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Craftsmen, upstarts and Sufis in the late Mamluk period

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Abstract
This article explores the careers of craftsmen and other commoners, who succeeded in joining the bureaucratic system and occupying high positions in the Mamluk administrative establishment, eventually acquiring great power and even political authority. At the same time Sufi shaykhs, also men of common origin and beneficiaries of Mamluk philanthropy, emerged as mighty and authoritative figures, venerated equally by the aristocracy and the populace. The newly privileged groups also figure as founders of Friday mosques following a flexible new attitude on the part of the authorities. This social fluidity, often criticized by historians of the period, was the result of the pious patronage of the Mamluk aristocracy, which brought academic education to the reach of a large part of the populace. Towards the end of the Mamluk period, the structure of religious institutions had itself been levelled: the Friday mosque with Sufi service replaced the earlier *madrasa*s and *khanqāhs*. The article also discusses how the visual arts of the period mirror the social changes with new aspects of artistic patronage.
Keywords: Mamluks, Art, Craftsmen, Friday mosque, Sufi shaykhs, Social hierarchy, Religious foundations

The fifteenth century in Mamluk history, while often associated by medieval as well as modern historians with decline, was also a period of social change, allowing much greater mobility between classes than had been the case under the preceding reign of the Bahri Mamluks. In the eyes of most Mamluk historians, upstarts were evidence of this decline. This article documents the dramatic career of a coppersmith who ascended the social ladder to become the second most powerful man in the Mamluk state after Sultan Jaqmaq.[1] This case, most vividly and colourfully documented by Ibn Taghrībirdī because of his pronounced antipathy towards this man, was not unique at that time. Numerous men of humble origin became powerful because, thanks to the education the Mamluk system provided, they were able to fill gaps in the administrative

1 Richard T. Mortel, "The decline of Mamlūk civil bureaucracy in the fifteenth century: the career of Abū l-Khayr al-Naḥḥās", *Journal of Islamic Studies* 6/2, 1995, 173–88; see also F. J. Apellániz Ruiz de Galaretta, *Pouvoir et finance en Méditerranée pré-moderne. Le deuxième état Mamelouk et le commerce des épices (1382–1517)* (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Institución Milá y Fontanals, Departamento de Estudios Medievales, 2009), 123.

establishment. This article deals with the craftsmen of the late Mamluk period whose careers did not remain confined to manual work, but who instead managed to become acknowledged scholars and members of the elite with a documented biography, or even succeeded in occupying important bureaucratic and administrative positions in the Mamluk State, hence the phenomenon of the craftsman as a social upstart, to the dislike of contemporary historians. In tandem with the ascendance of the craftsmen, Sufi shaykhs, also men of common origin, emerged as patrons of religious foundations including Friday mosques built with the attributes of princely monuments. During the fifteenth century, a remarkable multiplication in the number of Friday mosques with Sufi service, sponsored by patrons of different social groups, gradually replaced the traditional princely *madrasa*s and *khanqāh*s. These parallel developments appear to be connected in that they contributed to the creation of the "upstart", that haunted late Mamluk historians. It will be shown that this phenomenon also had implications for some aspects of the visual arts of this period.

It is well known that Mamluk literature provides very little information about craftsmen and artisans, although the ruling establishment relied strongly on their works to fulfil its patronage and express its political intent. The considerable biographical literature of this period does not name sufficient artists to match the tremendous artistic output of this period, not even in the field of architecture, the most prestigious of the visual arts and the closest to political power. No Mamluk historians associated the names of any builders or craftsmen with the construction of the mosque of Sultan Ḥasan although even in its own time it was acknowledged as one of the most stunning monuments of the Muslim world. In his description of Cairo's monuments, the *Khiṭaṭ*, Maqrīzī mentions only two architects: the *muʿallim* Ibn al-Suyūfī, master-builder of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad; and another Syrian architect called Ḥujayj, who built a palace in the Citadel of Cairo.[2] An exception in Mamluk historiography is Ibn al-Himṣī's account of the restoration of the Umayyad mosque of Damascus by Qāytbāy following the fire of 1479, which mentions the names of the chief craftsmen involved in the works. This unusual occurrence is part of a dramatic and moving description of the catastrophic fire that shook the entire population of Damascus and inspired Ibn al-Ḥimsī, an eyewitness, to his unusual account which describes in lively terms how the population stood up spontaneously to help rescue their great monument. Here, the contribution of the craftsmen who restored the devastated mosque had a special and unique significance.[3] Interestingly however, musicians and singers received more attention from historians than did builders; they feature in obituaries as celebrities of their time who enjoyed the patronage of the Mamluk aristocracy.[4] This goes

2 al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-mawāʿiẓ wa' l-Iʿtibār bi dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa'l-āthār*, Bulāq, 1306/1889, II, 384. On Ḥujayj, see Abdallah Kahil, "The architect of the Sultan Hasan complex in Cairo", *Artibus Asiae* LXVI/2, 2006, 155–74.

3 Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "The fire of 884/1479 at the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus and an account of its restoration", *Mamluk Studies Review* VIII/1, 2004, 279–96.

4 ʿAlī al-Sayyid Maḥmūd, *al-Jawārī fī-mujtamaʿ al-qāhira 'l-mamlūkiyya* (Cairo, 1988), 89 f.; al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafīī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa'l-abdān fī tawārīkh al-zamān*, 4 vols., ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī Cairo, 1970), I, 169; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr*, ed. M. Muṣṭafā (Wiesbaden and Cairo, 1961–75), II, 346.

back to the early tradition of Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid patronage and to Isbahānī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, which continued to have an impact in later literature. This lack of regard for craftsmen and manual artists is not just symptomatic of Mamluk literature, neither is it an exclusively Islamic phenomenon. Rather it is an aspect of a premodern distinction between manual and intellectual activities. However, fifteenth-century biographies regularly refer to scholars who earned their living as craftsmen. Although many of them began their lives as craftsmen, or were born into craftsmen's families, before acquiring a higher education, it was their connections with learned circles or their eventual recruitment to religious or bureaucratic positions that earned them mention.[5]

The Circassian period

The first Sultan of the Circassian period, al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (r. 784–91/1382–89), may have inaugurated a new era in the status of the Mamluk craftsman when he married, twice, into a family of builders, something unheard of under the rule of the preceding Bahri Mamluk sultans. There are many features of the reign of this sultan, besides the replacement of Turkish with Circassian *mamlūk*s which, although not explicitly propagated, point to Barqūq's intention to reform the political culture he inherited from the Bahri Qalāwūnid dynasty, and which still need to be investigated. Barqūq married the daughter and the sister (or niece) of *al-muʿallim* Aḥmad al-Ṭūlūnī, his master-builder, who began his career as stone-cutter, mason and carpenter.[6] We can assume that Aḥmad was already an important contractor when he was appointed chief architect or master builder to the Sultan. Aḥmad is described as *muhandis* and as *kabīr al-ṣunnāʿ*, or *kabīr al-muhandisīn*, which seems to correspond to the post of *shād al-ʿamā'ir* or Supervisor of the Royal Constructions, a position traditionally held by a Mamluk Emir of Ten, the lowest in the princely hierarchy. Although Aḥmad was not given this title, his professional and private connections with the Sultan opened the door to the Mamluk establishment for him. He was appointed Emir of Ten and began to dress like a *mamlūk*. Furthermore, his extraordinary career brought him considerable fame.[7] Aḥmad is associated with the construction of the funerary complex of Sultan Barqūq in Cairo and with civil engineering projects in the holy cities and along the pilgrimage road.[8] These tasks alone might not have earned him an obituary in the chronicles or an entry in biographical literature, but his family connection with the sultan and his status as emir did.

5 See also Nasser Rabbat, "Perception of architecture in Mamluk sources", *Mamluk Studies Review*, VI, 2000, 155–76.

6 al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ*, 12 vols. (Cairo, 1896) (reprint), I, 243.

7 D. Behrens-Abouseif, "*Muhandis*, *Shād*, *Muʿallim* – note on the building craft in the Mamluk period", *Der Islam* LXXII/2, 1995, 293–309; N. Rabbat, "Architects and artists in Mamluk society: the perspective of the sources", *Journal of Architectural Education* 52, 1998, 30–37.

8 Saleh Lamei Mostafa, *Madrasa Ḫanqāh und Mausoleum des Barqūq in Kairo (Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Islamische Abteilung Kairo)*, Vol. IV (Glückstadt, 1982).

Although Aḥmad al-Ṭūlūnī's descendants turned to the white-collar career of scholars and bureaucrats, they continued to play a leading role in the administration of royal constructions until the end of the Mamluk period, bearing the title *muʿallim al-muʿallimīn*, which was at that time equivalent to the Sultan's master builder. In Syria, the title *muʿallim al-sulṭān* was carried by the sultan's master builder operating in Damascus. In premodern Egypt and Syria the title *muʿallim* was used by all kinds of craftsmen, who in the Mamluk period were mostly local non-Mamluks. Signatures on artifacts by Egyptian and Syrian craftsmen often include this title. In the Mamluk establishment only the instructor in equestrian and military training in the barracks of the *mamlūk*s was called *muʿallim* (literally teacher), and thus belonged here to a different context. Sultan Qāytbāy in his earlier career had been a *muʿallim al-rammāḥa* or teacher of the lancers.[9]

Aḥmad al-Ṭūlūnī was not the only person to ascend the social ladder at that time. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī mentions in the events of 808/1405–06 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Ibn al-Jabbās, whose name indicates that his father was involved in the production of gypsum. He himself owned a spice or drug shop (*ʿaṭṭār*); although he did not succeed in becoming a broker he managed to occupy the post of market inspector (*muḥtasib*) of Fustat and later Cairo, a position traditionally held by an emir or a high-ranking bureaucrat. Ibn Ḥajar describes him as being extremely ignorant and with a miserable appearance (*fī ghāyat al-jahl, althagh zari' al-hay'a*.[10] Muḥammad Ibn Mūsā Ibn ʿIsā al-Damīrī (d. 808/1405) began his career as a tailor (*khayyāṭ*) before he became a prominent scholar, mystic and author of important books including the famous bestiary *ḥayāt al-ḥayawān*.[11] Aḥmad Ibn al-Shahīd (d. 813/1410) was in the fur trade before he became vizier and Inspector of the Army (*nāẓir al-jaysh*).[12]

Ibn Taghrībirdī, the son of a prominent Mamluk emir, emphasized and deplored the fact that posts that were formerly reserved for the Mamluk aristocracy were increasingly being taken over by bureaucrats and tradesmen.[13] He sharply criticized what appeared to him to be increasing social mobility, which enabled craftsmen and other commoners to occupy high positions in the administrative–political establishment, and attributed the general decline of the period to this development.[14] Ibn Taghrībirdī justified his discontent with examples of careers that represented the rise of riffraff and upstarts (*awbāsh wa aḥdāth*). Among the upstarts of this period was the *muʿallim* Muḥammad al-Bibāwī (d. 868/1463), an Upper Egyptian from a poor family, who came to Cairo to work as a butcher's apprentice.[15] He then set out to sell cooked food, then traded in meat and eventually became the chief meat supplier of the Mamluk barracks, which made him a rich man and opened the way for

9 Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith al-duhūr fī madā 'l-ayyām wa 'l-shuhūr*, ed. W. Popper, II (Berkeley, 1931), III, 456 f.
10 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbā' al-ghumr bi-abnā' al-ʿumr*, 9 vols. (Beirut, 1986), V, 291.
11 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inba'*, V, 347 f.; Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw*, X, 59–62.
12 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inba'*, VI, 242.
13 Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk miṣr wa'l-qāhira*, 16 vols. (Cairo, 1963–71), XIV, 42, XVI, 74 f.
14 Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, XVI, 278.
15 Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith*, III, 512 f., IV, 771, 780 ff.

the *muʿallim* to become vizier, "the highest position in Islam after the caliphate". Another contemporary upstart was Ibn Āqbars, the owner of a shop in the Amber Market, who became the supervisor of the *awqāf* in 853/1449.[16] However, it is the coppersmith Abū 'l-Khayr al-Naḥḥās (d. 863/1459) who occupies pride of place in Ibn Taghrībirdī's account of contemporary upstarts. The historian and aristocrat dedicates a substantial part of Volume 15 of the *Nujūm*, and several passages in the *Ḥawādith*, alongside a long entry in the *Manhal*, which reads like a thriller, to the extraordinary career of this person. In these texts, the historian vents his strong repugnance and fury towards the coppersmith.[17]

The tragedy of Abū 'l-Khayr al-Naḥḥās

Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Abū 'l-Khayr, also known as Ibn al-Naḥḥās and Ibn al-Faqīh, learned the coppersmith's craft from his father, and excelled at it. He owned a shop in the Coppersmiths' Market along the street of Taḥt al-Rabʿ; according to Ibn Ḥajar, he made inlaid bronze lamps.[18] His great opportunity arose after he accumulated debts that he was unable to pay so that his creditor brought his case before the Sultan. Abū 'l-Khayr managed to turn the situation to his advantage by accusing his adversary of having usurped funds belonging to one of the emirs. This denunciation earned him the attention, and eventually the confidence, of Sultan Jaqmaq (r. 1438–53). Abū 'l-Khayr became a regular visitor at the court and became increasingly involved in the Sultan's administration. In 851/1447 Jaqmaq entrusted him with a number of authoritative functions, as Supervisor of the Royal Constructions, Market Inspector, Secretary of the Public Treasury *(wakīl bayt al-māl)*, adding new tasks to his portfolio including the supervision of the endowments of Mecca and Medina (*awqāf al-ḥaramayn*), the hospital of Qalāwūn, the *khanqāh* of Saʿīd al-Suʿadā' founded by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and the Sultan's Treasury. Abū 'l-Khayr's power was second only to that of the Sultan. He began to dress like a gentleman and to ride a horse, a privilege exclusive to the Mamluk aristocracy, and he continued to climb the social ladder until he became the supreme political authority (*ṣāra huwa al-ḥall wa 'l-ʿaqd*), so that even the emirs feared him.

Ibn Taghrībirdī's accusations against Abū 'l-Khayr remain vague, however, referring to the abuses, intrigues and arrogance often associated with the upstarts. It seems that the former coppersmith was caught in the midst of an opposition movement of the Sultan's new *mamlūk*s (*julbān*) against their master and his staff. The *julbān* were an element for unrest in the fifteenth century,

16 Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, XV, 388, 397.

17 Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith*, 35, 49, 54, 68, 76 f., 80 f., 84, 326–7, 329, 392, 658; idem, *Nujūm*, XV, 375–8, 382, 395–401, 418–22, 429, 441–2, XVI, 131, 132, 133, 210–11; idem, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfī wa 'l-mustawfā baʿd al-wāfī* (Cairo, 1956–2005), XII, 322–35; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Tibr al-masbūk fī dhayl al-sulūk* (Cairo n.d.), 110, 141 f., 201–3, 305; 314–17; 389–90; idem, *Ḍawʾ*, VII, 63–6; idem, *al-Dhayl ʿalā raf' al-aṣr*, ed. Jawda Hilāl and Muḥammad M. Ṣubḥ (Cairo, 2000), 248, 250; Ibn Iyās, II, 260, 262–3, 274–15, 278–79, 279 f., 281, 285, 296, 318, 352.

18 Ibn Ḥajar, Inba', IX, 246.

often rebelling for lack of funds. The royal majordomo Zayn al-Dīn Yaḥyā had likewise been a victim of their attacks. However, the unpopularity of Abū 'l-Khayr was such that it provoked an unlikely alliance between *mamlūk*s and the populace, who one day rallied in the streets between Bāb Zuwayla and the Citadel Square waiting for him to arrive. At the moment he appeared they assaulted him, forcing him to escape through the first door he could find, which turned out to belong to the residence of one of the victims of his denunciation to the Sultan, the emir Yashbak al-Khāṣṣakī! The chase continued and Abū 'l-Khayr, after being beaten almost to death, was stripped of his clothes and mounted on a donkey, accompanied by curses and insults from the raging mob, and forced to seek another refuge until he could finally reach his house in the dark.

However, Abū 'l-Khayr continued for some time to enjoy the favour of the Sultan who, following this incident, bestowed on him a robe of honour. But the *mamlūk*s did not give in; they plundered and burnt down his house, and demanded from the Sultan his exile. Finally, Jaqmaq ordered an inventory of Abū 'l-Khayr's estate and an investigation by the Shāfiʿī judge. While the confiscation of his considerable possessions was taking place, the *mamlūk*s, alongside the mob, found another opportunity to catch him on the street and beat him up. Eventually, he was stripped of all the positions he held and thrown into prison. Jaqmaq transferred his case to the Mālikī judge to prosecute him for apostasy, which would have entailed a death sentence. Upon the Shāfiʿī judge's objection, however, he was acquitted of apostasy but sentenced on other charges. After a period in jail, in 854/1450, Abū 'l-Khayr was exiled to Tarsus. There, however, he seems to have been soon released and allowed to enjoy a good life so that the Sultan had to issue new orders to beat him and confiscate his slaves and *mamlūk*s. A year later, he was back in Cairo and went to see the Sultan, who again sentenced him to be beaten and jailed. Ibn Taghrībirdī comments that the Sultan's role in this matter was ambiguous, making it difficult to see through the confusing reports. Abū 'l-Khayr was once again sent into exile, this time to the fort of Ṣubayba in Tripoli; after some time he was released and allowed to settle in the city. In the meantime Jaqmaq died and was succeeded by Sultan Īnāl, who in 863/1459 invited Abū 'l-Khayr al-Naḥḥās to return to Cairo to be reinstated as Supervisor of the Royal Treasury and Secretary of the Public Treasury (*nāẓir al-dhakhīra 'l-sulṭāniyya* and *wakīl bayt al-māl*). He continued to enjoy great authority under Īnāl; Sakhāwī reports that he was instrumental in the promotion of the emir Khuhqadam, the future sultan (r. 1461–67), the post Great Chamberlain.[19] Again, the *mamlūk*s of the *julbān* royal corps opposed this appointment and chased and beat him. By then Abū 'l-Khayr's health was severely damaged, and he died shortly afterwards in 864/1460.

Ibn Taghrībirdī describes with disgust Abū 'l–Khayr's plebeian looks and behaviour: he was typical of his class, never ceased to behave like a shopkeeper, looked like his craft, *kānat ṣifātuhu mushbiha li-ṣanʿatihi;* he was devoid of knowledge, recited the Quran like a popular performer rather than a professional reader; his ostentatious behaviour and his lavish dress were not in keeping with

19 Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, III, 680.

his speech, which was that of the rabble. Ibn Iyās' account of Abū 'l-Khayr corresponds to that of Ibn Taghrībirdī, with the difference that not being contemporary to the events, it is less emotional and lacks the virulent polemic of his predecessor. Ibn Iyās adds, however, that Abū 'l-Khayr was a very unpopular person. He refers to him by the title *qāḍī* Zayn al-Dīn Abū 'l-Khayr and describes him with the words *takhallaqa bi akhlāq al-fuqahā'*, meaning that he adopted the demeanour of a scholar. He adds that Abū 'l-Khayr was among those Quran readers who performed musical recitations.[20] In fact the *qurrā' al-jawq* (choir readers) who performed melodic recitations of the Quran are regularly mentioned in biographical literature in connection with Sufi rituals.[21]

Abū 'l-Khayr could not have been illiterate or ignorant as Ibn Taghrībirdi's account suggests. His relatively long biographical entry by al-Sakhāwī, which fills gaps in Ibn Tagrhībirdī's account, rather conforms to that of many other members of the Mamluk civilian elite of this period. His patronym Ibn al-Faqīh suggests that his father, also a coppersmith, had some academic education. Sakhāwī further reports that he studied with a number of eminent scholars and even travelled to Aleppo to take a course and acquire an *ijāza* in a specific subject.[22] He also learned calligraphy from the famous Ibn al-Ṣāyigh,[23] and Quran chanting, which he performed in a choir (*qurrā' al-jawq*) in Sufi shrines. Sakhāwī comments that in spite of his studies his standard was mediocre and he remained a commoner (*wa lakinnahu lam yatamayyaz wa lā kāda bal istamarra ʿalā ʿāmmiatihi*). He also confirms Ibn Taghrībirdī's report that Abū 'l-Khayr gained Sultan Jaqmaq's confidence and inclination by denouncing dignitaries, such as the emir Jawhar al-Qunuqbā'ī and the Sufi shaykh Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Wafā'ī for embezzling funds. Sakhāwī also confirms that the coppersmith became extremely powerful and wealthy, being courted by all, to the extent that nothing happened without his involvement, and that his arrogance and tyranny became so extreme that he turned everyone against him so that finally the sultan had to give in and order his arrest.

Abū 'l-Khayr was a Sufi. Before he fell into disgrace, he built in the cemetery a domed mausoleum for himself, where his name in the foundation inscription was followed by the titles al-Sufi, al-Shāfiʿī and the "sultan's deputy": Abū 'l-Khayr Muḥammad al-Ṣūfī al-Shāfiʿī *wakīl mawalānā al-maqām al-sharīf.* The mausoleum, which is no longer extant, was dated 853/1449.[24] However, at his death no funds were available to his heirs to buy a shroud for Abu 'l-Khayr; this was eventually provided through a donation.

20 Ibn Iyās, II, 260, 262, 274 f., 278 ff., 280 f., 285, 296, 318, 352, 354, 357, 379.
21 al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, IX, 141.
22 Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (Princeton, 1992), 31 ff.
23 Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, IV, 161 f.; Ibn Iyās, II, 232
24 M. van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum. (Mémoires publiés par les Membres de la Mission Archéologique Française au Caire)*, XIX/1–4, Cairo 1894–1903, 277 f. This mausoleum was pulled down in 1977 for the construction of a new street.

Other upstarts

In spite of some extraordinary, almost fabulous and yet tragic features, the career of Abū 'l-Khayr as a craftsman, a Sufi, and a high dignitary is symptomatic of its time. The coppersmith's son had enjoyed an academic education that qualified him to occupy an administrative office; he could not have been illiterate. However, his disastrous end was not a characteristic of this kind of social ascendance but was due rather to his obviously faulty character, which made him unpopular even among his likes with the great power he was given. He was particularly hated as a market inspector and was held responsible for the exorbitant rise in prices during his tenure.[25]

Although not as virulent as Ibn Taghrībirdī, Ibn Iyās was likewise displeased by the appointment of craftsmen to important administrative posts,[26] as in the case of Abū 'l-Jawd. The son of a carpenter called *al-muʿallim* Ḥasan, and owner of a sweetmeat shop, he entered first into the service of Taghrībirdī the Majordomo, then Ṭūmānbāy and Qanṣuh al-Ghawrī, when both were still Great Secretaries prior to their ascendance to the throne. These connections led him to the office of Supervisor of the Endowments or *awqāf*, a post that allowed him to extort money from merchants and tradesmen.[27] Another *nāẓir al-awqāf* was Muḥammad Ibn al-ʿAẓama, a fur-tailor, who was appointed by Qāytbāy to this office in Safar 887/April 1482, but dismissed in Shaʿbān 889/September 1484, after being beaten and imprisoned. Qāytbāy's son al-Nāṣir Muḥammad reinstated him to his position, but new complaints led to his final dismissal and exile to the city of Qūṣ, not before he was thoroughly beaten up.[28] The position of the *nāẓir al-awqāf* had become so problematic that eventually, in 1496, al-Nāṣir abolished it altogether, to general satisfaction.[29] Ibn Iyās also reports a baker, Qāsim Shughayta, who became vizier during the reign of Qāytbāy,[30] and a villager named Ibn ʿAwaḍ, who dressed and spoke like a fellah, even after he rose to a high position in the bureaucracy, which placed him close to Sultan al-Ghawrī.[31]

Sultan Qāytbāy appointed merchants to be supervisors of his construction works: Muṣṭafā Ibn Maḥmūd Ibn Rustam, an Anatolian merchant, was in charge of his restoration of the Azhar mosque;[32] and Ibn al-Zaman was in charge of his constructions in Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem and also Cairo. Ibn al-Zaman, who had an academic education before moving to trade, also founded a *madrasa* in his own name in the Būlāq quarter of Cairo and another in Jerusalem.[33] The emergence of merchants occupying positions initially held by emirs in higher-level administration and bureaucracy indicates that these individuals were sufficiently affluent to adopt the established practice of buying their way into such

25 Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, XII, 329.
26 Ibn Iyās, IV, 376 f.
27 Ibn Iyās, IV, 44 f.
28 Ibn Iyās, III, 192, 209, 212, 382, 446.
29 Ibn Iyās, III, 336.
30 Ibn Iyās, III, 307.
31 Ibn Iyās, IV, 376 f.
32 Ibn Iyās, III, 306, 431; Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, X, 160.
33 Ibn Iyās, III, 145, 170, 293; Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, VIII, 260 f.

offices or offering the Sultan special services. Ibn Iyās credits Ibn Rustam with having come up with the costs of Qāytbāy's restoration of al-Azhar. The wealth and high connections which traders could acquire also enabled the sweetmeat-maker at Bayn al-Qasrayn, *al-muʿallim* al-Ḥalawānī al-ʿAjamī, to make himself indispensable to the Ottoman conquerors; he managed to become a member of governor Muṣṭafā Pasha's entourage in 1522.[34]

Craftsmen and shopkeepers such as Abū 'l-Khayr appear to have had easy access to the kind of academic education that enabled their employment in higher administrative functions. Considering Mamluk patronage of charitable educational institutions on the primary and academic levels, literacy and higher education must have been sufficiently widespread to allow men from lower social strata, such as craftsmen and villagers, to advance and gain prominence as men of the pen. The sheer number of Mamluk religious monuments and primary schools still standing today in Cairo and Syrian cities attests to the unparalleled magnitude of this academic and educational patronage. Although as early as the fourteenth century, some figures such as the poet Ibrāhīm al-Miʿmār, a builder also active in other manual crafts,[35] could become a man of the pen, it was in the fifteenth century that craftsmen could reach high positions in the religious and administrative establishment. The historian ʿAlī Ibn Dāwūd al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī (d. 900/1495), as his name indicates, was a jeweller; Sakhāwī and Ibn Iyās had little esteem for his scholarship.[36] Other scholars, such as Muhammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Jawjarī (d. 889/1484), to whose career Sakhāwī dedicates three-and-a-half pages, continued to work all his life as a shopkeeper.[37] Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī Ibn Musharraf (died during the fifteenth century), who worked as a doorman at the mausoleum of Sultan Barqūq and was at the same time a carpenter, was qualified with *ijāzah*s or certificates from several teachers.[38] Another carpenter in Damascus, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Najjār, abandoned his profession, at which he excelled, to become a scholar.[39] ʿUmar Ibn ʿAlī Ibn Fāris (d. 829/1425–6) had been a cap-maker before he studied at the *madrasa* of Sultan Barqūq and eventually became an authority on the Ḥanafī rite, and the rector of the *khanqāh* of Shaykhū, being highly respected by the Sultan. Ibn Ḥajar praised him for having maintained a humble life style.[40] These men were mostly also Sufis and associated with Sufi institutions.[41] The Sufi shaykh Muḥammad al-Maltūtī (d. 873/1468), who had studied at the *khanqāh* of Baybars al-Jashnakīr and was the head of the *dhakkārīn* (performers of Sufi ritual of *dhikr*) at the mosque of al-Ḥākim and

34 Ibn Iyās, V, 928, 493.
35 Thomas Bauer, "Ibrahim al-Miʿmar: ein dichtender Handwerker aus Ägyptens Mamlukenzeit", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 152, 2002, 63–93.
36 Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, V, 217–9; Ibn Iyas, III, 309.
37 Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, VIII, 123 ff.
38 Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, VIII, 220.
39 Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, X, 107.
40 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inba'*, VIII, 115 f.
41 Eric Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Egypte et en Syrie sous les derniers Mamelouks et les premiers Ottomans* (Damascus, 1995), 147; Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, *Les Civils et l'administration dans l'État Militaire Mamlūk (IXe/XVe Siècle)* (Damascus, 1991), 381.

a teacher, continued to earn his living with manual crafts, as inlayer in metalwork (*takfīt*), decorator (*naqqāsh*) and as haberdasher.[42] Ibn Ḥajar also praised the *faqīh* Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Fakhr al-Dīn for his multiple talents and activities in tailoring, carpentry, building, music and poetry while being at the same time good looking![43]

Whereas historians adopted a hostile attitude towards the upstarts who gained authority in the state bureaucracy, they tended to look more sympathetically at those who became scholars and Sufis but confined themselves to academic careers, in particular when they kept a low profile and humble attitudes.

One may describe some of these men as scholars and Sufis who practised manual crafts to earn their living or, conversely, as craftsmen and traders with Sufi and academic affiliations. It also seems that some religious foundations were dedicated to a community of craftsmen, as suggested by the entry in Sakhāwī's encyclopaedia on the emir Kāfūr al-Sarghitmishī al-Rūmī (d. 830/1427). The emir is reported to have built a *madrasa* and Friday mosque "for the craftsmen and their followers (or their likes), although he was aware of their shortcoming", *li 'l-ṣunnāʿ wa atbāʿihim maʿ ʿilmihi bi-taqṣīrihim*.[44] Sakhāwī's mention of a *madrasa* founded for craftsmen is astonishing and almost revolutionary. Unfortunately, this phenomenon cannot be substantiated by any further information on the matter. However, one can well imagine that Abū 'l-Khayr had access to such a *madrasa*. An anonymous document of the late sixteenth century on Egyptian guilds, which contains a polemic against Ottoman rule, praised the rule of the late Mamluks as a golden age for craftsmen, enabling them to enjoy substantial privileges.[45]

The cultural environment

The phenomenon of social ascendance demonstrated through the case of Abū 'l-Khayr, and others, is connected to the well-documented cultural development in the late Mamluk period, which gave the populace wide access to *madrasa* circles, eventually undermining their elitist status, as deplored by Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī.[46] The phenomenon of holy men of humble origin rising to influential and affluent figures, thanks to the lavish patronage of Sufi foundations by the sultans and emirs, ran in tandem with this development, which may have its roots in the Bahri Mamluk period, but which later acquired a new dimension. The authority

42 Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, VIII, 252.
43 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'*, III, 46 f.
44 Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, VI, 226.
45 D. Behrens-Abouseif, "Une polémique anti-Ottomane par un artisan au Caire du XVIIe siècle", in Brigitte Marino (ed.), *Etudes sur les villes du Proche-Orient: XVIe–XIXe siècle: hommage à André Raymond* (Damascus, 2001), 55–64.
46 S. Leder, "Postklassisch und vormodern: Beobachtungen zum Kulturwandel in der Mamlūkenzeit", in S. Conermann and A. Pistor-Hatam (eds), *Die Mamlūken. Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur. Zum Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999)* (Hamburg, 2003), 289–312; Berkey, *Transmission*, 185 ff.; idem, "Culture and society during the late middle ages", in *The Cambridge History of Egypt, vol I: Islamic Egypt* (Cambridge, 1998), 375–411; Boaz Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo* (Cambridge, 1993).

and power of these Sufis was further consolidated by the authorization they acquired from the early fifteenth century to found not just *zāwiya*s, but Friday mosques with the functions and physical attributes of princely foundations.

The foundation of a Friday mosque, which in principle required the sultan's authorization,[47] was reserved in the Bahri Mamluk period for members of the ruling Mamluk establishment and their clientele of high-ranking bureaucrats and other notables. Even in the last quarter of the fourteenth century the authorities showed some reluctance to turn *madrasa*s into Friday mosques. When the commander of the army (*atābak*) Emir Uljāy in 774/1372–73 held a meeting with scholars regarding the addition of the *khuṭba* to the *madrasa* of Sultan Qalāwūn, it was agreed not to authorize it.[48] In the early fifteenth century, the regulations concerning authorization of the *khuṭba* became more flexible.[49] Individuals of various backgrounds were allowed to found Friday mosques and at the same time a large number of *madrasa*s, *khanqāh*s and *zāwiya*s were upgraded to include the *khuṭba.* Foundations traditionally described as *zāwiya*s associated with Sufi shaykhs became Friday mosques, such as those of the ascetic mystic Shaykh Ahmad al-Zāhid (d. 819/1416),[50] and Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī (d. 847/1443), who owned a bookshop before he turned to Sufism.[51]

Tradesmen, who did not have the status of holy men, also feature as patrons of Friday mosques. In 1400 the Kīmakhtī mosque was founded by a master (*muʿallim*) of the craft of *kīmakht*-makers.[52] Maqrīzī mentioned a Friday mosque built by Shākir al-Banna', who may have been a builder (unless al-Banna' was only a nickname), and a *madrasa* built by a grain broker; he also attributes a Friday mosque to the *muqaddim al-saqqāyīn*, whose title suggests that he was the head of the water-carriers.[53] It cannot be ruled out that the domed mausoleum Abū 'l-Khayr built for himself was attached to a mosque with Sufi service, as was usual. At the end of the Mamluk period a considerable number of Friday mosques in Cairo were named after shaykhs and commoners. This evolution, which decentralized the *khuṭba*, thus further delegating its political authority, must have had socio-political consequences that still need to be explored. While upgrading the foundations of Sufis and commoners, the Mamluk aristocracy modified their own patronage of religious foundations. Stipulation regarding Sufi service applied to all forms of religious foundations regardless of whether they were called *jāmiʿ*, *madrasa* or *khanqāh*. The use of the term *khanqāh* became rare in epigraphy and *waqf* documents. The complex of

47 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'*, VII, 392, IX, 157 ff.; al-Sakhāwī, *Tibr*, 9–11.
48 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'*, I, 39 f.
49 Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 331; see also annotations by Azman Fu'ād Sayyid in his edition of the *Khiṭaṭ*, IV/1 (London, 2003), 354–60; Leonor Fernandes, "Mamluk architecture and the case of patronage", *Mamluk Studies Review* I, 1997, 107–20.
50 Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 326; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'*, VII, 229 f.; Ibn Shaʿrānī, II, 81 ff.
51 Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 326; Shaʿrānī, II, 88–101; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith*, 140.
52 Maqrizi, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 325. I could not find the meaning of *kīmakht*, but it may be equivalent to *kamkhā*, a type of silk embroidered fabric. Jawharī mentioned that it was spread before the sultan's horse in processions; al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī, ʿAlī Ibn Dāwūd, *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa 'l-abdān fī tawārīkh al-zamān*, 3 vols. (ed.) Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1970), I, 295, II, 73.
53 Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 331.

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Sultan Īnāl (r. 1453–61) is the latest known traditional *khanqāh* with a large complex of dwellings for its Sufi community.[54] The funerary mosque of Sultan Qāytbāy in the cemetery is not called *khanqāh* in its inscriptions nor in its *waqfiyya*, although it employed a Sufi shaykh as the head of forty Sufis to assemble in the mosque on a daily basis to perform a Sufi service (*mīʿād*). Its *waqf* deed describes it as a Friday mosque and its inscriptions call it a *madrasa*. This *mashyakhat ṣufiyya* is clearly defined in the stipulations of the *waqf* deed.[55]

Similarly, the *qubba* or domed mosque of Qaytbay's Grand Secretary Yashbak min Mahdī was a Friday mosque with Sufi service, as were all other Friday mosques of the period. The funerary complex of Sultan al-Ghawrī (r. 1501–16) is described in the *waqfiyya* as including a *khanqāh*: this was a dedicated hall for Sufi gatherings, with no boarding facilities, as was the case in the traditional *khanqāh*.[56] *Waqf* documents indicate that the integration of the Sufi curriculum in all forms of religious foundations took place simultaneously with the provision of academic education for students who were Sufis, thus confirming what is revealed in the intellectual discourse of the time. At the same time, monumental epigraphy uses the word *madrasa* to describe not a teaching institution but the type of building formerly associated with the *madrasa*, while the *waqf* document of the same foundation clearly states that it was a Friday mosque with no teaching curriculum.[57] As is already well documented, the fusion between the scholar and the Sufi (the *faqīh* and the *faqīr*) had been a gradual and complex process that led Sufism in the fifteenth century to penetrate religious life across all groups of Mamluk society,[58] thus integrating a mixed community of dignitaries, bureaucrats, scholars and craftsmen under its wing.[59] Abū 'l-Khayr al-Naḥḥās, a coppersmith and a Sufi with some academic education was one among many. The power of the Sufi shaykhs and their mediatory role between the ruling establishment and the urban populace must have facilitated the ascendance of members of their communities in the state apparatus.

The statement of the visual arts

The evidence of the visual arts corroborates the social development revealed in literary and archive sources. Mosques founded by Sufi shaykhs in the late Mamluk period bear the attributes of princely monuments. Although most of

54 Its *waqf* document has not come to light.

55 *Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya*, no 187, d. 884/1479; L. A. Mayer, *The Buildings of Qaytbay as Described in His Endowment Deeds* (London, 1938).

56 D. Behrens-Abouseif, "Change in function and form of Mamluk religious institutions", *Annales Islamologiques* XXI, 1985, 73–93.

57 Ibid., 89–9, 92; Max van Berchem, *Matériaux*, 536–7.

58 Leonor Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt: The Khanqah* (Berlin, 1988), 33 f., 101 f.; idem, "Some aspects of the *zāwiya* in Egypt at the eve of the Ottoman conquest", *Annales Islamologiques* XIX, 1983, 9–17; Shoshan Boaz, *Popular Culture*, ch. 1. On the ideological aspect of Egyptian Sufism see Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Egypte*, esp. 90 ff., 98 f., 150 ff., also ch. XX.

59 B. Shoshan, "High culture and popular culture in medieval Islam", *Studia Islamica* LXXIII, 1991, 67–107, esp. 105

Figure 1. The Minaret of the mosque of Shaykh Madyan (Doris Behrens-Abouseif)

the mosques attributed by Mamluk historians to commoners did not survive, either due to the disintegration or expropriation of their endowments, more likely here than in the case of princely foundations, or because the foundations associated with mystics tended to develop as venerated shrines being continuously refurbished and transformed, some exceptional cases reveal the status Sufi shaykhs could attain in terms of monumental patronage. The mosque of Shaykh Madyan (d. 862/1457–58) is a noteworthy case (Figure 1). Madyan, born into a North African family settled in the Egyptian Delta, moved to Cairo, where he built a mosque, said to have been generously endowed by the wife of Sultan Jaqmaq, who highly revered him.[60] The mosque, built in

60 Jawharī, *Inbā'*, 465 f.; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith*, 379; idem, *Nujūm*, XVI, 191; Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, X, 150 f.; al-Shaʿrānī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Anṣārī, *al-Ṭabaqaāt al-kubrā al-musammāh bi-lawāqiḥ al-anwār fīṭabāqat al-akhyār*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1954), II, 101 ff.; J.-C. Garcin, "L'Insertion sociale de Shaʿrani dans le milieu Cairote", in *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire* (Cairo, 1972), 159–68.

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the style of contemporary princely monuments, was lavishly decorated, as is still apparent in spite of advanced degradation. Its minaret, which was destroyed recently, was made of stone and was not just a common brick construction.[61] According to Sakhāwī, few scholars and shaykhs erected buildings of such beauty and distinction. Following the foundation of this *zāwiya*-Friday mosque, Madyan became very influential, his disciples grew in number, some were high dignitaries, and donations increased.

Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghamrī (d. 849/1445) built a mosque with a magnificent minaret in the Marjūsh street in the north-west part of the medieval city of Cairo, depicted by David Roberts before it had to be pulled down owing to structural problems (Figure 2).[62] The founder, who was a very humble man, originated in the town of Miniat Ghamr (Mīt Ghamr) in the Delta and led an ascetic life, earning his living as a craftsman. However, the significance and prestige he acquired during his career as a mystic shaykh, gathering a large number of disciples around him, allowed him to found several mosques in the province and in the capital, including this one. The Friday mosque is reported to have been founded in 843/1440 in response to an urgent need for a sanctuary in this quarter of Cairo. Sakhāwī reports that some scholars, himself included, criticized the shaykh for founding a Friday mosque, and advised him to do without the *khuṭba*, which the shaykh rejected. The minaret of this mosque was sponsored by a merchant from the neighbourhood. Its *minbar*, which stands today at the funerary mosque of Sultan Barsbāy in the cemetery, is a masterpiece of woodwork (Figure 3).[63] The carpenter who made it, Aḥmad Ibn ʿĪsā, worked for the emir Jamāl al-Dīn, the private secretary of Sultan Jaqmaq; he also produced the *minbar*s of the shrine of Mecca, the mosque of Qijmas al-Isḥāqī in Cairo. His prominence earned him a biographical entry in Sakhāwī's *Ḍaw'*; this is in itself an extraordinary occurrence considering that he was only a craftsman, not a scholar, who remained all his life a carpenter.[64] The sponsor of the *minbar* of al-Ghamrī, alongside a *kursī* for the Quran reader, was a scholar and merchant known as Ibn al-Radādī.[65]

The son of Muḥammad al-Ghamrī, Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Ghamrī, was an even more remarkable patron; he founded the Mosque of Repentance, *jāmiʿ al-thawba*, in the town of Maḥalla in the 1490s. Its minaret is the only provincial minaret of this period to be built in stone; all known minarets outside of Cairo were brick constructions. Only its octagonal first storey survived; it is in the Cairene style, which is also exceptional, indicating that it was built by a craftsman from the capital, perhaps a disciple of the shakyh. Abū 'l-ʿAbbās also founded the mosque with the remarkable rectangular minaret in the town of Mīt Ghamr (Figure 4). The double-headed minaret predates all known minarets

61 D. Behrens-Abouseif, *The Minarets of Cairo* (London and Cairo, 2010), p. 234 and fig. 182.

62 Maqrizi, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 331; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'*, IX, 244; Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, VIII, 238 ff.; Shaʿrānī, II, 87 f.; Mubārak, V, 60 f.; Van Berchem, *Matériaux*, 581 f.; Garcin, "L'insertion", 163; M. Meinecke, *Mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien*, 2 vols. (Mainz, 1993), II, 359.

63 Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Tārīkh al-masājid al-athariyya* (Cairo, 1946), 227 f.

64 Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, II, 59.

65 Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, IX, 9.

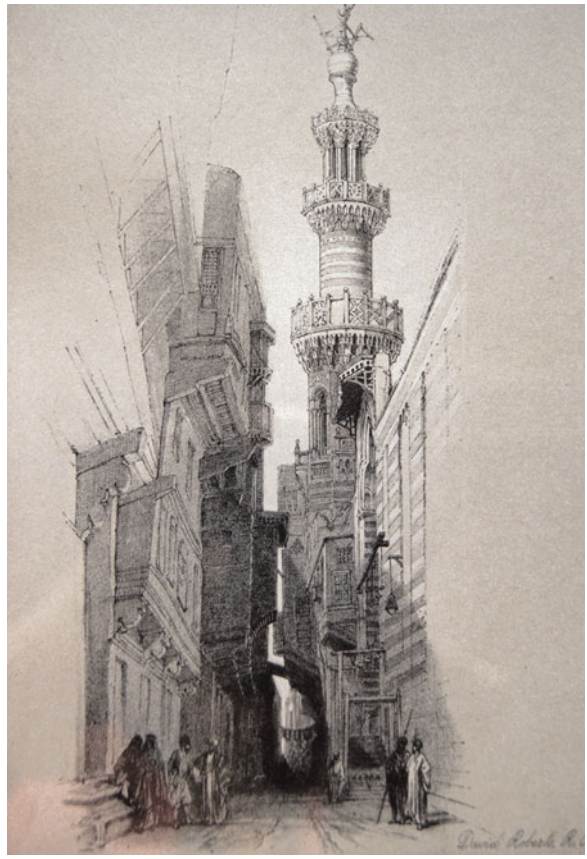

Figure 2. The Minaret of the mosque of Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghamrī, lithograph by David Roberts

in Cairo with an upper double-bulb. This shaykh is reported to have built as many as fifty mosques for which he was able to transport building materials from ancient monuments more efficiently than a sultan could![66]

The mosque with the mausoleum of Shaykh Abū 'l-ʿIlā on the shore of the Nile near Būlāq (before 1486), sponsored by a merchant and a disciple of the shaykh (Figure 5), could compete in all its architectural and decorative features with any aristocratic foundation of this period. Its elaborately carved stone minaret bears the most dense inscription programme in Cairo, and its pulpit is a masterpiece of woodwork signed by its maker.[67] The inscription on the mausoleum dome is remarkable in the history of Mamluk epigraphy: it mentions the patron with his title *khawāja* dedicated to great merchants.

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Dasthṭūṭī (d. 924/1518) was credited with the foundation of several Friday mosques, notably that in the north-west suburb of

66 Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, II, 161 f; Shaʿrānī, II, 121 f.; Ibn al-ʿImād, VIII, 25 f.
67 Shaʿrānī, II, 138; ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, 276–80.

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Figure 3. The *minbar* of the mosque of Muḥammad al-Ghamrī today in the funerary *khanqāh* of Sultan Barsbay (Bernard O'Kane)

Ṭabbāla in Cairo near a pond called Birkat al-Qarʿ (Pumpkin Pond).[68] He was an ascetic mystic, of no permanent abode, was not married and had no children, kept a frugal diet, wore a coarse gown and walked barefoot. He was highly venerated among the Mamluk aristocracy and especially by Sultan Qāytbāy, who demonstrated deep humility towards the shaykh and assigned him the administrative task of supervising the construction of his wife's mosque in the town of Fayyum, as is also attested in an inscription.[69] However, when he founded his mosque in Cairo,[70] Dashṭūṭī followed the example of contemporary emirs, and enlarged the canal connected to the Birkat al-Qarʿ to allow the navigation of boats therein during the Nile flood season, as was the case at the greater

68 Ibn Iyās, III, 392, IV, 97, V, 267 f.; Shaʿrānī, II, 138; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira bi aʿyān al-mi'a 'l-ʿāshira*, 3 vols. (Beirut, 1979), I, 246–50, 298; Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw'*, 300f.; 'Alī Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-jadīda al-tawfīqiyya li-Miṣr wa'l-Qāhira*, 20 vols. (Cairo, 1306/1888–9), IV, 300 f.; Jean-Claude Garcin, "Deux saints populaires du Caire au début du XVIe siècle", *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, 1977, 131–43.

69 Van Berchem, *Matériaux*, 557 f.

70 Index 12 (formerly). Today the mosque is no longer listed as a historic monument; *Bulletin du Comité de Conservation des Monuments Arabes du Caire*, 1888, 14, 1896, 58, 139; 1898, 75, 133; 1899, 63; 1907, 98; 1914, 86, 128, 141.

Figure 4. The Minaret of Shaykh Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al Ghamrī at Mīt Ghamr (Ḥusām Ismāʿīl)

ponds Birkat al-Raṭlī and Azbakiyya.[71] His mosque included a mausoleum for himself, which has lost its stately dome in recent years. It also had a remarkable *minbar*, considered worthy of restoration by the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe early in the last century.[72] This kind of patronage was not common prior to the fifteenth century.

The decorative arts of the late Mamluk period also reveal social change, by expressing a craftsman's pride. While Mamluk titles and blazons on metalwork

71 Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "The northeastern extension of Cairo under the Mamluks", *Annales Islamologiques* XVII, 1981, 157–89; idem, *Azbakiyya and Its Environs from Azbak to Ismāʿīl 1476–1871* (Cairo, 1985), 9 ff., 19 ff.

72 Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, *Bulletin* 1907, p. 98, also online at Islamic Art Network and Cresswell Archive at the Ashmolean Museum neg. EA.CA 4107A.CA.4107.

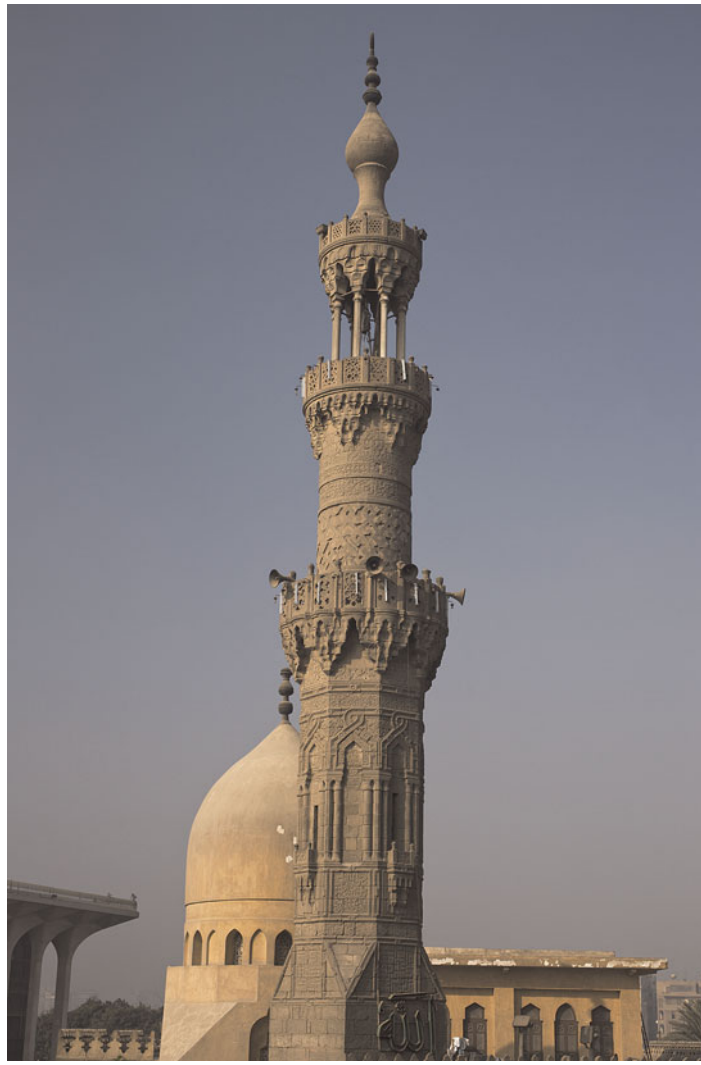

Figure 5. The mosque of Shaykh Abū ’l-ʿIlā at Būlāq

became far less frequent than during the Bahri period, names of commoners appear on art objects preceded by the formula *mimmā ʿumila bi-rasm*, previously associated only with high-ranking patrons. A fifteenth-century bowl in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha bears such an inscription with the name of a certain ʿAbd al-Ghaffār with no title, and includes, further, a poem authored by the prominent poet Taqiyy al-Dīn Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī (d. 837/1433–34),[73] praising the beauty of the bowl (Figure 6). There are other interesting

73 Inv. no: MW-96-99HU. The poem is included in al-Nawājī’s anthology, *Ḥulbat al-kumayt fī ’l-adab wa ’l-nawādir al-mutaʿalliqa bi l-khamriyyāt* (Cairo, 1299/1881–22), 171. On Ibn Ḥijja see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, XII, 291–5.

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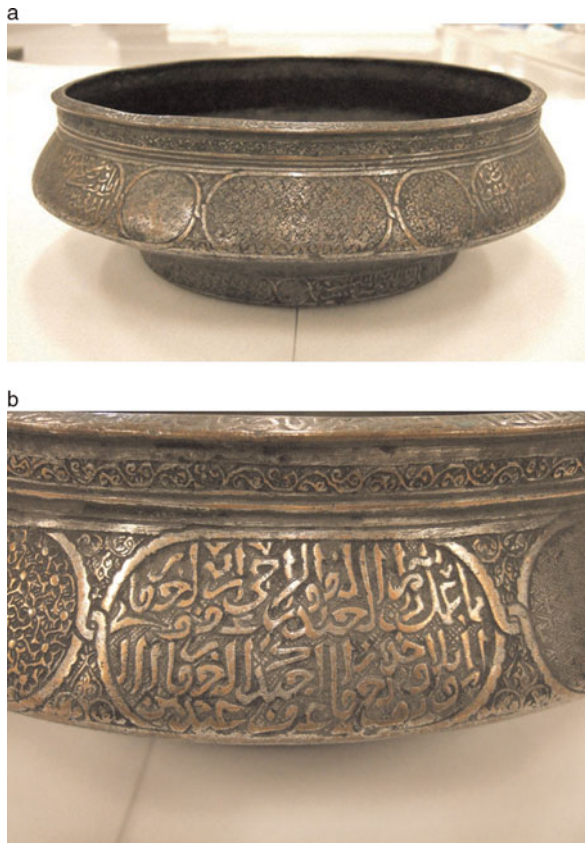

Figure 6. (a) Bowl inscribed with a poem in the name of ʿAbd al-Ghaffār (b) detail of the inscription (courtesy of the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha)

inscriptions like the one on a late Mamluk pen-box in which the owner swears in the first person by God that he never harmed anyone while practising his craft and goes on praising the craft of the *ṭirāz* (embroidered ceremonial textiles).[74] An elaborate late Mamluk brass salver bears the name of a sweetmeat-maker, al-ḥājj Aḥmad al-Ṭūkhī al-Ḥalawānī, preceded by the formula *mimmā ʿumila bi-rasm*, which indicates that it was made for him.[75] Perhaps the strongest evidence for the pride of a craftsman of this period is the signature of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Naqqāsh in the *mihrab* of the mosque of Qijmas al-Isḥāqī (1480–81) (Figure 7), placed in the centre of the remarkable and innovatively decorated niche. This signature is extraordinary, as almost all Mamluk *mihrab*s include

74 Auction catalogue of Sotheby's, *Arts of the Islamic World*, London, 8 October 2008, no. 122.

75 idem, no 121. The published reading is "al-Tarkhi" instead of al-Ṭūkhī, a common *nisba* referring to the town of Ṭūkh.

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Figure 7. The signature of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Naqqāsh inside the *miḥrāb* of the mosque of Qijmas al-Isḥāqī (Doris Behrens-Abouseif)

only Quranic texts. It was not common even for patrons, including sultans, to inscribe their names on *mihrab*s.[76]

The late Mamluk period was viewed by its own chroniclers as an era of decline, where corruption reached such proportions that unqualified persons were allowed to occupy high administrative posts, which they exploited to the detriment of others.[77] Like the converts, the upstarts were accused of abusing their position to gain profit and harm their fellows. However, one may also see in the rise of upstarts unprecedented opportunities for lower social groups, who for economic and political reasons, had become indispensable for filling gaps the Mamluk aristocracy were no longer able to fill. The phenomenon of the upstart was a natural consequence of the intensive and continuous Mamluk patronage of charitable educational and Sufi institutions, which schooled individuals of modest, mostly indigenous, background and qualified them to join the bureaucracy and fulfil functions in the state, thus climbing the social ladder, making fortunes and gaining power. Although the tragic end of Abū 'l-Khayr al-Naḥḥās reveals the uneasy reaction to this development in the Mamluk establishment, it remains an extreme and individual case.

As a final point, it is interesting to note that the ascendance of the craftsman to the status of scholar and intellectual did not have a noticeable impact on the status of the arts and artists, as happened in Renaissance Italy in the fifteenth century, when artists began to acquire a humanistic education that raised them

76 One exception is the *mihrāb* of the mosque of Qāḍī Yaḥyā at Būlāq, which refers to the patron and his master Sultan Jaqmaq. Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Tārīkh al-masājid al-athariyya* (Cairo, 1946), 240

77 For example, Mortel's conclusion in his article on Abū'l-Khayr al-Naḥḥās.

above the craftsman's status and earned them acknowledgement and respectability among the intellectual elite.[78] The acknowledgement earned by educated Mamluk craftsmen was confined to their scholarship rather than to any manual works of art they may have created. This is, however, another subject that requires a study of its own.

78 See on this subject Francis Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist* (New Haven and London, 2000).