THE EFFEMINATES OF EARLY MEDINA

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There is considerable evidence for the existence of a form of publicly recognized and institutionalized effeminacy or transvestism among males in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabian society. Unlike other men, these effeminates or *mukhannathūn* were permitted to associate freely with women, on the assumption that they had no sexual interest in them, and often acted as marriage brokers, or, less legitimately, as go-betweens. They also played an important role in the development of Arabic music in Umayyad Mecca and, especially, Medina, where they were numbered among the most celebrated singers and instrumentalists. Although they were subject to periodic persecution by the state, such measures were not based on any conclusions about their own sexual status—they were not assumed to be homosexual, although a few were—but on their activities as musicians and go-betweens, which were seen as corrupting the morals of society and especially of women. A particularly severe repression under the caliph Sulaymān put an end to the *mukhannathūn*’s prominence in music and society, although not to their existence.

IN THE COURSE OF THE FIRST ISLAMIC CENTURY, the holy cities of Mecca and Medina suffered a drastic loss of political power. As the rapidly expanding empire incorporated the populous provinces of Syria and Iraq, the caliphal capital was moved first to Kūfa and then to Damascus, and, after the defeat of the counter-caliph Ibn al-Zubayr in Medina in 73 A.H./A.D. 692, the political significance of the Hijaz was reduced to an occasional futile rebellion. At the same time, the institution of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca from all corners of the empire assured the prosperity of the two cities, and the system of stipends (*dīwān*) instituted by the caliph ʿUmar provided the local aristocracy, among the Quraysh and Ansār, with a dependable, and bountiful, source of wealth which—more or less intentionally—compensated for their political impotence. The result of this situation was the development of a refined and self-indulgent society, dedicated to luxury and the pursuit of the arts. Traditional Arabic poetry underwent a rapid evolution, producing among other innovations the independent love lyric; and a series of celebrated musicians, closely associated in their endeavors with the love poets, introduced new instruments and new musical styles into the peninsula.

Studies of this first, classical period of Arabic music have often remarked on the fact that the sources regularly identify many male musicians, including some of the most prominent, as “effeminates,” *mukhannathūn*. Observing that our meager sources on pre-Islamic music refer almost exclusively to women, while the most celebrated musicians of the subsequent ʿAbbāsid period were men, Owen Wright has suggested that these *mukhannathūn* represent “an intermediate, transitional stage in the transfer from a female-dominated to a male-dominated profession”;

1 Or *mukhannithūn*. The lexicographers generally consider the forms *mukhannath* and *mukhannith* simple variants, and I shall use the former throughout this article; on attempts to distinguish between the two semantically, see below, p. 675.


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of pleasure. To my knowledge, no further investigation into who and what these mukhannathūn were has heretofore been undertaken, despite a relative abundance of sources, particularly anecdotal ones, which tell us a great deal about their identity, behavior, social function, and status, as well as their ultimate fate.

The very existence of a recognized category of persons labelled "effeminate" raises a number of obvious questions. In what way were they effeminate? Was it their mannerisms that were so recognized, their speech, their behavior? Did they wear women's clothes or adopt feminine hairstyles: were they transvestites? To what extent was their effeminacy voluntary, or seen as such? Did they constitute a cohesive social group, a subculture? What social functions, if any, did they perform? Did they represent a kind of berdache institution? What sort of social status did they in fact have? Why, and to what extent, did they come to be associated with music?

Another important question is that of their sexual identity. It is well known to sociologists that the majority of transvestites in our own society are heterosexual in orientation, and the anthropological literature on institutions classified as berdache in various societies reveals considerable diversity in their real or assumed sexual orientation and behavior, including celibacy, heterosexuality, and various forms of bisexuality, as well as homosexuality, although the latter is probably the most common. An automatic link between the mukhannathūn of the Hijaz and homosexuality can therefore by no means be assumed. This question of sexual identity is all the more significant because of its pertinence to the far larger problem of homosexuality in classical Islamic culture, a subject which has enjoyed remarkably little scholarly attention to date, despite its obvious importance. An inquiry into the role and identity of the early mukhannathūn may thus serve in part as a preliminary to future investigation of this larger problem.

The following study will focus on the evidence available on mukhannathūn through the first Islamic century. That they had a well-defined role already in pre-Islamic Arabian society is suggested by a number of Prophetic hadith, which at least purportedly tell us something about the situation in the Prophet's time. Much richer, however, is the information provided by anecdotal literature, and above all by the Kitāb al-Aghānī of Abū l-Faraj al-İsfahānī (d. 356/967), on musical circles in Medina and Mecca several decades later, in the early Umayyad period; these sources offer a relatively full picture of a society in which the mukhannathūn, for a period of some two generations, enjoyed a position of exceptional visibility and prestige, and suggest answers to many of the questions posed above. They also describe how this unusual situation came to an abrupt and violent end, under the caliph Sulaymān (reigned 96–99/715–717), although there are wide divergences among the various accounts of this disaster which raise problems of interpretation. We have considerably less information about the mukhannathūn in late Umayyad society, and with the coming of the ābbāsids their entire social context seems to have changed radically. Apart from a brief characterization of the nature of this social shift, investigation of the subsequent fortunes of the mukhannathūn in the ābbāsid period must await a future study.

MUKHANNAH ĪN IN THE TIME OF THE PROPHET: THE EVIDENCE FROM HADĪTH

Acccording to the evidence of the lexicographers, the verb khanatha in the first form means to fold back the mouth of a waterskin for drinking. Derived terms develop the basic idea of bending or folding in the direction of pliability, suppleness, languidness, tenderness, delicacy. According to Abū ìUbayd (d. 224/838), the mukhannathūn were so called on account of their languidness (takas-sūr, elsewhere usually paired with tathanni, supple-
ness), while a languid woman was called khunuth. The Kitāb al-ʿAyn attributed to al-Khalil b. ʿAḥmad (d. c. 170/786), rather from khunīḥā, hermaphrodite, on the basis of parallel gender ambiguity. (Despite the plausibility of the latter, it should be noted that there is no term from this root signifying a mannish woman.) Later lexicographers define the mukhannath as a man who resembles or imitates a woman in the languidness of his limbs or the softness (līn) of his voice. Al-Azhari (d. 370/980) defines the verb takhanna as faʿala fiʾl al-mukhannath, “to do the act of a mukhannath,” but does not specify what this fiʾl is. The lexicographers nowhere make mention of dress. From their evidence, then, mukhannath has the general meaning “effeminate,” without distinction between involuntary and voluntary behavior, and does not indicate transvestism.

A somewhat different picture of the mukhannath emerges, however, if we consider its occurrence in a number of generally accepted Prophetic traditions. These hadith, and the literature of comment that developed around them, are of special importance for our subject, because—with the usual caveats about involuntary and voluntary behavior, and does not indicate transvestism.

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Although they display the usual profusion of variants, the hadith about the mukhannathūn which appear in the Muṣnādī of Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/797), the Musnad of ʿAḍīm b. Hānbal (d. 241/855), and the six canonical collections number essentially seven, which can be summarized as follows:

1. The Prophet cursed those exhibiting cross-gender behavior. In its most common form this hadith reads:

“The Prophet cursed effeminate men (al-mukhannathūn min al-rījāl) and mannish women (al-mutarajjilūn min al-nisāʾ).” The principal variant substitutes “men who imitate women” (al-mutarashabbīhūn min al-rījāl bi-l-nisāʾ) and “women who imitate men.” The two versions appear side by side in al-Bukhārī’s (d. 256/870) chapter on dress (libās); while the hadith itself does not specify the kind of cross-gender behavior condemned, the great maḥādīth’s apparent assumption that this involved dress, or at least ornament, is supported by other evidence, as will be seen. Some authorities add, to the second version, the further statement that the Prophet commanded, “Cast them out from your houses!” and that he and the caliph ʿUmar each banished one.

2. Ibn Māja (d. 273/886) and al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), in the section on false accusation (qadḥaʾ) of their books on hudūd, give hadith specifying twenty lashes for falsely calling someone a mukhannath. In Ibn Māja this is paired with the same penalty for falsely calling someone a liṭī (approximately, one who takes the active role in homosexual intercourse), but al-Tirmidhī pairs it rather with the same penalty for falsely calling someone a Jew.

3. Slightly more specific information on the mukhannathūn is provided by a hadith in Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/888), on the authority of Abū Hurayra, according to which, “A mukhannath, who had dyed his hands and feet with henna, was brought to the Prophet. The Prophet asked, ‘What is the matter with this one?’ He was told, ‘O Apostle of God, he imitates women.’ He

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ordered him banished to al-Naqi. They said, "O Apostle of God, shall we not kill him?" He replied, 'I have been forbidden to kill those who pray.'

4. Banishment also figures in some versions of the most celebrated, and widely commented, of the hadith on mukhannath, that concerning a person usually identified as Hit. According to various authorities, Umm Salama, one of the Prophet's wives, reported that on the eve of the taking of al-Tā'i (8/630) the Prophet visited her while a mukhannath (Hit) was also present. She heard the latter say to her brother, 'Abdallah b. Abi Umayya, "If God grants that you take underage males or eunuchs present in the women's presence, whose ends can be seen wrapping around on the two sides of her back when she walks away, thus appearing to be eight." To this the Prophet said, "Do not admit these into your (fem. pl.) presence!" Hit's "four" and "eight" are explained by the commentators, at great length, as referring collectively to the women and the undergarments of the mukhannath. To this the Prophet said, "Do not admit these into your (fem. pl.) presence!" or have both phrases together.

5. An apparent doublet of this story is a hadith reported from 'Ā'ishah, which Ibn Hanbal and Muslim (d. 261/875) have preserved in the following form: "There was a mukhannath who used to be admitted to the presence of the Prophet's wives. He was considered one of those lacking interest in women (min ghayr uli l-irba). One day the Prophet entered when this mukhannath was with one of his wives; he was describing a woman, and said 'When she comes forward, it is with four, and when she goes away, it is with eight.' The Prophet said, 'Oho! I think this one knows what goes on here! Do not admit him into your (fem. pl.) presence!' So he was kept out (hajabahu)." Abū Dāwūd supplies two additions to the story. The first states that the Prophet banished the mukhannath, who lived in the desert and came into Medina once a week to beg for food. According to the second, it was said to the Prophet (after the banishment), "He will die of hunger, then!" and he then permitted him to enter the city twice a week to beg and then return to the desert.

6. Finally, Ibn Majā reports on the authority of Saffān b. Umayya the following hadith, the only one to link the mukhannath with music: "We were with the Apostle of God when 'Amr b. Murra came to him and said, 'O Apostle of God, God has made misery my lot! The only way I have to earn my daily bread is with my tambourine (duff) in my hand; so permit me to do my singing, avoiding any immorality (fāhisha.)'" The Apostle of God replied, 'I will not permit you, not even as a favor! You lie, enemy of God! God has provided you with good and permissible ways to sustain yourself, but you have chosen the sustenance that God has forbidden you rather than the permissible which He has permitted you. If I had already given you prior warning, I would now be taking action against you. Leave me, and repent before God! I swear, if you do it again, I shall not bless you with a şadaqā (small free gift) of anything.'"
(ja‘alta) after this warning to you, I will give you a painful beating, shave your head as an example, banish you from your people, and declare plunder of your property permissible to the youth of Medina! ‘Amr went away, burning with a grief and shame that none but God could comprehend. When he was gone, the Prophet said, ‘Any of these rebels (‘asāḥ) who dies without repenting will be gathered by God on the Day of Resurrection just as he was in this world—mukhannath, naked, without a fringe to cover him before people, unable to stand without falling!’”

7. A final mention of mukhannathūn in al-Bukhārī occurs, not in a hadīth, but in an opinion (ra‘y) by al-Zuhri (d. 125/742), added as a supplement to a number of hadīths on the validity of a prayer led by an imām of questionable orthodoxy or moralities, namely, that one should pray behind a mukhannath only in cases of necessity.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this hadīth material, and can in turn be supplemented by further information from the commentaries, much of which is conveniently brought together in the massive commentaries on al-Bukhārī’s Sahīh by Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) and al-‘Aynī (d. 855/1451). First, the mukhannathūn were identifiable group of men who publicly adopted feminine adornment, at least with regard to the use of henna, and probably in clothing and jewelry as well. Al-‘Aynī quotes from al-Tabarānī’s Sahīhī by Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) and al-‘Aynī (d. 855/1451).

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the early material, however, is that implied that these mukhannathūn were sexually interested in males. Ibn Ḥabīb in the ninth century and al-Ṭabarānī in the tenth make this distinction explicitly, thereby suggesting that by their own time assumptions had changed and mukhannathūn were expected to be homosexually inclined.  

In the ḥadīth of ʿĀʾishah, the Prophet’s words imply that the mukhannathūn’s awareness of what men found attractive in women was proof of his own sexual interest in them, and that it is for this reason that he and those like him should be barred from the women’s quarters. The various ḥadīth about banishment of the mukhannathūn, however, go well beyond this in implying that takkannūth was objectionable in itself, and that the mukhannathūn should be banished from society altogether, not just from the women’s quarters. Only these latter ḥadīth, it should be noted, condemn takkannūth as a behavioral complex in itself. But there is apparently another factor involved. In the two ḥadīth of ʿUmūm Salama and ʿĀʾishah, the mukhannathūn is not simply expressing his own appreciation of a woman’s body, but describing it for the benefit of another man; and there is evidence, from the time of the Prophet as well as the following half century, that, because of their admission to the women’s quarters (which continued despite the Prophet’s reported disapproval), the mukhannathūn played a significant role as matchmakers for eligible bachelors with secluded women. In a non-canonical variant of the ḥadīth of ʿĀʾishah, the Prophet’s wife asks a mukhannath named Annah to direct her to (tadullūnā ʿalā, the standard verb for matchmaking) a suitable wife for her brother ʿAbd al-Rahmān; and al-Muhallab explains that the Prophet “only barred (the mukhannath) from the women’s quarters when he heard him describe the woman in this way (i.e., her belly-wrinkles) which excites the hearts of men; he forbade him (to enter) in order that he not describe (prospective) mates to people and thus nullify the point of excluding women (al-hijāb).”  

It is not entirely clear, then, to what extent the mukhannathūn were punished for their breaking of gender rules in itself, and to what extent such measures were taken rather because of the perceived damage to social institutions from their activities as matchmakers and their corresponding access to women. 

The second alternative is supported by the isolated ḥadīth in Ibn Māja, the sixth cited above, according to which the Prophet chastised ʿAmr b. Murra for making his living as an entertainment musician. This is the only ḥadīth to link the mukhannathūn with music, and at that only weakly, as ʿAmr is nowhere referred to directly as a mukhannath; on the other hand, the specific association of mukhannathūn with the tambourine (duff) is common in later reports, which might suggest anachronism here. If the Prophet found takkannūth shameful, his real quarrel with ʿAmr seems to have been the latter’s frivolity and purveyance of music, itself thought to be a corrupter of morals.  

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35 Al-Ṭabarānī, Tāj al-ʿarūs 5:240ff.; commenting on the attempt to relate this distinction to two distinct terms mukhannith and mukhannathūn, states flatly that “the takkannūth which is an act of immorality (fīʿ al-fāhīsha) is unknown to the (pure, original) Arabs, is not present in their language, and is not what is meant (by the word) in the ḥadīth.” Ibn Hajar (Fath al-bārī 15:174), discussing the ḥadīth prescribing exile for those exhibiting cross-gender behavior, which al-Bukhārī puts in his section on the ḥudūd, cites a legal argument for the necessity of distinguishing the mukhannathūn from the passive homosexual offender, based on the fact that the penalty for the latter, stoning, would obviate the penalty of exile.
mukhannathün, or rather a few of them who took advantage of their unique social position, endangered the social fabric by breaking down appropriate barriers between men and women and inciting passions with music and with intimate descriptions of respectable ladies to perfect strangers, perhaps this would be considered reason enough for banishment.

None of our sources in fact state that Muhammad actually banished more than two mukhannathün, and there is considerable evidence that such men continued to have access to women’s quarters and to describe women to other men. (On the other hand, there can be no question about the low social status of the mukhannath, as is clear from the second hadith cited above, which imposes a punishment for use of the term as an insult.) The various sources marshalled by al-’Ayni and Ibn Hajar give altogether five different names of mukhannathün banished by Muhammad, of which Hit (or Hinb) is the one most often mentioned; a long discussion can be traced through the commentators over whether Hit and Mātī (or Mānī) were two different banished mukhannathün or only one with two names. A total of six different places of banishment are mentioned as well. A particularly elaborate version of the Tāʾif hadith quoted by al-’Ayni and Ibn Hajar from Ibn al-Kalbī has Hit going beyond belly-wrinkles to give a longer and more extravagant description of the woman (to which are added glosses by Abū ‘Ubayd), and the Prophet replying “You have taken too good a look, enemy of God!” and banishing him from Medina to al-ʿImām; Ibn al-Kalbī reports further that after the Prophet’s death Abū Bakr refused to reconsider the man’s sentence, but ʿUmar was finally prevailed upon, when he had become old and sick, to permit him to enter the city once a week to beg. A parallel but even more elaborate account, in which the mukhannath cites verses, appears in the Aghānī, likewise citing Ibn al-Kalbī, but making it ʿUthmān who finally relented and permitted the weekly visits.¹⁴¹

As indicated by the Aghānī citation, the story of Hit also entered the adab tradition. Al-Jāhiz gives a straightforward version of it in his Mufākharaṭ al-jawārī wa-l-ghilmān, as does Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih in the ʿIqd al-fārīḍ. A longer version, similar to that in the Aghānī but even fuller, appears in Ḥamza al-İsfahānī’s book of proverbs, under the expression “more effeminate than Hit (akhnath min Hit)”; according to this version, Hit was exiled to Khākh, where he remained until the days of ʿUthmān. Ḥamza drew material from many earlier books of proverbs, and in particular from several of the Amṭhāl ʿalā ʿaf’al genre, and a wider search in both earlier and later adab literature would undoubtedly turn up many more (and varied) citations.⁴³

### THE MUKHANNATHÜN AND MUSIC IN MEDINA: TUWAYS

Except for the reports just cited about Hit’s later years, and the hadith which report that the Prophet and ʿUmar each banished one (anonymous) mukhannath, we have very little information about the mukhannathün after the death of Muhammad, until the consolidation of Marwānid rule sixty years later under ʿAbd al-Malik. But from the following period we have relatively rich sources, primarily because of the importance of a number of mukhannathün in the development of Arabic song in the Hijaz at this time. The Kitāb al-Aghānī, by far the most important of these sources, offers extensive biographies of all the leading musicians, both male and female, who contributed to this development, including two men, ʿUways and al-Dalāl, who were equally celebrated as mukhannathün, meriting inclusion beside Hit in the books of proverbs under the rubric “more effeminate than.” From these biographies, supplemented by scattered information in

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other adab works, it is possible to draw a rather fuller picture of the mukhannathūn in general, especially in Medina.

Tuways,44 the older of the two, was celebrated not only for his music and his ta'kānah, but also as a jinx—thus meriting a second entry in the proverb books, under the rubric "more unlucky than Tuways (āsh'am min Tuways)." The explanation given of this (with a number of variants) is that he was born the day the Prophet died, weaned the day Abū Bakr died, circumcised the day 'Umar was killed, married the day 'Uthmān was killed, and blessed with his first child the day 'Ali was killed.45 Born in the year 10/632, he died, according to Ibn Khallikān, in 92/711, at the age of 82 (lunar).46 According to most accounts, his name was Abū 'Abd al-Mun'im ʾĪsā b. ʾAbdallāh, Tuways ("little peacock") being a nickname (laqāb).47 While the various mukhannathūn mentioned from the time of the Prophet in the hadith all have regular given names (asmd), albeit mostly quite unusual ones, after Tuways the adoption of fanciful laqābs seems to have become standard practice among the mukhannathūn of Medina. The other mukhannathūn are said also to have changed Tuways's kunya to Abū ʾAbd al-Naʿīm, apparently in reference to the frivolity and hedonism normally associated with the mukhannath. Tuways was a client (mawlā) of the Banu Makhzūm;48 mawlā status seems in fact to have been usual among mukhannathūn both earlier and later.

According to the Aghānī, Tuways was the first of the mukhannathūn to sing "art music" (? ghināʾ mutqan), and the first person to compose in the "lighter" rhythms of hazaj and ramal in Islam—in fact, he is mentioned in yet a third proverbial expression, "better at hazaj than Tuways (ahzaj min Tuways)."49 Elsewhere, Abū ʾI-Faraj reports rather that Tuways was the first person to sing in Arabic in Medina, and also the first to flaunt publicly his effeminacy (? alqā l-khanāth) there; or again that he was the first in Medina to sing in measured rhythm (ghināʾ yādkhulū fī l-ṭaqāʾ).50 Al-Nuwayrī in his Nihāyāt al-arab attempts to rework the information provided in the Aghānī on early Arabic song into a rough chronology, which he begins with three men, naming Saʿīd b. Miṣjah, a black mawlā in Mecca, and Sāʾib Kāthir, a mawlā who settled in Medina, as well as Tuways.51 The first two, neither of whom is ever called a mukhannath, are said to have been active in the days of Muʿāwiyya (41–60/661–80). All three men trained pupils who were to become the leading musicians of the next generation. They differed from one another in the instruments they employed, as well as in their styles of music, although the exact meanings of the technical terms specifying these styles are difficult to interpret.52 Sāʾib Kāthir introduced the ʿud to Medina, while Tuways relied exclusively on the duff, a

44 He has, uniquely and inexplicably, two biographies in the Aghānī (2:164–72, 4:37–39). Despite the fact that the former gives his nickname as ʾĪsā, while according to the latter it was Ṭāwūs, the general congruence of the two accounts rules out the possibility that they refer to two different people.
47 Aghānī 2:164. But according to Aghānī 4:37, his real name was Ṭāwūs, and Ḥamza, Durrā 1:185, also gives him the name Ṭāwūs, changed to Tuways "lammā taksannathūna" (so also in al-Jawhari, Ṣābāḥ, 941ff.). A very brief notice in Ibn Qutayba, Maʾārif, 322, says his name was ʾAbd al-Malik. Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt 3:506, notes these variant reports.
48 Ibn Qutayba, Maʾārif, 322 (see previous note) makes him a mawlā of Arwā b. Kurayz, the mother of the caliph ʿUthmān.
49 Aghānī 4:37. There is probably a reference to a particular vocal quality or technique here; E. W. Lane defines hazaj as "a singer . . . who prolongs his voice, with trilling, or quavering, making the sounds to follow close, one upon another" (An Arabic-English Lexicon [Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1984], s.v.).
52 See Wright, "Music and Verse," 435–44.
square tambourine, and sang "lighter" songs, both characteristic of later mukhannathūn as well. One of Sā'īb Kāthir’s pupils, ‘Azza al-Maylā’, is called by Abū l-Faraj the first woman to sing in measured rhythm (‘al-ghinā‘ ‘al-mūqa‘) in the Hijaz; although she is also said to have sung the songs of the earlier slave girls (aghānī al-qiyūn min al-qadā‘īm), none of the names mentioned of the latter recur elsewhere in the Aghānī. In general, while our contradictory sources do not give us a clear picture of the earliest developments of Arabic song, these indications seem to offer little support for a chronological progression of singers from women to mukhannathūn to other men, as suggested by Wright.

Music was very much part of the frivolity and high living which our sources describe in the Holy Cities in the years after the final defeat of Ibn al-Zubayr, and of which the poet ‘Umar b. Abī l-Rabī‘a is the best-known representative. Bon vivants such as ‘Abdallāh b. Ja‘far b. Abī Tālīb and, especially, Ibn Abī ‘Atīq, a great-grandson of the caliph Abū Bakr, patronized musicians, and defended music against the strictures of the pious, as well as those of the caliph himself and his governors in Medina. While some anecdotes indicate a general disapproval of singing by the aristocracy (ashrāf) of the city, numerous others tell of Tūways being asked to sing by groups of young men (fīyān) from Quraysh, apparently his most appreciative audience; there seems to have been a generational split on the question. These young men sometimes invited Tūways to entertain them at pleasure parties in the "parks" (muntazahāt) outside Medina. They seem to have appreciated his wit and charm as much as his music, but held more mixed opinions about his takhanūmah. Here is how one authority describes him:

A group of people in Medina were one day talking about the city, and Tūways’ name came up for discussion. One man said, “If you had seen him, you would have been impressed by his knowledge, his elegance, his singing, and his skill with the duff. He could make a bereaved mother laugh!” But another said, “Still, he was ill-omened”—and he told the story of his birth, etc. . . . “and, on top of that, he was a mukhannath, who would try to trip us up and make us stumble.” He was tall, ungainly, and wall-eyed. Then another, from the midst of the group, said, “If he was as you say, he was nevertheless diverting, astute, respectful to anyone who treated him with appropriate politeness, and quick to be of service; but he refused to listen to anyone who granted him less than equal respect. He was a great partisan of his patrons, the Banū Makhzūm, and their allies among the Quraysh, but behaved peaceably toward their enemies and avoided provoking them. One cannot blame someone who speaks with knowledge and astuteness. ‘Blame to the wrong-doer, and the initiator does more wrong!’” Yet another said, “If what you say is true, then the Quraysh should have crowded around him, enjoyed his company, eagerly listened to his speech, and clamored for his singing. His downfall was his khunth; were it not for that, there is not one of the Quraysh, or the Ansār, or anyone else, who would have failed to welcome him.”

Another anecdote shows a similar difference of opinion, as well as illustrating Tūways’ sharp tongue. ‘Abdallāh b. Ja‘far was enjoying a spring evening with some companions in the muntazah of al-‘Aqiq, when they were overtaken by a shower. He proposed that they take refuge with Tūways, near whose residence they were standing, and enjoy his conversation, but ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Hassān b. Thābit objected, saying, “With all due respect, what do you want with Tūways? He is under the wrath of God, a mukhannath whom it is shameful to know.” ‘Abdallāh replied, “Don’t say that! He is a witty, delightful person, and will give us good company.” Overhearing this conversation, Tūways instructed his wife to cook a goat and ran to invite the party in. After serving them a princely dinner,

53 Aghānī 16:12f.
57 Aghānī 2:165.
58 Yakīdūnā wa-yaqīlubu ‘atharātīnā. On the kayd or kiyād of the mukhannathūn, see note 135 below.
he offered to sing and dance for the company, and was encouraged to do so. They were delighted with his song and praised its verses, but then Tuways asked them if they knew who had composed them. When they said no, he revealed that they were love verses written by Hassān b. Thābit's sister about a prominent Makhzūm, and thus took his revenge on 'Abdallāh b. Hassān b. Thābit, who was mortified.\(^{59}\)

Tuways showed himself more conciliatory in a similar account, which links him with the earlier mukhannath Hit. With an audience that included the son of 'Abdallāh b. Abī Umayya, to whom Hit had made his unfortunate matchmaking proposal, Tuways sang the very verses with which Hit had praised the proposed bride of al-Ṭā‘if. Although pressed to stop, Tuways insisted on completing the song, but then promised 'Abdallāh's son that he would never sing it again if it angered him. Abū l-Farāj links these two anecdotes by making Hit the mawāla of 'Abdallāh and suggesting that Tuways owed his khunth in some way to association with Hit.\(^{60}\)

Our sources offer very little information on the outward manifestations of this takhannuth. Perhaps relevant here is a joke in Ibn Qutayba's Kitāb al-Ma‘ārif, according to which Tuways was seen performing the pilgrimage rite at Minā of throwing stones at a stone representing the devil—but he had coated the stones with sugar and saffron. Questioned on this, he replied, "I owe the devil a favor, and I'm making up for it."\(^{61}\) More concrete are two accounts which associate takhannuth with irreligion and frivolity, and show an ambivalence toward it on the part of the government similar to that it displayed toward music. When Yahyā b. al-Hakam was 'Abd al-Malik's governor over Mecca, he or the governor's (elder) brother 'Amr was older, he replied, "I was trailing at the heels of the women of my people and their leaders went out to meet him. Tuways was among them, and when he saw Abān he said, "O amīr, I swore to God that if I saw you become amīr I would dye my hands and arms with henna up to the elbows and strut with my tambourine," and proceeded to do so, delighting the new governor with his singing. The latter cried, "Enough, Tuways!" addressing him by the non-diminutive form of his laqab out of respect. He seated Tuways beside him, then said, "They claim you are an unbeliever." Tuways replied with the confession of faith and the assertion that he observed the five prayers, the fast of Ramadān, and the pilgrimage. When the governor (tactlessly?) asked Tuways whether he or the governor's (elder) brother 'Amr was older, he replied, "I was trailing at the heels of the women of my people who accompanied your blessed mother's wedding procession to your good father."\(^{62}\)

All of this anecdotal material is too riddled with variants and chronological improbabilities to warrant belief in the historicity of any single account. A variant of the bounty story, for example, is assigned by Ibn al-Kalbī to the much earlier governorship of Yahyā's

\(^{59}\) Aḥānī 2:167, followed by another version, which also appears in Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, 'Iqd 6:28f. The story may hinge in part on political rivalries between the Anṣār, among whom the family of Hassān b. Thābit was prominent, and the Banū Makhzūm (of whom Tuways was a mawāla). Cf. a similar anecdote in Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, 'Iqd, 6:29; Ibn Qutayba, 'Uyūn al-akhbār, ed. Y. 'A. Tawīl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1986), 1:44f.; idem, Ma‘ārif, 294.

\(^{60}\) Aḥānī 2:167. The text is obscure and possibly corrupt: "wa-kāna Hit mawlan li-'Abdallāh . . . wa-kāna Tuways lahu fa-min inna munaqi lila (l. qabilu) al-khunth. 'Abdallāh b. Abī Umayya was a Makhzūm.

\(^{61}\) Ibn Qutayba, Ma‘ārif, 322. For other versions of this story, see p. 685 below.

\(^{62}\) Al-Ṭabarī, Ta‘rīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1960–69), 6:202, 209, 256. had the appearance of a woman: he was wearing fine dyed garments, and had dressed his hair and applied henna to his hands. He was identified to the governor as Ibn Nughūsh the mukhannath. The governor said, "I doubt that you ever read the Qur’ān. Recite the Mother of the Qur’ān!"\(^{63}\) Ibn Nughūsh replied, "O Father, if I knew the mother, I would know the daughters!" Outraged at this irreverence, Yahyā had him executed, and put a bounty of three hundred dirhams on the other mukhannathān. The narrator subsequently found Tuways entertaining a party. Informed of the news, Tuways sang verses deriding the governor, and complained that he had not had a higher bounty placed on him than did the others.\(^{64}\)

We hear no more about this policy or its effect on the mukhannathān, and a year later Yahyā b. al-Hakam was replaced by Abān b. ‘Uthmān.\(^{65}\) As the latter approached Medina to take up his office, the townspeople and their leaders went out to meet him. Tuways was among them, and when he saw Abān he said, "O amīr, I swore to God that if I saw you become amīr I would dye my hands and arms with henna up to the elbows and strut with my tambourine," and proceeded to do so, delighting the new governor with his singing. The latter cried, "Enough, Tuways!" addressing him by the non-diminutive form of his laqab out of respect. He seated Tuways beside him, then said, "They claim you are an unbeliever." Tuways replied with the confession of faith and the assertion that he observed the five prayers, the fast of Ramadān, and the pilgrimage.

\(^{63}\) That is, the first sūra.

\(^{64}\) Aḥānī 2:166.

\(^{65}\) Governor from 76/695 to 82/701; see al-Ṭabarī, Ta‘rīkh 6:256, 355.

brother Marwān, under the caliph Mu‘āwiya, and Ibn al-Kalbī claims that at that time Ṭuways went into self-imposed exile at al-Suwaydā', two nights' journey north of Medina, where he spent the rest of his life. 67 Compatible with this is Ibn al-Kalbī's version of the account of the verses by Ḥassān b. Thābit's sister, which makes Ḥassān's grandson Ṭuways' target, and sets the scene at al-Suwaydā', under the governorship of ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (87–93/706–12). 68 Despite such inconsistencies, however, I think we can accept the general picture drawn of Ṭuways, as the most prominent example, and perhaps in some sense leader, of a group of male professional musicians who publicly adopted women's fashions and were appreciated by many for their wit and charm as well as their music, but were disapproved of by others who, in varying degrees, saw their music, their takhannuth, and their flippant style as immorality and irreligion. They were also subject to varying degrees of repression by the state. References to a role as matchmaker are lacking in the case of Ṭuways, as are any references to homosexuality, or indeed to sex at all. 69 It may be noted in passing that Ṭuways is reported to have married and fathered children. 70

OTHER MUKHANNATH MUSICIANS IN MEDINA AND MECCA

A lengthy anecdote in Abū l-Faraj's biography of the songstress Jamīla, while historically implausible (as he himself points out), illustrates the role of the mukhan-

67 Aghānī 2:166; the other mukhannath is here named al-Nughāshī, and the bounty specified as ten dinars. According to Yaqūt, Muṣṣam al-balādīn (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 3:228, Ṭuways died and was buried in Suwayq al-Jazl, a place somewhere near the Wādī al-Qurā, north of Medina; cf. idem, al-Muṣṭarīk, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Dieterichschen Verlag, 1846), 250, and Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt 3:507.

68 Aghānī 2:168, and Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihī, Ḥaqīqat 6:28f.; cf. note 59 above. An appended report asserting that these verses were by "Ibn Zuhayr al-mukhannath" (rather than Ḥassān's sister herself?) is probably garbled from an attribution of the song to this Ibn Zuhayr; cf. Ibn Khurraḍādibih, Mukhāṭar Kitāb al-Lahw wa-l-malāḥī, ed. A. Khalīfī, in al-Machriq 54 (1960): 151, where the verses, attributed to Ḥassān's sister, are quoted as a famous song by the Medinese mukhannath Sālih b. Zuhayr al-Khuza‘ī. On ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz's tenure as governor of Medina and Mecca, see al-Ṭabarī, Taʾrīkh 6:427, 481ff.

69 A single exception will be dealt with below, p. 686.

70 In the story of his shuʿīm. The anecdote with ʿAbdallāh b. Jaʿfar and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥassān b. Thābit also refers to his wife (Aghānī 2:167).

nathān of Medina as a distinct group among the musicians of the Hijaz, while never using the word. Jamīla was a Medinese who owed her start in the profession to being a neighbor of Sā`īb Kāthir, and became the principal teacher of Maʿbad, the most famous singer of the next generation. 71 According to the story, 72 she once went on pilgrimage, taking with her all the principal Medinese singers, of both sexes, as well as the principal poets and other luminaries, including Ibn Abī ʿAtīq. Arriving in Mecca in grand procession, these were met by an equally dazzling assemblage of the most famous musicians and poets in that city, including in particular ʿUmar b. Abī Rabī`a. After performing the pilgrimage rites, Jamīla was asked to organize a concert (maṭlis lil-ğhanā), but refused to mix the serious and the frivolous (jidd and ḥazl). ʿUmar b. Abī Rabī`a then resolved to return with her to Medina, and in the event all the prominent Meccans joined the Medinese on their return, in a yet statelier procession than the first. ʿUmar then arranged for all to convene at Jamīla's house for three days of song. 73

Jamīla opened the proceedings by singing some verses by ʿUmar, and then called on the other singers, one by one. On the first day, thirteen male singers performed, Meccans alternating with Medinese. On the second day, it was the turn of "Ṭuways and his companions." All these were Medinese, whose names were included in the earlier list of participants in the pilgrimage procession, but grouped separately from the other Medinese male musicians. The eight names given are: Ḥit, Ṭuways, al-Dalāl, Bard al-Fu`ād ("coolness/contentment of the heart"), Nawmat al-Dūḥā ("morning nap"), Qand ("candy"), Rahmā, and Hibat-allāh. Ṭuways was called on to sing first, then al-Dalāl. Ḥit was excused on account of his advanced age. (This detail is apparently a concession to chronological plausibility, despite the otherwise drastic chronological telescoping of the story.) Then Bard al-Fu`ād and Nawmat al-Dūḥā performed together, and the last three as a group. Finally, on the third day, eleven women performed, and the grand occasion closed with a song sung by all in unison.

Although they are nowhere in this account so identified, the singers of the second day undoubtedly represent the mukhannathān of Medina. All but two of

71 Aghānī 7:118ff.; El 2, s.v. "Djamīla."


73 From the Aghānī's statement that, at the end of the first day's concert, the ʿāmma left, while the khāṣṣa remained, it appears that this was a public event.

74 This laqab is, however, probably to be emended to the ism Find; see below, p. 687, n. 124.
them are in fact so described in other sources, and the gratuitous and anachronistic inclusion of Hit, who is nowhere else associated with music and even here does not sing, confirms that *takhannuth* is essential to the identity of these musicians as a distinct group. Their placement between the other men and the women is certainly a reflection of their ambiguous gender status, although one version of the story has it that Jamila had “Tuways and his companions” and Ibn Surayj and his companions” draw lots for the first day, with the latter winning. Noteworthy, too, is the fact that the *mukhannathān*, like the women, are known by nicknames (*alqāb*), in contrast to all but one of the other men, suggesting that the *mukhannathān* shared with the women the kind of inferior status which permitted relative familiarity in address and general social intercourse.

The one participant from the first day who is known by a *laqab*, al-Ghārīd, was, however, apparently also a *mukhannath*—as was, according to some accounts, his master Ibn Surayj. Their participation on the first day, rather than the second, would seem to rule out a distinction between the two groups exclusively on the basis of *takhannuth*; on the other hand, both men were Meccans, and our sources give no indication of the existence in Mecca of any wider, high-profile group of *mukhannathān*, musical or otherwise, comparable to what we hear of in Medina. The concocter of the Jamila anecdote may simply have been unaware of reports of the *takhannuth* of Ibn Surayj and al-Ghārīd (which does not loom very large in their biographies in the *Aghānī*); or, plausibly, the *mukhannathān* of Medina may have developed a musical style that set them apart from the other male musicians, one which the Meccan *mukhannathān* did not share.

There is in any case evidence that the songs of the *mukhannathān* were, in some way, recognizable as such. Tuways’ preference for the *duff* and for the “lighter” rhythms of *hazaj* and *ramal* was shared by al-Dalāl, in particular, as well as his other *mukhan-

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75 All these names are attested also in other anecdotes, except Rahma (who appears as “Zujuja” [?I in the parallel to this account in al-Nuwayrī).

76 This version is juxtaposed by the *Aghānī* with another version that has Tuways protesting Jamila’s organization of the event and, by implication, his and his companions’ relegation to the second day. As in the anecdotes cited above, Tuways seems here to be insisting, against widespread prejudice, on his equality of status with other men.

77 *Aghānī* 1:95, 105, 2:125ff.
to one account in the *Aghání*, both men began as professional lamenters (*má-lih*), an activity traditionally restricted to women. Confronted with the younger al-Gharid’s competition, Ibn Surayj switched to conventional singing (*ghinás*); but then al-Gharid followed suit. Another version reports that Ibn Surayj, noting the similarity of al-Gharid’s singing style to lamentation (*nawwáh*), himself turned to (the lighter) *ramal* and *hazaj*. Accused then by al-Gharid of corrupting song, he retorted, “You, you *mukhannath*—may you sing laments over your mother and father—you say this to me!” and swore to sing the “heaviest” song ever heard. Unlike both men, it should be noted, performed with the ‘*id*, unlike the *mukhannath*in of Medina.”

Apart from questions of musical style, additional information on the appearance and behavior of the *mukhannath*in is offered by our sources in their biographies of al-Dalbl, the third *mukhannath*, after Hit and Ɂuways, whom the Medineșe included among the sophisticationes (*zura'á*) and wits (*ashq nabidir*) to whom they pointed with pride.63 Al-Dalbl’s real name was Náfcd, his *kunya* was Abú Yazid, and like his master Ɂuways he was a *mawill*.* The *laqab* al-Dalbl (“coquetry”) is explained as referring to his physical beauty and the charm of his manner; but the wit which constituted much of the latter was often crude, and he was also criticized in some quarters for his profligacy (*muján*) and flippancy (*safah*).64 A story that he farted during prayers and said, “I praise Thee fore and aft!” is typical; according to another account, when the *imám* recited, “And why should I not serve Him Who created me?” he said, “I don’t know,” and caused most of the assembled worshippers to laugh and invalidate their prayer.65

More serious, in the eyes of some, were al-Dalbl’s activities as a go-between, about which we have a number of anecdotes (in notable contrast to Ɂuways).66 While some of these stories, such as the account of his role in the marriage of 'Abdalláh b. Ja’far’s daughter to the governor al-Hajjáj b. Yúsuf,67 imply no impropriety, others depict al-Dalbl as encouraging immodesty and immorality among women. Of particular interest is one which mentions al-Dalbl as a close associate to two of the most profligate women in Medina (they are said to have indulged in horse-racing and while riding to have shown their ankle-bracelets), one of whom was the daughter of Yahyá b. al-Ḥakam. When Yahyá’s brother Ɂarwán, the governor, was instructed by the caliph Mu’áwiya to do something about his niece’s behavior, he used trickery to bring about her death. He also pursued al-Dalbl, who fled to Mecca. There he was reproached by the women, who said, “After killing the women of Medina you have come to kill us!” He retorted, “Nothing killed them but the Tempter!”68 When they warned him with threats to stay away from them, he said, “Who then will diagnose your illness and know where to find the proper

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63 *Aghání* 1:95–97, 124f.; according to some reports, Ibn Surayj’s instrument was the *qa’idh*, a percussion instrument. I am not sure of the implications of the reply by Ibráhím al-Mawšílí (d. 188/804) to the question who was the best singer, “Of the men, Ibn Muhriz, and of the women, Ibn Surayj” (*Aghání* 1:96); another version of this story adds that “It is said that the best male singers are those who imitate (ta-shabbaha bi-) women, and the best female singers are those who imitate men” (*Aghání* 1:119). It would be tempting to speculate that the *mukhannath*in sang in falsetto, but I have found no evidence for this; from a century later we are told that Ibráhím al-Mawšílí’s son Išáq (d. 235/850) compensated for some natural defect in his voice by inventing the technique of *takhnih*, which E. Neubauer translates “Kopfstimme”; see *Aghání* 5:75, 96, and E. Neubauer, *Musiker am Hof der frühen Abbásiden* (Frankfurt am Main: Diss. J. W. Goethe-Universität, 1965), 25.

64 *Aghání* 4:59.


66 *Aghání* 4:59, 64.

67 Qur’án 36:22.

68 *Aghání* 4:62, 64.


70 *Aghání* 4:70. The marriage was short-lived; see *Aghání* 13:102f. Al-Ḥajjáj was governor of Medina in 74–75/693–94; see al-Ṭabarí, *Ta’ríkh* 6:195, 202, 209.

71 *Aл-Hakka’k* literally, “scratcher.” The lexica define *hakkāk* as the devil’s whisperings in the heart. Perhaps the correct reading is simply *al-ḥukkák*, “the authorities.”
treatment? By God, I have never been guilty of fornication, nor of submitting to a fornicator! I have no desire for what the men and women of your city lust after!" 92

Al-Dalål seems here to be referring to his activity as a go-between, while absolving himself of responsibility for its consequences. His claims about his own behavior are less clear. He might mean that he has neither committed nor been tempted by illicit sexual conduct; or that he lacks sexual desire altogether, 93 or, indeed, that he had nothing to do with specifically heterosexual, as opposed to homosexual, behavior. 94 All of these alternatives are compatible with the statement that al-Dalål "adored women and loved to be with them; but any demands (by them for his sexual favors) were in vain." 95 But it is the third—an exclusively homosexual orientation—which is supported by another story, set at the time of the caliph Hishám’s pilgrimage to Mecca. 96 One of Hishám’s Syrian commanders, lodged in Medina near al-Dalål’s home, overhears his singing and accepts an invitation to visit him, bringing along two servant boys. He is ravished by al-Dalål’s first song, but the latter refuses to sing another until he agrees to sell him one of the boys, which he does with alacrity. The commander then tells al-Dalål, whom he calls a "beautiful man" (ayyuhd I-rajul al-jarnil), that he is looking for a slave-girl of a particular—and very voluptuous—description. Al-Dalål replies, "I have just the girl!" and offers to arrange a viewing, in return for being made a gift of the other boy, to which the commander again agrees with alacrity. Al-Dalål then goes to one of the respectable ladies of Medina and asks her help, describing his infatuation with the two servant boys and maintaining that only her daughter fits the commander’s description; there is no real danger involved, since the second boy is to be given up after a viewing of the girl, not after the sale. The commander is allowed to see the girl, naked, and touch her; but when he makes a specific offer, the mother reveals her identity and that of her daughter and heaps scorn on the commander as a typical representative of the "crudeness of the Syrians" (ghilaz ahl al-Shám wa-jafā’uhum). 97

More explicit testimony to this aspect of al-Dalål’s shameless behavior (mujún) comes from an account of his accompanying a party of young men of Quraysh on one of their pleasure excursions outside the city. 98 Among them was a good-looking boy to whom al-Dalål was attracted. This attraction was noticed by the party, who congratulated themselves, saying, "Now we have him for the entire day!" (The explanation for this is that al-Dalål was always impatient to get away, finding men’s conversation tiresome and much preferring that of women.) When they winked at the boy, al-Dalål noticed, and, angry, rose to depart; but they persuaded him to stay and sing, and then brought out wine and began to drink, plying al-Dalål with wine as well. Their exuberance attracted the attention of the authorities, who arrived as they fled. All escaped except for al-Dalål and the boy, who were too drunk to move, and were brought before the governor (unnamed). Al-Dalål’s impudent responses to the governor are classic mujún: when the latter bursts out, "You wanton degenerate (fāṣiq)!" he replies, "From your lips to heaven!" 99 To the command, "Slap his jaw, (guards)!", he retorts, "And cut off his head, too! (?)." 100 The governor asks, "Enemy of God, were you not comfortable enough at home, so that you had to go out into the desert with this boy and do your foul business there?" Al-Dalål answers, "If I had known that you were going to attack us, preferring that we do our foul business

92 Aghhání 4:63. The anecdote seems improbably early for al-Dalål, and it would be tempting to move it forward to the governorship of Yahyá b. al-Hakam himself, under “Abd al-Malik. On the other hand, Marwán is reported elsewhere to have been particularly severe toward people of loose morals; see p. 687 below.

93 In contrast to Ťuways, none of the anecdotes about al-Dalål I have seen mention his wife; but this cannot be taken as evidence that he did not have one.

94 Al-Dalål’s statement that “má zanaytu qaṭṭu wa-lá zuniya bī” is problematical. The passive verb would seem to imply a passive role in (necessarily) homosexual intercourse; the latter, however, would not ordinarily be called ziná, but liwāt. Since, however, the verb is negated, perhaps he means simply that, not being a woman, he has not submitted to fornication as a woman (unlike, he implies, his interlocutors).

95 Aghhání 4:59. The phrase is, however, obscure and the reading uncertain: wa-kāna yaqfuru (yaqifu?!) fa-lá yaqduru (yaqduru?) alayhi. Another possibility would be "he attempted (to have intercourse with them) but was incapable of doing so."

96 The only pilgrimage by Hishám reported by al-Ťabarání was in the year 106/725 (Ta’rikh 7:35f).

97 Aghhání 4:67f.

98 Aghhání 4:64f.

99 That is, “May your prayer be answered!”

100 Literally, “strike his neck, too!”: qāla ji’u fakkahu qāla wa-unqahu aydan. Were it not that the lexica define “waj’a unqahu” as “to behead,” I would suspect a reference to masturbation here; as it is, I do not get the joke.
SECRETLY, I WOULD NEVER HAVE LEFT MY HOUSE!101 "Strip him and give him the stipulated floggings!" 101 "That will do you no good, for, by God, I get stipulated floggings every day!" "And who undertakes to do that?" "The penises of the Muslims!" "Throw him on his face and sit on his back!" "I suppose the amîr wants to see what I look like when I'm sodomized!" Then the governor ordered him and the boy paraded in shame through the city. When the people asked, "What is this, Dalâl?" he said, "The amîr wanted to "bring two heads together,102 so he has brought me and this boy together and proclaimed our union; but if someone now calls him a pimp, he will be angry!" Hearing of this, the frustrated governor let them both go.

TAKHANNUTH AND PASSIVE HOMOSEXUALITY

Unlike his predecessors among the mukhannathûn, then, al-Dalâl is presented at least by some sources as an unabashed ma'ûbân, that is, someone who sought the passive role in homosexual relations; as Ḥamza al-Iṣfâhânî has him say, in a version of the anecdote of the sugared stones at Minâ attributed to al-Dalâl rather than Ṭuways, the Devil's favor for which he owes recompense is that he "made me like ubna." 102 Although a comprehensive investigation of this phenomenon in early Muslim society cannot be undertaken here, a few basic observations will help to put this statement in context. 104 Beginning with early Ābbâsid times, when the literary expression of homosexual sentiment became fashionable, our sources on the topic are extraordinarily rich. In contrast, homosexuality is rarely mentioned in our sources for Umayyad and pre-Umayyad society, and most references occur either in the hadîth and fiqh literature, or in vituperative poetry. Both the Qur'ân and the hadîth strongly condemn homosexual activity; 105 the fiqh literature defines this activity, more or less exclusively, as anal intercourse, and prescribes equal punishment for both the active and passive partners, distinguished when necessary as "fâ'il" and "mafiûl bihi." It is, however, abundantly clear that in classical Islamic culture in general "active" and "passive" homosexuality were considered essentially two different, albeit complementary, phenomena. (This state of affairs is hardly surprising, given the fact that the same was, on the whole, true of Western classical civilization, and, arguably, of medieval Europe; indeed, it remains the case in much of Middle Eastern—and of Western—society today.)

The Arabic terminology alone leaves little room for doubt about the importance of this distinction. Liwâ', formed from Lüt, is the general as well as legal term for homosexual anal intercourse, and technically may refer to the "activity" of either partner; lüt, on the other hand, a term rare in the legal literature but otherwise common, always refers to the active partner, who, at least from Ābbâsid times, was inevitably exposed to less intense societal disapproval than the passive partner, and, indeed, whose desires, if not his acts, were widely considered normal from at least the fourth/tenth century. 106 Furthermore, the lüt's partner was not assumed himself necessarily to be acting from motives of sexual desire, and no single term refers simply to such a person, without reference to his motives: if he is paid, for instance, he is a muqîrî; if he agrees to be the passive partner in exchange for a turn as the active partner, he is a mutâjrî; if he is indeed acting out of sexual desire for the passive role, he is most commonly called a ma'bûn. The word ma'bûn carries strong connotations of pathology, and ubna is in fact frequently called a "disease" (dâ'). 107 It is perhaps due to this rather clinical tone that a number of other, synonymous terms have been adopted over time, which are

101 1drabûhu haddan. The hadd punishment applied only to certain specific offenses. The relevant offence here is zinâ, to which liwâ' was analogized. Whether liwâ' was in fact punishable with a hadd penalty was controversial; see al-Sarakhsi, Mabsût 9:77-79; Abû İshâq al-Shirāzî, al-Muhadhdhab (Cairo: Muṣṭafâ al-Bâbî, 2nd ed., 1976), 2:344.

102 That is, to make a match.

103 Ḥamza, Durra 1:188; Abû Hilâl al-'Askârî, Jamhara 1:437f.; al-Maydâni, Majma' 1:251; al-Zamakhshari, Mus-taqsa 1:109. A more elaborate version of this anecdote, mentioning both Ṭuways and al-Dalâl and attributing to the former the comment that the Devil "made me like this desire (shahwa)," appears in al-Safadî's biography of Ṭuways, al-Wâfi bil-wafayât 16:502.


105 Qur'ân 7:80f., 26:165f., 27:54f., 29:27f., 54:37. For the hadîth, see, e.g., Mâlik b. Anas, al-Muwattât, no. 1503 (p. 593). See also EI 2, s.v. "liwâ'."

106 The normal object of such "active" desires was a pubescent boy; the expression of such desires toward a full adult male was considerably more controversial, but never considered as reprehensible—or pathological—as the desire for the passive role.

used more commonly in non-medical (and non-legal) contexts. In the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries, the most common of these was baghghā, with an abstract form bighā. In the Umayyad period, the more common synonym for ubna seems to have been hulāq, the practitioner being a halaqi.

What, if any, is the relationship between the maʾbūn, halaqi, or baghghā and the mukhannath? For the ʿAbbāsīd and later periods, the answer is clear: mukhannathūn were assumed to be baghghāʾun, while continuing to display many of the distinct traits for which they were known in the Umayyad period, such as wit and flippancy, association with music in general and certain musical instruments in particular, and activity as go-betweens, as well as cross-dressing. The combination of their flippancy, effeminacy, and bighā′ earned them their own subsection in some of the later joke collections.

For the pre-ʿAbbāsīd period, we have seen reason to doubt this equation. The accounts of Hit neither state nor imply it, and in some respects seem to contradict it. Tuways is nowhere in the Aḥḏnī associated with ubna. In al-Thacḥlibiʾs Thimār al-qulāb, Tuways is indeed called maʾbūn, and even said to be famous for ubna, as well as takhannath and shuʿm, but al-Thacḥlibi is here generalizing from a single passage in Ḥamza, in an account which nowhere else mentions ubna. What Ḥamza says is that Tuways was maʾāf, that is, he had an affliction (āša), which he was not ashamed of and did not hide from people; he even composed the following verses about it:

I am Abū ʿAbd al-Naʿīm,  
I am the Peacock of Hell (Ṭawūs al-Jaḥīm),  
And I am the most ill-omened (aśaʿam) person  
To creep over the face of the earth.  
I am a ḥaʾ, then a ʾām,  
Then a qāf and the stuffing of a mīm (i.e., a yāʾ).

Certainly no more emphatic association between Tuways and hulāq could be imagined than these verses; they could not, even with considerable textual tampering, refer to anyone or anything else. On the other hand, their authenticity might well be questioned, since hulāq seems otherwise to play no role in Tuwaysʾ persona, in such notable contrast to al-Dalīl; if Tuways was famous as the leader, in some sense, of the mukhannathūn of Medina, and if all mukhannathūn were later assumed to be maʾbūnūn, then some motivation for such a fabrication might be imagined.

Besides al-Dalīl, the other prominent figure from the Umayyad period to achieve some notoriety as a maʾbūn was, in fact, not one of the mukhannathūn musicians of Medina, but rather the city’s most famous poet, al-ʿAḥwaṣ. The Aḥḏnī several times refers to accusations that al-ʿAḥwaṣ was guilty of ubna or hulāq, and also offers a number of anecdotes which imply the activity without naming it. One of these concerns a beautiful boy whom al-ʿAḥwaṣ brought with him to one of Jamila’s public concerts, while two others claim that women associated with the poet were actually men. None of these stories, however, specify the nature of these relationships explicitly; and the need for caution in interpreting them is suggested by al-ʿAḥwaṣ’s own reported statement that when he was aroused it did not matter to him whether he met a nākīḥ (active sexual partner), munkīḥ (passive), or zānī (heterosexual fornicator). Whether an anecdote

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112 It should perhaps be stated explicitly that we can, of course, say nothing about Tuwaysʾ actual sex life. What is in question here is the public image of the mukhannathūn and whether this included assumptions about homosexual behavior, either explicitly or implicitly.
114 Aḥḏnī 1:113 and 7:39 (the two accounts are identical, except for the use of hulāq in the first and ubna in the second); 1:139 and 14:167; 4:43.
115 Aḥḏnī 7:139.
117 Aḥḏnī 9:44. If the text is sound, nākīḥ must here have, unusually, the meaning lāʾīr, it would be tempting to emend zānī to zānīya. Petrāče, “Leben,” 35, takes all three terms as referring to women, and translates “verlohte, verheiratete oder ehebrecherische,” but while the lexica support the meaning “married woman” for nākīḥ, I have found no lexical justification for his feminine interpretation of the other two terms.
portraying him as entering a mosque wearing two polished, saffron-dyed garments, bedaubed with saffron perfume and with a bundle of basil behind his ear is intended to imply takhannuth is quite unclear, although he is called a mukhannath explicitly once in the Aghānī—by the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik on the occasion of his pilgrimage (75/695), when he sermonized the Medins and reproached them for their frivolity, illustrating his point with verses by al-ʿĀwāṣa, whom he calls “your mukhannath and brother.”

One anecdote, however, does testify quite explicitly to al-ʿĀwāṣa’s ubna. During a stay with the caliph al-Walīd, he is said to have attempted to seduce the baker boys in the retinue of a fellow guest into having (active) intercourse with him (yafʿalā bihi); about to be exposed for this, he compounded his problem by attempting a diversionary tactic, inciting a disgruntled client of the guest to accuse the latter himself of sexual harassment. The truth came out, however, and the caliph sent al-ʿĀwāṣa to Ibn Ḥazm, his qādī in Medina, with orders to give him a hundred lashes, pour oil on his head, and parade him in shame before the people. Either at this time or somewhat later, Ibn Ḥazm, an inveterate enemy of al-ʿĀwāṣa, went a step further and banished him to the Red Sea island of Dahlak, where the poet remained for something over five years, until pardoned by the caliph Yazīd II. The reason usually given for this banishment is not, however, al-ʿĀwāṣa’s ubna, but his unwillingness to give up his practice of mentioning aristocratic ladies by name in his amatory verses.

Such behavior, in its challenge to society’s mores and the dignity of its members, was seen as symptomatic of a general profligacy which could then be readily fleshed out by accusations of sexual irregularity—zinda and liwāt, as well as ubna—whatever the truth of the latter. The suggestion of takhannuth belongs to another, but related range of objectionable activities, representing luxury, self-indulgence, and frivolity, and including the adoption of ostentatious dress and perfumes, wine-drinking, and music.

GOVERNMENT PERSECUTION OF THE MUKHANNATHŪN

That there were sporadic attempts by the government to suppress these trends has been noted above. Sanctions against mukhannathūn in the time of the Prophet and the early caliphs seem to have been intended to safeguard the privacy of the realm of women—infringed upon in a different way by the tashbih of al-ʿĀwāṣa. Under the early ʿUmayyads, the execution of Ibn Ṯughāṣh and the bounty put on the heads of other mukhannathūn was, according to the extant reports, based on a perceived connection between cross-dressing and a lack of proper religious commitment. This persecution is attributed both to Muʿāwiya’s governor Marwān b. al-Ḥakam and to the latter’s brother Yahyā, later governor under ʿAbd al-Malik. While the latter attribution may be chronologically more plausible, the former is supported by other evidence for Marwān’s severity. The account of his drastic measures to stop Yahyā’s daughter’s too-public behavior, with al-Dalāl’s consequent flight to Mecca, has been noted above; elsewhere, the Aghānī claims that Muʿāwiya appointed Marwān and Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀs as governor of Medina for alternate years, and contrasts the harshness of Marwān, under whom the (sexually) profligate would flee the city, with the mildness of Saʿīd, under whom they would come back.

This last statement is made in the context of an account of the mukhannath Find, a participant in Jamīla’s concert and a close friend of the poet Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt, many of whose verses he set to music. Like al-Dalāl, Find acted as a go-between—specifically, he provided a space in his house for lovers’ trysts—and Ibn Qays composed some verses in appreciation of this service. According to the story in the Aghānī, Marwān, during one of his years out of office, was on his way to the mosque when he encountered Find; striking him with his staff, he quoted these verses by Ibn Qays, accused him of promoting immorality, and threatened him. Find turned and coolly replied, “Yes, you’re right about me! But, praise God, what an ugly ex-governor you are!” Marwān laughed, but added, “Enjoy while you can! It won’t be long before you see what I have in store for you!” (We hear nothing,

118 Aghānī 4:51.
119 Aghānī 4:43f. On the bulūs, sacks on which offenders were set as a form of public humiliation, see Lane, s.v.
120 Aghānī 4:43, 48, and 8:54. For further references and discussion, see Gamāl, Shiʿr al-ʿĀwāṣa, 35ff., and Petráček, “Leben,” 41–49; on the Hijazi tashbih, see Vadet, L’Esprit courttois, 102–12.
121 Summed up by the word lahw. Besides his close association with Jamīla, al-ʿĀwāṣa was closely tied with musical circles because of Maʿbad and ʿĀlīk’s musical settings of his ghāzal, which contributed considerably to his celebrity.
122 Aḥl al-diʿāra wa-l-fustaq.
124 On him, see the references in F. Rosenthal, Humor in Early Islam (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1956), 8, n. 7. His name appears in the sources as both Find and Qand; Abū l-Faraj, Aghānī 16:59, expresses a preference for Find.
Concerning the attitude of Abûn's successor, Hishâm b. Ismâ'il al-Makhzûmî (83-87/702-6), I have found no information. Hishâm was ‘Abd al-‘Azîz (87-93/706-12), who is described as being at this time rather a bon vivant and devotee of poetry and even music (in contrast to his later ascetic piety as caliph). These years seem to represent the heyday of poetry and music in the Hijaz, and the first hint of trouble comes only under ‘Umar’s successor, ‘Uthmân b. Ḥayyân (93-96/712-15). When the latter arrived in Medina, we are told, some prominent citizens urged him to put an end to the rampant “corruption” by purifying the city of “singing and fornication”; he responded by giving the people involved in these activities three days to leave town. At the eleventh hour, the eminently respectable—but music-loving—Ibn Abî ‘Atîq, who had been away, returned and heard the news from Sallâma al-Zârqâ’, one of the city’s best-loved singers. Going immediately to the governor, he convinced him to admit Sallâma, who impressed him first with her piety, then her skill at Qur’ânic recitation, and finally was permitted to sing, at which ‘Uthmân was so delighted that he dropped his banishment order.129

‘Uthmân’s original order was directed against singing and fornication, and nothing is said about the mukhannahnûn. In contrast, probably about the same time, al-Walîd’s governor of Mecca, Nâfî’ b. ‘Alqâmâ al-Kinânî, “took stringent measures against singing, singers, and date-wine, and issued a proclamation against the mukhannahnûn.”130 Only two of the latter, Ibn Surayj and his pupil al-Ghârîd, are mentioned by name; Ibn Surayj seems to have played a game of cat and mouse with the governor, and escaped serious reprisals (he apparently died soon thereafter), while al-Ghârîd is said to have fled to Yemen, where he spent the rest of his life. Although we have no indication of a wider mukhannahnûn “community” in Mecca, the relevant anecdotes about both these musicians conform to the image of the mukhannahnûn we have seen in Medina. Ibn Surayj is described as wearing dyed clothing and playing with a locust which he had on a string; when someone chided him for this, he retorted, “What harm does it to do people if I color my garments and play with my locust?” To the rejoinder that his “immoral

125 The entry on him in the rather mangled Mukhţâr kitâb al-lahw wa-l-malâhi of Ibn Khurâradddhbih edited by Khalîfî (p. 150) may refer to these, but is unclear in its present textural state.

126 Al-Nâdîm, Fihrist (Beirut: Dâr al-Ma’rifâ, n.d.), 435. Also included are Nawmât al-Dûhâ and Hibatâllâh, known from Jamîla’s concert; Ibn al-Shûnûzî (?), who has an entry, in the form “‘Arîf b. al-Shûtârî,” in Ibn Khurâradddhbih’s Mukhûtâr (149f.), between the entries for al-Dâlîî and Fînd; and Abû l-Hurr al-Mâdhûnî, referred to as a Medinan mukhannahnûn and marriage broker by Ibn ‘Abî Rabîhi, ‘Iqd 6:105, and presumably identical to the “Abû l-Khazz” mentioned in both Ibn Khurâradddhbih’s Mukhûtâr (p. 144) and al-‘Abî’s chapter of mukhannahnûn jokes (Nathr al-durr 5:2). Of the other mukhannahnûn included in Ibn Khurâradddhbih’s Mukhûtâr (pp. 149–51, 159), ‘Alî b. Zuhayr has been mentioned above (n. 68); the rest—Sâjiyya, Shabîb, Sa’târ, and the Meccan Madâr—do not appear in other sources I have consulted.

127 The most famous of all was ‘Ash’âb, the accounts of whom constitute the core of Rosenthal’s Humor in Early Islam.

128 For the common depiction of Abûn as rather simple, see Rosenthal, Humor, 21, 53, 95.
songs” led people into temptation, he replied with a song which left his antagonist speechless with delight. Al-Gharîd is depicted conveying verses between Meccan poets and aristocrats, a kind of “go-between” activity not directed toward marriage, but probably only possible because of his mukhannath status. Al-Gharîd’s erotic interests were apparently, like al-Dalâl’s, in males (although whether he was a ḥālaqī—as seems probable—or a lūṭī is unspecified), at least according to one anecdote in the Aghâni. Invited to join a group on an outing, he was attracted to a young man (ghūlām) and asked the group to speak to him about meeting with him privately; when the young man agreed, the two withdrew behind a rock. When Al-Gharîd had “fulfilled his need,” the young man rejoined the group, and Al-Gharîd began to pelt the rock with pebbles, explaining that, as on the Day of Judgment the rock would testify against them, he was trying to “wound” this testimony (ajrahu bi-hahadatah).131

Al-Gharîd and al-Dalâl are the only two mukhannathin from the pre-‘Abbâsid period for whom we have explicit anecdotal evidence of homosexual activity. The Aghâni offers one further anecdote which would seem to make this linkage, but whose implications are unclear.132 A mukhannath from Mecca named Mukkhhka is said to have come to al-Dalâl in Medina and asked him to introduce him to (dullinī ‘alā) one of the mukhannathin of Medina, whom he could beguile, tease, and then seduce (ukāyiduha wa-umāziḥuhu thumma ufādhibuhu).133 Al-Dalâl replied, “I have just the person for you!” and described a neighbor of his, whom he would find at that moment in the mosque, performing his prayers, “for show.”134 In fact, however, this man was the police chief of Medina, Khaytham b. ‘Irāk b. Mālik.135 Finding Khaytham in the midst of his prayers, Mukkhhka told him to hurry up and finish, addressing him in the feminine.136 Taken aback, Khaytham exclaimed, “Glory to God (subḥān Allāh)!” Mukkhhka retorted, “May you sleep (sabahtā) in a pinching shackle (?)”!37 Finish up, so I can talk with you for a while!” But when Khaytham finished his prayer, he ordered the mukhannath seized, given a hundred stripes, and imprisoned. Sexual activity between mukhannathin seems to be clearly implied by this anecdote, a situation I have not encountered anywhere else in the literature, either pre-‘Abbâsid or ‘Abbâsid; one could perhaps imagine here a sort of reverse bidāl, that is, taking turns for the sake of enjoying the passive (rather than active) role, but the historicity of the anecdote is so problematical that it is perhaps best discounted altogether.138

131 Aghâni 1:97f.
133 Aghâni 2:128f. “Jarâha” means both “to wound” and “to impugn the probity of a witness.”
134 Aghâni 4:64.
135 Kayd al-nisâ’, “the guile of women,” is a standard cliché, based in part on the statement of Qur’ān 12:28, in the context of the story of Potiphar’s wife, “inna kaydakunna ‘azīm”; see al-Thuʿālibī, Thimār al-qulūb, 305 (kayd al-nisâ’). The third form of this root, kāyada, with verbal noun kīyād, seems equally stereotypical for mukhannath, as indicated by Hamza, Durra, 61, where “kīyād mukhannath” is included in a list of clichés created by settled Arabic speakers on the model of the Bedouins’ animal clichés. Similarly, the ‘Abbâsid poet Abû l-ʿAtâhiyya, reproached in his youth for takhannath, and in particular for taking up the zāmiḥa (a kind of tabl or drum) of the mukhannath, justified himself by saying “I want to learn their kīyād and memorize their speech”; see Aghâni 3:122–24.

136 “Li-yurrā’īya l-nas,” clearly a reference to the assumed irreligiosity of the mukhannathin.
137 Khaytham was sāhib al-shurta, we are told, under Ziyād b. ‘Abdallâh al-Ḥarithi; the latter was governor of Medina from 133/750 to 141/758, according to al-Ṭabarî, Taʾrikh 7:459, 511.
138 “Ajīlī bi-ṣalātikī lā sallā Allāh ‘alaykī.” I have seen no other examples of this use of the feminine among the mukhannathin in the pre-‘Abbâsid period, although later it became not uncommon.

139 “Sabahtā fī jāmiʿa qarrāṣa.” Clearly some sarcastic pun is intended here, but the meaning is obscure. In the parallel version of the anecdote in the Muwaffaqiyyāt of al-Zubayr b. Bakkār (see next note), the phrase is “Sabahtā bi-umm al-zinā fī jāmiʿa qamila,” which is followed by an intrusive gloss, explaining that “jāmiʿa” means “shackle” (qayḍ), and “qamîl” means “being imprisoned so long that one’s shackle (reading qayḍ for qadd) becomes lousy.” According to Lane, s.v. ghull, the latter term, a synonym for jāmiʿa, was used metonymically for “wife” (that is, “ball and chain”), while ghull qamîl referred to “a woman of evil disposition.” Sabaha may mean “swim,” “gallop,” “burrow,” and other things, as well as “sleep.”

140 Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, al-Akhbār al-Muwaffaqiyyāt, ed. S. M. al-ʿÂnî (Baghdād: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿÂnî, 1972), 321f., has a garbled version of this anecdote in which the Medinan joker is not al-Dalâl but Muzabbid, a well-known Medinan comic similar to Aḥṣab and nowhere else associated with takhannath (see Rosenthal, Humor, 14). The placement of the story under an ‘Abbâsid governor is too late for either al-Dalâl or Muzabbid.
CULMINATION OF THE PERSECUTION

Of considerably greater interest is another anecdote concerning al-Dalāl, and indeed all the mukhannathīn of his generation, which describes a particularly severe persecution to which they were subjected and seems to explain the rather abrupt end to their prominence and influence in Medina. Unfortunately, as with so many of the stories recounted above, this most widely reported of all the mukhannathīn anecdotes appears in a great variety of versions, which differ not only on the nature and scope of the persecution, but also on its occasion and rationale; at the same time, however, the different accounts provide numerous details which help further to fill out our picture of the mukhannathīn at this time.

In the Aghānī, Abū l-Faraj juxtaposes a number of these accounts, but specifies two very similar versions among them as being the most reliable. According to the first, the caliph Sulaymān was in camp in the desert one night, enjoying the company of a slave girl. He ordered her to assist him in his ablutions, but she failed to notice when he gestured to her to pour the water. Looking up, he saw that she was listening intently to a man’s singing drifting in from the camp. He noted the voice, and the verses, and the next day brought up the subject of song with his companions, feigning a genuine interest in it. Their comments quickly led him to the identity of the previous night’s singer, one Samīr al-

aylī, whom he summoned and interrogated. He then pronounced that “[t]he he-camel brays, and the she-camel comes running; the male goat cries, and the female struts; a man sings, and a woman swoons (tarībat),” and had the singer castrated. When castrated, he replied, “In Medina, among the mukhannathīn; they are the best and most highly skilled at it.”

The caliph then sent an order to his governor in Medina, Ibn Ḥāzm al-Ānṣārī, to castrate (akhsū) all the mukhannathīn singers there, which he did. 142

In this version, the mukhannathīn were punished simply because they were musicians. The grotesque choice of punishment, meted out equally to the non-mukhannath Samīr, 143 is a response, if not an entirely clear one, to the nature of the offense: music rouses women’s passions and is thus a moral threat to society. The implication that the caliph was acting out of personal jealousy over his own slave girl is made explicit in Abū l-Faraj’s other preferred version, which gives the verses of Samīr’s song as follows:

Secluded, she heard my voice, and it kept her awake
Through the long night to a wearisome dawn,
Her neck veiled by two swathes of saffron,
With green ornaments on her breast,
On a night of full moon, her bed companion unable to say
Whether her face or the moon shed more light.
Were she free, she would come to me on feet
So delicate they would almost shatter from her tread.

Needless to say, the description in the verses matched the slave girl; Sulaymān, furious with jealousy, imprisoned the singer and threatened the girl with her life. She protested that she had spent her entire life in the Hijaz until being purchased by Sulaymān, and would have had no opportunity to become acquainted with anyone locally (apparently somewhere in Syria). Samīr when summoned also protested his innocence, and Sulaymān was finally convinced. He was unwilling to let Samīr go free, however (lam tāṣīb nafsuhu bi-takhliyatihi sawīyyan), so he had him castrated and ordered the same for the mukhannathīn. 144

Other versions also stress Sulaymān’s jealousy, and some have nothing to say about the mukhannathīn at all. Such is the case in the al-‘Iqd al-farīd, which gives one version which ends with the singer’s castration, and another in which even he gets off with a warning. 145

Other sources omit the story of the singer, and have

142 Aghānī 4:60f.

143 In no version of the story is he ever identified as a mukhannath.

144 Aghānī 4:61f.


Akhbār al-Muwaffaqiyāt, 191f.
only the castration of the **mukhannathūn**. According to one version in Ḥamza al-Isfahānī, this was done because "they had become many in Medina, and were ruining the women for the men (afsadū l-nisāʾ 'alā l-rījāl);" similarly, another version in the *Aghānī*, which names the caliph as al-Walīd, says that he took action when informed that the women of Quraysh were visited by the **mukhannathūn** in Medina, despite the Prophet's explicit prohibition. The *Aghānī* also records a particularly lurid version, on the authority of Muṣʿab al-Zubayrī, who claimed to know best why al-Dalīl specifically was castrated. After arranging a marriage, according to Muṣʿab, al-Dalīl would convince the bride that her sexual excitement at the prospect of the wedding night was excessive and would only disgust her husband, and then he would offer to calm her down by having sexual intercourse with her first. He would then go to the groom, make the same point, and offer himself, passively, to cool him down as well. The outraged Sulaymān, here again called "jealous," ghārīr, but in a general sense, wrote to have all the **mukhannathūn** castrated, saying, "They are admitted to the women of Quraysh and corrupt them." Here, even with explicit testimony to al-Dalīl's homosexual behavior, it is the morals of the women which are of concern.

There is considerable variation among versions even with regard to the identity of the caliph and the governor, the former appearing sometimes as al-Walīd, ʿUmar ʿl, or Hishām, and the latter as ʿUthmān b. Ḥāyyān, although Sulaymān and Ibn Ḥazm are by far the most frequently named. The singer and the slavegirl are also variously named. One fairly common addition to the story, which serves as the basis for its inclusion in several of our *adab* sources, absolves Sulaymān of responsibility for the castration by claiming that what he actually wrote to the governor was "make a register (ahi) of the **mukhannathūn**", but the spluttering pen of the amanuensis added a dot to the bā' so that it read "ikhsi," "castrate." Some of these sources let the governor off the hook as well, reporting that he questioned the reading but was assured that the dot "looked like a date," or "was as big as the star Canopus." These stories perhaps imply that Sulaymān's action was viewed by some as unexpectedly brutal.

Several sources name some or all of the victims (besides al-Dalīl, who is almost always included). A number of these also report a series of quips said to have been pronounced by them on the occasion. The fullest version of these statements is offered by Ḥamza, whose list is as follows:

- Ṭūways: "This is simply a circumcision which we must undergo again."
- al-Dalīl: "Or rather the Greater Circumcision!"
- Naṣīm al-Saḥrāʾ ("Breeze of the Dawn"): "With castration I have become a **mukhannath** in truth!"
- Nawwat al-Duḥā: "Or rather we have become women in truth!"
- Bard al-Fuʿād: "We have been spared the trouble of carrying around a spout for urine."
- Zill al-Shājar ("Shade Under the Trees"): "What would we do with an unused weapon, anyway?"

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147 *Aghānī* 4:62.
148 *Aghānī* 4:59f.
152 Ḥamza, *Durra*, 186–88, reproduced by Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskārī, *Jamhara* 1:437f., and al-Maydānī, *Majmaʿ* 1:251. Ibn Khurradādbihī, *Mukhātār*, 149, attributes the first two of these sayings to, respectively, Ṭārīfah (or Ṭārīqah) b. al-Shūtarī (on whom see note 126 above) and al-Dalīl, and names as other victims Bard al-Fuʿād and Nawmat al-Duḥā. Since, according to Ibn Khallikān, Ṭūways had died three years before this event (see note 46 above), it seems likely that in Ḥamza's account his name has replaced that of the less well-known Ṭārīfah/Ṭārīqah; this supposition is supported by the version in the *Aghānī* 4:61, which claims that altogether nine *mukhannathūn* were castrated, including al-Dalīl, Ṭārīf, and
The last two statements imply that what the *mukhannathūn* underwent was *jībah*, the more drastic form of castration in which the penis was truncated. They serve to stress the *mukhannathūn*’s lack of sexual interest in women, while the two preceding statements identify the essential psychological motivation behind *takhannuth* as gender identification with women. The flippancy of tone in these quips is of course characteristic of the *mukhannath* persona, and also points to the singular inappropriateness of the punishment, despite its savagery; significantly, there is no positive reference to sexual orientation, as opposed to gender identity.

Our sources offer few details about the aftermath of this traumatic event. One much-repeated anecdote has Ibn Abī ‘Atīq reacting to news of the castration of al-Dalāl by insisting that (whatever one might say against him) he had done a fine rendition of some verses by al-‘Aḥwās. According to another story, both Badrāqūs, the physician who performed the castration, and his assistant were part of a group who set out from Mecca at some later date and were offered hospitality en route by Ḥabīb Nawmāt al-Duhā. When the assistant asked Ḥabīb his identity, he replied, “Do you not recognize me after having ‘circumcized’ me?” Taken aback, the assistant avoided the food offered by Ḥabīb for fear of poisoning. A third account, dependent on the “*tasḥīḥ*” version of the castration story, reports that the caliph Sulaymān was grieved by the accidental castration of the charming al-Dalāl, and had him secretly brought to his court. When the caliph asked him how he was, al-Dalāl replied, “Now that you’ve truncated (*jababta*) me in front, do you want to truncate me in back?” Sulaymān laughed, and ordered him to sing. Unable to decide whether he was more charmed by his wit or his singing, the caliph kept him with him a month, rewarded him richly, and sent him back to the Hijāz.

What is more striking than these few stories is the general silence in our sources on the Medinese *mukhannathūn* after this event, in sharp contrast to the wealth of anecdotes for the few decades before it. Whatever the historicity of the details of the account of their castration, this silence supports the assumption that they did suffer a major blow sometime around the caliphate of Sulaymān. The individual victims presumably lived out their lives, and it is not improbable that al-Dalāl, for example, may have continued to sing, to act as a go-between, and to pursue boys, as in the one anecdote we have about him which is datable after this time. But none of the next generation of singers, which included such major figures as Mālik b. Abī l-Samḥ, Ibn Abī ‘Isha, Ibn Muḥriz, Yūnūs al-Kātib, ‘Umar al-Wādī, and Ḥakam al-Wādī, are ever referred to as *mukhannathūn*. An anecdote about Ḥakam al-Wādī suggests that, while the connection between the *mukhannathūn* and music was not entirely broken, they had suffered a severe loss of prestige. Like several other Hijāzi musicians, Ḥakam emigrated to Iraq, where he enjoyed the patronage of the dissolute Muḥammad b. Abī l-‘Abbās, nephew of the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Manṣūr (136–58/754–75). Muḥammad was particularly appreciative of Ḥakam’s songs in *ḥazaj*, a style he had only begun to cultivate late in his life. Ḥakam’s son, however, disapproved of this, and reproached his father, saying, “In your old age, will you take to singing in the style of the *mukhannathūn*?” But his father replied, “Be quiet, ignorant boy! I sang in the heavy (*thaqīl*) style for sixty years, and never made more than my daily bread; but in the last few years I have sung songs in *ḥazaj* and made more money than you’d ever seen before!”

Another Hijāzi singer who made his way to ‘Abbāsid Iraq in his old age was Mālik b. Abī l-Samḥ, who was patronized briefly by Sulaymān b. Abī l-Samḥ. 154 In most versions, Ibn Abī ‘Atīq makes his comment in the midst of his prayers in the mosque, and the intention is clearly to show how he combined piety with appreciation for music.

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153 Aghānī 4:66.

154 Sulaymān’s punishment of al-‘Aḥwās would seem to represent a similar move on the caliph’s part, although I have not seen the two measures mentioned together in any of the sources.

155 At the time of Hīshām’s pilgrimage, in 106/725; see p. 684 above. The improbability of the Mukkha anecdote, which has al-Dalāl still alive in ‘Abbāsid times, has been pointed out above, note 140.

156 Aghānī 6:64.
governor of lower Iraq, before returning to Medina. While staying in Basra, we are told, Mālik met 'Ajjāja, the most famous of the mukhannathān there. 'Ajjāja insisted in singing for Mālik a song he had learned from another mukhannath, accompanying himself with the duff. The song turned out to be Mālik's own, and Mālik did not know whether to be appalled or amused, but kept repeating, "Who sang this to you? Who passed it on to you from me?" This story should not be interpreted to suggest that mukhannath musicians represented a phenomenon in late Umayyad and early 'Abbāsid Iraq comparable to that earlier in Medina. 'Ajjāja may have been the most famous mukhannath in Basra, but to my knowledge he is mentioned nowhere in our sources except in this single anecdote. As with the later Hijazi musicians, none of the indigenous Iraqi musicians known to us, beginning with Hunayn al-Hirī, are referred to as mukhannathān. In fact, the only significant figure in Iraq in this period whom I have found linked to mukhannath is the late Umayyad governor Khālid al-Rasī (105–20/723–38). According to a number of malicious, and highly improbable, reports in the Aghānī, this man, who spent his youth in Medina, is identified with a certain Khālid al-Khīrīt, a mukhannath who associated with the Medinese mukhannathān and musicians and used to convey messages between the poet 'Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a and various aristocratic ladies in the city. Yet even were we to grant these reports some credence, no trace of such frivolity is to be found in al-Rasī’s stern governorship of Iraq, where, we are told, he issued a decree forbidding singing.

Reports about mukhannathān begin to appear again with any frequency in our sources only in the high 'Abbāsid period, and then primarily in Baghdad. But by then their situation had changed rather radically. While we do hear occasionally of mukhannath musicians at court, none achieved sufficient celebrity even to have their names preserved. They continued to play the duff, but became associated also with a particular kind of drum and with the ṭunbūr, a long-necked lute. More than their music, however, it was their wit that now defined their persona, as illustrated most clearly by the career of 'Abbāda, the son of a cook at the court of al-Ma'mūn (198–218/813–33), who served as a kind of court jester, with some interruptions, for over forty years. In no way a musician, 'Abbāda was also less a wit than a buffoon, whose stock in trade was savage mockery, extravagant burlesque, and low sexual humor, much of the latter turning on his flaunting of his passive homosexuality. All these characteristics were henceforth to be associated with the figure of the mukhannath, and offer a considerable contrast with the earlier situation in the Hijaz.

An analysis of the nature of this change, and its relation to differing social conditions in Iraq, or processes of social change there, must be reserved for a future study of the mukhannathān in the 'Abbāsid period. Certainly a crucial factor was the sudden emergence of (active) homoerotic sentiment as an acceptable, and indeed fashionable, subject for prestige literature, as represented most notably by the poetry of Abū Nuwās. Increased public awareness of homosexuality, which was to persist through the following centuries, seems to have altered perceptions of gender in such a way that "effeminacy," while continuing to be distinguished from (passive) homosexual activity or desire, was no longer seen as independent from it; and the stigma attached to the latter seems correspondingly to have been directed at the former as well, so that the mukhannathān were never again to enjoy the status attained by their predecessors in Umayyad Medina.

160 Aghānī 4:169f.
161 Aghānī 19:55f.
162 Aghānī 1:160. Al-Qaṣrī was also governor of Mecca for a time, under either ‘Abd al-Malik or al-Walīd; see EI 2, s.v. "Khālid b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Kaṣrī." I have found no reports on his relations with musicians or mukhannathān during his tenure there.

163 See note 82 above. E. Neubauer, Musiker am Hof der Frühen 'Abbāsiden, 38, notes the connection between the fast ḥaṣaj rhythm and the ṭunbūr, which had little resonance.

164 For examples of 'Abbāda's humor, see the sections on mukhannathān and on baghdādīn in al-Ābi, Nahr al-durr 5:277–92, 302–6.

165 The evidence for mukhannathān, not only in the 'Abbāsid period, but also in subsequent periods up to the present day remains to be investigated. A well-known nineteenth-century reference is E. W. Lane's description in An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians (London: John Murray, 1860 [Dover reprint, New York, 1973]), 381f., of the transvestite dancers of Cairo called khawals and ginks. The only significant study of contemporary mukhannathān in the Middle East is Unni Wikan's controversial article on the khānīth of Oman, "Man Becomes Woman: Transsexualism in Oman As a Key to Gender Roles," Man 12 (1977): 304–19.