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A Note on the Disregarded Ottoman Cairene Ziyāra Book

Tetsuya OHTOSHI

Introduction

The huge cemetery areas known as al-Qarāfa al-Kubrā and al-Qarāfa al-Ṣughrā stretch from beneath the Muqattam Mountain towards Fustāṭ and historical Cairo. It became an attraction for mass visits, and the custom prevailed tenaciously among people of all classes from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. Consequently, the area formed not only a graveyard or a sanctuary, but also “the largest gathering place of the Egyptians, and the most famous pleasure resort of them (al-Maqnzi)” where enormous groups of people, including women and children enjoyed excursions.

When analyzing ziyāra (the act of visiting tombs by individuals or groups) customs at Qarafas and visitors’ mentalities, I utilized “the books of ziyāra (kutub al-ziyāra)” as main historical sources. These guidebooks were written by “the shaykh of ziyāra (sg. shaykh al-ziyāra, pl. mashāʾikh al-ziyāra, mashāyikh al-ziyāra, shuyukh al-ziyāra)” who also led visitors’ groups (tāʾifā) to the Qarafas, and at certain graves explained the deeds and merits of the persons buried there. The ziyāra books were written everywhere in the Islamic world, and more than twenty-five books are believed to have specialized in Egyptian Qarafas. Among them, only four famous tracts have survived regarding the period from

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1 Tetsuya Ohtoshi: “The Manners, Customs, and Mentality of Pilgrims to the Egyptian City of the Dead: 1100-1500 A.D.” Orient, vol. 29, 1993, pp. 19-44 (An oral presentation having almost the same content, was read at the 89th Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of Japan in 1991). Writing this article, I could not avail myself of Christopher Taylor’s Ph.D dissertation, The Cult of the Saints in Late Medieval Egypt (presented to the Princeton University, 1989). In this, he used basically the same basic materials as I, and had already pointed out some of the historical facts which I examined in my article.


3 In the fifteenth century, for example, eleven visit groups were recorded at two Qarafas simultaneously. Tuhfa 159.
the Arab conquest to the fifteenth century. These ziyāra tracts state the manners of visit, list popular graves and tell anecdotes about the persons buried there. Besides, these shaykhs of ziyāra may have brought ziyāra books with them during their visits.4

Although investigations have been made on al-Qarṣa and its visiting, they have all concentrated on the pre-Ottoman period, and almost no study can be found on the period afterwards in regard to the Cairoene ziyāra.5 My final goal is to further trace up to the modern period, the state of the ziyāra which, compared with the Middle Ages, seems to be marked by a decline. Within the course of this exploration, I wish to discover the turning point of the decline or a phenomenon of steady decline without a drastic changing point.

As a first step, this time, I will center my discussion on the early Ottoman ruling period in Egypt. The biggest reason for the lack of study of this era is presumably due to the want of relevant historical sources. Here, I take up a disregarded ziyāra book of the Ottoman Egyptian period, written around 1620 A.D., upon which Prof. ʿUṣuf Ṭāqī first shed light in his monumental article about ziyāra tracts, but this has also been the last study referring to this source heretofore.6 The book is Muḥammad b. al-Shuʿaybī’s Kitāb yashtamīl ‘alā Dhikr man dufina bi-Misr wa-al-Qāhira min al-Muḥaddithīn wa-al-Awliyāʾ wa-al-Riğāl wa-al-Nisāʾ (abridged as Yashtamīl hereafter).7 While listing Egyptian ziyāra books in his article, Ṭāqī referred to this source in the catalog of the manuscripts preserved in the Azhar Library, but mentioned that no information could be discovered other than C. Brockelmann’s short introduction.8 Fortunately, I had a chance to inspect and read through it, confirming this sources as an Egyptian ziyāra book, on which no further references can be found, so far as I know.9

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7 Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Shuʿayb b. ʿAll al-Shuʿaybī al-Abṣīlī: Kitāb yashtamīl ‘alā Dhikr man dufina bi-Misr wa-al-Qāhira min al-Muḥaddithīn wa-al-Awliyāʾ wa-al-Riğāl wa-al-Nisāʾ, MS. Maktaba al-Azhar, Taʿrīkh 5105819. This is thought to be the only surviving manuscript of this text.
9 The inspection was conducted from Nov. to Dec. of 1992, and Dec. of 1993. One of the reasons which caused this manuscript to remain hidden was that the manuscript was wrongly arranged and enclosed in a leather case with another manuscript under a different title.
I. al-Shu‘aybî and his Ziyâra Tract

About the Author

Even C. Brockelmann and al-Zirîkli give us a little information on this author, derived mainly from the catalog of the manuscripts preserved at the Azhar Library. However, data in the catalog are also based on the last part of the text, which we are examining now. From that we find that he was born in Mahalla in the Egyptian Delta, reared in Cairo, and belonged to the Shâfi‘i law school and the Ahmadiya ṭariqa (sufi order). In addition to this ziyâra book, four other tracts are known as his works, and all remain in manuscript form. Among them, I was able to examine two of his works in four manuscripts; these are al-Ma‘ānî al-Daqaqa and al-Jawhar al-Farâdî, preserved in Dâr al-Kutub al-Miṣrîya. Both texts deeply concern sufism and ṭariqa; al-Ma‘ānî in particular details practical aspects of sufism. For instance, the author frequently talks about the ḍhikr (ritualized invocation of the Names of God) and the ḍaadâra (assembly for the purpose of ḍhikr), that on these occasions the naqîb (leader) needs to prevent fuqara‘ (sufis) from drinking water, because it will emaciate the body, etc.

Chronologically speaking, al-Shu‘aybî’s ziyâra tracts were written in 1030 A.H./1621 A.D., while al-Ma‘ânî was composed in 1021/1612. Other manuscripts are respectively dated 1040/1631, 1063/1652, 1128/1715. Also one clue to al-Shu‘aybî’s career is that he mentions al-Habnâsî (miss spelling of al-Bahnasî?) as his master in a passage; however no further information can be found on this person. These are all the data about the author uncovered so far.

Its Composition

The manuscript totals 298 folios. Al-Shu‘aybî, the author, tries to state all burying places of persons who appeared in this book. Now we shall take a general view of it as follows. After the introduction, the first chapter describes on muḥaddithûn and their descendants who

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12 al-Ma‘ānî f. 152.
13 Yashsamîl fols. 298 a-b.
14 al-Jawhar: Majâmî‘ 229 (1040 A.H.), al-Jawhar: Taṣawwuf 237 (1063 A.H.), al-Jawhar: Taṣawwuf 250 (1128 A.H.). Although we are not sure that these are dates of composition or just transcribing.
15 Yashsamîl f. 208a.
were buried in Cairo and its quarters. It is followed by a description of the female muḥaddithāt's: the modest and charitable such as al-Sayyida al-Nafisa, also the good female muḥaddithāt or non-muḥaddithāt who were entombed in the two Qarāfās. Then tribes in the two Qarāfās are described, with a biography of Prophet Muḥammad and battles he fought attached. Next, a description of the people whose obituaries were not mentioned in chapter (bāh) three, and karāmāt (miracles, virtues) of the people of many tribes. Chapter five is a description of the muḥaddithūn who were buried in Cairo and its cemetery; of them the author counted 62. Hereupon, al-Shuʿaybī adds the history of Egyptian dynasties. Then a description of non-muḥaddithūn who were buried in the cemeteries in Cairo and other places concludes fairly large portion. Finally follows an epilogue.

As a Ziyāra Book

al-Shuʿaybī quotes many previous ziyāra books, clearly manifesting that he is in the same line. This point can be glanced from the following passages as well:

Ibn al-Zayyāt placed in his book, al-Kawākīb al-Sayyāra, boundary which differed from what Ibn al-Nāṣik had placed in his Miṣbāḥ al-Dayājī. In his book, al-Sakhāwī followed a different path from what these authors had followed. While Ibn al-Jabbās mentioned in his book ten tabaqa, and died without completing the forth tabaqa of them. This tract is the pioneer to date and no book precedes it. As for Kitāb Murshid al-Zuwwār, it gathered useful lessons and narratives as the visitors (to al-Qarafa) had desired, then elucidated the author's idea. I made this book (Yashtamil) in one tabaqa, to gain perfect usefulness.17

In another section, al-Shuʿaybī also wrote that he composed this ziyāra tract in order to correct the visitor's knowledge of certain graves.18

Books of ziyāra generally created a chaotic pool of different discourses, quoting many other ziyāra books prior to them.19 For example, regarding ziyāra books, Yashtamil quotes Murshid twice, Miṣbāḥ fourteen times, Kawākīb twenty-five times, and Tuhfa twenty-eight times, so far as is indicated by names. These quotations are concentrated in the earlier parts of Yashtamil, before around folio one hundred, except Tuhfa which appears mainly after folio one hundred. It is obvious from this that citations from Murshid are quite few, while Kawākīb is cited nearly as often as Tuhfa, which is the latest of these four tracts. In addition, some quotations al-Shuʿaybī asserted that he had quoted from Tuhfa were, in fact, requotations from Murshid.

16 Here the muḥaddith means a person who transmits the traditions of Prophet Muḥammad with manifest genealogy.
17 Yashtamil fols. 72b-73a.
18 Ibid., f. 67a.
Another feature of *Yashtamil* is that we find new names of such prominent scholars as al-Maqrizi (d. 845/1442), Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (d. 852/1449), al-Suyuti (d. 911/1505) which are rare in previous ziyara texts for chronological reasons.

More important, in my opinion, is the fact that *Yashtamil* cites unfamiliar ziyara texts which may date from the later Mamluk to the Ottoman period, such as those of Ibn al-Munir and 'Abd al-Zahir. Among them, the most significant would be the mentioning of another ziyara book by al-Shu'aybi, *al-Nashr al-'Atir*. He stated that he had described in this text those who had been buried in the area ranging from beneath the Muqattam mountain under the Citadel to al-Matarinya as its north limit. They added up to as nearly two thousand people, born mainly in the ninth and fifth hijra centuries. In *Yashtamil*, on the other hand, he dealt with people bearing *hadith*, contrary to *al-Nashr al-'Atir*. Although references to *al-Nashr* appear frequently in *Yashtamil*, nothing is known about it. This tract may possibly relate to the anonymous *Untitled Index of Saints' Tombs in Cairo*, preserved in Bibliothèque de l'Institut des langues et civilisations orientales in Paris, but unfortunately access to this unique manuscript is impossible at this time.

*Yashtamil* mentions sites of graves in detail, such as "eastward fourteen steps, then northward some steps", and descriptions on tombstones, showing that the author himself had visited and done fieldwork there. He also gives detailed information on the devastation of some graves. Any way, however, al-Shu'aybi is humble in expressing his own view in comparison to other shaykhs of ziyara.

**Its Features and Tendencies**

First, *Yashtamil* is conspicuous in its unpracticality for use as a ziyara manual. In comparison with previous ziyara books, its content was rather ideally categorized by employing the criterion of *muḥaddith* or not *muḥaddith*, so that it ceased to constitute a guidebook in relation to Qarafas' geographical composition. On this point, we find it innovational and, at the same time, unattractive for topographical study. Thus, with the exception of the Kurdish cemetery outside the Nasr Gate or al-Sufiya cemetery, *Yashtamil* is inferior as a guidebook. There remains, however, the possibility that al-Shu'aybi's alternate text, *al-Nashr al-'Atir*, reports on this subject instead of this text.

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20 Ḥāfīz's tract is titled, *al-Mastūm bi-al-Bāsira fi-man ḏufina bi-al-Qāhirā min Ahl al-Awrād* according to *Yashtamil* f. 2b.
21 *Yashtamil* f. 256b.
23 *Untitled Index of Saints' Tombs in Cairo*, (Arabic Manuscript no. 404). I have been corresponding with the Library (Bibliothèque) since 1994, but have been unsuccessful in getting permission to read this manuscript. Personal correspondence with the director of the Library said that the manuscript was "missing for the time being (sic)". Finally, in Autumn of 1997, I went to the Library myself and learned that access to all Arabic manuscripts there is forbidden. I sincerely hope that there be no delay in once again making this text available for viewing. I really appreciate the help of the librarians there, F. Carneiro and Mounem Rashida. Also I would like to thank Prof. Yusuf Râghib for giving me valuable advice on this manuscript.
Secondly, al-Shu'aybī attaches great importance to intellectual lineage. This trend seems to have already begun from about the time of al-Sakhawī, the later Mamlūk period. Therefore the lineages of transmission of hadiths, the study of fiqh and the Qur'ān, and sufī’s ijāza (authorization) are fully recorded. Moreover, the author generally laid stress on whether one had borne hadith or not. Perhaps he himself had profound knowledge of hadith studies.

In elsewhere, I have made analysis to show that ziyāra books substantially reflect the more popular Egyptian history that was accepted by the populace, rather than the official historical tendency of the chronicles which happened to include some oral traditions. Accordingly, ziyāra texts feature, so to speak, a panorama of the whole of Egyptian history as the people considered it to be. So Yashtamil devoted pages to descriptions of pyramids and the ancient ruin of ‘Ayn Shams, added to anecdotes of the Pharaoh’s wife Āsiya, Moses and Jesus, transactions between Copts and Arab conquerors, and Fātimid carnivorism. That is, “Egyptian history” as illustrated in other ziyāra books was reiterated here, too.

Since ziyāra tracts represent to a certain degree discourses of the common people, the Mamlūk sultan Baybars often appears in them, being modified into a legendary hero. There seems to be a certain deep connection with the oral literature of “Sīra Baybars”. Similarly, the name of Qarāqūsh, the Ayyūbid Cairene governor, is found in the text, possibly pertaining to oral traditions surrounding him.

I might add some other tendencies of Yashtamil as compared with other ziyāra books. The author expresses an adherence to the knowledge concerning Arab tribes, and likes to cite poetry, but not the popular oral traditions of visit customs. He tends to prefer the ideal and metaphysical aspects of sufism, rather than practical ones. Regarding Islamic creed, he sticks to writing about fasting; this element coupled with other religious ones, may have been intended to play a role in edifying the people. Also, this text can be used as a data source for statical studies. It clarifies dates of birth and death of persons buried there, birth place, year of arrival in Cairo, site where buried, and intellectual genealogy. A typical life course would be summarized as: born in some place in the Islamic world, came to study in Cairo, then taught there, and being entombed in Qarāfā areas.

II. Toward the Study of Early Ottoman Qarāfā

Topography and History

In defining the topography, Yashtamil has clear statements, such as “historians have reached agreement that al-Qarāfā ranges from ‘Ayn Shams to Ṭurā”. The explanation in

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24 T. Ohtoshi, “The Egyptian “Book of the Visit” as Historical Material”.
25 Yashtamil fols. 134a, 223b, 224a, 133a, 254a.
27 Yashtamil fols. 146b-147a.
the text speaks about its range in the Ottoman period from north to the south, comprising al-Ṣahrā’ area in the Mamlūk period. We are not certain, however, whether this definition belongs to common usage of the age or not.

As for the historical formation of Qarāfas, it says that the Greater Qarāfa (al-Qarāfa al-Kubrā) preceded as a graveyard for the people of Fustāṭ, particularly from the first to the third hijra centuries. Then the Smaller Qarāfa (al-Qarāfa al-Ṣughrā) developed from the foot of the Muqattām Mountain to Mashāhid al-Ṣaḥāba. The situation in the early Ottoman Qarāfa was that rebuilding went on at al-Mujawirūn cemetery and its surroundings, and also in the area between the Citadel and al-Maṭarīya.28 As a result, al-Shu‘aybī writes, quoting Ibn al-Muballat, “from al-Raydānīya to the Citadel, there spread six hundred turbas (mausolea), fifteen mashhads (mausolea), nineteen quarters (jiha), entombing four thousand dead(?) in the year 950/1543-4. After that, reconstruction has continued until recently (beginning of the seventeenth century)”.29

The Muqattām mountain enjoyed high esteem as ever. Yashtamil states four spots enabling the fulfillment of prayer (du‘a’); Jabal ‘Arafāt, al-Ka‘ba, Jerusalem, and al-Muqattām as well.30

Devastation of graveyards and people residing in them were other issues on which the text focuses. We find plentiful descriptions saying that graves were lay wasted and effaced. In fact, some zāwiya (sufi convents) had turned into graveyards; furthermore, some graves had come to be used as residences.31

Manners of Visiting Qarāfas

I have elucidated the visiting manners to Qarāfas elsewhere.32 To give my conclusion first, visit customs to Qarāfa can fully be observed from this text, expressed in such statements as “this mausoleum is crowded with visitors”.33 The habit of group visits has also been attested to by travelers’ accounts such as Muṣṭafā ‘Alī, Kabrīt, al-Nābulṣī, al-Khiyārī and E. Evliya Celebi, nevertheless they are not so clear from the information in al-Shu‘aybi’s book.34

In more detail, al-Shu‘aybī prohibits the osculation of graves, as well as wiping off and sitting on them, by quoting hadiths.35 This shows that these habits had still been practices by Qarāfa visitors as before. Besides, visitors to the mausoleum of Sayyida Nafīsa would recite special prayer (du‘a’) formula.36

28 Ibid., fols. 296a-b. The range also corresponds to al-Ṣahrā’ area in the Mamlūk period.
29 Ibid., f. 234a. The same problem had already been reported in the Mamlūk period. Sec T. Ohtoshi, “City of the Dead and the Egyptian Society from the 12th to the 15th Century”.
30 Ibid., fols. 93a-b.
31 Ibid., fols., 35a-36b.
Next, in regard to *nadhr* (making a vow and votive offerings), we find a requotation about revocations offering incense, saffron, candles, oil, and lumps. Likewise the lighting customarily seen at certain graves reflects a habit of donating candles or lumps as votive offerings.

Even during the early Ottoman period, to fulfill the prayer (*ijāba al-du‘ā*) seems to have been still of capital importance for Qarāfa visitors. *Yashtamil* counted more than twenty five places for fulfilling prayers. The number is, nevertheless, much smaller than in previous ziyāra texts. And saints who accomplished prayers while living can also be found, but they were all pre-Mamlūk cases. Moreover, al-Shu‘aybī cites passages on which specific times and seasons expressly enable prayers, as well as desirable types of prayers.

The notion of intercession (*shafa‘a*) in this period was, in my view, of as crucial importance as before, when it focused more on the mechanism of fulfillment of prayers. And not only the usual intercession by Muslim saints, but also reciting the "Sin" chapter of the Qurʾān (Ch. 36) would lead reciters to mediation by the chapter itself. It should be noted that the reward (*thawāb*) for reciting the Qurʾān or praiseworthy deeds was sent to others as well.

The dwelling within Qarāfas, as mentioned above, was not a recent custom as has been argued generally: al-Shu‘aybī writes that it had started already in the second century A.H. (from eighth to ninth century A.D.). In the early Ottoman period, the ḥāra (quarter) and houses extended around the mausoleum of Imām Layth in al-Qarāfa. We have more evidence of graveyards’ being turned into residences in this age. Another characteristic custom that appeared in *Yashtamil* was entombment by transferring from one cemetery to another, both around Cairo.

I regret to conclude that, in helping us to gain knowledge of manners of visits in this period, *Yashtamil* is obviously inferior to previous ziyāra books or the travelers’ accounts above mentioned. Travelers like Muṣṭafā ‘Alī, Kābrīt, al-Nābulṣī, al-Khiyārī and E. Çelebi witnessed and experienced the ziyāra of Qarāfas, vividly illustrated the manner of visiting. Above all, al-Nābulṣī is conspicuous in depicting the situation inside mausolea, such as in the Ibn al-Fāriq’s mausoleum after the Friday mass prayer, when the ḥaḍra would be held

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39 *Ibid.*, fols. 47a, 46b, etc.
40 *Yashtamil* fols. 26a, 174b etc. As for the analysis of this mechanism, see T. Ohtoshi, “The Manners, Customs, and Mentality of Pilgrims to the Egyptian City of the Dead: 1100-1500 A.D.” pp. 30-39.
41 *Yashtamil* f. 69b may be requotation from previous ziyāra book.
43 *Yashtamil* f. 80b.
44 al-Ḥaqqā f. 199.
45 *Yashtamil* f. 207a.
with dance and songs based on verses of the deceased. Whoever liked a passage would say "repeat!" and the singer would repeat the phrase.\(^47\)

*Karāmāt (Virtues, Miracles)*

Almost all the buried people listed in *Yashtamil* had *karāma* anecdotes concerning them attached. But the further we read in the text, the more the author tends to omit *karāma* content, simply saying that this individual has many *karāmāt*. Any way, *karāma* kept its importance in this literature, but with more abstract tendencies than concrete and popular plots.

Incidentally, contents of *karāmāt* in *Yashtamil* can be categorized as: healing of illness, shrinking of the earth, walking on water or flying in the air, the art of changing qualities, the art of creation, tale of water shortage, discernment, animal tales, detection of absence, conversion stories, repentance, diet tales, money tales, post-mortem miracles, intercourse with the Prophet and the Ḥār al-ʿAyn in dream. Further, erudition, fragrance, coarse clothing, seclusion, Islamic good conduct, and so on. All these have already been denoted in the previous four ziyāra texts according to my categorization.\(^48\)

**Conclusion**

Through these analyses, we were not able to detect changing tendencies in visiting Qarāfās in this era. Likewise the relationship between the ziyāra and mawlid (saint’s birthday celebration), which had evidently flourished until this time, is quite dilute as far as the evidence in *Yashtamil* is concerned. Surely we need more systematic inquiry for Egyptian mawlids.

Finally, I must conclude that, to investigate fully the early Ottoman Qarāfa, we require other sources than *Yashtamil*. Especially, regarding the study of Qarāfa’s structures and topography, chronicles and geographies seem effective, as well as travelers’ accounts for examining the visiting manners; chronicles for ruling elites’ visits, these are also indispensable. Among others, chronicles in manuscript form and sources in the Ottoman language such as E. Çelebî would be substantive. By scrutinizing these materials with *shariʿa* (Islamic law court) documents and law books, I would like to elucidate the ziyāra and al-Qarāfa of the Ottoman Egypt more fully, connecting then further to the modern situation.

In relation to this, I would comment on further prospects for the ziyāra sources. In my hypothesis, they will be functionally differentiated into several genres. Ziyāra books


\(^{48}\) See T. Ohtoshi, *Egyptian City of the Dead and Visit to Holy Tombs: The Case Study from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, (Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Tokyo, in Japanese), 1994, Chapter Two.
themselves will survive, like al-Sukkari’s, which Hasan Qasim stated as being the last Egyptian ziyāra tract.\textsuperscript{49} Nevertheless, this tract is quite short, forty-seven pages in manuscript, steadfastly devoted to topographical illustration, listing names of the deceased, resulting in no mention of visit manners or karāmāt. In this sense, it is nearer to the description of al-Qarāfa in Ibn Abī al-Surūr’s geographical work that was much influenced by al-Maqrīzī, or the celebrated Khīṭat of ‘Alī Mubārak.\textsuperscript{50} On the other hand, virtues of the Prophet’s family (Ahl al-Bayt) and their descendants, likewise the visit to their graves, came to be independently compiled into books, such as al-Ujhūrī (d.1784), al-Qal‘āwī (d.1815), al-Shablanjī (d.1883), al-Jumzūrī, al-Mushkī, and Aḥmad b. Muqaybal, etc.\textsuperscript{51} These tracts usually referred to other graves in al-Qarāfa.

Furthermore, coinciding with these currents, in about the eleventh century A.H., previous ziyāra books as Murshid and Miṣbah were frequently copied. In addition, as in Murshid, we see lots of new information that was added by anonymous writers (or by the copiers themselves) after the deaths of the real authors. This suggests that previous ziyāra books were still in effective use. In fact, former ziyāra tracts comprised more perfect knowledge on visit customs and older graves, and at least on pre-Mamlūk tombs, they were thoroughly detailed.


\textsuperscript{50} See Qaff, Kawkabī Abī al-Surūr, and ‘Alī Mubārak.

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