

The Philosophy of Locality Choice of Major Ayyubid and Mamluk Khanqahs in Cairo Ahmad Awaad Hussein

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Al Imam Abū ‘Abdullāh Muhammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī, famous Muslim jurist, said once that "three things in this world have been made lovely to me; avoiding affectation, treating people kindly, and following the way of tasawwuf."¹ This valuable statement illustrates the significance of Sufism as one of the major aspects of Islam as it basically represents the living heart of Islam, the aspect of eternal wisdom, the inner dimension of the revelation given to Muhammad, and not an arbitrary form of occultism.²

Accordingly, the Sufi could be generally defined as the Muslim who cleared and purified his soul in terms of devoting himself to a life of asceticism and austerity, aiming in the first place to gain Allah's gratification and mercy.³ Equally, Sufi could be defined as the Muslim who freed himself from living a restricted life with carnal or bodily concerns and bounds, and turning to God on the horizon of heart.⁴ In fact, the origin of the term "Sufi" has been a debatable issue between different scholars, for some believe that it was originally derived from the Arabic word "Ṣafā" which stands for clarity as one of the main characteristics of the Sufi's soul.⁵ Also, there is another stream which rooted the term "Sufi" to the Arabic word "Taṣfiya" which translates as "refinement" or "filtration" to illustrate the filtration of the Sufi's heart from evil deeds and intentions.⁶ However, the most popular theory states that it was primitively derived from the Arabic word "Ṣūf" which translates as "wool" for it was the main material used by the Sufis in their clothing to be matching with the nature of their ascetic life.⁷

In the light of Sufism history, it is broadly accepted between scholars that Sufism didn't exist till the second century of Hijra, as the Muslims of the first century were relatively close to the era of the Prophet Muhammad so they were strictly practicing Islam according to his direct instructions without bearing any titles, but the situation was slightly different by approaching the second half of the second century as the Muslims started to interact widely with other cultures and civilizations, so many of them began to be attracted the different aspects of their mundane life, in turn, a moderate Sufi stream sprang as a counter action to that newly born phenomenon in terms of preserving the fundamental Islamic rites and traditions.⁸ Meanwhile, the third and fourth centuries witnessed a new concept for Sufism which became itself a very special spiritual and mental institution through which the Sufis' concepts, principals and beliefs were divided between modest and extreme steams to the extent that some jurists accused them of being a threat to the society.⁹ Consequently, those two centuries witnessed the division of the Sufis into sects and religious orders "Tariqas", and each order had its Shaykh, rules, principals and followers.¹⁰ Thus,

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¹ www.spiritualfoundations.net/quotes.htm

² Geoffroy, *Sufism*, 1.

³ ‘Abdullāh, *Ma‘āhid*, 29; Rizq, *Khānqāwāt* 1:48.

⁴ Gülen, *Sufism*, 9; Kāmil, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 51.

⁵ Loc. cit.

⁶ Hilmī, *al-Hayāh*, 92.

⁷ ‘Abdullāh, *Ma‘āhid*, 29; Stoddart, *Sufism*, 20.

⁸ Hilmī, *al-Hayāh*, 70-71; ‘Abdullāh, *Ma‘āhid*, 32; Bentounès, *Sufism*, 22; Abu Ryān, *al Ṣuffiyah*, 65; Turkī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 100.

⁹ Kāmil, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 65-67; ‘Abdullāh, *Ma‘āhid*, 33.

¹⁰ Turkī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 238.

the Sufism trend has changed from individual Sufism to group Sufism, and the numbers of the Sufis increased to the extent that it was as an urgent necessity for them to establish a religious institution to house their communal life and accommodates their religious rituals and activities. This, institution is known as the "*khanqah*",¹¹ and most probably it was firstly established throughout the Islamic world in Persia (Iran) sometime between the (3-4 AH / 9-10 AD).¹²

As for Egypt, it is important to realize that the *khanqah* was firstly introduced to Cairo in the second half of (6 AH/ 12 AD) during the reign of Ṣalah al-Dīn upon converting dār Sa'īd al-Su'adā' which dates back to the Fatimid era- into a *khanqah*.¹³ Henceforth, this Ayyubid *khanqah* became the nucleus of the *khanqah* architecture in Egypt, especially Cairo which had witnessed a remarkable development in the *khanqah* architecture throughout its medieval history to reach its peak by the Burji Mamluk dynasty. Consequently, Cairo turned to be almost like an open-air museum for those *khanqahs* which were primarily founded in distinctive localities throughout Cairo's most important districts, neighborhoods, and outskirts.

Accordingly, this paper aims in the first place to unveil the main philosophy and concept behind the patrons' choice of specific locations throughout a major Islamic city like Cairo and its outskirts to accommodate their *khanqahs* during the Ayyubid and Mamluk dynasties in Egypt.

Certainly, the *khanqah* of Sa'īd al-Su'adā' has a very special significance for being the first *khanqah* to be founded throughout the history of Islamic architecture in Egypt (fig. 1).¹⁴ It was established in 569/ 1173 by Ṣalāh al-Dīn through converting that famous Fatimid house which was known formerly by dār Sa'īd al-Su'adā' into a Sufi religious institution known as Duwāyrat al-Ṣūfiyya or al-Ṣālihiyya,¹⁵ to receive Sufis from all over the Islamic world.¹⁶ The dār is located in a unique spot in Fatimid Cairo which was known by Rahbit al-'aid, right across the street from dār al-Wizāra,¹⁷ and its foundation was attributed to Sa'īd al-Su'adā', who was an eunuch of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustanṣir.¹⁸ Currently, the *khanqah's* design is based on a cruciform plan with a courtyard "*sahn*" and four iwans,¹⁹ in addition to the *khālāwa* or the cells for Sufis. Notably, Ṣalāh al-Dīn's choice of that unique location for his *khanqah* was not coincident, but to re-exploit one of the major Shi'ī Fatimid institutions as *khanqah* reserved for Sufis in respect of reviving and resurrecting the Sunī doctrine.²⁰ Assuredly, doctrinal symbolism here plays a remarkable role, as Ṣalāh al-Dīn aimed to exploit the architecture and locality in symbolizing the revival of the Sunī doctrine, and its remarkable victory over the Shi'ī creed in the heart of Fatimid Cairo, and right across the street from dār al-wizārā, the center of Shi'a rule and political power.²¹ This applied symbolism was among the main motifs behind the tangible expansion in the *khanqahs* building program throughout the Mamluk period.

As the Ayyubid dynasty was honored by the introduction of the *khanqah* in Egypt's Islamic architecture history, the Mamluks markedly succeeded in engraving their names in the history as patrons of architecture through their exclusive contributions to the different types of Islamic architecture, especially in Cairo. Indeed, the Mamluks grew that little *khanqah* seedling which they

¹¹ 'Abdullāh, *Ma'āhid*, 34.

¹² Rizq, *Khānqāwāt*, 1:25.

¹³ Loc. cit.

¹⁴ Fernandes, *Evolution*, 55; Rizq, *Aṭlas*, 1:736, Rizq, *Khānqāwāt*, 127.

¹⁵ Fernandes, *Evolution*, 55.

¹⁶ Aḥmad, *al-'Imārah*, 214.

¹⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 2:415.

¹⁸ Loc. cit.; 'Abdullāh, *Ma'āhid*, 75.

¹⁹ Rizq, *Khānqāwāt*, 135, Fernandes, *Evolution*, 57.

²⁰ Aḥmad, *al-'Imārah*, 214; Fernandes, *Evolution*, 56.

²¹ Fernandes, *Evolution*, 56.

inherited from the Ayyubids till it became a multifunction foundation and a remarkable star in the sky of Cairo medieval architecture.

During the Bahari Mamluk period (1250-1382) Egypt enjoyed an outstanding reputation worldwide as a direct result of the victory of the Mamulk Sultans over both the Mongols and the Crusaders, and also due to their role in the the revival of the Abbasid Caliphate in Cairo, consequently, Cairo as the capital of the Mamulk Sultanate took the lead in the whole region from different perspectives, especially the political, military and religious. Such religious leadership imposed on the Mamluks to be patrons of religious architecture through executing a pompous building program of religious foundations of different types throughout Cairo and its outskirts, especially the *khanqah* which had always come on the top of the Mamluk religious building list.²²

Naturally, the locality of the *khanqah* in Cairo or its suburbs had always been a major concern for the patron and the architect as well upon planning its foundation. It could be permissible to state that, in most cases, the locality choice of the Mamluk *khanqah* was twofold; first, the patrons aimed at exploiting an already existing dynamic site for their *khanqahs* in connection with adding a special value to their building, second, they aimed to use the *khanqah*-in addition to its basic functions-as an architectural tool to achieve further urban development targets in the chosen locality and its surroundings. The *khanqahs* of Amir Sanjar al-Jawli (1303-4) (fig. 2) along with that of Amir Shaykhū (1355) (fig. 3)²³ are good examples that demonstrate the impact of the vitality of a specific neighborhood or a historic route on the patron's locality choice for his building.

Sanjar al-Jawli was one of the most powerful Amirs during the lengthy reign of al-Nāsir Muhammad,²⁴ while Amir Shaykhū al-'Umari represented the major political authority in the state during the reign of Sultan Hasan until his assassination in 1337.²⁵ The common aspect between the two Amirs was their aim to commemorate their names, and the names of the Sultans whom they served through leaving a unique architectural imprint, that is to say, a remarkable *khanqah*. Consequently, each Amir was keen to choose a very special locality to accommodate his *khanqah* in terms of having that *khanqah* broadly observed and visited by the Sultan and the public as well. Henceforth, both Amirs smartly chose to have their *khanqahs* overlooking the Ṣalība Street.²⁶ Certainly, the Ṣalība Street had always enjoyed a unique rank among the Cairene streets during the Mamluk period, this uniqueness arose from being a major artery in Cairo's main processional route known by "al-Tarī' al-Sultānī."²⁷ The Ṣalība Street connected between Bāb Zuwayla and the citadel, thus, most of the Mamluk Sultans used it in returning back to the citadel after their procession toured Cairo.²⁸ In other cases, the royal processions pursued the Ṣalība upon parading from the citadel to the Nilometer at Rawda Island, Bulāq, or Giza and vice versa.²⁹ Consequently, both Amirs were attracted to al- Ṣalība so as to have their religious institutions seen and admired by their Ṣultāns and the public when the Sultanic processions were in action. Therefore, the significance of that processional route played a pivotal role in the choice of both Amirs to the locality of their *khanqahs*.

On the other hand, Cairo and its suburbs housed many *khanqahs* which were located in relatively remote areas from the city center, such exclusive choice could affirm the hypothesis which states that such localities didn't enjoy many advantages, however, the *khanqah's* patron

²² 'Abd Allā, *Ma'āhid*, 65.

²³ Abouseif, *Islamic*, 101, 116.

²⁴ Abouseif, *Cairo*, 156; 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Tarīkh*, 124.

²⁵ Abouseif, *Cairo*, 191; 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Tarīkh*, 156; Muhammad, *Masājid*, 3: 242.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 3:143, 259.

²⁷ Ismā'īl, *al-Usūl*, 16.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 17.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 21.

aimed to establish his religious foundation in such localities to exploit the *khanqah* and its vital religious role as an architectural nucleus of a further broader plan such as urban development. The *khanqahs* of Siryāqūs and Khwānd Ṭughai "Umm Anuk" are worthy examples of the discussed theory. Siryāqūs before the reign of al-Nāsir Muhammad Ibn Qalāwūn was merely a small rural village located approximately 20 km to the northeast of al-Qāhira, but during his reign, Siryāqūs witnessed a tremendous urban development plan as a direct result of al-Nāsir's vision to this area as one of the most important outskirts of al-Qāhira.³⁰ Siryāqūs had always enjoyed a distinctive locality in the northeastern outskirts of al-Qāhira, as it was regarded as a vestibule or an entrance hall to the capital, in addition to being an official square where delegations and visitors were received or bidden farewell. Also, Siryāqūs was regarded as terminal for the Sultan's procession upon leaving for/ arriving from Syria from/ to the capital.³¹ Thereupon, and due to the previously mentioned reasons, al-Nāsir adopted an extensive urbanization plan for Siryāqūs in 1325.³² The cornerstone for that urban plan was his religious complex which accommodated a major *khanqah*, a congregational mosque and a mausoleum. Consequently, his Amirs built a series of palaces set amidst gardens, for which the sultan imported trees from Syria.³³ Unfortunately, this *khanqah* does not currently exist as it was replaced by that of al-Ashraf Barsbāy in 1427 (fig. 4),³⁴ but al-Nāsir's *khanqah* will be always remembered for being the core of the urbanization plan of the whole district which is known currently by *al-khanqah*.³⁵

Markedly, the *khanqah* of Khwānd Ṭughai "Umm Anuk" could be regarded as another evidence of exploiting the significance of the *khanqah* presence in a certain location in achieving a further broader plan of urbanization for that locality (fig. 5). This *khanqah* is located in the Northern Cemetery of al-Qāhira which was truly a distinctive suburb of the capital. The significance of the Northern Cemetery arose initially from the foundation of that dome known as *Qubbat al-Naṣr* which was a major Sufi center in Egypt where the Sufis lived, prayed, and practiced their rituals.³⁶ Naturally, those Sufis were buried around the dome, so the area turned to be a blessed area which attracts people from all over Egypt to join the Sufis in their religious activities, or even to be interred after death next to their bodies. Al-Zahir Baybars decided to convert that spacious area located to the south of *Qubbat al-Naṣr* into a tremendous hippodrome for troop parades, and practice of different war games specially *al-Qabaq* game which was the favorite shooting game practiced in the area, thus, the hippodrome was known by *maydan al-Qabaq*.³⁷ Chiefly, the Northern Cemetery underwent a revolutionary development under al-Nāṣir Muḥammad during the reign of whom Egypt enjoyed a unique political and economic stability, and Cairo witnessed an unequalled expansion. Accordingly, al-Nāṣir put the foundation stone of the Northern Cemetery's urbanization plan through dedicating a *khanqah* to his favorite wife Khwānd Ṭughai who was known also "Umm Anuk."³⁸ Consequently, al-Nāṣir's Amirs were attracted to this site where they established further foundations down the road of urbanization such as mausolea, congregational mosques and *sabils* to the extent that it became almost like a small city.³⁹ Thereupon, this historic *khanqah* could clearly illustrate the fact that in many cases the *khanqah* was founded according to its importance in certain localities in Cairo's outskirts to act-besides its religious role-as a nucleus of a further

³⁰ Fernandes, *Evolution*, 61.

³¹ Abouseif, *Patrons*, 270-271.

³² 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Tarīkh*, 229.

³³ Abouseif, *Patrons*, 270.

³⁴ 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Tarīkh*, 230; Muhammad, *Masājid*, 4:128.

³⁵ Nuwayṣar, *al-Imārah*, 539.

³⁶ Hamza, *Northern*, 1.

³⁷ Al-Shishtāwī, *Mayādīn*, 5; Hamza, *Northern*, 1; Abouseif, *Islamic*, 135.

³⁸ Ahmad, *al-Mar'ah*, 58; Rizaq, *Khānqawāt*, 1:291, 295-296; Hamza, *Northern*, 4; Muhammad, *Masājid*, 3:242.

³⁹ Hamza, *Northern*, 26; Haddād, *al-Qāhira*, 148.

urban development project in connection with expanding Cairo's borders to lessen the capital's dense population.

In very limited cases, some other factors affected the patron's location choice for his *khanqah* such as the land topography. The Nizāmīyah *khanqah* is considered a remarkable example in demonstrating this theme (fig. 6). This *khanqah* was founded in 1356/757 by Nizām al-Dīn who was appointed by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad to be the Shaykh of his famous *khanqah* at Siryāqūs.⁴⁰ The *khanqah* is uniquely located almost 50m above the ground level, on one of the tops of the Muqātam hills to the north of Cairo's citadel. Such exotic location makes it the highest historic *khanqah* in Egypt. The patron aimed behind choosing that elevated site to symbolize the sublimity and highness of the Sufi life and the Sufis themselves who chose willingly to morally ascend from the mundane life level to another higher level of a divine life throughout dedicating themselves to Allah's worshipping and obedience. Moreover, this splendid locality allowed the *khanqah's* patron to overlook *Shari' Bāb al-Wadā'* which was during the Mamluk period the first phase of that famous medieval royal processional route known by "al-Darb al-Sultānī,"⁴¹ so the *khanqah*, and according to its elevated position, was clearly visible by the crowds who attended and watched different parades marching through al-Darb al-Sultānī, as if the patron was indirectly directing the public to join the Sufis in their spiritual religious activities. Therefore, the land topography could be classified as one of the top factors which affected the location choice of the *khanqah* by the patron in the shadow of adding a touch of uniqueness to his establishment.

Surprisingly, as the period of the Burji Mamluks witnessed the peak or the golden phase of the *khanqah* architecture, it also experienced in 1517 the evanescence of this art when Egypt was conquered by the Ottomans.⁴² As a matter of fact, most of the Burji Mamluk *khanqahs* were built by the Sultans unlike the majority of Bahari Mamluk *khanqahs* which were established by the Amirs, wealthy merchants, Sufi Shaykhs, and others rather than the Sultān himself.⁴³

This Burji Mamluk phenomenon could reflect the wealthy state of most of its Sultans due to the monopoly policy which they applied along with the tremendous taxes and customs they imposed on the commercial expeditions passing through the Egyptian land. The Burji Mamluk Sultans had always been keen to show themselves as pious and righteous sovereigns along with being the protectors of Islam. Meanwhile, they also aimed to commemorate their names throughout the next generations to acquire pure and sincere supplications from the public that may Allah have mercy on them after death and rescue them in the judgment day.⁴⁴ The *khanqah* was their main architectural tool in achieving their religious and political targets, so they focused on developing its characteristics and architectural features to be distinguished from the *khanqahs* of the Bahari Mamluk period, for example, most of the *khanqahs* were no longer just establishments for the Sufis to reside and perform their rituals, but they were used also as Friday mosques.⁴⁵ Upon visiting any of those Burji Mamluk *khanqahs*, the visitor may be impressed by the architecture and decorative arts, but this impression could be doubled if the locality choice concept is revealed.

The *khanqahs* of Faraj Ibn Barqūq and al-Ashraf Barsbāy come on the top of the list of the most impressive Burji Mamluk *khanqahs* from architectural, decorative arts, and locality choice perspectives.

The *khanqah* of Faraj Ibn Barqūq was established in (1400-11) (fig. 7), it is located at the northernmost area of the Northern Cemetery in a spacious area,⁴⁶ part of which was once dedicated as a cemetery for the Sufis, for that reason al-Ẓāhir Barqūq decided to be interred

⁴⁰ Williams, *Islamic*, 84; Warner, *Monuments*, 113.

⁴¹ Ismā'īl, *al-Usūl*, 2.

⁴² 'Abd Allāh, *Ma'āhid*, 67.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 66.

⁴⁴ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁶ Muhammad, *Masājid*, 4:63.

besides the Sufis in this modest area instead of his mausoleum in his complex at Naḥāsīn on all Mu'izz street.⁴⁷ His son and successor, al Nāṣir Faraj, fulfilled his father's wish by building a major *khanqah* and a double mausoleum near the Sufis' tombs.⁴⁸ Indeed, the case of this *khanqah*, regarding its location, is unique in the history of Islamic architecture of Cairo as al Nāṣir Faraj aimed to exploit the importance of that site in maximizing the value of his *khanqah* and in the same time he aimed at taking his *khanqah* as an initial step in creating a radical change in architectural face of area through a very well planned urban development strategy.⁴⁹ The significance of the chosen locality of the *khanqah* arose initially from overlooking the last phase of the royal processional route known by "al-Darb al- Sultānī " along with being adjacent to Qubbat al Naṣr, that extraordinary Sufi center in Cairo's northeastern outskirt. Al- Darb al- Sultānī, as the official processional route of the Mamluks commenced from al-Bāb al-Wastānī in the northwestern side of Cairo's citadel- the official residence of the Mamluk Sultans-then, it penetrated Cairo's eastern wall to enter the southern area of the Northern Cemetery, and it continues mainly in a northeastern direction to end at the previously mentioned Sufi foundation of "Qubbat al- Naṣr."⁵⁰ In fact, the processions which followed al-Darb al- Sultānī could be classified into 4 types as follows:

- 1- The royal processions, which were executed upon the Sultan's ascension to the throne.⁵¹
- 2- The athletic processions, which were organized by the Sultan for his troops when leaving the citadel towards *maydān al-qabaq* to practice different sports and games.⁵²
- 3- The funerary processions, which were organized for the Sultans' funerals, especially those Burji Mamluk sultans who were interred in the Northern Cemetery,⁵³ for the Cairenes did not appreciate the passage of any funeral within the city's wall.⁵⁴
- 4- The military processions, which followed al-Darb al-Sultānī when the troops were leaving Egypt for the Levant, such as that military procession which was organized by Sultan al-Muzafar Qutuz in 1260 when he left Egypt with his troops to meet the Tatars in the battle of 'Ain Jālūt.⁵⁵ Accordingly, both sides of that processional route had always been during the Mamluk period one of the public's most favorite meeting points, so many of the Burji Mamluk Sultans-starting from al al-Nāṣir-Faraj- were eager to establish their *khanqahs* in the Northern Cemetery overlooking al-Darb al- Sultānī to please the public and the crowds who witnessed the different parades, and in the same time to commemorate their names through ages as pious Sultāns to acquire the next generations sincere supplications for mercy and remission.

On the other hand, al-Nāṣir Faraj followed the urbanization strategy of al-Nāṣir Muhammad in urbanizing the Northern Cemetery. His plan was based on exploiting his extraordinary complex which housed a *khanqah*, a congregational mosque and madrasa as the core of his future urbanization plan. The project started when al-Nāṣir Faraj decided to move the donkey and camel markets from the famous *maydān* under the citadel to the area in front of his *khanqah*. Additionally, he supported his project by many other establishments to serve the travelers, public, and the market visitors such as a public bathhouse, flour mill, and bakery in addition to other service buildings which were planned to be executed in a later development phase such as a large *khān*

⁴⁷ Al- Haddād, *al-Qāhira*, 173; Abouseif, *Islamic*, 133; Nuwaysar, *al- 'Imārah*, 268.

⁴⁸ Abouseif, *Islamic*, 135; al-Ghīṭānī, *Qāhiryāt*, 125-126.

⁴⁹ Hamza, *Northern*, 25; al-Haddād, *al-Qāhira*, 176; Rizq, *Khānqāwat*, 2:538.

⁵⁰ 'Atīyah et al., *procession*, 96-97.

⁵¹ Mājid, *Nuzum*, 63.

⁵² Ibid, 137, 140, 142.

⁵³ Nuwaysar, *al- 'Imārah*, 314.

⁵⁴ Ismā'īl, *al-Usūl*, 13-14.

⁵⁵ Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 1:296-297.

(caravanserai) for passersby and travelers.⁵⁶ Unfortunately the whole project was abandoned immediately after al-Nāṣir's execution in the Levant in 1412,⁽⁵⁷⁾ as the market went back to its original location under the citadel and his other establishments were deserted. Consequently, the remarkable attempt of al-Nāṣir Faraj didn't fulfill the required wishes of urbanizing the gap between the northern and southern part of the Northern Cemetery, but few years later his successor al-Ashraf Barsbāy succeeded in the mission.⁵⁸

Finally, the funerary *khanqah* of Sultān al-Ashraf Barsbāy (1432) lies at about 160 m. to the SW of the *khanqah* of al-Nāṣir Faraj,⁵⁹ thus, it enjoys a distinctive location almost in the middle area of the Northern Cemetery overlooking al-Darb al-Sultānī (fig. 8).⁶⁰ Al-Ashraf Barsbāy decided to build his complex after the plague struck Egypt again in 1429,⁶¹ notably, the significance of this *khanqah* is doubled by having its establishments flanking al-Darb al-Sultānī on either side. The eastern side accommodates the *khanqah*, madrasa, *turba* and a Friday mosque, while the western side enclosed a *zāwiya*, well, water trough, water wheel and existing *qubba* known by the dome of the *Ma'bad al-Rifa'ī*.⁶² Markedly, al-Ashraf Barsbāy aimed behind choosing that specific location for his *khanqah* to have it as a cornerstone in fulfilling his predecessor al-Nāṣir Faraj's wish in urbanizing that spacious area between the northern and southern parts of the cemetery to attract the Cairenes to reside in this newly developed area in the shadow of lessening Cairo's dense population. Al-Ashraf Barsbāy surely succeeded in his mission as the period between the years 1427 and 1468 witnessed the foundation of almost 35 new buildings around the *khanqah*.⁶³ Furthermore Barsbāy, due to his distinct choice of his *khanqah* locality, gained many benefits on personal basis. For example, he was able to place his mausoleum directly on al-Darb al-Sultānī to commemorate his name through ages as a pious Sultān. Therefore, his locality choice for his *khanqah* could be compared to that of al-Nāṣir Faraj in terms of reflecting the significance of their religious institutions on the future urbanization plan of the Northern Cemetery, in addition to acquiring some personal benefits such as glorifying their names in front of the public.

In the Final analysis, the history of Sufism in the Islamic world commenced in the second century of Hijra when the Muslims started to interact with various foreign cultures and civilizations, and became more attracted to mundane life. Thus, a Sufi modest stream sprang aiming to revive the prime religious life of the Prophet and his companions. By the passing of the time the number of the Sufis increased and they were divided into groups and orders, accordingly they were in a mass need to a religious establishment to house their activities, this establishment was the *khanqah*. It was firstly introduced to Egypt in the 12th Century by Ṣalāh al-Dīn, while its architecture reached its peak in the Burji Mamluk dynasty.

It was proved throughout the research that in some cases the patron chose a historic site to have its significance reflected on the value of his *khanqah*, while in other cases, the patron aimed to place his *khanqah* in an unexploited locality to use his *khanqah* as a nucleus of another broader project such as urban development projects. Finally, and in very rare cases, the patron chose a particular locality to gain some benefits from the land topography such as delivering certain symbolic meanings related to Sufism, for example, the Nizāmīyah *khanqah*. If the architecture and

⁵⁶ Hamza, *Northern*, 11-12, Fernandes, *Ṣūfī*, 145.

⁵⁷ Rizq, *Khānqāwat*, 2:541.

⁵⁸ Hamza, *Northern*, 25.

⁵⁹ Fernandes, *Evolution*, 228; Abouseif, *Cairo*, 253.

⁶⁰ Rizq, *Khānqāwat*, 2:602.

⁶¹ Williams, *Urbanization*, 42.

⁶² Abouseif, *Cairo*, 253; Williams, *Urbanization*, 42; Hamza, *Northern*, 29; Nuwaysar, *al-'Imārah*, 508; 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Tarīkh*, 225; Rizq, *Khānqāwat*, 2:630.

⁶³ Hamza, *Northern*, 25, 30.

decorative arts of the *khanqah* are the main reasons behind the visitor's appreciation of the historic building, certainly, this appreciation will increase upon revealing more secrets, philosophies and concepts that lie beyond the buildings' stones and decorative elements, especially those that relate to the locality choice of the Ayyubid and Mamluk *khanqahs* in the glorious city of Cairo.

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Figures*



Figure (1)

The *khanqah* of Sa'īd al-Su'adā'



Figure (2)

The *khanqah* of Amir Sanjar al-Jawlī on al- Ṣalība Street



Figure (3)

The *khanqah* of Amir Shaykhū on al- Ṣalība Street



Figure (4)

The *khanqah* of al-Ashraf Barsbāy

* Photographs by the author.



Figure (5)

The *khanqah* of Khwānd Ṭughai "Umm Anuk" in the Northern Cemetery



Figure (6)

The Nizāmīyah *khanqah*



Figure (7)

The *khanqah* of Faraj Ibn Barqūq over looking al-Darb al- Sultānī



Figure (8)

The funerary *khanqah* of al- Sultān al-Ashraf Barsbāy in the middle area of the Northern Cemetery