

The 9/11 Handbook

Annotated Translation and Interpretation
of the Attackers' *Spiritual Manual*

edited by

Hans G. Kippenberg
and
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JIHAD HYMNS (*NASHĪDS*) AS A MEANS OF SELF-MOTIVATION IN THE HAMBURG GROUP

Tilman Seidensticker

1. *Bahaji's Wedding*

The unexpectedly significant role of ritual elements in the *Spiritual Manual* has a parallel in another first-hand source that sheds light on the 9/11 attackers' milieu. Among the body of evidence seized in connection with the Hamburg group, there is a videotape showing the wedding ceremony of Said Bahaji. Bahaji, born in Germany to a German mother and a Moroccan father and belonging to the Hamburg group, fled a few days before 9/11. He seems to be alive, as he still sends e-mails to his wife, who is of Turkish origin. The video was recorded on 9 October 1999, and it contains about 50 minutes of footage from the public wedding ceremony held in the al-Kuds Mosque in Hamburg. As is common in very strict Islamic circles, there were two separate gatherings: one for the female guests and one for the males. The video shows the men's gathering; among the 50 to 60 people attending, there were some children as well.²⁵¹ Among the guests were Ziad Jarrah and Marwan al-Shehhi, who lost their lives in the attacks of September 2001, and Ramzi Binalshibh. Binalshibh is one of the two chief planners of 9/11, the other one being Khalid Sheikh Mohammed; both have since been arrested in Pakistan and are presently in US detention at an unknown location.

Some parts of the ceremony conform to what one would expect to happen at a Muslim wedding. At the beginning, a young man of Turkish origin welcomes the guests in German, Arabic and Turkish and, among other things, expresses his delight at this Arabic–Turkish marriage, something that, he says, has regrettably gone out of fashion in the past 50 to 70 years. Later on, Bahaji thanks his guests for having accepted the invitation, adding that the Prophet Muḥammad imposed acceptance of such invitations as a religious duty on every Muslim. Shortly afterwards,



Figure 3. *The Quartet is Singing.*
Sitting: Ramzi Binalshibh and Said Bahaji. Standing to the right: Marwan al-Shehhi.

a Turkish imam from another Hamburg mosque delivers a short and quite unremarkable address in Arabic, expressing his best wishes to the couple. Later still, an Arabic wedding song is sung by a quartet. Afterwards a Moroccan imam gives a speech in Arabic on some aspects of marriage, and the procession of the guests congratulating the bridegroom and his father-in-law concludes the video.

2. *Jihadist Elements in the Wedding Ceremony*

These conventional elements are interspersed with scenes of a decidedly Jihadist character which, for the outside observer, are hardly compatible with the occasion of a wedding. Specifically, these scenes are:

1. a three-minute political speech by Ramzi Binalshibh, including a poem by the Syrian poet ‘Umar Abū Rīsha (1910–90) which bears the title ‘After the Catastrophe’ (*Ba’d al-nakba*);
2. a battle-song, about five minutes long, encouraging the ‘adherents of monotheism’ to fight ‘heresy’;
3. a second political statement by Binalshibh, about one and a half minutes long, in which he mentions the glorious conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and says that colonialists and orientalist later succeeded in sowing the seeds of discord among the Muslims;
4. a song of five and a half minutes duration, praising military activity as the Muslim’s real way of serving his God;
5. another song of four minutes length on the delights of dying as a martyr.

Of particular interest are the songs in scenes 4 and 5, as they represent a genre of religiously imbued music that apparently plays an enormous role in Jihadist circles. I leave aside the battle-song of scene 2, because its religious focus is not particularly evident. In fact, the two notions of *banū al-tawhīd* ‘adherents of monotheism’ and *ilhād* ‘heresy’ are the only religious terms in it, and they are comparatively vague.

3. *A Jihad Poem from the Eighth Century Set to Music*

A translation of the song is presented first, followed by an explanation. The wording of the song in scene 4 is as follows:

1. O ‘Servant of the two Holy Places’, if you saw us, you would know that you are only playing in your worship!
2. Others may tinge their cheeks with tears: our throats are tinged with our blood.

3. Others may exhaust their horses for idle purposes: our horses are worn out during the morning encounter with the enemy.
4. You smell of perfume, but our perfume is the dust stirred up by hooves, and the dust is the better perfume.
5. From the sayings of our Prophet, there has come down to us a reliable, truthful word which does not lie:
6. 'A man will never smell both the dust of God's cavalry and the smoke of a blazing fire [in hell]'.²⁵²
7. This is God's book, speaking among us, and it does not lie when saying 'the martyr is not dead'.²⁵³

The words of this song are a poem by 'Abdallāh Ibn Mubārak (d. AD 797) who was a transmitter of Prophetic tradition and is regarded as one of the founders of Sufism. He took part in several jihad campaigns and wrote a famous book on that topic, his *Kitāb al-Jihād*. The poem is addressed to another Sufi and expert on the Prophetic tradition named al-Fuḍayl Ibn 'Iyāḍ (d. AD 803) who was called 'Servant of the Two Holy Places'.²⁵⁴ The text of the poem is related in the Koran commentary by Ibn Kathīr (d. AD 1373), where it is quoted to elucidate verse 200 of surah 3. It is composed in the classical *Kāmil* metre. During the wedding, one of the singers first reads out the words of the poem; afterwards, the quartet sings it with numerous repetitions. A much more professional version of the song can be found on the Internet.²⁵⁵

4. A Modern Martyr Song

The song in scene 5 reads as follows:

1. I wished life as a delight, as travel and struggle,
2. and I chose my path myself and moved forward fast on it,
3. and I became a fire and a light and... [?] and a perfume,
4. until I died as a martyr, welcoming the fate of death.
5. The light fills my eyes, and the paradise virgins sit in the grasp of my right hand,
6. and I sing like an angel amidst gardens and springs.
7. These gardens are my abode, and my wounds are its perfume;
8. enchantment, joy and wine: what a fine place of rest!
9. My fellows are the prophets and my brothers are the (other) martyrs,
10. and God bestows on us the shadows of a merciful love.
11. In God's gardens I live in a thousand and one worlds,
12. and anything I desire is brought to me swiftly.

13. Don't say about those who went away yesterday: We lost them!
14. If dwelling in the Garden of Eternity means being lost, then it is better that you should lose me.

The text is composed in the classical *Mujtathth* metre, but, as the rhyme shows, it is of modern origin. The song can be downloaded from the same website as the preceding one; the version to be found there is striking because of the singer's androgynous voice and the strange pronunciation of the Arabic letter *rā'*. At the wedding, it is sung by a trio.

5. *A Conservative Scholar's Approval of Singing nashīds*

Songs like these two are called *nashīd* or *unshūda* in Arabic; the plural forms are *nashā'id*, *anshād* and *anāshīd*. If the form *nashīd* or *anāshīd* is typed into a search engine (in Arabic characters, of course), the result is a huge number of hits yielding either song lyrics, or, more often, audio files. Not all *nashīds* display such a Jihadist character as the two examples sung at Bahaji's wedding. A *nashīd* may have a non-political and non-religious character; the semantic core of the term is just 'song, hymn'. But in a narrower sense, *nashīd* is a political or religious (or religio-political) song.²⁵⁶ The volume of examples of this special type that is accessible on the Web is so large that it could be subject of more than one doctoral dissertation.

Although Islamic civilization developed a rich heritage of music, orthodox circles always had strong objections to various modes of musical activity. The best-known and most extreme example is the Taliban regime's complete ban on music in Afghanistan. Therefore, it is not surprising that the conformity of the *nashīds* (or *unshūdas*) with 'true Islam' has been discussed. For example, on the previously mentioned website, *Islaam.net*, the ruling of the Salafī scholar Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī²⁵⁷ is quoted, obviously to ease concerns about the 'Islamic admissibility' of these songs. It reads:

If these nashīds have 'Islamic' meanings whilst not having in them any musical instruments such as duffs, other drums, or the like, then there is no problem in this. However, it is necessary to explain an important prerequisite for their permissibility, and that is that they should be free of anything contradicting the shari'ah such as excessiveness and the like. Then another condition is that it should not become a habit because that diverts listeners [of the nashīds] from the recitation of the Qur'ān, which is encouraged in the Prophetic, purified, sunnah. Likewise, it diverts them from seeking beneficial knowledge and calling to Allāh subhanahu. As for the use of duffs in nashids, then this is permissible for women when amongst themselves, and not for men, and on 'īd and on weddings only.

Indeed, both songs in their more professional versions on the Web as well as in their renditions at the wedding are purely vocal music.

6. Insider Assessments of the History and Function of *nashīds*

On 27 September 2003, the Arabic newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat*²⁵⁸ published an article by Muḥammad al-Shāfi‘ī entitled ‘Dispute among fundamentalists on the use of files on “The Black-eyed Virgins” for the mobilization of the fighters of al-Qaeda’.²⁵⁹ Here is a translation of the most important paragraphs of this well-informed article:

A dispute has arisen among fundamentalists (*uṣūliyyūn*) about the recent release of data bearing the name ‘The Black-eyed Virgins’ (*al-ḥūr al-‘īn*). This is the designation of three audio files by a number of scholars belonging to fundamentalist organizations in the Gulf region. Their aim is to promote mobilization of fighters for al-Qaeda. The ‘Jihad Club’ (*al-Muntadā al-jihādī*) posted these files on the site *Balsam al-Īmān* (‘The Balm of Faith’) the day before yesterday.²⁶⁰ Other websites close to al-Qaeda disseminated the files, which exhort Muslims to renounce the world and direct their hopes to the beauty of the paradise virgins... The propagandists concentrate their efforts on depicting these virgins and the delight awaiting the martyrs.

The three files were produced by someone who calls himself ‘The Eastern Scholar’ (*al-tālib al-sharqī*), which is the alias of a fundamentalist leader close to al-Qaeda. He is the very person who formerly produced files bearing the name ‘Jihad is your duty’ (*‘alaykum bi-l-jihād*).

The Libyan Islamist (*islāmī*) Nu‘mān Ibn ‘Uthmān told Asharq Alawsat in a phone conversation that fundamentalists have collected such files since the days of Afghanistan. The expert on fundamentalist movements added that in about 90 per cent of the cases the incentive for the Mujahid to sacrifice his life is the expected reward in the Hereafter, especially the joy found with the paradise virgins...

‘Umar al-Bakrī, leader of the movement *al-Muhājirūn*, the largest fundamentalist organization in Britain, told Asharq Alawsat that the Islamists have been repeating their *nashīds* for 25 years and dream day and night (of paradise), saying ‘The light fills my eyes, and the paradise virgins sit in the grasp of my right hand, and I am like an angel singing amidst gardens and springs’.²⁶¹ The Syrian fundamentalist explained that ‘the audio files come under the heading of inciting interest in jihad, of instigating and impelling to it’. He added that those who belong to Jihadist circles know the descriptions of the paradise virgins by heart, as they are based on Koranic passages and Prophetic tradition. He said that the mujahedin in Iraq, Afghanistan and Chechnya long primarily for paradise with its virgins, its rivers, milk and honey...²⁶²

[Dr Hānī al-Sibā‘ī, an Islamist who hails from Egypt and directs the al-Maqrīzī Institute in London] said that there is one famous paradise virgin called al-‘Aynā’, for whom all fighters of al-Qaeda long and whom they desire for themselves. If she unveiled her face, the light of it would extinguish the sun...²⁶³

7. *Conclusions*

The wedding ceremony was an event that brought together some important members of the Hamburg group and a wider public. Many guests are sure to have had their reservations about its radical Jihadist ring. But although the missionary character of the event is obvious, we may assume that the ritual of singing was an important element for bringing about coherence within the Hamburg group itself. Songs about jihad, martyrdom and houris were composed, sung and recorded from the early days of the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. In former days, these songs were distributed in cassette form; nowadays, the Web facilitates the spread of this means of propaganda and recruitment to an extent that was inconceivable as recently as the early 1990s. The high technical standard of these files and their undeniable aesthetic value will only add to their suggestive effect. And the paradise virgins are as present in this sort of poetry set to music as they are in the *Spiritual Manual*.

8. *Arabic Text of the Songs*

The song in scene 4:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>yā ‘ābida l-ḥaramayni law absartanā</i> | <i>la-‘alimta annaka bi-l-‘ibādati tal‘abū</i> |
| 2. <i>man kāna yakḥḍibu khaddahū bi-dumū‘ihī</i> | <i>fa-nuḥūrunā bi-dimā‘inā tatakhaḍḍabū</i> |
| 3. <i>aw kāna yut‘ibu khaylahū fī bāṭilin</i> | <i>fa-khuyūlunā yawma l-ṣabīḥati tat‘abū</i> |
| 4. <i>rīḥu l-‘abūri lakum wa-naḥmu ‘abūrunā</i> | <i>wahaju l-sanābiki wa-l-ghubāru l-aṭyabū</i> |
| 5. <i>wa-la-ḡad atānā min maḡāli nabiyyinā</i> | <i>qawlun ṣaḥīḥun ṣādiqun lā yakdhibū</i> |
| 6. <i>lā yastawī wa-ghubāru khayli llāhi fī</i> | <i>anfi mri‘in wa-dukhānu nārin tulhabū</i> |
| 7. <i>hādḥā kitābu llāhi yanṭiqu baynanā</i> | <i>laysa l-shahīdu bi-mayyitin lā yakdhibū</i> |

The order in which the lines are sung is: 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 3, 4, 1, 2, 5, 5, 6, 1, 2, 7, 7, 7, 1, 2.

The song in scene 5:

1. <i>shi 'tu l-ḥayāta matā 'an</i>	<i>wa-riḥlatan wa-ṣirā 'an</i>
2. <i>wa-khartu darbī bi-naḥsī</i>	<i>wa-sirtu fīhi sirā 'an</i>
3. <i>wa-ṣirtu nāran wa-nūran</i>	<i>wa-ghinwatan wa-'abīran</i>
4. <i>ḥattā qaḍaytu shahīdan</i>	<i>muraḥḥiban bi-l-manūni</i>
5. <i>al-nūru mil 'u 'uyūnī</i>	<i>wa-l-ḥūru milku yamīnī</i>
6. <i>wa-ka-l-malāki ughannī</i>	<i>fī jannatin wa-'uyūnin</i>
7. <i>hādhi l-jināmu marāḥī</i>	<i>wa-'iṭruhā min jirāḥī</i>
8. <i>siḥrun wa-rawḥun wa-rāḥun</i>	<i>yā qalbu ayyu rawāḥin</i>
9. <i>jullāsiya l-anbiyā 'u</i>	<i>wa-ikhwatī l-shuhadā 'u</i>
10. <i>wa-llāhu yulqī 'alaynā</i>	<i>zilāla ḥubbin ḥanūnin</i>
11. <i>fī jannati llāhi aḥyā</i>	<i>fī alfi dunyā wa-dunyā</i>
12. <i>wa-mā tamannaytu shay 'an</i>	<i>illā atānī sarī 'an</i>
13. <i>fa-lā taqūlū khasirnā</i>	<i>man ghāba bi-l-amsi 'annā</i>
14. <i>in kāna fī l-khuldi khusrun</i>	<i>fa-l-khayru an takhsarūnī</i>

The first word of line 8, *siḥrun*, is taken from the text and audio versions available on the Internet; on the video, some other word is sung which I could not identify. *sarī 'an* in line 12 is taken from the text version on the Internet; on the video as well as in the audio version from the Web, *sarī 'an* is definitively not sung. The order in which the lines are sung is: 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 5, 6, 6 (second half), 7, 7, 8, 8, 9, 9, 10, 10, 5, 5, 6, 6 (second half), 11, 11, 12, 12, 13, 13, 14, 14 (second half), 14 (second half).

229. For more details, see *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 166; McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, pp. 179-80.
230. *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 225.
231. *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 223.
232. *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 231; Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*, p. 213.
233. Quoted by Mneimneh and Makiya, 'Manual for a "Raid"', pp. 303-304 n. 2.
234. Gerhard Endress, *Einführung in die islamische Geschichte* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1982), p. 177.
235. Fouda and Fielding, *Masterminds of Terror*, pp. 110-13.
236. Concerning the notion of the 'living martyr', who confessed an attack before committing it, see Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, p. 179.
237. Stephan Rosiny, *Islamismus bei den Schiiten im Libanon: Religion im Übergang von Tradition zur Moderne* (Berlin: Das arabische Buch, 1996), pp. 123-36.
238. Peter Waldmann, *Terrorismus: Provokation der Macht* (Munich: Gerling Akademie, 1998), pp. 61-68.
239. Magnus Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 62-65 ('Use of Cover Names and Concealment by Hizb'allah in Abduction of Foreigners').
240. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 32 (history); p. 177 (diagram of the organisation); pp. 195-200 (function of the basic units).
241. Denis Engelleder, *Die islamistische Bewegung in Jordanien und Palästina 1945-1989* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), pp. 108-11; Johannes Reissner, *Ideologie und Politik der Muslimbrüder Syriens: Von den Wahlen 1947 bis zum Verbot unter Adib Ash-Shishakli 1952* (Freiburg: Schwarz, 1980), p. 103.
242. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, pp. 195-200; Engelleder, *Die islamistische Bewegung*, pp. 108-11; Emmanuel Sivan, 'The Enclave Culture', in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalism Comprehended* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 11-63.
243. Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003 [French edn 1984]), pp. 52-56.
244. Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 278.
245. Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich; 3 vols.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), I, pp. 544-55.
246. Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 97.
247. Roy, *Globalized Islam*, pp. 5-6.
248. Roy, *Globalized Islam*, S.20.
249. McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, pp. xvi-xvii.
250. Holmes, 'Al-Qaeda, September 11, 2001'.
251. Excerpts from the video were transmitted by several TV stations. A screenshot is reproduced in *Der Spiegel* 19 (2005), p. 64, bottom.
252. This is an allusion to a Prophetic tradition transmitted in 'Abdallāh Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād* (no. 30): 'Dust [stirred up during a campaign] for the

cause of God and the smoke of hell will never be united in the nostrils of a Muslim servant [of God]' (*lā tajtami 'u ghubārun fī sabīli llāhi wa-dukhānu jahannama fī mankhīray 'abdin muslimin abadan*). What is meant is that nobody who participated in jihad will go to hell.

253. These last words are an allusion to Koran surah 2 verse 154: 'And call not those who are slain in the way of God dead. Nay, they are living', and surah 3 verse 169: 'Think not of those who are slain in the way of God as dead. Nay, they are living'.

254. On these two persons, cf. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (12 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1960–2004), III, p. 879; II, p. 936.

255. E.g. at www.islaam.net under the heading 'Knowledge': 'Nashids', and http://www.enshad.net/htm/singers/Tareq_Abu_Zeyad/Ya_3aBed_Al-7aramayn (accessed 22 August 2006).

256. For background on the religious *nashīd*, cf. Michael Frishkopf: 'Islamic hymnody in Egypt: *al-Inshād al-Dīnī*', in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, VI (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 165-75; Patrick Haenni and Husam Tammam, 'Chat Shows, nashid Groups and Lite Preaching: Egypt's Air-conditioned Islam', *Le Monde diplomatique*, English edn, September 2003, online: <http://mondediplo.com/2003/09/03egyptislam> (accessed 22 August 2006).

257. Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī was a watch repairman by trade and self-taught authority on Prophetic tradition and Islamic law. Because of his non-conformist views and aggressiveness, he was expelled from Syria and then from Saudi Arabia and spent the last years of his life until his death in 1999 under house arrest in Amman, Jordan.

258. In Arabic: *al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ*; English subtitle: 'Pan-Arab daily published from London'.

259. See online: <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=194981&issue=9069> (accessed 22 August 2006). In Arabic the title is *Jadal bayn al-ṣūliyyīn ḥawl istikhdam ashriṭat 'al-hūr al-'in 'li-tajnid muqātilīn li-'al-Qā'ida*.

260. See online: http://balsam99.jeeran.com/B_99.html. A download of the files under *'ushshāq al-hūr* is not possible (accessed 22 August 2006).

261. This is, of course, an allusion to the fifth verse of the song of scene 5 presented above.

262. 'Umar al-Bakrī, often spelled Omar Bakri (Mohammed), left Great Britain after the attacks of 7 July 2005, and now lives in Beirut.

263. al-'Aynā' is mentioned in 'Abdallāh Ibn Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād*, no. 149; on her face's extinguishing the sun's light, see no. 24.

264. This edition is based on the Arabic text edited by Albrecht Fuess, Moez Khalifaoui, and Tilman Seidensticker, in Kippenberg and Seidensticker (eds.), *Terror im Dienste Gottes*.