Qaṣṣār (d. 800/1397) to al-Maqrīzī. See *al-Khiṭaṭ* 3:571.

Egypt, highlights three important features of state-sponsored Sufism in medieval Egypt.[4] First, it contrasts the Sufis infused with *baraka* (blessedness) with the citizens of Fustat, who have come to be partake of the *baraka*. The weekly procession to the al-Ḥākim mosque was a regular and predictable occasion for the average person to be near a major source of *baraka*, which had the potential to heal, bless, and generally improve the life of one who came into contact with it.[5] Second, despite the division, it indicates that there was a space in which the distinction between high culture and popular culture was collapsed in a weekly event.[6] Every Friday, the government-funded elites of the *khānqāh* – and they **were** elites – participated with the common people in a social intercourse from which they both benefited – *baraka* for the spectators and status for the Sufis. Third, it indicates that the Sufis of the *khānqāh* were a fixture of medieval urban Cairene life. Finally, and without being explicit, al-Maqrīzī's source implies a sense of continuity and timelessness to the ritual: he narrates in the past progressive tense, mixing perfect and imperfect verbs; he calls the ritual an *'āda* (custom), which connotes a continuously repeated action; and he refers to the blessing of Saladin as the endower (*wāqif*) of the *khānqāh*, an act that ties the

---

[4] The Sa'īd al-Su'adā was also known as al-Ṣalāḥīya, *duwayrat al-ṣūfīya*, and in later times, *jāmi' al-khānqāh*; see 'Alī Bāshā Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-tawfīqīya al-jadīda li-miṣr al-qāhira* (Cairo: Būlāq, 1888), 1:90 and 4:102-107.

[5] *Baraka*, which I understand as a social exchange, remains a vastly under-theorized concept in medieval Islamic practice. One of the few authors to treat this phenomenon at length is Joseph Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Jews and Muslims in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 101-108. While Meri's treatment is an excellent description of the phenomenon in a range of medieval sources, he does not theorize how, precisely, something becomes laden with *baraka* in the first place. *Baraka*-laden individuals (and the objects associated with them), I argue, are the product of the **social** processes of sanctification. The best treatment of the social nature of sainthood, and thus the exchange of *baraka*, in medieval Islam is still Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), xvii-xliv; Omid Safi treats the political exchange of *baraka* in *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 25-157. Finally, in the modern period, Edward Westermarck devotes much space to the concept of *baraka* in his ethnographical study of Morocco, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* (London: 1926).

[6] Boaz Shoshan, "High Culture and Popular Culture in Medieval Islam," *Studia Islamica* 73 (1991): 67-107.

practice of the present to the foundational past (the *khānqāh* had been founded approximately 200 years before the life of al-Maqrīzī's informant).

This sense of permanence and stability is bolstered by the fact that the *khānqāh* was a physical structure, highly visible to the inhabitants of the city, and endowed in perpetuity with provisions for food and stipends for the inhabitants.[7] This notion of a stable, institutionalized Sufism at the *khānqāh* has been taken up by scholars.[8] In these accounts, the *khānqāh* becomes the locus of "institutionalized Sufism" and is sometimes tied to the development of the Sufi brotherhoods.[9] However, close attention to the men who lived in the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' reveals that they were not directly involved with the development of Sufi brotherhoods at all. In fact, the Sufis of the *khānqāh* and those of the nascent brotherhoods were members of completely different social worlds. The lack of precision about the role of the *khānqāh* in the development of medieval Egyptian Sufism is rooted in an overreliance on endowment deeds (*waqfīyāt*) and topographical works such as al-Maqrīzī's famous *al-Mawā'īẓ wa'l-i'tibār* as the primary means of

---

[7] The primary historian of the *khānqāh* in Egypt, Leonor Fernandes, has devoted most of her work to this aspect of the *khānqāh* (the endowment document or *waqfīya*); see in particular *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt*, 21-25.

[8] Scholars whose work tends to treat the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' as a stable institution include Behrens-Abuseif, "Change in Function and Form of Mamluk Religious Institutions;" Jacqueline Chabbi, "Khānḳāh;" Leonor Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution* (despite the title, her work is primarily about the development of the *waqfīya*, by far the most permanent and stable aspect of the *khānqāh*'s operation); Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 2: 213-214; Th. Emil Homerin, "Saving Muslim Souls: The Khānqāh and the Sufi Duty in Mamluk Lands;" Ira Lapidus, "Ayyubid Religious Policy and the Development of the Schools of Law in Cairo," in *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire* (Cairo: al-Nadwa al-Dawlīya li-Tārīkh al-Qāhira), 279-286; Neil MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo: A Topographical Study*; S. Babs Mala, "The Sufi Convent and its Social Significance in the Medieval Period of Islam;" 'Āṣim Rizq, *Khānqāwāt al-ṣūfīya fī miṣr fī al-'aṣrayn al-ayyūbī wa'l-Mamlukī* [*Sufi khānqāhs in Egypt During the Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*] (Cairo: Maktabat al-Madbūlī, 1997); J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 18-20 and 166-181.

[9] To cite only one example, Ira Lapidus writes that "Muslim cities harbored many groups of these Sufis who lived according to the disciplined 'way' of their master in convents called *zāwiyas*, *khānqās,* and *ribāṭs* ... On the basis of a common rite or discipline or acceptance of the teachings of a common founding sheikh these Sufi convents were affiliated into orders with branches throughout the Muslim world;" idem, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 105.

reconstructing the *khānqāh*'s history. By ignoring the social history of the Sufis who actually lived in the *khānqāh*, scholars have not paid attention to the subtle ways in which the *khānqāh* differed from other forms of Sufism in medieval Egypt.

The corrective to this historiography offered here is two-fold. First, one must offset the documentary and topographical history of the *khānqāh* with a social history of the people who actually lived there. I propose to focus specifically on those who were chosen to oversee its operation, an office known as the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh – "the chief Shaykh" – who was hand-picked by the Sultan to control the operations of the *khānqāh*. Second, using this prosopographical material as a starting point, I will then describe the actual functions of the *khānqāh*.[10] Because the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh was hand-picked by the Sultan, it is not difficult to discern the political, social, and religious roles the Ayyubid and Mamluk Sultans meant the *khānqāh* to play. A prosopographical study of the Sufis who lived in the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' will provide a clearer picture of the social world of the medieval *khānqāh* in Egypt and the data for a more precise analysis of its institutional and organizational aspects. One contribution of this study will therefore be a reconstruction of the history of the office of the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh from 1173, the founding of the *khānqāh*, until 1310, the death of the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh who was a contemporary and colleague of the Shādhilī Sufi master Ibn Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī.

Drawing on this prosopographical material, I will argue four related points. First, as a deliberate instantiation of a particular kind of Sufism, the *khānqāh*, rather

[10] Prosopography, as formulated by Lawrence Stone, is the study of the biographies of large groups of individuals in order to draw larger conclusions about the social worlds in which they moved. A central concern is detailing the social connections between various members of a society; see Lawrence Stone, "Prosopography," in *Daedalus* 100 (1971): 46–71.

than an "institution," is more accurately described as a formal organization.[11] It had a hierarchical relational structure, corporate goals, and governmental oversight. Furthermore, because the *khānqāh* had clearly articulated goals, it can be understood in light of rational-system theories of organizations that stress the corporate goals of an organization more than the roles of the individuals within it.[12] In this way, the *khānqāh* was much closer to the state-run *madrasa*s in Cairo, Fustat, and Alexandria than to the *ribāṭ*s and *zāwiya*s of the local Sufi population. Second, the directorship (*mashyakha*) of the *khānqāh* was reserved for individuals who were politically well-connected and often only nominally associated with Sufism. The men who controlled the Sa'īd al-Su'adā', those with the title Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, were foreigners, not born in Egypt, and were more career politicians of the "civilian elite" than they were mystics.[13] These political Sufis were only loosely connected, if at all, to the local communities of Sufis in Egypt. This was a political tactic, designed both to exclude the local population from power and to bring religious organizations under the direct control of the state via hand-picked proxies. Third, given the political nature of the office of Shaykh al-Shuȳukh and the organizational nature of the *khānqāh*, the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' can be described as what Althusser termed an "ideological state apparatus," since its purpose was to disseminate state (Ayyubid and Mamluk) ideologies.[14] A corollary of this project was the attempt to

---

[11] A formal organization, as I indicated in the Introduction, is an organization with clearly defined roles and offices that exist independtedly of any one individual; see above, p. 32.

[12] See the Introduction, pp. 33-34.

[13] Carl Petry argues that Mamluk society (and I would include Ayyubid society as well) was divided into three segments: "a ruling military caste, the Mamluks; a civilian administrative class, the majority of whom were designated 'ulama' or "those learned in the law"; and the masses upon whose labor and obedience the ruling class depended." See idem, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 3.

[14] Louis Althusser, Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *On Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008 [1970]).

co-opt the terminology and popularity of Sufism in Egypt. It is for this reason that I call this type of Sufism "state-sponsored." The Sufis were on the government payroll and, in return, they were expected to perform certain functions for the state and, it seems, model a certain type of Sufism for the local populace. Finally, despite the fact that the Sufis of the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' were of a completely different social world from those who would eventually form organized brotherhoods, I will argue that the *khānqāh* nevertheless played a role in the popularization of Sufism in medieval Egypt. As prominent members of the civilian elite who were seen on the streets of Cairo every week, they effectively put Sufism on the map for many inhabitants of the city. This was particularly true after the state-sponsored *khānqāh*s began to proliferate in Mamluk Egypt.[15] Thus, one of the unintended consequences of the founding of the *khānqāh* was the routinization of public Sufism, which ultimately fed into the growing popularity of Sufism all over Egypt.

The following discussion begins with an overview of the development of the *khānqāh* in Egypt. The focus will then shift to determining the exact meaning of the word *khānqāh* in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt and showing how the *khānqāh* differed from other Sufi structures, the *ribāṭ* and the *zāwiya*. This will lead to a description of the origins of the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, which lie in twelfth-century Baghdad, and the way this office made its way to Egypt. These sections will provide the historical context for the larger prosopographical section, which records the history of the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh from 1173 until 1310. From this prosopography, it will become clear that the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' was deliberately organized to co-opt the growing

---

[15] State-sponsored Sufism became widespread after the founding of the *khānqāh* of Baybars al-Jāshankīr in 706/1306 and the *khānqāh* of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad at Siryaqūs in 725/1324; see Fernandes *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, 25-32; and *al-Khiṭaṭ* 3:574-576 and 3:587-589.

popularity of Sufism in Egypt and spread the official Shāfi'ī/Ash'arī ideology of the Ayyubid state.

THE KHĀNQĀH IN EGYPT

The difficulties involved in studying the *khānqāh* in Egypt are legion. First and foremost, most of the sources about the history and development of the *khānqāh* date to the Mamluk period (1250-1517). This is particularly unfortunate because during this time the term began to be used interchangeably with *ribāṭ*, *zāwiya*, and even *madrasa*.[16] The problem of the sources' slippage in usage is further compounded by local variations. An early example of this variation is Ibn Jubayr's account of his travels. After visiting Damascus at the end of the 12th century, he remarks, "There are many *ribāṭ*s, which they call *khānqāh*s."[17] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, writing in the mid-14th century, uses *khānqāh* and *zāwiya* almost interchangeably.[18] While many have attempted to untangle the precise meaning of these three terms across time and place, this is ultimately an exercise in futility, as their meaning was never stable. By abandoning the project to define, once and for all, what these terms refer to over the entire Islamicate world, we become free to determine how and why they were used locally at a given time.[19] As a

[16] Behrens-Abuseif, "Change in Function and Form of Mamluk Religious Institutions;" Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education*, 45-50.
[17] *Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr* (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt li-Ṭibā'a wa'l-Nashr, 1984), 256. This fits in well with medieval Maghribī usage, which seems to have generally preferred the term *ribāṭ* to the others.
[18] Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 170-171.
[19] A similar problem plagued scholars of the *jizya* and *kharāj* taxes in early Islamic practice; usage varied by time and place, and early attempts to define the *jizya* and *kharāj* monothetically were not convincing. It was not until Daniel Dennet's *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950) that scholars took notice of the regional variations of usage, based upon pre-Islamic practice.

prelude to the discussion of these terms' usage in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, it will be worth sketching the development of the words *ribāṭ*, *zāwiya*, and *khānqāh*.[20]

The term *ribāṭ* (pl. *rubuṭ* or *ribāṭāt*), in its earliest usage, probably referred to a place to tie (*rabaṭa*) horses.[21] With the eighth-century Islamic conquests pushing into Byzantine territory, the word came to be associated with fortified points on the Byzantine frontier (*thughūr*) in Anatolia; those who lived there were known as *murābiṭūn*, "those who dwell on the frontier," in Chabbi's formulation.[22] In this context, the term might best be translated as "outpost." It was to the *ribāṭ* that those responding to the call of *jihād* would travel, and it was there that they would take up residence. As the concept of *jihād* became increasingly theorized in both legal and Sufi circles, the *jihād* against the ego-self (*jihād al-nafs*) became a reason in itself to live in a *ribāṭ* on the frontier. Living in isolation, with little access to the finer things in life, provided an atmosphere conducive to a self-reflective and ascetic lifestyle.

David Cook traces this development to the early to mid-ninth century, when Sufis began propagating their vision of Islam and the place of *jihād* in that vision.[23] For these early Sufis, the *ribāṭ* was a place where they were "tied to God," struggling against both the corporeal enemy (Byzantium) and the spiritual enemy (the ego-self, or *nafs*). The older sense of a military outpost gradually came to be replaced by the sense of a

---

[20] J. Chabbi's "Ribāṭ," in *EI2* is by far the best review of the literature and problems associated with all three terms and their evolving meanings.

[21] See C. Edmond Bosworth "The City of Tarsus and the Arab-Byzantine Frontiers in Early and Middle ʿAbbāsid Times," *Oriens* 33 (1992): 284-286; Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, 10-13; and J. Chabbi "Ribāṭ."

[22] Ibid.

[23] David Cook, *Understanding Jihād* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 35. The fact that neither al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857) nor Ibn Abī Dunyā (d. 894), the two individuals most closely associated with the development of the doctrine of the spiritual/ascetic *jihād*, cite the famous "greater *jihād*" ḥadīth, would seem to indicate that this particular tradition postdates them; see Cook, *Understanding Jihād*, 36.

monastery, a change that most likely occurred in the Seljuk lands of the mid-eleventh century. This usage subsequently became widespread, especially in Anatolia and Iraq, where *ribāṭ* was used almost exclusively to refer to a Sufi hospice.[24] However, one must be particularly sensitive to local variations in usage. For example, the term *ribāṭ* in the Maghrib was used as early as the tenth century to denote outposts that doubled as "rural mosques and centers of instruction," which were part of a larger urban outreach to spread Mālikī law into rural areas.[25] Outposts like these subsequently became centers of Sufi activity, and Sufis in the Maghrib came to be known as *murābiṭūn*. In al-Andalus, by contrast, the term *murābiṭ* was generally restricted to someone who defended Islamic territory from the Christian kingdoms in the north.[26] In Egypt, the *ribāṭ* was used in a sense similar to the Maghribī conception.

Zāwiya (lit. "corner") originally referred to the corners of a mosque where teachers would sit and hold lessons for students.[27] There were, for example, six *zāwiya*s in the Mosque of of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ in al-Fustat, where famous teachers would sit with their circles of students and give weekly lessons.[28] The Sufis took up this model of the master surrounded by a circle of disciples, and some began holding their spiritual sessions in private residences, which began to be known as the *zāwiya* of a certain person. Particularly in Egypt, the tomb of a saint would became known as a *zāwiya*, such as the *zāwiya* of the famous Dhū ʾl-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859) in the Qarāfa

---

[24] Chabbi, "La fonction du ribat à Bagdad du V e siècle au début du VII e siècle," in *REI* 42 (1974): 101-121.
[25] Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 33.
[26] Ibid., 39.
[27] Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, 13-16; J. G. Katz and C. Hamès, "Zāwiya," *EI2*; Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 52 and 58; Rachida Chih, "Zâwiya, sâha et rawda: développement et rôle de quelques institutions soufies en Égypte," *AnIsl* 31 (1997): 49-60.
[28] *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 3:144-170.

cemetery.[29] As time went on, the *zāwiya* could refer to a free-standing structure, a tomb, the corner of a mosque, or someone's house. There is even an Egyptian reference to a *zāwiya* inside a *ribāṭ*, which indicates that certain Sufis laid claim to a corner of a *ribāṭ*.[30]

Khānqāh, finally, is of Persian origin and literally means "house-place," or simply "residence."[31] The origins of this type of religious structure are still obscure, but it is generally agreed that it emerged in Khurāsān in the tenth century and was associated with the Karrāmīya and the tomb of Ibn Karrām (d. 255/869).[32] The practices of the Karrāmīya became part of larger movements within Khurāsānī Pietism and the *khānqāh* – as a meeting place for Sufis – began to spread. Two developments would help spread the *khānqāh* all over the medieval Middle East. First, the Sufi Abū Sa'īd b. Abī 'l-Khayr (d. 440/1049) developed one of the first systematic rules for Sufis living in a *khānqāh*.[33] These rules provided a practical guide that could be disseminated along with the basic structure of the *khānqāh* as a place for communal living.[34] Second, and of the most consequence for this study, the Great Seljuks (1040-1194) were keen to found and endow *khānqāh*s (along with *madrasa*s) as a means to bolster and spread the Seljuk ideology.[35] This was carried out in a number of ways, but essentially, those who taught at these organizations were required to teach certain subjects or risk being dismissed

---

[29] Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, 14.

[30] Denis Gril, *La Risāla*, 71 [Arabic section].

[31] Chabbi, "Khānḳāh," *EI2*; Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, 16-19; Rizq, *Khānqāwāt al-ṣūfīya*, 21-35; Erik Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 28-34; Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 97-100; Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 56-60.

[32] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 30.

[33] R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 76; Fritz Meier, *Abū Sa'īd b. Abī 'l-Khayr (357-440/967-1049): Wirklichkeit und Legende* (Leiden-Tehran-Liège: Brill, 1976).

[34] While Ibn Abī 'l-Khayr may have been the first to record a rule for novices, it was the *Ādāb al-Murīdīn* of Abū Najīb al-Suhrwardī (d. 1168) that became popular and widespread as a model manual for Sufi life.

[35] Safi details the Seljuk ideology in *The Politics of Knowledge*, 3-9 and 82.

from their posts. It is thus not surprising that the Seljuks supported Abū Sa'īd monetarily in exchange for his support.[36] After the so-called "Sunnī revival" (which was more about stamping out Shī'ism than anything else), the *khānqāh* moved West along with Khurāsānī Sufism and Seljuk Sunnism.

This brief review is not meant to be exhaustive or even to engage the myriad thorny issues attendant upon these three types of Sufi structures. Rather, I have outlined the barest essentials of the history of these terms in order to provide background for the Egyptian case.

The only substantive source of information on Ayyubid-era Sufi structures is al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ*, which was written almost 250 years after the fact. Nevertheless, from al-Maqrīzī's descriptions a few conclusions can be drawn about terminological usage in medieval Egypt. In total, al-Maqrīzī discusses 59 Sufi buildings: 21 *khānqāh*s, 12 *ribāṭ*s, and 26 *zāwiya*s.[37] Of these 59, only seven predate the Mamluk period, and of these seven only one is a *khānqāh* – Sa'īd al-Su'adā'. Examination of these 59 entries shows that al-Maqrīzī differentiated between the *khānqāh*, on the one hand, and the *ribāṭ* and *zāwiya* on the other. For al-Maqrīzī, the *ribāṭ* and *zāwiya* are independent structures, founded by or for an individual Sufi master. Thus, for example, the *ribāṭ/zāwiya* of Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn Abī 'l-Manṣūr (d. 682/1283) was built by him in the Qarāfa cemetery. Ṣafī al-Dīn himself calls it a *zāwiya*, while al-Maqrīzī calls it a *ribāṭ*.[38] The *khānqāh* was something different.

The precise meaning of the term *khānqāh* in early Mamluk Egypt can be seen clearly in two structures founded by the Mamluk Sultan Baybars al-Bunduqdārī (1260-

---

[36] Ibid., 137-144; Safi offers a much more nuanced description of the relationship between Abū Sa'īd and the Seljuk rulers, to which I can not do justice here.

[37] *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 3:567-624.

[38] *al-Khiṭaṭ* 3:604; Gril, *La Risāla*, 7-9 [French section].

1277), who founded both a *khānqāh* (the first after the Sa'īd al-Su'adā') and a *zāwiya*. The former was the Bunduqdārīya, founded in 673/1274 in Cairo, and the latter was the Zāwiyat al-Khiḍr outside Cairo (no date given). These were both founded by Baybars and both given an endowment; the difference between the two is that the *khānqāh* was built, like the Sa'īd al-Su'adā', as an all-purpose complex for housing Sufis from abroad.[39] The *zāwiya*, by contrast, was founded specifically for the *shaykh* Khiḍr al-'Adawī (fl. late 13th century), a Damascene Sufi who had clairvoyantly predicted al-Bunduqdārī's rise to power.[40] For al-Maqrīzī then, the difference in terminology reflects the precise purpose for which the structure was intended by its founder. In other words, *ribāṭs* and *zāwiyas* were structures founded by or for a specific Sufi master. The *khānqāh*, by contrast, was a structure founded by a Sultan, an amīr, or, (in one case) a powerful merchant, to house large numbers of Sufis in general.[41] I should stress that this is a generalization specific to Egypt. Jonathan Berkey's exhortation not to get tangled up in terminology is worth repeating: "To popular perception, [these institutions] signified less a particular place, institution, or building than a *function*."[42] Functionally, the *khānqāh* in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt was a state-sponsored organization meant to house Sufis in general.

But what kinds of Sufis and to what ends? Ibn Baṭṭūṭa offers a clue: when he visited Egypt in the fourteenth century, he reported the following: "There are many *zāwiya*s in Egypt, which they call *khānqāh*s, and the princes compete with each other to build them. Each *zāwiya* in Egypt was appointed for a particular group of Sufis, most of

---

[39] *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 3:584.
[40] *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 3:609-610.
[41] This is the *khānqāh Kharrūbīya* which was founded by Zakī al-Dīn al-Khurūbī (fl. 14th century?), a powerful merchant of Cairo; see *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 3:599-600.
[42] Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 50.

whom were Persians (*a'ājim*)."[43] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa rightly saw the *khānqāh* as a site of political competition and as full of Sufis from the East, as opposed to local Sufis. To understand this, I will turn to the specific history of the Sa'īd al-Su'adā'.

SA'ĪD AL-SU'ADĀ'

Saladin founded the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' *khānqāh* in 569/1173 as part of his massive building campaign to change the face and shape of Cairo and Fustat.[44] As he did with most structures, Saladin repurposed an existing Fatimid building for a new use; in this case he used the palace of a eunuch of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustanṣir (1036-1094), known by the nickname Sa'īd al-Su'adā' - "happiest of the happy."[45] The sources do not record the date the palace itself was originally built, but the eunuch was killed in 544/1149, and it is safe to assume that his residence was built in the early twelfth century. The palace was across the street from the Dār al-Wizāra (the vizier's palace). Ruzzīk ibn al-Ṣāliḥ Ṭalā'i' (1154-1161), the vizier of the Fatimid caliphs al-Fā'iz (1154-1160) and al-'Āḍid (1160-1171), then had a tunnel (*sirdāb*) built to connect the two structures.[46] Ibn Taghrī Birdī says that the purpose of the tunnel was to combine the two palaces into one large residence for Ṭalā'i''s massive entourage.[47]

---

[43] Ḥusayn Mu'nis, *Ibn Baṭṭūṭa wa-riḥlātuhu: taḥqīq wa-dirāsa wa-taḥlīl* [*Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and his Journeys: An Edition, Study, and Analysis* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 2003), 43.

[44] There is some discrepancy in the medieval sources about the actual date of the founding of the *khānqāh*, see Rizq, *Sufi Khānqāhs in Egypt*, 129. On Saladin's building project and the ways it changed these cities see Neil MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo: A Topographical Study*.

[45] *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 3:570; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk miṣr wa'l-qāhira*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1992), 6:54-55; he died after being thrown from the top of the palace (who threw him is not indicated) and he landed on his head.

[46] *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 3:570;

[47] *al-Nujūm,* 4:50-51. On Ṭalā'i' ibn Ruzzīk see Sayyid, *al-Dawla al-fāṭimīya fī miṣr*, 280-286; Thierry Bianquis, "Ṭalā'i' b. Ruzzīk, al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ," in *EI2*.

Saladin assumed the Fatimid vizierate in 1169, and in 1171 he had the *khuṭba* read in the name of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustaḍīʾ (1170-1180), effectively putting an end to Fatimid rule.[48] He immediately began founding and endowing *madrasa*s in Fustat and Cairo, enlarging and strengthening the city walls, in addition to founding and endowing the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ in 569/1173. There were undoubtedly *zāwiya*s and *ribāṭ*s in Egypt prior to this time, and the Karrāmīya (who, it will be remembered, were associated with the spread of the *khānqāh*) had a lodge in Fustat.[49] Nevertheless, the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ *khānqāh* was without a doubt the first of its kind in Egypt, owing to the fact that it was not built for any particular person or Sufi; rather, it was founded by the state, provided with a generous endowment, and meant to house large numbers of Sufis.

The original *waqfīya* (endowment deed) of the *khānqāh* has not survived. Fortunately, al-Maqrīzī had access to it and reproduces some of its stipulations in his description of the *khānqāh*: First, the *khānqāh* was for the sole purpose of housing 300 "poor and itinerant Sufis arriving from abroad." Second, a *shaykh* was to be appointed to lead the *khānqāh*, a position that would be known as the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh. Third, the revenues of the endowment were to be used to pay the salary of the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, to provide "food, meat, and bread" (*ṭaʿām wa-laḥm wa-khubz*) for the Sufis

---

[48] The intrigue and drama surrounding the decision to proclaim the Abbasid *khuṭba* is itself quite interesting because Saladin did not want to upset the Fāṭimid caliph al-ʿĀḍid. There are a number of theories as to who exactly was the first person to proclaim the Abbasid *khuṭba* and whether or not he even acted on Saladin's orders; see Andrew Ehrenkruetz, *Saladin* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1972), 89-92; Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt," 236-238

[49] At the very least the *zāwiya* of Dhū ʾl-Nūn al-Miṣrī mentioned above; on the *Karrāmīya* having a lodge in al-Fustat, see Rizq, *Khānqāwāt al-ṣūfīya*, 25.

every day, in addition to occasional sweets and soap.[50] Fourth, if a Sufi died with more than 20 *dinārs* to his name, some of the money was to be divided up among the other Sufis (the rest was presumably confiscated by the state or went back into the endowment). Finally, if a Sufi wanted to perform the *Ḥajj*, he would be given time and funds to do so.[51]

Who lived at the Sa'īd al-Sua'dā'? In general, it was men from the East. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa noted that they were all Persian, while al-Maqrīzī only wrote that they were from "abroad" (*al-bilād al-shāsi'a*). It is not easy to be more precise than this, as the relevant medieval biographers and historiographers show no interest in answering this question in more detail. There are a few scattered references to individuals staying in the *khānqāh* in Cairo, but these are few and far between. The earliest individual I have been able to find is Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 596/1199). Al-Ṭūsī was born in Khurāsān, traveled to Baghdad and Mecca – where he specialized in Shāfi'ī *fiqh*, and then came to Cairo in 579/1183. Ibn Khallikān records that when al-Ṭūsī came to Cairo he stayed at the Sa'īd al-Su'adā'.[52] Another Persian, Majd al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 622/1225), came to Cairo approximately a generation after al-Ṭūsī and also stayed at the Sa'īd al-Su'adā'.[53] Al-Dhahabī does not record al-Qazwīnī's *madhhab* affiliation. However, since almost every Sufi who stayed there was a Shāfi'ī, it is very likely that he was a Shāfi'ī, as will

---

[50] The revenues of the *waqf* were generated by six separate sources, including a few farms outside of Cairo and a store in Cairo. These properties were owned by the state and set aside to generate income for the *khānqāh*. For a description of the properties and the amount of money they generated annually, see Rizq, *Khānqāwāt al-ṣūfīya fī miṣr*, 134

[51] *al-Khiṭaṭ* 3:570-572. Fernandes discusses these stipulations in detail (including the amount of bread and meat given out) in *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, 23-24.

[52] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' al-zamān,* ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, n.d.), 4:204; see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1981), 21:387 for a fuller account of al-Ṭūsī's life and for a complete list of the biographical sources that describe him.

[53] *Siyar*, 22:249-250.

become clear in the pages that follow. These two individuals, out of the thousands who stayed at the *khānqāh* between 1173-1309, are probably typical examples. They were scholars from the East, most likely Shāfiʿīs, and came to Egypt in hopes of obtaining teaching positions. In the case of these two, al-Ṭūsī was successful but al-Qazwīnī was not; he left Egypt and died in Mosul.

While not much can be said about the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ based on the biographies of these two men, they fit into a larger pattern of those allowed to stay at the *khānqāh*. I will demonstrate this pattern by focusing on the most elite residents of the *khānqāh*, those who held the directorship, the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh.

Contrary to Fernandes' assertion that the holder of this office operated independently of the Sultan before the fourteenth century, I have found that the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh was always hand-picked by the Sultan to be his representative among the Sufis in Cairo.[54] This is clear from the facts that the title was given to only one person at a time in all of Egypt and that this person was always a member of the civilian elite. That is to say, the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh belonged to that class of individuals who made their living as professional scholars and thus relied on the cultivation of relationships with the political and ruling classes. The title was meant not only to refer to the master of the *khānqāh*, but also to convey the sense that this office was held by the chief Sufi in Egypt, parallel to the office of chief judge, Qāḍī al-Quḍāt.[55] This intention is highlighted by two points. First, in addition to bearing the

---

[54] Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, 23.

[55] The Qāḍī al-Quḍāt was an Abbasid innovation meant to consolidate the jurisprudential activities of the realm under a single authority. Each major city usually had such an office to oversee the legal aspects of rule. It was not until the time of the Mamluk Sultan al-Bunduqdārī in Egypt that each of the four *madhhab*s were represented by a Qāḍī al-Quḍāt in most cities; a development that would become the norm. On this topic, see J. H. Escovitz, "The Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships in the Mamlūk

title Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, the holder was also responsible for the *mashyakhat al-ṣūfīya fī al-diyār al-miṣrīya* (directorship of the Sufis of Egypt).[56] Second, when the Mamluk Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir (ruled three separate times: 1293-1294, 1299-1309, and 1309-1341) founded his own *khānqāh* in Siryāqūs (8 miles north of Cairo) in 725/1324, he declared that the *shaykh* of his *khānqāh* would now be the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh.[57] This was a surely a political move meant to bring the Sufis into his good graces by means of his largesse, and thus to exercise more direct control of the Sufi community. This creation of an office for a "chief *shaykh*" was new in Egypt, but the idea for the office had already been in practice in the East and was brought to Egypt by Saladin.

THE OFFICE OF SHAYKH AL-SHUYŪKH

Where did this office come from, and what did it entail? By the time of al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418), the office belonged to the *shaykh* of the *khānqāh* at Siryāqūs, who was "one of the holders of religious positions (*waẓā'if dīnīya*) who do not have an audience with the Sultan."[58] It was an essentially bureaucratic position, much less important than those of the class who had audiences with the Sultan.[59] However, during the Ayyubid and early Mamluk period, the office carried more prestige, as the

---

Empire," in *JAOS* 102 (1982): 529-531; idem, "Patterns of Appointment to the Chief Judgeships of Cairo during the Baḥrī Mamlūk Period," in *Arabica* 30 (1983): 147-168; and idem, *The office of Qâḍî al-Quḍât Cairo under the Baḥrî Mamlûks* (Berlin: Schwarz, 1984).

[56] There is no source that says explicitly, "The title of the office was both X and Y." However, most of the biographical dictionaries and historical chronicles refer to the holder of office as Shaykh al-Shuyūkh and as having "administered the directorship" (*waliya mashyakhat al-ṣūfīya fī al-diyār al-miṣrīya*).

[57] *al-Khiṭaṭ,* 3:587-589; Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, 29-32.

[58] Abū 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-a'shā' fī ṣinā'at al-inshā'*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Rasūl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Khadīwīya, 1913-1920), 4:37-38. al-Qalqashandī says explicitly that the directorship of the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' in his time had even less prestige than that of the directorship at the Siryāqūs *khānqāh*.

[59] Those "religious positions" that involved an audience with the Sultan included the chief judge, the military judge, the chief muftī, the treasurer, and the overseer of the state's endowments; see al-Qalqashandī, 4:34-37.

following description of its history will show. An early attestation of the title (as opposed to the office) occurs in the *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfīya* of al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), wherein he describes Muḥammad ibn Khafīf al-Shīrāzī (d. 371/981) as *shaykh al-mashāyikh fī waqtihi* – the greatest *shaykh* of his time.[60] A generation later, in the *Risāla* of al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), Ibn Khafīf has become "*shaykh al-shuyūkh wa-wāḥid waqtihi*" (the *shaykh* of *shaykh*s and the peerless one in his time).[61] In later biographical dictionaries, Ibn Khafīf is usually described as both *shaykh al-shuyūkh* and as *shaykh iqlīm fārs* – the *shaykh* of the region of Fars in southwest Iran – or *shaykh al-shīrāzīyīn*.[62] He was remembered as a great Sufi, a Shāfiʿī and an Ashʿarī, who had visited Abū ʾl-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936) in person. The shifting nomenclature – *shaykh al-mashāyikh*, *shaykh al-shuyūkh*, *shaykh iqlīm fārs*, *shaykh al-shīrāzīyīn* – undoubtedly indicates that Ibn Khafīf was a Sufi of some stature and influence in the East. There is not, however, any indication that he was a "professional Sufi," that is a Sufi on the payroll of the government for his services as a *shaykh*. This may be the earliest attestation of the title, which suggests that in the late tenth century the title *shaykh al-shuyūkh* existed but was

---

[60] al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfīya*, 462-464. On Ibn Khafīf in general, see Ahmet Karamustafa's succinct overview the sources and secondary literature in *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 56-58, especially note 2.

[61] al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-qushayrīya*, 119-120.

[62] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī tārīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭāʾ and Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭāʾ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, 1992), 14:288; *Siyar*, 16:342; al-Yāfiʿī, *Mirʾāt al-jinān wa-ʿibrat al-yaqẓān* (Ḥaydarābād, 1337 AH), 2:397; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿīya al-kubrā*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī and ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw (Cairo: ʿIsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1964-1976), 3:149-163; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa'l-nihāya*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 1997), 15:408 [but Ibn Kathīr does not call him *Shaykh al-Shuyūkh* or any other title]; *Shadharāt*, 4:386-388. Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Rāzī (father of the famous Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī), in his book *Ghāyat al-murām fī ʿilm al-kalām* (The Utmost Desire Concerning Theology) called al-Shīrāzī *shaykh al-shīrāzīyīn*, quoted by *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿīya*, 3:159.

not yet attached to an office.[63] One must look elsewhere for the beginning of a group of professional Sufis.

The first attestation of an actual office was arguably with the establishment of the Ribāṭ Shaykh al-Shuyūkh in Baghdad. This would prove to be an important development, and I will show that Saladin modeled his *khānqāh* on this *ribāṭ*. The Ribāṭ Shaykh al-Shuyūkh and the office that went with it were the brainchild of Ibn al-Muslima (d. 1058), the vizier to the Abbasid Caliph al-Qā'im (1031-1075) and the statesman who helped Ṭughril Beg (1040-1063) institute the Seljuk regime in Baghdad.[64] Ibn al-Muslima, it seems, was attempting to shore up the Caliph's weakened authority in light of (earlier) Buyid and Fatimid provocations, and instituting the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh was part of his larger strategy.[65] Ibn al-Muslima was joined in this venture by a certain 'Amīd al-'Irāq (d. 456/1063).[66] Also known as 'Amīd al-Mulk al-Kundurī, he was the vizier of Ṭughril Beg (1037-1063), and was most famous for not being as good at his job as his successor, Niẓām al-Mulk.[67] Together, Ibn Muslima and 'Amīd al-Mulk oversaw construction of the *ribāṭ*, which was destroyed when the Tigris flooded in 1074. It was subsequently rebuilt by Abū Sa'd al-Nīsābūrī (d. 479/1086), a Sufi and close friend

[63] There clearly remains much work to do on the early history of this office.

[64] On the biography of Abū 'l-Qāsim Ibn al-Muslima, also known as the *ra'īs al-ru'asā'*, see *al-Muntaẓam*, 16:41-43; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān fī tārīkh al-a'yān* (Ḥaydarābād, 1951-1952), 8:403-4; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī 'l-tārīkh*, ed. Abū 'l-Fidā 'Abd Allāh al-Qāḍī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1987), scattered references between 8:271 (when he became the vizier) and 8:344 (where Ibn al-Athīr describes his gruesome death at the hands of the Fāṭimid-sympathizer al-Basāsīrī); and Claude Cahen, "Ibn al-Muslima," in *EI2*.

[65] Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, vol. 2, Herbert Mason transl. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 145-157.

[66] *al-Kāmil*, 8:344 [i.e. the year 450 AH]: "As for 'Amīd al-'Irāq, he was killed by al-Basāsīrī. He was a brave man and known for his chivalry (*futuwwa*), he is the one who built the Ribāṭ Shaykh al-Shuyūkh."

[67] See George Makidisi's very lively account of how bad al-Kundurī was at his job in "al-Kundurī , 'Amīd al-Mulk Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Manṣūr," in *EI2*. For a more positive review of his life, see Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, 5:138-143.

of Niẓām al-Mulk.[68] It was Abū Sa'd's brother, Abū 'l-Barakāt Ismā'īl (d. 441/1050),[69] who first held the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh in Baghdad, which Abū Sa'd himself took over upon his brother's death.[70] Not coincidentally, Abū Sa'd was a student of Abū Sa'īd ibn Abī 'l-Khayr, the person to whom medieval writers often attributed the building of the first *khānqāh*. Abū Sa'd and his brother may, therefore, have been chosen to direct the *ribāṭ* because of their association with this famous Sufi who was loved by the Seljuk Sultans.

The *ribāṭ* itself enjoyed a favorable reputation and was part of the Seljuk ideological project of education.[71] It is described in medieval chronicles as an educational site and often appears side-by-side with the Niẓāmīya *madrasa* as a major center of study.[72] This appears to have been the first time that a state-endowed Sufi hospice was connected to an official title that was transferrable once the holder of office died. The office was hereditary and, after the death of Abū Sa'd, it went to his

[68] Massignon summarizes the building of the Ribāṭ in *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, 2: 152-153. Ibn al-Athīr's account is as follows: [In 479, al-Nīsābūrī] died. He is the one who took over building the *ribāṭ* on the Ma'allā river and oversaw its completion (*wuqūfahu*). It is known as the *ribāṭ shaykh al-shuyūkh* today. He [also] oversaw the completion of the *Niẓāmīya*. He was quite important in his time and was fiercely loyal to those who sought refuge with him. He renovated the shrine of Ma'rūf al-Karkhī [a famous Baghdād Sufi who died ca. 815] after it burned down. He had a huge residence near the Sultan's [residence], and it used to be said of him, 'praise God who took Abū Sa'd's head out from a *muraqqa'*, if he had taken it from a normal robe (*qabā'*), we would surely have been destroyed.'" This is a reference to his Sufi initiation; see *al-Kāmil fī 'l-tārīkh*, 8:479. Ohlander, I should point out, assumes that there are two different *ribāṭ*s known as *ribāṭ shaykh al-shuyūkh* – one built by Abū Sa'd and one built by Ṣadr al-Dīn. This mistake is based upon the fact that Ibn Kathīr says that the Abū Sa'd built his *ribāṭ* on the Mu'allā canal in Baghdad and that Ṣadr al-Dīn's *ribāṭ* was in the Mashra'a neighborhood of Baghdad. Both statements are true and both refer to the same place, as the Mu'allā canal ran through the Mashra'a; see Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 108-109.

[69] Abū 'l-Barakāt Ismā'īl al-Nīsābūrī: *al-Muntaẓam*, 18:50; *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 8:188;

[70] Abū Sa'd Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Dūst al-Nīsābūrī: *al-Muntaẓam,* 16:235; al-Dhahabī, *al-'Ibar fī khabar man ghabar*, ed. Muḥammad Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1985), 2:340-341; *al-Bidāya,* 16:91; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā'ūṭ and Maḥmūd al-Arnā'ūṭ (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1986), 5:344 (where it is mentioned that he was in good standing with Niẓām al-Mulk).

[71] Note that the function of this Baghdad *ribāṭ* is essentially the same as the *khānqāh* of Egypt; indicating the importance of paying close attention to function rather than nomenclature.

[72] Massignon describes it thus: "the *ribāṭ* and the Nizāmīya *madrasa* provided shelter both for monastic life and Ash'arite theology," *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, 2: 153.

son, Abū ʾl-Barakāt Ismāʿīl (d. 541/1146), and then to his grandson, Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, (d. 580/1184). This individual provides the connection between the Shaykh al-Shuūkh in Baghdād and the office that would eventually appear in Egypt. Ṣadr al-Dīn was an important Sufi-statesman, whom Ibn al-Athīr says, "combined leadership of the sacred and the profane" (*jamaʿa bayn riʾāsat al-dīn waʾl-dunyā*); and Abū Shāma mentions him repeatedly in his role as a representative of the Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (1180-1225). The latter sent Ṣadr al-Dīn on a number of diplomatic missions to Saladin.[73] This indicates very plainly that the chief Shaykh, in the wake of the Seljuk bureaucratization of Baghdad, had become a combination of Sufi and statesman. Once this idea was established, it was only a matter of recreating the office in other major cities, and in fact, this is precisely what Nūr al-Dīn Zengī (d. 1174) did in Damascus and Saladin would do in Cairo. It thus seems that, indirectly at least, Saladin was attempting to replicate the ideological projects of al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh.

It is difficult to determine precisely how the office of the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh developed in Damascus and Cairo for two reasons. First, since the endowment deed for the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ no longer exists, it is impossible to know whether or not specific stipulations were laid out for choosing the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh. One would have expected such a stipulation to be contained in the endowment deed: the deed for the *khānqāh* at Siryāqūs, for example, stipulates that the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh[74] must be

---

[73] Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm: *al-Kāmil*, 10:129-130; Abū Shāma, *ʿUyūn al-rawḍatayn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn al-nūrīya waʾl-ṣalāḥīya*, ed. Aḥmad al-Baysūmī (Damascus: Manshūrāt Wizārat al-Thaqāfa, 1991), 2:66-67, 80-82, 121-122; Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAlī Abū ʾl-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar*, ed. Muḥammad Zaynhum ʿAzab and Yaḥyā Sayyid Ḥusayn (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1998-1999), 3:88; *al-Nujūm*, 6:97-98; Ohlander treats this family of Shayh al-Shuyūkh in more detail in *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 107-112.

[74] It should be remembered that this *khānqāh* was meant by the Mamluk Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir to replace the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ as the primary locus of state-sponsored Sufism and was therefore, the first time the title of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh was given to someone not affiliated with the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ. This interpretation is underscored by the fact that al-Nāṣir closed down the Jāshankīr *khānqāh* and

chosen from among the Sufis who lived there, and furthermore, that these Sufis could be either foreign or local.[75] Second, and more importantly, contemporary sources show limited interest in the position of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh as such. It is the nature of medieval Islamicate literature – whether it be history, biography, or poetry – that the individual trumps the institutional.[76] As Leiser has shown with the history of the Ayyubid *madrasa*, it is difficult to reconstruct the history and evolution of an office for this period precisely because the sources are interested only in individuals of note, not in the organizational settings in which they worked.[77] Holding an office, no matter how prestigious, was not necessarily enough to warrant mention in a text. Nevertheless, many of the men who were given charge of the Saʻīd al-Suʻadāʼ were noteworthy enough to appear in the historical and biographical record, and we can reconstruct a fairly large portion of this history.[78]

In the following pages I reconstruct the history of the office of the Shaykh al-Shuȳukh in Cairo and those who occupied that office. This reveals that there was a uniformity to the choices made for this office. Those chosen were always from the East (or from families from the East), most always Shāfiʻī/Ashʻarī in orientation, and had close ties to the ruling class.

---

confiscated its *waqfs* while he was building and preparing his *khānqāh*. It remained closed for 20 years. See *al-Khiṭaṭ* 3:575. It is a testament to the prestige of the Saʻīd al-Suʻadāʼ, then, that al-Nāṣir did not attempt to interfere with its operation and allowed the director to retain the title Shaykh al-Shuyūkh; although he had to share it with the director of Siryāqūs.

[75] Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, 31, citing *Ḥujjat waqf sulṭān al-Nāṣir Muḥammad*, dated 717/1317; see also *al-Khiṭaṭ* 3:588 for a description of the ceremony of investiture for the new Shaykh al-Shuyūkh.

[76] This topic alone deserves a much fuller treatment, which I can not address here.

[77] Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt."

[78] The one exception to this is al-Suyūṭī, who discusses the *khānqāh* and gives a list of some of the more famous Shaykh al-Shuyūkh. Nevertheless, the list is incomplete and achronological; *Ḥusn*, 2:260.

It is not clear who the first director of the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' was. It is possible that it was Najm al-Dīn al-Khabūshānī (d. 587/1191).[79] Although there is no source that states explicitly that al-Khabūshānī was the first Shaykh al-Shuyūkh in Egypt, there is some evidence that he was at least associated with running the *khānqāh*. It was al-Khabūshānī who convinced Saladin to build the Shāfi'ī *madrasa* (al-Ṣalāḥīya) at Imām al-Shāfi'ī's tomb in the Qarāfa cemetery, and he was subsequently the professor of Shāfi'ī *fiqh* there until his death in 1191.[80] After al-Khabūshānī's death, the *mashyakha* of the *khānqāh* was almost always heldy by the instructor of *fiqh* at the Salāḥīya *madrasa*.[81] Thus, we may guess that since al-Khabūshānī was the instructor at the Ṣalāḥīya, he was also the first Shaykh al-Shuyūkh. However, this is circumstantial evidence based on a later situation and not enough to argue conclusively that al-Khabūshānī was the first Shaykh al-Shuyūkh.[82]

The first person of record to be called Shaykh al-Shuyūkh at the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' was, without doubt, Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ḥamuwayh al-Juwaynī (d. 617/1220).[83] Ṣadr al-Dīn, born in 543/1148, came from an influential family of Sufis and jurists from

---

[79] Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt," treats al-Khabūshānī in great detail (including all of the relevant bibliographical material) because of his role in proclaiming the Abbasid *khuṭba* and for his role in having the Ṣalāḥīya *madrasa* built; see pp. 233-249.

[80] Ibn Jubayr actually met al-Khabūshānī when he came to Egypt in 1183. See *Riḥlat ibn Jubayr*, 23, wherein Ibn Jubayr notes that al-Khabushānī operated under the direct jurisdiction of Saladin.

[81] On the Ṣalāḥīya *madrasa* see *al-Khiṭaṭ* (he calls it *al-Nāṣirīya bi'l-Qarāfa*), 3:533, and Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt," 225-259.

[82] Rizq's claim that al-Khabūshānī was an instructor at the *khānqāh* as well as the overseer of its endowment (*nāẓir al-waqf*) is a mistake. See *Khānqāwāt al-ṣūfīya*, 142. Rizq's claim is based upon a passage in al-Suyūṭī to the effect that al-Khabūshānī was the instructor and overseer of the endowment. However, the section of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara fī akhbār miṣr wa'l-qāhirah*, ed. Muḥammad Abū 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1968) in which al-Suyūṭī says this about al-Khabūshāni describes the Ṣalāḥīya *madrasa* NOT the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' *khānqāh*; see *Ḥusn,* 2:257-258.

[83] An overview of Ṣadr al-Dīn's biography and career can be found in Hans Gottschalk, "Awlād al-Shaykh (Banū Ḥamawiya)," in *EI2* and idem, "Die Aulad Šaiḫ Aš-Šuyūḫ (Banū Ḥamawiya)," in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 53 (1956): 57-87.

Nīsābūr.[84] Importantly, the progenitor of the family, Abū ʻAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Juwaynī (d. 530/1135), was a student of the Imām al-Ḥaramayn, Abū al-Maʻālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), the famous Ashʻarite theologian, Shāfiʻī jurist, and a teacher of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazāli.[85] This connection to al-Ghazālī and the Imām al-Ḥaramayn is important because an Ashʻarī/Shāfiʻī/Ghazālī intellectual background would become the *sine qua non* for the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh under the Ayyubids and early Mamluks. There were two important lineages of this family, one that stayed in the East and one that came to Syria and Egypt.[86] Of the latter branch of the family, it was Ṣadr al-Dīn's father, ʻImād al-Dīn Abū ʼl-Fatḥ ʻUmar (d. 577/1181), who was the first Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, albeit in Syria.[87] ʻImād al-Dīn had come to Damascus in either 563 or 564 (1167/8), where Nūr al-Dīn al-Zangī (1154-1174) asked him to oversee all the Sufi *ribāṭ*s, *zāwiya*s, and *khānqāh*s in Damascus, Hama, Homs, and Baalbek.[88] In addition to a generous stipend and a gold turban, Nūr al-Dīn conferred upon him the title Shaykh al-

---

[84] *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 2:438-439.

[85] On Abū ʼl-Maʻālī al-Juwaynī, see Tilman Nagel, *Die Festung des Glaubens: Triumph und Scheitern des islamischen Rationalismus im 11. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1988), and Muhammad Saflo, *al-Juwaynī's Thought and Methodology, with a Translation and Commentary on Lumaʻ al-Adilla* (Berlin: Schwarz, 2000), although on the limitations of the latter see Frank Griffel's review in *JAOS* 122 (Oct.-Dec. 2002): 858-859.

[86] On the eastern lineage, which was also famous and nominally associated with the Kubrawīya order, see Hermann Landolt, "Saʿd al- Dīn al- Ḥammūʾī (or al-Ḥamūʾī or al-Ḥamawī), Muḥammad b. al-Muʾayyad ... b. Ḥam(m)ūy(a) (or Ḥamuwayh or Ḥamawiyya) al-Dj̲uwaynī," in *EI2*. There is clearly confusion about the correct vocalization of the family name and *nisba*; Gottschalk vocalizes the family name as "Ḥamawiya," Leiser and some printed Arabic sources vocalize it "Ḥammūya," and still others as "Ḥammawīh." The best source of information on the family and the best argument for the correct vocalization of the family name and *nisba* is Jamal Elias, "The Sufi Lords of Bahrabad: Saʻd al-Dīn and Sadr al-Dīn Hamuwayī," in *Iranian Studies* 27 (1994), who vocalizes the family name "Ḥamuwayh," and the subsequent *nisba*, "Ḥamuwayī."

[87] Gottschalk, "Die Aulad Šaiḫ Aš-Šuyūḫ (Banū Ḥamawiya)," 60; *Mirʼāt al-zamān*, 8:272, 308; *al-Rawḍatayn*, 2:264; *Mirʼāt al-janān*, 3:408; *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 2:438; *al-Nujūm*, 6:90-91; *Shadharāt*, 11:426.

[88] Abū Shāma, quoting al-ʻImād al-Kātib, records "[In 564, Nūr al-Dīn] commanded me to write a decree (*manshūr*) giving [ʻImād al-Dīn] charge of the Sufis (*mashyakhat al-ṣūfīya*) and persuading him to live in Damascus on [Nūr al-Dīn's] beneficence. One of the things he gave him was a turban with gold stripes that Saladin had sent from Egypt." This is not in the Damascus edition of *al-Rawḍatayn* but is in the edition edited by Ibrāhīm Zaybaq *Kitāb al-rawḍatayn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn al-nūrīya waʼl-ṣalāḥīya* (Beirut: Muʻassasat al-Risāla, 1997), 2:265 and the story of the turban is repeated in 1:36 (also in the Beirut edition; I will indicate in subsequent notes which edition is cited). Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, also citing al-ʻImād al-Kātib, says this happened (including the gift of the gold turban) in 563, *Mirʼāt al-Zamān*, 8:272.

Shuyūkh; this marks the first time this title was given to a member of the family, and it would remain with them for at least three generations. ʻImād al-Dīn had two sons, Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad and Tāj al-Dīn ʻAbd Allāh (d. 642/1244), both of whom became Shaykh al-Shuyūkh themselves, the former in Cairo and the latter in Damascus.[89]

Ṣadr al-Dīn spent his childhood in Khurāsān, where he was trained in Shāfiʻī *fiqh* by Abū Ṭālib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 585/1189).[90] He moved to Damascus with his father and there studied *fiqh* with Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nīsābūrī (d. 578/1182) and *ḥadīth* with his father and Yaḥyā al-Thaqafī (d. 584/1188).[91] While in Damascus, he married Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nīsābūrī's daughter; in 575/1179 he married the daughter of the eminent judge Ibn Abī ʻAṣrūn (d. 585/1189).[92] The latter's daughter (who remains nameless in the sources) was also the wet-nurse of the future Ayyubid Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil (1218-1238), and the four sons she had with Ṣadr al-Dīn were like brothers to al-Kāmil.[93] Ṣadr al-Dīn was, therefore, extremely well-positioned within the Zengid/Ayyubid world. He had studied Shāfiʻī *fiqh* with some of the most prominent scholars of Nīsābūr and Syria, his father was a personal friend of Nūr al-Dīn, and his two wives were both daughters of important jurists. It is therefore not surprising that when his father, ʻImād al-Dīn ʻUmar, died in 1181, Ṣadr al-Dīn was hand-picked by Saladin to take over his father's

---

[89] For biographical and bibliographical information on Tāj al-Dīn ʻAbd Allāh see Gottschalk, "Die Aulad Šaiḫ Aš-Šuyūḫ (Banū Ḥamawiya)," 63-64. Tāj al-Dīn became the *Shaykh al-Shuyūkh* of Greater Syria (like his father) after Ṣadr al-Dīn ca. 600/1203.

[90] Abū Ṭālib Maḥmūd ibn ʻAlī: *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʻīya,* 7:286-287 and *Wafayāt al-aʻyān*, 5:174.

[91] Quṭb al-Dīn Masʻūd Abu ʼl-Maʻālī al-Nīsābūrī: *Wafayāt al-aʻyān* 5:196-197 and *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʻīya* 7:297-298; Yaḥyā ibn Maḥmūd ibn Saʻd al-Thaqafī: *Siyar,* 21:134-135 and *Shadharāt,* 6:463-464.

[92] He was the Qāḍī al-Quḍāt of Damascus under Nūr al-Dīn who build a number of *madrasas* for him through Syria; see *Shadharāt,* 6:465-466.

[93] *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 2:438.

duties as the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh in Damascus.[94] At some point – it is not clear exactly when – Ṣadr al-Dīn was brought to Cairo to oversee the *khānqāh* Sa'īd al-Su'adā'.

In trying to reconstruct the history of the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh in Cairo I propose three possible scenarios for Ṣadr al-Dīn's installation in Cairo. First, when Saladin appointed Ṣadr al-Dīn Shaykh al-Shuyūkh in Damascus, after his father's death, he may have enlarged his jurisdiction to include the Sufis of Egypt.[95] This, however, would mean that from 1173 until 1181 there was no Shaykh al-Shuyūkh directly in charge of the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' in Cairo. A second possibility is that Saladin originally appointed al-Khabūshānī to the position of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh and, when he died, Saladin brought Ṣadr al-Dīn to Cairo. This possibility is bolstered by the testimony of Abū Shāma and Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, both of whom state that Ṣadr al-Dīn came to Cairo and took over the teaching of Shāfi'ī *fiqh* at the Ṣalāḥīya *madrasa* (*wa-waliya ba'dahu tadrīs madrasat al-Shāfi'ī*). This teaching position was one of the responsibilities of the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh.[96] Al-Maqrīzī states very clearly that when Ṣadr al-Dīn came to Cairo "he took control of teaching Shāfi'ī *fiqh* at al-Qarāfa and the *mashyakha* of the *khānqāh al-ṣalāḥīya* Sa'īd al-Su'adā'."[97] This would seem to indicate that he took over both positions in 587/1191. A third possibility is that he took over the *madrasa* in 1191 but did not take over the *khānqāh* until 596/1200, when the Sultan al-'Ādil explicitly gave him the position after a period of absence from the *madrasa.*[98] At some point, however, Ṣadr al-

[94] *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 2:438.

[95] This may be the meaning of Ibn al-Athīr's comment that Ṣadr al-Dīn was "Shaykh al-Shuyūkh in Egypt and Syria," *al-Kāmil*, 10:425.

[96] *Mir'āt al-Zamān*, 8:415 and *al-Rawḍatayn* (Beirut), 4:294.

[97] *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 2:438.

[98] The sources are somewhat confused on this topic, but it seems that after Saladin died in 1193 there was a major shake-up in *manāṣib* throughout the Ayyubid realm. Part of this shakeup resulted in Ṣadr al-Dīn being dismissed from his position(s) until al-'Ādil took complete control of the Ayyubid state. For the

Dīn undoubtedly took over all the responsibilities of the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh (although exactly when and for how long is not clear): the Sa'īd al-Su'adā', the instructor of Shāfi'ī *fiqh* at the Ṣalāḥīya *madrasa*, and the overseer of the shrine of al-Ḥusayn.[99] But what qualified him for the position of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh? What were his Sufi credentials?

What seems to have qualified him first and foremost was his family's position with the Zengids and Ayyubids. Had it not been for his father's close relationship with Nūr al-Dīn, it is doubtful that Ṣadr al-Dīn would have had the opportunity to study with great scholars or to marry into the Ayyubid family. Furthermore, Ṣadr al-Dīn had two things in his favor: he was connected into the Ash'arī/Shāfi'ī/Ghazālī lineage by means of his teacher Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī, and he was from the East. These seem to be the two most important qualifications Saladin and his successors looked for in making appointments to important religious positions.[100] The question of why scholars of the East were so crucial for the Ayyubids deserves a more thorough investigation. However, it seems to me that this was a political tactic, designed both to exclude the local population from power and to bring religious organizations under the direct control of the state via hand-picked proxies. In any case, and in addition to his juridical

---

shakeup see Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193-1260* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), 87-123; see also Leiser "The Restoration of Sunnism" 249.

[99] On the Ṣalāḥīya, see note 62 above. The shrine of Ḥusyan (*al-mashhad al-ḥusaynī*) was built in 549/1154 after the head of al-Ḥusayn was brought to Egypt in 548/1153 from its previous home in Ashkelon (where it was housed in a shrine built by the Fāṭimid vizier al-Afḍal (d. 514/1121), the son of the famous Fāṭimid military vizier Badr al-Jamālī (d. 487/1094)); see *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 2:204-206. It was brought to Egypt out of fear that the Crusaders would destroy the shrine in Ashkelon; see Sayyid, *al-Dawla al-fāṭimīya fī miṣr*, 624. Saladin created a teaching position at the shrine, which led Lapidus to argue that the shrine became a *madrasa* ("Ayyubid Religious Policy," 283) but Leiser demonstrated that he merely appointed a teacher, with a stipend, to teach at the shrine ("The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt," 259-262).

[100] Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt," treats ALL of the scholars known to him that were appointed to teaching positions in the Ayyubid era. The vast majority of these are Shāfi'īs from the East.

qualifications, Ṣadr al-Dīn also had some Sufi credentials. His family was well-known for being Sufis, as demonstrated by al-Maqrīzī's entry on them.[101]

Furthermore, Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240), Ibn Abī 'l-Uṣaybi'a (d. 669/1270), and Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401) all mention Ṣadr al-Dīn's name in connection with the *khirqa* – the Sufi garment of investiture.[102] Ibn al-'Arabī traces the *khirqa* through Ṣadr al-Dīn to the mystical prototype Khiḍr.[103] Ibn al-Mulaqqin, who took the *khirqa* from a large number of Sufi masters, traces one of his lines through Ṣadr al-Dīn and then back through al-Junayd (d. 298/910) and al-Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 253/867).[104] The two different lines are brought together by Ibn Abī 'l-Uṣaybi'a, who reproduces the actual text that Ṣadr al-Dīn wrote when he passed the *khirqa* to Ibn Abī 'l-Uṣaybi'a's uncle Rashīd al-Dīn 'Alī (d. 616/1219). The text, in Ṣadr al-Dīn's own hand, says that the *khirqa* was passed to his family through two sources: one through Khiḍr and one through a more mundane transmission stretching back to al-Junayd and eventually to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and the prophet Muḥammad.[105] Ṣadr al-Dīn would thus seem to be an ideal candidate for Saladin and his successor al-'Ādil to appoint to run the *khānqāh*: he had credentials in both law and Sufism.

---

[101] *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 2:438, where he traces the family lineage to a legendary pair of kings in Khurāsān who left everything behind in order to embrace the Sufi life. Furthermore, Ṣadr al-Dīn, as mentioned above, could trace a direct line to al-Shāfi'ī and al-Ghazālī through his grandfather, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad, as mentioned above.

[102] Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1999), 1:284 (ed. 'Uthmān Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr [Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣrīya li'l-Kitāb, 1984], 3:186); Ibn Abī l-Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, ed. Nizār Riḍā (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1965), 740; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-Awliyā'*, 430-431.

[103] On Khiḍr as the archetypical saint and Sufi master see Denis Gril, "La Voie" in *Les voies d'Allah: les ordres mystiques dans l'islam des origines à aujourd'hui*, ed. G. Veinstein and A. Popovic (Paris: Fayard, 1996).

[104] On the Junayd-Baghdad school of Sufism see Ali Hasan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd* (London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series, 1976), 35-47.

[105] *'Uyūn al-Anbā'*, 740-741. Trimingham provides a genealogical chart of the *silsila* of this particular line. The chart begins with Ṣadr al-Dīn, proceeds through his father and grandfather, and eventually proceeds to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and then the prophet Muḥammad. This is of great importance because it is the **first** recorded *silsila* that includes 'Alī; Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 261-263.

After the death of Ṣadr al-Dīn in 1220 (of diarrhea or dysentery in Mosul),[106] the *mashyakha* of the *khānqāh* passed to one of his four sons, the so-called Awlād Shaykh al-Shuyūkh (the Sons of the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh). These are the four sons of Ṣadr al-Dīn's marriage to the daughter of Ibn Abī 'Aṣrūn; they are (in birth order): Fakhr al-Dīn Yūsuf, 'Imād al-Dīn 'Umar, Kamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad, and Mu'īn al-Dīn Ḥasan. Since each of these was the milk brother of the Ayyubid Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil (according to the principle of *raḍā'a,* or milk brotherhood), they all held important positions in al-'Ādil's and al-Kāmil's government. Of the four, Fakhr al-Dīn Yūsuf (d. 647/1249) was by far the most influential and politically active, and it was probably for this reason that he did not hold any teaching positions.[107] The majority of the sources agree that the three other sons all held the position of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh during their lifetimes, but none of them specifies precisely when and in what order.[108]

The most likely candidate to have taken over the office after his father died in 1220 was 'Imād al-Dīn 'Umar (d. 636/1239), the second oldest, since he inherited all his father's other positions.[109] 'Imād al-Dīn thus took control of teaching Shāfi'ī law at the Ṣalāḥīya *madrasa*, the oversight of the al-Ḥusayn shrine, and the *mashyakha* of the Sa'īd al-Su'adā'. Furthermore, al-Maqrīzī says of him that al-Malik al-Kāmil gave him "charge of knowledge and of the pen" (*ri'āsat al-'ilm wa'l-qalam*) in 633/1235 and that

---

[106] *al-Bidāya*, 17:101.
[107] Gottschalk recounts Fakhr al-Dīn's exploits in detail (including all of the relevant bibliographical details) in "Die Aulad Šaiḫ Aš-Šuyūḫ (Banū Ḥamawiya)," 64-78.
[108] The one exception is al-Suyūṭī who, in his list of the *Shaykh al-Shuyūkh* of the Sa'īd al-Su'adā, includes Kamāl al-Dīn "Yūsuf" (clearly a mistake for Aḥmad) and Mu'īn al-Dīn Ḥasan; *Ḥusn*, 2:260.
[109] Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt," 253-255; Gottschalk, "Die Aulad Šaiḫ Aš-Šuyūḫ (Banū Ḥamawiya)," p. 78-82; *Mir'āt al-zamān* 8:721-4; Abū Shāma, *al-Dhayl 'alā al-rawḍatayn tarājim rijāl al-qarnayn al-sādis wa'l-sābi'*, Muḥammad al-Kawtharī (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1974), 167-168; *Siyar*, 23:97-99; *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'īya* 8:342; *al-Bidāya,* 17:244; *al-Khiṭaṭ* 2:438; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah and Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr (Cairo: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīyah, 2006), 1:276-277; *Shadharāt,* 7:316.

this honor had never been bestowed upon anyone before this time.[110] Al-Maqrīzī does not explain what this means exactly, but it may indicate that ʻImād al-Dīn controlled the chancery and the educational apparatuses of the state, i.e. the *madrasas* and *khānqāh*.[111] Further indication of his wide-ranging power is the fact that al-Kāmil used him repeatedly as an ambassador to the Abbasid court in Baghdād, and that he was instrumental in the rise of al-Jawād to the Sultanate of Damascus in 635/1238.[112] Last but not least, he was the *wazīr* of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb.[113] Abū Shāma said of him "He was from a house of Sufism and royalty, and of the elites who were fanatical about Ashʻarism."[114] ʻImād al-Dīn died in Damascus while on a political mission at the behest of al-Malik al-ʻĀdil II (1238-1240) to remove al-Jawād from his office there. ʻImād al-Dīn marks the beginning of a tradition of appointing politically well-connected individuals to direct the *khānqāh*. Each of the subsequent Shaykh al-Shuȳukh would be religious and political elites.

The other two brothers of ʻImād al-Dīn, Kamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad (d. 640/1242)[115] and Muʻīn al-Dīn Ḥasan (d. 643/1246),[116] were also given charge of the Saʻīd al-Suʻadā'. Al-

---

[110] *al-Khiṭaṭ* 2:438.

[111] Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt," 253-254.

[112] He is called in the sources Yūnus al-Jawād. He was "a prince of monumental insignificance," who was thrust into the spotlight upon the death of al-Malik al-Kāmil in 1238. It was upon his death that a group of military and political elites – including ʻImād al-Dīn ibn Shaykh al-Shuyūkh – met to discuss who should take up the governorship of Damascus. The notables chose al-Jawād because they felt he could be easily controlled by them. This turned out to be a major mistake and al-Jawād quickly took most of Syria and began to have the *khuṭba* read in his name. His reign was short-lived, however, and he abdicated his power to al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb in 1239. This disastrous affair is recounted in detail by Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 239-250.

[113] *al-Nujūm*, 6:353.

[114] *al-Dhayl*, 167-168.

[115] Gottschalk, "Die Aulad Šaiḫ Aš-Šuyūḫ (Banū Ḥamawiya)," 82-83; Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt," 196-197; *Mirʻāt al-Zamān* 8:739; *al-Dhayl*, 172; *Siyar*, 23:99 *al-Khiṭaṭ* 2:439; *al-Nujūm,* 6:345; *Ḥusn*, 2:260; *Shadharāt*, 7:358.

Malik al-Kāmil charged Kamāl al-Dīn with running the Nāṣirīya *madrasa*, teaching Shāfi‘ī law at al-Qarāfa (i.e. the Ṣalāḥīya *madrasa*) and the *mashyakha* of Egypt.[117] After the death of al-Kāmil, al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb (1240-1249) gave him command of the armies "more than once."[118] As for Kamāl al-Dīn's education, he had studied law in Damascus with Abū Ṭāhir Barakāt al-Khushū‘ī (d. 640/1242) and received an *ijāza* from the famous Ḥanbalī theologian ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) in Baghdad. As for Mu‘īn al-Dīn, also known as al-Ṣāḥib al-Kabīr, he held all the same positions as his brother and was the vice-vizier of al-Malik al-Kāmil and then vizier of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb. He was buried next to his brother at Mt. Qāsiȳun outside Damascus.

What qualifications, then, did the Awlād al-Shaykh have for running the *khānqāh*? Their primary qualification seems to have been the good fortune of having al-Malik al-Kāmil as their milk brother. The brothers were well-connected to the political ruling class and, as a result, were given high-paying jobs in the bureaucratic apparatus. They had no other scholarly or mystical credentials. The medieval sources are almost silent as to their education, although it is certain that they were all of the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab* and ardent Ash‘arīs (as evidenced by Abū Shāma's comment about ‘Imād al-Dīn). As for Sufi qualifications, they had none, at least none that were recorded. Their family was known for being Sufis, but on the whole, they left no Sufi writings, did not participate in the wider Sufi community, and actually spent most of their time travelling between Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad on political or military

---

[116] Gottschalk, "Die Aulad Šaiḫ Aš-Šuyūḫ (Banū Ḥamawiya)," 84-87; Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt," 197-198; *Mir‘āt al-zamān*, 8:755-756; *al-Dhayl*, 176; *Siyar*, 23:100; *al-Bidāya*, 17:277, 279, 286-287; *al-Khiṭaṭ* 2:439; *al-Nujūm,* 6:352-353; *Shadharāt*, 7:379.

[117] *al-Khiṭaṭ,* 2:439.

[118] *al-Khiṭaṭ,* 2:439.

expeditions.[119] Al-Malik al-Kāmil and Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb both continued the pattern set by Saladin of installing Shāfi'ī/Ash'arīs from the East in the principal positions of importance in Egypt. These positions – running the Nāṣirīya, the Ṣalāḥīya, the shrine of al-Ḥusayn, and the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' – were given not to the overtly qualified but to the politically well-connected.

Not long after the death of Mu'īn al-Dīn, the remaining Ayyubid dynasts struggled with their Mamluk slave soldiers for control of Egypt and greater Syria, with the Mamluks emerging victorious around 1250. There is no definite record of anyone holding this office at the time time, and it is likely that in the confusion regarding the granting of governmental positions, there was no one in the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh. The next figure to become Shaykh al-Shuyūkh was the chief Ḥanbalī jurist and Qāḍī al-Quḍāt in Egypt, Shams al-Dīn Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Shaykh al-'Imād al-Maqdisī (d. 676/1277).[120] Born in 603/1206 in Damascus, he began his studies there before moving to Baghdad, where he continued his studies, married, and had children. Al-Dhahabī recorded that Shams al-Dīn came to Egypt when he was about 40 years old. This would have been in the year 643/1245, the same year Mu'īn al-Dīn Ḥasan died, and it may indicate that Shams al-Dīn came to Egypt to replace Mu'īn al-Dīn. When he became the chief judge in Egypt, his responsibilities included teaching at the Ṣāliḥīya and the *mashyakha* of the Sa'īd al-Su'adā'. He was the first Ḥanbalī chief judge and was well-known for his asceticism. The chief judgeship was taken from him for two years

---

[119] 'Imād al-Dīn died in Damascus and was buried on Mt. Qāsyūn, Kamāl al-Dīn died in Gaza and was buried there, and Mu'īn al-Dīn died in Damascus and was buried next to his brother.

[120] *al-'Ibar,* 3:333; *al-Bidāya*, 17:537-538; Ibn Rajab, *Kitāb al-dhayl 'alā ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1952), 2:294-295; *Shadharāt*, 7:616-617.

(for angering the vizier of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir) and arrested.[121] After his release he spent the rest of his days living in his house, teaching at the Ṣāliḥīya, and studying.[122]

What were Shams al-Dīn's qualifications to be the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh? The sources agree about his piety, asceticism, and upright behavior as a judge (he apparently refused a stipend [*jāmakīya*] for most of his services in that capacity), but there is no indication that he was trained as a Sufi or enjoyed prestige as a Sufi. He may have been chosen by al-Ẓāhir because he was a Ḥanbalī and could thus distance the new Mamluk regime from the former Shāfi'ī character of the Ayyubid positions. Like his predecessors, Shams al-Dīn was primarily a politician, well-connected to the ruling elite, and importantly, not from Egypt. This indicates that the Mamluks, despite choosing a Ḥanbalī, neverthless continued the practice of housing Sufis from the East in the *khānqāh*.

After the death of Shams al-Dīn al-Maqdisī in 1277, the next person to hold office seems to have been al-Shaykh Ḥasan al-Rūmī (684/1285). Unfortunately, there is no biographical information on this figure in any of the sources I was able to consult.[123] There are three traditions about his name. Ibn Kathīr and al-'Aynī both call him "al-Shaykh Ḥasan al-Rūmī." Al-Maqrīzī and al-Suyūṭī call him "Ḥasan al-Bukhārī." And finally, in the document of investiture for the next Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, the scribe writes that al-Aykī (see below) took office after the death of Ṣāyin al-Daḥsh al-

---

[121] It is not clear what he did to get him arrested, Ibn Kathīr only says, "because of certain duties he had to undertake;" *al-Bidāya*, 17:538.
[122] al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb built the Ṣāliḥīya *madrasa* in 1242 in Cairo and it was the first *madrasa* designed to accommodate all four legal *madhhabs*. See *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 3:465-466 and Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt," 352-361.
[123] See *al-Bidāya*, 17:599; *al-Sulūk* 1:730; al-'Aynī, *'Iqd al-jumān fī tārīkh ahl al-zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣrīya al-'Āmma li'l-Kitāb, 1987), 2:344; *Ḥusn*, 2:260.

Bukhārī.[124] Despite the differences in name, they are all in agreement about his being Shaykh al-Shuyūkh and his dying in 1285.

After the mysterious Ḥasan al-Rūmī, Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī (d. 697/1298) was the next to hold this office.[125] Al-Aykī was a Shāfi'ī jurist from Damascus who taught at the Ghazālīya *madrasa* in Damascus and was the director of the Sumaysāṭīya *khānqāh* before coming to Cairo.[126] According to al-Maqrīzī, he took up the directorship of the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' in 684/1285 after the previous Ḥasan al-Bukhārī died; but his control would be contested. A copy of the *taqlīd* (diploma of investiture) for al-Aykī is preserved in Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir's history, and it spells out his duties as Shaykh al-Shuyūkh.[127] However, the document is entirely formulaic and tells us next to nothing about al-Aykī himself, although its value in describing the evolution of the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh is great. It will be treated in greater detail below.

In 687/1288 an argument erupted between al-Aykī and Taqī al-Dīn al-'Allāmī (695/1295), the vizier of Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (1279-1290). The disagreement was quite serious, and they ended up literally cursing each other's careers. The argument ultimately led to al-Aykī's resignation in 689/1290 and his subsequent return to

---

[124] Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir, *Tashrīf al-ayyām wa'l-'uṣūr fī sīrat al-malik al-manṣūr*, ed. Murād Kāmil (Cairo: al-Jumhūrīya al-'Arabīya al-Muttaḥida, 1961), p. 232.

[125] Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Bakr al-Aykī: Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān al-'aṣr wa-a'wān al-naṣr*, ed. 'Alī Abū Zayd et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1998), 4:351-353; *Mir'āt al-janān*, 4:229; *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'īya*, 8:114 (al-Subkī doesn't actually have a biography for al-Aykī here, only his name. But the editors (al-Ṭanāḥī and al-Ḥilw) reproduce his biography from al-Subkī's *Ṭabaqāt al-wusṭā*); *al-Bidāya*, 17:706; *al-Sulūk* 1:730; *Ḥusn*, 1:543 and 2:260 (in the second instance he has al-Aylī, not al-Aykī); *Shadharāt,* 7:767.

[126] Founded in the early eleventh century by Abū 'l-Qāsim 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Sumaysāṭī (d. 453/1061). This *khānqāh* was originally the Umayyad palace of 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Marwān (717-720). It passed through a number of hands before al-Sumaysāṭī bought it and turned it into a hospice for Sufis; 'Abd al-Qādir al-Nu'aymī, *al-Dāris fī tārīkh al-madāris*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1990), 2:118-126 and *al-Bidāya*, 12:363.

[127] The *taqlīd* was written by the scribe of the Registry (*kātib al-darj al-sharīf*), Ibn al-Mukarram; see Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir, *Tashrīf al-ayyām wa'l-'uṣūr fī sīrat al-malik al-manṣūr* (Cairo: 1961), 232-235. The *taqlīd* is also discussed by Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, 51-52.

Damascus. The sources disagree about the nature of the dispute. Some record it being a matter of al-Aykī's inclination towards incarnationism (*al-ḥulūl*), demonstrated in his reading of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's famous *Qaṣīda Tā'īya* (Ode in T)[128] Others offer a different interpretation, arguing that it was a matter of protocol, caused by al-Aykī showing disrespect to al-'Allāmī when he visited the *khānqāh.*[129] At any rate, al-Aykī resigned, returned to Damascus, died, and was buried in the Sufi cemetery; a mourning ceremony (*'azā*) was held at the Sumaysāṭīya *khānqāh*, of which he had once been the director. In the aftermath of his resignation, al-'Allāmī took control of the *khānqāh* in Cairo.[130]

Al-Aykī was the first Shaykh al-Shuyūkh since Ṣadr al-Dīn ibn Ḥamuwayh to have had Sufi credentials. In addition to being a well-trained jurist and from a family from the East (he is called al-Fārisī in most sources), most biographers called him labeled him a "Sufi."[131] Furthermore, and most importantly, he studied with Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī's step-son and most famous student. This sheds important light on the controversy surrounding al-Aykī, because al-Qūnawī came to Cairo after 1245 to teach Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Tā'īya*. This may have been what led to the charge of incarnationism and/or atheism (*ilḥād*).[132] The sources are

---

[128] This interpretation is found in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson's hagiography, Sibṭ ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājat Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, ed. 'Abd al-Khālikq Maḥmūd (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1984), 30-32, and in al-'Aynī's *'Iqd al-Jumān*; a variant of this interpretation is that al-Aykī was accused of *ilḥād* (atheism) because of his questionable interpretation of the Qur'ānic *Surat al-Mā'ida*; see *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'īya*, 9:276-307 and *Shadharāt,* 7:767. Al-Ṣafadī and al-Suyūṭī by contrast, say that it was the Sufis themselves (probably meaning those of the *khānqāh*) who complained about him and caused his removal from office; *A'yān*, 4:352 and *Ḥusn,* 1:543.

[129] This interpretation is found in Ibn al-Furāt's *Tārīkh*, ed. Qusṭanṭīn Zurayq (Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Amīrkānīya, 1936), 8:124 and al-Maqrīzī's *Sulūk*, 1:741-742.

[130] This episode is analyzed in detail in Emile Homerin's *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint,* 39-44.

[131] Evidence of his juridical training is seen in his epithet, *imām fī al-aṣlayn*, "outstanding in the fields of *uṣūl al-dīn* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*;" *A'yān,* 4:351, adds that he was also an *imām* in the science of Sufism.

[132] On al-Qūnawī see, William Chittick, "Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Isḥāḳ b. Muḥammad b. Yūnus al-Ḳūnawī," in *EI2*.

silent as to whether or not al-Aykī held any other positions in Cairo while he was Shaykh al-Shuyūkh.

After the dispute with al-Aykī, Taqī al-Dīn al-ʻAllāmī took over the *khānqāh*.[133] He was the chief judge, vizier of Qalāwūn, and son of the famous chief judge Tāj al-Dīn ibn Bint al-Aʻazz (d. 665/1267).[134] He took over as chief judge in 686/1287 and, as noted above, took over the *khānqāh* in 689/1290. Because of his family connections he was an important figure who held at least 17 official positions at the height of his power. These positions included being the chief judge, the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, *khaṭīb* of al-Azhar, professor of law at the *Sharīfīya* and *Shāfiʻīya madrasa*s, teacher at the shrine of al-Ḥusayn, overseer of charitable endowments, and administrator of the state treasury.[135] With such an illustrious career, he was bound to make enemies; in 690/1290 he incurred the wrath of Ibn Salʻūs (d. 693/1293), the vizier of al-Malik al-Ashraf (1290-1293), and was stripped of all of his positions.[136] However, he was eventually reinstated to many of his positions, including control of the *khānqāh*, and kept them until his death two years later.[137] He was buried in al-Qarāfa.[138]

---

[133] Taqī al-Dīn ʻAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʻAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Khalaf ibn Badr al-ʻAllāmī: al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi'l-wafayāt,* ed. Aḥmad al-Arna'ūṭ and Turkī Muṣṭafā (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-ʻArabī, 2000), 18:1105-106; al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, ed. Iḥsān ʻAbbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1973-1974), 2:279-282; *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʻīya*, 8:172-174; *al-Bidāya*, 17:607, 613, 636, 664, 684, 690; *al-Nujūm*, 8:82-83; *Ḥusn*, 1:415 *Shadharāt*, 7:752.

[134] Tāj al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʻAbd al-Wahhāb ibn bint al-Aʻazz: *al-ʻIbr*, 3:313; *al-Wāfī*, 19:200-201; *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʻīya*, 8:318-323; *al-Bidāya*, 17:471-472; *al-Nujūm*, 7:222-223; *Ḥusn*, 1:455; *Shadharāt*, 555-556. Some of these sources record that Tāj al-Dīn was the *shaykh* of the *khānqāh*. I believe that there has been some confusion in the record because both he and his son were known as Ibn bint al-Aʻazz and may have been confused for each other. The earlier sources, like al-Dhahabī (d. 1348) and al-Ṣafadī (d. 1363), make no mention of Tāj al-Dīn in connection with the *khānqāh*. But beginning with al-Subkī (d. 1368), a line from Taqī al-Dīn's biography entered Tāj al-Dīn's biography. It seems that most later sources cite al-Subkī and he is probably the source for all the later entries.

[135] *al-Bidāya*, 17:636.

[136] This episode is treated in detail in Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint*, 42-44.

[137] *al-Bidāya*, 17:664.

[138] *al-Bidāya*, 17:690.

Why was Taqī al-Dīn chosen to run the Sa'īd al-Su'adā'? The sources never describe him as a Sufi, he does not seem to have studied with any Sufis, and he was known primarily for his political career.[139] The answer is that he most likely appointed himself, with Qalāwūn's permission. As someone who had already held many of the best paying jobs in the Mamluk polity and educational apparatus, and who suddenly found an opportunity for a position with a lucrative stipend, he may have nominated himself as Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, or actually paid the ruler for the position. However, being a jurist and politician with no training as a Sufi did not disqualify one from the position, this is clear from the cases of the *awlād al-shaykh* and Shams al-Dīn al-Maqdisī.

The final Shaykh al-Shuyūkh of interest here is Karīm al-Dīn al-Āmulī (d. 710/1310).[140] Not much is known about his biography or his training, other than that he was a student of Sa'd al-Dīn ibn Ḥamuwayh and a relative of the first Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, Ṣadr al-Dīn. He probably took over the *khānqāh* in 1295, when Taqī al-Dīn died, but this is not explicit in the sources. Ibn Kathīr says that "he had connections with the Amīrs," which is probably how he procured the position of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh. Whether he held any other positions in Egypt is unknown. The only biographical information I have been able to find about him is that some people found his speech quite difficult to understand, most likely because he had a thick Persian accent.[141]

---

[139] His primary connection to the Sufis is that his father, Tāj al-Dīn (d. 1267), was the first cousin of the famous Sufi Ṣafi al-Dīn ibn Abī 'l-Manṣūr (d. 1283); Gril, *Risāla*, 6.

[140] Karīm al-Dīn 'Abd al-Karīm ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Āmulī: *A'yān*, 3:133-134; *al-Wāfī*, 19:77; *al-Bidāya*, 18:108; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina fī a'yān al-mi'a al-thāmina*, ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992), 2:397; *Ḥusn*, 2:260.

[141] Karīm al-Dīn went to see another *shaykh* and spoke to him at length but the shaykh said nothing: "So when [Karīm al-Dīn] left, the *shaykh* said to those present, 'Did any of you understand what he just said (*tarākīb kalāmihi*), because the only thing I understood were the individual words (*mufradāt kalāmihi*),'"

Karīm al-Dīn's career as the chief *shaykh* was both interesting and eventful. In 706/1306 the Sufis of the *khānqāh* complained about him, accusing him of sixteen kinds of depravity (*fisq*), although what these acts were is not specified. These accusations led to his temporary removal from office and replacement by the chief judge Badr al-Dīn ibn Jamāʻa (d. 733/1332).[142] He was restored to office later that year, however, and became prominent again in 707/1307 for leading 500 Sufis in a demonstration against Ibn Taymīya for what he had written against Ibn ʻArabī and the so-called *wujūdī* school of Sufism.[143] Nothing came of the demonstration, so they proceeded to where Ibn Taymīya was being detained and demanded that the authorities turn him over to the Sufis (presumably to teach him a permanent lesson). This, too, was unsuccessful, although it does seem to be a primary factor in Ibn Jamāʻa's decision to send Ibn Taymīya back to Damascus. This made an impression on Ibn Taymīya, for most sources on ʻAbd al-Karīm mention that Ibn Taymīya hated him. The episode is important not only for what it reveals about the political clout of the Sufis, but also because ʻAbd al-Karīm's partner in leading the demonstrations was none other than Ibn ʻAṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309), the second Shādhilī *khalīfa*, who is discussed in the next

---

Aʻyān, 3:133. The *shaykh* who said this was none other than Ibn Daqīq al-ʻĪd, whom I will treat in more detail in the next chapter. This is important beacause Ibn Daqīq al-ʻĪd was a native of Egypt (Upper Egypt to be precise) and the fact that he could not understand Karīm al-Dīn indicates the social distance between the local and imported Sufi population.

[142] *Fawāt*, 3:297; *al-Wāfī*, 2:8; *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʻīya*, 9:139 *al-Bidāya*, 18:357. He was Qāḍī al-Quḍāt, Shaykh al-Islām, and Shaykh al-Shuyūkh during the reign of al-Ashraf. He took over the *khānqāh* temporarily because he was the chief judge.

[143] Ibn Taymīya was in Cairo at this time standing trial on the accusation of *tashbīh* (anthropomorphism) for what he had written against the philosophers and the theologians on the subject of God's attributes. On the outlines of this and other trials of Ibn Taymīya, see Donal Little, "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya." On Ibn Taymīya's position on Ibn ʻArabī and the *wujūdī*s, see Alexander Knysh, *Ibn ʻArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999).

chapter.[144] The cooperation between these two men marks the first time that independent Sufi groups cooperated with state-sponsored Sufis. Karīm al-Dīn is thus not only the chronological end point of this study of the *khānqāh* and office of the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, but the conceptual end as well. It was little wonder that Karīm al-Dīn was appointed as the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh: he had excellent training from an important family of Sufis, he was a leading figure in the ideological battle with Ibn Taymīya, and he was friends, or at least well-acquainted, with Ibn ʻAṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī.

[144] On al-Iskandarī and Ibn Taymīya, see Paul Nwyia, *Ibn ʻAṭā Allāh Et La Naissance De La Confrérie Šāḏilite* (Beirut: Dar al-Machreq, 1986); see also Henri Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya," in *EI2*, where he notes Karīm al-Dīn and al-Iskandarī's role in making life difficult for Ibn Taymīya, and calls them "two of the most influential Sufis of Egypt."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Before summarizing the sketches above, I can now tentatively present a chronology of the tenures of those who held the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh of the *khānqāh* Sa‘īd al-Su‘adā’ for the years 1173-1310:

1173-1191	Najm al-Dīn al-Khabūshānī
1191-1220	Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad
1220-1239	‘Imād al-Dīn ‘Umar
1239-1242	Kamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf
1242-1245	Mu‘īn al-Dīn Ḥasan
1245-1270	Shams al-Dīn al-Maqdisī
1270-1285	al-Shaykh Ḥasan al-Rūmī/al-Bukhārī
1285-1290	Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī
1290-1295	Taqī al-Dīn al-‘Allāmī
1295-1310	Karīm al-Dīn al-Āmulī [with a brief interlude by Badr al-Dīn ibn Jamā‘a]

From the biographies of these individuals, the following can be concluded about the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh in Ayyubid and early Mamluk Egypt: It was modeled on the office of the same name established by Nūr al-Dīn in Damascus, which was in turn modeled on that of the Seljuks in Baghdad. The office seems to have been hereditary for the Seljuks, as it passed from father to son (or an occasional brother) for some time. This practice was continued by the Ayyubids in Egypt, but the Mamluks discontinued it upon taking power. Those chosen for the office were primarily known for their expertise in law, all but one being Shāfi‘ī. All were career politicians; that is, they made their living working for the state. This is significant because the men who were chosen to control the state-sponsored *khānqāh* in Cairo were only nominally Sufis. Consider, for example, that al-Suyūṭī, in compiling his historical and biographical work on Egypt, did not include any of these nine men in his biographical section devoted to the subject

of the “upright, ascetics, and Sufis” of Egypt.[145] Indeed, only three of the nine were even known as Sufis: Ṣadr al-Dīn ibn Ḥamuwayh, Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī, and Karīm al-Dīn al-Āmulī. The rest were politically well-connected jurists who were responsible for teaching *fiqh* at any number of *madrasa*s. As a highly-paid position, the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh became an object of contestation and prestige, much in the same way that positions as professor of law in *madrasas* were contested.[146]

A composite sketch of the average Shaykh al-Shuyūkh would look something like the following: He or his family were from the East (i.e. Persian-speaking areas) but had settled further west as part of his education. He was well-trained in law, a practicing jurist, and nominally a Sufi; as such, he may best be described as what Vincent Cornell calls a “juridical Sufi.”[147] Owing to his education and circumstances he was very well paid, well-connected to the ruling class, and belonged to that class of the “civilian elite” that mediated between the military rulers and the general population.[148] His duties as Shaykh al-Shuyūkh included teaching Shāfiʿī law (most likely delegating this responsibility to one or more deputies),[149] leading the ritual sessions at the *khānqāh*, going on ambassadorial trips for the Sultan, seeing to the day-to-day activities of the *khānqāh*, and leading the Sufis every Friday to the al-Ḥākim mosque. Particularly

---

[145] *Ḥusn*, 1:511-530.

[146] Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 91-107.

[147] “Juridical Sufism is a type of mysticism that is epistemologically subservient to the authority of religious law;” *Realm of the Saint*, 67.

[148] Carl Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages*. Petry understood the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh to be embedded within the larger realm of legal occupations. His comments are specifically about the later Mamluk period, but it is clear from the preceding material that it applies to the Ayyubid and Baḥrī period as well; see *The Civilian Elite*, 221-223.

[149] Leiser has documented the widespread practice of delegating teaching responsibilities during the Ayyubid period. Such delegating was necessary because of the common practice of holding multiple positions (thus leaving no time for daily teaching duties) and because of the political role many of these men played (they couldn’t teach if they were on a diplomatic mission to the Franks); see “The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt,” especially chapter four, “Saladin’s Madrasas,” 187-267.

in the Ayyubid period, the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh was gone so often on diplomatic trips that one wonders how much time he actually spent at the *khānqāh*. It was only during the new order of the Mamluk regime that the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh spent substantial periods of time at the *khānqāh* – although it should be remembered that Taqī al-Dīn al-'Allāmī occupied 16 positions at the same time, a fact that indicates he was delegating many of his responsibilities to relatives and protégés acting as deputies.

How does this change our understanding of the *khānqāh* in Egypt? It is worth reiterating the four arguments outlined at the beginning of the chapter in greater detail here.

First, the directorship (*mashyakha*) of the *khānqāh* was reserved for individuals who were politically well-connected, trained in law, and from the East. This last point is all the more striking when one considers that Egypt – north and south – was a veritable melting pot of Sufis and Sufi ideas. Large groups of local Sufis had garnered the respect and admiration of the population but were never chosen to run the *khānqāh*. For example, the *Risāla* of Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn Abī 'l-Manṣūr (d. 682/1283), a biographical dictionary of all the Sufis he knew or met in Ayyubid Egypt, contains 117 entries. Of these entries, none are devoted to a Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, and only two of these mention a person who lived at the Sa'īd al-Su'adā'.[150] It is quite clear from reading the *Risāla* that Ṣafī al-Dīn, as a local Sufi, was uninterested in the goings on of this *khānqāh*, despite the fact that he was from an elite family with a number of relatives in the upper echelons of power.[151]

---

[150] Gril, *Risāla*, 84-85 [Arabic section], where Ṣafī al-Dīn mentions Khawājā Jahān and Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Kurdī, both of whom lived in the *khānqāh* but he provides no biographical information. Gril notes in his notes to the text that he was unable to find any further information on these two.

[151] On Ṣafī al-Dīn's family, see Gril's introduction to the *Risāla*, 3-6 [French section].

In this connection, it is worth recounting one incident in particular that Ṣafī al-Dīn relates about the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh. In an entry devoted to the mysterious Ḥasan al-Ṭawīl (d. 616/1219),[152] Ṣafī al-Dīn records that Ḥasan al-Ṭawīl was involved with trying to recover an old mosque that apparently had been replaced by a church. The Christian community was very vocal about this group not destroying the church and, at least according to this narrative, al-Malik al-Kāmil sided with the Christians. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭawīl, however, had "the masses" on his side, and al-Malik al-Kāmil, who had come to inspect the site personally, feared for his life. His solution was to ask his vizier and his Shaykh al-Shuyūkh – Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ḥamuwayh – to intervene. The fact that al-Malik al-Kāmil sent his chief Sufi indicates that he was perhaps trying to placate what he saw as an unruly Sufi mob, led by the wild Ḥasan al-Ṭawīl. The vizier and Ṣadr al-Dīn made their way through the menacing crowds (who were brandishing bricks with which to stone them) and entered the church. No sooner had they entered and offered a prayer than the church began to collapse and the two officials barely escaped with their lives. Al-Malik al-Kāmil was so embarrassed by the incident that he banished Ḥasan al-Ṭawīl from Egypt, and no other mention is made of Ṣadr al-Dīn in the narrative.[153] While Ṣafī al-Dīn offers no further commentary, the implication is clear. Ṣadr al-Dīn was powerless – both in the face of the mob and before the will of God, which was obviously to destroy the church. To a local Sufi like Ṣafī al-Dīn who knew most Cairene, Alexandrian, and even some Upper-Egyptian Sufis personally, Ṣadr al-Dīn

---

[152] Ḥasan al-Ṭawīl was from Tūnis and, after migrating to Egypt, installed himself at the "Andalusian mosque" in Fustat. See Gril, *Risāla*, 36-37 [Arabic] and 229 [French].
[153] The incident is recorded in Gril, *Risāla*, 36-37 [Arabic].

was an ineffectual bureaucrat. This reveals that the social world of the *khānqāh* was not the social world of the local Sufi population.[154]

The second argument of this chapter is that, as a deliberate instantiation of state-sponsored Sufism, the *khānqāh* is most accurately described as a formal organization with a hierarchical relational structure, corporate goals, and governmental oversight. The *khānqāh* was organized and endowed by Saladin for a specific purpose. He stipulated that there be room and board available to 300 Sufis, all of whom had to be foreigners. If we can take the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh as any indication, the *khānqāh* was not open to Egyptian Sufis, North African Sufis, or Andalusian Sufis. The general population of the *khānqāh* was probably culled from the same demographic as the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, juridical Sufis from the East: Damascus, Baghdad, or Khurasan. It is certain that they were organized hierarchically and expected to spend their time in study and devotions. The Shaykh al-Shuy̅ukh was at the top of this hierarchy and he most likely delegated many of the day-to-day operations of the *khānqāh* to his subordinates. Homerin has demonstrated that during the Mamluk period one of the responsibilities of the state-sponsored Sufis was to conduct prayer sessions for the welfare of the ruling family.[155] Whether or not this was the case during the Ayyubid period as well is unknown, although it is quite likely, given that the Mamluks continued most practices instituted by their Ayyubid predecessors.

Above all, and this is the third argument of the chapter, the purpose of the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ *khānqāh* was to advertise the ideology of the state. An organization may be

---

[154] There are a few exceptions to this. In the next chapter, I will highlight one instance in which Abū ʾl-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī is invited to visit the *khānqāh*, which he does. However, the visit is not about the *khānqāh* itself, but rather to visit a Sufi with whom he was acquainted.
[155] Homerin, "Saving Muslim Souls: The Khānqāh and the Sufi Duty in Mamluk Lands."

either formal/informal and rational/natural/open depending on the nature of its positions and how strongly the goals of the collectivity are articulated, respectively. The *khānqāh* Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ was a formal, rational-system organization. It was formal because the positions within it were offices and thus were not connected to any specific individual. Indeed, any of the individuals occupying office at any given time could be removed at the whim of the Sultan, as I have shown throughout this chapter. It was a rational-system organization because the Sufis, as employees of the state, were expected to implement the goals of the state. But besides the daily performance of *dhikr*, prayer sessions for the Sultan, the weekly procession to the al-Ḥākim mosque, and other minor duties, what were the state's expectations for the Sufis? What were the goals of the *khānqāh*?

To begin, one must ask why Saladin and his successors wanted to establish and endow *madrasa*s and *khānqāh*s in the first place? It has been argued, by Gibb primarily, that Saladin did so out of a deep sense of commitment to Sunnī Islam and his personal desire to ensure its place of centrality in Egypt and greater Syria.[156] In this reading, Saladin is primarily a moral actor, motivated by his personal belief in Sunnī Islam, and particularly his commitment to the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*. Ehrenkreuz, in contrast, argued that Saladin was a great politician and soldier, less interested in religious ideology and willing to subordinate his religious policies to his political designs.[157] Lev and Humphries, finally, both argue that many of Saladin's policies were merely taken over

[156] H. A. R. Gibb, *The Life of Saladin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 17 and idem, "The Achievement of Saladin," in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 99.
[157] Ehrenkreutz, *Saladin*, 238.

from those of Nūr al-Dīn or based upon Seljuk models, often deployed *ad hoc* as new situations arose.[158]

According to the present study, it is clear that Saladin was attempting to replicate what he had learned from his Zengid comrade Nūr al-Dīn, who had learned it from the great Seljuks. The major educational innovation of the Seljuks, thanks in great part to the genius of Niẓām al-Mulk,[159] was the creation of ideological state apparatuses: the *madrasa* and the *khānqāh* (called a *ribāṭ* in Baghdad). The Seljuks, of course, did not actually invent either one of these educational facilities. What they did do, however, was take the idea of these facilities (the *madrasa* and *khānqāh/ribāṭ*) and create a network of organizations and use them to disseminate the state ideology, as has been demonstrated in detail by Omid Safi.[160] It was this insight that was taken over from the Seljuks, first by Nūr al-Dīn in Syria, and then by Saladin in Egypt and greater Syria.[161] By founding *madrasa*s and *khānqāh*s, Saladin could keep tight control over the training and education of the learned class. Furthermore, by personally appointing the director of the *khānqāh*, Saladin and his successors could control the education happening therein and create conditions that would allow for the continuous production of knowledge, i.e., knowledge that he approved of. The surprisingly uniform nature regarding the ideological committments of those chosen to be Shaykh

---

[158] Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193-1260*; Yaacov Lev, *Saladin in Egypt*, 140-141.
[159] See Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 82-104.
[160] Ibid.
[161] One of Lev's arguments is that Saladin did not actually do anything original in Egypt, rather he had merely copied Nūr al-Dīn's policies. While this may be true, it completely obscures how revolutionary these organizations were for Egypt. Saladin drastically changed the face of Egypt - architecturally, socially, religiously, and educationally.

al-Shuyūkh would suggest that the *khānqāh* was meant to disseminate a very particular ideology, in this case juridical Sufism informed by Sunnī/Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī doctrine.

In Althusser's formulation, an ideological state apparatus (a school being the most common) is juxtaposed with a repressive state apparatus (like a police force). The latter is contained within the military, judicial, and ruling apparatuses that are meant to enforce the ruling ideology upon the populace. As Althusser points out, repressive apparatuses are not necessary when ideological state apparatuses are operating effectively, because they disseminate the ideology discursively.[162] This is precisely how the *khānqāh* was used. In other words, the socio-religious function of the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ *khānqāh* was to formalize the place of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk society. By legitimating Sufism in a way that served the interests of the state, the Sultan and his *amīr*s could exercise greater control over Sufism, which was gaining in popularity at that time.[163] The *khānqāh* was not designed to bring Sufism to Egypt,[164] nor was it meant solely to combat Shiʿites, although this was certainly part of the ideology,[165] nor was it an altruistic endowment from a moralistic vision of Sunnī Islam.[166] By co-opting the outward language of Sufism and by openly supporting Sufis who conformed to the eastern standards of Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī juridical Sufism, the *khānqāh* was designed to shape the discourse of Egyptian Sufism and bring it under state control.

---

[162] In fact, Althusser argues that the repressive apparatus can really only secure the conditions by which the ideological state apparatus can function properly; "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 20-25.
[163] ʿAlī Ṣāfi Ḥusayn has argued that it was precisely at this time that the whole of Egypt were turning to Sufism; *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, 17-33.
[164] Mackenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 23.
[165] Rizq, *Khānqāwāt al-ṣūfīya fī miṣr*, 26.
[166] This is, in some form or another, the view of a number of authors who see Saladin as an essentially moral and benevolent political actor.

The extent to which the Ayyubid and early-Mamluk states co-opted the language of the Sufis is clear in the diploma of investiture (*taqlīd*) authorizing Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī to be the next Shaykh al-Shuyukh. The writ contains no overt discussion of Sufi doctrine or practice, other than the name of al-Aykī, the *khānqāh*, and the mention of a few other Sufi hospices.[167] This indicates that the state intended to domesticate established institutions of Sufism rather than engage in debates over specific Sufi doctrines. The document is replete with Sufi terminology. In it, the Sufis are called *al-qawm* (the people). It refers to states (*aḥwāl*), secrets (*asrār*), removing the veil (*kashf al-ḥijāb*), sanctity (*walāya*), *dhikr*, retreats (*khalwa*), and the miracles (*karāmāt*) of the Sufis, among many other Sufi ideas.[168] Furthermore, in justifying the office of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, the scribe writes, "We consider it a legal obligation (*al-wājib al-farḍ*) to care for the various groups of the flock (*iḥsān ilā ṭawā'if al-ra'īya*)," and then lists the duties of the Shaykh. It is clear that one of the purposes of this *taqlīd* is to portray the Mamluks as kind benefactors who, acting as righteous rulers, care for the world by supplying it with spiritual nourishment (*al-ghawth*). In describing the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, the writ specifies explicitly that he should teach al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* and that he, like al-Ghazālī, should be a master of law and piety (*al-fiqh wa'l-wara'*). The document is strong testimony to the extent to which the state had endorsed the ideas and practices of juridical Sufism and authoritative piety. It is no surprise, then, that less than 50

---

[167] Included in his duties as Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, al-Aykī was to be responsible for the *khānqāh* in the Fayyūm and the *khānqāh* of al-Mashṭūb. I have not yet been able to locate more information about these two structures.

[168] It even mentions the hierarchy of saints in terms of the *abdāl* (the 40 saints alive at any given time), the *awtād* (tent-pegs, the Sufis who keep the world functioning), and the *ghawth* (the saint who nourishes the world. Tellingly, there is no mention of the *quṭb*, the axial saint who is at the top of the hierarchy. This is most likely because the concept of the supreme saint, to whom all Sufis defer, would conflict with the Mamluk polity with the Sultan as the absolute ruler.

years later, Ibn ʻAṭāʼ Allāh al-Iskandarī, the representative of the local Sufi population, and al-Āmulī, the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, would work together against Ibn Taymīya's attacks on Sufism.

Finally, and this is the fourth argument, despite the fact that the Sufis of the Saʻīd al-Suʻadāʼ were of a completely different social world from those who would eventually form organized brotherhoods in Egypt, the *khānqāh* played an indirect role in the popularization of Sufism in medieval Egypt. As prominent members of the civilian elite who were seen on the streets of Cairo every week, its residents put Sufism on the social map for the entire city. "Social facts," as Durkheim formulated the concept, are those phenomena of social exchange and action that become crystallized over time as they are repeated. What once may have been a novel or ingenious act of social production becomes, through the stability of daily, weekly, and yearly repetition, the accepted way of doing things. Thus, one of the unintended consequences of the founding of a state-sponsored *khānqāh* in Cairo was the routinization of public Sufism. The weekly procession of Sufis from the *khānqāh* to the al-Ḥākim mosque every week is just one example of a repeated act that became a social fact for the population of medieval Cairo.[169] No longer relegated to desert areas or cloistered in private *ribāṭ*s in the Qarāfa cemetery, These Sufis were a group of highly visible, politically well-connected Sufis who were on the government payroll. The effect this must have had on the local population should not be underestimated, as shown by al-Maqrīzī's account in which the weekly procession is described as one of the most beautiful and popular customs of contemporary Cairo. One of the consequences of the founding of

---

[169] Support for my contention that the procession became a social fact for the population can be seen in the fact that al-Maqrīzī calls the procession an *ʻāda*. This word, which means a repeated act or occasion, indicates that the ceremony had become a well-known, regular, and predicatable event.

the *khānqāh* Sa'īd al-Su'adā', then, was to make Sufism eminently more visible to the local population.

When the *khānqāh* opened its doors in 1173, it opened up a world quite foreign to the majority of Sufis in Egypt. Its inhabitants were scholars from the East, while many of the local Sufis were members of Sufi groups from the West. The Sufis who lived in the *khānqāh* got paid to live there, while local Sufis had to live by their own means. The Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, in particular, must have been an especially foreign concept to local Sufis. He was a man with strong connections to the political and military elite, well-trained in jurisprudence, and the recipient of large sums of money from the government in return for his services. This is a far cry from the Sufis discussed in the following chapters. However, by the end of the period under consideration, the *khānqāh* was a familiar feature of the political and religious landscape. It was established in society to the point that Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī, a truly local Sufi, was able to work closely with al-Āmulī to combat a common enemy, Ibn Taymīya. If there is any doubt as to the lasting efficacy of this ideological project, one should remember the description presented by al-Maqrīzī that opened this chapter. The *khānqāh* was part of the urban landscape, and the Sufis who participated in the procession were a source of *baraka*, admiration, and emulation. The *khānqāh* and its inhabitants had been integrated seamlessly into the socio-religious landscape of Cairo and Fustat.

The next chapter will be devoted to the above-mentioned al-Iskandarī and the form of Sufism that he popularized, state-sanctioned Sufism. While these Sufis were not affiliated with the state's various educational projects directly, they nevertheless

cultivated mutually beneficial relationships with the ruling elite in order to achieve their own goals.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE-SANCTIONED SUFISM: Ibn ʻAṭāʼ Allāh al-Iskandarī and the Nascent Shādhilīya

In the previous chapter I focused on the state-sponsored Sufis of the Saʻīd al-Suʻadāʼ *khānqāh*. In terms of relational structure, the *khānqāh* Sufis were organized hierarchically under the direct control of the state.[1] The Sultan – whether Ayyūbid or Mamlūk – appointed the individuals who oversaw the *khānqāh*, and these in turn appointed others to oversee various aspects of its daily operation. The organization of the *khānqāh* was thus ordered, in terms of power and prestige, from the top down. This relational structure was then used to spread the ideology of the state. In this chapter, I turn to a form of Sufism that was informally organized and loosely connected to the state. I call this state-sanctioned Sufism because these Sufis, while not necessarily on the state payroll, cultivated careful relationships with the ruling elites in order to further their own ends. These goals included the ability to move freely throughout Egypt in order to spread their teachings, to travel on the pilgrimage routes to Mecca, and to intercede with the rulers on behalf of their clients. The state, in turn, attempted to use these relationships with the Sufis to further its own ends.[2] This form of state-sanctioned Sufism is best exemplified by the first leaders of the Shādhilīya brotherhood: Abū ʼl-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258), Abū ʼl-ʻAbbās al-Mursī (d. 1286) and Ibn

---

[1] By "state" I mean the complicated administrative apparatus encompassing the Sultan, his viziers, the bureaucratic posts in the various ministries (*dawāwīn*), and the civilian elites who mediated between the state and the people.

[2] As I will demonstrate below, while the state attempted to co-opt some of the local Sufi population for its own ends, it was not very successful because most local Sufis were unwilling to work with the state so closely.

'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 1309). The nascent Shādhilīya are a good example of state-sanctioned Sufism because their relationship with the state became an important component of Shādhilī doctrine and practice, as will be shown below.

In addition to an example of state-sanctioned Sufism, the early Shādhilīya provide a model for the transition from the institution of the *ṭarīqa* to the organization of the *ṭā'ifa*. In the Introduction I argued that the difference between an institution and an organization was one of intent and purpose. An institution, in the simplest sense, is a socially accepted way of doing things while an organization is the deliberate instantiation of an institution for a specific purpose.[3] In medieval Sufi terminology, the method of a particular master was known as his or her *ṭarīqa*. This *ṭarīqa*, as the established method of a master, was an institution. The *ṭarīqa* of any Sufi should be conceptually separated from its subsequent social organization, or *ṭā'ifa*.[4] In the case of a *ṭā'ifa*, the *ṭarīqa* of a master is formalized, usually posthumously, and organized for a specific end. An integral stage in this development is the institutionalization of an eponymous identity. That is to say, once a master's *ṭarīqa* has been established and before it can be deliberately organized, the identity of the master is institutionalized as emblematic of the cluster of institutions (i.e. the institutionalized practices) that comprise the *ṭarīqa*. Thus, the life, teachings, and personality of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī became symbolic of the order that carried his name.

---

[3] See the Introduction, p. 22-28.

[4] Part of the problem with current accounts of medieval Sufi brotherhoods is the fact that in Modern Standard Arabic, a brotherhood is indeed called a *ṭarīqa*. However, medieval usage was quite consistent in its differentiation between *ṭarīqa* and *ṭā'ifa*. By paying close attention to this differentiation, the organization of brotherhoods becomes clearer. On this distinction, see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 145-146. The mistake of not paying close attention to terminology leads Abun-Nasr to argue that al-Iskandarī was "the true founder of the Shâdhiliyya *ṭarîqa*," see *Muslim Communities of Grace*, 109. It would be more accurate to say that al-Iskandarī was the impetus behind the transition from *ṭarīqa* to *ṭā'ifa*.

In this chapter I will detail some of the more salient features of the *ṭarīqa* of al-Shādhilī as it is represented in hagiographical sources. I will then describe how the personality of al-Shādhilī became an institutionalized identity that could be organized by later generations. The early Shādhilīya thus serve as a very clear example of the transition from *ṭarīqa* to *ṭā'ifa* and the institutionalization of al-Shādhilī's identity that made this transition possible.

Within 100 years of al-Shādhilī's death, the Shādhilī *ṭā'ifa* had forged a distinct identity that persists to this day.[5] However, the actual transition from an informal network of the followers of a charismatic teacher to a fully-formed organization is still not adequately understood.[6] Although al-Shādhilī himself died in 1258, it was not until the mid-fourteenth century that historians and hagiographers began to speak of a discrete institutionalized identity they called *al-ṭā'ifa al-shādhilīya* ("the Shādhilī group"). While most scholars have described Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī as the "founder" of this *ṭā'ifa*, the work of formulating and consolidating the group's identity was actually carried out by his first hagiographer, Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī.[7] There is no

---

[5] The Shādhilīya spread rapidly throughout Egypt, North Africa, and Syria and from these initial movements a staggering number of sub-branches and new brotherhoods had emerged by the modern period. On the Shādhilīya today in general, see Eric Geoffroy ed. *Une voie soufie dans le monde: la Shâdhiliyya* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2005), particularly the third and fourth sections, "La Shâdhiliyya à l'époque moderne," and "Aspects contemporains;" on the Shādhilīya in modern Egypt see 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *al-Madrasa al-shādhilīya al-ḥadītha wa-imāmuhā Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī* [The Modern Shādhilī School and its Leader, Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī] (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, n.d.); and Fārūq Aḥmad Muṣṭafā, *al-Binā' al-ijtimā'ī li'l-ṭarīqa al-shādhilīya fī miṣr: dirāsa fī 'l-anthrūbūlūjiyā al-ijtimā'īya* [The Social Structure of the Shādhilī Brotherhood in Egypt: A Study in Social Anthropology] (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣrīya al-'Āmma li'l-Kitāb, 1980).

[6] The bibliography on the Shādhilīya is quite extensive, although few have actually attempted to answer **why** and **how** the brotherhood emerged. The more notable of those who have addressed this question include: Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 47-51, 84-90; A. M. Mackeen, "The Rise of al-Shādhilī," in *JAOS* 91 (1971): 477-486; Cornell, *Realm of the Saint,* 144-154; Pierre Lory, "Shādhilīya," in *EI2*; Eric Geoffroy, "La Châdhiliyya," in *Les Voies de Allah*, p. 509-518; and Jamil Abun-Nasr, *Muslim Communities of Grace*, 96-112.

[7] This is primarily the case with historians writing in Arabic. Typical examples include 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *Qaḍīyat al-taṣawwuf: al-madrasa al-shādhilīya* [The Issue of Sufism: The Shādhilī School] (Cairo:

doubt that al-Shādhilī was well-known, both during his lifetime and after, for having advocated a unique spiritual method, i.e. his *ṭarīqa*.[8] However, there is no evidence that he organized a *ṭā'ifa*. How and when, exactly, did the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa* become the Shādhilī *ṭā'ifa*?

A close inspection of contemporary medieval literature reveals that this *ṭā'ifa* emerged in the mid- to late-fourteenth century. Al-Iskandarī wrote the first hagiography of al-Shādhilī, *Laṭā'if al-minan* (The Subtle Blessings), around 1296.[9] Al-Iskandarī uses the word *ṭā'ifa* repeatedly throughout the *Laṭā'if*, but only in the sense in which Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1074) used it in the eleventh century – to designate the Sufis in general as a group distinct from others, like the jurists.[10] Likewise, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh al-Ḥimyarī (d. 1323), the author of the second hagiographical work on al-Shādhilī, *Durrat al-Asrār* (The Pearl of Mysteries, written ca. 1315), does not mention or

---

Dār al-Ma'ārif, 2007); 'Alī Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, 39; Abū 'l-Wafā al-Taftāzānī, *Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī wa-taṣawwufuhu*, 13; and Ma'mūn Gharīb, *Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī: ḥayātuhu wa-taṣawaffuhu wa-talāmīdhuhu wa-awrāduhu* [Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī: His Life, Sufism, Students, and Litanies] (Cairo: Dār Gharīb, 2000); but there are also English language examples, see Cyril Glassé, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), where he says of al-Shādhilī, "he is the founder of the *Shadhiliyyah*, one of the most important Sufi brotherhoods," 475.

[8] The two hagiographers of al-Shādhilī, al-Iskandarī and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, consistently refer to the method of al-Shādhilī as his *ṭarīqa*.

[9] There are multiple printings of *Laṭā'if al-minan*, each of which has its own problems and there is still no critical edition of this important work. The present research is based on the edition edited by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (Cairo: Majallat Kitāb al-Sha'b, 1986). The dating of this work to 1296, first noted by Abū 'l-Wafā al-Taftāzānī, and then Eric Geoffroy, is based upon the fact that al-Iskandarī mentions meeting with the sultan Manṣūr Lājīn, who died in 698/1298; see al-Taftāzānī, *Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī*, p. 104; and Geoffroy, "Entre hagiographie et hagiologie : les Laṭā'if al-minan d'Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh (m. 709/1309)," in *AnIsl* 32 (1998), p. 51. The meeting with the Sultan is in *Laṭā'if al-minan*, p. 224.

[10] On al-Iskandarī's usage of *ṭā'ifa*, 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd notes that al-Iskandarī's intention is "the Sufis in a general sense, and his intent is not the Shādhilīya at all," *Laṭā'if al-minan*, p. 28, n. 1. Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī calls the first chapter of his *Risāla* "On the clarification of the beliefs of this *ṭā'ifa* about the matters of religion," *al-Risāla*, p. 11. By contrast, Abū Nāṣir al-Sarrāj's *Luma'*, which was written approximately 100 years before al-Qushayrī, does not use the word *ṭā'ifa*, but rather *'aṣāba*, or a group with personalistic loyalties; see *al-Luma' fī 'l-taṣawwuf*, p. 2 [Arabic section]. See also Eric Geoffroy, "Ṭā'ifa," in *EI2*, where he makes the case that the Sufis use the term almost exclusively to talk about themselves.

discuss an organized Shādhilī *ṭā'ifa*.[11] Both authors depict al-Shādhilī as a charismatic teacher with a unique *ṭarīqa* and a large number of students, but neither of them use language that would indicate an organization, nor do they refer to the group itself as a *ṭā'ifa*. One of al-Shādhilī's Sufi contemporaries, Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn Abī 'l-Manṣūr (d. 1283), notes that al-Shādhilī had many students but says nothing of the Shādhilī *ṭā'ifa* as an organization.[12] The Upper-Egyptian Sufi Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣi (d. 1308) actually met al-Shādhilī's student Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Mursī but again he makes no mention of a *ṭā'ifa*.[13] In 1326, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa visited Alexandria and met with Yaqūt al-Ḥabashī, who was, in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's words, "the student of Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Mursī, the student of the famous saint Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī."[14] This indicates that in 1326 al-Shādhilī was remembered as a saint but not as the shaykh of a *ṭā'ifa*. The biographer al-Yāfi'ī (d. 1367), despite devoting an extensive entry devoted to al-Shādhilī, likewise makes no mention of a *ṭā'ifa*.[15] The Ḥanbalī historian and biographer Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Dhahabī (d. 1348) seems to have been the first scholar to indicate an organization when he calls

---

[11] I have not, as of yet, been able to locate any biographical information on Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh. Not even Elmer Douglas, who translated *Durrat al-asrār*, provides any information whatsoever on the author. Douglas, *The Mystical Teachings of al-Shādhilī* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993). Like the *Laṭā'if al-minan*, the *Durrat al-asrār* has still not been edited properly. The best extant printed edition is that edited by 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā (Cairo, 1988); 'Aṭa attempted to make a semi-critical edition by using the Tunisian edition (1887), the Alexandrian edition (1935), and a private manuscript (belonging to a certain 'Abd al-Khāliq al-Shubrāwī) as the basis for his text; there are nevertheless still many mistakes. As to when Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh wrote *Durrat al-asrār*, the only internal indication is the fact that Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh collected material for the book in Alexandria and Cairo in 715/1315. Therefore, he would have written the book between 1315 and 1323, the year he is supposed to have died.

[12] Denis Gril, *Risāla*, p. 78-79 [Arabic section]. Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn Abī 'l-Manṣūr meticulously recorded all those Sufis whom he met in Egypt during his lifetime. He includes in these biographical notices descriptions of these Sufis' social circles. The fact that he mentions al-Shādhilī alone indicates that, as far as Ṣafī al-Dīn knew, al-Shādhilī had no significant circle of students.

[13] *al-Waḥīd fī sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd* (Cairo: The Central Library for Islamic Manuscripts, MS #3182), 2:99a-101b. Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī was interested in enumerating the various networks of Sufis in his contemporary Egypt and he takes great pains to note all the various groups of Sufis he knew and how they were connected. If there were a group of Sufis who self-identified as Shādhilīs, Ibn Nūḥ would have noted them. Instead, however, he merely mentions that al-Mursī was the student of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī.

[14] *Riḥlat ibn Baṭṭūṭa* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1992), 25.

[15] *Mir'āt al-jinān*, 4:140-147.

al-Shādhilī "*shaykh al-ṭā'ifa al-shādhilīya*" in his biographical dictionary of Muslim notables.[16] This indicates that by the mid-fourteenth century al-Shādhilī's personality had been institutionalized and become representative of a group of Sufis who traced their authority to him.

What happened in the roughly 100 years between the death of al-Shādhilī and the mid fourteenth-century recognition of an institutionalized identity known as *al-ṭā'ifa al-shādhilīya*? How did a coherent organization emerge, and what kinds of doctrinal and political strategies lent themselves to forming one? In other words, how did the Shādhilī *ṭā'ifa* organization become thinkable and reproducible? An important part of answering this question will be to uncover the set of institutionalized doctrines and practices that informed the creation and formalization of the organization. If a Sufi organization is rooted in shared ideas and practices, as well as more or less explicit goals, then one must recover the source of these ideas, practices, and goals in order to understand the emergence of the organization. It will be equally important to determine how the personality of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī became the symbolic object of this organizational trend. Herbert Blumer has argued that the world that exists for human beings is comprised of "objects," the meanings of which are generated through social interactions.[17] "The nature of an object – of any and every object – consists of the meaning that it has for the person for whom it is an object ... objects (in the sense of their meaning) must be seen as social creations – as being formed in and arising out of the process of definition and interpretation as this process takes place in the

---

[16] *Al-'Ibar*, 3:282.
[17] Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

interaction of people."[18] These meanings can and do shift over time as successive generations of people conceptualize an object. Thus, one way of tracing the changing role of al-Shādhilī will be to trace the changing meaning assigned to him as an object of veneration and as a spiritual model. How was the personality and life of al-Shādhilī, *qua* symbolic object, changed from teacher to eponym?

The writings of al-Iskandarī in Egypt and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh in North Africa were instrumental in reconceptualizing the person of al-Shādhilī as an object of devotion and emblematic of a unique Sufi group. In writing their hagiographies of al-Shādhilī and his deputy al-Mursī, these authors provided their readers with the doctrines, practices, and rhetoric of authority that would become the markers of the Shādhilī brotherhood's institutionalized identity. This institutionalized identity could then be reconceptualized by subsequent Sufis, as was the case with the Wafā'īya sub-order of the Shādhilīya.[19] What follows will focus on the hagiographical portrayals of al-Shādhilī and, to a lesser extent, al-Mursī, and what they preserve of the social world, rhetoric of authority, and methods of legitimation in 13th- and 14th-century Egypt. It was al-Iskandarī's crafting of these hagiographical portrayals that provided the raw materials for an emergent institutionalized identity of the Shādhilī *ṭā'ifa* in Egypt. In the

---

[18] Ibid., 11.

[19] The Wafā'īya have been treated at length by Richard McGregor in *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt: The Wafā' Sufi Order and the Legacy of Ibn 'Arabi* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004). Muḥammad Wafā', the eponym of this sub-order, does seem to have deliberately formed an organization based upon the pre-existing institutionalized identity of the Shādhilīya. Both Muḥammad Wafā' and his son and successor 'Alī re-worked the Shādhilī-based identity, which allowed them to claim simultaneously adherence to the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa* while proposing their own, presumably superior *ṭā'ifa*. On the Wafā'īya claim that they were superior to their teachers, see McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism*, 158. This is also the case with the sub-orders of the Chishtīya order in South Asia. Once an institutionalized identity had become an available social resource, sub-orders were deliberately organized to take advantage of this resource; see Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond*, 18-21.

conclusion, I will theorize more explicitly how al-Iskandarī was able to effect the transition from *ṭarīqa* to *ṭā'ifa*.

THE EARLY SHĀDHILĪYA: A BRIEF SKETCH

First of all, I will present a very brief outline of the lives of al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī. My account is a synopsis drawn from a variety of sources that are mostly in agreement about the major details of their lives.[20] This sketch provides the necessary background and sets the stage for the analysis that follows, which will problematize some of the historiography I summarize here.

Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī was born in the Maghrib around 593/1196 in Ghumāra, a region of the northwestern Maghrib.[21] The sources generally describe al-Shādhilī as claiming 'Alid-Ḥasanid descent through his father. As a young man, he began his training in the classical Islamic sciences (*al-'ulūm al-ẓāhira*) before moving on to the more esoteric sciences of Sufism (*al-'ulūm al-bāṭina*), although this detail of his biography is most likely a literary trope. His interest in the Sufi path compelled him to set out for the East to find a Sufi master or the *quṭb* – the axial saint of the age.[22] This

---

[20] The biography I am presenting here is based upon *Laṭā'if al-minan; Durrat al-asrār*; *al-'Ibar*, 3:282; 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī, *Ṭabaqāt al-sha'rānī* (Cairo: Maktaba wa-Maṭba'at Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣabīḥ, 1965), 2:6-16; al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durrīya fī tarājim al-sādat al-ṣūfīya*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdān (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azharīya li'l-Turāth, n.d.), 2:126-137; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, 398-399; *Ḥusn*, 1:520; Ibn 'Iyād, *al-Mafākhir al-'alīya fī 'l-ma'āthir al-shādhilīya* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1993); 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *al-Madrasa al-shādhilīya*; 'Alī Sālim 'Ammār, *Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī: 'aṣruhu, tārīkhuhu, 'ulūmuhu, taṣawwufuhu* [Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī: His Era, History, Teachings, and Sufism] (Cairo: Dār Rasā'il al-Najīb al-Islāmīya, 1951-1962); Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, 60-78; Mackeen, "The Rise of al-Shādhilī;" Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 146-149; and Jamāl al-Dīn Shayyāl, *A'lām al-iskandarīya fī 'l-aṣr al-islāmī* [*Notables of Alexandria in the Islamic Age*] (Alexandria: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīnīya, 2001). All of these sources, to one degree or another, are based upon al-Iskandarī and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh. There are, of course, many other sources, medieval and modern, that discuss the life of al-Shādhilī, but these are the most important ones.

[21] G. Yver, "Ghumāra," in *EI2*; and Mackeen, "The Rise of al-Shādhilī," 478.

[22] In the metaphysical hierarchy of the Sufis there are a number of saints who are more central to the maintenance and upkeep of the world than others. Among these are the *abdāl* or 'substitutes,' the *awtād*

quest supposedly led him to Iraq, where he met the leading representative (*khalīfa*) of the Rifāʿīya brotherhood, Abū ʾl-Fatḥ al-Wāsiṭī. Al-Wāsiṭī took al-Shādhilī on as a student briefly but told him to return to his home country if he wanted to find the *quṭb*. This is another literary trope, and there is no independent evidence that al-Shādhilī actually traveled to Iraq. In fact, al-Wāsiṭī was living in Alexandria at the time and it was there that the two most likely met, much later in al-Shādhilī's life.

Upon returning to the Maghrib, al-Shādhilī found ʿAbd al-Salām Ibn Mashīsh (d. 1225), a student of the Maghribī Sufi ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Madanī.[23] Ibn Mashīsh revealed that he was indeed the *quṭb* and authorized al-Shādhilī to teach in his name. Before his assassination by an ʿAlid rebel, Ibn Mashīsh sent al-Shādhilī to the village of Shādhila (hence his name) in Ifrīqīya (modern Tunisia) where he spent a great deal of time in meditative isolation on Mt. Zaghwān. From Shādhila, he then moved to Tunis, where he ran afoul of certain high-ranking members of the Hafsid court, the most prominent of whom was Ibn al-Barrāʾ, whom Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh identifies as the chief judge (*qāḍī al-jamāʿa*).[24] There are various theories offered about what, exactly, al-Shādhilī did to provoke their censure. Some argue that he was a threat to the chief *qāḍī*,[25] while others

---

or 'tent pegs,' and at the top of the hierarchy is the *quṭb*: the axis around whom all others revolve. Perhaps the most succinct definition of the *quṭb* is offered by ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Ḥifnī, *Muʿjam muṣṭalaḥāt al-ṣūfīya* [*Dictionary of Technical Terms of the Sufis*] (Beirut: Dār al-Masīra, 1987): "One man who is the locus of God's appearance in the world for all time," 217.

[23] On Ibn Mashīsh there is a monograph by Zakia Zouanat, *Ibn Mashish, maitre d'al-Shadhili* (Rabat, 1998), which I have consulted in an Arabic translation by Aḥmad al-Tawfīq, *Ibn Mashīsh shaykh al-Shādhilī* (Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 2006). Very little is known of this figure. For the basic sources of his life see Mackeen, "The Rise of al-Shādhilī," 479-482. On the relationship between Ibn Mashīsh and the Shādhilīya, see Zakia Zouanat, "Des origines de la Shâdhiliyya chez le cheikh ʿAbd al-Salâm Ibn Mashîsh," in *Une voie soufie dans le monde: la Shâdhiliyya*, 53-62. Not much is known of Ibn Mashīsh's teacher al-Madanī, who has often been confused for Abū Madyan. See the summary in Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 148

[24] I have been unable to locate any further information about this individual.

[25] ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *Qaḍīyat al-taṣawwuf: al-madrasa al-shādhilīya*, 33.

believe that it was his claim to have had prophetic visions.[26] ‘Ammār argues, correctly I think, that the source of his conflict was the accusation that he claimed to be the Fatimid *mahdī*.[27] While the Fatimid empire had disintegrated by this point (in 1171), there was still a political sensitivity to individuals who espoused vaguely Ismā‘īlī ideas. Neither al-Iskandarī nor Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh record any explicit Fatimid pretensions on al-Shādhilī's part, but he nevertheless made some claims that the Sunnī Hafsids considered suspect. First, he claimed a superior social status owing to his ‘Alid descent. Second, he appears to have claimed for himself the quality of *‘iṣma* – infallibility, which is a distinctly Shi‘ite doctrine.[28] Third, he claimed to be the axial saint of the age, the *quṭb*, which in the version of the doctrine taught by al-Shādhilī was very similar to that of the Shi‘ite Imamate.[29]

Although the question of whether al-Shādhilī actually claimed to be the *mahdī* cannot be answered definitely, the result was unequivocal: he was forced to leave Tunis for Alexandria, wherein he installed himself with the permission of the sultan in Cairo ca. 642/1244.[30] It was in Egypt, according to Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, that he also took the *khirqa*

---

[26] Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, 64.

[27] ‘Alī ‘Ammār, *Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī*, 190-191. Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's account has Ibn al-Barā' say explicitly to the Sultan of Tūnis, "A large group of people have gathered around [al-Shādhilī] and he claims he is the Fāṭimid (*al-fāṭimī*)." "The Fāṭimid" must be a circumlocution for the *mahdī*.

[28] *Ṭabaqāt al-Sha‘rānī*, 2:4; Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, 65.

[29] Ḥusayn goes so far as to argue that the doctrine of the *quṭb* is nothing but covert Shi‘ism in a thinly-veiled Sunnī cloak, which is quite a simplification of both doctrines and an overstatement of their similarities. It is for this reason that Ḥusayn attributes al-Shādhilī's troubles in Tūnis to "prophetic visions;" he fully endorses al-Shādhilī's Sunnī credentials and does not want to muddy the waters. On his discussion of the *quṭb* and Shi‘ism see *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, 35-36; on his discussion of the *quṭb* and al-Shādhilī, see pp. 41 and 64.

[30] This is the date given by ‘Alī ‘Ammār and others, but I have been unable to confirm this from any primary source on al-Shādhilī. Another question that is difficult to answer given the paucity of information in the sources is why al-Shādhilī chose to settle in Alexandria. Alexandria would have been a good choice given the cosmopolitan nature of the city. It was full of travelers, merchants, and pilgrims from all over North Africa, Europe, and points further East. But this would also have been true of contemporary Cairo and, to a lesser extent, Qūṣ. I would venture to guess that Alexandria was the most

and inherited the office of *quṭb* from Abū ʾl-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf al-Uqṣurī (d. 1244), one of the two representatives of the tradition of Abū Madyan Shuʿayb in Egypt; the other being ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Jazūlī (d. 1196), the teacher of al-Uqṣurī. As the *quṭb* and a highly-regarded Maghribī Sufi, al-Shādhilī led the pilgrimage from Alexandria to Mecca every year, and his sermons and spiritual sessions were attended by the greatest scholars of Ayyubid Egypt.

Before his death al-Shādhilī publicly announced that his student Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās al-Mursī would be his successor. Al-Mursī was from Murcia, al-Andalus, and while traveling with his family by ship he was orphaned when all those on the ship but he and his brother were drowned. He made his way to Tunis, where he fell in with al-Shādhilī and remained with him for the rest of al-Shādhilī's life. Al-Shādhilī died in the desert near the Red Sea port of ʿAydhāb in October of 1258 while en route to Mecca. He was buried in Ḥumaythrāʾ and a shrine was constructed on the spot.

Al-Mursī took the reins of leadership of the group without contestation, for al-Shādhilī had made clear indications that al-Mursī was to inherit his station upon his death.[31] However, upon al-Mursī's death in 1286, there seems to have occurred a disagreement over the leadership of the group.[32] It is important to understand this

---

logical choice as it was directly on the pilgrimage route for Maghribīs and was far enough from Cairo that al-Shādhilī would not have to worry about state interference.

[31] al-Iskandarī devotes a number of pages in *Laṭāʾif al-minan* to this topic; see pp. 109-113.

[32] The only treatment of this aspect of the development of the group is Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 150-154. I should stress that the fact there was a contestation of leadership does not mean that there was yet an institutionalized identity around the figure of al-Shādhilī. It was the contestation that *produced* this identity at a later date by spurring the writing of hagiographies. However, while the split was most certainly a central issue during the early formative years of the brotherhood, there was eventually a rapprochement between the two groups. An example of this rapprochement is the eighteenth-century work of Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan al-Kūhin al-Fāsī's *Jāmiʿ al-karāmāt al-ʿalīya fī ṭabaqāt al-sādat al-shādhilīya*, ed. Mursī Muḥammad ʿAlī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, 2001), which includes biographical notices on all the major Egyptian, Tunisian, and Moroccan figures and presents the *ṭarīqa* as a coherent whole. While al-Iskandarī certainly determined the path of the early incarnation of the group, at some point Ibn al-

power struggle because it sheds light on the character of al-Iskandarī's hagiography. Three factions vied for control of the group: an Egyptian group under the leadership of al-Iskandarī, a North African group under the leadership of Muḥammad ibn Sulṭān al-Masrūqī (d. after 1301) and his brother Māḍī ibn Sulṭān al-Masrūqī (d. 1318), and a second Egyptian group under the leadership of Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī (d. 1331).[33] The latter was a student of al-Mursī and contemporary of al-Iskandarī.[34] While later Shādhilī sources place Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī (or al-ʻArshī in some sources) in the *silsila* between al-Mursī and al-Iskandarī, al-Iskandarī himself says nothing about al-Ḥabashī's authority and cites him only once.[35] Evidence of al-Ḥabashī's status can be seen in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's account of his visit to Egypt. He met personally with al-Ḥabashī in 1326 in Alexandria and says unequivocally that al-Ḥabashī was the *khalīfa* of al-Mursī while making no mention of al-Iskandarī at all.[36] One of al-Iskandarī's purposes in composing *Laṭā'if al-*

Ṣabbāgh's hagiography became equally utilized by the Egyptians. This may have been due in part to the work of Ibn ʻAbbād of Ronda (d. 1390) who wrote a commentary on the *Ḥikam* of al-Iskandarī and popularized these mystical poems in the Maghrib. It was Ibn ʻAbbād, then, who seems to have been the primary link between the Egyptian and North African schools; see Kenneth Honnerkamp, "A Biography of Abû l-Hasan al-Shâdhili Dating from the Fourteenth Century," in *Une voie soufie dans le monde: la Shâdhiliyya*, 73-87, esp. p. 86. However, Ibn ʻAbbād may not have actually been a Shādhilīte himself; see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 153. On Ibn ʻAbbād in general see *Ibn Abbad of Ronda: Letters on the Sufi Path*, transl. John Renard (New York: Paulist Press, 1986) and Paul Nwyia, *Ibn ʻAbbâd de Ronda* (Beirut, 1961).

[33] Not much is known about the early social formation of the North African Shādhilīya and the two al-Masrūqī brothers; see *Durrat al-asrār*, 26 and Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 152-153.

[34] On Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī see *Mir'āt al-jinān*, 4:284; *al-Durar*, 4:408; *Ḥusn*, 1:525; *Ṭabaqāt al-Shaʻrānī*, 2:18-19; *al-Kawākib*, 3:71-73; *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, 315; and *Shadharāt*, 8:181.

[35] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, p. 122, is the only mention of al-Ḥabashī that I find. While al-Iskandarī says nothing about al-Ḥabashī, the later writer al-Shaʻrānī records the tradition that al-Iskandarī was actually al-Ḥabashī's student **after** al-Mursī! See *Ṭabaqāt al-Shaʻrānī*, 2:18-19. The confusion of names al-Ḥabashī/al-ʻArshī is due to the fact that his actual *nisba* was al-Ḥabashī (i.e. from the lands of Ḥabash, or modern Ethiopia). Al-ʻArshī was given to him (probably at a later date by his hagiographers) as a nickname because he was said to have reached a spiritual level just below the divine throne, *al-ʻarsh*. It is al-Shaʻrānī who clarifies this distinction.

[36] *Riḥlat ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, 25. Further evidence of the fact that al-Ḥabashī was al-Mursī's favored student and may have been meant to lead the group after al-Mursī's death is provided by the fact that al-Mursī married one of his daughters to al-Ḥabashī; see Jamāl al-Dīn Shayyāl, *Aʻlām al-iskandarīya*, 201. This is even more important in light of the fact that al-Mursī's daughter was also the granddaughter of al-Shādhilī (al-Mursī having married al-Shādhilī's daughter). This means al-Ḥabashī was brought into the Shādhilī family both literally and figuratively.

minan was to write al-Ḥabashī out of the story in order to cement his own claim as the true heir of the Shādhilī legacy. By controlling the narrative, al-Iskandarī could control the nascent group. Al-Ḥabashī, despite being al-Mursī's favored student, wrote no such narrative and is almost completely lost to the tradition's history. In this light, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's hagiography, *Durrat al-asrār*, should thus be seen as a North African answer to the version of events presented by al-Iskandarī, who is nowhere to be found in *Durrat al-asrār*.[37] Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's primary informants were al-Shadhilī's sons and the Maghribī Māḍī ibn Sulṭān;[38] he wrote al-Iskandarī completely out of the narrative. This strategy of controlling the nascent brotherhood's narrative of spiritual succession is one of many deployed by al-Iskandarī and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh in constructing an institutional identity for the group. In the following section I will look more closely at the hagiographical image of al-Shādhilī and what it reveals about these authors' strategies of legitimation.

THE HAGIOGRAPHICAL IMAGE OF AL-SHĀDHILĪ

Do al-Iskandarī and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh present the same hagiographical image of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī? This is a separate question from that of the historical accuracy of their accounts. I am less interested in the latter because the search for empirical verification is not directly related to the work of formulating an

[37] al-Iskandarī does turn up once in the *Durrat al-asrār* but it is only because he records some lines of verse attributed to al-Mursī that Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh was not aware of in other sources; see *Durrat al-asrār*, 175.

[38] Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh notes in his introduction to the *Durrat al-asrār* that his primary informants were "the righteous *shaykh* and saint Abū Sulṭān Māḍī, student and servant of our master Abū 'l-Ḥasan ... and his son, our master, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ... and our master the righteous *shaykh* Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī," *Durrat al-asrār*, 26. It is intriguing that Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh mined al-Ḥabashī for information and not al-Iskandarī's pupil Ibn Bākhila. This is further evidence of the enmity that existed between the Iskandarī and North African branches of the Shādhilīya.

institutionalized identity. In this sense, the formation of Sufi brotherhoods like the Shādhilīya was very similar to the formation of the four schools of Sunnī law. In both instances a subsequent institutional identity that had been crafted from a literary narrative was retroactively applied to an eponymous founder.[39] While the historical figure of al-Shādhilī may warrant attention,[40] I am more interested in his hagiographical image because it contains early strategies of legitimation and identity construction deployed after his death. In turn, these strategies will reveal a great deal about the authors' social milieu and the audience for whom they were writing. It is therefore important to determine whether or not al-Iskandarī and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh present the same hagiographical image of al-Shādhilī. In fact, they do not.

There are enough variations between the two narratives to demonstrate that al-Iskandarī and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh were working from different traditions and for different audiences. While both authors reproduce a similar corpus of sayings (*aqāwīl*), prayers (*ad'iya*), and litanies (*aḥzāb*) attributed to al-Shādhilī, they narrate his life in starkly different ways. Al-Iskandarī was writing as the representative of the Cairo followers of al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī, while Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh was writing for a specifically North African audience (i.e., one in the Maghrib and Ifrīqīya). Both narratives, then, were

---

[39] My thinking about this process is influenced by Christopher Melchert's *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

[40] The problem with recovering the historical figure of al-Shādhilī is that there are very few sources besides the hagiographical ones. Those biographies of al-Shādhilī that were written from outside the Shādhilī tradition, like Ṣafī al-Dīn's and al-Dhahabī's short notices mentioned above, are almost completely uninterested in his actual biography. Rather, they are interested in his teachings, his teachers, and his students. This is a perennial problem facing scholars of Sufi hagiography. When the only sources available for a historical reconstruction are hagiographical, the deck is already stacked against the possibility of an empirical intervention in the record. This problem is summarized pithily by Elliot Wolfson in his study of the last Rebbe of the Lubavitcher Ḥasidim, Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson: "Simply put, without [the hagiography] there would be no framework within which to study the life of Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson, and this is as true for the scholar as it is for the partisan ... The only truth that may be observed is truth garbed in the appearance of truth." Elliot Wolfson, *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 14.

shaped by the split after the death of al-Mursī in 1286, which seems to have resulted in three groups. In Egypt, there were the Alexandrians who looked to al-Ḥabashī and the Cairenes who looked to al-Iskandarī for guidance. Then there were the North Africans who made a different claim of spiritual succession. Because I am interested only in the social groups of Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's work is less important to this study than al-Iskandarī's. In what follows I will focus almost exclusively on al-Iskandarī.[41]

Al-Iskandarī collected his information from different people in different places, primarily Cairo and Alexandria. His presentation was thus constrained by the exigencies of his informants' memories and political agendas. Nevertheless, he attempted to shape all this material into a holistic and non-contradictory account. While one detects slightly contradictory reports in the work, it is internally consistent for the most part. This internal consistency reveals a great deal about the decisions al-Iskandarī made regarding what to include and where to place it in his account of the lives of al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī. The resultant hagiography eventually became the accepted version of their lives and teachings for the Shādhilīya in Egypt. In essence, the hagiographical narrative of the life of al-Shādhilī encoded the possibilities and limits of acceptable behavior for those who wished to follow his example. By providing his readers with a literary model for their devotions, al-Iskandarī made the life of al-Shādhilī eminently real for his readers and determined the shape of what it meant to

[41] Ideally, the group around al-Ḥabashī would be included here as well. Unfortunately, we do not possess much from this group. If we had writings from this faction of al-Mursī's followers, we would be in a much better position to uncover the ways in which Egyptian Sufis made competing claims of legitimacy and authority. I hope to return to this question in a subsequent study.

follow al-Shādhilī.[42] Once a coherent and discernable model was in place, the institutionalization of that model – what I am calling the institutionalized identity of al-Shādhilī – became possible as the doctrines and practices implicit in that model were repeated over time. Thus, the figure of al-Shādhilī became symbolic for a cluster of doctrines and practices that were formalized and institutionalized by repetition over subsequent generations of followers.

A great deal of material could be amassed to demonstrate the strategies al-Iskandarī deployed to construct the literary images of al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī. These literary strategies are important because they reveal both al-Iskandarī's vision of the nascent Shādhilīya and the interests and expectations of his intended audience. This imagined audience would eventually become the Shādhilī brotherhood. Therefore, these literary strategies constitute the nucleus of an identity that would then be institutionalized over time and eventually organized. In describing these strategies I focus on four conceptual tropes:

1) saintly authority;

2) juridical authority;

3) political reciprocity; and

4) authorizing practices.

---

[42] Roland Barthes, in his short essay, "The Reality Effect," describes the role that realistic description plays in literature and historical thinking. Description of unimportant details have the effect of showing that "the 'real' is supposed to be self-sufficient, that it is strong enough to belie any notion of function, that its 'speech-act' has no need to be integrated into a structure and that the *having-been-there* of things is a sufficient principle of speech." That is, seemingly unimportant details of realistic description lend the text an aura of reality, which he calls "the reality effect." While Barthes was ostensibly discussing modernist literature, and Flaubert in particular, I think his insight is helpful in thinking about hagiography. While hagiographies, and medieval Sufi hagiography is no exception, are ultimately quite stylized and almost over-determined by their genre, they nevertheless are full of the details of "real life" that lend the narrative a quality of reality. This reality effect is surely one of the reasons that hagiography functions so well as a model of and for proper Sufi behavior. See "The Reality Effect" in *The Rustle of Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 141-148.

The cumulative effect of these tropes was to differentiate the followers of al-Shādhilī from other Egyptian Sufis: they defined who the followers of al-Shādhilī were and who they were not. Thus, they had very real social consequences. As the ideas and practices that al-Iskandarī advocated in his writings were disseminated in Egypt, they produced a relatively stable and replicable set of doctrines and practices that determined what it meant to be a Shādhilī Sufi. These doctrines and practices are at the center of the institutionalized identity of the Shādhilīya.

SAINTLY AUTHORITY

At the center of Sufi piety and the development of the brotherhoods is the institution of the master/disciple relationship.[43] This is part of the larger social complex of Islamicate society, in which religious authority is granted by a teacher whose credentials can in some way be traced to the prophet Muḥammad.[44] The Sufis were no exception. Some of the earliest collections of Sufi *Ṭabaqāt* were focused upon this legitimating enterprise, connecting early Sufi masters to chains of authority stretching back to Muḥammad. Abū Nuʻaym al-Iṣfahānī went so far as to claim that the Companions were themselves proto-Sufis.[45] The Sufis eventually developed a visible and material symbol of their legitimate authority: the *khirqa* or *muraqqaʻa* – a cloak

[43] Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence have argued that "[t]he experiential origin of Sufism as a set of social institutions rested on the master-disciple relationship. It is hard to overestimate the importance of this relationship." *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, 19.

[44] An exception to this are charismatic healers and teachers who claim no traditional training. These individuals, however, often claim another kind of Muḥammadan authority by citing prophetic visitations in dreams or other kinds of visionary authorization.

[45] Abū Nuʻaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā' wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfīyā'*, ed. Saʻīd Khalīl al-Iskandarānī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʻArabī, 2001) begins his 10 volume compendium with Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and moves through the companions and connects them to the Sufis of his own time. On the purposes and methods of organization in the earliest Sufi *ṭabaqāt* literature see Jawid Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The Tabaqat Genre from al-Sulami to Jami* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001).

passed on from master to disciple to signify affiliation with the Sufis in general, and, more specifically, with a particular teacher.[46] The *khirqa* was thus a tangible and visible sign that the chain of authorization (*silsila*) was complete and unbroken. The doctrines, sayings, rituals, and idiosyncrasies of Sufi identity all came together in a piece of clothing that signified where one's identity and authority came from. If one claimed Sufi legitimacy, the *khirqa* was a powerful and visible symbol of that claim. The *khirqa*, more than anything else, I would argue, came to signify Sufi authority and piety. As Geoffroy argues, "l'investiture de la *khirqa* signifie plus largement le rattachement à un lignage initiatique remontant au Prophète."[47] As a Sufi master, one would expect al-Shādhilī to have inherited the *khirqa* from his teachers.

Indeed, the later Shādhilī tradition claims that al-Shādhilī took the *khirqa* several times. Ibn ʻIyād, for example, records that al-Shādhilī took the *khirqa* both from Muḥammad ibn Ḥarāzim (d. 633/1236) and Ibn Mashīsh.[48] The latter was al-Shādhilī's primary teacher, and the former was the son of the more famous Abū ʼl-Ḥasan ʻAlī ibn Ḥirzihim, or Sīdī Ḥarāzim, a major Sufi figure in Fez.[49] Likewise, there are traditions that al-Shādhilī inherited the *khirqa* of Abū Madyan in Egypt from Abū ʼl-Ḥajjāj al-

[46] The practice of donning the Sufi cloak can be seen as early as the ninth century in the works of al-Muḥāsibī. See especially Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulman* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1922) 108-110; also see J.-L. Michon, "Khirqa," in *EI2*; and Eric Geoffroy, "L'apparition des voies: les *khirqa* primitives (xiie siècle – début xiiie siècle)," in *Les Voies des Allah*, 44-54.
[47] Geoffroy, "L'apparition des voies: les *khirqa* primitives (xiie siècle – début xiiie siècle)," 44.
[48] Ibn ʻIyād, *al-Mafākhir al-ʻalīya*, 10. The *Mafākhir* is typical of later Shādhilite compositions in that it uses the material of al-Iskandarī and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh indiscriminately. The result is a muddled and often contradictory account of his life and teachings. Nevertheless, it is an important artifact in itself in that Ibn ʻIyād attempted to construct a unified hagiography from differing sources.
[49] See Abū Yūsuf Yaʻqub al-Tādilī, *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Aḥmad al-Tawfīq (Rabat: Manshūrāt Kullīyat al-Ādāb bi-ʼl-Rabāṭ, 1997), 95-96, and 168-173. On this family and their role in the dissemination of *uṣūlī* Sufism (i.e. Sufism grounded in Sunnī legal discourse) in Morocco, see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, p. 24-28. There is no evidence that al-Shādhilī knew, let alone studied with, Ibn Ḥarāzim and the claim is mostly likely a later invention to enhance al-Shādhilī's stature and connection to Sufi masters. Kūhin, for example, "solves" this problem by claiming that al-Shādhilī took the *khirqat al-tabarruk* from Ibn Ḥarāzim (a gesture of blessing from a master to an outsider) and the *khirqat al-irāda* (i.e. Sufi initiation) from Ibn Mashīsh; see al-Fāsī, *Jāmiʻ al-karāmāt al-ʻalīya*, 54.

Uqṣurī (d. 1244), from whom he also inherited the rank of *quṭb*.[50] However, neither al-Iskandarī nor Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh claims that al-Shādhilī or al-Mursī took the *khirqa* from anyone. In what follows I will look more closely at the claims made about the source of al-Shādhilī's authority. I begin with Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's account because it is the one most often repeated in later sources. I will then turn to al-Iskandarī's account of al-Shādhilī's authority, in which he posited a radical notion of authority rooted in a novel interpretation of sanctity (*walāya*) and prophecy (*nubuwwa*). Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh was responding to – and refuting – this interpretation. Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's account of al-Shādhilī's authority was a literary device designed to imbue al-Shādhilī with traditional Sufi credentials after al-Iskandarī had claimed he did not need them. Of primary importance, however, is what al-Iskandarī's notion of spiritual authority reveals about his strategy of legitimation and how this contributed to an emergent Shādhilī identity in medieval Egypt. In short, al-Iskandarī was attempting to create a Sufi identity that did not rely on the traditional indicators of the *khirqa* or the *silsila* for authority and legitimation.[51] This set the Shādhilīya apart from other Sufi groups in contemporary Egypt and was an important component of an institutionalized identity.

Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh claimed that al-Shādhilī inherited the spiritual stations of Ibn Mashīsh and Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī, both of whom were important Sufi figures in their time. I will treat each claim individually in order to highlight the type of authority that Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh claimed on al-Shādhilī's behalf and its relationship to al-Iskandarī's conception. To begin with Ibn al-Mashīsh: Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh never claims that al-Shādhilī

---

[50] Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 149-150.

[51] This is not to say that al-Iskandarī did not attempt to link al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī into the authority of the Prophet. As will become clear, al-Iskandarī was very much committed to prophetic authority. His innovation was to conceptualize this authority in such a way as to make the *silsila* and *khirqa* obsolete.

took the *khirqa* from him. He reports that the first time al-Shādhilī met Ibn Mashīsh, the latter was wearing a *muraqqa'a* and *qalansūwa* – a Sufi cloak and cap – but he did not pass them on to him.[52] Indeed, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh claims that "at that time [Ibn Mashīsh] was the axis of the age," but he did not invest al-Shādhilī with that office. However, he did predict that al-Shādhilī would inherit the *quṭbānīya* (role of *quṭb*) when he moved to Egypt.[53] This should be read as a tacit pre-investiture that authorized him to teach in Ibn Mashish's name. He did indeed do this when he moved to the village of Shādhila near Tunis and began to attract students. This account represents Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's first claim about al-Shādhilī's authority: he was informally authorized to teach in the name of the axis of the age, Ibn Mashīsh. His formal authorization would take place later in Egypt.

According to Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, al-Shādhilī's Sufi authority and his investiture with the *quṭbānīya* (axishood) derive from Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī (d. 642/1244).[54] This takes place within the context of a dream, in which Abū 'Alī ibn al-Sammāṭ reported, "Last night I saw the Prophet in a dream and he said to me, 'O Yūnus, *shaykh* Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī, who was the axis of the age in Egypt, died yesterday. God has made Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī his successor.' So I came to [al-Shādhilī], swore the oath of allegiance to him, and [affirmed] that he was the *quṭb*."[55] This is the fulfillment of Ibn Mashish's prediction: al-Shādhilī inherited the spiritual station of al-Uqṣurī in Egypt and became the axis of the age.[56] But why did Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh include this story? Why

---

[52] *Durrat al-asrār*, 28.
[53] Ibid., 29.
[54] I will treat al-Uqṣurī, the patron saint of Luxor in Upper Egypt, in greater detail in the next chapter.
[55] Ibid., 41. I have not been able to find Abū 'Alī ibn al-Sammāṭ in any other source.
[56] Vincent Cornell treats this incident and its implications for Moroccan Sufis in *Realm of the Saint*, 149-150.

did he root al-Shādhilī's authority in that of al-Uqṣurī? There is no contemporary source that claims that al-Uqṣurī was the *quṭb*, nor does anyone but Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh claim a connection between these two individuals.[57] The answer is straightforward. Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh wanted to tie al-Shādhilī into an impeccable spiritual lineage. Since he was writing for a North African audience, he would have wanted a Sufi with strong connection to the saints of that region. Al-Uqṣurī fit that bill perfectly.

Al-Uqṣurī is remembered as one of the Egyptian transmitters of the way of Abū Madyan Shu'ayb by virtue of the fact that one of his teachers was 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Jazūlī (d. 1195 or 1198), a student of Abū Madyan.[58] However, there were quite a few of the followers of Abū Madyan in Egypt at that time. So why does Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh insist that al-Uqṣūrī invested al-Shādhilī with his station? The answer lies in the fact that al-Uqṣūrī was one of the few Egyptian Sufis who had gained widespread fame in the Maghrib. This is undoubtedly related to the fact that al-Uqṣurī was an Egyptian student of the Maghribī school of Abū Madyan. Al-Bādisī's treatise on the "righteous men of Northern Morocco" (*ṣulaḥā' al-rīf*), written in approximately 1311,[59] mentions al-Uqṣūrī no fewer than 10 times.[60] Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh was obviously taking advantage of an Egyptian Sufi who was contemporary with al-Shādhilī, directly connected to Abū Madyan, and well-known throughout North Africa. It made perfect sense for him to have al-Shādhilī inherit Abū Madyan's legacy from al-Uqṣurī, despite the lack of evidence that the two ever met. Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's conception of al-Shādhilī's authority

---

[57] In fact, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's claim about al-Uqṣurī here is the only reference in medieval literature to al-Uqṣurī having been the *quṭb* and it is picked up by later writers about al-Uqṣurī.
[58] Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 47; and Gril, *Risāla*, 60 [Arabic section] and see Gril's notes and biographical summary on p. 208 [French Section].
[59] Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 100.
[60] 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Bādisī, *al-Maqṣid al-sharīf wa'l-manza' al-laṭīf fī 'l-ta'rīf bi-ṣulaḥā' al-rīf*, ed. Sa'īd Aḥmad A'rāb (Rabat: al-Maṭba' al-Malikīya, 1982), 81-84, 116, 146-149.

is thus rooted squarely within the classical tradition of the Sufi *silsila*. Indeed, a direct line can be traced from al-Shādhilī to al-Uqṣurī, Abū Madyan, and so on to the earliest Sufi masters. This is important because it is entirely different from the account of al-Iskandarī in the *Laṭā'if al-minan* If Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh wanted to link al-Shādhilī to Abū Madyan by means of a traditional *silsila*, it is because al-Iskandarī had already claimed that al-Shādhilī did not actually need (or have) such a *silsila*.

Al-Iskandarī discusses the *khirqa* and the *silsila* only once in the *Laṭā'if al-minan*, and buries it at the end of the second chapter. After mentioning several of al-Shādhilī's students, he writes:

> [al-Shādhilī's] method (*ṭarīqa*) can be traced to *shaykh* 'Abd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh and [his *shaykh*] 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Madanī. Then [the *silsila* proceeds through] one [master] after another to al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. I heard our *shaykh* [al-Mursī] say, "This method (*ṭarīqa*) of ours is not connected to any from the East nor to any from the West. Rather, [we trace it] one individual after another to al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who was the first *quṭb*." Enumerating the *shaykh*s of one's path is required only for those whose method involves wearing the *khirqa* ... But God might bring the servant [near] to Him and he will not need a teacher. [In that case,] God will join [the Sufi] to the prophet and [the latter] will authorize [the former.][61]

Al-Iskandarī is arguing that al-Shādhilī learned how to be a Sufi from his teacher Ibn Mashīsh, but his authority actually derived from God via the prophet Muḥammad. This is a fundamental aspect of early Shādhilī identity. They rejected the traditional reliance on *silsila*s and the external forms related to these *silsila*s such as the *khirqa, muraqqa'a,* or *ijāza*. This can be demonstrated by looking more closely at al-Iskandarī's account of spiritual authority (*walāya* or sainthood) and the role it plays in constructing a uniquely Shādhilī identity.

---

[61] al-Iskandarī, *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 104.

Al-Iskandarī treats the issue of authority and sainthood at great length in the Introduction of the *Laṭā'if*.[62] Not surprisingly, he presents a model of sainthood rooted in the thought of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. ca. 936) and Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 1240), two of the most important theoreticians of sainthood in medieval Islam.[63] Sainthood for al-Iskandarī is both a function of the saint's proximity to God (*walāya* having the primary meaning of nearness) **and** of the saint's inheritance of Muḥammad's light or reality (*al-nūr/al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadīya*). He argues forcefully that "the apparent light of the saints is nothing but the illumination of the lights of prophecy upon them. This can be likened [to saying] that the Muḥammadan reality is like the sun, and the hearts of the saints are like the moon, because the light of the moon is a product of the light of the sun."[64] Furthermore, he differentiates between those who draw near to God – the lesser *walāya* – and those whom God draws near to Himself – the greater *walāya*.[65] Al-Iskandarī goes on to construct a detailed typology of these different kinds of *walāya*, but

---

[62] Ibid., 21-84. The best treatment of the Sufi concept of *walāya*, particularly the social construction of the *walī,* the saint, is Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xvii-xliv.

[63] It is very obvious that al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was important to the early Shādhilīya as al-Iskandarī mentions his work, *Khatm al-awliyā'* (The Seal of Saints), many times; both referring to its contents and to report that al-Shādhilī himself was fond of reading it, see *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 103, 127 (both mention *Khatm al-awlīyā'*), and 223. Ibn al-'Arabī presents more of a challenge. al-Iskandarī was aware of him as he mentions his students on multiple occasions, but it is not clear how well-acquainted he was with the actual doctrines of Ibn al-'Arabī. The Muḥammadan Reality is most likely borrowed from him but Ibn al-'Arabī's discussion of *walāya* is much more complicated than al-Tirmidhī's and al-Iskandarī's. See especially the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. 'Afīfī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, n.d.), 134-137. Here, Ibn al-'Arabī reverses the usual typology of sainthood and argues that prophecy is but a subset of sainthood, the latter being the more basic in terms of knowledge and insight because prophecy is bound by time and space, while sainthood is limitless. Michel Chodkiewicz has done the most detailed work on Ibn al-'Arabī's concept of *walāya*, making great use of the *Futūḥāt al-Makkīya*, a voluminous work into which most scholars do not delve; see *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993). McGregor has explored the use of al-Tirmidhī and Ibn al-'Arabī by the Shādhilīya in detail – from al-Shādhilī himself to the Wafā'īya sub-branch and everyone in between; see *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt*; for al-Iskandarī and his student Ibn Bākhilā specifically see pp. 31-47.

[64] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 25-23.

[65] Ibid., 52.

this brief introduction is sufficient to demonstrate the metaphysical aspect of his conception of authority.

This aspect of the *Laṭā'if* has been treated at length by Eric Geoffroy in his essay "Entre hagiographie et hagiologie: les *Laṭā'if al-minan* d'Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh (m. 709/1309)."[66] Geoffroy describes the *Laṭā'if* as the foundational text of the Shādhilīya in a double sense. On the one hand, it presents the model of living sainthood in the figures of al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī – i.e., it is a hagiography. On the other hand, in spending more than 60 pages of printed text on the subject of sainthood, al-Iskandarī is offering an "apologie globale" for Sufism and Sufi sainthood – i.e., a hagiology.[67] The primary purpose of this discussion of sainthood is to prepare the reader to accept al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī as saints. The text thus serves to ground Shādhilīya identity both in physical persons, who can be imitated, and in a doctrine that can be learned. However, Geoffroy's analysis can be pushed further, because there is more in the *Laṭā'if al-minan* than an apology and typology of Sufi sainthood. It is also an apology for al-Shādhilī himself, who, at least for some, would appear to have lacked traditional Sufi credentials, since he lacked a clear *silsila*. This issue gains further importance when one realizes that this work is one of the first of its kind in Sufi literature. Al-Iskandarī devoted a great deal of space to the question of authority because he was one of the first hagiographers to connect a specific saint to an explicit theory of sainthood.

Al-Iskandarī's work was preceded by a number of other hagiographies, and comparison between them demonstrates his unique contribution to the genre and to

---

[66] Geoffroy, "Entre hagiographie et hagiologie: les Laṭā'if al-minan d'Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh (m. 709/1309)," 49-66.
[67] Ibid., 66.

Shādhilīya identity.[68] The earliest monographic Sufi hagiography may have been that devoted to Ibn Khafīf (d. 371/982), *Sīrat al-shaykh al-kabīr Abū ʻAbd Allāh ibn al-Khafīf al-Shīrāzī* (The Life of the Great Master Abū ʻAbd Allāh ibn al-Khafīf al-Shīrāzī) by his student Abū ʾl-Ḥasan ʻAlī al-Daylamī. Unfortunately, this hagiography exists only in a fourteenth-century Persian translation, which I have not been able to examine.[69] A representative of the early monographic hagiographies in Persian that I have been able to examine is *Asrār al-tawḥīd fī maqāmāt al-shaykh Abī Saʻīd* (Mysteries of Unity Concerning the Mystical Stations of the Master Abū Saʻīd), a hagiography of the Khurāsānī Sufi Abū Saʻīd ibn Abī ʾl-Khayr (d. 1049).[70] This was followed by what may have been the first monographic hagiography in Arabic, *Futūḥ al-ghayb* (The Revelations of the Unseen).[71] This work, a compilation of the sayings (*maqālāt*) of ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (eponym of the Qādirīya Sufi order), was compiled by the *shaykh's* son

---

[68] The *manāqib* (lit. noble acts or virtues) or *faḍāʾil* (lit. virtues) literature appears very early in Islamic literary history and there are many early *manāqib/faḍāʾil* traditions about the first caliphs and companions of Muḥammad. The genre is particularly rich concerning the "founders" of the four Sunnī legal schools; see Ch. Pellat, "Manāqib," in *EI2*. In Sufi literary production, this genre took the form of biographical dictionaries beginning with writers such as Abū ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 1021), Abū Nuʻaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1038), and Abū ʾl-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1074). Monographic hagiography, in the sense of a biographical work devoted to a single saint, emerged only about a century later.

[69] al-Daylamī, *Sīrat al-shaykh al-kabīr Abū ʻAbd Allāh ibn al-Khafīf al-Shīrāzī*, ed. Annemarie Schimmel (Tehran: Intishārāt-I Bābak, 1984). For a list of the earliest Persian and Arabic hagiographies and biographies of Sufi saints, see Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 85.

[70] The *Asrār al-tawḥīd* was written in Persian ca. 1178 by Abū Saʻīd's grandson, Muḥammad Ibn Munawwar. This is the first work devoted to a single Sufi saint and is divided into roughly three parts: the *shaykh*'s early life, the *shaykh*'s adult life, and a final section about his testamentary advice (*waṣīya*) and the circumstances of his death; *Asrār al-tawḥīd*, 11. Ibn Munawwar does not treat the topic of *walāya* explicitly in the book, but he does devote a portion of the third section to detailing Abū Saʻīd's miracles (*karāmāt*). He seems to make an implicit argument that Abū Saʻīd's authority is self-evident in these miracles but he does not attempt to theorize the relationship between authority and miracles. On Abū Saʻīd see the French translator's Introduction in *Les étapes mystiques du shaykh Abu Sa'id* (UNESCO: Desclée De Brouwer, 1974); Fritz Meier, *Abū Saʻīd-i Abūʾl Ḫayr. Wirklichkeit und Legende* (Tehran and Liège 1976) ; the Arabic Introduction of *Asrār al-tawḥīd* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣrīya liʾl-Taʾlīf waʾl-Tarjama, n.d.); Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam*, p. 137-144; and idem, "Abū Saʻīd ibn Abī ʾl-Khayr," in *EI3*. For an introduction and detailed analysis of the hagiography as a whole, see the remarks of the Arabic translator in *Asrār al-tawḥīd*, 3-17.

[71] *Futūḥ al-ghayb* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1973).

'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 603/1206).[72] Neither Ibn Munawwar nor 'Abd al-Razzāq theorized *walāya*; rather, it was merely asserted. The immediate precursor to al-Iskandarī's work was *Di'āmat al-yaqīn fī za'āmat al-muttaqīn* (Pillar of Surety for the Leadership of the God-Conscious), by the Moroccan Aḥmad al-'Azafī (d. 1236) about Abū Madyan's Moroccan teacher, the Berber saint Abū Yi'zzā Yallannūr (d. 1177).[73] Al-'Azafī seems to have been the first to connect an explicit theory of *walāya* with a particular saint.[74] He argues that sainthood is the by-product of a saintly life. In contrast, al-Iskandarī argued the opposite, that the condition of sainthood resulted in miraculous acts and an exemplary life. In other words, al-Shādhilī's saintly life was a product of his *walāya*, which was itself the result of his being chosen by God.[75]

Al-Iskandarī's *Laṭā'if al-minan* thus represents another theoretical step in the development of the monographic Sufi hagiography. First, unlike his predecessors, he foregrounds his discussion of *walāya* and miracles in the Introduction rather than at the

---

[72] 'Abd al-Razzāq does not explicitly treat questions of authority and sainthood. He begins the work with the paternal genealogy of his father, which extends to al-Ḥasan, the prophet's grandson; *Futūḥ al-ghayb*, 2. After recounting the 78 *maqālāt* of his father, 'Abd al-Razzāq ends the work with a short biographical section devoted to al-Jilānī, including an account of his death and advice. This is structurally similar to Ibn Munawwar's treatment, although 'Abd al-Razzāq shows more concern with demonstrating a genealogical link between al-Jīlānī and the Prophet and his companions. He relates that 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was both a Ḥasanid (through his father) and a Ḥusaynid (through his mother). He further claims that 'Abd al-Qādir can trace his genealogy to Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān (thus all four of the "rightly-guided Caliphs"), and that he traced his initiatory *silsila,* with direct reference to the *khirqa*, to the Baghdādī school of al-Junayd; *Futūḥ al-ghayb*, 109-115. In effect, 'Abd al-Razzāq is making an implicit argument that his father was the *quṭb* by virtue of his impeccable initiatory lineage **and** the spiritual power of the Prophet's family.

[73] Abū 'l-'Abbās al-'Azafī, *Di'āmat al-yaqīn fī za'āmat al-muttaqīn*, ed. Aḥmad al-Tawfīq (Rabat: Maktabat Khidmat al-Kitāb, 1989). On this book and its place in Maghribī hagiography, see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 67-79.

[74] The purpose of the book is two-fold: first, to describe the miracles (*karāmāt*) of Abū Yi'zzā; and second, to develop a theory of *walāya* that would essentially explain and defend these miracles from attack from Sunnī jurists. Again, as in the previous two hagiographies, this discussion of miracles and *walāya* comes at the end of the book. However, al-'Azafī goes beyond the previous works by developing a systematic theory of *walāya* that is rooted in the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīth*, and the sayings of the Companions. For al-'Azafī, *walāya* is literally the state of being near to God. This nearness (*qurb*) is a product of an individual's exemplary piety and devotions.

[75] Recall that in the *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 104 (quoted above), al-Iskandarī argued that for some saints, meaning al-Shādhilī, God will "bring the servant near" of His own volition.

end of the book. In doing so, he explicitly says that this theoretical material is essential to understanding the account that follows. Second, he seems to have been the first hagiographer to use the genre to take control of the social image of a group of Sufis. While his theory was not entirely new, as it was rooted in the ideas of al-Tirmidhī and Ibn al-ʻArabī, it was used for a new purpose: the creation of a coherent institutional identity around a charismatic figure. Third, al-Iskandarī implies for his readers that al-Shādhilī had no need for a teacher. Towards the end of his typology of sainthood, he discusses the different kinds of divine experiences that a saint might enjoy. He argues that "experience (*al-shurb*) pours into the hearts, limbs, and veins ... until [the saint] becomes drunk ... and each is given to drink according to his ability. But some are given to drink without any intermediary. God almighty endows the saint [directly] from Himself. Others are given to drink by means of intermediaries such as angels, scholars, and the great ones who draw close [to God]."[76] Al-Iskandarī effectively creates a space for al-Shādhilī to claim the greatest form of *walāya* – prophetic sainthood without an intermediary.

Al-Iskandarī uses his Introduction to *Laṭā'if al-minan* to describe a model of sainthood rooted in nearness to God and the Muḥammadan inheritance. This model created a new theory of sainthood in which particularly gifted people might inherit their divine gifts without intermediaries. He then buries the information about al-Shādhilī's teacher late in the following chapter.[77] Al-Iskandarī makes the case that al-

[76] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 70.
[77] al-Iskandarī nicely illustrates the principle of not needing a predecessor by means of a parable: "A king said to one of his courtiers: 'I want to make you my vizier.' The man responded, 'I have no one who held the position before me!' The king said, 'I want to make you the precedent (*al-salaf*) for those who come after you.'" God, as the king, is thus made to proclaim that he is giving al-Shādhilī his spiritual position *ex nihilo* in order to make him the predecessor for the Sufis after him. Ibid., 104.

Shādhilī was the axial saint of the age by virtue of his unique spiritual authority, which was a product of God's having drawn him near. He is thus able to sidestep the entire question of the *silsila*, the very question that pushes Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh to include dubious claims of Sufi lineage in his account. This is a central component of the nascent institutional identity of the Shādhilīya: those connected to al-Shādhilī are keyed into a saintly authority that is rooted in God Himself and the prophet Muḥammad.[78] Furthermore, because saintly authority is a purely spiritual concept, there is no need to transmit the *khirqa*. ʻAlī Ṣāfī Ḥusayn has already pointed out that the Shādhilīya brotherhood were unique in medieval Egypt for not using the *khirqa* as part of their initiatory practices.[79] This was another cornerstone of the identity formation of the Shādhilīya. Their initiatory practices did not require the *khirqa* because their authority was not rooted in a *silsila*, but in the gift of *walāya*.[80]

These discourses of sainthood and authority are but one example of al-Iskandarī's and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's attempt to legitimate al-Shādhilī's authority. Their models highlight the difference in emphasis between the Egyptian and North African branches of the Shādhilīya, particularly at this early stage of development. The nascent Egyptian branch, it seems, could not or would not legitimate al-Shādhilī's authority by

---

[78] I would also speculate that al-Iskandarī attempts to downplay the precise links in al-Shādhilī's *sharīfian* genealogy because of the North African context. While it was fine for Ibn al-Munawwar to explicitly enumerate his Abū Saʻīd's links to the ʻAlid house, this was a different context. In North Africa, with the danger of accusations of Fāṭimid loyalty, al-Iskandarī may have wanted to downplay al-Shādhilī's *sharīf*ian connections.

[79] It is worth quoting Ḥusayn here in full: "[al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī] did not speak of inheriting the station of the *quṭb*, nor did they recognize [the legitimacy] of passing along the *khirqa*. The *shaykh* [for them] was not a necessary condition for arriving at God or to achieve the rank of *quṭb* ... the initiate might enter [the path] by divine openings, or divine inspiration, without any human intermediary;" *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, 36.

[80] This would obviously change as time went on. While the Shādhilīya never did take up the use of the *khirqa*, they nevertheless began cultivating recording a traditional *silsila* that went through Ibn Mashīsh (among others) and back to ʻAlī.

means of a traditional Sufi *silsila*; hence the emphasis on closeness to God (*walāya*). This represents a stark contrast with the nascent Shādhilī group in Tunis, which placed a high value on the traditional *silsila* and therefore included multiple lines of authority for al-Shādhilī. Other examples could be marshaled to demonstrate the ways in which these authors represent Sufi authority, but this example should be sufficient to indicate their basic approaches. I will now turn to another form of legitimation deployed by al-Iskandarī: the testimony of famous jurists.

JURIDICAL AUTHORITY

Who were the members of al-Shādhilī's circle in Egypt? The accounts of Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh and al-Iskandarī are full of accounts of the local men and women with whom al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī were involved in various settings. Reading these stories one gets a sense of a moderately large community of believers who follow the charismatic al-Shādhilī from place to place, or, upon learning that he is in a particular town, come to visit him.[81] This is a familiar trope in Sufi hagiography. Not surprisingly, these two authors represent this circle in different ways. Al-Iskandarī, writing in Cairo two generations after the death of al-Shādhilī, is most interested in al-Shādhilī's Egyptian disciples. Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, writing in Tunis shortly after al-Iskandarī, focuses on al-

[81] When I use the word "charismatic" I do not mean Weber's notion of an ineffable quality that draws people in. Rather, I follow Thomas Csordas in conceptualizing charisma as located not in a leader but in a relation among or between selves: "Could not charisma be a product of the rhetorical apparatus in use of which leader and follower alike convince themselves that the world is constituted in a certain way? … Critical for our purposes is that charisma originates in a mobilization of communal symbolic resources that are realized in a mode of discourse or performed in a genre of ritual language within particular social settings;" Thomas Csordas, *Language, Charisma, and Creativity: The Ritual Life of a Religious Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 139-141.

Shādhilī's North African disciples.[82] These authors presumably had a large corpus of material from which to construct their accounts, after having spent years speaking with and recording the stories of al-Shādhilī's disciples and those who knew him.[83] Once in possession of this material, they would have had to sift through it all to produce a coherent hagiography, choosing some reports and ignoring others. One might envision an assortment of criteria by which each made these decisions, the content of the report and the reliability of the transmitter being obviously salient.[84] In what follows, I will argue that a third criterion, the social and religious status of an informant, was also very important for both writers, although each had different criteria. While neither author makes explicit mention of methodological choices in his compilation, I hope to demonstrate that several recurring characters in al-Iskandarī's account appear for reasons other than the reliability of their transmissions. Paying close attention to the social status of these characters will reveal the kind of community that al-Iskandarī was trying to create when he wrote *Laṭā'if al-minan*.

In this section I focus on three individuals who feature prominently in al-Iskandarī's narratives in order to determine how he envisioned this community: Makīn al-Dīn al-Asmar (d. 1292), 'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām (d. 1262), and Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd al-Qushayrī (d. 1302). These three men were important Sunnī jurists in their time, the latter two perhaps the most important jurists in Cairo. Al-Iskandarī included them to

[82] While al-Iskandarī never says so explicitly, we know he wrote the *Laṭā'if* in Cairo because it was written ca. 1296, when he was living in Cairo and teaching at the Manṣūrīya *madrasa*. Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, by contrast, offers no clues as to where he wrote *Durrat al-asrār*. I assume that he did the bulk of writing in Tūnis because this is where his primary informants lived and with whom he identified.
[83] We know, for example, that Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh also spent the better part of 715/1315 in Egypt interviewing people, as he continually remarks, "In 715 I spoke with so and so." These interviews take place all over Egypt and involve many different Shādhilī Sufis.
[84] On the relationship between oral tradition, testimony, and hagiography see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 65-66.

create an image of the nascent Shādhilīya as a part of the larger community of Sunnī scholars.

As an important Mālikī jurist himself, al-Iskandarī advocated a juridically-oriented Sufism that could include the uneducated masses as well as urban elites. This was a central pillar of early Shādhilī identity: a rigorous Sunnī legalism combined with the mystical doctrines of Sufism. Such a combination was by no means new. Vincent Cornell traced the development of such a combination in the Maghrib.[85] However, al-Iskandarī represents an early attempt in Egypt at integrating the mass popularity of a charismatic teacher and the juridical community. This integration would have profound consequences for the future development of Sufi brotherhoods and their assimilation into wider Egyptian society.

The individual whom al-Iskandarī cites more than any other is Makīn al-Dīn al-Asmar, a native of Alexandria and famous jurist and Qur'ānic reciter.[86] al-Iskandarī portrays him as an eyewitness to much of al-Shādhilī's Egyptian career and a famous Sufi in his own right, mentioning him by name at least 13 separate times (and some of

---

[85] Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 12-19. This does not mean, however, that Sufis and jurists were always on good terms. These two groups held very different epistemological claims about the nature of their authority and they continued to clash over these claims for quite some time. See Vincent Cornell, "Faqīh versus Faqīr in Marinid Morocco: Epistemological Dimensions of a Polemic," in Frederick de Jong and Berndt Radtke (eds.) *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999): 207-224 and Th. Emil Homerin, "Sufis and their Detractors in Mamlūk Egypt: A Survey of Protagonists and Institutional Settings," in ibid., 225-246.

[86] His full name was Makīn al-Dīn al-Asmar 'Abd Allāh ibn Manṣūr al-Iskandarī; see *al-'Ibar*, 3:378; *Mir'āt al-jinān*, 4:221; Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya fī ṭabaqāt al-qurrā'*, ed. G. Bergstraesser (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 2006), 1:29 and 410; *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 7:735. He was a Mālikī jurst who was noted for having mastered the seven readings of the Qur'ān in a single night and for being the primary teacher of Qur'ānic recitation in Alexandria during his lifetime; *Ghāyat al-nihāya*, 1:29 and 410. The biographical record for him is scanty at best, with some sources remembering him as a Sufi: *Mir'āt al-jinān*, 4:221 and *Ghāyat al-nihāya*, 1:410. The latter reference does not say that Makīn al-Dīn was a Sufi. Rather the author appends the *nisba* "al-Shādhilī" to Makīn al-Dīn's name. This indicates that he was remembered, at least by some, as a member of al-Shādhilī's circle. Other works make no mention of this connection at all *Kitāb al-'ibar*, 3:378 and *Shadharāt*, 7:735. His inclusion in non-Sufi biographical works indicates his status as a respected jurist and Qur'ānic scholar.

these passages contain multiple discrete reports).[87] He is totally absent from Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's account, which indicates to what extent these authors selectively chose their informants based upon their intended audience. The fact that al-Iskandarī cites him more than any other source betrays his desire to portray al-Shādhilī as a member of the juridically-oriented community in Alexandria. Having a well-respected jurist and Qur'ānic expert narrate the bulk of his reports about al-Shādhilī would have lent them weight for his Egyptian audience.

This is also the reason why al-Iskandarī's account includes numerous mentions of the Shāfi'ī jurist 'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām (d. 1262), who appears in the *Laṭā'if* three times in the section devoted to al-Shādhilī.[88] Whether 'Izz al-Dīn was actually a Sufi is not as important as the fact that al-Iskandarī wants to portray him as a sometime attendee of al-Shādhilī's circle.[89] In the first instance, al-Iskandarī reports that al-Shādhilī was in al-Manṣūra studying the *Risāla* of Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī in a tent

---

[87] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 71-75, 90, 91, 92, 99, 112, 141, 142.

[88] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 88, 89, and 93. For the sources on 'Izz al-Dīn, see *Nihāyat al-arab*, 30:40-47; *al-'Ibar*, 3:298-299; *Fawāt*, 2:350-352; *al-Wāfī,* 18:520-522; *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'īya*, 8:209-285; *Shadharāt*, 7:522-524; and E. Chaumont, "al-Sulamī, 'Izz al-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd al-Salām," in *EI2.*

[89] While the earliest sources on 'Izz al-Dīn's life do not associate him with the Sufis, there is a gradual accumulation of material over the centuries that begin to portray him as a Sufi. The earliest biographical notice is most likely al-Nuwayrī's obituary in the massive historical section of *Nihāyat al-Arab fī funūn al-'arab*, ed. Mufīd Qamīḥa (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 2004), 30:40-47. In addition to detailing his legal credentials, al-Nuwayrī adds that 'Izz al-Dīn was known for his asceticism, but there is no other indication here that he was involved with the local Sufis in any way. Ibn Taymīya's student al-Dhahabī, *al-'Ibar*, 3:299, writing shortly after al-Nuwayrī, adds that 'Izz al-Dīn enjoyed attending *samā'* ceremonies and dancing; this was probably a criticism. al-Yāfi'ī, *Mir'āt al-jinān*, 4:153-158, quotes both al-Nuwayrī and al-Dhahabī but adds that 'Izz al-Dīn knew al-Shādhilī. This literary trajectory continues into the sixteenth century, when al-Suyūṭī writes that "'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām used to attend [al-Shādhilī's] *majlis* and listen to him speak;" *Ḥusn*, 1:520, this from the entry on al-Shādhilī, in the entry on 'Izz al-Dīn himself, al-Suyūṭī is absolutely glowing in his praise *Ḥusn*, 1:314-316. Finally, the apex of this trajectory is reached when al-Sha'rānī claims that "after 'Izz al-Dīn 'Abd al-Salām met with al-Shādhilī and was converted to Sufism, he proclaimed, 'the strongest indication that the Sufis stand on the firmest pillars of religion is the fact that miracles are performed by their hands. Nothing like this happens at all for jurists unless they walk the path [of the Sufis];'" *Ṭabaqāt al-Sha'rānī*, 1:12. These accounts of al-Suyūṭī and al-Sha'rānī are certainly late inventions but they indicate the survival of the project of legitimation begun by al-Iskandarī.

with four individuals, including ʿIzz al-Dīn ibn ʿAbd al-Salām.[90] Al-Shādhilī is silent during their discussion, and the others prod him to speak. Al-Shādhilī demurs, saying, "You are the masters of the age and its greatest [men]. You have already spoken." They insist that he speak, so he holds forth at length about "amazing secrets and mighty sciences," at which point ʿIzz al-Dīn leaves the tent, goes away some distance, and shouts: "Listen to this wondrous speech, granted by God!"[91] Two things are remarkable in this story. First, and most importantly, al-Iskandarī portrays a famous jurist giving a glowing recommendation for al-Shādhilī. Second, ʿIzz al-Dīn's statement, "Listen to this wondrous speech, granted by God," is nearly identical to something al-Subkī records ʿIzz al-Dīn saying about Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās al-Mursī.[92] Clearly, there is a conflation of stories, the untangling of which are not important here. Rather, what is important is that al-Iskandarī is using a common trope to bolster al-Shādhilī's reputation as a juridical Sufi.

The second story involving ʿIzz al-Dīn is set shortly after the pilgrimage in an unspecified year.[93] After returning from the pilgrimage but before returning to

---

[90] The other three individuals were Majd al-Dīn al-Qushayrī, Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn Surāqa, and Majd al-Dīn al-Ikhmīmī. All three of these men were well-known juridical Sufis. al-Qushayrī was the father of Taqī al-Dīn al-Qushayrī, more on whom below. al-Ikhmīmī was a Sufi with impeccable credentials, famous for both his Sufism and for being the preacher (*khaṭīb*) of al-Fusṭāṭ; Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*, p. 68 [Arabic] and 230 [French]. Both of these men were from the Ṣaʿīd, a fact which is not coincidental as it is likely that al-Iskandarī is attempting to incorporate well-known Upper Egyptian Sufis into his account. Ibn Surāqa (d. 662) was a jurist and Sufi who held the shaykhship of the Kāmilīya *madrasa* in Cairo; Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Shāṭibī: *al-ʿIbar*, 4:305-6; *al-Wāfī*, 1:167-8; *Mirʾāt al-jinān,* 4:160; *al-Nujūm*, 7:216; *Ḥusn*, 1:381; and *Shadharāt*, 7:538-539.

[91] *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 88.

[92] al-Subkī's version of the story has al-Mursī going to visit ʿIzz al-Dīn at his *majlis*. The latter seems suspicious of him and so asks him to discuss a particular passage from the Qurʾān as a test. He is astounded by al-Mursī's insights and exclaims, "Listen to these words, they are speech granted by his Lord!" *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿīya*, 8:215. al-Iskandarī's version has Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām say, "*ismaʿū hādha ʾl-kalāma al-gharība al-qarība al-ʿahdi min allāhi*;" al-Subkī's versions reads, "*ismaʿū hādha ʾl-kalāma alladhī huwa ḥadīthu ʿahdin bi-rabbihi*."

[93] It seems that one of the roles that al-Shādhilī took up as a representative of Maghribī Sufism in Egypt was caring for visiting North Africans and leading the *ḥajj* caravan; see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 150.

Alexandria, al-Shādhilī pays a visit to ‘Izz al-Dīn.[94] This makes geographical sense since the Ḥajj caravan's terminus was in Cairo. Al-Shādhilī tells ‘Izz al-Dīn that the Prophet Muḥammad asked him to convey greetings. This understandably upsets ‘Izz al-Dīn, so al-Shādhilī invites him to "the *khānqāh* of the Sufis in Cairo."[95] They proceed to the *khānqāh* in the company of Ibn Surāqa (again) and Abū 'l-‘Alam Yāsīn, who, al-Iskandarī informs the reader, was one of Muḥyī 'l-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī's students. After discussion of the topic, Ibn Surāqa and Abū 'l-‘Alam convince ‘Izz al-Dīn that the Prophetic greeting is legitimate and something to rejoice over. Al-Iskandarī abruptly ends the story by saying, "So *shaykh* ‘Izz al-Dīn got up, [after having] spent an enjoyable time, and everyone got up with him."[96] Again, al-Iskandarī is drawing on the reputation of ‘Izz al-Dīn to construct a social picture of an integrated jurist-Sufi circle.

Finally, al-Iskandarī reports an anonymous tradition that somebody once said to al-Shādhilī: "There is not, on the face of the earth, a *majlis* of law more splendid than that of Shaykh ‘Izz al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Salām. And there is not, on the face of the earth, a *majlis* of *ḥadith* more splendid than that of Zakī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Aẓīm. There is not, on the face of the earth, a *majlis* of the science of realities (*‘ilm al-ḥaqā'iq*) more splendid than yours [i.e. al-Shādhilī]."[97]

---

[94] There is a similar story in Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's *Durrat al-asrār*, 42-43. In this narrative (the only time Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh mentions ‘Izz al-Dīn), the two do not know each other. According to Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, as chief *muftī*, ‘Izz al-Dīn has declared the Ḥajj unlawful this particular year because the risk to life was too great due to the Mongol invasions. al-Shādhilī defies his ruling and leads the pilgrims safely. ‘Izz al-Dīn was chastened.

[95] This must be the Sa‘īd al-Su‘adā' because the second *khānqāh* was not built in Cairo until 1274 (after the death of al-Shādhilī), by the Mamlūk sultan al-Bunduqdārī.

[96] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 89.

[97] Ibid., 93. This Zakī al-Dīn must be none other than the famous al-Mundhirī (d. 656) author of *al-Takmila li-wafayāt al-naqala*, an esteemed Shāfi‘ī jurist, master of *ḥadīth*, and one of the teachers of Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd. On Zakī al-Dīn, see *Shadharāt*, 7:479-480; see p. 479 n. 2 for all biographical notices, which are many.

The cumulative effect of these three stories is a double-praise. ʻIzz al-Dīn praises al-Shādhilī and al-Shādhilī praises ʻIzz al-Dīn. Rhetorically this is a fascinating strategy as it gives the reader the impression that these two great men were moving in the same social circles and were in awe of each other. For a Sufi in early Mamluk Egypt, ʻIzz al-Dīn was the prototype of the juridically-minded Sufi who had no compunctions about following al-Shādhilī. For a fourteenth-century jurist, these stories bring al-Shādhilī out of the shadows of mid-thirteenth century Sufism and into the *majlis.* In other words, he was a *shaykh* with impeccable Sunnī credentials.

There are also other examples of al-Iskandarī bolstering al-Shādhilī's status by means of juridical interlocutors. The case of Ibn Daqīq al-ʻĪd al-Qushayrī should be sufficient to demonstrate this.[98] al-Iskandarī reports that Ibn Daqīq al-ʻĪd was a member of al-Shādhilī's circle and that he claimed that al-Shādhilī was "the greatest gnostic" known to him.[99] Ḥusayn, in his survey of Egyptian Sufi literature of the thirteenth century, is highly skeptical of this report, arguing, "There is room for great doubt about this saying" for two reasons.[100] The first is that a jurist of Ibn Daqīq al-ʻĪd's stature would not make such a statement about someone like al-Shādhilī (i.e. a non-jurist). Second, Ibn Daqīq al-ʻĪd was known for his opposition to most forms of Sufism. Outside the literature of the Shādhilīya, there is no evidence to support the claim that Ibn Daqīq al-ʻĪd thought al-Shādhilī was a great gnostic or Sufi. Indeed, to quote Ḥusayn again, al-Iskandarī attributed this saying to Ibn Daqīq al-ʻĪd, "intending to raise

---

[98] Ibn Daqīq al-ʻĪd's father was Majd al-Dīn al-Qushayrī, a well-known friend of Sufis in Upper Egypt. I will discuss him in greater detail in the next chapter. The biographical sources for Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Daqīq al-ʻĪd are *Fawāt*, 2:442-450; *al-Wāfī*, 4:137-148; *Mirʻāt al-jinān*, 4:236; *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʻīya*, 9:207-249; *Ḥusn*, 1:317-320 and 2:168-171; and *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 8:11-13.

[99] *Laṭāʼif al-minan*, 88.

[100] Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, 66.

the position of al-Shādhilī and place him among the respected ranks of jurists and men of religion."[101] This makes sense since is actually no evidence that these two men knew each other.[102]

Al-Iskandarī used *Laṭā'if al-minan* to portray al-Shādhilī as an active member of the larger community of Sunnī scholars. By constructing an image of al-Shādhilī as a scholar (*'ālim*) and not just as a Sufi, al-Iskandarī framed an essential component of early Shādhilī identity. According to this model, the Shādhilīya espoused a Sufism that did not violate the bounds and dictates of the law.[103] Al-Iskandarī, it should be remembered, had been a jurist before he became a Sufi. He was initially, by his own admission, very distrustful of Sufis and thought that their emphasis on esoteric matters

---

[101] Ibid., 66.

[102] The only source that connects Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd with the Shādhilīya that I have found is recorded by al-Subkī in his *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īya*, 9:213. Here, al-Subkī relates that al-Mursī was in Cairo during "the year of inflated prices." He walks past a bakery, sees a crush of people trying to obtain bread and exclaims, "If only I had some *dirham*s, I would help them out with it." He miraculously finds money in his pocket and buys bread, but the baker discovers that the money is counterfeit and calls al-Mursī back. al-Mursī, realizing that the money has become counterfeit because he usurped God's role (i.e. feeding the poor), begs God's forgiveness, at which point the money becomes legal tender again. Al-Mursī then goes to Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd and tells him the story. The latter responds, "O teacher, if you are generous to someone, you become heretics; whereas for us, if we are **not** generous to the people, we become heretics." Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd's observation is astute: the Sufis are "heretics" if they are seen as having money to burn, while the jurists are "heretics" if they are seen as too miserly. The implication of this story is that Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd does not consider himself part of the world of the Sufis. The Sufis should be on the receiving end of *riqqa* – generosity or compassion, the word used throughout the story – not the giving end. The jurists, however, are required to give charity. Thus, far from demonstrating any actual link between the nascent Shādhilīya and this important jurist, the story demonstrates the opposite: Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd is not a Sufi and was at most only an acquaintance of al-Mursī.

Further evidence of the tropological nature of this incident is the fact that Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh reports the same story about al-Shādhilī in Tūnis; *Durrat al-asrār*, 30. In this version, al-Shādhilī is a young man, recently arrived in the city. He sees widespread hunger and says to himself, "If only I had something with which to buy bread for these people, I would do it." He hears a voice telling him to check his pockets, which he does, and finds a few *dirhams*. After buying bread and distributing it to the poor, the baker discovers the money is counterfeit. al-Shādhilī gives him some personal items as collateral before meeting a strange man who takes the money, shakes it, and it becomes real money. al-Shādhilī gives the baker the money and gets his collateral back. It turns out that the strange man was al-Khiḍr. I draw attention to these two stories in order to highlight the fact that there is very little evidence that Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd knew al-Shādhilī and even less evidence that he was a Sufi. Nevertheless, al-Iskandarī includes him in his hagiography in order to create the image of al-Shādhilī as juridically legitimate.

[103] This would be an enduring component of the group's identity and it is no coincidence, then, that 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (d. 1978) was both a Shādhilī Sufi and the rector of al-Azhar from 1973-1978.

was a waste of time.[104] It was only after meeting with al-Mursī and finding that his teachings did not violate the exoteric aspect of the law that al-Iskandarī became a devoted disciple.[105] This concern with the *sharīʿa* and the outward forms of the Law runs throughout *Laṭāʾif al-minan* and can be seen in al-Iskandarī's effort to portray al-Shādhilī as well-respected by the juridical establishment. While this was a rhetorical strategy, the social repercussions of this strategy should not be underestimated. The effect of al-Iskandarī's literary creation was to forge an ideal type. One of the purposes of this hagiography, as Geoffroy has noted, was to provide the nascent Shādhilī Sufi community with a model to be imitated. By carefully constructing the ideal type of the juridical Sufi, al-Iskandarī implicitly frames the limits of acceptable behavior for his readers. This is one of the methods by which al-Iskandarī controlled the way in which al-Shādhilī was read as an object of imitation and devotion.

The shaping of an institutionalized Shādhilī identity described thus far involved a unique conception of spiritual authority and a commitment to juridical Sufism. In the next section I add another component to this identity: the wary cultivation of political connections for the good of the group.

POLITICAL RECIPROCITY

Despite being on the government payroll himself, al-Iskandarī has surprisingly little to say about the relationship between the political and spiritual realms. This lacuna is due, in part, to the fact that al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī had somewhat different

---

[104] He writes about al-Mursī, "I was of those who denied him and objected to him ... there is nothing [trustworthy/worthwhile] except for exoteric learning. Those people [the Sufis] claim mighty things but the plain sense of the revelation refutes them." *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 128.

[105] See al-Taftāzānī's discussion of al-Iskandarī's conversion to Sufism in *Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī wa-taṣawwufuhu*, 42-48.

attitudes towards the political rulers of their time. Al-Shādhilī advocated a politically active position from which a Sufi *shaykh* could exploit political contacts for the benefit of the poor. Al-Mursī, by contrast, advocated keeping one's distance from political activity and seems to have avoided political figures at all costs. Al-Iskandarī attempted to harmonize these views into a position that I would call wary political reciprocity. According to this position, a Sufi *shaykh* might exploit political connections for the good of the poor, but should remain as much as possible outside the system of state-sponsored Sufi patronage. This was an effective social strategy as well as a political one. Warm political relations ensured that the Shādhilīya would be able to operate without state interference, while maintaining a degree of political protection and patronage. This was surely a significant component of the success of the Shādhilīya and contributed to their longevity.

Al-Iskandarī reveals almost nothing about al-Shādhilī's political attitudes; this information comes primarily from Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh. However, the one passage in which he delves into the subject is quite revealing. In his discussion about sainthood, al-Iskandarī quotes al-Shādhilī as saying, "Every saint has a veil."[106] Al-Iskandarī explains that every saint has some aspect of his or her personality that obscures his or her true nature. Thus, some saints are seen as having "a cocky and forceful presence," or having "great wealth and worldly joy," both of which obscure their inner realities. Thus, not all saints behave or look like saints; some of them may actually act inappropriately. There is a third veil of particular interest to al-Iskandarī: "The repeated frequenting of kings and princes" (*kathrat al-tirdād ilā al-mulūk wa'l-umarā'*). This may look to the

---

[106] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 227.

observer as though a particular saint has sold out to the power eilte, but the real purpose of this behavior, al-Iskandarī explains, is actually the alleviation of suffering among the worshippers of God. He then adds, "This was the way of the Shaykh of our Shaykh, the mighty Quṭb, Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī."[107] He provides no further information, but the implication is clear: al-Shādhilī spent considerable time with the political rulers of his day in order to help the poor and suffering. In fact, there are hints that some Sufis may have had a problem with al-Shādhilī's political relationships. Al-Iskandarī states explicitly that many Egyptians never really understood the spiritual power of al-Shādhilī because it was obscured by his constant visits to the court.[108]

While this is the only substantive statement al-Iskandarī makes about al-Shādhilī's politics, it complements what Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh writes about al-Shādhilī. Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh seems to have been more interested in this aspect of al-Shādhilī's personality and he records some important information on the subject. When al-Shādhilī was arrested by the Hafsid *wazīr* Ibn al-Barrā', probably having been accused of Fāṭimid political activity, he was brought before Sultan Abū Zakarīyā in Tunis. al-Shādhilī impressed the Sultan and easily won him over to his side.[109] After leaving Tunis, he was similarly arrested in Alexandria and brought to Cairo for an interrogation with the Ayyubid Sultan.[110] Again, al-Shādhilī was easily able to gain the favor of the Sultan.

---

[107] Ibid., 228.

[108] "The people and politicians are ignorant of the power of *shaykh* Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī because of his many visits to [the government] for the purpose of intercession." al-Iskandarī attributes this statement to Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd, which is a brilliant move on al-Iskandarī's part. The effect is such that a high-ranking and powerful jurist is both acknowledging al-Shādhilī's power and demonstrating al-Iskandarī's fundamental point: there is nothing inherently wrong in seeking political favors if it is on behalf of the poor. Ibid., 228.

[109] *Durrat al-asrār*, 35-38. The Sultan was actually quite upset when al-Shādhilī decided to move to Egypt and asked him to stay in Tūnis; at least as Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh tells the story.

[110] Ibid., 38-39. The reason that al-Shādhilī was arrested in Alexandria was that Ibn al-Barrā' sent a letter to the Sultan in Cairo saying, "This person who is arriving in Egypt caused us a lot of trouble in our lands

After moving to Alexandria permanently, the governor of Alexandria provided al-Shādhilī with housing for his family and a number of his Sufi companions.[111] This may actually indicate that al-Shādhilī was still considered a political threat and that the Ayyubid authorities were attempting to keep him under observation.

Finally, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh reports a vision in which the Prophet Muḥammad appears to al-Shādhilī in the city of al-Manṣūra after al-Shādhilī had been up all night worrying about "the border" (*al-thaghr*) i.e. the Crusader threat.[112] The Prophet speaks to him directly and gives him this advice:

> Do not worry yourself on account of the border. Let me give you some advice about the crux of the matter (*ra's al-'amr*), that is, the Sultan. If a tyrant rules over [the Muslims], then maybe this" – and he clenched the five fingers of his left hand as if to shorten [the Sultan's] reign. "But if a devout man (*taqī*) rules over them, then 'God is the patron of the god-fearing'" (Q 45:19) – and he opened his right and left hands. "As for the Muslims: God, His Prophet, and the believers are all you need. 'For those who turn to God, His Prophet, and the believers, [they] are the party of God and they will triumph' (Q 5:56). As for the Sultan: the hand of God's mercy is extended to him as long as he protects the people under his jurisdiction, treats them well, and treats the believers well. So advise him; speak eloquent counsel to an oppressor, who is an enemy of God,

---

and he will do likewise in your lands." Elmer Douglas argues that the Sultan in question was probably al-Malik al-Kāmil Muḥammad (1218-1238); see Douglas, *The Mystical Teachings of al-Shadhili*, 249, n. 21.

[111] *Durrat al-asrār*, 42. Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh visited this tower (*burj*) in Alexandria in 715/1315 and writes: "[al-Shādhilī's] residence in Alexandria was in one of the towers of the city walls, which the Sultan had given to him and his descendents ... the bottom level of which contained a large cistern and hitching posts for large animals. The middle level contained residences for the Sufis and a large mosque. The top floor contained an attic for his living quarters and those of his family." Whether or not this was the situation when al-Shādhilī himself lived there (more than 60 years before Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh visited the site) can not be determined. This is the only reference to the tower residence in all the literature I have consulted.

[112] The context of this story is very clearly the seventh crusade led by Louis IX of France. After having taken Damietta without resistance in 1249, Louis IX and his troops began advancing on Cairo until they met the Muslim resistance at al-Manṣūra led by al-Mu'aẓẓam Tūrān Shāh (1249-1250). The Muslims successfully defended the city and the Crusaders were pushed back to Damietta before being expelled from Egypt. al-Maqrīzī gives a detailed (and chronological) account in *al-Sulūk*, 1 pt. 2 (for the years 646-647 AH); see also the account of al-Nuwayrī (which is much earlier but less chronologically coherent that al-Maqrīzī's summary), *Nihāyat al-'arab*, 29:216-232, which contains a fascinating death letter written by al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb to his son al-Mu'aẓẓam Tūrān Shāh, giving him advice on how to beat the Crusaders and deal with the increasing internal threat of the Mamlūk soldiers; al-Nuwayrī dryly adds "but the king al-Mu'aẓẓam did not follow [his father's] advice." Abū 'l-Fidā also has a scattered account in *al-Mukhtaṣar*, 3:216-219.

> and write to him. 'Be patient, truly God's promise is real. Do not let those who are shaky shake you' (Q. 30:60)."[113]

The message is clear: the Sufis have a mission, the Sultan has a mission, and if all do what they ought to do, God will take care of the rest. Al-Shādhilī's political program was one of reciprocity. It is the job of the saint to counsel the political rulers of the day, but not to interfere with their rule. Likewise, it was the job of the rulers to support the saints and their followers but not interfere in their lives. Ruler and Sufi each benefit from the support of the other.

Al-Shādhilī did indeed have an explicit political philosophy, but al-Iskandarī was mostly silent on the subject for two reasons. First, Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Mursi's politics were different from al-Shādhilī's, at least as portrayed in *Laṭā'if al-minan*, and al-Iskandarī would certainly not want to highlight this divergence. Second, and more importantly, al-Iskandarī himself was closely allied with the upper echelons of political power in Mamlūk Cairo. He occupied a major position as the head instructor of Mālikī law at the Manṣūrīya *madrasa* and gave weekly lectures at al-Azhar that were said to be popular.[114] As a major figure at an endowed religious institutions, al-Iskandarī received a stipend for his work therein and saw no contradiction between his dual roles as Sufi *shaykh* and government employee. al-Iskandarī saw no need to discuss the political views of al-Shādhilī because he took them for granted.[115] By the late thirteenth century

---

[113] *Durrat al-asrār*, 168-169.

[114] These lectures were compiled into a work that bears the title *Tāj al-'arūs al-ḥāwī li-tahdhīb al-nufūs* (Aleppo: Khān al-Ṣābūn, n.d.); on this work see also al-Taftāzānī, *Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī*, 105-107, who argues that the work is a collection of sermons directed to the uninitiated masses (and thus probably his lectures from al-Azhar); and Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo*, 13-16, who attempts to extrapolate popular religious themes from these sermons that would have resonated with a medieval Cairene audience.

[115] It should be remembered that al-Iskandarī was criticized by other students of al-Mursī for being a *faqīh*. al-Iskandarī writes, "I was one of those who denied [al-Mursī] and opposed everything I heard

the moral gap between Sufi *shaykh* and state employee was closing in Egypt, and al-Iskandarī embodied this shift.

However, this does not necessarily mean that al-Iskandarī was a shill for his Mamluk bosses. The *Laṭā'if* contains an implicit polemic against Sufis who were living in governmentally-funded *khānqāh*s, and al-Iskandarī uses al-Mursī to voice this critique. Al-Mursī is portrayed repeatedly throughout the *Laṭā'if* as stridently opposed to political relationships with the ruling class. One salient example involves the governor of the region of Alexandria. A certain Sufi, Zakī al-Dīn al-Aswānī, comes to al-Mursī and says, "Master, the governor (*mutawallī*) of Alexandria said that he would like to meet with you so that he might take your hand and you might become his *shaykh*." This is precisely the kind of relationship that al-Shādhilī sought. By taking on the governor as a disciple, al-Mursī would be able to offer spiritual counsel and obtain political favors. This was not to be, however: al-Mursī replied, "Zakī, I am not the kind of person who would play with him .... He will never see me and I will never see him!"[116] In fact, al-Iskandarī reports that al-Mursī's animus towards politicians was so great that "if he arrived in a place and was told the ruler would like to meet him the next day, he would leave that very night."[117] Furthermore, al-Iskandarī describes al-Mursī as "the most abstemious person in terms of political rulers," by which he meant that he avoided asking them for favors or associating with them.[118]

---

from him and everything reported about him. This resulted in a mutual disagreement (*muqāwila*) between me and some of his students." *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 128.

[116] Ibid., 134.

[117] Ibid., 134.

[118] Ibid., 149. Nancy Roberts' translates the phrase "He was, of all people, the least willing to seek favors from those in positions of worldly power and influence," *The Subtle Blessings in the Saintly Lives of Abu 'l-Abbas al-Mursi and His Master Abu 'l-Hasan* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2005), 181.

Another example of al-Mursī's desire to steer clear of governmental influence is his rejection of state sponsorship. In the following account, al-Mursī, speaking to some of his companions, remarks that the eunuchs Bahā' al-Dīn and Shams al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb had come to see him that day. Bahā' al-Dīn was *Mushidd al-Dawāwīn*, who, according to al-Qalqashandī, was the right-hand-man to the *wazīr* and a kind of tax collector.[119] Shams al-Dīn was *Nāẓir al-Aḥbās*, or Overseer of Religious Endowments, a position that al-Qalqashandī calls "high status" (*'āliyat al-miqdār*).[120] Shams al-Dīn's position is particularly important for the story because he would have been in charge of the endowments for "congregational mosques, local mosques, *ribāṭ*s, *zāwiya*s, and *madrasa*s," which is to say any government-controlled religious or educational organization with an endowment.[121] In other words, two government employees with control over state funds had come to see al-Mursī personally in order to make him an offer of sponsorship: "This fortress (*qal'a*) really needs mats, oil, and lamps, and the Sufis need provisions.[122] We are currently in a position to offer [you] something [i.e., a stipend] every month." The visitors are offering, essentially, to turn al-Mursī's structure into a state-sponsored *khānqāh*. Given that those with salaried positions in the Mamlūk *khānqāh* were required to teach assigned subjects, it is very likely that there were political strings attached to this offer. While the text does not say so explicitly, al-Mursī would most likely have been subject to interference from state

---

[119] *Ṣubḥ*, 4:22. al-Qalqashandī records that there were 25 positions directly appointed by the Sultan, this is one of them.
[120] Ibid., 4:38.
[121] Ibid., 4:38.
[122] The use of the word *qal'a* here is puzzling. This word is usually associated with fortresses and citadels used for the defense of cities, like those Saladin constructed in Cairo and Damascus. This may be a reference to the building in which al-Shādhilī lived, which was a tower built into the city walls of Alexandria.

authorities had he accepted the money. Al-Mursī does not answer this request directly, but puts it to his students, who do not have an answer either. He then says, "O God, enrich us beyond the need of [these two men] but not by means of them, for You have power over all things." Al-Iskandarī concludes with the simple observation that "[al-Mursī] died, and there is [still] no stipend or endowment for the place."[123]

This is a very clever polemic in which al-Iskandarī indirectly criticizes those Sufis who live in the government-funded *khānqāh*. While al-Iskandarī saw nothing necessarily wrong with exploiting political contacts to help the poor and suffering, he seems to draw the line at full state sponsorship for the Sufis themselves. It is one thing to perform a service at governmental expense (as al-Iskandarī did), but quite another to participate in the spread of the state ideology in exchange for food, lights, and soft cushions, as the Sufis of the *khānqāh* did.

In this section I have demonstrated that one of the distinctive characteristics of the nascent Shādhilīya in Egypt was the cultivation of a wary political reciprocity with regard to the state. Al-Iskandarī has few explicit remarks on this subject, but I think a coherent view can be detected in his writing. Al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī had different ideas about the relationship between the Sufi *shaykh* and the ruler. Al-Shādhilī saw the potential for a beneficial relationship in which the ruling class could use its money to alleviate the hunger and suffering of the poor. Furthermore, he saw the sultans as holding power by God's prerogative. Therefore, a Sufi *shaykh* should not interfere with their rule, and should give council when appropriate. Al-Mursī, in contrast, was uncomfortable with political relationships and avoided them at all costs. Al-Iskandarī

---

[123] *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 137.

harmonizes these two views into a coherent policy by insisting that each saint has a different veil that conceals his or her true essence; al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī had different veils. This harmonization extended to al-Iskandarī himself. He advocated a middle ground and successfully attempted to walk a fine line between state sanction and state support. This is why I classify the Shādhilī Sufis as "state-sanctioned." This position contributed to the emergent social and political identity of the group. The political stance outlined by al-Iskandarī contrasted significantly with that of the Sufis of the *khānqāh* and set the nascent Shādhilīya apart from them. Likewise, this position set the Shādhilīya apart from those Sufis who opposed the state, like Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī (d. 1307), a position that I discuss in the next chapter. In the final section of this chapter, I turn to some of the authorizing practices that contributed to the emergent Shādhilī identity.

AUTHORIZING PRACTICES

The three components of an institutionalized Shādhilī identity examined so far – the establishment of saintly authority, the establishment of juridical legitimacy, and the advocacy of political reciprocity – appear as rhetorical strategies deployed by al-Iskandarī in his treatment of al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī. These strategies were designed to differentiate the nascent Shādhilīya from other Sufi groups emerging in late Ayyubid and early Mamluk Egypt. The following section will not depart from the literary record of this analysis – because the literary record is all we have – but will focus on the authorizing practices advocated by al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī as recorded by al-Iskandarī. This is not to say that the first three components of identity formation were

strictly textual. Each of them also entailed and necessitated certain acts or performances – political behavior, attitude to jurists, and interaction with a *shaykh* to name just a few. The difference is that the latter component, the authorizing practices of Shādhilī identity, are explicitly meant to be performed as opposed to conceptual doctrines outlined above.

The emergence of a body of distinct and unique practices was a significant element in the institutionalization of a Shādhilī identity. The writings of al-Iskandarī can be mined for data that reveal the specific practices that set the Shādhilīya apart from other groups in Egyptian society, with the result that they became formalized over time. I will not deal with every action that might be construed as a practice or as potentially performative, but rather focus on three distinct themes: clothing and appearance, vocation, and ritual.

The nascent Shādhilīya rejected the typical forms of Sufi dress. They shunned the wearing of coarse wool (*ṣūf*), the *khirqa*, or any other type of "uniform" that might give the impression that the wearer was a Sufi. At first glance, this might appear counterintuitive. Why would a Sufi not dress like a Sufi? To phrase the question in more analytic fashion, how does the absence of distinctive Sufi dress translate into an expression of Sufi identity? To answer this question one must first examine why the Shādhilīya shunned Sufi fashions. I have already discussed why the Shādhilīya did not employ the *khirqa*. Their conceptualization of al-Shādhilī's unmediated spiritual authority negated its necessity. Al-Iskandarī addressed their rejection of the distinctive wool or other outward signs of piety worn by most other Sufis in an account

of a conversation between al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī.[124] The latter came to al-Shādhilī desiring "to eat coarse food and wear coarse clothing." This is a typical request made by a novice to a *shaykh*. Al-Mursī wanted to exhibit Sufi identity in the traditional fashion by eating cheap food and wearing poor clothing. Al-Shādilī gives an unexpected response: "Abū 'l-'Abbās, just know God and be however you like!" The meaning of this reply is that if one knows God, it does not matter how one eats or dresses.

Al-Iskandarī puts this into even sharper focus in the following account. A man wearing a hair shirt (*libās min sha'r*) came to al-Shādhilī to hear him speak about the Sufi path. Once al-Shādhilī had finished, the man approached him, grabbed his clothing, and said, "O master, there is no servant of God who would wear such clothes as these." Al-Shādhilī reciprocated by grabbing the strange man's clothes and said, "And no true servant of God would wear clothes like these! My clothing says, 'I have no need of your [charity] so do not give me anything.' Your clothing says, 'I am poor and in need of you. Give to me.'" The point of the story is clear. Al-Shādhilī dressed in fine clothing so that people would not give him charity, thus ensuring that only God would provide for him. Indeed, al-Shādhilī was famous for his fine clothing. Al-Iskandarī deduces a general rule from these stories: "This is the method of *shaykh* [al-Mursī] and his *shaykh* [al-Shādhilī] ... the rejection of wearing clothing that calls [undue] attention to the true purpose of the clothing."[125] For the early Shādhilīya, clothing was important. By wearing fine clothing they demonstrated their rejection of charity or

[124] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 207.

[125] Ibid., 207. Importantly, al-Iskandarī does not reject the wearing of course garments completely. He says that if you really want to wear them, go ahead, but it is not necessary.

mendicancy. This differentiated them from other Sufi groups who dressed in coarse materials and accepted handouts – including from the state.

A final word about clothing will reinforce this position. In this same section al-Iskandarī discusses the etymology of the word *ṣūfī*, which had been a subject of contention from the earliest treatises on Sufism.[126] Citing al-Mursī, al-Iskandarī rejects the usual etymology, which holds the word *ṣūfī* to be an adjective derived from the word *ṣūf* (wool) and with it the idea that they are called Sufis because they wear woolen garments. He argues instead that the word refers "to what God does to [the Sufi]; that is, God treats him sincerely (*ṣāfāhu*) and he thus becomes sincerely chosen (*ṣūfiya*)."[127] The purpose of this entire discussion is to demonstrate that it is actually more Sufi to dress in fine clothing than it is to dress like a Sufi in the traditional sense. In other words, clothes do not make the Sufi, God does. The Shādhilīya are the elites among Sufis because they do not dress like other Sufis.

This attitude must have been important for the popularization of Shādhilī Sufism in medieval Egypt. If a central component of the identity of the group was the rejection of conspicuous clothing, this would have been advantageous for those who worked for a living. The distinctive dress of the Shādhilīya – or lack thereof – was itself a performative aspect of Shādhilī identity. Being a Shādhilī Sufi came to mean not dressing in a certain way, and this contributed to the institutionalization of the Shādhilī identity and formalization of the order.

---

[126] Two early treatises on the doctrines of the Sufis both begin with a discussion of the etymology of the word *ṣūfī*. See al-Sarrāj (d. 988) *Kitāb al-luma' fī al-taṣawwuf*, 20-22 [Arabic section] and Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. 990) *al-Ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, 13-16.

[127] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 208. Al-Iskandarī is able to argue that *ṣāfā* is the root of the word Sufi by vocalizing *ṣūfī* as the passive form of the perfect tense of the verb.

In addition to their position on clothing and appearance, the early Shādhilī masters encouraged their adepts to be gainfully employed. I have already pointed out that al-Iskandarī's attitude towards working for the state was one of cautious acceptance; one may work for the state but should not be beholden to its ideological agenda. However, such a position would only apply to an elite minority. What about the urban classes of people who were not scholars, bureaucrats, or military rulers? What about the butchers and bakers and merchants and so on?[128] Classical Sufi thought often emphasises the rejection of the material world (*al-dunyā*) and the concomitant embrace of the next world (*al-ākhira*). The practical consequence of this doctrine is embodied in the performance of ascetic renunciation of the world (*al-zuhd ʻan al-dunyā*).[129] This renunciation of the world could take many forms; in clothing, food, or shelter. The Sufis also developed a spiritual practice of self-isolation from the world, *khalwa*. In *khalwa*, the devotee goes into strict isolation for days or even months at a time in order to devote himself or herself to meditation and spiritual exercises. However, devotional practices like these would not mesh well with the exigencies of family life and putting food on the table and would constitute a major stumbling block to the mass popularization of Sufism.[130] Al-Shādhilī, al-Mursī, and al-Iskandarī moved

---

[128] This is not to say that these men and women were ill-educated, or illiterate. Rather, I mean to differentiate between those whose professions were linked to the state and its maintenance and those whose professions were, for the most part, unconnected to the work of the state. An ʻ*ālim* who taught at a *madrasa* drew an income from a source – the state – that was completely different than the income of a merchant.

[129] The discipline of Sufism developed partially out of an earlier ascetic tradition that developed in Iraq and Egypt in proximity to the many Christian monastic communities of these two places; see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 29-41.

[130] A lovely illustration of this is the letter, published by S. D. Goitein, from the Cairo Genizah in which a woman writes to R. David Maimonides (fl. 1335-1415) complaining that her husband is spending all of his time with the Sufis and there is no food for her children; S. D. Goitein, "A Jewish Addict to Sufism in the Time of the Nagid David II Maimonides," in *JQR* 44 (1953): 37-49. The fact that such a situation existed

beyond this position and insisted that that one can be a Sufi and a breadwinner at the same time.

In a number of statements in the *Laṭā'if*, the masters insist that Sufis should keep their jobs: "If a merchant joins us, we do not say 'Leave your merchandise and come [with us].' Or if a craftsman joins us we do not say 'Leave your work.' ... Rather, we confirm that God has given every individual a means to support himself."[131] This acknowledgement that even a Sufi needs to work for a living runs throughout the Shādhilī corpus. Al-Mursī went so far as to insist that all Sufis must have a job: al-Iskandarī notes that al-Mursī "did not like the novice who did not have a means of livelihood (*lā sababa lahu*)."[132] There was therefore no reason that one could not have a profession and be a good Sufi. However, the novice also needed to negotiate a fine line between crass materialism and making a living .

Al-Iskandarī addressed this issue at length in his treatise *Kitāb al-tanwīr fī isqāṭ al-tadbīr* (The Book of Illumination Concerning the Elimination of Self-Reliance).[133] This is an introductory textbook on Sufi life and devotion meant to teach the average person how to be a Sufi and work for a living at the same time.[134] The work is divided into two

---

among the Jewish community would strongly suggest that there were similar problems in the Muslim community.

[131] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 125.

[132] Ibid., 149.

[133] *Kitāb al-tanwīr fī isqāṭ al-tadbīr* (Cairo: 'Ālam al-Fikr, 1998). Scott Kugle translates *tadbīr* as "selfish calculation," which I find carries too negative a connotation; see *The Book of Illumination* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2005). It is true that al-Iskandarī argues for the "elimination" of *tadbīr*, but as the second half of the book makes clear, *tadbīr* is a necessary fact of life and the most one can do is eliminate "self-reliance," which is how I would translate *tadbīr*, while nevertheless working to make a living. "Selfish calculation" would give the impression that earning a living (one of the areas pertaining to *tadbīr*) is an entirely selfish act; something al-Iskandarī would deny.

[134] The popularity of this book, even today, is discussed by Kugle in his Introduction to the text. This popularity is also evidenced by Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), catalogued approximately 40 separate manuscripts of the book around the world, see *G II*, p. 118 and *S II*,

parts. The first deals with elucidating the meaning of *isqāṭ al-tadbīr*, eliminating self-reliance, which for al-Iskandarī means the cessation of worry about *asbāb* (making a living) and letting God take care of His servants. Al-Iskandarī argues that those who want to draw near to God (*al-wuṣūl ilā Allāh*) need "to leave, abandon, and purify" themselves of self-reliance and struggle against their fate (*munāza'at al-maqādīr*).[135] This is accomplished by "obeying [God's] every command and submitting to His power."[136] In a typically Sufi turn of phrase, al-Iskandarī cites al-Shādhilī's statement that "If you must plan [i.e. exercise self-reliance], plan not to plan ... [likewise] do not choose anything for yourself but choose not to choose."[137] By "choosing not to choose," the adept should make the self-conscious decision that whatever God has in store will be sufficient. There is no need to agonize over decisions. The first half of the book therefore lays out a number of strategies and ways of conceptualizing the decision "to plan not to plan" one's future actions.

The second half of the book takes a more practical stance. The message here is that once one has left the future to God, one is still obligated to put an effort into living one's life. Al-Iskandarī insists that "eliminating self-reliance is not the abandonment of earning a living, for this would make a person useless and exhausting for others [who have to take care of him]."[138] Here, he cites a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet Muḥammad said, "The merchant who is a faithful and truthful Muslim will be with the martyrs on

---

145-146. al-Taftāzānī also treats the book in some detail, including the theme of *isqāṭ al-tadbīr*, which he calls "the fundamental idea of the 'Aṭā'ī school" in *Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī*, 101-104, 119-145.

[135] *Kitāb al-tanwīr*, 8.

[136] Ibid., 9-10.

[137] Ibid., 9.

[138] Ibid., 62.

the day of resurrection."[139] Al-Iskandarī exclaims, "So how could anyone blame working for a living after [hearing] this!? What is blameworthy is whatever distracts you from God."[140] For al-Iskandarī, then, the ideal is to work at making a living without becoming distracted. al-Iskandarī explains how to do this in the remaining portions of the *Kitāb al-tanwīr*.

Much more could be written about this part of al-Iskandarī's teachings and the subtle intricacies of his thought throughout *Kitāb al-tanwīr*. This stance on working was part of what made the Shādhilīya distinct among their peers in Egyptian society. As opposed to other Sufi masters who insisted that their disciples abandon worldly pursuits, the early Shādhilī masters opened up a space of participation for the average working man. This not only had the effect of making the Shādhilīya institutionally distinct but also made membership a viable option for a larger portion of society. This was an important step towards the wider popularization and institutionalization of Shādhilī identity.

Finally, the early Shādhilī masters advocated a unique set of rituals that also set their group apart from others. Both the *Laṭā'if* and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's *Durrat al-asrār* record a large number of devotional invocations (*adhkār*; sg. *dhikr*), litanies (*aḥzāb*; sg. *ḥizb* or *awrād*; sg. *wird*), and supplications (*ad'iya*; sg. *du'ā'*).[141] Al-Iskandarī ascribes authorship of these to al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī themselves, and they are said to be extremely efficacious for those adepts who chant them. They are original compositions

---

[139] This *ḥadīth* can be found in the *Jāmi'* of al-Tirmidhī and the *Sunan* of Ibn Māja.
[140] *Kitāb al-tanwīr*, 63.
[141] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 243-258; *Durrat al-asrār*, 66-113. The differences between *dhikr*, *ḥizb*, *du'ā*, and *wird* are not always clear cut. There are overlapping meanings and borderline cases. However, al-Iskandarī uses *wird* very specifically in the sense of a spiritual exercise assigned by the master to a disciple. With respect to the other terms, this means that other forms of invocation are different types of *awrād* that might be assigned.

of varying length (a *dhikr* may be only one sentence while a *ḥizb* can run for dozens of pages) that are specific to the Shādhilī method. Al-Iskandarī provides a model for how these are to be used when he describes one of the *aḥzāb* of al-Mursī: "[This *ḥizb*] was an exercise given to him by his *Shaykh* that was to be recited after the final night prayer. The *ḥizb* [entitled] 'And If He Comes to You' [was meant to be recited] after the morning prayer. The *Ḥizb al-baḥr* (Litany of the Sea) [was meant to be recited] after the afternoon prayer. This is how *shaykh* al-Mursī ordered them." We learn from this that al-Shādhilī gave al-Mursī specific exercises (*awrād*) to be performed at particular times of day and night and that these exercises included various *aḥzāb* and *adhkār*. Al-Mursī then passed these on to his disciple, al-Iskandarī, who then passed them on to his disciples, and so on. These were eventually put into short collections for use by the novice.

One of the distinctive characteristics of the early Shādhilīya was the recitation of these compositions at particular times. While al-Iskandarī does not go into detail about how these should be performed, it is likely that at least some of them were performed communally. An indication of this may be the report that a certain Sufi, while visiting the Shādhilīya in the Maghrib, saw a circle (*dā'ira*) of men, with one man in the middle, and everyone in the circle facing the middle man. In this particular report the man in the middle was al-Mursī.[142] Rituals like this were opportunities for the social enactment of group identity and were repeated at regular intervals. The repetition of prayers, chants, and litanies is an institutionalized devotional practice that is repeatable and stable over time.

---

[142] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 123.

Another way in which al-Iskandarī encouraged the institutionalization of the nascent order, then, was to write down devotions for ease of transmission. He states very plainly that they are meant to be given from *shaykh* to disciple and reports that their use has already spread all over Egypt. In a letter to his students that he appended to *Laṭā'if al-minan*, al-Iskandarī cautions, "Do not forsake your *awrād* for *wāridāt*."[143] This clever word play, based on the root *w-r-d*, means that a student should not give up his prescribed spiritual exercises (the *awrād*) in favor of fleeting and infrequent onrushes of divine feeling (the *wāridāt*). This is reminiscent of al-Mursī's teaching that if students came to him with their own *awrād*, he would expel them.[144]

All of the foregoing indicates that the institutional formation of the Shādhilīya involved a devotional element that was passed on from master to disciple. This was yet another performative aspect of Shādhilī identity that contributed to the institutionalization of the order and of its doctrines. The combination of these elements was highly attractive to the greater population of Egypt. One might dress "normally," have a day job, and later meet with others around the *shaykh* to recite prayers, litanies, and supplications. This is a powerful combination for it allows a seamless transition between the worlds of *asbāb* and *aḥzāb*, making a living during the day and chanting communally in the evening.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is now possible to step back and ask larger questions about the foregoing material. The two important questions in the present chapter are, What does al-

---

[143] Ibid, 266.
[144] Ibid, 149.

Iskandarī's project reveal about the processes of institutionalization and social formation among Sufis in medieval Egypt? How did the nascent Shādhilīya fit into the larger social world of Ayyubid and early Mamluk Sufism? These questions are interrelated and the answers to the first will shed light on the second. To begin with institutionalization: a distinct shift took place between the death of al-Shādhilī in 1258 and the emergence in the mid-fourteenth century of an identifiable social group known as *al-ṭā'ifa al-shādhilīya*. With regard to group leadership and authority, this shift is similar to Max Weber's concept of charismatic authority and the subsequent routinization of charisma in other individuals or bureaucratic social structures.[145] Thus, the issue of the institutionalization of Sufi authority and identity can be profitably juxtaposed with the processes involved in the routinization of charisma. They both involve the same question: How does a stable social formation emerge among the followers of a living, charismatic human being and become an institution whose continued and collective identity is traced to the remembered authority of a former spiritual master? While Weber was concerned primarily with how charismatic authority was transferred from one leader to the next, I am here concerned with something slightly different.[146] How did the remembered charisma of al-Shādhilī become routinized, or institutionalized, in the figure of al-Shādhilī himself as the eponym of a new social formation?

---

[145] On Weber's discussion of charisma, see *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 358.

[146] Weber outlines six possible forms the transference of charismatic authority from one individual to another; see *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 364-367. These might be used to describe the transference of authority from al-Shādhilī to al-Mursī, who was his designated successor, but for al-Iskandarī there was less concern with a designated successor to lead the community as much as a focus on creating a group identity connected to al-Shādhilī's name. Nowhere in the *Laṭā'if* does al-Iskandarī claim he was the official representative (*khalīfa*) of al-Mursī.

The move from charisma to an institution was not the result of vague or unintentional social processes, but rather was due to the very deliberate efforts of one particular Sufi *shaykh* and author to take discursive control of the legacy of a founding figure. Against the competing claims of Yaqūt al-Ḥabashī in Egypt and the North African followers of al-Shādhilī, al-Iskandarī systematically created a conception of authority rooted in his own reading of *walāya*. In addition, he advocated a wary political reciprocity, formulated a distinctive approach to dress and livelihood, and transmitted a set of rituals linked to al-Shādhilī's name. In doing so, he created a cognitive canon of what was doctrinally thinkable and performable. That is to say, al-Iskandarī inscribed the limits of possibility in the very personality and life of al-Shādhilī himself, this personality being symbolic of what it meant to be a Shādhilī Sufi.

How al-Iskandarī was able to effect such a transition can be understood more clearly in light of Althusser's conception of ideology and social formations.[147] While Althusser was primarily concerned with the overlapping discourses of ideology and economics, his thoughts are also translatable to socio-religious discourse. Paraphrasing Marx, he writes, "Every child knows that a social formation which did not reproduce the conditions of production at the same time as it produced would not last a year."[148] That is to say that a social formation must both produce something (whether physical

---

[147] See especially, Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)." Social formation, as Marx and Althusser used the term, is a complicated concept that refers to the relations that obtain between economic modes of production, ideology, and groupings of social actors. Here, I am using the term as it is understood by scholars of religion as referring to the process whereby patterns of practice produce "socially significant effects for the structure of a society and its on-going operation;" see Burton Mack, "Social Formation," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. Willi Braun and Russell McCutcheon (London: Cassell, 2000), 283.

[148] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 1. The example Althusser gives is a man who produces woolen yarn. If, while he is producing yarn, this individual does not continually replace the machinery and workforce that produce the yarn, he will soon be out of business. The most important aspect of this cycle is replacing the workers with more workers who are willing to work within the constraints of the system. This is the role ideology plays.

goods or social capital) **and** reproduce the conditions that make that production possible. In the case of a Sufi social formation – the Shādhilīya – this means that the institutionalized group must continually reproduce the conditions of production of group identity. Since the conditions of Shādhilī identity production inhered in the charismatic authority of al-Shādhilī himself, al-Iskandarī needed to routinize that charisma for subsequent generations. By inscribing the limits of the doctrinally possible in the mythical figure of al-Shādhilī, he was able to insure that the conditions of a particular social formation could be produced and reproduced over and over again.

Myth, it should be remembered, is not a genre of stories that are false or fanciful, but "a story that is sacred to and shared by a group of people who find their most important meanings in it."[149] At a very basic level, then, myth is a narrative encoding of norms and expectations. As J. Z. Smith puts it, myth is "thinking with stories."[150] In this sense, al-Iskandarī was able to craft a mythic narrative of the social formation he envisioned. In order for an institution to survive the death of its charismatic leader-founder, there must be a means to inscribe the group's norms and expectations in a secondary body.[151] In the case of the Shādhilīya, these norms and expectations were inscribed in mythic form onto the life of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī through the writings of al-Iskandarī. Hagiography – as myth-making – does precisely this. Myth creates the conceptual space wherein the conditions of social reproduction

---

[149] Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 2. On the history of scholarship on myth, see Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Lincoln enlarges the domain of myth by substituting "ideology" for "sacred." He argues that myth is "ideology in narrative form," see *Theorizing Myth*, xii.

[150] J. Z. Smith, "Manna, Mana Everywhere and /_ / _ /," in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 120.

[151] As Weber logically points out, there must actually first be a desire on the part of the followers for "the continuation and the continual reactivation of the community," *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 364.

can be transmitted and recreated from generation to generation. As Bruce Lincoln describes the process, "The past shapes the present, *invocation* of an ancestor being simultaneously the *evocation* of a correlated social group."[152] In other words, each time al-Iskandarī's hagiography/myth of al-Shādhilī is invoked, there is a simultaneous evocation of the social formation of the Shādhilīya. Hagiographers (the successful ones at least) encode an entire social system within the mythical life of the eponym. In this case, what has been called the routinization of charisma, and what I call the institutionalization of an identity, is the process of encoding charisma mythically so that the institutionalized community has access to it over time.

How, then, did the nascent Shādhilīya and this process of myth-making fit into the larger social world of Ayyubid and early Mamluk Sufism? Of all the groups under consideration in the present work, the only two that were actively engaged in a process of myth-making were the nascent Shādhilīya, via al-Iskandarī, and the Jewish Sufis, via Abraham Maimonides. The Sufis of the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ *khānqāh*, whose authority stemmed from their relationship to the state, made no attempt to legitimate that authority by recourse to sainthood, prophetic models, or miracles. For them, with the power of the state behind them, might made right. Their institutional identity was perpetuated by the ideological state apparatus of the *khānqāh*. As I show in the next chapter, the Sufis of Upper Egypt constructed their identity around a set of performances. These included acts of public moral regulation, anti-state activities, and the working of miracles. Thus, the charisma of Upper Egyptian Sufis was never mythically routinized and the result was a series of localized cults. Without the

[152] Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 20.

systematizing impetus of al-Iskandarī or Abraham Maimonides, the Sufis of the *khānqāh* and Upper Egypt were unable to create the conditions necessary for the reproduction of a specific and unique social identity.

Furthermore, the attitude of al-Iskandarī towards the state placed the nascent Shādhilīya in a unique position. One might envision a continuum of Sufi-state relations. At one end, signifying the alliance of state and Sufi, were the Sufis of the *khānqāh*. At the other end, signifying the opposition between state and Sufi, were the non-state-sanctioned Sufis of Upper Egypt. Socially and politically, then, we can place the early Shādhilīya between these two extremes. They cultivated the sanction of the state without seeking its direct support. This may in fact have contributed to the group's legitimacy in the eyes of some Egyptians. They neither sided with or against the state, but they could intercede with the state if the need arose. Despite having their roots firmly in the Maghrib and North Africa, and despite their differences from these other groups, it is clear that the nascent Shādhilīya, under the leadership of al-Iskandarī, were very much a product of the Egyptian political and social milieu. How the Sufis of Upper Egypt fit into this milieu – how they constructed authority and group identity – is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

NON-STATE-SANCTIONED SUFISM: The Independent Sufis of Upper Egypt

Shifting the focus from Cairo and Alexandria in the North of Egypt to the cities and villages of the South, one can see that the Sufis of Upper Egypt represent another socio-political configuration of Sufism in Ayyubid and early Mamluk Egypt.[1] Unlike those of the *khānqāh* Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ or the nascent Shādhilīya, the Sufis of Upper Egypt were indifferent at best and antagonistic at worst to the Ayyubid and Mamluk states and their representatives. This is not to say that Upper-Egyptian Sufis were actively seeking the destruction of the state or the disruption of its operations. There were groups in Upper Egypt working toward these ends, but they were primarily small Shiʿite groups seeking a return to Fatimid rule or, at the very least, keeping the Fatimid

[1] There is no monograph in a European language on the Sufis of Upper Egypt. To my knowledge, the only studies that treat these Sufis at all are the scattered references in Jean-Claude Garcin's monumental history of Qūṣ, *Un centre musulman de la haute-Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ* (Cairo: IFAO, 1976); the work of Denis Gril, "Une source inédite pour l'histoire du *taṣawwuf* en Égypte au vii/xiiie siècle," in *Livre du centenaire*, 1880-1980 (Cairo: IFAO, 1980): 441-508; idem, "Le soufisme en Égypte au début de l'époque mamelouke d'après le *Waḥīd fī sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd* de ʿAbd al-Ghaffār Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī (m. 708/1308);" in *Le développement du soufisme en Égypt à l'époque mamelouke*, ed. Richard McGregor and Adam Sabra (Cairo: IFAO, 2010), 51-73; idem, "Une émeute antichrétienne à Qūṣ au début du VIIIe/XIVe siècle," in *AnIsl* 16 (1980): 241-274; and finally, Tamer El-Leithy's lengthy article devoted to the anti-Christian Sufi riots of fourteenth-century Egypt, "Sufis, Copts and the Politics of Piety: Moral Regulation in Fourteenth-Century Upper Egypt," in *Le développement du soufisme en Égypt à l'époque mamelouke*, 75-119. In Arabic, the situation is somewhat different, although not much improved. There are a few monographs devoted to the Sufis of Upper Egypt, but these are primarily recapitulations of medieval sources and do not offer much in the way of analysis. See, for example, Muḥammad al-Ḥajjājī, *Shakhṣīyāt ṣūfīya fī ṣaʿīd miṣr fī ʾl-ʿaṣr al-islāmī* [Sufi Personalities of Upper Egypt] (Cairo, 1971); idem, *ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʾī* (Cairo, 1990); and idem, *al-ʿĀrif bi-llāh Abū ʾl-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī* (Cairo: Dār al-Taḍāmun liʾl-Ṭibāʿ waʾl-Nashr, 1968). ʿAlī Ṣāfī Ḥusayn, in his survey of medieval Egyptian Sufi literature, offers a short section devoted to the Upper Egyptian Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī, but only to draw attention to his literary output. See *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, 162-163.

da'wa alive.[2] The Upper-Egyptian Sufis were social and religious reformers and not revolutionaries. Indeed, they were generally politically quietist unless they perceived a threat to their practice of Sunni Islam. In the instance of such a threat, however, they would use force to impose their normative vision of the *Sunna*. Breaking the stereotype of quietist Sufis who are more comfortable in isolated meditation than in acts of opposition, these Sufis sometimes used violence to give voice to their political and religious concerns. Politically, they were critical of Ayyubid and Mamluk policies and the inability of the state to regulate Upper Egypt properly. Religiously, they wished to purge the region of Shi'ite and Christian influence by enforcing their vision of a normative Sunni Islam. These roles sometimes put the Sufis into direct competition and even conflict with the state, effectively cutting them off from access to any form of state sanction or support.

In addition to their socio-political stance, the Sufis of medieval Upper Egypt differed from other groups of contemporary Sufis by virtue of their fluid relational structure. If the Sufis of the *khānqāh* were formally organized hierarchically and the nascent Shādhilīya informally organized around the figure of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, these Sufis were loosely embedded within local Sufi networks. Each of these networks overlapped with other Sufi networks and even some trans-regional Sufi networks.[3]

---

[2] There are a number of examples of Shi'ite revolutionary groups, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Fatimid state. In 569/1173, to take but one example, a band of Sudanese soldiers based in Upper Egypt and loyal to the Fatimid family attempted a coup in Cairo. Their plot was discovered and Saladin had the co-conspirators hanged in the central square of Cairo (*bayn al-qaṣrayn*). For details, see *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1:334 and Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār banī ayyūb*, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn Shayyāl (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Amīrīya bi'l-Qāhira, 1957), 1:242-251. See also Devin Stewart's account of Upper-Egyptian rebellions against the Ayyubids in "Popular Shiism in Medieval Egypt: Vestiges of Islamic Sectarian Polemics in Egyptian Arabic," in *Studia Islamica* 84 (1996): 35-66; especially pp. 52-58.

[3] The most significant trans-regional network was that of the disciples of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Jazūlī (d. 592/1196), a Maghribī disciple of Abū Madyan Shu'ayb who had settled in Alexandria to spread the Madyanī *ṭarīqa*. While his main circle of disciples was in Alexandria, he nevertheless had students from

This "network of networks," as Denis Gril has called it, had important consequences for the subsequent institutional development of Upper-Egyptian Sufism.[4] These networks never developed into formally organized brotherhoods. The Sufis of medieval Upper Egypt did not make the transition from *ṭarīqa* to *ṭā'ifa* that so many other groups did. At first glance this may be somewhat surprising. Upper Egypt was home to a number of charismatic Sufi masters with large circles of disciples. Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī (d. 642/1244), the figure from whom Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh claimed that al-Shādhilī had inherited the office of *quṭb*, was an influential and charismatic Sufi master with a large following throughout Upper Egypt.[5] Yet, an organized order linked to al-Uqṣurī's name never developed. The same can be said for a number of other important Upper Egyptian Sufis. These were charismatic masters with large numbers of followers whose *ṭarīqa* institutions died with them or with the first generation of their students.

Why were the Sufis of medieval Upper Egypt unable to create and sustain an institutionalized identity that would lend itself to the formation of a *ṭā'ifa* organization? They lacked a systematizing spokesperson like Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī. Networks are collectivities of individuals with overlapping interests and goals and, by their very nature, tend to be non-hierarchical and lack formal leadership.[6] Without clear spokespersons and hagiographers, Upper Egyptian Sufis were unable to

---

Upper Egypt, most notably Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī of Luxor, on whom see below, pp. 162-164. al-Uqṣurī thus represents a node in two overlapping Sufi networks: the Alexandrian Madyanites and the Upper-Egyptian Sufis.

[4] Denis Gril, "Le soufisme en Égypte au début de l'époque mamelouke," 54.

[5] See above, pp. 101-102 and 109-113.

[6] Stanley Wasserman and Katherine Faust summarize the primary features of social networks and social network analysis: "Actors and their actions are viewed as interdependent rather than independent, autonomous units. Relational ties (linkages) between actors are channels for transfer or "flow" of resources (either material or nonmaterial). Network models focusing on individuals view the network structure environment as providing opportunities for or constraints on individual action. Network models conceptualize structure (social, economic, political, and so forth) as lasting patterns of relations among actors." See idem, *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*, 4-5.

institutionalize the identity of one or more of these Sufi masters. Nevertheless, as members of networks these Sufis did have overlapping interests and goals. Foremost among these were those noted above: criticizing the state and its representatives, ridding Upper Egypt of Shi'ites and Christians, and enforcing their own normative vision of Sunni Islam. Ultimately, the Sufis of Upper Egypt *did* work together to realize these goals, albeit without formal leadership. Such cooperative work can be understood in the context of open-system theories of organization, which understand organizations as comprised of loosely-connected individuals working together for common purposes.[7] Importantly, these theories stress that the boundaries of the group are not fixed and individuals move fluidly between the collectivity and their environments to realize their goals.[8] This is a useful model with which to analyze the Sufis of Upper Egypt, who utilized their local environment as well as group resources in furtherance of their religious and political agenda. In order to explore and develop this idea further, I will argue three related points in this chapter.

First, despite their informal relational structure, the Sufis of Upper Egypt constituted a distinct collectivity with a unique character. The Sufis of medieval Upper Egypt exhibited a certain level of uniformity in their ideas, practices, methods of legitimation and goals. This uniformity provides at least circumstantial evidence of a

---

[7] On open-system theories of organization, see the Introduction, pp. 33-34.

[8] Richard Scott summarizes some of the major features of these kinds of organizations thus: "The open system view of organizational structure stresses the complexity and variability of the individual parts – both individual participants and subgroups – as well as the looseness of connections among them. Parts are viewed as capable of semi-autonomous action; many parts are viewed as, at best, loosely coupled to other parts. Further, in human organizations ... the system is "multicephalous": many heads are present to receive information, make decisions, direct action. Individuals and subgroups form and leave coalitions. Coordination and control become problematic. ... Organizations create, but also, appropriate knowledge, know-how, and meaning from their environments." See Scott, *Organizations*, 101.

shared solidarity, and perhaps also a shared identity. Therefore, the Sufis of Upper Egypt constituted an informal open-system organization.

Second, Upper Egyptian Sufism was never formally organized into *ṭā'ifa*s because the teachings of Sufi masters were never institutionalized around an identity. Whereas the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa* became the Shādhilī *ṭā'ifa* by means of al-Iskandarī's literary construction of a Shādhilī ideology, there was no Upper Egyptian Sufi ideologist who could institutionalize the personality and teachings of a master the way al-Iskandarī did. There was thus no way for any Upper Egyptian group to conceptualize the conditions of possibility that would make an enduring institutional identity possible. Furthermore, the Sufis of Upper Egypt did not enjoy the state patronage that would have created a stable space within which to develop organizationally.[9]

Finally, one could say that the charisma of these masters actually *was* institutionalized, but not as an identity. Instead, their charisma was institutionalized after death in the bodies of the masters themselves within their tombs. Functionally, this is indicated by the development of localized cults of devotion centered on the shrine complexes at their tombs.

In order to demonstrate these three points, I will make the case that the Sufis of Ayyubid and Mamluk Upper Egypt did, in fact, constitute an informal open-system organization. This can be demonstrated by highlighting the shared ideas, practices, methods of legitimation, and goals that set these Sufis apart from those of Cairo or Alexandria. I will therefore focus on five discernible characteristics that united these

[9] A larger question here is why the Sufis of Upper Egypt did not write monographic hagiographies. If one of the reasons that these groups were unable to create an institutionalized identity was a lack of hagiographical tradition, why was there no tradition? I hope to return to this question at a later date.

Sufis and differentiated them from those of the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ and the nascent Shādhilīya.

The five characteristics that the Sufis of Upper Egypt shared were primarily social. They describe how these Sufis viewed and dealt with those around them but do not necessarily describe their views on any particular Sufi doctrine. While these social characteristics were derived in part from doctrinal positions, I will restrict my focus to the social repercussions because they are more clearly visible.[10] Crucially, these five characteristics are best understood within the context of these Sufis' competition with the state. Upper Egypt was a notoriously difficult region to keep under state control, and these local Sufis were critical of the state's inability to enforce Islamic standards properly. These shared characteristics are thus related to Upper Egyptian Sufi attempts to monitor and regulate Upper Egypt according to their conception of the norms of Sunni Islam.

First, a direct consequence of their critique of the state was that the Sufis of Upper Egypt did not seek any kind of support or sanction from it. They did not live in state-endowed *khānqāh*s, and they did not take jobs paid for or subsidized by the state, whether in *madrasa*s or in the local bureaucracies. On the contrary, some of these Sufis deliberately left their jobs as employees of the state in order to take up the Sufi path. This did not mean that they were necessarily opposed to having a vocation. Most of the Sufis examined here supported themselves and their families through a variety of

[10] The social characteristics emerge most vibrantly from the sources at our disposal. This is a result of the fact that none of the Sufis of Upper Egypt discussed in this chapter left behind a written treatise and none of them had a hagiographer of the caliber of al-Iskandarī to record their teachings. Therefore, the scholar must rely on more traditional biographical notices that, by definition, do not contain much in the way of doctrinal utterances. Whereas for a Sufi like Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī for whom we possess both his writings and his students' reflections on his life and personality, we possess neither of these for the Sufis of Upper Egypt. Ibn Nūḥ's compendium of Upper Egyptian saints, to which I will return below, is of a unique character that does not lend itself well to reconstructions of doctrinal positions.

occupations, from trade to cloth-dyeing. Their resignation from governmental positions was a conscious and calculated performance intended to highlight the independence of the Sufi path from state-sponsored institutions and organizations.

Second, these Sufis showed a marked tendency toward enforcing their normative vision of Sunni Islam. This enforcement took a number of forms, the most common of which was the public regulation of morality. A recurring trope in the literature involves Sufis who learn of and then publicly discipline individuals whose conduct violates the Sufis' conception of acceptable behavior. These Sufis took it upon themselves to enforce social norms via public interventions. Sometimes such interventions led to acts of violence, as when the disciples of Abū ʾl-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī attacked the occupants of a house in which wine was being served, and men and women were mixing freely.[11] Much of this Sufi education and outreach in Upper Egypt was centered in local *ribāṭ*s. Many of these Upper Egyptian Sufis were the disciples of Maghribī immigrants who had come to Upper Egypt fleeing political instability in the wake of the Almohad revolt in the mid-twelfth century. These Maghribīs brought their rigorous, Mālikī-inflected Sufism with them, including the use of *ribāṭ*s as centers of rural education.[12]

Third, and a corollary of this enforcement of Sunni norms, the Sufis of Upper Egypt made a concerted effort to rid Upper Egypt of Shiʿites and Shiʿite influence. The region had been home to a relatively high percentage of Shiʿites since at least the eleventh-century and, after the Ayyubid takeover of Egypt, the Sufis arrogated to

[11] I discuss this incident below, pp. 189-190. On this kind of behavior in general see Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[12] On Maghribī Sufis and their rural educational outreach and use of the *ribāṭ*, see Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 32-54.

themselves the task of converting them to Sunni Islam.[13] Again, this took place within the context of local *ribāṭ*s and *madrasa*s, especially the latter. Since the state had not founded or endowed any centers of education in Upper Egypt, the Sufis took it upon themselves to educate the population. Unfortunately, we know less about how this process happened. Contemporary sources attribute a declining Shiʿite presence to Sufis, but do not go into detail about how, exactly, they were able to effect conversions.

Fourth, Upper Egyptian Sufis were preoccupied with policing the communal boundaries between Christians and Muslims. Such monitoring took place in a range of settings, from literary polemics to the destruction of Christian churches. It was partially due to the large Christian population of Upper Egypt in comparison to the Nile Delta and the urban centers of Cairo and Alexandria. This anti-Christian behavior is also related to these Sufis' distrust of the Ayyubid and Mamluk states, which they saw as colluding with Christians, promoting them to governmental offices or using them as tax-collectors.[14] This, the Sufis argued, was an affront to Islam and the primacy of the *sharīʿa* and flew in the face of the divinely-sanctioned conquests that had resulted in the subjugation of the Christians of Egypt. Thus, in 1307 in a demonstration of anger, the Sufis of Qūṣ rioted and destroyed thirteen Coptic churches in less than two hours.

Finally, these Upper Egyptian Sufis tended to be itinerant and charismatic wonder-workers whose claims of authority were rooted in their ability to perform astounding miracles. The earliest hagiographies and histories of these Sufis reveal a

---

[13] There were other, more moderate, figures dedicated to the same project, particularly in Qūṣ and Qinā.

[14] It is possible that this anti-Christian sentiment was bound up with anti-Fatimid/Shiʿite sentiment. A very common criticism of the Fatimid state (both by Fatimid bureacrats and by later historians) was that they employed large numbers of Christians and Jews in various state offices. As virulent anti-Shiʿite Sufis, the Sufis of Upper Egypt may have been attuned to this criticism and taken it up as part of their Sunni project.

decisive and marked interest in the wonder-working saint who travels from place to place and amazes crowds with his miracles (*karāmāt*), clairvoyance (*mukāshafāt*), or ability to be in two places at once (*al-kashf al-ṣūrī*). Moving beyond claims to authority found in traditional Sufi *silsila*s (although these were important), juridical proficiency, or theorizations of sainthood, these Sufis embodied a model of sanctity and authority connected to their unmediated access to the world of the unseen (*al-ghayb*). These Sufis' emphasis on the authority of sanctity was related to their critique of the state. The sanctity (*walāya*) of the Sufis was in direction competition with the sovereignty (*wilāya*) of the state.[15]

These five characteristics represent a broad composite of Ayyubid and Mamluk Sufism in Upper Egypt. Again, each of them was symptomatic of a larger critique of the state and its perceived inability to keep Upper Egypt under proper control. In the absence of a strong state presence, these Sufis took it upon themselves to enforce Sunni norms, to rid the region of Shiʿites, and to patrol the boundaries with their Christian neighbors. They legitimated their position by making claims of authority rooted in their miracles and access to the unseen. The Sufis examined here implemented this shared vision by cooperating in overlapping networks that can be collectively considered an informal open-system organization.

In what follows, these five characteristics will be illustrated in more detail through the careers of five Sufi masters who were active in Ayyubid and early Mamluk Upper Egypt. These five can be taken as broadly representative of Upper-Egyptian Sufism and its social milieu. Since the history of Upper Egyptian Sufism remains mostly

---

[15] On the relationship of *walāya* and *wilāya* in the context of Sufi claims to authority, see Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xvii-xxi; 216-217; and 228.

unexplored in the scholarly literature, it is hoped that what follows will provide a framework for future inquiry into this fascinating chapter of medieval Sufism.

FIVE UPPER-EGYPTIAN SUFIS

One of the most important of medieval Upper Egyptian Sufis was the Maghribī immigrant ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʾī (d. 592/1195).[16] Al-Qināʾī is a crucial figure in this chapter because it was he who introduced Maghribī Sufism into Upper Egypt and brought the Maghribī model of the *ribāṭ* to the region. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʾī was originally from Sabta (Ceuta) in the Maghrib. After his father's death, al-Qināʾī moved to Fez where he began training with the Berber Sufi Abū Yiʿzzā, the master of Abū Madyan.[17] Muḥammad al-Ḥajjājī, the modern biographer of a number of Upper Egyptian saints, argues that al-Qināʾī was the student of Abū Madyan as well.[18] While the medieval sources provide not diret evidence about the relationship between the two, Abū Madyan was the *muqaddam* of Abū Yiʿzzā's *zāwiya* in Fez, and ʿAbd al-Raḥīm would thus have been in close contact with Abū Madyan during his time in Fez.[19] After his Sufi training, al-Qināʾī left for Mecca, where he lived for nine years before moving to Upper Egypt permanently in 1157. He eventually settled in the town of Qinā, which is

---

[16] ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥajjūn al-Sabtī al-Qināʾī: al-Udfuwī, *al-Ṭāliʿ al-saʿīd al-jāmiʿ asmāʾ nujabāʾ al-ṣaʿīd*, ed. Saʿd Muḥammad Ḥasan (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣrīya al-ʿĀmma liʾl-Kitāb, 2001), 297-303; *Riḥlat ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, 52 and 282; *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyāʾ*, 385-389; *Ḥusn*, 1:515-516; *Ṭabaqāt al-Shaʿrānī*, 1:135; al-Ḥajjājī, *Shaykhṣīyāt al-ṣūfīya*; idem, *ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʾī*; Gril, *Risāla*, 207 [French section].

[17] On Abū Yiʿzzā, see the hagiography by al-ʿAzafī, *Diʿāmat al-yaqīn fī zaʿāmat al-muttaqīn* (above, pp. 116-117) and Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 67-79.

[18] al-Ḥajjājī, *ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʾī*, 52.

[19] Vincent Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan: The Works of Abū Madyan Shuʿayb*, 7-8. See especially Abū Madyan's autobiographical comments recorded in al-Tādilī's *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*, p. 319-326. While he never says explicitly here that he was the *muqaddam* of the *zāwiya*, his role is clear from his own descriptions of his duties and activities in Fez.

the source of his *nisba*.[20] Al-Qinā'ī quickly gained a reputation for his Sunni activism and his students were among the most influential in Upper Egypt. His two most famous students were Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī and Abū 'l-Ḥasan ibn al-Ṣabbāgh (both of whom are treated below). Al-Qinā'ī was a merchant by trade, and when he retired he was able to build his own *ribāṭ* - the first in Upper Egypt – on the east side of the city.[21] It was in this *ribāṭ* that he was buried when he died at the age of 71.

'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī had two influential students, the first of whom was Abū 'l-Ḥasan ibn al-Ṣabbāgh (d. 612/1215).[22] Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh was a central figure in the spread of Sufism in Upper-Egypt because of the very large number of his students. He was born and raised in Qūṣ, where he apprenticed with his father as a cloth dyer. His father hoped he would join the family business, but most historians record that Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh knew from an early age that he wanted to be a Sufi and, after performing a miracle in his father's shop, he was freed to pursue that path.[23] His master in Sufism was the above-mentioned 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī, and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh was clearly his chosen successor: Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh married the daughter of al-Qinā'ī and inherited his *ribāṭ* when the master died. As noted above, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh had a large number of students. Ṣafī al-Dīn lists fifteen disciples whom he had met personally and al-Udfuwī

---

[20] The city of Qinā' is located on the East bank of the Nile, approximately 300 miles south of Cairo and 25 miles north of Qūṣ.

[21] al-Ḥajjājī, *'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī*, 56.

[22] Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ṣabbāgh al-Qūṣī: *al-Waḥīd*, 1:103a-105a; *Mir'āt al-jinān,* 4:24-25; al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmila li-wafayāt al-naqala*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1988), 2:340; *al-Ṭāli'*, 383-387; *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, 394-398; *Ḥusn*, 1:516; *al-Kawākib*, 2:120; *Shadharāt*, 7:96; al-Ḥajjājī, *Shakhṣīyāt al-ṣūfīya*, 59-83; Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, 119-123; Gril, *Risāla*, 217 [French section].

[23] It is related in multiple sources that when he was a teenager Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh took all the cloth in his father's shop and placed it into a single vat of dye. His father was enraged until he started pulling the pieces of cloth out and each one was dyed to the exact specification of its owner. One would think that this would have made Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh an excellent candidate to take over the business and his father would have wanted to keep him in his employ. However, the trope of the miracle is used, as always, to demonstrate that the miracle worker was destined for greater things.

says that Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's disciples "were as numerous as seeds."[24] Before his death and burial in al-Qināʾī's *ribāṭ*, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh seems to have designated as his successor Abū Yaḥyā ibn Shāfiʿ (d. 647/1249).[25] This is indicated by the fact that Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh married his daughter to Abū Yaḥyā. However, a group attached to the name of Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh would not persist. While Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's popularity and fame would be long-lived, a group bearing his name did not survive the first generation of his students. Ṣafī al-Dīn notes that a certain Abū ʾl-Qāsim al-Marāghī (d. 683/1284) was his last student: "The circle of Abū ʾl-Ḥasan died out until nobody was left but [al-Marāghī]."[26] Finally, Ṣafī al-Dīn reports that men used to come to visit Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's son, not to learn from him, but for the chance to gain blessings by sitting on his father's prayer rug.[27]

Perhaps the best known Sufi of Upper Egypt and the other influential student of al-Qināʾī was Abū ʾl-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī (d. 642/1244).[28] Al-Uqṣurī's origins are obscure. While medieval sources are silent about his birthplace and upbringing, there was

---

[24] *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 384. Ṣafī al-Dīn's account in the *Risāla* (p. 44-57 [Arabic section]) is particularly interesting because he reveals that Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's disciples (at least those mentioned by him) were equal parts Upper Egyptians and Maghribīs/Andalusīs. This is an early indication of not only the popularity of Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, but also the large number of Maghribī and Andalusī Sufis present in thirteenth-century Upper Egypt.

[25] Abū Yaḥyā ibn Shāfiʿ al-Qināʾī: Gril, *Risāla*, 49-50 [Arabic section]; *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 743-744; *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyāʾ*, 420-421; *Ḥusn*, 1:518-519; *al-Kawākib*, 2:49-50.

[26] Gril, *Risāla*, 54 [Arabic section]. On al-Marāghī see the *Risāla*, 53-54.

[27] Gril, *Risāla*, 50 [Arabic section]. This is fascinating because this son was not only the son of Ibn al-Ṣabbagh but, on his mother's side, the grandson of al-Qināʾī. Ṣafī al-Dīn does record that the Sufis and jurists thought the son (who remains nameless) was "great" but the real purpose of their visits to him was the chance to be near the prayer rug. His blessed lineage should have made him a prime candidate for spiritual succession, but the son seems to have actually sought spiritual training from ibn Shāfiʿ after his father's death. This is supported by al-Udfuwī's report, in which he notes that immediately after Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's death, some of his students came to the master's son for guidance. The son, knowing that he had chosen Abū Yaḥyā to be his successor, demurred and told them he was under Abū Yaḥyā's guidance. See *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 744. This all indicates that there was confusion in the group after the death of Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, which helps explain why the group was ultimately short-lived.

[28] Abū ʾl-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf al-Uqṣurī: Gril, *Risāla*, 60 [Arabic section] and 215-216 [French section]; al-Bādisī, *al-Maqṣid al-sharīf*, 81-84, 116, 146-149 ; *al-Waḥīd*, 127b-132a; *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 722-724; *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyāʾ*, 417-418; *Ṣubḥ*, 3:384; *Ḥusn*, 1:518; *Ṭabaqāt al-Shaʿrānī*, 1:136-137; *al-Kawākib*, 2:46-47; al-Ḥajjājī, *Abū ʾl-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī*; idem, *Shakhṣīyāt al-ṣūfīya*, 84-132; Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 165-167.

apparently a local oral tradition in Luxor that he was a successful merchant from Baghdad and a well-known Sufi before migrating to Luxor.[29] The Egyptian scholar al-Ḥajjājī takes the story at face value, but this is based upon an oral tradition that contradicts the medieval sources.[30] However, the historical accounts about his later life are in agreement. He was the overseer of an unspecified government bureau (*mushārif al-diwān*) in Upper Egypt but abandoned his post to become a Sufi.[31] Al-Uqṣurī was the student of both ʻAbd al-Razzāq al-Jazūlī (d. 1196) and ʻAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʼī (above), the representatives of the school of Abū Madyan in Alexandria and Upper Egypt, respectively. Like his contemporary, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, al-Uqṣurī attracted a large following, but there was no organization attached to his name after his death. Instead, he became the patron saint of his city and his shrine complex in Luxor became the object of a yearly pilgrimage and festival. Already in the time of al-Udfuwī (mid-fourteenth century) the celebrations had gotten wild enough to offend his sober sensibilities, however, and he declaimed that al-Uqṣurī himself had nothing to do with

[29] Luxor is on the East bank of the Nile, approximately 20 miles south of Qūṣ and 400 miles south of Cairo.

[30] al-Ḥajjājī, *Abū ʼl-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī*, 46. The earliest recorded source on al-Uqṣurī's life is that of Ṣafī al-Dīn's *Risāla*, which mentions nothing about his birth or upbringing but does mention that "once, when [al-Uqṣurī] was a young man (*shābb*) and at the beginning of his Sufi career, he was with ʻAbd al-Raḥīm," 60. This would mitigate the idea that he spent his youth in Baghdad. al-Udfuwī likewise says nothing about al-Uqṣurī's youth but records that after his apprenticeship in Alexandria with ʻAbd al-Razzāq al-Jazūlī, "he returned to his native land," i.e. Upper Egypt. Again, this would indicate that he was not from Baghdad. The source of the Baghdad legend is in a work by the French archeologist Georges Legrain who was working in Luxor in the early 20th century. He apparently spent a lot of time speaking with his neighbors in Luxor and learning the local lore. He wrote a book, *Louxor sans les Pharaons* (Paris, 1914), in which he recorded a number of local legends, including those about the patron saint of the city, Abū ʼl-Ḥajjāj (pp. 47-91). The Baghdad story seems to me to be a later hagiographical invention that arose to fill in the details of the life of the city's most famous (post-Pharaonic) inhabitant. Garcin himself argues that over time the legends of al-Uqṣurī were confused with another great Egyptian saint, Aḥmad al-Badawī; see *Qūṣ*, 166. This may be the case, but the stories of al-Badawī have him coming from Fez to Ṭanṭa in the Nile delta, via Mecca; see Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, *al-Sayyid al-Badawi: Un grand saint de l'Islam egyptien*. al-Uqṣurī's connection with Baghdad may also have been a product of his relationship to Abū Madyan, who was also supposed to have visited Baghdad, where he met ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (d. 563/1166). This story is apocryphal as well. See Vincent Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan*, 10.

[31] The sources do not specify which of the various *dawāwīn* this might have been. Upper Egypt was not as formally organized as were the urban centers of Cairo and Alexandria and the different *dawāwīn* of those cities may have been combined into one in Upper Egypt.

such things.[32] Al-Uqṣurī was something of an ecstatic, fond of locking himself in his house alone for long periods of time, speaking to *jinn*, and attending sessions of *samāʿ* in which he would often go into a deep trance.

Of Upper Egyptian Sufis known for miracles, none was more miraculous than Mufarrij al-Damāmīnī (d. 648/1250).[33] Al-Damāmīnī had one of the more interesting careers of those under consideration here. Originally from Abyssinia, the first portion of his life was spent in Damāmīn as the slave of a Ṣaʿīdī merchant.[34] At some point during his servitude, he lost all sense of himself in "a bout of madness" (*akhdha ʿaẓīma*) that lasted for six months. During this time he did not eat or drink anything. He was placed in chains in locked rooms but always managed to escape miraculously. Fame of his spell spread, and eventually Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh paid him a visit and declared that God had chosen and purified him for the Sufi path. Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh took him under his care, declared him a *majdhūb* (holy fool), and healed him of his affliction.[35] From that point

---

[32] The festival takes place on the 14th of Shaʿbān, which is to commemorate his visionary ascent into heaven (*miʿrāj*), according to al-Udfuwī or to commemorate his arrival in Luxor from Baghdad, according to al-Ḥajjājī. al-Udfuwī describes the scene at the festival, saying that people would get dressed up and bring flutes and tambourines, "The men and women intermingle and the youth and the rebellious would come together. This is one of those revolting matters and abominable innovations. But the *shaykh* was far from all of this and excepted from it," *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 417. On the development and popular use of the *miʿrāj* of the Prophet, see Frederick Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey: Tracing the Development of the Ibn ʿAbbās Ascension Development* (Albany: State University of New York, 2008).

[33] Mufarrij ibn Muwaffaq al-Damāmīnī: Gril, *Risāla*, 60-62 [Arabic section] and 230-231 [French section]; *al-Waḥīd*, 1:125b-127b; *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 648-656; *al-Maqṣad al-sharīf*, 84; *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā*', 409-412; *Ḥusn*, 1:519; *al-Kawākib*, 1:713-714; Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 149-150, 167, 173-174; al-Ḥajjājī, *Shakhṣīyāt al-ṣūfīya*, 123-141.

[34] Damāmīn, no longer extant, was located on the East bank of the Nile between the cities of Qūṣ and Luxor; see *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 16 n. 4, for references in the medieval geographical literature.

[35] A *majdhūb*, lit. "attracted" or "possessed," refers to an individual whom God has drawn so near that his or her mind no longer functions in expected ways. The issue of primary importance for the *majdhūb*, however, is not how well one's intellect functions but the means of his or her enlightenment. Most Sufis must follow the path deliberately, performing their devotions for the sake of knowing and loving God. The *majdhūb*, by contrast, is "attracted" by God without effort. In a sense, the *majdhūb* has done nothing to warrant his or her state. al-Suhrawardī devoted a section of his *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif* ("On an Explanation of the Level of Spiritual Mastery") to detailing the implications of having a *majdhūb* for a spiritual master; it is not a good idea because the *majdhūb* has not actually traveled the path and therefore can not tell someone else how it is to be done; Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 2004), 80-87.

on, Mufarrij lived the rest of his days as a Sufi based in Damāmīn but wandering all over Egypt; a feat that was made easier by his ability to be in two places at once. His fame was apparently so great that it reached Cairo and Ṣafī al-Dīn records his experience with Mufarrij in the Qarāfa cemetery: "He was sitting on the edge of a platform and all around him were the greatest of princes and masses of people. They were crowding in around him and reaching for his hand from under the bench like the crush of people at the black stone during the *Ḥajj* – his hand being yanked from one hand to another."[36] Mufarrij was also a student of Abū ʾl-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī in addition to Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh. He left behind no students that we know of, did not have a *ribāṭ* or a *zāwiya* in Damāmīn, but al-Udfuwī testifies that he and many others visited the grave of Mufarrij and made supplications there.[37] The popularity of Mufarrij spread quickly, and he seems to have garnered a reputation for clairvoyance and miracles all over Egypt, to the point that his name was used in magical amulets.[38]

Finally, I will draw extensively on the career of Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī (d. 708/1308).[39] Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī was the author of the only extant biographical dictionary of the Sufis of Upper Egypt, *al-Waḥīd fī sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd* (The Unique Guide Concerning the Lives of the People of Unity). The work remains unpublished.[40] In *al-Waḥīd*, Ibn Nūḥ discusses

---

[36] Gril, *Risāla*, 61 [Arabic section].
[37] *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 656.
[38] Gril, *Risāla*, 61 [Arabic section].
[39] ʿAbd al-Ghaffār ibn Aḥmad ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī: *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 323-327; *Aʿyān al-aṣr*, 3:111; *al-Wāfī*, 19:21; *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿīya*, 10:87-88; *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyāʾ*, 390-391; *al-Sulūk*, 2:50; *al-Durar*, 2:385-386; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfī waʾl-musṭawfā baʿda ʾl-wāfī*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣrīya al-ʿĀmma liʾl-Kitāb, 1984), 7:311-312; *al-Nujūm*, 8:230; *Ṭabaqāt al-Shaʿrānī*, 1:139; *Ḥusn*, 1:524; Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr*, 162-163; Gril, "Une source inédite pour l'histoire du taṣawwuf en Égypte au vii/xiiie siècle," 441-508
[40] This two-volume work exists in a number of manuscripts. The manuscript I consulted contains both volumes, was copied in 1078/1667, and is housed in the collection of Islamic manuscripts at the Sayyida Zaynab mosque in Cairo, catalog #3112. For other manuscripts in Paris, Cairo, Brussels, and Berlin, see

every Sufi whom he either knew personally, by reputation, or had been known to his father. While the work is not as well-organized or polished as Ṣafī al-Dīn's *Risāla*, it is nevertheless invaluable for reconstructing the social climate of thirteenth-century Sufism in Upper Egypt.[41] In fact, it is the only extant literary artifact from Ayyubid/Mamluk-era Upper Egyptian Sufism. Ibn Nūḥ had two teachers in Sufism: Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Mulaththam – "the veiled" – (d. 672/1273) and 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Minūfī (d. 703/1303). The former was a mysterious Sufi from the Hijaz who was said to have been 600 years old[42] and the latter was a student of al-Uqṣurī and Abū 'l-Fatḥ al-Wāsiṭī in Alexandria.[43] In addition to authoring his treatise on the Sufis of the Ṣa'īd, Ibn Nūḥ is famous for his role in inciting an anti-Christian riot in Qūṣ in 1307. He maintained his innocence in the face of the Mamluk authorities' accusations but to no avail. He was arrested, forced to live in Fustat under house arrest, and died in 1308 in the 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ mosque. The Sufi riot of 1307 is an important piece of the picture of Upper Egyptian Sufism. I will return to the details, and Ibn Nūḥ's role in the matter, below.

These were by no means all of the important Sufis of Upper Egypt. Between the works of Ibn Nūḥ and al-Udfuwī alone, one can count hundreds of Upper Egyptian men

---

Gril, *Une source inédite*, 447-448. The publication of this manuscript is a major desideratum for the study of medieval Upper Egyptian Sufism.

[41] The structure of the book is loosely based on that of al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*. He begins with a brief overview of Sufi terminology before moving on to biographies of individual Sufis. However, he was not as disciplined in his writing as al-Qushayrī and the two volumes can almost be described as an exercise in stream of consciousness. He moves from topic to topic and person to person with ease and without transition. If one Sufi reminds him of another, he will pause in his narrative to elucidate the latter before eventually returning to the former. This structure makes the book difficult as a research tool, but is a delight to read. This is also due to Ibn Nūḥ's very informal writing style (there are some colloquial elements in his writing) and his apparent love of gossip and scandal, which are woven throughout the narratives.

[42] On al-Mulaththam, see, *al-Waḥīd*, 1:58b-65a; *al-Ṭāli'*, 131-135; *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'īya*, 8:35-37; *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, 366-367; *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Sha'rānī*, 1:135-136; *Ḥusn*, 1:521; Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 167-169.

[43] On al-Minūfī, see *Nihāyat al-arab*, 32:57-58; *al-Waḥīd*, 1: 66b – 74b; *al-Durar al-kāmina*, 2:373-375; *'Iqd*, 4:331-333; *al-Sulūk*, 1:957; *al-Manhal al-ṣāfī*, 7:280-281. The details of his biography are quite sketchy. Some have him living in the Ṣa'īd and some in Fustat, but all are in agreement that he died in Fustat and was buried in the Qarāfa cemetery.

and women who were famous for being Sufis. However, the five Sufis I focus on here represent the contours of larger trends that I have detected in the literature and serve as exemplars in the arguments that follow. In addition, the Sufis of Upper Egypt were not isolated from the larger context of medieval Egyptian Sufism. To take but one salient example, ʻAbd al-Razzāq al-Jazūlī (d. 1196), the representative of the Madyanī tradition in Alexandria, was one of the teachers of Abū ʼl-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī. ʻAbd al-Razzāq was a fixture of the Alexandrian scene, but he maintained ties to the Ṣaʻīd and apparently spent a great deal of time at the *zāwiya* of Dhū ʼl-Nūn in the city of Akhmīm.[44] He would retire to Akhmīm when he needed to get away from the pressures of life and his wife (who apparently beat him regularly).[45] While these Sufis and their large circles of disciples represent a unique cooperative collectivity, they were nevertheless in contact with other Egyptian Sufi groups.[46] Before moving to the central arguments of this chapter I turn briefly to the larger context of medieval Upper Egypt, which will frame the ensuing arguments about the unique qualities of Upper Egyptian Sufism.

---

[44] On Dhū ʼl-Nūn al-Miṣrī see the Introduction, pp. 8-9.

[45] al-Jazūlī's biography may be gleaned from Abū ʼl-ʻAbbās Aḥmad al-Mājirī, *al-Minhāj al-wāḍiḥ fī taḥqīq karāmāt Abī Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʻa al-Miṣrīya, 1933), 149-150; Grill, *Risāla*, 70-72 [Arabic section]; *al-Maqṣad al-sharīf*, 67-68; Ibn Qunfudh, *Uns al-faqīr wa-ʻizz al-ḥaqīr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Fāsī and Adolphe Faure (Rabat, 1965), 35-36; and al-Fāsī, *al-ʻIqd al-thamīn fī tārīkh al-balad al-amīn*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid Fiqī et al (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1986), 2:240-241. Al-Jazūlī's wife was actually the black concubine of Abū Madyan, who gave her to al-Jazūlī because he had no interest in women. al-Jazūlī's marriage to her is one of the reasons he left for Alexandria, as there was a ban among the Sanhaja Berber against marrying blacks; see Vincent Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan*, 14.

[46] Ibn Nūḥ, to take another example, was acquainted with Abū ʼl-ʻAbbās al-Mursī and actually sat with him and watched him go into a trance: "I met with [al-Mursī] one time in Qūṣ in the house of *shaykh* Nāṣir al-Dīn. I found him very pleasant ... I entered [the house] and found the *shaykh* [al-Mursī] sitting on the floor when a state had overtaken him (*ghalabahu al-ḥāl*). His eyes were red, his teeth were chattering, and his beard danced on his chest. I did not greet him, nor did I speak to him because it was not appropriate at that time." See *al-Waḥīd*, 1:99a-101b. It is quite significant that al-Mursī was well-known in Upper Egypt. It is not a coincidence that al-Mursī, the representative of the Maghribī al-Shādhilī, would devote time and energy among the many Maghribīs in Upper Egypt. It indicates that he was trying to spread the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa* among what he assumed would be a like-minded population.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF UPPER EGYPT

The region known as Upper Egypt is a narrow strip of land that runs along the Nile river. Known in Arabic as *al-ṣaʿīd*, lit. "elevated plain" (because one travels "up" in elevation southward along the Nile), *al-wajh al-qiblī* (because it was the half of Egypt facing the direction of the *qibla* in Mecca), or *miṣr al-aʿlā* (upper Egypt), the area stretches along the Nile from Gīza to Aswān. Al-Udfuwī wrote that the region was long and narrow, requiring 12 days by camel to travel its length but only three hours to travel its width.[47] The city of Aswān, which both Ibn Jubayr and al-Maqrīzī called "the end of the Ṣaʿīd," was thus at least a twelve-day camel ride from Cairo, although the trip usually took much longer.[48] In the Middle Ages this large geographical area had a distinctive character that set it apart from the rich farmlands of the Delta and the urban centers in Alexandria, Cairo, and Fustat.[49] The unique character of Upper Egypt was due primarily to three factors.

First, the demographics of Upper Egypt were different from those in the rest of Egypt. While there are no absolute figures on this issue, it is safe to say that the towns and villages of the Ṣaʿīd retained a majority Christian population and character until

---

[47] *ạl-Ṭāliʿ*, 7. This is due to the fact that the inhabited portions of the Ṣaʿīd hug both sides of the Nile; there is not much settlement beyond its fertile banks.
[48] *Riḥlat ibn Jubayr*, 57; *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 1:554. Twelve days is the figure given by al-Udfuwī when travelling by camel caravan. However, the trip could be undertaken by boat using the Nile. The trip upstream could take as long as 45 days if the weather and currents were not favorable. See S. D. Goitein, review of Garcin, *Un centre musulman*, in *Speculum* 53 (1978), 363. Ibn Jubayr, travelling by boat in favorable conditions, was able to reach Qūṣ from Fustat in only 18 days. See *Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr*, 65.
[49] There is still no comprehensive treatment of the history of Islamic Upper Egypt in a European language. The best alternative is Jean-Claude Garcin's monumental history of Qūṣ, *Un centre musulman de la Haute-Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ.* While Garcin focuses on the city of Qūṣ, his wide-ranging scholarship touches upon a number of aspects of life throughout Upper Egypt and I will rely on much of his scholarship in reconstructing the social and political worlds of Upper-Egyptian Sufis. In a review of Garcin's work, Ira Lapidus wrote "From the vantage of Qūṣ we look at the whole world of Egyptian politics ... the study of Qūṣ is in microcosm the study of the history of Upper Egypt." See *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 21 (1978): 331-334.

the fourteenth century – much later than the rest of Egypt.[50] Until recently, scholars had argued that there were two waves of Christian conversions to Islam, the first occurring in the ninth century and the other in the fourteenth century.[51] It was assumed that the ninth-century conversions were the most substantial, imparting an Islamic character to Upper Egypt quite early.[52] However, Yohanan Friedmann, and then Tamer El-Leithy in more detail, have shown quite conclusively that there was no ninth-century wave of conversions and that there was only a single wave in the fourteenth century.[53] While these remarks can also apply to the whole of Egypt, it was Upper Egypt that was the primary holdout in terms of Christian resistance to conversion.[54] This can be seen in the facts that there were still large numbers of churches throughout Upper Egypt during the fourteenth century and that there continued to be serious, and

---

[50] Unlike Persian-speaking areas in the East, the Arabization of Egypt took place far more rapidly than its Islamization. This may have allowed the local Christian and Jewish populations to avoid conversion while still maintaining active roles in the various Muslim polities after the conquest. See, for example, Georges Anawati, "Factors and Effects of Arabization and Islamization in Medieval Egypt and Syria," in *Islam and Cultural Change in the Middle Ages*, ed. Spiros Vryonis (Los Angeles: University of California, 1975): 17-41; and Richard Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

[51] The proponents of this view include Gaston Wiet, "Ḳibṭ," in *EI*1; idem, *L'Egypte arabe de la conquête arabe à la conquête ottomane* (Paris, 1937); Ira Lapidus, "The Conversion of Egypt to Islam," in *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 248-262; Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*; Jonathan Bloom, "The Mosque of the Qarafa in Cairo," in *Muqarnas* 4 (1987): 7-20.

[52] This interpretation hinges on the reading of a single word – *ghalaba* – in al-Maqrīzī's account in the *Khiṭaṭ*. Earlier scholars argued that *ghalaba* meant that the Muslims had "overtaken" the Christians in terms of population. See Tamer el-Leithy, "Coptic Culture and Conversion in Medieval Cairo, 1293-1524 A.D" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Princeton University, 2005), 13-28.

[53] Yohanan Friedmann, "A Note on the Conversion of Egypt to Islam," in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 3 (1981): 238-240; and el-Leithy, "Coptic Culture and Conversion in Medieval Cairo," 19-20.

[54] One example of the relatively high proportion of Christians to Muslims in Upper Egypt can be seen in the geography of al-Maqdisī who, writing in the tenth century, says that there were not many cities in Upper Egypt. This is obviously not true as there were quite a large number of cities along the Nile. However, al-Maqdisī explains that his statement was due to the fact that for Muslim geographers, a city (no matter how populous) was not a city if there was no mosque in it. Therefore, al-Maqdisī says that the only "cities" in Upper Egypt were Aswān, Ḥulwān, Qūṣ, Akhmīm, and ʻAllāqī; see *Aḥsān al-taqāsīm fī maʻrifat al-aqālīm*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* III (Leiden: Brill, 1877), 193-194. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, writing in the thirteenth century, still called Qūṣ a Christian town (*wa-hiya qibṭīya*); *Muʻjam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977), 4: 413. See also Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 120-121.

often violent, communal tensions between the local Muslim and Christian populations in this region during the same period.[55]

There was also a Jewish presence in Upper Egypt.[56] While they were far less numerous than the Christians, Jews lived in most of the towns of the Ṣaʿīd, with the largest population in Qūṣ.[57] When Benjamin of Tudela (fl. 1170) visited the region in the last quarter of the twelfth century, he noted that many of the cities of Upper Egypt had populations of between two and three hundred Jews each.[58] Drawing on Genizah evidence, Goitein argued that "a likely estimate of the size of the population of a medieval Jewish community in a town of the Egyptian Rīf might be from sixty to ninety families with from three hundred to five hundred souls."[59] Goitein here refers to the Nile Delta, and, taken together with the numbers given by Benjamin of Tudela, it is safe to say that the towns and villages of Upper Egypt had smaller Jewish populations than those of the Delta.

Finally, Shiʿism seems to have taken especially strong root in Upper Egypt during the Fatimid period and a substantial Shiʿite presence could still be detected long after the Fatimid demise.[60] It was the Fatimid military vizier Badr al-Jamālī (d. 1121)

---

[55] El-Leithy surveys much of the material on this topic in "Sufis, Copts and the Politics of Piety: Moral Regulation in Fourteenth-Century Upper Egypt." See pp. 84-86 for the churches of Upper Egypt and pp. 79-82 for a discussion of the major outbreaks of anti-Christian violence in the fourteenth century.

[56] For a general overview of the Jews of Upper Egypt see Norman Golb, "The Topography of the Jews of Medieval Egypt," in *JNES* 24 (1965): 251-270.

[57] S. D. Goitein and Mordechai Friedman, *India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents from the Cairo Genizah* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 221. Here, Friedman only remarks that Qūṣ "contained a considerable Jewish community."

[58] *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. Marcus Adler (New York: Feldheim, 1907), 62 [Hebrew section] and 68-69 [English section].

[59] S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society, Volume II: The Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 45.

[60] Muḥammad al-Ḥajjājī, *Qūṣ fī ʾl-tārīkh al-islāmī* [Qūṣ in Islamic History] (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣrīya al-ʿĀmma liʾl-Kitāb, 2001), 117-118. al-Kutubī, writing in the early fourteenth century, claimed that the entire west bank of the Nile was still Shiʿite in character; *Mabāhij al-fikar*, cited by Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 308 n.1.

who, in 470/1078, divided Egypt into the six administrative districts (*wilāyāt*) that would persist under the Ayyubids and Mamluks.[61] He made Qūṣ the administrative seat of the district of Upper Egypt, whereas the Ṣa'īd had previously not been under direct state administration.[62] The Fatimids took great care to cultivate a stable and loyal Upper Egypt because they wanted to control the trade and pilgrimage routes that led east through the Red Sea ports of 'Aydhāb and Quṣayr, in addition to the rich mineral resources of the region.[63] Under the Fatimids, Qūṣ became a large and important city; Ibn al-Athīr remarked that the governor of Qūṣ was almost as powerful as the vizier himself and Qūṣ was generally recognized as the third most important city in Egypt.[64] According to Garcin, one of the primary reasons that Qūṣ was chosen as the seat of regional government was that it allowed the state to keep a close eye on the Bedouin tribes who had proven quite difficult to keep under state control.[65] However, there was no *madrasa* in Qūṣ until 1210. Garcin attributes this to the fact that, because the region was still primarily Shi'ite and Christian in character, most Muslims had no interest in building a Sunni *madrasa* there.[66]

See also al-Ḥajjājī, who notes that Aswān in particular became "a center for their propaganda;" *'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī*, 36.

[61] These were the districts of Qūṣ, Alexandria, the East, the West, Cairo, and Fustat.

[62] Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid notes that the division between Upper and Lower Egypt was an older administrative division that the Muslims took over from the Byzantines. Under the early Fatimids, that is, before the reforms of Badr al-Jamālī, the entire region of Upper Egypt was under the jurisdiction of the *mutawallī al-sayyāra* or *mutawallī al-ḥarb*. The sources do no say what, exactly, this entailed but Sayyid argues that it was probably a military office, meant to protect the region from Nubian encroachment. There was thus no civilian administrative seat in Upper Egypt until 1078. See idem, *al-Dawla al-fāṭimīya fī miṣr*, p. 327-329 and Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 79-84.

[63] Sayyid, *al-Dawla al-fāṭimīya fī miṣr*, 332 and Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 90-108.

[64] See references in Garcin, "Ḳūṣ," in *EI2* and Sayyid, *al-Dawla al-fāṭimīya*, 330.

[65] Jean-Claude Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 90-96.

[66] Jean-Claude Garcin, "Ḳūṣ," in *EI2*. The Fatimids did not build *madrasa*s as we have come to understand the term; i.e. as a place in which the law is taught. See Paul Walker, "Fatimid Institutions of Learning" in *Fatimid History and Ismaili Doctrine* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorium, 2008). However, toward the end of their reign, the Fatimids did allow their often Sunni viziers to build *madrasas* in Alexandria. These were

Finally, it is worth mentioning that in the immediate aftermath of the Ayyubid overthrow of the Fatimid regime, there were a number of Shi‘ite revolts that originated in Upper Egypt, particularly in Aswān.[67] Alternatively, when local revolts in Cairo failed, the leaders and combatants would flee to Upper Egypt for sanctuary.[68] Shi‘ism maintained a presence in Upper Egypt at least until the early years of Mamluk rule, as evidenced by al-Udfuwī's comments about many Upper Egyptian cities.[69] In his brief survey of the major cities of Upper Egypt, al-Udfuwī takes special note of the fact that Aswān "was overtaken by Shi‘ism during the time of the Fatimids (*al-‘ubaydīyīn*)," a situation that extended to his own time.[70] He also says that there was still a significant Shi‘ite presence in the towns of Edfu (even having both Ismā‘īlī and Imāmī populations), Isnā', Usfūn, and Armant.[71] The Shi‘ite population of Aswān was to be long-lived. Al-Ḥajjājī notes that after the fall of the Fatimids in 1171 most of those who supported them fled to Aswān and set up "a center for their propaganda" that was moderately successful.[72] The unique confessional configuration of Upper Egypt is

---

primarily devoted to the Mālikī school of law. The fact that these viziers had no apparent interest in building *madrasa*s in Upper Egypt might be taken as evidence that the large Shi‘ite and Christian populations of the region precluded building explicitly Sunni institutions. See Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt: *Madrasas* and *Mudarrisūn*, 495-647/1101-1249."

[67] Ibn Kathīr records that when Kanz al-Dawla's first revolt against Saladin failed in 1171, he fled to Aswān where he set up a new *da‘wa* and attracted a large number of followers. This revolt also failed; see *al-Bidāya*, 16: 499-500. For more on this and other, later revolts, see Devin Stewart, "Popular Shiism in Medieval Egypt," 52-58.

[68] There were pro-Fatimid revolts originating in Upper Egypt in 1171, 1173, 1175, and 1177; see Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 128-131. Leiser notes that when Saladin took power, most Fatimid supporters fled to Upper Egypt. This region seems to have been a lost cause for him because he never built a *madrasa* there; see Gary Leiser, "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt: *Madrasas* and *Mudarrisūn*, 495-647/1101-1249."

[69] It is interesting to note here that al-Ḥajjājī, in his study of ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī, argued that it was the Ayyubid-era Sufis of the Ṣa‘īd who were the agents of ridding the region of Shi‘ites; see *‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī*, 38. It is difficult to determine to what extent this may be true, but it is supported by some statements of al-Udfuwī, treated below, and Garcin's observations about the Sufis of Qinā'; see *Qūṣ*, 171-180.

[70] *al-Ṭāli‘*, 34.

[71] Ibid., 37-41.

[72] *‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī*, 36.

important because the character of Upper Egyptian Sufism developed in close proximity to these other communities.

The demographic tide began to turn in the late thirteenth century. By this time the city of Qinā' had become a center of Sunni piety and outreach in Upper Egypt.[73] Qinā' was home to a large number of Maghribī transplants fleeing unstable political conditions in their homeland and they brought their particularly Mālikī Sunni outlook and Sufism with them.[74] 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī, mentioned above, was one of these Maghribī Sufis and became one of the most famous Sufis of Upper Egypt. It was al-Qinā'ī and his disciples who are often credited with spreading Sunni piety from Qinā throughout the Ṣa'īd. He and Sufis like him zealously defended the prophetic *Sunna* against Christians and Shi'ites, and their efforts slowly chipped away at the populations of both communities. To summarize, for the period covered by the present work, 1173-1309, Upper Egypt was quite different demographically from the rest of Egypt owing to the very large numbers of Christians and Shi'ites in the area. Furthermore, the large numbers of Maghribīs contributed to an emergent Sufi identity rooted in a Sunni piety with a Mālikī legal orientation that condemned the numbers of Christians and Shi'ites in the region as problematic.

The second factor that made Upper Egypt unique during this period was its increasing prominence in travel and trade. Before the eleventh century, pilgrims and merchants coming from the West (Ifrīqīya, the western Maghrib, or al-Andalus) who

---

[73] Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 171-180

[74] The Almohads came to power in the twelfth century by means of a rural-based revolt in the Maghrib that ousted their Almoravid predecessors. The carnage caused a great deal of social upheaval, leading many – including 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī – to leave for safer environs like Upper Egypt. Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī, for example, noted that in his time the Maghribīs were all over Upper Egypt and were extremely zealous in their practice and defense of the *sunna*; see Denis Gril, "Une émeute antichrétienne à Qūṣ au début du VIIIe/XIVe siècle," 252.

were headed for Mecca typically travelled via Alexandria to Cairo, across the Sinai, and then down the west coast of the Arabian peninsula.[75] However, for approximately two hundred years and during the height of Crusader activity (ca. the mid-eleventh through mid-thirteenth centuries), the northern routes and waterways became increasingly dangerous. An alternate route through the Ṣaʿīd thus was a viable and attractive option. al-Maqrīzī writes, "For more than two hundred years, pilgrims from Egypt and the Maghrib only traveled to Mecca via the desert of ʿAydhāb. They would embark on the Nile from the shore at Fustat and sail to Qūṣ. From there they would ride camels, passing through the desert, to reach ʿAydhāb. [From ʿAydhāb] they would sail in trading ships (*jallāb*) to Jadda."[76] This was a long trip, but much safer than the northern route. The trip upstream from Fustat to Qūṣ could take as many as 45 days, depending on currents and the weather.[77] Once they had left the Nile, travelers and pilgrims had to make an arduous journey overland through the eastern desert to the ports of either ʿAydhāb or Quṣayr.[78] These routes were not only for pilgrims, and al-Maqrīzī notes that

---

[75] Obviously, pilgrims and merchants originating in Alexandria and Cairo would use this route as well.

[76] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 1:568. al-Maqrīzī also helpfully adds that these two hundred years of travel extended from the beginning of the year 450 to the beginning of 660; corresponding to the beginning of the "great crisis" during the reign of the Fatimid al-Mustanṣir (1036-1094) until the Mamluk sultan al-Bunduqdārī reinstated the *Ḥajj* caravan from Cairo.

[77] S. D. Goitein, review of Garcin, *Un centre musulman*, in *Speculum* 53 (1978), 363.

[78] Ibn Jubayr talks about how difficult the journey was, *Riḥlat ibn Jubayr*, 65-69. al-Maqrīzī writes that the journey to the coast took 17 days and one could go as long as four days without finding any water. He adds that "life in ʿAydhāb is the life of animals and [the residents] are closer to wild beasts than humans." See *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 1:567-568. The Genizah letters collected by Goitein for *The India Book* also portray a journey frought with peril; see Goitein and Friedman, *The India Book*, 157-164. Nancy Um, "Pilgrims and Spice and Everything Nice: Re-mapping Medieval Egypt," *Jusūr* 11 (1995), argues that ʿAydhāb was probably the larger and more popular port but given the fact that no excavations have been undertaken there (as opposed to Quṣayr, which has been excavated several times and a large cache of documents recovered), it is impossible to tell exactly what the relationship was between these two towns. Both Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Buṭṭūṭa provide us with some crucial information about ʿAydhāb. According to Ibn Jubayr, it was a city of nominal Muslims who were in reality a pagan tribe of black-skinned bedouin, the Būja. Ibn Jubayr in particular did not find the place charming and complains about how miserable he was, writing, "We stayed there [23 days] in air that melts the skin and water that causes one to forget about wanting food. Indeed, no man is oppressed who avoids this city," *Riḥlat ibn Jubayr*, 72.

merchants from India, Yemen, and Abyssinia used the same route in reverse: Jadda – ‘Aydhāb – Qūṣ - Fustat - Cairo.[79]

For these 200 years, then, Upper Egypt was at the center of “three spatial networks: the Indian Ocean trade, trans-African pilgrimage routes, and an intra-Egyptian network of commerce and exchange.”[80] The Ṣa‘īd in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was thus a geographical space in which people from North and sub-Saharan Africa, India, the Maghrib, and the urban centers of Cairo and Alexandria all came together to create a thriving commercial culture. Qūṣ was the primary beneficiary of this activity and infusion of people. Ibn Jubayr, who passed through Qūṣ in the twelfth century, describes this beautifully:

> [Qūṣ] is a city overflowing with markets, amenities, and people thanks to the coming and going of pilgrims and Yemenite, Indian, and Abyssinian merchants. It is a gathering place for everyone and a way-station for travelers. It is a meeting place for friends and a gathering place for pilgrims from the Maghrib, Egypt, and Alexandria.[81]

The most important consequence of all this activity for the present work is that the region was infused with new people and ideas, particularly from the Maghrib.[82]

---

[79] See Roxani Margariti’s *Aden and the Indian Ocean Trade: 150 Years in the Life of a Medieval Arabian Port* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) for a description of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade routes and how they connected with Egypt.

[80] Um, “Pilgrims and Spice,” 16.

[81] *Riḥlat ibn Jubayr*, 65. The portion of his trip from Fustat to Qūṣ was relatively simple compared to his trek from Qūṣ to the port of ‘Aydhāb, which took a grueling 19 days of camel riding through the unpopulated desert.

[82] The Ṣa‘īd was also a place of agricultural importance, and al-Maqrīzī begins his account of Upper Egypt by listing the various names by which the region is known: “it is also called the good land (*al-arḍ al-ṭayyib*) and it is said that all its soil (*turāb*) is good.” See *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 1:532.

The third and final reason Upper Egypt was unique was its distance from the political center of Cairo. This distance made Upper Egypt an ideal place to escape notice or hide.[83] The last Umayyad caliph, Marwān II (d. 750), tried to hide in Upper Egypt before his ʻAbbāsid pursuers found him hiding in a church and killed him.[84] Fatimid royals escaping Saladin's purge in the capital also fled to Upper Egypt. While nominally under the control of whatever dynasty controlled Cairo, Upper Egypt was mostly left to its own devices and the tribal politics of the various Bedouin clans that lived there. There had been, since the Fatimid period, a governor (*wālī*) appointed directly by the Fatimid caliph or Ayyubid/Mamluk sultan. The *wālī*, who was based in Qūṣ, was directly responsible for the entire region of Upper Egypt. He appointed his own advisors, scribes, functionaries, bureaucrats and postal workers. Particularly during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, "this decentralized system was the operative system in all of Egypt."[85] The result of this decentralized policy was that Upper Egypt existed almost in a world of its own, outside the surveillance and laws of the central government.

Ibn Jubayr was incensed by the fact that, all over the Ṣaʻīd, men posing as tax collectors routinely searched the possessions of pilgrims and merchants for the nefarious purpose of collecting *zakāt* that actually ended up in their own pockets. "There is no doubt," he assures his reader, "that Saladin does not know about this matter. If he knew about it, he would put an immediate stop to it."[86] It should also be

---

[83] See Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 200-202 and Um, "Pilgrims and Spice," 15.
[84] *al-Bidāya*, 13: 260-261. Gerald Hawting, "Marwān II, b. Muḥammad b. Marwān b. al-Ḥakam," in *EI2*.
[85] Muḥammad ʻAbduh al-Ḥajjājī, *Qūṣ fī ʼl-tārīkh al-Islāmī*, 58.
[86] *Riḥlat ibn Jubayr*, 62-63. Ibn Jubayr describes the way these men worked. They would board ships and stop caravans, then produce long pointed sticks that they would use to poke and jab into everyone's

remembered that Aswān was as far as the Fatimid, Ayyubid, or Mamluk rulers were ever able to extend their authority.[87] For example, Tūrānshāh (d. 1180), the brother of Saladin, attempted to push into Nubia in 1172 but finding it too difficult, decided instead to turn West and bring Yemen and the Hijaz under Ayyubid control.[88] The distance and difficulty of retaining control was surely one of the central factors contributing to the fact that Shi'ism was better able to retain a foothold the further south one travelled beyond central Egypt.[89]

Further indication of the difficulty the state had in controlling the Ṣa'īd can be seen in the number and severity of Bedouin revolts during the Ayyubid and Mamluk eras.[90] Emblematic of these revolts is that of 651/1253.[91] Jean-Claude Garcin, following the interpretation of al-Nuwayrī, argues that the Bedouin revolted precisely at this time to take advantage of the political uncertainty surrounding the rise of the Mamluk state.[92] This is certainly correct, although the revolt was not an isolated event and was

belongings. In this way, they were able to ferret out any hidden treasures or undeclared caches of money, which they could then declare legally taxable.

[87] al-Maqrīzī, writing in the fifteenth century, notes that "Aswān is the last city of the Ṣa'īd and the border of regional borders, dividing Nūba from Egypt. See *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 1:554.

[88] The sources generally attribute this push into Nubia to Saladin's fear that Nūr al-Dīn would attempt to take Egypt for himself by attacking from the South (i.e. Nubia). When Tūrānshāh was unable (or unwilling according to some sources) to take Nubia, Saladin adjusted the threat level and worried that Nūr al-Dīn would actually attack from the Yemen, giving him access to 'Aydhāb and Quṣayr and, ultimately, Cairo. See the accounts in *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 1: 228-229 and 237-243. It is worth noting that the sources are somewhat apologetic about this attempt. Ibn Wāṣil in *Mufarrij al-kurūb* argued that Tūrānshāh turned back to Aswān when he realized how poor Nubia was and not worth conquering. Abū Shāma, by contrast, merely says of the whole affair, "And in [1172] Shams al-Dawla Tūrānshāh, the brother of Saladin, conquered the lands of Nubia," *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1:325. By no stretch of the imagination did he "conquer the lands of Nubia."

[89] As mentioned above, the Fatimids paid special attention to the Ṣa'īd in order to exploit its resources. al-Maqrīzī writes that during the years of Fatimid rule, "Aswān was full of soldiers armed to protect the border from attacks from Nūba or Sūdān. But when the Fatimid state disappeared, this all came to an end." *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 1:557.

[90] While less severe, the Fatimids had trouble with the Bedouin as well. See Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 73-76 and 90-96.

[91] See al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk* for the year 651; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, 29:275-276 [al-Nuwayrī places these events in 652 AH]; and Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 183-190.

[92] Ibid., 189. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, 29:275.

part of a larger tradition of anti-state activities by the Bedouin. In the revolt of 1253, the tribal leader Ḥiṣn al-Dīn Thaʿlab al-Jaʿfarī (d. 658/1260) led a massive coalition of Bedouin to cut off all the roads into and out of Upper Egypt. This was a deliberate anti-state move, and Ḥiṣn al-Dīn rallied his men with the slogan "We are the lords of these lands" (*naḥnu aṣḥāb al-bilād*). He was also reported to have said, "I am more deserving of power than the *mamlūk*s and we have had enough of serving the Banū Ayyūb."[93] Crucially, al-Maqrīzī reports that as long as the Bedouin controlled the roads, no merchants were allowed to pass through, and the state was unable to collect any of the land tax (*kharāj*) for that year. Al-Malik al-Muʿizz Aybak (1250-1257) was eventually able to quell the revolt, and the punishment he meted out was severe: the leaders were all hanged, and Ḥiṣn al-Dīn was arrested and imprisoned in Alexandria. Furthermore, the Bedouin were singled out from the population for a much higher tax rate and were required to give yearly gifts (*al-qawd*) to the rulers. The result, in al-Maqrīzī's telling, was that "they were despised and decreased [in number] until their situation became as we know it today."[94] The inability to collect taxes and the stoppage of commerce indicate very clearly the difficulty the government had in controlling the region. While the state was able to quell this revolt, it was not the first, nor would it be the last.[95]

Distance from the capital, the state's difficulty in surveilling and controlling the region, combined with a kind of *laissez faire* attitude towards governance, had significant consequences for the Sufis of Upper Egypt. Left alone, these Sufis

---

[93] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 651 AH.

[94] Ibid. al-Nuwayrī's account is less useful here because he is very clearly sympathetic to his Mamluk employers. Thus, he makes no mention of the stalled commerce or of the taxes being cut off.

[95] al-Maqrīzī records a Bedouin revolt in 638/1240. See *al-Sulūk* for the year 638. There was also a revolt in 701/1302 in which the Bedouin were able to control all the roads into Upper Egypt. In this case again, the Bedouin were able to prevent the collection of the land tax while they controlled the roads. See *al-Sulūk* for the year 701, al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-arab*, 32:5-6, and *ʿIqd al-jumān*, 4:173-177.

articulated their own unique views about the role of the state and its representatives. They developed a position of self-reliance that came to view the state as something to be wary of and its officials as people not to be trusted. Most importantly, the perceived weakness of the state led these Sufis to compete with it in controlling the population. This, combined with the large numbers of Christians and Shiʿites (even if these numbers were slightly exaggerated) and the influx of Maghribī people and ideas lent a unique character to the Sufis of the Ṣaʿīd. In addition to their attitude toward the state, they were careful to patrol and maintain communal boundaries and to enforce publicly their ideals of Sunni piety. A further consequence of their unique position, particularly related to their Maghribī roots and isolation from large centers of learning, was their emphasis on miracles as a means of demonstrating their authority.[96] These five characteristics, while treated separately here, ought to be understood as parts of the larger ethos of Upper Egyptian Sufism. Aspects of one influenced the other.

"ANTI-ESTABLISHEMENT" SUFIS

The Sufis of Upper Egypt had a different relationship to political elites from that of other contemporary Sufi groups. Whereas the Sufis of the *khānqāh* in Cairo relied on the state for their very existence, and some state-sanctioned Sufis like al-Iskandarī relied on the state for their salaries,[97] the Sufis of Upper Egypt had almost no positive connection with the state. Indeed, one might chart the political attitudes of the Upper Egyptian Sufis on a spectrum from indifference on one end to complete hostility on the

---

[96] Vincent Cornell has shown that miracles of power (as opposed to miracles of knowledge) were most effective in determining the greatest saints in premodern Morocco. It thus makes sense that miracles of power, which are indeed the types of miracles evinced by Upper Egyptian Sufis, would be prevalent in Upper Egypt. See *Realm of the Saint*, 118-120.

[97] I mean that al-Iskandarī was on the state payroll for his work at the Manṣūrīya *madrasa*.

other. This is due to a number of factors. First, as noted above, there was a very limited presence of Ayyubid and Mamluk officials and troops in the Ṣaʿīd at this time. Sufi hostility to the ruling class was at least partly a result of the Sufis' perception that the state was unable to surveil the region and enforce Sunni norms adequately. Second, the population of the Ṣaʿīd was often caught between the continual skirmishing between the state and the local Bedouin. This was not the affair of most of the sedentary rural populations in Upper Egypt, who often looked to the Sufis for protection.[98] The Sufis thus found themselves in an adversarial position vis-a-vis both the state and the local Arab tribesmen. Third, when representatives of the state did appear in Upper Egypt, it was primarily for purposes of tax collection. This bred resentment and hostility among much of the sedentary population. Finally, Upper Egyptian Sufis were attracted to the anti-worldly stance advocated by the Khurāsānī school of Sufism, and there was even a population of Qalandarīs in Upper Egypt.[99] Such a view of the nature of the world had the logical consequence that the masters of this world, the ruling elites, were not to be trusted and ought to be avoided as much as possible. A few incidents and anecdotes will bear this wary attitude to the state out.

A number of *ribāṭ*s and *zāwiya*s are mentioned in connection with these Sufis. Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās al-Mulaththam (the first teacher of Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-

---

[98] El-leithy, "Sufis, Copts, and the Politics of Piety," 109, esp. n. 201.

[99] Qalandarīs may be distinguished from Malāmatī Sufis by the fact that the latter hide their "path of blame" while the former celebrated their antinomianism openly. Or, as al-Suhrwardī wrote, "The difference between the Malāmatī and the Qalandarī is that the Malāmatī works to hide his devotions while the Qalandarī works to destroy accepted custom," *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*, 76. As one modern writer puts it, "They resembled, with some minor differences, the 'hippies' of today," Tahsin Yazici, "Ḳalandar," in *EI2*. For a more thorough discussion see Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufis Orders in Islam*, 264-269 and Ahmet Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994). On the Qalandarīs of Egypt, see the references given by el-Leithy, "Sufis, Copts, and the Politics of Piety," 110-111.

Qinā'ī, Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī, and Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī all maintained *ribāṭ*s.[100] Not one of these was endowed by the state, nor is there any mention of any attempt by the state to co-opt them. Each *ribāṭ* was independently owned and operated, paid for by the *shaykh* himself or a wealthy local patron.[101] The argument from silence is not conclusive, but there is no evidence that the state was involved with Sufism in the Ṣa'īd in any way. This is not surprising given the absence of an official Ayyubid or Mamluk presence in the region. In addition, the existence of Sufi *ribāṭ*s of this type is surely connected to Maghribī influence in the region. It is said that 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī's *ribāṭ* was the first in Upper Egypt. Being from the Maghrib himself and having been trained by Abū Yi'zzā, he most likely brought the Maghribī model of the rural *ribāṭ* to the Upper Egypt.[102] Thus, these *ribāṭ*s were, in reality, non-state-sanctioned centers of education and rural outreach.

Another indication of the tension between state and Sufi in Upper Egypt is the frequent trope of Sufis who abandon governmental positions in order to take up the Sufi path. While there was not a strong state presence in the Ṣa'īd there was nevertheless a necessity for a certain level of governmental oversight. In medieval Islamicate societies, the ability to collect taxes effectively meant control. The Bedouin

---

[100] I ought to note here that in all of the material I consulted on Upper Egyptian Sufism, there is no mention of a *khānqāh* save for the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' in Cairo. All buildings in which Sufis lived were called *ribāṭ*s or *zāwiya*s. This makes sense in light of the way that al-Maqrīzī uses the terms and supports my argument that in medieval Egypt, only structures endowed by the state for the use of Sufis were known as *khānqāh*s.

[101] This follows Mālikī practice. The *ribāṭ* of al-Qinā'ī was built after he had spent most of his adult life saving money in his career as a merchant. Once he had enough money set aside, he built the *ribāṭ* and, for lack of a better word, retired in his new career as a Sufi master.

[102] As Vincent Cornell has argued, "Most Moroccan *ribāṭs* of the tenth through the thirteenth centuries C.E were privately built and locally maintained … the *ribāṭs* of Morocco were primarily centers of instruction in Islamic dogma (*i'tiqādāt*) and practice (*mu'āmalāt*). Ribāṭs also served an important secondary role as communication hubs, facilitating interaction between economic and political networks in rural areas." See *Realm of the Saint*, 40. This model of the medieval Maghribī *ribāṭ* fits well with what we know of the same institution in Upper Egypt.

revolts described above demonstrate how important taxes were to the maintenance of state control. Taxes thus had to be collected and the only way this could be accomplished was through at least a minimum amount of record keeping and surveillance of the population. This opened up positions for various kinds of regional functionaries. Furthermore, and particularly in Qūṣ, there were the official representatives of the state. Qūṣ, it should be remembered, was the capital of the administrative district of the Ṣa'īd and, as such, was home to the governor (*wālī*) of the region. There were thus a number of officials and bureaucrats associated with the state. These government employees seem to have been enough of an irritant to elicit anti-government feelings among the Sufis. Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī, before his turn to Sufism, was the *mushārif al-dawāwīn* (overseer of state offices) in Luxor. The position was probably that of a regional administrator, responsible for record keeping and facilitating communication between local and state leadership. However, once al-Uqṣurī decided to take up the Sufi path, he immediately abandoned his post and never worked for the state again.[103]

Ibn Nūḥ reports a story that is probably a literary topos about an anonymous Maghribī *shaykh* who had a famous (anonymous) vizier for a student. When the vizier had progressed sufficiently on the Sufi path, the *shaykh* demanded that he leave his post and sell everything he had if he wanted to achieve enlightenment (*fatḥ*). Once the vizier abandoned his worldly life, the *shaykh* still refused to help him achieve enlightenment. He traveled to Mecca, where he met another *shaykh* who told him that he had to return to his native land. Upon returning to the Maghrib, his original *shaykh*

---

[103] *al-Waḥīd*, 127b; *al-Ṭāli'*, 723; al-Ḥajjājī, *Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī*, 104-105.

told him that the final veil separating him from the divine was his love for the *shaykh*. Once he abandoned that, he would achieve enlightenment, which he did. The story then takes a very unexpected twist: the Sultan himself came to see the *shaykh* to demand that his vizier be allowed to resume his duties. The *shaykh* agreed and gave two justifications for his ruling. First, now that the vizier had achieved enlightenment, no level of worldly power would distract him from his devotions. Second, in the absence of another qualified individual to run the affairs of the state, it was the vizier's duty to help.[104] This story demonstrates the ambivalence Ibn Nūḥ felt about the ruling elite.

In addition to the preceding types of stories, there are a number of more general accounts that can be described as "anti-ruler." One of the more interesting of these is a very short account recorded by al-Bādisī, the hagiographer of the saints of the Rīf mountains of the Maghrib. In the previous chapter I indicated that some Upper Egyptians were well-known in the Maghrib because after the northern routes of pilgrimage became dangerous, most Maghribīs and Andalusīs traveled through the Ṣaʿīd to reach Mecca. Al-Bādisī notes a number of instances in which Maghribī Sufis came into contact with Ṣaʿīdīs.[105] He relates an anecdote from his uncle Yaḥyā who was returning from the pilgrimage to Mecca and had stopped in Damāmīn to visit the grave of Shaykh Mufarrij, the Abyssinian Sufi who had been taken by a "spell" in his youth.[106] When he visited the grave, the people of Damāmīn proudly told him stories of the noble

---

[104] *al-Waḥīd*, 1:74b-75a.

[105] Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī in particular seems to have gained widespread fame in the Maghrib. If al-Bādisī's account reflects a wider reality, al-Uqṣurī was the object of several deliberate mini-pilgrimages by Maghribī Sufis who wanted to meet him and learn from him. See *al-Maqṣid al-sharīrf*, 76-77, 116, and 146.

[106] See above, pp. 164-165.

traits of their local saint. They told Yaḥyā that Mufarrij was one-eyed (*a'war*) and related the events that led to the loss of his eye. An unnamed "prince/military commander of the valley" (*amīr al-wādī*) came to visit Shaykh Mufarrij at his *ribāṭ* and Mufarrij treated the *amīr* to his finest food. It is unclear who this might have been, whether an actual *amīr* (he is called the governor – *wālī* – in the next line of the account) or perhaps a local Bedouin chief. In any case, he is presented as a figure of political authority and thus deserving of hospitality. Once the prince left, a group of Sufis returning from the pilgrimage came seeking the same treatment, but Mufarrij was only able to offer them bread. The Sufis were furious, beat him, and threw him into a well, which is how he lost his eye. While in the well, the Sufis yelled at Mufarrij, "Hey pimp (*yā qawwād*)!! You treat the governor with respect but short-change the Sufis? You will not leave that well until you treat us with hospitality."[107] While it might seem that the point of the story is Mufarrij's generosity with a local ruler (this is how al-Bādisī reads it), the more telling aspect of the account is the behavior of the Sufis and their role in the incident. For the Upper Egyptians who related this incident to Yaḥyā, the Sufis represented a dangerous band of rogues who did not tolerate preferential treatment based upon social position.[108] The story of Mufarrij thus serves two purposes. On the one hand it provides an etiology for the loss of his eye. On the other

---

[107] *al-Maqṣid al-sharīf*, 84.

[108] This is related to the Maghribī tradition of Sufism, and particularly the teachings of Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Sabtī (d. 601/1204). al-Sabtī was especially concerned with social consciousness and the equal distribution of goods. The pillar of his doctrine was *mushāṭara* – "the ritualistic sharing of goods in proportionate measure." See Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 79-92.

hand, it reveals the fact that some Upper Egyptian Sufis would not tolerate treating government officials or rulers with deference or excessive respect.[109]

Enforcement of Sunni Norms

The available sources dating from the early Mamluk period suggest that the Sufis of Upper Egypt played an important role in giving the region a Sunni and Mālikī character. They were also instrumental in converting Shiʻites to Sunnism. While it is difficult to estimate exactly what percentage of the population had either converted to Shiʻīsm or had sympathies with Shiʻism, contemporary witnesses attest that the region was full of Shiʻītes, particularly the cities of Isnā and Aswān and the entire west bank of the Nile.[110] This demographic situation probably intensified after the Ayyubid's rise to power because of the numbers of Fatimid sympathizers who fled to the Ṣaʻīd after

[109] An interesting corollary to this observation is a story recounted in most of the biographies of Mufarrij. The details of the story are not entirely clear but it seems that Mufarrij, along with a couple of his companions, made a trip to Cairo to intercede with the Sultan on behalf of a fellow Ṣaʻīdī. In the aftermath of the political struggle between al-Malik al-ʻĀdil II (1238-1240) and al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb (1240-1249) (on which, see Humphries, *From Saladin to the Mongols,* 250-265), the latter turned his attention to whipping Egypt into shape after his absence. Part of his plan involved sending "an army to fight the bedouin (*al-ʻarab*) in the Ṣaʻīd" (al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, for the year 638 and al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, 29:167-175) and rounding up everyone he felt was a threat, including many from the Ashrafīya (a corps of the Mamluk army) and gave their jobs and monies to his own *mamālīk* (ibid.). As part of his housecleaning, he apparently arrested and held for ransom a certain individual from the Upper Egyptian family of the Banū Faqīh Naṣr. It was on behalf of the latter that Mufarrij traveled to Cairo and attempted to secure his release as well as an end to the extortion. The outcome is not clear. Sources sympathetic to Mufarrij assert that he was able to secure the release of the prisoner and the cessation of extortion. See *al-Waḥīd*, 1:127a, where Ibn Nūḥ reports that Mufarrij was able to exert a kind of mind control over the Sultan: "[Mufarij] said to [the sultan], 'You have nothing to do with him,' and the Sultan said, 'Master, I have nothing to do with him, I have nothing to do with him.'" However, other sources report that Ibn Faqīh Naṣr was "tried during the reign of al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb. He was seized and given over to someone for punishment, who beat him until he died on 2 Jumādā al-Ūlā 638/1240;" see *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʻīya*, 8:125 and also *al-Wāfī*, 6:98. al-Ḥajjājī, *Shakhṣīyāt ṣūfīya*, 138, argues that the incident demonstrates that Mufarrij was well-respected by the political establishment. I disagree however, and would argue that, at best, Mufarrij was granted an audience with the Sultan because of his wide-spread popularity among the masses of Upper Egyptians, who al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb struggled to keep under control. Finally, see Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 149-150, who speculates that Mufarrij may actually have gone to Cairo to dissuade al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb from attacking the city of Qūṣ after a Bedouin rebellion.

[110] See above, pp. 170-171.

Saladin ousted the royal family and their servants. It is noteworthy that Saladin, after founding five *madrasa*s in Cairo and Fustat, and at least one in Alexandria, invested nothing in Upper Egypt. It is certain that these *madrasa*s were part of his larger strategy to bring the Egyptian population under his purview by insisting that professors of *madrasa*s and the *khānqāh* be Shāfiʿī and Ashʿarī in their legal and theological orientation. However, other than the occasional military foray into the region, Saladin and his successors seem to have ignored Upper Egypt. Sufis, particularly those who had immigrated from the Maghrib and al-Andalus, played an important role in filling the vacuum left by this neglect.

The center of what Jean-Claude Garcin calls the "contre-Réforme sunnite" in Upper Egypt was the city of Qinā.[111] The important role played by Qinā was due to a historical accident. Al-Yaʿqūbī, who visited the region at the end of the ninth century, wrote of Qinā that "its architecture had been destroyed and reduced to very little because of frequent attacks of the Bedouin and Khārijites, in addition to roadside ambushes, so the people left."[112] The city was only sparsely populated from that time forward until an influx of Maghribī émigrés began populating the city once again in the twelfth century.[113] This makes sense in light of the biography of *shaykh* ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʾī. Al-Qināʾī left the Maghrib in 1147 because of "the events and crises" caused by the Almohad revolution led by ʿAbd al-Muʾmin ibn ʿAlī al-Gūmī (1130-1163).[114] While

---

[111] Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 161.

[112] Aḥmad al-Yaʿqūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān* (*Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* VII, ed. De Goeje, Leiden: Brill, 1892), 333.

[113] Garcin argues that it was precisely the fact that the city was mostly abandoned that made it desirable to the new population; *Qūṣ*, 160.

[114] al-Ḥajjājī, *ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʾī*, p. 53. See also the article by Hanna Kassis, "Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ's Rebellion Against the Almohads in Sabtah (A.H. 542-543/A.D. 1147-1148): New Numismatic Evidence," in *JAOS* 103

it is difficult if not impossible to say how many individuals left the Maghrib for Upper Egypt, it is safe to say that Qinā became a center for Sunni, and especially Mālikī, activism. ʻAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʼī was himself an important figure in this movement and he had disciples all over Upper Egypt. It was al-Qināʼī and other Sufis from Qinā who pushed what Garcin calls the "Sunni counterreformation" forward.[115] Al-Qināʼī might, in fact, be appropriately called the "father" of Upper Egyptian Sufism. His students included Abū ʼl-Ḥasan ibn al-Ṣabbāgh and Abū ʼl-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī. These two were the principle Sufi masters of most of the Sufis in the Ṣaʻīd. As a Maghribī Sufi from the school of Abū Yiʻzzā, al-Qināʼī's influence can not be overstated. An example of the mark he left on the region is the very first *madrasa* ever built in Qūṣ, and probably the whole region, the Najībīya.

The Najībīya was built in 607/1210 by a native of Qūṣ, Najīb b. Hibat Allāh al-Thaʻlabī al-Qūṣī (d. 622/1225).[116] We know almost nothing about this individual except that he built the *madrasa*, named it after himself, and appointed Majd al-Dīn al-Qushayrī (d. 667/1268) to oversee its operation. However, it is certain that it was al-Qināʼī's student Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh and the latter's student *shaykh* Mufarrij al-Damāmīnī who convinced Najīb to allow Majd al-Dīn al-Qushayrī to run the *madrasa* and teach both Mālikī and Shāfiʻī *fiqh* therein. This is most likely because Majd al-Dīn al-Qushayrī was

---

(1983): 504-514, in which she sheds more light on the rebellion against Almohad authority at precisely this time.

[115] While Garcin is certainly the most knowledgeable on the subject, I am wary of using the language of "counterreformation" to talk about this process. It implies, owing to its origins in the Catholic counterreformation of the sixteenth century in Europe, that the region had originally been Sunni, then reformed to Shiʻism, then "counterreformed" to Sunnism once again. It is much more likely that the region was quite mixed in terms of religious practice and affiliation and that the "counterreformation" was actually the first time any kind of uniformity had been achieved.

[116] *al-Ṭāliʻ*, 408. See also Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 173.

trained in both the Mālikī and Shāfiʿī *madhhab*s.[117] Majd al-Dīn, from the city of Manfalūṭ, is an almost mythical figure in the biographical, historical, and hagiographical sources from the Ayyubid period.[118] He was present at the battle of al-Manṣūra in 1250, where he supposedly studied the *Risāla* of al-Qushayrī with Abū ʾl-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī,[119] he traveled with Mufarrij al-Damāmīnī to Cairo on a mission of intercession with the Sultan,[120] and al-Udfuwī has him single-handedly eliminating Shiʿism from Upper Egypt: "The Shiʿite school (*madhhab*) was widespread in that region and [Majd al-Dīn] introduced the Sunni school in a wise way (*ʿalā uslūb ḥakīm*) so that rejection of [or blasphemy against] the prophet's companions (*al-rafḍ*) was wiped out and disappeared."[121] This is surely an exaggeration, but it indicates his reputation for the propagation of Sunnism in Upper Egypt, which he undertook with the help of many of the most famous Sufis of his time.

The Sufis of Upper Egypt were also depicted as debating, confounding, and converting Christians. Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī records the story of a trip he took by himself along the Nile. Along the way he meets an agreeable Christian priest (*qissīs*) who strikes up a friendly conversation about the difference between Muslims and Christians. Ibn Nūḥ replies, "I am the Muslim, you are the Christian. I will not call you an unbeliever because you are already an unbeliever. To make something happen that has already

---

[117] al-Udfuwī records the teachers of al-Qushayrī in both *madhhab*s. However, al-Subkī does not have an entry for al-Qushayrī in his compendium of Shāfiʿī notables, although he does include al-Qushayrī's son Taqī al-Dīn al-Qushayrī (also known as Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd) on whom, see *Fawāt*, 2:442-450; *al-Wāfī*, 4:137-148; *Mirʾāt al-jinān*, 4:236; *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿīya*, 9:207-249; *Ḥusn*, 1:317-320 and 2:168-171; and *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 8:11-13.

[118] Majd al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Wahb ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd al-Qushayrī: *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 424-435.

[119] *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 88.

[120] *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 654 and see above, n. 105.

[121] *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 424.

happened is a logical absurdity."[122] In another account, Ibn Nūḥ boasts that a powerful Christian bureaucrat converted to Islam because of the miracles of the Sufis.[123] They actively participated in the establishment and support of institutions for Sunni learning like *madrasa*s and mosques. The Jalāla mosque of Qūṣ, for example, was famous for its weekly public *dhikr* ceremonies held by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir (d. 1301), a student of Majd al-Dīn al-Qushayrī.[124] Further, and perhaps most interesting, the Sufis of Upper Egypt were fond of public displays of righteous indignation directed against those who did not conform to their version of the *Sunna*. Two examples bear this out.

The first example involved Abū ʾl-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī. Ibn Nūḥ reports the event second hand via an eyewitness. The eyewitness was with al-Uqṣurī and other Sufis when al-Uqṣurī said, "I have been told that at this very instant, in the house of so-and-so, there are such-and-such forbidden things (*al-munkar*) happening with certain women. They are all meeting together and up to no good (*ʿalā ḥāla ghayr jayyida*). Come Sufis! Let us go to them!"[125] What happened next is a classic scene of mob violence. The Sufis, completely riled up, went to the house of disrepute and began beating on the door. When the inhabitants refused to answer, the mob went around the outside wall and broke down the doors. The inhabitants fled in terror, while the Sufis destroyed everything they could get their hands on (including a cache of wine, which may have

---

[122] Denis Gril, *Une émeute*, 285.

[123] Ibn Nūḥ*, al-Waḥīd*, 1:62a-63a.

[124] *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 393. On Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir, see Ibid., 392-399. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir represents another group of Sufis who do not seem to have been connected to the group I discuss here. He was a juridical Sufi who was authorized to teach Shāfiʿī law. Ibid., 392-3. He was a member of the circle of Sufis led by the mysterious ʿAlī al-Kurdī (d. 1225), of whom Ṣafī al-Dīn writes, "He was, on the surface, crazy" (*kāna ẓāhiruhu al-walah*). See Gril, *Risāla*, 34-36 [Arabic section]. al-Kurdī was from Damascus but seems to have spent some time in Qūṣ, which is where Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir and others took up with him. It is clear from Ibn Kathīr's account that the people of Damascus were not sure what to make of him, *al-Bidāya*, 17:139-140. Neither Ṣafī al-Dīn (who met him in Damascus) nor Ibn Kathīr mentions that ʿAlī al-Kurdī left Damascus to travel to Egypt; al-Udfuwī is the only source for this information.

[125] *al-Waḥīd*, 1:132a.

been main the source of the accusation). Ibn Nūḥ ends the account with a simple comment about al-Uqṣurī: "This was always his habit." Al-Uqṣurī was apparently well-known for his public outbursts of righteous indignation. This account is treated by Ibn Nūḥ as paradigmatic of a larger trend in which the Sufis, and especially al-Uqṣurī, were the regulators of public morals.[126]

The second incident involves Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Mulaththam, the first *shaykh* of Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī. Al-Mulaththam, it will be remembered, came to the Ṣa'īd from the Ḥijāz and was, in the words of Garcin, "très attaché à la Sunna."[127] Ibn Nūḥ reports a very strange incident involving al-Mulaththam ("veiled," because he always wore a full facial veil in public) and the governor of Qūṣ, 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak al-Afram (d. 1295).[128] Al-Afram, while fulfilling his duties as governor, found himself tired and hungry one afternoon after having spent the day attending to affairs of state. Upon returning home he stripped down to nothing and wrapped a towel around his waist, "owing to the intense heat." In this state of what the account calls "nakedness" he caught a glimpse of one of his slave girls (*jāriya*) wearing nothing but a loose fitting robe and with her head uncovered. He was overcome with desire and, in his own words, "I

---

[126] This kind of behavior is reminiscent of the policies and actions of the Almohad leader Ibn Tūmart (d. 1080-1130), who attempted "to reformulate the ethical purpose underlying Islamic law ... as a force for individual reform and social justice." See Vincent Cornell, "Understanding is the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tūmart," in *Studia Islamica* 66 (1987): 71-103; quotation on p. 72. See also ibid., 78, where Cornell describes an incident in Bougie in which Ibn Tūmart beat men and women who were congregating together in the city square. It is this kind of Maghribī attitude toward normative Sunni morals that made its way to Upper Egypt via Sufism.

[127] Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 167.

[128] On 'Izz al-Dīn al-Afram, see *al-Manhal al-ṣāfī*, 3:131-132, where Ibn Taghrī Birdī notes that al-Afram was obscenely rich due to his holdings of prized *iqṭā*'s. Garcin, *Qūṣ*, 186-189, notes that al-Afram came to the Ṣa'īd in 1253 at the behest of the first Mamluk ruler al-Mu'izz Aybak (1250-1257). Aybak sent al-Afram to quell a revolt of the Upper Egyptian Bedouin who felt that, in light of the Mamluk seizure of power, the time was ripe for them to break free from Cairo. Garcin notes a discrepancy in the historical record, in which Ibn Khaldūn (*Kitāb al-'ibar* [Būlāq, 1284 AH], 5:376) wrote that al-Afram was the governor of Qūṣ and Ikhmīm while al-Nuwayrī (*Nihāya*, 29:275-276) wrote that he was in Upper Egypt solely as a military commander. Ibn Nūḥ may have provided the actual answer, as he was a first-hand witness from Qūṣ and he explicitly calls al-Afram the *wālī* of Qūṣ, *al-Waḥīd*, 1:64b.

placed my hands around her neck (*'unqihā*)." The woman insisted that he eat something first and he agreed: "So I ate with one hand and held her neck with my other hand." As if the scene could not get any stranger, at this moment al-Mulaththam bursts into the governor's private chamber after having given the slip to his guards and servants. Al-Mulaththam throws a covering over the woman and sends her out before engaging in small talk with the governor. Eventually he departed and left the governor completely incensed. Ibn Nūḥ supplies the interpretation of the incident and argues that this was an instance of "proper behavior and hidden sainthood." These actions were called proper behavior because al-Mulaththam was preventing the governor from polluting himself with a non-Muslim slave girl. This is in line with the Upper Egyptian Sufis' concern for rigorous adherence to the *Sunna*, which would include purity laws. The act also demonstrated hidden sainthood because al-Mulaththam was able to enter and leave the governor's chambers without injury or incident.[129] Two common Upper Egyptian Sufi tropes are thus combined in one account. Al-Mulaththam publicly intervenes to prevent ritual defilement, and he does so by means of a miracle of power: he was invisible and so was able to sneak into and out of the palace undetected.

The details of these stories and others like them represent the Sufis as the sharp edge of the sword of Sunnism in Upper Egypt. While the conversion of large portions of the population to Sunnism was probably accomplished slowly and by a number of means, the role of the Sufis was prominent in this process. They were famous for traveling all over Upper Egypt, preaching and performing miracles wherever they went. These were interpreted, by themselves and by others, as evidence of their strong

[129] *al-Waḥīd*, 1:64b. This story is also fascinating for what it reveals of Ibn Nūḥ's contempt for the governor and, by extension, the ruling class. One senses an almost gleeful tone in the humiliation of the governor at the hands of the famous *shaykh*.

commitment to the *Sunna* of the Prophet Muḥammad. While the work of educating the population in more traditional ways took place in *madrasa*s like the Najībīya, the Sufis seem to have played the role of itinerant missionaries, drawing in crowds with their miracles and claims of clairvoyance. Shaykh Mufarrij, for example, took a boat from Damāmīn to Fustat. al-Udfuwī records that the boat was forced to stop in every town along the way (and there are many towns on the Nile between the two cities) because of the masses of people who wanted to see at first hand the miracles of the famous *majdhūb* who could be in two places at once. The spread of Sunni ideology throughout the Ṣa'īd was thus promoted by the charismatic wonders of local Sufis and cemented in local centers of learning. Maghribī Sufis played a critical role in this process. It was due to the efforts of 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī, 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Jazūlī (who lived in Alexandria but spent much time in the Ṣa'īd), and their students that a Maghribī-inflected Islam was brought to Upper Egypt.

MONITORING COMMUNAL BOUNDARIES

In addition to their roles as exemplars of Sunni piety and morality, the Sufis of Upper Egypt were also often instigators of inter-communal violence. There was a very large Coptic population in Upper Egypt, particularly in Qūṣ, and the Sufis were at the forefront of inter-communal tensions. Perhaps the most violent case of Sufi interference in interreligious affairs was the anti-Christian riot of 1307 in the city of Qūṣ that resulted in the destruction of thirteen churches in less than two hours. Tamer el-Leithy has examined this incident in great detail, and there is no need to enlarge

upon his analysis here.[130] Rather, it is sufficient to outline the events of 1307, explain their place within the larger context of Sunni-Sufi activity described above, and demonstrate that there was a distinct anti-state component of this violence.

The two primary sources for the events of 1307 are Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī's account of his own (non)involvement in the church destruction and al-Udfuwī's account in his biography of Ibn Nūḥ.[131] Other accounts, primarily from official Mamluk sources in Cairo, do not add anything new to the accounts of Ibn Nūḥ and al-Udfuwī except to remark on Ibn Nūḥ's involvement.[132] The most relevant political precursor to this incident was the official state decree of 1301 that all churches and synagogues in Egypt be closed down and locked up.[133] While it is not clear how permanent or effective this decree was meant to be, al-Udfuwī begins his account of the events of 1307 by saying that the Christians of Qūṣ had written a petition (*marsūm*) to have their churches reopened in the city and had been given a favorable reply.[134] In reaction to this decree, an unidentified man got up in the main mosque of Qūṣ and, after reciting a Qur'ānic verse, declared that a prayer should be made for the destruction of the cities' churches

---

[130] "Sufis, Copts, and the Politics of Piety: Moral Regulation in Fourteenth-Century Upper Egypt." I disagree with el-Leithy's analysis only in minor details, which I will address below.
[131] *al-Waḥīd*, 2:212b-222b and *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 325-326. Gril published the portion of *al-Waḥīd* pertaining to the riot based upon the Paris version of the manuscript, "Une émeute antichrétienne à Qūṣ au début du VIIIe/XIVe siècle," in *AnIsl* 16 (1980): 241-274. The manuscript I consulted differs from his published version only in very slight ways and I will refer to Gril's published version throughout this section.
[132] These include the accounts of Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikra fī tārīkh al-hijra*, ed. D. S. Richards (Berlin, 1998), 409; *Aʿyān*, 3:111; *al-Durar*, 2:385-386; and *al-Manhal al-ṣāfī*, 7:311-312.
[133] On this event, see *Nihāyat al-arab*, 31:259-264, Ibn al-Dawādārī, *ʿIqd al-durar*, ed. Bernd Radtke (Cairo, 1960), 9:47-50; *al-Sulūk*, 1:909-910; *al-Nujūm*, 8:132-133. The decree to close churches and synagogues seems to have been precipitated by a visit from a Maghribī vizier who could not believe that the *ahl al-dhimma* were not being forced to live according to the stipulations of the Pact of ʿUmar. More specifically, the sources state that he was incredulous that Christians were allowed to ride donkeys publicly in Fustat. He complained to the Mamluk rulers, who immediately decreed that all *dhimmī* structures be closed and locked.
[134] *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 325.

(*al-ṣalāt fī hadm al-kanā'is*).[135] This seems to have aroused the feelings of the Muslims, who went out straightaway and in less than two hours destroyed thirteen churches. In the aftermath, a number of Sufis were arrested and beaten, and Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣi was arrested for inciting the riot, taken to Cairo, and placed under house arrest in Fustat for the last year of his life. He insisted upon his innocence of all charges until his death.[136]

El-Leithy, in his detailed analysis of this incident, situates it within the larger contexts of perceived Coptic displays of wealth, waves of Coptic conversions to Islam, other instances of church destruction in fourteenth-century Egypt, the regional politics of Upper Egypt, and the social role of literate Sufis who often served as a link between anti-*dhimmī* polemics in legal works and illiterate classes of Muslims. These are all helpful for understanding this event. However, I would like to focus on two other aspects of the violence that were not treated by el-Leithy First, el-Leithy is concerned less with the identity of these Sufis and more with their literary roles in anti-*dhimmī* polemics and historical accounts of the violence, although he does speculate that it may have actually been the *ḥarāfīsh* and not necessarily the Sufis who conducted the destruction.[137] However, in light of my arguments in this chapter, I think the identity of the rioters is important. The Sufis of Upper Egypt, as I have demonstrated, were very concerned with establishing Sunni norms and this instance of anti-*dhimmī*

[135] "Une eméute," 246; *al-Ṭāli'*, 325.

[136] This is the reason he includes a detailed account in *al-Waḥīd*. He wanted to demonstrate that he had nothing to do with the violence. It is worth adding that those government officials responsible for Ibn Nūḥ's arrest died shortly thereafter. al-Udfuwī, clearly reflecting his partisanship for the Upper-Egyptian Sufis, notes that their deaths were a direct result of their involvement in Ibn Nūḥ's imprisonment. See *al-Ṭāli'*, 326-327.

[137] "Sufis, Copts, and the Politics of Piety," 110-112. The *harāfīsh* were a class of out of work laborers who made their living by seeking charity and perhaps even extorting officials for money; see William Brinner, "Ḥarfūsh," in *EI2*; idem, "The Significance of the Ḥarāfīsh and their Sultan," in *JESHO* 6 (1963): 190-215; and Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam, Mamluk Egypt 1250-1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 14-16.

violence makes sense within that context. The church destruction was undertaken by a group who Ibn Nūḥ says had "zealous pride for Islam" (*ghayrat al-dīn*), the same description he later gives of his own Sufi disciples. Furthermore, and despite his constant protestations to the contrary, it is obvious that the instigator of the riot was indeed Ibn Nūḥ himself. The frequency and intensity of his denials have a certain air of "the lady doth protest too much" to them. For example, he attempts to undermine his accuser by claiming that the individual who turned him in to the state authorities was "a dancer whose wife sells *ḥashīsh* in front of the government palace (*dār al-walāya*)."[138] His other protestations usually involve him insisting that he was in his *ribāṭ* the whole time (which he insists he only left for Friday prayers) and that he did not even know there was a riot taking place at all. Al-Udfuwī, who clearly delighted in the church destructions, only says that "a man close to [Ibn Nūḥ] incited the riot."[139] Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī was very much a part of the larger trend of Sunni-Sufi activism in Upper Egypt and it is difficult to believe that both he and his circle were not involved in the violence of 1307.[140]

Promoting Sunni Islam was one of the ways that the Sufis of Upper Egypt made a case for their authority and legitimation. Whether their opponents were Shi'ites, badly behaving rulers, sinful Sunnis, or haughty Christians, the Sufis of Upper Egypt claimed they were the ones most fit to deal with them. This is not to say that the riot of

---

[138] "Une Eméute," 250.

[139] *al-Ṭāli'*, 325.

[140] Further evidence of Ibn Nūḥ's involvement is the fact that he gives an inordinate amount of attention to his detailing the various legal rationales for destroying churches. Beginning with the Islamic conquest, moving through the Pact of Umar, and citing a number of anti-*dhimmī* treatises, Ibn Nūḥ attempts to create an airtight case that the Copts of Egypt have no legal basis on which to defend their building and maintenance of churches. If he was so far removed from the violence of 1307, why did he make such careful arguments for doing what he says he did not do?

1307 was nothing more than a chance for Sufis to demonstrate their zeal. Indeed, as el-Leithy has shown, there was much more at stake than public displays of righteous indignation. To add to el-Leithy's analysis, I would argue that one of the ways in which this incident can be read is as an overt anti-state action. David Nirenberg has argued that the anti-Jewish violence of the Shepherd's Crusade of 1320 should be understood "within the framework of a revolt against the monarchy."[141] This was, Nirenberg argues, a result of the Jews' role as fiscal agents of the state.[142] The indigent Christian shepherds could not very well attack the king who was oppressing them, but they could attack his agents. Similarly, the Sufis of Upper Egypt could not attack their Mamluk rulers without incurring brutal retribution. However, they could attack the Christians, whom they saw as the agents of the state. Ibn Nūḥ's account is full of criticism against the actions of state actors, princes, *mamluk*s, governors, and bureaucrats. These critiques are rooted in the perception that Coptic Christians were infiltrating government positions and weaking the Islamic character – and hence the moral legitimacy – of the state.[143]

A careful reading of Ibn Nūḥ's *apologia* reveals that he was concerned not only with Coptic expansion (both outwardly and secretly in the form of insincere

---

[141] David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecutions of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 48.

[142] Not only did the French monarchy enforce the collection of debts owed to Jewish money-lenders, but in the wake of the expulsion of the Jews from France in 1306, the state itself took on the task of collecting (and keeping) the debts owed to the exiled Jewish lenders. After allowing the Jews to return to France in 1315, the state resumed its role as enforcer of debt collections. See Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 48-51.

[143] This is in addition to Ibn Nūḥ's belief that every single Christian and Jewish structure in all of Egypt was illegal according to the Pact of ʿUmar, which forbids the building of any new *dhimmī* structures. In fact, he argues counter-factually that the Fatimids – because they were zealous Maghribīs – destroyed all the churches and synagogues in Egypt. So how, he asks, can anyone not see that all the churches and synagogues in his time were "new?" In his legal reasoning on this issue, Ibn Nūḥ is very close to the position of Ibn Taymīya, who also argued that all churches and synagogues were illegal. On the similarity of the positions of Ibn Nūḥ and Ibn Taymīya see Gril, "Une émeute," 242.

conversion), but also with the possibility that the state itself was coming loose from its foundations. He begins his account by recounting the dream of a Sufi who saw a vision in which the Mamluk state (*al-dawla al-manṣūra*, named for Manṣūr Lājīn) was "like a tree planted but uprooted." He boldly proclaims that "the result of the dream is the elimination of the state."[144] His primary concern throughout the text is that "Christians" are influencing state actors, who themselves are willing, or unwilling, participants in a Christian takeover that will eventually result in the loss of Muslim property and, eventually, the Islamic state itself. This was surely connected to the anxieties fueled by Coptic conversion and their prominent roles in government, particularly as tax collectors.[145] As el-Leithy argues, "Much of the unpopularity of Coptic bureaucrats derived from their carrying out direct Mamlûk extortionist policies."[146] The anti-state nature of the riot of 1307 becomes clearer in the accounts of the aftermath of the riots given by Ibn Nūḥ and al-Udfuwī. Holding the Sufis responsible, the local rulers and their soldiers rounded up the Sufis of Qūṣ and beat them with 470 lashes, in addition to decreeing the death penalty for seventeen of them.[147] As was the case with the anti-Jewish violence in Provence, I would argue that the anti-Christian violence in Upper Egypt was directly related to dissatisfaction with the state.

---

[144] "Une émeute," 246.

[145] al-Ḥajjājī, *Qūṣ fī 'l-tārīkh al-islāmī*, 67. El-Leithy notes that it was commonly believed that Coptic Christians would take a monk's vow and enter the monastery in order to avoid paying the *jizyā* tax. Indeed, at least one monk admitted as much. "Sufis, Copts, and the Politics of Piety," p. 91-92. Churches also collected alms for the benefit of the poor and maintenance of church structures. They were also accused of embezzling money from the state treasury. The picture that el-Leithy paints is one in which local Christians were seen as having fiscal advantages over their Muslim neighbors by virtue of their being Christian. Gril also attributes some anti-Christian sentiment to the fact that Christians were seen to be profiting from their bureaucratic positions; see "Une Émeute," 244.

[146] "Sufis, Copts, and the Politics of Piety," 97.

[147] "Une Émeute," 250.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SUBTEXT OF SUFI MIRACLES

In reading through the biographies and short hagiographies of Upper Egyptian Sufis in the thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries, one is immediately struck by the frequency and variety of miracles they are reported to have performed. Shaykh Mufarrij, during the period of his life in which he was "taken" by God, was chained to a wall and locked in a room, only miraculously to appear shortly thereafter walking freely outside the house.[148] When Mufarrij was brought a plate of roasted birds for lunch, he reanimated them by throwing them in the air, at which point they flew away.[149] He once prayed so fervently in front of the prayer niche that he completely disappeared into the niche.[150] Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī was reported to be able to walk on the waters of the Nile as though it were a road.[151] He conversed regularly with *jinn* inside his home and once cursed a military commander, predicting that he would die as a dancer, a prediction that came true. Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Mulaththam was said to be 600 years old, could be in two places at the same time, and a disciple had only to think of the *shaykh* in his mind's eye and al-Mulaththam would appear in the flesh before him.[152] Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, as an apprentice working in his father's dye business, once put all the customers' cloth into a single vat of dye. When he pulled them out each was dyed to the different specifications of its owner. Those individuals who participated in the

---

[148] Gril, *Risāla*, 61 [Arabic section].
[149] Ibid., 61; *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, 410; *al-Kawākib*, 1:714.
[150] Gril, *Risāla*, 62.
[151] al-Bādisī, *al-Maqṣid al-sharīf*, 77.
[152] *al-Waḥīd*, 1:59a-59b; *al-Ṭāli'*, 131; *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, 366-367; *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'īya*, 8:35.

identification, arrest, and imprisonment of Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī died mysterious deaths as a direct result of their involvement in his incarceration.[153]

Miracles are a stock feature of Sufi stories. Hagiographies are full of them, medieval Sufi writers took great pains to legitimate them, and some jurists took equal pains to refute them.[154] Most Sufi treatises differentiate between *mu'jizāt* and *karāmāt*, both of which can be translated as "miracles." This is rooted in a distinction between *nubuwwa* (prophethood) and *walāya* (sainthood): prophets perform *mu'jizāt* and saints perform *karāmāt*. Since sainthood is usually understood to be related but not identical to prophethood, *karāmāt* are therefore related but not identical to *mu'jizāt*. Just as a prophet will produce *mu'jizāt* to demonstrate the veracity of his claim to prophecy, so will a saint perform *karāmāt* to demonstrate his or her claim to sanctity. This is not to say that all saints perform miracles. Many Sufi authors insist that while a *mu'jiza* is the *sine qua non* of prophecy, a saint has no such requirement to "prove" his or her sainthood with a *karāma*.[155] This doctrinal position mitigated the need to bolster a saint's reputation by the inclusion of real or imagined miracles in any given biography. Indeed, there are a large number of Sufi hagiographies that include no mention of miracles at all; they are an attractive but non-essential component of the saintly *vita*.

---

[153] *al-Ṭāli'*, 326-327.

[154] Ibn al-Jawzī, for example, devoted the eleventh chapter of his *Talbīs Iblīs* against what he saw as the excesses of the Sufis to a discussion of their miracles: "Concerning the deception of Satan of those who are edified by what appear to be miracles." See idem, *Talbīs Iblīs* (Beirut: Dār ibn Zaydūn, n.d.), 509-520.

[155] Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, for example, writes, "Not every miracle (*karāma*) of a saint (*walī*) must be exactly the same as those of other saints. Indeed, even if there is no miracle attesting to a saint in this world, the lack [of such a miracle] does not detract from his being a saint. This contrasts with the prophets, for whom it is required (*yajib*) for them to perform miracles (*mu'jizāt*)," *al-Risāla al-qushayrīya*, 520. al-Qushayrī argues that this is because the prophets have been "sent" (*mab'ūth*) to humanity, who require proof of their mission. A saint, because he or she has not been sent for a specific purpose, do not need to prove their sainthood.

This fact makes the frequency and intensity of Upper Egyptian miracle stories stand out.

The sheer volume of Upper-Egyptian Sufi miracle stories dwarfs those of other Egyptian Sufis. This can be seen by consulting the list of Egyptian Sufis in *Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍara* of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), which contains the names and short descriptions of all the Sufis known to him from the Islamic conquest until his own time.[156] Of the 91 Sufis in this list, 20 are from Upper Egypt, and 71 from other regions. Of these, 85 percent of those from Upper Egypt were known explicitly for their miracles (*karāmāt*) as opposed to 10 percent of non-Upper-Egyptian Sufis. While not scientific, this reveals quite clearly that the Sufis of Upper Egypt had cultivated a noticeable reputation for their miracles.[157]

The hagiographies recorded by Ibn Nūḥ in particular are loosely organized lists of miracle stories. The notices for his first teacher, Abū ʼl-ʻAbbās al-Mulaththam, reveal almost no biographical detail at all. Instead, Ibn Nūḥ writes extensively of al-Mulththam's advanced age, his ability to be in two places at once, his clairvoyance, and his ability to control the minds of others.[158] While the latter are ostensibly epistemological miracles, they are used for the express purpose of demonstrating al-Mulaththam's legitimacy and authority to intervene in various social and political settings. These notices are not unique in his work as a whole. It was not only Ibn Nūḥ who recorded miracles stories. The trope of the miracle-working Sufi of the Ṣaʻīd can

---

[156] This section of *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara* is entitled, "A Mention of the Upright, Ascetics, and Sufis Who Were in Egypt." See *Ḥusn*, 1:511-530.

[157] These numbers are based on the Sufis' *nisba* (toponym) and in some cases, al-Suyūṭī says explicitly that they lived in a specific region. Once these numbers were compiled, I took note of those Sufis who were known specifically for *karāmāt*. That is to say that I looked for the explicit mention of *karāmāt* in connection with each Sufi.

[158] *al-Waḥīd*, 1:58b-64b.

be traced through all biographical dictionaries from the twelfth century on. Al-Udfuwī is an instructive case in point. He seems to have been so dismayed at the sheer number and audacity of these miracles stories that on two separate occasions he interrupts his narrative to express his displeasure at what he is recording. In the first instance, he relates the claim that al-Mulaththam could be in two places at once and pauses to interject that Taqī al-Dīn al-Qushayrī – the son of the previously mentioned Majd al-Dīn – thought that such claims were "crazy" (*majnūn*). Al-Udfuwī then writes, "Among the Sufis there is a group who affirm that which normal intellects would reject. They believe in things that normal custom (*ʿādāt*) would deny. For me, belief in such things is innovation and error, leading to gross ignorance (*farṭ al-jahāla*)."[159]

In the second instance, after reporting a series of the miracles of *shaykh* Mufarrij, al-Udfuwī pauses to comment again. Here, he expands on his earlier comments and brings prooftexts against these claims from the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and juridical discourse. In short, he argues that in the case of some miracles – although they may be physically possible and there is no legal reason to deny their possibility – "established customs and legal rulings dictate that [these kinds of things] do not happen." So, for instance, while there is no legal reason that an individual might not fly through the air, established custom dictates that it cannot happen, except in the case of the Prophet Muḥammad's night journey through the heavens.[160] Even Ṣafī al-Dīn, himself a Sufi, balked at some of these miracle stories. In his entry for Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj

---

[159] *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 133. al-Udfuwwī classifies miracles into three types. First, miracles that are true because they are quotidian (like having a prayer answered) and have been reported by a reliable witness. Second, miracles that are false because they are patently absurd, "like a vision of the Creator in the world, even though this was attributed to the Prophet." Third, miracles on which judgment is reserved because of a legal difference of opinion, like the possibility of raising the dead; ibid., 133-134.

[160] Ibid., 650-653.

al-Uqṣurī, he writes that al-Uqṣurī possessed a certain gift of clairvoyance and was able to tell his master ʻAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʼī the precise location of an unseen slave girl; he was able to identify the exact village and residence where she was staying. Ṣafī al-Dīn does not deny the miracle, but he qualifies the account by saying that this type of behavior is the "lowest level of unveiling" and that al-Uqṣurī was only allowed to do it because he was young and al-Qināʼī allowed him to perform it as a kind of teaching moment. In other words, these kinds of miracles are little more than parlor tricks that have no real significance.[161] Nevertheless, these miracles had significance for the Upper-Egyptian Sufis who related them.

Miracle stories served a very important function for the Sufis of the Ṣaʻīd: they were the most powerful and accessible means of claiming religious authority. Particularly when the state was seen to lack legitimacy, these Sufis attempted to fill the vacuum by cultivating and demonstrating their own authority through the performance of miracles. These Sufis were not, for the most part, trained as jurists as was Ibn ʻAṭāʼ Allāh al-Iskandarī. Nor did they possess the erudition to compose a lengthy treatise in which they could make an argument for their *walāya*. They had no connection to state functionaries or rulers and could not claim legitimacy that way. They staked their claims to legitimacy and authority by publicly regulating morality and by taking advantage of the widely popular belief in miracles. If *karāmāt* were the signs or proofs of sanctity – and, critically, authority – then they would produce these signs in large number. This strategy is brought into sharp focus in the first portion of Ibn Nūḥ's *al-Waḥīd*.

---

[161] Gril, *Risāla*, 60 [Arabic section].

Ibn Nūḥ structured his work on the model of earlier Sufi treatises with hagiographic content, particularly the *Risāla* of Abū ʾl-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1074). In the latter, al-Qushayrī begins with a brief introduction to Sufism, followed by a biographical section devoted to the most famous Sufis of previous generations, and ends with a dictionary-like description of the states and stations of the Sufis. Ibn Nūḥ attempts something similar with *al-Waḥīd*. He begins with a general description of the states and stations (*al-aḥwāl waʾl-maqāmāt*) and ends with a biographical description of all the Sufis whom he knew or about whom he possessed reliable second-hand reports. In almost every Sufi treatise that describes states and stations, *tawba* (repentance) is the first station and miracles, as a product of various Sufi states, are discussed at the end. A miracle is not a state or a station, but a byproduct of sanctity. Ibn Nūḥ begins his enumeration of the stations with *tawba*, as one would expect. However, after *tawba*, Ibn Nūḥ's second station is "faith in the miracles of this group" (*al-īmān bi-karāmāt hādhihi ʾl-ṭāʾifa*). Ibn Nūḥ thus not only reverses the traditional organization of such works, but also makes belief in Sufi miracles one of the basic foundations of the Sufi path. This is without a doubt a reflection of the social world of Upper-Egyptian Sufism.

The primary thread that Ibn Nūḥ weaves through this discussion is that belief in *karāmāt* is connected to the realm of the unseen (*al-ghayb*). He writes, "As for belief in the miracles of this group (*ṭāʾifa*), it entails belief in the unseen (*al-ghayb*), which is mandatory (*wājib*)." He then adduces a number of examples from the Qurʾān (*al-Baqara*, 1-5) and *Ḥadīth* in which belief in the unseen is lauded.[162] Ibn Nūḥ includes all manner

[162] To cite just one example of many that Ibn Nūḥ offers, he writes: "[Take note also of] the *ḥadīth* of the sheep with the wolf: "[And when another man was herding his sheep, a wolf suddenly grabbed one of them,] but the man snatched it back from the wolf, which then spoke: 'How will you protect your sheep on the day when predatory animals (attack them) and they have no one to protect them except me?'"

of ideas and practices under the rubric of *al-ghayb*: the number of prostrations required for daily prayer, the number of times to circumambulate the Ka'ba, and the laws of inheritance. These are all linked to *al-ghayb* because their ultimate origin, God, is unseen. In a sense, Ibn Nūḥ includes the entirety of Islamic thought and praxis under the umbrella of *al-ghayb*, as all aspects of Islam ultimately depend upon faith in the unseen. In so doing, he is able to place miracles on the same epistemological level as belief in the veracity of reports about the five daily prayers.

He strengthens this argument by then adding that the saints have a share of prophetic inheritance and are thus able to tap directly into *al-ghayb*. This power, however, is not from the saints themselves but from the power of God (*qudrat Allāh*). Ibn Nūḥ relays a number of really marvelous stories of time travel, a speaking fetus, and a man who read the entire Qur'ān 7,000 times in a day, and argues that this is all possible because of the power of God made manifest in the Sufi saint. He observes, "God is able to do [these things], and nothing prevents Him from doing [them]. It is required to believe in this, and one who does not believe in this is an unbeliever (*kāfir*)."[163] Ibn Nūḥ pushes this saintly authority further by arguing that the Sufis have more authority than the traditional class of scholars, the *'ulamā'*.

In explaining how Sufis have access to the unseen, Ibn Nūḥ cites the well-known *ḥadīth* that "the scholars are the heirs of the prophets" (*al-'ulamā' warathat al-anbiyā'*). He then states that only "those who fear God" merit the appellation of scholars

---

They said, "There is no god but God, a talking wolf!" The Messenger of God said, "I believe the story and Abū Bakr and 'Umar believe it as well." It was related on faith and [Abū Bakr and 'Umar] were not even present at the time. What is important here is that the Messenger said, "I believe [the story]," even though it was an unseen matter [to him] that happened long ago [among] the Banū Isrā'īl." This narrative is a actually a paraphrase of a longer *ḥadīth* found in all the major collections. See G. H. A. Juynboll, *Encyclopedia of Canonical Ḥadīth* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 557-558.

[163] *al-Waḥīd*, 1:7b.

(*‘ulamā’*), based on Qur’ān 35:28 (*al-Fāṭir*): “Those among His servants who fear God are the *‘ulamā’*.” This notion he then contrasts with “those who raise themselves up in learned assenblies ... and fight for worldly positions, striving for high rank at learned asseblies, and spreading [false rumors] about those who speak the truth.”[164] This kind of worldly behavior “erases fear [of God] and, indeed, true knowledge (*al-‘ilm*) is opposed to this.” The purpose of this discussion is two-fold. First, Ibn Nūḥ includes the saint (*walī*) as one of those who inherit prophetic access to *al-ghayb*. This is the source of the saint’s ability to perform miracles. Second, he explicitly argues that the ordinary class of *‘ulamā’* - those who make a living from their learning – have no share in the prophetic inheritance because they lack a fear of God. In a few lines Ibn Nūḥ manages to turn the traditional meaning of the *ḥadīth* completely around and argues that the scholarly class are not, in fact, true scholars. It is the Sufis, whose knowledge of the unseen induces fear of God, who are the true scholars. This is further evidence of the tension the Sufis of Upper Egypt felt towards the state and its professional religious employees.[165]

The importance of Ibn Nūḥ’s position on miracles can be highlighted further by comparing it with al-Iskandarī’s discussion of miracles. Al-Iskandarī and Ibn Nūḥ were exact contemporaries, the former dying in 1309 and the latter dying in 1308. Both authors were learned Sufis, by which I mean they both were trained in the Islamic sciences, although al-Iskandarī was a professional jurist and Ibn Nūḥ was an apparent demagogue. Al-Iskandarī devotes a short excursus (*faṣl*) of the *Laṭā’if al-minan* to the

---

[164] Ibid., 1:6b.

[165] Again, this is a strategy common with, and perhaps indebted to, the Maghribī traditions of Sufism. See Vincent Cornell’s article on the subject, “Faqīh versus Faqīr in Marinid Morocco: Epistemological Dimensions of a Polemic,“ 207-224.

topic of miracles.[166] Miracles, for al-Iskandarī, are of two types. The first, including walking on water, flying in the air, and clairvoyance, are "external, sensory miracles" (*karāmāt ẓāhira ḥissīya*), by which he means they are observable by others.[167] The second class of miracles, and those that are more highly prized (*afḍal wa-ajall*) by the Sufis, are "spiritual miracles" (*karāmāt maʿnawīya*). The latter include knowledge of God, quick obedience to His commands, and constant vigilance over the self.[168] Already, it should be clear that al-Iskandarī has valorized a completely different conception of miracles from Ibn Nūḥ's. For Ibn Nūḥ, belief in the unseen and all its attendant power and authority are absolutely essential for the Sufi path. Al-Iskandarī, while not denying the existence of such miracles, inverts their importance. Yes, al-Iskandarī says, one may walk on water, but how much greater it is to be able to know God.

Al-Iskandarī ends his discussion with the observation that "sometimes miracles appear for the sake of the saint himself, and sometimes for the sake of another."[169] Miracles for oneself are meant to demonstrate the power (*qudra*) of God in an individual's life, and miracles for the sake of others demonstrate that a particular saint's spiritual methods are sound (*ṣiḥḥat ṭarīq al-walī*). In both cases, miracles are instrumental; they bring individuals closer to God. For Ibn Nūḥ, however, miracles are evidence that a particular individual has access to the God's unseen power. That is, he or she has a share in the prophetic inheritance. Al-Iskandarī is very clear that a saint may or may not evince a miracle,[170] but Ibn Nūḥ is adamant that miracles are

---

[166] *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 75-84.
[167] Ibid., 76.
[168] Ibid., 76.
[169] Ibid., 83.
[170] "The group (*al-ṭāʾifa*) are in agreement about the fact that a saint can be a saint without rending the state of established custom [a euphemism for miracles]," *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 76.

fundamental proofs of sanctity. Finally, it is worth noting that both authors highlight the relationship between *karāmāt* and the unseen. Al-Iskandarī argues that some miracles entail "access to the unseen" (*iṭṭilā' 'alā ghayb min al-ghuyūb*),[171] which is similar to Ibn Nūḥ's definition. They both clearly draw on similar traditions, but each author circumscribes his discussion in very distinct ways and for very different ends. Ibn Nūḥ uses the rhetoric of miracles and the unseen as a way of highlighting what makes Sufis unique and, by extension, what gives them authority. This must be understood in the context of the Sufis' criticisms of the state. Ultimately, this indicates that miracles in Upper Egypt were meant to demonstrate Sufi authority – *walāya* and *wilāya* – in the absence of state control or legitimacy.[172]

This divergence indicates a larger point about the Sufis of Upper Egypt. To ordinary eyes, they were not in themselves persons of power. They lived in a primarily rural milieu, far removed from the agents of the state, and there was little opportunity for them to make a prosperous living with their learning, as was the case with the other Sufis in this study. Their options for legitimating their religious status were limited. On the one hand, they could claim access to chains of Sufi authority through a traditional *silsila*. Most of them did this by affiliating with the Maghribī Sufis who immigrated to Upper Egypt. On the other hand, they were able to bolster these claims by pointing to the charismatic, wonder-working personalities of their local Sufi

---

[171] Ibid., 78.

[172] A similar situation developed in Marinid Maghribī Sufism. In the absence of strong state control in the region of the southern Maghrib, the Sufis of the Māgirīya and Ḥujjājīya orders attempted to fill the power vacuum and their *ribāṭ*, Āsafī, "became the defacto capital of this region." The Almoravid rulers saw these Sufis as rivals but were ultimately unable to prevent their influence in the region. See Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 138-141, quotation on 141. Importantly, the Māgirīya and Ḥujjājīya were connected to the line of Abū Madyan, as were the Sufis of Upper Egypt. This is yet another example of Maghribī attitudes and practices being cultivated in Upper Egypt.

masters. While miracle stories about Sufis are nothing unique, the Sufis of Upper Egypt, and Ibn Nūḥ in particular, pushed these stories to their limits to argue for authority and Islamic authenticity. While other Sufis may have been unconcerned if a particular saint evinced no miracles, such a view was unthinkable in Upper Egypt, where the Sufis' most visible stock in trade was performing amazing feats. In other words, miracles were more than an instrumental device for bringing souls closer to God, they were the means by which Upper Egyptian Sufis articulated a unique identity in the context of numerous competing claims for power and authority.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

One of the consequences of the Ayyubid and early Mamluk states' inability to control Upper Egypt effectively was the networking of Upper-Egyptian Sufis to do the work the state could not or would not do. Having inherited the rigorous Mālikī-inflected Sufism of earlier Maghribī immigrants, the Sufis of Upper Egypt were well-equipped to realize their goals. These goals included eliminating the influence of Shi'ites and Christians by inculcating their vision of normative Sunni Islam among the local population. They did so through local *ribāṭ*s and *madrasa*s, which they were instrumental in founding and maintaining. The Sufis of Upper Egypt, by working cooperatively towards these goals, can be understood in light of theories of informal, open-system organizations. They drew on each other as well as resources from their environment to realize their goals. For example, they cultivated relationships with non-Sufi merchants with money to endow their centers of education. Upper Egyptian Sufis legitimated their roles by stressing their ability to perform miracles. These

miracles demonstrated the Sufis' unmediated access to the unseen and thus furnished them with proofs of their authority. Such socio-political roles made them different from other groups of Sufis in contemporary Egypt.

The Sufis of the Ṣa'īd were unique in another way as well. Whereas contemporary urban centers like Alexandria and Cairo were home to a wide range of different Sufi groups during the Ayyubid and Mamluk eras, Upper Egypt seems to have been less diverse. While these Sufis certainly had contact with other groups – the early Shādhilīya and Rifā'īya to name only two – the extent to which they were affiliated with other Sufis was very limited.[173] The Sufis of Upper Egypt thus represent yet another model for thinking about the processes of institutionalization and organization in medieval Egyptian Sufism.

These Sufis were drawing on the same stock of institutionalized practices that most Sufis of medieval Egypt inherited. These included the master/disciple relationship, the ritual chanting of the names of God (*dhikr*), musical sessions (*samā'*), and the use of a localized center, always called a *ribāṭ* in Upper Egypt, in which the Sufi master conducted these sessions.[174] These, to a greater or lesser extent, were

---

[173] Ibn Nūḥ, as I noted above, met al-Mursī personally and while he was impressed with al-Mursī he nevertheless makes no indication that he considered him his teacher or was affiliated with him in any way. Furthermore, Ibn Nūḥ's second *shaykh*, 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Minūfī, was apparently at one time a student of the Rifā'ī representative in Alexandria, Abū 'l-Fatḥ al-Wāsiṭī. Ibn Nūḥ mentions this and makes scattered references to al-Wāsiṭī throughout *al-Waḥīd*. However, besides acknowledging the superior status of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī as a saint, Ibn Nūḥ claimed no real affiliation with the Rifā'īya or attempted to spread the teachings of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī. Denis Gril, in his article surveying the contents of *al-Waḥīd*, notes that it would be an anachronism to speak of the Shādhilīya or Rifā'īya at this point (ca. 1307) because they had not yet been organized. This is confirmed by Ibn Nūḥ who does not ascribe any kind of institutional identity to these groups, but rather only refers to "the companions of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī" or "the companions of Abū 'l-Fatḥ al-Wāsiṭī." See Gril, "Une source inédite," 450.

[174] These Sufis, in contrast with the early Shādhilīya, may have also been transmitters of the *khirqa*, although it is difficult to assess to what extent this practice was common. I have not yet found any reference in Ibn Nūḥ's *al-Waḥīd* to the practice of transmitting the *khirqa*. However, Ṣafī al-Dīn in his *Risāla*, notes that a certain Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Shāṭibī (d. ca. 640/1240) inherited the *khirqa* from Abū 'l-Ḥasan ibn al-Ṣabbāgh: "[al-Shāṭibī] was a great companion of [Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh], who

institutional aspects of Sufism common all over Egypt. These institutions were deployed by the Sufis of Upper Egypt in service of their larger goals and formed the basis of their informal open-system organization. However, these Sufis were never organized formally as were the nascent Shādhilīya and other brotherhoods. Nor were the *ribāṭ*s of these Sufi masters ever corporately organized the way that the *khānqāh* in Cairo was.[175] This latter point is easily explained. By shunning the state, Upper-Egyptian Sufis also shunned the possibility of receiving state funcing for their practices and structures. This is how they wanted things to be. But why were the Sufi teachings and identities of these individual masters never institutionalized and organized? Mufarrij al-Damāmīnī, ʻAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʾī, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, Abū ʾl-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī, and Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī were all popular, charismatic leaders with large numbers of followers. Why did their *ṭarīqa*s never become institutionalized into *ṭāʾifa* organizations?[176]

First, the relational structure of their group worked against such a development. As loosely organized networks of masters and disciples, the Sufis of Upper Egypt were able to cultivate a regional identity rooted in shared practices and a relational structure that tied them to other Ṣaʻīdī Sufis. These informal networks, while

transmitted the Sufi *khirqa* to him (*albasahu khirqat al-taṣawwuf*), which no other Sufi wore from him;" *al-Risāla*, 55 [Arabic section]. Gril notes in his footnote to this entry that the *khirqa* was not a wide-spread practice among the Sufis coming from al-Andalus, which is where al-Shāṭibī was from (present-day Játiva).

[175] The *ribāṭ*s of the Sufis of Upper Egypt do not appear to have been endowed like the *khānqāh* in Cairo. They were built using private money and not meant to house large numbers of Sufis or pay them a stipend.

[176] It is interesting to note here that while none of these masters ever became the eponym of an organized *ṭāʾifa*, a unique regional identity of Upper Egyptian Sufism exists even today. See Mark Sedgwick's essay, "Upper Egypt's Regional Identity: The Role and Impact of Sufi Links," in *Upper Egypt: Identity and Change*, ed. N. S. Hopkins and R. Saad (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2004): 97-118. Sedgwick argues that there is indeed a distinct regional identity in Upper Egypt today that is closely linked to various Sufi orders. These orders, such as the Idrīsī-Shādhilī, developed much later than the period I consider here.

a powerful means for the spread of ideas, practices, and a sense of identity, were multi-cephalous and non-hierarchical. Thus, there was no single representative or even a group of representatives to formally articulate a vision of the group's goals. The early Shādhilīya, by contrast, while not a fully developed organization, nevertheless had clear spokespersons who discursively controlled the vision of the group. The Upper-Egyptian Sufis had no such person to articulate their narrative. Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī was the only Upper-Egyptian Sufi to produce a substantial literary product that might have articulated the vision of this group. However, *al-Waḥīd fī sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd* mirrors the relational structure of the group it describes: networks of overlapping entries that provide isolated accounts or vignettes of the actions of masters and disciples.[177] If al-Iskandarī's *Laṭā'if al-minan* created the conditions for the reproduction of an institutionalized identity around the figures of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī and Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Mursī, *al-Waḥīd* created the conditions for the reproduction of networks but not of an identity. The charisma of any one of these Upper-Egyptian masters was never formalized as an identity.

Another reason that these Upper-Egyptian Sufis were unable to create long-lasting institutions and organizations may be that the Mamluk state was ultimately able to subdue the region. After the many Bedouin revolts that had bedeviled the state for so long, the Mamluks eventually imposed draconian measures on them to bring them

---

[177] This aspect of *al-Waḥīd* deserves more consideration. Unlike other Sufi biographical dictionaries or works of hagiography, Ibn Nūḥ does not seem to have employed any organizational rubric for generating his entries. Rather, it seems to be a product of his own stream of consciousness. While the first two biographies are of his own teachers, I have been unable to determine any rhyme or reason to the order of the entries after that point. Each entry is not even self-contained. Bits of information can be gleaned about individuals from all over the work and some mini-entries of lesser-known Sufis are embedded within larger entries about well-known saints. I have been able only to determine that entries about disciples are generally found near those of their teachers. This is a fascinating literary artifact as it mirrors almost perfectly the relational structure of the group.

under control. The Mamluks levied harsh taxes, increased other forms of payment, and demanded a yearly tribute from all the Bedouin groups. The cumulative effect of this policy is clear from al-Maqrīzī's statement in the early fifteenth century: "[The Bedouins] were despised and decreased [in number] until their situation became as we know it today."[178] As the legitimacy of the state increased in Upper Egypt, the ability of the Sufis to make counter-claims about their own legitimacy may have decreased. Indeed, Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī, who died in 1308 and just after the last major Bedouin revolt, was one of the last visible figures of medieval Upper Egyptian Sufism.[179] This is not to say, however, that the Sufi masters of Upper Egypt were forgotten.

The charisma of Upper Egyptian Sufi masters did not die with them. Local cults of saint veneration developed around the tombs of al-Qinā'ī, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, al-Damāmīnī, and al-Uqṣurī. 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī's *ribāṭ* in Qinā became so famous that it became the primary reason people wanted to visit that city.[180] Al-Udfuwī records in detail the popular devotion that was exhibited there regularly.[181] Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's

---

[178] See above, pp. 177-178.

[179] al-Suyūṭī lists only a handful of Sufis from Upper Egypt after his entry devoted to Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī. See *Ḥusn*, 1:524.

[180] *al-Ṭāli'*, 302-303; *Riḥlat ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, 52; *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, 386-387; *Ṭabaqāt al-Sha'rānī*, 1:135; *Ṣubḥ*, 3:383; al-Ḥajjājī, *Shakhṣīyāt ṣūfīya*, 42-45; idem, *'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī*, 73-76. Al-Udfuwī's description of visitation's to al-Qinā'ī's grave is intriguing. He writes that the site is always full of visitors from all over the world who have come to visit the grave and be blessed such that "the people are congested" (*tazdaḥim al-nās*) around al-Qinā'ī's grave in an attempt to obtain some of the *shaykh*'s "support" (*rifd*).

[181] "The people of [Qinā'] are agreed about the experience of praying at his grave on Wednesday. A person walks barefoot, with head uncovered, at the time of the afternoon prayer and makes a prayer that I will mention shortly. They claim that, whatever might afflict a person, doing this [prayer] will result in God releasing that person from it. … [To pray], one should perform two prostrations, read something from the Qur'ān, and say 'O God, I beseech You by the grace of your prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him, and by our father Adam and our mother Eve, and by all those prophets and messengers between them, and by your servant 'Abd al-Raḥīm, to answer my need.' Then [the person] should mention his need." Al-Udfuwī mentions that large numbers of people have had their requests answered in miraculous fashion by performing this ritual. See *al-Ṭāli'*, 300-301. Al-Ḥajjājī notes that the tradition of Wednesday grave visitations continued for quite some time during the Middle Ages, but is no longer practiced at the still extant shrine of al-Qinā'ī, which was rebuilt and re-endowed in 1757. See *Shakhṣīyāt al-ṣūfīya*, 44.

prayer rug and home likewise became objects of pilgrimage for large numbers of Upper Egyptian Sufis.[182] The grave of al-Damāmīnī became an object of veneration and site for the celebration of the saint's *mawlid*.[183] Finally, the cult around al-Uqṣurī's tomb in Luxor became so popular that it became synonymous with the city itself, being mentioned by everyone who passed through the city.[184] To use Weberian terminology, there was a routinization of charisma among the Sufis of Upper Egypt, but a routinization connected to place rather than identity. The phenomenon of saint veneration is common throughout the Islamicate world, and became increasingly so after the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[185] Even the tomb of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, located in the desert near ʿAydhāb, has been the object of continual veneration since his death in 1258. It is quite common for the charisma of a popular Sufi master to be routinized in the location of his or her body, and this is what happened with most Upper-Egyptian Sufi masters.[186]

---

[182] Gril, *Risāla*, 50 [Arabic section].
[183] *al-Ṭāliʿ*, 656; *al-Kawākib*, 1:714; Gril, *Risāla*, 231 [French section].
[184] *Riḥlat ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, 52; *Ṣubḥ*, 3:384; U. Haarmann, "al-Uḳṣur," in *EI2*.
[185] Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 143-151. For the medieval Maghrib see Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 32-62. For the Indian subcontinent see Carl Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).
[186] The practice of visiting the graves of exceptional humans for the purpose of personal edification or the gleaning of *baraka* predates the appearance of Islam and seems to have been an issue of contention from very early on. al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728) supposedly wrote about concerns he had about improper conduct during such visitations. Ḥanbalī theologians like Ibn ʿAqīl and Ibn Taymīya were especially vocal in their opposition to the practice of visiting tombs (*ziyārat al-qubūr*), which they saw as nothing more than pagan practices. In the wake of such controversies, pro-*ziyāra* literature arose to both defend the practice and to offer practical guides for those who wished to undertake pilgrimages to saint's tombs. Thus, for example, there is the guide of ʿAlī ibn Bakr al-Harawī (d. 1215), *Kitāb al-ishārāt ilā maʿrifat al-ziyārāt* [Guidebook for the Knowledge of Visitations], ed. Janne Sourdel-Thomine (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1953), which was a guide to the graves of the Arabian Peninsula. There is the *Murshid al-zawwār ilā qubūr al-abrār* [Guide for Visitors to the Graves of the Pious], ed. Muḥammad Fatḥī Abū Bakr (Cairo: Dār al-Miṣrīya al-Lubnānīya, 1995) by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿUthmān (d. 1218), a guide for the graves of Egypt. After the thirteenth century the genre became very popular and there are dozens of medieval guides to the tombs of the saints. See Ignaz Goldziher, "Veneration of Saints in Islam," in *Muslim Studies*, Barber and Stern transl. (New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction Publishers, 2006 [1966]), 255-341; C. S. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval*

In the next chapter I turn to a unique phenomenon in the history of Sufism, the Jewish Sufis. Like all the groups discussed so far in this thesis, the Jewish Sufis drew on the same set of institutionalized ideas and practices common to Sufis everywhere. Unlike their Muslim counterparts, however, the Jewish Sufis could not make the same claims to legitimacy. It simply would not do for a Jew to claim religious authority by virtue of a traditional Sufi *silsila*, esoteric initiation by the Muslim saint al-Khiḍr, support from the Muslim state, or even by performing miracles. These were all coded as explicitly Islamic forms of legitimation. In the next chapter I explore in detail the relational structure of the Jewish Sufis, what kinds of institutionalized practices and ideas they were engaged with, and above all, how they attempted to create a legitimate and stable institutionalized identity.

Egypt (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Josef Meri "Ziyāra," in *EI2* (along with the long list of secondary sources cited therein), and idem, *The Cult of Saints Among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

CHAPTER FOUR

SUBALTERN SUFISM:
Abraham Maimonides and the Jewish Pietists of Fustat

The popularity of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt was not limited to the Muslim population. In one of the more interesting episodes in the histories of both Judaism and Sufism in the medieval Islamicate world, a group of Egyptian Jews consciously and deliberately took up the Sufi path, albeit interpreted through the lens of biblical and rabbinic history. While there had been earlier literary syntheses of Sufism and Judaism, the Jewish-Sufi movement of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Egypt marks the first time that a group of Jews attempted to translate the institutional and relational structures of Sufism into a rabbinic framework.[1] These Jews, who called

[1] The clearest, and earliest, example of a literary synthesis of Judaism and Sufism is the *Hidāya ʾilā farāʾiḍ al-qulūb* (Guide to the Duties of the Heart) by the Andalusian Baḥya ibn Paqūda (fl. 1060), edited by A. S. Yahuda (Leiden: Brill, 1912). Baḥya's *Hidāya* is modeled, both in structure and content, on classical manuals of Sufi doctrine, particularly *Kitāb al-riʿāya li-ḥuqūq allāh* (The Book of Observance of the Rights of God) of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857) and the *Qūt al-qulūb fī muʿāmalat al-maḥbūb* (The Nourishment of the Heart Concerning the Worship of the Beloved) of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 996). On Baḥya's sources see A. S. Yahuda, "Die islamischen Quellen des al-Hidāja," in *Hidāja ʾilā farāʾiḍ al-qulūb*, 53-113; Menahem Mansoor, "Arabic Sources of Ibn Paquda's Duties of the Heart" in *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 6 (1977): 81-90; idem, "Translator's Introduction" in *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1973), 12-39; and Amos Goldreich, "Possible Arabic Sources for the Distinction Between 'Duties of the Heart' and 'Duties of the Limbs,'" in *Teʿuda: meḥaqrim be-ʿivrit u-ve-ʿaravit*, ed. Aaron Dotan (Tel-Aviv: University of Tel Aviv, 1988): 179-208. For a thorough accounting of Baḥya's interpretation of Sufism see Diana Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue: Philosophy and Mysticism in Baḥya ibn Paqūda's Duties of the Heart* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), especially her exhaustive bibliography. A rough contemporary of Baḥya, the Andalusian Yehuda ha-Levi (d. 1141) also drew heavily on Sufi vocabulary and concepts in his *Kitāb al-radd waʾl-dalīl fī ʾl-dīn al-dhalīl* (The Book of Refutation and Proof Concerning the Despised Religion), edited by David Baneth (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1977). On ha-Levi's use of Sufi concepts and vocabulary see Diana Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language of Religious Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's* Kuzari (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000). Israel Efros' claim that Saʿadya Gaʾon (d. 942) devoted a section of the *Kitāb al-amānāt waʾl-iʿtiqādāt* (Book of Beliefs and Convictions), edited by Saul Landauer (Leiden: Brill, 1880), to a refutation of the Sufis of Baghdad is less convincing; see "Saadia's General Ethical Theory and its Relation to Sufism," *Seventy Fifth Anniversary Volume of the Jewish Quarterly Review* (Philadelphia, 1967): 166-177. The anti-ascetic character of Saʿadya's work was more likely a response to the ascetic practices of the Qaraite *Aveley Ṣion* (the

themselves Pietists (Heb. *ḥasidim*), quoted from Sufi manuals, translated Sufi materials into Judeo-Arabic, compared themselves to Sufis, and practiced Sufi-inspired devotions, all of which were anchored by the institution of the master-disciple relationship that was so central to Sufism.[2] Of these characteristics, the Islamic literary and doctrinal contexts of the Pietists have been the primary focus of scholars interested in the movement.[3] Here I focus on the social history and institutional makeup of the Pietist movement and their larger project. Specifically, it will be shown that the Pietists were more than an interesting footnote to the history of Egyptian Sufism. Rather, the Pietists represent an important test case for my claim that the thirteenth century began a period of increasingly popularized and organized forms of Sufism in Egypt. In short, it will be argued that the Pietists took up Sufism in a deliberate attempt to organize a political messianic movement. These were not merely Jews interested in some Sufi ideas and practices. They were Jews who appropriated Sufism for their own political and religious goals.

Samuel Rosenblatt was the first scholar to bring the Sufi nature of the Pietist movement to light with his publication, beginning in 1927, of portions of the *Kifāyat al-ʿābidīn* (The Sufficient Guide for God's Devotees), written by Abraham Maimonides (d.

---

mourners of Zion) in Jerusalem; on the latter see more recently Yoram Erder, "The Mourners of Zion: The Karaites in Jerusalem in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," in *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, edited by Meira Polliack (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 213-235.

[2] On the genres of Pietist literary output, see Paul Fenton, "Judaeo-Arabic Mystical Writings of the XIIIth and XIVth Centuries," in *Judaeo-Arabic Studies*, edited by Norman Golb (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 87-101. On some of the practices of the Pietists, see Naphtali Wieder, *Hashpaʿot islamiyot ʿal ha-pulḥan ha-yehudi* (Islamic Influences on Jewish Worship) (Oxford: East and West Library, 1947). For a general historical and thematic introduction to the Pietist movement, see Paul Fenton *The Treatise of the Pool* (London: Octagon Press, 1981), 1-24 and idem, *Deux Traités de Mystique Juive* (Paris: Lagrasse, 1987), 13-111.

[3] For a review of this scholarship, see Naḥem Ilan, "*ha-Sifrut ha-ṣufit ha-yehudit: ben hashpaʿah le-hashra'ah*" (Jewish Sufi Literature: Between Influence and Inspiration), in *Turim: Studies in Jewish History and Literature Presented to Dr. Bernard Lander*, ed. M. A. Shmidman (New York: Touro College Press, 2007), 1-21 [Hebrew section].

1237), the son of the famous philosopher Moses Maimonides (d. 1204).[4] Abraham Maimonides was the chief spokesman for the group, and the publication of the *Kifāya* marked the beginning of a sustained inquiry into the Pietist movement.[5] Rosenblatt's work was followed by that of Naphtali Wieder, whose 1948 study addressed some of the devotional aspects of the movement.[6] Since that time most studies of the Pietists have followed one of two trends. Scholars either see the Pietists through the specific lens of S. D. Goitein's Judeo-Arabic symbiosis and attempt to trace the specifically Sufi sources and ideas of Pietist literature,[7] or they read the Pietists as an essentially Jewish movement and attempt to locate their ideas in a specifically Jewish milieu.[8] Both of

---

[4] Samuel Rosenblatt, *The High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides*, vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927) and vol. II (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938). Rosenblatt's discussion of the Sufi characteristics of the *Kifāya* are in 1:48-53. The remaining portions of the *Kifāya* were published by Nissim Dana with a Hebrew translation as *Sefer ha-maspiq le-'ovedey ha-shem* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1989).

[5] Simon Eppenstein was perhaps the first to note the distinct piety of Abraham Maimonides and his circle: however, his work was focused on the biography of Abraham and the liturgical sections of the *Kifāya* and, as such, did not note the Sufi characteristics of the work; see "*Pereq 24 ve-ḥeleq mi-pereq 25 mi-kitāb kifāyat al-'ābidīn le-rabbi Avraham ben rabbi Moshe Maimon*" (Chapter 24 and Part of Chapter 25 of Abraham ben Moses Maimonides' *Kifāyat al-'ābidīn)* in *Festschrift zu Israel Lewy's siebzigstem Geburtstag*, ed. Marcus Brann and Ismar Elbogen (Breslau 1911), 33-59 [Hebrew section] and idem, *Abraham Maimuni: sein Leben und seine Schriften* (Berlin: Verlag von Louis Lamm, 1914). Jacob Mann devoted a short section of his *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fāṭimid Caliphs* (New York: Ktav, 1970), 2:326-336, to Abraham Maimonides and works attributed to him and his descendents.

[6] Naphtali Wieder, *Hashpa'ot islamiyot 'al ha-pulḥan ha-yehudi*. Wieder was not specifically interested in the Pietists, but rather in any devotional elements of medieval Jewish worship that he saw as having been influenced to some degree by the Islamic environment.

[7] The most important of these are S. D. Goitein, "*Rabbenu Avraham ben ha-Rambam ve-ḥugo ha-ḥasidi: mismakhim ḥadashim min ha-genizah*" (Rabbi Abraham Maimonides and his Pietist Circle: New Documents from the Genizah) in *Tarbiṣ* 33 (1964):181-197; idem, "Abraham Maimonides and his Pietist Circle," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. A. Atlmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 145-164; idem, *A Mediterranean Society, Volume 5: The Individual*, 474-496; Paul Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool*; idem, *Deux Traités de Mystique Juive*; idem, ed., *al-Murshid ilā al-tafarrud wa'l-murfid ilā al-tajarrud* (The Guide to Detachment and the Aid to Isolation) (Jerusalem: Meqiṣey Nirdamim, 1987), 13-49; and Mireille Loubet, "Une mystique particulière: Le piétisme juif de type soufi en Egypte médiévale," in *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français de Jérusalem* 7 (2000): 11-16; and Dov Maimon, "*Gevulot ha-mifgash beyn yahadut rabbanit u-misṭiqa muslimit*" (Borderlines: Between Rabbinic Judaism and Islamic Mysticism) in *Aqdamot* 7 (1999): 9-29 and *Aqdamot* 8 (2000): 43-72.

[8] The clearest example is Gerson Cohen's seminal article "The Soteriology of Abraham Maimuni" in *PAAJR* 35 (1968): 33-56 [reprinted in *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 209-242]. Elisha Russ-Fishbane's dissertation, "Between Politics and Piety: Abraham Maimonides and his Times" (Harvard University, 2009), primarily treats Abraham Maimonides, although

these trends (and there is certainly overlap between the two) have contributed significantly to our understanding of the Pietist movement. We now know whom the Pietists were reading (both Muslim and Jewish authors) and how they integrated this material into a thoroughly rabbinic framework. This literary focus remains the general trajectory of scholarship on the Pietists.[9]

However, the Pietist movement was more than literary. At the center of the Pietist project was a vibrant social and devotional core centered on the master-disciple relationship. The Pietist writings, therefore, can and should be mined for what they reveal of the social world of the Pietists and their practices. Such a study reveals that this social world was that of contemporary thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Egypt and not the world of the eleventh- and twelfth-century Sufi manuals that they were reading. While literary analyses have demonstrated conclusively that the Pietists were reading Abū ʾl-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1076), Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), and Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191), these analyses have not taken note of the specifically Egyptian character of the movement.[10] It was S. D. Goitein who, in 1967, first

---

there is much discussion of the Pietists therein. While Russ-Fishbane devotes space to the Sufi elements (and Muslim environment) of Abraham Maimonides' thought and praxis, he is primarily interested in the specifically rabbinic and communal context of Maimonides' life and role as leader of the Jewish community of Egypt.

[9] In his state of the field article, Naḥem Ilan suggested six potentially fruitful directions for future research: 1) completing the catalogue of Jewish Sufi works in manuscript; 2) compiling a dictionary of technical terms found within this corpus; 3) a source critical analysis showing what works they were reading and quoting; 4) a comparative analysis of beliefs and doctrines between the Jews and Sufis; 5) a reconstruction of the libraries of the Jews and the Sufis of the time; and 6) a phenomenological study of the corpus. These all remain important areas meriting further work. Note, however, the purely literary nature of each of them. See "*ha-Sifrut ha-ṣufit ha-yehudit*," 19-21.

[10] There has been much work done on demonstrating the debt that Abraham Maimonides owed to al-Ghazālī and the structure of his *Iḥyā ʿulūm al-dīn*. Both works were designed to join the devotions of the mystics and the praxis of the masses; they both attempted to write an encompassing devotional guide that would be applicable to all; both works share a similar structure. Aviva Shusman reviews the scholarship on this issue and comes down on the Ghazālī-as-influence side in her article "*She'elat ha-meqorot ha-muslimiyim le-ḥibburo shel R. Avraham ben ha-Rambam kitāb kifāyat al-ʿābidīn*" (A Question about the Muslim Sources of Abraham Maimonides' Composition *Kitāb Kifāyat al-ʿĀbidin*) in *Tarbiṣ* 55 (1986): 229-

recognized that local Sufi custom and practice must have left its mark on the Pietists: "As is well known, Abraham Maimonides greatly admired the Muslim mystics, the Sufis ... It is obvious that he was much influenced by Sufi doctrines ... However, Sufism was an extremely ramified movement, and, as the present writer has already pointed out ... the task at hand is to find out which particular school of Islamic mysticism served Abraham Maimuni as model."[11] It should be clear after the preceding chapters that medieval Egyptian Sufism was indeed a "ramified movement," but did it leave an identifiable mark on the Pietists? This chapter answers this question in the affirmative, although perhaps in an unexpected way.[12] It was the increasing institutionalization and emergent organizational trends of contemporary Sufism that would play a decisive role in shaping the Pietist movement. The establishment of a state-sponsored *khānqāh*, the proliferation of local *ribāṭ*s, the increasing social prominence of the *awliyā'*, the formalization of individual *ṭarīqa*s, and the emergence of Sufi *ṭā'ifa*s all provided immediate models for the Pietist project. It was these institutional and organizational developments that the Pietists took up for their own ends and can be seen in the Pietists' larger project. This was an Islamicate example of what Ivan Marcus, in a

---

251. As for al-Qushayrī, for example, Joseph ben Judah ibn Aqnin (d. ca. 1220) wrote an allegorical treatise on the biblical Song of Songs in which he develops a vocabulary borrowed from the al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*; see *Inkishāf al-asrār wa-ẓuhūr al-anwār* (The Disclosure of Secrets and the Appearance of Lights), ed. A. S. Halkin (Jerusalem: Meqiṣey Nirdamim, 1964). Finally, David ben Joshua Maimonides (ca. 1335-1415) quoted liberally from al-Suhrawardī's *Maqāmāt al-ṣūfīya*, ed. Emile Maalouf (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 2002). In his *al-Murshid ilā al-tafarrud*, David actually quotes al-Suhrwardī word-for-word except to exchange explicitly Islamic material for more rabinically-friendly material; see *al-Murshid ilā al-tafarrud*, 46-49.

[11] Goitein, "Abraham Maimonides and his Pietist Circle," 146.

[12] While I think that the Egyptian context was the most important one for understanding the Pietists, the movement was by no means confined to Fustat or even Egypt. We possess letters from the period attesting to the fact that there were Pietists in Alexandria and even Syria; see especially Goitein, "Rabbi Abraham Maimonides and his Pietist Circle: New Documents from the Genizah," 184-189 and Maimon, "Gevulot" part 1, p. 10, who notes that there were Pietist circles in Fustat, Alexandria, Damascus, Aleppo, Baghdad, Jerusalem, and Acre (although he does not cite any reference or evidence for this claim). Tsvi Langermann has uncovered what seem to be Jewish-Sufi materials from the Maghrib, see "A Judaeo-Arabic Candle Lighting Prayer," in *JQR* 92 (2001): 133-135, and idem, "A Judaeo-Arabic Paraphrase of Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut*," in *Zutot* (2003): 28-33.

different context, has called "inward acculturation," or the use and subversion of the majority culture's discourses and symbols to, paradoxically, distinguish themselves from the majority.[13]

The Pietists of Ayyubid and early Mamluk Egypt were taking up these institutional models for a revolutionary end: the restoration of prophecy to the Jews, which would usher in the messianic era and signal the liberation of the people of Israel from foreign rule.[14] In other words, the Pietists took up Sufism in order to create an organized messianic movement. This argument is rooted in a close reading of Pietist texts for what they reveal about the movement's social vision. A large number of Pietist texts, letters, and fragments is available because of the tireless efforts of scholars to comb through and identify the material preserved in the Cairo Genizah.[15] In addition

---

[13] Ivan Marcus, "A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis: The Culture of Early Ashkenaz," in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken, 2002), 449-516.

[14] I am not the first to note that the Pietists sought the return of prophecy. See Gerson Cohen, "The Soteriology of Abraham Maimuni," 55-56; Paul Fenton, *al-Murshid*, 17; idem, "Abraham Maimonides (1186-1237): Founding a Mystical Dynasty," 150-151; and Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 306-309. This begs the question of what, exactly, constitutes prophecy. I will address the Pietist conception of prophecy below, pp. 267-273. Here, I only point to the fact that in rabbinic Judaism, prophecy was usually equated with the "Holy Spirit" (*ruaḥ ha-qodesh*) that divinely inspired the biblical prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Rabbinic tradition held that this spirit was withdrawn from Israel after the deaths of Haggai, Malachi, and Zechariah, which would date the end of prophecy to the post-exilic period; see the discussion and references in Frederick Greenspahn, "Why Prophecy Ceased," in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 37-49. The issue here is not when, exactly, Jews ceased accepting the authority of prophecy, but rather what the inherited rabbinic tradition had to say on the subject, since this would have informed the Pietists. It is clear that the tradition associated the loss of prophecy, in one way or another, with the Babylonian exile and/or the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE. Maimonides himself is quite clear on the subject in *Guide for the Perplexed* II:36, where he writes that prophecy had been taken away from Israel during the time of the Exile and that it would only be restored in the days of the Messiah.

[15] The Cairo Genizah was a depository in the Ben Ezra synagogue of Fustat. Since Hebrew documents often contain the name of God, which is exceptionally holy in itself, Jews have customarily disposed of unwanted or unusable Hebrew texts by storing them in *genizot* (depositories). The Cairo Genizah was used primarily between the 10th and 13th centuries, although there is later material. Owing to the climate of Egypt and the longevity of the synagogue itself, the documents of the Genizah were remarkably well-preserved until their discovery by European scholars in the 19th century. On the Genizah itself, see Stefan Reif, *A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000); although it is worth mentioning that the Genizah is *not* an archive since the documents were not organized or systematically treated. On the value and potential contributions of the Genizah to Islamic Studies, see Mark Cohen,

to the writings of Abraham Maimonides,[16] we are fortunate to have the writings of his sons ʻObadyah (d. 1265)[17] and David (d. 1300),[18] his great-great grandson David ben Joshua (ca. 1400),[19] Abraham's mentor Abraham ibn Abī ʼl-Rabīʻa, otherwise known as Abraham he-Ḥasid (d. 1223),[20] and Abraham's father-in-law, the judge (*dayyan*) Ḥanan'el ben Shmu'el (fl. 1200);[21] this is in addition to a number of anonymous texts and the personal correspondence of those involved with the movement. Here, I focus primarily

---

"Genizah for Islamicists, Islamic Genizah, and the 'New Cairo Genizah'," in *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 7 (2006): 129-145.

16 On Abraham Maimonides himself, see Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 9-32, where he discusses his biography and literary output.

17 ʻObadyāh is without a doubt the author of *al-Maqāla al-ḥawḍīya* (The Treatise of the Pool) published by Paul Fenton as well as the probable author of the *Peraqim be-haṣlaḥah* (Chapters on Beatitude), ed. H. S. Davidowitz (Jerusalem: Meqiṣey Nirdamim, 1939). The latter was falsely attributed to Moses Maimonides, but the style and content are not in keeping with the Judeo-Arabic of the philosopher. Fenton argues convincingly that the style and content *are* in keeping with those of ʻObadyāh in *al-Maqāla al-ḥawḍīya*; see *The Treatise of the Pool*, 44-46.

18 David ben Abraham Maimonides' writings do not betray any actual Pietist content, which may be related to his position as head of the Jews (*raʼīs al-yahūd*). As I will argue below (pp. 280-283), the movement seems to have gone underground after the death of Abraham Maimonides and David's high profile may have prevented him from writing about the Pietists whereas ʻObadyāh may have been in a better position to do so. On the literary production of David ben Abraham, see Paul Fenton, "The Literary Legacy of Maimonides' Descendants," in *Sobre la vida y obra de Maimónides*, ed. J. P. del Rosal (Cordoba, 1991), 153-154.

19 On the writings of David ben Joshua Maimonides see Paul Fenton, "The Literary Legacy of David ben Joshua, Last of the Maimonidean Nĕgīdim," in *JQR* 75 (1984): 1-56; and idem, *al-Murshid ilā al-tafarrud*, 19-29.

20 It is very likely that Abraham he-Ḥasid was a physician, like Abraham Maimonides. We are fortunate to have a list of books owned by Abraham he-Ḥasid (they were auctioned at his death), published and discussed by Ernest Worman, "Two Book-Lists from the Cambridge Genizah Fragments," in *JQR* 20 (1908): 450-463. Many of these books are clearly those of a physician, including works by Galen, Hippocrates and various treatises on diseases in animals. Paul Fenton has published a number of manuscripts and fragments attributed to Abraham he-Ḥasid or, in the absence of attribution, whose character suggests Abraham's authorship: "Some Judeo-Arabic Fragments of Abraham he-Ḥasid the Jewish Sufi," in *JJS* 26 (1981): 47-72; idem, "A Pietist Letter from the Genizah," in *Hebrew Annual Review* 9 (1985): 159-167; idem, "A Mystical Treatise on Prayer and the Spiritual Quest from the Pietist Circle," in *JSAI* 16 (1993): 137-175; idem, "A Mystical Treatise on Perfection, Providence, and Prophecy from the Jewish Sufi Circle," in *The Jews of Medieval Islam*, ed. Daniel Frank (Leiden: Brill, 1995): 301-333; and idem, "De la perfection de la Torah et des voies de sa révélation: un commentaire piétiste sur le Psaume XIX provenant de la Genizah du Caire," in *Torah et science: perspectives historiques et théoriques*, ed. Gad Freudenthal et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2001): 91-117.

21 Goitein first brought this figure to attention in "*R. Ḥanan'el ha-dayyan ha-gadol ben R. Shmu'el ha-Nadiv meḥutano shel ha-Rambam*" (R. Ḥanan'el ben Shmu'el, the Great Judge and In-law of Maimonides), in *Tarbiṣ* 50 (1980-81): 371-395. More recently, Paul Fenton has published more about him and his writings, "A Judeo-Arabic Commentary on the Hafṭarot by Ḥanan'el ben Shmu'el (?), Abraham Maimonides' Father-in-Law," in *Maimonidean Studies* 1 (1990): 27-56; and idem, "*ʻOd ʻal R. Ḥanan'el ben Shmu'el ha-dayyan, gedol ha-ḥasidim*" (More on R. Ḥanan'el ben Shmu'el, Leader of the Pietists), in *Tarbiṣ* 55 (2005): 77-107.

on Abraham Maimonides and his *Kifāyat al-ʿĀbidīn*, although I will draw on the other materials as much as possible. I focus on the *Kifāya* for the primary reason that it is the most coherent and systematic expression of the Pietists' doctrines, practices, and goals. Abraham Maimonides seems to have been the leader of the group, and therefore the *Kifāya* lends itself well to an analysis of the institutional vision of the group as a whole.[22] Drawing on this close reading of the *Kifāya*, I will argue four related points.

First, the Pietists were Jewish Sufis and not merely Jews interested in Sufi ideas or practices. The Pietists ought to be counted among the numerous and diverse groups of Sufism in Ayyubid and early-Mamluk Egypt because they thought of themselves as the *true* Sufis. The Pietists saw Sufism as an authentically Jewish/biblical practice, and their movement represented an attempt to reclaim that practice. Second, this reclamation can be seen most clearly in Abraham Maimonides' *Kifāya*, in which his overarching project was to organize the movement into a more unified collectivity for the purpose of political emancipation.[23] This organizing project is further evidence of the Pietists' place in medieval Egyptian Sufism as a whole, which I have argued was characterized by increasingly organized forms. I argue that Abraham's *Kifāya*, much like al-Iskandarī's project in *Laṭā'if al-minan*, for example, was meant to take discursive

[22] In a letter from the Genizah (ULC OR 1080 J 281) Abraham is called *ro'sh kol ha-ḥasidim* (head of all the Pietists). In another Genizah letter, CUL TS 8J 20 f. 20, Abraham Maimonides is referred to as "the presence of God dwelling among us" (*shekhina sheruya benenu*). While the letter does not seem to be from one of the Pietists, it surely indicates his exalted status in the eyes of the local Jewish community. S. D. Goitein, who perhaps read more Genizah material than any other person, noted, "while it is not uncommon in the Talmud to *compare* a scholar (or one's own mother, Qiddushim 31b) to the Presence of God (see Berakhot 64a and Sanhedrin 110a), I do not remember having seen in the Genizah another instance of a person *addressed* thus." S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 5:640, n. 276.

[23] The proposition that the Pietist movement predated Abraham Maimonides is not an uncontroversial one and I will return to this question in more detail below; see pp. 250-255. Gerson Cohen, for example, saw the *Kifāya* as a deliberate attempt on the part of Abraham Maimonides to stem the conversion of Jews to Islam. In Cohen's account, Abraham was distressed by the flow of converts to Islam who were attracted to Sufism and therefore proposed a Judeo-Sufism that would appeal to the community and stem the tide of conversion. See "The Soteriology of Abraham Maimuni," 227-229.

control of a pre-existing movement and organize it. Third, Abraham organized the Jewish community into two groups, the religious elites and the masses. In a clear example of the inward acculturation of Sufism, these elites thought of themselves as the saints (*awliyā'*) of Israel. As such, they occupied a spiritual station immediately below that of the biblical prophets and shared the same status as the sages of the Talmud. The significance of such a conception is that it placed the Pietists in a direct relationship with the prophets and created the theoretical grounds of their project to reinstitute prophecy. Finally, the larger institutional vision promulgated by Abraham Maimonides in the *Kifāya* and the concomitant goal of reinstating prophecy provide yet another socio-political model of medieval Egyptian Sufism: subaltern Sufism.

I label the Pietist movement "subaltern" in order to stress the Pietists' agency as literary and social actors in their own right. The Subaltern Studies Collective, drawing on the work of Antonio Gramsci, shifted the focus of South Asian historiography from the elites to the subalterns, those of inferior rank or station, as agents of social change.[24] As a *dhimmī* (protected religious minority) community, the Jews of medieval Egypt constituted a clear subaltern group within the larger Muslim society. Much work on the Jewish communities of the medieval Islamicate world either focuses on these communities' literary production – as products of larger cultural trends – or on intra-

[24] Gramsci, "Notes on Italian History," in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quitin Hoare and Geoffrey Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 52-120; see pages 52-55 in particular where Gramsci outlines an agenda for the study of Subaltern classes as agents of social change in their own right. This was taken up by the early Subaltern Studies collectivity, especially in the first three volumes of *Subaltern Studies* edited by Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982; 1983; 1984); the subsequent trajectory of the collectivity has been increasingly focused on postmodern critiques, literary analyses, and "colonial discourse," which I find less helpful. For a discussion of this trend see Richard Eaton "(Re)imag(in)ing Other^{2}ness: A Postmortem for the Postmodern in India," in *Journal of World History* 11 (2000): 57-78. I thank Vincent Cornell for initially suggesting I look at Subaltern Studies as a potential theoretical lens for this material and Peter Valdina for directing me to some valuable resources on the subject.

communal structures and issues. Examining medieval Jewry through the lens of Subaltern Studies pushes us to combine these two foci and re-conceptualize how medieval Jews exercised agency and explore what ends they hoped to achieve by doing so. This is a particularly effective strategy for studying the Pietists because they used literary production as one strategy to disseminate and inculcate new communal structures that would ultimately be redemptive. They appropriated and subverted the dominant cultural model of Sufism for their own political and religious ends. First and foremost of these ends was the cultivation of practices that would bring about the return of the gift of prophecy (Ar. *nubuwwa* /Heb. *nevu'a*) in anticipation of the messianic age. This was a political act because of their belief that the messianic era, by definition, would be politically redemptive, returning the Jews to a state of political sovereignty. In this light, Abraham Maimonides' project (as indicative of the thought of the whole group) can be viewed as an attempt to put an end to exile (*golah*) and usher in the redemption (*ge'ulah*). Indeed, one might read Abraham Maimonides' reforms and literary output as a "hidden transcript" that invisibly (to the dominant culture at least) sought to upend the political and social order.[25] Calling the Pietists "subaltern Sufis" is thus meant to highlight their social status as *dhimmī* subjects in Ayyubid and Mamluk society and to stress their agency as social actors seeking political

[25] On the hidden transcript as a political tool of resistance of the subaltern see James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990): "Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a 'hidden transcript' that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant," xii. The literary output of the Pietist movement is particularly well-suited for analysis as a hidden transcript as they employ the idiom of the dominant culture (in this case Sufism) in a language (Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew) that would have been inaccessible to most Muslims. Some critiques of Scott's work have wondered how, exactly, the historian is to gain access to hidden texts that are, by definition, invisible to the dominant modes of literary production; see for example Daniel Little's review in *Political Theory* 21 (1993), 154. Reading Judeo-Arabic literature as potential texts of resistance is one possible response to this methodological problem.

change. The Pietists were careful and deliberate thinkers and writers who attempted to create what they saw as a better world in which Jews would be politically sovereign.[26]

In order to demonstrate that the Pietist writings constitute a "hidden transcript" that might be read as a subversive political agenda, what follows is a detailed examination of Abraham Maimonides' views as formulated in *Kifāyat al-'Ābidīn.* First, I will outline the general character of the Pietist movement, together with the nature of its members' ideas and devotions and their relationship to Sufism. This includes my argument that the Pietist movement predated Abraham Maimonides. Second, I turn to the relational structure of the movement as outlined by Abraham Maimonides in *Kifāyat al-'ābidīn.* This will involve a close reading of the *Kifāya*, wherein Abraham conceptualized the Pietists as a small group of elites who are the contemporary saints of Israel (*awliyā' yisra'el*). This is a crucial distinction because the *awliyā'* are only one degree removed from the biblical prophets of Israel and, as such, were in a position to attain some degree of prophecy. Having demonstrated that the Pietists are none other than the *awliyā'* of Israel, I will then turn to Abraham Maimonides' discussion of *al-wuṣūl* (lit. "arriving," i.e., a conjunction of the human and divine intellects), which was the goal of his entire socio-religious system, and its relationship to prophecy. Here, I argue that the Pietist movement as outlined by Abraham was meant to cultivate a return of prophecy that would usher in the messianic era. I end by noting the ways in which Abraham's systematizing and

---

[26] I do not want to overstate the marginality of Jews in medieval Egypt. While they were certainly subject to deliberately repressive measures, they also had a fair degree of communal autonomy. In all cases, it is important to heed the advice of Mark Cohen and avoid the "myth" of the Jewish golden age as well as the more recent "counter myth" that the Jews of the medieval Islamicate world were as bad off – or worse- as the Jews of medieval Christendom; see *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 3-14.

mythologizing can be compared fruitfully to the work of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī. This mythologizing was a strategy of legitimation meant to authorize Pietist practices. In promulgating a coherent institutional and religious vision rooted in a mythical re-reading of biblical and Talmudic material, his efforts were an attempt to authorize, formalize, and organize the practices and ideas of the Pietists. Rather than institutionalizing the identity of a master as emblematic of the cluster of institutions that comprise the *ṭarīqa* as al-Iskandarī did, Abraham attempted to institutionalize an identity rooted in biblical and Talmudic material in service of what I see as a deliberate effort to create an organized hierarchy.[27]

A final introductory word should be said about the relationship of the Pietists, and Abraham Maimonides in particular, to Moses Maimonides. Maimonides is usually understood as the paragon of rationalism in medieval Jewish thought. His commentary on the *Mishnah*, his legal code, the *Mishneh Torah*, and especially the *Guide for the Perplexed* reveal his commitment to synthesizing the insights of philosophical investigation and rabbinic Judaism. This pro-philosophical stance has seemed to many to put him at odds with any mystically-inclined interpretation of his work. Indeed, Maimonides is often understood as having been vehemently opposed to mystical tendencies.[28] So is how one to square the rational Maimonides with his mystical descendents? Putting aside the spurious bifurcation between "philosophy" and "mysticism" taken up by many modern scholars, there is much evidence that

---

[27] In terms of the paradigms outlined in the Introduction, pp. 32-34, the Pietists can be understood in light of rational system organizational theories. While the relational structure of the movement was informal, the fact that the Pietists had a clearly defined goal and a means of achieving that goal, indicates very clearly the kind of organization meant by rational systems theorists.

[28] See especially Menachem Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism* (Portland: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2006).

Maimonides need not be interpreted as the arch-rationalist historians of philosophy have often make him out to be.[29]

David Blumenthal has shown that Maimonides was read by large numbers of medieval Jews in a decidedly mystical vein. While not proving that Maimonides himself was a mystic, it indicates the false dichotomy between "mystical" and "philosophical" for many medieval Jews. The sages of Yemen, in particular, embraced a decidedly Neoplatonic interpretation of Maimonides' writings.[30] Furthermore, the Spanish Kabbalist Abraham Abulafia (d. 1291) read Maimonides' works in an overtly philosophical-mystical vein. He saw the *Guide for the Perplexed* as a metaphysical primer that would reveal the secrets of the Torah, which were conducive to attaining prophetic enlightenment.[31] Furthermore, hints in the *Guide* itself suggest that Maimonides conceived of a post-rational experience of the divine that is similar to what we would now call mystical experience.[32] There is thus no reason to assume that

---

[29] As Grace Jantzen has argued, "the idea of 'mysticism' is a social construction, and … it has been constructed in different ways at different times." Likewise, I would add, the idea of "philosophy" is a social construction whose valence has also changed over time. In post-Enlightenment scholarship, the two have been conceptually separated as dealing with two discrete spheres of epistemology. Central to this bias are the oppositional categories of (non-rational) mysticism and (rational) philosophy, with the latter given more weight epistemologically. The development of this opposition owes much to post-Kantian epistemology, the privatization of religion, and the valorization of the "rational." According to this view, philosophers, as paragons of logical, deductive, and dialectical thinking can never be mystics whose epistemological assumptions and claims can never be satisfactorily supported by philosophical means. Maimonides did not live in a post-Kantian world. For this reason, it would be a mistake to claim that "mysticism" and "philosophy" were, for him, two separate spheres of experience and epistemology. See Grace Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 12; and Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and 'The Mystic East'* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 8-34.

[30] David Blumenthal, *The Commentary of R. Ḥōṭer ben Shelōmō to the Thirteen Principles of Maimonides* (Leiden: Brill, 1974) and idem, *The Philosophic Questions and Answers of Ḥōṭer ben Shelōmō* (Leiden: Brill, 1981).

[31] On Abraham Abulafia as an interpreter of the *Guide for the Perplexed* see Moshe Idel, "Abulafia's Secrets of the Guide: A Linguistic Turn," in *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism*, ed. Alfred Ivry, Elliot Wolfson, and Alan Arkush (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998): 289-329; idem, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988).

[32] See the collection of essays in David Blumenthal, *Philosophic Mysticism: Studies in Rational Religion* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2006).

Abraham Maimonides made a radical break with his father in this area. After the Bible and Talmud, Abraham cites nobody as much as he does his father. It is no exaggeration to say that Abraham Maimonides' entire metaphysical system is rooted in his father's teachings. Furthermore, Abraham insisted that he followed his father's example in his life.[33] It will be clear in the following pages that Abraham saw the Pietist project as a direct extension of his father's work. This by itself should give cause to rethink the common image of Maimonides' as an anti-mystical rationalist.

THE NATURE OF THE PIETIST MOVEMENT

Were the Pietists merely Jews who were interested in some aspects of Sufism or where they actually Sufis? Here it will be argued not only that they should be included in the history of Sufism in general, but also that the Pietists saw themselves as the true Sufis. Samuel Rosenblatt was the first to comment on the Sufi character of Abraham Maimonides' work. He argued that Abraham "not only openly shows his admiration for the Sufis by praising their way of life, calling them the real lineal descendants of the prophets, and regretting that the Jews do not imitate their example, but his whole ethical system ... appears to be Sufic from beginning to end in terminology and ideology, or at least based on some Sufic prototype."[34] The same position has been taken up by most scholars of the movement since Rosenblatt.[35] These scholars

---

[33] In one of his *responsa*, Abraham wrote, "On behalf [of the writer of the inquiry] I have acted according to my method and custom (*darkhi u-minhagi*), as is the custom of the land, with loving mercy and following the way of my father and teacher, may his memory be a blessing. For I walk in [his path] thought I avert my eyes from his measure and knowledge." See *Abraham Maimuni: Responsa*, ed. A. H. Freimann and S. D. Goitein (Jerusalem: Meqiṣey Nirdamim, 1937), 17-18.

[34] *Kifāya*, 1:50.

[35] Wieder, Goitein, Fenton, Shusman, Maimon, Ilan, and Russ-Fishbane all, to greater or lesser extent, see the Pietists as directly indebted to Sufi thought and praxis.

understood Abraham's *Kifāya* to have been written under the direct influence of Sufi literature and argued that these influences could be seen clearly in its structure and content.

Gerson Cohen, however, argued that such readings ought to be mitigated by paying attention to the clearly rabbinic character of the work. In terms of its structure, conceptual schema, and content, he argued, the *Kifāya* is clearly informed by rabbinic forms of literary production and the methods of Abraham's father Moses Maimonides in particular. In terms of doctrine, the work as a whole describes the devotional transition from worship rooted in fear to worship rooted in love in the quest to become a *ḥasid*. This is directly related to the same division between worship from fear and worship from love described by Maimonides in the *Mishneh Torah* and the *Guide for the Perplexed*.[36] In a broader sense, the structure of the *Kifāya* seems to reflect the statement of Simeon the Righteous in *Avot* 1:2, that the foundation of the world stands on Torah, worship, and acts of kindness.[37] This tri-partite schema is mirrored in the first three sections of the *Kifāya*. These section cover the subjects of 1) man and Torah, 2) man and God, and 3) man and society. The fourth and final section of the book is also divided into three sections, which consist of an esoteric re-working of the first three sections and mirror their progression. Cohen further argues that there is no evidence that Abraham Maimonides actively read Sufi literature (there are no Sufi quotations in

---

[36] See *Mishneh Torah, Teshuva,* chapter 10 and *The Guide for the Perplexed*, 3:52. In both instances, worship rooted in the fear of God is inferior and only preparatory to the true worship of God, which only happens because of love.

[37] Cohen, "The Soteriology of Abraham Maimuni," p. 218. The passage from *Avot* reads, "Simeon the Righteous was one of the last members of the Great Assembly. He used to say, 'the world stands on three things: On the Torah, on worship (*ha-'avodah*), and on acts of loving kindness (*gemilut ha-ḥasidim*).'"

the *Kifāya*) or was directly involved with actual Sufis.[38] There is thus no reason, he says, to look to Sufism as an explanation for Abraham's project, because it is thoroughly rabbinic in its outlook and structure.

However, it is important here not to overstate Cohen's position. He was fully aware of the ascetic and pietist devotions that Abraham espoused and of the synagogue reforms he attempted to enact. Cohen had "no desire to question the profound impact that Sufis had on Maimuni and the members of his circle."[39] Rather, he was attempting to attenuate the tendency to see Abraham Maimonides as *primarily* Sufi in orientation: "However Sufistically oriented Maimuni was, the technique he employed in the exposition of his synthesis of Judaism was deliberately structured in terms of classical categories."[40] For Cohen, Abraham was not merely a translator of Sufi concepts, terms, and praxis into a Jewish setting, but rather the proponent of a *new* synthesis of Judaism who drew on a variety of sources and philosophical insights and presented them in a thoroughly rabbinic form.

In their reviews of Rosenblatt's edition of the *Kifāya*, both S. D. Goitein and David Baneth argue that Abraham Maimonides was explicitly writing a Jewish Sufi work, that is, the content and structure of the *Kifāya* were thoroughly Sufi. Baneth in particular insisted that the four-part structure of the book mirrored that of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʻulūm al-dīn*.[41] For Baneth, the lack of explicitly cited Sufi sources in the *Kifāya* is mitigated by the fact that the structure of the book is directly modeled on that of the *Iḥyā*ʾ. Goitein, while not as insistent on the book's indebtedness to al-Ghazālī, nevertheless insisted

---

[38] Ibid., 214.
[39] Ibid., 212.
[40] Ibid., 218.
[41] Both reviews appeared in *Kiryat Sefer*, Baneth's in 1932 and Goitein's in 1939. This debate is discussed in detail in Shusman, "*She'elat ha-meqorot*."

that it betrays a number of Sufi influences. Shusman took up this debate and attempted to moderate between the positions of Baneth and Goitein on the one hand and of Gerson Cohen on the other. In the end, however, she is clearly on the side of Baneth and Goitein, arguing that there actually *are* conceptual and structural traces of al-Ghazālī in the *Kifāya*.[42] Finally, Paul Fenton has argued that the nature of Abraham Maimonides' larger intellectual project – to legitimate and theorize the Pietist movement in rabbinic language – is akin to al-Ghazālī's project in the *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, which was to systematize Sufi thought and practice in light of Ash'arī theology and juridically appropriate practices.[43]

The extent to which the Pietist movement was infused with Sufi vocabulary, ideas, and even practices can no longer be questioned. Given the extent to which the Pietists were practicing Sufism as much as writing about it, a strong case can be made that they do in fact deserve to be called "Jewish Sufis." Furthermore, the fact that Pietists like Abraham Maimonides explicitly argued that Sufism was nothing more than an Islamic usurpation of ancient biblical practices, which the Pietists were reclaiming, makes an even stronger case that they were Jewish Sufis. Indeed, the Pietists interpreted all Sufi thought and practice through the lens of biblical and Talmudic models. The result is a salient example of Marcus' concept of inward acculturation. The Pietists took up the symbols and practices of the Sufis and re-worked them in light

---

[42] Specifically, Shusman argues that while Abraham Maimonides used Sufi sources in his explication of the Pietist life, he attempted to drain them of any specifically Islamic content. So, for example, in his discussion of the thoroughly Sufi concept of reliance on God – *tawakkul* – Abraham chooses to use the cognate *ittikāl* rather than the more Sufi-inflected term. However, in a section that appears to be a close paraphrasing of al-Ghazālī's discussion of this concept, Abraham uses *tawakkul*. Shusman argues that this is evidence that Abraham had al-Ghazālī in front of him when writing and thus the word entered into the *Kifāya* unconsciously; Shusman, "*She'elat ha-meqorot*," 243.

[43] Paul Fenton, "Maimonides - Father and Son: Continuity and Change," in *Traditions of Maimonideanism*, ed. Carlos Fraenkel (Leiden: Brill, 2009): 103-137; relevant material on pp. 127-128.

of Jewish models in order to highlight their own superiority and to achieve their own goals. They saw Sufism as an authentically Jewish practice and made a concerted effort to demonstrate this in their writings.

What follows is a brief overview of some of the doctrines and practices of the Pietists that are directly modeled on Sufi doctrines and practices. Particular attention will be drawn to the ways in which the Pietists interpreted these in light of biblical and Talmudic models. This will then set the stage for the analysis that follows, wherein I argue that the Pietists, as the "saints of Israel," deliberately took up the institutions of Sufism and actively sought the return of prophecy in anticipation of the messianic age. This political messianism, clothed in Judeo-Sufi language, constitutes the "hidden transcript" of the movement and indicates how deeply embedded the Pietists were in the wider Egyptian society. For Scott, a hidden transcript is a performance or text that appears innocuous or uncontroversial but that carries a hidden political message for those who understand it.[44] In this case, the Pietists' performance of Sufism would have appeared to most to be merely the adoption of some Islamic practices. For the Pietists however, these practices carried the hidden political agenda of bringing about the days of the messiah.

After surveying some of the more salient Sufi aspects of the movement, I will turn to the question of the movement's origins. Did it predate Abraham Maimonides? Or was the *Kifāya* a *sui generis* work meant to create a wholly new movement? This is not an idle historical question, but has direct bearing on the argument that Abraham Maimonides was attempting to take discursive and organizational control of the

---

[44] James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, xii.

movement. I will argue, from hints in the *Kifāya* itself as well as other indicators, that the movement did indeed predate Abraham Maimonides and that the *Kifāya* may be read in a way similar to my reading of al-Iskandarī's *Laṭā'if al-minan* in chapter two.

Pietist literature is full of allusions to and quotations from Sufi texts. Paul Fenton has surveyed and characterized the literary remains of the Pietist movement, dividing it into four types.[45] First, there are copies of Muslim mystical texts, either in Hebrew or Arabic characters, many of which are in the recognizable handwriting of Pietists like Abraham he-Ḥasid. Thus, for example, the Genizah contains the writings of al-Ghazālī, al-Qushayrī, al-Junayd, al-Nūrī, and al-Ḥallāj, to name only a few.[46] Second, there are original ethical and theological treatises in Judeo-Arabic that betray clear Sufi inspiration.[47] It is to this category that works like the *Kifāya*, Obadyah's *al-Maqāla*, and David ben Joshua's *al-Murshid* belong. They form the primary literary corpus of the Pietist movement. Third, there are a large number of commentaries in a Pietist vein on biblical books. The *Song of Songs*, in particular, was an attractive target of commentary and was often read allegorically as a conversation between the human soul and God (or the Active Intellect).[48] Finally, there are a number of miscellaneous writings – letters, petitions, short tracts, etc. – that are often useful in fleshing out the lives of the Pietists

---

[45] Paul Fenton, "Judaeo-Arabic Mystical Writings of the XIIIth – XIVth Centuries," 87-102.

[46] This last Sufi in particular saw widespread popularity among the Jews; see Paul Fenton, "Les traces d'Al-Hallag, martyr mystique de l'islam, dans la tradition juive," in *AnIsl* 35 (2001): 101-127.

[47] The difference between influence and inspiration, as Naḥem Ilan formulates it, is a difference of intention. Influence may be posited when clear intentional use can be established. Inspiration, by contrast, involves the use of culturally common artifacts without knowledge of their source. Ilan, "*ha-Sifrut ha-ṣufit ha-yehudit*," 2-3.

[48] See Paul Fenton, "A Mystical Commentary on the Song of Songs in the Hand of David Maimonides II," in *Esoteric and Exoteric Aspects in Judeo-Arabic Culture*, ed. Benjamin Hary and Haggai Ben-Shammai (Leiden: Brill, 2006): 19-53. An edition of the commentary itself is in the Hebrew version of the article, found in *Tarbiẓ* 69 (2000).

and their movement.[49] Fenton has published a treatise on prayer from the Genizah (the author of which may be Abraham he-Ḥasid) that is written in the same handwriting as transliterations of other Muslim Sufi works. If the handwriting is indeed the same, this would indicate that the circle was *reading*, *copying,* and *distributing* these materials as well as composing treatises of their own.[50]

Abraham Maimonides himself points to the importance of the Sufis in the imagination of the Pietists. Throughout the *Kifāya* he refers to the Sufis by name (*al-mutaṣawwifūn*) and notes the ways in which their practices reflect biblical precedents. This point is of critical importance to the understanding of the Pietist movement's conception of itself. Abraham argued that the practices seen among the Sufis of his day were actually practiced by the prophets of the Bible, subsequently lost to Jewish praxis, and were therefore in need of recovery. Wieder argues in his study of Jewish practice that the the Pietists saw the changes in their worship not as a "reformation" of practice so much as a "restoration" of long-abandoned devotions.[51] Thus, Abraham writes of the spiritual struggle against matter (*al-mujāhada*): "Do not condemn our likening of [these practices] to the condition of the Sufis, because the Sufis imitated the prophets and gleaned from their examples. The prophets did not [imitate] them."[52] The Sufis are explicitly conceptualized as the practicing links in a chain of devotion that connects the biblical prophets to the Pietists in medieval Egypt. This is the reason the Pietists should be thought of as *Sufis* and not just Jews who "borrowed" a few ideas from

[49] Thus, for example, a letter from a mentor (possibly Abraham he-Ḥasid) to a disciple in which he exhorts the disciple to meditate, focus his thoughts, study tractate *Avot*, and alludes to the practice of *khalwa*; see Paul Fenton, "A Pietist Letter from the Genizah," 159-167.

[50] See Paul Fenton, "A Mystical Treatise on Prayer and the Spiritual Quest from the Pietist Circle," and idem, "A Mystical Treatise on Perfection, Providence and Prophecy from the Jewish Sufi Circle."

[51] Wieder, *Hashpaʻot islamiyot*, 31.

[52] *Kifāya*, 2:321.

Sufism. They literally thought of themselves as the true Sufis, recovering the practices that had been lost to Jews but preserved by Sufis. This is similar to claims made by Muslims that Islam was a restoration of the "original" religion of Abraham. The Jewish counter-claim of true originality is an example of inward acculturation. They were using the same arguments Muslims used, but the Pietists did so in furtherance of their goals and to highlight their own (self-perceived) superiority. This is central to my argument that the Pietists *were* Sufis and not just Jews interested in Sufi ideas and practices. They thought of themselves as Sufis.

In an almost complete inversion of the literary style of Abraham Maimonides, which is characterized by explicit references to Sufis but no quotations from Sufi works, David ben Joshua Maimonides' *al-Murshid ilā al-tafarrud* contains no explicit references to Sufis but is full of quotations from Sufi literature. In his edition of *al-Murshid*, Fenton has demonstrated the affinity between David's expositions and the illuminationist writings of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191). He quotes almost word for word from al-Suhrawardī's *Maqāmāt al-ṣūfīya* in a number of places, replacing *al-ṣūfī* and *al-taṣawwuf* with *he-ḥasid* and *derekh he-ḥasidut*, respectively.[53] He also quotes explicitly from al-Ghazāli's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (without naming him), replacing Qur'ānic quotations with quotations from the Torah.[54] Such an inversion of the style of Abraham Maimonides may reflect the fact that, almost 200 years after Abraham's death, David had internalized what Abraham attempted to demonstrate, the biblical origins of Sufi practice, and it was no longer necessary to formulate explicitly *why* Sufi literature was important.

---

[53] *al-Murshid*, 15, 46-49.
[54] Ibid., 49.

In addition to these two Maimonideans, mention should also be made of Obadyah Maimonides, whose *al-Maqāla al-ḥawdīya* is replete with Sufi terminology. In his edition, Fenton lists more than 30 Sufi technical terms (*fanā*', *baqā*', *ḥaḍra*, *khalwa*, etc.) used by 'Obadyāh in his exposition.[55] 'Obadyāh also uses a number of common Sufi metaphors (the heart as a pool and the preserved tablet [*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*] e.g.) and hierarchies throughout the course of his treatise. While the above examples are not meant to be exhaustive, they point to a matter of central importance in this literature: these authors were steeped in Muslim Sufi writings and the Sufis played an important role in their literary imagination. The Pietists saw the Sufis as the inheritors of lost (to the Jews) biblical traditions and were therefore deliberately reading and using their work to recover these traditions.

The Pietists did not merely read, copy, and adapt Sufi writings. They also practiced explicitly Sufi devotions, albeit conceived as lost prophetic practices. A number of practices are based on Sufi models, but six in particular are clearly marked as having Sufi origins. That is, there is no possibility of mistaking these practices for anything but Sufi-inspired. These are spiritual guidance, musical sessions, distinctive dress, fasting and vigils, asceticism, and isolated meditation.[56] These indicate to what extent the Pietists were inwardly acculturated to contemporary Sufism. The following discussion sets the stage for the discussion of the *Kifāya* that appears later in this chapter.

---

[55] Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool*, 131. There is another, much longer list like this one at the end of his edition of the *al-Murshid*, 89.

[56] This is essentially the same list that Russ-Fishbane enumerates in his study of Abraham Maimonides. I have added asceticism as a distinct category because there are practices associated with it not covered by the other practices. See Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 154-191.

SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE:[57] It should be clear from the previous chapters that the master-disciple relationship is perhaps the paradigmatic institution of Sufism. Each of the groups that I have examined in the previous three chapters emphasized the necessity of having an experienced teacher guide one on the Sufi path. Only in the special case of Abū ʾl-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī did al-Iskandarī argue that sometimes an individual, by virtue of his special gifts may receive spiritual guidance directly from God without need for a teacher.[58] In all other cases, the novice needs a master's guidance. Indeed, Sufi manuals typically insist on the necessity of a spiritual mentor who will guide the novice through the pitfalls of the path and prescribe devotions to cultivate piety and tame the ego-self (*nafs*). The Pietists, who looked to the examples of biblical prophets through the lens of contemporary Sufism, were likewise adamant that one be guided on the path to *wuṣūl*, the end of the Pietist system.

Abraham Maimonides was the most explicit of the Pietists in discussing the need for a spiritual mentor. While his terminology is not always consistent, the requirement of spiritual guidance is clear.[59] The novice must be guided along the path by someone who has already traversed the path and is in a state of "arriving" (*wāṣil*). Abraham is very clear in the *Kifāya* that one who wishes to achieve attainment (*al-wuṣūl*) must do so "under the guidance of one who has already achieved it" (*bi-taslīk shakhṣin wāṣilin*). In a move that exemplifies his exposition of the path, he also provides a rabbinic prooftext for his position in the famous dictum "Get yourself a teacher" from

---

[57] See Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 154-162 for his discussion of this institution.

[58] See al-Iskandarī, *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 70 and above pp. 108-119.

[59] In his discussion of the *khirqa*, Abraham Maimonides notes that it was the practice of the biblical prophets for the master to dress his disciple in the *khirqa* upon initiation (*talbīs al-shaykh al-khirqa li'l-murīd*); *Kifāya* 2:266. However, in his final remarks about the Exalted Paths, he refers to *al-shaykh wa'l-khadīm* (master and servant) or *al-tābiʿ wa'l-matbūʿ* (the follower and the followed); *Kifāya* 2:422.

Avot 1:6.[60] Furthermore, Abraham connects the master-disciple institution to biblical prophets like Elijah and Elisha, among others.[61] It is here that Abraham Maimonides says explicitly that the model of the biblical prophets had been "passed to others and has become, for [the Sufis], the master and the servant or the follower and the followed." This is one of the clearest examples of Abraham Maimonides' understanding of the Pietist movement as a recovery of biblical practices that had been taken over by the Sufis. For him, rather than being an Islamicate institution that was co-opted by the Jewish Pietists, the master-disciple relationship was essentially biblical, and the Pietists were taking it *back* from the Sufis.

While Abraham Maimonides was the most explicit of the Pietists on this subject, there are other references in the Pietist literature to the necessity of a master. ʻObadyāh, in keeping with the generally opaque and esoteric character of his *Treatise of the Pool*, makes no mention of the need for a human teacher. However, he does insist that the best guide on the path is the human intellect when it is properly trained to receive the divine overflow of knowledge.[62] Thus, while Obadyah does not insist on a

---

[60] *Kifāya* 2:422: "What you must know and understand is that the proper way of arriving at the utmost true goal has, as its condition, that it be undertaken under the guidance of one who has already achieved it. As the transmitters (of tradition) said, 'Get yourself a teacher.'"

[61] *Kifāya* 2:422: "And you know the text of the Torah concerning the follower and the followed (*al-tābiʻ wa-'l-matbūʻ*): Joshua, 'the servant of Moses, was one of his young men' (Numbers 27:18), who achieved *wuṣūl* and followed [after Moses]. Likewise, the prophets after him relied [on this system]. Shmu'el the Ramathite's master (*musallik*) was ʻEli; Elisha's [master was] Elijah; and Baruch ben Neriah's [master was] Jeremiah. Now this is why the *beney ha-neviʻim* (the sons of the prophets) were known by that name, because the prophets were their masters."

[62] For ʻObadyāh, the intellect (*al-ʻaql*) is the perfect guide or master because it is open to direct inspiration from its divine source in the Active Intellect. Indeed, he calls the intellect "the intercessor" (*al-shafiʻa*) and argues that "It is clear that he who hath not gained an intercessor to mediate between himself and his Beloved is *considered as dead* ... Thus it is incumbent upon us to seek diligently after an intercessor and to find one without delay, for he is our guardian in the nether world and our guide to the world everlasting and think not otherwise." Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool*, 112-113. This point caused some confusion for Georges Vajda, who believed that ʻObadyāh's reference to the intercessor was meant to refer to "a quasi-messianic figure" who would play some soteriological role; see idem, "The Mystical Doctrine of Rabbi Obadya, Grandson of Moses Maimonides," in *JJS* 6:4 (1955): 213-225. Fenton however,

human guide, he nevertheless articulates the necessity of guidance on the path. In this case, the intellect, because it is connected to the divine realm, is suitable to guide the adept. David ben Joshua Maimonides likewise insists that one who is not knowledgeable about the ways of the path (*derekh ha-ḥasidut*) "must take a realized guide and trustworthy trainer" (*musallik muḥaqqiq wa-muwaqqif ṣādiq*).[63] Indeed, it is incumbent upon one who has "traversed the path, knows its levels, entrances, and stages to guide others on the path."[64] In his commentary on *Song of Songs* 1:8, he again stresses the importance of a guide on the spiritual path. David interprets this verse ("If you do not know, O fairest of women, Go follow the tracks of the sheep") as an injunction to "follow the tracks of the sheep," which means to follow in the footsteps of the "ancient shepherds," presumably the prophets and patriarchs of the Bible.[65]

In an anonymous letter from a Pietist master to his disciple, the teacher encourages his protégé to meditate, to stay away from stray thoughts, to practice seclusion (*khalwa*), and to study the tractate *Avot*, the portion of the Mishnah devoted to ethical principles.[66] In this letter, one can see an example of the kind of advice a Pietist *shaykh* would give to one of his adepts.[67] There is also evidence that the Pietists

---

notes that ʻObadyāh is referring to the intellect and the role the intellect plays in mediating this world and the world of the Active Intellect; Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool,* 128, n.162.

[63] *al-Murshid ilā al-tafarrud*, 50 [Arabic section].

[64] Ibid.

[65] Fenton, "A Mystical Commentary on the Song of Songs," 36-37.

[66] Fenton, "A Pietist Letter from the Genizah," 162-163.

[67] There are other examples. Abraham he-Ḥasid seems to have been Abraham Maimonides' mentor on the path, as well as a model for other Pietists. Abraham Maimonides refers to Abraham he-Ḥasid in a number of places in the *Kifāya* (2:24 and 2:290, where he refers to Abraham he-Ḥasid as *ṣāḥibī* (my teacher). Abraham he-Ḥasid himself refers to the master-disciple institution in his commentary on the Song of Songs when he remarks that "each person who takes a master in pursuit of the goal is like the sons of the prophets." Here, Abraham uses *al-muṣṭaḥib*, i.e. one who takes a master/companion. See CUL TS 1b.7, published by Fenton, "Some Judaeo-Arabic Fragments by Rabbi Abraham he-Ḥasid, The Jewish Sufi," 51. In a letter from one of the Pietists to a lapsed member of the circle, the author rebukes the lapsed member saying, "You have left the service of the master Abraham, which is incumbent upon all

referred to themselves as a "fellowship" (*ṣuḥba*) and referred to their masters on the path as *ṣāḥib*.[68] In all of these cases and examples, we see the centrality of the master/disciple institution for the Pietist vision of spiritual practice.

MUSICAL SESSIONS:[69] We know less about the practice of the Pietists' musical sessions (*samāʿ*) than most other practices, primarily because it is only briefly alluded to in a few works. In each case, however, the use of music or musical chanting is directly connected to the cultivation of prophecy. Moses Maimonides himself acknowledges this connection in the *Mishneh Torah* where he writes that happiness (*simḥa*) is a prerequisite for prophecy, adding that "for this reason did the disciples of the prophets (*beney ha-nevi'im*) [use] a lyre, drum, flute, and harp when they sought prophecy."[70] In the *Kifāya*, Abraham Maimonides is more explicit about the contemporary use of music for the Pietists to cultivate prophecy. In his chapter on solitary meditation (*khalwa*), he argues that "the prophets and their followers" used music to clear their minds and turn their aspirations toward God: "In order to attain

---

who come from afar." Notable here is that companionship of Abraham Maimonides is referred to as *khidmat al-mawlā*, *khidma* being the term that Abraham uses in the *Kifāya* when speaking of discipleship. Also, note that this *khidma* is "incumbent upon all who come from afar (*min al-bilād*)," which indicates that disciples came from outside Egypt to be trained in the Pietist path. For the letter see CUL TS 10 J 13.8, published by Goitein, "*Rabbenu Avraham ben ha-Rambam ve-ḥugo ha-ḥasidi*," 187.

[68] See, for example, CUL TS 10 J 13.8, in which the writer refers to their circle as *al-ṣuḥba*; see Goitein, "*Rabbenu Avraham ben ha-Rambam ve-ḥugo ha-ḥasidi*," 187. In another letter, CUL TS 12.289, the writer refers to the circle around Abraham Maimonides as the "*aṣḥāb* of our master," see Goitein, "*Rabbenu Avraham ben ha-Rambam ve-ḥugo ha-ḥasidi*," 189. See also *Kifāya*, 2:290, where Abraham Maimonides calls Abraham he-Ḥasid "*ṣāḥibī*."

[69] See Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 181-185.

[70] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah: Yesodey ha-Torah* 7:4. It is worth quoting Maimonides in full on this point: "All the prophets were not able to prophesy at any time they wanted. Rather, they set their minds to the task (*mekavvenin daʿatan*), and sat in happiness and good cheer in meditation (*mitbodedin*). For prophecy does not come in the midst of sadness or idleness, but only in the midst of happiness. For that reason did the disciples of the prophets [use] a lyre, drum, flute, and harp when they sought prophecy. This is why [scripture] says, "they sought prophecy" (1 Samuel 10:5), that is, they were actively seeking the path of prophecy, in the same way you might say one seeks greatness (*mitgadel*)." Note in particular that Maimonides uses the term *mitboded* to refer to the preparation for prophecy. This term is most certainly the Hebrew translation for the Sufi term *khalwa*. See also Maimonides comments on 2 Kings 3:15 (on musical instruments) in *Thamāniya Fuṣūl: Mûsâ Maymûnî's Acht Capitel, Arabisch und Deutsch*, ed. M. Wolff (Leiden: Brill, 1903), 25-26 and *Mishneh Torah: Pereq ḥeleq*, 10:1.

the inner solitude (*al-khalwa al-bāṭina*) that leads to *wuṣūl*, the prophets and their followers used musical instruments and melodies to spur the spirit toward God."[71]

David ben Joshua Maimonides treated music at greater length in his *al-Murshid ilā al-tafarrud*.[72] Here, David extols the effect of music on the soul – that it will increase "longing for the heart's desire and impede it from turning aside to all else" and that beautiful rhythm will cause the soul "to long for its noble origin and subtle source and remind it of its sublime abode."[73] The Neoplatonic overtones of this discussion are clear and are quite congruent with Sufi notions of music and the soul. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that David says explicitly that this was the method of *al-ḥasidim wa-beney ha-nevi'im* (the Pietists and sons of the prophets), indicating again the confluence of the disciples of the prophets and the Pietists in Pietist thought.[74] While there are no precise instructions that we know of regarding the playing of music, it is clear that the Pietists did indeed use music and musical chants in their devotions. In all cases, as one would expect, these are connected to the practices of biblical prophets.[75]

---

[71] *Kifāya*, 2:384-385. On *al-khalwa al-bāṭina*, see below, pp. 247-250. While this is the most explicit statement of Abraham Maimonides on the subject, he alludes to this topic in *Kifāya* 2:52 ("Scripture is clear that Elisha sought prophecy by means of 'the minstrel' (*bi'l-menaggen*) and the disciples of the prophets used the lyre, drum, and flute") and *Kifāya* 2:282-284 where he repeats the previous observation and references his father's discussion in the *Mishneh Torah*. See Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 183-184 for Abraham Maimonides' use of music and melody in the synagogue during prayer.

[72] See Paul Fenton's article "A Jewish Sufi on the Influence of Music," in *Yuval* 4 (1982): 124-130. The corresponding portions of the *Murshid* that Fenton here translates and analyses are on pages 52-56 of Fenton's edition.

[73] Fenton, "A Jewish Sufi on the Influence of Music," 127-128 and *al-Murshid ilā al-tafarrud*, 52.

[74] Ibid.

[75] There are a few other possible examples of Pietist references to music as part of their devotions. Paul Fenton found an Arabic transcription in Hebrew characters of a story about *samā'* and Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī in the documents of the Cairo Genizah (TS Ar. 44.201), indicating that the Pietists were at the very least copying and reading texts about musical practice; see Fenton, "A Jewish Sufi on the Influence of Music," 126 n. 8. Elisha Russ-Fishbane notes that there is a poem by the Jewish author of Hebrew *maqamāt*, Judah al-Ḥarīzī (fl. 1220) that may be of Pietist origin. The poem, in Judeo-Arabic, contains the lines *yā huwa yā huwa mā lī illā huwa* (O He, O He, I have no one but Him), which are very much like Sufi *dhikr* formulae. The poem is TS Box H 10/18.2 and was published by S. M. Stern, "Some Unpublished Poems by al-Harizi," *JQR* 50 (1960): 269-276, 346-364. In this connection, it is worth mentioning that in

DISTINCTIVE DRESS:[76] Most Sufis, with some exceptions like the Shādhilīya, advocated the wearing of special clothing. This was usually connected to their ascetic lifestyles and most commonly took the form of coarse woolen clothing. Furthermore, the Sufis were well-known for their use of the initiatory cloak (*khirqa* or *muraqqa‘a*) and wearing the Sufi cap (*qalansūwa*). It is thus not surprising that the Pietists also advocated the use of special clothing. Pietist clothing seems to have been of three types, at least as formulated by Abraham Maimonides. First, the Pietists wore coarse woolen clothing a part of their devotions in order to inculcate the virtues of humility and asceticism.[77] Wearing fine or luxurious clothing "goes against the path of the saints" because the prophets themselves wore "ragged garments" (*muraqqa‘āt al-thiyāb*) and "hair shirts" (*aksiyat al-sha‘r*).[78] The purpose of this type of clothing is clear: to train and subdue the body (matter), which will allow the soul to commune with God. Abraham is here quite explicit that the use of these kinds of clothing originated with the biblical prophets but that the practice "has passed to the Sufis."[79] Again, he argues

---

the letter published by Paul Fenton from one Pietist master (possibly Abraham he-Ḥasid) to his pupil, the author writes that if the student finds himself in a difficult or dismaying situation he should "return to remembrance of Him (*dhikrihi*)." While not decisive, it may indicate that the Pietists practiced a form of *dhikr*. See Paul Fenton, "A Pietist Letter from the Genizah," 162. Finally, Tsvi Langermann has uncovered a Genizah fragment (Firk. Heb. Ar. II 2499 f.8a-b) from the Maghrib in which the author remarks that in the home, one should have "a corner set aside for the remembrance of God" (*zāwiya mu‘adda li-dhikr Allāh*). See "From Private Devotion to Communal Prayer: New Light on Abraham Maimonides' Synagogue Reforms," in *Ginzei Qedem* 1 (2005): 31-49; document on p. 40.

[76] See Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," p. 185-191 where he discusses this topic.

[77] Abraham Maimonides deals with this subject in a few places. In *Kifāya* 2:74-76, he notes that "wearing coarse clothing" is a mandatory (*wājib*) part of cultivating humility but that one should absolutely not wear "dirty or filthy clothing." He connects this to the rabbinic dictum that "every *talmid ḥakham* whose clothing has a grease stain deserves the death penalty" (*Shabbat* 114a). In *Kifāya* 2:348 he notes that coarse and ragged clothing is linked to the biblical prophets. Interestingly, the charge to wear wool or coarse clothing is not absolute. Each Pietist should determine what his precise needs were. Thus, in *Kifāya* 2:186 he writes that some Pietists can retain their humility while wearing *libās al-mutawassaṭ* ("middling garments" in Rosenblatt's translation), while some must wear coarse clothing.

[78] *Kifāya* 2:348.

[79] Ibid.

that the Sufis have taken up biblical practices and not that the Jews have taken up Sufi practices.

In addition to the wearing of coarse clothing, the Pietists wore distinct clothing meant to highlight their institutional identity. They used the *khirqa* in the same way that the Sufis did: to indicate initiatory induction into the group.[80] In the section of the *Kifāya* devoted to ascetic practices (*zuhd*), Abraham Maimonides mentions the *khirqa* by name and advocates its use to indicate specifically prophetic initiation. "When Elijah passed by Elisha – before [Elisha] began following [Elijah] – he found him plowing ... then [Elijah] cast his cloak (*kisā'ahu*) over [Elisha] to indicate the good news (*bishāra*) that [from that point on] his clothing, appearance, and behavior would be like [Elijah's] and the good news that his perfection would pass to [Elisha]."[81] In this passage, Abraham again connects the biblical prophets to the Sufis of his own time, saying explicitly that the Sufis have taken up this practice of "the *shaykh* dressing his *murīd* in the *khirqa* when [the latter] wishes to embark upon [the master's] way (*ṭarīq*)."[82] He attributes this loss of distinctive dress to the "sins of Israel" that have caused the people to lose the old devotional practices of the saints and prophets and allowed these practices to move to the "Sufis of Islam." He then notes, "We have taken from them and emulate their example in wearing sleeveless garments (*baqā'ir*) and the like."[83]

[80] *Kifāya*, 2:264-266.

[81] This is a reference to the events described in 1 Kings 19:19: "[Elijah] set out from there and came upon Elisha son of Shaphat as he was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah came over to him and threw his mantle (*'adareto*) over him."

[82] *Kifāya*, 2:266.

[83] It is odd that Abraham Maimonides here mentions that they have adopted the Sufi dress known as *baqā'ir* (sg. *baqīr* or *baqīra*. The word refers to a garment without sleeves, one meaning of the verb *baqara* being "to open up and widen." However, the *baqā'ir* were known to be worn by women specifically and I have found no reference in connection to the Sufis. Perhaps the Sufis of Egypt appropriated this sleeveless garment from women or perhaps Abraham Maimonides is mistaken in his terminology. See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, q.v. *al-baqīr* (1:324): "A ripped garment that is worn without sleeves or pocket.

Finally, it seems that the Pietists wore special clothing during their prayers.[84] In the section of the *Kifāya* devoted to the subject of prayer, Abraham Maimonides urges all members of the community (Pietist or not) to take care of the clothing worn for prayer.[85] However, it is not clear how widespread this practice was, as he remarks that not all people, not even the Pietists, are able to do this all the time. In an interesting hint to a possible Pietist practice, he does mention that some Pietists had taken up the biblical custom of wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes when they performed their prayers. Nevertheless, this was only done occasionally.[86] The use of special clothing during times of prayer was another way in which the Pietists cultivated humility as part of their devotions, the purpose of which was surely to prepare the soul for prophecy.

FASTING AND VIGILS:[87] One of the most widespread Pietist practices was fasting and staying up late at night to pray (*al-qiyām wa'l-ṣiyām*), which has both Sufi and biblical antecedents. There is evidence that late night devotions had been practiced by Jews for quite some time prior to the emergence of the Pietist movement.[88] The Pietists also included this practice as an integral part of their devotions, and their formalized language indicates that it was a well-established practice. In addition to the standardized term *al-qiyām wa'l-ṣiyām* (lit. "standing and fasting"), which is used

---

It is said that it is the same as an *itb*. *Al-baqīra* [means that] the garment is taken and ripped, then a woman wraps it around her neck so there are no sleeves or pockets. An *itb* is a ripped shirt without sleeves worn by women." This is confirmed by Reinhardt Dozy, *Dictionnaire détaille des noms des vêtements chez les arabes* (Amsterdam: Jean Müller, 1845), 84, citing al-Jawharī's *Mu'jam al-ṣiḥāḥ* and al-Fayrūzābādī's *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīt.* This may be similar to the Moroccan *gandūra*, which is a sleeveless garment worn over the *thawb* or *galabīya*.

[84] Russ-Fishbane discusses this in more detail in "Between Politics and Piety," 189-190.

[85] *Sefer ha-maspiq*, 103-105.

[86] *Sefer ha-Maspiq*, 105.

[87] See Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 162-169.

[88] Ibid., 163.

repeatedly by the Pietists, the language of fasting and vigils finds its way into descriptions of the group itself. In a letter to Abraham he-Ḥasid and his brother, an anonymous writer says in lovely rhymed prose that *layloteyhem qamim ve-yomoteyhem ṣamim ke-yom ha-kippurim* – "they spend their nights in prayer and their days in fasting like the Day of Atonement."[89] In a letter to Abraham Maimonides, one of his disciples calls his circle *al-ṣā'imīn al-qā'imīn* – those who fast and pray.[90] Abraham Maimonides himself notes that in the performance of seclusion (*khalwa*), "it is praiseworthy to awake late at night" for the purpose of prayer.[91] Fasting was also addressed at length by the Pietists, particularly as it related to the ascetic lifestyle. In both cases, the Pietists, and Abraham Maimonides in particular, saw these devotions has having authentic biblical and Talmudic roots.[92]

ASCETICISM: A major component of the Pietist program was the cultivation of the virtue of asceticism (*zuhd*). While much of the preceding list of practices might also be classified as part of the practice of asceticism, it is worth focusing on the place of *zuhd* in Abraham Maimonides' thought in particular because it is directly related to his conception of prophecy.[93] In essence, Abraham Maimonides saw the world and worldly existence as a great veil (*ḥijāb*) separating the worshiper from God.[94] Matter (*al-mādda*), a necessary condition of earthly existence, was the primary obstacle preventing the soul (*al-nafs*) from communing with its divine source. For this reason, it

---

[89] CUL T-S 20.148; S. D. Goitein's edition available online through the Friedberg Genizah Project.
[90] CUL T-S 10J 13.8, see Goitein, "*Rabbenu Avraham ben ha-Rambam ve-ḥugo ha-ḥasidi*," 187.
[91] *Kifāya*, 2:416.
[92] Abraham Maimonides cites Psalm 132:4 in support of these devotions: "I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids until I find a place for the Lord, and an abode for the Mighty One of Jacob." *Kifāya*, 2:322.
[93] This topic is the subject of a large portion of the *Kifāya*, 2:224-306.
[94] *Kifāya*, 2:224.

is the Pietists' charge in particular to counteract the effects of matter as much as possible by means of ascetic practices.[95] These practices included wearing coarse clothing, fasting, eating only a little plain food, living in a modest room or small house, and refraining from sexual activity. All of these practices, over time, would inculcate the virtue of asceticism and lead to a refinement of the body's materiality. The refinement of the body that has been cleansed of its materiality would then allow the *nafs* to commune with its divine source.[96] This doctrine had important prophetic repercussions, and I will return to these in the section on prophecy below. Here, it is enough to note that the Pietists' conception of ascetic virtue was rooted in both rabbinic and Sufi models of ascetic practices. As he does throughout the *Kifāya*, Abraham Maimonides takes care to connect Sufi ideas and practices to those of the biblical prophets. Thus, the patriarch Jacob is a model for abstinent eating.[97] The stories of the "disciples of the prophets" (*beney ha-nevi'im*) were a particularly rich

---

[95] Abraham Maimonides' metaphysical model is clearly an Aristotelian one. Following his father, he writes that the human soul is, the "form" that connects humanity to divinity; see *Guide* I:1. As the soul concentrates on its divine source, it ascends to its "source" (*mabda'ihā*) and the bond between the human and the divine is strengthened. Conversely, as the soul focuses on the things of the world the bond between the human and the divine is weakened. To remove worldly objects from attention is a way of forcing the soul to focus on its source. "For this reason *zuhd* is one of the Exalted Paths that lead to a connection with [God], because the heart of one who rejects the world is free from [the world's] cares. He is free to meditate upon that which will lead him to his Creator. See *Kifāya*, 2:232.

[96] This language of refining was common among Sufis of this period and is related to alchemical practices and ideas. Even Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī was said to have dabbled in Alchemy during his younger years. See *Durrat al-asrār*, 31, where it is related that al-Shādhilī said, "At the beginning of my career I used to study alchemy (*yaṭlub 'ilm al-kīmīyā'*) and ask God about it." However, al-Shādhilī eventually realized that alchemy was ultimately an unclean path.

[97] Abraham repeatedly makes reference to the biblical account of Jacob making his way to his uncle Laban. On the way, Jacob makes a vow that "If God remains with me, if He protects me on this journey that I am making, and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and if I return safe to my father's house – the Lord shall be my God," Genesis 28: 20-21. The important part of this teaching is that Jacob only requests "bread to eat and clothing to wear," which Abraham Maimonides reads as statement of ascetic renunciation. See *Kifāya* 2:232.

textual source for Abraham to mine for ascetic material.[98] Talmudic figures were also models of self-denial.[99] Abraham is very careful throughout this section to stress that one should inculcate asceticism by degrees. One should begin by slowly cutting the number of meals eaten in a day to just one. Then, one should replace meat with vegetables and honey with cheese.[100] In this way, dietary asceticism was to be inculcated slowly and without shocking the body. The cultivation of *zuhd* was ultimately meant to prepare the body and soul for isolated meditation, the subject of the next section.

ISOLATED MEDITATION:[101] The practice of solitary meditation (Ar. *khalwa*; Heb. *hitbodedut*) is another practice that is often mentioned in Pietist literature. It is also the most important practice in terms of the preparation for prophecy. Abraham Maimonides argues that it is the highest of the paths, the most distinguished, and the means by which the prophets achieved prophecy.[102] Here, he differentiates between inward solitude (*al-khalwa al-bāṭina*) and external solitude (*al-khalwa al-ẓāhira*); the latter

---

[98] The 100 disciples of the prophets lived on "twenty loaves of barley bread and some fresh grain" (2 Kings 4:42); they all lived together in a modest communal house (2 Kings 6:2); and they were so poor that one of them was forced to borrow an axe in order to construct the house (2 Kings 6:5); see *Kifāya* 2:234. Elisha is an exemplar for having lived in the Shunamite woman's house in a "small upper chamber" (2 Kings 4:10); see *Kifāya* 2:258.

[99] For example, Abba Ḥilqia was a day laborer who wore borrowed clothing and whose children had very little to eat. Because of his abstinent behavior he was able to pray for (and receive) rain during a drought; see BT *Ta'anit* 23b and *Kifāya* 2:234 and 2:250. Abraham also cites the example of the sons of Batira who resigned from their positions of leadership in deference to Hillel the Elder; see BT *Pesaḥim* 66a, BT *Bava Meṣi'a* 85a and *Kifāya* 2:262. The Talmudic sources actually deal with the hierarchy of *halakhic* knowledge. When the sons are unable to answer a question about the permissibility of sacrifice on the Sabbath, they resign their positions in favor of Hillel, who is able to answer. Abraham Maimonides reads this event as an example of resigning positions of leadership to focus on devotional matters. The sons of Batira were two leaders of the Sanhedrin during the time of Herod. The name is not a patronymic but a toponymic, indicating that they were rabbis from the Golan village of Bathyra; see Marcus Jastrow and Samuel Krauss, "Bathyra" in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnall, 1906) and Isaiah Gafni, "Bathyra," in *EJ2*.

[100] *Kifāya* 2:254-246.

[101] Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 169-181.

[102] *Kifāya* 2:382.

precedes the former and is the means by which inner solitude, which seems to be almost synonymous with attainment (*wuṣūl*), is achieved. In other words, external solitude is an outward *practice*, the performance of which will inculcate the inner *virtue* of inner solitude. External solitude was comprised of physical isolation, emptying the mind and the heart of everything except God, and shutting down the sensitive part of the soul. There were, furthermore, two types of external solitude: shutting oneself off in a house or a room, or a more long-term solitude of isolation in the desert or wilderness. Importantly, Abraham stresses that neither type of solitude is permanent and that one must always return to one's duties as a member of society.[103] In this connection, we have evidence that the Pietists practiced a form of the Sufi *arbaʿīnīya*, the forty-day period of seclusion or isolation.[104] It is worth noting in this connection that Abū Madyan, whose influence was so pronounced in medieval Egypt, advocated a *ṣawm al-wiṣāl* – the fast of attainment, the practice of which he traced to the prophet Moses in the desert.[105] It is no coincidence that the terminology is so similar to Abraham Maimonides. Indeed, Abraham Maimonides looks directly and explicitly to the Sufis as exemplars who have perfected the art of meditation in seclusion, even

---

[103] *Kifāya* 2:386. Moses Maimonides argues something similar in *Guide* 3:52-54.

[104] In a letter preserved in the Genizah, the writer tries to calm the worried son of a man (who it seems is actually Ḥanan'el ben Shemu'el – the father-in-law of Abraham Maimonides) who will undertake the *arbaʿīnīya* in the desert outside Cairo. He assures the son that travel and isolation (*al-safara wa'l-khalwa*) will be the same as that of Moses' forty days and forty nights, and that he should not worry that his father will lose his mind from being far away from people, "for he will be accompanied by the Creator of divine intimacy (*bi-khāliq al-uns*) and His angels, prophets, and saints." CUL T-S 13 J 9.12. The letter was published and discussed by Eliyahu Ashtor, *Toledot ha-yehudim be-miṣrayyim u-ve-suriyah taḥat ha-shilṭon ha-mamluki* (History of the Jews of Egypt and Syria under the Mamluks) (Jerusalem, 1944-1951), vol. 3, 28-32. Ashtor thought that the journey referred to in the letter was a business trip. Fenton, *Deux traités*, 63-65 and Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 174-176, demonstrate that the letter is very clearly about the *arbaʿīnīya*.

[105] Vincent Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan*, 30-31.

admiring their "strong inner light."[106] In all cases, however, physical isolation is only a means to a specific end, the cultivation of the inner virtue of inward seclusion. This inward seclusion is "the last rung on the ladder leading to attainment (*wuṣūl*). Indeed, it **is** *wuṣūl*, and we say that this inner clarity is complete sincerity of the heart (*al-ikhlāṣ al-tāmm al-qalbī*)."[107]

Likewise, David ben Joshua devotes an entire section in the *Murshid* to the practice of seclusion and the variety of its types. However, rather than using the Sufi term *khalwa*, he uses the rabbinic term *perishut*.[108] However, it is clear that he intends the same set of practices that Abraham does.[109]

R. Ḥananel ben Shemu'el also discusses solitary meditation in one of the Genizah fragments identified by Paul Fenton. He compares the revelation of the Torah at Sinai to the contemplative fruits of *khalwa*. He posits that the former was open to all of Israel, the knowledge and wisdom from that initial revelation being handed down through the generations. The insight to be gleaned from *khalwa*, however, is available

---

[106] *Kifāya* 2:418 - "The Sufis of Islam practice *khalwa* in dark places and isolate themselves therein so that the sensitive part of their souls is incapacitated to the point that they can not even see light. This [type of discipline] requires a strong inner light (*nūr bāṭin qawī*) that the soul uses so as not to be distressed (*tastawḥish*) by the great darkness."

[107] *Kifāya* 2:382.

[108] This is primarily due to the ingenious framework that David ben Joshua used in organizing the *Murshid*. Rather than using the Sufi terminology of states and stations as Baḥyā ibn Paqūda and, to a lesser extent, Abraham Maimonides did, David ben Joshua used a rabbinic dictum to orient his discussion of the path (*derekh ha-ḥasidut*). While his language is rabbinic, he nevertheless calls each stage of the path a *maqām* and it is easy to determine the Sufi station 'behind' them. These *maqāmāt*, in the order he discusses them are: *zehirut* (determination), *zerizut* (agility in controlling one's actions and thoughts), *perishut* (isolation), *neqiyut* (purity/sincerity), *'anava* (humility), *yir'ah* (fear), and *ḥasidut* (piety). These "stations" come from the Talmudic passage in '*Avodah Zarah* 20b: "Torah leads to *zehirut*, and *zehirut* leads to *zerizut*, and zerizut leads to *neqiyut*, and *neqiyut* leads to *perishut*, and *perishut* leads to *ṭaharah* (purity), and *ṭaharah* leads to *ḥasidut*, and *ḥasidut* leads to '*anavah*, and '*anavah* leads to *yir'at ḥeṭ'* (fear of sin) and *yir'at ḥeṭ'* leads to *qedusha* (holiness) and *qedusha* leads to the spirit of holiness, which leads to resurrection. And *ḥasidut* is greater than all of them." Thus, David ben Joshua wrapped a clearly Sufi notion of the Sufi path in thoroughly rabbinic clothing. On this point see Franz Rosenthal, "A Judaeo-Arabic Work under Ṣūfic Influence," in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 15 (1940), 442-443, and Paul Fenton's comments in his edition of *al-Murshid*, 42-46 [Hebrew section].

[109] Fenton, *al-Murshid*, 15-24 [Arabic section].

individually and to anyone who is willing to perform this ritual properly. Like Abraham, Ḥananel is clearly arguing that the fruits of *khalwa* are akin to those of prophecy.[110]

It is finally worth mentioning that Maimonides, while eschewing extreme forms of asceticism (see below), nevertheless advocated a certain degree of seclusion and meditation. This is in fact extremely important for his philosophical system, since meditation on the First Cause represents the highest state of happiness that humanity can achieve.[111] It is also clear from *Guide* III:51 that this high state of happiness is a post-philosophical state akin to the spiritual attainment (*wuṣūl*) described by Abraham Maimonides.[112] It is not far-fetched to argue that Abraham's view of this particular practice has roots both in Maimonides' thought and in the praxis of the Sufis. Maimonides himself was conversant with Sufi terminology, as demonstrated by David Blumenthal's meticulous collection of Sufi terms and sayings culled from the *Guide for the Perplexed*.[113]

Having now outlined the contours of Pietist praxis and its relationship to Sufi models, a final question remains. Did Abraham Maimonides create the Pietist movement as a means to prevent conversion to Islam, as Gerson Cohen argued, or was he the spokesman for an earlier movement?[114] Here it will be argued that the

---

[110] Fenton, "More about R. Hananel ben Shmuel ha-Dayyan, Leader of the Pietists," 81.
[111] Harry Blumberg, "*Al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājja, and ve-ha-Rambam 'al hanhagat ha-mitboded: meqorot ve-hashpa'ot*" (al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājja, and Maimonides on the Regimen of the Solitary: Sources and Influences), in *Sinai* 78 (1975): 135-145.
[112] See David Blumenthal, "Maimonides' Intellectualist Mysticism and the Superiority of the Prophecy of Moses," in *Philosophic Mysticism*, 73-95.
[113] David Blumenthal, *Philosophic Mysticism*, 96-114, 128-151, especially 147-150.
[114] S. D. Goitein also seems to have thought of Abraham Maimonides as having created the Pietist movement, writing that he "originated a circle of practicing Pietists;" see Goitein, "A Treatise in Defense of the Pietists by Abraham Maimonides," 105-106.

movement predated Abraham Maimonides. This is a crucial component of my argument that Ayyubid and early-Mamluk Sufism was characterized by increasingly organized forms and that the Pietists wer part of this trend. In a very general sense, it is quite clear that some kind of Sufi-inflected interpretation of Judaism predated Abraham Maimonides. The *Hidāya ilā farā'iḍ al-qulūb* of Baḥya ibn Paqūda was very much indebted to Sufi ideas and practices and was well-known in the time of Abraham Maimonides, who quotes Baḥya by name.[115] How widely the work was disseminated and whether or not it was used as a model for practice are less clear. Nevertheless, there is evidence that Egyptian Jews practiced ascetic devotions before the time of Abraham Maimonides.

Moses Maimonides hinted at the existence of a group of ascetic Jews in his own time. In his *Thamāniya fuṣūl* (Eight Chapters), an ethical work that prefaces his commentary to the Mishnaic tractate *Avot*, Maimonides devotes the fourth chapter to "healing the diseases of the soul."[116] The primary cure for these ethical diseases is to cultivate virtue by means of "moderate acts that mediate between two extremes."[117] The virtue of abstemiousness (*al-'iffa*), for example, is cultivated by avoiding both of the oppositional extremes of enthusiastic passion (*al-sharra*) and total insensitivity (*'adam al-iḥsās*). Within this context, Maimonides takes special note of the "virtuous ones"

---

[115] *Kifāya*, 2:252. Abraham cites Baḥya approvingly for his interpretation of Zechariah 13:4 ("In that day, every prophet will be ashamed of the visions he had when he prophesied. In order to deceive he will not wear a hairy mantle and he will declare, 'I am not a prophet.'") Baḥya interpreted this to mean that the true prophets and saints *did* wear hairy mantles. See *al-Hidāya*, 9.6.

[116] *Thamāniya Fuṣūl: Mûsâ Maymûnî's Acht Capitel, Arabisch und Deutsch*, ed. M. Wolff (Leiden: Brill, 1903), 7-16 [Judeo-Arabic section]. For the standard Hebrew text, see Joseph Gorfinkle's critical edition of Ibn Tibbon's translation, *The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics (Shemonah Peraḳim): A Psychological and Ethical Treatise* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912), 19-29 [Hebrew section]. The text in Yosef Qafiḥ's edition can be found in *Mishna im Perush Rabbenu Moshe ben Maimon* (Mossad Harav Kook: Jerusalem, 1964), *Nezikin*, 372-407.

[117] *Thamāniya fuṣūl*, 7.

(*fuḍalāʾ*) who occasionally go to ascetic extremes in their devotions: "fasting, staying up at night to pray, renouncing meat and wine, avoiding women, wearing wool and hair, living in the mountains, and cutting themselves off [from social contact] in the wilderness."[118] These actions, he notes, were performed only temporarily and as a cure for the ills of living in a corrupt society (*fasād ahl al-madīna*). Importantly, Maimonides goes on to say, "When the ignorant saw these virtuous individuals doing these acts, and without understanding their purpose, they thought they were virtues [in themselves] and sought to perform them and become like [the virtuous]. They tormented their bodies with all kinds of torments and thought they were attaining virtue and performing good works and by doing so drawing near to God."[119] Maimonides rejects this popular attitude toward extreme devotion as wrong-headed, arguing that one must cultivate moderation in all things. Finally, he returns once again to these "ignorant ones" and says, "If those of our religion (*ahl sharīʿatinā*) who imitate other religious communities (*al-milal*) claim that they are tormenting their bodies and denying themselves all pleasures in order to train their bodily faculties ... this is an error (*ghalaṭ*) on their part."[120] Two important conclusions may be drawn from these statements. First, they indicate that there was a group of Jews – possibly in al-Andalus, where Maimonides was born – who practiced ascetic devotions that they learned from either Muslims or Christians.[121] Second, and more importantly, his remarks indicate that at

---

[118] Ibid., 10.
[119] Ibid., 11.
[120] Ibid., 12.
[121] Maimonides probably was referring to al-Andalus because he wrote most of his commentary on the Mishnah before settling in Egypt. Many scholars have taken this passage to indicate that Maimonides was opposed to Sufi ideas and practices. However, there is no reason to interpret the passage as being strictly about Sufi devotions. Both Egypt and al-Andalus had sizable Christian populations that harbored monks and nuns who practiced similar kinds of ascetic devotions.

least some people justified their actions by claiming that they were following the examples of the virtuous of Israel (i.e. the prophets and the sages).[122] Thus, Maimonides' statements in the *Thamāniya fuṣūl* provide a crucial context for some of Abraham Maimonides' remarks in the *Kifāyat al-'Ābidīn*.[123]

Abraham Maimonides makes it very clear in the *Kifāya* that the special devotions of the Pietists are not meant to be a replacement for the requirements of the Law. He notes, for example, that eating unlawfully obtained food, even once, will erase the merit accrued through ten years of fasting.[124] Wearing a *ṭalit* without the required *ṣiṣit* will erase the merit of a lifetime of wearing wool.[125] Neglecting to place a *mezuzah* at the entrance of one's home will erase the merit of years of meditation in seclusion.[126] In the section on humility (*al-tawāḍu'*), Abraham very pointedly states:

> Some of the righteous (*ba'ḍ al-ṣāliḥīn*) err in being pleased with their own religiosity and righteousness (*dīnihim wa-ṣalāḥihim*) so that they need to return to the correct opinion ... [namely], that it is mandatory for you to know that we are commanded by [God] and held accountable to perform all the commandments of the Torah – both positive and negative. You must know how many their number is and what is expected of you in terms of their performance. Not one individual of Israel is exempted from performing any one [commandment] over any other [commandment] that is expected of him.[127]

---

[122] Maimonides quotes Talmudic and biblical passages throughout this discussion as examples of the *fuḍalā'*.

[123] Maimonides, in the *Guide for the Perplexed* 3:51, also denounces those "who think about and regularly mention God" (*amma man yafkur fī Allāh wa-yukaththir dhikrahu*). This may indicate a group of Jews who practice *dhikr*, which is how David Blumenthal interprets the. See *Philosophic Mysticism*, 60. See also ibid, 148-149, where Blumenthal cites other writings from Maimonides' that indicate that he was aware of what may have been Pietist groups. Maimonides' wife and her family bore the epithet *he-ḥasid*, the pious. On this latter point, see also S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 5:482-483.

[124] *Kifāya*, 1:146.

[125] Ibid., 1:148. The *ṭalit* is a four-cornered garment worn under the clothing and *ṣiṣit* are threaded fringes attached to the corners of the *ṭalit*. The biblical commandment to wear *ṣiṣit* with the *ṭalit* can be found in Numbers 15:38 and Deuteronomy 22:12.

[126] *Kifāya*, 1:148.

[127] Ibid., 2:64.

The shift to second-person address in this section of the *Kifāya* makes it clear that Abraham Maimonides is directly addressing the Pietist community. He makes an unequivocal charge to those Pietists who neglected the commandments of the Torah in favor of their devotions.[128]

Taking the statements of Moses and Abraham Maimonides together, it seems highly likely that there had been a community of Jews in Egypt who practiced ascetic devotions before Abraham wrote the *Kifāya.* This group was also extreme enough to warrant censure from the father and a warning from the son.[129] On one level, then, the *Kifāya* can be seen as an attempt to provide a coherent framework within which these contemporary Pietists could practice their devotions and remain within the *halakhic* boundaries of Judaism. On another level, Abraham could be seen as attempting to take control of a pre-existing movement by defining the limits of acceptable behavior. By inscribing this behavior within a mythical framework of biblical and rabbinic history, he created a viable model that would allow the movement to continue to exist and adapt to new circumstances. In other words, Abraham Maimonides took up the Pietist institutions described above, and organized them further in pursuit of a greater goal – the cultivation of prophecy. In order to understand why he did this it is necessary to explore his conception of the Pietists' place in Jewish society. Attention to the

[128] This was not only a problem during the time of Abraham Maimonides. In a very famous Genizah letter (CUL TS 8J 26.19) published by S. D. Goitein, a woman wrote to David ben Joshua Maimonides in his capacity as *ra'īs al-yahūd*. The woman complains that her husband has been neglecting his duties as a husband and a Jew because he is spending all his time with the Muslim Sufi master al-Kūrānī, whom Goitein identified as Yūsuf al-'Ajamī al-Kūrānī (d. 1367). See Goitein, "A Jewish Addict to Sufism In the Time of the Nagid David II Maimonides."

[129] Paul Fenton takes this same position, arguing that Abraham Maimonides was trying "to consolidate a spiritual phase that was already existent and widespread." See "Maimonides – Father and Son: Continuity and Change," 127.

relational structure of the Pietist movement, reveals more clearly Abraham's vision for the movement and its role in bringing about the redemption of Israel.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE PIETIST MOVEMENT

In the *Kifāyat al-ʻābidīn*, Abraham Maimonides detailed his all-encompassing vision for the Jewish people. Here, I detail the ways in which Abraham attempted to organize the Jewish community and how this organization informed his larger political project. The *Kifāya* is divided into four sections, totaling ten books in all, and is meant to contain something for every member of the community.[130] The first three sections were meant for the entire community and contained a codification of Jewish law in Judeo-Arabic.[131] While much of this portion of the *Kifāya* has been lost, the portions of it that survive indicate its character very clearly. It was essentially *halakhic* in nature and, like his father's *Mishneh Torah*, contained straightforward instructions on all matters of law, omitting the complicated and copious Talmudic and Ga'onic material that informed his legal decisions.[132] It was, in essence, exactly what the title suggests, an all-encompassing guide to being Jewish. Abraham Maimonides described the

---

[130] On the structure and organization of the *Kifāya*, see Rosenblatt, *The High Ways*, 1:1-4; Gerson Cohen, "The Soteriology of Abraham Maimuni" 214-219; and Paul Fenton, "En Marge du *Kitāb Kifāyat al-ʻĀbidīn* de Rabbi Abraham ben Moïse Maïmonide," in *REJ* 150 (1991): 385-405.

[131] It is this portion of the *Kifāya* that Nisim Dana has published as *Sefer ha-maspiq*. This may seem to be an odd move, as his father had already done precisely the same thing in writing his code of Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*. The fact that Maimonides' code was in Hebrew and Abraham's in Judeo-Arabic indicates that the *Kifāya* was meant to appeal specifically to his co-religionists of all walks of life. On this topic, see Nisim Dana's discussion in *Sefer ha-maspiq*, 18-20, where he conjectures that the purpose of writing another *halakhic* code was 1) it differed in doctrine; 2) it is stylistically different; 3) it was intended for a different audience; and 4) it differed in subject matter. See also Paul Fenton's discussion of this question in his review of Dana, "Dana's Edition of Abraham Maimuni's *Kifāyat al'Ābidīn*," in *JQR* 82 (1991): 194-206.

[132] The fact that neither Maimonides nor his son cited their sources in their legal codes is one of the reasons that their codes were met with hostility by some members of the community. See Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 97-107; 518-525.

content of this first part as pertaining to *al-sulūk al-ʻāmm*, "the general way." The scope of this general way encompassed "the performance of the outward commandments (*al-miṣvot al-ẓāhira*), including performing the positive commandments and avoiding the negative commandments."[133] In other words, "the general way" was a path that all Jews must follow, and one who treaded this path was known as a *ṣaddiq* – a righteous person.[134]

In addition to the general way, there was an exclusive or specialized way that was to be followed only by the elites of the Jewish community. *Al-sulūk al-khāṣṣ* - "the exclusive way" – is detailed in the fourth and final section of the *Kifāya* and is comprised of books nine and ten, the latter of which has been lost.[135] In Abraham Maimonides' description, the exclusive way is "the way of the [inward] purpose of the commandments and their secrets (*ghāyāt al-miṣvot wa-asrārihā*) and what can be gleaned from the intent of the Law (*al-sharīʻa*), and the lives of the saints and prophets."[136] The exclusive way was thus reserved for those who understood the inward meaning of the commandments and the Law, and the one who trod this path was known as *ḥasid* –

---

[133] *Kifāya*, 1:132. In Jewish law, the positive commandments (*miṣvot ʻaseh*) and negative commandments (*miṣvot lo' taʻaseh*) is a distinction meant to differentiate between commandments of action, such as those related to prayer, and those commandments that forbid action, such as the injunction to avoid eating pork.

[134] Abraham Maimonides says that those who follow this path may be called *tam* (blameless), *yashar* (upright), or *sar me-raʻ* (turns away from evil), but that the best term is *ṣaddiq*; *Kifāya*, 1:132-134. This description may be a reference to Job 1:1, "There was a man in the land of Uz named Job. That man was blameless and upright (*tam ve-yashar*); he feared God and shunned evil (*sar me-raʻ*)." Importantly, the one term in the verse that Abraham Maimonides did not use – *yire' 'elohim* (fears God) – is a crucial component of both Abraham Maimonides' and his father's anthropology. The first stage of devotion is the fear of God, followed by the love of God, which is the more noble state of devotion. Thus, there is a subtle hint here that those who tread the general path do so out of fear and not yet love. On this distinction in both authors, see Gerson Cohen, "The Soteriology of Abraham Maimuni," 220.

[135] Paul Fenton has located fragments of this final section of the Kifāya; see "*Torat ha-devequt be-mishnato shel R. Avraham ben ha-Rambam: qeṭaʻim mitokh ha-ḥeleq ha-'avud shel ha-maspiq le-ʻovdey ha-shem*" (The Doctrine of Devequt According to Abraham Maimonides: Fragments from the Lost Portion of the Kifāya), in *Daʻat* 50-52 (2003): 107-119. He has located 3 fragments to date: TS Misc. 24.152; Firk. II 1.2924; and Firk II 1.2926.

[136] *Kifāya*, 1:134.

pious.[137] Note in particular that the exclusive way is the way of "the saints and the prophets." Already at the beginning of his treatment of the Pietist way, Abraham hinted that these practices and virtues are connected to prophecy. The ninth book of the *Kifāya* is devoted to enumerating and explicating the nature and purpose of this exclusive way, which is composed of a number of "Exalted Paths" (*masālik rafī'a*). It is in his descriptions of these Exalted Paths that Abraham Maimonides draws most fully on Sufi literature and praxis. These paths, which we might more accurately call virtues, are: sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), mercy (*raḥma*), generosity (*karam*), forbearance (*ḥilm*), modesty (*tawāḍu'*), reliance on God (*ittikāl*), contentedness (*qanā'a*), asceticism (*zuhd*), zealousness (*mujāhada*), governance of faculties and actions (*ḍabṭ al-quwā wa'l-af'āl*), and acts of isolation/meditation (*khalwāt*).[138] These virtues are meant to be mastered, one by one, until they can all be mastered simultaneously, which will lead to the attainment

---

[137] Like his description of those who follow the general way, Abraham Maimonides also offers a couple of descriptions of those who follow the exclusive way: *qadosh* (holy), *'anav* (humble), and *ḥasid* (pious). Of these, *ḥasid* is the most appropriate; *Kifāya*, 1:134.

[138] Scholars have debated whether or not these Exalted Paths were meant to mirror the stations (*maqāmāt*) of the Sufis. Rosenblatt writes, "The *masālik rafī'a* or virtues, which mark the stages of this path in ascending order in each one of which man must perfect himself so as to be in complete possession of them, resemble in every way the *maqāmāt* of the Sufi's *ṭarīqa*." *Kifāya*, 1:50. Gerson Cohen, "The Soteriology of Abraham Maimuni," 233-234, n. 24, argues that the fact that Abraham Maimonides did not actually use the classical Sufi terms of "states and stations" indicates that he was not attempting to import the *maqāmāt* into his system: "Maimuni's avoidance of such terms can hardly be an accident. (According to Maimuni, the virtues are paths that must all be traversed simultaneously, if religious perfection is to be attained; … They could, therefore, not be characterized as states or stages at all."" Paul Fenton, "Abraham Maimonides: Founding a Mystical Dynasty," 144 argues that the Exalted Paths are indeed related to the *maqāmāt* because, despite the absence of the term *maqāmāt*, the Exalted Paths are nevertheless the very same as many of the *maqāmāt* of classical Sufi manuals. I side with Rosenblatt and Fenton not only because of the similarity of the *masālik* and the *maqāmāt*, but also because Abraham Maimonides does actually use the word *maqām* on a number of occasions to refer to spiritual stations; see for example *Kifāya* 2:84 and his *Responsa*, where he makes references to *maqām al-nubuwwa*, the station of prophecy; Freimann and Goitein, *Responsa*, 39, no. 30.

of *al-wuṣūl*, which was treated in the tenth book of the *Kifāya*.[139] This portion has been lost.

What then, was the relationship between the general way and the exclusive way? More specifically, what was the relationship between those Jews who followed the general way and those elites who followed the exclusive way?

Abraham Maimonides is very clear about those who are required to follow the general way: this is a requirement for every single Jew without exception. The lowliest, most uneducated members of the community along with the most learned and sophisticated must al perform the commandments that comprise the general way. Abraham Maimonides' vision of the general way was that it was universally applicable to every member of the Jewish community: "Begin with the outward, general way and carry it out completely without being remiss in anything that is required of you; then you may begin the exclusive way."[140] However, this statement should not be taken to mean that once one begins the exclusive way it is allowable to abandon the general way. On the contrary, neglecting the general way in favor of the exclusive way will undo any merit gained by performing the supererogatory practices on the exclusive way.[141] The division of praxis between general and exclusive is thus not a strict division of labor. Rather, the exclusive way of the Exalted Paths is a supererogatory set of practices and virtues that augment the general way. One does not abandon the general

---

[139] In his final remarks to this section of the *Kifāya*, Abraham writes, "These paths have an order (*rutba*) and some precede others. I do not mean they precede or come after each other in terms of when they are tread, but that they precede and come after each other in terms of level and order." *Kifāya*, 2:420.

[140] *Kifāya*, 1:146.

[141] See *Kifāya*, 1:148. Specifically, Abraham Maimonides argues that if one were to eat unlawful food it would nullify ten years of fasting. Or, in another example, wearing wool (*ṣūf*; i.e. the dress of the Sufis) will not make up for neglecting to wear the mandated fringes (*ṣiṣit*). Living in meditatve isolation (*al-khalwa*) will likewise not make up for neglecting to live in a house with a *mezuzah*.

way upon embarking upon the exclusive way; they are to be followed simultaneously.[142] In addition, the Exalted Paths are not so much practices but rather virtues that are the result of specific spiritual practices. For Sufis and Pietists, who both drew on Aristotelian ethics, the practices that established virtue and disciplined the body were known as *riyāḍāt*, or "exercises." Abraham Maimonides hints in a number of places that the *miṣvot* are themselves the *riyāḍāt* that will train the body and inculcate these virtues.[143] In a very literal sense then, the general way was meant to train body and soul in preparation for the exclusive way.

This interrelated notion of the general and exclusive ways had important social consequences. Truly to walk the Exalted Paths required an intensive commitment from the *ḥasid*. In addition to the already rigorous requirements of the *halakhah*, he or she would also have been responsible for additional supererogatory prayers, fasts, periods of isolated meditation, and exacting ethical attitudes. This was not within the realm of possibility for the majority of medieval Egyptian Jews, who had to work for a living. Abraham Maimonides addresses this issue in his chapter on asceticism (*al-zuhd*).[144] He raises the potential objection that there are passages in the Torah that promise worldly

---

[142] In the section devoted to humility, Abraham warns that there are some who gravely err in thinking that they do not need to perform the commandments because of their extreme piety: "Likewise, some of the righteous err, being pleased with their own religious practice and perfection. But they must return to correct understanding ... which is that it is mandatory for you to know that we are commanded by God and held accountable for performing all the commandments of the Torah, positive and negative. ... And nobody from Israel can be satisfied with performing some [of the commandments] to the exclusion of others." *Kifāya*, 2:64.

[143] In *Kifāya*, 2:256, for example, Abraham notes that fasting is a *riyāḍa* that will inculcate the virtue of *al-zuhd*. In one of his clearest statements on the subject, *Kifāya* 2:276, Abraham writes, "We have made clear in the second introduction of the introductions to this part [i.e. part 3], that [God's] *riyāḍa* is in His commandments for the whole community (*sharā'i'ihi li-jumlat al-milla*)." This statement refers, unfortunately, to one of the lost sections of the *Kifāya*. See Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 160, n. 43, for a more extensive list of the instances in which Abraham Maimonides used the word *riyāḍa* in the *Kifāya*.

[144] The chapter on asceticism (*al-faṣl fī 'l-zuhd*) can be found in *Kifāya*, 2:224-306.

riches (*ni'am al-dunyā*) as a reward for obedience (*jazā' al-ṭā'a*); so how can strict asceticism be a virtue?[145] His answer involves two arguments. First, he notes that it would be "impossible for an entire religious community (*milla*), or even half of it, or even a fourth of it, or even a tenth of it, to be ascetics (*zuhhād*)."[146] Therefore, only a minority of religious specialists would be expected to cultivate the virtue of *zuhd* and worldly delights are the reward for the rest of Israel who, although they are obedient, cannot tread the exclusive path.

Second, Abraham Maimonides argues, citing his father, that the worldly rewards of the obedient masses ought to be used, at least partially, to support the elites in their devotions:[147]

> We say that if it were not for one engaged in sowing and reaping, [and one] grinding, kneading, and baking the crop, it would not be easy for the ascetic to obtain a dry piece [of bread] to support his body. And were it not for one who spins, weaves, and sews, it would not be easy for [the ascetic] to obtain a cotton robe or a woolen cloak to cover his body.[148]

Thus, Abraham Maimonides' general vision for the Jewish people extends beyond the strict details of the law and encompasses the livelihoods of both average and elite Jews. The general and exclusive ways are thus connected both in terms of praxis, the general way being the foundation for the exclusive way, and in terms of relational structure. The majority of Jews are meant to follow the general way of the *miṣvot*, for which they

---

[145] Abraham Maimonides does not cite any biblical prooftexts here, but he surely has in mind such verses as *Psalms* 112: 1-3, "Happy is the man who fears the Lord, who is ardently devoted to His commandments. His descendants will be mighty in the land, a blessed generation of upright men. Wealth and riches are in his house and his beneficence lasts forever."
[146] *Kifāya*, 2:274.
[147] Moses Maimonides's view was that the purpose of society was to foster the perfection of certain intellectually superior individuals. One of the ways in which this is accomplished is to support the scholarship and solitude of the religious elites. See Howard Kreisel, "Individual Perfection vs. Communal Welfare and the Problem of Contradiction in Maimonides' Approach to Ethics," in *PAAJR* 58 (1992): 138.
[148] *Kifāya*, 2:276.

will be rewarded with health and a measure of worldly success. A portion of this worldly success should then be used to support the supererogatory devotions of the religious specialists who follow the exclusive way. This seems to be what Abraham Maimonides had in mind when he wrote about the organization of the community (*tadbīr qehillot yisra'el*) in the fifth book of the *Kifāya*.[149]

Abraham argues that "a choice group of modest and ascetic individuals who are desirous of the world to come" should be selected from the community. These should be allowed to stay "continually isolated in the synagogue" (*munqaṭiʿīn dā'iman fī bet ha-kenesset*) for the purpose of "reading the Torah, giving themselves over to devotions, being busy with religious matters and not to worldly pursuits; their needs having being provided [by the community]."[150] These elites of the synagogue are equated with the "ten devotees" (*ʿasarah baṭlanim*) of rabbinic literature.[151] While these ten devotees were usually understood to be judges, scribes, cantors, and teachers, Abraham Maimonides argues that they are not, in fact, such exoteric religious professionals. Rather, they are "isolated devotees" (*ʿibād munqaṭiʿīn*) who are to serve as devotional and moral exemplars for the community in exchange for worldly support.[152] The language of *ʿibād munqaṭiʿīn* is reminiscent of the Sufi *zāwiya*, in which the Sufi retires to

---

[149] This portion of the *Kifāya* can be found in *Sefer ha-maspiq*, 105-113. The theme of this section of the *Kifāya* is prayer, and the sub-unit that encompasses this particular discussion is entitled, "On Preparing the Place of Prayer" (*amma tahayyu' mawḍiʿ al-ṣalāt*).

[150] *Sefer ha-maspiq*, 112.

[151] "What is considered to be large city? Any [city] with ten devotees. Any [settlement] with less than this should be considered a village." Mishnah *Megillah*, 1:3.

[152] Abraham Maimonides actually cites his father as formerly being of the opinion that the ten devotees were professionals but that, later in life, he changed his mind and agreed with Abraham. Maimonides' comments on this subject can be found in his commentary on *Mishnah Megillah* and *Hilkhot Megilla* in the *Mishneh Torah.* It is not clear at all that this is actually what Maimonides was arguing. Furthermore, the earlier work (his commentary on the Mishnah) is where his position is closer to Abraham's, while the later *Mishneh Torah* supports the more widespread interpretation. If Maimonides did in fact change his mind on the subject, it was the opposite of the shift that Abraham claims he made. On this point, see Paul Fenton, "Maimonides - Father and Son: Continuity and Change," 121.

one "corner" of a structure for devotional purposes. There is a very good possibility that Abraham Maimonides has in mind here the model of the Sufi *zāwiya*, wherein religious elites could dedicate themselves entirely to their devotions.[153] Again, Abraham Maimonides advocates the integration of the general and exclusive ways within a holistic vision of the community. In this larger vision, the entire community is organized for the explicit purpose of endowing certain individuals with the ability to pursue their devotions. These devotions would then effect the return of prophecy in anticipation of the messianic age.

Before turning to the subject of prophecy itself, however, it is first necessary to detail how, exactly, Abraham Maimonides conceptualized the religious elites who followed the exclusive way. At the beginning of the ninth book of the *Kifāya*, he very clearly states that one who follows the general way is to be known as *ṣaddiq* and the one who follows the exclusive way is to be called *ḥasid*. This nomenclature is not surprising given both the long history of the rabbinic usage of *ḥasid* to denote a pious individual and Abraham's own Hebrew calque of *al-sulūk al-khāṣṣ* as *derekh ha-ḥasidut*, the path of

---

[153] I would like to thank Professor Paul Fenton who first brought this passage and its significance to my attention. See also his, "Maimonides - Father and Son: Continuity and Change," 120-121. More evidence of the fact that Abraham Maimonides advocated that certain individuals be allowed to devote themselves to nothing but isolated Torah study and devotions is found in his discussion of *al-zuhd*. Here, he cites his father's comments from the *Mishneh Torah*, *Shemiṭah ve-Yovel* 13:13: "Each and every person who comes into this world, whose soul permits him, and whose intellect makes him understand that he should separate himself and stand before the Lord to worship and serve Him ... and removes from his neck the yoke of concerns (*ḥeshbonot*) that humans pursue, behold, this person will become utterly sanctified (*nitqadesh qodesh qodeshim*)." *Kifāya*, 2:280. This indicates the high value that both father and son placed upon isolated meditation without the impediments of human intercourse and commerce. Finally, there may be a hint of a communally-supported place of devotion in ʻObadyāh's *Maqāla*: "Know that in previous times, the virtuous used to work (*yajtahidūna*) in the buildings of the *midrashot* (study halls) for students. And they would give [the students] material to live on (*mādda taqūmu bihā*) and would supervise them in busying themselves with Torah." *al-Maqāla al-ḥawḍīya*, 22b. Like much of ʻObadyāh's writing, this passage is not as clear as it could be. Paul Fenton interpreted the passage to be about materials for learning, see his translation on p. 108. In light of Abraham Maimonides' ideas however, it would not be surprising that ʻObadyāh would also advocate a *khānqāh*-like establishment.

piety.[154] Indeed, he uses the term *ḥasid* and its derivatives throughout the *Kifāya* when he discusses those who walk the exclusive path. However, he also hints that the *ḥasidim* are more than just "pious," they are, in fact, the "saints of Israel" (*awliyā' yisra'el*). Abraham never says this explicitly, but clues scattered throughout the *Kifāya* allude to his identification of the *ḥasidim* with the *awliyā' yisra'el*. This is an important distinction, because, in Abraham Maimonides' hierarchy, the saints are just below the prophets (*al-anbiyā'*) in terms of their proximity to God, spiritual gifts, and ability to perform miracles. If Abraham Maimonides posited that the Pietists were indeed the saints of Israel, this is further evidence that the whole group was working toward the realization of prophecy, the messianic age, and the subsequent political redemption of Israel.

In almost every instance that Abraham Maimonides mentions the *awliyā'*, he also mentions the *anbiyā'*. For example, in the above-mentioned passage in which he describes *al-sulūk al-khāṣṣ*, he writes that this path can be understood from, among other things, "the lives of the saints and prophets" (*siyar al-anbiyā' wa'l-awliyā'*).[155] In the section on humility (*al-tawāḍu'*), he notes that "the lights of [God's] emanation illuminate His prophets and saints" (*ashraqat anwār fayḍihi 'alā anbiyā'ihi wa-awliyā'ihi*).[156] Examples of such equivalences abound.[157] In other instances Abraham explicitly places the *awliyā'* behind the *anbiyā'*, as their followers. In the section on reliance on God (*al-*

[154] *Kifāya*, 2:80 and 2:252.
[155] Ibid., 1:134.
[156] Ibid., 2:60.
[157] The instances in which Abraham Maimonides employs the phrase *anbiyā' wa-awliyā'* (prophets and saints) or some variation thereof, are many. See, for example, *Kifāya* 1:134; 1:202; 2:60; 2:92; 2:98; 2:120; 2:126; 2:138; 2:152; 2:164; 2:232-234; 2:248; 2:254; and 2:256. It may not be a coincidence that Abraham uses the terms *awliyā'* and *anbiyā'* in conjunction throughout the *Kifāya* until 2:256. After that point, he no longer mentions them together. In each of these later instances, he associates the *awliyā'* with the Pietist project; see 2:266; 2:272; 2:284; 2:344; 2:346; 2:364; 2:374: 2:383; and 2:416.

ittikāl), he places the saints and prophets in the highest category of those who exhibit this virtue: "The first of the three categories is the reliance of the prophets who are drawn near [to God] (*al-anbiyā' al-muqarrabīn*)[158] and their followers the sincere saints (*awliyā' al-mukhliṣīn*)."[159] Examples in which Abraham Maimonides calls the saints "the followers of the prophets" are likewise numerous. These citations indicate the very close relationship between the saints and prophets in his hierarchy of religious figures, even displaying a certain ambiguity about the difference between the two. Thus, for Abraham Maimonides to claim that the *ḥasidim* who comprise his fellowship (*ṣuḥba*) are the saints of Israel is to claim for them an exalted status that puts them into direct a relationship with the prophets.

As mentioned above, Abraham Maimonides never explicitly identifies the *ḥasidim* as the *awliyā'*. In fact, in every instance that he gives a textual example of a *walī*, he does so in reference to the early rabbinic sages. Examples of *anbiyā'* are always drawn from the Bible and the *awliyā'* are always drawn from the Mishnah and Talmud. This is a technique of legitimation whereby he is able to establish an important connection between the biblical prophets and the first generations of rabbis. While these rabbis were already connected to the prophets by means of the chain of tradition as embodied in the Oral Torah, Abraham Maimonides makes this connection more explicit by arguing that these sages not only transmitted the Oral Torah, but also

---

[158] Rosenblatt's transcription of the Judeo-Arabic text has a *shadda* and a *fatḥa* over the letter *resh* here. I have not yet been able to see whether this was in the original text or an addition by the scribe. The difference between *muqarribīn* – those who draw near, and *muqarrabīn* – those who are drawn near by God, is vast. This is precisely the distinction that Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī makes in his Introduction to *Laṭā'if al-minan*. There he states that there are two types of saints, the saint who draws near to God (*walī yatawallā Allāh*) and the saint whom God draws near (*walī yatawallāhu Allāh*); see *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 52.

[159] *Kifāya*, 2:92.

performed the same devotions and practices as the prophets. Thus, by linking the Pietists to the saints, Abraham was, in effect, linking them to the prophets.

Abraham Maimonides hints that the Pietists are the *awliyāʾ* in very subtle ways. One of the first of these is in the section devoted to asceticism (*zuhd*). In a passage in which he discusses the merits of habituating oneself to ascetic practices, he writes that the prophets and saints abandoned "worldly habits in addition to undertaking examinations of the heart. They wore wool, satisfied themselves with eating only that which was necessary, but not tasty, and practiced fasting or [eating] very little. Some of them gave up women, abandoned civilization, and retired to caves, mountains, and the isolated wilderness."[160] These are the same *riyāḍāt* that Abraham Maimonides prescribes for his *ḥasidim*. He notes, "All of these [practices] are incumbent upon beginning the regimen (*al-riyāḍa*)."[161] In another passage from his discussion of asceticism, Abraham Maimonides notes that *al-maslak al-rafīʿ* (the Exalted Path) is nothing more than *derekh ḥasidey ha-shem u-nevi'av* – the path of the pious of God and His prophets.[162] This conflation of the *ḥasidim* and the *awliyāʾ* is not incidental; he has replaced the *awliyāʾ* with the *ḥasidim*, putting the latter in a direct relationship with the prophets.

One of the clearest instances in which Abraham Maimonides hints that the Pietists are the saints of Israel is shortly after the passage mentioned above. Here, he speaks directly to the reader, posing a hypothetical question: Suppose you really like delicious food but decide you want to become a Pietist. Rather than using the term

---

[160] Ibid., 2:248.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid., 2:252.

ḥasid, Abraham Maimonides says instead, "[Suppose] you decide you want to walk the path of the *awliyā*', which you have *seen* (*shāhadtahā*) or [the path of] the prophets, of which you have *heard*."[163] This seems to indicate that Abraham believes that there are contemporary saints of Israel who can be seen and imitated; *shāhada* being a verb that denotes physical observation or witnessing. In his concluding remarks on asceticism, Abraham claims that some of the *ḥasidim* who achieved "the ultimate in piety" (*nihāya fī 'l-ḥasidut*) are "close to the level of the prophets" (*al-qarībīn min darajat al-anbiyā*').[164] Finally, he refers to the virtues and devotions he prescribes for the Pietists as *ṭarīq al-walāya* – the way of sanctity or sainthood.[165] All these examples together indicate that Abraham Maimonides believed that the circle of Pietists, the *ḥasidey yisra'el* or *ḥasidey derekh ha-shem*, are actually the equivalent of the *awliyā' Allāh*.[166] This indicates the potential for the *ḥasidim* to approach the spiritual level of the prophets and, as I will show in the next section, actually cultivate prophecy themselves.

---

[163] Ibid., 2:254. Emphasis mine.

[164] Ibid., 2:298. He goes on in this passage to say that the great *ḥasidim* who have achieved such a high level of piety are like R. Ḥanina in the Talmud (who was known for his ascetic poverty): "Each and every day a heavenly voice (*bat qol*) goes out and proclaims: 'The entire world is supported (*nizon*) because of Ḥanina, My son. It is enough for Ḥanina [to eat] only a *qav* of carob from one Sabbath eve to the next." *Berakhot* 17b.

[165] *Kifāya*, 2:346, 2:348, and 2:350.

[166] See *Kifāya*, 2:320-322 where Abraham Maimonides argues that the *ṭarīq* of the Pharisees (*perushim*) of the Mishnah and Talmud (i.e. the *awliyā*') was synonymous with zealousness (*al-mujāhada*), the same quality he enjoins for his followers; *Kifāya*, 2:342 where he writes "the paths of [God's] prophets and pious" (*darkhey nevi'av ve-ḥasidav*); *Kifāya*, 2:382 where he notes that the practice of *khalwa*, which he advocates for his disciples, is the same practiced by *kibār al-awliyā*' (the great saints); and *Kifāya*, 2:322-324 and 2:423 where he notes that one must have a guide (*musallik* or *shaykh*) in order to tread the Exalted Paths and then notes that the "sons of the prophets" (a reference to the circle of the biblical prophet Elisha) had a *musallik*. Even Maimonides seemed to indicate that certain people of his own generation may approach the level of the prophets. Particularly in the *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides blurs the line between the *fuḍalā*' ("the noble ones" of his time) and the *anbiyā'*. See David Blumenthal, *Philosophic Mysticism*, 99-101.

THE RETURN OF PROPHECY

Abraham Maimonides did not outline his ideas on prophecy and its relationship to the Pietist movement in a single place. Rather, much as in his father's *Guide for the Perplexed*, his ideas must be pieced together from various portions of the *Kifāya* and other writings.[167] To begin, I will review Abraham Maimonides' psychological mechanisms of prophecy. This will be followed by an examination of his discussion of the possibility of cultivating prophecy and how it relates to the Pietists' goal of attainment to God (*al-wuṣūl*). *Al-wuṣūl*, in its most perfect form, is equated with prophecy and is the ultimate goal of the Exalted Paths. The renewal of prophecy will ultimately bring about the messianic age. Abraham's idea that prophecy might be reinstated did not appear in a vacuum. Historians have long noted that there was a tradition current among the Maimonides family that the return of prophecy was imminent. Thus, it is not surprising to see that Abraham Maimonides and his fellow Pietists took it upon themselves to help bring about this event.[168]

Abraham Maimonides' conception of prophecy was essentially that of his father's, albeit in a much simplified form. At the heart of his views of prophecy was the Neoplatonic soul, which seeks reunification with its divine source. Abraham says

---

[167] In the introduction to the *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides writes that one of the reasons that contradictions may be found in the *Guide* is that "In speaking about very obscure matters it is necessary to conceal some parts and to disclose others." Shlomo Pines, *The Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 18. In practice, this means that a number of Maimonides' positions on different subjects must be pieced together from scattered references in the *Guide*. This is the same strategy adopted by Abraham Maimonides in the *Kifāya*; one must put together his position on different subjects by looking in multiple places.

[168] Abraham Maimonides was not the only Pietist who wrote on this topic. See, for example, the Pietist treatise published by Paul Fenton in which the anonymous author discusses prophecy at length: "A Judeo-Arabic Commentary on the Haftarot;" idem, "A Mystical Treatise on Perfection, Providence and Prophecy from the Jewish Sufi Circle;" See also the Genizah fragments that Paul Fenton published recently, which clearly show a marked interested among the Pietists in prophecy: "*Biqoret 'al ha-Rambam be-ḥibbur ḥasidi min ha-genizah*" (A Controversy about Maimonides in a Pietist Composition from the Genizah), in *Ginzey Qedem* 1 (2005): 139-161. The anonymous *Treatise on Beatitude*, also clearly a Pietist composition, seems also to be about prophecy to some degree. See above, p. 221 n. 17.

explicitly that his conception of the soul relies in its particulars on his father's discussion in the *Thamāniya fuṣūl*.[169] The soul is a unitary entity, although it can be divided conceptually into five functions: the nutritive (*al-ghādhī*), the sensitive (*al-ḥāss*), the imaginative (*al-mutakhayyil*), the impulsive (*al-nuzūʿī*), and the rational (*al-nāṭiq*).[170] These five functions of the soul make life possible when the soul is combined with a material body, the soul animating the matter. However, it is only the imaginative and rational faculties of the soul that make prophecy possible.[171] The critical component of the soul/matter distinction is that the soul has a divine origin and, as such, is what connects humanity to its ultimate source.[172] "The human soul (*nafs al-insān*) is the connection (*al-ṣila*) between [the human being] and his Lord."[173] The soul, as the connecting link between the human and the divine, is the locus of prophetic inspiration (*al-waḥy*).[174] The fundamental obstacle to receiving this inspiration is matter (*al-mādda*).

Although it makes earthly life possible, matter renders the soul incapable of divine communion, owing to its coarse and utterly non-divine quality. It is the veil that

---

[169] *Kifāya*, 2:328: "The subject of this chapter [The Governance of Faculties and Actions] requires introductions that we do not wish to dwell on here because my father and teacher has already explained this in his chapters accompanying his commentary on *Maseket Avot* in the Mishnah." This discussion is found in the first of the eight chapters: *Thamāniya fuṣūl*, 1-4 [Arabic section]; *Shemonah peraqim*, 8-13 [Hebrew section]. The five divisions of the soul are ultimately those of al-Fārābī, via Aristotle. See *Kitāb ārāʾ ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* (Book of the Opinions of the People of the Noble City) (Beirut: Dār al-Machreq, 2002), 108-116.

[170] *Thamāniya fuṣūl*, 1.

[171] See in particular the *Guide* 2:35-39.

[172] See *Kifāya* 2:224, where Abraham Maimonides notes that the soul is the "form" referred to in Genesis 1:26-27: "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' ... And God created man in His image, in the image of God he created him." This is very clearly indebted to his father's interpretation of the same verse in *Guide* 1:1.

[173] *Kifāya*, 2:282.

[174] In an Islamic context, *waḥī* would clearly mean "revelation." However, its seems that for a Maimonidean, the term used for prophets who are not Moses should be "inspiration" and not "revelation." The latter concept was reserved exclusively for the revelation of the Torah at Sinai. On the Maimonidean typology of prophecy see *Guide* 2:45.

separates the soul from its divine source (*ḥajb al-mādda*).[175] In order to become as perfect as humanly possible, one must refine one's materiality and subdue it. The highest level of perfection for the human being is "prophetic perfection" (*al-kamāl al-nabawī*), which is only reached through disciplining the body by acquiring the virtue of humility (*al-tawāḍu'*). This, it will be recalled, is one Abraham's Exalted Paths.[176] This virtue is inculcated by the *riyāḍāt* of the commandments and the supererogatory fasts, prayers, and meditations of the exclusive way. As the matter of the body becomes more satisfied, with food, comfort, sex, and so on, the soul's link to its source is weakened. Conversely, as the body is denied these pleasures and is refined, the soul's link to its source is strengthened.[177] In addition to refining bodily matter, one must also perfect the soul by meditating on its divine source. The combination of bodily denial and continuous meditation on the divine is exemplified in the Exalted Path of asceticism. Abraham Maimonides is quite explicit that the prophets and saints are to spend their time "in nothing but busying themselves with [God], not with anything that would distract them from Him. Therefore, asceticism is one of the Exalted Paths that lead to [God] because the ascetic's heart that is relieved from the cares of this world is thus free to concentrate on that which leads to its Creator."[178] The operative Arabic verb in this passage is *tawṣīl*, to cause to arrive, or more plainly: to achieve *al-wuṣūl*. *Al-wuṣūl* (attainment to God) is at the heart of the Pietist conception of prophecy.

---

[175] *Kifāya*, 2:54.
[176] This is laid out most clearly in the section of the *Kifāya* devoted to *al-tawāḍu'*, especially 2:50-58.
[177] *Kifāya*, 2:224-226.
[178] *Kifāya*, 2:232.

Various levels of *wuṣūl* correspond to one's abilities and accomplishments on the Exalted Paths.[179] The highest level of human perfection, which we have already seen is prophecy, is therefore the same as the highest level of attainment (*al-kamāl al-a'ẓam wa'l-wuṣūl al-tāmm*).[180] One of the most unambiguous statements on the equivalence of *al-wuṣūl* and *al-nubūwa* comes at the end of the ninth book of the *Kifāya*, immediately before the tenth (lost) book, which deals specifically with *wuṣūl*. Here, Abraham Maimonides makes a pointed note (*tanbīh*) that "the truly useful comportment (*sulūk*) that leads to true attainment has, as its ultimate condition, that one take up the path under the guidance of someone who has achieved it (*bi-taslīk shakhṣ wāṣil*)." He then provides a number of examples of biblical prophets who achieved prophecy by means of training at the feet of master prophets: Joshua with Moses, Samuel with Eli, Elisha with Elijah, Baruch with Jeremiah.[181] Most importantly, he includes the *beney ha-nevi'im* (the circle around Elijah and Elisha) as the example *par excellence* of the prophetic master/disciple relationship. Only by following one who has already achieved attainment (whom Abraham calls a *wāṣil*), can one achieve *wuṣūl*. Indeed, the power of the prophetic *wāṣil* is so great that it can even lead to prophecy

---

[179] "Note: These Exalted Paths are bound up one with another. For example, humility is associated with gentleness and mercy with generosity and contentedness with asceticism and so on. And the path that leads to attainment (*al-sulūk al-muwaṣṣil*) is to walk in all of them and to travel the breadth of each one to reach its end, or [at least] to travel as much of the breadth as possible in order to draw near the end. If one travels some of them and neglects others, or stops at some obstacle while traversing its breadth, his *wuṣūl* will be in accordance with his *sulūk*," *Kifāya*, 2:418-420.

[180] *Kifāya*, 2:54 and 2:422-424.

[181] Joshua with Moses: "And the Lord said to Moses, take Joshua the son of Nun a man whom the spirit is in him (*ruaḥ bo*), and lay your hands upon his head ... invest him with some of your authority," *Numbers* 27:18-19. Samuel with Eli: Samuel's mother gave him to Eli to be raised in the temple, *1 Samuel* 1:24-28. Elisha with Elijah: "The Lord said [to Elijah], go back to the wilderness of Damascus and anoint Hazael as King of Aram, anoint Jehu as king of Israel and anoint Elisha ... to follow you as prophet," *1 Kings* 19:15-16. Baruch with Jeremiah: Jeremiah entrusts Baruch with the deed to land in the region of Israel so that it may be used again after the exile, *Jeremiah* 32:6-15.

among non-prophets, as happened to Saul and his servants when in the presence of Samuel.[182]

Abraham Maimonides ends the ninth book of the *Kifāya* by stating that the final section of the book will be devoted to "a chapter on 'the source of attainment' (*aṣl al-wuṣūl*) and [scripture's] saying – 'cleave to Him;' 'by cleaving to Him;' 'you should all cleave to Him' – determine their meaning."[183] These three verses have one word in common, the Hebrew *d-v-q*, which means "to cleave." In all three instances, God speaks to the nation of Israel as a whole as He recapitulates the revelation at Sinai: "You should fear the Lord your God, worship Him, cleave to Him, and swear by His name."[184] "Choose life ... by loving the Lord your God, listening to His voice, and cleaving to Him."[185] "Follow after the Lord your God, fear Him and observe His commandments, hear His voice, worship Him, and cleave to Him."[186] Of these, however, none is more intriguing than Deuteronomy 11:22-23, "If, indeed, you keep all this instruction (*ha-miṣvah ha-zo't*) that I have commanded you, loving the Lord your God, walking in His ways, and cleaving to Him, the Lord will pluck out all these nations (*goyim*) from before you and you will displace nations greater and more numerous than you." By referring to these verses, Abraham Maimonides does two things. First, he connects the notions of *wuṣūl* and *nubūwa* to that of *devequt* – cleaving, which in medieval Jewish philosophy typically meant the cleaving of the human and divine intellects.[187] Second, and critical

---

[182] *1 Samuel* 19:20-23.
[183] *Kifāya*, 2:424.
[184] Deuteronomy 10:20.
[185] Ibid. 30:19-20.
[186] Ibid. 13:5.
[187] For an overview, see Moshe Idel, "Varieties of Devekut in Jewish Mysticism," in idem, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 35-58; and see Gilya Schmidt, "Cleaving to God" through the Ages: An Historical Analysis of the Jewish Concept of 'Devekut'," in *Mystics Quarterly* 21

to the argument of this chapter, he makes a political reward the consequence of *devequt* and obedience to the Torah. In other words, by cultivating *wuṣūl/nubūwa/devequt*, the Pietists hoped to achieve the political end of "displacing the nations greater and more numerous than [the Jews]."

This latter point is supported by a passage in Abraham Maimonides' *Milḥamot ha-Shem* (The Wars of the Lord), a treatise he wrote in defense of his father's writings.[188] In defense of his father's position that there would be no eating and drinking in the world to come, Abraham writes of the difference between "the days of the messiah" (*yemot ha-meshiaḥ*) and "the world to come" (*ha-'olam ha-ba'*).[189] If one conceptually separates these two periods, he argues, there is no problem, because the biblical verses that talk about eating and drinking all refer to the days of the messiah.[190] Of particular importance to the present discussion is Abraham's quotation of the rabbinic dictum "There is no difference between this world and the days of the Messiah except for [our] enslavement to [other] kingdoms (*ella shi'abbud malkhuyot bilvad*)."[191] It is clear then, that the days of the Messiah refer to a period when Israel will once again have its own sovereign kingdom. Abraham is particularly interested in the "feast of Leviathan"

(1995): 103-120.

[188] Unlike most of Abraham Maimonides' writings, *Milḥamot ha-Shem* was written in Hebrew, presumably because it was a response to the criticism coming from the rabbis of southern Europe, where the learned Jews read and wrote in Hebrew, not in Judeo-Arabic. The standard edition is that prepared and edited by Reuben Margoliyot, *Milḥamot ha-shem* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1952). Fred Rosner has prepared an English translation that includes an extensive bibliography of the Maimonidean controversies and essays on the same subject; *The Wars of the Lord by Abraham Maimonides in Defense of his Father Moses Maimonides* (Haifa: The Maimonides Research Institute, 2000).

[189] Maimonides' position is detailed in his *al-Maqāla fī teḥiyyat ha-metim* (Treatise on Resurrection), published with Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation by Joshua Finkel, "Maimonides' Treatise on Resurrection," in *PAAJR* 9 (1930): 1-105 [English] and 1-42 [Arabic and Hebrew].

[190] This discussion is in Margoliyot, *Milḥamot ha-shem*, 61-68.

[191] *Milḥamot ha-shem*, 64. This dictum is in BT *Berakhot* 34b and *Sanhedrin* 99a. Maimonides himself cites this dictum in his discussion of the days of the messiah and the future Jewish kingdom in *Mishneh Torah*, *Melakhim u-Milḥamot*, 12.2. Margoliyot, in a footnote to this section, quotes Maimonides from *Pereq ḥeleq*: "The days of the messiah are a time when sovereignty will return to Israel and [the people] will return to the land of Israel."

(*se'udat livyatan*), a common idea in rabbinic literature that the sages will eat the Leviathan during the days of the messiah. Abraham writes that the feast of Leviathan is an allegory, the secret meaning of which is that "eating" the Leviathan refers to the destruction of human passions and the evil inclination (*yeṣer ha-ra'*). Once these have been conquered, "then one will know the Lord his God by the cleaving (*hidavveq*) of his intellect and soul to the Active Intellect and each of them will return to being a single thing."[192] Thus, it is quite clear that Abraham Maimonides, building on his father's teachings, considered the days of the messiah to be a time when prophecy (note the language of *devequt*) and political redemption will appear together.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Maimonides family believed that the return of prophecy was imminent. In the *Iggeret Teman* (Epistle to Yemen), Maimonides responds to a messianic fervor that had gripped Yemen after the appearance of an individual claiming to be the Messiah. Maimonides' response was that no one knew when the Messiah would come, although his advent would be preceded by the return of prophecy. It is at this point that he relates a family tradition about a secret interpretation of Balaam's statement in Numbers 23:23 to the effect that the time from Creation to Balaam would be equal to the time from Balaam to the return of prophecy. This would place the return of prophecy approximately in the year 1216 CE. "This is the most reliable tradition concerning the advent of the Messiah. I call it reliable, although I have admonished against it, and strictly prohibited blazoning it abroad, lest some people deem it unduly postponed."[193]

---

[192] *Milḥamot ha-shem*, 66.

[193] Abraham Halkin and David Hartman, *Epistles of Maimonides: Crisis and Leadership* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985), 122-123. See also Hartman's discussion of this issue in his commentary, *Epistles of Maimonides*, 169-171. It is worth mentioning here that Abraham Heschel argued

Through a long series of hints and allusions, Abraham Maimonides lays out a systematic conception of sanctity and prophecy in the *Kifāya*. By linking the saints directly to the prophets, he implies that they may receive prophetic inspiration. Furthermore, by drawing on his father's conception of prophecy and its relationship to soul and matter, he designed the fourth section of the *Kifāya* as a manual for the elite Pietists to refine and subdue their materiality. The implication of writing such a manual was the very real possibility of cultivating the ultimate form of attainment to God, which was nothing other than prophecy itself. This is not surprising, given the Maimonides' family tradition that the return of prophecy was imminent. By linking this complex of ideas to the biblical-philosophical concept of *devequt*, Abraham was able to join the Pietist project to the biblical promise of redemption contained in Deuteronomy 11:22-23. Unfortunately, since we no longer possess the tenth and final chapter of the *Kifāya* wherein he treated *wuṣūl*, there is no way to know how explicit he was. However, it cannot be a coincidence that the portion of the book that was most likely to arouse doctrinal suspicion about the Pietist program is missing.

In the following concluding remarks, I will summarize my reading of the Pietist program and offer some ways of contextualizing it within contemporary Ayyubid and Mamluk society in Egypt.

---

forcefully that Maimonides not only believed this tradition to be true, but that he himself sought prophetic inspiration. See Heschel, "Did Maimonides Believe That He Had Attained the Rank of Prophet?" in *Prophetic Inspiration After the Prophets: Maimonides and Other Medieval Authorities* (New York: Ktav, 1996), 69-126. See also David Blumenthal (and his references to the *Guide*) in *Philosophic Mysticism*, 75-78.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I have made four related arguments about the Pietists in this chapter. First, the Pietists were Jewish Sufis and not merely Jews interested in Sufi ideas or practices. They had inherited the same institutionalized vocabulary, ideas, and practices that were rooted in classical Sufism and that other medieval Egyptian Sufi groups had inherited. These included the master-disciple relationship, which was specifically modeled on a Sufi/biblical paradigm; the use of musical sessions (*samāʿ*) in their devotions; devotional and institutional forms of dress; staying up late into the night in prayer and fasting; ascetic practices; and isolated meditation (*khalwa*). Furthermore, these were conceived as being authentically biblical-prophetic practices that had been passed (*intaqala*) to the Sufis. All of this indicates very clearly that the Pietists saw Sufism itself as the repository of authentic biblical Judaism. Much in the same way that Muslims saw Islam as the reinstatement of true Abrahamic religion, so the Pietists saw their Sufism as the reinstatement of true biblical religion. The Pietists were thus part of the larger phenomenon that saw the spread and popularization of Sufism throughout medieval Egypt.

Second, Abraham Maimonides' overarching project was to organize a preexisting Jewish Pietist movement into a more unified collectivity. Jews had been interested in Sufi thought and praxis since at least the mid-eleventh century C.E., and Abraham sought to organize this earlier social and religious interest into a more coherent framework. But Abraham did more than merely organize the ideas and institutions of Jewish Sufism. It seems that there were actually competing groups of Pietists whom Abraham sought to unify. He wrote against such groups who thought of

themselves as having moved beyond the exigencies and requirements of the outward forms of the Law. Such antinomianism was unacceptable to Abraham, and one of his projects in the *Kifāya* was to organize Jewish society into a more clearly defined relationship to the Law. Ultimately, this involved organizing Jewish society into two categories. The largest category comprised the ordinary believers who were expected to live by the commandments of the Torah and support materially the devotions of the second category. This second group was a small vanguard of elites who would, in addition to keeping the commandments of the Torah, be engaged in supererogatory devotions designed to cultivate a series of inward virtues, known as the Exalted Paths (*al-masālik al-rafīʿa*).

Third, the religious elites, who were called Pietists (*ḥasidim*) and referred to themselves as a fellowship (*ṣuḥba*), were the contemporary *awliyā*ʾ of Israel, saints who occupied a spiritual station immediately below that of the biblical prophets and shared the same status as the sages of the Talmud. In an example of the inward acculturation of Sufism, this schema of sainthood is clearly developed from Islamic models but used to highlight the Pietists' superiority. In the Islamic cases, the famous *ḥadīth* that "the scholars are the inheritance of the prophets" is usually interpreted to mean that the saints are the true scholars and inheritors of the prophets. Abraham Maimonides uses this model in fleshing out his conception of the Pietist path by indirectly arguing that the Pietists are the saints of Israel and the inheritors of the prophets. He does this by re-mythologizing biblical and Talmudic narratives in terms of thoroughly Sufi language and practices. The result is a Jewish Sufism in which the Pietists are the true Sufis and the Muslims are the co-opters.

Finally, as subaltern Sufis, the Pietists deliberately engaged in practices that would subvert the political order, ultimately usher in the messianic age, and bring about an end to exile. This eschatological goal constituted the "hidden transcript" of the *Kifāya* and the Pietist movement as a whole. As a *dhimmī* population, the Jewish communities of the Islamicate world could not realistically contemplate political resistance. However, they could rely on the doctrines and practices of the Sufis and their uncanny resemblance to the practices of the biblical prophets and Talmudic sages to express their aspirations. Furthermore, by thoroughly biblicizing these overtly Islamic ideas and practices, Abraham Maimonides could outline a larger redemptive project without arousing the suspicion of Muslim authorities. This was the "hidden transcript" of the movement. Abraham's whole project was designed to take discursive control of a preexistent movement and deploy it for a more explicit political end: the redemption of Israel from exile. The project as embodied in the *Kifāya*, however, would ultimately prove unsuccessful.[194]

---

[194] While the specific project of the Pietists did not bring the return of prophecy or the messianic age, this is not to say that the movement had no lasting impact on Jewish practice. To offer only one example, it seems that the Pietist emphasis on *khalwa*, isolated meditation, made its way into medieval Kabbalah in its Hebrew form, *hitbodedut*. Both Moshe Idel and Paul Fenton have written on this subject. See Idel, "*Hitbodedut* as Concentration in Ecstatic Kabbalah," in idem, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988): 103-169; Paul Fenton, "La '*hitbodedut*' chez les premiers Qabbalistes en Orient et chez les Soufis," in Roland Goetschel, ed., *Prière, mystique et judaïsme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1987): 133-157; and idem, "Solitary Meditation in Jewish and Islamic Mysticism in the Light of a Recent Archeological Discovery," in *Medieval Encounters* 1 (1995): 271-296. Eitan Fishbane explores this in more detail in connection with the Kabbalist Isaac of Acre (fl. 1300); see his *As Light Before Dawn: The Inner World of a Medieval Kabbalist* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 252-259. Isaac of Acre, as a Kabbalist from the land of Israel, was in a unique position to transmit both Kabbalistic traditions from southern Europe and the Pietist materials from Egypt. As for *hitbodedut*, Fishbane mediates the positions of Idel (that *hitbodedut* was strictly a meditative exercise) and Fenton (that *hitbodedut* was the physical act of isolation) by arguing that *hitbodedut* originally meant the act of isolation but came to be associated with meditation sometime later. This makes sense in light of how Abraham Maimonides talks about *khalwa* as both the act of physical isolation (*al-khalwa al-ẓāhira*) and the inner clarity of higher states of consciousness (*al-khalwa al-bāṭina*).

The latest Pietist work of which we are aware is *al-Murshid ilā al-tafarrud* (The Guide to Detachment) by David ben Joshua Maimonides. In this work, David reworks Abraham Maimonides' mythical narrative to align Pietist ideals with the Sufi stations by re-interpreting the Talmudic statement about the stages of worship in '*Avodah Zarah* 20b in light of Sufi ideas.[195] By this time, however (the mid-fourteenth century C.E.), the Pietist movement was on its last legs. David ben Joshua was himself exiled to Aleppo at the time of writing *al-Murshid*, and only a single copy of the manuscript still exists.[196] A number of explanations have been put forward as possible reasons for the ultimate demise of this movement.[197] One possible reason that has not received much attention is that the movement, as articulated by Abraham Maimonides, had overreached its goals. As Elisha Russ-Fishbane has demonstrated, Abraham Maimonides had a radically new vision for the role of the *ra'īs al-yahūd*, the leader of the Jewish community in Egypt.[198] He saw the *ra'īs al-yahūd* as a political, communal, and religious leader, and his extensive reforms bear this out. In addition to the Pietist devotions, which were *not* incumbent on the general Jewish population, he also attempted to inaugurate a series of sweeping liturgical and devotional reforms that

---

[195] See above, p. 249 n. 108. The statement is: "Torah leads to *zehirut*, and *zehirut* leads to *zerizut*, and *zerizut* leads to *neqiyut*, and *neqiyut* leads to *perishut*, and *perishut* leads to *ṭaharah*, and *ṭaharah* leads to *ḥasidut*, and *ḥasidut* leads to '*anavah*, and '*anavah* leads to *yir'at ḥeṭ'*, and *yir'at ḥeṭ'* leads to *qedusha*, and *qedusha* leads to the spirit of holiness, which leads to resurrection. And *ḥasidut* is greater than all of them."

[196] Bodl. Huntington 382 (Neubauer 1422). There is a short section, five folios, preserved in Firkovitch Heb.-Ar. NS 964.1-5.

[197] Paul Fenton has written, for example, that the movement was ultimately unsuccessful because prophecy never returned, knowledge of classical Arabic among the Jews declined, and the popularity of Kabbalah increased in the in Arabic-speaking regions after the 13th century; see "Judaeo-Arabic Mystical Writings," p. 101. Goitein attributes the decline of the movement to larger societal decline as well, citing decimation by "persecution, epidemics, and apostasy," such that the movement could not sustain the elites necessary for its survival; see *A Mediterranean Society*, 5:494.

[198] Abraham Maimonides was Head of the Jews from 1205 (when he was only 19 years old) until 1237; see S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 5:481. On the history and office of the *ra'īs al-yahūd* in Egypt see Mark Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt: The Origins of the Office of Head of the Jews, ca. 1065-1126* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

were required for all Egyptian Jews. The liturgical reforms included standardizing the lectionary cycle,[199] eliminating *payṭanic* blessings from the liturgy,[200] and eliminating the morning blessings from the synagogue service.[201] The devotional reforms included such seemingly Muslim practices as prostration during prayer, standing in orderly rows in the synagogue, and spreading out the hands during prayer, among others.[202] Both the liturgical and devotional reforms were met with strong resistance from many leaders of the community. This resistance was so great, in fact, that Abraham incurred the wrath of an oppositional movement that sought to have him removed as *ra'īs al-yahūd*.[203] This was certainly not a mere liturgical or devotional matter, as the leaders of the oppositional movement had clear political designs of their own; namely, claiming the position of *ra'īs al-yahūd* for themselves. They took their complaints as far as the Sultan, but were ultimately unsuccessful in removing Abraham Maimonides from his position.[204] While all of Abraham Maimonides' reforms and devotions were part of his

---

[199] Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 215-233. There were two lectionary cycles in medieval Egypt, the so-called "Palestinian rite" in which the Torah was read every three years and the and "Babylonian rite" in which the Torah was read every year. Abraham Maimonides attempted to downplay the Palestinian rite and institute a uniform practice of the Babylonian rite for all rabbinic Jews.

[200] Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 233-249. The *payṭanic* blessings were poems composed by *payṭanim* (liturgical poets) and added to certain prayers at different points in the liturgy on special occasions.

[201] Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 249-257. It had become customary in a number of congregations to have the cantor recite the morning blessings; these blessings were traditionally recited privately after the morning hand washing.

[202] See Wieder, *Hashpa'ot Islamiyyot*, 31-82 and Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 260-282.

[203] The family of Nethanel ha-Levi had been influential in Egyptian politics for quite some time and many members of the family held the position of *ra'īs al-yahūd* at different times. It was this family that then formulated a *taqqana*, or ruling, in 1205 that Abraham Maimonides' authority (*reshut*) should not be mentioned in synagogue services. This was ultimately not successful. The family also denounced Abraham to the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-ʿĀdil; this was also unsuccessful. On these events see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 5:491. Goitein and others had thought that Abraham had been accused of *bidʿa*, innovation, perhaps the most devastating charge one could be accused of at that time. However, Paul Fenton has found evidence that the charge was not actually *bidʿa* but *tabdīl* and *taghyīr* (substitution and change); see Fenton, "Abraham Maimonides: Founding a Mystical Dynasty," 147-148.

[204] Much has been written of the controversies surrounding Abraham Maimonides' reforms. See especially, S. D. Goitein, "A Treatise in Defense of the Pietists by Abraham Maimonides;" Mordechai

larger vision for the redemption of the Jewish people, his opponents seem to have been primarily concerned with the liturgical and devotional reforms and not with the Pietist movement itself.[205]

While the attempt to remove Abraham Maimonides from office was ultimately unsuccessful, the opposition does seem to have succeeded in driving the Pietist movement underground to some extent. A letter preserved in the Cairo Genizah mentions that Ḥanan'el ben Shemu'el, the prominent Pietist and father-in-law of Abraham Maimonides, had been forced to flee Fustat and that his whereabouts were unknown.[206] This coincided with the deposition of Abraham's son David, who had taken over as *ra'īs al-yahūd* after his father's death in 1237. David left Egypt in 1250 and lived in exile in Acre for two years before returning to Egypt and resuming his position.[207]

Friedman, "*Makhloqet le-shem shamayyim: 'iyyunim be-pulmus ha-tefillah shel R. Avraham ben ha-Rambam u-beney doro*" (A Controversy for the Sake of Heaven: Matters Regarding the Prayer Controversy of Abraham Maimonides and his Generation), in *Te'udah* 10 (1996): 243-298; Tzvi Langermann, "From Private Devotion to Communal Prayer: New Light on Abraham Maimonides' Synagogue Reforms," 31-49; Marina Rustow, "At the Limits of Communal Autonomy: Jewish Bids for Intervention from the Mamluk State," in *Mamluk Studies Review* 13 (2009): 1-27; on Abraham Maimonides in particular see pp. 7-14; and Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 282-306.

[205] I discern three very different levels of reform/restoration (depending on one's viewpoint) in Abraham Maimonides' activities. First, his attempts to standardize the liturgy for all the Rabbanite communities of Egypt. Second, his attempts to introduce devotional changes (prostration, standing in rows, etc.). Third, his attempts to organize and lead the activities of the Pietists. This is an important distinction because the first two of these three were meant for the entire community while the latter was only meant for the elite members of the Pietist movement itself. While it seems that some of his opponents may have lumped all these together, it is very clear that they were conceptually separate aspects of a larger plan of revitalizing the entirety of Jewish worship. In a response to his critics, Abraham Maimonides was very careful in his language. He wrote that he performed the Pietist devotions "in my house for myself (*fī baytī li-nafsī*) and I do not force anyone else to undertake them. I have not changed anything in their synagogues." CUL TS Ar. 51.111, published by S. D. Goitein, "New Documents from the Cairo Genizah," in *Homenaje a Millás Vallícrosa* (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1954): 707-720.

[206] In the letter (CUL TS 6J 7.3), the author writes that the *majlis* of the *ra'īs* (David ben Abraham) had been closed and that "R. Ḥanan'el is missing because of the quarrel of our companions (*mukhāṣimat aṣḥābinā*) with the *ra'īs*. Some people say he has fled to Qūṣ and some say he has fled to Alexandria and some say he is hiding in [Fustat]." Published by S. D. Goitein, "*Miktav 'el ha-Rambam be-'inyaney ha-heqdeshot ve-yediyot ḥadashot 'al ṣe'eṣa'av he-negidim*" (A Letter to Maimonides on Endowments and New Information about His Descendents the Negidim) in *Tarbiẓ* 34 (1965): 232-256; see pp. 240-241. Is it a coincidence that the author speculates that R. Ḥanan'el fled to Qūṣ or Alexandria, the two major centers of Maghribī-inflected Sufism in medieval Egypt?

[207] Russ-Fishbane, "Between Politics and Piety," 198.

Finally, Abraham's other son, 'Obadyāh, who it seems was more like his father with regard to his Pietist agenda, wrote at least one Pietist treatise, *al-Maqāla al-ḥawḍīya*, The Treatise of the Pool. This short work is entirely different in scope, content, and style from the *Kifāya*. 'Obadyāh specifically warns his readers not to divulge any of the Pietist doctrines or secrets, lest "something you do not understand happen to you in connection [with what you reveal]."[208] One might surmise that perhaps the Pietists were engaged in illegal or illicit activities to warrant such a warning. However, there is no evidence whatsoever that the Pietists did anything of the sort. The warning not to divulge the Pietist project must therefore be seen as referring to a voluntary vow of silence taken up by the Pietists to protect themselves from those in the community who had opposed 'Obadyāh's father and brother. This may explain why the movement, which was so robust during Abraham's tenure as leader, was not to survive the death of David ben Joshua in the mid-fourteenth century. Nevertheless, for a significant window of time, the Pietist movement was an important and visible component of medieval Egyptian Sufism.

For this reason, I would revise Goitein's judgment that the Pietist circle "did not develop into a tightly organized, permanent community of ascetics, a process in which Islam was so extraordinarily successful," as only partially true.[209] The movement may not have been permanent, but for a time it did constitute "a tightly organized community of ascetics." For this reason, the projects of Abraham Maimonides and Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī can be compared fruitfully.

---

[208] *al-Maqāla*, 22a. The Judeo-Arabic reads *fa-in abaḥta bi-shay'in minhu 'amila 'alayka fīhi mā lā ta'lamuhu*. Paul Fenton translated the line "If (peradventure) thou betrayest thyself then the unimaginable will befall thee on its account." *al-Maqāla*, 107.

[209] S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 5:494.

Both authors were sophisticated distillers and systematizers of practice and doctrine, and both produced works of clarity and precision about the Sufi path. Both were also formidable leaders of their communities, organizing their followers for very specific, albeit very different, goals. Furthermore, they both formulated their visions in mythical form. Al-Iskandarī's stories and reports about Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī constitute the mythical framework within which an institutionalized Shādhilī identity was formulated. The biblical prophets and Talmudic sages provided Abraham Maimonides with a narrative that tied the Pietists' devotions to the mythical Jewish past. In the words of Bruce Lincoln, "the past shapes the present, *invocation* of an ancestor being simultaneously the *evocation* of a correlated social group."[210] The invocation of biblical and Talmudic accounts was meant to evoke an ideal community for the Pietists, a community that could cultivate prophecy. The mythical framework of the *Kifāya* contained an entire vision of a society modeled on that of the prophets and sages and lent the movement legitimacy. Since this was undertaken with the intent to cultivate prophecy, it strongly indicates that Abraham Maimonides sought to organize the Pietists in the way that al-Iskandarī sought to organize and formalize the institutions of the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa*. In both cases the institutions and discourse of Sufism were reformulated in light of clear and specific goals. In the case of the Shādhilīya, this goal was the dissemination of al-Shādhilī's teachings and al-Iskandarī's attempt to unify the movement under a single authority. In the case of the Pietists, this goal was the unification of the movement leading to the reinstatement of prophecy and the ushering in of the messianic age under Abraham's leadership as *ra'īs al-yahūd*. In both

---

[210] Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, 20.

cases Abraham Maimonides and al-Iskandarī attempted to take discursive control of movements with multiple claims of legitimacy. Thus, in the terminology I have been using throughout this study, the Pietists constituted an informal organization. It was an organization with clearly defined goals and means of achieving those goals, but one that lacked formalized offices and relational structures.

This raises an interesting question that scholars have asked of the Pietist community and Abraham Maimonides in particular. Was Abraham trying to create "a Jewish Sufi *ṭarīqa*?" Both S. D. Goitein and Paul Fenton have speculated on this question and agree that Abraham Maimonides did indeed want to create such a *ṭarīqa*.[211] I agree with Goitein and Fenton that Abraham did attempt to found a Jewish Pietist organization akin to Sufi fellowships. However, I would modify their terminology. In keeping with the usage of thirteenth-century Egypt, the so-called "Jewish *ṭarīqa*" should be understood as the institutionalized spiritual methodology of the Pietists and not their social form. Abraham was attempting to organize the institutions and members of the Pietist *ṭarīqa* into a Jewish *ṭā'ifa*, with him as the leader and spokesperson for the group.

The Pietists were thus an integral part of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Egyptian Sufism. While they may not have quoted contemporary Sufis by name or mentioned any Egyptian Sufi organizations in their writings, they were clearly a product of their time and place. They had inherited the same institutions of Sufism

---

[211] Goitein famously opined that "Abraham longed to found a Jewish *ṭarīqa*, a special "way," a community of novices dedicated to the ascetic life, as conceived in the *Kifāya*, and with himself as master." see, *A Mediterranean Society*, 5:476. Paul Fenton agrees, writing that Abraham Maimonides "was intent on propagating his *via mystica* and on founding a Judaic *ṭarīqa* ... followed by a community of novices dedicated to the ascetic discipline outlined in his *Kifāya*." Fenton, "Abraham Maimonides (1186-1237): Founding a Mystical Dynasty," 137.

common to all medieval Egyptian Sufi groups and then used these institutions for their own purposes. Thus, the same forces that pushed other groups toward more formalized organizations were operative among the Pietists as well. Just as the Sufis of the *khānqāh*, the nascent Shādhilīya, and even the Sufis of Upper Egypt were more or less organized for specific reasons, so were the Pietists organized for a specific goal. In other words, Abraham Maimonides' project as outlined in the *Kifāya* supports my contention that the late twelfth through early fourteenth centuries constituted a period of organization and not just institutionalization. It was in this contemporary trend toward the organization of Sufism that the Pietists can be seen most clearly as part of the larger world of medieval Egyptian Sufism. Perhaps I can end by quoting S. D. Goitein, who simply said of Abraham Maimonides, "He was a son of his time."[212]

---

[212] *A Mediterranean Society*, 5:495.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have used the sociological concept of the institution as a way to describe and analyze the social landscape of Ayyubid and early Mamluk Sufism in Egypt. There are five essential elements of the concept as I have used it. First, institutions are *social.* They exist within the interpersonal relationships between members of social groups. Second, institutions are *normative*. They regulate the behaviors of actors in a group. Third, institutions are *mimetic* and *linguistically formalized*. They originate in the accumulation of repetitive and learned social behaviors. Fourth, by virtue of the preceding three points, institutions are *objectively real* for the actors who comprise them. As succeeding generations of social actors accumulate behavioral knowledge, institutions perpetuate themselves by providing the grounds of future social possibility and become objective facts. Fifth, by shifting the focus between the individual and the institutional, one can observe that institutions are *changeable* over time. The continual feedback loop of expected behaviors and unintended consequences will produce changes to any given institution over a period of time.

I have also used the concept of the organization as distinct from institution. An organization is the *deliberate and corporate instantiation* of one or more institutions for one or more goals. I distinguish between "formal" and "informal' types of organizations. *Formal organizations* are those in which "social positions and the relationships among them have been explicitly specified and are defined independently of the personal characteristics and relations of the participants occupying these

positions."[1] *Informal organizations* are those in which "it is impossible to distinguish between the characteristics of the positions and the prescribed relations and the characteristics and personal relations of the participants."[2] In other words, social roles in formal organizations are fixed independently of personalities while informal organizations are dependent on the personalities of their constituent elements. These two concepts have served as heuristic devices to describe and analyze the social and religious history of Sufism in Ayyubid and early-Mamluk Egypt.

This dissertation began with a quotation from the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu: "Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness." This statement encapsulates the seeming paradox that the rules and assumptions of the social order – i.e., the institutions of any given society or social formation – are ultimately arbitrary yet are experienced as the natural grounds of social reality. Institutions develop differently from place to place and change over time. Nevertheless, because these institutions structure human interaction and understanding, they become naturalized over time and constitute the unspoken assumptions about social reality. Thus, as Berger and Luckman have argued, reality is socially constructed via the development of institutions.[3] One of the aims of this study has been to make explicit some of the unspoken rules and assumptions inherent in the "naturalized" order of Ayyubid and early Mamluk-era Egyptian Sufism in its many varieties. Each of the Sufi groups under discussion operated within the constraints of institutionalized ideas, vocabularies, and

---

[1] Scott, *Organizations*, 20.
[2] Ibid., 20.
[3] *The Social Construction of Reality*, 47-92.

practices, many of which been systematized and formalized by earlier generations of Sufis.

The legacy of earlier inherited institutions can be seen in the uniformity of these groups' assumptions about the Sufi path. When these Sufis spoke and/or wrote of *walāya*, *dhikr*, *ṣuḥba*, *khalwa* and so on, they did so with the assumption that other Sufis would understand what they were saying or writing. In taking up the institution of *khalwa*, for example, Abraham Maimonides explains how it fits into the "path of piety," constitutes one of the Exalted Paths, and was practiced by biblical prophets. What he does **not** do is explain where the word came from or what it actually meant in a literal sense. Rather, he merely begins his discussion by saying, "*Khalwa* is divided into two kinds: *khalwa ẓāhira* and *khalwa bāṭina*," before moving into a description of each.[4] The same principle applies to all of the groups discussed here. When al-Iskandarī speaks of the *awliyā'* in his introduction to *Laṭā'if al-minan*, he does not need to explain the term, its origin, development, or usage. He merely asserts that "The lights made manifest in the *awliyā'* are actually a reflection of the lights of prophecy upon them."[5] While he explains how this process works, al-Iskandarī does not need to unpack his terminology or why prophecy and sanctity should be linked. These concepts had already been institutionalized. When Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī describes the *karāmāt* of the Sufis, he does so in the context of emphasizing the importance of miracles and not to actually describe what miracles are. The ideas and terminology associated with the performance of non-prophetic miracles (*karāmāt*) had been institutionalized much earlier, allowing Ibn Nūḥ to then use these ideas and terms in

---

[4] *Kifāya*, 2:382.
[5] *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 39.

his way. In writing the document of investiture for Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī, the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh of the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' in Cairo, the scribe had no need to define or justify his use of Sufi terms such as *abdāl*, *awtād*, and *ghawth*. The meaning of significance of these terms were taken for granted in a Sufi context because they had been institutionalized at an earlier date. In all of these four cases, the Sufis' use of these concepts and practices betrays an assumed, *a priori* familiarity with them. They worked with these Sufi ideas and practices without needing to explain why or where they came from. If, as Michael Hechter has argued, institutions are indicated by "some regularity of behavior," then the regularity of Sufi terminology and practices in Ayyubid and early Mamluk Egypt signifies that they had been institutionalized previously.[6]

While some scholars have described the regularity of behavior and ideas in the thirteenth century Muslim world as constituting a new phase of "institutionalized Sufism," this study has shown that some of this institutionalization happened much earlier. The tenth through early twelfth centuries saw a concerted effort by Sufis in the East to articulate and formalize Sufi thought and praxis. Sufis like al-Kalābādhī, al-Sarrāj, al-Qushayrī, al-Ghazālī, and al-Suhrawardī (both Abū Najīb and Abū Hafṣ) all contributed to this institutionalization. This can be seen in the structure and content of their respective literary works. While each of these authors were writing in different contexts and for different reasons, they ultimately share a common vocabulary, progression, and purpose, despite differences of definition and emphasis.[7] For example, they all conceptualized the Sufi path as being comprised of states (*maqāmāt*) and stations (*aḥwāl*). It was these earlier Sufis who formulated the grounds of

---

[6] Michael Hecter, "The Emergence of Cooperative Social Institutions," 14.
[7] On the different contexts and purposes of these authors' manuals, see Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 83-113.

possibility – or *doxa*, as Bourdieu calls it – for the later Sufis examined in the present study. For example, the congeries of ideas and practices that inform the concept of *walāya* taken up by al-Iskandarī, Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī, and Abraham Maimonides had already been institutionalized by their time. Each of these authors wrote of *walāya* with the assumption that its place in and relevance to Sufism were given. They did not need to explain its relevance because the concept of *walāya* had become an institutionalized component of the Sufi path. Once institutionalized, these ideas and practices became part of the shared assumptions about Sufism. However, despite these shared assumptions, each author (or group) used these institutionalized ideas and practices for different reasons and ends.

The pursuit of these ends led to increasingly organized forms of Sufism after the end of the twelfth century. In different ways and in diverse socio-political settings these Sufis drew on the rich institutions of Sufism in order to pursue their interests. By taking up the institutions of Sufism for its own ends, each of the groups under discussion here was organized – formally or informally – to greater and lesser extents. It has been another aim of this dissertation to highlight these goals and interests and the ways in which these groups pursued them. In doing so, these Sufis also helped to popularize Sufism in medieval Egypt. While it is difficult to explain fully why the popularity of Sufism increased dramatically after the end of the twelfth century, we can understand how this popularity spread. One contribution of this dissertation has been to address how Sufism spread through medieval Egyptian society and gained in popularity.

Scholars have often tried to explain the popularity of Sufism after the late-twelfth century as a reaction to a "dry," and "legalistic" Islam or, in Marshall Hodgson's words, to the "strongly kerygmatic approach" of the *'ulamā'*.[8] These interpretive models stress the personalistic and spiritual qualities of Sufism as an attractive religious alternative to a populace seeking more than what the jurists had to offer. However, such a model assumes a great deal that cannot be justified from the medieval sources. First, the model assumes that the populace were particularly interested in the Islam of the jurists in the first place. It is not clear that non-jurists would have paid much attention to the debates and developments of scholastic Islam. Second, it assumes that Muslims (and Jews) in the Middle Ages sought some kind of spiritual fulfillment. While this may have been the case, there is no evidence that medieval Muslims, Jews, or Christians, conceptualized a realm of experience that we would now call "spirituality" or a state of "fulfillment." Third, it assumes that these individuals would then naturally gravitate to a personal/spiritual ideal rather than to the alternatives. These assumptions seem to me to be particularly rooted in a Protestant understanding of religion and the personal quest for spiritual fulfillment. I would argue that a more fruitful approach, and one that is truer to the medieval sources, is to turn the question upside down. Rather than seeking to explain why Sufism became so popular among the masses who embraced it, we ought to look to those who actively popularized Sufism and *made* it attractive to the populace in the first place. In doing so, we can see that the groups under consideration in this study actually made Sufism more accessible to the Egyptian population. In a real sense, they brought Sufism to the

---

[8] Marshal Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 2:203-206.

masses; the masses did not come to Sufism. Thus, in each of the chapters of this dissertation I have attempted to highlight each group's unique socio-political position, its institutional and organizational features, as well as some of the ways in which it may have contributed to the popularization of Sufism in Egypt.

In chapter one, it was argued that the Sufis of the *khānqāh* Sa'īd al-Su'adā' were organized and sponsored by Saladin and his successors for the express purpose of spreading the state ideology. They did so by specifying what kinds of Sufis, exactly, would be allowed to live in the *khānqāh*. These Sufis were from the East – Damascus, Baghdad, and Persian-speaking areas – and they brought with them the Sunni Islam propagated by the Seljuks in the organizations masterminded by Niẓām al-Mulk. In particular, this meant they brought to Egypt the Sufism of al-Ghazālī: it was juridically Shāfi'ī and theologically Ash'arī. The state was able to manage the *khānqāh* and its Sufis by exercising direct control over choosing the individual who would run its operations, known as the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh. During the Ayyūbid and early-Mamluk periods, these "chief Shaykhs" were only nominally Sufis. They were primarily trained as jurists and, because they were sponsored by the state, there was no sustained attempt on their part to articulate the source of their Sufi authority. In effect, their authority stemmed from the power of the state itself. Institutions like *dhikr*, *ṣuḥba*, *silsila*, and others were deliberately instantiated in the Sa'īd al-Su'adā' for the purpose of spreading the state's Sunni ideology and promulgating their particular form of juridical Sufism in Egypt. This promulgation did not happen in formal instruction within the physical walls of the *khānqāh*, but rather in public performance and spectacle.

One of the indirect effects of the founding of the *khānqāh*, intentional or not, was its contribution to the growing popularity of Sufism. The spectacle of the weekly Sufi procession to the al-Ḥākim mosque in Cairo and its attendant public performances, and the Sufis' generous stipends, ample food, and subsidized pilgrimages all must have contributed to a growing sense among the population of Cairo that Sufism was a worthwhile (and perhaps even lucrative) endeavor. This is clear from al-Maqrīzī's account of the crowds of Egyptians who would come to watch the Sufis every Friday. Despite being inaccessible to the local Egyptian population, the *khānqāh* may have generated curiosity about Sufism among the population. This curiosity could have then driven some Egyptians to more accessible Sufi masters like Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Mursī, and Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī.

In chapter two I investigated how the cluster of institutions that constituted the *ṭarīqa* of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī became formalized in an organizational entity known as *al-ṭā'ifa al-shādhilīya*. Against the competing claims of Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī in Alexandria and those of the North African followers of al-Shādhilī in the West, al-Iskandarī systematically created a conception of al-Shādhilī's authority rooted in his unique reading of *walāya*. In addition, he advocated a wary political reciprocity, formulated a unique approach to dress and livelihood, and transmitted a set of rituals linked to al-Shādhilī's name. In doing so, he articulated the bounds of what was doctrinally thinkable and performable; this became the *doxa* of the nascent Shādhilīya. Al-Iskandarī inscribed the limits of possibility in the very personality and life of al-Shādhilī himself; this personality was symbolic of what it meant to be a Shādhilī Sufi. al-Iskandarī's hagiography – as myth – created an institutionalized identity that guided

future generations of disciples. In effect, he created the conditions that made possible the organized *ṭā'ifa* that would emerge shortly after his death. The success of this *ṭarīqa* and the subsequent *ṭā'ifa* helped to spread Sufism among large sectors of the medieval Egyptian population.

It is clear why the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa/ṭā'ifa* became so popular. One was encouraged to keep regular employment, to dress in fine clothes, and to participate in rituals of group inclusion like vocal *dhikr* sessions. These teachings must have been attractive to large segments of the urban populations of Alexandria, Cairo, and Fustat. The nascent Shādhilīya contributed to the growing popularity of Sufism in Egypt by offering a kind of Sufism that was eminently livable and approachable for the average member of medieval Egyptian society. In doing so, the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa* spread rapidly throughout Egypt. By the time of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa in the mid-fourteenth century, the shrine of al-Shādhilī near the Upper Egyptian port of ʻAydhāb had become a popular pilgrimage destination in Upper Egypt, and the group had become well-known from Alexandria to Qūṣ.

The Sufis of medieval Upper Egypt were the least formally organized of the groups under consideration here, but they had some of the most ambitious goals. In chapter three I argued that these goals included the elimination of Shiʻite and Christian influence in the region by inculcating their vision of normative Sunni Islam among the local population. They did so in the context of local *ribāṭ*s and *madrasa*s that they had been instrumental in founding and maintaining. Having inherited the rigorous Mālikī-inflected Sufism of earlier Maghribī immigrants, the Sufis of Upper Egypt were well-equipped to achieve these ends. Crucially, it was the chronic absence of a strong state

presence in Upper Egypt that left a vacuum in which these Sufis could articulate and pursue their goals. In effect, they competed with the state as a regulating force in Upper Egypt. Because of their unique socio-political position, the Sufis of Upper Egypt conceptualized their authority differently from most other Egyptian Sufis. Upper Egyptian Sufis legitimized their roles by stressing their ability to perform miracles, which demonstrated their unmediated access to the unseen and thus furnished them with proofs of their authority. These miracles were a visible manifestation of their authority, which was meant to supersede the *wilāya* of the state. Not only did these Sufis succeed as communal leaders and exemplars among the Upper Egyptian populace, but their efforts helped spread Sufism in the region as well.

Sufis from the Maghribī tradition like ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʾī and his students popularized Sufism in Upper Egypt. Whereas there is no evidence either for or against Sufism's having much of a presence in Upper Egypt after Dhū ʾl-Nūn left Ikhmīm in the mid-ninth century, it was to prove very popular after al-Qināʾī settled in Qinā in the mid-twelfth century. Thus, at the very least we know the mechanism by which Sufism was spread and gained popularity in Upper Egypt: through the travels and outreach of the disciples of al-Qināʾī and their efforts to establish *ribāṭ*s and *madrasa*s to spread their ideology. Furthermore, the miraculous reputations of saints like Mufarrij al-Damāmīnī and Abū ʾl-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī spread all over Upper Egypt and large crowds turned out to see and meet them as they traveled through the region. However, a tradition of monographic hagiography devoted to any these Sufis never developed. As a result, an institutionalized identity never developed around the personalities of any of these Sufi masters, which mitigated against the possibility of an organizational entity. Rather, the

charisma of these wonder-working saints was often routinized and institutionalized in the physical body of the saint at his tomb. The result was a series of localized cults of shrine veneration where the memories and miracles of these masters would continue to be a marked presence in Upper Egypt.

The extent to which Sufism had permeated all levels of society in medieval Egypt is clear from the case of the Jewish Pietists. They are an indication of just how popular these ideas and practices had become by the thirteenth century. The Pietists, no less than the other groups under consideration here, were working with the same institutionalized ideas, vocabulary, and practices that had been formulated generations earlier. Moreover, just like Muslim Sufis, the Pietists took up these institutions in their own way and for their own reasons and ends. These were not just Jews borrowing ideas from Sufis. They were actually Sufis because they conceptualized their spiritual project as a deliberate re-appropriation of authentically and originally biblical practices that had been co-opted by Sufis. Sufism *was* Jewish for the Pietists. By including the Pietists in this discussion, and by conceptualizing them as a form of subaltern Sufism, I hope to have demonstrated that the social landscape of medieval Egyptian Sufism was more complex and varied than previously thought. Furthermore, as subalterns, they provide another socio-politcal model of the ways in which Sufism could be deployed for a variety of ends. While most medieval Jews living under foreign rule were politically quiet and even supportive of Christian and Muslim rulers, I have argued that the Pietists were actively seeking to undermine the Islamic polity.[9] As a minority population the Pietists were unable to directly confront or revolt against their Muslim

[9] On Jewish attitudes to non-Jewish rule and servitude, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Servants of Kings and not Servants of Servants: Some Aspects of the Political History of the Jews* (Atlanta: Tam Institute for Jewish Studies, Emory University, 2005).

rulers. However, Sufism – reinterpreted in light of biblical and Talmudic precedent – offered the Pietists a way of indirectly undermining the Islamic state. This subtle strategy constituted the "hidden transcript" of the Pietists and their subaltern Sufism.

Abraham Maimonides, much like al-Iskandarī, attempted to take discursive control of the Pietist movement by thoroughly and carefully working Sufi institutions into a larger conceptual and mythical framework. While al-Iskandarī attempted to unify the group against competing claims on al-Shādhilī's authority, Abraham was concerned with wresting control from hypernomian Jewish Sufis who felt their practices superseded the Law. His project was an attempt to create a Jewish *ṭā'ifa* that would work collectively toward their spiritual/political goal of reinstituting prophecy. The reintroduction of prophecy would then usher in the days of the messiah, signaling an end to exile and the beginning of a new and independent Jewish kingdom.

In the case of each of these Sufi groups the institutionalized practices and ideas of Sufism that had been formulated earlier were used in furtherance of one or more goals. In the pursuit of such goals, these Sufis contributed either directly or indirectly to the popularity of Sufism in medieval Egypt and were instrumental in spreading Sufi ideas and practices throughout society. Ultimately, the reason that Sufism became so popular in thirteenth and fourteenth century Egypt seems due to a perfect storm of historical developments. Immigration from the West due to political instability in the Maghrib and the *reconquista* in al-Andalus, the establishment of a Sunni state that took an interest in promoting a certain kind of Sufism, and Crusader activity in the Mediterranean that opened the trade routes in Upper Egypt all brought a large number of Sufis and an infusion of new ideas into Egypt during this time. The result of this

influx of persons and ideas was the creation of the conditions that popularized Sufism for large segments of the population.

In addition to offering a more detailed picture of the social landscape of medieval Egyptian Sufism, I also hope to have shown here the utility of conceptually and analytically separating institutions and organizations in the study of Sufism more generally. Doing so offers a much clearer picture of the ways in which Sufis inherited, used, and in the process, changed the institutions of Sufism. Furthermore, such a distinction has highlighted the diversity of Sufi groups active in medieval Egypt while simultaneously emphasizing their shared *doxa*. While they shared this larger institutional legacy, it is worth stressing here that the processes of institutionalization that I have dated to the tenth through early-twelfth centuries did not end at that time.

While I have argued that the late-twelfth through early-fourteenth centuries was a period of "organization" more than "institutionalization," the Sufis examined here continued to work within and change the very institutions that constituted the framework of their social activity. The institutions taken up by these Sufi groups were changed in their very performance and in the process of their organization. Furthermore, the formality of Sufi organization seems to have increased after the fourteenth century, as indicated by the many sub-branches of major *ṭā'ifa* groups that emerged in the fifteenth centuries and beyond. This would make sense as organizations tend to become increasingly formal over time. Sufis continued to take up the institutions of Sufism and use them for a variety of reasons and in often formally organized *ṭā'ifa* groups. Therefore, rather than re-inscribing the common trope that Sufism went into a period of creative decline after the fifteenth century, scholars

should recognize these same processes of institutionalization and organization were operative for later Sufis as much as they were for these earlier groups. If anything, the success of brotherhoods like the Jāzūlīya in pre-Modern Morocco or the Tījānīya in the Sudan, as organized forms of anti-colonial resistance, indicates that Sufism continued to be a rich source of symbolic and political capital. This capital was made particularly effective in organized form.

This dissertation has been about the ways in which different groups of Sufis in medieval Egypt creatively took up and transformed the legacy of Sufism. Living and working in a range of confessional, social, geographical, and political settings, these Sufis directly contributed to the mass popularization of Sufism in Egypt. In doing so they laid the groundwork for the spread of large corporate Sufi brotherhoods in subsequent centuries. It is hoped that similar projects might be undertaken for the histories of Sufism in other major centers like Damascus, Aleppo, Baghdad, and locales eastward. Such studies will contribute to a larger and more detailed understanding of the complex processes inherent in the institutionalization and organization of Sufi social formations and the emergence of corporate brotherhoods. Rather than a single comprehensive theory about the appearance and persistence of Sufi brotherhoods, such studies would provide something more valuable: a detailed social and religious history of Sufi institutions and organizations in the medieval Islamicate world. This would go a long way toward filling a glaring lacuna in Sufi studies. As Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence note about the emergence of Sufi orders, “We don’t understand them, or at least we haven’t figured out how to understand them as historical

developments."[10] By engaging with the local histories of Sufi organizations, we may eventually be able to develop a more sophisticated understanding of their emergence and development in general.

[10] Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond*, 11.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

‘Ammār, ‘Alī Sālim. *Abū ’l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī: ‘aṣruhu, tārīkhuhu, ‘ulūmuhu, taṣawwufuhu*. Cairo: Dār Rasā’il al-Najīb al-Islāmīya, 1951-1962.

‘Uwayḍa, Kāmil. *Dhū ’l-Nūn al-Miṣrī al-ḥakīm al-zāhid*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīya, 1996.

Abdel-Kader, Ali Hassan. *The Life, Personality and Writings of Al-Junayd* London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series, 1976.

Abū Shāma, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ismā‘īl. *al-Dhayl ‘alā al-rawḍatayn tarājim rijāl al-qarnayn al-sādis wa’l-sābi‘*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Kawtharī. Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1974.

———. *Kitāb al-rawḍatayn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn al-nūrīya wa’l-ṣalāḥīya* Edited by Ibrāhīm Zaybaq. Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 1997.

———. *‘Uyūn al-rawḍatayn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn al-nūrīya wa’l-ṣalāḥīya*. Edited by Aḥmad al-Baysūmī. Damascus: Manshūrāt Wizārat al-Thaqāfa, 1991.

Abū ’l-Fidā, Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Alī. *al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar*. Edited by Muḥammad Zaynahum ‘Azab and Yaḥyā Sayyid Ḥusayn. Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1998-1999.

Abun-Nasr, Jamil. *Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

al-‘Asqalānī, Ibn Ḥajar. *al-Durar al-kāmina fī a‘yān al-mi’a al-thāmina*. Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992.

al-‘Aynī, Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd. *‘Iqd al-jumān fī tārīkh ahl al-zamān*. Edited by Muḥammad Amīn. Cairo: al-Hay’ah al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Āmmah li’l-Kitāb, 1987.

al-‘Azafī, Abū ’l-‘Abbās. *Di‘āmat al-yaqīn fī za‘āmat al-muttaqīn*. Edited by Aḥmad al-Tawfīq. Rabat: Maktabat Khidmat al-Kitāb, 1989.

al-Bādisī, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq. *al-Maqṣad al-sharīf wa’l-manza‘ al-laṭīf fī ’l-ta‘rīf bi-ṣulaḥā’ al-rīf*. Edited by Sa‘īd Aḥmad A‘rāb. Rabat: al-Maṭba‘ al-Malikīya, 1982.

al-Daylamī, Abū ’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī. *Sīrat al-shaykh al-kabīr Abū ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Khafīf al-Shīrāzī*. Edited by Annemarie Schimmel. Tehran: Intishārāt-I Bābak, 1984.

al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. *al-‘Ibar fī khabar man ghabar*. Edited by Abū Hājir Muḥammad Zaghlūl. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīya, 1985.

———. *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*. Edited by Shu'ayb Arna'ūṭ. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1981.

al-Fārābī, Abū Naṣr. *Kitāb ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*. Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 2002.

al-Fāsī, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan al-Kūhin. *Jāmi' al-karāmāt al-'alīya fī ṭabaqāt al-sādat al-shādhilīya*. Edited by Mursī Muḥammad 'Alī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 2001.

al-Fāsī, Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad. *al-'Iqd al-thamīn fī tārīkh al-balad al-amīn*. Edited by Muḥammad Ḥāmid Fiqī et al. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1986.

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*. Edited by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd. Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1981.

———. *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2004.

al-Ḥajjājī, Muḥammad. *al-'Ārif bi-llāh Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣurī* Cairo: Dār al-Taḍāmun li'l-Ṭibā' wa'l-Nashr, 1968.

———. *Qūṣ fī 'l-tārīkh al-islāmī*. Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣrīya al-'Āmma li'l-Kitāb, 2001.

———. *Shakhṣīyāt ṣūfīya fī ṣa'īd miṣr fī 'l-'aṣr al-islāmī*. Cairo1971.

al-Ḥamawī, Yāqūt. *Mu'jam al-buldān*. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977.

al-Harawī, 'Alī ibn Bakr. *Kitāb al-ishārāt ilā ma'rifat al-ziyārāt*. Edited by Janne Sourdel-Thomine. Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1953.

al-Ḥifnī, 'Abd al-Mun'im. *Mu'jam muṣṭalaḥāt al-ṣūfīya*. Beirut: Dār al-Masīra, 1987.

al-Iṣfahānī, Abū Nu'aym. *Ḥilyat al-awliyā' wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfīyā'*. Edited by Sa'īd Khalīl al-Iskandarānī. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2001.

al-Iskandarī, Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh. *Kitāb al-tanwīr fī isqāṭ al-tadbīr*. Cairo: 'Ālam al-Fikr, 1998.

———. *Laṭā'if al-minan fī manāqib al-shaykh Abū 'l-'Abbas al-Mursi wa-shaykhihi al-Shādhilī Abū 'l-Ḥasan*. Edited by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd. Cairo: Majallat Kitāb al-Sha'b, 1986.

———. *Tāj al-'arūs al-ḥāwī li-tahdhīb al-nufūs*. Aleppo: Khān al-Ṣābūn, n.d.

al-Jīlānī, 'Abd al-Razzāq. *futūḥ al-ghayb*. Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1973.

al-Kalābādhī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad *al-Ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*. Edited by Yuḥannā al-Jayb Ṣādir. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2006.

al-Kutubī, Muḥammad ibn Shākir. *Fawāt al-wafayāt*. Edited by Iḥsān ʻAbbās. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1973-1974.

al-Mājirī, Abū ʼl-ʻAbbās Aḥmad. *al-Minhāj al-wāḍiḥ fī taḥqīq karāmāt Abī Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ*. Cairo: al-Maṭbaʻa al-Miṣrīya, 1933.

al-Makkī, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī *Qūt al-qulūb fī muʻāmalat al-maḥbūb*. Edited by Saʻīd Nasīb Mukāram. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2007.

al-Manṣūrī, Baybars. *Zubdat al-fikra fī tārīkh al-hijra*. Edited by D. S. Richards. Berlin, 1998.

al-Maqdisī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad. *Aḥsān al-taqāsīm fī maʻrifat al-aqālīm*. Edited by M. J. de Goeje. Vol. 3, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*. Leiden: Brill, 1877.

al-Maqrīzī, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad. *al-Mawāʻiẓ wa'l-iʻtibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa'l-āthār*. Edited by Muḥammad Zaynhum and Madīḥat al-Sharqāwā. Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1998.

———. *Ittiʻāẓ al-ḥunafāʼ bi-akhbār al-aʼimma al-fāṭimiyīn al-khulafāʼ*. Edited by Muḥammad Aḥmad. Cairo: Lajnat Iḥyāʼ ʼl-Turāth, 1996.

———. *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʻrifat duwal al-mulūk*. Edited by Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah and Saʻīd ʻAbd al-Fattāḥ ʻĀshūr. 12 vols. al-Qāhirah: Maṭbaʻat Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathāʼiq al-Qawmīyah, 2006 [1956-1973].

al-Munāwī, ʻAbd al-Raʼūf. *al-Kawākib al-durrīya fī tarājim al-sādat al-ṣūfīya*. Edited by ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdān. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azharīya li'l-Turāth, n.d. .

al-Mundhirī, Zakī al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad. *al-Takmila li-wafayāt al-naqala*. Edited by Bashshār ʻAwwād Maʻrūf. Beirut: Muʼassasat al-Risāla, 1988.

al-Najjār, ʻĀmir. *al-Ṭuruq al-ṣūfīya fī miṣr nashʼatuhā wa-nuẓumuhā wa-ruwwāduhā*. Cairo: Dār al-Maʻārif, 1995 [1975].

al-Nuʻaymī, ʻAbd al-Qādir. *al-Dāris fī tārīkh al-madāris*. Edited by Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmīya, 1990.

al-Nuwayrī, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad. *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-ʻarab*. Edited by Mufīd Qamīḥa. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmīya, 2004.

al-Qalqashandī, Abū ʼl-ʻAbbās Aḥmad. *Ṣubḥ al-aʻshā fī ṣināʻat al-inshā*. Edited by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Rasūl Ibrāhīm. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Khadīwīya, 1913-1920.

al-Qushayrī, Abū ʼl-Qāsim. *Al-Risāla al-qushayrīya*. Edited by ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd. Damascus and Beirut: Dār al-Khayr, 2003.

al-Qūṣī, Ibn Nūḥ. *al-Waḥīd fī sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd.* Cairo: The Central Library for Islamic Manuscripts, MS #3182.

al-Ṣafadi, Khalīl ibn Aybak. *al-Wāfī bi'l-wafayāt*. Edited by Aḥmad al-Arna'ūṭ and Turkī Muṣṭafā. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2000.

———. *A'yān al-'aṣr wa-a'wān al-naṣr*. Edited by 'Alī Abū Zayd and et al. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1998.

al-Sarrāj, Abū Naṣr. *Kitāb al-luma' fī 'l-taṣawwuf*. Edited by Reynold A. Nicholson. Leiden: Brill, 1914.

al-Sha'rānī, 'Abd al-Wahhāb. *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*. Cairo: Maktaba wa-Maṭba'at Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣabīḥ, 1965.

al-Shībī, Kāmil Muṣṭafā. *al-Ṣila bayna 'l-taṣawwuf wa'l-tashayyu'*. Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1982 [1963-1966].

al-Subkī. *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'īya al-kubrā*. Edited by Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭināḥī and 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥaluw. Cairo: 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1964-1976.

al-Suhrawardī, Abū Ḥafṣ. *'Awārif al-ma'ārif*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 2004.

al-Suhrawardī, Abū Najīb. *Ādāb al-murīdīn*. Edited by Menahem Milsom. Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1978.

al-Suhrawardī, Shihāb al-Dīn. *Maqāmāt al-ṣūfīya*. Edited by Emile Maalouf. Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 2002.

al-Sulamī, Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān. *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfīya*. Edited by Nūr al-Dīn Shurayba. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānijī, 1969.

al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-dīn. *al-Maknūn fī manāqib Abī 'l-Fayḍ Dhī 'l-Nūn*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1992.

———. *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara fī akhbār miṣr wa'l-qāhira*. Edited by Muḥammad Abū 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. 2 vols. Cairo: 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1968.

al-Tādilī, Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf. *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*. Edited by Aḥmad al-Tawfīq. Rabat: Manshūrāt Kulīyat al-Ādāb bi-'l-Rabāṭ, 1997.

al-Taftāzānī, Muḥammad. *Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī wa-taṣawwufuhu*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglo al-Miṣrīya, 1969.

———. *Madkhal ilā 'l-taṣawwuf al-islāmī*. Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa li'l-Nashr wa'l-tawzī', 1979.

al-Tawfīq, Aḥmad. *Ibn Mashīsh shaykh al-Shādhilī*. Casablanca: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 2006.

al-Udfuwī, Abū ʾl-Faḍl Jaʿfar. *al-Ṭāliʿ al-saʿīd al-jāmiʿ asmāʾ nujabāʾ al-ṣaʿīd*. Edited by Saʿd Muḥammad Ḥasan. Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣrīya al-ʿĀmma liʾl-Kitāb, 2001.

al-Wāsiṭī, Taqī al-Dīn. *Tiryāq al-muḥibbīn fī ṭabaqāt khirqat al-ʿārifīn*. Cairo, n.d.

al-Yaʿqūbī, Aḥmad. *Kitāb al-buldān*. Edited by M. J. de Goeje. Vol. 7, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*. Leiden: Brill, 1892.

al-Yāfiʿī, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh. *Mirʾāt al-jinān wa-ʿibrat al-yaqẓān*. Ḥaydarābād: 1337 AH.

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." In *On Ideology*. London: Verso, 2008 [1970].

Anawati, Georges. "Factors and Effects of Arabization and Islamization in Medieval Egypt and Syria." In *Islam and Cultural Change in the Middle Ages*, edited by Spiros Vryonis, 17-41. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975.

Anonymous. *Peraqim be-haṣlaḥah*. Edited by H. S. Davidowitz. Jerusalem: Meqiṣey Nirdamim, 1939.

Arberry, Arthur J. *A Biography of Dhul-Nūn Al-Miṣrī*. New Delhi: Majlis-i Nazr-i ʿArshi, 1965.

———. *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*. Mineoloa, New York: Dover Publications, 2002 [1952].

Ashtor, Eliyahu. *Toledot ha-yehudim be-miṣrayyim u-ve-suriyah taḥat ha-shilṭon ha-mamluki*. 3 vols. Jerusalem, 1944-1951.

Ayalon, David. "Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army - III." *BSOAS* 16 (1954): 57-90.

Baldick, Julian. "Uwaysiyya." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Banquis, Thierry. "Ṭalāʾiʿ B. Ruzzīk, Al-Malik Al-Ṣāliḥ." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005

Barthes, Roland. "The Reality Effect." In *The Rustle of Language*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

Behrens-Abouseif, Doris. "Change in Function and Form of Mamluk Religious Institutions." *AnIsl* 21 (1985): 73-93.

Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967 [1966].

Berkey, Jonathan. *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Bloom, Jonathan. "The Mosque of the Qarafa in Cairo." *Muqarnas* 4 (1987): 7-20.

Bloor, David. *Wittgenstein, Rules, and Institutions*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Blumberg, Harry. "*Al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājja, ve-ha-Rambam ʻal hanhagat ha-mitboded: meqorot ve-hashpaʻot*." *Sinai* 78, no. 135-145 (1975).

Blumenthal, David. *The Commentary of R. Ḥōṭer Ben Shelōmō to the Thirteen Principles of Maimonides*. Leiden: Brill, 1974.

———. *Philosophical Mysticism: Studies in Rational Religion*. Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2006.

———. *The Philosophic Questions and Answers of Ḥōṭer Ben Shelōmō*. Leiden: Brill, 1981.

Blumer, Herbert. *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

Bosworth, C.E. "The City of Tarsus and the Arab-Byzantine Frontiers in Early and Middle ʿabbāsid Times." *Oriens* 33 (1992): 268-86.

Boullata, Issa. "Toward a Biography of Ibn Al-Fāriḍ." *Arabica* 38 (1981): 38-56.

———. "Verbal Arabesque and Mystical Union: A Study of Ibn Al-Fāriḍ's Al-Ta'iyya Al-Kubrā." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 3 (1981): 152-69.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Brinner, William. "Harfūsh." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Brockelmann, Carl. *Geschichte Der Arabischen Litteratur*. Leiden: Brill, 1996.

Bulliet, Richard. *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Cahen, Claude. "Dhimma." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

———. "Ibn Al-Muslima." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Chabbi, J. "Khānḳāh." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005

———. "La Fonction Du Ribat À Bagdad Du V E Siècle Au Début Du Vii E Siècle." *REI* 42 (1974): 101-21.

———. "Ribāṭ." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Chamberlain, Michael. *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus: 1190-1350.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Chaumont, E. "'Izz Al-Dīn 'Abd Al-'Azīz Ibn 'Abd Al-Salām." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Chih, Rachida. "Zāwiyya, Sāha Et Rawda: Développement Et Rôle De Quelques Institutions Soufies En Egypte." *AnIsl* 31 (1997): 49-60.

Chittick, William. "Ṣadr Al-Dīn Muḥammad B. Isḥāḳ B. Muḥammad B. Yūnus Al-Ḳūnawī." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Chodkiewicz, Michel. *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī* Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993.

Cohen, Gerson. "The Soteriology of Abraham Maimuni." *PAAJR* 35 (1968): 33-56.

Cohen, Mark. "Genizah for Islamicists, Islamic Genizah, and the 'New Cairo Genizah'." *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 7 (2006): 129-45.

———. *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt: The Origins of the Office of Head of the Jews, Ca. 1065-1126*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

———. *Poverty and Charity in the Medieval Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

———. *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Colby, Frederick. *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey: Tracing the Development of the Ibn 'Abbās Ascension Development*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2008.

Cook, David. *Understanding Jihād*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Cook, Michael. *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Cornell, Rkia. *Early Sufi Women*. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999.

Cornell, Vincent. "Faqīh Versus Faqīr in Marinid Morocco: Epistemological Dimensions of a Polemic." In *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, edited by Frederick de Jong and Berndt Radtke, 207-24. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

———. *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998.

———. "Understanding Is the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tūmart." *Studia Islamica* 66 (1987): 71-103.

———. *The Way of Abū Madyan: The Works of Abū Madyan Shuʻayb*. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1996.

Crothers, Charles. "History of Social Structure Analysis." In *Structure, Culture, and History: Recent Issues in Social Theory*, edited by Sing C. Chew and J. David Knottnerus, 3-41. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002.

Csordas, Thomas. *Language, Charisma, and Creativity: The Ritual Life of a Religious Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Dennett, Daniel. *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950.

Doniger, Wendy. *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

Douglas, Elmer. *The Mystical Teachings of al-Shādhilī*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1993.

Dozy, Reinhardt. *Dictionnaire détaille des noms des vêtements chez les arabes*. Amsterdam: Jean Müller, 1845.

Durkheim, Emile. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: The Free Press, 1982.

Efros, Israel. "Saadia's General Ethical Theory and Its Relation to Sufism." In *Seventy Fifth Anniversary Volume of the Jewish Quarterly Review*, 166-77. Philadelphia, 1967.

Ehrenkruetz. *Saladin*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1972.

El-Leithy, Tamer. "Coptic Culture and Conversion in Medieval Cairo, 1293-1524 A.D." Ph.D. Dissertation: Princeton University, 2005.

———. "Sufis, Copts and the Politics of Piety: Moral Regulation in Fourteenth-Century Upper Egypt." In *Le Développement Du Soufisme En Égypt À L'époque Mamelouke*, edited by Richard McGregor and Adam Sabra, 75-119. Cairo: IFAO, 2010.

Elias, Jamal. "The Sufi Lords of Bahrabad: Sa'd al-Din and Sadr al-Din Hamuwayi." *Iranian Studies* 27 (1994): 53-75.

Elster, Jon. *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Eppenstein, Simon. *Abraham Maimuni: sein Leben und seine Schriften*. Berlin: Verlag von Louis Lamm, 1914.

———. "*Pereq 24 ve-ḥeleq mi-pereq 25 mi-kitāb kifāyat al-'ābidīn le-Rabbi Avraham Ben Rabbi Moshe Maimon*." In *Festschrift Zu Israel Lewy's Siebzigstem Geburtstag*, edited by Marcus Brann and Ismar Elbogen, 33-59 [Hebrew section]. Breslau, 1911.

Erder, Yoram. "The Mourners of Zion: The Karaites in Jerusalem in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries." In *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources*, edited by Meira Polliack, 213-35. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

Ernst, Carl. *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1992.

Ernst, Carl, and Bruce Lawrence. *Suif Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Escovitz, J. H. "The Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships in the Mamlūk Empire." *JAOS* 102 (1982): 529-531.

———. *The Office of Qâḍî al-Quḍât Cairo under the Baḥrî Mamlûks*. Berlin: Schwarz, 1984.

———. "Patterns of Appointment to the Chief Judgeships of Cairo during the Baḥrī Mamlūk Period." *Arabica* 30 (1983): 147-168.

Fenton, Paul. "Abraham Maimonides (1186-1237): Founding a Mystical Dynasty." In *Jewish Mystical Leaders and Leadership in the 13th Century*, edited by Moshe Idel. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998.

———. "Biqoret 'Al Ha-Rambam Be-Ḥibbur Ḥasidi Min Ha-Genizah." *Ginzei Qedem* 1 (2005): 139-61.

———. "Dana's Edition of Abraham Maimuni's *Kifāyat al-'ābidīn*." *JQR* 82 (1991): 194-206.

———. "De la perfection de la torah et des voies de sa révélation: un commentaire piétiste sur le psaume xix provenant de la genizah du Caire." In *Torah et science: perspectives historiques et théoriques*, edited by Gad Freudenthal et al., 91-117. Leuven: Peeters, 2001.

———. *Deux traités de mystique juive*. Paris: Lagrasse, 1987.

———. "En marge du *Kitāb Kifāyat al-ʿĀbidīn* de Rabbi Abraham Ben Moïse Maïmonide." *REJ* 150 (1991): 385-405.

———. "A Jewish Sufi on the Influence of Music." *Yuval* 4 (1982): 124-30.

———. "Judaeo-Arabic Mystical Writings of the Xiiith and Xivth Centuries." In *Judaeo-Arabic Studies*, edited by Norman Golb, 87-101. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997.

———. "A Judeo-Arabic Commentary on the Hafṭarot by Ḥanan'el Ben Shmu'el (?), Abraham Maimonides' Father-in-Law." *Maimonidean Studies* 1 (1990): 27-56.

———. "La 'hitbodedut' chez les premiers qabbalistes en orient et chez les soufis." In *Prière, mystique et judaïsme*, edited by Roland Goetschel, 133-57. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1987.

———. "Les traces d'al-Hallag, martyr mystique de l'islam, dans la tradition juive." *AnIsl* 35 (2001): 101-27.

———. "The Literary Legacy of David Ben Joshua, Last of the Maimonidean Nĕgīdim." *JQR* 75 (1984): 1-56.

———. "The Literary Legacy of Maimonides' Descendants." In *Sobre la vida y obra de Maimónides*, edited by J. P. del Rosal, 149-56. Cordoba, 1991.

———. "Maimonides - Father and Son: Continuity and Change." In *Traditions of Maimonideanism*, edited by Carlos Fraenkel, 103-37. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

———. "A Mystical Commentary on the Song of Songs in the Hand of David Maimonides Ii." In *Esoteric and Exoteric Aspects in Judeo-Arabic Culture*, edited by Benjamin Hary and Haggai Ben-Shammai, 19-53. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

———. "A Mystical Treatise on Perfection, Providence, and Prophecy from the Jewish Sufi Circle." In *The Jews of Medieval Islam*, edited by Daniel Frank, 301-33. Leiden: Brill, 1995.

———. "A Mystical Treatise on Prayer and the Spiritual Quest from the Pietist Circle." *JSAI* 16 (1993): 137-75.

———. "*ʿOd ʿal R. Ḥanan'el Ben Shmu'el ha-dayyan, gedol ha-ḥasidim*." *Tarbiṣ* 55 (2005): 77-107.

———. "A Pietist Letter from the Genizah." *Hebrew Annual Review* 9 (1985): 159-67.

———. "Solitary Meditation in Jewish and Islamic Mysticism in the Light of a Recent Archeological Discovery." *Medieval Encounters* 1 (1995): 271-96.

———. "Some Judeo-Arabic Fragments of Abraham He-Ḥasid the Jewish Sufi." *JJS* 26 (1981): 47-72.

———. "*Torat ha-devequt be-mishnato shel R. Avraham ben Ha-Rambam: qeṭa'im mitokh ha-ḥeleq ha-'avud shel ha-maspiq le-'ovdey ha-shem*." *Da'at* 50-52 (2003): 107-19.

———. *The Treatise of the Pool*. London: The Octagon Press, 1981.

Fernandes, Leonor. *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt: The Khanqah*. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1988.

Finkel, Joshua. "Maimonides' Treatise on Resurrection." *PAAJR* 9 (1930): 1-105 [English] and 1-42 [Hebrew and Arabic].

Fishbane, Eitan. *As Light before Dawn: The Inner World of a Medieval Kabbalist*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Friedman, Mordechai. "*Makhloqet le-shem shamayyim: 'iyyunim be-pulmus ha-tefillah shel R. Avraham ben ha-Rambam u-beney doro*." *Te'udah* 10 (1996): 243-98.

Friedmann, Yonanan. "A Note on the Conversion of Egypt to Islam." *JSAI* 3 (1981): 238-40.

Gafni, Isaiah. "Bathyra." In *Encyclopedia Judaica, 2nd ed.* Macmillan Reference, 2006.

Garcin, Jean-Claude. "Ḳūṣ." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

———. *Un centre musulman de la haute-Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ* Cairo: IFAO, 1976.

Geoffroy, Eric. "Entre hagiographie et hagiologie : Les Laṭā'if al-Minan d'ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh (M. 709/1309)." *AnIsl* 32 (1998): 49-66.

———. *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*. Translated by Roger Gaetani. Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2010.

———. "L'apparition des voies: les khirqa primitives (Xiie siècle – début Xiiie siècle)." In *Les voies d'allah: les ordres mystiques dans l'islam des origines à aujourd'hui*, edited by G and A. Popovic Veinstein, 44-54. Paris: Fayard, 1996.

———. "La Châdhiliyya." In *Les voies d'allah: les ordres mystiques dans l'islam des origines à aujourd'hui*, edited by G and A. Popovic Veinstein, 509-18. Paris: Fayard, 1996.

———. "Ṭā'ifa." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

———, ed. *Une voie soufie dans le monde: la Shâdhiliyya*. Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2005.

Gharīb, Ma'mūn. *Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-shādhilī: ḥayātuhu wa-taṣawaffuhu wa-talāmīdhuhu wa-awrāduhu*. Cairo: Dār Gharīb, 2000.

Gibb, H. A. R. *The Life of Saladin*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.

———. *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1984.

Glassé, Cyril. *The New Encyclopedia of Islam*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008.

Goitein, S. D. "Abraham Maimonides and His Pietist Circle." In *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, edited by A. Altmann, 145-64. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967.

———. "A Jewish Addict to Sufism in the Time of the Nagid David Ii Maimonides." *JQR* 44 (1953): 37-49.

———. *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*. 6 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

———. "*Miktav 'el ha-Rambam be-'inyaney ha-heqdeshot ve-yediyot ḥadashot 'al ṣe'eṣa'av he-negidim*." *Tarbiṣ* 34 (1965): 232-56.

———. "*R. Ḥanan'el ha-dayyan ha-Gadol ben R. Shmu'el ha-nadiv meḥutano shel ha-Rambam*." *Tarbiṣ* 50 (1980-1981): 371-95.

———. "*Rabbenu Avraham ben ha-Rambam ve-ḥugo ha-ḥasidi: mismakhim ḥadashim min ha-genizah*." *Tarbiṣ* 33 (1964): 181-97.

———. "Review of Jean-Claude Garcin's Un centre musulman de la haute-Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ." *Speculum* 53 (1978): 361-63.

Goitein, S. D., and Mordechai Friedman. *India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents from the Cairo Genizah*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Golb, Norman. "The Topography of the Jews of Medieval Egypt." *JNES* 24 and 33 (1965 and 1974): 251-57; 116-49.

———. "The Topography of the Jews of Medieval Egypt." *JNES* 24 (1965): 251-70.

Goldreich, Amos. "Possible Arabic Sources for the Distinction between 'Duties of the Heart' and 'Duties of the Limbs." In *Te'uda: meḥaqrim be-'ivrit u-ve-'aravit*, edited by Aaron Dotan, 179-208. Tel Aviv: University of Tel Aviv, 1988.

Goldziher, Ignaz. *Muslim Studies.* New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction Publishers, 2006 [1966].

Gottschalk, H. L. "Awlād al-Shaykh (Banū Ḥamawiya)." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

———. "Die Aulad Šaiḫ Aš-Šuyūḫ (Banū Ḥamawiya)." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 53 (1956): 57-87.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Edited by Quitin Hoare and Geoffrey Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1971.

Greenspahn, Frederick. "Why Prophecy Ceased." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 37-49.

Griffel, Frank. "Review of Muhammad Saflo, *Al-Juwaynī's Thought and Methodology, with a Translation and Commentary on Luma' Al-Adilla*." *JAOS* 122 (2002): 858-59.

Gril, Denis. *La risāla de Ṣafī al-Dīn Ibn Abī l-Manṣūr Ibn Ẓāfir: Biographies des maîtres spirituels connus par un cheikh Égyptien du Viie/Xiiie siècle*. Cairo: Institute Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1986.

———. "La Voie." In *Les voies d'Allah: les ordres mystiques dans l'islam des origines à aujourd'hui*, edited by Gilles Veinstein and Alexandre Popovic. Paris: Fayard, 1996.

———. "Le Soufisme en Égypte au début de l'époque mamelouke d'après le *waḥīd fī sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd de 'Abd al-Ghaffār ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī* (M. 708/1308)." In *Le développement du soufisme en Égypte à l'époque mamelouke*, edited by Richard McGregor and Adam Sabra. Cairo: IFAO, 2010.

———. "Une émeute antichrétienne à Qūṣ au début du Viiie/Xive siècle." *AnIsl* 16 (1980): 241-74.

———. "Une source inédite pour l'histoire du taṣawwuf en Égypte au Vii/Xiiie Siècle." In *Livre du centenaire*, 441-508. Cairo: IFAO, 1980.

Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies I - III*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982-1984.

Ha-Ga'on, Sa'adya ben Joseph. *Kitāb al-amānāt wa'l-i'tiqādāt*. Edited by Saul Landauer. Leiden: Brill, 1880.

Ha-Levi, Yehudah. *Kitāb al-radd wa'l-dalīl fī 'l-dīn al-dhalīl*. Edited by David Baneth. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1977.

Haarmann, U. "Al-Uḳṣur." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Hechter, Michael. "The Emergence of Cooperative Social Institutions." In *Social Institutions: Their Emergence, Maintenance and Effects*, edited by Michael Hechter, Karl-Dieter Opp and Reinhard Wippler. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *Prophetic Inspiration after the Prophets: Maimonides and Other Medieval Authorities*. New York: KTAV, 1996.

Hodgson, Marshall. *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*. 3 vols. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Homerin, Th. Emil. "The Domed Shrine of Ibn Al-Fāriḍ." *AnIsl* 25-26 (1989-1990): 125-30.

———. *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn Al-Fāriḍ, His Verse, and His Shrine*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2001.

———. "Saving Muslim Souls: The Khanqah and the Sufi Duty in Mamluk Lands." *Mamluk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 59-83.

———. "Sufis and Their Detractors in Mamlūk Egypt: A Survey of Protagonists and Institutional Settings." In *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, edited by Frederick de Jong and Berndt Radtke, 225-46. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

———. "Umar Ibn Al-Fāriḍ, a Saint of Mamluk and Ottoman Egypt." In *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*, edited by Grace Smith and Carl Ernst, 85-94. Istanbul: Isis Press, 1993.

———. *'Umar Ibn Al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Saintly Life*. New York: Paulist Press, 2001.

Honnerkamp, Kenneth. "A Biography of Abû L-Hasan Al-Shâdhili Dating from the Fourteenth Century." In *Une voie soufie dans le monde: la Shâdhiliyya*, edited by Eric Geoffroy, 73-87. Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose.

Humphreys, Stephen R. *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193-1260*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1977.

Ḥusayn, 'Alī Ṣafī. *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī miṣr fī al-qarn al-sābi' al-hijrī*. Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1964.

Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, Muḥyī ʼl-Dīn. *Tashrīf al-ayyām wa'l-ʻuṣūr fī sīrat al-malik al-manṣūr*. Edited by Murād Kāmil. Cairo: al-Jumhūrīyah al-ʻArabīyah al-Muttaḥidah, 1961.

Ibn ʻIyād, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad. *al-mafākhir al-ʻalīya fī ʼl-maʼāthir al-shādhilīya*. Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1993.

Ibn ʻUthmān, Abd al-Raḥmān *Murshid al-zawwār ilā qubūr al-abrār*. Edited by Muḥammad Fatḥī Abū Bakr. Cairo: Dār al-Miṣrīya al-Lubnānīya, 1995.

Ibn Abī l-Uṣaybiʻa, Aḥmad ibn al-Qāsim. *ʻUyūn al-anbāʼ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʼ*. Edited by Nizār Riḍā. Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1965.

Ibn al-ʻArabī, Muḥyī ʼl-Dīn. *al-Futūḥāt al-makkīya*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmīya, 1999.

———. *al-Futūḥāt al-makkīya*. Edited by ʻUthmān Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. Cairo: al-Hayʼa al-Miṣrīya liʼl-Kitāb, 1984.

———. *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Edited by ʻAfīfī. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʻArabī, n.d.

———. *La Vie merveilleuse de Dhû-l-Nûn l'Égyptien*. Translated by Roger Deladrière. Paris: Sindbad, 1988.

Ibn al-ʻImād, Shihāb al-Dīn. *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*. Edited by ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Arnāʼūṭ and Maḥmūd al-Arnāʼūṭ. Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1986.

Ibn al-Athīr, Abū ʼl-Ḥasan ʻAlī. *al-Kāmil fī ʼl-tārīkh*. Edited by Abū ʼl-Fidā ʻAbd Allāh al-Qāḍī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmīya, 1987.

Ibn al-Dawādārī, Abū Bakr. *Iqd al-durar*. Edited by Bernd Radtke. Cairo1960.

Ibn al-Furāt, Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd al-Raḥmān. *Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt*. Edited by Qusṭanṭīn Zurayq. Beirut: al-Maṭbaʻa al-Amīrkānīya, 1936.

Ibn al-Jawzī, Abū ʼl-Faraj. *Al-muntaẓam fī tārīkh al-mulūk waʼl-umam*. Edited by Muḥammad ʻAbd al-Qādir ʻAṭāʼ and Muṣṭafā ʻAbd al-Qādir ʻAṭāʼ. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmīya, 1992.

———. *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*. Edited by Maḥmūd Fākhūrī. Beirut: Dār al-Maʻrifa, 1986.

———. *Talbīs iblīs*. Beirut: Dār Ibn Zaydūn, n.d.

Ibn al-Jawzī, Sibṭ. *Mirʼāt al-zamān fī tārīkh al-aʻyān*. Ḥaydarābād, 1951-1952.

Ibn al-Jazarī, Muḥammad. *Ghāyat al-nihāya fī ṭabaqāt al-qurrāʼ*. Edited by G. Bergstraesser. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmīya, 2006.

Ibn al-Mulaqqin, ʻUmar ibn ʻAlī. *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyāʼ*. Edited by Nūr al-Dīn Shurayb. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānijī, 2006.

Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, Muḥammad ibn Abī ʼl-Qāsim. *Durrat al-asrār wa-tuḥfat al-abrār*. Edited by ʻAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʻAṭā. Cairo1988.

Ibn Aqnin, Joseph ben Judah. *Inkishāf al-asrār wa-ẓuhūr al-anwār*. Edited by A. S. Halkin. Jerusalem: Meqiṣey Nirdamim, 1964.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd Allāh. *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1992.

Ibn Jubayr, Abū ʼl-Ḥusayn Muḥammad. *Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr*. Beirut: Dār Bayrūt liʼl-Ṭibāʻa waʼl-Nashr, 1984.

———. *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*. Translated by R. J. C. Broadhurst. London: J. Cape, 1952.

Ibn Kathīr, ʻImād al-Dīn Abū ʼl-Fidāʼ Ismāʻīl. *Al-Bidāya waʼl-nihāya*. Edited by ʻAbd Allāh ibn ʻAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī. Cairo: Dār Hajar, 1997.

Ibn Khaldun, Abū Zayd ʻAbd al-Raḥmān. *Al-muqaddima*. Edited by ʻAbd al-Salām al-Shadādī. Casablanca: Khizānat Ibn Khaldūn, 2005.

———. *Kitāb al-ʻibar*. Būlāq1284 AH.

Ibn Khallikān, Abū ʼl-ʻAbbās Aḥmad. *Wafāyāt al-aʻyān wa-anbāʼ al-zamān*. Edited by Iḥsān ʻAbbās. Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, n.d.

Ibn Munawwar, Muḥammad. *Asrār al-tawḥīd* Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣrīya liʼl-Taʼlīf waʼl-Tarjama, n.d. .

———. *Les Étapes mystiques du dhaykh Abu Saʼid*. UNESCO: Desclée De Brouwer, 1974.

Ibn Paqūda, Baḥya. *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart* Translated by Menahem Mansoor. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1973.

———. *Hidāya ʼilā farāʼiḍ al-qulūb*. Edited by A. S. Yahuda. Leiden: Brill, 1912.

Ibn Qunfudh, Abū ʼl-ʻAbbās Aḥmad *Uns al-faqīr wa-ʻizz al-ḥaqīr*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Fāsī and Adolphe Faure. Rabat1965.

Ibn Rajab, Zayn al-Dīn. *Kitāb al-dhayl ʻAaā ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*. Edited by Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī. Beirut: Dār al-Maʻrifa, 1952.

Ibn Taghrībirdī, Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf. *al-Manhal al-ṣāfī waʼl-muṣṭawfā baʻda ʼl-wāfī*. Edited by Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn. Cairo: al-Hayʼa al-Miṣrīya al-ʻĀmma liʼl-Kitāb, 1984.

———. *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk miṣr wa'l-qāhira*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1992.

Ibn Wāṣil, Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad. *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār banī ayyūb*. Edited by Jamāl al-Dīn Shayyāl. Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Amīrīya bi'l-Qāhira, 1957.

Idel, Moshe. "Abulafia's Secrets of the Guide: A Linguistic Turn." In *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism*, edited by Alfred Ivry, Elliot Wolfson and Alan Arkush, 289-329. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998.

———. *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

———. *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1988.

———. *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1988.

Ilan, Naḥem. "*ha-Sifrut ha-ṣufit ha-yehudit: ben hashpa'ah le-hashra'ah*." In *Turim: Studies in Jewish History and Literature Presented to Dr. Bernard Lander*, edited by M. A. Shmidman, 1-21 [Hebrew section]. New York: Touro College Press, 2007.

Jantzen, Grace. *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Jastrow, Marcus, and Samuel Krauss. "Bathyra." In *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. New York: Funk and Wagnall, 1906.

Juynboll, G. H. A. *Encyclopedia of Canonical Ḥadīth*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Karamustafa, Ahmet. *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994.

Kassis, Hannah. "Qāḍī 'Iyād's Rebellion against the Almohads in Sabtah (A.H. 542-543/A.D. 1147-1148): New Numismatic Evidence." *JAOS* 103 (1983): 504-14.

Karamustafa, Ahmet. *Sufism: The Formative Period*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Katz, J. G., and C. Hamès. "Zāwiya." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Kellner, Menachem. *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism*. Portland: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2006.

King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and 'the Mystic East'*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999.

Knysh, Alexander. *Ibn ʻArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1999.

Kreisel, Howard. "Individual Perfection Vs. Communal Welfare and the Problem of Contradiction in Maimonides' Approach to Ethics." *PAAJR* 58 (1992): 107-41.

Kugle, Scott. *The Book of Illumination*. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2005.

Landolt, Hermann. "Saʿd Al- Dīn Al- Ḥammū;Ī (or Al-Ḥamūʾī or Al-Ḥamawī), Muḥammad B. Al-Muʾayyad ... B. Ḥam(M)Ūy(a) (or Ḥamuwayh or Ḥamawiyya) Al-Dj̱Uwaynī." *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

Langermann, Tsvi. "From Private Devotion to Communal Prayer: New Light on Abraham Maimonides' Synagogue Reforms." *Ginzei Qedem* 1 (2005): 31-49.

———. "A Judaeo-Arabic Candle Lighting Prayer." *JQR* 92 (2001): 133-35.

———. "A Judaeo-Arabic Paraphrase of Ibn Gabirol's Keter Malkhut." *Zutot* (2003): 28-33.

Laoust, Henri. "Ibn Taymiyya." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Lapidus, Ira. "Ayyūbid Religious Policy and the Development of the Schools of Law in Cairo." In *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire*, 279-86. Cairo: al-Nadwa al-Dawlīya li-Tārīkh al-Qāhira, 1969.

———. "The Conversion of Egypt to Islam." *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 248-62.

———. *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

———. "Review of Jean-Claude Garcin's *Un centre musulman de la haute-Égypte Médiévale: Qūṣ*." *JESHO* 21 (1978): 331-34.

Lassner, Jacob. *A Mediterranean Society: An Abridgement in One Volume*. Berkely: University of California Press, 2003.

Legrain, Georges. *Louxor sans les pharaons*. Paris1914.

Leiser, Gary. "The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt: Madrasas and Mudarrisun, 495-647/1101-1249." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1976.

Lev, Yaacov. *Saladin in Egypt*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

———. *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt*. Leiden: Brill, 1991.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, 1963.

Levtizion, Nehemiah. "The Dynamics of Sufi Brotherhoods." In *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, edited by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion. Albany: SUNY Press, 2002.

Lincoln, Bruce. *Discourse and the Construction of Society* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

———. *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Little, Donald. "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4 (1973): 311-27.

Lobel, Diana. *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language of Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's Kuzari*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2000.

———. *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue: Philosophy and Mysticism in Baḥya Ibn Paqūda's Duties of the Heart*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

Lopez, José, and John Scott. *Social Structure*. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000.

Lory, Pierre. "Shādhilīya." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Loubet, Mireille. "Une mystique particulière: le piétisme juif de type soufi en Égypte médiévale." *Bulletin du centre de recherche français de Jérusalem* 7 (2000): 11-16.

Mack, Burton. "Social Formation." In *Guide to the Study of Religion*, edited by Willi Braun and Russell McCutcheon. London: Cassell, 2000.

Mackeen, A. M. "The Rise of Al-Shādhilī." *JAOS* 91 (1971): 477-86.

MacKenzie, Neil. *Ayyubid Cairo: A Topographical Study*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1992.

Maḥmūd, ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm. *al-ʻĀlim al-ʻābid al-ʻārif bi-llāh dhū 'l-nūn al-miṣrī*. Cairo: Dār al-Rashād, 2004.

———. *al-Madrasa al-shādhilīya al-ḥadītha wa -imāmuhā Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī* Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, n.d.

———. *Qaḍīyat al-taṣawwuf: al-madrasa al-shādhilīya*. Cairo: Dār al-Maʻārif, 2007.

Maimon, Dov. "*Gevulot ha-mifgash beyn yahadut rabbanit u-misṭiqa muslimit*." *Aqdamot* 7 and 8 (1999-2000): 9-29 and 43-72.

Maimonides, ʻObadyāh. *al-Maqāla al-ḥawḍīya*. Edited by Paul Fenton. London: Octagon Press, 1981.

Maimonides, Abraham. *Abraham Maimuni: Responsa*. Edited by A. H. Freimann and S. D. Goitein. Jerusalem: Mekiṣey Nirdamim, 1937.

———. *The High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides, Vol. 1*. Edited by Samuel Rosenblatt. New York: Columbia University Press, 1927.

———. *The High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides, Vol. 2*. Edited by Samuel Rosenblatt. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938.

———. *Milḥamot ha-shem*. Edited by Reuben Margoliyot. Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1952.

———. *Sefer ha-maspiq le-ʻovedey ha-shem* Edited by Nissim Dana. Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1989.

Maimonides, David ben Joshua. *al-Murshid ilā al-tafarrud wa'l-murfid ilā al-tajarrud*. Edited by Paul Fenton. Jerusalem: Meqiṣey Nirdamim, 1987.

Maimonides, Moses. "*al-Maqāla fī teḥiyyat ha-metim*." *PAAJR* 9 (1930): 1-105 [English] and 1-42 [Arabic and Hebrew].

———. *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*. Edited by I. Joel. Jerusalem1929.

———. *The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics (shemonah peraḳim): A Psychological and Ethical Treatise*. Edited by Joseph Gorfinkle. New York: Columbia University Press, 1912.

———. *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Translated by Shlomo Pines. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.

———. *Mishna ʻim perush Rabbenu Moshe Ben Maimon*. Edited by Yosef Qāfiḥ. Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1964.

———. *Mishneh torah*. Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1955.

———. *Thamāniya fuṣūl: Mûsâ Maymûnî's acht Capitel, Arabisch und Deutsch*. Edited by M. Wolff. Leiden: Brill, 1903.

Makdisi, George. "al-Kundurī , ʻAmīd Al-Mulk Abū Naṣr Muḥammad B. Manṣūr." *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

———. *The Rise of Colleges: Insitutions of Learning in Islam and the Wests*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981.

Mala, S. Babs. "The Sufi Convent and Its Social Significance in the Medieval Period of Islam." *Islamic Culture* 51 (1977): 31-52.

Mann, Jacob. *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fāṭimid Caliphs*. 2 volumes in 1 vols. New York: KTAV Press, 1970.

Mansoor, Menahem. "Arabic Sources of Ibn Paquda's Duties of the Heart." *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 6 (1977): 81-90.

Marcus, Ivan. *A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis: The Culture of Early Ashkenaz*. Edited by David Biale. New York: Schocken, 2002.

Margariti, Roxani. *Aden and the Indian Ocean Trade: 150 Years in the Life of a Medieval Arabian Port*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Marshall, Gordon, ed. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Massignon, Louis. *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulman*. Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1922.

———. *The Passion of Al-Ḥallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*. Translated by Herbert Mason. 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Mayeur-Jaouen, Catherine. *al-Sayyid al-Badawī: Un grand saint de l'islam égyptien*. Cairo: IFAO, 1994.

McGregor, Richard. *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt: The Wafā' Sufi Order and the Legacy of Ibn 'Arabi* Albany: SUNY Press, 2004.

Mead, George Herbert. *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Meier, Fritz. *Abū Sa'īd b. Abī 'l-Khayr (357-440/967-1049): Wirklichkeit und Legende*. Leiden-Tehran-Liège: Brill, 1976.

———. *Essays on Islamic Mysticism and Piety*. Translated by John O'Kane and Bernd Radtke. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

Melchert, Christopher. *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E.* Leiden: Brill, 1997.

Meri, Joseph. *The Cult of Saints among Jews and Muslims in Medieval Syria*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

———. "Ziyāra." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Michon, J. L. "Khirqa." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Mojaddedi, Jawad. *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The Tabaqat Genre from Al-Sulami to Jami*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001.

Morris, James. *The Master and the Disciple: An Early Islamic Spiritual Dialogue, a New Arabic Edition and English Translation of Ja'Far B. Manṣūr Al-Yaman's Kitāb Al-'Ālim Wa'l-Ghulām*. London: I.B Taurus, 2001.

Mubārak, 'Alī Bāshā. *al-Khiṭaṭ al-tawfīqīya al-jadīda li-miṣr al-qāhira*. Cairo: Būlāq, 1306 AH.

Muṣṭafā, Fārūq Aḥmad. *al-Binā' al-ijtimā'ī li'l-¯tarīqa al-shādhilīya fī miṣr: dirāsa fī 'l-anthrūbūlūjīya al-ijtimā'īya*. Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣrīya al-'Āmma li'l-Kitāb, 1980.

Mu'nis, Ḥusayn. *Ibn Baṭṭūṭa wa-riḥlātuhu: taḥqīq wa-dirāsa wa-taḥlīl* Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 2003.

Nagel, Tilman. *Die Festung des Glaubens: Triumph und Scheitern des islamischen Rationalismus im 11. Jahrhundert*. Munich, 1988.

Nashshār, Muṣṭafā. *Dhū 'l-nūn al-miṣrī rā'id al-taṣawwuf al-islāmī*. Cairo: Dār Qibā', 2006.

Nicholson, Reynold A. "The Lives of 'Umar Ibnu'l-Farid and Muhiyyu 'din Ibnu'l-'Arabi." *JRAS* (1906): 797-824.

———. *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921.

Nirenberg, David. *Communities of Violence: Persecutions of Minorities in the Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Nwyia, Paul. *Ibn 'Abbâd de Ronda*. Beirut1961.

———. *Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh et la naissance de la confrérie Šāḏilite*. Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1986.

Offe, Claus. "Institutions' Role in the Distribution and Control of Social Power." In *Rethinking Political Institutions: The Art of the State*, edited by Ian Shapiro, Stephen Skowronek and Daniel Gavlin. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

Ohlander, Erik. *Sufism in an Age of Transition: 'Umar Al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Parsons, Talcott. "Prolegomena to a Theory of Social Institutions [Reprint of 1934 Article]." *American Sociological Review* 55 (1990): 319-33.

Pellat, Ch. "Manāqib." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Petry, Carl. *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Reif, Stefan. *A Jewish Archive of Old Cairo*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000.

Renard, John. *Ibn Abbad of Ronda: Letters on the Sufi Path*. New York: Paulist Press, 1986.

Rizq, ʿĀṣim Muḥammad. *Khānqāwāt al-ṣūfīya fī miṣr fī al-ʿaṣrayn al-ayyūbī waʾl-mamlukī.* Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1997.

Roberts, Nancy. *The Subtle Blessings in the Saintly Lives of Abu ʾl-Abbas al-Mursi and His Master Abu ʾl-Hasan*. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2005.

Rosenthal, Franz. "A Judaeo-Arabic Work under Ṣūfic Influence." *Hebrew Annual Review* 15 (1940): 433-84.

Rosner, Fred. *The Wars of the Lord by Abraham Maimonides in Defense of His Father Moses Maimonides.* Haifa: The Maimonides Research Institute, 2000.

Russ-Fishbane, Elisha. "Between Politics and Piety: Abraham Maimonides and His Times." Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2009.

Rustow, Marina. "At the Limits of Communal Autonomy: Jewish Bids for Intervention from the Mamluk State." *Mamluk Studies Review* 13 (2009): 1-27.

———. *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimide Caliphate*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.

Sabra, Adam. *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam, Mamluk Egypt 1250-1517*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Safi, Omid. "Abū Saʿīd Ibn Abī ʾl-Khayr." *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 3rd edition. Leiden: Brill, 2007 -

———. *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiationg Ideology and Religious Inquiry*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Saflo, Muhammad. *Al-Juwaynīʾs Thought and Methodology, with a Translation and Commentary on Lumaʿ Al-Adilla*. Berlin: Schwarz, 2000.

Sanders, Paula. "The Fāṭimid State, 969-1171." In *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume One: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*, edited by Carl Petry, 151-74. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Sayyid, Ayman Fu'ād. *al-Dawla al-fāṭimīya fī miṣr tafsīr jadīd*. Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣrīya al-Lubnānīya, 1992.

Scattolin, Giuseppe. "Al-Farghānī's Commentary on Ibn Al-Fāriḍ's Mystical Poem Al-Tā'iyyat Al-Kubrā." *MIDEO* 21 (1993): 331-83.

———. "More on Ibn Al-Fāriḍ's Biography." *MIDEO* 22 (1994): 197-242.

———. "Realization of Self (*anā*) in Islamic Mysticism: The Mystical Experience of 'Umar Ibn Al-Fāriḍ." *Mélanges de li'Université Saint-Joseph* 54 (1999): 117-48.

Schimmel, Annemarie. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1978.

Schmidt, Gilya. ""Cleaving to God" Through the Ages: An Historical Analysis of the Jewish Concept of 'Devekut'." *Mystics Quarterly* 21 (1995): 103-20.

Scott, James. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Scott, John. *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook*. London: SAGE Publications, 2000.

Scott, Richard. *Institutions and Organizations*. London: SAGE Publications, 1995.

———. *Organizations: Rational, Natural, and Open Systems*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2003.

Sedgwick, Mark. "Upper Egypt's Regional Identity: The Role and Impact of Sufi Links." In *Upper Egypt: Identity and Change*, edited by N. S. Hopkins and R. Saad. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2004.

Sewell, William. "A Theory of Structure: Dulaity, Agency, and Transformation." *The American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1992): 1-29.

Shayyāl, Jamāl al-Dīn. *A'lām al-iskandarīya fī 'l-aṣr al-islāmī* Alexandria: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīnīya, 2001.

Shoshan, Boaz. "High Culture and Popular Culture in Medieval Islam." *Studia Islamica* 73 (1991): 67-107.

Shusman, Aviva. "*She'elat ha-meqorot ha-muslimiyim le-ḥibburo shel R. Avraham Ben ha-Rambam Kitāb Kifāyat al-'Ābidīn*." *Tarbiṣ* 55 (1986): 229-51.

Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, 'Alī. *Dībājat Ibn al-Fāriḍ*. Edited by 'Abd al-Khāliq Maḥmūd. Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1984.

Smith, J. Z. . "Manna, Mana Everywhere and /_ / _ /." In *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Stern, Sacha. "Some Unpublished Poems by al-Harizi." *JQR* 50 (1960): 269-76 and 346-64.

Stewart, Devin. "The Doctorate of Islamic Law in Mamluk Egypt and Syria." In *Law and Education in Medieval Islam*, edited by Joseph Lowry, Devin Stewart and Shawkat Toorawa: E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2004.

———. "Popular Shiism in Medieval Egypt: Vestiges of Islamic Sectarian Polemics in Egyptian Arabic," in *Studia Islamica* 84 (1996): 35-66.

Stillman, Norman. "The Non-Muslim Communities: The Jewish Community." In *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume One: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*, edited by Carl Petry, 198-210. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Stinchcombe, Arthur. *Constructing Social Theories*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968.

Stone, Lawrence. "Prosopography." *Daedalus* 100 (1971): 46-71.

Taylor, C. S. *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

Tibawi, Abdul Latif. "Muslim Education in the Golden Age of the Caliphate." *Islamic Culture* 28 (1954): 418-38.

———. "Origin and Character of Al-Madrasa." *BSOAS* 25 (1962): 225-38.

Trimingham, J. Spencer. *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Tudela, Benjamin of. *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*. Translated by Marcus Adler. Edited by Marcus Adler. New York: Feldheim, 1907.

Twersky, Isadore. *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.

Um, Nancy. "Pilgrims and Spice and Everything Nice: Re-Mapping Medieval Egypt." *Jusūr* 11 (1995).

Vajda, Georges. "The Mystical Doctrine of Rabbi Obadya, Grandson of Moses Maimonides." *JJS* 6 (1955): 213-25.

Veinstein, Gilles, and Alexandre Popovic, eds. *Les voies d'Allah: les ordres mystiques dans l'islam des origines à aujourd'hui*. Paris: Fayard, 1996.

Wasserman, Stanley, and Katherine Faust, eds. *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Westermarckh, Edward. *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*. London, 1926.

Wieder, Naphtali. *Hashpa'ot islamiyot 'al ha-pulḥan ha-yehudi*. London: East and West Library, 1948.

Wiet, Gaston. "Ḳibṭ." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

———. *L'Egypte arabe de la conquête arabe à la conquête ottomane*. Paris1937.

Williams, Raymond. *Keywords*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Wolfson, Elliot. *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Worman, Ernest. "Two Book-Lists from the Cambridge Genizah Fragments." *JQR* 20 (1908): 450-63.

Yazici, Tahsin. "Ḳalandar." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim. *Servants of Kings and not Servants of Servants: Some Aspects of the Political History of the Jews*. Atlanta, GA: Tam Institute for Jewish Studies, Emory University, 2005.

Yver, G. "Ghumāra." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005.

Zouanat, Zakia. "Des Origines de la shâdhiliyya chez le cheikh 'Abd al-Salâm Ibn Mashîsh." In *Une voie soufie dans le monde: la Shâdhiliyya*, edited by Eric Geoffroy, 53-62. Paris: Masonneuve & Larose, 2005.

———. *Ibn Mashish, maitre d'al-Shadhili.* Rabat, 1998.

GENIZAH DOCUMENTS

Cambridge University Library

Or. 1080 J 281
T-S H 10/18.2
T-S 12.289
T-S 20.148
T-S 6J 7.3
T-S 8J 20.20

T-S 8J 26.19
T-S 10 J 13.8
T-S 13 J 9.12
T-S Ar. 44.201
T-S Ar. 51.111
T-S Misc. 24.152

Bodleian Library, Oxford

Bodl. Huntington 382 (Neubauer 1422)

National Library, St. Petersburg

II Firk. Heb.-Arab. NS 964.1-5
II Firk. Heb.-Arab. 2499.8
II Firk. 1.2924
II Firk. 1.2926