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## THE CONTROVERSY OVER RECITING THE QURʾĀN WITH TONES (*AL-QIRĀʾAH BI-ʾL-ALḤĀN*)

**Abstract:** Whether it is acceptable to recite the Qurʾān with tones (*al-qirāʾah bi-ʾl-alḥān*) touches on two larger issues, the acceptability of music and the distinctiveness of Islam from Christianity and Judaism. Various hadith reports apparently caused difficulty for traditionalists who rejected recitation with tones. The reports themselves were evidently too well established to be rejected. Sometimes they were nullified by more or less strained interpretation, sometimes by paraphrase. Early Ḥanbali literature is strongly opposed to it. Māliki literature also rejects it, but the Ḥanafī school seems to have been divided. By contrast, the earliest Shāfiʿī literature is permissive.

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<sup>1</sup> Two short historical studies of reciting with tones are Henry George Farmer, “The Religious Music of Islām,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1952, 60–65, and M. Talbi, “La qirāʾa bi-l-alḥān,” *Arabica* 5 (1958): 183–190, both based mainly on *adab* literature. Ayman Rushdī Suwayd, *al-Bayān li-ḥukm qirāʾat al-Qurʾān bi-ʾl-alḥān* (Jedda: al-Jamāʾah al-Khayriyyah li-Taḥfīẓ al-Qurʾān al-Karīm, 1412/1991), is a collection of strictures on reciting with tones from al-Khallāl (i.e. early tenth cent. C.E.) to the present (incidentally showing that the controversy is still alive, although the present article extends only to the fifteenth century). Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal’s hostility to it is reviewed in Christopher Melchert, “Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and the Qurʾān,” *Journal of Qurʾānic Studies* 6/2 (2004): 22–34, at 25–26, Māliki hostility in Maribel Fierro, “Al-Ṭurṭūshī and the Fatimids,” *The Fatimid Caliphate*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Shainool Jiwa, Institute of Ismaili Studies Ismaili Heritage ser. 14 (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 118–163, at 130–131, 151–152. Overconfident but useful, esp. for defining technical terms, is Lamyā al-Fārūqī, “Tartīl al-Qurʾān al-Karīm,” *Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Sayyid Abul Aʿla Mawdūdī*, ed. Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1979), 105–119 (in English, despite the title). For practice in the 20th century, see Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qurʾān* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), also *The Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, s.v. “Recitation of the Qurʾān,” by Anna M. Gade.

### Qur'ān

The Qur'ān twice uses the verb *rattala*, which may refer to a mode of recitation. At Q al-Furqān 25:32, it refers to God's action: "Those who disbelieve say, "Why has the Recitation not been sent down to him all at once?" [We have sent it down] thus that We may strengthen your heart by it, and we have sent it down distinctly" (*wa-rattalnāhu tartīlan*) (Jones translation). The tradition of qur'ānic commentary is mainly concerned with divine revelation, but admits some connection with style of recitation. For example, here is `Alī b. Muḥammad al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058):

This has five interpretations. One is that it means "We sent it down as a message (*rassalnāhu tarsīlan*), one thing after another." Ibn `Abbās said this. The second is that it means "We divided it up (*farraqnāhu tafriqan*)." Ibrāhīm said this. The third is that it means "We sent it down in detail (*faṣṣalnāhu tafṣīlan*)." Al-Suddī said this. The fourth is that it means "We explained it fully (*fassarnāhu tafsīran*)." Ibn Zayd said this. The fifth is that it means "We made it perfectly clear (*bayyannāhu tabyīnan*)." Qatādah said this.

It is related of Ibn `Abbās that he said that the Messenger of God . . . said, "O Ibn `Abbās, when you recite the Qur'ān, *rattilhu tartīlan*." I asked him, "What does this mean?" He said, "Make it perfectly clear. Do not cut it off like a poor date tree, or read it fast like poetry (*wa-lā tahudhdhahu hadhdha 'l-shi'r*). Let not one of you be concerned with the end of the chapter."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa-'l-'uyūn*, ed. al-Sayyid b. `Abd al-Maqṣūd b. `Abd al-Raḥīm (6 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah and Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, n.d.), 4:144, *ad* Q. 25:32. The authorities quoted are `Abd Allāh b. `Abbās (Companion, d. 63/682-683), Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī (Kufan, d. 96/714?), Ismā'īl b. `Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suddī (Kufan, d. 127/744-745), `Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd (Medinese client, d. 182/798-799), and Qatādah b. Dī'āmah (Basran, d. 117/735-736?). Almost the same warning as that of Ibn `Abbās at the end attributed to `Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd (Companion, d. 32/652-653?) in al-Shaybānī, *Kitāb al-Āthār*, ed. Khālīd al-'Awwād, Waqfiyyat al-Muzaynī (2 vols.; Kuwayt: Dār al-Nawādir, 1432/2011), 1:277 (Kufan *isnād*); likewise Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥamad `Abd Allāh al-Jum'ah and Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Luḥayḍān (16 vols.; Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1425/2004), 3:610, *al-ṣalāh* 840, *fī qirā'at al-Qur'ān*; al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* 28, *bāb al-tartīl fī 'l-qirā'ah*, no. 5043 (Basran/Kufan *isnād*); attributed to `Alī in two Shi'i sources: al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, ed. `Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, corr'd Muḥammad al-Ākhundī (8 vols.; Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1389, 1391), 2:614; al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān *Da'ā'im al-islām*, ed. `Aṣīf b. `Alī Aṣghar Fayḍī (2 vols.; Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1951, repr. 1969), 1:163. One of the anonymous referees for *JIQSA* thought I should justify quoting al-Māwardī rather than Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923). What I find useful here is first al-Māwardī's concision, dispensing with *isnāds*, secondly his offering more different interpretations *seriatim* than al-Ṭabarī. But comparison is always useful, as here, where al-Ṭabarī's quotation of Ibrāhīm *ad* Q 25:32, *nazala mutafarriqan*, works as a gloss on al-Māwardī's.

At the end, Ibn `Abbās is thus quoted a second time with acknowledgement that *rattala* also has something to do with how humans are to recite the Qur`ān. Concern with the end of the chapter is evidently discouraged inasmuch as it constitutes a goal to rush toward. His warning is in line with many other discouragements of overly fast recitation; for example, the Prophet's warning, "He has not understood (*lam yafqah*) who has recited the Qur`ān in less than three days."<sup>3</sup>

The other verse using *rattala* is a simple command at Q al-Muzammil 73:4: "and be distinct with the Recitation" (*wa-rattil al-Qur`ān tartīlan*). Accordingly, the commentary tradition is mainly about human recitation. Here for example is `Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām (d. 211/827) < Ma`mar < Qatādah: "We have heard that most of the recitation of the Prophet . . . was extending (*al-madd*)."<sup>4</sup> This report appears in multiple later collections with a fuller *isnād*, on which more to come. Here is al-Māwardī again:

There are three aspects. One of them is that it means "Make the Qur`ān perfectly clear." Ibn `Abbās and Zayd b. Aslam said this. The second is that it means "Explain it clearly (*fassirhu tafsiiran*)."<sup>5</sup> Ibn Jubayr said this. The third is that it means that you are to recite it according to its order and arrangement, without changing any word, bringing forward what is later, taken from *tartīl al-asnān*, when (the teeth) have come in uniformly in good order. Ibn Baḥr said this.<sup>5</sup>

The last authority is difficult to identify but may be `Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (Basran cl., d. 255/868–869)—certainly, the philological explanation attributed to him befits a *littérateur*. And although al-Māwardī had largely retreated to the Arabic-Sunni tradition late in life when he composed his commentary (as opposed to earlier, when he was notably more inclined to

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<sup>3</sup> Abū Dāwūd, *al-Sunan*, *shahr Ramaḍān* 8, *fī kam yuqra`u 'l-Qur`ān*, no. 1390, *shahr Ramaḍān* 9, *bāb taḥzīb al-Qur`ān*, no. 1394; al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi`*, *al-qirā`āt* 13, nos. 2946, 2949; Ibn Mājah, *al-Sunan*, *iqāmat al-ṣalawāt* 178, *bāb mā jā`a fī kam yustaḥabbu yukhtamu 'l-Qur`ān*, no. 1347; Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaḥ* 2:575, *al-ṣalāh* 826, *fī 'l-Qur`ān fī kam yukhtam*; G. H. A. Juynboll, *Encyclopedia of Canonical Hadīth* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 444.

<sup>4</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr al-Qur`ān*, ed. `Abd al-Mu`ṭī Amīn Qal`ajī (2 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Ma`rifah, 1411/1991), 2:260, *ad Q. 73:4*.

<sup>5</sup> Māwardī, *Nukat* 6:126, *ad Q. 73:4*. Besides Ibn `Abbās and "Ibn Baḥr," the authorities quoted are Zayd b. Aslam (Med. cl., father to `Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd, d. 136/753–754) and Sa`īd b. Jubayr (Kufan cl., d. 95/714?).

draw on the Persian and Hellenistic wisdom traditions), he still quotes Mu` tazili authorities from time to time in his legal works and occasionally endorses Mu` tazili positions in his commentary, particularly at points where free will is an issue.<sup>6</sup>

### Hadith

There are eight or nine main groups of Prophet hadith on the subject of recitation with tones, distinguished by the terms they use for such recitation. One, naturally, uses the term *rattala* for proper recitation. Sometimes it is ambiguous, as when the Prophet predicts, “It will be said to the master of the Qur`ān, ‘Recite, rise, and chant (*iqra` wa-`rqa wa-rattil*) as you used to chant in the world. Your place is at the last verse you recite.’”<sup>7</sup> The idea is apparently that each verse is a step on the way to Paradise, so that one who commands the whole Qur`ān is most sure to reach it.<sup>8</sup> An apparent gloss, without *tartīl*, comes with a completely different *isnād*: “It will be said to the master of the Qur`ān when he enters Paradise, ‘Recite and rise (*iqra` wa-`ş`ad*),’ whereupon he will rise by one degree with each verse until he recites the last that he has.”<sup>9</sup> Other hadith makes it clear that *tartīl* means slow and deliberate recitation, as in al-Māwardī’s quotation of Ibn `Abbās apropos of Q 25:32. When someone told Ibn `Abbās, “I am a man who speaks and recites rapidly,” Ibn `Abbās told him, “I should prefer to recite *al-baqarah* (Q 2) slowly (*urattiluhā*) to hurrying through the whole Qur`ān.”<sup>10</sup> Another hadith report, like al-Māwardī’s quotation of Ibn `Abbās, discourages its evident opposite, *hadhdh*: in one form,

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<sup>6</sup> For more on al-Māwardī’s position, see Christopher Melchert, ‘Māwardī’s legal thinking’, *Al-`Uşūr al-wustā* 23 (2015): 68–86, esp. 72–74, at <http://islamichistorycommons.org/mem/al-usur-al-wusta>.

<sup>7</sup> Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *al-şalāh* 353, *bāb kayfa yustaḥabbu `l-tartīl fī `l-qirā`ah*, no. 1464; al-Nasā`ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā* (henceforth SK), ed. `Abd al-Ghaffār Sulaymān al-Bundārī and Sayyid Kisrawī Ḥasan (6 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyyah, 1411/1991), no. 8056 = ed. Ḥasan `Abd al-Mun`im Shalabī, sup’d Shu`ayb al-Arna`ūt (12 vols.; Beirut: Mu`assasat al-Risālah, 1421/2001), no. 8002. Henceforth, the latter edition cited in *italic*. (The latter edition is superior but the former is commonly cited in cross-references.)

<sup>8</sup> See Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 638, s.n. (Sufyān) al-Thawrī.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, *al-adab* 52, *bāb thawāb al-Qur`ān*, no. 3780 (Kufan *isnād*).

<sup>10</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muşannaḥ*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A`zamī, *Min manshūrāt al-Majlis al-`Ilmī* 39 (11 vols.; Johannesburg: Majlis Ilmi, 1390–1392/1970–1972), 2:489 (Basran *isnād*).

A man came to Ibn Mas'ūd and said, "I have recited the *mufaṣṣal* tonight in one bowing." He said, "Is this a hurrying (*hadhdh*) like the hurrying of poetry? I knew the similar ones (*naẓā'ir*) that the Prophet . . . would pair." He mentioned 20 chapters of the *mufaṣṣal*, two chapters of the family of *ḥāmīm* in each bowing.<sup>11</sup>

This does not use the word *tartīl*, but it does come under some section headings with that word.<sup>12</sup>

Second are those that refer to *tarjī'*, which means literally "making to return." Here is one version included in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870):

< Abū 'l-Walīd < Shu'bah < Mu'āwiyah b. Qurrah < 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mughaffal:

"I saw the Messenger of God . . . on the day of the conquest of Mecca on his camel, reciting *sūrat al-Faṭḥ* (or *from sūrat al-Faṭḥ*) and practicing repetition (*yurajji'u*)." He said, "If not for the people's gathering around me, I would repeat as he repeated."<sup>13</sup>

Al-Bukhārī mentions versions in three other places as well, while other variants are reported by (among others) Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875), Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ash'ath (d. 275/889), and Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915?) as well, all through Shu'bah b. al-Ḥajjāj (Basran, d. 160/776?).<sup>14</sup> In all of them, Mu'āwiyah b. Qurrah (Basran, d. 113/731–732) says he will not recite as Ibn al-Mughaffal had in imitation of the Prophet, in most explaining that this is to avoid attracting an audience.

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<sup>11</sup> Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-adhān* 106, *bāb al-jam' bayna 'l-sūratayn fī 'l-rak'ah*, no. 775; sim. at *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* 6, *bāb ta'līf al-Qur'ān*, no. 4996, and *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* 28, *bāb al-tartīl fī 'l-qirā'ah*, no. 5043. Cf. Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 97, s.n. al-A'mash.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Muslim, *Jāmi'*, *ṣalāt al-musāfirīn* 49, *bāb tartīl al-qirā'ah wa-'jtināb al-hadhdh*, no. 722.

<sup>13</sup> Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-maghāzī* 49, *bāb ayna rakaza 'l-nabī al-rāyah yawma 'l-faṭḥ*, no. 4281.

<sup>14</sup> Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-tafsīr* 48, *bāb Q. 48:1*, no. 4835; *ibid.*, *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* 30, *bāb al-tarjī'*, no. 5047; *ibid.*, *al-tawhīd* 50, *bāb dhikr al-nabī wa-riwāyatihī 'an rabbih*, no. 7540; Aḥmad, *al-Musnad* (6 vols.; Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Maymaniyyah, 1313/1895), 4:85–86, 5:54–56; also ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt, et al. (50 vols.; Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1413–1421/1993–2001), 27:345–346, 34:165–166, 175, 178–179 (references to the latter edn. henceforth in *italics*); Muslim, *Jāmi'*, *ṣalāt al-musāfirīn* 35, *bāb dhikr qirā'at al-nabī*, no. 794; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *al-witr* 8, *bāb kayfa yustahabbu 'l-tartīl fī 'l-Qur'ān*, no. 1467; Nasā'ī, *SK*, nos. 8054–8055 8000–8002.

As for what it means to practice repetition, he gives some indication in some versions: “He said ‘*ā ā*’ three times” or just “‘*ā ā*.’”<sup>15</sup> This apparently indicates some prolongation of vowels. In one version, Ibn al-Mughaffal refers to the Prophet’s manner as a *lahn*.<sup>16</sup> *Lisān al-‘arab* indicates that *tarjī* means to recite with a quavering sound.<sup>17</sup> This is certainly credible, although not exclusive of prolongation or the musical aspect implied by *lahn*. Ibn al-Mughaffal’s reluctance to have a crowd gather is in line with renunciant distrust of public acclaim, which threatened to turn proper devotion to God into improper performance for men. For example, the Prophet said, “The one who (recites) the Qur’ān openly is like the one who (gives) alms openly, while the one who (recites) the Qur’ān secretly is like the one who (gives) alms secretly.”<sup>18</sup> Sa’īd b. al-Musayyab (Medinese, d. 94/712–713?) rebuked the then-governor of Medina ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (d. 101/720) for reciting the Qur’ān in the mosque such as to attract an audience.<sup>19</sup>

Third are descriptions of the Prophet’s recitation that stress extension, using the word *madd*. One instance has been mentioned already, with an incomplete but mainly Basran *isnād*. Through the same Basran Follower but expressly naming his Companion informant, this description appears in several collections: “I asked Anas how the recitation of the Messenger of God had been . . . . He said, ‘He used to extend his voice (*yamuddu ṣawtahu maddan*).’”<sup>20</sup> This agrees with the report that the Prophet practiced *tarjī* which meant

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<sup>15</sup> Bukhārī, no. 7540; Aḥmad, *Musnad* 5:54 34:166.

<sup>16</sup> Aḥmad, *Musnad* 5:55 34:175.

<sup>17</sup> See Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (8 pts.; London: Williams and Norgate, 1863–1893), s.v. r-j-‘.

<sup>18</sup> Aḥmad, *Musnad* 4:151 28:598 (Homsī *isnād*); sim., 4:201 29:332–333.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 2:484; another version, Ibn Abī Zayd, *al-Nawādir wa-‘l-ziyādāt*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Ḥulw, et al. (15 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1999), 1:539–540.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Sa’īd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. Eduard Sachau, et al. (9 vols. in 15; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1904–40), 1/2:97–98 = *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (9 vols.; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957–1968), 1:376. Henceforth, the latter edition cited in *italic*. Almost identical at Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaf* 3:609, *al-ṣalāḥ* 840, *fī qirā’at al-Qur’ān*; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *al-ṣalāḥ* 353, *bāb kayfa yustaḥabbu ‘l-tartīl fī ‘l-qirā’ah*, no. 1465; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *faḍl ‘il al-Qur’ān* 29, *bāb madd al-qirā’ah*, no. 5045; Nasā’ī, *SK*, no. 8059 8005; idem, *Muḥtabā*, *al-iftitāḥ* 82, *bāb madd al-ṣawt bi-‘l-qirā’ah*, no. 1015.

something like *ā ā*. However, that is denied in other versions. In one, Qatādah says that after saying the Prophet's recitation involved extension, "He recited *bi-sm Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, extending *bi-sm Allāh*, extending *al-Raḥmān*, and extending *al-Raḥīm*," which seems to indicate stretching out vowels but not repeating anything or quavering.<sup>21</sup> In another version, Qatādah says,

God never sent a prophet but that he sent him with a comely face and a comely voice, till he sent your prophet . . . . He sent him with a comely face and a comely voice. He did not use to practice repetition (*lam yakun yurajji`u*), but he would somewhat extend (his pronunciation; *kāna yamuddu ba`da `l-madd*).<sup>22</sup>

At first glance, the most likely interpretation of these conflicting reports is that neither Mu`āwiyah b. Qurrah's nor Qatādah's report (to identify them by the Followers in their *isnāds*) originally included any explanation, but that Mu`āwiyah b. Qurrah's report was promulgated by a proponent of *tarjī`* and occasionally elaborated to show that it allowed *madd*, mainly by the addition of *ā ā*, while Qatādah's report was promulgated by proponents of *madd* and occasionally elaborated to show that this excluded *tarjī`*. Admittedly, the elaboration expressly excluding *tarjī`* is presented with an incomplete *isnād*, presumptively a sign of its being earlier than a report with a complete one.<sup>23</sup>

Fourth, and very awkward for opponents of musical recitation, are some hadith reports using the verb *taghannā*. Most simply, by a Meccan *isnād*, Sa`d b. Abī Waqqāṣ quotes the Prophet as saying, "He is not of us who has not chanted the Qur`ān (*laysa minnā man lam yataghanna bi-`l-Qur`ān*)."<sup>24</sup> Occasionally, it comes with some context. Here is a version from `Abd al-Razzāq:

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<sup>21</sup> Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *faḍā`il al-Qur`ān* 29, *bāb madd al-qirā`ah*, no. 5046.

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Sa`d, *Ṭabaqāt* 1/2:98 1:376.

<sup>23</sup> So Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 165.

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaf* 3:612, *al-ṣalāh* 841, *fī ḥusn al-sawt bi-`l-Qur`ān*; ibid. 10:210, *faḍā`il al-Qur`ān* 4, *fī ḥusn al-sawt bi-`l-Qur`ān*; Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī, *al-Musnad* (Hyderabad: Maṭba`at Majlis Dā`irat al-Ma`ārif al-Nizāmiyyah, 1321, repr. Beirut: Dār al-Ma`rifah, n.d.), no. 201; Aḥmad, *Musnad* 1:175, 179 3:39, 125; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *al-witr* 8, *bāb istiḥbāb al-tartīl fī `l-qirā`ah*, no.

`Abd Allāh b. `Umar the *qāri* and the *mutawakkil* Ibn Abī Nahīk went in to Sa`d b. Abī Waqqāṣ. Sa`d said to `Abd Allāh, “Who is this?” He said, “The *mutawakkil* Ibn Abī Nahīk.” He said, “Yes—traders who profit, traders who profit, who will be rewarded (*yu`jarūn*). I heard the Messenger of God . . . say, ‘He is not of us who has not chanted (*lam yataghanna bi-*) the Qur’ān.’”<sup>25</sup>

Another context makes the Companion anonymous and discusses the implication for Qur’ān reciters:

`Abd al-A`lā b. Ḥammād < `Abd al-Jabbār b. al-Ward < Ibn Abī Mulaykah < `Ubayd Allāh b. Abī Yazīd: “Abū Lubābah passed by us so we followed him till he entered his house. We went in after him. There was a shaggy, poor-looking man there. I heard him say that he had heard the Messenger of God . . . say, ‘He is not of us who has not chanted the Qur’ān.’”

“I said to Ibn Abī Mulaykah, ‘O Abū Muḥammad, what do you think if he hasn’t a comely voice?’ He said, ‘He makes it as comely as he can.’”<sup>26</sup>

The speaker at the end is presumably `Abd al-Jabbār b. al-Ward (Meccan cl., fl. mid-2nd/8th cent.). In the context of Abū Dāwūd’s collection, it glosses *yataghannā* in the previous hadith report, connecting it with having “a good voice.”

A related hadith report associates comeliness, sadness, and chanting (*ḥusn*, *ḥuzn*, and *taghannin*):

`Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Sā`ib: “Sa`d b. Abī Waqqāṣ came to us, having lost his sight. I saluted him. He asked, ‘Who is this?’ so I told him. He said, ‘Welcome, nephew. I have heard that you have a good voice for reciting the Qur’ān. I heard the Messenger of God . . . say, “This Qur’ān came down in sadness, so when you recite it, weep. If you do not weep, pretend to weep, for whoever has not chanted it with us is not of us.”’”<sup>27</sup>

The Qur’ān itself connects its recitation with weeping; e.g., Q al-Mā`idah 5:83, “When they hear what has been sent down to the messenger, you can see their eyes overflow with tears.”

Here, then, the call for sadness and tears mainly downplays the musicality suggested by

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1469 (Meccan *isnāds*); al-Tirmidhī, *Ilal al-Tirmidhī al-kabīr*, arr. Abū Ṭālib al-Qāḍī, ed. Ṣubḥī al-Sāmarrā’ī, Abū al-Ma`āṭī al-Nūrī, and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Khalīl al-Ṣa`īdī (Beirut: `Ālam al-Kutub, 1409/1989), 350 (this version endorsed as sound by al-Bukhārī, who rejects alternative versions in which Ibn `Abbās or `Ā’ishah quotes the Prophet).

<sup>25</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ* 2:483. *Yu`jarūn* is my reading—a fn. says it is unpointed in the MS.

<sup>26</sup> Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *al-witr* 8, *bāb istiḥbāb al-tartīl fī ‘l-qirā’ah*, no. 1471 (Meccan *isnād*).

<sup>27</sup> Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, *iqāmat al-ṣalawāt* 176, *bāb fī ḥusn al-ṣawt bi- ‘l-Qur’ān*, no. 1337 (mixed *isnād*).



*taghannin*. This is in line with eighth-century renunciant interpretation of comeliness as evincing fear; for example, ‘The person with the comeliest voice for the Qur’ān is the one who, when he recites, you see that he fears God.’<sup>28</sup>

Many other glosses likewise deflect interpretation from musicality (and incidentally confirm that *taghannin* implies something musical, although without recordings it is of course impossible to say precisely what style of recitation these reports encouraged). A common one is to equate *taghannin* (form V) with *istighnā*’ (Form X): “He is not of us who has not chanted the Qur’ān.” “This means he lets it suffice (*yastaghni bih*).”<sup>29</sup> Sometimes the gloss is expressly attributed to the transmitter Wakī’ b. al-Jarrāḥ (Kufan, d. 197/812).<sup>30</sup> Sufyān b. ‘Uyaynah (Kufan, transferred to Mecca, d. 198/814) is also quoted for *yastaghni*.<sup>31</sup> Other glosses make out that *yataghannā* means *yajharu* (say aloud); for example, “He is not of us who has not chanted the Qur’ān.” Someone else added, “He says it aloud.”<sup>32</sup>

Fifth, there is an intersecting group of hadith reports distinguished by the ambiguous verb *adhina*, meaning either to listen or to permit. Permission is implied by a version with *an*: “God has not permitted anything to a prophet as he permitted a prophet to chant (*an yataghannā bi-*) the Qur’ān.”<sup>33</sup> Sometimes it is not a prophet who is permitted to chant: “God

<sup>28</sup> So Ṭalq (b. Ḥabīb, Basran, d. after 90/708–709): Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Zuhd*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Qāsim (Mecca: Maṭba‘at Umm al-Qurā, 1357), 174 = (repr. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1396/1976), 217.

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaf* 3:612, *al-ṣalāh* 841, *fī ḥusn al-sawṭ bi-’l-Qur’ān* (Meccan *isnād*).

<sup>30</sup> Aḥmad, *Musnad* 1:172 3:74–76.

<sup>31</sup> Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *al-witr* 8, *bāb istiḥbāb al-tartīl fī ’l-qirā’ah*, no. 1472; also in one MS of al-Dārimī, *al-Musnad al-jāmi‘*, ed. Nabīl b. Ḥāshim ‘Abd Allāh al-Ghamrī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyyah, 1434/2013), 488, *faḍā’il al-Qur’ān* 34, *bāb al-taghannī bi-’l-Qur’ān*. Included in the text without comment in idem, *al-Sunan*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Dahmān (2 vols.; Damascus: Maṭba‘at al-‘Iṭidāl, 1349), 2:471, and *al-Sunan*, ed. Fawwāz Aḥmad Zamarlī and Khālīd al-Sab‘ al-‘Alamī (2 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1407/1987), 2:563. The last is apparently a retyping of the 1349 edition with added numbers. This evident interpolation is an example of why the Ghamrī edition should become the standard, although Zamarlī and ‘Alamī’s item numbers (incompatible with Ghamrī’s edition) are commonly cited in cross-references.

<sup>32</sup> Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-tawḥīd* 44, no. 7527 (Basran/Meccan *isnād*).

<sup>33</sup> ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 2:481–482; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *faḍā’il al-Qur’ān* 19, *bāb man lam yataghanna bi-’l-Qur’ān*, nos. 5023–24; Nasā’ī, *SK*, no. 8053 7999 (Basran or Egyptian/Medinese *isnāds*).

permits a man who has a good voice to chant the Qur'ān.”<sup>34</sup> Some of these come with protective glosses, though: “God has not permitted anything as he has permitted a prophet to chant the Qur'ān.” Then, “A disciple of his said it means to recite it aloud”<sup>35</sup> or Sufyān (b. `Uyaynah) said, “Its interpretation is that he lets it suffice (*yastaghni bih*).”<sup>36</sup> More often, there is no particle *an* so that *adhina* evidently refers rather to listening; e.g. “God has not listened to a prophet as he has listened to a prophet chanting (*yataghannā bi-*) the Qur'ān.”<sup>37</sup> Some variants make this specifically a prophet with a comely voice.<sup>38</sup> Some versions, although without the particle *an* and therefore apparently about listening, not permission, include a gloss to make sure that listening is understood. Sometimes this is expressly a gloss; for example, “A disciple of his said it means to recite it aloud.”<sup>39</sup> Sometimes it seems to be included in the Prophet's statement.<sup>40</sup> One version suppresses chanting altogether: “God has not listened to anything as he has listened to a prophet with a comely voice reciting (*yaqra`u*) the Qur'ān aloud.”<sup>41</sup> Another replaces the word *taghannā* with *tarannama*, suggesting tones but distinct from music.<sup>42</sup> Besides once quoting the prophet himself as glossing *yataghannā*

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<sup>34</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 2:483–484.

<sup>35</sup> Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 5023.

<sup>36</sup> Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 5024.

<sup>37</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 2:482 (Meccan *isnād*); Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-tawḥīd* 32, no. 7482 (same *isnād* as no. 5023 but without *an*); Muslim, *Jāmi`*, *ṣalāt al-musāfirīn* 34, *bāb istiḥbāb taḥsīn al-ṣawt bi-l-Qur'ān*, no. 892; Nasā'ī, *SK*, nos. 1090–1091, 8052 1091–1092, 7998; idem, *Mujtabā*, *al-iftitāḥ* 83, *tazyīn al-Qur'ān bi-l-ṣawt*, no. 1018; Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Muṣannaf* 10:210, *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* 4, *fī ḥusn al-ṣawt bi-l-Qur'ān*. See also Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 614, s.n. Sufyān b. `Uyaynah.

<sup>38</sup> Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-tawḥīd* 52, *bāb qawl al-nabī . . . al-māhir bi-l-Qur'ān ma'a l-safarah al-bararah wa-zayyinū l-Qur'ān bi-aṣwātikum*, no. 7544; Muslim, *Jāmi`*, *ṣalāt al-musāfirīn* 34, *bāb istiḥbāb taḥsīn al-ṣawt bi-l-Qur'ān*, no. 892; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *al-witr* 20, *bāb istiḥbāb al-tartīl fī l-qirā'ah*, no. 1473; Nasā'ī, *SK*, no. 8052 7998; idem, *Mujtabā*, *al-iftitāḥ* 83, *tazyīn al-Qur'ān bi-l-ṣawt*, no. 1018 (the same as `Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 2:481–482, but without *an*).

<sup>39</sup> Dārimī, *Musnad*, 788; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-tawḥīd* 32, no. 7482. Sim., `Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 2:482.

<sup>40</sup> Dārimī, *Musnad*, 789; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 7544; Muslim, *Jāmi`*, *ṣalāt al-musāfirīn* 34, *bāb istiḥbāb taḥsīn al-ṣawt bi-l-Qur'ān*, no. 892; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *al-witr* 20, no. 1473; Nasā'ī, *SK*, no. 8052 7998; idem, *Mujtabā*, no. 1017 (mainly Kufan *isnāds*).

<sup>41</sup> Dārimī, *Musnad*, 789; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 7544; Muslim, *Jāmi`*, *ṣalāt al-musāfirīn* 34, *bāb istiḥbāb taḥsīn al-ṣawt bi-l-Qur'ān*, no. 892; Nasā'ī, *SK*, no. 8052 7998; similarly, Shaybānī, *Āthār* 1:283 (mainly Kufan *isnāds*).

<sup>42</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 2:482–483; Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaf* 10:210, *k. faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* 4, *fī ḥusn al-ṣawt bi-l-Qur'ān* (Meccan *isnāds*).

as reciting aloud, the collector al-Dārimī once comments himself, “This means letting it suffice (*al-istighnā*’).”<sup>43</sup>

Sixth is a direct command: “Learn the Book of God, keep it up with one another (*ta`āhadūhu*), chant it (*taghannaw bihi*), and follow it, for by him in whose hand is Muḥammad’s soul, it is quicker to escape than camels from their ties.”<sup>44</sup> Al-Dārimī relates the same as a Companion saying.<sup>45</sup> Al-Nasā’ī also relates a version beginning and ending the same way but omits the command to chant.<sup>46</sup> The combination in this report of memorization and chanting suggests that the tones are an aid to memorization. The Qur’ān should be harder to memorize than poetry, since it is not metrical and does not always rhyme, but tones should help by providing more context for each variant sequence of words. However, I know of no strong evidence that they are connected, and observers of qur’ānic chanting in the present have detected no regular pairing of words and phrases with particular sequences of notes.<sup>47</sup> Al-Nasā’ī’s version without chanting shows that some traditionists were uncomfortable despite whatever utility the tones might have.

A widely reported hadith report, “Ornament the Qur’ān with your voices (*zayyinū ‘l-Qur’ān bi-aṣwātikum*),” does not expressly call for musical tones but was evidently interpreted so, constituting number Seven.<sup>48</sup> Sometimes, it comes in the course of a longer speech, recommending one to ornament the Qur’ān along with other meritorious deeds; for

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<sup>43</sup> Dārimī, *Musnad*, 374.

<sup>44</sup> Dārimī, *Musnad*, 763; Nasā’ī, *SK*, nos. 8034, 8049 7980, 7995 (Egyptian or Basran/Egyptian *isnāds*).

<sup>45</sup> Dārimī, *Musnad*, 763.

<sup>46</sup> Nasā’ī, *SK*, no. 8035 7981 (al-Nasā’ī’s immediate informant is Damascene, the rest of the *isnād* Basran/Egyptian).

<sup>47</sup> Al-Fārūqī, “Tartīl al-Qur’ān,” 114.

<sup>48</sup> Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, no. 738; Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaf* 3:611, *al-ṣalāh* 841, *fī ḥusn al-ṣawt bi-‘l-Qur’ān*; ibid. 10:209, *k. faḍā’il al-Qur’ān* 4, *fī ḥusn al-ṣawt bi-‘l-Qur’ān*; Dārimī, *Musnad*, 790; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *al-witr* 20, *bāb kayfa yustaḥabbu ‘l-tartīl fī ‘l-qirā’ah*, no. 1468; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, *iqāmat al-ṣalawāt* 176, *bāb fī ḥusn al-ṣawt bi-‘l-Qur’ān*, no. 1342; Nasā’ī, *Mujtabā*, *al-iftitāḥ* 83, *tazyīn al-Qur’ān bi-‘l-ṣawt*, no. 1016–1017; idem, *SK*, nos. 1089, 8050 1090, 7996 (Kufan *isnāds*).

example, “God and the angels bless (*yuṣallūna`alā*) the front rows (of those praying). Ornament the Qur’ān with your voices. Whoever gives a gift of milk . . . .”<sup>49</sup> Disquiet is suggested by some variant wordings. `Abd al-Razzāq reports the usual version through Sufyān al-Thawrī and an alternative that justifies the idea of ornamenting the Qur’ān, as if it could be improved: “Everything has its ornament (*ḥilyah*), the ornament of the Qur’ān being a comely voice.”<sup>50</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq also relates this alternative through the Basran Ma`mar b. Rāshid (d. 153/770): “Ornament your voices with the Qur’ān.”<sup>51</sup> Al-Nasā’ī at least makes this the emphasis of one of his section headings, “The ornamentation of the voice by means of the Qur’ān.”<sup>52</sup> Another prominent Basran traditionist, Shu`bah, said, “Ayyūb (al-Sakhtiyānī, Basran, d. 131/749) forbade me to relate this hadith report, ‘Adorn the Qur’ān with your voices.’” The littérateur Abū `Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (Baghdadi, d. 224/838–839) explains, “What Ayyūb disliked, we think, is only that the people should interpret this hadith report (as giving) license from the Messenger of God concerning these innovated tones (*al-alḥān al-mubtada’ah*). For this reason, he forbade him it.”<sup>53</sup> “Ornament” implied recitation with tones.

Eighth is a large *matn* cluster, to use G. H. A. Juynboll’s terminology, by which the Prophet praised the recitation of Abū Mūsā `l-Ash`arī (d. 50/670–671?) as being akin to the *mazāmīr* of the family of David; for example, from `Ā’ishah, “The Prophet . . . heard the

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<sup>49</sup> Aḥmad, *Musnad* 4:296 30:580–582 (from `Abd al-Razzāq but not found in *al-Muṣannaf*); sim., 4:285, 304 30:4794–82, 632–634; also `Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 2:484 (Kufan *isnāds*).

<sup>50</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 2:484; sim., Kulaynī, *Kāfī* 2:615.

<sup>51</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 2:484. Cf. Aḥmad, *Musnad* 4:296 30:580–582, where `Abd al-Razzāq < Sufyān goes with the usual order, “Ornament the Qur’ān with your voices.” Cf. also Shaybānī, *Āthār* 1:282, whereby it is `Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb who says, “Make your voices comely with the Qur’ān” (Kufan *isnād*).

<sup>52</sup> Nasā’ī, *SK*, *faḍā’il al-Qur’ān* 38, *tazyīn al-ṣawt bi-’l-Qur’ān*. The same section title appears in Muslim, *Jāmi’*, but of course this was added centuries later.

<sup>53</sup> Abū `Ubayd, *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, ed. Marwān al-`Aṭīyyah, Muḥsin Kharābah, and Wafā’ Taqī al-Dīn (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1415/1995), 167 = ed. Aḥmad b. `Abd al-Wāḥid al-Khayyāṭī, 2 vols. (al-Muḥammadiyyah: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-’l-Shu’ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1415/1995), 1:335–336. Henceforth, the latter edition cited in *italic*.

voice of Abū Mūsā 'l-Ash'arī as he was reciting, whereupon he said, 'Abū Mūsā has been gifted with (one) of the *mazāmīr* of the family of Dāwūd.'"<sup>54</sup> *Mazāmīr* may refer either to reed flutes or to psalms. (*Zabūr* is the Qur'ānic word for the scripture given Dāwūd, but one also finds references to his *mazāmīr* that are plainly an alternative term.<sup>55</sup>) The latter seems more likely, here, but on either account we seem to have an approving reference to musicality.

Ninth, "taking the Qur'ān for psalms" sometimes appears in a list of six terrible developments better avoided. One version quotes Abū Hurayrah (d. Medina, 58/678):

Abū Hurayrah mentioned death as if he wished for it. One of his companions said, "How can you wish for death after the saying of the Messenger of God . . . that no one is to wish for death, whether pious or reprobate: as for the pious one, let him increase in piety, and as for the reprobate, let him mend his ways (*yasta'tib*)?" He said, "How should I not wish for death when I fear to meet up with six things: belittling sins, selling judgements, disregarding blood relations, multiplication of police, tipsiness from wine, and those who take the Qur'ān for psalms (*yattakhidhūna 'l-Qur'ān mazāmīr*)?"<sup>56</sup>

In other versions, the Companion is 'Ābid al-Ghifārī, 'Awf b. Mālīk al-Ashja'ī, or anonymous.<sup>57</sup> In others still, the Prophet himself recommends dying before six things

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<sup>54</sup> 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 2:485; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* 4/1:80 4:107–108; Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaf* 11:181; Dārimī, *Musnad*, 374; Nasā'ī, *SK*, nos. 1094–1095, 7997 1093–1094, 8051; idem, *Mujtabā*, *al-iftitāḥ* 83, *tazyīn al-Qur'ān bi-'l-ṣawt*, nos. 1021–1022. Juynboll says that "*matn* cluster" is "a newly coined technical term, which indicates that a legal, theological, ethical or ritual issue gave rise to a variety of some slightly different but often closely resembling, if not wholly identical, *matns* which originated at different times in different ḥadīth centres" (*Encyclopedia*, xxviii). Other versions in this cluster quote the Prophet through the Companions Abū Hurayrah, Buraydah b. al-Ḥuṣayb, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ka'b, with Medinese, Basran, and Kufan *isnāds*.

<sup>55</sup> E.g. "Written in the *mazāmīr* of Dāwūd (upon him be peace) is, "Do you know whom of my servants I forgive?" He said, "Whom, O my Lord?" He said, "Him who, when he commits a sin, his joints shake on account of it. That is the one in whose disfavor I command my angels not to record that sin"" (Aḥmad, *Zuhd* [Mecca], 73 = [Beirut] 92–93).

<sup>56</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* 4/2:61 4:337 (Basran *isnād*). The closest I have observed to this version of the Prophet's saying against hoping for death is this: "Let none of you wish for death, whether doing good, for he may increase in goodness, or doing bad, for he may mend his ways (*yasta'tib*)" (Dārimī, *Musnad*, 661, Syrian-Medinese *isnād*). Cf. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* 4/1:15 4:23: "do not wish for death. If you are doing good, if it is put off for you, then you will do more good. Your doing good is better for you. If you are doing evil, if it is put off for you, then you may mend your ways. Do not wish for death" (Basran *isnād*). See also Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 474 (another version he attributes to Shu'bah).

<sup>57</sup> Abū 'Ubayd, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, 166 1:334–335; Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaf* 15:225–226, 229; Aḥmad, *Musnad* 6:22, 23 39:391–392, 396 (Kufan *isnāds*).

appear.<sup>58</sup> The last elaborate on what those who favor chanting will do; for example, “They will sing songs and put forward (to lead the prayer) a man who is not the most knowledgeable of them as to law or hadith, refusing to put him forward unless he leads them in singing.”<sup>59</sup>

Finally, I will name one warning from the Prophet less widely reported:

Recite the Qur’ān in the tones and sounds (*luḥūn, aswāt*) of the Arabs. Beware of the tones of the people of depravity (*fisq*) and the people of the two books. There will come a people after me who will repeat (*yurajji`ūna bi-*) the Qur’ān in the manner of singing, monasticism, and lamentation. It will not pass their throats. Their hearts are deceived, likewise the hearts of those who are pleased by their affair.<sup>60</sup>

Especially significant, here, is the concern to maintain Arab ways and to resist taking up the ways of Christians and Jews. The Talmud calls on Jews not to read Scripture in an ordinary tone, which is to insult it by treating it as something common. Christians also have chanted passages of the Bible, mainly the Psalms and Canticles, especially in the context of services for Communion and the canonical hours. “Lamentation (*niyāḥah*)” refers to demonstrative mourning, mostly condemned by the Islamic legal tradition.<sup>61</sup> “It will not pass their throats” is a conventional disparagement of Muslims who seem extraordinarily pious but are actually outside the saved community, most often the Khawārij.<sup>62</sup>

#### Against singing

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<sup>58</sup> Aḥmad, *Musnad* 3:494–495 25:427–430; al-Bukhārī, *K. al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* (4 vols. in 8; Hyderabad: Maṭba`at Dā`irat al-Ma`ārif al-Nizāmiyyah, 1941–1945, repr. Hyderabad: Maṭba`at Dā`irat al-Ma`ārif al-`Uthmāniyyah, 1377/1958, repr. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 7:80 (Kufan *isnāds*).

<sup>59</sup> Bukhārī, *Tārīkh* 7:80.

<sup>60</sup> Abū `Ubayd, *Faḍā`il al-Qur`ān*, 165 1:334 (mixed *isnād*); sim. (but with *alhān* for the tones of the Arabs, *luḥūn* for those of the people of depravity, et al.), Kulaynī, *Kāfī* 2:614.

<sup>61</sup> See Leor Halevi, *Muhammad's Grave: Death Rites and the Making of Islamic Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), chap. 4.

<sup>62</sup> E.g. “At the end of time certain people will come forth, young and stupid, they use seemingly elevated language, they recite the Qur’ān in a way which does not go past their windpipes, they transpierce the faith like an arrow pierces a prey” (Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 111); “One day certain people will march against you. In comparison with their way of performing the *ṣalāt* you will think little of your own *ṣalāt* and in comparison with their way of fasting you think little of your own way of fasting, and next to their deeds you hold your own actions in contempt. But they recite the Qur’ān in a way that does not go farther than their windpipes and their recited texts transpierce the faith in the way an arrow passes clean through game” (Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 671).

Music itself generally has a poor reputation in the Islamic legal tradition.<sup>63</sup> The Prophet himself introduced a songstress to `Ā'ishah, according to one report, but then apparently expressed disapproval.

He said, "O `Ā'ishah, do you recognize this one?" She said, "No, O Prophet of God." He said, "This is the songstress (*qaynah*) of Banī So-and-so. Would you like her to sing for you?" She said, "Yes," so he gave her a plate and she sang to her (*ghannathā*). The Prophet . . . said, "Satan has blown into her nostrils."

Significantly, the Prophet's last word, given here after the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, is missing in most manuscripts of *al-Sunan al-kubrā* of al-Nasā'ī, where it ends with the singing.<sup>64</sup> The short version better fits al-Nasā'ī's section heading, so it seems likely that disapproval was excised by al-Nasā'ī's source (the *isnād* is otherwise identical to Aḥmad's), then restored by some transmitter (after al-Nasā'ī) who knew the longer version. An early Zaydi collection makes out that the Prophet identified singing as the first of a series of enormities: "The first to sing was Iblīs. Then he piped (*zamara*), then he urged forward camels with singing (*ḥadā*), then he lamented (*nāḥa*)."<sup>65</sup> There is certainly no endorsement here of Arab ways against non-Arab.

As for Companion reports, when Ibn `Umar heard a shepherd's pipe (*zammārah*) he put his fingers in his ears, saying that he had seen the Messenger of God do the same.<sup>66</sup> The Follower Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab said, "I loathe singing (*ghinā*) but love poetry (*rajaz*)."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Taken as given by Ian Bedford, "The Interdiction of Music in Islam," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 12 (2001): 1-14. Bedford holds that qur'ānic recitation is not perceived by Muslims as music. He mainly speculates about tension over other devotional forms, such as modern Pakistani *qawwālī*, paying negligible attention to what either its opponents or defenders say.

<sup>64</sup> Aḥmad, *Musnad* 3:449 24:497; Nasā'ī, *SK*, 'ishrat al-nisā' 19, *iṭlāq al-rajul li-zawjatihi 'stimā' al-ghinā'*, no. 8960 8911 (Medinese *isnād*).

<sup>65</sup> Zayd b. `Alī (attrib.), *Corpus iuris di Zaid ibn `Alī (VIII sec. cr.)*, ed. Eugenio Griffini (Milan: Ultrico Hoepli, 1919), 297, no. 1003.

<sup>66</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* 4/1:120 4:163; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *al-adab* 52, *bāb karāhiyat al-ghinā' wa-'l-zamar*, nos. 4924-4926.

<sup>67</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 11:6.

Ibrāhīm al-Nakha`ī said, “Singing makes hypocrisy spring up in the heart.”<sup>68</sup> Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyyah (Medinese, d. after 100/718–719) is said to have glossed Q al-Ḥajj 22:30, *qawl al-zūr*, as singing.<sup>69</sup> Mujāhid b. Jabr (Meccan cl., d. 103/721–722?) glossed “diverting tales (*lahw al-ḥadīth*) to lead away from the path of God” (Q Luqmān 31:6) as “singing” (*ghinā`*).<sup>70</sup> Hishām b. Ibrāhīm al-`Abbāsī reported that `Alī al-Riḍā (d. 203/818) permitted singing, which `Alī himself then denied, quoting the earlier imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 114/732–733?) as saying God had separated truth from falsehood, with music obviously in the latter category.<sup>71</sup> There is a widely reported relaxation in favor of music to announce a wedding: “A separation between the permitted and forbidden is the voice and beating drums.”<sup>72</sup> It is rare to find an early jurist said to have considered singing indifferent, not forbidden or even discouraged. The Twelver leader al-Ṭūsī Shaykh al-Ṭā`ifāh (d. 460/1067?) states that this was the position of Ibrāhīm b. Sa`d al-Zuhrī (Medinese, d. after 100/718–719) and `Ubayd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan al-`Anbarī (Basran qadi, d. 168/784–785).<sup>73</sup>

Singing appears as a peculiarly Medinese weakness in a saying attributed to the Basran Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān (d. 223/838?): “If a man went by every concession

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<sup>68</sup> `Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 11:4. Elsewhere attributed to the Prophet; e.g. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan, al-adab* 52, *bāb karāhiyat al-ghinā` wa-`l-zamar*, no. 4927 (Basran/Kufan *isnād*), and Zayd b. `Alī, *Corpus iuris*, 297, no. 1004.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Ṭūsī Shaykh al-Ṭā`ifāh, *K. al-Khilāf*, ed. `Alī al-Khurāsānī, Jawād al-Shahristānī, and Mahdī Najaf (6 vols.; Qum: Mu`assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1416–1421), 6:306.

<sup>70</sup> Abū Nu`aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā`* (10 vols.; Cairo: Maṭba`at al-Sa`ādah and Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1352–1357/1932–1938), 3:286. Said to be the interpretation of Ibn Mas`ūd, Ibn `Abbās, `Ikrimah, Ibn Jubayr, and Qatādah by Māwardī, *Nukat* 4:328.

<sup>71</sup> Al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Karbala`: Mu`assasat al-`Ilamī, n.d.), 422 = al-Ṭūsī Shaykh al-Ṭā`ifāh, *Ikhtiyār ma`rifat al-rijāl*, ed. Ḥasan al-Muṣṭafawī, Dānishgadah-yi ilāhiyyāt va ma`ārif-i islāmī (Mashhad: Dānishgāh-i Mashhad, 1348), 500–501.

<sup>72</sup> Tirmidhī, *Jāmi`*, *al-nikāḥ* 6, *bāb mā jā`a fī `l-lān al-nikāḥ*, no. 1088; Nasā`ī, *SK*, no. 5562 5527; idem, *Mujtabā*, *al-nikāḥ* 72, *i`lān al-nikāḥ bi-ṣawt wa-ḍarb al-duff*, no. 3369; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan, al-nikāḥ* 20, *bāb i`lān al-nikāḥ*, no. 1896 (Wasiti *isnāds*). For another example, in which the Prophet allows singing to celebrate a battle, see Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 17, 70. Al-Ṭūsī Shaykh al-Ṭā`ifāh the Twelver considers drumming discouraged at weddings and circumcisions, otherwise forbidden along with singing and musical instruments everywhere: *Khilāf* 6:307. Along with singing at weddings, moderate weeping over the dead is permitted in a variant reported by Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, no. 1221 (mixed Basran/Kufan *isnād*).

<sup>73</sup> Ṭūsī, *Khilāf* 6:306.



(*rukḥṣah*)—the position of the people of Kufa as to date wine (*nabīdh*), of the people of Medina as to *samā`*, meaning singing (*ghinā`*), and the people of Mecca as to marriage for a term (*mut`ah*), he would be a reprobate.”<sup>74</sup> A variant is attributed to the Basran Ma`mar:

If a man went by the position of the people of Medina concerning *samā`*, meaning singing (*ghinā`*), and going into women’s rears, the position of the people of Mecca concerning marriage for a term and changing money, and the position of the people of Kufa concerning intoxicants, he would be the worst of God’s servants.”<sup>75</sup>

There seems to be a certain Basran/Medinese preponderance in *isnāds* that support hadith more favourable to musical recitation of the Qur’ān, a Kufan/Meccan preponderance in *isnāds* that support hadith less favourable, but the regional pattern is admittedly not strong—regrettably, Medinese opinion is precisely what is most poorly documented, apart from what Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) endorsed. On this point, Mālik seems to have dissented. Asked about what the people of Medina permit (*yatarakhkhaṣu*) by way of singing, he did not describe what the Medinese permitted but said, “In our view, only the reprobates (*fussāq*) do it.”<sup>76</sup> He is said to have strongly rejected singing (*taṭrīb*) in making the call to prayer.<sup>77</sup> Aḥmad b. Idrīs al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285) explains Mālik’s opposition to *taṭrīb* in the call to prayer: “He disliked it on account of its resemblance to singing (*ghinā`*), anything near to which is to be avoided.”<sup>78</sup> Both Medinese notoriety for permitting it and the presence of dissent seem evident in an exchange with Ibrāhīm b. al-Mundhir (Medinese, d. 236/850?): on being asked, “Do you permit (*tatarakhkhaṣūna*) singing?” he said, “I take refuge in God. In

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<sup>74</sup> Al-Khallāl, *al-Amr bi- 'l-ma`rūf wa- 'l-nahy `an al-munkar*, ed. `Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad `Aṭā, Nawādir al-turāth 2 (Cairo: Dār al-ʿIṭṣām, 1975), 158 = (repr. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1406/1986), 99. References to the latter edn. henceforth in *italic*.

<sup>75</sup> Khallāl, *Amr*, 159 100.

<sup>76</sup> Khallāl, *Amr*, 158 99.

<sup>77</sup> Saḥnūn, *al-Mudawwanah al-kubrā* (16 vols.; Cairo: Maṭba`at al-Sa`ādah, 1323/1905), 1:58, 59.

<sup>78</sup> Al-Qarāfī, *al-Dhakhīrah*, ed. Muḥammad Būkhubzah, et al. (14 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1994), 2:48.

our view, no one does this but the reprobate.”<sup>79</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal also strongly rejected singing, saying, “It establishes hypocrisy in the heart. I dislike it.”<sup>80</sup>

Al-Shāfiʿī is relatively relaxed about singing, perhaps showing the influence of the predominant Medinese acceptance of music opposed by Mālik. It comes up in the *Umm* in the discussion of witnessing. A professional singer (*yattakhidhu ʿl-ghināʾ šināʾatahu*) is thereby disqualified to be a witness “because of what that entails by way of discouraged foolishness (*safah*) . . . . Whoever engages in this is associated with shamelessness and the falling away of manliness. Whoever is willing to be associated with this deserves (to be disqualified), even if it is not clearly forbidden.”<sup>81</sup> As for the man who listens to singing slaves, male and female together, he is disqualified from testifying as making a fool of himself (*safah*). Listening to singing slave girls is worse yet. However, the listener’s testimony is accepted if he listens only a little. There is no harm in listening to *ḥudāʾ*, *nashīd al-aʿrāb*, or poetry; that is (against Zayd b. ʿAlī, among others), characteristic Arabian musical forms.<sup>82</sup> The Shāfiʿī tradition after him likewise tends to be permissive of light exposure to music, less permissive of heavy. For example, al-ʿImrānī (d. 558/1163) begins his discussion of singing with tones (*al-ghināʾ bi-ʿl-alḥān*) by saying that it is discouraged, neither forbidden nor indifferent, if it is unaccompanied by musical instruments. In the following discussion, however, he distinguishes between listening to singers in public and private, only public listening disqualifying someone to testify, and expressly allows listening to traditional Arab forms, *ḥudāʾ* and *nashīd al-aʿrāb*.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Khallāl, *Amr*, 158 99.

<sup>80</sup> ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad, *Masāʾil al-imām*, ed. Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1401/1981), 316.

<sup>81</sup> Al-Shāfiʿī, *Kitāb al-Umm* (7 vols. in 4; Bulaq: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Kubrā ʿl-Amīriyyah, 1321–1325, repr. Cairo: Kitāb al-Shaʿb, 1388/1968), 6:214–215 = ed. Rifʿat Fawzī ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (11 vols.; al-Mansūrah: Dār al-Wafāʾ, 1422/2001; 2nd printing 1425/2004), 7:518. References to the latter edition henceforth in *italic*. Sim., al-Muzanī, *al-Mukhtaṣar*, *ad al-Umm* 5:257margin.

<sup>82</sup> Shāfiʿī, *Umm* 6:215 7:518. Sim., Muzanī, *Mukhtaṣar*, *ad Umm* 5:257marg.

<sup>83</sup> Yaḥyā b. Abī ʿl-Khayr al-ʿImrānī, *al-Bayān*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī Aḥmad al-Saqqā (13 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1423/2002), 13:270–272.

Apparently in reaction to al-Shāfiʿī's argument, the question of singing sometimes comes up in handbooks from other schools where they consider disqualifications to testify. Al-Ṭūsī Shaykh al-Ṭāʾifāh states that singing (*ghināʾ*) is forbidden and that the one who does it thereby becomes a reprobate whose testimony is rejected. By contrast, he asserts, Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, and al-Shāfiʿī considered it merely discouraged, although he admits that there are contrary reports by which Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik identified it as the work of reprobates whose testimony was to be rejected.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, al-Sarakhsī the prominent Ḥanafī (d. 483/1090–1091?) rejects the testimony of *ṣāhib al-ghināʾ*, apparently someone who depends on singing for his social life.<sup>85</sup>

#### Men of religion mostly against recitation with tones

Early Sunni literature quotes just one authority that I have noticed in favor of reciting the Qurʾān with tones. ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Jurayj (Meccan cl., d. 150/767–768?) asked ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ (Meccan cl., d. 114/732?) about recitation in the style of singing (*al-qirāʾah ʿalā ʾl-ghināʾ*). He said, “There is no harm in that. I heard ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr say that David the prophet . . . would take an instrument and play on it in this manner, letting his voice reverberate in it (*yuraddidu ʿalayhi ṣawtahu*), seeking thereby to weep and to make others weep.”<sup>86</sup> ʿAbd Allāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889?) devotes a long section of *al-Maʿārif* to reciters of the Qurʾān, then a short one to reciters with tones. It attributes the first recitation with tones to a sometime qadi for Basra and governor of Sijistan, ʿUbayd Allāh b. Abī Bakrah (d. 79/698–699), popularized by a grandson of his. Ibn Qutaybah states that his mode of recitation had nothing to do with either singing or *ḥudāʾ*, the musical chanting of camel drivers. He goes on to name several reciters who took up ʿUbayd Allāh's

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<sup>84</sup> Ṭūsī, *Khilāf* 6:305–306.

<sup>85</sup> Al-Sarakhsī, *al-Mabsūṭ*, ed. Muḥammad Rāḍī al-Ḥanafī (30 vols. in 13; Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿādah, 1324–1331), 16:132.

<sup>86</sup> ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 2:481. ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr was a Meccan preacher (*qāṣṣ*; d. 68/687–688).

recitation, then several reciters with tones patronized by Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/786–809) whose mode did overlap with singing and *ḥudāʾ*. None of the reciters he names in this section is found in either al-Dhahabī or Ibn al-Jazarī’s comprehensive biographical dictionaries of reciters, suggesting that they stood well apart from the scholarly mainstream.<sup>87</sup> Muḥammad b. al-Haytham (fl. earlier 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> cent.) related how someone had imprisoned his slave al-Haytham, an effeminate (*mukhannath*), and sworn not to release him until he could recite the Qurʾān. In response, he “invented these tones (*waḍaʿa ḥādhihi ʾl-alḥān*).”<sup>88</sup> Although invention by a single person seems improbable, the story suggests again significant spread in the later eighth century, which coincides with the patronage of Hārūn al-Rashīd.

Many more are quoted against reciting the Qurʾān with tones. Of the Companion Anas b. Mālik (d. 93/711–712?), it was said, “A man recited before Anas, using these tones (*yalḥanu min ḥādhihi ʾl-alḥān*). Anas disliked that.”<sup>89</sup> (Another version emphatically makes out that he was singing the Qurʾān, using the verb *ṭarraba*.<sup>90</sup>) Saʿīd b. Jubayr (Kufan cl., d. 95/714?) asked someone, “What is it that you have innovated after me?” He said, “We have innovated nothing after you (*lam nuḥdith baʿdaka shayʾan*).” Saʿīd said, “Yes you have: blind men and the sons of sword-sharpeners (*ibn al-ṣayqal*) chant (*yataḡhannayāni*) the Qurʾān to you.”<sup>91</sup> Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) is said to have disliked recitation “with sounds (*aṣwāt*).”<sup>92</sup> Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (Basran, d. 110/729) said, “They used to consider

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<sup>87</sup> Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Maʾārif*, ed. Tharwat ʾUkāshah (Cairo: al-Hayʾah al-ʾĀmmah lil-Kitāb, 1960, repr. 1992), 533; discussed by Talbi, ‘La qirāʾa’, 186–187. Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Maʾrifat al-qurrāʾ al-kibār*, ed. Bashshār ʾAwwād Maʾrūf, Shuʾayb al-ʾArnaʾūt, and Ṣāliḥ Maḥdī ʾAbbās, 2 vols (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah, 1404/1984), and Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāyah fī ṭabaqāt al-qurrāʾ*, ed. Gotthelf Bergsträßer, 3 vols (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1351–1352/1932–1933).

<sup>88</sup> Khallāl, *Amr*, 178 114.

<sup>89</sup> Dārimī, *Musnad*, 790; Khallāl, *Amr*, 175–176 113 (Kufan *isnād*).

<sup>90</sup> Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaf* 10:211–212, *faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān* 5, fī ʾl-ṭaṭrīb man karihah.

<sup>91</sup> Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt* 6:181 6:260. It is easy to see how blind men might be attracted to qurʾānic recitation, mainly to attract alms. I do not know why the sons of sword-sharpeners should be especially attracted to it.

<sup>92</sup> Khallāl, *Amr*, 176 113 (Basran *isnād*).

these tones in the Qur'ān an innovation (*muḥdathah*).<sup>93</sup> Such quotations suggest that recitation with tones became well-established already by the late seventh century. To the contrary, `Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (Khurasani, d. 181/797) is quoted as saying recitation with tones had not been met with among former reciters (*qurrā`*).<sup>94</sup> Therefore, I am more inclined to accept Mohamed Talbi's chronology, of establishment in Medina by the mid-eighth century, after that in Baghdad. Admittedly, many opponents of reciting with tones describe it as a recent innovation. For example, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qaṣṭallānī (d. 923/1517) the Egyptian commentator on al-Bukhārī says of the hadith report about the Prophet's recitation at the conquest of Mecca, "The intention is not the repetition of singing (*tarjī` al-ghinā`*) such as the reciters of our time have invented, God forgive them and us."<sup>95</sup>

Yazīd b. Hārūn (Wasiti, d. 206/821–822) was asked, "What do you say about the recitation of sadness (*qirā`at al-ḥuzn*)?" He said, "Go and make yourself sad in your house." He was asked, "What do you say about reciting with tones (*bi-'l-alḥān*)?" He said, "An innovation." He was told, "O Abū Khālid, the people like it (*yashtahīh*)."<sup>96</sup> He said, "You may have something else (*laka ghayruh*)."<sup>96</sup> Possibly, this confirms spread of chanting the Qur'ān in the later eighth century, when Yazīd might have experienced it as an innovation. Like some other sayings already quoted, such as Mu`āwiyah b. Qurrah's unwillingness to recite lest he draw a crowd, this quotation of Yazīd more strongly suggests that dislike of emotive recitation, including with tones, had much to do with dislike of pious display. If people like it, it is probably being done for the sake of pleasing them, not God.

Distrust of public performance is evident in various quotations of Mālik b. Anas. The earliest I have come across is from the *Utbiyyah* (alternatively called *al-Mustakhrajah*) of

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<sup>93</sup> Dārimī, *Musnad*, 790; sim., Khallāl, *Amr*, 176 113 (Basran *isnād*).

<sup>94</sup> Abū Nu`aym, *Ḥilyah* 8:169 (Syrian *isnād*).

<sup>95</sup> Al-Qaṣṭallānī, *Irshād al-sārī li-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muḥammad `Abd al-`Azīz al-Khālīdī (15 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyyah, 1996, repr. 2009), 11:318, *ad faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* 30, *bāb al-tarjī`*, no. 5047.

<sup>96</sup> Abū `Ubayd, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, 167 1:336.

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-ʿUtbī (Andalusian, d. 255/869?), which reports this on the authority of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Qāsim (Egyptian, d. 191/806):

Mālik said, . . . “Recitation in the mosque is an innovation. The last of the community will not be better guided than those who came before . . . .” He was asked about a group in the mosque who, when they gather, appoint a man with a comely voice to recite for them. He disliked it. He was asked about ʿUmar’s saying to Abū Mūsā, “Give us to recollect our Lord.” He said, “I never heard of this.” He disliked recitation with tones. He said, “They took up that in order to eat by it.” He disliked that a group should meet to recite one chapter together.<sup>97</sup>

A later, complementary quotation of the same source adds an explanation: “Mālik disliked meeting for the sake of reciting one chapter of the Qurʾān on account of what it entailed by way of competition over comeliness of voice and providing tones.”<sup>98</sup> This seems to be concerned with the diversion of attention from proper devotion. The pious tradition opposed competition over worldly goods. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, “If you see men competing over the world, compete with them over the afterworld.”<sup>99</sup> Other later scholars stressed accuracy of recitation, incidentally indicating that by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as still in the twentieth, Egyptians were especially notable for reciting musically.<sup>100</sup>

In *al-Umm*, al-Shāfiʿī does not oppose reciting the Qurʾān with tones. He relates the hadith report (without *isnād*) “God has not listened to anything as he has listened to a prophet good at chanting (*ḥasan al-tarannnum bi-*) the Qurʾān,” then comments, “There is no harm in recitation with tones and thereby making the voice comely in whatever way. I prefer to be recited to with tears and making sad (*ḥadran wa-taḥzīnan*).”<sup>101</sup> His disciple Ismāʿīl b. Yaḥyā

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<sup>97</sup> Ibn Abī Zayd, *Nawādir* 1:529. For ʿUmar and Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, see Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt* 4/1:80–81 4:109 (Basran/Egyptian/Medinese and Mesopotamian/Medinese *isnāds*).

<sup>98</sup> Qarāfi, *Dhakhīrah* 13:349. Sim. at Muḥammad b. Saḥnūn, *Kitāb Ādāb al-muʿallimīn*, ed. Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-Mawlā (Algiers: al-Sharikah al-Waṭaniyyah, n.d.), 83. Thanks to Paul Gledhill for pointing out this source.

<sup>99</sup> Aḥmad, *Zuhd*, 217, 268–269, 283 266, 328, 345. The last version has Ibn al-Mubārak in the *isnād* but the saying does not appear in Ibn al-Mubārak, *al-Zuhd*.

<sup>100</sup> See summary in Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaṭṭāb, *Mawāhib al-jalīl*, ed. Zakariyyā ʿUmayrāt (8 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1416/1995), 2:91–92, 362–363.

<sup>101</sup> Shāfiʿī, *Umm* 6:215 7:520–521; Muzanī, *Mukhtaṣar, ad Umm* 5: 257marg.

ʿl-Muzanī (d. 264/877?) quotes al-Shāfiʿī as saying, “If the meaning of *yataghannā* *bi-ʿl-Qurʾān* were *istighnāʾ*, it would be *yataghānā*. To make the voice comely (*tahsīn al-ṣawt*) is *yataghannā*.”<sup>102</sup> This is to reject his teacher Sufyān b. ʿUyaynah’s interpretation of *yataghannā* as *yastaghni*, although admittedly al-Shāfiʿī does not positively endorse reciting the Qurʾān with tones. According to the Yemeni al-ʿImrānī, “Al-Shāfiʿī said in one place ‘I do not dislike it’ and in another place ‘I dislike it,’” unfortunately without specifying where.<sup>103</sup>

Strong opposition to chanting the Qurʾān with tones comes from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. He objected to it as an innovation (*muḥdath* or *bidʿah*).<sup>104</sup> He rejected tones as “songs (*aghānī*).”<sup>105</sup> He objected that chanting distorted words: when one man asked him what he thought of recitation with tones, Aḥmad asked him his name. “Muḥammad,” he said. “Would it please you,” asked Aḥmad, “if you were addressed, *yā Mūḥāmmād*, stretched out?”<sup>106</sup> He was aware of hadith reports apparently in favour of recitation with tones but denied that they had to do with musicality. “Ornament the Qurʾān with your voices” meant to make it comely or simply to do it well (*yuḥsinu*).<sup>107</sup> As for the version of the report in which Ibn al-Mughaffal refers to the Prophet’s manner of recitation as a *lahn*, Aḥmad “denied that this had the meaning of *alḥān*.”<sup>108</sup> “He is not of us who has not chanted the Qurʾān” just means that he has raised his voice.<sup>109</sup> Positively, Aḥmad called for reciting the Qurʾān in whatever way was

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<sup>102</sup> Muzanī, *Mukhtaṣar*, ad Umm 5:257 marg.

<sup>103</sup> ʿImrānī, *Bayān* 13:279.

<sup>104</sup> Khallāl, *Amr*, 108–109, 112; ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad, *Masāʾil al-imām*, 442; Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābilah*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiḳī (2 vols.; Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyyah, 1371/1952), 1:57, 67, 74, 197, 208, 225, 396.

<sup>105</sup> Khallāl, *Amr*, 177 114.

<sup>106</sup> Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt* 1:197; cf. Khallāl, *Amr*, 177 114.

<sup>107</sup> Ṣāliḥ b. Aḥmad, *Masāʾil al-imām*, ed. Ṭāriq b. ʿAwaḍ Allāh b. Muḥammad (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1420/1999), 81; Khallāl, *Amr*, 170 109.

<sup>108</sup> Khallāl, *Amr*, 173–174 111.

<sup>109</sup> Khallāl, *Amr*, 175 112. This is somewhat softened in Aḥmad’s comment on the hadith report, “God has not listened to anything”: “A certain person says that if one raises his voice, he has chanted it (*taghannā biḥ*)” (Ṣāliḥ, *Masāʾil*, 82). One of the anonymous referees for *JIQSA* thought that “raise” here might refer to notes on a scale rather than loudness. I would refer to Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-qadar 7,

natural to someone (*tab` al-rajul*), without his taking pains (*min ghayr takalluf*) and without requiring to be learnt (*lā yata`allamuh*). This was all the Prophet had praised Abū Mūsā for.<sup>110</sup> Unsurprisingly, the later Ḥanbali school similarly rejected recitation with tones. In his review of qualification to testify, for example, `Alī b. Sulaymān al-Mardāwī (d. 885/1480) observes that most have said that singing is forbidden (*ghinā`*, *yuḥarramu*), likewise reciting with tones.<sup>111</sup>

There is less again in the early Ḥanafī tradition, although if early Medinese opinion was unusually favorable, one would expect disapproval in the Ḥanafī tradition, developing out of the earlier Kufan. Abū Ja`far Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. Old Cairo, 321/933) discusses the hadith report, “God has not listened to anything as he listens to a prophet chanting the Qur’ān.” He offers the paraphrase, “He has not listened to anything as he listened to a prophet chanting the Qur’ān by way of making it comely with his voice, seeking thereby the softening of his heart on account of his hoping in this for the reward of his lord (mighty and glorious is he) for that.”<sup>112</sup> He also discusses the report, “He is not of us who has not chanted the Qur’ān.” He reports that people have advanced two interpretations of it: that it means letting the Qur’ān suffice (*al-istighnā` bi-’l-Qur’ān*) or making the voice comely in order to soften the heart of the reciter. He prefers the former position and denies that there is any other.<sup>113</sup> However, the later tradition seems to have softened. Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad Ibn Māzah (d. 616/1219–1220?) considers singing and recitation in the context of which

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*bāb lā ḥawl wa-lā quwwah illā bi-’llāh*, no. 6610, in which the Prophet tells some Companions who have been raising their voices (“*rafa`nā aswātanā*”) in supplication, “O people, speak softly to yourselves, for you are not supplicating someone deaf or absent,” so that *raf` al-sawt* is clearly about loudness, not pitch. This report has many parallels, for some of which see Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 137-138.

<sup>110</sup> `Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad, *Masā`il*, 442; Khallāl, *Amr*, 169–170 108.

<sup>111</sup> Al-Mardāwī, *al-Inṣāf fī ma`rifat al-rājiḥ min al-khilāf*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiḳī (12 vols.; Cairo: Maṭba`at al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyyah, 1955–1958, repr. Dār Iḥyā` al-Turāth al-`Arabī, 1419/1998), 12:39.

<sup>112</sup> Al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ mushkil al-āthār*, ed. Shu`ayb al-Arna`ūt (16 vols.; Beirut: Mu`assasat al-Risālah, 1415/1994), 3:346.

<sup>113</sup> Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ* 3:347–353.



misreadings of the Qur'ān invalidate the ritual prayer. He pronounces a comely voice and ornamentation (*tazyīn al-qirā'ah*) desirable both in and outside the ritual prayer, so long as they do not interfere with the intelligibility of words, as by prolonging consonants.<sup>114</sup> The Qur'ān commentator Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273?), although himself opposed to recitation with tones (as one expects of a Māliki), puts Abū Ḥanīfah at the head of those permitting recitation with at least *tarjī'*, possibly more, along with al-Shāfi'i, Ibn al-Mubārak, and al-Naḍr b. Shumayl (Basran, d. 203/819?), among others.<sup>115</sup> As an example of the later tradition, Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī (d. 855/1451) seems permissive, apparently citing precedents within and without the school:

As for reciting with tones, a number have permitted it and a number have forbidden it. The chosen position is that the recitation should not change letters (*lā yughayyiru 'l-ḥurūf min naẓmihā*). Otherwise it is not permissible. This was said in *al-Ḥilyah* without disagreement, also *al-Tanbīh*.<sup>116</sup>

This is from the section on qualification to testify, hence surely a reaction to Shāfi'i discussions, also evidently inclined toward compromise.

Inasmuch as Sufi audition (*samā'*) dates only to the mid-ninth century, it seems impossible to relate opposition to chanting with tones to opposition to nascent Islamic mysticism.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, recitation with tones was not strongly identified with Sufi practice. For example, Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988) begins his section on audition with remarks on

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<sup>114</sup> Ibn Māzah, *al-Muḥīṭ al-burhānī fī al-fiqh al-nu'mānī*, ed. 'Abd al-Karīm Sāmī al-Jundī (9 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2004/1424), 1:335–356.

<sup>115</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Mahdī (20 vols. in 10; Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1418/1997), 1:41.

<sup>116</sup> Al-'Aynī, *al-Bināyah sharḥ al-Hidāyah*, ed. Ayman Ṣāliḥ Sha'bān (13 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1420/2000), 9:147. The *Ḥilyah* referred to is presumably *Ḥilyat al-'ulamā' fī madhāhib al-fuqahā'* by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī (d. Baghdad, 507/1114), although a Shāfi'i. *Al-Tanbīh* is perhaps *Tanbīh al-ghāfilīn* by the Ḥanafi al-Mufaḍḍal b. Mas'ūd (d. 443/1051–1052?).

<sup>117</sup> On the appearance of Sufi audition, see Jean During, "Musique et rites: le *samā'*," in Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein (eds.), *Les voies d'Allah: les ordres mystiques dans l'islam des origines à aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1996), 157–172, at 159; similarly, Arthur Gribetz, "The *samā'* Controversy: Sufi vs. Legalist," *Studia Islamica*, no. 74 (1991), 43–62, at 44. According to Massignon, "the *samā'* (spiritual concert) was established in Baghdād by Abū 'Alī Tanūkhī, a friend of Sarī (d. 253)": Louis Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, trans. Benjamin Clark (Notre Dame, Ind.: University Press, 1997), 106.

reciting the Qur'ān with a comely voice, suggesting some connection, but never mentions precisely recitation with tones. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996 or after) devotes a chapter to qur'ānic recitation, but the most he says about the mode of it is that it should be with deliberateness and preoccupation, of which sadness and weeping are desirable signs. He does not mention recitation with tones.<sup>118</sup>

### Conclusion

There are several ways to map disagreement over whether to recite the Qur'ān with tones. The acceptability of music shows up directly in condemnations of chanting in an expressly musical manner, “taking the Qur'ān for psalms,” less directly in evident alterations of received wording so that the Prophet does not endorse singing (*taghannin*) or adds a gloss to make his reference to singing mean something else, such as reciting aloud. Here, comparison of variants provides evidence of how traditionists dealt with hadith that made them uncomfortable: relating them anyway as they found them or more or less neutralizing them by glossing, addition, subtraction, or substitution. Since our ninth-century collections include examples of all these methods, I tend to infer that hadith in favour of chanting the Qur'ān go back to the early or at least mid-eighth century, alterations against it mainly to late in the eighth century.

I have proposed that opposition to reciting with tones was related to the enterprise of distinguishing Islam from Christianity and Judaism. Concern not to do as the Christians and Jews do is explicit in one hadith report against chanting the Qur'ān. Otherwise, however, it is admittedly at most a background consideration; for example, when the stress on the Prophet's reciting on a camel at the conquest of Mecca implicitly likens his recitation with tones to *ḥudā'*, the singing of Arab camel-drivers. Even less, despite Talbi's emphasis, is there

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<sup>118</sup> Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb* (2 vols.; Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Maymaniyyah, 1310/1893), chap. 16, esp. 1:45–46.

evidence of particular opposition to court culture in hadith against recitation by tones.

Mentioned reciters include poor people looking for alms or in one case a slave but no figures at court that I have come across in hadith, *zuhd*, or legal literature (that is, outside *adab* literature).

A third issue is the extent to which early disagreement over chanting the Qur'ān had a regional character. The evidence for it does not look strong. The jurists of Medina were notorious for approving of singing, and literary sources evidently identify recitation of the Qur'ān with tones as appearing earliest in Medina. Somewhat to the contrary, however, no early Medinese jurist is expressly quoted in favour of singing, and the early Mālikī school is strongly opposed. Hadith reports that apparently encourage chanting the Qur'ān come mainly from Iraq (in the first place Basra) and Mecca. Al-Shāfi'ī's approval of chanting apparently agrees with the reported majority position in Medina and favourable Meccan hadith, Mālikī opposition representing a Medinese minority position. Ḥanafī uncertainty, tending toward unconcern, presumably continues the Iraqi majority position of favouring recitation with tones, Ḥanbalī opposition a minority position. However, Ḥanbalī opposition does fit a larger pattern of distrusting devotional forms practiced only by specialists. This is related to the theme of hadith against chanting that one should avoid attracting an audience to one's devotions, as in Ibn al-Mughaffal's reluctance to demonstrate the style of the Prophet's *tarjī'* and Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab's rebuke to `Umar b. `Abd al-`Azīz. Proper devotions should be within everyone's ability and directed to God alone.