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 'A'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 'A'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-Razzaq (d. 211 AH) in his Musannaf on the authority of Anas b. Malik 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 court of the Prophet. The Prophet stood at the door of 'A'isha's chamber, covered her with his garment and allowed her to watch the Abyssinians' play in the mosque. A third tradition recorded by 'Abd al-Razzaq 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-Razzaq, Musannaf, Ḥabību l-Rahmān al-ʿAzamī, ed. (Beirut, 1392/1972), X, p. 466, no. 19723.
3 'Abd al-Razzaq, Musannaf, X, p. 465, no. 19721.
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 Khurdadbeh (d. 300 AH) records a report on the authority of A‘īsha: 5 Abū Bakr entered A‘īsha’s room and met there two Ānṣārī girls (jāriyatānī), who chanted songs which the Ānṣār 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 A‘īsha, says: The Prophet passed by a people playing the danka.u 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 (fuslātun) 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 A‘īsha’s behaviour is given by al-Humaydī (d. 219 H). 7 A‘īsha 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 A‘īsha 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 hadith, 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. The background of this tradition, says

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8 See the editor’s references in al-Tirmidhī IV, p. 317.
10 This tradition, says al-Ḥusaynī, is recorded by Abū Nu‘aym (i.e., al-Īsfahānī-k) and al-Dāyāmī (i.e., Shīrāzīyī b. Shahrīdār b. Shīrāzīyī al-Dāyāmī, the author of Firdausu l-akhbār bi-ma‘thūrī l-khiṭāb al-mukharraj ‘alā kitābī l-shihāb) on the
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al-Husayni, is that the Prophet passed by a group who practiced *darkala* (not *dankala*) in Medina. 'A'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.1

Abū 'Ubayd records the tradition *khudhū yā bānī arfīda* in his Gharīb al-hadīth. He observes that the purpose of the tradition is to stress the permissibility of watching entertainment (*wa-lladhū yurdu min hādhā l-rakhsatū fi l-nazāri ḍā l-lahwī*). It is not meant to permit forbidden entertainment in which flutes and lutes (*al-mazzīhir wa-l-mazzīmūr*) would be played. It referred merely to a play of a foreign people (*innamā hādhūhi 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 bānī arfīda* ... ” as *saḥīh*. 13

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

authority of al-Sha’bī, who traced it back to ‘Ā’isha. Abū ‘Ubayda (sic!), continues al-Ḥusaynī, in his Gharīb and al-Kharāṭī in his *Itīdāl al-qūlūb* record it as well on the authority of al-Sha’bī. Al-Suyūṭī recorded it in his al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaghīr. This tradition is indeed recorded in Suyūṭī’s Jam‘u l-ṣawāmi‘ (Cairo, 1978), I, p. 507, l. 4 from bottom and the sources given in the al-Bayān wa-l-ta‘rif. And see al-Suyūṭī, Jam‘u l-ṣawāmi‘, Majma‘ al-bulḥāth 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 bānī arfīdatū ḥattā yablūna l-yahidū wa-l-nāṣīra anna fi dinīn fushātan wa khudhū li-yablūna yahidū anna fi dinīn fushātan wa-anna bi‘īthtu bi-l-ḥanifīyyatī l-samḥātī;* 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-ṣawāmi‘, II, p. 738, quoted from al-Daylami’s Firdaws and traced back to ‘Ā’isha.

As to the lexical explanation of *darqala*: Lisān al-ʿArab s.v. *d r q l* quotes an opinion that *darqala* has to be rendered by “he danced.” Lisān al-ʿArab , s.v. *d r k l*: al-dirakla is rendered by a play of boys (*ṣībān*); it is a play of foreign people, and an Arabicised 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 (*jiddu yā bānī arfīda*), 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-ʿAsqalānī in his al-Maṭālibu l-ʿalīya bi-zawā‘idī l-masānīdī l-thamānīya, III, p. 30, no. 2793; and see the comments of the editor. Cf. al-Zamakhshārī, al-Fa‘ṣiq, ʿAlī Muhammad al-Bijāwī and Muḥammad Abū l-ʿAdl Ibrāhīm, eds. (Cairo, 1971), I, p. 421.

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

'Ala' al-Dīn 'Alī b. Balabān al-Fārisī (d. 739 H) has a more comprehensive report.\textsuperscript{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: "Muhāmmad is a righteous servant (of God)."\textsuperscript{15}

Ibn Balabān also has a report on the event in 'Ā'isha's room and the clash with her father.\textsuperscript{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-thābīhi). 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-jāriyyati l-‘arabiyyati l-hadīthati l-sinnī)," '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.\textsuperscript{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 Rīfḍa.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15} muḥammatun 'abdun sāliḥun.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibn Balabān, al-Iḥsān, VII, p. 544, no. 5838.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibn Balabān, al-Iḥsān, VII, p. 544, no. 5837.
\textsuperscript{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-ʿArab*, s.v. *rjd*, the Banū Arfīda mentioned in the tradition are said to have been a group (*jins*) of Abyssinians who practiced dancing. The Prophet addressed them encouragingly and said: *dīnakum yā bānī arfīda*. Ibn al-Athīr assumed that this was their nickname. Some say that it was the name of their ancestor, Arfīda 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 (*yushaddiḍūna*). 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 Sufi groups argued that this story bears evidence that dancing and listening to music is permitted in Islam. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 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” (*Ulũhū wa-l-Febū, fa-innī akrahu an yurā fi dinikum ẓuḥūla*).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-ʿAynī records the story of the dancing Abyssinians22 under the following headline: “Women looking at the Abyssinians and others without suspicion.” In his explanation al-ʿAynī remarks that a woman is permitted to look at a stranger (*al-ajnābi*), as long as he does not look

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


at her. The word “Abyssinians” is mentioned here, though the rule may be applied to other cases as well. Al-'Ayni 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-'Ayni gives other reasons for the permission granted 'A'isha to watch the play of the Abyssinians. 'A'isha, says al-'Ayni, was then a young girl (kānat saḥīratan), 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 rukkhiṣa fī l-a'yād). 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-'Ayni, the hadith about Ibn Umm Maktūm abrogated the concession granted 'A'isha. Another reason for letting 'A'isha 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 hadith opposed the assumption that 'A'isha 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 'A'isha was sixteen years old.

The tradition concerning the story of the two singing girls in 'A'isha’s room and the story of the dancing group of the Abyssinians who performed their play in the presence of the Prophet and 'A'isha are also recorded by al-'Ayni in another volume of his 'Umda.23

The copious variants of the text provided by al-'Ayni, 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-hīrābi wa-l-daraq yaumu l-‘īd, gives al-'Ayni the opportunity to observe that the title itself indicates that the festival (yaumu l-‘īd), 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
day. Al-'Aynī rightly observes that the heading of the tradition does not correspond exactly to the content of the hadith; 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 hadith 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 ʿUrwa says that the two girls sang in the room of ʿAʾisha on the Days of Mina. The tradition recorded by al-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Hishām b. ʿUrwa, 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 taqadhafat: 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 Jahiliyya, 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-ʿAynī makes the following reservation: “and they were not professional songstresses” (wa-laysatayn bi-mughaniyaytayn). This reservation is rightly interpreted by al-ʿAynī: “their song did not stir the souls towards improprieties” (lam yakun bi-l-ghināʾi iladhī yahājū l-nufūsa ilā umūrin lā taliqu). This is of course an attempt to clear ʿAʾisha

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24 The days of Muslim festivities during the ḥajj; and see this version in Ibn Ḥazm’s Rasāʾil, Iḥṣān ʿAbbās, ed. (Beirut, 1401/1980), I, p. 436— in the Risāla fi l-ghināʾ l-mulīḥī, a mubāḥun huwa am maḥṣūr.

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 ʿUmar to enter; but when ʿUthmān asked permission to enter, the girl stopped playing and the Prophet remarked: "ʿUthmān is a chaste person" (*inna ʿuthmāna rajūλun ḥayyiyun*).\(^{28}\) As to the tradition of the Abyssinians playing in the Prophet's court, there are contradictory versions whether ʿAʾisha 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 ʿAʾisha and the Prophet watched the play of the Abyssinians are noteworthy: "his mouth at my mouth" (*fīhu ʾilā fiyya*), or "my cheek on his cheek" (*khaddī ʿalā khaddihi*), "and I put my head on his shoulder" (*fa-waḍaʾtu raʾsī ʿalā mankibayhi*), "and I looked from between his ears and his shoulder" (*aṇẓuru bāyna udhunayhi wa-ʾātiqihi*). Sometimes the situation is described in more general terms: "and he veiled me with his garment" (*yasturunz bi-ridīʿīhi*); at other times the description is more detailed: "and put my chin on his shoulder and I leaned my face on his cheek" (*Ja-waḍaʾtu dhaqaṇī ʿalā ʾātiqihi wa-asnadtu wajhi ʾilā khaddihi*).

A peculiar tradition recorded by al-ʿAynī is that of Nasaʿī: "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 shabiʿti, a-mā shabiʿti? qālat: fa-jaʿaltu aqūlu: lā, lī-ānuṣurā manzi-

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In another version 'A'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

Al-'Aynī devotes a lengthy passage to justify the Prophet's decision to let 'A'isha listen to the songs of the Ansārī 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 'A'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 Şūfīs 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:

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wa-qala ba'du mashāyakhinā: mujarradu l-ghinā'i wa-l-istimā'u ilayhi ma'siyatun, hattā qālā: istimā'u l-qur'āni bi-l-alhāni ma'siyatun wa-l-tālt wa-l-sāmi' āthimānī.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

30 Qur'ān 24:32.
31 Cf. al-Ajurri, al-Tauhib 'an mas'alati l-sami', MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158, fol. 6a - 6b. See also the story of a singing girl who "read according to tunes" (tagra'u bi-l-alhān); according to the opinions of Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, al-Hārith b. Miskīn and Aḥmad b. Hanbal, she was sold as an "unqualified" servant for a cheap sum of more than seventy dinārs; by the next day she was sold by the buyer for a sum of more than one hundred seventy dinārs.
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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-'Ayni also quotes Ibn Ḥazm who thought that singing, dancing and playing during the two feasts was permissible. Furthermore, ʿUmar permitted Bedouin songs resembling the ḥidārī and known as al-nasb; 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-'Ayni 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 radiya llāhu 'anāhā.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-aqīlu: lā, li-anzura manzili 'indahu). 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.

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32 It may be noted that the ḥidārī (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 Zabādī, Ithāf al-sāda al-muttaqin, VI, pp. 482-83.
36 Al-'Aynī, al-'Umda, VI, p. 270.
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, Idris b. Baydakin b. ‘Abdallah 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 (natf) 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’lim al-karr wa-l-Jarr), 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, ‘Ali Mahfūz. 40 He refutes the claims of some Şūfis 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 Şūfi groups, on the other hand, was invented and practiced by the wicked Samaritan (al-sāmirī), 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-

39 Al-Turkumānī, al-Luma‘, I, p. 90.
41 Like the tabakhtur and the musābaqa.
proved 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 'Arafā, in al-Aqṣā mosque and in the mosque of al-Khayf during the festivities of Mīnā. 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


\(^{43}\) See \textit{ibid.}, pp. 231–237.

the sake of God, they are *li-ghayri ilāhi, lā li-ilāhi*. The desire, longing and the heat in the interior (*lahibu l-ahshā*) 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-mubtilūn*) 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-alwi‘li‘il‘iya*) and pure qualities (*al-zi‘ī‘iyā*). It is equally wrong to believe that the *samā‘* is more distinguished than voluntary ritual practices (*nawafil*) like night vigils, reading of the Qurān 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 Qurān and that the *samā‘* is more beneficial for the believer than listening to the Qurān.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 Qurān 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 yushqiqi l-rasīla min ba‘di mā tabayyanā lahu l-hudā wa-yattabi‘ ghayra sabīlī l-mu‘minīna nuwallīhi mā tawallā wa-nuṣlıhi jahannama wa-sā‘at maṣīrān*).46

Ibn Qayyim argues against the champions of *samā‘*: If one of them claims that this innovated *samā‘* (*al-sama‘u l-musibāhu ‘alayhi l-muhā‘āth*) 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 (*shara‘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

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this view fabricates lies against God and His Messenger, since the *sama* contains harmful and destructive elements. Attributing the *sama* to the Companions of the Prophet and the *tābi‘ūn* is mere slander with which they try to defend themselves (*yatātarrusūna 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 (*nāqīs*) until brought to perfection by these adherents of *sama* (*al-*sama‘ātiyya); it would thus be these *sama‘ātiyyūn* who would have been exclusively granted the grace which was withheld from the Muhājirūn and the Ānšār.47

V

A strong censure of the *sama* is included in a treatise written by Diya’ al-Dīn Abū ‘Abdallah Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahid b. Āhmad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Maqdisi (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’an.49

Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (d. 974 AH) assesses the festivities of the *maulid* as a *bid’a hasana*; 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, marking them as *qaba‘ī*. Al-Haytami 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

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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-Haytami 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-Haytami to the repudiation of the sama’ in his Kaffu l-ra’ā ‘an muḥarramātī l-lahwi wa-l-samā’.\(^{52}\) Al-Haytami mentions in his al-Ni’ma al-kubra\(^{53}\) that Abū ‘Abdallah b. al-Hājj 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 Ka’ba after its destruction by ‘Abdallah b. al-Zubayr. These tunes were introduced among the Arabs by “the inauspicious Tuways;” 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 ‘Umar, he married on the day on which ‘Uthmān was killed and a child was born to him on the day ‘Alī was killed. One of his everlasting calamities was the invention of the bid’ā of the “Arabic song,” al-ghinā’u l-arabī.\(^{55}\)

Burhan al-Dīn b. Jama’a was asked about the permissibility of the sama’ in 772 H, when he was the khaṭīb in Jerusalem. When asked whether the sama’ originated in the time of the Prophet or in the period of one of the saḥāba, Burḥān al-Dīn firmly stated that that was not their habit (da’b); 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

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\(^{52}\) Included in his al-Zawajir ‘an iqtirāfī l-kabā’ir (Cairo, 1390/1970), pp. 267–335.

\(^{53}\) Al-Haytami, al-Ni’matu l-kubri , fol. 46.

\(^{54}\) Al-Qāsimī, Islāhu l-marājid (Cairo, 1341 H), p. 124.

\(^{55}\) Diyya’ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, al-Amr bi-tībā’i l-sunan, MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158, fol. 31b; and see al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr al-manṭhūr (Cairo, 1314), V, pp. 158–160; cf. al-Khaṭīfā, Sulhūtu l-aḥzān, 111: ... anna l-nabiyya qallā lālā lāhū ‘alayhi wa-sallam qāla: lā yahṣillu ba’u l-mughanniyāt wa-lā shirā’uhunna wa-lā tijaratun fihunna... .

\(^{56}\) Burḥān al-Dīn b. Jama’a, Su’al sa’alahu shakhsun min al-fuqarā’ ,..., MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158, fols. 18a-b.
recited Qur‘ān 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-nāsī man yashtarz lahwa l-haddithi...). Lahwu  l-hadīth was rendered by the commentators of the Qur‘ān as al-ghinā‘, singing or chanting, or acquiring singing girls, or singing and playing flutes (al-ghinā‘ wa-l-masāmīr). Singing is classified as the incantation of fornication (al-ghinā‘u ruqyatū l-zinā‘). A tradition attributed to the Prophet says: “He who listens to the song of a slave girl, boiling lead (ānūk) will be poured into his ear on the Day of Resurrection.” Another tradition, reported on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās, gives the circumstances of the revelation: al-Nadr 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 Mūḥammad.

A treatise of Mūḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ājurri (d. 360 AH), entitled al-Jawāb ‘an mas‘alati l-samā‘ records a great deal of traditions in which the lahwhu l-hadīth is rendered by “song” or “chanting” or “a singing girl.”

57 Diyā‘ al-Dīn al-Maqdisi, al-Amr bi-ttiba‘i l-sunan... MS. Hebrew University, AP. AR. 158, fol. 31b. I have used Arberry’s translation of the Qur‘ān 58 See al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr al-manthūr, V, p. 159; and see ‘Abd al-Razzāq b. Ḥammām, Tafsīr u-l-qur‘ān, Muṣṭafa Muslim Mūḥammad, ed. (al-Riyyād, 1410/1989), II, p. 105; and see Mūḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, Tafsīr u-l-ḥasan al-baṣrī, (Cairo, 1992), II, p. 199 for different renderings of the word lahwh. 59 Al-Munawwī, Fayḍu l-qadr, VI, p. 60, no. 8428; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Faṣṣu l-khwāātim fi-mā qila fi l-wala‘im, Nizar Ubaţa, ed. (Damascus, 1987), p. 104, sup. 60 Al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr al-manthūr, V, p. 159; and see al-Wāḥiḍī, Asbāb l-nuṣūl (Cairo, 1388/1968), pp. 232–233; and see Abū ‘Abdallāh Mūḥammad b. Ḥāfeit al-Anṣārī al-Qurtubī, al-Jaami‘ il-ḥakāmī l-qur‘ān (Tafsīr u-l-qurtubi), (Cairo, 1387/1967), XIV, p. 52. And see fragments of this tradition: Muqatīl b. Sulaymān, (d. 150 H), Tafsīr, Abūdallāh Muḥammad Shāhāta, ed. (Cairo, 1984), III, p. 432; al-Mawardī, Tafsīr, Khīṭr Muḥammad Khīḍr, ed., revised by ‘Abd al-Ṣattār Abū Ghudda (Kuwayt, 1402/1982), III, p. 276; Mūḥammad b. ʿAbd Ṣaltār b. Muṭarrīf al-Kinānī, Kitāb u l-qurṭayn (Cairo, 1355), p. 72. 61 MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158, fols. 1a-10a. 62 Fols. 2b-4a; and see al-Mawardī, Tafsīr al-nukat wa-l-tuyūn, Khīḍr Muḥammad Khīḍr, ed. (Kuwayt, 1402/1982), III, p. 276; al-Shaukānī, Fatḥu l-qadr al-jāmī‘ bayna fannāyī l-r ᵰa‘aya wa-l-dirāya min ʿīmī l-tafsīr, (Beirut, reprint, n.d.), IV, p. 234; and see al-Suyūṭī, Jam‘u l-jawā‘īrī, (Cairo, 1978), I, p. 879, penult.; and see this tradition in Qurtubi’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-Khāzīn, Luḥābū l-ta‘wil fi ma‘ānī l-tansīl, (Cairo, n.d.), V, p. 177, quoted in connection with the explanation of lahwhu l-hadīth. 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-shāmiyyin, Ḥamdī ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Sīlāfī, ed. (Beirut, 1409/1989), I, pp. 144–145, no. 231, and see the references of the editor;
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The word *ziir* in the phrase *wâ-lladhîna lâ yashshadîna l-zîrâ* (Qurʾān 25:72) was rendered by some scholars as singing; “and those who do not attend assemblies with singing girls.”

The same arguments against singing girls, the acquisition of these girls and teaching them to chant are used by al-Ḥakîm al-Tirmidhi (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.

According to the opinion of Mālik b. Anas, a man who bought a slave girl was allowed to return her if he found out that she was a singing girl. In another saying the Prophet is said to have stated that he had been sent in order to destroy the flutes and the drums. 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 Jahiliyya. A person who destroys a musical instrument should not be fined. 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.

Music, drinking of wine, licentious songs and the company of frivolous women are means by which Iblis led the believers astray. In God’s famous talk with Iblis, (after Adam’s expulsion from Paradise-k), God promised Iblis that in contradistinction to the Books of the believers...
(i.e., Taurât, Zabûr, Injîl and Qur'ân) the book of Iblîs would be tattoo, the Qur'ân of Iblîs would be poetry; in contradistinction to the angels and prophets who are the messengers of God, the messengers of Iblîs would be soothsayers (kahâna), his food would be the meat over which God's name would not mentioned, his beverage would be every intoxicating drink, his house would be the bath-house, his traps would be women, his mu'âdhînin would be the flute and his mosque the market.  

An eminent Sûfî, Abû l-Hârîth al-Aulâsî, relates a dream in which he saw how Iblîs ceded his prerogatives of corrupting the character of the Sûfîs. In the dream he saw Iblîs in the company of his people sitting on his right and his left in a samâ' party. Iblîs then enjoined one group to start chanting, fa-akhadhî fî l-qâula; the song was so moving that al-Aulâsî 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 (ishârât), shouting and yelling to such an extent that al-Aulâsî became perplexed. Then Iblîs asked al-Aulâsî whether the samâ' party was enjoyable and al-Aulâsî responded in the affirmative. Iblîs explained to Aulâsî that samâ' was the only means to find the way to his people (scil. the Sûfîs-k). Then the joy of samâ' immediately left his heart; and from that day on he never joined another samâ' party.

The strict prohibitions of the Prophet regarding licentious samâ' 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 samâ', the maulûd and the practices of dhîkr, all triggered the rise of Sûfî traditions in praise of the samâ'. 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 (tawâjîda). According to this story, recorded on the authority of Anas b. Mâlik, the Prophet was very pleased when Jibrîl 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 tiding 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:

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70 See Dîyâ' al-Dîn al-Maqdisî, al-Amr, MS. Hebrew University, fol. 32b.
71 See on him al-Sam'âni, al-Ansâb (Hyderabad, 1382/1972), I, p. 393, no. 278.
72 Dîyâ' al-Dîn al-Maqdisî, al-Amr, MS. Hebrew University, fol. 35b-36a.
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The Prophet became excited to such an extent that his garment fell off his shoulders and the Companions became excited as well. Muʿawiya rebuked the Prophet for his excitement, but he replied that only a man who is not noble is not agitated by samāʿ. Burhan al-Din b. Jamaʿa considers this tradition an obvious lie and senseless jabber (wa-hādhā min audahī l-kadhibi wa-l-hadhayānī).73

The tradition recorded in Muḥammad b. Muhammad al-Manbiji’s Kitāb al-samāʿi wa-l-raqs (and included in Ibn Taymiyya’s Majmūʿat al-rasāʾīlī l-kubrā74) is assertively refuted by the author; it is also recorded by ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī in his ‘Awārif al-maʿārif.75 In both these sources, Muʿawiya b. Abī Sufyān expresses his admiration for the play of the Prophet and his Companions, saying mā aḥsana iahwakum.

Another tradition related to the Prophet’s ṭawājūd says that when the poor received the good tidings about their early entrance to Paradise, they became excited and tore their garments (kharaqu athwābāhum). Then God sent Jibril 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 khirqa and hung it on His throne. These are indeed the garments (ziyy) of the poor, i.e., the Śūfis.76 In al-Manbiji’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-Manbiji.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,
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 Sirin to sing in front of a group of people in the castle (\textit{utum}) of Hassān 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 (\textit{haraj})—woe to both of you—upon me if I delight in entertainment?” The Prophet smiled


\(^80\) Al-Ājurri, \textit{al-Jawāb ‘an mas‘alati l-samā‘}, MS. Hebrew University, fol. 8a; and see about the mukhannath ilīt: Ibn Ḥajar, \textit{al-Iṣāba}, VI, pp. 563–565, no. 9026; and see \textit{ibid.}, p. 565 sup. about the three mukhannathūn in Medina.


\(^82\) See this tradition in ‘Abd al-Ghānī al- Nabulusī, \textit{Īdāh al-dalalāt fi sāma‘i l-lālāt}, Ahmad Rāīšī Ḥammūṣī, ed. (Damascus, 1401/1981), 36, 74. Al-Ājurri, \textit{al-Jawāb ‘an mas‘alati l-samā‘}, MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158, fol. 7a; and see the tradition in Al-Ājurri’s \textit{Tahrīmu l-nardi wa-l-shāṭrānī wa-l-malāhī}, ‘Umar Ghārāma al-‘Amrāwī, ed. (al-Qasim-Burayda, 1407), pp. 43–45, and see \textit{ibid.}, the copious references of the editor. Ibn Baydaktīn, \textit{Kitāb l-luma‘}, I, p. 161, and see \textit{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-Nāṣī in his \textit{Ishratu l-nisa‘}, ‘Amr ‘All Umar, ed. (Cairo, 1408/1988), pp. 86–88, and the interpretation of the tradition in al-Munawr’s \textit{Fayḍū l-qadir}, 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 fi l-rizq), good luck (‘alä l-†a’ir al-maymun) and God’s blessing (baraka lahù lakum). Finally, the Prophet summoned the players to beat the tambourins above the groom’s head (daffifu ‘alä ra’sih). 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-qala: hal min lahwin?). 86

In one of the sayings of the Prophet there is an obvious indication of the love of play and amusement among the Ansâr in Medina. When ‘A’isha managed to bring about the marriage of a woman with an Ansârî, the Prophet asked her whether there was some amusement (lahw), at the wedding, as the Ansâr are fond of it (yu’ribuhum). 87

A report recorded on the authority of ‘Abbî b. Sa’d 88 says that he had visited some dwellings of the Ansâr and met there singing girls and


84 İbn Abî l-Dunya, Dhammu l-malâhî, p. 56, no. 11: ... a’linâ l-nîkâha wa-qribu ‘alayhi bi-l-gîrbâl; on al-gîrbâl as a musical instrument see Lîsân al-‘Arâb, s. v. gh r b î; İbn Qayyîm al-Jauzîyya, al-Kalâm ‘alâ mas‘alati l-samâ’, p. 133, ult.; İbn Ṭûlûn, Faṣṣî f-khuwātîm finâ qa’î fi l-walî’îm, pp. 95–96. And see the version quoted by ‘Abd al-Ghanî al-Nabûlî in his İdâh al-dalâlât fi samâ’î l-alât, p. 54: a’linâ hadhâ l-nîkâha wa-j’alîhu fi l-masâyiḍi wa-qribu ‘alayhi bi-l-duṣîf.


87 İbn Abî l-Dunya, Dhammu l-malâhî, p. 56, no. 12.

88 See on him İbn Ḥajar al-‘İṣkâlînî, Tahdhibu l-tahdhib (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. A concise version of this tradition is recorded in one of the earliest collections of hadîth: a girl from ‘Â’isha’s family was given in marriage to an Anşârî. When the Prophet came home, he asked why people did not accompany the bride chanting: ataynâkum, ataynâkum : fa-âhayyâna wa-âhayyâkum.

Even the strict ruler ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭâb, 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?” Al-Âjurri reports the song chanted when the bridgroom 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 Anşâr are fond of erotic poetry (ghazal).”

Another version recorded by al-Âjurri on the authority of ‘Âmir b. ‘Abd al-Qâdir records important information concerning the wedding customs of the Anşâr in Medina during the Jahiliyya. The relatives of the bride (ahlu l-nâkiha) used to pride themselves on taunting the relatives of the groom on the night of the consummation of the marriage (laylat l-binâ’):

ta-llâhi mâ kunta bi-ahlin lahâ: lau-lâ l-kitâbu l-qadaru l-sâbiqu.

Other people used to chant:

ataynâkum, ataynâkum, tuhâyynâ nuhayyikum:
lau-lâ l-dhahabu l-ahmaru lamâ hållat bi-wâdiškum :
lau-lâ l-hintatu l-samrâ’u lâ mum tasman ‘adhârikum.

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90 Abû l-Zubâyrb al-Mamâd b. Muslim b. Tadrus (d. 126 H) Juz’ fihi aḥadîth abî l-zubayr, MS. Zâhiriyâ, majmu‘a 53/3, fol. 10b. The meaning of the verse is in some doubt.
92 Al-Âjurri, al-Jawwâb ‘an mas‘alatî l-samâ’, MS. Hebrew University, AP AR 158, fol. 9a, sup.
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-Ajurri; the singing girls used to chant:

\[
\text{ahdā lahā za'ujūhā sab'ata akbushin}
\text{yatabābahāna bi-l-mirbad,}
\text{wa-za'ujūhā fī l-nādī ya'lamu mā fī l-ghādī.}
\]

The Prophet disapproved of the last phrase, stressing that only God knows what will happen on the next day. 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-Isāba. The Prophet entered her home on her wedding day, sat down close to her on her carpet (fīrāsh), and listened to the servant singers (juwayriyyāt lānā), 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 nabiyyūn ya'lamu mā fī ghādī). The Prophet enjoined her to omit this phrase and to continue mourning the relatives of al-Rubayyi'.

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

\[
\text{ataynākum, ataynakum: fa-ḥaqqūnā nūḥayyikum.}
\text{wa-lau lā l-dhahabu l-ahmaru mā hallat bi-wadikum.}
\]

The Prophet enjoined her to add:

\[
\text{lau lā l-ḥiniṭatu l-sam-rā'u mā samina 'adhārikum.}
\]

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

\[76\]

\[Tālā' a l-badru 'alaynā min thaniyātī l-wadā'i,^98\]
\[Wajāba l-shukrū 'alaynā mā dā'ā l-lāhī dā'i.\]

According to another report, a black servant girl addressed the Prophet, asking his permission to beat a tambourine upon his return (sci1. in triumph-k) from the raid in which he intended to participate. The Prophet gave her the choice: to chant beating the tambourine or to refrain from doing so. The girl chanted and beat the tambourine 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 tambourine. The Prophet then remarked: “Satan flees away at your arrival” (\[inna l-shaytān la-yafirru minka, yā 'umar\]).^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-Fākili, 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 kurrak), a play practiced in Mecca, which he deemed incompatible with his belief; he argued that the Prophet himself did not prohibit it. Other Caliphs and their governors tried to act severely against transgressors; pious people were allowed to break musical instruments.\(^{102}\) The

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^98 Thaniyātī al-wadā'i is a place near Medina. See Yaqūt, Mu'jam al-buldān, s.v.
^99 'Abd al-Ghanf al-Nabulsi, !r!ii~ al-daliitiit. pp. 66-67; and see the song of the Banū Najjār girls when they met the Prophet:
 Nahnu jawārin min banī l-najjār: yā ḥabbadhā muḥammadun min jār.
 In al-Mausilr's Kitāb al-wasīla, vol. 5, part 2, p. 252, the Prophet replied:
 allāhumma bārik fiḥinna.
^101 Al-Fākili, III, p. 33
heads of the madhahib also disapproved of the sama' gatherings. On the other hand, al-Zabidi 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. Al-Zabidi 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 'Abdallah b. al-Zubayr, al-Mughira b. Shu'ba, and Mu'awiya b. Abi Sufyān. The same can be said about many sahāba, such as 'Uthmān b. Affān, 'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Auf, Abū 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ and Sa'd b. Abi Waqqās. 'Abdallah b. al-Mubārak, the great scholar of hadith and a very pious Muslim, was fond of singing girls' performances. A famous scholar of Muslim law, Ibrahim b. Sa'd al-Zuhri (108-183 AH) considered singing permissible. He even stated that he would not transmit hadith without starting the session with a musical performance.

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

The concept of the sama' in the ascetic and Śūfi 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 Śūfis, people who attend the sama' have to prepare themselves, and be sensitive to the tunes according to their feelings, hopes and expectations. Sulami quotes a saying of his grandfather Abu 'Amr Ismā'īl b. Nujayd: participation in a party of sama'
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 *samāʿ* party. Every person who takes part in the *samāʿ* 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 *samāʿ*, 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-lʿabū fa-innī akrahu an yurā fi dinikum ghilzatan*).112

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111 The concept of “soul” (*nafs*), which is the dwelling place of all wickedness, is frequently use in the Ṣūfī writings. Cf. Qurʾān 12:53. See al-Sulami, *Kitāb al-samāʿ*, p. 16: *innāma yaḥillu l-samāʿu li-man kāna qalbuhu ḥayyan wa-nafsuhu mayyitan; fa-amma man kāna qalbuhu mayyit (sic!) wa-nafsuhu ḥayyan (sic) fa-lā yaḥillu lahu l-samāʿ*.