Tamas Juhasz

“Let`s Ban Applause!” The Cultural Politics of Music in Ninth and Tenth Century Iraq

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies.

Central European University

Budapest

2018

“Let`s Ban Applause!” The Cultural Politics of Music in Ninth and Tenth Century Iraq

by

Tamas Juhasz (Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements

of the Master of Arts degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

_____

Chair, Examination Committee

_____

Thesis Supervisor

_____

Examiner

_____

Examiner

Budapest

2018

“Let`s Ban Applause!” The Cultural Politics of Music in Ninth and Tenth Century Iraq

by

Tamas Juhasz (Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements

of the Master of Arts degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

_____

External Reader

Budapest
2018

“Let`s Ban Applause!” The Cultural Politics of Music in Ninth and Tenth Century Iraq

by

Tamas Juhasz (Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements

of the Master of Arts degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

_____

External Supervisor

Budapest
2018

I, the undersigned, Tamas Juhasz, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 26 06 2018

_____

Signature

Abstract

In the ninth Century Abbasid Baghdad music gained an elevated status among the highest social and political circles, meanwhile the first known legal dispute over music in the Islamic context was written. I argue that the two are connected to each other and the cultural changes of the Abbasid court started the emergence of legal disputes over music. The Sufis of Baghdad started to hold musical gatherings, the nature of these even concerned some of the Sufis themselves and I point out that culturally these musical gatherings and the ones of the Abbasid court are connected.

Acknowledgements

Thank you all.

Table of contents

List of Abbreviations

Arabic

Letters of the Alphabet

Initial	Medial	Final	Alone	Romanization
ا	ا	ا	ا	omit
ب	ب	ب	ب	b
ت	ت	ت	ت	t
ث	ث	ث	ث	th
ج	ج	ج	ج	j
ح	ح	ح	ح	ḥ
خ	خ	خ	خ	kh
د	د	د	د	d
ذ	ذ	ذ	ذ	dh
ر	ر	ر	ر	r
ز	ز	ز	ز	z
س	س	س	س	s
ش	ش	ش	ش	sh
ص	ص	ص	ص	ṣ
ض	ض	ض	ض	ḍ
ط	ط	ط	ط	ṭ
ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	ẓ
ع	ع	ع	ع	‘ (ayn)
غ	غ	غ	غ	gh
ف	ف	ف	ف	f
ق	ق	ق	ق	q
ك	ك	ك	ك	k
ل	ل	ل	ل	l
م	م	م	م	m
ن	ن	ن	ن	n
ه	ـه	ـه	ه	h
و	و	و	و	w
ي	ي	ي	ي	y

long wovel with alif: ā

long vowel with yā: ī

long wovel with wāw: ū

Introduction

The title "Let's Ban Applause!" is a reference to a 1962 article in *Musical America* written by the famous Canadian pianist Glenn Gould. In this article Gould called for the abolition of applause and demonstrations of all kinds, with the acronym GPAADAK. I choose this quote to be my title, as without the context it seems strange to call for such an act, but in the world of Glenn Gould it makes sense. In his worldview, musical theater is an adjunct of the church, in contrast to regular concert attenders considering it the comfortably upholstered extension of the profane Roman Colosseum. He is disposed toward this view because he believes that "the justification of art is the internal combustion it ignites in the heart of men and not its shallow, externalized, public manifestations. "[1] So, he does not want to ban applause *per se*, but he strongly believes that the theater is a sacred space where no sound should be produced, except by the musicians. The context of his argumentation is important to understand it. Some of the arguments against music in my primary sources seem to be even stranger and puzzled me greatly, like the banning of music because it causes intoxication.[2] As an answer to that, the famous musicologist Henry George Farmer said, "should we ban grapes as you can produce wine from them? "[3] I started my research on the topic to find the social, cultural, philosophical and religious context of these arguments and as my primary sources are some of the first known texts related to music in the Islamic context I will survey how these processes might started.

Between the ninth and the eleventh centuries Baghdad was the cultural and political capital of a vast empire. During the Abbasid era (750–1258) bureaucrats, intellectuals and rulers were

[1] Tim Page, *The Glenn Gould Reader*, New York:Vintage: 1990, 264.
[2] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā, and* Bawāriq al-ilmā' *by Majd al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī*, ed. and trans. James Robson (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1938),24.
[3] Henry George Farmer, *Greek Theorists of Music in Arabic Translation*, Isis, Vol.13, No.2, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press,1930., 2.

invested in the newly forming Abbasid culture. It was Arab and Islamic, Greek and Christian, Persian and Zoroastrian. The caliph al-Mansur began to build the city to mark the beginning of a new era in the Abbasid dynasty. Culture was centered around the inner circle, where the rulers and their families lived, holding gatherings that included poetry, dancing and music. These gatherings were attended by all kinds of people representing a wide range of social and economic status. Musicians, singers and poets of both sexes attended such parties, women at male gatherings were mostly highly educated slave companions rather than freeborn women. Freeborn rich women had their own cohorts of female singers, poetesses and musicians. In these gatherings, artists and the rich were freely mingling, pitting their own artistic talents against each other.[4]

One of the best schools for singing girls was in Medina; in the Abbasid period the city lost its political role. It had a thriving community of scholars and became a favored retirement place for the rich, keen for high quality entertainment. The school was regarded as the best in teaching musicianship and dancing; girls from every Islamic periphery came to learn and practice.[5] The school emerged in the Paleo-Muslim period and they developed an elaborate cantillation system, building upon Persian modes.[6]

I argue that Islamic Sunni jurists developed an unfavorable view of music due to the musician`s social and political status in the ninth and tenth century Abbasid court. Therefore, I will look at musicians as part of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious court, emerging from the wave of Greek translations and general acceptance of non-Arabs to the circles of the high-ranking courtiers. These courtiers could threaten the political status of Islamic jurists. The dispute

[4]Amira K. Bennison, *The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age of the Abbasid Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.), 103-104.
[5] Bennison, *The Great Caliphs*, 104.
[66] Aziz al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allah and his people*, (New York: Cambridge University Press), 2014, 438.

between these groups led to theological divisions echoing the jurist`s own politico-religious dogma. Taking this into account, I will carry out the survey of the court musicians and the Paleo Sunni intellectuals developing Islamic jurisprudence. I chose this timeframe as the life of musicians in this era is well documented, yet according to my knowledge, no studies have dealt with this particular problem. Moreover, since the eleventh century was a period of intense religious conflict in the region, the cultural and socio-political changes beforehand might answer questions regarding the cause for these turbulences. I will argue that musicians were part of a new group of courtiers, dependent on the Abbasid caliphs, whom became less powerful by the twelfth century and their courtiers were either falling with them or leaving Baghdad.

After court musicians, I will examine the so-called traditionalist theologians. As it can be misleading to use the word theology in the medieval Islamic context, first a brief summary and justification for the use of this term is in order. *Theologia* for Augustine of Hippo is the discussion concerning the Deity, for Aristotle *theologike* was one of the three fields of theoretical philosophy and it partly was concerned with the nature of the divine. In the very recent *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* Sabine Schmidtke states that theological discussions during the formative period of Islam were largely inspired by the wider intellectual-cultural environment in which these discussions took place. She emphasizes that religious notions prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia, concepts originating in other local traditions and the religio-philosophical heritage of the Late Antiquity were included in the discussions over the nature in this period.[7] In the present thesis I will use the term theology in the Aristotelian sense as in the Arabic speaking tradition the *Theology of Aristotle* by Plotinus was the chief text conveying ideas on theology. Moreover, the divine compared to the deity is a much broader term and does not need a centralized theology. In this thesis I will use attributes of time, such

[7] Sabine Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3.

as paleo and formative, as I am focusing on the early stages of certain processes. Since I adapt the terminology from existing historical works, I will provide a short historiographical introduction.

Historians perceived time discordantly in the last century. Time is the cause of change, which urges historians to create categories and pinpoint the boundaries of these categories. A timeline is two dimensional, therefore it has two boundaries, a beginning and an end. Where these boundaries are marked in time is what historians do not agree on their efforts to create categories, and the resulting scholarly trends affect the perception of time profoundly. Aziz al-Azmeh proposes to call the first few centuries after Muhammad Paleo-Muslim and the religion Paleo-Islam. The word paleo conjures change by time, meanwhile the word proto used by other scholars invokes inherited change.[8] Garth Fowden highlights that for scholars such as al-Azmeh drawing lines of demarcation is hard. Describing this perception of time, he theorizes that such a historian sees humankind adjusting across the ages bit by bit to gradual transformations.[9] This perception is very much in agreement with Fernand Braudel and his three-geared history, where each gear is bigger than the other and therefore moves slower. Wolf Liebeschuetz argues that as the importance of marking breaks in continuity is minimized and the priority simply becomes how far things remained the same and not what ways they became different.[10] In this vein Muhammad Qasim Zaman prefers the word proto suggesting that the term proto-Sunni designates those groups of the late eighth and ninth centuries who defined their identity in terms of what they saw as their adherence to the Prophet`s *sunna*.[11]

Al-Azmeh's concept, based on the idea of gradual change, partly derives from Peter Brown's work. The last forty years greatly increased the knowledge and understanding of the Hellenistic

[8] Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity*, 279.
[9] Garth Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad* (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 2014), 53.
[10] J.Liebeschuetz, 'Late antiquity and the concept of decline,' *Nottingham Medieval Studies, 45*. (2001), 4.
[11] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the early Abbasids*, (Brill: Leiden, 1997), 1.

late antique world, especially in the area of social and cultural history. Peter Brown introduced the concept of the long late antiquity summoning scholars to research the early Islamic world in the framework of the long Late Antiquity, that is, not as a breaking point but a phenomenon showing significant continuities with Late Antiquity.[12]

Regarding methodology, I will rely upon the musical terminology of the primary sources to track down certain groups and analyze the texts in their social and political context to highlight possible and likely connections. Particular terminology used to denote instruments was a shared practice; the comparison of such terms can help identifying certain groups of the era. The lack of musical terminology in Arabic at that period obliged scholars and theorists to look for, or to invent, adequate technical terms. The versatile scholar Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq (d.873), considered instrumental in this new development, was a favorite of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (d.861) who appointed him president of the commission in charge of the translation of Greek scientific works into Arabic. I will undertake a comparative analysis of Abbasid courtly literature, jurisprudence, and philosophical works to draw up an overview of the socio-historical view on music at the time. Following this, I will map the cultural milieu of Bagdad at the given period through the general portrayal of the Abbasid court and personal histories of pivotal figures.

The fact that my topic is not the direct subject if any the primary sources available raises several difficulties, first, I will describe the linguistic ones. As Amnon Shiloah wrote, in medieval Arabic writings, there is no single term analogous to the modern Western category of "music." Various practices that we nowadays include under "music" were discussed in medieval Arabic works under different categories.[13] In my sources, two central terms are relevant: *samā*, literally, "listening" or "audition", and by extension, "the music listened to" refers mainly to music in the mystical context. The word *ghinā* designates what is often referred to as "art

[12] Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad*, 49.
[13] Shiloah, Amnon. "Music and Religion in Islam." *Acta Musicologica*69, no. 2 (1997), 146.

music,"[14] both instrumental and vocal. Much of the opposition of jurists to music was directed toward "art music" and musical instruments, *ālāt al-malāhī*, literally meaning instruments of amusements.[15] *Ghinā* was practiced in a variety of contexts related to court culture, and it is the same word, that occurs in the *Dhamm al-malahi* by al-Dunyā.

The late Lois al-Faruqi draws attention to this problem of terminology as well. She says that a question we may first ask is what music is and is not in Islamic culture. She groups Qur'anic chant and the call to prayer, along with pilgrimage chants, eulogy chants and chanted poetry with noble themes, all as non-musical. Listening to these is permitted in Islamic law. Then there is the group of types which were considered music. These include ceremonial music, caravan chant, military band music (all permissible), and sensuous song (forbidden).[16] This approach can be helpful for tracking down *ghinā* in various sources, but raises a question about the general terminology regarding sound, and creating any auditory output. She proposes the coined expression "*handasah al-ṣawt*" (the engineering of sound).[17] The other musical term and the musical gatherings centered around it is *samā* (hearing).

One of the main early authorities of this field is Ābū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d.505/1111), who in his *Iḥiyā Ulūm al-Dīn* (Revival of the religious sciences) wrote a chapter concerning *samā* that provides the touchstone for much of the discussion on it.[18] Al-Ghazālī comments on Dhū al-Nūn (d.246/861) and approves that *samā* is "the arrival of Truth which arouses hearts toward the Truth; one who listens to it truthfully is confirmed in that Truth, but one who listens to it sensually becomes an unbeliever".[19] The following hypothetical example summarizes al-

[14] al-Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn `Ali al-Katib, *Kitāb kamal adab al-gina'* [The perfection of musical knowledge], 29.
[15] Amnon Shiloah, "The Arabic Concept of Mode." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 34, no. 1 (1981), 26.
[16] Lois Ibsen Al-Faruqi, "Accentuation in Qur'ānic Chant: A Study in Musical Tawāzun." *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 10 (1978), 53.
[17] Lois Ibsen al-Faruqi, "Music, Musicians and Muslim Law," *Asian Music* 17, no. 1 (1985): 8.
[18] Kenneth S. Avery, *A Psychology of Early Sufi Samā: Listening and Altered States*, (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 10-11.
[19] Avery, *Early Sufi samā*, 16.

Ghazālī 's main thesis about the permissibility of *samā* or musical audition: If one were to ask al-Ghazālī whether the use of one's feet is permissible or forbidden, he would answer: if you use your feet to walk to the mosque for prayer or to visit a friend, then that is permissible, but if you kick someone for no reason or with intent to harm, that is a forbidden use of the feet.[20] Al-Ghazālī approaches the ethico-religious issue of music insofar as it concerns the listener or "consumer" of music, not the musicians themselves. This is not atypical of the approach of those others who have discussed this issue in Islam.

Nūrī (d. 907), an early Sufi saint, meant not so much an "audition" by *samā*, but an active act of listening to a recitation of poetry or a song, while keeping the ears open for detecting mystical meanings that lay behind the level of sound.[21] One who learned to listen in this manner ultimately "heard" it and was moved to answer: "He whose ear is opened to hearing, his tongue is moved to answer".[22] This ability to lend an ear to God turned him into a poet, with many verses preserved in his name. Such moments of response to God were moments of "finding" and "ecstasy" (*wajd*, with both meanings), though for Nūrī ecstasy could never become a pretext for improper behaviour: "He who does not observe propriety in his moments [of finding/ecstasy], his is [a moment of] detestation. "[23] *Samā* in later centuries is most often attached to the cult of a particular saint; his *baraka* and his intercession that is demanded. According to ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) by turning towards an intercessor and guide other than the Prophet, the Sufis the Sufis were accused of associationism (*shirk*) and infidelity (*kufr*). As *samā* is in many occasions is considered as the concrete proof of the intervention of the interceding saint Ibn Taymiyya argues that the ecstatic states are merely cases of demoniac possession.[24] His standpoint and argumentation did not resonate with his contemporaries. He

[20] Fadlou Shehadi, ed., *Philosophies of Music in Medieval Islam,* Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 67 (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1995), 115.
[21] Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism The Formative Period,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 14-15.
[22] Karamustafa, *Formative,* 15.
[23] Karamustafa, *Formative,* 14-15.
[24] Ed. by Carl W. Ernst, *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam,* (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 1994), 28.

became pivotal in recent centuries, as many theorists of Islamic fundamental reformist movements adopted his works and highlighted him as an authority figure. *Samā* was widely discussed by practitioners of the Sufi traditions and their contemporaries as well. It is striking that even the earlies handbooks on Sufi practice showed deep concern with questions of etiquette and ceremony.[25] Keeping this in mind I will analyse some of these primary sources concentrating on ethical treaties that help to reconstruct the actual circumstances and proceedings of these musical gatherings

The second concept in the core of my methodological discourse is habitus, which is considered as Bourdieu`s greatest contribution to social sciences and the entire corpus of his thought is built upon it.[26] Reading texts for historical purposes, texts in literate societies can be seen to operate in the manner of Bourdieu's concept of habitus. I will aim to examine early Sufi texts mentioning music as a system of unconscious schemes of thought and perception or dispositions which act as mediation between systems of approved group behaviour and musical practices.[27]

There are several historical works dealing with the topics I touch upon, although not all together. Still, I will avoid doing a simple review of these works and highlight some of the primary source materials that have hitherto remained largely outside of comparative scholarly scrutiny. My aim is to juxtapose these works and to augment our current knowledge pertaining to the intellectual history of ninth and tenth century Iraq. I will explore evidence for medieval Arabic traditions about the *ghulāmiyyat* and other court musicians as these groups seem to be far more prevalent than is commonly assumed and I will examine their possible influence on early Sufi *samā*. Articles and books on music at the early Abbasid era mostly stated that

[25] Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 3.
[26] Mary S. Mander, Bourdieu, the Sociology of Culture and Cultural Studies: A Critique, *European Journal of Communication*, Sage, Volume 2. (1987), 1.
[27] Mander, *Bourdieu*, 3.

listening to music in Islam is an issue of ethics. These works place the legitimacy of music to the sphere of philosophy and morality, stating that it is an issue of behavior in the broad sense and part of the moral philosopher's concern with morality in art.[28] Other academics state that music has always been a controversial legal and social issue in Islam, and pious guardians always had a compulsion to condemn on immoral activities. That argument have been discarded in multiple occasions, yet it is still pervasive.

[28] Shehadi, *Philosophies of Music*, 124.

Chapter 1

The state of "art music" and musicians in the early Abbasid Baghdad

In this chapter, I will survey the state of "art music" and musicians in the early Abbasid Baghdad, mainly focusing on the ninth century. During this period, the first texts in Arabic that related to music emerged. I will show the connection between two phenomena, namely the elevation of the status of the musicians in the Abbasid court and the religious scholars' changing attitude towards music, and then theorize that Islamic legal arguments against music started in the ninth century, not earlier as Henry George Farmer claims.

From the ninth century onward, the fusion of Arabic, Persian, and Greek motifs produced an outburst of musical and overall cultural vitality that mainly concentrated around Baghdad. Theoretical writings on music were produced in Arabic and the social status of musicians was elevated in the courts. Persian culture prevailed in Baghdad at the time. The celebration of Nawruz was sometimes forbidden by authorities, the celebration and the accompanying customs persisted, al-Tabari notes that the caliph allowed the custom of throwing water, the crowd took it too far throwing water all over the police at one of their guard posts. Saint days were celebrated as well, accompanied with music of tambourines, lutes, dancing and singing.[29]

[29] Bennison, *The Great Caliphs*, 99.

Meanwhile, some religious scholars voiced their concerns through legal texts that focused on the morality of Baghdad's elites. The central figure of my thesis, and writer of the first legal arguments against music, al-Dunyā, enjoyed singular importance in the Abbasid court as the personal tutor of Caliph al-Mu□taḍ id (854-902) and his son al-Muktafī (877/878-908). In later works, scholars arguing about music always end up quoting him as the sole authority. He mainly argued against *ghinā*□ (art music), which, as explained in the introduction above, is the term I use for court-related musical practices. First, I will survey theoretical writings about ghinā□. In the second part, I will look at the book of al-Dunyā, poetry and stories created in the Abbasid courts, and analyze the circumstances that may have influenced al-Dunyā to disdain the so-called art music.

"Among the last of my people there will be swallowing up, pelting, and metamorphosis." 8 It was said, ", apostle of Allah, when?" He said, "When the *ma*□*āziṭ* and the *qainā t* appear, and wine is considered lawful." The *ma*□*āziṭ* are musical instruments (*ālāt al-ṭ arab*), and the *qainā t* are the singing-girls. And as for the pelting, it is the throwing of stones [from the sky, just as they were sent on Lot's people, some on tribes and some on houses; and they will be sent on them][30]

Theoretical Background: *Ṭarab*

Many theoretical writers put emphasis on and agreed on the major influence of *ṭ arab* upon humans and animals as well. The *ṭ arab* is poetic and musical emotion, the outburst of uncontrolled impulses, a trauma,[31] a deadly trance. Imrū' al-Qays, a famous poet in the sixth century, described as *ṭ arab* the singing of the birds, or the cameleer`s singing calming the animals.[32] Al-Hasan al-Kātib in his book entitled *Kamal adab al-ghina* (The perfection of

[30] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*, 19.
[31] Amnon Shiloah, *La perfection des connaissances musicales: Traduction annotée du traité de musique arabe d'al-Ḥasan ibn Umar ibn 'Ali al-Kātib*, École pratique des hautes études. 4e section, Sciences historiques et philologiques, 1964-1965
[32] *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (E. J. Brill; Leiden, 1986)

musical knowledge) mentions that herdsmen can control their animals with dedicated styles that each species can distinguish.[33]

Al-Kātib was a municipal secretary in the eleventh century and he put together ideas from his three main sources of influence: the two great philosophers Kindī (d. 874) and Fārābī (d.950), and the lesser known al-Sarakhsī (d. 899), who was Kindī's most prominent student and who wrote on both the theory and practice of music. Al-Kātib gives a relatively fresh and well fleshed-out statement about the meaning of music, and especially about the need for knowledge to properly enjoy music.[34]

Defending musical practices, early Sufi writer Sarrāj describes its medical effects and the beneficial effect of the cameleer's voice in urging and soothing tired camels. Sarrāj recounts a narrative about a camel master being ruined by a slave cameleer's enchanting voice. The slave urged on the tired camels with their heavy loads in a state of enchantment until they died of exhaustion. The story anticipates the dramatic effects of music and poetry on the human soul.[35] Some musical instruments could have been related to the jinn as well, as the word □*azf* means the voice of a jinn and it is also the name of a stringed instrument.[36]

… "My Lord forbade me wine, *al-maisir*, the *qinnīn*, and the *kūba*." *Al-maisir* is gambling; the *qinnīn* is the lute (ʻud) and it is said the *qinnīn* is one of the playthings used in gambling; and the kūba is the drum (*ṭ abl*), and it is said it is the lute (□*ūd*) and backgammon (*nard*).[37]

According to al-Ibshīhī,[38] *ṭ arab* was mere angry shouting, the vibration of the bees, the pulsating of the lute`s body which calms the heart (*khaffat al-maṭ arib*),[39] or the heavenly choir

[33] al-Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn `Ali al-Katib, *Kitāb kamal adab al-gina'* [The perfection of musical knowledge] (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣ rīya al-`Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1975), 50.
[34] Fadlou Shehadi, ed., *Philosophies of Music*, 81.
[35] Kenneth S. Avery, *A Psychology of Early Sufi Sama* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 15.
[36] H. G. Farmer, "The Influence of Music from Arabic Sources," *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 52 (1925): 94.
[37] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*,, 31.
[38] He wrote the book called *Kitāb al-sama' wa ahkamuhu* (The book of listening to music and its attributes).
[39] *Encyclopaedia Of Islam*, 210, 211.

of the seraphs inspiring the birds and the singers. Musicologist Amnon Shiloah suggests that mentioning the seraphs might show a Judaic influence, the description and effect of their singing is in accordance with a cabbalistic concept about the angels and Israel singing which keeps the micro- and macrocosms in harmony.[40]

Al-Isfahānī, the sole authority on medieval Arabic music, in *The Book of Songs* calls the uncontrollable trance *idṭ irab,*[41] Al-Dunyā calls musical instruments *ālat al-ṭ arab* in a pejorative manner,[42] in his case particularly stringed instruments.[43] Al-Dunyā relies on hadiths that are either Old Testament related or generally of Judaic origin. These stories talk about the origin of musical instruments. According to one of them Tubal, the ancestor of Cain invented some stringed instruments, his people used them to divert and seduce each other and it spread to the ancestors of Seth, who were addicted to alcohol, which al-Dunyā linked to art music claiming that it causes the same kind of intoxication.

On the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, on the authority of the Prophet (Allah bless him, etc.), he said, "Allah has forbidden you wine, *al-maisir*, and the *kūba*, which is the drum (*ṭ abl*)." And he said, "Every intoxicant is forbidden.[44]

According to Shiloah this origin story and others related to Jubal from Genesis occur in a variety of Arabic sources around the ninth to eleventh centuries.[45] The theoretical similarities of Judaic and Arabic texts from the ninth century onwards regarding the origins and ethics of music are striking and worth further research. In the end of the ninth century al-Fārābī explained the ecstatic phenomena in his major work, the *Kitāb al-musiqā al-kabir* (The great book of music). According to him a skilled musician with different tunings can influence people to the point that they go to sleep.[46] Ibn □Abd Rabbih, the Andalusian writer in his best-

[40] Shiloah, *Music and Religion in Islam*, 153.
[41] Encylopaedia of Islam, 343.
[42] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*, 41.
[43] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*, 19.
[44] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*, 31.
[45] Shiloah, *Music and Religion in Islam*, 154.
[46] Farmer, "The Influence of Music from Arabic Sources,", 107.

known book called □*Igd al-farīd* (Precious necklace) wrote a whole chapter about dying and fainting from music.[47] His writings were circulating in Baghdad most likely as well, al-Kātib quoted from the □*Igd al-farīd* several times.[48]

Philosophical Background

> The caliph al-Raṣ hīd asked Ibrāhīm b. Maymūn al-Mawṣ ilī about the ancient and contemporary music. It looks like the old silk; about which it is seen after long and extensive examination that it is crafted with quality care and beauty. Contemporary music is like the newly designed silk, which is a pleasure to look at from the first sight, but after a while whenever looking at it, one begins to find flaws, sees its beauty decrease.
>
> … But the musician must practice ancient poetry, has to know the lasting styles of the centuries, be clear about all the details from beginning to the end.[49]

> And on the authority of ‘A□isha (Allah be pleased with her!), she said, Allah’s apostle (Allah bless him, etc.) said, “Among my people there will be swallowing up, pelting, and metamorphosis.” ‘A□isha said, “apostle of Allah, while they say, ‘There is no god but Allah’?” He said, “When singing-girls appear, and immorality, drinking of wine, and wearing of silk appear, this will take place among us.”[50]

One major influence for these scholars on conceiving music was antique and late antique philosophy. By the ninth century Abbasid scholars had become acquainted through a vast translation enterprise with the scientific achievements of the Greeks in various areas of learning, including that of musical science. Music was associated with classical Greek philosophies; even the Arabic word, *mūsīqā*, meaning art music in theoretical writings comes from ancient Greek.[51] Furthermore, many Abbasid era scholars practiced philosophy, those interested in music were significantly influenced by “The Harmony of the Spheres” by Pythagoras.[52] Plato`s and Aristotle`s influence, direct or indirect, extends throughout the wide scale of audio-visual perception. Pythagorean ideas can be encountered in the thought of Al-

[47] H.G. Farmer, “The Influence of Music from Arabic Sources,”,107.
[48] Amnon Shiloah, *La perfection des connaissances musicales*. 1964-1965., 68.
[49] al-Katib, *Kitāb kamal adab al-gina'* [The perfection of musical knowledge], 29.
[50] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*,20.
[51] Shehadi, ed., *Philosophies of Music*, 7.
[52] Shehadi, ed., *Philosophies of Music*, 3-4.

Kindī, and in the Epistles of the Brotherhood of Purity, the mysterious philosopher group of the 11th century. I will investigate the influence of Pythagoras in music related texts further later.

Much of the opposition of scholars to music was directed toward "art music" and musical instruments, *ālāt al-malāhī*, literally meaning instruments of amusements. It is the same word that occurs in the *Dhamm al-malāhī by* al-Dunyā. *Ghinā* was practiced in a variety of contexts related to court culture.

Musicians in the early Abbasid courts and al-Dunyā

> Many people, when they hear Arabic poetry about camping, trails, leads, springs, wells, houses, travelling through the desert, camels, deserts, water, solitude, cupidity, conflicts, battles, rage and revenge find it unpleasant. They don't care about it, especially if it is an outlandish and strange poem. For that reason, these people cannot understand the uniqueness of these poems, or understand what they mean. These people have no reference to a kind of poetry which deals with love, nature, drinking alcohol, slave girls (qiyan) or happy gatherings. These poems are out of their sight.[53]

> … And Ibn Mās ud said. "Singing makes hypocrisy grow in the heart as water makes the seed grow." And from him, he said, Allah's apostle (Allah bless him, etc.) said, "Singing makes hypocrisy grow in the heart as water makes vegetables grow."[54]

In the following section I will survey the status of musicians in the early Abbasid courts. Many of them were highly valued courtiers, that could make musicians unwanted for the possible influence on the highest circles in Baghdad. Some of them were involved in politics as well. For this reason, I will survey their social status and involvement during the given period. The eighth to the ninth centuries were a formative period for political thought for the Islamic

[53] al-Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn `Ali al-Katib, *Kitāb kamal adab al-gina'* [The perfection of musical knowledge], 31.
[54] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*, 24.

dynasties.[55] Most of the earliest sources regarding music were written in the eleventh century, many music historians took the later sources for granted.

Henry George Farmer states that "the strict Muslims were scandalized at the ungodliness of the court, wine and music, singing-men, and singing-women." He talks about the court of Yazid I (680-83), relying on William Muir's *The Caliphate: Its Rise, Decline, and Fall,* which was written in 1892. Muir, in turn, simply took *The Book of Songs* by al-Isfahānī for granted and relied on one source about Yazid I and the so-called strict Muslim`s attitude towards music. Given this lack of access to sources the only coherent piece of Umayyad-era history of music becomes very questionable. Yet Farmer was well read in medieval Arabic musical texts, so I will use his quotes carefully and sidestep his methodological flaws.

It is hard to tell generally how a movement, or a certain attitude starts, the same goes for the religious and moral disdain of art music. What is certain that the first coherent written argument in the Islamic context comes from the end of the ninth century, written by Ibn abi al-Dunyā (d.894). He is a lesser known Arabic writer, although the references to him, both positive and negative, show that he was an authoritative figure of his time. For example, nearly a hundred years later, Abū Naṣ r al-Sarrāj (d.988) the famous early Sufi writer in his book, the *Kitāb al-Lumā* (The book of flashes), argues for the musicality of the recitation and tries to discredit al-Dunyā.[56] In his history, Ibn al-Athīr only mentions the death of al-Dunyā in the year of 281 (894). Generally, Ibn al-Athīr only acknowledges great or extraordinary events, the passing of famous people. Such important mentions indicate that al-Dunyā was an influential member of the Abbasid society of Baghdad.

[55] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics Under the Early Abbasids* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1.

[56] Avery, *A Psychology of Early Sufi Sama*, 14. The only coherent translation and critical edition of the *Kitāb al-Luma* was published in 1914. I will survey this book, as well as the problems with the translation and its connection to art music in a separate chapter.

As al-Dunyā was closely related to the court, a brief survey of the condition and status of musicians in the early Abbasid court is in order. Could the circumstances in the highest circles of Baghdad lead al-Dunyā to voice his concerns and disdain, which eventually led a tradition condemning art music? From the various sources I will attempt to cast light on the status and everyday life of musicians in Baghdad.

Nearly all the early-Abbasid caliphs composed poetry or music themselves, some musicians had very close relationships with the caliphs. Artists were appreciated for their role as a very close companion. Quite often, they amused the ruler and educated him about various aspects of life. They had to be knowledgeable, sociable, and entertaining. This practice was part of an earlier tradition in the area, musicians in the Sassanian court occupied an elevated status in the king`s retinue and were represented in the three hierarchic classes of the courtiers. The court singers were expected to possess qualities that made them a perfect social companion. Being a companion was a profession and they were called *nadīm*, to a certain extent al- Dunyā was a companion as well. Shiloah argues that to a large extent the same system would be adopted by the Abbasid caliphs in their courts.[57] If the Abbasids adopted it from the Sassanian court it might suggest that in the ninth century the emergence of musical text took place simply because music became an important part of courtly life. Written sources name countless musicians with close, even intimate relationships with the Abbasid caliphs. The caliph al-Walīd ibn Yazīd for example didn't care much for politics, spent money lavishly on poets and musicians, was fund of wine. He was described as a good singer and instrumentalist. He was murdered, and historians speculate that his behaviour cost him his life.[58] A singer called Al-□Abbās ibn al-Aḥ naf accompanied the great caliph Hārūn al-Raṣ hīd on his military campaigns,[59] a certain

[57] Ammon Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford Handbooks, 2014), 8.
[58] George Dimitri Sawa, *Erotica, Love and Humor in Arabia*, Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2016., 13.
[59] Ed. by Shawkat M. Toorawa, *Consorts of the Caliphs, Women and the Court of Baghdad*, New York: New York University Press, 2015, 23.

poet and musician; Abū Dulaf al-Qāsim ibn □Ī sā al-□Ijlī became a military commander under the caliph al- Amīn and governor under the caliph al-Mu□taṣ im.[60] Al-Iṣ fahānī mentions him as a challenger of poets in the court of al-Mu□taṣ im,[61] As a governor and artist he could have been confident in the court of Baghdad and certainly knew al-Dunyā. The list of caliphs, princes and high-ranking officials who became musicians or were very closely involved with music is very long. Thanks to the countless picturesque primary sources and the tireless secondary literature dealing with them it is justifiable to assume that musicians and music itself threatened the status of some of the other companions, like al-Dunyā.

As al-Dunyā does not mention the musicians directly, I will analyze his narrative, especially when he defines musical instruments. As I mentioned earlier, he mainly referred to stringed instruments, all the Judaic stories linking musical instruments to the devil in his works are mainly about stringed instruments.[62] Most of the theoretical writers of the time associated stringed instruments with the strongest ecstatic effects on people, they are considerably more versatile and easier to accompany poetry with. The stringed instrumentalists link to poetry and storytelling is an important aspect that I plan to research further in the future.

Yazīd ibn al-Walīd said, ", Umaiyads, avoid singing, for it decreases shame, increases desire, and destroys manliness, and verily it takes the place of wine and does what drunkenness does. But if you must engage in it, keep the women and children away from it, for singing is the instigator of fornication."[63]

Al-Dunyā associates art music with manliness and homosexuality as well. Al-Ghazālī, the influential figure of Islamic jurisprudence in his works mentions the banning of the so called homosexual musical instruments as well,[64] which is taken as a tradition from al-Dunyā. What they meant most likely is that certain music played on that instrument causes homosexuality, or that the players themselves were homosexuals. Coining these terms can be misleading,

[60] Ed. by Shawkat M., *Consorts of the Caliphs*, 160.
[61]Ed. by Shawkat M., *Consorts of the Caliphs*, 67.
[62] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*,22.
[63] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*, 27.
[64] Faruqi, "Music, Musicians and Muslim Law",24.

James Robson in his 1938 edition of the *dhamm al-malāhī* calls them homosexual instruments, while the contemporary scholar Sahar Amer with satisfying explanation coined the term queer musical instruments.[65] In this thesis I will follow Amer`s classification. She mentions that during the reign of al-Amīn (787-813) a queer group of musicians called *ghulāmiyyat* became important part of the courtly life. One of them, called Arīb was in the proximity of al-Amīn. According to the sources the mother of al-Amīn introduced them to the court, learning of the affection of his son for boys she brought these slave girls (*ghulāmiyyat)* to the court, dressed in the fashion of men with painted moustaches.

And from him (Allah bless him, etc.) that he said when a man questioned him, saying, ", apostle of Allah, do you forbid us to weep when you weep?" He said, "I forbade you only two foolish, wicked sounds [a sound] in a tune of diversion and sport and devil's pipes; and a sound in affliction and scratching of faces and rending of breasts and devil's moaning."[66]

Ḥuḍ aifa was relating on the authority of Allah's apostle (Allah bless him, etc.), "Let not the man imitate the woman in her clothing, and let not the woman imitate the man in his clothing."[67]

According to Sahar Amer it became a fashion for high ranking women in Baghdad to act and dress like men. One of the terms used for these slave girls were *mutazarrifat*, which occurs in the works of al-Isfahānī meaning high ranking women who act queer.[68] George Dimitri Sawa translated and collected a good proportion of the homoerotic stories and poetry from the Book of Songs.[69]

In this chapter I have surveyed the state of music and musicians in the early Abbasid era. In the ninth century scholars of the Abbasid Caliphate started to write about music, argue for the good or bad effects of it. What most of them agreed on is that music is powerful and capable

[65] Sahar Amer, Medieval Arab Lesbians and Lesbian-Like Women Journal of the History of Sexuality, Vol.18, No.2, University of Texas Press, 2009, 227.
[66] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*, 28.
[67] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*,, 29.
[68] Sahar Amer, Medieval Arab Lesbians, 228-29.
[69] Robson, *Erotica, Love and Humor in Arabia*.

of influencing humans and animals to the extreme. Meanwhile the caliphs of Baghdad adopted in some way the Sassanian musical ceremonies and made musicians their companions, equal to poets. Although poetry became a projection of power and a trademark of Arab identity, art music was urban, feminine and foreign-rooted. As from the eleventh century onwards the Abbasids lost control and piety was on the rise, the morals of the urbanized Abbasid high circles were blamed for the political turmoil and the words of al-Dunyā began to resonate with an increasing number of scholars who disdained artsy philosopher rulers and their weak predecessors.

CHAPTER 2

Musical Gatherings in the Formative Period of Sufism

In this chapter I will survey the nature of Sufi musical gatherings and their connection to non-religious music that I examined in the previous chapter. First, I will lay out the contemporary stand of scholarship on the difficulties of the formative period of Sufism. Muslims started using the term Sufi to describe certain types of religious attitudes quite early in the Islamic context. Sufism is not an internal term, but a descriptor employed by Western observers to refer to a diverse array of phenomena related to those called Sufis.[70] The idea that all things described as Sufi fits into an "-ism" is a modern and misleading presumption.

The term was coined during the Enlightenment to describe religions, and Sufism became a standard term. It is easy to assume that the phenomenon and any other terms hold minor varieties therefore Sufism is used as an umbrella term. This assumption is the result of the way social and intellectual history has developed in Europe and America. The nineteenth-century methodology of Darwinism and zoology had a major influence on all sciences, including comparative religious studies as well. The mainstream body of religion according to this theory is considered the main species, sects and particular types of religious practices are viewed as different species and subspecies.[71] The essence of the assumption is that every religion has an

[70] Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, 9.

[71] Carl W. Ernst, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam* (Boston and London: Shambala, 2011, 18-19.

untainted core, which corrupts as time goes by. This is not far from the general theological views of Lutheran teachings and intellectuals under the influence of the reformation in the Germanic academia, whom by no mere chance had a great effect on the above-mentioned fields. When British Protestants traveling in the Middle East saw religious phenomena that reminded them of Catholic saint-veneration, they applied to it the same language previously reserved for what they thought of as the superstitious practices of Catholicism. From the nineteenth century onwards, Muslim fundamentalists used a similar language when describing the idolatry of saint-worship. Sainthood is thus, like Sufism, a contested term in Islamic thought, despite the considerable importance of saints in Muslim religious life over most of the previous millennium.[72]

Shahzad Bashir uses the term *tasawwuf*, the Arabic verbal noun which means making oneself Sufi.[73] Calling a group of Sufis an order has led scholars to misapprehend the type of internal cohesion and discipline that characterizes a Sufi network.[74] *Tasawwuf* is about the way and procession of a Sufi, how different Sufis and Sufi networks behaved and how these networks were related to each other in terms of behaviour. According to Ernst, these definitions begin with additional etymologies that connect the term Sufi to other Arabic roots, especially *safa*□, or purity, and *ṣafwa*, meaning the chosen ones. Qushayrī (d. 1074), the ninth-century religious scholar, introduced the subject of the Sufis in this way: "God made this group the chosen ones among his friends, and he honored them above the rest of his worshippers after his messengers and his prophets . . . and he purified them from all obscurities." Qushayrī explicitly stated that the term Sufi does not originate linguistically in any of the roots that have been proposed for

[72] Ernst, *Sufism*, 45.
[73] Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 10.
[74] Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 11-12.

it, since most of them stretch the rules of language. "This group is too well known to require definition by verbal analogy and etymological research," he stated.[75]

Ironically, the unease with the term Sufism seems to have emerged almost as soon as the term itself became popular. When asked about Sufism, Hujwīrī (d. ca. 1075), the author of *Kashf al-maḥjūb* (Unveiling of the hidden), the earliest known formal treaty on Sufism in Persian, replied "In our time this science has been obliterated, especially in this region, for people are all occupied with pleasure, and have turned away from satisfying [God]. The scholars of the age and pretenders of the day have formed an impression of it that is contrary to its principles." Lamenting on the decline of Sufism can be found even in the first known texts, which, according to Ernst, indicates the tension between the ideals of mysticism and the realities of social practice. The most famous such formulation is attributed to an early Sufi named Abu al-Hasan Fushanja: "Sufism today is a name without a reality, whereas it was once a reality without a name."[76]

Another influential theorist in this field is Abu ʿAbd al-Raḥ mān al-Sulamī (d. 1021). He lived in eastern Iran and wrote numerous works in Arabic, including the earliest major collection of lives of Sufi saints. He constructed a historical interpretation linking the Sufis as the heirs and followers of the prophets, a form of creating authority. Nevertheless Sulamī like other Sufi writers acknowledged that the term Sufi did not originate at the time of Muhammad, but like other religious technical terms it came into existence later. It was observed by Ansari (d. 1089) in his Persian translation of Sulamī's biographical work that the first person who bore the name Sufi was a Syrian named Abū Hāshim al-Sūfi (d. 767) and what important he adds, "Before him there were saints characterized by asceticism, abstemiousness, and good deeds in the path

[75] Ernst, *Sufism*, 18.
[76] Ernst, *Sufism*, 20.

of trusting God and the path of love. But this name Sufi was first used of him."[77] Again, a reality without the name or the name without the reality.

Early Baghdad Sufis in Musical Gatherings

The following section is dedicated to the early Baghdad Sufis, how they behaved in musical gatherings and whether their gatherings had connections with other forms of musical gatherings. The other aspect of the early Baghdad Sufis I will investigate is their collectiveness. In the Western context, mysticism—a word much often used to describe Sufis —evokes an inward-looking mystic, an individualistic thinker working in his dark and private place.[78] Analysing these presumptions I will look at the early Baghdad network of Sufis gathering publicly as a mystical collective aiming to reach God. I chose the Baghdadi Sufis, because a there was a rift between the mystics of Nishapur and Baghdad specifically regarding musical gatherings. This disagreement hampered the fusion of the two trends and their differences likely continued to exist in and after the tenth century. The rift between the two approaches is visible in their differing attitudes towards the culture of artisanal classes, with which the Baghdad Sufis may be linked.[79]

As briefly noted above, Bourdieu`s concept of habitus be adapted regarding musical practices.[80] Habitus and texts both are societal products and crucial for shaping societal practices. The job of a historian is to go beyond the surfaces of the texts and reconstitute the social world looking at interrelated social and discursive practices.[81] Shahzad Bashir adopted habitus to deconstruct hagiographies of Persianate Sufi masters from the thirteenth century

[77] Ernst, *Sufism*, 24.
[78] Green, Sufism,2.
[79] Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Formative* 65.
[80] Mary S. Mander, "Bourdieu, the Sociology of Culture and Cultural Studies: A Critique," *European Journal of Communication* 2 (1987): 1.
[81] Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 17.

onwards focusing on the conception of the human body between interior and exterior realities. My timeframe and cultural context is different, although his remarks on *dhikr* and *samā* are instrumental to my analysis. Since then others have adopted habitus to musicology or music history, but their period and cultural context were also very different.[82]

Bourdieu remarks that artistic production is always—depending on the art form and the traditions of practice—pure practice without theory.[83] It always contains an indescribable connection between humans, and for Sufis certainly between them and God. Keeping these existing works and approaches in mind I will examine early Sufi texts mentioning music as a system of unconscious schemes of thought and perception or dispositions which act as mediation between systems of approved group behaviour and musical practices.[84]

There are many similarities between mysticism and music. The musician can be, like the saint, be the owner of the quasi-supernatural power to stir the emotions without any 'natural' causes. Their power is not far from miracles, in most cases miraculous healing. Ethos in traditional music leads to ethic, it is a science which is transmitted in an initiated way, like certain Sufi sheikhs. The music master needs to deliver to his initiated disciples an official authorization to transmit his teachings in his name.[85]This is the same set of relationships and projection of authority, which in the Sufi tradition can be regarded as the sum of similar sets of relationships: between saints and followers, between the readers and writers of the Sufi texts, between the subjects and objects of the devotion that was the emotional heartbeat of Sufi tradition.[86] This

[82] See: Mark Rimmer, *Listening to the Monkey: Class, Youth and the Formation of a Musical Habitus, Ethnography*, *Ethnography* 11, no. 2 (2010); and Loren Monte Ludwig, *"Equal to All Alike": A Cultural History of the Violin Consort in England, c.1550-1675*, PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2011.
[83] Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*, 2.
[84] Mander, *Bourdieu*, 3.
[85] Ernst, *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*, 27.
[86] Green, *Sufism*, 9-10.

is the intimate relationship and urge to oneness what Shahzad Bashir calls the system of handshakes.[87]

One way to practice and master that relationship between disciple, sheik and God is the musical gathering called *samā*. In the given period it was classified as an active act of listening to a recitation of poetry or a song but keeping the mind open for detecting mystical meanings that lay behind the level of sound. One who learned to listen in this manner ultimately 'heard' and was moved. 'He whose ear is opened to hearing, his tongue is moved to answer.'[88] Since much of early Arabic Sufi poetry seems to have been lost, it is known for the most part through brief quotations of verses attributed to early masters, as quoted in later handbooks on Sufism. Many of these verses use the same imagery of love and wine found in secular poetry, so the only thing to distinguish them as mystical is their context and interpretation. Probably the best-known example is the cerebral and passionate poetry of Hallāj, of which several hundred verses were collected by Louis Massignon from various sources.[89]

It is striking that even the earlies handbooks on Sufi practice showed deep concern with questions of etiquette and ceremony.[90] In theory, the purpose of entering a brotherhood has been to learn the practices of *adab* (etiquette), *dhikr* (chanting) and *muraqaba* (meditation) passed down by its masters. This is the reason Nile Green called Sufism a tradition of powerful knowledge, practices, and persons.[91] The ties between disciples and masters were in the centre of Sufi authority, if a disciple can fit into the tradition embodied by the master he will eventually become a master himself passing on the tradition and the authority as well.

[87] Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 12.
[88] Karamustafa, *Formative*, 14-15.
[89] Ernst, *Sufism*, 118.
[90] Green, *Sufism*, 3.
[91] Green, *Sufism*, 3.

Despite its importance as a theoretical and symbolic term, the word Sufi was not very often applied to actual individuals. Partly this was because of the intrinsic tension between the ideal of selflessness and the egotism inherent in claiming such status. There was a sense, in other words, that a true Sufi would never claim that title. Derivative words were spun off to cover these contingencies, so that a *mutasawwif* was someone who legitimately aspired to be a Sufi, and this term could be happily adopted by many. Alternatively, someone who falsely claimed to be a Sufi was a *mustaswif*, a term used only pejoratively.[92] Keeping the anti-individualistic aspect of the Sufi tradition in mind, it seems logical that the etiquette of gatherings was important from the very beginning. What happened at these gatherings that concerned the Sufi masters? To what extent it is possible to deconstruct the primary sources and examine samā gatherings?

The *Kitāb al-Lumā fi l-Tasawwuf* (Book of splendours concerning the Sufi way) by the Sunni ascetic and scholar Abū Naṣ r Abdallāh b. Āli b. Muḥ ammad b. Yaḥ yā al-Sarrāj al-Ṭ ūsī (d.988) is regarded as the oldest extant guide to a Sufi tradition.[93] I will analyse the parts concerning *samā* practices. Al-Sarrāj explains in the beginning of the book that he wrote the *Kitāb al-Lumā* at the request of a friend, whose name he does not mention. His purpose in writing was to set forth the true principles of the Sufi tradition and to show by argument that they agree with and are confirmed by the doctrines of the Qur`an and the hadith; that they involve imitation of the Prophet and his companions as well as conformity with the religious practice of Muslims. Kenneth S. Avery argues that the work, therefore, is avowedly apologetic and controversial in character.[94]

[92] Ernst, *Sufism*, 22.
[93] Avery, *Early Sufi Samā*, 11.
[94] Avery, *Early Sufi Samā*, 3.

What exactly happened at these samā gatherings that made Sarraj apologetic? First and foremost, music generally has been labelled profane by certain members of the society in the Mediterranean basin at least after the teachings of Pythagoras, who linked music to the divine.[95]

> The philosophers have taken into consideration in the science of musical harmonies the importance of the arithmetic, geometry and astronomy. But sometimes vulgarity got attached to this field of science, for no reason, claiming its right on it without being inherently part of it. This alteration lessens the value of music in the eyes of those who are incompetent to be scientifically accurate … These people adjudge music by its vulgar attributes, their works lack respect and vocation, meanwhile they judge those who practice this science with wholeheartedness and never lasting enthusiasm.[96]

Sufism had many ties to scholarly circles, and the concept of knowledge and learning is pivotal. Sufism is frequently described in the early manuals as a form of religious learning (*'ilm*) alongside the familiar religious sciences of law and the sayings of Muhammad. A master of this kind of learning was known as an *'alim*, or scholar. Many of the most important religious scholars in Islamic history were simultaneously engaged in the practices of Sufism, so that titles of the learned such as *mawlana* (our master) are frequently applied to Sufis and religious scholars without any distinction. When mystical knowledge was emphasized over traditional learning, the preferred term was *ma'rifa* or *'irfan*, meaning a special knowledge that transcended ordinary rationality. The possessor of this knowledge was known as an *'ārif*. Many intellectuals combined their interest in mysticism with the metaphysical curriculum derived from Greek philosophy, which was highly developed in Arabic through translations of Plato and Aristotle as well as independent works by philosophers such as Ibn Sina, also known as Avicenna (d. 1037). The master of metaphysical wisdom or *ḥikma* was called a *ḥākim*.[97]

[95] Joscelyn Godwin, *The Harmony of the Spheres: The Pythagorean Tradition in Music* (Rochester, VT: Inner Tradition, 1992), 46. About the connection between art music and the so called Greek sciences in the given place and time I wrote in the previous chapter.
[96] al-Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn `Ali al-Katib, *Kitāb kamal adab al-gina'* [The perfection of musical knowledge], 30.
[97] Ernst, *Sufism*, 23.

If Sufi practitioners were acquainted with Greek philosophy at the time it is important to investigate whether their theories and concepts had ties to it. Abrahamov argues that Sufi divine love in Islam owes much to ancient Greek thinking. Divine love was one of the cornerstones of Sufi practices, being a Sufi implied that one had come under the spell of love, words meaning lover and beloved are used to designate Sufis in prose and poetry alike.[98] It is necessary to present the main features of this philosophical tradition to understand the link with the Sufi concept of love and its effect on musical practices and etiquette. According to Abrahamov every discussion of love, whether courtly love, romantic love or religious love must begin with Plato. Most of the material on love is found in the *Symposium*. In this dialogue, Aristophanes sets forth a myth according to which in the beginning humanity was divided into three sexes, male, female and hermaphroditic. They attacked the gods, were defeated and almost destroyed, only to be saved by Zeus's mercy. Zeus divided them into two parts, after that each part longed for the part from which it had been disconnected. The division of the three sexes explains the existence of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Human nature was originally one and we were a whole, and the desire and the pursuit of the whole is called love.[99] That desire of the whole is the purpose of Sufi practices, but it is not only meant to reach God but the mediator masters as well, and to unite the community in a single body spiritually, mentally and to some extent physically. The morally widely accepted purpose of samā is the love of God. Aristophanes wrote that it is the desire for the whole which is missing, yearning for goodness. Plato states that the fourth stage of seeking love is the realization that there is absolute beauty in which all features of beauty are included and which does not change and is eternal.[100] That love for the eternal God is in the works of Plotinus as well, who was regarded in some circles as the founder of Sufism in the Middle-Ages. He explained in one of his

[98] Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 107.
[99] Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism,*(London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 1.
[100] Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism,* 2.

discourses, “when the human spirit separates from God, it must always desire and like good and beautiful things. It must desire God who is the source of all good and beauty, and it must have love for God in its heart.” The word “love” (‘*eshq*)—it is not known whether or not it is correctly translated—became an excuse in the hands of the Sufis for their amorous talk with God.[101]

The application of the word ‘*eshq*, or passionate love, was problematic for the mediaeval theologians because it implies a physical love, which of course is impossible for the incorporeal divinity but it was a reality in the communities. Kasravi went beyond the discourses of the theologians concerning ‘*eshq* and focused upon the devotional Sufi practices, such as the samā□, or listening to Sufi music and dancing in ecstasy. In Asrani’s own words: “They played the lute and flute, stamped their feet, clapped their hands, spun and jumped around in such a way that they foamed at the mouth, became dizzy and fell over.” Moreover, the samā□ was performed by the Sufis not on account of their love for God, but rather “most of them witnessed either a beautiful youth or woman, and danced in memory of him or her”.[102] Although there may be some element of truth in Asrani’s remarks, one should not forget that many Sufis were probably genuine in their devotional activities and also spoke of exercising extreme caution when practising the samā□. It was frequently the case that the dervishes were advised to perform the samā□ when the common people were not present, at a suitable time and when permission had been given by the spiritual master. One should not forget either the beneficial sociological consequences of the so-called commoners participating in the samā□. Through a combination of entertainment, devotional practice and ritual performance, the samā□ served

[101] Lloyd Ridgeon, ed., *Sufi Castigator*, 80.
[102] Lloyd Ridgeon, ed., *Sufi Castigator*, 57.

as a tool in the integration of society,[103] it is the same notion that I mentioned about love connecting communities.

According to al-Sarraj, musical gatherings sometimes involved physical connections between men which concerned many Sufis at the time. At the previous chapter I showed how Al-Dunyā associates art music with manliness and homosexuality, Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) the influential figure of Islamic jurisprudence mentions the banning of the so called homosexual musical instruments as well,[104] which is taken as a tradition from al-Dunyā, which connects the two scholars living two hundred years apart. Both circles lived in Baghdad and were connected to multi-cultural upper-class circles. Did the habitus of the musical circles of al-Dunyā`s time lived on and effected Sufi musical practices? I would argue that to some extent it happened and that is why the instruments were labelled homosexual. The music *per se* did not survive as it was not written down, al-Kātib was furious how all these brilliant pieces are lost "like tears in the rain." The only connection with the former gatherings was the memory and the practice of the individual musician, but when they die all that remains is the instrument itself. Additionally, because of their capabilities of causing ecstasy, al-Dunyā and al-Ghazālī could have meant that certain music played on that instrument can cause homosexuality, or that the players themselves were homosexuals. As noted in the introduction, these terms can be misleading: James Robson's 1938 edition of the al-Dunyā`s *dhamm al-malāhī* translates them as homosexual instruments, while contemporary scholar Sahar Amer with satisfactory explanation coins the term queer musical instruments.[105] Amer mentions that during the reign of Hārun al-Rashid (787-813) a queer group of musicians called *ghulāmiyyat* became important part of the courtly life.

[103] Lloyd Ridgeon, ed., *Sufi Castigator*,56-57.
[104] Faruqi, "Music, Musicians and Muslim Law", 24.
[105] Amer, "Medieval Arab Lesbians," 227.

Various sources said about *samā* that it is very dangerous for novices and penitents, it may lead them to break their vows and indulge in sensual pleasures; listening to quatrains is the mark of two classes of men, either the frivolous and dissolute or the adepts in mysticism who have mortified their passions and are entirely devoted to God. Accordingly, some Sufis reject samā on the grounds that they are not yet ready for it. They think it better to occupy themselves with performing.[106] Both wine and (some) music lead away from a moral life with the same decisive force. As a matter of fact, the *ṭ arab*, the ecstatic delight that results from listening to music, has often been compared to the state of drunkenness.[107] Many theoretical writers emphasize and agree on the major influence that *ṭ arab* can cause on humans and animals as well, as discussed in the previous chapter. A picturesque story demonstrates how the Sufis were connected to homosexuality as well. About Sheikh Owhad al-Din Kermani a story states, "In witnessing the Truth he used to turn to manifestations of the upper body, and he witnessed Absolute Beauty in fixed forms." The author, wanting to express that Sheikh Kermani was a homosexual, says, "He contemplated the beauty of God in the faces of youths." In the same book is the following story about Sheikh Hamed; "when he became excited during the samā, he would tear open the shirts of the beardless youths, and dance with his breast upon theirs."[108]

> When he came to Baghdad, the Caliph who had a handsome son heard this and said, He is an innovator, and if the unbeliever performs this kind of action while associating with me, I will kill him once the saga is in full swing. The Sheikh understood [the Caliph's thoughts] through his charismatic power, and said: It is easy for me to feel the point of a sword [It is easy] to lose one's head for the sake of the friend. You have come to kill the unbeliever, since you are the lord I must be an unbeliever. The caliph and his son placed their heads at the sheikh's feet, and became his followers. Fourth, rejection of the world and despising life (which has been a custom of the Sufis, indeed, has been the foundation of their life) is another of their sins.[109]

[106] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*, 77-78.
[107] Shehadi, ed., *Philosophies of Music*, 122.
[108] Abrahamov, *Divine Love*, 44.
[109] Lloyd Ridgeon, ed., *Sufi Castigator*, 79.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, at the end of the ninth century the first coherent written dispute about music in the Islamic context appears, written by Ibn Abū al-Dunyā (d.894). Al-Sarrāj in the al-Lumā□ tries to discredit al-Dunyā and argues for the permissibility of music. The style of music that al-Dunyā argued against was art music, which was associated with the Abbasid court, alcohol consumption, musical ecstasy, homosexuality and Persian-style urban culture.[110] Al-Dunyā in his argumentation mostly referred to Judaic and Old Testament sources, translated by Hunayn ibn Isḥ āq in the early ninth century. Interestingly enough, he is one of the first scholars during the Abbasid caliphate who delved into writing music theory.[111] I would argue that the early Baghdad-based Sufi gatherings had some components similar to art music which led many people to question their permissibility. If that is the case, it would answer the question why etiquette was such a great concern of Sufis even in the earliest handbooks. Properly linking the two practices is too ambitious a task for this thesis, yet I needed to remark my intuition as it is my objective in the long run.

Al-Sarraj in the *al-Lumā*□ quotes many Sufi masters of his time to show the various opinions and debates concerning samā□. It is clear, that the language of rules and models, which—as it becomes a tradition—continuously carries out the checks and corrections intended to ensure the adjustments to the practices, like a self-regulating device, is yet to emerge.[112] Sarraj uses the same definition of samā□ as al-Ghāzālī, a tradition from Dhu al-Nūn. Then adds that according to Abu Sulaymān al-Dārānī samā□ in practice is the recitation of poetry with a musical accompaniment, which is the description of Abu al-Ḥusayn al-Darrāj.[113] Abu al-Ḥusayn al-Nūri defined the Sufi as one who practices samā□. Abu al-Ḥusayn b. Zīrī used to stay and listen to music (samā□) if he approved of it; otherwise he would pick up his shoes

[110] See Sawa, *Erotica, Love and Humor in Arabia*.
[111] Godwin, *Harmony of the Spheres*, 91.
[112] Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*, 10-11.
[113] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*□, 69.

and go.[114] Al-Ḥuṣ ri wished for samā that it should never cease, and should be more desired the more it was enjoyed.[115] Bundār b. al-Ḥusayn says that samā is lawful when it is not connected with any evil purpose and since poetry may be recited, there is no objection to reciting it with musical notes and melodies and with an agreeable intonation. After that al-Sarraj argues that samā is not like wine drinking,[116] which a reference to al-Dunyā who said that art music leads to ecstasy, which is the same when alcohol consuming causes intoxication therefore art music should be banned.[117] Al-Kātib was well aware of the connection that people made between music and alcohol consumption as well:

"There are people who do not take notice of those advantages that music can provide and they believe that it is simply the soul`s favorite entertainment after alcohol consumption."[118]

Intoxication was a characteristic of saintly people, some souls were overpowered by the attraction of divine energies. Those "fools of God" lost normal rationality and could appear to be mad. Whether their condition was temporary or permanent, those who were ecstatically absorbed (*majdhub,* also known in Persian as *mast*, or intoxicated) were often regarded as holy, and they were cared for and respected by ordinary people according to latter Persian traditions.[119]

The connection between sainthood, intoxication, ecstasy and music seems to be clear yet none of the above-mentioned arguments appear in the works of al-Dunyā. His argumentation may seem strange, but it is methodologically acceptable according to the Islamic theological analogy (*qiyās*) of the late ninth century. Yet most scholars in the time of al-Sarraj did not accept this analogy—from the eleventh century onwards most of them did not accept analogy per se;[120] nevertheless a debate existed even among the Sufis themselves over musical

[114] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*, 70.
[115] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*, 71.
[116] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*, 70-72.
[117] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*,, 20.
[118] al-Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn `Ali al-Katib, *Kitāb kamal adab al-gina'* [The perfection of musical knowledge], 34.
[119] Ernst, *Sufism,* 23.
[120] *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Shmidtke, 115.

gatherings, even those without any religious connotation. Imagine if al-Dunyā lived long enough to see Sufis reaching for God listening to the same music and chanting the same poetry linked to alcohol consuming and queerness! Sarraj sums up the discussion by stating that "audition is lawful, if it has no corrupt end in view and if it does not involve the use of certain musical instruments forbidden by the Prophet."[121]

The Nicholson edition of the book in this part is unclear, Avery translates this part as "it is those instruments used by vain or superficial people (*ahl al-bāṭ il*), and prohibited in sacred Traditions." Nicholson's translation is misleading in two regards, first saying "certain musical instruments" is an elegant way to confess that he does not exactly know what those instruments are. Secondly, saying that the Prophet forbade those instruments indicates that there is a reference to those instruments in the Qur'an or in the *hadiths* which is clearly not the case—if he refers to the *hadiths* quoted by al-Dunyā it is misleading because those were considered weak by most.

Avery translated the same phrase as "sacred traditions," which refers to the huge *hadith* corpus. Al-Dunyā in his book refers to a great number of hadiths—mostly of Judaic origin. These traditions attribute the origin of certain stringed instruments to the devil and to various sinful people.[122] Al-Sarraj most likely referred to the same *hadiths* as al-Dunyā, balancing in the middle ground between those who permit all music and those who would banish them all.

It is captivating why stringed instruments were considered the most profane. There are several stories like that in the works of Al-Sarraj, Mimshādh al-Dīnawarī, who said that all the musical instruments in the world could not divert his thoughts from God.[123] Some stringed instruments were considered saintly in Sufi tradition. The tanbur, a two-stringed lute whose function is fundamentally sacred. It is used in Kurdish and Persian Alh-i Haqq samā's, which preserves

[121] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*, 71.
[122] *Tracts on Listening to Music:* Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā*, 22.
[123] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*,75.

the memory of their saint, especially of the members of the cosmic hierarchy, particularly the Seven (*Haftān*) by means of sacred texts.[124] The *ney* of the Mevlevi dervishes in later centuries is an example, more sacred are the drums (*daff*) and the flute (*shababa*) of the Yezidis in front of which the adept has to prostrate himself. Among the Ahl-i Haqq, the tanbur is considered a sacred instrument that people kiss as a relic, from which emanates a beneficial vibration. Its sacralization is said to have been conferred on it by Shah Khushin, the great theophany of the eleventh century, who promoted this instrument`s exclusive use in samā.[125]

Al-Sarraj relates that once Abu al-Hasan b. Razcan heard a stringed instrument player singing some erotic verses, but a friend with whom he was walking improvised a mystical variation of them. Here, says the author, we have a proof that verses of which the intention is bad may be interpreted in a sense that accords with the inward feelings of the hearer.[126] These stories show that the Baghdad Sufis had very different thoughts on samā for a variety of reasons. Sufism is considered to be indifferent to matters of religious law, thus it becomes easy to posit an external origin for Sufism. The increasing stress on sociology and ideology in the study of religion results in the current picture of Sufism as a kind of mystical philosophy.[127]

According to Ernst, in later medieval Sufi texts, legally speaking, samā is of four types. One is the lawful, in which the listener is totally longing for God and not at all longing for the created. The second is the permitted, in which the listener is mostly longing for God and only a little for the created. The third is the disapproved, in which there is much longing for the created and a little for God. The fourth is the forbidden, in which there is no longing for God and all is for the created. But the listener should know the difference between doing the lawful,

[124] Ernst, *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*, 28.
[125] Ernst, *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*, 34.
[126] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*, 77.
[127] Ernst, *Sufism*, 19.

the forbidden, the permitted, and the disapproved. And this is a secret between God and the listener.[128]

As stated by Sarraj, the Qur'an condemns those who listen only with their ears and praises those who listen with attentive minds. He collected a few examples of the emotions produced by listening to the Qur'an. In the most extreme cases, the listeners die.[129] Sarraj recounts the narrative about a camel master being ruined by a slave cameleer's enchanting voice.[130] Ibn □Abd Rabbihi, the Andalusian writer in his best-known book called □*Igd al-farīd* (Precious necklace) wrote a whole chapter about dying and fainting from music.[131] His writings circulated in Baghdad most likely as well, al-Kātib, for example, quoted from the □*Igd al-farīd* several times.[132] A story related by Abu al-Ḥusayn al-Darrāj talks about a young boy who died upon hearing a slave-girl sing two verses of poetry.[133] According to Avery the evidence is inadequate for the direct effect of samā□ causing death,[134] although it was something widely discussed. What is important in these stories is that it seems like similar effects were expected from the Qur'an as from music or poetry, or the combination of the two. The Qur'an is expected to cause that effect because it is the word of God, and the most sacred scripture of the Islamic tradition cannot have the same effect as the profane and secular musical pieces of Baghdad.

Apart from some very brief references with no value for phenomenological discussion, there are some four or five instances of sudden death in the □*Igd al-farīd*. Some doubt remains over the narrative of the two shaykhs and the deaths of their followers. This account may be nothing more than an exaggerated record of rivalry and feuding between the two parties, perhaps with

[128] Ernst, *Sufism*, 139.
[129] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*□,72.
[130] S. Avery, *Early Sufi Sama*, 15.
[131] H. G. Farmer, "The Influence of Music from Arabic Sources," *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 52 (1925):107.
[132] Shiloah, *La perfection des connaissances musicales*, 68.
[133] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*□, 75.
[134] Avery, *Early Sufi Sama*, 133-34.

some display of "magic" powers added to the situation.[135] Sarraj also describes a visit which Abu al-Ḥusayn al-Darrāj paid to Yūsuf b. al-Ḥusayn at Rayy. The latter burst into tears on hearing two verses which al-Darrāj recited, though he had previously read aloud to himself a large portion of the Qur'an without any such sign of emotion.[136] Another story is related to a man who drowned in the Euphrates, probably caused by anxiety at hearing the Qur'an proclaiming God's judgement, which was taken literally and personally. This leaves the one remaining instance of the beggar who died unexpectedly upon hearing poetry recited, which he understood as God speaking directly to him. There is no straightforward explanation for his collapse and sudden death.[137] Many further examples might be given of the ecstasy and enthusiasm caused by listening to dhikr or moral exhortations.

Abū b. Uthmān (al-Ḥīrī) said; influences from the unseen world, whether they be audible or visible, produce a powerful effect upon the heart when they are in harmony with it, i.e., when the heart is pure; otherwise, their effect is weak.[138]

The chanted or recited poetry may or may not be accompanied by musical instruments. The emphasis was therefore on the experience of listening rather than on the performance of music; performance was generally the job of service professionals of relatively low social status. The consideration of Sufi music must therefore begin with the voice. Early Sufi theorists are fully aware of the power of the human voice to bring out powerful emotion. Many stories are told to illustrate the power of the voice, starting with the effect of the recitation of the Qur'an, the divine names, and religious poetry. Numerous *hadith* relate that the prophets have all been endowed with beautiful voices of remarkable intensity; it is said that when David recited the Psalms, the coffins of four hundred Israelites who expired during the recitation had to be carried out of the assembly.

[135] Avery, *Early Sufi Samā*, 133-34.
[136] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma* ,75.
[137] S. Avery, *Early Sufi Samā*, 133-134.
[138] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*, 76.

They say when Alexander, known as al-Qarnayn stood up to pay respect to a musician and offered him a seat. When his counsellors objected the gesture, he said: I pay respect to the music which lives inside him. This happened like that as those who practice this science were trained with those who cultivate all the other sciences. Alexander said: It is not because of me, that their science is honored. This is the reason he offered them with a seat.[139]

In contrast, ugly voices are to be avoided. After all, in the Qur'an God said, "The most objectionable of voices is the voice of the ass" (31:19).[140] Ruwaym described the state of the Sufi Sheykhs during audition as resembling that of a flock of sheep attacked by wolves. Abu al-Qāsim b. Marwān al-Nahāwandī, who had taken no part in the *samā* for many years, attended a meeting where some poetry was recited. The audience fell into ecstasy, after the *samā* al-Qāsim questioned them about their experiences.[141]

Samā was held at night only, piety and sleep deprivation was generally connected in Islam.[142] Given the widespread preference for night-time devotions, it is surprisingly common to read of sleep deprivation. The Kufan Masruq (d.63/682-3) did not sleep on pilgrimage save in prostration. The wife of Medinese qadi Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Ḥazm (d. 728-9) testified that he did not lie on his bed at night for forty years.[143]

Sarrāj observes that when Sufis attain to perfection their senses are purified to such an extent that they take no pleasure in music and singing.[144] Ascetics and mystics endeavour to excite lofty states (of ecstasy). Although it might make them better not to do this, such ecstasy is approved in these gatherings since they have renounced worldly things, and their ecstasy is the result of the joy which they feel in austerities and asceticism.[145] Dhū al-Nūn solves the problem of *samā* by examining the aspects or the causes leading the Sufi to *samā*: if he practices it

[139] al-Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn `Ali al-Katib, *Kitāb kamal adab al-gina'* [The perfection of musical knowledge], 37.
[140] Ernst, *Sufism*, 138-139.
[141] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*, 74.
[142] Reid, *Law and Piety*, 21.
[143] Lloyd Ridgeon, ed., *Sufi Castigator*, 5.
[144] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*, 75.
[145] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*, 78-79.

with the true aim of reaching God, it is permissible, however, if he turns to it to satisfy his lower soul, he becomes an unbeliever (tazandaqa).[146]

> If another man, who is well-acquainted in grammar, poetry, prosody and music hardly feels anything … Those less sophisticated in music is the easiest to move. Those more sophisticated having more knowledge about this art is harder to move, they will be less satisfied by what they hear. This kind of people is easy to spot and I wish most people will fall into the latter category … The beauty of those sounds that move animals is of the same quality that move ignorant people … [the owner of] the richest musical knowledge more ignorant to musical emotions … For these reasons, to experience musical ecstasy at its best one needs the finest conscience.[147]

The concerns of Sarraj and al-Kātib are very similar. Both occupy an elitist point of view, in which the unprepared and the less educated will reach a sort of ecstasy easier, but what causes that emotion is of a lesser quality therefore it must be avoided. The difference is that al-Katib has a different audience, his book is a sort of mirror of princes for listeners and musicians alike, while Sarraj does not mention the musicians themselves.

Poetry and music can cause the same emotional outburst as the Qur'an, which clearly kept the early Baghdad Sufis awake at night. If the recitation is accompanied by music, or the recitation has a certain musicality to it how can they be sure that the word of God caused the trance? It is a complicated question, and the short answer is that they cannot be sure about it.

The Sufis had to justify their practices and make sense of their experiences. They internalized the Qur'an by memorizing every verse in it and externalized the hadith corpus by enacting its moral examples in their behaviour.[148] By incorporating profane musical practices in their gatherings they could endanger their moral authority. According to Sarrāj not the music which is dangerous, but the unprepared young minds. "Those who lack the spiritual emotion which accords with the hearing of the Qur'an and is excited thereby are like beasts: they hear but do

[146] Abramahov, *Ibn Arabi and the Sufis*, 33
[147] al-Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn `Ali al-Katib, *Kitāb kamal adab al-gina'* [The perfection of musical knowledge], 20.
[148] Green, *Sufism*, 26.

not understand".[149] Animals can be excited and controlled with songs and music, to be moved by the Qur'an is human and it is much harder to achieve. Man may read the whole Qur'an many times over without being touched with emotion, whereas if the reading is accompanied by a sweet voice and plaintive intonation he feels emotion and delight in hearing it. These feelings, then, are not caused by the Qur'an, but by sweet sounds and melodies which accord with human temperaments. The harmonies of poetry are similar in their nature and their effects and easily blend with music. A certain homogeneity exists between them and the spirit of man.[150] Al-Kātib in his *kitāb kamāl adab al-ginā* talks about something very similar about art music.

In the ninth century Baghdad was home to a great debate over the creation of the Qur'an. According to the proto-orthodox scholars of the time the Qur'an is perfect and not created, changing it by different intonations is wrong,[151] and trance might not be caused by the Qur'an but the musicality of the intonation, which is a kind of ecstasy that is easier to reach and different from the pure Qur'anic ecstasy. To borrow the terminology from Christology, it is the question of similar substance or same substance. That is partly the reason that these authors were concerned about samā□.

"If the beginner is ignorant of these conditions, he must learn them from a Sheikh, or he should be seduced and corrupted."[152] Viewed as a whole, the *Kitāb al-Samā*□ attempts to justify the practice of samā□ among the Sufis, and the heat generated by this controversy was considerable.[153] Yet according to the *Kitāb al-Samā*□ most Sufis practiced samā□, a smaller group called the the "People of Blame" refused to wear distinctive clothing, took care to earn

[149] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*□,72.
[150] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*□,74.
[151] Green, *Sufism*, 24.
[152] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*□,74.
[153] al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma*□, 24-25

their own living, and had no distinct public rituals; they performed *dhikr* silently and did not hold any samā sessions.[154]

My primary sources are witnesses of a formative period, when the differing customs, habits were yet to be shaped as a single normative tradition, or as ones existing parallel. From the middle of the ninth century, the term Sufi came to be used increasingly as a technical term to designate a group of people who belonged to a clearly identify able social movement in Baghdad that was based on a distinct type of piety. The process through which the earlier term Sufi became the preferred name for Baghdad mystics remains obscure, though one can speculate that the term Sufi had a certain 'avant-garde' or 'cutting-edge' resonance among both renunciants and others, and that this 'hip' quality facilitated its application to the new movement.[155] Even the Sufis of Baghdad were not agreeing on the permissibility of musical practices, they were less reluctant about it which is possibly due to the art of milieu of the great city.

[154] Karamustafa, *Formative*, 48-49.
[155] Karamustafa, *Formative*, 23.

Conclusion

In the present thesis I surveyed the cultural politics of music in the ninth and the tenth centuries, with looking outward to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In the first chapter I investigated the status of art music and musicians in the Abbasid courts of Baghdad. The rulers and their families lived in the inner circle of Baghdad and art music was centered around them. The caliphs hold gatherings that included poetry, dancing and music. These gatherings were attended by all kinds of people, a wide range of social and economic status, artists of both sexes. Meanwhile al-Dunyā wrote the first known texts against music in the Islamic context. He mainly argued against *ghinā* (art music), which is closely attached to court-related musical practices, the Greek translation movement and everything that made Abbasid culture multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. I surveyed the theoretical writings on music, mainly by al-Dunyā and al-Katib. The represent two different worlds. Al-Dunyā is of Arab origin, well respected at his time with the highest political connections. The life of al-Kātib is uncertain, he was a bureaucrat somewhere in the Abbasid system and studied immensely Greek philosophy and music. Al-Dunyā saw the apocalypse in the elevation of a lifestyle which included art music, singing girls, backgammon and silk. Al-Kātib used silk as a reference to beauty and fine craftsmanship, although he was worried that obscenity can discredit music and musical sciences. He did not mention any names, but he harshly attacked those who could not see behind certain music and musicians and rejected the art form. From both of their works and from the *Book of Songs* we can see, that it became a fashion to practice music, everyone including the highest social and political circles learned, practiced and listened to it. Al-Dunyā mentions cross-dressing, playing music, unmanliness and weeping next to each other. This close association most likely is the outcome of the presence of the singing girls in the court, the *ghulāmiyyah*, who cross-dressed, acted manly and started a certain queer fashion movement

in Baghdad which spread amongst the high-ranking women, holding their own gatherings as well. With the passing of time we can see how music changed. Al-Katib wrote about practice and theory as well, a sort of mirror for princes, al-Ghazālī who did not reject music as harshly as al-Dunyā was only concerned with the consumers of music. The court musicians and scribes depended on the caliph not only for patronage but for their very freedom to exist. Rulers had a greater say in the shaping of the cultural orientation of Islam than most scholars had realized.

With the deprivation of the caliph's power, the court musicians and scribes lost their status and the state's political opinion became increasingly to be articulated by the very people who abhorred them; the Islamic jurists. Their dependence was a double-edged sword, it's darker side appeared during the reign of the Buyid Dynasty (934-1048), when the Ḥanbali scholars established a close relationship with the caliph. They became part of the establishment and made their mark in the religious life of Bagdad. Under the leadership of Abu Jafar al-Hāshimī (d. 1077–8), a shrewd politician and notable leader from the Hāshimī family, the Hanbalis – one of the Sunni Islamic school of jurisprudence - acted on two fronts. They enforced the strictest religious rules on everyday life, banning music and destroying wine which they confiscated from taverns. Furthermore, they fought against various schools of thought, particularly against Mu□tazilah doctrines, a major philosophical branch rising during the translation period. Provided that the *ghulāmiyyat* or other musician groups labelled immoral still existed and were influential in the court during the epoch al-Dunyā it might answer why he was so meticulous when mentioning the instruments in his treatises. Music was caught up in the wave of sectarian/political power struggles in the ninth-tenth centuries. The intellectual historical analysis of al-Dunyā's works and his contemporaries might help us to better understand how and why music became the enemy of certain thinkers. After Baghdad became politically and culturally hostile for them, musicians gravitated towards the emerging Fatimid Dynasty, constructing a round city in the Baghdad mode called al-Mansuriya. They enhanced

and deepened the diffusion of Persian influence into the Islamic West and into the Mediterranean basin, as the ceiling paintings depicting dancers and musicians in the Norman Capella Palatina in Palermo testify.[156]

In the second chapter I surveyed the formative period of Sufism in Baghdad, their musical gatherings and the ethical writings concerned with them. Depicting the nature of this early stage I juxtaposed it to art music and the culture connected to it that formerly rose in Baghdad. There are many ties between these two phenomena, although art music is non-religious and Sufi samā is religious. Both art forms are closely related to love poetry, eroticism, late night musical gatherings, homosexuality, ancient Greek, Persian and Christian culture. I analyzed the works of al-Sarraj on samā, how different Sufis and Sufi networks behaved and how these networks were related to each other in terms of behaviour. For Sufis authority was pivotal, al-Sarraj seems anxious defending Sufism and discrediting immoral behaviour of certain members, especially in samā gatherings. The ties between disciples and masters were in the centrality of Sufi authority, if a disciple can fit into the tradition embodied by the master he will eventually become a master himself passing on the tradition and the authority as well. The relationship between saints and followers, between the readers and writers of the Sufi texts, between the subjects and objects of the devotion that has been the emotional heartbeat of Sufi tradition.[157]By the end of the ninth century a somewhat classical Sufi tradition had developed in Baghdad, from where it would spread and absorb other pious movements over the next two centuries.

[156] Bennison, *The Great Caliphs,* 77-78.
[157] Green, *Sufism*, 9-10.

Bibliography

Al-Azmeh, Aziz. *Muslim Kingship*. New York, London: I.B. Tauris, 2001.

al-Azmeh, Aziz. *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allah and his people*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

al-Faruqi, Lois Ibsen. "Music, Musicians and Muslim Law". *Asian Music*, Vol.17, No.1, University of Texas Press, (1985)

al-Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn `Ali al-Katib. *Kitāb kamal adab al-gina'* (The Perfection of Musical Knowledge), Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣ rīya al-`Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1975.

Alleyne Nicholson, Reynold. *The Kitāb al-Luma Fi l-Tasawwuf*. Leyden: Brill, 1914.

Amer, Sahar. "Medieval Arab Lesbians and Lesbian-Like Women ". *Journal of the History of Sexuality* Vol.18, No.2, University of Texas Press, (2009)

Bashir, Shahzad. *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Bennison, Amira K. *The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age of the Abbasid Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Brown, Peter. *The Cult of Saints Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Consorts of the Caliphs, Women, and the Court of Baghdad. Ed. by Shawkat M. Toorawa. New York: New York University Press, 2015.

Farmer, H.G. "The Influence of Music from Arabic Sources". *Proceedings of the Musical Association,* 52nd Sess,Taylor & Francis, Ltd., (1925)

Farmer, Henry George. *A history of arabian music to the XIIIth century*. New-Delhi, 2001.

Farmer, Henry George. "Greek Theorists of Music in Arabic Translation". Isis Vol.13, No.2, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, (1930)

Fowden, Garth. *Before and After Muhammad*. New Haven: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Godwin, Joscelyn. *The Harmony of the Spheres, The Pythagorean Tradition in Music -Inner Traditions*. Vermont: Inner Tradition International ltd, 1992.

Green,Nile. *Sufism: A Global History,* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Karamustafa, Ahmet T. *Sufism: A Formative Period*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

Liebeschuetz, J. "Late antiquity and the concept of decline". *Nottingham Medieval Studies, 45*. (2001)

Lois Ibsen Al-Faruqi, "Accentuation in Qur'ānic Chant: A Study in Musical Tawāzun". *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 10 (1978)

Ludwig, Monte Loren. *"Equal to All Alike": A Cultural History of the Violin Consort in England,* c.1550-1675, PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2011.

Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam. Ed. By Carl W. Ernst. Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 1994.

Meri, Josef W. *Cult of Saints Among Muslims,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Philosophies of Music in Medieval Islam. ed. by Shehadi, Fadlou. Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, ISSN 0920-8607, vol.67, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1995.

Rebenich, Stefan. *Jerome, The Early Church Fathers*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Rimmer, Mark. "Listening to the Monkey: Class, Youth and the Formation of a "musical Habitus"." *Ethnography* 11, no. 2 (2010)

Robson, James. *Tracts on Listening to Music*. Edinburgh: Royal Asiatic Society, 1932.

S. Avery, Kenneth. *A Psychology of Early Sufi Sama*. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.

Sawa, George Dimitri. *Erotica, Love and Humor in Arabia*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2016.

Shiloah, Amnon, "*The status of Traditional Art Music in Muslim Nations*". *Asian Music*, Vol.12, No.1, Symposium on Art Music in Muslim Nations, University of Texas Press (1980)

Shiloah, Amnon. "Musical Scenes in Arabic Iconography". *Music in Art* 33, no. 1/2 (2008)

Shiloah, Amnon. "The Arabic Concept of Mode". *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 34, no. 1 (1981)

Shiloah, Amnon. "The Origin of Language and its Link with Music according to the Theory of Jabir ibn Hayyan" in *Al-Masaq*, Vol. 21, No. 2, (2009)

Shiloah, Amnon. "Music and Religion in Islam". *Acta Musicologica*, Vol.69, Fasc. 2, International Musicological Society (1997)

Shiloah, Amnon. *La perfection des connaissances musicales. Traduction annotée du traité de musique arabe d'al-Ḥasan ibn Umar ibn 'Ali al-Kātib*, École pratique des hautes études. 4e section, Sciences historiques et philologiques, 1964-1965.

Shiloah, Amnon. *Music in the World of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford Handbooks, 2014.

Sufi Castigator: Ahmad Kasravi and the Iranian Mystical Tradition. ed. by Lloyd Ridgeon. New York: Routledge, 2006.

The Encyclopaedia of Islam. ed. E. J. Brill; Otto Harrassovitz. Leiden, 1986.

The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology, ed. By Sabine Shmidtke, Oxford University Press, 2016.

Tim Page, *The Glenn Gould Reader*, Vintage: 1990

Tracts on Listening to Music: Dhamm al-Malāhi *by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā, and* Bawāriq al-ilmā' *by Majd al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī*. ed. and trans. James Robson. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1938

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *Religion and Politics Under the Early Abbasids*. Brill, 1997.