The Shaykh, the Physical Setting and the Holy Site:

the diffusion of the Qādirī path in late

medieval Palestine*

DAPHNA EPHRAT

This article explores the local context of the prominence of Sufism and sanctity in the late medieval period (1250–1500) through an examination of the diffusion of the Qādirī spiritual path in the spatial frame of Palestine. The geographical spread of the major spiritual paths (*ṭarīqa*s) and the emergence of their shaykhs as charismatic figures in the course of the late medieval period has received considerable attention by historians of Sufism.[1] Although the study of the social historical dimensions of the universal evolution and its nuances and variations is in order, patiently asked questions remain open regarding the establishment of the *ṭarīqa*s into locally embedded associations around charismatic shaykhs in particular historical and geographical settings, as well as the role local leaders of the *ṭarīqa*s played in shaping a communities' life and space.

One of the earliest spiritual paths, as well as the most significant *ṭarīqa*s for the development of institutional Sufism, the Qādiriyya extended its reach to Syria-Palestine (Bilād al-Shām), and its various local groups became active in Palestinian cities from the late Mamluk period, fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, onwards.[2] While tied vertically to a chain of spiritual authority (*silsila*), and horizontally to cosmopolitan networks that cut across geographical and political boundaries, the local Sufi shaykh diffused his spiritual method among his fellow believers and played a prominent role in the evolution of devotional Sufism as a focus of local communal life. Authors of sacred biographies, while creating a reservoir of universally

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[1] For a panoramic review of the expansion of Sufism and the evolution of sainthood during the late medieval period, see Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), pp. 153–157. Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (New York, 1994), p. 174, pinpoints the twelfth century as a milestone in this development. The most recent and comprehensive work on the growth of the cult of dead Muslim saints as a fundamental aspect of Islamic piety in the late medieval period are Josef W. Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford and New York, 2002); Christopher S. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt*, Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts, Vol. 32 (Leiden, Boston, Cologne, 1999). While focusing on Egypt (1200–1500), Taylor provides insightful observations for our understanding of the evolution of the saint phenomenon as a whole. See also his extensive bibliography on this field.

[2] General discussions of the spread of the Qādiriyya in Syria include J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders* (New York and Oxford, 1971), p. 43; Éric Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie sous les Derniers Mamelouks et les Premiers Ottomans: Orientations Spirituelles et Enjeux Culturels* (Damascus, 1995), pp. 225–228.

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idealised saintly figures, portrayed the life and activities of the Sufi "friend of God", the *walī Allāh*, within his community, thereby further reasserting his local ties. The examination of this process of localisation of centres on three intertwined aspects: the establishment and growth of the local branch of Qādirī *ṭarīqa* around the shaykh, the physical setting of the Qādirī shaykh and his local community of followers, and the local spaces that emerged around the venerated shaykh and commemorated his memory.

In studying the biographies of the shaykhs, leaders of the *ṭarīqa* in fourteenth to fifteenth-century Palestine, I look beyond the introductory formula that places the Sufi 'friend of God' within a normative cultural model, and analyse the narratives that embed him in the local community of believers and render his elevated figure concrete. In examining the sites and spaces that emerged around the shaykhs of the *ṭarīqa* and their transformation into a focus of communal life, I use the rich complementary non-narrative source materials available to the historian of Sufism. These include endowment-deeds establishing the physical place of the shaykh of the *ṭarīqa*, inscriptions affixed to Sufi lodges and saintly tombs, and physical remnants. Drawing on these source-materials, this article seeks to advance an understanding of the local manifestations of the expansion of Sufism in medieval Islam and offers additional perspective on the 'missing links' of the social historical dimensions of Sufism between the formative and modern period.

The Shaykh and the Locally Embedded *Ṭarīqa*

The patterns of the establishment of the so-called collective of the *ṭarīqa* were not, of course, monolithic at any point in time or place or even in regard to individual leaders and their followings. Similarly, spiritual routes did not simply branch out as chains of authority and as practices and rituals. Nor were the modes and frameworks of operation applied by the shaykh of the *ṭarīqa* simply replicated.[3] Rather, as I attempt to show, the shaykh of the *ṭarīqa* must have functioned within the local community, accommodating himself to, and profiting from its specific social and political order. Furthermore, he must have operated in ways that made his followers perceive him to be 'their shaykh', suited to meet their beliefs, concerns and expectations.

Greater Syria, it should be noted, did not constitute the cradle of the major *ṭarīqa*s that evolved in the course of the late medieval period. The overwhelming majority of the *ṭarīqa*s which appeared on its soil during this period were branches of mystical paths and spiritual chains that originated in other parts of the Muslim world. Having its origins in Iraq, the Qādiriyya was one of the most prominent among them. Its appearance in the Syrian region is often ascribed to the great thirteenth-century Ḥanbalī families of Ibn Qudāma and Yunīnī.[4] But it was only in the subsequent two centuries due to the activities of lineage-descendants

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[3]Trimingham, who, in his *The Sufi Order*s coined the common translation of *ṭarīqa* as "order," was also the first to describe a historical pattern that applies to the spread of all Sufi orders. Among recent studies directly challenging Trimingham vis-à-vis the history of specific orders and regions is Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York, 2002), esp. Chapter 1: "What is a Sufi Order". For another example of that kind of approach, see Dina Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World* (Albany, 2004).

[4]On the history of these two famous families, see especially Louis Pouzet, *Damas au viie/xiiie s. Vie et structures religieuses dans une métropole islamique* (Beirut, 1988), Chapter 4: The ascetic and mystic life in the 13th century, pp. 207–243.

of the alleged founder 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī that branches of the *ṭarīqa* spread extensively and rapidly in the entire Syrian region and were locally established independently of each other. Two prominent shaykhs, claiming descent to this affiliation, are credited with playing a major role in the establishment of the Qādiriyya in the urban centres of the region during this period: Sharf al-Dīn Yaḥyā (d. 734/1333), grandson of 'Abd al-Razzāq (the noteworthy son of al-Jīlānī), in Hama, and al-Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, known as Ibn Arslān (d. 844/1440), in Palestine.

Though the introduction of the Qādiriyya into Greater Syria was closely linked with the rise of the Ḥanbalī *madhhab* in cities such as Damascus and Aleppo and their environs, the great shaykhs of the latter phase of its expansion affiliated with the Shāfiʿī school of law – the dominant Sunni rite in this part of the Muslim world at that time. Affiliation with the firmly established Shāfiʿī school in the domains of legal scholarship and intellectual life and, even more importantly, integration into the scholarly circles and state-supported institutions of the *madhhab*, no doubt provided the Qādirī shaykhs with an additionally meaningful resource of authority which facilitated their social ascent. However, whereas the Qādirī shaykhs of Hama emerged as members of a powerful family-based *ṭarīqa*,[5] the leading contemporary shaykhs of the *ṭarīqa* in Palestine did not base their charismatic authority and prestigious social status on familial affiliation, nor did they transmit their spiritual knowledge within family circles or pass on their positions and wealth from father to son.

Aḥmad b. Arslān, the first reputable local representative of the Qādirī *ṭarīqa* in Palestine of the late medieval period was born in Ramla but later moved to Jerusalem. An astute Sufi and Shafiʿī legal scholar (*faqih*), who claimed to be a descendant of no lesser personage than al-Jīlānī, he is credited with making Jerusalem into another "great hearth of the Qādiriyya in Bilād al-Shām". His disciple and successor as leader of the Palestinian Qādiriyya, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Abū l-ʿAwn al-Jaljūlī (d. 910/1504), was born in Ghaza, settled first in Jaljuliyya and finally moved to Ramla, where he lived to the end of his days. So great was his renown, he was proclaimed to be "the Qādirī of his epoch". Apparently, however, the fame of later Qādirī shaykhs in Jerusalem and Ramla, though they bore the appellation *shaykh al-shuyūkh al-qādiriyya*, does not seem to have extended beyond the limits of these cities. Thus, the Palestinian branch of the Qādiriyya remained a local association centred on its shaykh, his lodge (*zāwiya*) and his tomb. The term *ṭarīqa*, when it appears in the biographies of its leading shaykhs, normally denotes a method of spiritual guidance practiced by the *particular* shaykh, rather than designating an institutionalised Sufi order or even a well-established spiritual route in terms of doctrine, rules and rituals. Similarly, the sets of people called "people of the way" (*ahl al-ṭarīqa*, or *ahl al-ṭarīq*) were those who gathered around the charismatic shaykh, rather than members of the *ṭarīqa* as a social organisation.

Mujīr al-Dīn's history of Jerusalem and Hebron and the comprehensive biographical dictionaries by al-Sakhāwī and al-Ghazzī are the main literary sources for the study of the lives and activities of the two great Qādirī shaykhs of late medieval Palestine.[6] The biographies

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[5]On the history of the House of al-Jīlānī in Ḥama, see Zaïm Khenchelaoui et Theirry Zarcone, "La Famille Jîlânî de Hama – Syrie (Bayt al- Jîlânî)", *Journal of the History of Sufism* 1–2 (2000). Special Issue: *The Qâdiriyya Order. Dedicated to Alexandre Popovic*. Theirry Zarcone, Ekrem IŞIN, Arthur Buehler (eds.) (Istanbul, 2000), pp. 53–77.

[6]Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns al-jalīl bi-taʾrīkh al-Quds waʾl-Khalīl*, 2 parts, new edition (Baghdad, Maktabat al-Nahda, 1995), ii, pp. 184–186 (biography of Ibn Arslān); al-Sakhāwī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, *al-Dauʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl*

these authors composed provide accounts about the shaykhs' resources of authority, the example they set, their local following and the sites and spaces that grew up around the transmission of their knowledge and guidance and the bestowal of their divine grace. When piecing together the personalities of the Qādirī shaykhs through their biographies, one must first acknowledge the rich variety of terms and expressions used by the authors to designate them. Thus Ibn Arslān bears the appellations *quṭb al-rabbānī* (God's spiritual pole), *al-ʿālim al-ʿārif bi-Allāh* (one who possesses both religious and intuitive knowledge of God), *al-imām* (the religious leader), *amīn al-dīn* (the upright), and *ṣāḥib al-karāmāt al-ẓāhira* (the worker of visible and outstanding deeds).[7] The biographer of Abū l-ʿAwn al-Jaljūlī uses similar adjectives to describe him; even designates him as the unique 'help', that is the highest spiritual guide of the faithful (*al-ghauth al-faradānī*).[8] In what follows, biographers laud the asceticism and piety of the shaykhs, as well as their legal scholarship and outstanding traits and deeds (*manāqib*, *karāmāt*). Taken together, the descriptions of the Qādirī shaykhs yield multifaceted figures, bringing together a variety of 'high' and 'popular' traditions and acting in various dimensions.

Ibn Arslān's piety and keen interest in religious learning was apparent already as a youth; he knew the Quran by heart when he was ten years old. His father, a merchant and an expert in Quranic recital himself, sent him off to a shop owned by a local cloth merchant to serve an apprenticeship. However, the young Ibn Arslān was so much engaged in reading and studying, that he neglected the shop's affairs, and when the cloth merchant blamed him for loss in revenues, he excused himself by saying he was not good for anything except for studying. Thereupon, Ibn Arslān set out on his own, dedicating himself to the acquisition of profound knowledge in religious matters. He studied first Arabic literature and grammar, and proceeded with the study of the law of distributive shares and calculation. As he gained esteem for his firm grasp of Shafiʿī jurisprudence, he assumed the professorship in the Shafiʿī *madrasa* of al-Khāṣakiyya – a position which, as we shall see, he relinquished later. Next he moved to Jerusalem, where he combined legalism and mysticism in his own study and scholarly pursuits and in his teaching and training of others. The most notable masters of the law and the secrets of Sufism were the Qādirī-Shafiʿī shaykhs Muḥammad al-Quramī, who moved from Damascus to Jerusalem and died in the city (in 788/1389), and Abū Bakr al-Nawṣilī of Mosul (d. 797/1394), the founder of the Mawṣiliya branch of the Qādiriyya, who lived in Jerusalem for several years. While in Jerusalem, they adorned Ibn Arslān with their cloaks (*khirqa*s), as an indicator of his authoritative incorporation into the spiritual lineage (*silsila*) of the *ṭarīqa*, and trained him in the ritual practice of the *dhikr*. It was also al-Quramī who transmitted to his close disciple al-Bukhārī's canonical compilation of prophetic traditions that he himself had heard from trustworthy *ḥadīth* transmitters in Damascus, thereby tying him to this chain as well. In addition, Ibn Arslān studied the other five canonical *ḥadīth* compilations, as well as al-Shafiʿī's compilation of sound prophetic traditions, under several religious scholars of Jerusalem. Thus, he accumulated vast knowledge and excelled in the

al-qarn al-tāsiʿ, 6 vols. (Cairo, 1353 AH), i, pp. 282–287 (bio. of Ibn Arslān); Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sāʾira bi-aʿyān al-miʾa al-ʿashira*, ed. J. Jabbūr, 3 vols. (Beirut, al-Maṭbaʿat al-Amīr Kāniyya, 1945), i, pp. 74–77 (biography of Abū l-ʿAwn al-Jaljūlī).
    [7] Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns al-jalīl*, ii, p. 184; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍauʾ al-lāmiʿ*, i, p. 282.
    [8] Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib*, i, p. 74.

study of all of the Islamic sciences, until he gained recognition as an authoritative religious leader (*imām*).

A prolific author, Ibn Arslān composed many treatises on Quranic exegesis, *ḥadīth* commentaries, Arabic literature and grammar, and on Islamic law, above all, his treatise on jurisprudence (*fiqh*), *Matn al-zubad*.[9] His ascetic and pious practices made him a model of virtue. "He never touched the deemed unlawful food and drink (*ḥaram*), never cursed or abused anyone or harboured feelings of hatred against anyone, and treated with gentleness anyone who tried to dispute with him".[10]

Al-Ghazzī, author of *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira*, a biographical compilation with a strong emphasis on the manifestations of sanctity and the spiritual virtues of the biographees (composed in the seventeenth-century),[11] is more concerned with Abū l-'Awn al-Jaljūlī's resources of authority as a charismatic figure, a channel to God, than with his resources of authority as a Shafi'ī legal scholar. People related to his splendorous appearance as a *walī*, which revealed itself in his numerous wondrous deeds (he performed 50 *karāmāt* daily). He had many sound mystical revelations (*kashf*), and attained elevated mystical states (*aḥwāl*) and spiritual perfection, until he became the highest spiritual guide of the faithful.[12]

It was due to the various elements of their persona, their resources of authority, and their actual venues – a combination so characteristic of the great Sufi shaykhs of their epoch – that the Qādirī shaykhs assumed charismatic leadership over the local branch the *ṭarīqa* and attracted a local following beyond the small circle of wayfarers and disciples. To define them as *shar'ī* – mystics or 'orthodox' – Sufis would be simply to play down another most important element of their persona, that of a spiritual and charismatic authority, the focus of veneration of disciples and followers who orbited round them. Scrupulous observance of the Islamic religious law and adoption of the legalist approach of incessant concern with the regularisation and shaping of communal and social life must have helped establish their increasingly intensifying position and fame. More important, however, were the embodiment of their spiritual and ethical virtues (*manāqib*) within society, and the manipulation of their divine grace (*baraka*) in ways that benefited their fellow believers.

The renowned Ibn Arslān is a good example of a Sufi shaykh of well-established spiritual and charismatic authority. Believers from various Muslim countries set out on journeys to visit him and the number of disciples and novices devoted to him grew constantly wherever he went. He educated a number of disciples (*jamā'a*), and advanced each aspirant on the Path in accordance with his spiritual state regardless of his inherited virtues (*wa-shaghala kullān fīmā yarā ḥālahu yalīqu bihi fī al-najāba wa-'adamihā*). He then dressed a group of disciples from al-Shām and Egypt in his *khirqa*, and bestowed his *baraka* upon them.[13] His transmission of knowledge, as with other *awliyā'*, extended to include many besides aspirants and novices. One anecdote, in particular, illustrates this point. It tells of a disciple of Ibn Arslān who appealed for his help against acts of injustice (*maẓālim*) inflicted by the district chief (*kāshif*)

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[9] Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍau' al-lāmi'i*, pp. 282–283, 285.
[10] *Ibid.*, 1, p. 284.
[11] For al-Ghazzī and his compilation, see Geoffroy's discussion of various sources for the study of Sufism in the Mamluk period, in *Le Soufisme*, pp. 23–24.
[12] Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib*, i, pp. 74–75.
[13] Al-Sakhāwī, i, pp. 282–284.

of Ramla. The governor refused to deal with the case unless Ibn Arslān's supernatural forces were manifested in the palm trees standing in front of him. At that moment, the trees were uprooted by a sudden storm. Accompanied by his entourage, the governor then turned to Ibn Arslān in repentance. Attributing the miraculous deed to God alone, Ibn Arslān demanded that they should turn to Him and renew their religious belief.[14]

The virtuous and charismatic benefactor is further exemplified in Abū l-'Awn al-Jaljūlī. It was related that God made him visible in the "dark tenth century", and that his splendorous appearance as a *walī* was due to his many sound mystical revelations (*kashf*) as well as to his training (*tarbiyya*) of the Sufis (*fuqarā'*) and his benefiting the people in general (*al-nās*). He bestowed gracious benefits upon those seeking to be near to him and was hospitable toward all fellow believers who approached him to receive his blessing and intercession (*shafā'a*) on their behalf. People flocked to his doorstep with gifts to make oaths and receive his blessing. He was the intercessor of the oppressed before kings and the princes, and he dispensed as charity all the gifts he received from royalty, never taking, or even wishing to take, anything for himself.[15]

Abū l-'Awn al-Jaljūlī, who had among his following several distinguished religious scholars (*'ulamā'*) alongside people from the very fringes of society, even law-breakers, took under his protection Qāsim b. Zanlal, a soldier and one of the "valiant and ill-tempered people". He killed a Mamluk officer, who was in the service of the governor of Aleppo, to rescue a woman the officer was about to violate. Fleeing along the coast, Qāsim arrived in Jaljuliyya and sought the shaykh's help. The shaykh invoked God in his favour. He rebuked Qāsim for the killing (which his special powers gave him knowledge of) but interceded for him with the authorities and saved him from punishment: "Allāh shielded him from the persecutors through the *baraka* of the shaykh". Qāsim's encounter with the shaykh led to his repentance and transformation: thereafter he refrained from the ways of the villainous and ill-tempered. The shaykh assigned to him the job of water-carrier, and Qāsim persisted in the work and in adhering to the prescribed behaviour (*taur*) of the Sufis (*fuqarā'*) until he became a renowned figure.[16]

These stories afford a glimpse of the dynamic of growth of the Sufi *walī*'s following and the diverse circles that gathered around him. The more his extraordinary virtues were publicly manifested, the more his fellow believers turned to him; the more he met their spiritual and non-religious needs by using his divine powers, the greater became his following and authority as a charismatic guide. A select few disciples and colleagues sought his spiritual advice in the hope of achieving an elevated mystical state. A much more numerous following turned to him for instruction in the essentials of their religion, for guidelines in correct Islamic behaviour and for a word of blessing. Shared by all local believers, veneration of the Sufi 'friend of God' cut across social boundaries and blurred the distinctions between the so-called 'popular' and 'elitist' varieties of religion. In view of the shaykh's growing following locally, members of the city's ruling and religious institutions joined in, fitting themselves into the existing practices enacted by others. Participation of a Mamluk governor

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[14] Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍau' al-lāmi'*, i, p. 286. See also Mujīr al-Dīn, ii, p. 175, for a slightly different version of the story.
[15] Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib*, i, pp. 74–76.
[16] *Ibid.*, i, pp. 75–76, ii, pp. 240–242. Geoffroy relates to this story in *Le Soufisme*, pp. 115–116.

in the spiritual life of the local community did not of course transform him into a native member of that society, but it did provide him with an entry into the public sphere. At the same time, worship of the Sufi *walī*, by being open to the active participation of the political authorities, rendered the barriers between the official and public spheres at least bridgeable or possibly it obliterated them.[17]

The available sources use the expression *ahl al-ṭarīqa*, or *ahl al-ṭarīq*, to designate the set of people attached to a certain Sufi *walī* of well-established spiritual authority. Their accounts suggest the existence of at least two circles around him. One, a small inner group, which consisted of his committed disciples (the *aṣḥāb* or *murīdūn* or *talāmīdh*); the other is a wider circle of occasional visitors to his lodge or tomb who came to seek his blessing or simply to be close to him. For all its diffusive affiliations and informal, fluid social networks, the *ahl al-ṭarīqa*, during the late medieval period, developed into the prime association, religiously based and led, within the public sphere of Islamic societies.

Disciples and intimates expressed their admiration and gratitude to the *walī* by clinging to him wherever he settled or travelled, by relating and recording stories about his life and miraculous deeds, and by erecting a tomb over his grave. Commoners provided the *walī* with the food necessary for his subsistence, while local governors established charitable endowments for the construction of his lodge and tomb, others set up the revenues of a village as *waqf* for his benefit. While experiencing their encounters with the Sufi saint in a variety of ways, local believers of all social classes shared the belief in his ability to manipulate divine forces which shaped his perception as a charismatic figure. Whether seeking spiritual guidance or blessing, or to take part in the growing practices surrounding local holy men, they all flocked around whoever they believed to be their 'channels to God', frequenting their lodges and tombs.[18]

One anecdote, in particular, conveys the notion of the inclusiveness and flexibility of the locally embedded *ṭarīqa* that orbited round the shaykh. It tells that when a certain *faqih* paid a visit to al-Jaljūlī in his lodge (*zāwiya*) in Ramla, he found among his group (*jamāʿa*) "the poor and the affluent, the righteous and the corrupt (literally, unruly) alike".[19] The *faqih* considered the presence of the latter inappropriate since, in his view, only the righteous deserved to be included in a shaykh's companionship (*ṣuḥbat al-shaykh*). Reading the *faqih*'s thought, the shaykh referred to the model of the revered ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, whose *jamāʿa* always included both the righteous and evildoers: the first became more zealous, while in the case of the evildoers, "God turned them from their sins through companionship with him (*ṣuḥbatihi*)".[20]

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[17] This conclusion is in line with recent studies that, while focusing on the world of religious learning, suggest a much greater degree of integration and acculturation of the Mamluks into Muslim society than is described by religious scholars and historians. The pioneering work on this subject is that of Ulrich Haarmann, especially his "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and Their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-Century Egypt and Syria", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33 (1988), pp. 81–114.

[18] See N. Z. Davis's important suggestion on the need to examine the range of people's relations with the sacred and the supernatural, so as not to fragment those practices, beliefs, and institutions which for different segments of the community of believers constitute a whole: N. Z. Davis, "Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion", in *The Pursuit of Holiness*, ed. C. Trinkhaus (Leiden, 1974), pp. 312–313.

[19] Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib*, i, p. 75

[20] *Ibid.*

The Physical Setting

The intense establishment of pious institutions – mosques, *madrasa*s, and Sufi lodges variously called *khānqāh*s or *ribāṭ*s or *zāwiya*s – during the Mamluk reign and under their patronage has attracted much interest in scholarship about the Mamluks, yielding a considerable data of their nature and functions as revealed in legal documents and physical remnants.[21] However, the study of the religious and social context of the construction and growth of pious establishments is in order. This is particularly relevant with regard to Sufi and other pious institutions in Mamluk Palestine. Several historians have meticulously employed a wealth of information derived from the study of buildings and documents, mainly legal documents of various types discovered on the Ḥaram (in 1974 and 1976), in order to reconstruct the names, locations, benefactors, beneficiaries and stipulations of pious institutions. The study, written mainly in Arabic and Hebrew, is still scattered,[22] and there is scope for further research of the distinctive characteristics of Sufi establishments and their significance in the overall institutionalisation and expansion of Sufism in the specific setting. The foundation of Sufi lodges of various types, I argue, must be seen as the institutional dimension of the broader process through which Sufi shaykhs integrated Sufism into the fabric of social and communal life and made a prominent role in consolidating an Islamic society and space.

The piety and traditional generosity with which the Mamluks behaved toward the institutions of Sunni Islam across their domains is well known. Like the Ayyubids before them, Mamluk Sultans and officials displayed their support of the "righteous Sufis" – members of the mainstream Sunni camp – through the foundation of establishments of various types, where they could lodge or sojourn and conduct their rituals. In addition to the elaborate *khānqāh*s that were lavishly endowed for the benefit of groups of local and foreign Sufis and *zāwiya*s for particular shaykhs, the rulers and other wealthy individuals built hostels (*ribāṭ*s) and soup kitchens in Jerusalem for devout poor people – Sufis and non-Sufi *fuqarā'* alike – to supply their basic needs. Extracts from the endowment charters of the lodges founded in Jerusalem and Hebron, as recorded by Mujīr al-Dīn, contain valuable information about their founding, their building, their administration, and the functions that they were expected to perform.[23] Such was their construction in Jerusalem, that by the end of the Mamluk period Sufi establishments had become an integral part of the urban landscape dotted with pious establishments of various types.

While it was around a particular Sufi shaykh rather than around institutional frameworks or physical settings that the locally embedded *ṭarīqa* consolidated and extended its social horizons, the intensive construction of endowed establishments designed for the Sufis

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[21] See especially, Muḥammad Amīn, *al-Awqāf wal-ḥayat al-ijtimaʿiyya fī Miṣr 648–923/1250–1517* (Cairo, 1980); Leonor Fernandes in a number of articles and in her book: *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution: the Khanqah* (Berlin, 1988).
[22] Relevant studies include the following: Kamāl al-Dīn, al-ʿAsalī, *Maʿāhid al-ʿilm fī bayt al-maqdis* (Amman, 1981); *idem, Wathā'iq maqdisiyya ta'rīkhiyya* (Amman, 1983–89); Donald P. Little, "Jerusalem Under the Ayyūbids and Mamlūks 1187–1516 AD", in *Jerusalem in History*, K. J. Asali, ed. (New York, 1989), pp. 177–199; Y. Frenkel, "Political and Social Aspects of Islamic Religious Endowments (*waqf*): Saladin in Cairo (1169–1173) and Jerusalem (1187–1193)", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (1999), pp. 1–20; Joseph Drory, "Jerusalem in the Mamluk Period", in *Jerusalem in the Middle Ages*, ed. B. Z. Kedar (Jerusalem, Yad Izhaq Ben-Zvi, 1979): esp. p. 165 (Hebrew).
[23] For details, see Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety,* Table 3.2 *Khānqā*s and *Zāwiya*s in Ayyubid and Mamluk Jerusalem and Hebron.

and their rituals played a significant role in this process. Similarly, while the Sufi–inspired community developed out of internal dynamics, independent of the official sphere, by patronising and sponsoring Sufi lodges, the ruling elite helped structure the Sufi experience and extend its horizons.

Revealed already in the Ṣalāḥiyya Shāfi'ī *madrasa* and *khānqāh* founded by Saladin in Jerusalem about two years after its liberation from the Christian 'yoke',[24] the institutional rapprochement between legalists and mystics reached its peak in the cities ruled by the Mamluks. Not only did Shafi'ī–Sufis of the Mamluk period continue to hold the position of a *mudarris* (teacher of the legal and Islamic sciences) in a *madrasa* and that of *shaykh al-ṣūfiyya* in the Sufi establishment of the *khānqāh*, it also became common for *madrasa*s to house Sufis and their rituals, and for the endowment of Sufi establishments, especially the magnificent *khānqāh*s, to make provisions for the support of lessons in jurisprudence according to one or more of the *madhhab*s. The fusion of educational and devotional activities in the royal institutions founded in Jerusalem and other great cities ruled by the Mamluks was so complete that by the end of the Mamluk period it became increasingly difficult to distinguish the institutions that supported the activities of the jurists as opposed to the mystics. Similarly, the terms *madrasa* and *khānqāh* (and, at times, "mosque") often appear interchangeably.[25]

Notwithstanding the growing combination of legalist and mystical learning, several Sufi shaykhs – the most legally erudite included – seem still to have oscillated between the two streams, seeking an alternative to religious attainment and devotion in the Sufi Way. Viewing the *madrasa* as the representative of formal knowledge, book learning and worldliness, they would refrain from teaching or studying in the institution, or would resign their paid teaching positions at a certain phase of their lives. One of the most famous examples in the context studied here is that of Ibn Arslān. Having relinquished the position of *mudarris* of al-Madrasa al-Khāṣakiyya, he settled in the residence chamber of the Ḥanthaniyya *zāwiya*, which stood behind the *minbar* of al-Aqṣā mosque, and there he lived to his last day devoting himself to advancing on the stages of the Path, training others to approach God more directly and intimately at the same time.[26]

By this time, *zāwiya*s proliferated both in al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf of Jerusalem and outside its walls, as well as in other Palestinian cities. Several of these Sufi lodges were associated with the local Qādiriyya, most famously the *zāwiya* of Muḥammad al-Quramī, master of Ibn Arslān, in Harat Marzubān west of the Ḥaram,[27] and that mentioned above of his own disciple, Abū l-'Awn al-Jaljūlī, in Ramla. Accounts about these *zāwiya*s are indicative of trends in their development as physical settings. In particular, they point at the characteristics of the *zāwiya* distinct from those of the *khānqāh*, and the significance of this Sufi establishment in the world of the shaykh and his local following.

The foundation of the great *khānqāh*s is a clear indication of the process by which Sufism moved from the margins of intellectual and social life to become part of the social order

[24] See Y. Frenkel, "The Endowment of al-Madrasa al-Ṣalāḥiyya in Jerusalem by Saladin", in *Palestine during the Mamluk Period*, ed. J. Drory (Jerusalem, 1993), pp. 64–85 (Hebrew).

[25] For examples of this blending in Mamluk Cairo, see Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 47–50, 56–60. On this subject generally, see also Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, p. 33 ff, pp. 97–108.

[26] Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍau' al-lāmi'*, i, p. 283.

[27] Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns al-jalīl*, ii, p. 160.

and the fabric of Muslim devotion. These magnificent buildings are physical evidence of the growing recognition of Sufis as members of a mainstream Sunni camp alongside religious scholars of the established legal schools. However, the formal institutional structure of the *khānqāh* could hardly contain the activities and energy of the growing numbers of medieval Muslim men and women who identified themselves in some way as Sufis. No less important, it seems, was the wish of Sufis pursuing an ascetic way of life to avoid the patronage of the ruling elite and distance themselves from an establishment founded by the powerful and closely associated with the official sphere. Unsurprisingly, it was around the much more modest and less institutionalised Sufi establishment of the *zāwiya* that shaykhs and their groupings gathered.

*Zāwiya*s, originally signifying particular corners of or spaces in large mosques, in late medieval Jerusalem and Hebron developed into independent buildings serving as a residence for their shaykh and as a forum for the transmission of his guidance and knowledge. Moreover, unlike the royal institutions of the *madrasa* and the *khānqāh,* the *zāwiya* was always built for a particular Sufi shaykh, leader of a particular *ṭarīqa*, and his successors thereafter with funds provided either by the shaykh himself or by the rulers or other notables.[28] The description of the foundation of al-Ḥanthaniyya, residence of Ibn Arslān and the centre of his activities, demonstrates the individual pattern for establishing and endowing the *zāwiya* that became increasingly apparent in his lifetime. It is noteworthy that the Ḥanthaniyya, originally a prayer chamber, is the first Sufi establishment in Ayyubid Jerusalem specifically and consistently called a *zāwiya*, as Mujīr al-Dīn relates:

> As for the *madrasa*s and *zāwiya*s [in and] around the mosque [of al-Aqṣā]: the earliest is *al-Zāwiya al-Ḥanthaniyya*, inside the mosque behind the *minabr*. Al-Malik Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, may God protect him with His grace, bequeathed it as *waqf* for one of the people of virtue. This is the honourable, ascetic and pious man, Shaykh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn al-Shāshī, an inhabitant of Bayt al-Muqqadas, and, after him, for whoever would follow him. A group of the distinguished shaykhs has presided over it ever since.[29]

Leonor Fernandes was the first to observe the development of a new type of *zāwiya* in Mamluk Egypt during the fifteenth century. Along with the traditional *zāwiya*s that persisted in Egypt throughout the Mamluk period as residences for Sufi shaykhs and as centres for their disciples and other followers of their *ṭarīqa*s, other *zāwiya*s took on the character of *ribāṭ*s and mosques in which Sufis and non-Sufis alike could conduct their communal devotional life. As mosques, they provided facilities for prayer and sermons; as *ribāṭ*s, they provided food and shelter for the poor.[30] This observation may be well applicable to the development of the *zāwiya* in Palestine. One example concerns Ibn Arslān. In addition to the *zāwiya* that he had in Jerusalem, he restored an ancient mosque in Ramla that served as a type of *zāwiya*, being a sojourn place for whoever sought his guidance. He provided for those forsaking

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[28]Donald P. Little dwelled on the development of this distinction, summarising previous research on the nature and function of the various Sufi establishments in Mamluk Egypt based on the study of surviving buildings and their deeds of endowments. See Little, "The Nature of Khānqhās, Ribāṭs, and Zāwiya under the Mamlūks", in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, eds. Wael Ibn Hallaq and Donald P. Little (Leiden, 1991), esp. pp. 93–96.
[29]Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns al-jalīl*, i, p. 34; ii, p. 144 (in his biography of al-Shāshī).
[30]Fernandes, "Some Aspects of the *Zāwiya* in Egypt at the Eve of the Ottoman Conquest", *Annales islamologiques* 19 (1983), pp. 12–14.

their material possessions and social connections to join him (*inqaṭāʿa ilayhi*) generously, and imparted knowledge to them in this *zāwiya*. Moreover, he built a congregation mosque in Ramla for the conduction of the Friday sermon and public prayer.[31]

As the realm of the shaykh of the *ṭarīqa*, a physical symbol of his presence and authority, the *zāwiya* developed into the prime physical setting of the local *ṭarīqa*'s leadership and community. As such, the proliferation of *zāwiya*s in Palestinian cities, towns and villages in the late medieval period made a significant contribution to the growth of local followings around pious and charismatic leaders who lived in lodges among their fellow believers. Moreover, by taking on the characteristics and functions of other pious establishments, the *zāwiya* transformed into a public space central for the life of the community as well as a centre around which a local space emerged. This extension of the realm and ambiance of the Sufi shaykh and the *ṭarīqa* he represented was closely related to the affinity between Sufism and sanctity.

The Holy Site

The thirteenth century marked a new phase in the history of Christian and Islamic sainthood: more than ever before some men and women were celebrated by their contemporaries as holy – either during their lifetimes or after their deaths. In contrast with the new 'holy' men in western Christendom, however, the importance of the new 'friends of God' in the Islamic Near East found its most salient expression in pilgrimage to their shrines, rather than in transmitting their holy example in hagiography or seeking their powers of intercession in private devotional prayer.[32] Indeed, the environment in which Ibn Arslān and Abū l-ʿAwn al-Jaljūlī lived had long been saturated with Islamic holy sites, the object of pilgrimage of Muslims from all social strata. In the course of the crusades and the counter-crusade period that was marked by an overall intense religious attitude, new sacred sites were added on to the traditional inventory at an unprecedented pace, due to the appropriation and transformation of older sacred sites, as well as the establishment of new ones. Under the Zangids and the Ayyubids, memorial structures (*mashhad*s) and monuments (*maqām*s) that commemorate events in the life of a saintly figure or harbour a relic associated with him were established, and structures were built around them.[33]

Under the Mamluk regime, the number of saintly tombs continued to grow dramatically, this continuous proliferation was an integral part of a more systematised and broader process of cultural transformation and Islamisation of landscape.[34] Mamluk sultans and their officials initiated the building of new shrines or the renovation or transformation of old ones and provided the necessary funding. The accounts in *al-Uns al-jalīl* are abundant with examples of the endowments that rulers donated. Still, shrines, like other buildings in the public

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[31] Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍauʾ al-lāmiʿ*, i, p. 284.

[32] See the remarks of Thomas Head in his introduction to *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, Head ed. (New York and London, 2001), pp. xxii–xxiii.

[33] A recent study by Daniella Talmon-Heller provides a comprehensive picture of the growth of pilgrimage sites in Syria during the Zangid and Ayyubid periods: Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangids and Ayyubids (1146–1269)* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 184–198.

[34] On the intense and deliberate policy of Islamisation of the Palestinian landscape initiated by Baybars in the second half of the thirteenth century, see Y. Frenkel, "Baybars and the Sacred Geography of *Bilād al-Shām*: a Chapter in the Islamisation of Syria's Landscape", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2001), pp. 153–170.

sphere supported by *waqf*, became an integral part of an Islamic public space that came into being and expanded not so much due to the rulers as to local venerated figures. Sufi shaykhs and their institutions played a significant role as agents of Islamisation of landscape.[35] In addition to turning their lodge's local space into public domain, the two Qādirī shaykhs of Mamluk Palestine whose biographies are studied here, constructed or reconstructed, as well as supervised shrines that developed into holy sites being the focus of pilgrimage common to all members of society.

Through their presence and manifested virtues, Ibn Arslān and Abū Abū l-'Awn al-Jaljūlī became associated with the history of Jerusalem, Ramla and the Palestinian coastal frontier towns, where ascetic and learned-warriors combining worship with holy war had settled or gathered from earliest times.[36] Meanwhile, through their public activities, the charismatic shaykhs made a significant contribution to the shaping of local and regional holy sites in the coastal towns and to developing religious and social practices around them.

Deriving their aura of sanctity from historical circumstances or events relating to the holy warfare on the coastal or land frontier (*al-ribāṭāt al-baḥriyya; al-ribāṭāt al-thughūriyya*) between the Islamic and non-Islamic domains, the *ribāṭ* towns were considered to be a perfect place for the attainment of religious realisation of the Islamic faith. Such was their extolment in prophetic traditions and in literature in praise of Muslim cities (*faḍā'il*), sojourning there, even for a short stay while facing the enemy (*murābaṭa*), was raised to the rank of settling or spending time in the vicinity of a holy place (*mujāwara*), normally attributed to Mecca and Medina, and the *murābiṭ* equalled with the *mujāwir*.[37] Surely, at the end of the Mamluk period, the *ribāṭ* lost its strictly military connotation, and the term referred to a residence for Sufis or, more frequently, a hospice for the poor.[38] Accordingly, the title *murābiṭ*, when it appears in descriptions of ascetic Sufi shaykhs living in the late Mamluk period (such as Ibn Arslān) no longer denotes a zealous warrior fighting for the sake of Islam in the fortified frontier town. By this time, the last crusaders had long evacuated, the Mamluks destroyed the coastal towns along the eastern Mediterranean to leave no bridgehead for their potential return, and Christian naval forces no longer posed a threat to Islam (let alone the Knights of St John whose attacks launched from their castle in Rhodes continued up to the sixteenth

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[35] For the contribution of Sufis to the cultural transformation of landscape of villages surrounding Jerusalem, see Nimrod Luz, "Aspects of Islamization of Space and Society in Mamluk Jerusalem and its Hinterland", *Mamluk Studies Review* 6 (2002), pp. 133–153. See also, Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, Part 3: Lodge and Tomb, for additional examples and analysis of Sufis as agents of Islamisation in this setting.

[36] For examples, see Amikam Elad, "The Coastal cities of Eretz-Israel in the Arab Period (640–1099) on the Basis of Arab Sources", *Cathedra* 8 (1978), pp. 175–176 (Hebrew); H. Khalilieh, "Arsuf and the Defense Patterns of Jund Filastin during the Years 640–1099: Ribats and Mihrabs", in *The Encounter of Crusaders and Muslims in Palestine as Reflected in Arsuf, Sayyiduna 'Ali and Other Coastal Sites*, eds. I. Roll, O. Tal and M. Winter (Tel Aviv, 2007), pp. 135–137 (Hebrew).

[37] On the development of the traditions about the sanctity of the frontier towns in early Islamic tradition, see especially Ofer Livne-Kafri, "Jerusalem and the Sanctity of the Frontier Cities in Islam", *Cathedra* 94 (2000), pp. 75–88 (in Hebrew). About the religious significance and attributes ascribed to *murābaṭa*, see M. Bonner, "Some Observations Concerning the Early Development of *Jihad* on the Arab-Byzantine Frontier", *Studia Islamica*, 75, pp. 5–31; S. Bashir, "Apocalyptic and Other Materials on Early-Muslim Wars: A Review of Arabic Sources", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (new series, 1991), i/ii, pp. 173–207.

[38] Muḥammad Amīn makes this observation in *al-Awqāf wal-ḥayāt al-ijtimā'iyya fī Miṣr 648–923/1250–1517* (Cairo, 1980), p. 111.

century).[39] Regardless of the changing balance of power between Christians and Muslims along the eastern Mediterranean, the association of the coastal and land frontier towns with Holy War and the idealisation of settling or staying in them seem to have remained intact. A string of Mamluk authors wrote in support of jihad in the *ribāṭ*s and in praise of the *murābaṭa* – *Kitāb al-jihād fī ṭalab al-jihād* by Ibn Kathīr, *Mas'ala fī al-murābaṭa bil-thughur afḍal min al-mujāwara bimaka* by Ibn Taymiyya, and *Arba'ūn ḥadīthan fī faḍl al-jihād*, the later contribution to this genre by al-Suyūṭī – are some among other noteworthy examples.

Significantly, from the very beginning, ascetics, Sufis and holy figures played a major role in disseminating the praise of the *ribāṭ* towns and in creating their glorious tradition. A unique form of asceticism that manifested itself in supererogatory acts of worship, self-imposed mortification and incessant search for purity especially in dietary matters, evolved along the Arab-Byzantine frontier in earliest times.[40] In common with the sacred cities of Jerusalem and Hebron in the aftermath of the crusades, the Palestinian coastal towns continued to constitute magnets for Sufis seeking retreat from the material world and devoting themselves to contemplation and pious practices. It was to the glorious heritage of the *murābaṭa* tradition, imbued with practices and values often attributed to Sufis, around which the activities of the two Qādirī shaykhs, referred to in the following accounts, revolve. The terminology used in the accounts – in particular, the use of the verbal noun *r-b-ṭ* (in the third form) – highlights their association with the tradition.

Ibn Arslān's ascetic piety manifested itself in constant praying, fasting and prayer at night, as well as in *murābaṭa*, which appears to be one of the shaykh's virtues. His biographer relates:

Having erected a small castle (*burj*)[41] in the harbour of Jaffa, he spent much time there (*kānā kathīr al-ribāṭ fīhi*). No year passed without him dwelling by the sea engaging days and nights in constant prayer secretly and openly, preferring obscurity and passionate love of God to ostentation, and refusing any worldly benefits and paid positions offered to him.[42]

The pious endeavours of the Qādirī shaykh as a *murābiṭ* extended beyond striving for self-spiritual perfection in the worship of God through seclusion and retreat. Rather, the shaykh seems to have been attentive to the beliefs of his fellow believers and to have catered for their religious and communal life. Mujīr al-Dīn, recording the major of events of 900/1495 (the last year covered by his History), tells that "our shaykh and *walī*", Shihāb al-Dīn b. Arslān, built the *mashhad* of *sayyidunā* Rūbīl (Nabi Rūbīn) son of Ya'qūb west of Ramla close to the sea".[43] Though no other literary or material evidence supports this account, it may be surmised that the stories about the site and the shaykh were linked together, if not in

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[39] An extensive discussion of the Mamluk sea policy and the political history of the coast is Albrecht Fuess, *Auswirkungen mamlukischer Seepoltik auf Beirut die syro-palästinensische Küste (1250–1517)* (Leiden, 2001).

[40] On the origins of this tradition, see especially Michael Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, CT, 1996), pp. 34–107.

[41] In the Mamluk period, in addition to its function as a castle built on the shore to protect the coastal town, served its residents as a mosque where they could perform their religious rituals. On the definition of the term, see Muḥammad Amīn, *al-Muṣṭalaḥāt al-m'māriyya fī l-wathā'iq al-mamlūqyya* (Cairo, Dār al-Nashr, nd), p. 21. It is also possible that with the passage of time the building developed into a mosque named Ibn Arslan after the shaykh and standing up to 1948. On Ibn al-Arslān (or Raslān) mosque, see L. A. Mayer, J. Pinkerfeld, and J. W. Hirschberg, *Some Religious Buildings in Israel* (Jerusalem, 1950), p. 34.

[42] Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍau' al-lāmi'*, i, p. 284.

[43] Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns al-jalīl*, ii, p. 72.

Fig. 1.   General view of Nabi Rūbīn.

reality, then at least in the mind of contemporary inhabitants and observers. According to an inscription above the gate, the *mashhad* was built under the orders of the Mamluk governor of Ghaza Timrāz al-Mu'ayyadī (around 1437). This is the oldest part of the complex around which the other structures were built: the arcade used as a prayer hall, the minaret, a side room, the walls and wells. Located on the shore between of Jaffa and Yavne and standing to this day, the tomb of Rūbīn became one of the major shrines of Palestine during the Ottoman period.[44]

A more detailed and historically grounded account of the Sufi shaykhs' contribution to the shaping of public holy sites is that relating to Abū l-'Awn al-Jaljūlī and the *mashhad* of Sayyidunā 'Alī (known as Sidna 'Alī) in Arsuf-Apollonia. A memorial structure, with a high *minaret*, developed around the tomb of 'Ali b. 'Ulaym or 'Ulayl, a descendant of the caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 474/1081), who, in Mujīr al-Dīn's words, "was among the famous holy figures in the land of Palestine, venerated by Muslims and Franks alike".[45] The identity of 'Alī b. 'Ulaym and the date of the building of his *mashhad* have remained obscure, but the renovation of the holy site at the end of the Mamluk period and its growth are well documented. During the Ottoman period, the rooms on the second floor of the present site and the inscription now located opposite the *miḥrāb* were added.[46] Mujīr al-Dīn, noticing

[44] About the history of the shrine, see L.A. Mayer, *Saracenic Heraldry* (Oxford,1933), pp. 310–314; Andrew Petersen, "A Preliminary eds. Report on Three Muslim Shrines in Palestine", *Levant* 28 (1996), pp. 103–108; *idem*, "The Tomb of Benjamin and Other Old Testament Figures", in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Era* III, eds. U. Vermeulen and J. Van Steenbergen (Leuven, 2001), pp. 365–366.
[45] Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns al-jalīl*, ii, p. 72.
[46] On the architectural development of the site, see the Hana Taragan, "The Tomb of Sayyidunā 'Alī in Arsuf: the Story of a Holy Place", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* Vol. 14, Part 2 (July 2004), pp. 83–102.

Fig. 2.   Sayyidunā 'Alī: view of the courtyard.

that 'Alī b. 'Ulaym's tomb (*ḍarīḥ*) was located in a large *mashhad* with a tall *minaret*, credits Abū l-'Awn al-Jaljūlī with the renovation of the site:

> In our day, the *mashhad* was under the supervision of our master and lord, our shaykh, a model for the servants of God, the leader (*imām*) of the ascetics (*zuhhād*) and the blessing of God's servants, adherent of the Shafi'ī school, Shams al-Dīn Abū l-'Awn Muḥammad al-Ghazī, a resident of Jaljuliyya, head of the Qādiriyya *ṭarīqa* in the Islamic realm. He reconstructed the *mashhad*, restored it, organised the pilgrimages and turned the place into a beautiful site. He covered the holy tomb with marble in the year AH 886; previously there had been a wooden tomb. He dug a well in the courtyard of the mosque, until he reached the spring water. Thereafter, he built, atop the *iwān* (sitting room), a tower (*burj*) for the purpose of the holy war, for the sake of Allāh, may He be glorified. . . . [The tower] was completed after the year AH 890.[47]

This was how the Qādirī shaykh became identified with the glorified tradition of the anti-Frankish jihad conducted on the coast of Arsūf from the time of the famous "Battle of Arsuf" in 1191 to the town's salvation from infidel rule in 1265.[48] In the case of Abū l-'Awn, too, the building of the shrine was another manifestation of the Sufi shaykh's contribution to creating a public religious space for the sake of his fellow believers. Indeed, as Mujīr al-Dīn puts it: this was "one of his deeds of charity by virtue of which Allāh dressed him in glorious

[47] Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns al-jalīl*, ii, p. 73.
[48] See Taragan, "The Tomb", about the three periods in the development of the site: the burial of 'Alī b. 'Alīm (474/1081), the visit of Baybars to the site (663/1265), and the renovation of the *mashhad* (886–890/1482–1485).

garments and lengthened his life".[49] Moreover, Abū l-'Awn was not only the renovator of the shrine; he was also keeper of the site in charge of the upkeep of the building and the pilgrimage and rites conducted there.

In common with other cultural traditions, a building was made holy in Islamic tradition not only by being the site of events central to the faith, but also through the religious practices conducted there, be they private devotions or public rituals performed by pilgrims and visitors over time.[50] Medieval Muslim pilgrims and visitors did not leave journey-diaries or firsthand testimonies that allow a reconstruction of pilgrimage as an individual or group experience, as did Christians of late antiquity and the Middle Ages who recorded their experience of the sacred. But guides to Muslims pilgrims and travellers and historical accounts of pilgrimage allow us to discern general trends. The best available information suggests that *ziyāra* (visitation, pilgrimage) to tomb-sanctuaries as an organised group activity at fixed times (as opposed to the customary private and occasional endeavour) was commonplace at the end of the Mamluk period. The sources also show that seasonal festivals (*mawsim*s) and saints' days (*mawlid*s) drew large crowds to shrines scattered around Syria–Palestine from around the middle of the thirteenth century.[51] Mujīr al-Dīn provides a glimpse of the Nabi Rūbīn shrine as an object of *ziyāra*: Every year, in a certain season, believers from Ramla, Gaza and other places in the region gather around the tomb. They stay there several days, spend large amounts of money, and read the Quran.[52] A similarly typical ceremonial rite took place every summer beside the *mashhad* of Sayyidunā 'Alī, where countless people took the opportunity of their stay there to read the story of the birth of the Prophet (*mawlid an-nabi*).[53]

Significantly, both the *mashhad*s of Nabi Rūbīn and Sayyidunā 'Alī seem to have been local or regional sites, and *ziyāra* to them performed by local devotees of the immediate vicinity and nearby towns, as opposed to long-distance travel to the universally venerated sites in Jerusalem and Hebron. As a public space – the focus of rituals common to "the people" (*al-nās*) and members of the religious and civilian elite – the local shrine must have contributed to deepening and sustaining the sense of communal identity and the community's cohesion.

The acceleration in the popularity of the collective-organised ceremonial rite around the holy site went hand-in-hand with the growing importance of the Sufi shaykh in society. Affiliation of laypeople with Sufi *ṭarīqa*s was thus often through the so-called 'cult of saints' – an association so prominent in Islamic society and culture from around the thirteenth century and thereafter. Biographers praise many of the new 'friends of God' in Islamic societies for virtues, above all asceticism and altruism, based on the Prophetic model and usually ascribed to the Sufis. The proliferation of the tombs of these figures and their transformation into a

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[49] Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns al-jalīl*, ii, p. 73.

[50] Sara Hamilton and Andrew Spicer make these comments in the introduction to *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Sara Hamilton and Andrew Spicer (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 1–2.

[51] Daniella Talmon-Heller makes this observation in *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria*, p. 207. In Egypt, the first organised-group *ziyāra* took place in the first half of the thirteenth century. See Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, pp. 62–63.

[52] Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns al-jalīl*, ii, p. 72.

[53] *Ibid.*, ii, p. 73.

focus of pilgrimage to receive the shaykhs' blessing at their graves reveal the linkage between Sufism and sanctity in its full light.

At the close of the Mamluk period, Palestinian cities and their hinterland were dotted with tombs of Sufi 'friends of God' as evidenced in pilgrimage guides and travellers' accounts. Mujīr al-Dīn, in *al-Uns al-Jalīl*, tells of successive generations of families and individual tombs that were built side by side in *zāwiya*s or in the cemetery areas outside the gates of Jerusalem, clustering around a *walī* whose tomb had become an important focus of pilgrimage. Of the tombs of Ibn Arslān and one of his spiritual ancestors, 'Abd Allāh al-Qurashī, lying side-by-side in al-Māmillā cemetery (west of the Ḥaram), the resting-place of the remains of Muslims warriors and martyrs, Mujīr al-Dīn declared: "Whoever invokes God's name while standing between the graves of Ibn Arslān and al-Qurashī, God will grant all his wishes".[54]

Tombs developed into mausoleums and shrines in stages, parallel to the spread of the belief in the *baraka* of the holy men buried there and their appropriation by a prominent shaykh and his community of followers, 'the people of his path'. Moreover, mosques were built to commemorate the memory of the Sufi 'friends of God', and in some cases, prayer halls were added to their mausoleum and shrines turning them into neighbourhood mosques. The story about the development of the tomb of Abū l-'Awn al-Jaljūlī illustrates this point as well. Two public religious spaces, which stand to our day, were named after him: his mausoleum in Ramla, and a mosque in his place of origin of Jaljuliyya. Sometime during the Ottoman period, Abū l-'Awn al-Jaljūlī's burial place developed into a compound as a great prayer room was erected on the top of and around his grave. According to al-Ghazzī, this is the Jami' Abū l-'Awn, and a pilgrimage site where his blessings might be received.[55] White marble columns, carrying a pointed arch of coloured stones, flank the *miḥrāb* of the mosque. Inlaid vertical marble strips decorate the niche itself, to the right of which stood not long ago a *minbar* with a small dome. At the northeast corner outside stairs lead to the domed roof and to a high minaret, rising over this corner. The courtyard has been used as a cemetery for those seeking to be close to the *walī* after death.[56] The inscription on Abū l-'Awn al-Jaljūlī's tombstone, dating from CE 1504, reads as follows:

> This is the burial place of the servant yearning to God, the exalted arbiter of righteous religious learning and practice (*'ālim* and *'āmil*), the trustworthy, the humble, the ascetic, guide of the seekers of the path, model of kings, the great pole, possessor of divine knowledge, Abū l-'Awn al-Jaljūlī... head of the Qādiriyya on the borders of Palestine and the Muslim kingdom. May God spread on all Muslims his blessing in this world and in the hereafter through Muḥammad and his family.

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Focusing on the diffusion of the Qādiriyya in late medieval Palestine, this article has explored the process by which the shaykhs of the *ṭarīqa* established their charismatic position and

[54] *Ibid.* p. 72.
[55] Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib*, ii, p. 77.
[56] For a detailed view of the site as surveyed around the mid-twentieth century, see L. A. Mayer, J. Pinkerfeld, and J. W. Hirschberg, *Some Religious Buildings in Israel* (Jerusalem, 1950), pp. 27–29. See also, A. Petersen, "Ramla after the Crusades", in Vermeulen and Van Steenbergen, *Egypt and Syria*, pp. 351–352.
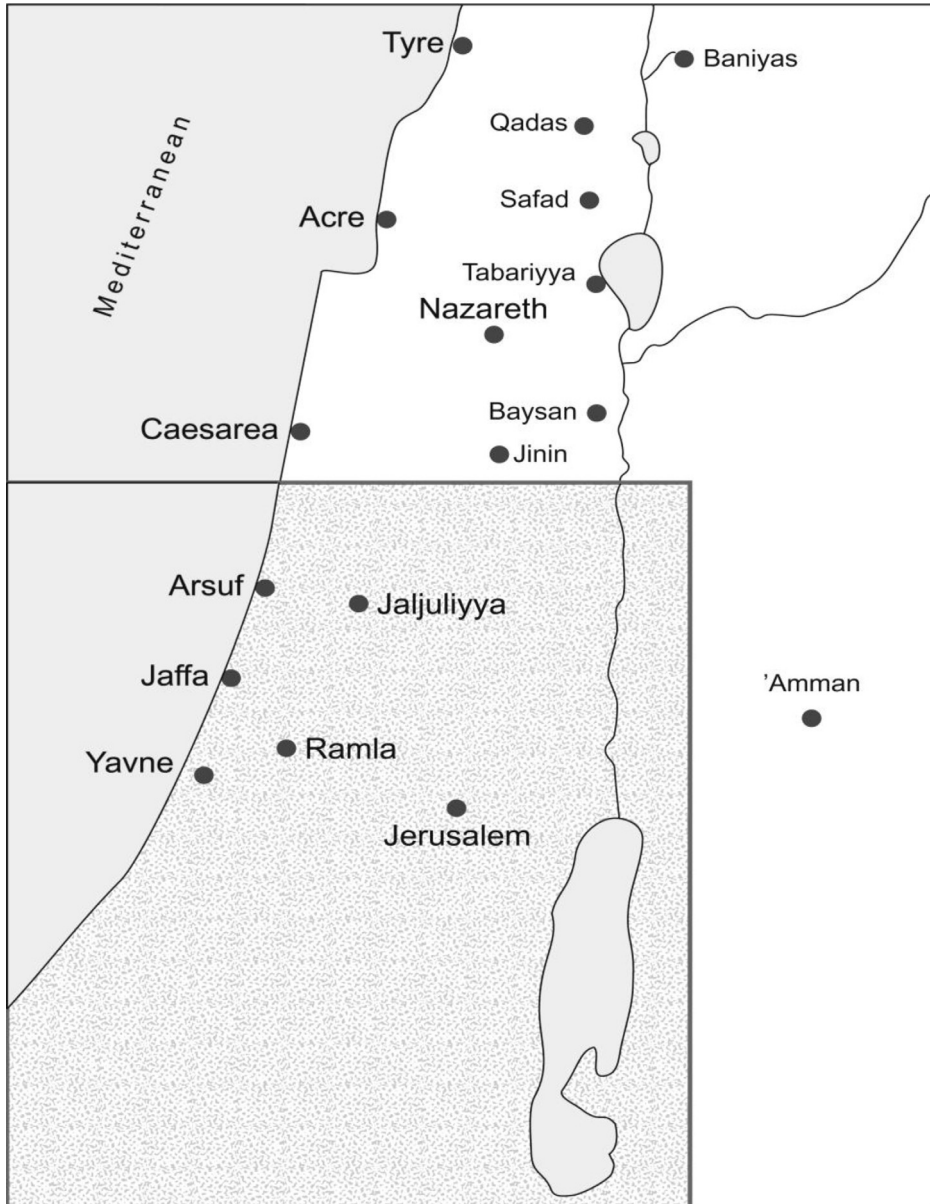
Map: Centres of the Qādiriyya in Palestine at the end of the Mamluk Period.

shaped local religious life and public space. My central proposition is that only through the localisation or appropriation of the shaykh of the *ṭarīqa* did his charismatic position become established and the perpetuation of his spiritual method become guaranteed? For his disciples and followers, the shaykh must have been – by his very nature – an utterly localised

Fig. 3.   The prayer niche in the mosque of Abū l-ʿAwn al-Jaljūlī in Ramla.

Fig. 4.   The tomb of Abū l-ʿAwn al-Jaljūlī (behind is the tomb of a family member).

individual, his figure must have been concrete, and his extraordinary traits and gratuitous marvels embodied within his specific community and publicly manifested.[57] The modes and

[57] For the notion of persona and its performing character, see E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York, 1959), pp. 17–76; M. Mauss, "La Notion de Personne, Celle de Moi", in *Sociologie et Entropologie*, 6th edition (Paris, 1995), pp. 333–362. For charismatic performances in contemporary Sufi communities, see P. G. Pinto, "Performing *Baraka*: Sainthood and Local Spirituality in Syrian Sufism", in *On* Archaeology *of Sainthood and Local Spirituality in Islam: Past and Present Crossroads of Events and Ideas (Yearbook of the sociology of Islam 5)* (Bielefeld, 2004), pp. 195–211.

frameworks of operation through which the shaykh performed and diffused his charisma and enlarged his following are substantial to any discussion of the local context of medieval Sufism.

At the heart of the process of localisation of the Qādirī path in late medieval Palestine resided the operation of the shaykhs of the *ṭarīqa* within the local community and the sites and spaces that grew up and around the transmission of their knowledge and divine blessing. Living among their fellow believers, the Qādirī shaykhs enlarged their following and turned their lodges into centres of communal life. Their tombs and the holy sites they harnessed further tightened the affinity between the *ṭarīqa*, the local community and the land, and set a tangible and lasting mark on the physical environment. By highlighting the process of the localisation of the particular spiritual path in the particular historical and geographical setting, my hope is to contribute to a new avenue of research that brings the local context of medieval Sufism into the centre of inquiry.

DAPHNA EPHRAT
The Open University of Israel