

Warfare and Welcome: Practicality and Qur'ānic Hierarchy in Ibādī Muslims' Jurisprudential Rulings on Music

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Cover Page Footnote

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Warfare and Welcome

Practicality and Qur'ānic Hierarchy in Ibādī Muslims' Jurisprudential Rulings on Music

Bradford J. Garvey

And the instruments of entertainment that have no use
Outside of themselves are to be broken whenever they are found,
In all of their types that exist,
Because in this there is no benefit.

– ‘Abdullah bin Ḥumayd “Nūr al-Dīn” al-Sālimī (1286–1332/1869–1914) in the *Jawhār al-Niẓām*

Omani Orientations to the Charge of “Music”

A few days before Ramadan began in 2016, I was sitting in my friend Ḥamad’s *majlis*, a large sitting room adjacent to his home, enjoying a *hilba*, a milky, fenugreek-flavored drink. Over the course of the last year or so, I had interviewed Ḥamad dozens of times in his role as the manager of a local men’s performance group that specialized in the performance of a choral ode called *al-‘āzī* and a war dance, *al-razḥa*. Though my research was focused on the highly charged exchange of praise poetry and governmentally directed dispensation, I had slowly come to realize the delicacy of the religious toleration of these public praise genres in Oman. The *‘āzī* and the *razḥa* were, in the eyes of most, expressions of Omani pride, masculine solidarity, and communal obligation. But that did not mean they were not Islamically suspect, even here, in the small, rural town of Manah in the Interior region of the Sultanate of Oman.

Nestled in the southeast corner of the Arabian Peninsula and boasting some three million citizen-residents, the sultanate and its various historical polities have remained one of the few bastions of *‘Ibādīyya*, or

Ibādism, the third major branch of Islam. Though no official population count exists, the Interior province of the modern sultanate, along with adjacent regions, was until the 1950s part of one of the longest-lasting theocratic regimes in the world, called the Ibādī Imamate. Overthrown by the current sultan’s father in the late 1950s (despite himself and all his line being nominally Ibādī), the Imamate has cast a long shadow over Oman’s historiography. I found myself darting in and out of that long shadow in interviews, poetry discussions, and conversations with performers throughout my year of researching men’s performance.

The tension around engaging in a variety of performance genres – drumming, dancing, singing – was palpable during my research in many ways. Early on, I realized that a direct approach to the music question got me nowhere. In fact, framing my research as studying “music” was met only by furtive glances and unsure responses. Yes, I was assured, there was “music” in Oman, surely; Bedouins or “mountain folks” (*and al-jabāl*) play “music,” that’s probably what I meant. I quickly found out that the key term was not *music*, or *mūsīqā*, but *funūn* – the “arts.” The performance genres I studied

were properly “arts,” not music. The reason for this tentative response was, of course, that Ibādīs had quite a dim view of “music.” And yet, there I was, months into research on a practice that *was* but *was not* musical.

And so we return to that day in Hamad’s *majlis*, seated with our backs to the short, threadbare couch that lined all four walls; the beige, satiny gloss of the new paint glinting in the strong fluorescent lighting; the walls boasting hand-painted *sūra*-s of the Qur’ān hanging amid floating palm trees painted in permanent bloom. I was setting out my notebook and recorder when Ḥamad noticed a book on the status of music in Islam sticking out of my bag.

“Oh, father,” he moaned, “what is this?”

“This?” I picked up the book. “This is a book about Islamic jurisprudence . . .”

“Well, I can see that, doctor. What do you want with it [*shtibā bih*]?”

“I just wanted to know the opinions of Ibādī scholars on music . . .”

“That’s fine,” Ḥamad said, leaning back and pulling his long white *dishdāsha* robe over his feet, “but you’re not studying ‘music’ [*mūsīqā*]. If you want to know about that, it’s not in *razḥa*. There’s no melody, there’s no singing, there’s no instruments [*mā shay al-naghmāt, mā shay al-ghinā’, mā shay al-ma’āzif*]. But I’m no scholar, don’t ask me. I don’t know. Listen, I don’t want to enter into that issue, I don’t even want to enter into it [*mū bāghī adakhhhalu*]. The *razḥa* is for warfare and welcome [*al-ḥarb wa-l-tarḥīb*], that’s what I say to any imam.”

“That reminds me, why isn’t the *razḥa* ever performed if a new mosque is opened?” I asked facetiously, trying to corner him. I had been studying the role of *razḥa* and ‘*āzī* in civil celebrations of governmental generosity, and so the conspicuous absence of praise poetry to celebrate the opening of

the hundreds of smaller mosques and the dozens of huge *jāmi’* (one in each town, all confusingly named the “Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque”) was very obvious to me but brooked no comment from performers.

“Oh, lord spread blessings and mercy like rain. That is a good question for the Islamic scholars. I do not know.”

Months earlier, I was discussing some of the local arts that were less well known than the *razḥa* and the ‘*āzī* with Khamīs, the leader of a new troupe in the town of ‘Izkī. We were meeting in his ‘*azba*, a kind of semipermanent camp and corral for grazing stock, eating dates by the goat pen that he affectionately referred to as the “UN” (“I’ve got every type of goat in there,” he boasted, “Indian, Pakistani, Sindhi, Afghan, Somali, Kenyan, Nubian, Egyptian, Georgian, Bosnian, Iraqi, Persian, Balochi, Roman, and Chinese – it’s the UN of goats [*al-‘umum al-mutaḥḥida māl al-hūsh*]”). After a half-hour of chatting, a pickup full of Khamīs’s male kin pulled up. We exchanged pleasantries and they joined us in eating dates.

“We’re talking about music [*mūsīqā*],” Khamīs said casually, flicking his eyes over to his younger brother.

“The arts?” his brother replied.

“No, music,” he insisted., “This Englishman wants to study music here.”

“Well, not music, God lengthen your lives,” I jumped in. “I want to study the arts. But we were chatting a bit about music around here. Khamīs said that you all perform *al-rūgh* in the early dusk?” *Al-rūgh* is a genre of instrumental reed-pipe music accompanied by drumming and some sung poetry. The word *rūgh* refers to both the genre and the reed-pipe, which is shaped and played like the more common *mijwiz*. I have never encountered any source that discusses *al-rūgh* and so it may be a genre that is

mostly performed by *shawāwī* (seminomadic herders) performers, whose music is largely undocumented in Western scholarship. The area around 'Izkī is, however, home to many rare and undocumented instruments, including a kind of gourd resonator monochord, a large family of African-derived idiophones, and so on.

"*Al-rūgh*," his brother chuckled, "that's the horn-pipe of Satan [*mizmār al-shayṭān*],¹ that *al-rūgh*. The only thing worse is the *zār*. Did you hear about the *zār*?" The *zār* is a common name for a genre of healing music mostly performed by and for women: as it deals with metahumans like *jinn*, among other supernatural beings, it is roundly condemned by Islamic scholars.²

"*Zār*? You want to see a *zār*, doctor?" Khamīs perked up. "*Mizmār al-shayṭān*, ha! I hold a *zār* here every night. *Zār* and *mizmār*, all night." Of course, Khamīs did not hold a performance of *zār* or *rūgh* every night, but he was voicing an opinion contrary to his brother's take on the Islamic status of things called music. Rather than acquiescing to the putative illicit nature of some practices, as Ḥamad would later do, Khamīs pushed back against that discourse, claiming to embrace a profoundly controversial genre of *mūsīqā*.

As these anecdotes show, Ibādī Omanis express a wide range of discursive and metadiscursive perspectives on the charge of music, from those like Khamīs's—that embrace targeted sonic practices even in the face of condemnation—to those that scorn them.³ However, before we discuss particular Ibādī perspectives on the issue of defining "music," we should outline the general stakes of the debate over the status of artistically engineered sound in Muslim discourse. Such a foray bears a long pedigree: as just one example, Amnon Shiloah introduces the question as an "interminable debate" in

his *Music in the World of Islam*.⁴ "The debate elicited views that varied from complete negation to full admittance of all musical forms and means, even dance," Shiloah writes, adding that "between these two extremes we can find all possible nuances."⁵ Oman, as we've seen, is no exception. Early in my research, when I was not pursuing Omanis' perceptions of the Islamic status of musical sounds, I nevertheless recorded a wide range of beliefs. These often correlated with the social and economic position of the speaker: an official in the Omani Center for Traditional Music told me that "that debate is over, from the Middle Ages the scholars agree that music is permitted"; a performer of the Sufi-inflected⁶ *mālīd* genre told me that "rhythm [*al-'īqā'*] is a powerful tool for religion, and must be used with care"; a performer of the *razḥa* at the Muscat Festival brought me a fatwa declaring attendance at the Muscat Festival to be avoided if possible because it included music (*mūsīqā*, "especially from Bahrain," he added).

In this article, I want to offer the following two interventions in this much-discussed area: first, I want to positively reassess Lois Ibsen al-Faruqī's landmark 1985 article "Music, Musicians, and Muslim Law" by engaging with her central diagrammatic expression of Qur'ānic hierarchy; and second, I want to highlight an under-recognized aspect of Muslim jurisprudential scholarship with regard to a variety of sonic practices: the issue of function and practicality. Rather than criticizing or attempting to replace al-Faruqī's claims, I want to think positively alongside her work in order to tease out further dimensions of her linear model. Adding the value dimension of practicality—which I explore through recent Ibādī scholarship—to her linear schematic model

(and thereby pluralizing the relational network between sonic practices and Qur'ānic recitation) both allows a useful co-conception⁷ of Islamic jurisprudential scholarship on music and highlights a heuristic mode often overlooked in previous discussions. Specifically, I want to draw out of al-Faruqi's model a latent Dumontian⁸ premise: rather than a linear hierarchy of gradual transformation from most similar to least similar to Qur'ānic recitation, recitation may be best understood as "encompassing" other Islamically licit sonic forms. Sonic practice might therefore exist—in anthropologist Joel Robbins's terms⁹—within a plural value scheme, with any specific practice tugged toward contrasting polarities. In taking up the question of value and modes of valuation, I engage the recent revival in anthropological studies of value,¹⁰ and specifically the ongoing reevaluation of the work of Louis Dumont applied to cases outside of the Indian subcontinent.¹¹ While Dumont's work has encountered serious critique in its applications to actually existing social structures and value regimes in South Asia,¹² certain elements of Dumont's thinking have been usefully applied to conceptual schemes as opposed to social structure.¹³ In so engaging, I seek not to champion one or another theoretical approach, but to evaluate the purchase afforded by value-oriented approaches in examining a potent and historically perduring conceptual hierarchy.

Starting "As Muslims Do," Ending Up Where We Started

Understanding how differently positioned Muslims regard sonic practices requires both historical and ethnographic engagement. To do this, we should begin, in Talal Asad's terms, "as Muslims do, from

the context of a discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of the Qur'an and the Hadith."¹⁴ This is precisely al-Faruqi's initial point in her article, published a year before Asad's remarks, in which she urges researchers to utilize materials "that a consensus of the Muslims themselves consider to be authoritative in these matters."¹⁵ The irony, of course, is that starting "as Muslims do" reveals precisely the core complexity of discussing "music" and Islam: that there is no obvious universal position. The only *sūra*, or verse, in the entire Qur'an that scholars have argued refers directly to "music" is Luqmān 6: "And of those people who buy idle talk to lead [others] astray from the path of God without knowledge, and take it as mockery, they will [face] a humiliating punishment." The central term in this *sūra*, "idle talk," is a translation of *al-lahū al-ḥadīth*, whose exact translation has been subject to many opinions, as we shall see. Indeed, this is why Asad promotes studying Islam and Islamic practices as "discursive traditions."¹⁶ Practices are constituted within discourses that relate to past, present, and future, and are Islamic insofar as they are practices that induct persons as Muslims. An Islamic practice so constituted, for Asad, is authorized as orthodoxy. "Wherever Muslims have power to regulate, uphold, require or adjust *correct* practices," Asad claims, "and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace *incorrect* ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy," which is "crucial to all Islamic traditions."¹⁷ For our discussion here, we should recognize that the "interminable debate" over the legal status of any one sonic practice is precisely the kind of discursive tradition to which Asad is drawing attention. However, despite Asad's claim of the constant push for

orthodoxy (and orthopraxy), the status of certain practices remains doggedly murky.

This situation is noted by historian Shahab Ahmed when he criticizes Asad's notion of Islam as a tradition in *What Is Islam?* Troubled by Asad's identification of the push to orthodoxy as the core of Islamic practices, Ahmed concludes that it is incorrect "to put forward a schema where the definitive purpose of the discursive tradition/Islam is the production of orthodoxy."¹⁸ Ahmed instead argues that, at least within what he terms the "Balkans-to-Bengal complex," a "temporal-geographical entity" stretching from Sarajevo to Dhaka, a huge range of discursive practices have flourished—"Avicennan philosophy, Akbarian Sufism, Suhrawardīan Illuminationism, Ḥāfīzian poetics, figural painting and wine-drinking"—practices that never strive for orthodoxy, embrace complexity, but are nevertheless "at the very center of the discursive tradition" and hence Islam.¹⁹ One of Ahmed's strongest statements of this fact comes from analyzing the musical life of Amīr Khusraw, the famed inventor of *qawwālī* (650–725/1253–1325). Noting that music is rarely considered "Islamic," he shows that despite this, "in the self-statement of Muslims, we find that music is made *meaningful* precisely in . . . Islamic terms."²⁰ Ahmed claims that Khusraw's heterodox and anti-authoritarian "couplets on music constitute and make normative statements that are at once philosophy, Sufism, theology, Qur'ānic exegesis and law" and hence take part in the "discursive tradition" as much as any scholars seeking orthodoxy. What Ahmed articulates is the plurality of values that might animate Islamic practice in one or another of the varied contexts in which Muslims have

constituted themselves as Muslims: poetry exegesis, esoterica, musical rapture, and so on. Orthodoxy hangs less as a North Star and more as point in a complex constellation.

In Oman and among Ibādīs, what is interesting about the outcome of this debate over the status of certain sonic practices is not that Muslims do not seek orthodoxy and orthopraxy, since they decidedly do. Rather, the avowedly Islamic conclusions of the debate admit the performance of controversial practices—the *‘āzī* and the *razḥa*—for controversial reasons. In *‘āzī*, a lead singer sing-recites a formal, monorhymed ode on a given topic, most often praising local leaders, while a choral group sings antiphonal responses and plays drum rolls. The *razḥa*, on the other hand, is a circle dance that involves lines of dancers trading lines of sung poetry, coordinated by a pair of drums. These practices are linked to each other in that they are both performed by the same group of men but are also conceptually associated with warfare. Poems sung in each often deal with belligerence, violence, bravery, and the glories of combat, inciting the participants to courage in arms. Neither, as I have noted, is considered "*mūsīqā*," but then neither is considered wholly Islamically licit. Here, Ibādī charges of "music" are not simply a matter of applying or constructing an orthodoxy under which everything is either accepted or not, as Asad would have it; nor do legal scholars merely privilege the capacity of practices to "have meaning" for Muslims over and above the desires of centralized power, as would Ahmed. Instead, we can see a strong pragmatic thread, attending closely to context and wary of the ramifications of overzealous condemnation. Rather than trying to establish an Ibādī "doctrine" on

sonic practices, we can use Ibādī writings and fatwas to trace their shifting role in the lives of Omani Muslims. As we shall see, historically, the *razḥah* and the *‘āzī* seem to have been tolerated because they were technologies of warfare – and insofar as they supported war, they were deeply connected to statecraft, elites, and leadership. They are tolerated merely

because they are practical: they serve some explicit, useful purpose for Ibādīs.

Music and Muslim Law, Redux; or, A Chain of Beings of Decreasing Dignity

Al-Faruqī’s classic investigation of the status of music in Islam (writ broadly) presents a hierarchy of “sound art expressions”

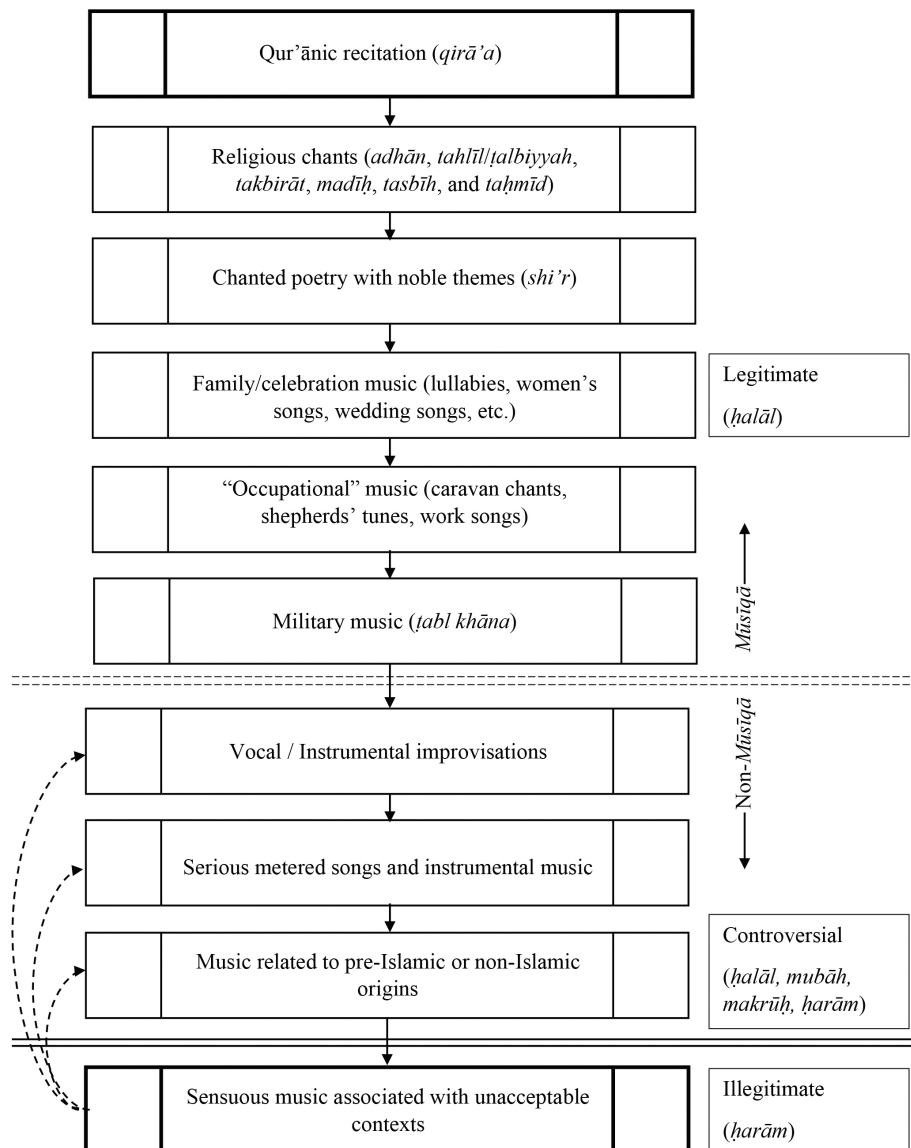


Figure 1. The Qur'anic hierarchy. A linear vertical representation of the relative legal ranking of various sound-art expressions by Muslim legal scholars. Qur'anic recitation occupies the highest value position, and all others are related by way of decreasing Islamic legitimacy. Other value orderings can be read into sections of the diagram, such as the role of words or the voice, the inculcation of emotional states, or the presence of musical instruments. Adapted from al-Faruqī 1985, 8.

(*handasah al-ṣawt*) that are arranged in relation to two poles whose statuses are clear.²¹ I reproduce this linear model in Figure 1. At the top of the hierarchy lies the most legitimate form of *handasah al-ṣawt*: Qur’ānic recitation (*qirā’a*), and at the bottom is “sensuous music associated with unacceptable contexts.”²² Virtually all Islamic scholars are in agreement on the position of these two forms. In al-Faruqi’s hierarchy, she places Qur’ānic recitation and religious chants that are a “duty to believers” (*adhān*, *tahlīl/talbiyyah*, etc.) above poems with noble themes and a variety of occasional musics. Conceptually “below” these are the controversial genres of art song, improvisations, non-Islamic, and sensuous music.

Al-Faruqi concludes that the intention of the hierarchy was not to “destroy all sound-art,” but rather to submit musical pleasure to higher ethical standards.²³ She argues that “a number of interrelated aspects seem to have been involved in determining the implicit hierarchy of sound-art that is described here.”²⁴ However, the four aspects she picks out (conformity with Qur’ānic chant; conformity with the “aesthetic demands of the culture”; community acceptance or esteem; and “conformance in sound-art to the moral demands of Islam”) do not seem to imply a unidirectional—or monist, following Robbins—organizational hierarchy.²⁵ Al-Faruqi posits that formal similarity to Qur’ānic recitation is the metric by which sonic practices are aligned: those like Qur’ānic chant are next in line below it, those that are less similar further away, and so on. One reason this valuation by similarity works is that the forms and stylistic features of Qur’ānic recitation are often strategically employed by capable performers, and astute listeners evaluate

such employments with considerable nuance. Virginia Danielson points to the repertory of Umm Kulthum as one example of an explicit link between Qur’ānic recitation and Arabic song. Specific features like nasalization, hoarseness or *bahḥah*, and a full and deliberate pronunciation of emphatic, velar, and uvular consonants were all used by Umm Kulthum in order to evoke recitation in her performances of poetic texts.²⁶ However, while this seems to hold for those sonic practices that al-Faruqi sees as closely related to the Qur’ān as well as serious metered song, where does this leave lullabies, works songs, and military parades?

Here, I want to turn to a useful tool of structural analysis that has seen some recent rehabilitative theoretical work: Louis Dumont’s notion of hierarchy, and specifically that of “hierarchical opposition.”²⁷ Hierarchical opposition refers to a value relation that is measured between “a set or whole and an element of that set or whole.”²⁸ This nesting of values is regarded as revealing “levels” of value, heuristically described as “higher” or “lower.” The crucial feature of hierarchical opposition is that relatively higher values *encompass* relatively lower values, in this sense meaning that higher values *include* as part of their value those lower ones as well (as in the Euler diagram in Figure 2). Lower values are recognized as supporting higher values, as deriving their value from just a *part* or *parts* of higher values. Nevertheless, since they offer a value dimension that is distinct from a higher one, they are considered “contradictory.”²⁹ We can operationalize this in our discussion of the Qur’ānic hierarchy by pointing out that Qur’ānic recitation does not serve as a performative *model* for other Islamically

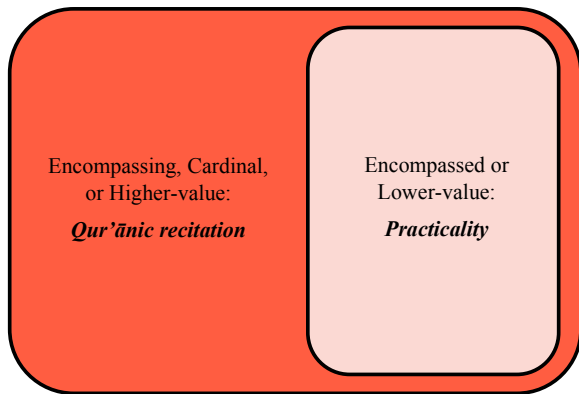


Figure 2: Dominance hierarchy. A depiction of the encompassing and encompassed values within any Dumontian hierarchy, here the Qur’ānic hierarchy. Adapted from Dumont by way of Leonhard Euler.

licit genres to mimic; rather, it provides a cardinal value to which they are ultimately ordained, subordinated, and coordinated.³⁰

The question of whether Qur’ānic recitation acts as a monist “supervalue” that encompasses all others can be approached by way of Joel Robbins’s pluralist conception of Dumont’s notion of hierarchy.³¹ Dumont writes that hierarchy is not “a great chain of beings of decreasing dignity,” which Robbins interprets as Dumont’s recognition of the potential plurality of values exposed in differing contextual relations.³² Robbins continues by pointing out that “chains in which successive elements are distinguished by decreasing amounts of a single valued feature are clearly organized by a single value” and hence fail to regard other, concurrent, crosscutting plural values that may spring into importance within various concrete contexts.³³ Such values may be quite diverse and contextually specific. As Jonathan Glasser has recently argued, “[Dumontian] hierarchy presupposes a segmentation of values: social worlds are suffused by diverse and extendable rankings that can come into complex, overlapping, and intertwined relation with

one another.”³⁴ Musicians may be regularly subordinated in wider society and occupy rather low-status positions even though the skills they possess may make them – under certain conditions – immensely valuable to power, say, for purposes of propaganda, playing dance music, enlivening feasts and festivals, accompanying parades, and so on. While the “cardinal value” of any social structure may be something like patrilineal descent from the Prophet, on certain occasions, this higher value makes room for musicians and other skilled laborers to be contextually highly valued. The value attributed to any one practice in the Qur’ānic hierarchy that al-Faruqi tracks may or may not be fully realized by the dimension of similarity. I follow Naomi Haynes and Justin Hickel in concluding that what is most useful in tracking hierarchical arrangements is the “way that they reveal particular ideological arrangements, that is, topographies of value.”³⁵

If the perfection of Qur’ānic recitation for Muslims is not approximated in Ottoman *mehter* military marches, nor yet in Omani *‘āzī* or *razħa*, or lullabies or work songs or poetry with noble themes for that matter – then what makes these practices valuable, that is, *licit*, is that they are not made to *oppose* the higher value of recitation, but are, in fact, held to be subordinate to and supportive of it. The overriding value of the recitation of the Qur’ān and the values to which that practice points for listeners “makes room,” in some sense, for other practices that might be evaluated along *different* but *supervened* value dimensions. Nested levels of “reverse supervenience” are the very stuff of Dumontian hierarchy. In other words, lower levels of difference are determined and shaped by – and must ultimately be cashed out in terms defined

by—higher levels. Rather than higher levels of value relying on lower ones for coherence, lower ones rely on higher ones. Practitioners can perform and value lower-level sonic practices in circumscribed contexts and otherwise regard them as safely inferior to or dependent on the recitation of the Qur’ān.

Figure 3 is a diagram that I propose as a co-conception with al-Faruqī’s: here,

rather than expressing one hierarchical spectrum, I choose to break apart the model into independent practices in order to track value segmentation. The upper purple field represents the “highest value level” of recitation. The grey circles carved out of that field are two potential contradicting lower values—similarity and practicality. Rather than trying to fit lullabies or work songs into

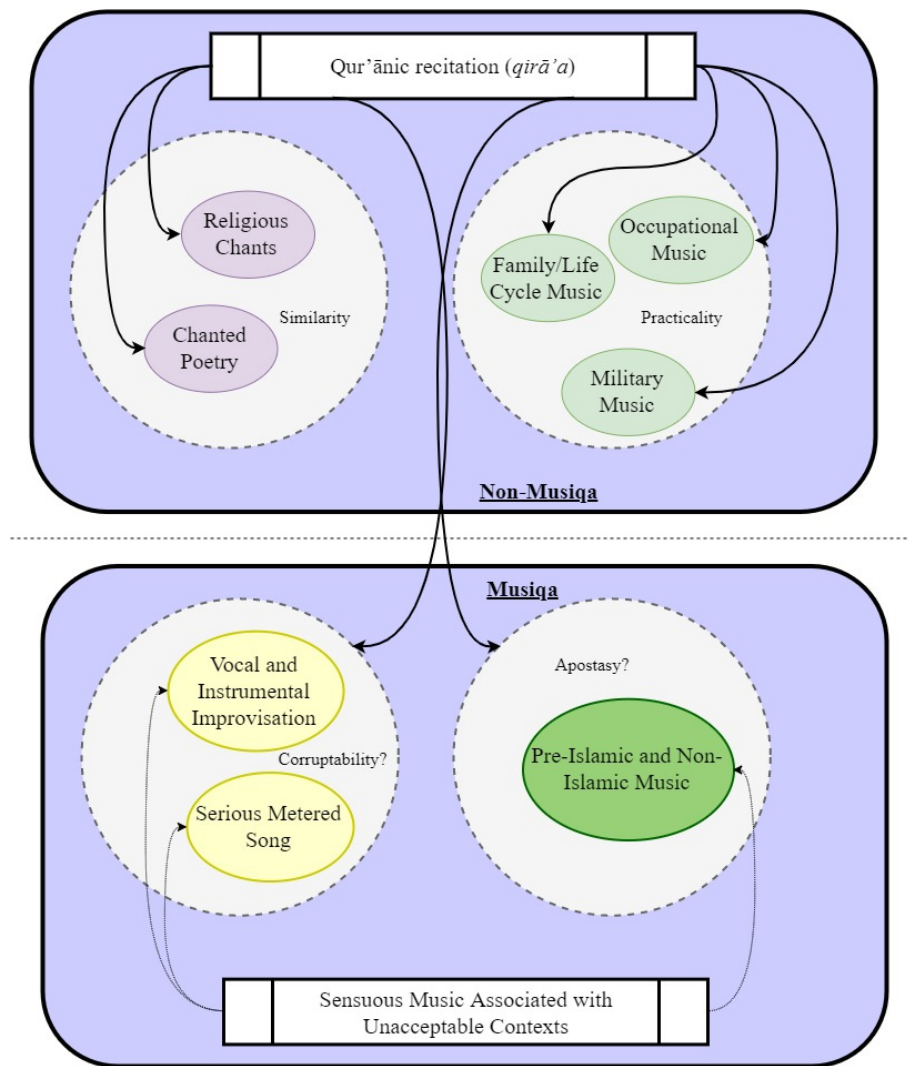


Figure 3. Relational-hierarchical model of the Qur’anic hierarchy. In this model, the linear descending order is broken into various “lower”-value dimensions, which I have provisionally named similarity, practicality, corruptability, and apostasy. I only explore the value dimension of practicality here. Specifically, what this model displays is that each practice is not fitted somewhere along a monist continuum of similarity, but is evaluated against Qur’anic recitation as a “higher” or encompassing value. The purple field represents the capacity of Qur’anic chant to define the total value landscape of any non-mūsīqā practice and the grey circles represent the delimited domains of lesser values that operate within that space. The lower diagram, or mūsīqā section, is provisional—a polar model of the Qur’anic hierarchy would necessarily include recitation’s obverse, that is, sensuous music. The dotted lines represent the potential of mūsīqā practices to be encompassed not by recitation, but by sensuous music instead.

a monist descending scheme, pluralizing the model allows us to more fully explore the exceptions and legal specificities that allow practical genres to flourish as legitimate ones despite sharing little in common with other licit genres. Nevertheless, everything here is ultimately “reduced” to the positions they occupy within al-Faruqi’s model. Taking apart the linear model allows us to track relations between the various entities as encompassed by Qur’ānic recitation, or, the obverse, as potentially encompassed by sensuous music. In this model, sensuous music operates not so much as a category drained of all the elements of Qur’ānic recitation, but as a polar opposite to it, as a potential encompassing value to which some practices may be oriented instead. While I won’t dwell on this potential here, the threat of sensuous music’s capacity to encompass certain genres of undecided legality may help explain their medial position in al-Faruqi’s diagram. Rather than a unidirectional decline in value, we have a contestation. What this model exposes, I think, is that similarity is one value vector amongst many by which Omani Ibādī Muslims implicitly and explicitly experience this value hierarchy. Hence, similarity to recitation may be operant in some cases as a mode by which sonic practices are encompassed within the Qur’ānic hierarchy, but it may coexist alongside many others.

The relational-hierarchical model thus exposes the “level” at which other values may operate within the entire hierarchy. In this case, I pick out but one, practicality, and show how it more parsimoniously explains the licit nature of what al-Faruqi describes as “occupational music,” “life cycle music,” and—my special focus in the next section—“military music.” Similarity is the wrong value to explain these cases, but in

a linear model this subtlety is subsumed to explanation *via* a higher value. Practicality may never be important at higher levels of valuation, but it does come into play—and quite specifically in the case of the *‘āzī* and the *razha* in Oman. Now we shall turn to the evidence that points to practicality as a “lower value” in the Qur’ānic hierarchy of sonic practices.

“Devotion Is a Wide Door”: Islam, Ibādī Pragmatism, and the “Problem” of Useful Music

In this section, I want to first draw out the seriousness with which Ibādī scholars condemn practices called “music” in order to contextualize the importance of embracing practicality as a value in genres that bear no resemblance to Qur’ānic recitation—specifically, sounds organized for war. When we look at Ibādī scholars’ judgments pertaining to musical sound, one contemporary scholar’s work stands out: Khālid bin ‘Īsā bin Ṣāliḥ al-Sulaymānī’s *Al-ghinā’ wa al-ma’āzif fī al-mayzān: qirā’a fī al-aḥkām al-fiqhiyya al-mut’aliqa bi al-ghinā’ wa al-ma’āzif wa ḥukumhumā fī al-islām* (Singing and Musical Instruments in the Balance: A Study on Jurisprudential Judgments Pertaining to Singing and Musical Instruments and Their Judgment in Islam).³⁶ Al-Sulaymānī gives an overview of the debate surrounding singing and musical instruments first by looking at the Qur’ān and the “pure *sunna*” (Ibādīs regard only a small selection of *ḥadīth*-s as “pure”), then by taking up a philological approach to the definition of the key terms “singing” (*al-ghinā’*) and “the playing of musical instruments” (*al-ma’āzif*). These two terms are often used in conjunction with each other in the Islamic jurisprudence on music, referring at least in general to

“singing” and “musical instruments and the playing of musical instruments.”

Al-ghinā’ and al-ma‘āzif

Al-Sulaymānī writes that “singing” (*al-ghinā’*) is a “polluted word” (*kalima mulawwitha*) due to its association with “those that draw from singing a craft and profession; and those that bring to it musical instruments that move/agitate the spirit, that arouse passionate love and obscenity.”³⁷ It is for this reason that “those with common sense are on their guard against using the word ‘singing’ (*al-ghinā’*) and avoid it, and they replace it with other words such as the word *inshād*.”³⁸ Such a shift in vocabulary does not change the status of music that is already “polluted.” “If we come to the general meaning of the word *al-ghinā’* among the Arabs,” al-Sulaymānī continues, it has come to refer only to “*al-ghinā’ al-mājin* (‘immoral singing’).”³⁹ Al-Sulaymānī concludes by firmly distinguishing between *al-ghinā’ al-mubāḥ* and *al-ghinā’ al-muḥarram*. *Mubāḥ* (permissible) in Islamic jurisprudence means something that is permitted but for which there is neither reward nor punishment: something toward which one ought to cultivate indifference. *Al-ghinā’ al-mubāḥ* for al-Sulaymānī “is chaste, modest, respectable, authentic singing, free from the traces of indecency and which is not accompanied by musical instruments and the forbidden *ṭarab*. This type is now classified under the name *inshād*.”⁴⁰ These include the categories that we have modeled as licit: lullabies, work songs, military marches, and so on. As for *al-ghinā’ al-muḥarram*, al-Sulaymānī quotes Māliki scholar Abū ‘Abdullah al-Qurṭabī (610–671/1214–1273):

It is immoral singing . . . [as al-Qurṭabī said] it is “singing which agitates the spirits and that arouses them to

passionate love, amorous poetry and obscenity . . . which moves the still and reveals the hidden . . . this is that type of singing if it has poetry that celebrates [women in verse] by mentioning women and descriptions of their beauties, and mentioning wine and other forbidden things upon which there is no difference [of opinion among scholars] in their being forbidden . . . As for what the Sufis have created these days it is from an addiction to listening to the sung [*samā’ al-mughannī*] and the instruments of *ṭarab*.”⁴¹

As we saw above, at some point the last definition, that is, singing being associated with immorality, became the most commonly used definition of *al-ghinā’*. Other types of singing used to be referred to as *ghinā’*, including the Islamically licit genres of wedding/life-cycle and occupational music. Over time, however, for many Islamic scholars, the word *ghinā’* itself has come to represent all that is negative in vocal music.

Al-ma‘āzif, in a similar process, has come to refer to all musical instruments and the playing of them. Early definitions, such as those compiled by Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1312), indicate that *al-ma‘āzif* referred only to the playing of instruments, not the instruments themselves, equating it with *malāḥī*, or “entertainment.” Later scholars amended the meaning of *al-ma‘āzif* to include musical instruments as objects.⁴²

Ibādī Pragmatism: Condemnation and Conciliation

When al-Sulaymānī shifts his focus to presenting the perspectives of Ibādī perspectives on music, he is unequivocal:

The reader of the books of Ibādī scholars that treat the question of singing and musical instruments and what is related to them (in the judgment of

jurisprudential scholars) finds that Ibādism is among the harshest of all the Islamic schools in condemning singing and its instruments. There is no difference among Ibādī scholars and their rulings, neither in the past nor in the present, on the question of forbidding singing and musical instruments. Rather, their statements on the two are the most ruthless of all statements, and they consider the two among the greatest sins and most reprehensible actions.⁴³

Such is the position espoused by Muḥammad bin 'Ibrāhīm al-Kindī, cited above: “listening to entertainment is disobedient, sitting among it is sinfulness, and working in it is apostasy (of ungratefulness towards God’s blessings, *kufṛ al-nu‘ama*).”⁴⁴ Many Ibādī scholars have interpreted this kind of harsh judgment as permitting the destruction of instruments as a means of defense against them. The breaking of instruments is a common behavior cultivated in “enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong.” Such a statement is recorded by the eleventh-/seventeenth-century Ibādī scholar Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abdullah bin Jum‘a bin ‘Abīdān al-Nizwī:

As for the *dahra/daire* and the *mizmār-s* and all the instruments of entertainment, it is permitted for you to break them if you are able, if they are used or not. As for the *dahra/daire*, the *āṣnāj* [cymbals] and *zamārāt*, they are to be broken wherever found, used or not. As for the reed instrument [*qaṣba*], as it has been said: “when it is used and there is singing with it” . . . as for the *duff-s*, if they are used outside of the month of marriage, then they are to be broken.⁴⁵

Another instrument mentioned by the Ibādīs, more familiar in Central Asia, is the *ṭunbūr*. Interestingly, Mūsā bin ‘Abī Jābir al-Manḥī (of Manāḥ, d. 181/797) writes that one has “permission to leave it unbroken ‘if it

was without adornment’ [*‘idha kān li-ghayr zayna*], [though] if the value of the *ṭunbūr* seemed high, then most scholars permitted breaking it ‘even if it was of great value.’”⁴⁶

Ibādīs were careful to condemn not just their own music, but that of Africans, British subjects, and Indians as well.⁴⁷ British imperial officers stationed in Muscat noted in 1869 that the influence of Sa‘īd bin Khalfān al-Khalīlī, an Ibādī scholar, had reached such a level that he outlawed the weekly music sessions of the *Siddi-s* (a population derived from enslaved Africans) in the capital.⁴⁸ Similarly, the British political agent in Muscat had to intervene when Ibādī leaders requested that he prevent his Indian subjects from

beating drums or playing musical instruments. Disbrowe [the political agent in Muscat] refused to heed the request. Instead, he replied that if these activities were restricted [to] hours when it is unreasonable or caused disturbance, then an understanding could be reached between the two sides. [Imam] ‘Azzān in his reply stated that music was to be banned at all times and no concession would be made to British subjects.⁴⁹

‘Azzān’s time as imam was predicated on his opposition to imperial ingresses in Oman and his call to reassert the religious basis of the Imamate.

The essential statement on music for our purposes, however, is a *qaṣīda* written by the famed Imam ‘Abdullah bin Ḥumayd “Nūr al-Dīn” al-Sālīmī (1286–1332/1869–1914) in the *Jawhār al-Niẓām fī ‘ilmī al-‘adyān wa-l-aḥkām* (The Jewel of Order in the Science of Religions and Judgments), a collection of poems and prose sections that gather and expound on Ibādī Islamic themes. Nūr al-Dīn was one of the most prolific and popular scholars of the Ibādī renaissance of the late nineteenth century, and his poems

are widely read, bought, memorized, and interpreted today – virtually any library or bookstore in Oman contains his work. In the section entitled “Book of the Order of the World,” in the subsection “Enjoining the Right and Forbidding the Wrong,” he writes the following lines:

And the instruments of entertainment
that have no use

Outside of themselves are to be
broken whenever they are found,
In all of their types that exist,
Because in this there is no benefit.

Bin Maḥbūb told us about his compatriot;
That he played a drum with no mind
to it.

And in their telling, he [Bin Maḥbūb]
rent the leather [of the drumheads]

And that is incumbent upon any of
the proper [Muslims].

And they are not permitted to play the
drum

For entertainment – but for two “just
meanings”:

And that is the terrorization of enemies,
And as a response to the distant cries
[of communication],

And as a call to the prayers of the festival
[al-‘īd]

Or to a serious and purposeful
meeting between them [Muslims].⁵⁰

Nūr al-Dīn once again demonstrates the harsh Ibāḍī injunction to destroy musical instruments. What this passage shows most clearly, however, is the pragmatic Ibāḍī interest in *function* and *uselessness*. The poet’s main criticism of music and musical instruments in this passage is that the instruments of entertainment are to be broken “because in [them] there is no benefit” and they “have no use outside of themselves.” Al-Sulaymānī adds that musical instruments are “not [the kind of things] that are benefited from.”⁵¹ When the “two

‘just meanings’” for using instruments are provided, they are clearly phrased in terms of function: insofar as drums are useful in times of war (to terrorize enemies and coordinate soldiers) and peace (to gather the Muslims to festival and consultation), they are permitted. This is a clear expression of what al-Faruqī presented as the hierarchy of *handasa al-ṣawt*, but the *justification* of it is presented in terms not of the practice’s similarity to the recitation of the Qur’ān, but of its benefit to believers in other ways.

The current grand muftī of the Sultanate of Oman, Aḥmad bin Ḥamad al-Khalīlī, has issued several fatwas about music and echoes his predecessors very closely. Condemnation should be the general stance, but bets are hedged. The general Ibāḍī interpretation of music contends that the “*al-lahū al-ḥadīth*” mentioned in Luqmān 6 refers to music, musical instruments, the purchase or renting of music, and nearly everything else related to it. In an undated fatwa issued by the muftī, he summarizes the Ibāḍī position:

Al-lahū is impermissible [*yaḥram al-lahū*] when it pulls to it corruption and emits iniquity. Its impermissibility is evidenced by the true speech of the Most High: “And of those people who buy idle talk to lead [others] astray from the path of God without knowledge” [Luqmān 6]. *Al-lahū al-ḥadīth* in this verse is “singing,” as narrated by the learned interpreter and translator of the Qur’ān Ibn ‘Abbās – God’s mercy upon him. Thus it was told about the Prophet – may God send prayers and peace – through the telling of twelve of his followers, of [his] prohibition of singing and playing and instruments [*al-ghinā’ wa-l-‘azif wa-l-zamr*]. Despite this, scholars have permitted, in the case of war, what inspires *ḥamās* [vigor, enthusiasm] in the believers and

strengthens their resolves. However, war songs [*inshād*-s] that carry *hamās* are conditional provided they do not come at the expense of religious duties, such as impeding the duty to remember God and the duty of prayer; surely, God knows best.⁵²

Here we have a good example of the capacity of Qur'ānic recitation (and the values within which it is situated) to encompass a contradicting lower value: war songs are tolerated “provided they do not come at the expense of religious duties.” Once again, function outweighs the doctrinal slash-and-burn prohibition of music. Music is, in fact, too useful to ban completely. Practicality is valued at one level but cannot overwhelm the cardinal value of the Qur'ān and Islamic duty. In my discussions of this with another religious scholar, he explained to me that non-Muslims often think that Muslims ban alcohol and music without exception: “In fact,” he pointed out, “alcohol and music are common. Why? Because you need alcohol for cleaning, chemistry, for useful things [*ashiyā' mufīda*] like perfume. It is the same with music. It is not *ḥarām* without exception—if it is useful and beneficial to the Muslim, he must use and benefit from it.”

The definition of permitted sonic art for Ibādīs is also quite wide – as al-Faruqī notes, it is only that music which is most strongly associated with immoral settings that is uniformly denounced. In a 2005 fatwa, the muftī also commented on a variety of *inshād*-s that were sent to him. The letter and response read:⁵³

July 2005 / Jumādā al-thānī 1426 Fatwa

In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. His Eminence the Shaykh / 'Aḥmad bin Ḥamad al-Khalīlī the Venerable Grand Muftī of the Sultanate:

Peace be upon you, and God's blessings and mercy,

The included attachment with the letter is a group of *inshād*-s that include various vocal expressions. Since the controversy among people has increased around [music's] judgment according to the Sharia, we submit it to your Eminence, seeking from you the blessing of notifying us as to its status.

The attachment is ordered as follows:

1. *Al-duff*?
2. Western music/rhythm? [*al-'īqā' al-gharbī*]
3. Sea music with or without interlocking clapping?
4. Invigorating military music?
5. Melismata [*Āhāt*]—by a natural human voice?
6. Melismata by sampler (a human voice entered into a computer, then used in performance)?
7. Autotune (a human voice entered into a computer and purified to become sharp, free from melodic impurities)?
8. Vocal alternatives (a human voice entered into a computer which then undergoes editing until it becomes like another voice)?
9. Bass [*al-bayz*] (a rough voice accompanying music/rhythm either human or nonhuman)?

The answer: It is well known that devotion is a wide door. So he who is prudent leaves [unmolested] the nonprohibited—that is most safe and forthright. As for the judgment, I do not find in what has been presented in these expressions something that is forbidden except for Western music, insofar as it is in imitation of nonbelievers, and sea music with interlocking clapping due to the clapping. Surely God knows best.⁵⁴

In this letter, values that we might imagine to be central (such as the unmodulated human voice) are not regarded as interesting,

whereas “Western music/rhythm” remains as clearly condemned, as al-Faruqi’s diagram makes clear.

Nevertheless, the contemporary Omani state has embraced certain aspects of “Western music,” establishing highland bagpipe regiments in the army, multiple orchestras, compulsory music education in primary classrooms, and, most recently, opening the Royal Opera House in 2011. Ethnomusicologists Anne Rasmussen and Majid al-Harthy have documented the Omani state’s huge investment in music and the arts more generally.⁵⁵ This official support of both music and its official Ibādī condemnation has largely been understood as reflecting the personality of the former sultan, who is said to love European music. The Opera House has witnessed a number of minor protests over the years for “un-Islamic” activities, such as an event in 2013 in which verses of the Qur’ān were read or sung during a live jazz performance.⁵⁶ At the same time, the government has long patronized the dozens of traditional performance groups that specialize in a variety of local arts, whose status is at the very least questionable (such as the “sea music” in the letter above).

Is “Music” Useful or Useless?

What emerges from the preceding discussion most clearly is (1) that proscriptions on individual sonic practices made by Ibādīs are very fine-grained, and (2) that a crucial deciding factor is whether or not the practice or instrument serves a discrete and necessary social function. Hence, while musical instruments are broadly impermissible, commonly held exceptions exist to preserve what is useful and beneficial. Similarly, practices that are considered to have no use or benefit are prohibited. One example of

this kind of thinking is given by al-Nabahānī when he writes that the large *qaṣba* (“reed,” flute) was “beneficial in remembering the hereafter (or death in another reading). It was reported about al-Wuḍāḥ bin ‘Aqaba [fl. 237/851] that his son Ziyād saw him listening to the sound of the large *qaṣba* while crying.”⁵⁷

This practical mode of thinking in religious matters was reported by Mandana Limbert in her ethnographic research on sociality in Bahlā’ as well.⁵⁸ However, Limbert notes the reverse: older Bahlawis considered social visiting to be an aspect of pious living, while “being social, younger Bahlawis argued, was a distraction from the constant remembering of God” and therefore ought to be condemned.⁵⁹ “Thus,” Limbert continues, “rather than considering this sociality to be ‘proper’ (that is, religiously sanctioned), younger Bahlawis argued that it was useless (*ghayr nafa’a*), a waste of time, and thus a sin.”⁶⁰ Rather than the usefulness of a practice determining its acceptability, it is the uselessness of an action (within a certain discourse) that condemns it. Despite protestations that visiting might, in fact, be a kind of work (*shughl*), its frivolity is enough to make it sinful. Limbert notes that philosopher Oliver Leaman traces this tendency of equating “uselessness” with sin back to the third-/tenth-eleventh-century Islamic jurist ‘Abd al-Jabbar, who first presented the uselessness of an action as “sufficient condition of its evilness,” whatever the consequences.⁶¹ If, as ‘Abd al-Jabbar claims, “everything has value because there is a purpose behind its existence,” then “anything which is not in accordance with this purpose must be evil. The performance of a useless action must be objectionable on such a view, since it involves acting as though there were no all-encompassing

purpose at work in creation.”⁶² Despite the high-mindedness of this claim, for Omanis the concept of uselessness is a very everyday one. A common saying among Omanis when evaluating something is to say “*mā yaṣlah*,” which means both “it’s not proper” and “it’s not usable, not practicable,” or the opposite, “*yaṣlah*,” meaning “it is fitting, serviceable, or useful.” The Omani proverb *gald al-fi’r mā yaṣlah l-al-raḥmānī* (literally, “A mouse’s hide isn’t useful/enough to skin a *raḥmānī* drum”) is used to refer to meager attempts to solve a big problem. Encouragements to drink more water, juice, or coffee, to eat more, or to use incense are accompanied by the phrase “it will benefit you” (*yistafīdak*). After many interviews and performances, I was asked, “Did you benefit from it?” (*tistafīd minnu?*). Discussing the moral dangers of coffee and coffee consumption in Bahlā’, Limbert cites a jurisprudential *qaṣīda* poem by the scholar Mājīd bin Khamīs al-‘Abrī (1252–1340/1836/37–1921/22), who “simply notes that there is nothing wrong with coffee and that its effects are not harmful, but rather useful.”⁶³

Legitimizing the Drums of War

This circumscribed commitment to practicality is what allows the ‘*āzī* and the *razḥa* to flourish in contemporary Oman. “It is noteworthy that the attitudes of the [Ibādī] jurists are not uniformly hardline,” writes Michael Cook, and that “the single most prominent motive behind the softer views is military.”⁶⁴ Cook notes that chess might be roundly condemned and yet could be allowed in the case of military instruction, that “male shrieking” was illegitimate as “a residue of the [pre-Islamic] Jāhiliyya” though it could be legitimate when it functioned as a “war-cry intended to rally the troops and strike fear into the enemy.”⁶⁵

The same Muslim jurist notes that “it may then be permitted, though his preference would be for the use of the Islamic war-cry ‘God is greatest!’”⁶⁶ Even more shocking, some Omani imams seemed to have toyed with the idea of permitting expressly forbidden actions if they occurred during war. Once again, while practicality wins out at one level—justifying a war-cry—the legal scholar nevertheless would prefer not to have to make such a diversion to a lower level of value. Al-Nabahānī notes the same process regarding drums in the Interior: “it seems,” he offers, “that drums acquired their legitimacy from some Islamic scholars due to the effect they had during war and in meeting the enemy.”⁶⁷ Al-Nabahānī continues that “Shaykh Khamīs bin Sa‘īd al-Shaqṣī [ca. 1030s–1090s/1620s–1680s] confirms that [legitimacy] when he said:... ‘In our days, the drum is not considered shameful [*lā yistaqbaḥ al-ṭabl*] especially if it was a time of war, in a parade at the [military?] camps, and perhaps as a sign or notice of that.”⁶⁸ Al-Shaqṣī concludes that “each time period and people has its own legal judgment,” and al-Nabahānī astutely notes that this is perhaps written with a sense of resignation. Al-Shaqṣī was active during a period in which the Imamate was struggling to repel the invaders and contain internal separatist movements: “a time of the wars to unify the nation and throw out the occupying Portuguese.”⁶⁹ Anticolonial necessities prompted a vigorous, if qualified, acceptance of the drums of war.

While warfare seems to draw even the most condemnatory scholars into a more pragmatic mode, it is worth pointing out that none of the *razḥa*-s I recorded, participated in, or witnessed were related to the actual prosecution of war. Instead, *razḥa*-s were generally linked to war by way of their

production of *ḥamās*, a heightened state of vigor, enthusiasm, and élan associated with fighting or conflict. Inducing *ḥamās*, then, was the practical function of the *razḥa*, which, in turn, was linked to warfare. *Ḥamās* is a complex phenomenon with considerable historical precedent that I cannot engage here. Nevertheless, this juncture is where we can witness the controversial slippages that manifest among the complicated and nested legal logics cum valuations that animate the acceptance or condemnation of any genre. The overlapping relations between war, *ḥamās*, and collective performance are enough to support the contingent and controversial legal rulings that form the backbone of Islamic debates about the value(s) of music. Values do not simply emerge and interact alone: they are motivated as part of discursive projects by situated actors in order to deal with the complex exigencies of everyday life. Importantly, those motivated discourses help shape the topographies of value that Islamic scholars navigate. Differently valued “levels” of a hierarchy may merge and shift within discourses as they accrue the successive sedimentations of historical deployment.

If hierarchies imply a “segmentation of values,” then one such segmentation may be revealed by bracketing certain universally licit sonic practices within the Qur’ānic hierarchy, such as military marches, and revealing the contradictory values by which they are rendered acceptable. While practicality, function, benefit, or usefulness may be relevant for some sonic practices, the safeguarding of production (occupational music) and reproduction (life-cycle music) within Muslim communities may be for

others. Values may be so nested, and if so, the logic of their partibility requires investigation. Dumontian hierarchy provides one avenue for this. It is worth noting that Dumont’s approach may be especially well suited for a *conceptual* hierarchy such as the Qur’ānic one precisely because it does not appear to map in any straightforward way to social structure, as notions such as caste and marginalization might.⁷⁰ The link between such conceptual hierarchies and social ones seems decidedly more fraught with hazard, though careful work here is a useful guide.⁷¹

Elaboration of a successful heuristic confirms the value of the original formulation. While the relational diagram of a posited “Qur’ānic hierarchy” that I presented here can be read alone, it should be read as a complement to and elaboration of al-Faruqi’s linear approach. Breaking apart al-Faruqi’s continuum allows some hidden aspects of the hierarchy to emerge. At the same time, some aspects of the linear model are obscured, such as the role of the word or the presence of musical instruments. Nevertheless, by drawing out some of the latent “lower-value” dimensions of the hierarchy I have pointed to the potential for plural value schemes to exist within the overwhelming importance of recitation by explaining one aspect of one edge case: military music. Other cross-cutting values may be drawn out in a similar way. Building on al-Faruqi’s approach can fruitfully explore the historical and ongoing segmentation of values within the Islamic tradition of debate about music as a project based on sophisticated legal logics of precedent and analogy, as well as being deeply embedded in the everyday.

NOTES

1 The famous rebuke uttered by the Prophet's father-in-law and longtime follower Abū Bakr in an equally famous *ḥadīth*. Abū Bakr admonished two women of the 'Anṣār singing in the presence of the Prophet on a festival day by saying, "The horn-pipes of Satan [*mizāmīr al-shayṭān*] in the house of God's Prophet!" The Prophet's reply: "Let them sing, O Abū Bakr, verily to every nation there is a festival, and this is our festival."

2 See Janice Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zar Cult in Northern Sudan* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995) for a deeper discussion of *zār*.

3 In this article and in my research more generally, I only focus on the reception of Ibādī jurisprudential rulings in the Interior province of Oman, Dakhiliyah. Oman is by no means a monocultural country, and various opinions and traditions interact according to unique dynamics in different regions. While Zāhirah, on the Saudi border, may take a dimmer view of music even than the Interior, Bedouin groups, Sunnis in the coastal town of Ṣūr, and the southern capital of Zūfār may have sharply divergent opinions to those I present here. Research on the role of "music" in social life outside of the Interior is an important project for future scholars.

4 Amnon Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam: A Socio-Cultural Study* (London: Scholar Press, 1995), 31.

5 Ibid.

6 Valerie J. Hoffman points out that a major difference between Ibādī and Wahhābī doctrine is the importance of mysticism to Ibādī scholars. While few Ibādīs might refer to themselves as Sufis, a similar concept of *sulūk*, or "pathways" in religion, is present in many of the writings of scholars during the nineteenth-century Ibādī "renaissance." Valerie J. Hoffman, "Mysticism, Rationalism and Puritanism in Modern Omani Ibādism (18th–Early 20th Century)," *The Muslim World* 105/2 (2015): 251–65, <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12091>.

7 I'm not sure if this is a real word. I'm using it instead of "reconception" to mean thinking along with, rather than overturning. Co-conceiving would mean thinking along with, holding two ideas or models as mutually if contrastingly meritorious.

8 Following the recent and ongoing reinterpretation of Louis Dumont's conceptions of hierarchy and encompassment found in *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), see also Jonathan Glasser, "Musical Jews: Listening for Hierarchy in Colonial Algeria and Beyond,"

Anthropological Quarterly 90/1 (2017): 139–66; Michael Houseman, "The Hierarchical Relation: A Particular Ideology or a General Model?" trans. Eléonore Rimbault, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5/1 (2015): 251–69; Timo Kallinen, "Christianity, Festishism, and the Development of Secular Politics in Ghana: A Dumontian Approach," *Anthropological Theory* 14/2 (2014): 153–68; Ton Otto and Nils Bubandt, eds., *Experiments in Holism: Theory and Practice in Contemporary Anthropology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Knut M. Rio and Olaf H. Smedal, eds., *Hierarchy: Persistence and Transformation in Social Formations* (New York: Berghahn, 2009); Joel Robbins, "Equality as Value: Ideology in Dumont, Melanesia and the West," *Social Analysis* 36 (1994): 21–70; Joel Robbins, "Monism, Pluralism, and the Structure of Value Relations: A Dumontian Contribution to the Contemporary Study of Value," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3/1 (2013): 99–115; Joel Robbins and Jukka Siikala, "Hierarchy and Hybridity: Toward a Dumontian Approach to Contemporary Cultural Change," *Anthropological Theory* 14/2 (2014): 121–32; Olaf H. Smedal, "Demotion as Value: Rank Infraction among the Ngadha in Flores, Indonesia," *Social Analysis* 60/4 (2016): 114–33; as well as the special issue on Dumont of *Anthropological Theory* 14/2 (2014).

9 Robbins, "Monism, Pluralism."

10 For recent work on value in anthropology, see David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Naomi Haynes and Jason Hickel, "Introduction: Hierarchy, Value, and the Value of Hierarchy," *Social Analysis* 60/4 (2016): 1–20; Michael Lambek, "Value and Virtue," *Anthropological Theory* 8/2 (2008): 133–57; Otto and Bubandt, eds., *Experiments in Holism*; Ton Otto and Rane Willerslev, "Prologue: Value as Theory: Value, Action, and Critique," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3/2 (2013a): 1–10; Robbins, "Equality as Value" and "Monism, Pluralism"; Smedal, "Demotion as Value"; Terence Turner, "Marxian Value Theory," *Anthropological Theory* 8/1 (2008): 43–56.

11 Houseman, "Hierarchical Relation"; Ronald Parkin, *Louis Dumont and Hierarchical Opposition* (New York: Berghahn, 2009); Robbins, "Monism, Pluralism"; Smedal, "Demotion as Value."

12 Steve Barnett, Lina Fruzzetti, and Akos Ostor, "Hierarchy Purified: Notes on Dumont and His Critics," *Journal of Asian Studies* 35/4 (1976): 627–46, doi:10.2307/2053675; Sumit Guha, *Beyond Caste: Identity and Power in South Asia, Past and*

- Present* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2013); Ravindra Khare, ed., *Caste, Hierarchy, and Individualism: Indian Critiques of Louis Dumont's Contributions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- 13 Houseman, "Hierarchical Relation."
 - 14 Asad, "On the Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," 14.
 - 15 Lois Ibsen al-Faruqi, "Music, Musicians, and Muslim Law," *Asian Music* 17/1 (1985): 3–36.
 - 16 Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," Occasional Papers Series (Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986), 14.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, 15.
 - 18 Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 272–73.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, 277.
 - 20 *Ibid.*, 427.
 - 21 Al-Faruqi "Music, Musicians, and Muslim Law," 7–8.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, 8.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, 27.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, 13.
 - 25 *Ibid.*; Robbins "Monism, Pluralism."
 - 26 Virginia Danielson, "The Qur'an and the Qasidah: Aspects of the Popularity of the Repertory Sung by Umm Kulthum," *Asian Music* 19/1 (1987): 26–45.
 - 27 Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*; Per Hage, Frank Harary, and Bojka Milicic, "Hierarchical Opposition," *Oceania* 65/4 (1995): 347–54.
 - 28 Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, 240.
 - 29 Glasser, "Musical Jews," 147.
 - 30 Joel Robbins, "Equality as Value: Ideology in Dumont, Melanesia and the West," *Social Analysis* 36 (1994): 21–70.
 - 31 Robbins, "Monism, Pluralism," 103.
 - 32 Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, 239; Robbins, "Monism, Pluralism," 104.
 - 33 Robbins, "Monism, Pluralism," 104.
 - 34 Glasser, "Musical Jews," 143.
 - 35 Haynes and Hickel, "Introduction," 5.
 - 36 Khālid bin 'Īsā bin Ṣāliḥ al-Sulaymānī, *Al-ghinā' wa al-ma'āzif fī al-mayzān: qirā'a fī al-ahkām al-fiqhiyya al-mut'aliqa bi al-ghinā' wa al-ma'āzif wa ḥukhumā fī al-islām* (Al-Sīb, Oman: Maktabat al-Dāmīrī, 2011).
 - 37 *Ibid.*, 20.
 - 38 *Ibid.*
 - 39 *Ibid.*, 21.
 - 40 *Ibid.*, 23.
 - 41 *Ibid.*, 24.
 - 42 *Ibid.*, 24–26.
 - 43 *Ibid.*, 95.
 - 44 *Ibid.*, 96.
 - 45 *Ibid.*, 98.
 - 46 Walīd al-Nabhānī, *Min tārikh al-mūsīqā fī 'Umān 'ishkālīyāt wa nuṣūṣ* (From the History of Music in Oman: Problems and Texts) (Muscat, Oman: Mu'assasat 'Umān li-l-ṣaḥāfa wa-l-nashr wa-l-i'lān, 2016), 45.
 - 47 Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 409–10.
 - 48 Shelly Johnny, "The Decline of Oman's Maritime Empire during the Late Nineteenth Century," Ph.D. thesis (Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2010), 70.
 - 49 *Ibid.*, 70–71.
 - 50 Al-Sulaymānī, *Al-ghinā' wa al-ma'āzif*, 96–97.
 - 51 *Ibid.*, 97.
 - 52 *Ibid.*, 106.
 - 53 I have not yet found the sound examples that accompanied the letter.
 - 54 Al-Sulaymānī, *Al-ghinā' wa al-ma'āzif*, 109–10.
 - 55 Anne K. Rasmussen and Majid al-Harthy, "Music in Oman: An Overture," *The World of Music*, n.s.: "Music in Oman: Politics, Identity, Time, and Space in the Sultanate," Volume 1 / 2 (2012): 63–99.
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 - 57 Al-Nabahānī, *Min tārikh al-mūsīqā*, 45–46.
 - 58 Mandana Limbert, *In the Time of Oil: Piety, Memory, and Social Life in an Omani Town* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).
 - 59 *Ibid.*, 14.
 - 60 *Ibid.*
 - 61 Oliver Leaman, "'Abd Al-Jabbar and the Concept of Uselessness," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41/1 (1980): 129–31.
 - 62 *Ibid.*, 129.
 - 63 Limbert, *In the Time of Oil*, 66.
 - 64 Cook, *Commanding the Right*, 410.
 - 65 *Ibid.*
 - 66 *Ibid.*, 411.
 - 67 Al-Nabahānī, *Min tārikh al-mūsīqā*, 46.
 - 68 *Ibid.*
 - 69 *Ibid.*
 - 70 Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*; Glasser, "Musical Jews."
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