



ANNALES ISLAMOLOGIQUES

en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne

AnIsl 60 (2026), p. 287-326

Hadrien Collet

A West African History of the Qarāfa. Taktūrī Muslims and the Great Cairene Necropolis (4th-9th/10th-15th Centuries)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'utilisation du contenu de ce site est limitée à un usage personnel et non commercial. Toute autre utilisation du site et de son contenu est soumise à une autorisation préalable de l'éditeur (contact AT ifao.egnet.net). Le copyright est conservé par l'éditeur (Ifao).

Conditions of Use

You may use content in this website only for your personal, noncommercial use. Any further use of this website and its content is forbidden, unless you have obtained prior permission from the publisher (contact AT ifao.egnet.net). The copyright is retained by the publisher (Ifao).

Dernières publications

9782724711288	<i>Karnak-Nord XI</i>	Colin Hope
9782724711622	<i>BIFAO 126</i>	
9782724711059	<i>Les Inscriptions de visiteurs dans les Tombes thébaines</i>	Chloé Ragazzoli
9782724711455	<i>Les émotions dans l'Égypte Ancienne</i>	Rania Y. Merzeban (éd.), Marie-Lys Arnette (éd.), Dimitri Laboury, Cédric Larcher
9782724711639	<i>AnIsl 60</i>	
9782724711448	<i>Athribis XI</i>	Marcus Müller (éd.)
9782724711615	<i>Le temple de Dendara X. Les chapelles osiriennes</i>	Sylvie Cauville, Oussama Bassiouni, Matjaž Kačičnik, Bernard Lenthéric
9782724711707	????? ?????????? ?????????? ???? ?? ????????	Omar Jamal Mohamed Ali, Ali al-Sayyid Abdelatif
?? ???? ?? ??????? ??????? ?? ????????? ?????????? ??????????????		

A West African History of the Qarāfa

Takrūrī Muslims and the Great Cairene Necropolis (4th–9th/10th–15th Centuries)**

♦ ABSTRACT

In the Mamluk Orient, Takrūr was the name given to the Islamised lands of the Sahel, from the Atlantic to the Lake Chad. Many West African Muslims carrying the *nisba* “al-Takrūrī” (pl. Takārura, Takārīr, Takārna) can be found in the Mamluk domain. Some were only passing by, on the pilgrimage in Mecca, seeking to trade, or in the pursuit of scientific knowledge, following the teachings of famous scholars at prestigious institutions before going back to the Sahel after several months or years. Many settled in Egypt, Syria, or Arabia. Cairo was the main centre attracting this mobility. The necropolis of the Qarāfa was such a place where Takrūrī settled. This article endeavours to outline the first West African history of the Qarāfa.

Keywords: West Africa, Qarāfa, diasporas, mobility, Takrūr, Takrūrī, Cairo, saints, necropolis, Sahel, Mamluk period, medieval Egypt

* Hadrien Collet, UMR 7310 Institut de recherches et d'études sur les mondes arabes et musulmans (Iremam), hadrien.collet@cnrs.fr.

I would like to express my gratitude to Giuseppe Cecere, Richard McGregor, Mauro Nobili, Julien Loiseau, and Jean-Charles Ducène for having taken the time to read drafts of this work. Their feedbacks and comments were invaluable for its improvement.

** This study is dedicated to the memory of Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias.

♦ RÉSUMÉ

Une histoire ouest-africaine de la Qarāfa : les musulmans *takrūrī-s* et la grande nécropole du Caire (IV^e-IX^e/X^e-XV^e siècle)

Dans l'Orient mamelouk, Takrūr était le nom donné à la bande islamisée du Sahel, de l'océan Atlantique au lac Tchad. De nombreux musulmans ouest-africains portant la *nisba* « al-Takrūrī » (pl. Takārura, Takārīr, Takārna) peuvent être trouvés dans le sultanat mamelouk. Certains étaient simplement de passage, en route pour le pèlerinage à La Mecque, présents pour le commerce ou bien en quête de science, afin de suivre les enseignements des célèbres professeurs des non moins fameuses institutions mameloukes. Ils retournaient ensuite au Sahel après plusieurs mois ou années. Nombreux sont ceux qui s'installèrent définitivement en Égypte, en Syrie ou dans la péninsule Arabique. La ville du Caire était le principal centre d'attraction de cette mobilité. La nécropole de la Qarāfa fut l'un de ces endroits où les musulmans du Takrūr s'installèrent. Cet article propose de retracer la première histoire ouest-africaine de la Qarāfa.

Mots-clés : Afrique de l'Ouest, Qarāfa, diaspora, mobilités, Takrūr, Takrūrī, Le Caire, saints, nécropole, Sahel, période mamelouke, Égypte médiévale

♦ ملخص

تاريخ غرب إفريقيا المرتبط بالقرافة: مسلمو تکرور والجبانة الكبرى بالقاهرة (ق ٤-٩ هـ/١٠-١٥ م) في الشرق المملوكي، كان اسم تکرور يُطلق على القطاع الإسلامي في منطقة الساحل الإفريقي، الممتد من المحيط الأطلسي إلى بحيرة تشاد. فيمكن العثور على العديد من المسلمين من غرب إفريقيا الذين يحملون نسبة «التكروري» (جمع: تكارورة، تكارير، تكارنة) في السلطنة المملوكية. كان بعضهم مجرد عابرين في طريقهم إلى الحج إلى مكة، أو موجودين لأغراض تجارية أو طلبًا للعلم بهدف اتباع تعاليم أساتذة مشهورين في مؤسسات مملوكية مشهورة. وكان هؤلاء يعودون بعد عدة أشهر أو سنوات إلى منطقة الساحل. غير أن عددًا كبيرًا منهم قد استقرّ نهائيًا في مصر وسوريا وشبه الجزيرة العربية. كانت مدينة القاهرة هي المركز الرئيس لهذه الحركة ولذلك التنقل. كما كانت القرافة من بين الأماكن التي استقرّ فيها مسلمو تکرور. يتبع هذا المقال أول تاريخ لغرب إفريقيا المرتبط بالقرافة.

كلمات مفتاحية: غرب إفريقيا، القرافة، جاليات، تنقل، تکرور، تکروري، القاهرة، أولياء، جبانة، منطقة الساحل الإفريقي، العصر المملوكي، مصر في العصور الوسطى

I. Introduction: Requiem for the Greater Qarāfa

In the 830s/1430s, under the reign of the sultan al-Ašraf Barsbāy (r. 825–841/1422–1438), the Sheikh Mubārak Abū ‘Alī al-Takrūrī, a former black slave, had grown too weak to continue working as a dough-kneader for several bakeries (*afrān*), notably the famous one of Mu‘allim Muḥammad al-Maḥallī the miller (*al-taḥḥān*), located at Bāb al-Lūq. Feeling his last days coming, he settled in the Greater Qarāfa. The wondrous Ğāmi‘ al-Awliyā’ (“Great Mosque of the Saints”, formerly known as Ğāmi‘ al-Qarāfa), built in the image of the great mosque of al-Azhar, was once the beating heart of the Greater Qarāfa.¹ However, when Mubārak arrived, it was in ruins, and the sheikh found a high and large hill of rubble (*kūm*) at its south. He decided then to level the debris, one bit at a time, re-employing the material to erect tombs. He spent a long time there, wandering everywhere, searching for reusable fragments. Each time he found a slab of marble, he would put it on one of the tombs he had built. Close to Mubārak’s place of work, north of the great mystic mausoleum of al-Udfuwī, was an elevated dome under which laid two saints, Fāṭima the Senior and Fāṭima the Minor, and a group of *šurafā’*.² Pillagers (*mufsidūn*) had lingered in that place. Mubārak took the slab of marble that was still lying on one of the two tombs and put it on a tomb he had constructed, calling it “tomb of Fāṭima the Minor”. Later, he wrote on stones names of his own invention and placed them on the tombs he had built. The first name he had imagined was “Šukrān”. He desired to cover this specific tomb with a piece of fabric (*sitr*). It was arranged for him and brought from the Bīmāristān al-Manšūrī in Cairo to the Qarāfa. This transfer was a well-attended event.³

This anecdote is the first part of an account given by Nūr al-Dīn al-Saḥāwī (d. after 888/1484), a “sheikh of the visit” (i.e. “guide for pilgrims”). It takes us to the Greater Qarāfa in the middle of the 9th/15th century, when it was already damaged beyond repair, despite the hard work of Mubārak. The great necropolis had always been the home of ruins. However, the illustration of the *Description de l’Égypte* (1809–1822) shows the result of a process that actually started in the last decades of the 8th/14th century and accelerated at the beginning of the 9th/15th century (fig. 1). Much of greater Cairo had fallen into ruin, and if the sultans and the elites had rebuilt their capital by the middle of the 9th/15th century, it was not the case for the Greater Qarāfa.⁴

1. On this specific mosque, see Bloom 1987. See also *infra*.

2. A little south of the Ṭabāṭabā; see fig. 3.

3. Al-Saḥāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, pp. 180–181; Ohtoshi 2006a, p. 94.

4. On the ruination and rebuilding of Cairo between 750/1350 and 850/1450, see Loiseau 2010.



Fig. 1. The Qarāfa in the *Description de l'Égypte* (1809).

The immense urban history of Cairo written by al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār bi-dīkr al-ḥiṭaṭ wa-l-ātār*, initially composed between 818/1415 and 827/1424, and completed until 844/1440, give an overview of the Qarāfa, and especially of the Greater Qarāfa before its demise, when it was a very lively city inside the city.⁵ Al-Maqrīzī lists built-up neighbourhoods, wells, markets, cisterns (*ṣahārīḡ*), a bakery (*furn*), villas (*quṣūr*), public fountains (*sabīl*), a gazebo (*manẓara*), and palaces of agreement or kiosks (*ḡawāsiq*). But foremost, the Qarāfa was known as a highly religious and sacred place. Therefore, it is no wonder such places are the most numerous in the *Ḥiṭaṭ*: roofless oratories (*muṣalliyāt*) and *maḥārib*, state-sponsored Sufi convents (*ḥawāniq*) or autonomous ones (*ribāṭāt*, *zawāyā*), Friday mosques (*ḡawāmi'*) and colleges (*madāris*).⁶ The number of mosques (*masāḡid*) must have been particularly impressive, as al-Maqrīzī states, after having put forward thirty-three of them: "It is said that twelve thousand mosques stood at the Greater Qarāfa."⁷ By phrasing it this way (*yuqāl innahu*, "it is said"), al-Maqrīzī clearly hints that the affirmation had to be taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, the need for such a great number of places of worship means that a lot of people lived in the Qarāfa among the tombs, mausolea, shrines, and sanctuaries.

5. This work and its historiographic trajectory are presented in Loiseau 2010, pp. 19–27.

6. The places pertaining to the Qarāfa are scattered throughout the *Ḥiṭaṭ*. See the volume of index from Sayyid Fu'ād's edition: al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, *al-kaṣāfāt al-taḥlīliyya*.

7. Al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV, p. 874.

The history of the medieval Qarāfa has been an interest of academic studies from the early 1900s. Many scholars, among whom historians Yūsuf Rāgib, Tetsuya Ohtoshi and Christopher Taylor, have reconstructed the main sequences of its history.⁸ The Qarāfa was as old as Fustāṭ, the first Muslim settlement in Egypt. The cemeteries first developed east of Fustāṭ and alongside the foot and the slopes of the sacred mountain of the Muqaṭṭam. It is possible to single out three particular moments of urbanisation in the medieval history of the Qarāfa. The necropolis was already inhabited and visited from the Tulunid period (254–292/868–905) to the Ikhshidid period (323–358/935–969).⁹ Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn (r. 254–270/868–884) notably built a monumental aqueduct that ran from the lake (*birka*) al-Ḥabash to ‘Ayn al-Šira, crossing the heart of the Greater Qarāfa (fig. 2).¹⁰ The Fatimid period was the first significant moment in the urban development of the Qarāfa. In 366/976, Durzān, the caliph al-Mu‘izz’s concubine, built with her daughter Sitt al-Mulk the complex of the Ġāmi‘ al-Qarāfa, a sumptuous edifice that reflected the philanthropic activities of powerful women at the time in the Qarāfa. Building within the walled city of Cairo was the prerogative of men of the court.¹¹ A second symbolic event takes place during the Ayyubid period (567–648/1171–1250). In 572/1176, Saladin started the construction of well-endowed madrasa near the tomb of al-Šāfi‘ī (d. 204/820), founder of the Šāfi‘ī *madhhab* (legal school), and the sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil (r. 615–635/1218–1238) erected an enormous mausoleum over his tomb in 608/1211.¹² Since the foundation of al-Qāhira (358/969), the city had slowly outgrown its walls. Starting from the Ayyubids, the Qarāfa’s centre of gravity gradually shifted toward what came to be known as the Lesser Qarāfa (fig. 2), with al-Šāfi‘ī’s mausoleum at its centre, attracting most of the burials of the new popular saints and the religious or political elite.

Finally, the urban zenith of the Qarāfa was reached under the long reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (r. 693–694/1293–1295, 698–708/1299–1309, 709–741/1310–1341). The architectural work occurred mainly in the Lesser Qarāfa, but the necropolis as a whole drew ever more people, from the *amīr*-s to the common crowds, for visits or to settle there.¹³ At that time, the Qarāfa exerted a powerful attraction on people for ambivalent reasons: it was a place where one could escape the constraints of society, where women could frequent men, where all kind of social behaviours could be found, but at the same time it was a holy place, a refuge for indigents and those fallen from grace.¹⁴ In his *Ḥiṭaṭ*, al-Maqrīzī offered snippets of poetry to reflect this reality:

8. Guest 1926; Massignon 1958; Rāgib 1972; 1973; 1974; Ohtoshi 1993; 2006a; 2006b; Taylor 1999; el-Kadi, Bonnamy 2001; al-Ibrashy 2006.

9. Massignon 1958, pp. 55–56; Ohtoshi 2006a, p. 87.

10. Taylor 1999, p. 18.

11. Bloom 1987, pp. 16–17.

12. Taylor 1999, pp. 20, 27; Ohtoshi 2006a, p. 88.

13. Ohtoshi 2006a, pp. 89–90; al-Ibrashy 2013, p. 149.

14. Ohtoshi 2006a, pp. 95–96.

The Qarāfa gathers two opposites, * the here below and the thereafter. It is the most excellent abode.
The outcast mingles with the illustrious in friendship. * The ascetic flies around its tombs.
How many nights did we spend in it while our companion of pleasure * sang, nearly melting stone
away.

* * *

I was filled with wonder at the case of the Qarāfa! Here it was * with the sorrow of its dead and
yet our heart brightened with the joy of a child.

I found it a haven for all the lovers. * The besotted were settling there, the heart was becoming
infatuated with it.¹⁵

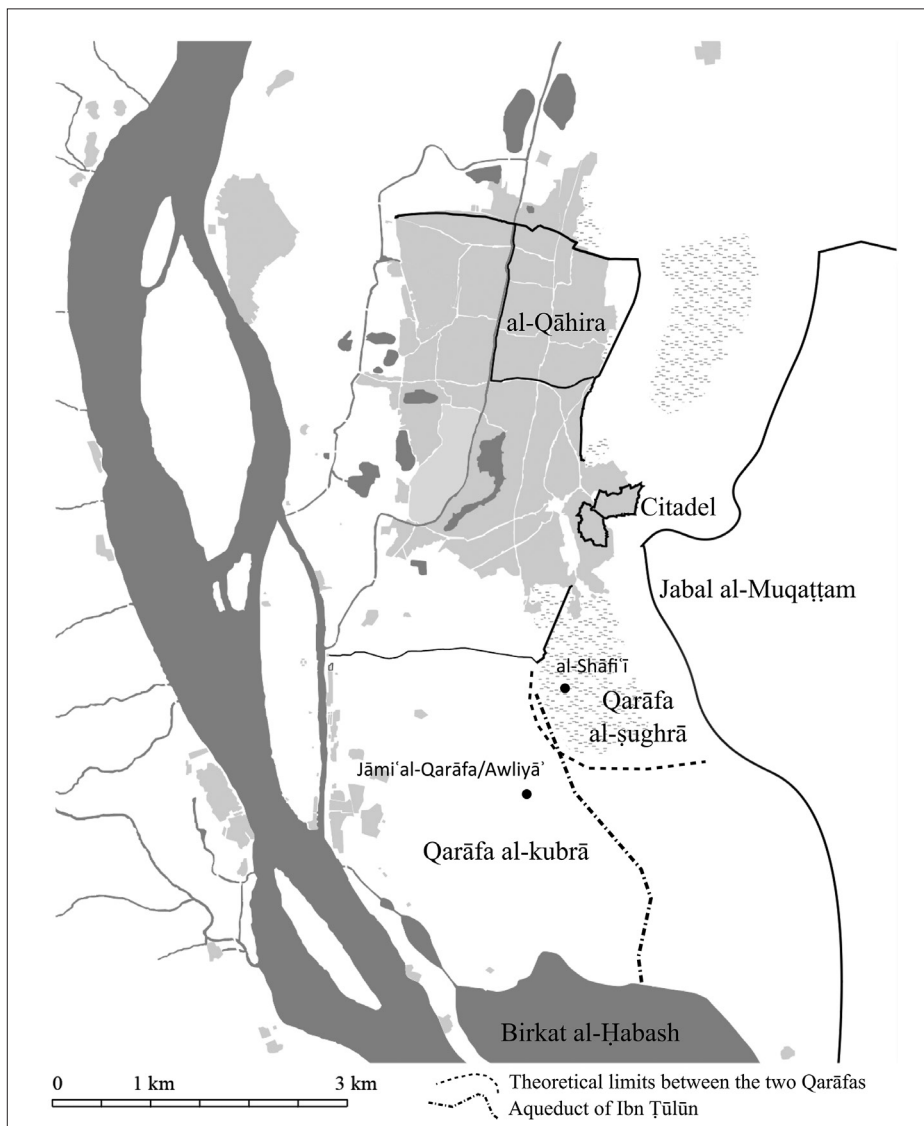


Fig. 2. General map of the Qarāfa in Cairene context (map: H. Collet; basemap: J. Loiseau 2010 ©).

15. Al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭat*, IV, pp. 849–850.

2. Al-Takrūrī, a new *nisba* for Islam

Mubārak bore the name of “al-Takrūrī”. The *nisba* (name of origin) “al-Takrūrī” (pl. al-Takārīr, al-Takārura, al-Takārna) appeared toward the mid-7th/13th century in the Middle East. Al-Takrūrī means “from al-Takrūr”. In 1969, ‘Umar al-Naqar was among the firsts to take an interest in that name in the Egyptian context in his PhD dissertation “West Africa and the Muslim Pilgrimage: An Historical Study with Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century” and in an article published in the *Journal of African History*, “Takrūr: The History of a Name”. In 1986, Nehemia Levtzion realised a similar study entitled “Mamluk Egypt and Takrūr (West Africa)”.

In the Arabic sources of the Muslim West, Takrūr was a kingdom that was first described by the Andalusī geographer al-Bakrī in his *Masālik* in 460/1068. It was probably located in the valley of the Senegal River, in the Bilād al-Sūdān (“the Land of the Blacks”) of the medieval Arabic geography. Warġābī b. Rabīs (d. 432/1040–1041), one of its kings, al-Bakrī says, was the first to convert to Islam and support its diffusion in the kingdom.¹⁶ Takrūr remained independent until its conquest by the sultanate of Mālī around the mid-7th/13th century. ‘U. al-Naqar and N. Levtzion stated that the name Takrūr appears first in the oriental Arabic sources in Ibn Ḥallikān’s *Wafayāt*, written between 654/1256 and 672/1274, to denote a land and a people west to Kanem.¹⁷ Afterward, the use of “al-Takrūrī” to refer to Sahelian Muslims became widespread, and the Islamised part of the Sahelian strip was renamed “Bilād al-Takrūr” (“the Land of Takrūr”) to single it out from the broader non-monotheist Bilād al-Sūdān. However, the *nisba* “al-Takrūrī” had likely spread earlier. The earliest mention I was able to find in the chronicles is in the *Tārīḥ Irbil* of al-Mustawfī (d. 637/1239) who quotes a certain Mas‘ūd b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Takrūrī as one of his informers.¹⁸

It is generally admitted that the name “al-Takrūrī” came to define West African Muslims as a whole through the pilgrimage of Muslims coming from the kingdom of Takrūr. The kingdom is purportedly one of the first whose dynasty adopted Islam officially in the region. Then, people in Mecca, Medina, and later Cairo developed the habit of calling “Takrūrī” any black Muslim coming from the Bilād al-Sūdān. If the Kanem was first separated from the Takrūr, all the Sahelian strip, including the Chad Lake region, was gradually incorporated in the geographical acceptance of the term. It poses a problem as medieval geographers and historians had a limited geographical knowledge on the Sahel. To their eyes, a single king could rule the entire region. Therefore, they call “king of the Takrūr” whoever appears to be the hegemonic ruler of the moment, sometimes blurring our ability to tell which part of the Sahel this title refers to. In the middle of the 8th/14th century for example, there is no doubt it is the sultan of Mālī. The same goes for the period after the middle of the 9th/15th century, when the expression “king of the Takrūr” designates the sultan of Borno. But for the first half of the

16. Al-Naqar 1969, p. 367; Levtzion 1986, p. 183.

17. Al-Naqar 1969, p. 369; Levtzion 1986, p. 183.

18. Al-Mustawfī, *Tārīḥ Irbil*, I, pp. 292–293.

9th/15th century, when the power of Mālī waned and Borno was on the rise, it is trickier to tell. In general, the use of the *nisba* “al-Takrūrī” is a curse and a blessing at the same time. It allows us to better find Sahelian Muslims in the documents, but most of the time erase all information on their origin and personal history.

As ‘U. al-Naqar’s, N. Levtzion’s and many others’ works indicate, the history of Sahelian Muslims in Egypt has been conducted in the remit of two thematics tied to travelling. First, the journey for the pilgrimage to Mecca of which the sojourn to Cairo was one of the highlights. Second, the journey in the pursuit of science (*ṭalab al-‘ilm*).¹⁹ Cairo had indeed become, after the Sunni restoration of the Ayyubids, the dominant centre of Islamic scholarship.²⁰ The Egyptian capital was also the meeting point of western and eastern mystic ways of Islam.²¹ Muslims thirsty for any kind of Islamic experience could then quench their desire with normative and spiritual initiations or both. This history of mobilities between the Sahel and Egypt seems to have overshadowed another vivid historical reality. West African Muslims had also settled in Egypt, the Mamluk domain, and above all, Cairo. They were part of the social landscape, could be found in any level of society. Cairo is obviously the place we find them in greater number. Yet, there is a particular place that was closely associated to Takrūrī Muslims during the last three centuries of the medieval period: the necropolis of the Qarāfa. The subject is not entirely new, as they appear in passing in several historical studies on Cairo or the Qarāfa.²² It is now time to make them the centre of attention.

3. The “books of the visit”, *lieux de mémoire* of the medieval Qarāfa

Holy men of Islam dwelled early in the Qarāfa. Sufism and more broadly mystical Islam gained a prominent status in the Egyptian society under the Ayyubids and the Mamluks, and were favoured by the court.²³ Yet, living or dead, saints residing in the Qarāfa were visited long before these eras. The necropolis was already part of the Egyptians’ spiritual daily life under the Fatimids and previously.²⁴ Scholars (*‘ulamā’, fuqahā’*) and mystics (*ṣūfiyya, fuqarā’*) respectively animated the normative and spiritual religious life, but the two worlds were deeply intermingled and connected.²⁵

19. I am obviously talking of free persons, who are the focus of this study. It goes without saying that this history of mobility has also been dominated by the subject of slavery, through what is called the “trans-Saharan slave trade” or “the oriental slave trade”.

20. See for example Sartain 1971.

21. Geoffroy 1995, pp. 169–212.

22. See for example Garcin 1976 (ed. 2005), pp. 426–429, who gives an intense and rapid overview of the Takrūrī in medieval Egypt.

23. Geoffroy 1995, pp. 101–107.

24. Bloom 1987, p. 14.

25. On the scholars who were Sufis and vice versa in Egypt and Syria, see Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*; Geoffroy 1995, pp. 126–127. For examples in Tunisia, Morocco, and the Saharan West, see respectively Amri 2013; Cornell 1998; Stewart, Stewart 1973. On the staging of an opposition between the two statuses for performative/personal purposes, see Cecere 2013.

Saints could come from any level of society and reveal their sainthood in many forms. From the end of the 6th/12th century, Sufi orders (*ṭarīqa*, pl. *ṭuruq*) became the dominant institution through which mystical Islam was expressed. Yet, the term “Sufi” itself was not widespread at the time to designate a mystic.²⁶ In general, the fact that many individuals could experience and cumulate a variety of mystical experiences should prevent us to confine them in predetermined categories or institutions such as Sufi orders. A rich vocabulary existed for mystical attributes, reflecting the richness of the paths toward hidden realities and knowledge: the renunciant (*zāhid*), the devout (*‘ābid*), the blame-seeker (*malāmātī*), the one who used science for spiritual realisations (*al-‘ālim al-‘āmil*), the illiterate sheikh inspired by God (*ṣayḥ ummī*), the master of the states (*rabb al-aḥwāl*), the one whose mind had been raptured by God (*mağdūb*, pl. *mağāḏīb*), etc.²⁷ *Mağāḏīb* particularly flourished under the Mamluk period. Their minds being most of the time coalesced in the invisible (*al-ğayb*), they were rarely aware of their surroundings, but their eccentric behaviour was tolerated.²⁸

Saints could be distinguished with one or several of these mystical attributes. In his study on the holy men at the Qarāfa, C. Taylor gave an extensive and lengthy repository of examples about the feats, abilities, social and political functions of the saints.²⁹ Saints were particularly sought for regarding their capacity to answer prayers and demands through intercession with the divine.³⁰ The Qarāfa and its saints offered a large choice for all kind of acts of devotion with performative intents and was especially important in time of crisis for its open space and its spiritual protection, as it was the case for instance after the great earthquake of 702/1303 or in case of epidemics.³¹

Sainthood was a vivid reality in social life. The Ayyubid and Mamluk periods produced many new saints who became very popular and overshadowed older ones. Saints could also disappear from memory and history, with the ruining of their mausolea for example, as we will see in the case of many great medieval saints of the Qarāfa. Cairo and its surroundings did not have the monopoly on sainthood. Aḥmad al-Badawī (d. 675/1276), originally from Morocco, settled in Ṭanṭā in the Delta and has remained to this day the most popular saint in Egypt.³² Alexandria or Upper Egypt also saw a blooming of saints.³³

The pious visits to the tombs are called *ziyārāt* (sing. *ziyāra*). They were gradually organised by “sheikhs of the visit” (*mašāyih al-ziyāra*) who guided groups in the necropolis alongside autonomous visits. They were especially taking care of institutionalised visits happening at set times and dates, such as the Friday visits. These sheikhs instructed the appropriate

26. For instance, in the 7th/13th century, Ṣafī al-Dīn b. Zāfir doesn’t call Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Šāḏilī “Sufis” even though they are considered among the greatest men of the history of Sufism. See Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*, p. 115.

27. Geoffroy 1995, pp. 231–232, 240, 273. *Sūfi* and *faqīr* had become synonyms during the Mamluk period.

28. Geoffroy 1995, p. 252.

29. Taylor 1999, pp. 80–167.

30. Ohtoshi 1993.

31. Ohtoshi 2006a, pp. 96–97.

32. Geoffroy 1995, pp. 169–170; Mayeur-Jaouen 2019.

33. Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*; Geoffroy 1995.

behaviour during the tour in general and more specifically before tombs that required certain rituals (e.g. handshaking, taking out clothes) or orientated the visitors (*zuwwār*) to the saints fitting their needs (e.g. the settling of one's debt or good fortune for the journey of the hajj).³⁴ They were the living memory of the Qarāfa, whose topography was always evolving, keeping alive the stories of the people buried there. They must have been conscious of their unique position as they started to write "books of the visit" (*kutub al-ziyāra*), genuine guide books detailing the circuits of visits in the Qarāfa, its topography, identifying the names of the most famous tombs and giving narratives on the characters buried underneath. Four of these "books" from the medieval period are still extant.

The first, from Muwaffaq b. 'Uṭmān (d. 615/1218), is known as *Muršid al-zuwwār ilā qubūr al-abrār* or *al-Durr al-munazzam fī ziyārat al-ġabal al-Muqaṭṭam*.³⁵ Ibn 'Uṭmān set a kind of standard and was quoted by successive sheikhs of the visit. Nevertheless, he focuses mostly on the Muqaṭṭam district and major figures buried in the Qarāfa. It is the less detailed of the four. The second, *Miṣbāḥ al-dayāġi wa-ġawṭ al-rāġi wa-kahf al-lāġi*, is from Muḥammad b. al-Nāsiḥ (d. after 699/1299–1300). It is much more detailed than the *Muršid* and was highly quoted thereafter.³⁶ The third, from Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Zayyāt (d. 814/1412), *al-Kawākib al-sayyāra fī tartīb al-ziyāra fī-l-Qarāfatayn al-kubrā wa-l-suġrā*, is the most famous of the four. It describes over one thousand and nine hundred entombed persons, and is the most prolific for the Qarāfa. Finally, we find the *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb wa-buġiyyat al-ṭullāb fī al-ḥiṭaṭ wa-al-mazārāt wa-al-tarāġim wa-al-biqā' al-mubārakāt*, completed in 889/February 1484 by Nūr al-Dīn al-Saḥāwī.³⁷ It is less original as he drew extensively from Ibn al-Zayyāt but provides nevertheless some updates on the tombs. Furthermore, he also describes other cemeteries, such as the necropolis of the Desert (al-Šaḥrā') favoured by the Circassian Mamluk sultans.³⁸

The study of these books has a long academic tradition.³⁹ In 1958, Louis Massignon published a comprehensive study on the Lesser Qarāfa, "La cité des morts au Caire (Qarāfa, Darb al-Ahmar)", in which he gave a much incarnated and spiritual narrative on the visits partly based on ongoing practices at his time. L. Massignon notably dwells on the "Seven Saints", a particular tour in the Qarāfa that is stated to have started under the reign of the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil. Called the "visit of the Seven", it was a visitor's favourite and was put forward by the "books of the visit". In his *Ḥiṭaṭ*, al-Maqrizī gave two alternative lists for the Seven that had emerged at his time.⁴⁰ Of all the scholarly works on the Qarāfa, except L. Massignon's article, very few have attempted to reconstruct maps of the Qarāfa, and if so, they focused mostly on the

34. Al-Ibrashy 2006, p. 271.

35. Ohtoshi 2006b; al-Ibrashy 2006, pp. 271–272.

36. Tetsuya Ohtoshi (2006b, p. 305) tells us: "The total number of known entombed persons described sharply rises to nearly 1193", as opposed to the *Muršid* that described only over four hundred buried individuals.

37. Ohtoshi 2006b, p. 302.

38. Al-Ibrashy 2006, p. 278.

39. See the works listed *supra*, n. 8.

40. Al-Maqrizī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV, pp. 907–908.

Lesser Qarāfa, for the Greater Qarāfa has almost completely disappeared from present Cairene landscape. The most detailed effort for mapping the medieval Qarāfa has been offered by May al-Ibrashy based on Ibn al-Zayyāt's *Kawākib* that carve the necropolis in many districts and sub-districts, not always easy to follow but nonetheless allowing to situate lost mausolea and tombs.⁴¹

Yet, to my knowledge, no maps have tried to situate the three lists of the Seven. Before turning to the subject of West African Muslims, it is important to visualise them in the Qarāfa, as their tombs structured the visits and the necropolis. The first list gives (fig. 3):

1. Abū al-Ḥasan b. Ṣā'ig al-Dīnawarī (d. 331/943);
2. 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Baḡdādī (d. 335/946–947);
3. Ismā'il al-Muzanī (or al-Muznī; d. 264/877–878);
4. Bakkār b. Qutayba (d. 270/883–884);
5. al-Mufaḍḍāl b. Faḍāla (d. 181/866);
6. Abū Bakr 'Abd al-Malik al-Qumanī (or al-Qimnī; d. 432/1041);
7. Dū-l-Nūn al-Misrī (d. 245/859–860).⁴²

As we can see, this list contains old saints buried in the Qarāfa who were visited long before the institutionalisation of the visits. To give an order of the tombs' density in the "books of the visit", let's consider the case of al-Dīnawarī and al-Baḡdādī, whose tombs are no longer extant. Their mausolea were located between the Lu'lu'a mosque and the mausoleum of the mystic poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Between these two extant constructions, Ibn al-Nāsiḥ's *Miṣbāḥ* gives the name of forty-two buried individual and informs on the presence of many other tombs. Yet, even if the pages belie us to think we have walked some distance in company of the sheikh, only 170 m separate the two extant monuments as the crow flies.

The first alternative list given by al-Maqrīzī states:

1. Ṣīla b. Mu'ammal (d. 429/1038);
2. Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥuwarāzmī (d. 401/1011);
3. Sālim al-'Afif (already present in the *Muršid*);
4. Abū al-Faḍl b. al-Ḡawharī (d. 480/1088);
5. Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Bazzāz (already present in the *Muršid*);
6. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Ṭayr (Ṭabb) al-Warḥṣ (in the state of identifiable ruins at the time of Ibn al-Zayyāt);
7. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Andalusī al-Kaḥḥāl (already present in the *Muršid*).⁴³

41. Al-Ibrashy 2006, pp. 296–297.

42. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib*, p. 580.

43. Al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/2, p. 908.

As for the third list, some names are familiar:

1. ‘Uqba b. ‘Āmir al-Ġuhanī (d. 58/678, companion);
2. al-Šāfi‘ī (d. 204/820);
3. Abū Bakr al-Zaqqāq (4th/10th c.);
4. Ismā‘īl al-Muzanī (d. 264/877–878);
5. Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad al-Ḥarrār (d. around 620/1223);
6. al-Faqīh b. Diḥya al-Kalbī (d. 632/1235);
7. Ibn Fāris al-Laḥmī (appears in the *Kawākib*).

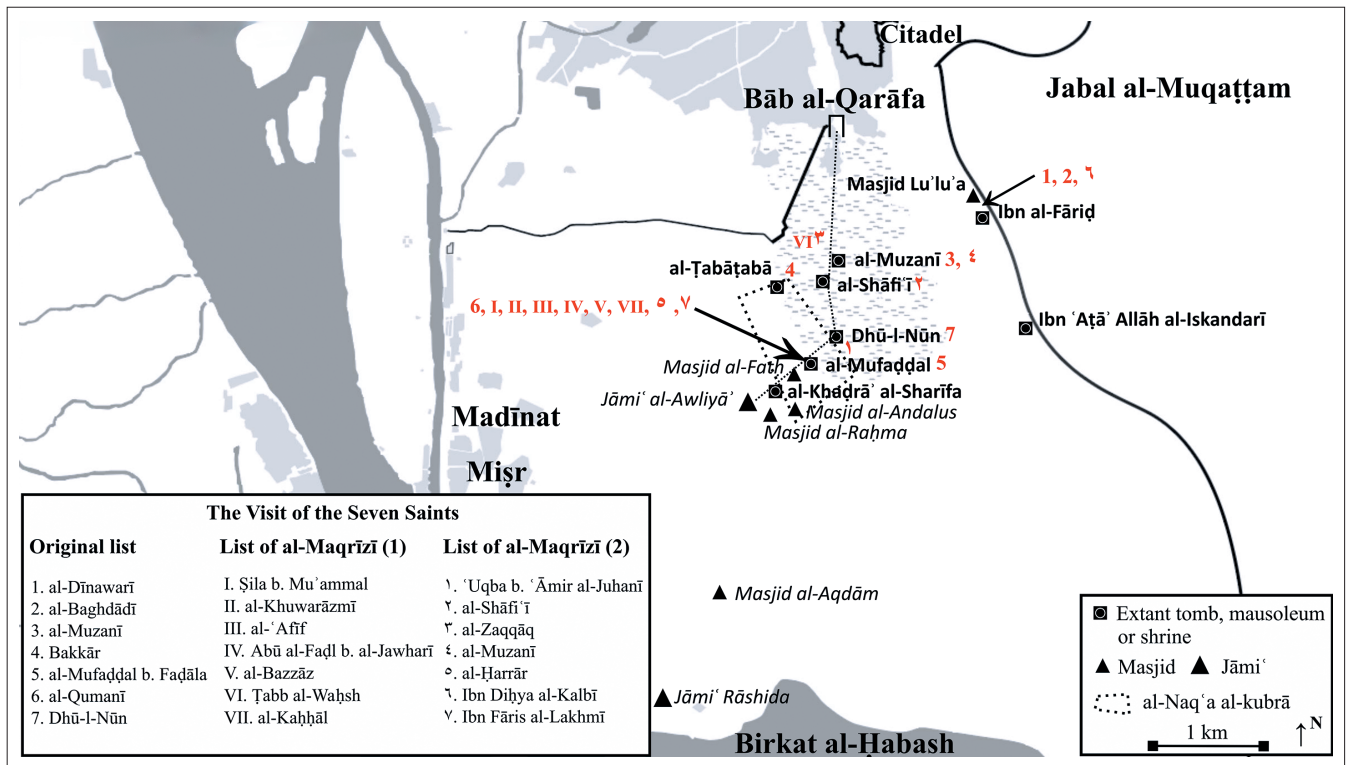


Fig. 3. The visit of the “Seven” (map: H. Collet; basemap: J. Loiseau 2010 ©).

As we can see on Figure 3, most of the saints listed lied around al-Mufaḍḍāl, at the junction between the Lesser and Greater Qarāfa. The area, called al-Naq‘a al-Kubrā, was considered the most sacred of the necropolis.

4. Early presence of Taktūrī Muslims in Cairo: Myth-coated narratives

The mentions of the oldest Taktūrī Muslims in Egypt appear in the literature of the “books of the visit” with some confusion. A great saint, Abū Muḥammad Yūsuf b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Taktūrī, lived at the time of the first Cairene Fatimid caliph.⁴⁴ Ibn al-Nāsīḥ gives a fair account of his

44. Al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh (r. 341–365/953–975), fourth Fatimid caliph, arrived in Cairo in ramaḍān 362/July 972, but the city was founded after the conquest of Egypt in 358/969.

life exposing mostly his miracles (*karāmāt*), the most famous of which tells of a time he stopped the wind, the Nile flow, and walked on water to retrieve a child abducted from his mother by Sudanic bandits who had escaped by boat. Another miracle tells us that one day, the caliph had sent men to seize gallnuts from him. Yet, when the gallnuts arrived to him, the caliph found that they had turned to stone. As soon as he gave them back to the saint, they turned back to their normal state.⁴⁵ Abū Muḥammad lived in Būlāq, on the west bank of the Nile. The great mosque there took his name, and this district took the name of “Būlāq al-Takrūrī” (or “al-Takrūr”).⁴⁶ Further in his book, Ibn al-Nāsiḥ speaks of an Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Takrūrī but fleetingly comments: “It is said that he is the Takrūrī mentioned before.”⁴⁷ The problem is that this time, this Takrūrī is located in the Qarāfa, not in Būlāq. Ibn al-Nāsiḥ might have conveyed hearsays to mask the fact that he had no information on the latter saint or might have repeated a common confusion. In his *Kawākib*, Ibn al-Zayyāt provides more information on Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad:

Ibn Ḡābār passed away in 973. [...] On the west side, at the tip of Ibn Ḡābār[’s tomb, lies] the Sheikh Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Takrūrī al-Mālikī, companion of Ibn Ḡābār. He discoursed on the *uṣūl al-fiqh* of the Maliki and Shafiite school. It is said he is the Takrūrī mentioned before in Būlāq. Rather, it is said that he was his sheikh. He was an eloquent *faqīh* and engaged in numerous sciences. He used to say: “The wealth our bodies seed is for horses.” The *amīr* of Egypt [*Kāfūr al-Iḥṣīdī*] had visited him and asked prayers of him. His eyes had been touched [by a disease]. He [*Muḥammad al-Takrūrī*] implored God so He would give him back his eye, and his eye returned as it was before. Kāfūr had a hundred dinars sent to him. It appeared to the envoy that he [*Muḥammad al-Takrūrī*] was in a state of madness [*al-ḡunūn*]. He then returned to Kāfūr and said: “You sent me to a madman [*maḡnūn*].” Kāfūr answered to him: “He is not mad. He does his religious deeds at night and fast in silence during the day [*yaqūm al-layl wa-yaṣūm al-nahār*].” The man [*the envoy*] resolved to return there at night and to bring to him a company of pious men [*ḡamā‘a min al-ṣāliḥīn*]. They came to Ibn Ḡābār and asked [to see] al-Takrūrī. “But we did not find him and we stepped outside. That is when [we] saw a man praying, looked at him [from a distance], and he was al-Takrūrī! We saw him and followed him until he reached a huge door [*darb*], which he found closed. He said: ‘Is it my habit with you to close the door to my nose?’ Then the door opened up and he went out [through it]. We went through behind him until we reached a cemetery. Then, he started to pray and left afterwards. Then, a wild animal [*waḥṣ*] arrived and rolled on the floor where he had prayed.”⁴⁸

45. Taylor 1999, p. 153.

46. The current neighbourhood of Būlāq al-Dakrūr is located further west than its medieval homonym.

47. Ibn al-Nāsiḥ, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 139.

48. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib*, p. 237.

Ibn al-Zayyāt then proceed to present the Takrūrī from Būlāq, making a clear distinction between Abū Muḥammad Yūsuf al-Takrūrī and Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Takrūrī. In the *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, Nūr al-Dīn al-Saḥāwī reproduces faithfully Ibn al-Zayyāt’s account.⁴⁹

It was very common for companions to decide to be buried next to each other. This phenomenon produced a concentration of divine blessing (*baraka*) that in turn encouraged others to be buried next to such clusters of saints. Ibn Ġābār, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Takrūrī’s neighbour, is celebrated as a great saint in the “books of the visit”. He was a figure of *al-‘ālim al-ṣūfī* as he is presented as one of the greatest scholars (*akābir al-‘ulamā’*) and as one of the greatest Sufi sheikhs (*kibār mašāyih al-ṣūfiyya*). He had come to Egypt as a child with his father under the reign of Kāfūr al-Iḥšīdī, governor of the country (*ḥākim*) from 334/946 to 355/966 and then its sovereign ruler until his death in 357/968 under the eunuch title of *ustād*. In the text above, the word “*amīr*” for Kāfūr, to be taken in the Mamluk context, may suggest that Muḥammad al-Takrūrī’s interaction with him happened between 355/966 and 357/968. Ibn Ġābār was close with Kāfūr and his entourage, with whom he had a relation of friendship. First a fine scholar, *‘ālim* and *faqīh*, he discovered Sufism and established his *zāwiya* in the Qarāfa where he had a circle (*ḥalqa*) of disciples. Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Takrūrī was likely part of his circle. Toward the end of his life, he removed himself from society and retreated in the mountain of the Muqaṭṭam where he died.⁵⁰ Like his West African companion, Ibn Ġābār was revered as a saint before his passing.

Muḥammad al-Takrūrī was buried next to another great saint, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Fuqā‘ī, a close companion of Ibn Ṣā’ig al-Dīnawarī (d. 331/943), one of the original Seven and the great mystic of his time. Al-Dīnawarī was considered the supreme Pole (*al-quṭb al-ḡawṭ*, i.e. the highest in the hierarchy of the saints) of his time and a companion of Ḥaḍīr (or Ḥiḍr), the undying and invisible patron of the Sufis who would appear only to a chosen and worthy few to unveil for them the hidden knowledge.⁵¹ This leads us to a second early place associated to West African Muslims, the Cave of the Blacks (Kahf al-Sūdān). According to the *Muršid*, the place was very famous. At the time of Ibn ‘Uṭmān (before 615/1218), everybody had already forgotten when it had become associated to mystics, but everyone agreed it was first occupied by a group of Muslim Sūdān, hence the name, who had dug it in the mountain and made it their place of worship.⁵² Over time, the cave was built-up and overlaid with several historical strata until the contemporaneous period.⁵³ The cave was favoured by the mystics for their spiritual retreat (*ḥalwa*) or their esoteric teaching. It was precisely the case of al-Dīnawarī and his disciple al-Fuqā‘ī, the latter even supervising the construction of a *mīhrāb* in the cave.⁵⁴ The *kutub al-ziyāra* tell of a famous anecdote when one day the Devil himself tried to tempt

49. Al-Saḥāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, p. 257.

50. Ibn al-Nāsīḥ, *Mišbāḥ*, p. 138; Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib*, p. 236.

51. Geoffroy 1995, pp. 109, 341–343.

52. Ibn ‘Uṭmān, *Muršid*, p. 21. In his *Ḥiṭaṭ*, al-Maqrīzī reprises verbatim the text of *Muršid*, IV, p. 883.

53. Massignon 1958, pp. 65–66. It was listed as national heritage in 1940.

54. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib*, p. 48.

them in the cave.⁵⁵ Al-Fuqā'ī was foreseen by al-Dīnawarī as the one who would succeed him at the station of the *ḡawṭ*, and it came to pass. However, in “La cité des morts”, L. Massignon argues that Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Takrūrī had first succeeded, for a time, al-Dīnawarī at the mountain, before al-Fuqā'ī. Sadly, he does not provide any reference, and I was not able to find any evidence in the “books of the visit” or elsewhere that supports this claim. In any case, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad was a close companion of Ibn Ḡābār, known for his retreat at the mountain. It is likely that the Takrūrī saint also spent some time at the Kahf al-Sūdān, which had at least a dozen saints settled there at the time, and may have kept company with al-Fuqā'ī as their vicinity side by side in death suggests.⁵⁶

As we can see, the hagiographic dimension has taken over these narratives, where the life of the saints often serves as a cautionary tale for men in power. Offending a saint always backfires while seeking their company is ever profitable. Takrūrī Muslims appear in Egypt in the remit of mystical Islam. In a dynamic context of sainthood, standing out could undeniably promote oneself to the front row of society.

Regarding these two Takrūrī-s' place of origin, we are left with more questions than answers. Their accounts appear in Ibn al-Nāsiḥ's *Miṣbāḥ* and are absent from Ibn ‘Uṭmān's *Muršid* who gives far less occurrences than the other “books of the visit”. The Kahf al-Sūdān makes its apparition in the *Muršid*, at a time when the *nisba* “al-Takrūrī” had purportedly not replaced “al-Sūdānī” to refer to Sahelian Muslims in Egypt. Three centuries separate the lives of the Būlāqī and Qarāfi Takrūrī saints, and Ibn al-Nāsiḥ's work. Furthermore, the author of the *Miṣbāḥ* was writing at a time when the *nisba* “al-Takrūrī” was commonly used. One tomb was located in a part of the Qarāfa that later fell in ruins and has vanished. The other one is still extant but has been moved after 790/1388 to a new location to preserve it from the Nile floods. The mausoleum of the Būlāqī is currently located in the garden of the Museum of Agriculture that just reopened after having been closed several years for renovation. No medieval inscription has survived in the current mausoleum that was entirely rebuilt in 2022 and bear the name “Sīdī al-Dakrūrī”.⁵⁷ If we are to believe that they were indeed named “al-Takrūrī” (and not “al-Sūdānī”) as soon as the second half of the 4th/10th century, we have therefore to reconsider the conventional chronology of the Islamisation for the Takrūr.⁵⁸ The kingdom is first featured in the work of al-Bakrī (460/1068) who defends the idea that Islam spread thereinto thanks to one of its kings who died in 432/1040. It is possible that the Takrūr's society had a much earlier Muslim component that seized the opportunity of travelling the world their newly acquired faith had opened up to them. If we set back a century the beginnings of Islamisation

55. Ibn ‘Uṭmān, *Muršid*, p. 149; Taylor 1999, p. 92.

56. Ibn ‘Uṭmān, *Muršid*, p. 149.

57. The last one mentioned in the documentation dates from 715/1315. See Qāsim 1945 (ed. 2017), VI, p. 254. Current plaque in the mausoleum ties the Takrūrī saint to the Āl al-Bayt through the great Maḡribī mystic Abū Madyan (509–594/1115–1198). This phenomenon is common in Egypt regarding medieval West African saints whose origin has been completely forgotten and replaced with new narratives.

58. To my knowledge, the toponym “Takrūr” appears first in Arabic literature in the *Aḥbār al-zamān* of al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 346/957) as a land with no connection to Islam. See Cuoq (ed.) 1975 (ed. 1985), p. 62.

in the Taktūr, the *nisba* “al-Taktūrī” could have been indeed the first Muslim Sahelian name to reach Egypt. It would explain why it was chosen to name all Muslims from this part of the world when a much greater number of West African Muslims started to make the journey to Egypt at the beginning of the 7th/13th century.

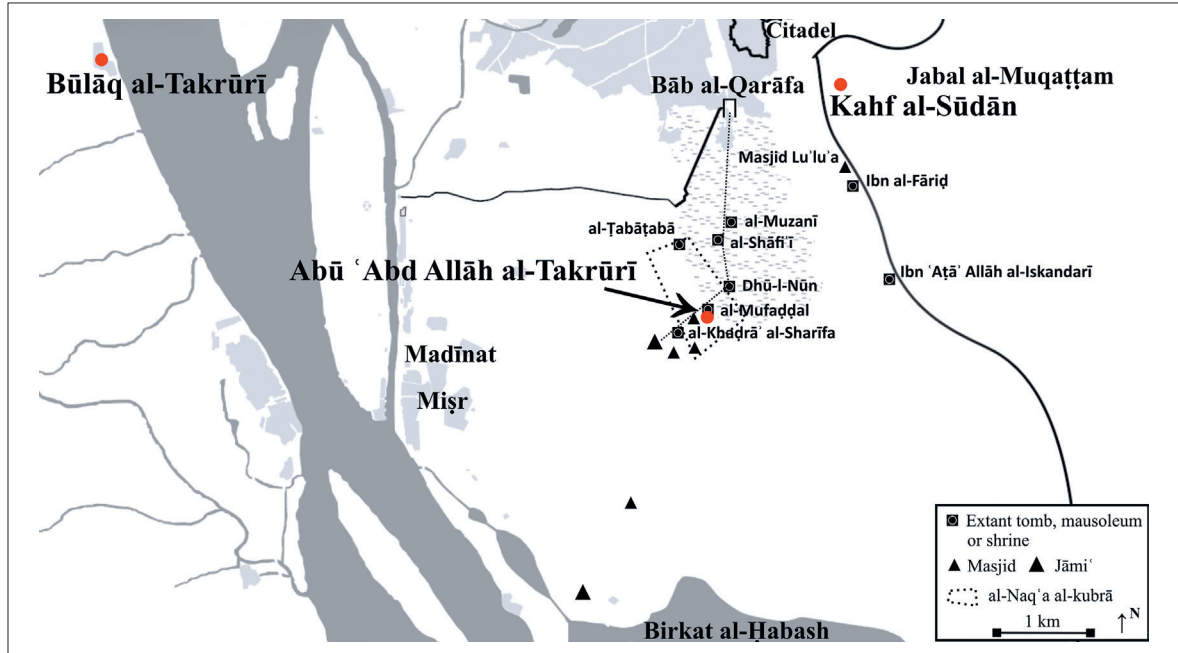


Fig. 4. The first Taktūrī presence ever recorded in Egypt (map: H. Collet; basemap: J. Loiseau 2010 ©).

5. Settling in the Qarāfa at the blessed time of the visits

As I said, Taktūrī Muslims are not featured in the *Muršid*. Almost a century later, Ibn al-Nāsiḥ gives a new picture of the Qarāfa, more detailed and attentive to what had changed. In the decades separating the two sheikhs of the visit, Taktūrī Muslims had settled in the Qarāfa, formed a community, and were even an active part of the Qarāfi society. In return, this prompted the sheikh of the visit to cast a light on a more ancient presence of members identified with their community. Outside the book of the visit, I have found only one text that mentions their presence in the 7th/13th century. The scene takes place in the surroundings of the Masğid al-Andalus, renowned mosque of the Greater Qarāfa erected in 526/1132 (fig. 3), which offered ample space for large gatherings.⁵⁹ Al-Maqrizī relates the story in his *Ḥiṭaṭ* upon broaching the history of the aforesaid mosque:

When the sultan al-Malik al-Zāhir Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Bunduqdārī died in Damascus, in muḥarram 676 [July 1277], and after his son al-Malik al-Sa‘id Barkah Ḥān was elevated to the sultanate, he organised a wake [‘azā’] for his father in the Masğid al-Andalus. Readers [qurrā’]

59. Al-Maqrizī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/2, p. 856.

and jurists [*fuqahā'*] gathered there. Kitchens were set, and a lot of dishes were prepared. It was divided between the *zawiya*-s. Huge tablecloth mats [*asmiṭa*] were laid in the tents that were set up around [the Masḡid] al-Andalus. People ate together, regardless of social categories, the readers accomplished the august reading of the Quran from one end to the other. This moment was recorded in the register of the most important affairs attested in Egypt. It happened in muḥarram 677, one year exactly after the passing of al-Malik al-Zāhir. Then, after that, he [*al-Malik al-Sa'id*] performed good deeds for: a collective [*muḡtama'*] of the madrasa al-Nāširiyya, the one next to the dome of al-Šāfi'i, a collective of the great mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn, a collective of the great mosque of al-Zāhir at Bayn al-Qaṣrayn, a collective of the madrasa al-Šāliḡiyya, a collective of Dār al-Ḥadiṡ al-Kāmila, a collective of the *ḡanqāḡ* al-Šāliḡiyya Sa'id al-Su'adā', and a collective of the great mosque of al-Ḥākim. Numerous dishes were arranged for these collectives. *He performed good deeds for the Takārura by saving them a table [ḡiwān] where they could eat.* He did the same for the readers, whose table was visited by many virtuous and righteous people.⁶⁰

As we can see, the wake was not an open event but rather received delegations of the main religious institutions of the time and selected groups. The fact that a table was arranged for the representatives of the Takārura suggests that they were already a well-established group in the Qarāfa in 677/1278 and were part of its society. Indeed, the Takrūrī Muslims were inscribed in the sacred geography of the Qarāfa beyond the sole case of Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḡammad al-Takrūrī. Ibn al-Nāsiḡ gives a first cluster in his *Miṡbāḡ*:

At his [*the maṡhad of al-Zil'i*] south, [lies] the Sheikh Abū Bakr al-Takrūrī, the Sheikh 'Umar al-Takrūrī, Raḡī al-Takrūrī, and a company of people [*ḡamā'a*] from the Takrūr, scholars [*'ulamā'*], virtuous men [*fuḡdalā'*], and renunciant ascetics [*zubbād*]. It is strange [*'aḡīb*] that historians [*ahl al-tārīḡ*] did not mention them! Ibn 'Abd al-Barr had already invited [historians] to mention them, their journey [*riḡla*] and their miracles [*karāmāt*]. They are people in the way of God [*ṡarīḡ ilā Allāḡ*], they were known for that, they are facing [*muḡābil*] Dū-l-Nūn.⁶¹

We can only regret, with Ibn al-Nāsiḡ, the fact that historians overlooked the stories of these saints who seemed to have gained a great reputation in their time. Nonetheless, the mention of the famous traditionist and historian Ibn 'Abd al-Barr gives us a *terminus ante quem*. The prolific Andalūsī scholar died in 463/1071.⁶² Therefore, those three saints and their *ḡamā'a* could have been part of a generation that migrated to Egypt after the one of Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḡammad al-Takrūrī. This gives another ancient point of fixation in the Qarāfa for settling. Ibn al-Nāsiḡ provides another and last Takrūrī saint: "Next to him [*the traditionist Ḥuṡī'a al-Laḡmī*], the tomb of the Sheikh 'Alī al-Takrūrī, better known as al-Fānī [*"the one whose self was extinguished in God"*]. He was among the greatest saints

60. Al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṡaṡ*, IV/2, p. 857.

61. Ibn al-Nāsiḡ, *Miṡbāḡ*, p. 203.

62. Regrettably, I have not been able to find any text pertaining to Sahelian Muslims in his works.

[*akābir al-ṣāliḥīn*]. He was buried in the enclosure [*maqṣūra*] of Dū-l-Nūn al-Miṣri, in the one [tomb] that is on its door in the entrance [*al-dahliz*].”⁶³

No further information is given on ‘Alī, but the fact that he was entombed in the mausoleum of Dū-l-Nūn, not far from the other three previous Takrūrī saints, might allow to postulate that he was from their generation (fig. 5). Dū-l-Nūn (d. 245/860) is one of the greatest mystics of Islam and of the original Seven.⁶⁴ He was also considered a powerful magician and alchemist. He belongs at the same time to the grand history of Sufism and of occult sciences. He was famously known for his alleged capacity to read hieroglyphs from which he drew secret knowledge.⁶⁵ I have emphasised before the close ties between the first Sahelian Muslims and mystical Islam. With magic, another dimension might arise here.

The practice of non-Islamic magic was a vivid reality in medieval Sahelian religions and societies.⁶⁶ The first five Takrūrī saints encountered so far, who lived before 463/1071, probably travelled to Egypt to settle there.⁶⁷ It would mean that they were socialised in a Sahelian environment where normative and scholarly Islam were reportedly not established at this time. Non-monotheistic religions were still vastly dominant in the Sahelian kingdoms, closely tied with the ruling elites. Such religions had a strong hidden dimension, the invisible world of spirits and deities coexisted with the living, and secret initiations were widespread in social life (for education, sworn societies of hunters or craftsmen, religion). Therefore, upon first contact, the mystical and magic dimensions of Islam could have offered discursive familiarities, such as the visible and the invisible (*ḡayb*) being part of the same unbreakable encompassing reality or the existence of hidden/revealed knowledge, etc.⁶⁸ From this particular aspect only, the newly-converted Takrūrī Muslims could have found some forms of a spiritual continuity with mystical Islam. It would explain why we find them first in Egypt in this remit and why Dū-l-Nūn would have been a desirable funereal neighbour, being the symbol of both mystic and magic.⁶⁹

63. Ibn al-Nāsiḥ, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 208.

64. Massignon 1958, p. 60.

65. Coulon 2017, pp. 177–179; McGregor 2020, pp. 190–191.

66. In the middle of the 8th/14th century, al-‘Umarī still mentions, based on his informer from Mālī, that “the people of this kingdom make much use of magic and poison”; see Levtzion, Hopkins (eds.) 1981 (ed. 2011), p. 272.

67. ‘Abd al-Barr hints that at least three of them and their society had travelled to Egypt.

68. Hamès 2008, pp. 83, 87, 94. It must be noted that with the spread of Islam in Western Sahel after the 5th/11th century, magic was irresistibly Islamised, as Constant Hamès points out.

69. On the continuous relationship between Sufism and magic, and its favourable climate under the Mamluks, see Melvin-Koushki 2017.

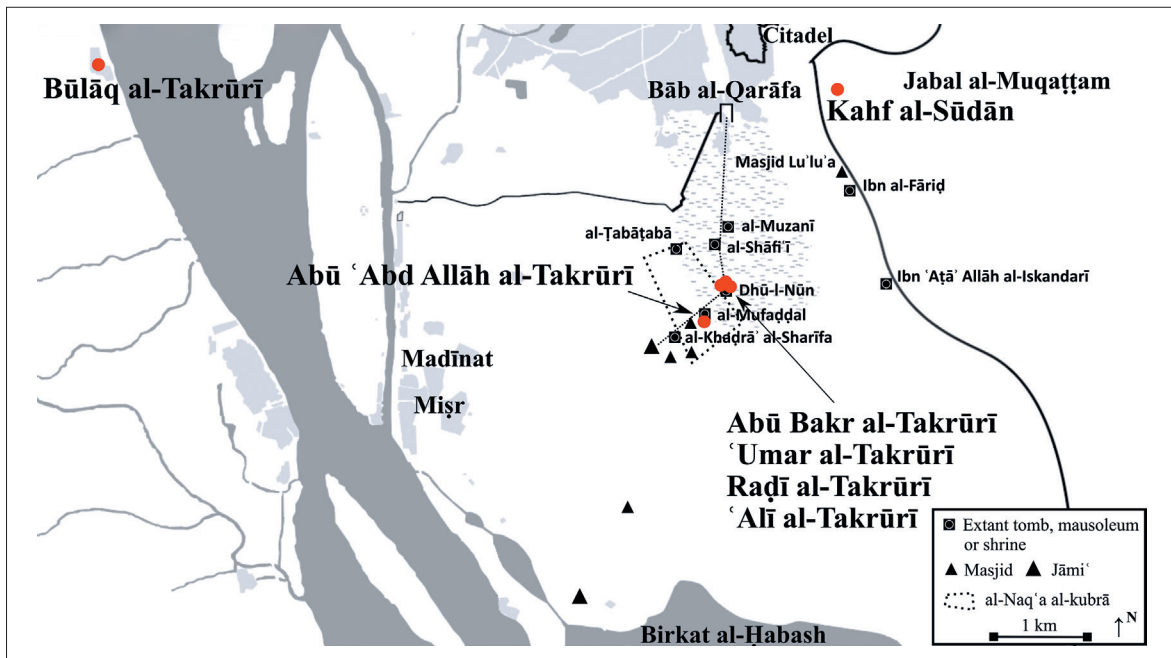


Fig. 5. The second stratum of Tahriri saints (map: H. Collet; basemap: J. Loiseau 2010 ©).

We left the 7th/13th century with an assembly of Tahriri Muslims gathered in the Qarāfa to pay tribute to the departed sultan Baybars. Ibn al-Zayyāt's *Kawākib*, by providing a new list of Tahriri-s for the 8th/14th century, brings a little more substance to the table. It must be noted first that Ibn al-Zayyāt did not reprise in his work the four Tahriri saints presented above. The reason likely lies in the remark of Ibn al-Nāsiḥ: since nobody had carried their memory, they had fallen out of history. Ibn al-Zayyāt wrote a century after his colleague. By that time, a new stratum of Tahriri history had partly overlaid the old one:

Then we stroll in the direction of the south, toward the neighbourhood [*al-ḥuṭṭ*] known as al-'Awātima in which we find an elegant mausoleum by the road [*ṭariq*] where lies the sepulture of Sayyida Šarīfa al-Ḥaḍrā' and with her the tomb of the Sheikh al-Fānī al-Tahriri (2), imam of the great mosque, mentioned by Ibn Mulaqqin in his *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, who died in 671 [1272]. In the same neighbourhood, we find the tomb of the Sheikh Ḥalīfa al-Tahriri, who reached the age of 120 years and who died soon after [al-Fānī al-Tahriri (2)].⁷⁰

Let's proceed immediately with the account of the great jurist and hagiographer Sirāḡ al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. al-Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401): "The Sheikh 'Alī al-Tahriri (2), saint worshipper [*abd ṣāliḥ*], imam at the Greater Qarāfa. I met him more than once. He died in 771 [1369–1370] in the Greater Qarāfa and is buried there."⁷¹

70. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib*, p. 326. In order to avoid the confusion with the previous one, I will call him "Alī al-Fānī (2)" and do so every time a name is repeated.

71. Ibn Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 563.

The two texts give a different date. Ibn al-Zayyāt is probably the one who mixed up centuries as al-Saḥāwī gives, in his *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, Ḥalīfa al-Takrūrī's date of death, which was also 771/1369–1370.⁷² The great mosque in question is the Ġāmi' al-Awliyā'. In the *Ḥiṭaṭ*'s notice on this mosque, al-Maqrizī explains: "I went to it when the Greater Qarāfa was populated by Sūdān Takārura inhabitants. It was sought for its *baraka*."⁷³ The centre of the Greater Qarāfa during the second half of the 8th/14th century was truly then, as al-Saḥāwī's editor puts it, "the Qarāfat al-Sūdān",⁷⁴ a Takrūrī imam leading the prayer in its most prestigious mosque.

Ibn al-Zayyāt lists another Takrūrī saint from the generation of 'Alī al-Fānī (2) and Ḥalīfa:

On his [*al-'Alā' b. Kaṭīr*] north side, by the door, the tomb of the pious man known as al-Ṣā'ig. He is next to the mausoleum [*turba*] of the Sheikh 'Umar al-Takrūrī (2). This Sheikh 'Umar was among the greatest saints. He is from the age class of the Sheikh Ḥalīfa and the Sheikh 'Alī. He was their contemporaneous. He had written in his will to be buried there, by the road, so that people who would walk by his tomb could take him in their misericord. His mausoleum is at the south of Ibrāhīm al-Saṭṭār's mausoleum, in the vicinity of the Imam al-Ṣāfi'.⁷⁵

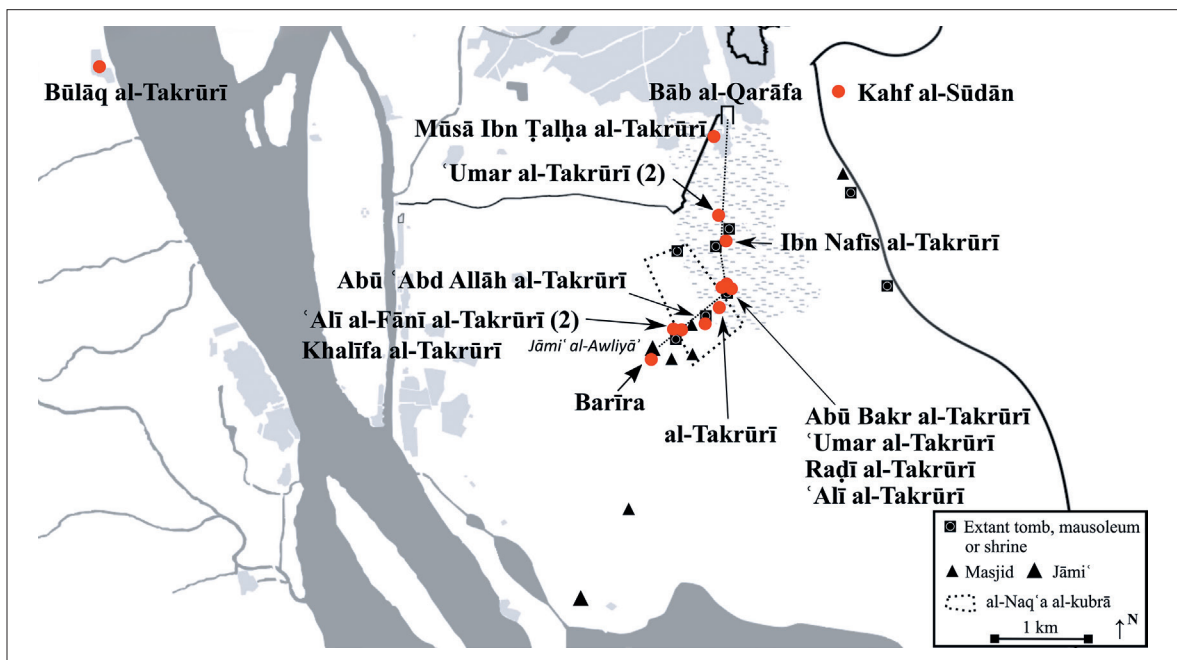


Fig. 6. The new Takrūrī saints provided by the *Kawākib* (map: H. Collet; basemap: J. Loiseau 2010 ©).

72. Al-Saḥāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, p. 178. Al-Saḥāwī copied Ibn al-Zayyāt extensively. Therefore, later in the book, when talking again of 'Alī and Ḥalīfa, he copied Ibn al-Zayyāt's text with the date "671", seemingly forgetting that he gave another date some hundred pages before. See al-Saḥāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, p. 294.

73. Al-Maqrizī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/1, p. 294.

74. Al-Saḥāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, p. 405.

75. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib*, p. 349.

This time, we find ourselves in the centre of gravity of the Lesser Qarāfa, near the *mašhad* of al-Šāfi‘ī, by its main road. Since the 7th/13th century, every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, the corporation of the readers (of the Quran, *maqārī*) performed public readings at the tomb of al-Šāfi‘ī, and urban development under the reign of the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (3rd r. 709–741/1310–1341) had made this part of the Qarāfa very dynamic.⁷⁶ Finally, Ibn al-Zayyāt mentions other names with little information that we can replace on a map thanks to the context:

In the burial complex [*al-ḥawma*] of the al-Ġamriyyīn cemetery, we find a column in soft stone [*kaddān*] on which is written: “The sheikh, the saint [*al-ṣāliḥ*] Ibn Nafīs al-Takrūrī [...]”⁷⁷

Then, to the west, the tomb of Mūsā b. Ṭalḥa al-Takrūrī [...]”⁷⁸

Next to the mausoleum of al-Huzraġī, the mausoleum of the Banū Maskīn. Between the two, the mausoleum of al-Takrūrī. And in this enclosure [*al-ḥawṣ*] the tomb of al-Takrūrī. He was a saint man. Ibn al-Ġabbās mentioned him in his chronicle [...]”⁷⁹

South, the tomb of the saint woman Barīra, daughter of the king of the Sūdān. She is known to answer the supplicating prayers [*al-du‘ā’*] said al-Quršī.⁸⁰

We have very little information on al-Quršī. Ibn al-Nāsiḥ already quotes him in the same fashion as Ibn al-Zayyāt, who says he was the author of a *Kitāb al-mazārāt* (i.e. the places that are the object of a *ziyāra*).⁸¹ He was certainly another sheikh of the visit whose work is lost. In any case, it allows us to know that Barīra was buried there before 700/1300, even though Ibn al-Nāsiḥ deemed she was not worthy of a mention. Only two Sudanic kings are known to have made the pilgrimage to Mecca in the 7th/13th century. The first is the sultan of Kanem Dūnāma b. Salma (r. 606–645/1210–1248) who probably came to Cairo in 640/1242. The second is Mansa Walī, sultan of Mālī, who made his pilgrimage under Baybars (r. 658–676/1260–1277).⁸² Without being able to settle the matter, it is interesting to think that a Malian princess could have been buried at the centre of the Greater Qarāfa when the sultan of Mālī Mansa Mūsā’s caravan arrived there in 724/1324. I will not develop here the story of this pilgrimage insofar as it has generated an imposing literature and will focus on the Qarāfi events.⁸³ That year, for four months, the Greater Qarāfa gained at least 10,000 Takrūrī inhabitants (with probably twice as much if not more beasts of burden). We can better understand now why the huge caravan was settled in the Qarāfa: ample space, under the sight

76. Massignon 1958, p. 46.

77. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib*, p. 359.

78. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib*, p. 92.

79. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib*, p. 469. Al-Ġabbās (d. after 736/1336) was a sheikh of the visit of tremendous reputation. His lost *Muḥdḍib al-ṭālibin ilā qubūr al-ṣāliḥin* is often quoted by the extant books of the visit. See Gom‘a 2018.

80. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib*, p. 320.

81. Gom‘a 2017, p. 13.

82. Cuoq (ed.) 1975 (ed. 1985), p. 389; Dewière 2017, pp. 428, 433.

83. See Levtzion 1986, pp. 185–195; Collet 2019a; 2019b.

of the citadel, but first and foremost because the necropolis was home to a vast community of West African Muslims, some probably from the sultanate of Mālī itself. According to Ibn Ḥaldūn, the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad gave a *qaṣr* to Mansa Mūsā in the Qarāfa after receiving from him the famous gift of 50,000 dinars.⁸⁴ Al-Maqrīzī defines the *quṣūr* and lists a few of them in his *Ḥiṭaṭ*: “There was at the Qarāfa several *quṣūr*. They are called *al-ḡawāsiq*, provided with gazebos [*manāẓir*], orchards [*basātīn*]. However, the majority of them do not have gardens, nor wells, but elevated gazebos. We also say for all of them *quṣūr*.”⁸⁵ Most of the *ḡawāsiq* had been constructed under the Fatimid period and were already in ruins at the time.⁸⁶ Al-Maqrīzī does not give a lot of information on these little leisurely palaces in the Qarāfa, and there is no way of knowing in which one the sultan Mūsā stayed. Furthermore, we also know, thanks to an anecdote provided by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, that Mūsā had become close with a great Egyptian merchant, Sirāḡ al-Dīn al-Kuwayk, who hosted the sultan in the gardens of his villa by the shore of the Birkat al-Ḥabaš, at the southern extremity of the Qarāfa.⁸⁷ It may have happened after Mūsā sold the *qaṣr* he had been given to replenish his assets.⁸⁸

Mūsā’s sojourn in Cairo probably increased the number of West African Muslims in the Qarāfa. His dramatic return from Mecca cost him, according to Mamluk historians, two thirds of his caravan and he had to buy new slaves in Cairo in order to carry to Mālī the goods he had purchased. Maybe the scare of the journey through Arabia convinced some to stop their travel in Cairo, or the attraction of the city was sufficient for pious men. As we shall see in a moment, the sources speak of at least one family of Taktūrī originating from Ḡānā, then province of the sultanate of Mālī, likely present in the Qarāfa before 724/1324. New settlers could find a welcoming environment. Other caravans filled with Taktūrī Muslims are recorded for the 8th/14th century and until the end of the Mamluk era.⁸⁹ In 744/1344, for instance, the caravan for the pilgrimage numbered 5,000 Taktūrī-s.⁹⁰ Did other Taktūrī sultans or Taktūrī caravans stayed at the Qarāfa? We can consider it even though no evidence supports it. The ancient, now “autochthonous”, Taktūrī community of the Qarāfa incorporated certainly new members every year.

What happened during Mansa Mūsā’s four-month stay in the Qarāfa is also unknown beyond what I just presented. It is difficult to evaluate Mūsā’s direct influence on the fact that until the beginning of the 9th/15th century, the Greater Qarāfa was associated with its Sahelian community. A Taktūrī was at some point the imam of its most important mosque, and Taktūrī saints were spanning the sacred landscape of the necropolis when a time of hardship struck Cairo in 748/autumn 1347 with the Black Death. Outside the *Kawākib*, another Taktūrī dwelling in the Qarāfa presents characteristics that flourished in time of crisis when

84. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Ibar*, V, pp. 434–435.

85. Al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/2, p. 876.

86. Taylor 1999, pp. 34–35.

87. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥlat*, IV, p. 270.

88. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Ibar*, V, pp. 434–435.

89. Garcin 1976 (ed. 2005), pp. 28–29; Dewièrè 2017, pp. 433–435.

90. Levtzion 1986, p. 186. The information comes from al-Maqrīzī’s *Sulūk*.

divine blessing was increasingly sought for. Short accounts completing one another are given in al-Maqrīzī's *al-Durar al-farīda* and in Ibn Taġrī Birdī's *al-Manhal al-sāfi wa-al-mustawfi ba'd al-wāfi* and *al-Nuġūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Maṣr wa-al-Qāhira*:

Rāšid al-Takrūrī, *al-faqīr*, *al-mu'taqad*, the ravished in God [*al-maġdūb*], resident of the Ğāmi' Rāšida, outside of the city of Miṣr. I visited him. He died at the hospital [*al-bīmāristān*] in 23 ġumādā al-āhira 796 [3 May 1394].⁹¹

The sheikh, *al-mu'taqad*, the saint [*al-ṣāliḥ*], Rāšid al-Takrūrī the Black died at the hospital al-Manṣūrī on Saturday 23 ġumādā al-āhira. He was residing at the Ğāmi' Rāšida outside the old city of Miṣr. He is the last one to have inhabited it. He was the object of the pious visit [*al-ziyāra*]. People had for him the most sublime *i'tiqād*.⁹²

Rāšid, we also say Rašid, the saint, the *mu'taqad*, al-Takrūrī, the ravished in God [*al-maġdūb*], residing at the Ğāmi' Rāšida outside the old city of Miṣr. People had for him the most sublime *i'tiqād*. They were striving for *baraka* by piously visiting him [*yatabarrakūn bi-ziyāratihī*] until he died at the hospital al-Manṣūrī on Saturday 23 ġumādā al-āhira 796. God Most High grant him misericord.⁹³

The terms *i'tiqād* and *mu'taqad* (i.e. the one being the object of *i'tiqād*) were commonly associated with the *maġdūb* but also with other characters like the greatest 'ulamā'.⁹⁴ *I'tiqād* can be compared with the concept of *walāya*, "sainthood", as *mu'taqad*-s were considered living saints who were exhaling *baraka* or divine blessing.⁹⁵ In this regard, they were venerated by the population, from the masses to the elite.⁹⁶ *Maġādīb* (sing. *maġdūb*) were found first living in the streets, in bakeries or public baths, but as they grew more popular, they invested extant religious institution, ruined ones or built *zāwiya*-s and mosques for themselves.⁹⁷ Rāšid might have been named after the mosque, becoming one with it. Rāšida was an ancient and prestigious *ġāmi'* first built in 393/1003 and remade several times after that. Al-Maqrīzī gives a lengthy account on the mosque, which was located in a ruined neighbourhood at his time.⁹⁸ He himself visited Rāšid and probably witnessed the abandonment of the *ġāmi'* after the saint died. The death of Rāšid may have been perceived then symbolically as the "death" of Rāšida, hastening its ruining.

91. Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar*, II, p. 86.

92. Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, XII, p. 108.

93. Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Manhal*, V, p. 341.

94. Geoffroy 1995, p. 43.

95. Geoffroy 1995, p. 43.

96. Geoffroy 1995, p. 262.

97. Geoffroy 1995, p. 255.

98. Al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/1, pp. 126–129.

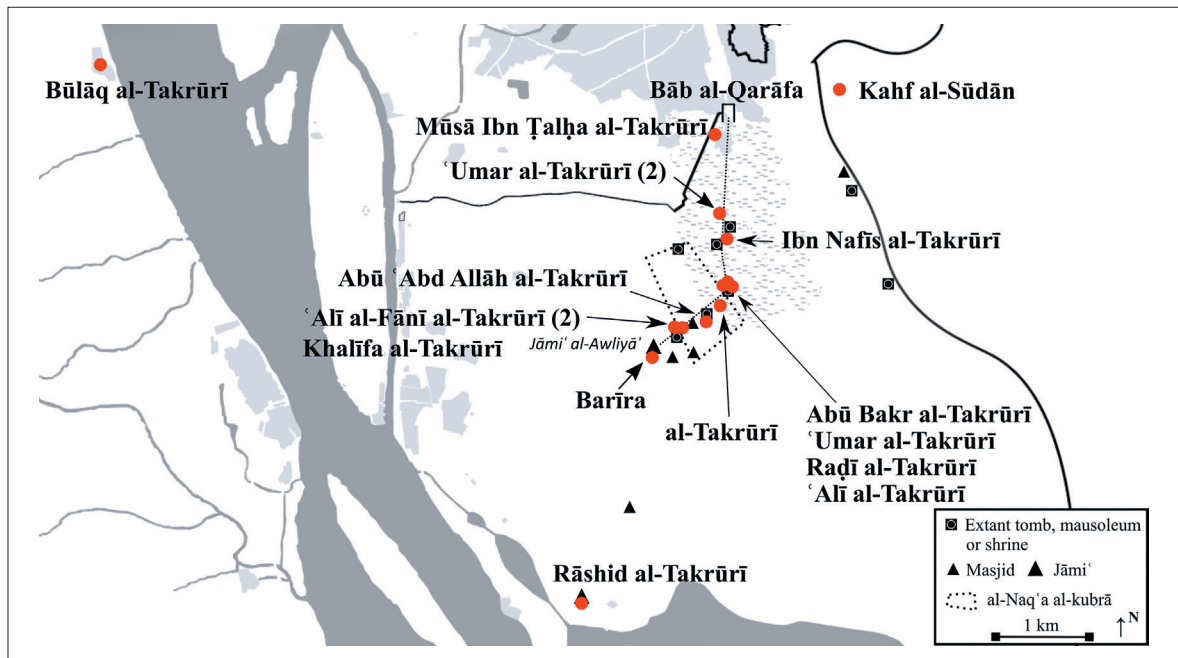


Fig. 7. Overview of the “Tadrūri moment” in the Qarāfa (map: H. Collet; basemap: J. Loiseau 2010 ©).

Figure 7 shows the tombs of Tadrūri saints being positioned along the main axis of the Qarāfa, from Bāb al-Qarāfa to the Ġāmi‘ al-Awliyā’ around which the main bulk of the West African communities were probably living.

Generic terms used by the sources have so far prevented us to know more about these individuals, leaving me to speculate. Luckily, medieval sources single out the life of one of these Qarāfi-born Tadrūri Muslims, whose family was originally from Ġānā (Ghana).

6. Al-‘Izz al-Ġānī: A son of the Qarāfa at the top of Cairene intelligentsia

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Tadrūri al-Ġānī, “al-‘Izz” for his companions, has been known in the field of Sahelian studies since 1981 when an account given by al-Saḥāwī’s immense biographical dictionary, *al-Ḍaw’ al-lāmi’*, was translated in the *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History*.⁹⁹ Yet, this translation is incomplete, and the text has not been studied to my knowledge.¹⁰⁰ Another short account can be found in Ibn Taġrī Birdī’s *al-Nuġūm al-zāhira*, also featured in the *Corpus*.¹⁰¹

A more detailed and personal—anthumous—account appears in Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Biqā‘ī’s (809–885/1407–1480) biographical dictionary *‘Unwān al-zamān fī tarāġim al-šuyūḥ wa-al-aqrān*, completed by posthumous accounts in two other works: al-Saḥāwī’s

99. Al-Saḥāwī, *Ḍaw’*, VII, p. 2; Levtzion, Hopkins (eds.) 1981 (ed. 2011), pp. 362–363.

100. Some parts of the text are not translated without formal caveats to the reader.

101. Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, XVI, p. 140; Levtzion, Hopkins (eds.) 1981 (ed. 2011), p. 360.

Wağīz al-kalām and al-Biqā'ī's *al-Mu'ğam al-sağīr*. Al-Biqā'ī, originally from Syria, settled in Cairo where he counted among the students of Ibn Ḥağar al-ʿAsqalānī. Through him, he climbed the social ladder and served “as a scholar-in-residence to the Mamluk sultans Ğaqmaq (r. 1438–1453) and Īnāl (r. 1453–1461)”.¹⁰² Al-Biqā'ī was a close friend of al-ʿIzz al-Ġānī and had much admiration for him: “Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUṭmān b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Sulaymān b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad, al-Takrūrī, originally al-Ġānī, *nisba* for Ġānā [*Ghana*], one of the cities of the Takrūr, al-Miṣrī, al-Mālīkī, our companion [*ṣāhibnā*], ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Kutubī, the imam, the scholar [*al-ʿālim*].”¹⁰³

Al-Saḥāwī gives a much more detailed onomastic opening:

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUṭmān b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Sulaymān b. ʿUmar b. *al-ṣayḥ* Muḥammad, the famous companion of al-Ḥaḍīr whose tomb is at al-Qarāfa, b. Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Ḥarrāz [*the amulet maker*], al-ʿIzz, al-Takrūrī originally, al-Qarāfī, al-Qāhirī, al-Mālīkī, al-Kutubī, known as al-ʿIzz al-Takrūrī. Also, he could formerly be called al-Ġānī, *nisba* after Ġānā, a city of the Takrūr.¹⁰⁴

As often in Arabic medieval sources, a name can reveal much on the life of a person. Al-ʿIzz's family had been Muslim at least for seven generations.¹⁰⁵ Of his two distant ancestors, one claimed to be a companion of Ḥaḍīr, the invisible companion of the Sufis, and the other was an amulet maker. We find once again the peculiar bond between Takrūrī and Islamic mystic and magic. The indication that his ancestor Muḥammad was buried in the Qarāfa suggests that this Ġānī family had settled there in the beginning of the 7th/13th century at the earliest.

Al-Saḥāwī and al-Biqā'ī also complete each other regarding al-ʿIzz's education. Born in the Greater Qarāfa at the beginning of 791/1389, he first memorised the Quran and recited it according to the reading (*riwāya*) of Abū ʿAmr with the Sheikh Šams al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Zarātī.¹⁰⁶ He also memorised the ʿ*Umda* and the *Risāla* of Ibn Abī Zayd and the *Alfiyya* of Ibn Mālīk.¹⁰⁷ He was then licensed to teach such works and did so to many students but only granted one license

102. Guo 2005, p. 102. Oddly, I have not been able to find any mention of ʿIzz al-Takrūrī in the first three volumes of his autobiographical chronicle (covering 855/1451 to 865/1461) *Izhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr* (also known as *Tārīḥ al-Biqā'ī*).

103. Al-Biqā'ī, *Unwān*, V, p. 24.

104. Al-Saḥāwī, *Dawʿ*, VII, p. 2.

105. Considering he was born in 791/1389, if we count thirty years for a generation from Muḥammad (180 years), we go back to the beginning of the 7th/13th century, roughly when the geographer al-Idrīsī gave his famous account in the kingdom of Ġānā, describing it well established in Islam; see Levtzion, Hopkins (eds.) 1981 (ed. 2011), pp. 109–110. If we count twenty years (120 years), we go back to the middle of the 7th/13th century, when Ġānā had become of province of Mālī, conquest that might have caused the emigration of some of its population.

106. Muḥammad Abū ʿAbd Allāh Šams al-Dīn al-Zarātī al-Ḥanafī (748–820/1347–1417), great reader of the Quran of his time.

107. Ibn Malīk is the founder to the Maliki school of law. Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386/996) is the third grand master of the school (the second being Saḥnūn).

in his life.¹⁰⁸ He studied the *fiqh* with the Sheikh Šihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Šanhāgī (i.e. possibly originating from the Saharan West), showing interesting Saharan-Sahelian relations, and al-Šams Ibn ‘Ammār.¹⁰⁹ The Qarāfa was certainly a great Maliki hub at the time, the dominant *madhhab* in the Islamic West. Al-‘Izz also learned the Arabic grammar, the prosody, and the calligraphic style of the *ḡubār* with Nāšir al-Dīn al-Bārnbārī.¹¹⁰ Finally, this first stage of studies ended with the learning of the law of inheritance (*al-farā’id*) with al-Šams al-Ġarrāqī.¹¹¹ While continuing his studies, he started his activity as a copyist. For the Sheikh al-Šams al-Wasīmī, he wrote successfully the initiatory chain (*isnād*) of al-Zayn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Šā’ig in a beautiful letter that caused a sensation, having displayed masterfully all the appreciated calligraphic styles of the time (*ašrār*, *muḥaqaq*, *riḥān*, and *ḡubār*).¹¹² Before the age of 20, he had already acquired an excellent reputation as a calligraphist as well as a person of many virtues and as an excellent storyteller.¹¹³ In 819/1417, at the age of 28, he accomplished his first pilgrimage to Mecca, which was followed by many others according to the chroniclers.¹¹⁴ He resided and studied in different places (e.g. the old Fatimid mosque al-Aqmar).

The two biographical accounts dwell then on al-‘Izz’s licenses or certificates of studies (*iḡāzāt*), drawing their information from the same informant, the Shafiite Sheikh ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Qalqašandī (780–856/1379–1452), who held the *mašayḥa* of the Qarāfi madrasa al-Šāliḥiyya. Al-Qalqašandī regularly frequented the bookshop of al-‘Izz of whom he was a dear companion. Among this new lists of masters: al-Tanūḥī, Abū Hurayra b. al-Ḍahabī, and Abū al-Ḥayr b. al-‘Alā’ī.¹¹⁵ He also learned a commentary of *al-Badī’iyya* from its author al-Taḳī b. Ḥiḡḡa, for whom he made several copies himself.¹¹⁶ Al-Qalqašandī also saw a certificate of audition (*samā’*) for the *Talāṭiyyāt* of al-Buḥārī that al-‘Izz had apparently slipped negligibly in a *dīwān* of the scholar Ibn Manamnam.¹¹⁷ Clearly, al-‘Izz had received enough education to be an accomplished Maliki scholar, with a taste for copying books and writing. Some of his poetry is also given by al-Saḥāwī and al-Biqā’ī. Yet, he took another path, which led him to become one of the most prominent and thriving booksellers of his time. Al-Saḥāwī’s account

108. Al-Saḥāwī, *Ḍaw’*, VII, p. 2; al-Biqā’ī, *‘Unwān*, V, p. 26.

109. Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Ammār al-Miṣrī al-Mālikī (768–844/1367–1440), great and famous Cairene Maliki scholar.

110. Appears as a master of prosody and poetry in biographies of the *Ḍaw’*.

111. Great specialist of the time on the matter. His name appears eighty-four times in the *Ḍaw’*.

112. Al-Wasīmī and Ibn al-Šā’ig (d. 846/1442) were both grand masters of calligraphy “*šayḥ al-kuttāb*” and reputed scholars. The former was the master of the latter. See Behrens-Abouseif 2018, p. 137.

113. Al-Saḥāwī, *Ḍaw’*, VII, p. 2; al-Biqā’ī, *‘Unwān*, V, p. 27.

114. Al-Saḥāwī, *Ḍaw’*, VII, p. 2; al-Biqā’ī, *‘Unwān*, V, p. 27.

115. Al-Tanūḥī (800–888/1397–1483) was a famous professor of Hadith established in Damascus who had numerous students. Abū Hurayra b. al-Ḍahabī was a scholar from Damascus that appears frequently in the *Ḍaw’*, grouped with al-Tanūḥī and Abū Ḥayr b. ‘Alā’ī, also a professor of Islamic sciences who was based in Jerusalem. It might give a sense of al-‘Izz’s travels for *ṭalab al-‘ilm* but they also could have come to Cairo to teach.

116. Al-Saḥāwī, *Ḍaw’*, VII, p. 2. Taḳī al-Dīn b. Ḥuḡḡa al-Ḥamawī (767–837/1366–1433) was one of the greatest men of letter (*adīb*) from his time. From Ḥamāh in Syria, he travelled frequently to Cairo.

117. Al-Biqā’ī, *‘Unwān*, V, p. 28.

stops here, and we have to turn to al-Biqā'ī to gain access to this dimension of al-'Izz's life. The location of his bookshop is specified in an anecdote after al-Biqā'ī had finished listening to his companion's poetry: "He declaimed it with his own mouth, the Saturday 27 raġab 846 [10 December 1442] in his shop [*dukkān*] of the book market, near the madrasa al-Ṣāliḥiyya."¹¹⁸ We are here at Bayn al-Qaṣrayn, in the heart of al-Qāhira. Al-Biqā'ī then proceeds to give a vivid and incarnate account on al-'Izz's activity as a bookseller:

He is a virtuous man, very knowledgeable about his time, gifted with a beautiful and excellent intelligence, and has a complete knowledge on books. He is the head of the book dealers [*ra'īs abl sūq al-kutub*]. He authored lovely anecdotes [*nawādir*] and curious stories. He told me once, that he was near some rocks and that he saw, from his own eyes, in the cavity of one of these rocks, a worm [*dawda*] that had herbs for itself. Al-'Izz informed me on the reason of his book trade. One day, he had entered the book market. He had seen a book that was being auctioned for 24 dirhams. "I said: 25! Nobody outbid and so I bought it. Then, I went home with it. It happened to be a book of *sīmiyā'*, rare in its domain. I put it on a shelf and forgot about it. Wild pigeons nested on it, laid eggs therein, and nestlings eventually hatched from it. Later, while I was one day at the booksellers', a man entered with numerous bounded leaves of paper. I saw on one of them a leaf whose writing looked like the one in the book. So far, I had looked for another copy without ever finding one. I told its owner: 'Sell me this pile!' He answered: 'I offer it to you.' I then took it. I found out that the leaves were completing the ones [damaged by the birds]. I wiped them and brought them to Badr al-Dīn b. Ṣadaqa the book binder so he could bind them together. A book-broker [*dallāl 'alā al-kutub*] was also there, an expert in books' prices and in who buys them. He said: 'I know a foreigner [*'aġamī*] who greatly desires this book. He places orders for it the day of the market. One of the merchants said that this foreigner longs for this book. You bought it and you could make a profit out of it.' Then it was put up for auction, bids followed one another, and the sum reached 400 [dirhams] and more. Later, Badr al-Dīn asked me to sell it to the foreigner because he was the one who really desired it and if another one was to buy it, it would cause him prejudice. Therefore, I sold it to him, and that was how I entered the commerce of books." He told me that he had bought the *Rawḍa* of al-Nawawī,¹¹⁹ in which was the handwriting of the Sheikh Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkašī. However, it was incomplete. It stayed at his place for a long time without anyone asking for it [because of the missing parts]. One day, while 'Alā' al-Dīn [al-Qalqašandī] was sitting at his place, came a book broker who had put up for auction a book with a lot of leaves scattered in twenty [bundles]. Al-'Alā' told him to buy this auction. "I said: 'I do not need it.'" The broker left, then came back. Nobody had bidden. "Al-'Alā' said [again]: 'Buy them.' I said [again]: 'I don't need them. Indeed, leaves' worth depends on the content of the books. I do not deal in scattered science!' He insisted: 'Buy them!' Then I said: "These leaves are from which book?' He answered: 'From the *Rawḍa*!' Then, my hope clang to the fact that they could be the ones missing

118. Al-Biqā'ī, *'Unwān*, V, p. 27.

119. Traditionist and Shafiite scholar who died in 676/1277. Credited as the one who re-organised the Shafiite school.

from my copy. I therefore bought them. Later, in the incomplete part [of my book], I found that these leaves corresponded perfectly [to the ones missing], sixteen pages in total that fitted in the book. I undid the binding, added the pages to their place, and had it bound [once more]. When I took it to the book binder, came Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Mağribī, the assistant of the secretary in chief [*nāʾib kātib al-sirr*] of the chancellery, with his mule. He asked for the *Rawḍa*. Then, I showed it to him and he bought it. This is part of the wonders [*ʿağāʾib*] of the transactions [*al-anfāq*].”¹²⁰

Heading the corporation of book dealers, al-ʿIzz was a central character of the book market. As we can see, he kept good company and “his shop [was] a meeting point for scholars”.¹²¹ There is a sweet sense of destiny that he entered his craft with a book of *sīmiyāʾ*, a branch of occult science that dealt first with seals and talismans but referred at this time to the magic of letters and divine names.¹²² One of the few known Qarāfi Taktūrī-s who had chosen another path than mystic and occult science, al-ʿIzz’s new life started symbolically with a book from this realm. The biography continues by focusing on the exploits of the *šayḥ al-kutub* ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Šāʾiḡ al-Mukattib, legend in the book market community and a companion of al-ʿIzz known for his wondrous and prodigious writing capacity.¹²³ Al-ʿIzz intervenes as a witness of good faith and as an auxiliary in these anecdotes.¹²⁴ Then, the account takes a more personal tone and give another dimension to the persona of al-ʿIzz. In the last two anecdotes, mystic Islam and the Qarāfa make their return:

Al-ʿIzz al-Taktūrī informed me that two of his close parents [*qarībayn*] had died, one of old age [*hadmān*], the other by drowning. He had seen the drowned one in a nocturnal vision [*manām*]. He had asked him about some of his deceased family members [*aqārib*] and he [*the drowning victim*] informed him about them and many things. He [*al-ʿIzz*] asked him about the one who had died of old age. He answered: “Very well, he and I are residing in one abode.”

He informed me that he had visited the Qarāfa one day, after his recovery [*naqūh*] from a disease, with, under him, an excellent donkey. When he arrived near the [tomb] of the *qāḍi* Bakkār, the donkey started to walk fiercely with its head held high, then kicked, showing the worst animosity. Fearing to fall [uncontrollably], he then jumped by himself to the ground. The donkey continued its outbreak of violence [*šawṭihi*] and threw every piece of equipment that was on him all over the place. He said: “I went after it with no haste and picked up the pieces of equipment. When I arrived at the place of visitation [*mazār*] of the *qāḍi* Bakkār, I stopped before it and implored

120. Al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān*, V, pp. 28–29. For a slightly different translation of this excerpt, see Behrens-Abouseif 2018, pp. 76–77; for example, she did not speak of the retraction of al-ʿIzz who eventually sold the book to the foreigner, heeding his friend’s advice, and not for the golden bidden price.

121. Behrens-Abouseif 2018, p. 77.

122. Coulon 2017, p. 145.

123. Behrens-Abouseif 2018, pp. 137–139.

124. Al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān*, V, pp. 29–30.

God Most High so He would give me back my donkey. I had not finished that it arrived, between two dogs as if they were leading him, until he reached me. I seized him and turned my face toward the two dogs, but did not see them.”¹²⁵

The oneiric vision (*manām*) is a common experience for Sufis. The impeccability and aura of al-‘Izz is emphasised by the biographer, as this kind of phenomenon could also touch people who were not asking for it. Likewise, in the second story, the fact that Bakkār b. Qutayba, one of the original Seven, interceded immediately with the divine to answer al-‘Izz’s query, demonstrates that the Takkūrī was the subject of a particular consideration by higher powers. Dogs’ interventions to help people are a trope of Sufi literature, which alludes that they are in fact djinns in disguise.¹²⁶ The anecdote shows that even though al-‘Izz had moved to the urban centre of the capital, the Qarāfa had remained a part of him and his habitus. Visits to saints still held a particular place for the Qarāfi, who did not fail to return to thank those who had surrounded him growing up. The ‘Unwān’s account stops here. Posthumous notices in al-Saḥāwī’s *Waḡīz al-kalām* and al-Biqā‘ī’s *al-Mu‘ḡam al-saḡīr* complete it. Al-‘Izz died at 66 on Wednesday 27 ḡumādā al-ulā 847/1 October 1443 at the Qarāfa.¹²⁷ The prayer for his salvation took place the same day at Bāb al-Naṣr. Yet, sign of the times, he was buried in the necropolis of the Desert (al-Ṣaḥrā’), developed by the Circassian sultans, then new place of election for burials.¹²⁸ By 847/1443, the Greater Qarāfa was already in an advanced state of decay.

Muḥammad al-‘Izz was not the only al-Ġānī living in Cairo at the time. He had two cousins: Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Umar, Ḥayr al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥayr al-Sarrī b. al-Ṣadr al-Qāhiri al-Mālīkī b. al-Ġānī (who died very old the 29 muḥarram 889/7 March 1484), an assistant to the inspector of the market at Bāb al-Ṣa‘riyya and also prominent Maliki scholar; and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ġānī, who inherited the former upon his passing.¹²⁹ Al-Saḥāwī does not say if they were originally Qarāfi like their cousin al-‘Izz, but it is permissible to think so. They are other examples of Takkūrī Muslims integrated in Cairene society. By that time, they were indeed a common piece in the patchwork of people composing the social landscape.

7. The demise of the Greater Qarāfa in the 9th/15th century

When evocating the Ġāmi‘ al-Awliyā’, we left al-Maqrīzī telling us that he frequented it when the Greater Qarāfa was brimming with Takkūrī Muslims. Here is the rest of the account: “I went to it when the Greater Qarāfa was populated by Sūdān Takārura inhabitants. It was sought for its *baraka*. When the events and the ordeals [*ḥawādiṯ wa-miḥān*] of 806 [1403] broke

125. Al-Biqā‘ī, ‘*Unwān*, V, p. 30.

126. Geoffroy 1995, p. 101.

127. Maybe from the plague that broke out that year in Egypt, as it started to affect the Qarāfa regularly after 806/1403. See Dols 1977, p. 311.

128. Al-Biqā‘ī, *Mu‘ḡam*, p. 235; al-Saḥāwī, *Waḡīz al-kalām*, p. 680.

129. Al-Saḥāwī, *Ḍaw’*, IX, p. 265.

out, the number of inhabitants in the Qarāfa dwindled. This mosque stayed closed every day, except for some gatherings on Fridays.”¹³⁰

In al-Maqrīzī’s work, the “events and ordeals” refer to one of the deadliest recurrences of the plague that hit Cairo in 806/1403 together with a low flood, a famine, and extreme cold.¹³¹ If the 748–749/1347–1348 outbreak had not been recorded as particularly dire for the Qarāfa, the one of 806/1403 dealt a first blow to its population, without though decimating the Taktūrī community. This cannot be said for another recurrence of the plague, which happened in 833/1430 and ravaged Egypt.¹³² Ibn Ḥaḡar was present at the Qarāfa during this turmoil and witnessed the disaster:

Death descended upon the Sūdān of the Qarāfa to the extent that three thousand of them perished. The presence of gravediggers and corpse washers became scarce as well as the one of the tomb builders, so much so that immense mass graves were dug in which the dead were thrown. Many shrouds were stolen, and dogs dug a lot, eating the limbs of the dead. The situation evolved out of control to such an extent that I saw with my eyes the stretchers [*nu’ūš*] [spread] between the Muṣallā al-M’uminī and Bāb al-Qarāfa as if they were white vultures [*raḡam*] circling around the dead. As for the streets, [the dead] were there like lines of camels, as if they were tied together and followed one another very closely.¹³³

His story can be completed with one narrated by the historian al-Sayrafī (819–900/1416–1495):

During this annihilation [*al-fanā’*] curious events [*ḡarā’ib*] happened. At the Greater and Lesser Qarāfa were situated approximately three thousand Sudanic men, women, and children from the Taktūr. The plague [*al-tā’ūn*] exterminated them to the extent that only a few remained. They fled to the mountain, spend their nights there without finding any sleep because of the scale of the calamity and the loss among their people, their children, and their wives. With time, they became resident of the mountain. During the second night, thirty more souls died among them, who they buried in haste. While they were busy doing that, twenty-eight more persons perished. Only ten of them survived.¹³⁴

If we consider that the recurrence of the plague in 806/1403 had already reduced the Taktūrī community, it would have therefore counted more than three thousand people in the Qarāfa in the second half of the 8th/14th century. Such a dreadful mortality was not only a problem for West African Muslims but for the Qarāfa as a whole. In order to endure the trial of time, a tomb needed social life, a community dwelling nearby and taking care of it

130. Al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭat*, IV/1, p. 294.

131. It may have taken half of the population. See Dols 1977, p. 305; Loiseau 2010, pp. 158–159; 2013.

132. This outbreak has been closely studied. See Dols 1977, pp. 204–211; Loiseau 2010, pp. 115–116.

133. Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Inbā’*, III, pp. 437–438.

134. Al-Sayrafī, *Nuzhat*, III, pp. 188–189.

or at least people visiting it and mending it when necessary. Mausolea of Taktūrī saints had lasted through decades precisely thanks to communities, West African and otherwise, that looked after them. If the Lesser Qarāfa resisted better the depopulation of the necropolis, due to its closer proximity with the outskirts of Cairo and a more recent urban development, the Greater Qarāfa fell in ruins.¹³⁵ The demise of the Taktūrī community was certainly an important factor of the urban abandonment in this part of the necropolis.

Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb, the last book of the visit, was completed by Nūr al-Dīn al-Saḥāwī in 889/1484 after these upheavals in the Qarāfa. The time of the visits had passed its apogee. The *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb* itself is largely a *muḥtaṣar* of Ibn al-Zayyāt's *Kawākib*. The Taktūrī saints present in the book are mentioned in accounts borrowed from Ibn al-Zayyāt, without any way of knowing if the tombs were still extant (probably not in the Greater Qarāfa). Nevertheless, we can find rare updates. In the case of Mūsā b. Talḥa al-Taktūrī, for example, Nūr al-Dīn al-Saḥāwī states that “[his tomb] belongs to the tombs that are not visible in this *zawiya* because of its deletion [*li-indiṭārihā*]”.¹³⁶ The same can be said of Ibn Nafis al-Taktūrī, called Ya‘īš in the *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*. In Arabic, the two names have a close resemblance without the diacritic dots. Shabbiness could have been a reason for the misreading.¹³⁷

The only entirely new character is Mubārak al-Taktūrī, who we left, in the introduction of this article, building new tombs from *kīmān* (sing. *kūm*), the hills of debris that had accumulated in the Greater Qarāfa. The last part of the *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*'s account give a sense of the needs Mubārak was filling in the Qarāfa:

Then he [*Mubārak Abū ‘Alī al-Taktūrī*] devoted himself to build something [*‘imāra*] in this place. He received the benefits [*al-ḥayrāt*] of al-Ḥaḡḡ ‘Īsā, *salāḥūrī* of the *amīr* Ḡaḡmaḡ al-‘Alā’ī the great constable [*al-amīr al-aḥūr*], the one who rose to the sultanate, and his wife, who gave him assistance to achieve his goals. Later, a person called Ḥalīl, miller at Bāb al-Qarāfa, was reading the *Sīrat ‘antar* and the *Sīrat dāt al-himma*. He [*Ḥalīl*] invented names for them [*the dead of the Qarāfa*] in notebooks [*kurrās*]. He gave the notebooks to the Sheikh Badr al-Dīn b. al-Šarr in a house. He was pressed into reading them, and he read some parts for he could not read it all. Among those mentioned in the notebook were ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, a group of Companions [*al-Šaḥāba*], but it mentioned no historical people [*ahl al-tārīḥ*] and no saint people for the visit [*ahl al-ziyārāt*]. For that reason, it was not distributed, even though it contained some exact information. It spread nonetheless, even though those who were buried in the Qarāfa, among the descendants of the Prophet, the saints [*awliyā’*], and the scholars were known. Indeed, it was the ancient and current abode of the caliphs, the kings, the *amīr*-s, the owner of dignities [*arbāb al-manāṣīb*], of the great erected villas [*al-quṣūr al-māšīda*], the kiosks [*ḡawāsiq*], the gazebos [*manāẓir*], of mosques, places of adoration [*al-ma‘ābid*], and *ribat*-s. People never ceased to visit the *zāwiya* of Abū ‘Alī al-Taktūrī, the one in question, until God took him. His passing happened the last Friday of raḡab, the year 871 [15 March 1467].

135. Loiseau 2010, pp. 71–72.

136. Al-Saḥāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, p. 166.

137. Al-Saḥāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, p. 308.

He was buried in this cemetery that he had built patiently. This mausoleum [*turba*] is to the east of the mosque al-Nabbās [next to Maṣḡid al-Raḥma to the east].¹³⁸

The story on Ḥalīl is inserted in the account to mirror the one of Mubārak. It was a hard time for the sheikhs of the visit. On the one hand, Mubārak was inventing tombs and naming them whimsically. On the other hand, a storyteller and reader was writing his own book of the visit by largely inventing the names of the buried! Mubārak was entombed in the Greater Qarāfa where he had worked to mend a ruined swathe of the necropolis. Even though he was not related to the long history of Taktūrī communities producing saints in the Qarāfa, being a former slave working in bakeries, he became the last visited Taktūrī saint recorded in the medieval sources, having erected a *zāwiya* with the support of a powerful Mamluk *amīr*.

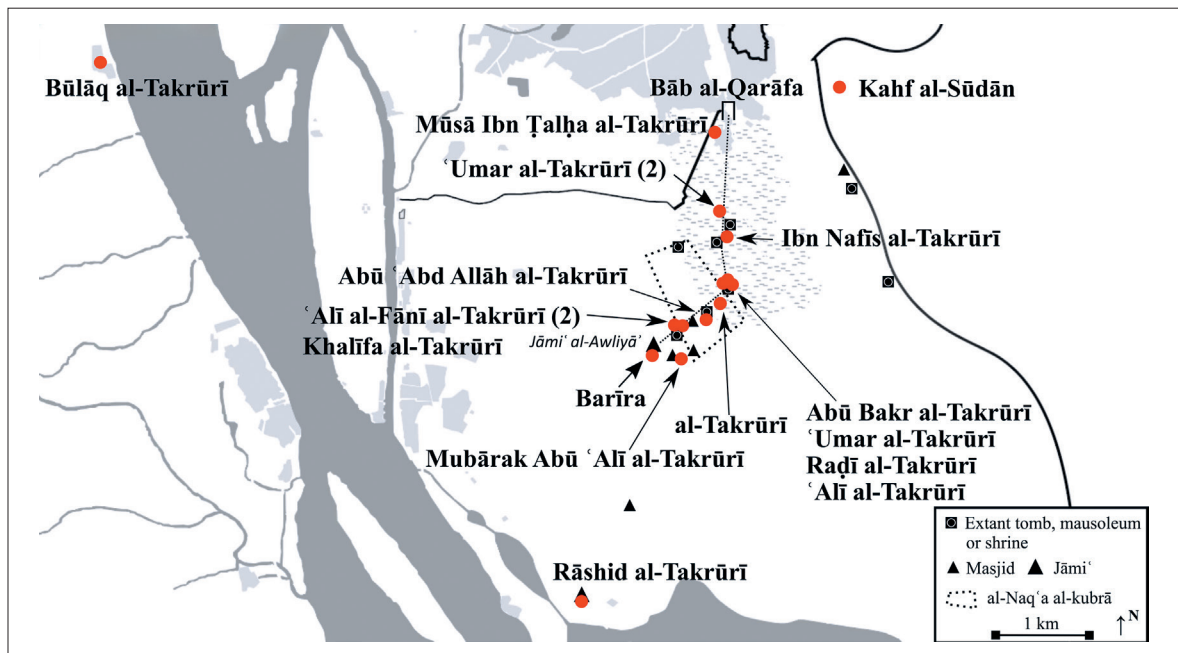


Fig. 8. Diachronic Taktūrī presence in the Qarāfa (4th–9th/10th–15th c.) (map: H. Collet; basemap: J. Loiseau 2010 ©).

138. Al-Saḥāwī, *Tuhfat al-aḥbāb*, pp. 181–182.

8. Conclusion: The mausoleum of ‘Abd Allāh al-Dakrūrī and the Takrūrī legacy in the Qarāfa

What remains today of this history in the Qarāfa? The necropolis’ constructions have endured many more hardship through the centuries before us. Later epochs each had their own relation with the necropolis, but it was only at the end of the 19th century that appeared the need to preserve some of the architectural treasures of the Qarāfa in a context of further degradation and increasing human settlement therein.¹³⁹ The 18th of December 1881, the Khedive Tawfiq established the Comité de conservation des monuments de l’art arabe (CCMAA) under the purview of the administration of the *Waqf*-s to preserve Egypt’s Islamic heritage.¹⁴⁰ Nowadays, anyone wandering around the Lesser Qarāfa would visit the *mašhad* of al-Šāfi‘ī, located by one of its main streets. A little bit northward, a high domed mausoleum (*qubba*) dominates the same street. It is known as the Qubbat ‘Abd Allāh al-Dakrūrī. “Dakrūrī” is the phonetic evolution of “Takrūrī” in Egyptian Arabic that occurred in the post-medieval centuries from 1008/1600, “Takrūr” becoming “Dakrūr”. The *Islamic Monuments in Cairo: The Practical Guide*, edited by Caroline Williams at the press of the American University of Cairo, presents it as a “little tomb-chamber, notable for its ribbed and fluted stone dome. This is the tomb of a pastry cook from Bab al-Luq who in his old age lived in the cemetery and performed pious works. When he died in 1466/871 his mausoleum became a place of pilgrimage.”¹⁴¹

C. Williams’ text reproduces verbatim some parts of Keppel Creswell’s “Brief Chronology of the Muhammadan Monuments of Egypt to AD 1517” published in the *Bulletin de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale* in 1916. In his notice on the mausoleum, K. Creswell formally identifies ‘Abd Allāh al-Dakrūrī as Abū ‘Alī Mubāarak al-Takrūrī, based on a text of the *Tuhfat al-aḥbāb* he saw in a margin of a manuscript of the *Naṣḥ al-ṭīb*, the great Andalusī historical anthology of the historian al-Maqqarī who died in Cairo in 1041/1631–1632, as well as on information supplied by a Cairene official, ‘Abdul Ḥamīd Bey Muṣṭafa.¹⁴² Therefore, we are left facing a discrepancy, as we just saw that Mubāarak, according to the *Tuhfat al-aḥbāb*, was buried in the Greater Qarāfa in a place he had striven to mend and not in the heart of the Lesser Qarāfa.

139. From the beginning of the 20th century, the Qarāfa saw the arrival of new inhabitants, mainly homeless and poor communities. Informal housing and settlements in the tombs developed rapidly. See el-Kadi, Bonnamy 2001, pp. 257–261.

140. El-Kadi, Bonnamy 2001, p. 276.

141. Williams 2008, pp. 133–134.

142. Creswell 1919, p. 137.

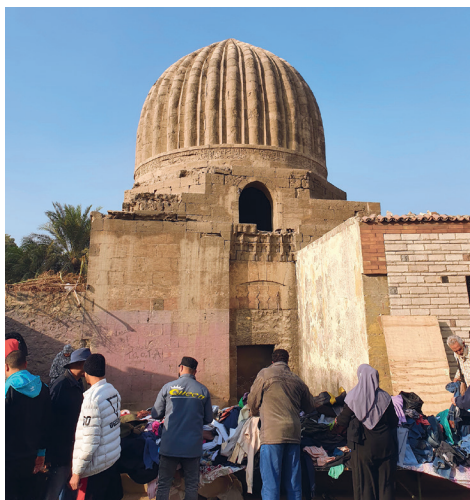


Fig. 9.



Fig. 10.



Fig. 11.



Fig. 12.



Fig. 13.

Figs. 9–13. The mausoleum of 'Abd Allāh al-Dakrūrī (photos: H. Collet, January 2021 and 2022).

As Figures 9–13 show, the mausoleum is in a decent state of conservation. Indeed, as soon as 1897, the CCMAA had deemed urgent to list it as a historical monument in order to protect it against a gravedigger who had started to construct against its wall.¹⁴³ The CCMAA recommended the administration of the *Waqf*-s to delimit a three-meter perimeter around the mausoleum to create a safe buffer zone in order to prevent informal constructions around it, a decision that was however never enforced.¹⁴⁴

Specialist of Mamluk architecture Michael Meinecke has closely studied the mausoleum of ‘Abd Allāh al-Dakrūrī.¹⁴⁵ Based on an analysis of the *muqarnas*-s (figs. 10–11) and the heraldry (fig. 12) that appears at the centre of the calligraphic inscription on each side, he argues that the mausoleum presents all the archaeological features of a monument built around 740/1340.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, the Qubbat al-Dakrūrī is a textbook example, that can be corroborated with other monuments of the same period, of the prevailing of stone over other materials, as seen in the *muqarnas*-s no longer in stucco.¹⁴⁷ Likewise, the coat of arms of the Mamluk *amīr* who sponsored the construction reflects the state of heraldry of the mid-8th/14th century, when the patterns were less complex than the ones of the Circassian period (784–923/1382–1517).¹⁴⁸ Prior to M. Meinecke’s *Die mamlukische Architektur* but following up on his remarks in “Zur mamlukischen Heraldik”, Christel Kessler had focused on the domes in stone, a unique landmark of Mamluk Cairo. She defines seven technical and artistic stages of masonry dome making, from the mid-8th/14th century to 921/1515.¹⁴⁹ The dome of al-Dakrūrī fits the first stage in the mid-8th/14th century (fig. 9).¹⁵⁰

Therefore, strong architectural evidence supports the fact that the mausoleum was not originally built for Mubārak nor by him, who was indeed buried in his now lost *zāwiya* in the Greater Qarāfa. In her effort to map the Lesser Qarāfa, M. al-Ibrashy has attributed it to ‘Umar al-Takrūrī, “‘Umar (2)” in this study, based on the *Kawākib*.¹⁵¹ ‘Umar (2) is indeed a good candidate, as we saw that he had written in his will to be buried here, by the main street so the people would not forget him, and that he was from the same generation as ‘Alī al-Takrūrī (2), imam of the Ğāmi‘ al-Awliyā’ who died in 771/1369–1370. What happened then? Mubārak’s tomb could have been threatened, despite his effort, by the rampant ruining of the Naq‘a area and been re-entombed in the *qubba* shortly after his death. Or people could have wanted the popular saint to rest closer to a more lively and frequented area. In any case, ‘Umar (2)’s

143. Franz et al. 1898.

144. El-Kadi, Bonnamy 2001, p. 277.

145. Meinecke 1972, pp. 253–254.

146. The inscription starts on the side facing the door opening on the street with the *basmala*, then continues with the Verses 255–257 of *ṣūrat al-Baqara*, and ends with the closing formula “*ṣadaqa Allāh al-‘azīm*”.

147. Meinecke 1992, I, p. 91.

148. Meinecke 1972, pp. xvi, lxiv, 253–254; 1992, II, p. 183.

149. Kessler 1976, p. 4.

150. Kessler 1976, p. 6.

151. Al-Ibrashy 2006, pp. 291, 297. On my maps, I have located ‘Umar (2) at the mausoleum of ‘Abd Allāh al-Dakrūrī.

memory was erased or overwritten by a new narrative. No dedicated inscription is found in the mausoleum nor in any document I have read. Therefore, the date 871/1467 given erroneously for the mausoleum is merely the date of Mubārak's passing.

Another hypothesis could be that Mubārak's tomb eventually fell to ruin and that his memory became somewhat attached to the old *qubba* through the Takrūrī/Dakrūrī names. "Abd Allāh" is a generic and very common Muslim name slaves were receiving when they were converted to Islam by their masters. "Mubārak" could have been of his choosing, after his manumission, and might have remained part of his full appellation. The *kutub al-ziyāra* are rife with the sheikhs of the visit's exasperation with the 'amma, meaning the popular or vulgar crowds, that constantly mistook one's burial for another or invented new narratives around tombs. The *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*'s account on Mubārak shows that after the middle of the 9th/15th century, the informal corporation of the sheikhs of the visit was henceforth lacking the manpower to enforce a knowledge it had accumulated and passed on for centuries. Ruining, epidemics, and political instability resulted in the acceleration of an already evolving topography, physically and imaginarily. In this scenario, the Takrūrī legacy in the Qarāfa reflects the state in which the necropolis was during the second half of the 9th/15th century. A then already fuzzy substrate of Takrūrī history had served to anchor its last recorded representative.

Bibliography

Primary sources

- AL-BIQĀ'Ī, *Mu'ḡam*
al-Biqā'ī, *al-Mu'ḡam al-ṣaḡīr*, Ḥ. Ḥabašī (ed.),
Cairo, 2003.
- AL-BIQĀ'Ī, *Unwān*
al-Biqā'ī, *Unwān al-zamān fī tarāḡim al-šuyūḥ*
wa-al-aqrān, 5 vols., Ḥ. Ḥabašī (ed.), Cairo, 2009.
- CUOQ (ed.) 1975 (ed. 1985)
J. Cuoq (ed.), *Recueil des sources arabes concernant*
l'Afrique occidentale du VIII^e au XVI^e siècle (1975),
Sources d'histoire médiévale 7, Paris, 1985
(2nd ed.).
- IBN BAṬṬŪṬA, *Riḥlat*
Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa al-musammāt*
Tuḥfat al-nuzzār, 5 vols., 'A. al-Tāzī (ed.), Rabat,
1995.
- IBN ḤAĠAR, *Dayl al-durar*
Ibn Ḥaġar, *Dayl al-durar al-kāmina*,
'A. Darwiš (ed.), Cairo, 1992.
- IBN ḤAĠAR, *Inbā'*
Ibn Ḥaġar, *Inbā' al-ḡumr bi-abnā' al-'amr*, 4 vols.,
Ḥ. Ḥabašī (ed.), Cairo, 1972.
- IBN ḤALDŪN, *Ibar*
Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Kitāb al-'ibar*, 7 vols., 'A. Sa'd (ed.),
Beirut, 2010.
- IBN MULAQQIN, *Ṭabaqāt*
Ibn Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, N. Šarībah (ed.),
Cairo, 1994.
- IBN AL-NĀSIḤ, *Miṣbāḥ*
Ibn al-Nāsiḥ, *Miṣbāḥ al-dayāḡī wa-ḡawṭ al-rāḡī*
wa-kahf al-lāḡī, A. Gom'a (ed.), Cairo, 2022.
- IBN TAĠRĪ BIRDĪ, *Manḥal*
Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *al-Manḥal al-šāfi wa-al-mustawfi*
ba'd al-wāfi, 13 vols., M. Amīn (ed.), Cairo, 1984.
- IBN TAĠRĪ BIRDĪ, *Nuḡūm*
Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *al-Nuḡūm al-zāhira*
fī mulūk Maṣr wa-al-Qāhira, 16 vols.,
Dār al-kutub al-'Ilmiyya (ed.), Beirut, 1992.

- IBN 'UṬMĀN, *Muršid*
Ibn 'Uṭmān, *al-Durr al-munazzam fi ziyārat al-ḡabal al-Muqaṭṭam al-ma'rūf bi Muršid al-zuwwār ilā qubūr al-abrār*, A. Gom'a (ed.), Cairo, 2022.
- IBN AL-ZAYYĀT, *Kawākib*
Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-sayyāra fi tartīb al-ziyāra fi-l-Qarāfatayn al-kubrā wa-l-suḡrā*, A. Gom'a (ed.), Cairo, 2024.
- LEVTZION, HOPKINS (eds.) 1981 (ed. 2011)
N. Levtzion, J. Hopkins (eds.), *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (1981), Princeton, 2011 (3rd ed.).
- AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *Durar*
al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-'uqūd al-farīda fi tarājim al-a'yān al-mufīda*, 4 vols., M. al-Ḡalīlī (ed.), Beirut, 2002.
- AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *Ḥiṭaṭ*
al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār bi-dīkr al-ḥiṭaṭ wa-l-aṭār*, 7 vols., S.A. Fu'ād (ed.), London, 2013.
- AL-MUSTAWFĪ, *Tārīḥ Irbil*
al-Mustawfī, *Tārīḥ Irbil*, 4 vols., S. al-Ṣaḡar (ed.), Baghdad, 1980.
- ṢAFĪ AL-DĪN, *Risāla*
Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*, D. Gril (ed.), Cairo, 1986.
- AL-SAḤĀWĪ, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*
al-Saḥāwī, Nūr al-Dīn, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb wa-buḡiyyat al-ṭullāb fi al-ḥiṭaṭ wa-al-mazārāt wa-al-tarāḡim wa-al-biqā' al-mubārakāt*, A. Nashat (ed.), Cairo, 1937.
- AL-SAḤĀWĪ, *Ḍaw'*
al-Saḥāwī, Ṣams al-Dīn, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi' li-abl al-qarn al-tāsi'*, 12 vols., Dār al-Jayl (ed.), Beirut, 1992.
- AL-SAḤĀWĪ, *Waḡīz al-kalām*
al-Saḥāwī, Ṣams al-Dīn, *Waḡīz al-kalām fi al-ḍayl 'alā duwal al-Islām*, B. Ma'rūf, 'U al-Ḥarastānī, A. al-Ḥaṭaymī (eds.), Cairo, 1995.
- AL-SAYRAFI, *Nuzhat*
al-Sayrafi, *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa-l-abdān fi tawārīḥ al-zamān*, 3 vols., Ḥ. Ḥabašī (ed.), Cairo, 1973.

Secondary sources

- AMRI 2013
N. Amri, *Un «manuel» ifriqiyen d'adab soufi. Paroles de sagesse de 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Mzūghī (m. 675/1276), compagnon de Shādhilī*, Tunis, 2013.
- BEHRENS-ABOUSEIF 2018
D. Behrens-Abouseif, *The Book in Mamluk Egypt and Syria (1250–1517): Scribes, Libraries and Market*, Islamic History and Civilization 162, Leiden, Boston, 2018.
- BLOOM 1987
J.M. Bloom, "The Mosque of the Qarafa in Cairo", *Muqarnas* 8, 1987, pp. 7–20.
- CECERE 2013
G. Cecere, "Le charme discret de la Shādhiliyya ou l'insertion sociale d'Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī", in G. Cecere, M. Loubet, S. Paganī (eds.), *Les mystiques juives, chrétiennes et musulmanes dans l'Égypte médiévale (VI^e-XVI^e siècles): interculturalités et contextes historiques. Actes du colloque organisé à l'Ifao, 22-24 novembre 2010*, RAPH 35, Cairo, 2013, pp. 63–93.
- COLLET 2019a
H. Collet, "Échos d'Arabie. Le pèlerinage à La Mecque de Mansa Musa (724-725/1324-1325) d'après des nouvelles sources", *History in Africa* 46, 2019, pp. 105–135.
- COLLET 2019b
H. Collet, "Royal Pilgrims from Takrūr According to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazīrī (12th–16th Century)", *Islamic Africa* 10/1–2, 2019, pp. 181–203.
- CORNELL 1998
V.J. Cornell, *Realms of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism*, Austin, 1998.
- COULON 2017
J.-C. Coulon, *La magie en terre d'islam au Moyen Âge*, CTHS Histoire 61, Paris, 2017.
- CRESWELL 1919
K.A.C. Creswell, "A Brief Chronology of the Muhammadan Monuments of Egypt to AD 1517", *BIFAO* 16, 1919, pp. 39–164.
- DEWIÈRE 2017
R. Dewière, *Du lac Tchad à La Mecque. Le sultanat du Borno et son monde (XVI^e-XVII^e siècle)*, Bibliothèque historique des pays d'Islam II, Paris, 2017.

- DOLS 1977
M.W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, Princeton, Guildford, 1977.
- FRANZ et al. 1898
J. Franz, P. Grand, M. Herz, A.H. Faouzi, "Coupole du cheikh Abdallah el-Dacrouri", *CCMAA* 14, 1898, p. 64.
- GARCIN 1976 (ed. 2005)
J.-C. Garcin, *Qūṣ. Un centre musulman de la Haute Égypte médiévale* (1976), *TAEI* 6, Cairo, 2005 (2nd ed.).
- GEOFFROY 1995
É. Geoffroy, *Le soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie, sous les derniers mamelouks et les premiers ottomans. Orientations spirituelles et enjeux culturels*, Études arabes, médiévales et modernes 156, Damas, 1995.
- GOM' A 2017
A. Gom'a, *Kutub al-ziyārāt bayn adab al-ḥiṭāṭ wa al-riḥlāt*, Beau Bassin, 2017.
- GOM' A 2018
A. Gom'a, *Ma waṣāla ilaynā min kitāb Muḥdhib al-ṭālibīn ilā qubūr al-ṣālīhīn*, Beau Bassin, 2018.
- GUEST 1926
R. Guest, "Cairene Topography: El Qarafa According to Ibn Ez Zaiyat", *JRAS* 58/1, 1926, pp. 57–61.
- GUO 2005
L. Guo, "Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem: Domestic Life in al-Biqā'ī's Autobiographical Chronicle", *MSRev* 9/1, 2005, pp. 101–121.
- HAMÈS 2008
C. Hamès, "Problématiques de la magie-sorcellerie en islam et perspectives africaines", *Cahiers d'études africaines* 189–190, 2008, pp. 81–99.
- AL-ĪBRASHY 2006
M. al-Ibrashy, "Cairo's Qarafa as Described in the ziyara Literature", in R.J.A. McGregor, A. Sabra (eds.), *Le développement du soufisme en Égypte à l'époque mamelouke / Taṭawwūr al-taṣawwuf fī Miṣr fī al-ʿaṣr al-Mamlūkī / The Development of Sufism in Mamluk Egypt*, CAI 27, Cairo, 2006, pp. 269–297.
- AL-ĪBRASHY 2013
M. al-Ibrashy, "The Life and Times of the Mamluk turba: Processual Subversion of Inceptual Intent", *AnIsl* 46, 2013, pp. 145–166.
- EL-KADI, BONNAMY 2001
G. el-Kadi, A. Bonnamy, *La cité des morts*. Le Caire, Paris, Sprimont, 2001.
- KESSLER 1976
C. Kessler, *The Carved Masonry Domes of Mediaeval Cairo*, Cairo, 1976.
- LOISEAU 2010
J. Loiseau, *Reconstruire la maison du sultan, 1350-1450. Ruine et recomposition de l'ordre urbain au Caire*, *EtudUrb* 8, Cairo, 2010.
- LOISEAU 2013
J. Loiseau, "Les événements de l'année 806. Ou comment al-Maqrīzī a pensé une rupture majeure dans l'histoire de l'Égypte", *Médiévales* 64, 2013, pp. 119–133.
- LEV TZION 1986
N. Levtzion, "Mamluk Egypt and Takrūr (West Africa)", in M. Sharon (ed.), *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of Professor David Ayalon*, Jerusalem, Leiden, 1986, pp. 183–207.
- MASSIGNON 1958
L. Massignon, "La cité des morts au Caire (Qarāfa, Darb al-Ahmar)", *BIFAO* 57, 1958, pp. 25–79.
- MAYEUR-JAOUEN 2019
C. Mayeur-Jaouen, *The Mulid of al-Sayyid al-Badawi of Tanta: Egypt's Legendary Sufi Festival*, Cairo, New York, 2019.
- MCGREGOR 2020
R.J.A. McGregor, *Islam and the Devotional Object: Seeing Religion in Egypt and Syria*, Cambridge, New York, 2020.
- MEINECKE 1972
M. Meinecke, "Zur mamlukischen Heraldik", *MDAIK* 28/2, 1972, pp. 213–287.
- MEINECKE 1992
M. Meinecke, *Die mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien (648/1250 bis 923/1517)*, vol. 1: *Genese, Entwicklung und Auswirkungen der mamlukischen Architektur*, vol. 2: *Chronologische Liste der mamlukischen Baumassnahmen*, ADAIK-Kopt. 5, Glückstadt, 1992.
- MELVIN-KOUSHKI 2017
M. Melvin-Koushki, "In Defense of Geomancy: Šaraf al-Dīn Yazdī Rebuts Ibn Ḥaldūn's Critique of the Occult Sciences", *Arabica* 64/3–4, 2017, pp. 346–403.

- AL-NAQAR 1969
U. al-Naqar, "Takrūr: The History of a Name", *JAH* 10/3, 1969, pp. 365–374.
- OHTOSHI 1993
T. Ohtoshi, "The Manners, Customs, and Mentality of Pilgrims to the Egyptian City of the Dead, 1100–1500 AD", *Orient* (Tokyo) 29, 1993, pp. 19–44.
- OHTOSHI 2006a
T. Ohtoshi, "Cairene Cemeteries as Public Loci in Mamluk Egypt", *MSRev* 10/1, 2006, pp. 83–116.
- OHTOSHI 2006b
T. Ohtoshi, "Tasawwuf as Reflected in ziyāra Books and the Cairo Cemeteries", in R.J.A. McGregor, A. Sabra (eds.), *Le développement du soufisme en Égypte à l'époque mamelouke / Taṭawwur al-taṣawwuf fi Miṣr fi al-ʿaṣr al-Mamlūki / The Development of Sufism in Mamluk Egypt*, CAI 27, Cairo, 2006, pp. 299–330.
- QĀSIM 1945 (ed. 2017)
H. Qāsim, *al-Mazārāt al-islāmiyya wa-l-aṭār al-ʿarabiyya fi Maṣr wa-l-Qāhira al-muʿizziyya* (1945), 8 vols., Alexandria, 2017 (2nd ed).
- RĀĠIB 1972
Y. Rāġib, "Sur un groupe de mausolées du cimetière du Caire", *REI* 40/1, 1972, pp. 189–195.
- RĀĠIB 1973
Y. Rāġib, "Essai d'inventaire chronologique des guides à l'usage des pèlerins du Caire", *REI* 41/2, 1973, pp. 259–280.
- RĀĠIB 1974
Y. Rāġib, "Sur deux monuments funéraires du cimetière d'al-Qarāfa al-Kubrā au Caire", *AnIsl* 12, 1974, pp. 67–84.
- SARTAIN 1971
E.M. Sartain, "Jalal ad-Din as-Suyuti's Relations with the People of Takrur", *JSS* 16/2, 1971, pp. 193–198.
- STEWART, STEWART 1973
C.C. Stewart, E.K. Stewart, *Islam and Social Order in Mauritania: A Case Study from the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, 1973.
- TAYLOR 1999
C.S. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt*, *Islamic History and Civilization* 22, Leiden, Boston, 1999.
- WILLIAMS 2008
C. Williams, *Islamic Monuments in Cairo. The Practical Guide*, Cairo, New York, 2008.