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SUFI SAINTS AND SHRINE ARCHITECTURE IN THE EARLY FOURTEENTH CENTURY

On 2 Rajib 725 (13 June 1325), the intrepid traveler Ibn Battuta left his home in Tangier and began a remarkable journey that was to last a quarter of a century and take him throughout most of the known Islamic world. He traversed North Africa to complete the hajj, circumscribed the Iranian plateau, visited Constantinople and the Golden Horde, sailed through the Red Sea to the Maldives, India, Sumatra, and Malabar, and may even have reached the shores of China. Returning home, he dictated the memoirs of his journeys that made him one of the world's most renowned travelers.¹ As remarkable as the extent of his travels is the fact that he did not have to pay for a night's lodging. Instead, he was the guest of various rulers or lodged at pious foundations that had been endowed throughout the Muslim world. This paper discusses three such "little cities of God," shrine centers around the graves of Sufi shaykhs where Ibn Battuta might have stayed.² The three are all contemporary, but spread throughout the Muslim world in Ilkhanid Iran, Mamluk Egypt, and the Merinid Maghreb. Together, they illustrate different aspects of a common phenomenon — the popular veneration of saints in the medieval period.

The first complex is located in the middle of the Iranian plateau in Natanz, a small town some 130 kilometers north of Isfahan on the old road connecting Qum and Kashan with Ardistan and Yazd. The complex (Iranian National Monument 188) surrounds the grave of Nur al-Din 'Abd al-Samad b. 'Ali al-Isfahani, a Suhrawardi shaykh who lived in Natanz and reportedly died in 699 (1299–1300). The complex is a single, irregularly shaped entity, measuring at its maximum 55 meters east-west and 42 meters north-south and containing a mosque, minaret, and khanaqah clustered around the shaykh's tomb.

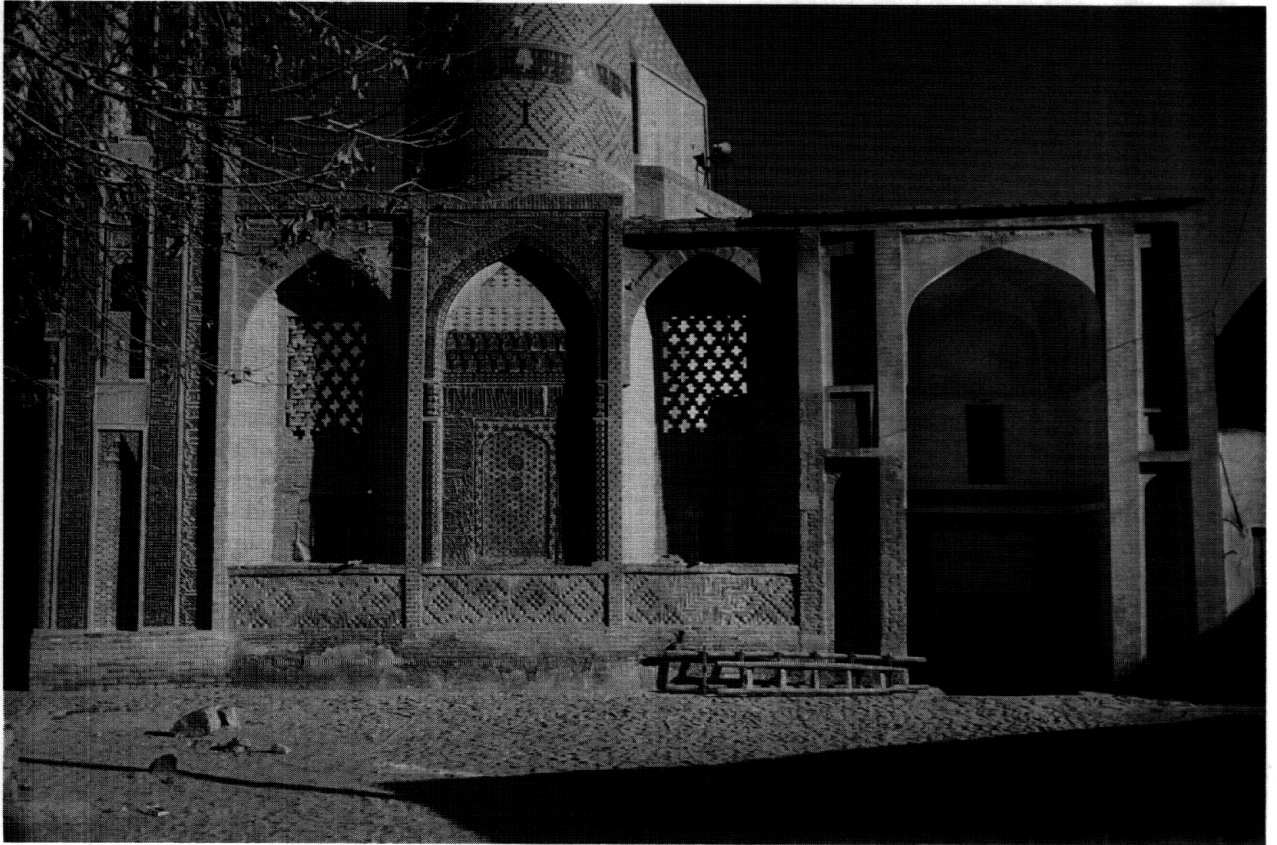
Approaching the complex from the south (fig. 1), the pilgrim first sees a tall 37-meter minaret towering over the pyramidal roof of the shaykh's tomb. Balconies supported on muqarnas corbels divided the minaret's shaft into three sections. It is the vertical pivot organizing the main façade. To the left is a tall muqarnas

semi-dome covering an entrance portal, all that remains of a building identified in its foundation inscription as a khanaqah for poor Sufis. To the right is a lower, plainer portal which opens into a narrow corridor.

This narrow corridor is the spine organizing the interior of the surviving sections of the complex (fig. 2). Moving along the corridor, the first doorway on the left leads to subsidiary rooms behind the base of the minaret, while the second leads to the interior of the shaykh's tomb, a small room 6 meters on a side (fig. 3). Niches on the cardinal sides project to turn the square into an octagon.

At the end of the corridor, the pilgrim turns left to reach the toilets and ablution facilities. Turning right, he enters the courtyard of the congregational mosque. Measuring 14 meters on a side, the court is surrounded by four iwans of varying lengths and widths connected by two series of rooms. In the southeast corner is a large covered hall which serves as a winter mosque. A mihrab projects from the back wall of the south iwan, and beyond it, but lying two meters to the west, is an octagonal domed sanctuary.

The buildings are constructed of baked bricks of the same size, except for part of the octagonal sanctuary which is built of larger rectangular ones. Color enlivens the south façade and the shaft of the minaret. Pieces of cut tile in three colors (dark blue, light blue, and white) form elaborate patterns of mosaic faience (fig. 4), and bricks glazed with light blue are set within the plain brick ground, the so-called *bana'i* technique, to spell out sacred names or pious phrases. Cut and painted plaster covers interior surfaces. Elaborately cut inscription bands on a floral and arabesque ground cross the intrados of the north iwan and encircle the top of the walls of the tomb, which is covered by a stupendous 10-tier muqarnas dome, probably a shell suspended from the exterior pyramidal roof covered in light-blue glazed bricks. Traveler's reports and traces in the plaster show that the tomb had a dado of luster-painted star and cross tiles. Other luster tiles may well have covered the original cenotaph. In short, the complex is a virtual



1. Natanz. Shrine of 'Abd al-Samad. View of complex from south.

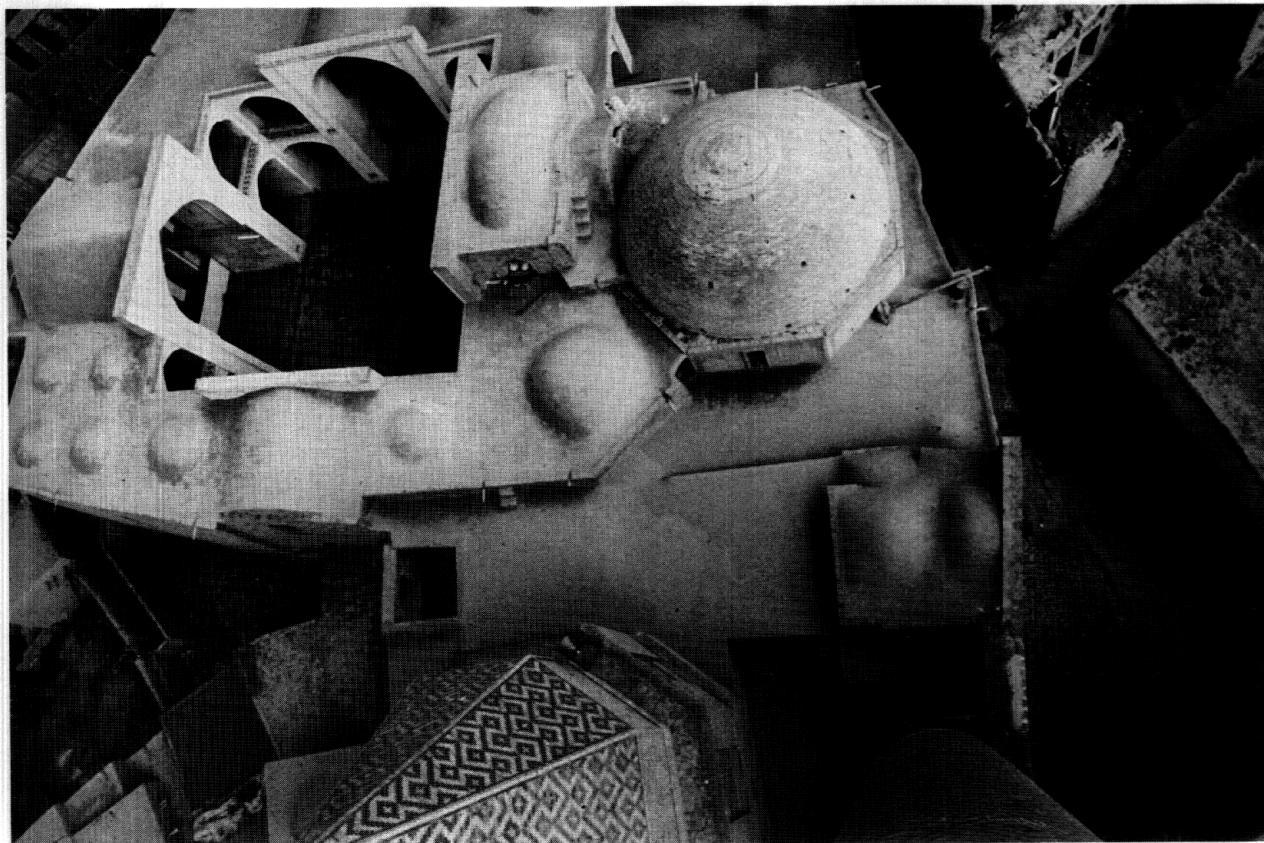
catalogue of the decorative techniques and styles used on early fourteenth-century architecture in Iran.

The different brick sizes, varying levels and irregularly shaped spaces and exterior show that the complex was not planned as a single unified campaign, but rather was adapted to pre-existing structures on the site. Nevertheless, most of what we see today is the result of a single campaign carried out in the first decade of the fourteenth century under the patronage of an Ilkhanid amir, Zayn al-Din Khalifa b. al-Husayn al-Mastari. In 1324–25 another functionary made minor reconstructions and repairs. All of this work was overseen by a group of *şadrs*, probably members of the shaykh's order.³

Almost exactly contemporary with the complex around the tomb of Shaykh 'Abd al-Samad at Natanz is another one located in the southern cemetery of Cairo, just outside the Bab al-Qarafa on the main road leading south to the tomb of Imam al-Shafa'i. Popularly known as the Jami' al-Qadiriyya or the Jami' Sidi 'Ulay, the

complex (Index Number 172) surrounds the tomb of Zayn al-Din Yusuf, an 'Adawiyya shaykh who died in Rabi' I 697 (December 1297) (fig. 5).

A tall muqarnas portal at the north end of the north-east façade gives access to the complex (fig. 6). Passing through the cross-vaulted vestibule, the pilgrim can turn right into a small north room, but to enter the complex he bends to the left and then to the right to emerge in an iwan fronting on a 5-by-10-meter oblong court. Iwans of varying sizes surround the other sides of the court: the opposite one on the southeast is broad and shallow (dimensions 5.6 by 3.9 meters) and contains a mihrab in the back wall. From the qibla iwan the pilgrim can enter a single-story cross-vaulted room that fills the east corner or the mausoleum that towers in the south corner. Its square room, just over 5 meters on a side, is surmounted by a tall gadrooned dome (figs. 7–8). Various doorways on the southwest, the side opposite the main street façade, suggest that the complex was meant to extend further west, but was never finished.



2. Natanz. Shrine of 'Abd al-Samad. View from minaret showing central corridor, roof of tomb, and four-iwan mosque.

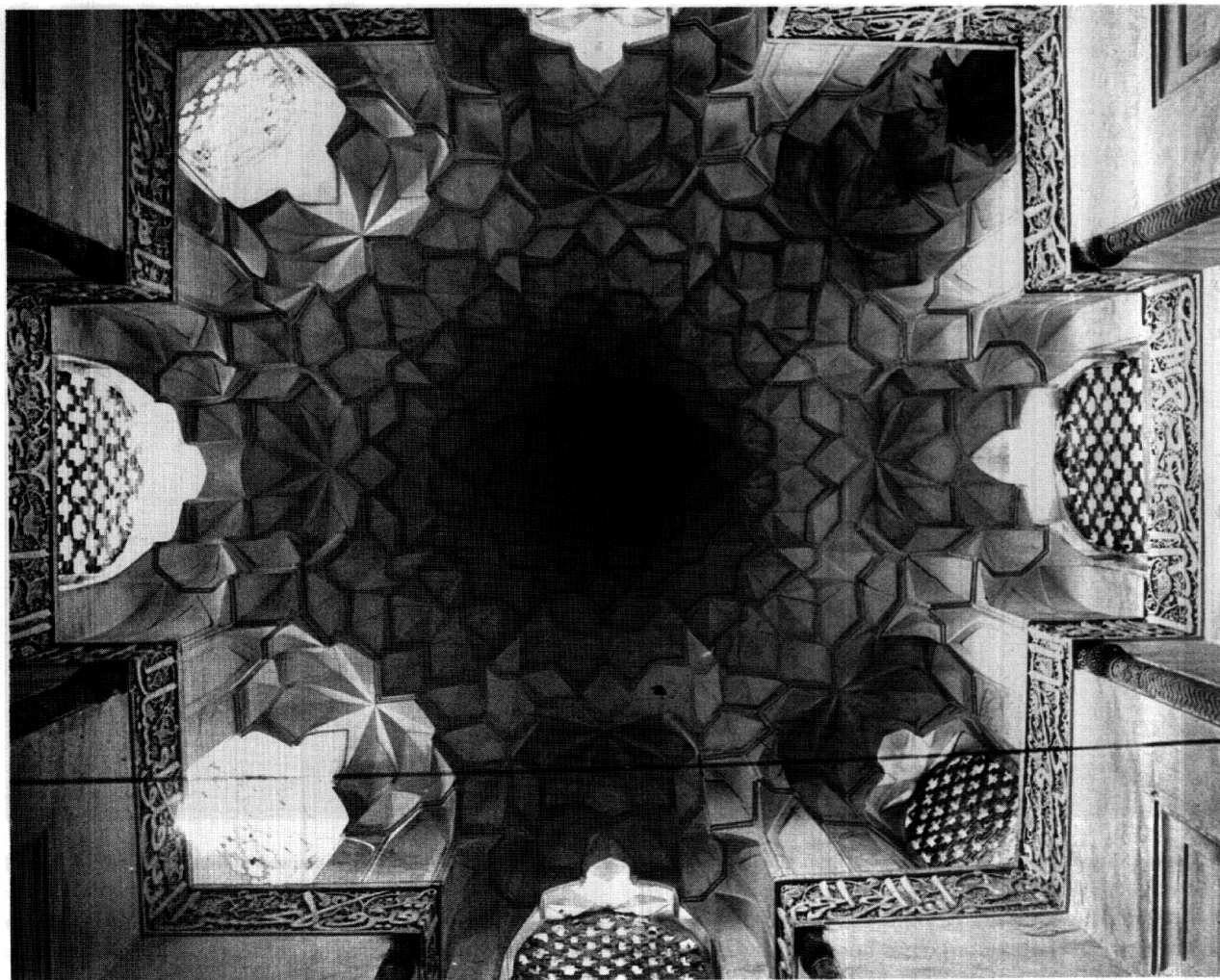
Outside the complex beyond the entrance portal is another portal with a muqarnas hood. It now stands in splendid isolation, but unpublished excavations in front of the main façade revealed traces of walls and a fountain that probably belonged to an ablution area, well, and other dependencies mentioned in an earlier source but now vanished.

Like most of the medieval architecture of Cairo, the exterior walls of the complex are constructed of stone masonry. Brick is used for the inner walls, vaults, and dome of the mausoleum. Decoration around the court is confined to an inscription band in cut plaster which encircles the iwans just below the level of the springing, while a panoply of decorative techniques were lavished on the tomb. Marble panels cover the walls, and stucco envelops the remaining interior surfaces, including the zone of transition and ribbed dome. Colored glass once filled the stucco grilles around the windows.

As with the complex of Shaykh 'Abd al-Samad at Natanz, that of Zayn al-Din Yusuf in Cairo is poorly

documented in historical sources, but the dates furnished in the inscriptions combined with architectural considerations permitted Layla Ibrahim to sketch a history of the complex. An inscribed marble slab set over the main entrance says that the tomb was finished seven months after the shaykh's death in Shawwal 697 (1298). The initial foundation probably consisted of the tomb and subsidiary rooms to the east within the extant southeast and northeast walls. Then in 1325 the complex was adapted to a cruciform plan: the northeast wall was extended, the vaulted iwans built, and the main portal and north room added. Finally in 1335–36 the ablution area and dependencies were enclosed within an area marked by another grand portal to the northeast. Curiously, all the inscriptions are anonymous: unlike most Cairene foundation texts, they mention no patron; yet the quality of the construction and the lavishness of the decoration bespeak significant funding.⁴

Slightly later than these two complexes and even more picturesque is the shrine perched on the north



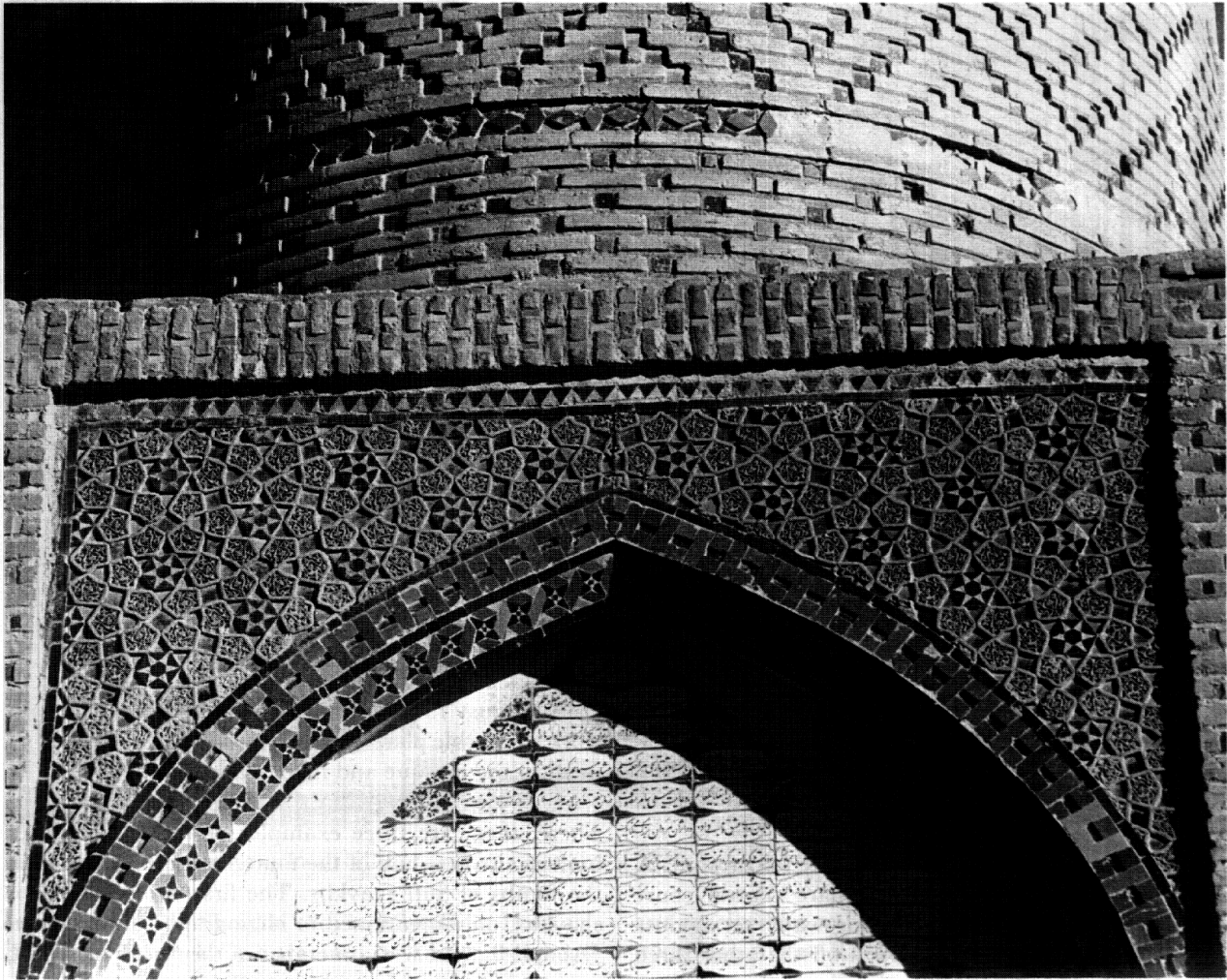
3. Natanz. Shrine of 'Abd al-Samad. Muqarnas dome in shaykh's tomb.

slope of Mafrush Mountain in the village of 'Ubbad, 2 kilometers southeast of the city of Tlemcen in western Algeria near the border with Morocco. The complex centers on the tomb of Abu Madyan Shu'ayb, a well known Andalusian mystic who died in 1197. Immediately after his death during the reign of the Almohad ruler Muhammad al-Nasir (1199–1214), his grave was marked by a tomb, but only in the early fourteenth century did the Merinid sultan Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali convert it into a shrine complex, including a mosque, madrasa, ablution facilities, and residence.

From afar, the pilgrim can see the top of the minaret and complex perched on the hillside, but climbing the slope, he emerges in a small lane bordered by high white walls (fig. 9). The tomb opens down the slope to the left

(figs. 10–11). The pilgrim descends a few steps into a 5.4-meter-square forecourt with a tank, a tetrastyle atrium whose onyx columns and capitals were brought from the Merinid palace at Mansura. Further to the east lies the tomb room, the standard domed square covered by a green glazed pyramidal roof. The tomb was totally restored in 1793.

Lying slightly below the tomb and wrapping around it on the north and west is a badly ruined multi-room structure known as the Dar al-Sultan or Palace of the Sultan. The west wing consists of a patio with a rectangular basin and covered porticos to the north and south. Beyond it to the east are a dozen or so more rooms, several almost 12 meters long, but none more than 3 meters wide. Despite its ruined condition, traces of



4. Natanz. Shrine of 'Abd al-Samad. Detail of three-color tilework on façade.

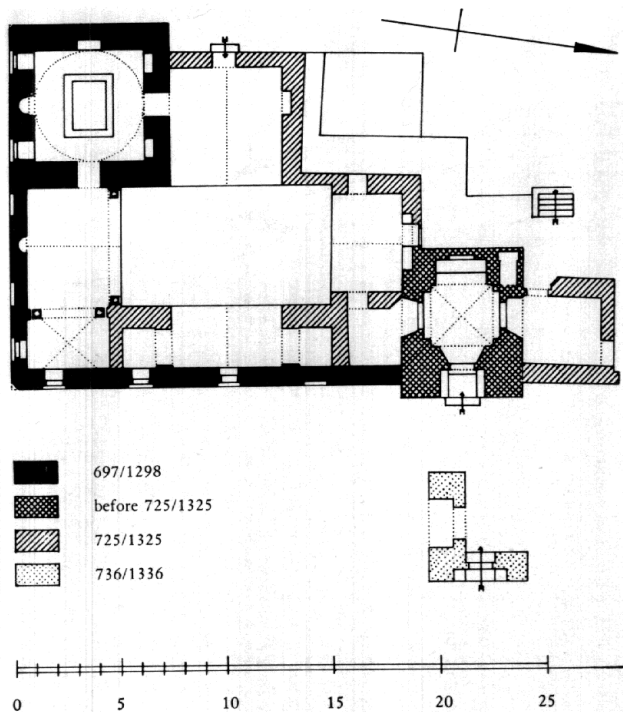
sumptuous decoration attests to its original quality. No inscription identifies its function. It could have served as a residence for the patron or for rich pilgrims, and the mention in the endowment deed for the mosque and madrasa of food for residents of a *zawiya* makes the latter especially possible.

Across the narrow passage is the entrance to the mosque, a rectangle measuring 18.9 by 28.45 meters. A minaret 27.5 meters high rises in the northwest corner. In the center of the façade sits a monumental portal faced with tile. The pilgrim climbs 11 steps to an elaborately decorated entrance porch covered by a *muqarnas* vault (fig. 12). Doors to the right and left lead to small rooms for a Qur'anic school and shelter for pilgrims, but continuing straight through monumental

bronze doors, the pilgrim enters the arcaded court (fig. 13). In the center is a basin and beyond lies the covered prayer hall.

Four arcades divide the space into five aisles perpendicular to the qibla (fig. 14). The four side aisles stop one bay short of the mihrab; the bay over the center aisle in front of the mihrab is covered by a pierced stucco dome. The mihrab projects from the qibla wall and is encased in a small room. Doors at the north end of the prayer hall, almost in the center of the side aisles, lead outward and give direct access to the subsidiary buildings which flank the mosque.

To the east across a small alley lies the ablution area. The latrines are housed in a trapezoidal structure, measuring 10.5 by 8 meters. One enters through a doorway



5. Cairo. Shrine of Zayn al-Din Yusuf. Plan. (From: Layla Ibrahim, "Zawiya of Šaiḥ Zayn al-Din Yusuf in Cairo," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 34 [1978], fig. 1).

in the center of the longest side opposite the mosque. A dome surmounts the 4.5-meter-square central court with an ablution tank with running water set against the east wall. Small cubicles open off the other three sides.

Adjacent to the latrines on the south are the baths. Entering from the same alley, the pilgrim passes through a short passage to a domed room which abuts the latrines to the north. Measuring 6 by 8 meters, it served as the apodyterium. To the southeast through a large doorway lies a suite of three rooms, each 8 meters deep, which served as the frigidarium and tepidarium.

To the west of the mosque on the opposite side of another small lane is the highest building of the group, the madrasa. A flight of 15 steps leads to the main portal faced with tile (fig. 15). The doorway gives onto a nearly square arcaded court with a central basin (fig. 16). Beyond it lies a square prayer hall with a domed roof and projecting mihrab. Small cells for the students, each 2.85 meters wide and 2 meters deep, fill the lateral sides of the madrasa. There are 12 on the ground floor and 12 more on the upper story, accessible by a stair on

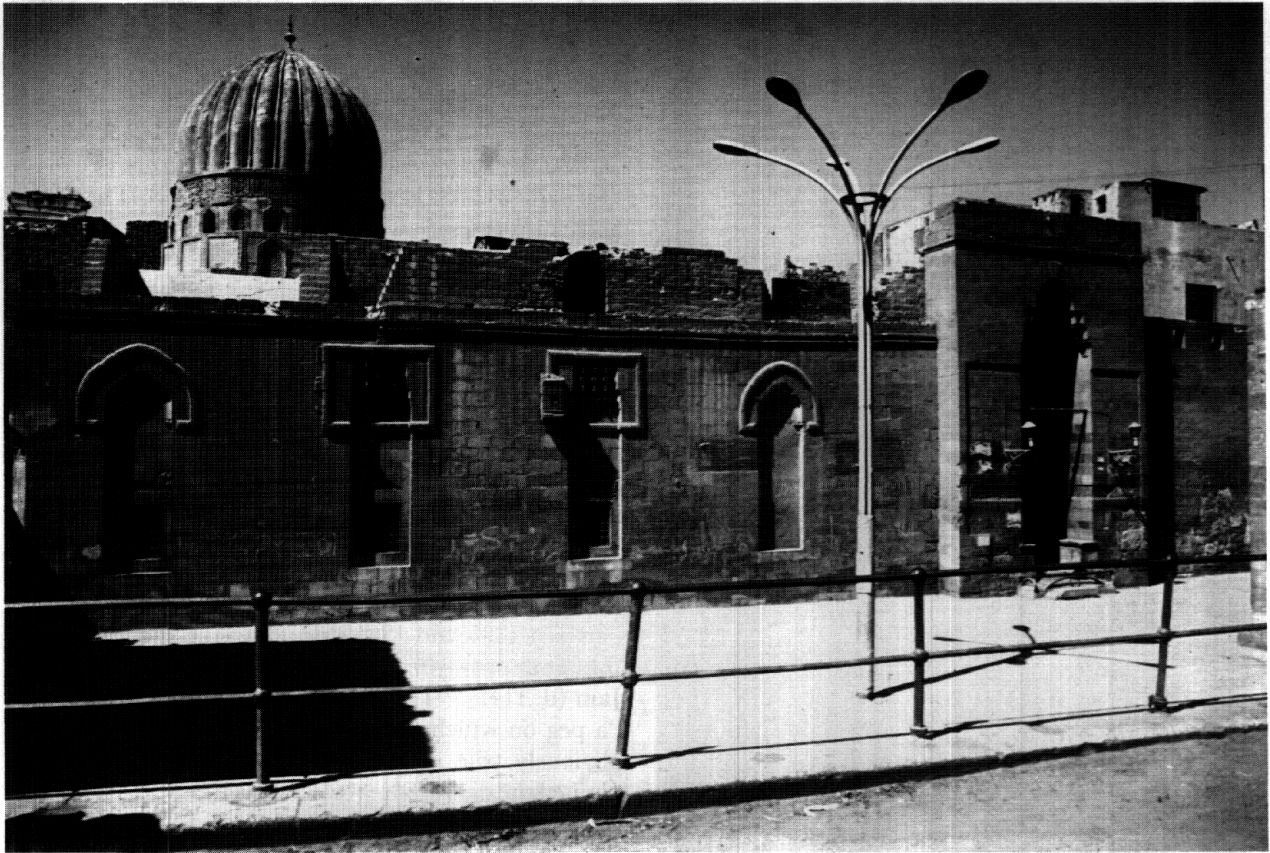
the left of the entrance. In the southeast corner of the ground floor are four additional cells, accessible through a small door from the court, perhaps a residential unit for the teacher. In the opposite (northwest) corner projects the block of latrines with eight cubicles and a rectangular basin.

Constructed of brick, all of the buildings in the complex at ʿUbbad are richly decorated in the techniques and styles typical of Merinid architecture. The walls are covered with a dado of mosaic faience (*zālīj*) surmounted by richly carved plasterwork. Nearby forests made wood more abundant than in other regions of the Islamic world, and it was used for ceilings, awnings, and the base of the dome in the madrasa. The high class of patronage allowed for lavish furnishings, including remarkable bronze doors for the mosque and onyx columns and capitals.

An inscription over the entrance to the mosque tells us that the Merinid sultan Abu'l-Hasan ʿAli ordered its foundation in 739 (1338–39). His name is repeated on various architectural fragments such as capitals and columns. A poem around the base of the dome of the madrasa gives a date eight years later, Rabiʿ 2, 747 (July–August 1346) and may mark completion of the work. A marble plaque preserves the text of the endowment to the mosque and madrasa.⁵

These, then, are three examples of shrine complexes built in the first half of the fourteenth century around the tombs of Sufi shaykhs. The first two were minor shaykhs, only mentioned in hagiographical literature. ʿAbd al-Samad was a member of the Suhrawardiyya, one of the two main orders in Ilkhanid Iran. He received his mantle in Shiraz from Najib al-Din Buzghush (d. 1279), who in turn was one of the most famous disciples of Shihab al-Din Abu Hafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardi (d. 1234), nephew of Ziya al-Din Abu'l Najib Suhrawardi, the founder of the order. We know nothing about ʿAbd al-Samad's writings. Jami tells us only that he possessed both exoteric and esoteric knowledge and had two famous pupils, ʿIzz al-Din Mahmud b. ʿAli b. Muhammad b. Abi Tahir al-Kashani al-Natanzi (d. 1334–35) and Kamal al-Din ʿAbd al-Razzaq b. Abi'l Ghana'im al-Kashani (d. 1335), both of whom outshone their master in scholarly writings.⁶ Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad lived and taught in Natanz. When he died, one of his followers, an Ilkhanid amir, turned the site of his residence and teaching into a monumental complex around his tomb.

Zayn al-Din Yusuf belonged to the ʿAdawiyya, an



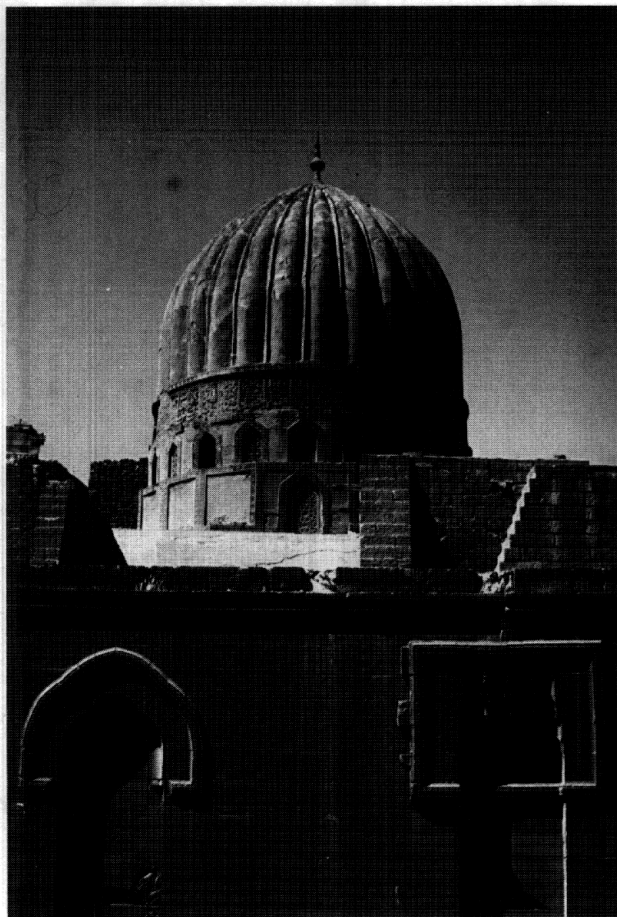
6. Cairo. Shrine of Zayn al-Din Yusuf. View of northeast façade.

order founded by Shaykh ‘Adi b. Musafir al-Hakkari. Born near Baalbek, ‘Adi traveled far and wide, spending much time in the wilderness, and eventually settling in Laylash near Mosul where he founded a convent and started the ‘Adawiyya order. When he died childless in 1162, leadership passed through the children of his brother Sakhr. The order was mainly confined to Kurds who became fanatically devoted to ‘Adi and worshiped at his grave. The order eventually attracted the attention of authority: in 1246 Badr al-Din Lu’lu’ had Sakhr’s great-grandson Shams al-Din Hasan put to death and in 1257 his son Sharaf al-Din Muhammad was summoned to assist ‘Izz al-Din Kay Khusraw of Malatya.⁷

Zayn al-Din Yusuf, the person buried in Cairo, was Sharaf al-Din Muhammad’s son. According to al-Umari, he moved to Syria and settled near ‘Adi’s birthplace outside Baalbek with a large retinue including mamluks, ghumans, and slave girls. He was important enough to have returned an *himra*, the title of amir,

and received an embassy on the accession of the Mamluk sultan Ashraf Khalil in 1288.⁸ Squabbles may have broken out in his family, for Zayn al-Din Yusuf abandoned his wealth and prestige in Syria and came to Egypt where he founded the ‘Adawiyya. We have no idea where he taught, but after his death, he was buried in the southern cemetery and the tomb was erected over his grave.

In contrast, Abu Madyan Shu’ayb was a well-known Andalusian mystic who had died almost 150 years earlier. He was born ca. 1126 at Cantillana, a little town 20 miles north-northeast of Seville. A weaver by trade, his thirst for knowledge led him to Fez and eventually to Iraq where he became acquainted with the great mystical traditions. He returned to North Africa and settled in Bougie where his erudition and reputation attracted the envy of the Almohad ulama who summoned him to account at their capital at Marrakesh. En route, he died at ‘Ubbad, probably already the center of a circle of Sufi devotees. After his death in



7. Cairo. Shrine of Zayn al-Din Yusuf. Gadrooned dome over the shaykh's tomb.

1197, his sons moved to Egypt. His "way" was perpetuated through his pupil 'Abd al-Salam b. Mashish, whose disciple Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali al-Shadhili founded the Shadhiliyya, the most important order in North Africa.⁹

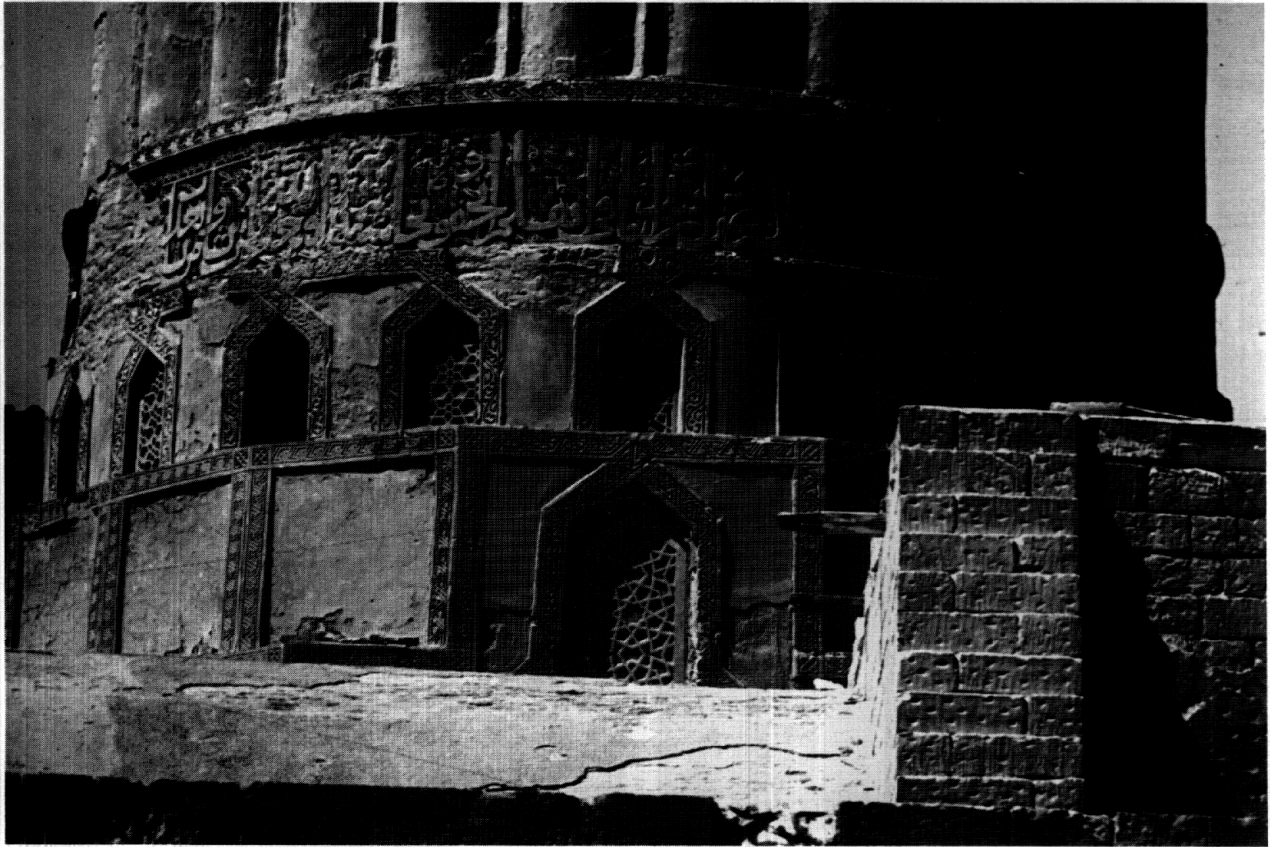
The basic tradition of Madyani Sufism also continued, and Abu Madyan's tomb outside of Tlemcen became the center for a popular movement and was surrounded by other, smaller tombs. Historical and political circumstances explain why the Merinid sultan Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali decided to monumentalize the site 150 years after the shaykh's death. After a two-year siege, the Merinid sultan had taken the Almohad capital of Tlemcen on 27 Ramadan 737 (1 May 1337). Certainly as part of the commemoration of this victory, he turned the tomb into a monumental complex.

The rhetorical element of his pious foundation is

evident in the inscriptions throughout the mosque. The cavetto cornice on the left of the entrance to the porch says that this is what was ordered by Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali; the one on the right asks God to assist him to triumph, investiture, and clear victory (*ayyadahu allah bi'l-naṣr wa'l-tamkīn wa'l-faṭḥ al-mubīn*). The terms used echo the Qur'anic verses inscribed in the stucco. The upper border on the side walls repeats Qur'an 3:126 ("Help comes only from God, the all-mighty, the all-wise"); the outer border over the main portal to the right of the bronze doors has 61:13 ("Help from God and a nigh victory. Give thou good tidings to the believers!"), the verse repeated over the mihrab.

In a sense, the Merinid sultan made Abu Madyan famous for, as Trimingham said, his fame derives not from his maintained Sufi tradition, but through the Merinid sultan's fostering of tomb veneration.¹⁰ This was not an isolated case of choosing an older saint's grave for veneration. Lisa Golombek drew attention to the "little cities of God" that developed in Mongol Iran between 1305 and 1365, including the shrines around the tomb of Bayazid Bastami (d. 875) and Ahmad of Jam (d. 1141).¹¹ The shaykh, she concluded, was more "a peg on which to hang the hat," and the same was obviously true in the case of Abu Madyan. She explained the development of these shrine centers in Mongol Iran as due to the wealth of the Sufi community and the institutionalization of Sufism and its regularization with authority. To this we can add political considerations.

In each of the three cases studied here, the shaykh's grave was marked by a similarly sized domed tomb. The one at Natanz measures 6 meters and is covered by a muqarnas vault (fig. 3) suspended from a glazed pyramidal roof (fig. 2). Zayn al-Din's tomb in the Cairene cemetery measures 5 meters and is covered by a melon-shaped, gadrooned dome (figs. 7–8). Abu Madyan's tomb outside Tlemcen was rebuilt in the eighteenth century, but it probably kept its original size (5 meters) and shape (pyramidal roof) (fig. 11). Local architectural traditions determined the materials and profile of the dome, but there was obviously an "ideal type" of shaykh's tomb visually recognizable from one end of the Muslim world to the other. The scale differed dramatically from that of contemporary imperial mausolea: Baybars al-Jashangir's mausoleum in his khanaqah on the main street of old Cairo, for example, measures 11.3 meters; the Ilkhanid sultan Uljaytu's tomb at Sultaniyya measures a whopping 26 meters. The shrines at Natanz, Cairo, and 'Ubbad were obviously



8. Cairo. Shrine of Zayn al-Din Yusuf. Detail of the decoration around the base of the dome over the shaykh's tomb.

shrines for popular saints, and they also differed from the “grand” tradition of saints like Imam al-Shaf‘i, whose tomb in Cairo measures 15.3 meters.

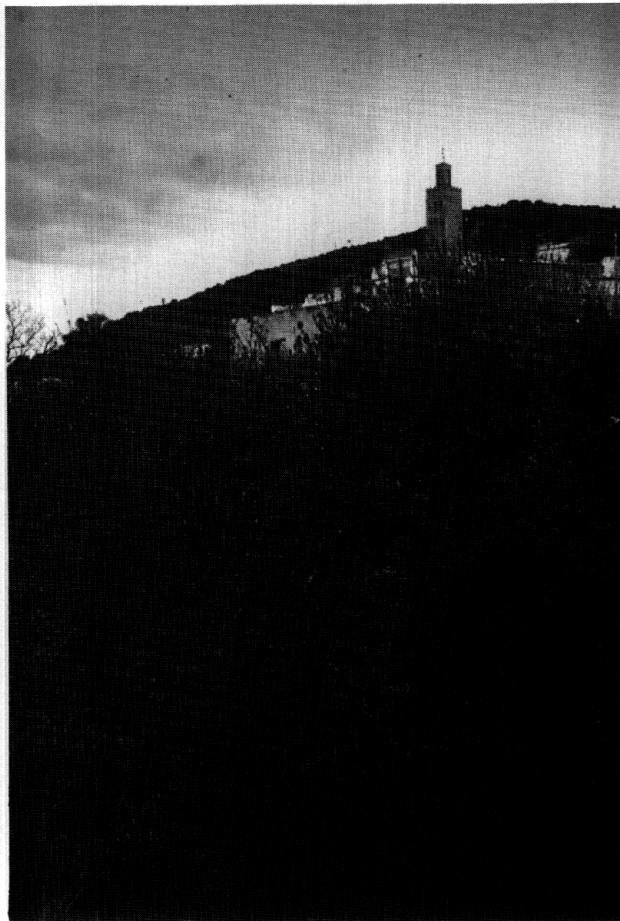
Several types of building were needed in these shrine complexes. One was a communal space. At Natanz, this took the form of a four-iwan mosque with a domed sanctuary (fig. 2); at ‘Ubbad, a covered hypostyle mosque (fig. 14). In the shrine of Zayn al-Din Yusuf in Cairo, the space evolved over time: the original foundation included some sort of space adjacent to the tomb within the confines of the extant southeast and northeast walls; then in 1325, this was enlarged to a four-iwan plan. These spaces could serve various kinds of communal gatherings, from strictly religious Friday prayer to Sufi-inspired recitations and dancing.

The complexes also provided residential quarters. The khanaqah at Natanz was destroyed, but it probably followed the four-iwan plan typical of Iranian architecture and used in such other khanaqahs as the one for Shaykh Taqi al-Din Dada Muhammad at Bun-

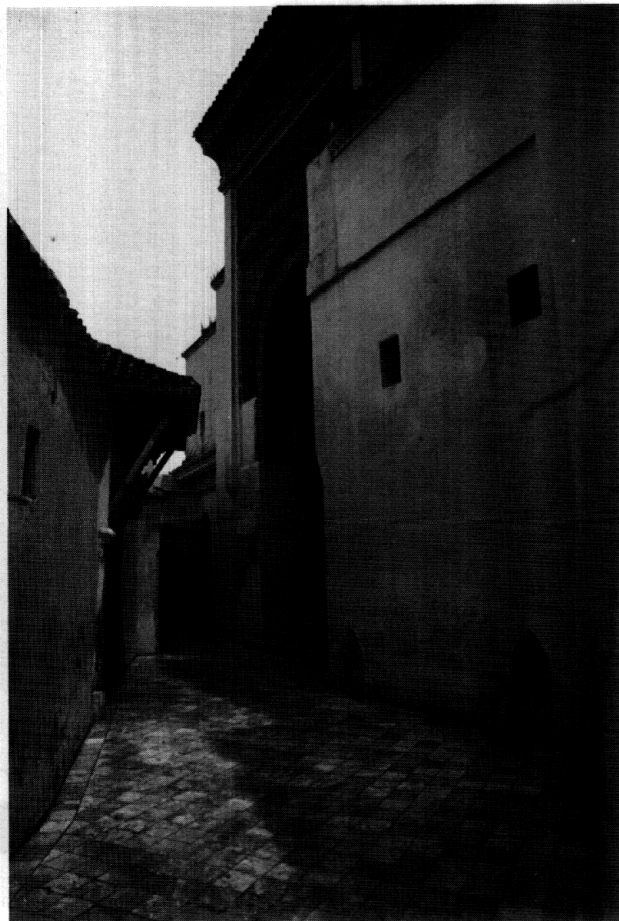
derabad.¹² The waqf for the shrine at ‘Ubbad mentions a *zawiya*, which might be associated with the building known as the *Dar al-Sultan*. The living quarters in Zayn al-Din Yusuf’s tomb in Cairo cannot be clearly reconstructed, but his followers may have been meant to reside in the unfinished areas to the west.

Abu Madyan’s complex includes another residential unit, the *madrassa* (figs. 15–16). This was a major part of the complex, almost as large in area as the mosque, and provided 32 cells for students, a suite with 4 more cells, and 8 toilets. It remained an important center for instruction in the Maghreb, and the renowned scholar Ibn Khaldun worked there. In addition to its size, it is remarkable for its state of preservation, for it is one of the earliest preserved residential units and gives us a good idea of how students lived in the medieval period. Through it, we can imagine what now-vanished buildings like the khanaqah at Natanz might have looked like.

Trimingham pointed out that contrary to the general



9. 'Ubbad. Shrine of Abu Madyan Shu 'ayb. View from below.



10. 'Ubbad. Shrine of Abu Madyan Shu 'ayb. View of lane with the entrances to the tomb on the left and the mosque on the right.

tradition in the Arab Near East, under the Merinids jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and mysticism (*taṣawwuf*) were mutually tolerated companions, and Sufism was considered a subject for regular teaching compatible with religious science.¹³ The same was true in contemporary Iran under the Ilkhanids, for the endowments of large imperial tomb complexes provided for the study of both legal sciences and mysticism. Ghazan's tomb complex outside Tabriz included two madrasas (one for Hanafis and one for Shafi'is) and a khanaqah. His vizier Rashid al-Din's complex had a khanaqah with five Sufis (later doubled to ten); two professors (one for Qur'anic commentary and Traditions, another for other sciences) taught 12 students in the winter and summer mosques in the building containing his tomb (*rawḍa*). The pre-eminence of *fiqh* over *taṣawwuf* can be seen in the salaries allotted: the professor of other sciences received

500 dinars annually, while the shaykh got only 150 (later doubled to 300 when the number of Sufis increased).¹⁴ The complexes surrounding the mausolea of two local leaders of Yazd also included madrasas and khanaqahs.¹⁵

Alongside space and accommodation for residents, these complexes also provided for pilgrims and travelers. All three have spare rooms near the entrance that could well have been used to shelter pilgrims. At Natanz, the rooms behind the minaret were enlarged in 1324–25, and other rooms in the two-story arcades of the mosque might have provided extra accommodation. The small room to the north of the entrance portal in the zawiya of Zayn al-Din Yusuf might have functioned in the same way. At 'Ubbad, two small rooms open off the entrance porch of the mosque. These small subsidiary rooms might suggest that pilgrims were not as impor-



11. 'Ubbad. Shrine of Abu Madyan Shu 'ayb. View of the shaykh's tomb.

tant or numerous as residents, but several other factors — both architectural and literary — show that this was not the case.

One is the attention to ablution facilities. André Raymond suggested that the number of baths might be a significant indicator for the size of a city's population.¹⁶ In the absence of other data, could the number of toilets and baths help determine the size and clientele of shrine complexes? The difficulty with this approach is that the water and especially the steam from baths destroy buildings, and few baths survive from the medieval period. The ones at Natanz were rebuilt at the same time as the new mosque was built on the site of the original khanaqah. Those excavated in front of the zawiya façade in Cairo are unpublished. Those at 'Ubbad, however, are well preserved. The toilets across the lane to the east of the mosque are equal in number to those attached to the

madrassa. This equality of number suggests an equal number of users. In addition, the complex at 'Ubbad retains the elaborate bath complex to the south.

The surviving waqf document shows the importance of pilgrims to the shrine of Abu Madyan. The text is inscribed on a 65 by 123 cm. marble slab encased in the column to the left of the mihrab. It enumerates the properties (gardens, orchards, houses, windmills, baths, and land) bought by Sultan Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali and endowed to the complex. One was a piece of arable land measuring 20 *zūj*¹⁷ that was to provide food in the zawiya for the poor and pilgrims, resident or transient; another plot of 10 *zūj* was to sustain the members of the madrassa at the rate of 15 *ṣā*¹⁸ per student per month. The relative sizes of the plots suggest that the Sufis and pilgrims were meant to outnumber the students in the madrassa two to one.

Architectural considerations also show the importance of pilgrims for these complexes. One of the most distinctive features of all three is the elaboration of the exterior decoration. The tomb of the shaykh, the center of the complex, naturally received the finest decoration available: luster tiles and a splendid muqarnas dome at Natanz (fig. 3), marble inlay and another fine muqarnas dome in Cairo (fig. 7). Equally eye-catching was the attention paid to the main façade. This is particularly clear at Natanz, where an attempt was made to tie together the irregularly oriented buildings into a homogeneous south façade (fig. 1) whose elaborate and colorful tile and brick decoration (fig. 4) contrasts markedly with the plain, unfinished exterior on the other sides. Both mosque and madrassa at 'Ubbad have tiled entrances (figs. 12, 15), and the mosque has a magnificent muqarnas vault. The minarets at these two complexes (figs. 1, 9) would also have served as beacons for pilgrims coming from afar.

The shrines in Tlemcen and Natanz are irregularly shaped complexes that grew to fit the space available. They responded to topographic determinants. The case of Zayn al-Din Yusuf's shrine in Cairo is slightly different, for it was founded in an urban cemetery. The Cairene cemeteries were well-known spots for pilgrimage, and pilgrim guides give one-, two-, and three-day tours of the Qarafa in addition to the usual visits on Thursdays, Fridays, and feast days. Two of them mention Zayn al-Din.¹⁹ Visits there were easier and presumably shorter than those made to small towns like Natanz or 'Ubbad, and one can readily understand why less provision was made for lodging.

Yet even within an urban context, attracting visitors



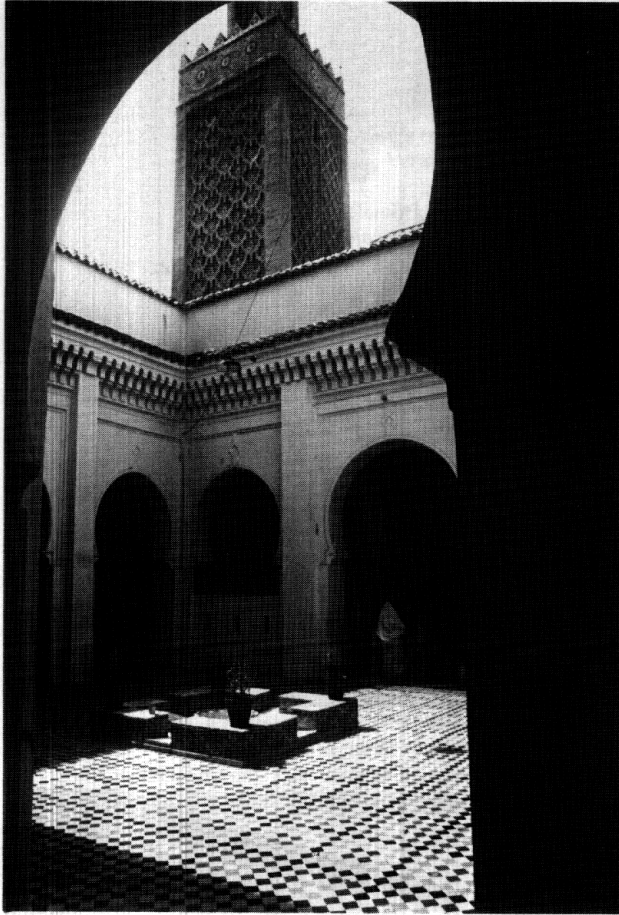
12. ʿUbbad. Shrine of Abu Madyan Shuʿayb. Muqarnas vault in the entrance porch to the mosque.

was important. The original foundation of Zayn al-Din Yusuf's tomb, like many others in the *Qarafa*, already contained a tall dome visible from afar. When the complex was enlarged in 1325 and transformed from a tomb into a shrine, attractability was even more necessary, and the entrance was monumentalized by a tall portal on the northeast wall (figs. 5–6). Thinking that the portal was part of the original construction, Creswell had called it the earliest extant example of a muqarnas portal in Egypt, but Ibrahim showed that it had to post-date the construction of the iwans and was therefore one of several contemporary examples. As she noted, however, the portal had another feature unique in Cairene architecture from the first half of the fourteenth century: its height. The portal is so tall that it rises considerably above the façade walls. Indeed the only other monuments whose portals are as tall are those that were built almost a century later by the Mamluk Muʿayyid Shaykh.²⁰

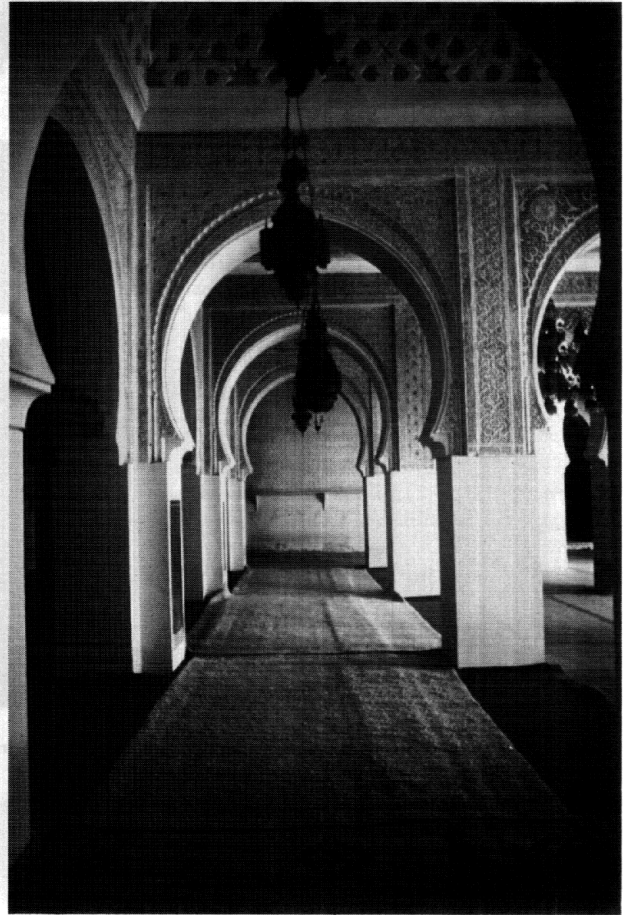
The tall portal in Zayn al-Din Yusuf's *zawiya* was

obviously insufficient as an attraction-getter, so a third step involved the construction of the second major portal to the northeast in 1335–36. It is as tall as the first one and also marked by a muqarnas vault. It probably provided an entrance to the whole complex and dependencies from the main street of the *Qarafa*. Perhaps these tall portals were meant to compensate for the lack of a minaret, the best beacon for travelers from afar. Medieval pilgrimage manuals mention that madrasas, mosques, shrines, and other foundations had minarets, but the only one associated with Zayn al-Din Yusuf's complex, no longer extant but visible in old photographs, is located some distance to the northeast and is late Ottoman in date.

These three examples around the tombs of ʿAbd al-Samad at Natanz, Zayn al-Din Yusuf in Cairo, and Abu Madyan outside Tlemcen, show that Sufi shrine complexes in the early fourteenth century were not places of retreat like early *ribats* where poor, needy or mystically minded people sought asylum from the



13. 'Ubbad. Shrine of Abu Madyan Shu'ayb. Courtyard of the mosque with the minaret.

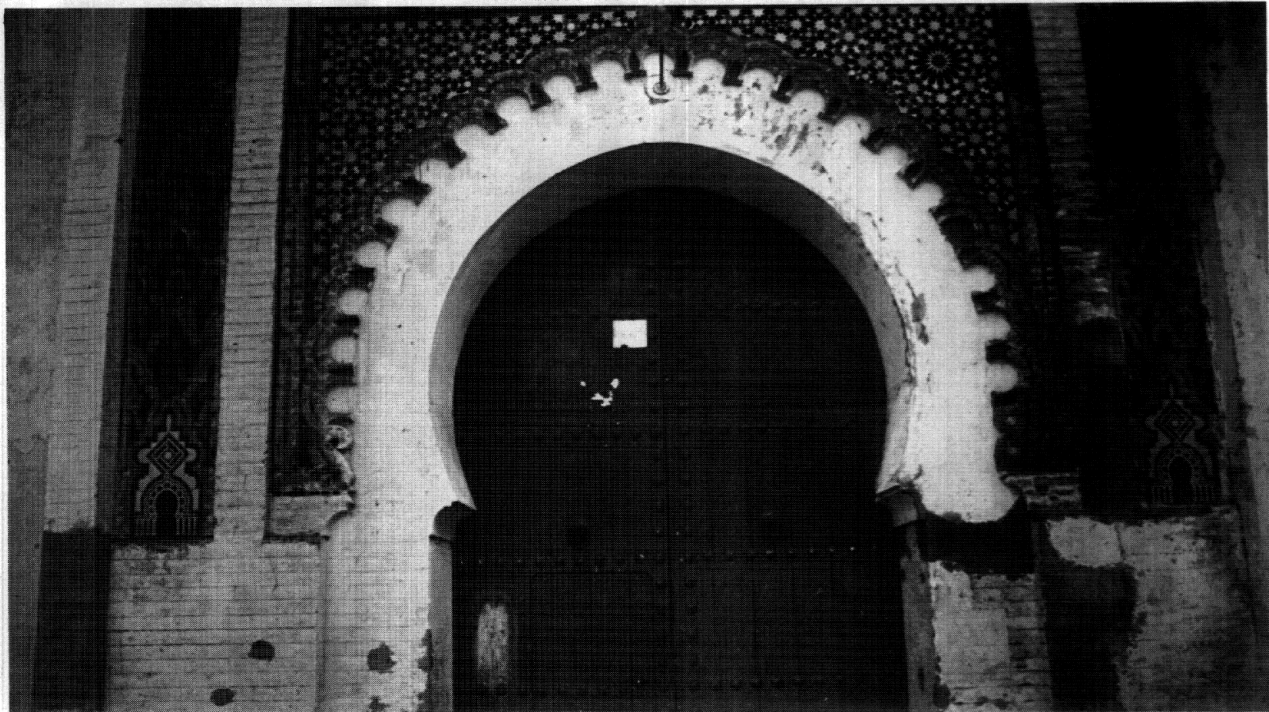


14. 'Ubbad. Shrine of Abu Madyan Shu'ayb. Prayer hall of the mosque from the east.

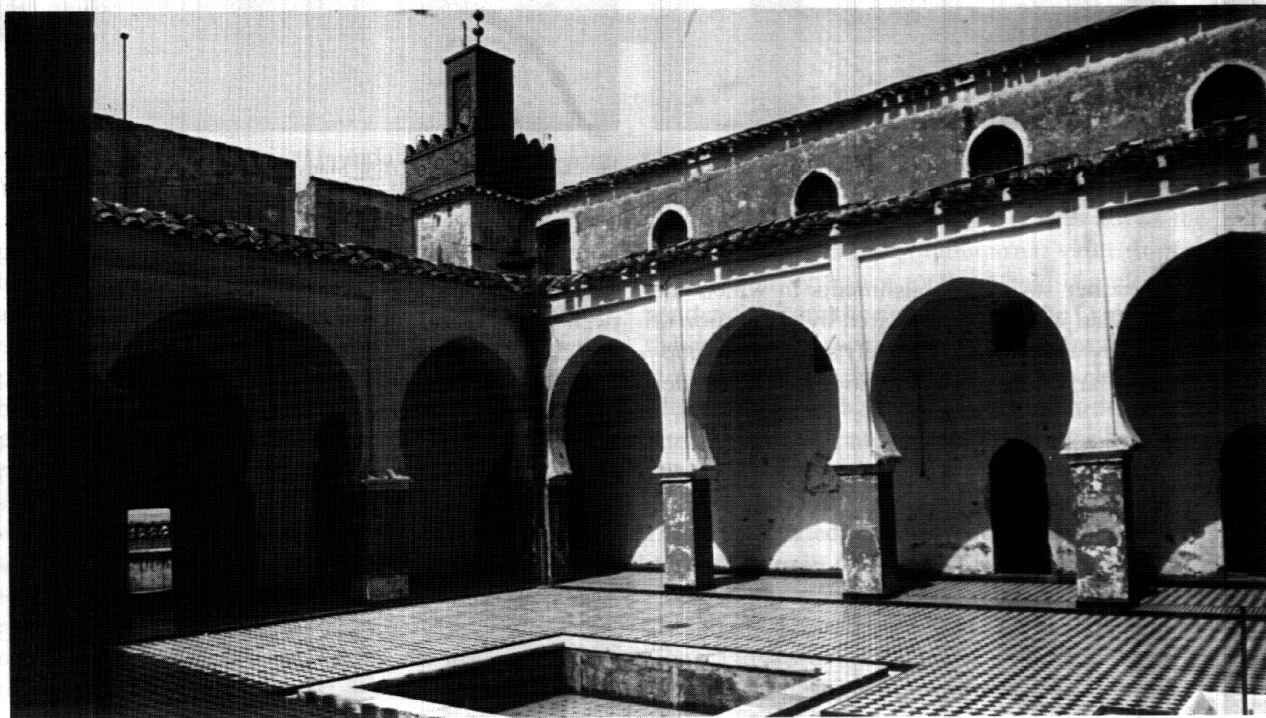
world, but rather social establishments in which the place of the dead was commemorated by veneration of the living. They were attractive, lively spots, more popular than scholarly or official foundations.²¹ No wonder

that Ibn Battuta enjoyed visiting them for more than twenty-five years.

Richmond, New Hampshire



15. 'Ubbad. Shrine of Abu Madyan Shu'ayb. Entrance to the madrasa with tile decoration.



16. 'Ubbad. Shrine of Abu Madyan Shu'ayb. Courtyard of the madrasa from the southwest.

NOTES

1. For a short bibliography, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2d ed. (hereafter *EI*²) s.v. "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa." The best edition of his *Riḥla* is by C. Defrémery and B. R. Sanguinetti, 4 vols. (Paris, 1853–59); their French translation (*Voyages*) has been reprinted with an introduction and notes by Stéphanos Yerasimos, 3 vols. (Paris, 1982).
2. The term was coined by Lisa Golombek, "The Cult of Saints and Shrine Architecture in the Fourteenth Century," *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, D. Kouymjian, ed. (Beirut, 1974), pp. 419–30.
3. Sheila S. Blair, *The Ilkhanid Shrine Complex at Natanz, Iran* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986). For the octagonal tomb dated 389 (998–999) that was incorporated into the complex as the sanctuary of the mosque, see idem, "The Octagonal Pavilion at Natanz: A Re-examination of Early Islamic Architecture in Iran," *Muqarnas* 1 (1983): 69–94.
4. Basic description in K. A. C. Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, vol. 2. (Oxford, 1959), pp. 239–33; analysis of the stages of construction and decoration by Layla 'Alī Ibrahim, "The Zāwiya of Šaiḥ Zain ad-Dīn Yūsuf in Cairo," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 34 (1978): 79–110.
5. William and Georges Marçais, *Les Monuments Arabes de Tlemcen* (Paris, 1903), chap. 8, pp. 223–84; Rachid Bourouiba, *L'Art religieux musulman en Algérie* (Algiers, 1973), pp. 153–201. For the inscriptions, see Charles Brosselard, "Les inscriptions arabes de Tlemcen," *Revue Africaine* 3 (1859): 401–19 and Étienne Combe, Jean Sauvaget, and Gaston Wiet, eds., *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe*, vol. 15 (Cairo, 1956), nos. 5762–68.
6. 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī, *Kitāb Nafahāt al-uns*, ed. M. Tawhīd pūr (Tehran, 1337/1960), p. 480. For details about his pupils, see Blair, *Natanz*, p. 75.
7. *EI*² s.v. "Adī b. Musāfir."
8. al-Umari, *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*, cited in Ibrahim, "Zāwiya of Šaiḥ Zain ad-Dīn Yūsuf in Cairo," p. 98 and n. 84.
9. *EI*² s.v. "Abū Madyān, Shu'ayb b. al-Ḥusayn al-Andalūsī" and J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 46–48.
10. *Sufi Orders in Islam*, p. 84.
11. See above, n. 2.
12. Iraj Afshār, *Yādghārḥā-yi Yazd*, vol. 1 (Tehran, 1348/1969), pp. 126–36; Bernard O'Kane, "The Tiled Minbars of Iran," *Annales Islamologiques* 22 (1986): 137–47.
13. *Sufi Orders in Islam*, p. 50.
14. Sheila S. Blair, "Ilkhanid Architecture and Society: An Analysis of the Endowment Deed of the Rab'ī Rashīdī," *Iran* 22 (1984): 67–90.
15. The text of the endowment deed of the two sayyids of Yazd, known as the *Jāmi' al-Khayrāt* is given by Iraj Afshār in *Yādghārḥā-yi Yazd*, vol. 2 (Tehran, 1354/1976), pp. 391–552.
16. "Cairo's Area and Population in the Early Fifteenth Century," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 21–32, especially n. 13.
17. *Zūj*, generally the word for pair, refers to the amount of ground that a pair of oxen could work in a season (R. Dozy, *Supplément aux Dictionnaires arabes* [Beirut, 1968] 1:611).
18. Dozy defines *ṣā'* as a viable measure from 40 to 50 pounds. Brosselard ("Inscriptions arabes de Tlemcen," *Revue Africaine* 3: 415, n. 3) says in Tlemcen it is a cubic measure equivalent to 2.50 liters and hence that the monthly ration of 15 *ṣā'* is equal to 37.5 liters.
19. Ibrahim, "Zāwiya of Šaiḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf in Cairo," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 34 (1978), n. 83.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
21. Leonor Fernandes, "The Evolution of the Khanqah Institution in Mamluk Egypt," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1980, makes the distinction between the "high" Sufism practiced in khanaqahs and the popular one in zawiyas.