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Strategies in Islamic Religious Oral Performance: The Creation of Audience Response

Abstract Contemporary Islamic chanting (*inshād*) has fed into Islamic popular music (*nasheed*) and vice versa. This chapter deals with more traditional, non-Sufi *inshād* in a ritual context. It analyses audio examples from fieldwork conducted in Lebanon in 2011 and 2012 and focuses on the mediation of poetic verses in praise of the prophet Muḥammad from the ninth century. Starting from the premise that one main aim in the rendition of religious texts is not only to convey information but also to create an emotional impact on listeners, the analysis builds on the concept of emotional involvement (*infiʿāl*) rooted in the Arab musical tradition. This concept highlights the interactive dynamics of the performance and thereby focuses not only on the performer but also on the listeners' perspective. The triggers of audience responses operate on a rhetorical, musical, and semantic level. The carefully staged aesthetic experience of the poetic text shows that the meaning of the Prophet's birthday (*mawlid*) becomes encapsulated in his role as an intercessor in the everyday life of the believer.

In the Islamic literary tradition, a vast repertory of texts was composed not for silent reading but for public recitation. Texts whose main purpose is to be publicly enacted to unfold their religious meaningfulness and function include not only the obvious forms, such as the Qurʾān or sermons, but also many prayers (duʿāʾ, pl. adʿiya) and literary genres, including narratives of religious figures (mawlid, miʿrāj, maqātil) or praise poetry for the Prophet. The artistic performance of such texts takes place communally and is a highly interactive process. Participants in these events take part in the delivery of text either through collective or alternating singing and reciting or through responses to a performing soloist. It is this last form that shall be explored in this paper: How does this process begin? What triggers the responses? And what rhetorical, musical, extra-textual and extra-musical factors contribute to and shape the performance?

Contrary to the investigation of historic performances, this paper deals with live events. Rather than taking the text as a starting point or analysing large parts of the textual material that is performed, it will take a short poetic passage as an example. Further, it will examine the performance of poetry with regard to concepts rooted in the Arab musical tradition and seek to identify the intertwined layers that are at work during the process of reception. This analysis is based on fieldwork study of the contemporary practices of inshād (religious chanting) in Syria and Lebanon.

Beyond conveying information alone, the performers of inshād—as well as reciters of the Qurʾān or preachers—are expected to exercise an emotional impact (taʾthīr) on the listeners.[1] This impact is generated through the framing of the event, the employment of body language, vocal techniques, and—according to the context—through musical means. In her analysis of Qurʾānic recitation, Kristina Nelson states: "It is recognized that the use of musical skills plays an important role in communicating not only the meaning of the text, but the significance of the recitation experience by capturing emotions, affecting the senses, and engaging the total attention and focusing on the significance of the Qurʾan."[2]

Writing on listening in the religious context, the theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) describes the ear as an interface that is only the entrance point of the sound. It is then perceived by an inward sense which sets the heart in motion and guides the believer's interaction (muʿāmala) with God.[3] The heart should be opened up to receive the Divine message;

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1 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm ad-dīn, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dār ash-Shaʿb, n.d. [1937]), 1133; Kristina Nelson, The Art of Reciting the Qurʾan (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2001), 59, 102; Linda G. Jones, The Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 245.
2 Nelson, The Art of Reciting, 100.
3 al-Ghazālī, Iḥyāʾ, 1140, 1153. This blends well into the Platonic notion of psychagogy; cf. Introduction to this volume. There is a wide-spread tendency to cite al-Ghazālī foremost as an advocator of Sufism; it is worth noting, however, that he is not exclusively writing on listening in the Sufi context.

and listening is one way to soften the hard heart (*tarqīq*).[4] Whereas during a sermon the musical means of the performer are naturally limited to rhetoric and poetry, body language and voice techniques, during Qurʾānic recitation[5] and *inshād* the performer can make use of a wide range of musical devices.

Inshād: Contemporary practices and usages of the term

The context of my analyses is the religious practice of *inshād* (chanting). *Inshād* is the verbal noun of n-sh-d in form IV which denotes any kind of language articulation that exceeds normal speech. In historical sources, the verb is often used when a person recites poetry ("fa-anshada"), which denotes a kind of declamatory speech modus, including a raised voice, a strong rhythm, and a tempo that is eventually slower than that of normal speech.[6] The term can also be used for the musical rendition of literature. Referring to the etymology of Arabic lexicographers, Geert Jan van Gelder points out that *inshād* is not used for musical rendition, the latter being *ghināʾ* (singing).[7] I agree with van Gelder that *ghināʾ* is to be distinguished on a musical-technical basis, since as an art form (*al-ghināʾ al-mutqan*), it is more complex than simple chanting. Nevertheless, many Arabic native speakers would refer to the musically elaborated *qaṣīda* performance[8] in a religious context as *inshād* and not as *ghināʾ*.

Today, many Muslims choose to use the root n-sh-d and its derivations to draw a line between secular singing (*ghināʾ*) and religious chanting. Even when there is not much difference at a musical-technical level—the performance of religious poetry shares many features with secular singing—the terminological distinction is retained to keep music as a secular art form separate from religiously employed sound.[9] Sometimes the use

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4   al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 1178; Nelson, *The Art of Reciting*, 89–92; Jones, *Power of Oratory,* 102, 107; with a slightly different vocabulary *(inshirāḥ)* in the context of audio-taped sermons Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 68, 72.

5   Here the *mujawwad* style of recitation, which is generally used for public performances, as opposed to the musically less complex *murattal* style. See for both styles and their musical characteristics, Nelson, *The Art of Reciting,* 102–116.

6   Another verb which is used in this context is *qāla* ("to say") which is quite versatile in its application: it is used for normal speech, the rendition of poetry, for recitation in the religious context, singing, and instrumental playing. Interviews and conversations during fieldwork; Scott L. Marcus, *Music in Egypt: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 12; Ali Jihad Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World: The Culture and Artistry of* Ṭarab (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 32, 79.

7   Geert Jan van Gelder, *Sound and Sense in Classical Arabic Poetry* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 160.

8   For the musical characteristics of a *qaṣīda* performance, see below.

9   Many Arabic speaking Christian and Druze communities use different terms for singing and chanting (e.g. *tartīl*) as well. Cf. Kathleen Hood, *Music in Druze Life: Ritual, Values and Performance Practice* (London: The Druze Heritage Foundation, 2007), 24–26; Ines Weinrich, "Musik im sakralen und profanen Kontext im Nahen

of the term is ideology-driven, serving the need to draw a clear-cut line between 'Islamic' and 'non-Islamic': for instance, one finds references to YouTube videos of religious songs under the title "*nasheed* (not song)" or "*nasheed* (not music)." *Nasheed*, the English spelling of Arabic *nashīd* (the verbal noun of n-sh-d in form I), is also used by non-Arabic speakers to denote a religious—or religiously licit—repertory. 'Nasheed' has turned into the denomination of a genre of religious songs in many languages that are loosely defined by shared musical and textual characteristics. Texts speak of love for the Prophet, praise for God, longing for religious sites, or describe how to live a 'good life'; non-Arabic texts often have some Arabic passages interspersed. Musically, the vocal line is emphasised, the songs use soft melodies (often against a computerised strings background in pop versions) and occasionally lively rhythmic patterns.[10]

In the context of this paper—contemporary Bilād al-Shām or the Eastern Levant—the term *inshād* is used as a generic term for the performance of texts in the religious context.[11] Here it refers to a religious repertory performed as and during a pious act of listening. *Inshād* is an integral part of many commemorative festivities (*iḥtifāl*), including the Prophet's birthday, the Prophet's ascension to heaven, the beginning of the Islamic *hijrī*-year, or the anniversary of the birth or death of important figures in religious history. *Inshād*, either as live-performance or broadcasted via radio and television, is also used to mark ritually special times like the hours before fasting and fast-breaking in Ramadan. The repertory of *inshād* includes praise poetry for the Prophet, doxology, prayers, rogation, benediction, and the performance of narratives. Musically quite heterogeneous, *inshād* features solo singing and group singing, rhythmic and metrically free melodies, simple and musically elaborated styles.

The observations and sound examples presented in the following stem from fieldwork that was conducted in Sunni urban milieus in Syria and Lebanon between 2009 and 2013. Here a small performance ensemble (*firqa*) carries out the *inshād*. It typically consists of a lead singer (*munshid*) and a chorus of four to eight persons. Often, one to three frame drums are used

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Osten und darüber hinaus. Terminologische Überlegungen," in *Rezeption und Selbstwahrnehmung von Musikkulturen. Musik in rituellen und ritualisierten Kontexten,* ed. Marianne Bröcker (Münster: Monsenstein und Vannerdat, 2009), 21–23. On the other hand, by no means do all Muslims consider this terminological differentiation necessary. In my analysis of the musical material, I will use the term 'singing' also for the religious context.

10 Sharing the same etymological root, but coming from a different cultural and musical background, *nashīd* (pl. *anāshīd*) also denotes predominantly political hymns, like the national anthems or patriotic hymns of the early Arab nationalist movements, bearing many resemblances with European marches. See, for general musical characteristics, Ines Weinrich, *Fayrūz und die Brüder Raḥbānī. Musik, Moderne und Nation im Libanon* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2006), 75–80. Some contemporary Islamic movements use the musical language of both forms of *nashīd*.

11 Conversations during fieldwork; see also Nadhīr Muḥammad Maktabī, *al-Inshād wa-l-munshidūn. Dirāsa adabiyya sharʿiyya* (Damascus: Dār al-Maktabī, 2000); Muḥammad Fuʾād, "al-Munshid Ḥasan Ḥaffār," *ath-Thawra. Al-Mulḥaq ath-thaqāfī,* February 24, 2009.

for the musical accompaniment; one of the drums may have several pairs of cymbals incorporated into the frame to add further subtleness to the sound. Performance ensembles are either all-male or all-female. In mixed festivities, which were the most common during fieldwork, male groups perform; whereas in segregated festivities, women's ensembles perform for the women. The observed occasions commonly feature Qurʾānic recitation, *inshād*, suspended by a short oration addressing the occasion, and a concluding prayer (*duʿāʾ*). The events are organised by Sunni governmental institutions, mosque communities, religious associations, or private endowments.

Infiʿāl: The sensual experience of text

In his introduction to a recitation, a local shaykh in Beirut talked about the difference between books made for studying history and books made for recitation. The latter he termed as "books of *infiʿāl*." And *infiʿāl*, he added, means aesthetic experience (*jamāl*).[12] This example describes the difference between reading texts in order to obtain or convey information and reading or reciting texts in order to sensually experience its meaning. In the latter case, the performer makes use of the full range of vocal techniques and body language and enters a communicative process with the listeners.

Infiʿāl means the "(state of) being affected or involved." The dictionary of Edward William Lane elaborates further: "the suffering, or receiving, the effect of an act, whether the effect is intended by the agent or not; [. . .] e.g. blushing in consequence of confusion, or shame, affecting one from the seeing a person (sic) and the emotion, or excitement, ensuing from the hearing of singing, and the agitation of the passionate lover at his seeing the object of his love."[13]

The concept of *infiʿāl* has hitherto only been studied within Arab music from an ethnomusicological perspective.[14] It is relevant for the rendition of many religious texts as well. I use *infiʿāl* in this paper as a generic term; in practice, a variety of similar terms and synonyms are used to describe the state caused by making or listening to music. Nevertheless, *infiʿāl* is the most abstract term which denotes the process or state of being involved.

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12 Shaykh al-Mūsawī, Beirut, 15.11.2012.
13 Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon,* book 1, part 6 (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), 2420.
14 Ali Jihad Racy, "Creativity and Ambience: An Ecstatic Feedback Model from Arab Music," *The World of Music* 33 (1991); "Improvisation, Ecstasy, and Performance Dynamics in Arabic Music," in *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation,* ed. Bruno Nettl and Melinda Russell (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998); Racy, *Making Music*; see also Jürgen Elsner, "Listening to Arabic Music," *The World of Music* 39 (1997); Jonathan Holt Shannon, *Among the Jasmine Trees: Music and Modernity in Contemporary Syria* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2006).

This may refer to both the performer and the listener: a performer in the state of *infiʿāl* will fully indulge in the performance and feel inspired by the ambience; things will come out well without even noticing. On the listeners' side, *infiʿāl* involves emotional, bodily, and acoustic responses. For instance, it is manifested in a tense body, a raised arm or finger, or a swaying hand at peaks of the performance; it is further manifested through sighs or exclamations like "yā allāh" (o God), "ṣalli ʿalā n-nabī!" (invoke blessings upon the Prophet!), or comments on the melodic progression. Audience response is a necessary tool that is needed to stimulate the performer.

This highly communicative process, verbal and non-verbal, is mirrored in the term *tafāʿul* (mutual involvement) which stresses reciprocity. Through their responses, listeners savour the performance, show their enthusiasm for the artistry, and support the performer. Nevertheless, it is not the aim to show as much response as possible: both too much and too little response may spoil the performance, as would the choice of the wrong moment, using inadequate words, or inappropriate musical wishes. These rules of behaviour are subsumed into a code called *ādāb*. *Ādāb* (rules of conduct) refers not only to ethically and/or ritually correct behaviour but also to the musical level: a musically initiated listener does not interrupt but sustains the modal ambience by providing appropriate responses which are related to the musical process. *Ādāb* therefore requires musical knowledge, or at least a certain level of intimacy with the music performed. These well-informed listeners have, again, a special term: *samīʿa*.[15] Performers highly value the support of a true *samīʿa*.

The described phenomena of *infiʿāl*, *ādāb*, and *samīʿa* are closely related to a typical *ṭarab* performance. *Ṭarab*, often simplified in translation as "ecstasy," denotes the transformative state caused by music and encompasses enchantment, rapture, delight, and affliction. However, *ṭarab* is today a highly loaded term, since it may be used both pejoratively and as a compliment, depending on the cultural orientation and attitude of the speaker or writer. The usage of the term includes discussion on the significance of writing and a written musical tradition, the status and value of improvisation, ways to modernise and teach music, and adequate musical expressions.[16] In religious contexts, there is a debate on whether or not *ṭarab* is desirable for religious performances: for opponents to *ṭarab*, the *ṭarab* phenomenon is either closely associated with secular singing in general or with certain recitation techniques which are seen as having the musical devices prevail over the text. On the other hand, we find *ṭarab* or

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15 This term may in general be best translated as "listening connoisseurs," cf. Ali Jihad Racy, "Musical Aesthetics in Present-Day Cairo," *Ethnomusicology* 26 (1982): 392.
16 Scott Marcus, "Arab Music Theory in the Modern Period" (PhD diss., University of California, 1989); Jonathan H. Shannon, "Emotion, Performance, and Temporality in Arab Music: Reflections on Tarab," *Cultural Anthropology* 18 (2003): 74; Weinrich, *Fayrūz,* 59–64, 357–364.

its derivations, especially *taṭrīb*,[17] used to describe an emotionally effective and successful religious performance.[18] Furthermore, in contemporary usage *ṭarab* may denote a musical style which is associated with an older repertory, especially of the early twentieth century up to the 1960s.

After this short introduction to the general context of the fieldwork and to the basic technical terms, I will now turn to the poetic verses and their performance.

Yā khayra man (O best of those): The religio-semantic context

The following verses were performed during a celebration to commemorate the Prophet's birthday (*mawlid*) in a small mosque in downtown Beirut in 2011.[19] It was the first full-fledged solo performance after a number of rhythmic and collectively sung songs, and it featured a careful elaboration of the text as well as intense audience responses.

> *Yā khayra man wuqiʿat fī l-qāʿi aʿẓumuhu*
> *fa-ṭāba min ṭībihinna l-qāʿu wa-l-akamu*
> *Nafsī l-fidāʾu li-qabrin anta sākinihu*
> *fīhi l-ʿafāfu wa-fīhi l-jūdu wa-l-karamu*
> O best of those whose bones are buried in the plain
> by their fragrance, the plain and the hill are made fragrant
> My soul is the ransom for a grave you inhabit
> in it are virtue, generosity, and magnanimity.

The overall context of these verses is the *ziyāra* (lit. "visit") to the grave of the Prophet Muḥammad. Muḥammad was buried in his house in Medina, and his grave was subsequently connected to the mosque and soon became a site for visitors.[20] Today, the *ziyāra* of graves, tombs, or special sites[21] is a widespread practice among Muslims and Christians in the Middle East.

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17 *Taṭrīb* designates the effect a successful *ṭarab* performance has on the listener. From this semantic field, the common term for singer, *muṭrib*, is derived, lit. "the one who enraptures." Connoisseurs still distinguish between a *muṭrib* (a 'real singer' who knows how to produce *ṭarab*) and a *mughannī* (any singer).

18 The debate on *ṭarab* in the religious context cannot be explored here at length. It shall be noted that evaluations and terminology depend heavily on individual attitude and historical contexts and cannot be generalised.

19 The birthday of Muḥammad is nowadays generally dated on 12 or, less frequently, 17 Rabīʿ al-awwal of the Islamic calendar. Nevertheless, festivities on the occasion are not limited to a single day but may span a period from a week before until three weeks after that date.

20 Marcel Behrens, *"Ein Garten des Paradieses." Die Prophetenmoschee von Medina* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007), 155–157; for the rites of the Prophet's *ziyāra* cf. 227–276.

21 Connected to persons or events but not necessarily containing a grave. For *ziyāra* in Syria throughout history cf. Daniella Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques: Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangids and Ayyūbids (1142–1260)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 179–207; for contemporary Syria cf. Gebhard Fartacek, *Pilgerstätten in der syrischen Peripherie. Eine ethnologische Studie zur kognitiven*

Many Muslims combine the visit to the Prophet's grave with their pilgrimage to Mecca (ḥajj).

The addressee of the verses is Muḥammad—the "best of those whose bones are buried" in Medina. Bones figure here *pars pro toto* for the complete body. Notably, the bones/body described here do not smell, as one might expect from a corpse or skeleton, but instead emit fragrance and thereby perfume the surrounding area. Fragrant smell is a distinction granted by God: numerous traditions tell of Muḥammad's extraordinarily fragrant and pleasant smell. The notion that corpses of persons in a privileged relationship to God do not decompose and that their graves emanate fragrance is a widespread notion in Islam, and it is one that is illustrated through numerous narratives and poems recited in *inshād*.[22] Ṭayba or Ṭība (The Fragrant One) is also one of the epithets of Medina, due to the fact that Muḥammad and many of his companions are buried there.

Following the semantic development of ṭ-y-b, it is worth noting that its literal meaning "to be good, pleasant" has become identified with pleasant smell. In the Qurʾān, numerous verses mention the good things (*aṭ-ṭayyib*, *aṭ-ṭayyibāt*) that God has provided for humankind,[23] and one positive quality—fragrance—has becomes synonymous with "good."[24] The doubling of the positively connoted sound of ṭ–y-b through the combination of verb and verbal noun (*ṭāba, ṭībi*) reinforces this positive effect.

Equally, *fidāʾ* is a highly evocative metaphor: f-d-y means "to redeem, to ransom s.th. with or by." In pre-Islamic tribal society, it denoted the ransoming of a person from captivity by someone who was not involved in the circumstances which led to captivity. The payment was carried out as an act of chivalry, and we find the term being used as an expression of devotion and friendship in pre-Islamic poetry. In early provisions for fasting in the Qurʾān, *fidya* is the act of redemption required by someone who is not fasting (Q 2:184). In the tradition of the Twelver Shīʿa, addressing the imams with "juʿiltu fidāka" ("could I only be your ransom") expresses the wish to render unnecessary the sacrifice of the imams by one's own suffering.[25] In older as well as contemporary love poetry, f-d-y is used to denote the sacrifice of the lover to his or her (unrequited) love. Finally, a *fidāʾī* is someone who makes him or herself a ransom. Although the term was used in this sense in modern Arabic literature as early as the 1930s, the *fidāʾī*-ethos of Palestinian poetry became highly influential from the

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Konstruktion sakraler Plätze und deren Praxisrelevanz (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003).

22 We find this notion also in Judaism and Christianity, cf. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 11–13, 47–48.

23 Amongst others Q 2:57; 7:58; 8:26; 9:92; 10:22; 14:24; 34:15.

24 For a similar equation of "good things" with "good smells," see Harvey, *Scenting Salvation*, 55.

25 Cf. Heinz Halm, *Die Schia* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), 178.

1960s onwards[26]. In our context, the metaphor is used to indicate the high degree of devotion of the speaker to the person he is addressing.

Whereas the first hemistich of the second verse focuses on the devotion of the speaker, its second hemistich focuses on the person addressed by enumerating some of his highly esteemed qualities. These qualities appear often as the qualities of Muḥammad in songs and prayers and are thereby familiar to the listener. The two verses thus encompass the thematic sequence of the evocation of the place, the act of approaching and addressing the Prophet—both use the marker of smell as a distinction for place and person—as well as acts of devotion and praise.

These two verses are well known and were performed more than once during the observed occasions. According to the Islamic tradition, the verses are ascribed to a Bedouin (*aʿrābī*) who uttered them at the grave of the Prophet and were transmitted by the ninth-century author al-ʿUtbī.[27] The thirteenth-century scholar Muḥyī ad-Dīn ibn Sharaf an-Nawawī (d. 1277) gives the context as follows:

> I was sitting by the grave of God's messenger pbuh, when a Bedouin came and said: "Peace be upon you, oh messenger of God. I heard that God said: If only, when wronging themselves, they had come to you and asked God's forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found God to be All-Pardoning, Compassionate to each.[28] Therefore, I came to you to ask for forgiveness for my sins (*dhanbī*) by asking for your intercession with God."
> Then, he started to recite (*yaqūl*):
>   O best of those whose bones are buried in the plain
>   by their fragrance, the plain and the hill are made fragrant
>   My soul is the ransom for a grave you inhabit
>   in it are virtue, generosity, and magnanimity.
> Then he left, and I fell asleep, and I saw the prophet pbuh while sleeping, and he said: "O ʿUtbī, follow the Bedouin and tell him the good news that God the Exalted has him forgiven his sins."[29]

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26 See further Angelika Neuwirth, "Kulturelle Selbstbehauptung zwischen Erinnerung und Aufbruch: Einblicke in die Welt der palästinensischen Dichtung," in *Kulturelle Selbstbehauptung der Palästinenser. Survey der modernen palästinensischen Dichtung,* eds. Birgit Embaló, Angelika Neuwirth, and Friederike Pannewick (Beirut: Ergon, 2001), 17–18.

27 Muḥammad ibn ʿUbaydallāh ibn ʿAmr al-ʿUtbī (d. 842) was a poet, compiler of *akhbār*, and author of early *adab* literature; cf. Khayr al-Dīn az-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām,* vol. 6 (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm li-l-Malāyīn, 2002), 258–259.

28 This is a quotation from Q 4:64. Translation by Tarif Khalidi, *The Qurʾan: A New Translation* (London: Penguin, 2009).

29 Muḥyī ad-Dīn ibn Sharaf an-Nawawī, *Majmūʿ sharḥ al-muhadhdhab,* ed. Maḥmūd Najīb al-Muṭīʿī, vol. 8 (Jidda: Maktabat al-Irshād, 1983), 256–257. This is an eighteen-volume commentary on the two-volume *al-Muhadhdhab* by the Shāfiʿī jurist Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 1083). Translations are mine if not indicated otherwise.

This narrative illustrates the central position of Muḥammad's role as inter-cessor (*shafīʿ*). This role is often supported by the above-quoted Qurʾānic verse (4:64) and is further elaborated in various sayings ascribed to the Prophet.[30] Besides, the well-known narrative, or at least the allusions to it, of Muḥammad as the only prophet able to intercede where all other proph-ets fail, is often incorporated into *inshād* sessions and celebrations, either as solo performance or in songs. For instance, an-Nawawī introduces the above-quoted narrative and its verses as the best way that one can ask for Muḥammad's intercession (*istishfāʿ*).[31]

In an-Nawawī's text, only two verses are included, and as is often the practice in *inshād* with old or prestigious verses, several verses are added or combined with these two. In our example, the following verses are added:

(Fa-)[32]Anta sh-shafīʿu lladhī turjā shafāʿatuhu
  ʿalā ṣ-ṣirāṭi idhā mā zallati l-qadamu
Fa-ṣāḥibāka fa-mā ansāhumā abadan
  minnī s-salāmu ʿalaykum mā jarā l-qalamu
You are the intercessor whose intercession is hoped for
  at the path when the foot slips
And your two companions I will never forget them
  I greet you with "as-salāmu ʿalaykum," as long as the pen writes.[33]

Although there are not many variants possible in a phrase as short as a hemistich, the first hemistich is strongly reminiscent of a verse from the so-called poem *al-Burda*:

Huwa l-ḥabību lladhī turjā shafāʿatuhu
  li-kulli hawlin mina l-ahwāli muqtaḥamī[34]
He is the beloved of God whose intercession is hoped for
  in the face of every dread and unexpected horror.[35]

The *Burda* is an immensely popular poem in praise of the Prophet Muḥam-mad that was written by the Mamluk poet Sharaf ad-Dīn Muḥammad al-Būṣīrī (d. 1294–97). Significantly, the whole poem aims invoking Muḥammad as

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30 For further Qurʾānic verses on intercession *(shafāʿa)* and discussions about who is entitled to intercede, cf. A.J. Wensinck [D. Gimaret], A. Schimmel, "shafāʿa," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* new ed., vol. 9 (Leiden: Brill).
31 an-Nawawī, *Majmūʿ,* 256.
32 "Fa-" is sung but does not belong to the verse, as its inclusion would exceed the number of fourteen syllables and the general sequence of syllables in the line.
33 One of the usual phrases that indicates eternity, typical of praise poetry for the Prophet.
34 Verse 36 of the *Burda,* cf. Sharaf ad-Dīn Muḥammad al-Būṣīrī, *Dīwān,* ed. Muḥam-mad Sayyid al-Kīlānī (Cairo: Maktabat wa-Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955), 193.
35 Translation by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muḥammad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 97.

intercessor for someone who admits his wrongs and repents.[36] The resemblance to the *Burda* is generated by textual evidence on several levels: besides the almost identical wording, both verses rhyme in *mīm* and the metre corresponds (*basīṭ*). Although *ḥabību* (beloved) of the *Burda*'s verse is substituted here by *shafīʿu* (intercessor), the sound pattern of ī-u remains. *Hawl* (horror) in the context of *shafāʿa* refers to the horror of death and Judgement Day, which is, in our example, evoked by the word *ṣirāṭ*. *Ṣirāṭ* is derived from Latin *strata*,[37] which means "path, way," and is likewise found in this neutral meaning in the Qurʾān. It is furthermore used to denote the 'right way' that a believer should choose to follow in his or her life: *aṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* ("the straight path"). This expression features most prominently in the opening Sura of the Qurʾān (*al-fātiḥa*): *ihdinā ṣ-ṣirāṭa l-mustaqīm* (Guide us to the straight path; transl. Khalidi). In addition, *aṣ-ṣirāṭ* (always with article) is a term of Muslim eschatology. It belongs to a repertory of conceptions, found in the Islamic tradition but not in the Qurʾān and partly influenced by Iranian ideas, about the occurrences on Judgement Day. Here, *ṣirāṭ* denotes the narrow bridge above hell which the believer has to cross: for the righteous it is easy to cross, but for the wicked it becomes thin and sharp like a razor blade so that they may fall.[38] The slipping of the foot can be read either literally, the physical slipping on the bridge, or in the figurative sense, that a person slips in her/his life path and does something wrong.

The two companions mentioned in the second verse refer to the two caliphs Abū Bakr and ʿUmar who were buried next to Muḥammad[39] and are also mentioned in an-Nawawī's text: an-Nawawī advises the visitor to also pay respect to both, since the head of Abū Bakr is located next to the Prophet's shoulder (*liʾanna raʾsahu ʿinda mankabi rasūli llāh*), and to greet them with "as-Salāmu ʿalayka yā Abā Bakrin [. . .] / as-Salāmu ʿalayka yā ʿUmar [. . .]."[40]

As recorded in videos posted on the internet,[41] the first two verses, each hemistich on a column, are written in golden letters on a green background which is on the columns demarcating the entrance to Muḥammad's burial place inside today's mosque.

Thus, the performed verses exhibit a dense texture of associations and meanings and are thereby highly emotive. They evoke a number of

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36 For more on the poem, see the contribution of Suzanne Stetkevych in this volume and for a literary analysis, see Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes,* chapter two; for contemporary ritual enactments of the poem cf. Ines Weinrich, "Between Poem and Ritual: The *Burda* by al-Būṣīrī (d. 1294–1297)," in *Performing Religion: Actors, contexts, and texts. Case studies on Islam,* ed. Ines Weinrich (Beirut: Ergon, 2016).
37 Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾān* (Baroda: The Oriental Institute, 1938), 196.
38 Cf. G. Monnot, "sirāṭ," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 9 (Leiden: Brill).
39 The exact positioning of the graves is unclear; see Behrens, *Prophetenmoschee*, 125.
40 an-Nawawī, *Majmūʿ,* 256.
41 For instance, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjeJeNwHa7I (accessed February 26, 2016).

theologically charged keywords, including *shafāʿa* (intercession), *ziyāra* (visit of the grave), and *shawq* (longing, here for a visit to Medina). Although only one concept (*shafāʿa*) is explicitly verbalised, from their pre-knowledge and listening experience the listeners can derive *ziyāra* and *shawq*. The verses furthermore feature devotional commitment, the distinction of Muḥammad (fragrance, ability to intercede), and praise for Muḥammad (virtue, generosity, magnanimity). The musical elaboration of the vocal rendition mirrors this semantic density.

Yā khayra man: The musical rendition

The metrically free rendition is performed by the soloist; no drums are used, and only the chorus occasionally provides tonal support for the soloist. In addition, members of the audience respond to the performance. The singer takes five minutes for the delivery of the four verses. A transcription of the verses as they are actually performed shows immediately why this is the case. On the left side, we find the performed text, on the right side the audience response.

(1) Yā khayra man wuqiʿat fī l-qāʿi aʿẓumuhu   ṣallū alayh!
yā____
yā khayra man / wuqiʿat / fī l-qā_ʿ / aʿẓumuhu
fa-ṭāba min ṭībihinna l-qāʿu wa-l_-akamu   eh, allāh, ṣallū ʿalayh!
fa-ṭāba min ṭībihinna l- / qāʿu wa-l-akamu__

(2) Nafsī l-fidāʾu li-qabrin anta sākinuhu yā___ ḥabībī   allāh! ah, ṣalli ʿalayh!
nafsī l-fidāʾu li-qabrin anta sākinuhū   ah, a___h
fīhi l-ʿafāf
fīhi l-ʿafā_f / wa-fīhi l-jūdu wa-l-karam   ah, allāh
wa-fīhi l-ju_____d wa-fīhi__ l-jūdu wa l-karamu

(3) Fa-anta sh-shafīʿu lladhī turjā shafāʿatuhu
    ʿalā ṣ-ṣirāṭi idhā mā zallati l-qadamu ḥabī__bī   a___h
[shouted:] allāhumma ṣalli ʿā-n-nabī!
fa-anta sh-shafī_ʿ / fa-anta sh-shafīʿu lladhī__ turjā_ a___h
fa-anta sh-shafīʿ / fa-anta l-ḥabī___b
fa-anta sh-shafī_ʿ   ṣalli ʿalayh
fa-anta l-ḥabī_b   allāh allāh allāh
alladhī turjā shafāʿatuhu ʿalā ṣ-ṣirāṭi
    idhā mā zallati l-qadamu ḥabī___b   a___h
[shouted:] ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-ālih wa-sallam!

(4) Wa-ṣāḥibāka fa-lā ansāhumā_ abadan   raḍiya llāh ʿankum![42]
     wa-ṣāḥibāka fa-lā ansāhumā___ abadan   a__h
     minnī s-salā___m
     fa-ṣāḥibāka fa-lā ansā_humā__ abadan
     minnī s-salāmun ʿalaykum
     mā_ jarā l-qalam / yā ḥabība llāh

Transcription of the performed verses, 2011.
/ indicates a short pause; ___ indicate how long a syllable is held.

It becomes clear that the singer does not render the words in a linear, consecutive manner. Instead, he lengthens the text through repetitions, pauses, the holding of single notes, and melisma, that is, by singing more than one musical note on one syllable. Musically, the singer starts in a lower register of the voice and, by degrees, ascends to a higher register. Each hemistich of the first verse is performed completely, and then it is repeated by breaking up the text in several portions. The rendition of the second verse provides the first musical climax, reaching the highest pitch at the end of its first hemistich with the interpolation of "yā ḥabībī" (O Beloved). The singer removes the tension by returning to a lower register and a slower pace. In the third verse, another climax is reached. This climax is well prepared by retardation in tempo and a melisma in a low register ("jūd") before, thus creating a contrast to the following acceleration and ascension to the highest register of the whole passage. The acceleration is less achieved by the concrete act of speeding up than suggested by uttering, almost shouting, the complete verse without pause and almost in one breath. The agogic accents and the slightly pressed voice add further intensity. Again, the singer inserts "ḥabībī," and the responses are fierce. The tempo decelerates again; the singer musically elaborates on the text, playing between *shafīʿ* (intercessor) and *ḥabīb* (beloved). Then he delivers the rest of the verse again in a long breath with much emphasis on "ḥabībī" through melisma and grace notes. The musical mode changes with the fourth verse, which also introduces a different topic. The rendition of it is thus far less dramatic.

Responses usually appear at the end of a musical phrase. This corresponds to the technique of the single-breath phrase followed by a tension release at the end, which Nelson has observed for Qurʾānic recitation in the *mujawwad* style.[43] Melisma is used to emphasise significant words like *jūd* (generosity), the interjection *yā* addressing Muḥammad, or *ḥabīb* (beloved) and often elicit responses. The invitation to invoke blessings upon Muḥammad, "ṣallū (pl.)" or "ṣalli (sing.) ʿalayh," is not necessarily triggered by the mere mentioning of his name. It can just as easily be a spontaneous

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42 "May God be content with you," is the usual eulogy for the caliphs.
43 Nelson, *The Art of Reciting,* 27, 122.

exclamation in response to something exciting or beautiful, as it is used in common parlance.

In these techniques, the musical rendition shares many characteristics of a *qaṣīda*-style performance in Arab music: the liberties taken by the singer in his treatment of melody, time, and wording, the careful articulation (*lafẓ*), and the interaction between performer and listener (*tafāʿul*). Particularly striking is the use of techniques of textual stretching: fragmentation and repetition, interpolation and verbal fillers, holding tones and melisma. Also, silence (i.e. pauses) is an important tool in the successful delivery of the text. All these techniques provide enough space to let the meaning sink in and the impact fully unfold. In textual stretching, Ali Jihad Racy sees both a "balance between textual-semantic evocation and vocal-musical stimulation" as well as a necessary tool: "This balance precludes the stifling effect of excessive wordiness or extreme semantization, thus giving the music more space to 'breathe.'"[44] In our case, it is exactly this 'breathing' which ensures a semantic enhancement, by operating both on a musical-emotional and semantic-auditory level. Describing the *mujawwad* style of Qurʾānic recitation, Nelson writes:

> One structuring technique characteristic of this style is to present the text in short clear phrases characterized by syllabic and unornamented melodies, and then to repeat the text in a single long phrase. In fact, a sequence of short phrases usually signals a melodically elaborate recapitulation of the text executed in a single long breath. This technique allows the reciter to be both clear and inventive in his art, fulfilling demands both of the ideal and of the musical aesthetic. The effect on the audience is to heighten involvement by means of delaying the resolution provided by the longer phrase: that is, the greater the sequence of short phrases, the more tension is prolonged. The tension and release experienced by the listeners, however, is evident in their response, which is restrained until it breaks like a wave in the pause following the long phrase.[45]

Although in our example the complete hemistich is performed *before* its fragmentation, the overall fragmentation and the predominantly syllabic rendition serve to enhance the third verse (*Fa-anta sh-shafīʿu . . .*). This verse contains a central message of the celebration (see below) and features emotionally loaded keywords like *shafāʿa*, *ṣirāṭ*, and *ḥabībī*. Both their musically staged position and their auditory-semantic appeal[46] enhance their emotive effect.

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44 Racy, *Making Music,* 91.
45 Nelson, *The Art of Reciting,* 117.
46 I borrow this term from Racy, *Making Music,* 174f. Building on the linguist and anthropologist Paul Friedrich, he uses the term to show that the sonic quality of well-known keywords may evoke a series of semantic meanings that are based on a shared literary history as well as individual experience.

Such exhaustive elaboration does not necessarily always occur. A second performance by the same *munshid*, recorded at a commemorative celebration of the Prophet's night journey and ascension (*al-isrāʾ wa-l-miʿrāj*)[47] in 2012, also features a metrically free solo rendition and the acoustic responses of the audience. But whereas in the first example the performer takes five minutes to musically elaborate on the text, the second example has a length of approximately only half that time (2.20 min.). This is not simply due to the fact that the second example features only three of the four verses,[48] as the texture of the performance shows:

(1) Yā khayra man / wuqiʿat /
     fī l-qāʾi aʿẓumuhu fa-ṭāba min ṭībihinna l-qāʿu wa-l-akamu allāh, ṣallū ʿalayh

(2) Nafsī l- fidāʾu li-rawḍin
     anta sākinuhu___
     Nafsī l-fidā__ʾ / li-rawḍin / anta sākinuhu fīhi l-ʿafāf
     fīhi l-ʿafā__f / wa-fīhi l_-jūdu wa-l_-karamu   allāh

(4) Wa-ṣāhibāka fa-lā ansāhumā abadan
     Wa-ṣāḥibā___k
     fa-lā___ ansāhumā abadan
     minnī s-salām / minnī s-salā_m /
        ʿalaykum mā jarā l-qalamu ḥabī_____bī   ah, allāh allāh allāh
     Wa-ṣāḥibāka fa-lā__ ansāhumā abadan
     minnī s-salā__m / ʿalay_kum / mā jarā l-qalamu a___h

Transcription of the performed verses, 2012.
/ indicates a short pause; ___ indicate how long a syllable is held.

The pace is faster, there are less pauses, less melisma, and less repetitions. Consequently, there are also fewer responses. The different rendition of the same passage is the result of the overall context of its staging within the celebration and the flexible handling over the course of a celebration in general. Before further drawing upon textual practices, we shall therefore take a closer look at the context of the verses and how they are staged within the overall celebration.

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47 The Prophet's night journey and ascension to heaven are nowadays commemorated together 27 Rajab of the Islamic calendar.
48 Only the second of the added verses features; following consecutive numbering of the first example's verses, the second example would feature verses 1, 2, and 4.

Yā khayra man: The staging of the verses in the *iḥtifāl* context

The musical context of both examples is very similar: both feature after twenty to thirty minutes in the first section of the *inshād* (i.e. before the oration), following a number of rhythmic songs. Many of these songs feature alternate singing between a soloist who performs the stanzas and the *firqa*, or all participants, who performs the refrain. In both cases, respectively, this forms the first metrically free solo performance, followed by more collective songs. Thus, the passage is musically distinct from the rest of the repertory and thereby emphasised. Its position parallels the conventions of a *ṭarab* performance: a musically intense passage would never feature at the very beginning since the musicians need time to develop the appropriate mood and to build up a relationship with the audience.

Regarding the thematic alignment of the celebration, the order of both examples varies slightly. In the second example, during the commemoration of Muḥammad's ascension to heaven, the passage is preceded by a number of songs on the event of the night journey and ascension to heaven. Two songs follow which prominently feature the profession of faith (*shahāda*). Another song leads to the solo passage. This song mainly constitutes an invitation to invoke blessings upon the Prophet. The solo passage is followed by excerpts from a poem by the Syrian Shaykh Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī (1850–1909), *ʿAlayka ṣallā llāh* (God shall bless you). A collectively and repeatedly performed invocation of blessings concludes this part of the celebration before the oration starts. Thus, the solo passage constitutes here both greeting and praise of the Prophet, which joins other greetings and blessings.

The staging and message of the solo passage in our first example, during the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday, are different. The celebration starts with songs that already touch upon themes which will become relevant for the verses of the solo passage: the birth of Muḥammad, the wish to perform a *ziyāra* to Medina, longing (*shawq*), intercession, and Muḥammad as the best of humankind. This part ends with a song praising God, which is followed by a spoken invitation to invoke blessings. After a short interval, the solo passage unfolds. It is followed by the central song of the occasion, *al-Layla ʿindakum ʿīd* (Tonight you have a celebration). This is a joyful song with a strong rhythm and a refrain which praises the birth of the Prophet.[49] The relatively short song is stretched here to almost nine minutes, featuring drum soli, the addressing of the participants in spoken speech modus by the lead singer, and collectively sung invocations

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49 In the years that the fieldwork was carried out, this song turned out to be one of the most popular: people sang along, clapping their hands, and the soloist more than once extended single stanzas of it into a long question-response sequence between the *firqa* and the community. Although the first line continues with "the birthday of God's messenger," it was performed on other occasions as well, sometimes replacing "birthday" with the given occasion.

of blessings. Moreover, one of the song's stanzas contains the line "You will meet the Prophet on the Day of Resurrection / standing at the river Kawthar [in Paradise] and shouting: o you who love me!"—forming a confirmation of what is part of the *shafāʿa*-concept but has not been stated explicitly before: those who love the Prophet and invoke blessings will be granted his intercession and enter paradise.

The solo passage and subsequent song mark the celebration's centre of gravity: they combine the joy of the occasion, his birth, with the one central meaning ascribed to the event. The four solo verses picture Muḥammad's function that is relevant in the everyday life of the followers: his ability to intercede and therefore to provide a coping strategy when faced with the idea of death and judgement. This message is carefully prepared on a musical as well as on a content-related level.

Textual practices and textual qualities

Inshād ensembles usually perform without any written form of the text or music. Only rarely one can spot some written text during a performance, let alone a book. Rather, the singers sometimes have in front of them single sheets of paper with scribbled notes on the event's sequence or the text of a longer song with many stanzas. There are several reasons for this. First, performers habitually know the repertory by heart. Second, performance in the *qaṣīda* style does not require a pre-composed written script, since the processes of composing and performing are overlapping. Moreover, the musical processes that constitute the accompaniment or embellishment of a melodic line—heterophony, alternate singing with overlapping voices, vocal or rhythmic fill-ins—can be easily organised during the performance: the size and positioning of the ensemble members in a half-circle enable the necessary communication processes. And finally, the repertory of a festivity is typically developed over the course of the performance. Although ensembles have an approximate sequence for the repertory in mind when they start to perform, nevertheless, they may divert from that and change as is appropriate according to time, atmosphere, and audience, and thereby develop the final sequence during the performance.[50]

This is exactly the practice that Racy describes for *ṭarab* musicians, albeit in a less extended and extreme way. *Ṭarab* musicians seek to establish a relationship with their audience in order to elicit the necessary responses which support and shape their performance. Especially when performing in an unknown environment, they employ a kind of 'trial and error' system in order to find out which musical structures the listeners will respond to. Musicians furthermore sometimes bring 'their own *samīʿa*':

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50 Interviews with male and female lead *munshids* in Beirut, 10.06.2009; 15.03.2010; 24.06.2013; 25.06.2013; 06.07.2013.

when performing in front of large crowds especially, they might bring in a group of people who could be counted on to provide adequate responses.[51] I observed a similar phenomenon during my fieldwork when often a group of especially active listeners could be seen sitting in the front area. These men and women gave typical responses after single-breath phrases and knew large parts of the texts by heart.[52]

Therefore, the given repertory of any event is the result of spontaneous reactions to the atmosphere and to the composition of the audience, especially in relation to its level of musical intimacy. This requires flexibility in the sequence of repertory in general and in the performance of a single piece, as regards repetitions, interpolations, or length. The overarching aim is not textual integrity, but rather a delivery that produces emotional impact (*ta'thīr*) on the audience.

In addition to textual stretching, other textual diversions occur in our examples. The two verses sung correspond to the version given by an-Nawawī with the exception of one verb: instead of *dufinat* the performer in both cases sings *wuqiʿat* without altering the meaning. Furthermore, the passive clause of both verbs indicates the same morphological structure and sound pattern.

The verses are furthermore included in the four-volume compilation of praise poetry by the scholar, judge, and poet Yūsuf ibn Ismāʿīl an-Nabhānī (1849–1932). Here, the two verses exactly correspond to the verses in an-Nawawī; but the additional verse on the Prophet as intercessor is inserted between the two verses instead of added afterwards.[53] Sometimes, this verse (no. 3) features *ḥabīb* instead of *shafīʿ*;[54] and in an-Nabhānī's collection, the version has *nabī* (Prophet). Each of the words denotes a different quality of Muḥammad—beloved, intercessor, Prophet—but all of them have the same sound pattern.

In the second performance, the *munshid* sings *rawḍ* (garden) instead of *qabr* (grave). This evokes the larger spatial arrangement of the place addressed, as it echoes the famous saying of the Prophet: *Mā bayna baytī wa-minbarī rawḍa min riyāḍ al-janna* (Between my house and my pulpit is a garden of Paradise).[55] It further refers to an eschatological scenario: the phrase "rawḍa min riyāḍ al-janna" is familiar to the listeners through its inclusion in prayers, most frequently as a petition in the closing *duʿāʾ* of the

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51 Racy, *Making Music,* 64.
52 Whether these were brought in on purpose by the *firqa* or merely constituted a religiously and/or musically eager group cannot be said for certain.
53 Yūsuf ibn Ismāʿīl an-Nabhānī, ed., *al-Majmūʿa an-nabhāniyya fī l-madāʾiḥ an-nabawiyya,* vol. 4 (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Adabīya, ca. 1320H), 71. An-Nabhānī's version includes three verses.
54 For instance, in versions found on the internet; this would correspond to the wording of the *Burda*.
55 Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2002), 288.

daily Ramadan night prayers (*tarāwīḥ*): *Allāhumma iǧʿal qubūranā rawḍatan min riyāḍ al-janna* (O God make our graves a garden of Paradise).[56]

Sometimes changes are not about substituting single words but about playing around with the text: an-Nabhānī remarks that he has changed the first line according to an expression used in al-Būṣīrī's *Burda*:

> *Yā khayra man ʿabiqat bi-l-qāʿi turbatuhu*
> *fa-ṭāba bi-ṭ-ṭībi minhā l-qāʿu wa-l-akamu*[57]
> Oh best of those whose grave exhales scent in the plain
> by the fragrance [emanating] from it the plain and the hill
> are made fragrant.

The respective verse of al-Būṣīrī goes:

> *Lā ṭība yaʿdilu turban ḍamma aʿẓumahu*
> *ṭūbā li-muntashiqin minhu wa-l-multathimi*[58]
> No perfume is as redolent as the dust that holds his bones
> whoever inhales or kisses it is blessed.[59]

The linking lexeme between an-Nabhānī's and al-Būṣīrī's verse is *turba*, meaning both "dust" and "grave." For grammatical reasons, the syntax of the second hemistich needed to be changed, but the phonetic structure is almost completely retained (al-ʿUtbī: *bi-ṭībihinna*, an-Nabhānī: *bi-ṭ-ṭībi minhā*). The sonic doubling of ṭ-y-b is further developed by al-Būṣīrī into the *jinās* (root-play) of *ṭīb* and *ṭūbā* (blessing). The re-occurrence of *ṭīb* and *aʿẓumahu* in al-Būṣīrī's verse, which is strongly reminiscent of the original verse, is noteworthy. Moreover, al-Būṣīrī's verse encompasses rites connected to *ziyāra* such as incorporating the positive power or blessing (*baraka*) of the place through inhaling its fragrance or by the physical contact of touching or kissing.

The lines transmitted by al-ʿUtbī were repeatedly taken up by other poets. We find a version of the lines inserted in a poem (*basīṭ*, rhyme in *lām*) by al-Buraʿī.[60] The Yemeni poet ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm al-Buraʿī was for a long time believed to have lived in the eleventh century[61] but most probably

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56 Fieldwork during Ramadan in Beirut, 2010–2013.

57 an-Nabhānī, *al-Majmūʿa,* 71.

58 al-Būṣīrī, *Dīwān,* 194 (verse 58).

59 Stetkevych, *Mantle Odes,* 99.

60 Another technique of using and thereby honouring a text is the formalised way of *tashṭīr* or *takhmīs;* in the case of the *Burda* we furthermore find the unique case of the *badīʿiyya,* which is studied in detail by Suzanne Stetkevych in this volume. In the case of al-Buraʿī, the three lines are consecutively inserted in to a thirty-seven-line poem.

61 Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur,* vol. 1 (Weimar: Emil Felber, 1898), 259; see also *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur. Erster Supplementband* (Leiden: Brill, 1937), 459; Ismāʿīl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadīyat al-ʿārifīn. Asmāʾ al-muʾallifīn. Āthār al-muṣannafīn,* vol. 1 (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevı, 1951),

died in 1400.[62] His poems are well known and widespread in religious chanting today.

> *Yā khayra man dufinat fī t-turbi aʿẓumuhu*
> > *fa-ṭāba min ṭībihinna s-sahlu wa-l-jabalu*
> *Nafsī l-fidāʾu li-qabrin anta sākinuhu*
> > *fīhi l-hudā wa-n-nadā wa-l-ʿilmu wa-l-ʿamalu*
> *Anta l-ḥābību lladhī narjū ʿawāṭifahu*
> > *ʿinda ṣ-ṣirāṭi idhā mā ḍāqati l-ḥiyalu*[63]

> Oh best of those whose bones are buried in the dust
> > from their fragrance the plain and the mountain
> > are made fragrant.
> My soul is a ransom for the grave you inhabit
> > in it are guidance, generosity, knowledge,
> > and accomplishment.
> You are the beloved whose compassion we hope for
> > at the path when the way-outs became few.

The third verse may indeed have served as a source for one of the often-added lines, especially its second hemistich. Yet textual archaeology is not the aim of this paper; rather, these examples were included to show that textual integrity is not always the priority in delivery, although it does play a role in valuing poems of single authors.

Conclusion

In the context of *inshād*, the overall aim is not the word-by-word delivery of a given text. Instead, it is to convey its overall meanings and emotions. To achieve this, the performance makes use of a variety of features: textual, auditory, semantic, and musical.

The textual features include rhetorical devices like rhyme and metre, which are not necessarily central to the performance. Especially in textual fragmentation, the metre becomes less tangible, but the rhyme indicates the end of a hemistich or verse and therefore structures the performance. The doublings of positively connoted sounds stress the overall joyous message (*ṭāba/ṭībi*; *shafīʿu/shafāʿa*). The semantic message is conceived by powerful imagery and religiously charged keywords encompassing the fields of praise (*khayr*, *ṭīb*, *ʿafāf*, *jūd*, *karam*), devotion (*fidāʾ*, *ḥabīb*), and

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559; *Dīwān al-Buraʾī fī l-madāʾiḥ ar-rabbāniyya wa-n-nabawiyya wa-ṣ-ṣūfiyya* (Cairo: Al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī [1950]), no pagination.
62 ʿUmar Riḍā Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn,* vol. 5 (Damascus: Maṭbaʿat at-Taraqqī, 1958), 202; az-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām,* 3: 323.
63 *Dīwān al-Buraʾī fī l-ibtihālāt wa-t-taḍarruʿāt al-ilāhiyya wa-l-madāʾiḥ an-nabawiyya* (Beirut: Dār an-Najm, 1994), 94. The aforementioned *Dīwān* (footnote 60, poem starts p. 181) was no longer accessible to me when writing this paper.

eschatology (*ṣirāṭ*, *shafāʿa*). The intensity brought on by the direct address and invocation (*yā*, *anta*) is reinforced by the interpolations during the performance ("yā ḥabībī"). *Ḥabībī* ("beloved") is by no means an exclusively religious form of address, since it is also used in common parlance to address a lover, a friend, or a child. It signifies closeness and affection. Addressing the Prophet as *ḥabībī* is a strategy often used in *inshād* to create intimacy.

Some of the auditory features are already inscribed into the text, such as rhymes or assonances. Others highly depend on the concrete vocal rendition and the skilful use of the voice: the subtleties of volume, pitch, timbre and tempo, or the employment of interpolation, repetition, emphasis, lengthening, and silence. The mode of delivery is musical, and here involves the single voice performance as opposed to the spoken mode or to multiple or alternating voices. The musical mediation is furthermore characterised by the metrically free *qaṣīda* style with its single-breath phrases, pauses, and interpolations. The organisation of pitch and melodic progression is bound to the rules of the modal system of Arab music, which involves the gradual progression from a lower to higher register and the stress on notes which are central for the musical mode (*maqām*).

Semantic meaningfulness is provided by associations and allusions to larger coherences which refer to the prior listening experiences of the audience, including the singularity of the Prophet's ability to intercede on behalf of his followers. The here analysed poetic passage interconnects with songs, prayers, or other genres employed in *inshād* as well as with the literary experiences or religious knowledge of the audience.

Audience response constitutes an integral part of the performance. Its triggers operate on both a musical-auditory and a semantic-auditory level. Listeners react to the rhythm of tension and release produced by textual fragmentation, sudden stops, and accelerando in the delivery. They musically respond to the shifting to higher tonal degrees and the lengthening and ornamentation of syllables. These musical devices are not arbitrary but chosen to highlight significant parts of the text. Emotionally loaded words, charged with religious meaning, like *shafāʿa* or *ḥabībī*, produce affects which are grounded both in musical and semantic processes. The semantic texture of the verses interacts with literary traditions (e.g. *fidāʾ*) and religious propositions (e.g. *ziyāra* for the purpose of *istishfāʾ*).

Furthermore, extra-musical and extra-textual factors play a role in performance: the occasion of the performance, the temporal staging of the verses within the celebration, the overall spatial arrangement in the mosque, and the composition of the audience shape the choice of the musical means according to atmosphere and the level of interaction. In this sense, both the listeners and the setting become "co-creators."[64]

The existence of an established 'process of delivery,' however, does not necessarily mean that all modes of musical delivery need to meet the criteria of age or tradition. Thinking in terms of transculturality, it would fall

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64 Ruth Finnegan, "The How of Literature," *Oral Tradition* 20 (2005): 172.

short to assume that the described processes constitute a self-contained system which would not allow transcultural developments. On the contrary, building on the listening experiences of the audience and the flexibility of performers with regard to the course of a single *inshād* session and their choice of musical means, facilitates the incorporation of new sounds that are not found in tradition but are nowadays nevertheless ubiquitous. Such sounds, for instance, are built on European tonality and contain glimpses of functional harmony, be it derived from European art music or global pop music.[65] Performers respond to current trends—some eagerly, others more reluctantly, sometimes regretting that people today prefer simpler and faster musical styles.[66]

This paper has revealed the material qualities of both poetry and its mediation through a short textual example. More than just a voiced rendition of poetic lines, the performance of the verses and their semantic and emotional content set multi-layered processes in motion: on the level of text, we find the performed text and its rhetorical devices as well as a backgrounded history of literature and religious propositions according to the individual pre-experience of the listeners. On the level of sound, we find auditory devices, partly inscribed into the text and partly realised during performance, and the musical modal organisation rooted in the Arab musical tradition. Finally, we need to name the extra-textual and extra-musical factors which shape a performance, such as the physical setting and the level of musical intimacy between the performers and listeners.

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65 European art music has become part of the musical culture in the Middle East on a larger scale since the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, European musical theory has become part of the educational curricula since the 1930s. For asymmetries in the relationship between Arab and European music, see Ines Weinrich, "The *Inḥiṭāṭ* Paradigm in Arab Music History," in Inḥiṭāṭ – *The Decline Paradigm: Its Influence and Persistence in the Writing of Arab Cultural History,* ed. Syrinx von Hees (Würzburg: Ergon, 2017).

66 Interviews with female and male performers in Damascus and Beirut, 06.10.2007; 13.04.2013; 24.06.2013; Fuʾād, "al-Munshid Ḥasan Ḥaffār."

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