

“EXERT YOURSELVES, O BANŪ ARFIDA!”: SOME NOTES ON ENTERTAINMENT IN THE ISLAMIC TRADITION

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I

In the period of the Jāhiliyya, recitation of verses containing satirical abuse of rival tribes was often accompanied by singing songs and beating tambourins. Such performances apparently continued in Islamic times, though the content and character of the songs changed in conformity with the new circumstances.

A tradition concerning recitation of poetry and singing in ‘Ā’isha’s home in the presence of the Prophet became a subject of lively debate as to the permissibility of listening to such recitation and singing. Another tradition describing a meeting of the Prophet with a group of young Abyssinians who performed dances and plays in the presence of ‘Ā’isha aroused a controversy concerning the presence of women at such performances and about the permissibility of singing, dancing and playing with javelins on the occasion of religious festivities.

A report recorded by ‘Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211 AH) in his *Muṣannaf*¹ on the authority of Anas b. Mālīk says that the Abyssinians played with their javelins out of joy on the arrival of the Prophet in Medina. Another report has the event taking place in the court² of the Prophet. The Prophet stood at the door of ‘Ā’isha’s chamber, covered her with his garment and allowed her to watch the Abyssinians’ play in the mosque.³ A third tradition recorded by ‘Abd al-Razzāq⁴ shows ‘Umar assaulting the Abyssinians who played in the mosque of the Prophet: he pelted them with pebbles, but the Prophet asked him to leave them alone.

¹ ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, Ḥabību l-Raḥmān al-A‘zamī, ed. (Beirut, 1392/1972), X, p. 466, no. 19723.

² “Court” is a translation of the Arabic *dār*. *Dār* often denotes a compound building, sometimes of considerable dimensions, containing in some cases stores, workshops, storage spaces and even markets. See my “Some reports concerning Mecca,” *JESHO* 15 (1972): 85-86; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba*, V, p. 744 supra; Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ al-unuf*, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Wakīl, ed. (Cairo, 1970), VI, pp. 333-334

³ ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, X, p. 465, no. 19721.

⁴ *Ibidem*, X, p. 466, no. 19724.

An examination of the various versions of these traditions may elucidate the circumstances in which they originated and may help to gain insight into the development of the ideas concerning play and entertainment in early Muslim society.

Ibn Khurdādhbih (d. 300 AH) records a report on the authority of ‘Ā’isha:⁵ Abū Bakr entered ‘Ā’isha’s room and met there two Anṣārī girls (*jāriyatāni*), who chanted songs which the Anṣār used to sing during the war of Bu‘āth. Abū Bakr asked: “A flute of Satan in the house of the Prophet, and that on the day of a feast?” The Prophet then said: “O Abū Bakr, every people has its feast and this is our feast.”⁶

Another tradition, related on the authority of ‘Ā’isha, says: The Prophet passed by a people playing the *dankala*. He then said: “Take it (i.e. practice it, act vigorously, continue to act,-k), O Sons of Arfida, so that Jews and Christians may know that there is latitude (*fushatun*) in our faith.” They then played and exclaimed: “Abū l-Qāsim the good, Abū l-Qāsim the good.” Then ‘Umar came in and the players dispersed.

A different version containing various details about the play of the Abyssinians, the Prophet’s reaction and ‘Ā’isha’s behaviour is given by al-Ḥumaydī (d. 219 H).⁷ ‘Ā’isha reports how she hid behind the Prophet while watching the Abyssinians playing with their javelins. She watched them until she decided to withdraw. The Prophet remarked that there is none among them whose cloth is not caught by a satan saying “look.” When ‘Umar came in, the satans dispersed.⁸ ‘Ā’isha remarks: “I cannot recall from their speech anything except the words: Abū l-Qāsim is good, Abū l-Qāsim is good.”

A late transmitter of *ḥadīth*, Ibn Ḥamza al-Ḥusaynī (d. 1120 AH), relates the following version:⁹ “O sons of Arfida, take (scil. to it, take up-k) so that the Jews and the Christians may know that there is latitude in our faith,” said the Prophet.¹⁰ The background of this tradition, says

⁵ Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Mukhtār min kitābi l-lahwi wa-l-malāhī*, Ignatius ‘Abduh Khalīfa, ed. (1969), p. 13.

⁶ See this tradition: al-Baghawī, *al-Anwār fī shamā’ili l-nabiyyi l-mukhtār*, Muḥammad al-Ya’qūbī, ed. (Beirut, 1409/1989), I, p. 276, no. 350; Abū Bakr b. Kāmil al-Khaffāf, *Salwatu l-aḥzān*, Ṭāriq al-Ṭanṭāwī, ed. (Cairo, 1991); Abū Nu’aym al-Iṣfahānī, *Majlis min amālī abī nu’aymi l-iṣfahānī*, Sa’īd b. ‘Umar b. Ghāzī, ed. (Ṭanṭā, 1410/1989), pp. 58–61, no. 111; Ibrāhīm b. ‘Alī al-Fayrūzābādī al-Shīrāzī, *al-Muḥadḍḥab fī fiqhī l-shāfi’i*, (repr. Beirut 1379/1959), II, p. 327. See the copious references of the editors in the above sources.

⁷ Al-Ḥumaydī, *al-Musnad*, Ḥabību l-Raḥmān al-A’zamī, ed. (Beirut - Cairo, 1381), I, pp. 123–124, no. 254.

⁸ See the editor’s references in al-Tirmidhī IV, p. 317.

⁹ Ibn Ḥamza al-Ḥusaynī, *Al-Bayān wa-l-ta’rīf fī asbābi wurūdi l-ḥadīthi l-sharīf*, (Beirut, 1400/1980), II, pp. 297–298, no. 982.

¹⁰ This tradition, says al-Ḥusaynī, is recorded by Abū Nu’aym (i.e., al-Iṣfahānī-k) and al-Daylamī (i.e., Shīrawayhi b. Shahridār b. Shīrawayhi al-Daylamī, the author of *Firdausu l-akhbār bi-ma’tḥūri l-khiṭāb al-mukharraj ‘alā kitābi l-shihāb*) on the

al-Ḥusaynī, is that the Prophet passed by a group who practiced *darkala* (not *dankala*) in Medina. ‘Ā’isha watched them from “between the ears” (i.e., from behind his head -k) of the Prophet and heard him encouraging them to continue their play. They chanted: “Abū l-Qāsim the good, Abū l-Qāsim the good.” When they saw ‘Umar, they dispersed.¹¹

Abū ‘Ubayd records the tradition *khudhū yā banī arfida* in his *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*. He observes that the purpose of the tradition is to stress the permissibility of watching entertainment (*wa-lladhī yurādu min hādihā l-ḥadīthi al-rukḥṣatu fī l-naẓari ilā l-lahwi*). It is not meant to permit forbidden entertainment in which flutes and lutes (*al-mazāhir wa-l-mazāmīr*) would be played. It referred merely to a play of a foreign people (*innamā hādhihi lu‘batun li-l-‘ajam*).¹²

Orthodox circles seem to have considered this tradition as sound; Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī marks the tradition ”*khudhū yā banī arfida ...*” as *ṣaḥīḥ*.¹³

A short report in *Lisān al-‘Arab*, s.v. *zfn*, furnishes us with some details about the origin of this utterance. ‘Ā’isha reports that a delegation (*wafd*) from Abyssinia came to the Prophet and they performed a play and a dance (*fa-ja‘alū yazfinūna wa-yal‘abūna*).

authority of al-Sha‘bī, who traced it back to ‘Ā’isha. Abū ‘Ubayda (sic!), continues al-Ḥusaynī, in his *Gharīb* and al-Kharā’iṭī in his *I’tilāl al-qulūb* record it as well on the authority of al-Sha‘bī. Al-Suyūṭī recorded it in his *al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*. This tradition is indeed recorded in Suyūṭī’s *Jam‘u l-jawāmi‘* (Cairo, 1978), I, p. 507, l. 4 from bottom and the sources given in the *al-Bayān wa-l-ta’rīf*. And see al-Suyūṭī, *Jam‘u l-jawāmi‘*, *Majma‘ al-buḥūth al-islāmiyya*, ed. (Cairo, 1390/1970), IX, pp. 1646–1647, nos. 13555–13556, in which two versions of the utterance of the Prophet are recorded: *khudhū yā banī arfidata ḥattā ya‘lama l-yahūdu wa-l-naṣārā anna fī dīninā fushātan* and *khudhū li-ya‘lama yahūdu anna fī dīninā fushātan wa-annī bu‘ithu bi-l-ḥanifiyyati l-samḥati*; and see the references and comments provided by the editors.

¹¹ *Darkala* is explained by the editor as a kind of play with javelins; it was in fact a special kind of dance. This version is recorded in Suyūṭī’s *Jam‘u l-jawāmi‘*, II, p. 738, quoted from al-Daylamī’s *Firdaus* and traced back to ‘Ā’isha.

As to the lexical explanation of *darqala*: *Lisān al-‘Arab* s.v. *d r q l* quotes an opinion that *darqala* has to be rendered by “he danced.” *Lisān al-‘Arab*, s.v. *d r k l*: *al-dirakla* is rendered by a play of boys (*ṣibyān*); it is a play of foreign people, and an Arabised word. Ibn Durayd assumed that it is an Abyssinian word adopted in Arabic (*mu‘arrab*). Following is the tradition of Abū ‘Ubayd about the meeting of the Prophet with the group practicing the *dirakla*. He passed by them and said: “Exert yourselves, o sons of Arfida (*jiddū yā banī arfida*), so that Jews and Christians may know that there is latitude (*fushātan*) in our faith.”

This version of the tradition is given as well by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī in his *al-Maṭālibu l-‘āliya bi-zawā’idi l-masānīdi l-thamāniya*, III, p. 30, no. 2793; and see the comments of the editor. Cf. al-Zamaksharī, *al-Fā’iq*, ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī and Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, eds. (Cairo, 1971), I, p. 421.

¹² Abū ‘Ubayd, *Gharību l-ḥadīth*, Muḥammad ‘Azīmu l-Dīn, ed. (Hyderabad, 1384/1965), II, pp. 219 ult.- 221 sup.

¹³ Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, (Beirut, 1406/1986), I, p. 613, no. 3219.

‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Balabān al-Fārisī (d.739 H) has a more comprehensive report:¹⁴ the tradition recorded on the authority of Anas b. Mālik refers to the story recorded in *Lisān al-‘Arab*, s.v. *zfn*. This tradition contains, however, some details missing in the report of the *Lisān*: the Abyssinians who danced in the presence of the Prophet spoke in a language which he did not understand. He asked them what they said, and they explained that they had said: “Muḥammad is a righteous servant (of God).”¹⁵

Ibn Balabān also has a report on the event in ‘Ā’isha’s room and the clash with her father.¹⁶ This version is transmitted by ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr on the authority of ‘Ā’isha. Abū Bakr entered ‘Ā’isha’s room on a day during the Minā festivities and met there two young girls who were chanting some songs; the Prophet was present in the room, wrapped in his cloak (*musajjan bi-thaubihi*). Abū Bakr rebuked the two girls, but the Prophet removed the cloak from his head and asked Abū Bakr to leave them alone, as it was a festive occasion.

This report contains a passage from another tradition: ‘Ā’isha states that the Prophet covered her with his cloak while she watched the Abyssinians playing. “You should appreciate the perseverance of a young Arab girl (*fa-qdirū qadra l-jāriyati l-‘arabiyyati l-ḥadīthati l-sinni*),” ‘Ā’isha ends her report. According to another version, transmitted by Abū Hurayra, ‘Umar entered a room in which the Abyssinians were playing with their javelins and started to pelt them with pebbles. The Prophet forbade him to rebuke them.¹⁷

Ibn Balabān records another noteworthy tradition. This report, transmitted on the authority of ‘Urwa and traced back to ‘Ā’isha, is in fact a blend of two stories. The one is of the two singing girls and the other is the story of the delegation of the Abyssinians playing in the mosque of the Prophet in his presence. This combined tradition contains some additional details which may be of importance for the evaluation of the opinions of the early Muslim scholars concerning the ideas of play and dance in the mosque and the permissibility of attending performances of singing girls.

Another passage includes the tradition of Abū Hurayra, reporting that ‘Umar entered the mosque while the Abyssinians were playing and rebuked them. The Prophet silenced him arguing that they were the descendants of Rifda.¹⁸

¹⁴ ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Balabān al-Fārisī, *Al-Iḥsān bi-tartībi ṣaḥīḥi bni ḥibbān*, (Ibn Ḥibbān died in 354 AH), Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt, ed. (Beirut, 1407/1987), VII, p. 545, no. 5840.

¹⁵ *muḥammadun ‘abdun ṣāliḥun*.

¹⁶ Ibn Balabān, *al-Iḥsān*, VII, p. 544, no. 5838.

¹⁷ Ibn Balabān, *al-Iḥsān*, VII, p. 544, no. 5837.

¹⁸ This remark seems to imply that this tribal group was known for their inclination to engage in dancing and singing.

In a report recorded in *Lisān al-‘Arab*, s.v. *rfd*, the Banū Arfida mentioned in the tradition are said to have been a group (*jins*) of Abyssinians who practiced dancing. The Prophet addressed them encouragingly and said: *dūnakum yā banī arfida*. Ibn al-Athīr assumed that this was their nickname. Some say that it was the name of their ancestor, Arfida or Arfada.¹⁹

The utterances of the Prophet regarding dancing are explained by al-Munāwī with reference to his struggle against the Jews and the Christians.²⁰ In his commentary, al-Munāwī explains the utterance of the Prophet by juxtaposing the latitude of permitted actions and liberty of recreation in the faith of Islam with the limitations which the Jews and Christians imposed upon themselves by being too strict in the performance of their religious duties (*yushaddidūna*). The utterance was made on the day of a festival of the Abyssinians, when the Prophet saw them dancing and playing with their javelins. This utterance indicates that it is permissible to watch a play, provided that there are no flutes nor bow-string instruments.

Some Šūfī groups argued that this story bears evidence that dancing and listening to music is permitted in Islam. Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī quoted the opinion of scholars who refuted this assumption, saying that the play of the Abyssinians with their javelins was merely a war-exercise.

A tradition recorded by al-Munāwī maintains that the Prophet did not encourage a foreign dancing group; he encouraged a group of his own people to take part in performances and in recreation. “Enjoy entertainment and play,” he said, “as I do not like to see rigidity in your faith” (*Ulhū wa-l’abū, fa-innī akrahu an yurā fī dīnikum ghilza*).²¹ It is indeed a rare tradition in which the Prophet urged his people to enjoy amusement and entertainment.

II

Later sources continue to record the two traditions, analysing them, commenting on them and discussing some additional aspects of their contents. Al-‘Aynī records the story of the dancing Abyssinians²² under the following headline: “Women looking at the Abyssinians and others without suspicion.” In his explanation al-‘Aynī remarks that a woman is permitted to look at a stranger (*al-ajnaḇī*), as long as he does not look

¹⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya fī gharībi l-ḥadīthi wa-l-athar*, al-Ṭanāḥī and al-Zāwī, eds. Note the different readings of the noun: *dirakla, dirkila, dirkala and diriqila*. It is a play of boys, or a kind of a dance. This is mentioned in a tradition saying that Abyssinian youngsters (*fityatun*), came to the Prophet and danced (*yudarqilūna*).

²⁰ Al-Munāwī, *Fayḍu l-qadīr, sharḥu l-jāmi‘i l-ṣaghīr*, (Beirut, 1391/1972), III, p. 435, no. 3896.

²¹ Al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-qadīr*, II, p. 161, no. 1582.

²² Al-‘Aynī, *‘Umdat al-qārī, sharḥ ṣaḥīḥi l-bukhārī*, 1348, (repr. Beirut), XX, pp. 216–217.

at her. The word "Abyssinians" is mentioned here, though the rule may be applied to other cases as well. Al-ʿAynī says that the case of Ibn Umm Maktūm was different: the Prophet ordered Umm Salama and Maymūna to veil their faces when the blind Ibn Umm Maktūm entered the room. When the two women tried to object, saying that he was blind, the Prophet replied: "But you are not blind."

Al-ʿAynī gives other reasons for the permission granted ʿĀʿisha to watch the play of the Abyssinians. ʿĀʿisha, says al-ʿAynī, was then a young girl (*kānat ṣaghīratan*), and there was nothing improper in her watching them. Further it may be argued that what was not permitted at other times, was permitted during festivities (*innahu rukhkhīṣa fī l-aʿyād*). It may also be assumed that the Prophet's wives were granted special and exclusive permission to watch because of their respectability. Perhaps, continues al-ʿAynī, the *ḥadīth* about Ibn Umm Maktūm abrogated the concession granted ʿĀʿisha. Another reason for letting ʿĀʿisha watch the Abyssinians was that they were young boys who had not yet reached maturity. And finally: the difference between the Prophet's decisions in these two cases is probably based on the surmise that the blind man (i.e. Ibn Umm Maktūm-k) might have inadvertently uncovered some part of his body.

The case of Ibn Umm Maktūm and the Prophet's order bidding the women to cover their faces may explain the prescription that women are permitted to attend services in the mosques, but have to veil their faces.

Some transmitters of *ḥadīth* opposed the assumption that ʿĀʿisha was a young woman and had not yet reached maturity at the time, arguing that the delegation of the Abyssinians came to the Prophet in 7 AH when ʿĀʿisha was sixteen years old.

The tradition concerning the story of the two singing girls in ʿĀʿisha's room and the story of the dancing group of the Abyssinians who performed their play in the presence of the Prophet and ʿĀʿisha are also recorded by al-ʿAynī in another volume of his *ʿUmda*.²³

The copious variants of the text provided by al-ʿAynī, the comments of different scholars recorded by him, the abundant explanations of the words and expressions — all stress the importance of the traditions and reflect the various opinions and attitudes towards their content. In many cases the explanations disclose the scholars' tendencies and ideological views.

The heading of the tradition as recorded by al-Bukhārī: *bābu l-ḥirābi wa-l-daraq yauma l-ʿīd*, gives al-ʿAynī the opportunity to observe that the title itself indicates that the festival (*yaumu l-ʿīd*), is a day of joy and pleasure. On this day the believers will be granted forgiveness for their sins, an absolution they would not have been granted on any other

²³ Al-ʿAynī, *ʿUmda*, VI, pp. 267 inf.-272.

day. Al-‘Aynī rightly observes that the heading of the tradition does not correspond exactly to the content of the *ḥadīth*; it refers merely to two words included in the tradition: javelins and leather shields (*al-ḥirāb wa-l-daraq*). He further quotes the opinion of Ibn Baṭṭāl (d. 449 AH) that there is no indication in the *ḥadīth* that the Prophet went out with the warriors bearing javelins and leather shields on the festive day, nor did he order his Companions to be ready to take up arms. Thus the title of the tradition is only partly connected with its content.

The tradition of al-Bukhārī recorded by al-‘Aynī is indeed a composite one. It includes the story of the singing girls rebuked by Abū Bakr and the story of the Abyssinians armoured with their javelins and leather shields, encouraged in their play by the Prophet.

Al-‘Aynī’s remarks concerning the different versions of the tradition are also important. The tradition transmitted by al-Zuhrī on the authority of ‘Urwa says that the two girls sang in the room of ‘Ā’isha on the Days of Minā.²⁴ The tradition recorded by al-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Umm Salama says that one of the singing girls belonged (scil. as a servant-k) to Ḥassān b. Thābit. Ibn Abī l-Dunyā records in his *Kitābu l-‘idāyini* the tradition transmitted by Fulayḥ²⁵ on the authority of Hishām b. ‘Urwa, according to which the singing girls were Ḥamāma and her friend. Al-‘Aynī remarks that he could not find the name of Ḥamāma in the collections containing the lists of the Companions of the Prophet.

Some of the versions have an additional word: *bi-duffayn*; they performed the singing accompanied with the beating of tambourins. Others read have *bi-mā taqādhafat*: they sang verses in which the fighting parties reviled each other on the Day of Bu‘āth. It is plausible that this was the reason for Abū Bakr’s rebuke, since such verses, often mentioned in the battles and clashes of the Jāhiliyya, may have had an inflammatory effect, causing clashes between hostile Muslims factions.

Verses of such kind were recited before or during the battle in order to incite the warriors’ hatred against the tribal enemy. The recitation, or the singing performance, was performed by a singing girl or a songstress (*mughanniya*). It is therefore of some importance that one of the versions quoted by al-‘Aynī makes the following reservation: “and they were not professional songstresses” (*wa-laysatā bi-mughanniyyatayn*). This reservation is rightly interpreted by al-‘Aynī: “their song did not stir the souls towards improprieties” (*lam yakun bi-l-ghinā’i l-ladhī yahīju l-nufūsa ilā umūrin lā talīqu*). This is of course an attempt to clear ‘Ā’isha

²⁴ The days of Muslim festivities during the *ḥajj*; and see this version in Ibn Ḥazm’s *Rasā’il*, Iḥsān ‘Abbās, ed. (Beirut, 1401/1980), I, p. 436—in the *Risāla fi l-ghinā’ l-mulhī, a mubāḥun huwa am maḥzūr*.

²⁵ See on him: Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb l-tahdhīb*, (Hyderabad, 1326), VIII, p. 303, no. 551.

from any suspicion of using singing girls to arouse dissension and strife. According to Ibn Ḥazm, the expression *wa-laysatā bi-mughanniyatayni* indicates that the two girls were not skilled songstresses (*laysatā bi-muḥsinatayni*).²⁶

A peculiar tradition relates that the Prophet entered the room of al-Rubayyi' bint Mu'awwadh of the Banū Najjār on the day of her marriage, sat down on her bed and listened to the girls who sang the songs bewailing the death of their relatives on the Day of Badr, accompanying the songs by beating tambourins. When one of the girls (*juwayriyyāt*), started to sing verses in praise of the Prophet, he stopped her and ordered her to continue singing songs of mourning. It is evident that the aim of this tradition is to emphasize that the Prophet gave his permission to sing verses lamenting the heroic relatives who were killed in battles for the cause of Islam, preferring these to songs praising the Prophet.²⁷

It is indeed surprising to find a tradition about a singing girl who played in the Prophet's home, accompanying herself with a tambourin. The Prophet allowed Abū Bakr to enter the room, then allowed 'Umar to enter; but when 'Uthmān asked permission to enter, the girl stopped playing and the Prophet remarked: "'Uthmān is a chaste person" (*inna 'uthmāna rajulun ḥayyiyun*).²⁸ As to the tradition of the Abyssinians playing in the Prophet's court, there are contradictory versions whether 'Ā'isha asked to attend their performance or whether it was the Prophet who proposed that she watch their play.

The formulations of the position in which 'Ā'isha and the Prophet watched the play of the Abyssinians are noteworthy: "his mouth at my mouth" (*fūhu ilā fiyya*), or "my cheek on his cheek" (*khaddī 'alā khaddihī*), "and I put my head on his shoulder" (*fa-wada'tu ra'sī 'alā mankibayhi*), "and I looked from between his ears and his shoulder" (*anzuru bayna udhunayhi wa-ātiqihī*). Sometimes the situation is described in more general terms: "and he veiled me with his garment" (*yasturunī bi-ridā'ihī*); at other times the description is more detailed: "and put my chin on his shoulder and I leaned my face on his cheek" (*fa-wada'tu dhaqanī 'alā ātiqihī wa-asnadtū wajhī ilā khaddihī*).

A peculiar tradition recorded by al-'Aynī is that of Nasā'ī: . . . "And he said 'Have you not had enough, have you not had enough?'; and I started to say 'no' in order to test the measure of his affection for me (*a-mā shabi'ti, a-mā shabi'ti? qālat: fa-ja'altu aqūlu: lā, li-anzura manzi-*

²⁶ Ibn Ḥazm, *Rasā'il*, I, p. 436.

²⁷ See this story: Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba*, VII, pp. 641-642, no. 11166; Ibn Balabān, *al-Iḥsān*, VII, pp. 548, no. 5848; Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī, *al-Istibṣār fī nasabi al-ṣaḥāba mina l-anṣār*, 'Alī Nuwayhid, ed. (Beirut, 1391/1971), pp. 66-67; al-Baghawī, *al-Anwār fī shamā'ili l-nabiyyi l-mukhtār*, I, p. 277, no. 351.

²⁸ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Faḍā'ilu l-ṣaḥāba*, Waṣiyyu llāhi b. Muḥammad 'Abbās, ed. (Makka al-mukarrama, 1403/1983), I, p. 451, no. 725.

latī 'indahū). In another version 'Ā'isha asked to continue watching the performance and the Prophet consented; after some time he asked her again whether she had not seen enough, but she wished that the women (scil. the wives of the Prophet-k) might know her position (scil. of favour and affection-k) in his eyes.²⁹

III

Al-'Aynī devotes a lengthy passage to justify the Prophet's decision to let 'Ā'isha listen to the songs of the Anṣārī girls. It is indeed true that singing of songs is forbidden and considered a sin; but the songs of the two girls were not songs of wine or descriptions of young men and women's charms; they merely sang about the virtues of courage and bravery in battle.

As for the play of the Abyssinians, it was in fact a military exercise, which is permissible. Concerning the presence of 'Ā'isha at the performance, one has to take into account that at the time she had not yet reached maturity. Additionally it may be said that this took place before the verse "And say to the believing women, that they cast down their eyes..."³⁰ had been revealed.

Al-'Aynī vigorously denies the claims of some Ṣūfīs who argued that the tradition grants permission to sing and to listen to songs, whether accompanied by instruments or not. Al-'Aynī stresses that listening to the recital of the Qur'ān accompanied by some sort of music is considered by certain scholars to be a sin of disobedience to God: *wa-qāla ba'du mashāyikhinā: mujarradu l-ghinā'i wa-l-istimā'u ilayhi ma'siyatun, ḥattā qālū: istimā'u l-qur'āni bi-l-alḥāni ma'siyatun wa-l-tālī wa-l-sāmi' āthimāni.*³¹

Al-'Aynī maintains that several conclusions can be drawn from the combined tradition: the believer is enjoined to entertain his family and to bring them joy on festive days. It may also be inferred that the father is allowed to visit his daughter in the house of her husband, if this is his usual habit. He also has the right to rebuke his daughter. On the other hand, women should be treated leniently. Abū Bakr is assumed to have reprimanded his daughter only because he thought that the Prophet

²⁹ Cf. al-Nasā'ī, *'Ishratu l-nisā'i*, 'Amr 'Alī 'Umar, ed. (Cairo, 1408/1988), p. 98, no. 65.

³⁰ Qur'ān 24:32.

³¹ Cf. al-Ājurri, *al-Jawāb 'an mas'alati l-samā'*, MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158, fol. 6a - 6b. See also the story of a singing girl who "read according to tunes" (*taqra'u bi-l-alḥān*); according to the opinions of Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, al-Ḥārith b. Miskīn and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, she was sold as an "unqualified" servant for a cheap sum of more than seventy dīnārs; by the next day she was sold by the buyer for a sum of more than one hundred seventy dīnārs.

was asleep. Therefore, 'Ā'isha's sending away of the two girls may be considered as a deed of obedience to her father's orders.

Listening to a girl's singing is permissible: the Prophet did not rebuke Abū Bakr for listening to the song; he rebuked him for reprimanding his daughter who enjoyed listening to it. Al-'Aynī also quotes Ibn Ḥazm who thought that singing, dancing and playing during the two feasts was permissible. Furthermore, 'Umar permitted Bedouin songs resembling the *hidā'*³² and known as *al-naṣb*; the song of the two girls was probably of this kind.³³

Al-Ṭabarānī records three traditions concerning the play of the Abyssinians in the mosque of the Prophet.³⁴ In these traditions it was the Prophet who stood at the door of 'Ā'isha's chamber; he wrapped her in his garment and enabled her to watch the Abyssinians playing in the mosque. Four other traditions record the story of the singing girls in 'Ā'isha's room, the rebuke of Abū Bakr and the request of the Prophet to let them chant as it was the day of "our feast."³⁵

Al-'Aynī records a peculiar version of the dance and the permission granted 'Ā'isha to watch.³⁶ This version has only few points of similarity with the versions mentioned above. One day the Prophet and 'Ā'isha heard a noise. The Prophet stood up and saw an Abyssinian woman dancing, surrounded by boys. He called 'Ā'isha and bade her to watch the dancer.

This same tradition, with significant variants, is recorded in Suyūṭī's *Musnad ummi l-mu'minīna 'ā'ishata raḍiya llāhu 'anhā*.³⁷ 'Ā'isha indeed stood up to watch the dancing woman. The Prophet asked her after some time whether she had not had enough, but her answer was negative as she wanted to test the measure of the Prophet's affection for her. (... *fa-aqūlu: lā, li-anzura manzilī 'indahū*). Then 'Umar appeared and the youths and the people dispersed from around the dancing woman. The Prophet then said: "I saw the Satans of men and *jinn* fleeing from 'Umar." The Prophet also said: "After a short time she will be afflicted with an attack of epilepsy." This indeed happened and people came to inform him about it.

³² It may be noted that the *hidā'* (the songs of the camel drivers) was viewed favourably by Arab scholars. These songs were helpful in overcoming the fatigue of the riders and in urging the weary camels on. None of the Companions opposed these tunes. See Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, VI, pp. 482-83.

³³ Cf. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya fī gharībī l-ḥadīthi wa-l-athar*, Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanūhī, ed. (Cairo, 1385/1965), V, p. 62.

³⁴ Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, Ḥamdī 'Abd al-Majīd al-Silafī, ed. (1403/1983), XXIII, pp. 179-180, nos. 282-284.

³⁵ Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, XXIII, pp. 180-181, nos. 285-288.

³⁶ Al-'Aynī, *al-'Umda*, VI, p. 270.

³⁷ Extracted from Suyūṭī's *Jam'u l-jawāmi'*, Muḥammad Ghauth al-Nadwī, ed., revised by Mukhtār Aḥmad al-Nadwī (Bombay 1401/1981), p. 82, no. 433.

IV

Singing and dancing became a widely discussed subject in the Muslim community. It was forbidden by some extreme scholars of Muslim tradition. Nevertheless, some concessions are said to have been made by the Prophet. The case of the Abyssinians dancing in the mosque of the Prophet is often mentioned in the heated debates as evidence of the permissibility of dancing and play even in ritual practices.

A late Muslim scholar, Idrīs b. Baydakīn b. ‘Abdallāh al-Turkumānī,³⁸ gives a fair exposition of the opinions of Muslim scholars concerning play, dancing, amusement and entertainment in Muslim society. According to him, one of the vicious innovations in this world and in the next, strongly censured by orthodox scholars, is the practice of dancing, singing and jumping in the mosque of al-Khayf at Minā; the dancer becomes tired in this world and does not reach the objects of his desire in the next. Similar practices of jumping (*natt*) are carried out in Jerusalem as well; these are *bida*’s performed contrary to the *sunna* of the Prophet and of his Companions.

Al-Turkumānī stresses that the dance of the Abyssinians in the mosque of the Prophet did not belong to the evil kind of dance which was characterized by movements reflecting sexual desire (*hawan*), and accompanied by beating tambourins. The Abyssinians performed a play with weapons (*silāh*), which was actually a preparation for battle. They taught the strategy of attack and tactical retreat (*ta‘līm al-karr wa-l-farr*), the thrusting of lances and hitting (with swords-k) in war.³⁹

Almost identical arguments against dancing and singing during the performances of *dhikr* are put forward by a contemporary Egyptian scholar, ‘Alī Maḥfūz.⁴⁰ He refutes the claims of some Ṣūfīs who rely on the dancing of the Abyssinians and their play in the mosque of the Prophet to justify their involvement in profligate and perverted performances during the *dhikr*. The aim of the Abyssinians’ dance was to prepare for military activity for the sake of Islam. The author mentions other concessions granted to the warriors,⁴¹ useful in war.

The promiscuous dance of some Ṣūfī groups, on the other hand, was invented and practiced by the wicked Samaritan (*al-sāmīrī*), who created the “Idol of the Calf” and the impious people led astray by him danced around the idol.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya (d. 751 AH) refers to the vicious and de-

³⁸ He lived in the seventh century AH. See al-Turkumānī, *Kitābu l-luma‘ fī l-ḥawādith wa-l-bida‘*, Ṣubḥī Labīb, ed. (1406/1986), I, p. 100.

³⁹ Al-Turkumānī, *al-Luma‘*, I, p. 90.

⁴⁰ See his *al-Ibdā‘ fī maḍārri l-ibtidā‘* (Cairo, 1388/1968), pp. 330–332.

⁴¹ Like the *tabakhtur* and the *musābaqa*.

praved practices rampant during the observance of Muslim ritual.⁴² He quotes the opinion of Ṭurtūshī who stated that those who perform these practices of singing in mosques and sacred places and who adopt them as practices of their faith are in fact acting against the injunctions of Muslim law. The most abominable deed of this group, says Ibn Qayyim, is what they practice on the eve of 'Arafa, in al-Aqṣā mosque and in the mosque of al-Khayf during the festivities of Minā. Ibn Qayyim reports that his men expelled the vicious group from the mosque of al-Khayf several times by hitting them, but they went over to the *ḥaram* itself and to the place of the circumambulations and there continued their practices. "I dispatched to them the 'Party of Allah' (*ḥizbu llāh*), and they scattered them," says Ibn Qayyim. This vicious group was seen in 'Arafāt practicing their abominable singing and playing on reed-pipes and tambourins (*bi-l-yarā' wa-l-duff*), amidst the voices of supplications of the praying believers.

Verses quoted by Ibn Qayyim give a vivid picture of the life style of this group. "When did people of our faith reckon singing as a *sunna* which has to be followed?" asks the poet. He continues: "They eat like asses and dance in *Jam'* until they fall down. . . like beasts they are moved to dance, saturated and filled with food." In another poem, a poet points out the hypocrisy and fraudulent claims of these impostors; it is evident that the censure refers to a Ṣūfī group performing these practices.⁴³

Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya reiterates in a lengthy passage his censure of the Ṣūfī *samā'*: listening to the sounds of the *samā'*, as practiced "nowadays" (i.e., in his time-k), is forbidden. No Muslim would approve of it, and the only people who find the *samā'* enjoyable are those who shed the clothes of belief and bashfulness and face God, His messenger, His faith and servants with vicious and ugly deeds. The disapproval of such *samā'* is firmly established in the natural dispositions (*fiṭar*) of the people, so that even unbelievers upbraid the Muslims and their faith for these vicious performances.⁴⁴

The *samā'*, says Ibn Qayyim, causes damage, corrupting the mind and the faith of women, children and youths; it brings into existence bad innovations and spreads debauchery; it encourages unbelief (*kufr*) and hypocrisy; it sows the seeds of hatred towards faith and causes dissension in the community. It paves the way for sin and disobedience of God's orders. Souls get drunk with the *samā'* and cause strife by engaging in forbidden practices; the *samā'* is indeed a "charm of fornication"; it is a practice inspired by Satan. The gladness and joy of the soul are not for

⁴² See, e.g., Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Ighāthatu l-lahfān min maṣāyidi l-shayṭān*, Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiṭrī, ed. (Beirut, 1395/1975), I, pp. 230-231.

⁴³ See *ibid.*, pp. 231-237.

⁴⁴ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *al-Kalām 'alā mas'alati l-samā'*, Rāshid b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥamd, ed. (Riyāḍ, 1409), pp. 106 ff.

the sake of God, they are *li-ghayri llāhi, lā li-llāhi*. The desire, longing and the heat in the interior (*lahību l-aḥshā'*) do not appear when the Words of the Lord of Creation are recited; they are only stirred when the liars' voices refuting the truth (*al-mubṭilūn*) are heard.

The greatest calamity is that these practices are attributed to the faith of the Messenger of God and the revealed Law of Islam. Those people claim falsely that God's messenger permitted his community to perform these practices, although they clearly contradict faith and law. Furthermore, it is reprehensible to believe that the *samā'* is a commendable deed by which the believer comes nearer to the faith enjoined by God, and that it brings about the righteousness of the believer's heart, filling it with noble and high states of mystical ecstasy (*al-aḥwāl al-āliya*) and pure qualities (*al-ṣifāt al-zakiyya*). It is equally wrong to believe that the *samā'* is more distinguished than voluntary ritual practices (*nawāfil*) like night vigils, reading of the Qur'ān and the believer's efforts to gain beneficial knowledge and perform pious deeds. It is indeed a calamity that some of the believers assume that hearts are more influenced (*tata'aththaru*) by *samā'* than by the Qur'ān and that the *samā'* is more beneficial for the believer than listening to the Qur'ān.⁴⁵

The opinion of Ibn Qayyim regarding the people who are aware that the *samā'* is prohibited and nevertheless practice it, and his opinion regarding the people who practice it believing that it is a commendable deed, are instructive. The former are more likely to be punished than the latter, since they perform a practice which turns the tenets of faith upside down, contradicts the injunctions of the Messenger of God and follows the ways of the unbelievers. Ibn Qayyim bases his assumption on Qur'ān 4:115: "But whoso makes a breach with the Messenger after the guidance has become clear to him, and follows a way other than the believers', him We shall turn over to what he has turned to and We shall roast him in Gehenna, an evil homecoming!" (*wa-man yushāqiqi l-rasūla min ba'di mā tabayyana lahu l-hudā wa-yattabi' ghayra sabīli l-mu'minīna nuwallihi mā tawallā wa-nuṣlihi jahannama wa-sā'at maṣīran*).⁴⁶

Ibn Qayyim argues against the champions of *samā'*: If one of them claims that this innovated *samā'* (*al-samā'u l-muṣṭalaḥu 'alayhi l-muḥ-dath*) is based on the tenets of the faith, on which hearts become kind and righteous, then he has two ways in which to justify his assumption: he may claim that God established it as an obligatory practice (*sharā'ahu li-rasūlihi*) when He perfected his faith for the Prophet. He then acted accordingly and summoned his people to act in this way, as he did not leave any means to draw the believers towards God, intending to gain for them the righteousness of their hearts and tenets. He who advocates

⁴⁵ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *al-Kalām*, p. 108.

⁴⁶ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *al-Kalām*, p. 109 (translation by Arberry).

this view fabricates lies against God and His Messenger, since the *samā'* contains harmful and destructive elements. Attributing the *samā'* to the Companions of the Prophet and the *tābi'ūn* is mere slander with which they try to defend themselves (*yatatarrasūna bihi*) against the arrows of the Prophet's party and the helpers of his faith.

Or he may say: God did not enjoin it, nor His Messenger. But it is nevertheless a part of the faith and contains essential elements by which the righteousness of the hearts can be achieved. This assumption would then oblige him to state that faith was imperfect (*nāqis*) until brought to perfection by these adherents of *samā'* (*al-samā'ātiyya*); it would thus be these *samā'ātiyyūn* who would have been exclusively granted the grace which was withheld from the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār.⁴⁷

V

A strong censure of the *samā'* is included in a treatise written by Diyā' al-Dīn Abū 'Abdallah Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Maqdisī (d. 643 AH).⁴⁸

The author gives a dismal account of the situation in his period, pointing out the circumstances in which these *bida'* originated. Many people practiced these *bida'*, considering them a way leading to God. They attended singing parties in which they associated with women and young men (*murdān*) and in which flutes were played and people danced. Some of them considered these parties as being better than prayer and recitation of the Qur'ān.⁴⁹

Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974 AH) assesses the festivities of the *maulid* as a *bid'a ḥasana*; these festivities did not exist during the first generations of the Muslim community, but they are virtuous because of the deeds of charity performed on this day by the believers.⁵⁰ But al-Haytamī also reports about the vicious practices during the *maulid* in Mecca,⁵¹ marking them as *qabā'ih*. Al-Haytamī gives an account of the immodest behaviour of the pious believers who took part in the festivities of the *maulid*; during their depraved practises the mixed crowds of men and women perpetrated sins which almost reached fornication, impeded only by the fact that the women were clad in their garments. Some

⁴⁷ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *al-Kalām*, p. 111.

⁴⁸ Diyā' al-Dīn Abū 'Abdallah Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Maqdisī, *Al-amru bi-ttibā'i l-sunan wa-jtinābi l-bida'*, MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 25b.

⁵⁰ Al-Haytamī, *al-Ni'matu l-kubrā 'alā l-'ālam bi-maulidi sayyidi banī ādam ṣallā llāhu 'alayhi wa-sallama 'alayhi wa-zādahu fakhran wa-sharafan ladayhi*, MS. in my possession, fol. 1b—3a.

⁵¹ Al-Haytamī, *al-Ni'matu l-kubrā*, fol. 3a, penult.—4b.

religious leaders in Mecca tried to convince the believers to prohibit the women from attending these festivities, but there were religious personalities who adhered to the current customs and resisted any change in the corrupt festivities. Al-Haytamī quotes evidence of his students who were almost seduced by women during the ritual of kissing the Black Stone.

Lengthy chapters were dedicated by al-Haytamī to the repudiation of the *samāʿ* in his *Kaffu l-raʿā ʿan muḥarramāti l-lahwi wa-l-samāʿ*.⁵² Al-Haytamī mentions in his *al-Niʿma al-kubrā*⁵³ that Abū ʿAbdallāh b. al-Ḥājj al-Mālikī (d. 737 AH) recorded the condemned practices of the *maulid* in his *Mudkhal*.

Similar transgressions are reported by a modern Egyptian scholar; they take place in the *maulid* festivities. The vicious practices of singing and dancing on that occasion are considered worship.⁵⁴

VI

Certain traditions maintain that singing is a reprehensible custom, adopted by the Arabs from Persian workers who used to sing while they rebuilt the Kaʿba after its destruction by ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr. These tunes were introduced among the Arabs by “the inauspicious Ṭuways;” he was born on the day of the death of the Prophet, he was weaned on the day of Abū Bakr’s death, he reached maturity on the day of the murder of ʿUmar, he married on the day on which ʿUthmān was killed and a child was born to him on the day ʿAlī was killed. One of his everlasting calamities was the invention of the *bidʿa* of the “Arabic song,” *al-ghināʾu l-ʿarabi*.⁵⁵

Burhān al-Dīn b. Jamāʿa was asked about the permissibility of the *samāʿ* in 772 H, when he was the *khaṭīb* in Jerusalem. When asked whether the *samāʿ* originated in the time of the Prophet or in the period of one of the *ṣaḥāba*, Burhān al-Dīn firmly stated that that was not their habit (*daʿb*); it was invented by worthless people and heretics (*zanādiqa*).⁵⁶

It was the Prophet himself who prohibited to buy girls, to teach them the art of singing and to sell them later (for a high price-k). He

⁵² Included in his *al-Zawājir ʿan iqtirāfi l-kabāʾir* (Cairo, 1390/1970), pp. 267–335.

⁵³ Al-Haytamī, *al-Niʿmatu l-kubrā*, fol. 46.

⁵⁴ Al-Qāsimī, *Islāḥu l-masājid* (Cairo, 1341 H), p. 124.

⁵⁵ *Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, al-Amr bi-ttibāʿi l-sunan*, MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158, fol. 31b; and see al-Suyūfī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* (Cairo, 1314), V, pp. 158–160; cf. al-Khaḥfāf, *Salwatu l-aḥzān*, 111: ... *anna l-nabiyya ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam qāla: lā yaḥillu bayʿu l-mughanniyyāt wa-lā shirāʾuhunna wa-lā tijāratun fihinna...*

⁵⁶ Burhān al-Dīn b. Jamāʿa, *Suʾāl saʾalahu shakhṣun min al-fuqarāʾ* ... , MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158, fols. 18a-b.

recited Qurʾān 31:6: “Some men there are who buy diverting talk to lead astray from the way of God without knowledge, and to take it in mockery; those- there awaits them a humbling chastisement” (*wa-mina l-nāsi man yashtarī lahwu l-ḥadīthi. . .*).⁵⁷ *Lahwu l-ḥadīth* was rendered by the commentators of the Qurʾān as *al-ghināʾ*, singing or chanting, or acquiring singing girls, or singing and playing flutes (*al-ghināʾ wa-l-mazāmīr*). Singing is classified as the incantation of fornication (*al-ghināʾ u ruqyatu l-zinā*).⁵⁸ A tradition attributed to the Prophet says: “He who listens to the song of a slave girl, boiling lead (*ānuk*) will be poured into his ear on the Day of Resurrection.”⁵⁹ Another tradition, reported on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās, gives the circumstances of the revelation: al-Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith bought a singing girl and advised her to receive hospitably the men who came to Mecca in order to embrace Islam, to sing for them and to convince them that eating, drinking and listening to songs is much better than praying, fasting and fighting for the cause of Muḥammad.⁶⁰

A treatise of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ājurri (d. 360 AH), entitled *al-Jawāb ʿan masʾalati l-samāʾ*⁶¹ records a great deal of traditions in which the *lahwu l-ḥadīth* is rendered by “song” or “chanting” or “a singing girl.”⁶²

⁵⁷ Diyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Amr bi-ttibāʾi l-sunan. . .* MS. Hebrew University, AP. AR. 158, fol. 31b. I have used Arberry’s translation of the Qurʾān

⁵⁸ See al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, V, p. 159; and see ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Hammām, *Tafsīru l-qurʾān*, Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad, ed. (al-Riyāḍ, 1410/1989), II, p. 105; and see Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, *Tafsīru l-ḥasan al-baṣrī*, (Cairo, 1992), II, p. 199 for different renderings of the word *lahwu*.

⁵⁹ Al-Munāwī, *Fayḍu l-qadīr*, VI, p. 60, no. 8428; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Faṣṣu l-khawātīm fī-mā qila fī l-walāʾim*, Nizār Ubāza, ed. (Damascus, 1987), p. 104, sup.

⁶⁰ Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, V, p. 159; and see al-Wāḥidī, *Asbābu l-nuzūl* (Cairo, 1388/1968), pp. 232–233; and see Abū ʿAbdallah Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkāmī l-qurʾān (Tafsīru l-qurṭubī)*, (Cairo, 1387/1967), XIV, p. 52. And see fragments of this tradition: Muqātil b. Sulaymān, (d. 150 H), *Tafsīr*, ʿAbdallah Maḥmūd Shaḥāta, ed. (Cairo, 1984), III, p. 432; al-Māwardī, *Tafsīr*, Khidr Muḥammad Khidr, ed., revised by ʿAbd al-Sattār Abū Ghudda (Kuwayt, 1402/1982), III, p. 276; Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muṭarrif al-Kinānī, *Kitābu l-qurʾān* (Cairo, 1355), p. 72.

⁶¹ MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158, fols. 1a-10a.

⁶² Fols. 2b-4a; and see al-Māwardī, *Tafsīr al-nukat wa-l-ʿuyūn*, Khidr Muḥammad Khidr, ed. (Kuwayt, 1402/1982), III, p. 276; al-Shaukānī, *Faṭḥu l-qadīr al-jāmiʿ bayna fannayī l-riwāya wa-l-dirāya min ʿilmi l-tafsīr*, (Beirut, reprint, n. d., IV, p. 234); and see al-Suyūṭī, *Jamʿu l-jawāmiʿ*, (Cairo, 1978), I, p. 879, penult.; and see this tradition in Qurṭubī’s *Tafsīr*, XIV, p. 51, and see *ibid.* the discussion concerning the validity of the utterance and its *isnāds*. See also the utterances of the Prophet prohibiting the acquisition of singing girls: al-Khāzin, *Lubābu l-taʾwīl fī maʾānī l-tanzīl*, (Cairo, n.d.), V, p. 177, quoted in connection with the explanation of *lahwu l-ḥadīth*. See also the utterance of the Prophet warning a singer that he would be punished by two angels sent by God; they would beat him on his chest until he stopped singing: al-Ṭabarānī, *Musnad al-shāmiyyīn*, Ḥamdī ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Silāfi, ed. (Beirut, 1409/1989), I, pp. 144–145, no. 231, and see the references of the editor;

The word *zūr* in the phrase *wa-lladhīna lā yashhadūna l-zūra* (Qurʾān 25:72) was rendered by some scholars as singing; “and those who do not attend assemblies with singing girls.”⁶³

The same arguments against singing girls, the acquisition of these girls and teaching them to chant are used by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. ca. 318/930). It is forbidden to teach youths or girls the art of singing and it is forbidden to buy or hire singing girls; their occupation is merely play and entertainment, as indicated in Qurʾān 31:6. Singing is a kind of entertainment which leads astray from (belief in-k) God; teaching music to youths therefore amounts to corruption of their souls. Teaching a (slave-k) girl music causes, of course, an increase in her price.⁶⁴

According to the opinion of Mālīk b. Anas, a man who bought a slave girl was allowed to return her if he found out that she was a singing girl.⁶⁵ In another saying the Prophet is said to have stated that he had been sent in order to destroy the flutes and the drums.⁶⁶ According to a more detailed tradition, he is said to have stated that he was sent out of mercy to mankind, and was ordered by God to eradicate the musical instruments and the flutes, to destroy the crosses and to abolish the order of the Jāhiliyya.⁶⁷ A person who destroys a musical instrument should not be fined.⁶⁸ In another utterance the Prophet stated that the profits of a singing girl and a singing man are forbidden, the profit of a prostitute is unlawful and God will not introduce into Paradise a body which grew up on immoral profit.⁶⁹

Music, drinking of wine, licentious songs and the company of frivolous women are means by which Iblīs led the believers astray. In God’s famous talk with Iblīs, (after Ādam’s expulsion from Paradise-k), God promised Iblīs that in contradistinction to the Books of the believers

cf. al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, V, p. 159 inf.

⁶³ See al-Qurtubī, *Tafsīr*, XIII, p. 80, on the authority of Mujāhid; Mujāhid, *Tafsīr*, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad al-Sūrātī, ed. (Islamabad, n.d.), II, p. 456, no. 3, quoted by the editor from the *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* on the authority of Mujāhid, but missing in the text; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, V, p. 80 inf.; al-Māwardī, *Tafsīr*, III, p. 167 with a misprint: *al-fanā*’ instead of *al-ghinā*’. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (Cairo, n.d.), XXIV, p. 113 on the authority of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya; al-Khazīn, *Lubābu l-ta’wīl*, V, p. 91; al-Shaukānī, *Fathu l-qadīr*, IV, p. 89.

⁶⁴ Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *al-Manhiyyāt*, Muḥammad b. Basyūnī Zaghlūl, ed. (Beirut, 1405/1985), p. 58.

⁶⁵ Al-Zabīdī, *Iṭḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, (Beirut, n.d.), VI, p. 456.

⁶⁶ Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Amr*, MS. Hebrew University, fol. 33a; al-Qurtubī, *Tafsīr*, XIV, p. 53; ‘Abdallah b. ‘Adī al-Jurjānī, *al-Kāmil fī ḍu‘afā’ l-rijāl* (Beirut, 1404/1984), I, p. 238: ... *amaranī rabbī ‘azza wa-jalla bi-nafyi l-ḥunbūri wa-l-mizmāri*.

⁶⁷ Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *al-Manhiyyāt*, pp. 43 inf.-44; cf. al-Ājurri, *Taḥrīmu l-nard*, pp. 116–117, nos. 58–60.

⁶⁸ Al-Ḥakīm al-Manhiyyāt, p. 69.

⁶⁹ Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Amr*, MS. Hebrew University, fol. 33b.

(i.e., Taurāt, Zabūr, Injīl and Qurʾān) the book of Iblīs would be tattoo, the Qurʾān of Iblīs would be poetry; in contradistinction to the angels and prophets who are the messengers of God, the messengers of Iblīs would be soothsayers (*kahana*), his food would be the meat over which God's name would not be mentioned, his beverage would be every intoxicating drink, his truth would be falsehood, his house would be the bath-house, his traps would be women, his *mu'adhdhin* would be the flute and his mosque the market.⁷⁰

An eminent Ṣūfī, Abū l-Ḥārith al-Aulāsī⁷¹, relates a dream in which he saw how Iblīs ceded his prerogatives of corrupting the character of the Ṣūfīs. In the dream he saw Iblīs in the company of his people sitting on his right and his left in a *samāʿ* party. Iblīs then enjoined one group to start chanting, *fa-akhadhū fī l-qaul*; the song was so moving that al-Aulāsī almost jumped from the roof of the house (where he was resting-k). Then he ordered another group to dance. They began dancing, performing during the dance pleasing gestures (*ishārāt*), shouting and yelling to such an extent that al-Aulāsī became perplexed. Then Iblīs asked al-Aulāsī whether the *samāʿ* party was enjoyable and al-Aulāsī responded in the affirmative. Iblīs explained to Aulāsī that *samāʿ* was the only means to find the way to his people (scil. the Ṣūfīs-k). Then the joy of *samāʿ* immediately left his heart; and from that day on he never joined another *samāʿ* party.⁷²

The strict prohibitions of the Prophet regarding licentious *samāʿ* attended by young men and women, in which songs of love and desire were chanted, the warnings of the orthodox scholars against the excesses carried out during the meetings of *samāʿ*, the *maulid* and the practices of *dhikr*, all triggered the rise of Ṣūfī traditions in praise of the *samāʿ*. It is plausible that these traditions were alleged to have been uttered by the Prophet, but were assiduously and assertively denied by the orthodox scholars.

Such a case can be discerned in a story in which the Prophet himself, moved by verses of a Bedouin, was driven into a dance of excitement and passion (*tawājada*). According to this story, recorded on the authority of Anas b. Mālīk, the Prophet was very pleased when Jibrīl conveyed to him the revelation of God, saying that the poor believers will enter Paradise five hundred years before the rich. He felt happy about this tidings and asked whether there was among the attending believers a man who could compose verses about this joyous event. Then a Bedouin stood up and recited the following verses:

⁷⁰ See Diyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Amr*, MS. Hebrew University, fol. 32b.

⁷¹ See on him al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb* (Hyderabad, 1382/1972), I, p. 393, no. 278.

⁷² Diyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Amr*, MS. Hebrew University, fol. 35b-36a.

qad lasa‘at ḥayyatu l-hawā kabiḍ:
a-lā ṭabība lahā wa-lā rāqī ?
illā l-tabību lladhī shughiftu bihi:
fa-‘indahū ruqyatī wa-tiryāqī.

The Prophet became excited to such an extent that his garment fell off his shoulders and the Companions became excited as well. Mu‘āwiya rebuked the Prophet for his excitement, but he replied that only a man who is not noble is not agitated by *samā‘*. Burhān al-Dīn b. Jamā‘a considers this tradition an obvious lie and senseless jabber (. . . *wa-hādhā min auḍaḥi l-kadhībi wa-l-hadhayāni*).⁷³

The tradition recorded in Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Manbijī’s *Kitāb al-samā‘i wa-l-raḡṣ* (and included in Ibn Taymiyya’s *Majmū‘at al-rasā‘ili l-kubrā*⁷⁴) is assertively refuted by the author; it is also recorded by ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī in his *‘Awārif al-ma‘ārif*.⁷⁵ In both these sources, Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān expresses his admiration for the play of the Prophet and his Companions, saying *mā aḥsana lahwakum*.

Another tradition related to the Prophet’s *tawājjud* says that when the poor received the good tidings about their early entrance to Paradise, they became excited and tore their garments (*kharaqū athwābahum*). Then God sent Jibrīl to the Prophet and ordered him to collect the garments, as He wanted to have a share of these scraps. He took from them a *khirqā* and hung it on His throne. These are indeed the garments (*ziyy*) of the poor, i.e., the Ṣūfīs.⁷⁶ In al-Manbijī’s view these traditions are characterized by ignorance and by a lack of religious knowledge. “This surpasses the godlessness (*kufr*) of the Jews and the Christians,” concludes al-Manbijī.⁷⁷

The rigorous prohibitions of singing and dancing, the harsh threats of punishment and torture in Hell awaiting the effeminate singers and those who attended their performances, were explicit and were lucidly formulated by the Prophet. When a poor Companion described his misery to the Prophet and said that he could not make a living except by singing and beating tambourins, the Prophet firmly forbade him to do so and threatened him with the harshest punishment possible.⁷⁸ Additionally,

⁷³ Burhān al-Dīn b. Jamā‘a, *Su‘āl*, MS. Hebrew University, AP. AR. 158, fols. 11b-18b. Cf. Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Furqān bayna auliyā‘i l-raḥmān wa-auliyā‘i l-shayṭān*, Sharīf Muḥammad Hazzā‘, ed. (Ṭaṇṭā, 1410/1990), p. 13; and see the reference of the editor.

⁷⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘at al-rasā‘il al-kubrā* (Beirut, 1392/1972), II, p. 299.

⁷⁵ ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī, *‘Awārif al-ma‘ārif* (Beirut, 1966), pp. 204–205.

⁷⁶ Al-Manbijī, *Fī l-samā‘i wa-l-raḡṣ*, in Ibn Taymiyya’s *Majmū‘u l-rasā‘ili l-kubrā*, II, pp. 299–300.

⁷⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘at al-rasā‘ili l-kubrā*, II, p. 300.

⁷⁸ Al-Ājurrī, *al-Jawāb ‘an mas‘alati l-samā‘*, MS. Hebrew University, AP AR, 158, fol. 7b: . . . *lau kuntu taqaddamtu ilayka la-nakaltu bika; qum ‘anni wa-tub ilā llāhi ‘azza wa-jalla; amā in fa‘alta ba‘da hādhīhi l-taqdimati ḍarabtuka ḍarban wajī‘an*

the Prophet depicted the miserable future of the disobedient effeminate singers who would die without repenting their sins.⁷⁹ He also ordered to expel from Medina some effeminate men and man-like women.⁸⁰ This view of the Prophet was put into effect by Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik who sat one day on the roof of his house and overheard an erotic song. The singer was apprehended and castrated on his orders.⁸¹

VII

The rigorous prohibitions of attending performances of singers and dancers were alleviated to some extent by traditions granting concessions to amusement and play. The permissible amusements were, however, very few. "Every amusement is vanity, said the Prophet, except three things: to train a horse, to caress the (legally married -k) woman and to shoot arrows from a bow."⁸²

However, in the very early period these concessions were extended to singing and dancing. There is a tradition saying that the Prophet permitted a singing girl named Sīrīn to sing in front of a group of people in the castle (*uṭum*) of Ḥassān b. Thābit. She accompanied herself with a tambourin adorned with small bells hanging around it. She approached the Prophet and sang: "Is there a fault (*ḥaraḡ*) — woe to both of you — upon me if I delight in entertainment?" The Prophet smiled

li-fityāni ahli l-madīnati

⁷⁹ See *ibid.*, fol. 7b.: . . . *hā'ulā'i l-'uṣātu, man māta minhum min ghayri taubatin ḥasharahu llāhu 'azza wa-jalla yauma l-qiyāmati kamā huwa mukhannathan fi l-dunyā 'uryānan . . .*; and see Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *Dhammu l-malāhī*, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā, ed. (Cairo, 1987), pp. 56–57, no. 14.; and see the story of 'Amr b. Qurra in Ibn Ḥajar's *al-Iṣāba*, IV, p. 672, no. 5946 and Ibn al-Athīr, *Usdu l-ghāba*, IV, pp. 126–127.

⁸⁰ Al-Ājurrī, *al-Jawāb 'an mas'alati l-samā'*, MS. Hebrew University, fol. 8a; and see about the *mukhannath* Hīt: Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba*, VI, pp. 563–565, no. 9026; and see *ibid.*, p. 565 sup. about the three *mukhannathūn* in Medina.

⁸¹ Ibn Ghānim al-Maqdisī, *Maṣāyidu l-shayṭān wa-dhammu l-hawā, mukhtaṣar ighāthati l-lahfān*, Ibrāhīm Muḥammad al-Jamal, ed. (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 49–50; cf. the story of Khālīd b. 'Abdallāh al-Qaṣrī, who ordered to pull down minarets after listening to verses of a *mu'adhdhin* who addressed women with amorous remarks from the minaret: al-Sinjārī, *Manā'ihu l-karam bi-akhbāri makkata wa-l-ḥaram*, MS. Leiden Or. 7018m fol. 93a.

⁸² See this tradition in 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nabulsī, *Īdāḡ al-dalālāt fi samā'i l-ālāt*, Aḥmad Rātib Ḥammūsh, ed. (Damascus, 1401/1981), 36, 74. Al-Ājurrī, *al-Jawāb 'an mas'alati l-samā'*, MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158, fol. 7a; and see the tradition in al-Ājurrī's *Taḥrīmu l-nardi wa-l-shaṭranji wa-l-malāhī*, 'Umar Gharāma al-'Amrawī, ed. (al-Qasim-Burayda, 1407), pp. 43–45, and see *ibid.*, the copious references of the editor. Ibn Baydakīn, *Kitāb al-luma'*, I, p. 161, and see *ibid.*, I, p. 160 the explication of the permissibility of caressing the wife: the natural disposition of play is inherent in every creature and the caressing of the wife satisfies this desire. This is preferable to engaging in immoral activities forbidden by God. See also the versions quoted by al-Nasā'ī in his *'Ishratu l-nisā'*, 'Amr 'Alī 'Umar, ed. (Cairo, 1408/1988), pp. 86–88, and the interpretation of the tradition in al-Munāwī's *Fayḍu l-qadīr*, V, p. 23, no. 6316.

and said: "There is no fault upon you, God willing."⁸³

Orthodox scholars tried to emphasize that even during the time of the Prophet there were some feasts or festivities in which the chanting and playing of instruments was allowed; the Prophet is said to have permitted to play musical instruments on wedding days and to announce it publicly.⁸⁴ A tradition reported by Mu'adh b. Jabal gives the text of the Prophet's blessing on the occasion of one of his Companion's marriage; he wished him harmony in his marital life (*ulfa*), abundance of livelihood (*sa'atun fī l-rizq*), good luck (*'alā l-ṭā'ir al-maymūn*) and God's blessing (*bāraka llāhu lakum*). Finally, the Prophet summoned the players to beat the tambourins above the groom's head (*daffifū 'alā ra'sihī*).⁸⁵

A significant report says that the Prophet attended the wedding of Durra, the daughter of Abū Lahab and asked whether there would be some entertainment (... *fa-qāla: hal min lahwīn?*).⁸⁶

In one of the sayings of the Prophet there is an obvious indication of the love of play and amusement among the Anṣār in Medina. When 'Ā'isha managed to bring about the marriage of a woman with an Anṣārī, the Prophet asked her whether there was some amusement (*lahw*), at the wedding, as the Anṣār are fond of it (*yu'jibuhum*).⁸⁷

A report recorded on the authority of 'Āmir b. Sa'd⁸⁸ says that he had visited some dwellings of the Anṣār and met there singing girls and

⁸³ Abū Nua'ym al-Isfahānī, *Majlis min amālī*, ed. Sā'id b. 'Umar b. Ghāzī (Ṭanṭā, 1410/1989), pp. 65–66, no. 13: ... *marra rasūlu llāhi bi-ḥassān b. thābit wa-qad rashsha finā'a uṭumihi wa-ma'ahu aṣḥābuhu simāṭayni wa-jāriyatun lahum yuqālu lahā sarīn (!) ma'ahā mazharuhā takhtaliḥu bayna l-simāṭayni, bayna l-qaumi wa-hiya tughannihim; fa-lammā marra l-nabiyyu (ṣal'am) wa-lam ya'murhum wa-lam yanhahum, fa-nṭahā ilayhā wa-hiya taqūlu fī ghīnā'ihā: hal 'alayya wayḥakumā in lahautu min ḥaraj ? fa-tabassama rasūlu llāhi (ṣal'am) wa-qāla: lā ḥaraja in shā'a llāhu. And see Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Muhadhdhab fī fiqhī l-shāfi'ī* (Cairo, n. d., repr. Beirut), II, p. 327. Cf. the commentary of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Baṭṭāl al-Rakbī, *al-Naẓm al-musta'dhab fī sharḥi gharībī l-muhadhdhab*, II, p. 327 (on the margin of the *Muhadhdhab*). See also 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulṣī, *Īdāḥ al-dalālāt fī samā'i l-ālāt*, p. 104, l. 2 (one of the three verses recited by a man in the presence of the Prophet; and the comment of the editor), as well as the version recorded in 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Mauṣilī, *Kitāb al-wasīla*, (Hyderabad, 1400/1980), Vol. 2, p. 252.*

⁸⁴ Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *Dhammu l-malāhī*, p. 56, no. 11: ... *a'linū l-nikāha wa-ḍribū 'alayhi bi-l-ghirbāl; on al-ghirbāl as a musical instrument see Lisān al-'Arab*, s.v. *gh r b l*; Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *al-Kalām 'alā mas'alati l-samā'*, p. 133, ult.; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Faṣṣu l-khawātim fīmā qīla fī l-walā'im*, pp. 95–96. And see the version quoted by 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulṣī in his *Īdāḥ al-dalālāt fī samā'i al-ālāt*, p. 54: *a'linū hādhā l-nikāha wa-j'alūhu fī l-masājīd wa-ḍribū 'alayhi bi-l-dufūf*.

⁸⁵ 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Mauṣilī, *Kitāb al-wasīla*, Vol. 5, part 2, p. 253.

⁸⁶ Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *Dhammu l-malāhī*, p. 56, no. 13; 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Mauṣilī, *Kitāb al-wasīla*, Vol. 5, part 2, p. 253.

⁸⁷ Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *Dhammu l-malāhī*, p. 56, no. 12.

⁸⁸ See on him Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhību l-tahdhīb* (Hyderabad, 1326), V, p. 64, no. 107.

“some things” (the expression seems to indicate that he found there some musical instruments-k). He was astonished and asked the people, who were the Companions of the Prophet, how is it possible that they “do such things” (i.e., they perform musical plays, or attend such performances-k). They replied by saying that the Prophet had granted them permission to take part in performances of entertainment on wedding days and to weep in cases of death.⁸⁹ A concise version of this tradition is recorded in one of the earliest collections of *ḥadīth*: a girl from ‘Ā’isha’s family was given in marriage to an Anṣārī. When the Prophet came home, he asked why people did not accompany the bride chanting: *ataynākum, ataynākum : fa-ḥayyānā wa-ḥayyākum*.⁹⁰

Even the strict ruler ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, when he heard voices in his court and was informed that it was a wedding feast, asked in surprise: “Why do the people not set in motion their tambourins?”⁹¹ Al-Ājurri reports the song chanted when the bridegroom arrives at the wedding place in the company of his relatives. He mentions the words of the song and adds an additional phrase uttered by the Prophet: “. . . because these Anṣār are fond of erotic poetry (*ghazal*).”⁹²

Another version recorded by al-Ājurri on the authority of Ṣafwān b. ‘Amr provides important information concerning the wedding customs of the Anṣār in Medina during the Jāhiliyya. The relatives of the bride (*ahlu l-nākiḥa*) used to pride themselves on taunting the relatives of the groom on the night of the consummation of the marriage (*laylat l-binā*):

ta-llāhi mā kunta bi-ahlin lahā: lau-lā l-kitābu l-qadaru l-sābiq.

Other people used to chant:

*ataynākum, ataynākum, tuḥayyūnā nuḥayyikum:
lau-lā l-dhahabu l-aḥmaru lamā ḥallat bi-wādikum:
lau-lā l-ḥinṭatu l-samrā’u lam tasman ‘adhārikum.*⁹³

⁸⁹ See Abū Nu‘aym al-Isfahānī, *Ma’rifatu l-ṣaḥāba*, Muḥammad Rāḍī b. Ḥāj, ed. (al-Riyāḍ - al-Madīna al-munawwara, 1408/1988), III, p. 240, no. 1330 and p. 245, no. 1336.

⁹⁰ Abū l-Zubayr Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Tadrus (d. 126 H) *Juz’ fihi aḥādīth abī l-zubayr*, MS. Zāhiriyya, *majmū’a* 53/3, fol. 10b. The meaning of the verse is in some doubt.

⁹¹ Ibn al-Jauzī, *Manāqib amīri l-mu’minīna ‘umara bni l-khaṭṭāb*, Zaynab Ibrāhīm al-Qārūṭ, ed. (Beirut, 1402/1982), p. 203.

⁹² Al-Ājurri, *al-Jawāb ‘an mas’alati l-samā’*, MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158, fol. 9a, sup.

⁹³ Al-Ājurri, *al-Jawāb ‘an mas’alati l-samā’*, fol. 9a, inf.-9b, sup. See this tradition in Abū Nu‘aym al-Isfahānī’s *Majlis min amālī* . . . , pp. 62–63, and the references provided by the editor. Cf. Ḍiyā’u l-Dīn Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wāhid b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Maqdisī, *Juz’ fihi l-amru bi-ttibā’i l-sunan wa-jīnābi l-bida’*, MS. Hebrew University, AP. Ar. 158, fol. 53b. See also the tradition recorded by Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya in his *al-Kalām ‘alā mas’alati l-samā’*,

The singing girls used to reply with verses praising the bride and the groom. They used to emphasize his generosity and his sagaciousness. Verses of this kind were recorded by al-Ājurri; the singing girls used to chant:

ahdā lahā zaujuhā sab'ata akbushin
yatabahbahna bi-l-mirbad,
wa-zaujuhā fī l-nādī ya'lamu mā fī l-ghadī.

The Prophet disapproved of the last phrase, stressing that only God knows what will happen on the next day.⁹⁴ He also disapproved of it when applied to himself. A report of al-Rubayyi' bint Mu'awwidh, a very early adherent of the Prophet who is said to have taken part in his military expeditions, is recorded in Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī's *al-Iṣāba*.⁹⁵ The Prophet entered her home on her wedding day, sat down close to her on her carpet (*firāsh*), and listened to the servant singers (*juwayriyyāt lanā*, who sang verses mourning the relatives killed (i.e., as believers-k), on the Day of Badr. One of the girl-servants said in her song: "and among us is a prophet who knows what would happen tomorrow" (*wa-finā nabīyyun ya'lamu mā fī ghadin*). The Prophet enjoined her to omit this phrase and to continue mourning the relatives of al-Rubayyi'.⁹⁶

A similar tradition is recorded by Ibn Ḥajar on the authority of Umm Nubayṭ. She attended the wedding of a girl of the Banū Najjār and was one of the women who beat the tambourins. The Prophet asked about the songs chanted during the wedding and Umm Nubayṭ repeated:

ataynākum, ataynākum: fa-hayyūnā nuhayyikum.
wa-lau lā l-dhahabu l-aḥmaru mā ḥallat bi- wādikum.

The Prophet enjoined her to add:

*lau lā l-ḥinṭatu l-sam- rā' u mā samina 'adhārīkum.*⁹⁷

The permission of singing and beating the tambourins was extended and included days of feasts, welcome of returning relatives, marriages,

pp. 122–123. See al-Mauṣilī, *Kitābu l-wasīla*, Vol. 5, part 2, pp. 253–254. See the references of the editor. On *samrā'* denoting *ḥinṭa*, see al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-awsaṭ*, Maḥmūd al-Ṭahḥān, ed. (al-Riyāḍ, 1407/1987), III, p. 202, no. 2421.

⁹⁴ Al-Ājurri, *al-Jawāb 'an mas' alati l-samā'*, MS. Hebrew University, fol. 9b.

⁹⁵ Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī tamyīzi l-ṣaḥāba*, 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī ed. (Cairo, 1392/1972), VII, pp. 641–642, no. 11166; al-Ḥusayn b. Mas'ūd al-Baghawī, *al-Anwār fī shamā' ilī l-nabīyyi l-mukhtār*, Ibrāhīm al-Ya'qūbī, ed. (Beirut, 1409/1989), I, p. 277, no. 351. Both editors have provided additional references to this tradition.

⁹⁶ See this expression in Wahb b. Munabbih's *Maghāzī rasūli llāhi: fa-in qāla fī yaumin li-qaumin maqālatan: fa-taṣḍiqhā fī l-yaumi au min duḥā ghadi* in R. G. Khoury, *Wahb b. Munabbih*, I, (Wiesbaden, 1972), p. 154, l. 5

⁹⁷ Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, VIII, p. 315, no. 12279.

feasts of circumcision, days of the 'aqīqa and public performances on days of the return of victorious armies.

When the Prophet made his *hijra* and arrived in Medina the women of the Banū Najjār welcomed him chanting:

*Ṭala'a l-badru 'alaynā min thaniyyati l-wadā'i*⁹⁸
*Wajaba l-shukru 'alaynā mā da'ā li-llāhi dā'i*⁹⁹

According to another report, a black servant girl addressed the Prophet, asking his permission to beat a tambourin upon his return (scil. in triumph-k) from the raid in which he intended to participate. The Prophet gave her the choice: to chant beating the tambourin or to refrain from doing so. The girl chanted and beat the tambourin at the Prophet's return; the Prophet and the attending Companions listened to the song and to the tunes of the tambourin. But when 'Umar entered, the girl stopped singing and concealed the tambourin. The Prophet then remarked: "Satan flees away at your arrival" (*inna l-shayṭāna la-yafirru minka, yā 'umar*).¹⁰⁰

VII

The concept of entertainment underwent considerable change in the Muslim community in the first centuries of its history. It is noteworthy that the customs of the Jāhiliyya seem to have remain current even during the first century of Islam; reliable reports describe lustful plays, singing performances, erotic recitals and fictitious *mut'a* marriages which sometimes continued only for a day or two. According to these reports, such events occurred even in Mecca, and traditions bear evidence of the deplorable moral situation in other Muslim centers as well. Al-Fākihī, a reliable historian of the third century AH, provides us with some peculiar cases of public violation of Islamic rules and customs. In some cases even the strict Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb refrained from prohibiting *kurraj* (or *kurraj*), a play practiced in Mecca, which he deemed incompatible with his belief; he argued that the Prophet himself did not prohibit it.¹⁰¹ Other Caliphs and their governors tried to act severely against transgressors; pious people were allowed to break musical instruments.¹⁰² The

⁹⁸ *Thaniyyati al-wadā'i* is a place near Medina. See Yaqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, s.v.

⁹⁹ 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulṣī, *Īdāḥ al-dalālāt*, pp. 66-67; and see the song of the Banū Najjār girls when they met the Prophet:

Naḥnu jawārin min banī l-najjār: yā ḥabbadhā muḥammadun min jār.

In al-Mauṣilī's *Kitāb al-wasīla*, vol. 5, part 2, p. 252, the Prophet replied:
allāhumma bārik fihinna.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Mauṣilī, *Kitābu l-wasīla*, vol. 5, part 2, pp. 252-253.

¹⁰¹ Al-Fākihī, III, p. 33

¹⁰² Al-Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb l-āthār*, IV, *musnad 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib*, pp. 240 ff. (nos. 377-385); Ibn Abi Dunyā, *Dhammu l-malāhī*, MS. fol. 78b-79.

heads of the *madhāhib* also disapproved of the *samāʿ* gatherings.¹⁰³ On the other hand, al-Zabīdī himself provides us with an impressive list of rulers, governors and their officials who owned singing girls. Among the pious people of the first centuries of Islam there were some prominent personalities who possessed singing girls and enjoyed their songs.¹⁰⁴ Al-Zabīdī quotes very early sources in which owners of singing girls were mentioned. The list of the early believers who were moved by tunes and showed signs of excitement when listening to songstresses includes ʿAbdallah b. al-Zubayr, al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba, and Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān. The same can be said about many *ṣaḥāba*, such as ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAuf, Abū ʿUbayda b. al-Jarrāḥ and Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ. ʿAbdallah b. al-Mubārak, the great scholar of *ḥadīth* and a very pious Muslim, was fond of singing girls' performances.¹⁰⁵ A famous scholar of Muslim law, Ibrahim b. Saʿd al-Zuhri (108-183 AH) considered singing permissible.¹⁰⁶ He even stated that he would not transmit *ḥadīth* without starting the session with a musical performance.¹⁰⁷

Other scholars strongly criticized the gatherings of *samāʿ* (*al-samāʿ al-muṣṭalah*) because these included descriptions of young female bodies, immodest expressions concerning lust, forbidden love and immoral verses. Some ascetics and moderate Ṣūfīs tried to find an intermediate way to permit the *samāʿ* parties, reconciling the stalwart opponents with the adherents of the *samāʿ* practices. Al-Sulamī argues in his *Kitāb al-samāʿ*¹⁰⁸ that the Prophet and the Companions approved of the *samāʿ*. Mālik b. Anas (179 AH)¹⁰⁹ stated that scholars approved of the *samāʿ*. Only a foolish and ignorant man, or a rough ʿIrāqī ascetic, could deny its permissibility.¹¹⁰

The concept of the *samāʿ* in the ascetic and Ṣūfī circles differs from the opinion of strict believers who unreservedly denounced the performances of singing and considered them harmful for those who participate in them. In the opinion of the Ṣūfīs, people who attend the *samāʿ* have to prepare themselves, and be sensitive to the tunes according to their feelings, hopes and expectations. Sulamī quotes a saying of his grandfather Abū ʿAmr Ismāʿīl b. Nujayd: participation in a party of *samāʿ*

¹⁰³ See Murtaḍā l-Zabīdī, *Iṭḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, VI, p. 458.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, VI, pp. 458-9.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, VI, p. 462.

¹⁰⁶ See Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalanī, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (Hyderābād, 1325), I, p. 123, no. 216.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Zabīdī, *Iṭḥāf al-sāda*, VI, p. 456.

¹⁰⁸ Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412 AH), *Kitāb al-samāʿ* in *Majmūʿat āthār Abī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī*, Naṣrullāh Pūr Yawādī, ed. (Teheran, 1369), II, pp. 2-30.

¹⁰⁹ See about him, *EJ*², s.v. "Mālik b. Anas" (J. Schacht).

¹¹⁰ Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-samāʿ*, p. 21 inf: ...*fa-qāla mālik: adraktu ahla l-ʿilmi bi-baldatinā hādhihi lā yunkirūna dhālika wa-lā yaqʿudūna ʿanhu, wa-mā qaʿada ʿanhu wa-lā ankarahu illā ghabiyyun au jāhilun au nāsikun ʿirāqīyyun ghalīzu l-ṭabʿi.*

is allowed only for one whose heart is alive and whose soul is dead; one whose heart is dead and whose soul is alive is not allowed to take part in a *samā'* party.¹¹¹ Every person who takes part in the *samā'* listens to the music and to the words of the song, but one who lives in fear of God's wrath and his punishment reacts by weeping and screaming, while he who hopes for God's forgiveness smiles and expresses his joy and content. The *samā'*, according to this idea, does not bring about a collective reaction of shouting, dancing and even tearing of one's clothes, but causes an individual and very sensitive response of feelings and emotions.

In the early Islamic period, the Prophet ordered the Abyssinian youths to exert themselves in order to show the believers that there is "latitude in the realm of Islam" (scil: for recreation and play-k). In later centuries a similar injunction was given to the believers: "Entertain yourselves and play, because I do not wish that rigidity be seen in your religion" (*ulhū wa-l'abū fa-innī akrahu an yurā fī dīnikum ghilzatun*).¹¹²

¹¹¹ The concept of "soul" (*nafs*), which is the dwelling place of all wickedness, is frequently use in the Ṣūfī writings. Cf. Qur'ān 12:53. See al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-samā'*, p. 16: *innamā yaḥillu l-samā' u li-man kāna qalbuhu ḥayyan wa-nafsuhu mayyitan; fa-amma man kāna qalbuhu mayyit (sic!) wa-nafsuhu ḥayyan (sic) fa-lā yaḥillu lahu l-samā'*.

¹¹² Al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-qadīr*, II, p. 161, no. 1582.