

Excerpts from Idah al-Dalalat fi Sami` al-Alat Of Shaykh `Abdal Ghani al-Nablusi

Clarifying the Proofs Regarding Musical Instruments

Sahaba and Tabi`een who Allowed Music

It was narrated that Birr ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) as spoken by the Hafiz Abu Na`im, that he used to listen to music.

It was narrated of `Abdullah ibn Ja`far ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) that he listened to popular beneficial singing. His position was narrated by every single one who prohibited the question of the jurists, and the memorizers, and the historians. And Ibn `Abd al-Barr said in al-Isti`ab that he used to watch the singers. And the Ustadh Abu Mansur al-Baghdadi said in his writing on music: “`Abdullah ibn Ja`far used to... listen to music.” The Commander of the Faithful (the Caliph) when he entered on Ibn Abi Talib used to look at him. Ibn Qutayba said in his book al-Rakhsat: Mu`awiyah (may Allah be pleased with him) entered upon ibn Ja`far as he had promised, and he had seen with him an instrument with a rock. He (Mu`awiyah) said “what is this O Ibn Ja`far?” and he (Ibn Ja`far) replied “this is a musical instrument which I compose poetry...” and so he played the instrument and started to sing poetry:

*Do you not have thankfulness for the one who made you
And then created your mind for wisdom?
And renewed from you what has become your character
Throughout time – for He who the future and past are in his hands!*

And it was said: So Mu`awiyah started moving his leg, and `Abdullah told him “did you not move your leg?” And so he said “from the generosity of the musician.”

Al-Mawardi also spoke of this in his al-Hawa: Indeed Mu`awiyah and `Umar ibn Aws (may Allah be pleased with them) were present with `Abdullah ibn Ja`far (may Allah be pleased with him) when he increased in the listening of singing... for indeed when they entered upon him the instrument went silent. And thus Mu`awiyah (may Allah be pleased with him) said to him “return to what you were just upon!” and so he returned, and sung and played the instrument and Mu`awiyah moved his leg...

It was narrated by al-Zubayr ibn Makar with his chain: that `Abdullah ibn Ja`far (may Allah be pleased with him) would go to his house happily to listen (to music) and those who heard it swore that there was not the singing of anyone except that it was in his house!

What has also been narrated from `Abdullah ibn Zubayr (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated from Abu Talib al-Makki that he used to listen to singing. And it was narrated that Shaykh Taqi al-Din ibn Daqeeq al-Iyyad in his book "Iqtanas al-Sowanah) in his chain upon Wahab ibn Keesan that he said "I heard `Abdullah ibn Zubayr listen to singing. And it was said by `Abdullah: "And what about music – people of the Muhajireen that listen. Imam al-Haramayn and Ibn Abu al-Damm narrated that it has come from the historians from the recorded that they were possessed by `Abdullah ibn Zubayr musical instruments and that Ibn `Umar entered into his house and saw these instrument so he said "what are these oh Sahaba of Rasul Allah?" and so he played them and Ibn `Umar then said "these are a measure of behavior" and Ibn Zubayr replied "to measure with them intelligence!"

Hassan ibn Thabbit (may Allah be pleased with him) saw Abu Faraj al-Asfahani with his chain to Mahraz ibn Ja`far... was narrated to have played musical instruments.

Mughira ibn Sha`abat (may Allah be pleased with him) it is said that singing was heard from him from Abu Talib al-Makki (may Allah have mercy on him) in his book "Quwwat al-Qalb" and Shaykh Taj al-Deen al-Fazari and other than them.

And these are the recorded instances of the Sahaba playing musical instruments [`Abdullah ibn Ja`far, Mu`awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan listening, `Abdullah ibn Zubayr, Hassan ibn Thabbit, and Mughira ibn Sha`bat] and now we will move onto tabi`een playing musical instruments:

It has been recorded of them Sa`eed ibn al-Musayb, and his father would hit the instruments with their wara` (scrupulousness in fear of Allah) and they are the best of Tabi`een after Uways with those who witnessed the presence of Uways. He was one of the 7 Jurists (of Madina) and he used to listen to songs.

It was narrated by Hafiz Abu `Umaru ibn `Abd al-Barr with his chain that Sa`eed ibn Musayb came by one of the azzakat of Makkah and so he listened to al-Khidr singing in the house of the Qadi ibn Wa'il and he was to say the poetry... and so Sa`eed hit his foot!

`Amaru al-Sha`bi (may Allah have mercy upon him) and he was one of the greatest Tabi`een scholars and of knowledge and he was spoken of by Qadi Abu Mansur: that he would divide the sounds unto the first portion/section and the second portion/section and those after it from portion/section."

And `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr al-Siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him) as narrated by Qadi Abu Mansur: Ibn Abi `Ateeq was a Faqih and would know of songs and he used to listen to very much and this is well known and the people of narrations do not differ upon this with a good chain. And he used to be very happy. He would engage in jurisprudence and abstinence and worship. And the two Shaykhs narrated from him in their two Sahihs.

`Ata ibn Abi Rabbah and he was of the greatest of Tabi`een. And he with his knowledge, and his worship, and his abstinence, and his knowledge of the Sunnah just as Qadi Abu Mansur said of him: that he used to divide sounds into the first portion and into the second portion/section and what was after it from portions/sections. And Ibn Qutayba said “Indeed `Ata ibn Abi Rabah was with his son and he had with him an instrument and sang...”

Scholars who Allowed Music

Ibn Qutayba said: it was said of Ibn Jareej that he used to go to the jami`at, and he came upon a singer so he knocked on his door, and so he sat with him upon the road and said “I was here and I heard sounds singing, and so my tears came down until they reached my beard” and then he said “Indeed from songs for whoever remembers Paradise.”

And Sahib al-Tazkarat al-Hamduni said that Dawud al-Makki said: I was in the study circle of Ibn Jareej and he had a group with him including `Abdullah ibn Mubarak and a group of Iraqis and when a singer came by them they would say to him: “I love that you would sing” so they would say “I am in a hurry!” So they sung upon them and so they said to him “It is better three times.” And they said “do you find these immoral?” And they replied “Indeed we find them immoral in Iraq” And they said to him “What do you say of Rajz” And they said “there is no harm of it with us” And he said “and what is the difference between it and singing?”

On Ibrahim ibn Sa`eed ibn Sa`d ibn Ibraheem ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf al-Zahri and he was one of the Shafi`i scholars and he used to be an Imam in Fiqh (jurisprudence) and in narrations, and his opinion about singing and music is famous, the writers do not have any difference about it. And the the jurists wrote about him in their books. And Qadi Abu Mansur said: Ibrahim ibn Sa`ed was an Imam in Fiqh and narrations, and he used to not listen to a hadith until he would listen to songs which were nasheeds and simple. And it was narrated upon al-Khateeb al-Hafiz Ahmad Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi his History of Baghdad with his chain with `Abdullah ibn Sa`ed ibn Kathir on `Afr that he said: “Ibrahim ibn Sa`d al-Zahri al-`Iraqi died in the year 184 or 187 and al-Rasheed honored him and it was apparent in him. And he was asked about songs, and he gave fatwa that it is allowed... and (it was asked which type of guitar) and he replied “the guitar (oud) which is a musical instrument!” and

so al-Rasheed smiled...

And al-Mansur and al-Khateeb narrated upon him that he used to memorize 70,000 hadith in his al-Ahkam only without including other than it. And al-Bukhari said "He is indeed memorized them upon Ibn Ishaq solely without other than him. And they agreed upon his trustworthiness and uprightness..."

And Ibn al-Faris narrated upon the Malikis: It is permissible for men to listen to musical instruments.

And Sufyan ibn `Ayani it was narrated upon him that he was a Faqih and a scholar by Hafiz al-Zubayr ibn Bakir in al-Mafqeat, and it was narrated upon him: ... and he said about songs it was asked: "What is your opinion of them?" And he said a line of poetry and then said "they are Sunnah" He was asked why and he said a poem.

And of Ibn Majhad that Abu Talib al-Makki said in his book Quwwat al-Qulub: "Ibn Majjad would not like an invitation except if it had in it music!"

Abu Talib al-Makki said in Quwwat al-Qulub: (Some) Sahaba and Tabi`een listened to music and this dispensation was taken by the people of Hijaz.

It was narrated by Imam and scholar Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Fakahi in his History of Makkah in his chain on Musa ibn Magheerat al-Jamhi that he said... that people were playing the `Oud (guitar) and singing and when he saw it he grabbed it and `Ata said "I will not sit! I will not sit! Until you play the guitar upon what you were on.

And so he played the guitar and (`Ata) sat down and this is what was written by Imam al-Hadidi in his writing on music.

And it is said: Will people prohibit the taqlid of the Mujtahids, and the Sahaba, and the Tabi`een?

(The reply to these people is) Nay! Taqlid of the Sahaba is obligatory it was said by al-Manal al-Khusru in his work on Usool "it is obligatory to do taqlid (blind imitation) upon the Sahaba... (long discussion about this which is irrelevant here I believe)..."

And what about the Tabi`een? It is said that they are like the Sahaba and it is obligatory but some say no.

Imam al-Qushayri wrote in his famous Risala on his first chapter on music: Allah ta`ala said "Thus give glad tidings to my servants whom listen to the words and follow the best of them"

Ibn Ghanam al-Maqdisi wrote... "Indeed many hated music and they said it was immoral in it's roots and branches and in reality and in the Divine Law and this is an

error of them. Indeed this makes sinners many of the Awliya' of Allah corrupt as well as a section of the scholars!"

Abu Talib al-Makki said "Do not say those who listen to music are corrupt for then indeed you will say 70 Siddiqs (truthful pious people) are corrupt." Abu Marwan al-Qadi had instruments that he would listen to poetry with the Sufis and `Ata had his instrument and his brothers used to listen to it. And Abu Hasan al-`Aqlani used to listen to it and it used to rid his mind of sadness with music and he wrote a book in which he refuted those who prohibited it.

It was said of Abu Mashad al-Dinari [may Allah be pleased with him] that he said: I saw Rasul Allah ﷺ in a dream and so I said "O Beloved O Messenger of God do you find immoral form this music anything?" And so he said "I do not find immoral from them anything. Nay indeed tell them to read before (using them) al-Qur'an and to read after it al-Qur'an." I said to him "O Messenger of God indeed they hurt me!" And so he said upon him be blessings and peace "Put up with them O Abu `Ali"

What is the ruling of Allah upon the question of listening to musical instruments and good melodies?

Indeed we have divided this listening to music and instruments that we have narrated into types:

Firstly that with wine, or fornication, or homosexuality, or calling for one of these from touching with desire, or looking with desire upon those one is not related to or kissing; or secondly that which does not contain the aforementioned in the gathering.

Indeed if it is motivated by or intended for unlawful desires or if it brings about in one's mind pictures of the aforementioned vices or wished that they were present in the gathering then indeed this music is unlawful upon all those who hear it or see it and it is known by one's conscience the truth of one's intention or motive. Thus it is called by it's truth of the falling into the unlawfulness which is present in such a gathering, or that is motivated that one imagines such in his self, or wishes that it was present in such a gathering, and inviting others to unlawfulness is unlawful.

And thus many letters have existed of many of the greatest scholars from the Hanafis with their papers in a political address that it [musical instruments] is not a transgression of the Sacred Law rather it is witnessed by proofs and principles of the Sacred Law and we will thus respond in what explains and proofs this.

These do not prohibit from music of instruments that are played and good melodies yet when it goes along with that which makes one falls into the unlawful listening to it is not permissible for oneself.

And what is lawful from this? For it is when the gathering is free of alcohol, fornication, homosexuality, touching with desire or kissing, looking with desire at other than one's wife or at one whom is unrelated, and if this music has a good motive and a upright intention with internal purity from indulging in such prohibited desires – the desires of fornication, homosexuality, drinking alcohol or anything which intoxicates or any drugs, and that he has strength over the state of his heart and preserves it from the choice that he would do anything that Allah Most High has prohibited upon him, and if he chooses to use his power of defense in his heart and cleaned it so that it only desires the lawful, and it will not harm him to cause this kind of falling into the unlawful in his heart, then indeed it is permissible for him to listen to this music that we have discussed in any of it's types, and nothing is prohibited to him from such and it is not disliked for him in what we have discussed, for indeed he is pure and clean at such a time inwardly and outwardly such that music we have discussed does not make him fall into anything that Allah has prohibited.

All of those who narrated on music from the Sahaba, the Tabi`een, and the learned scholars concerns their motive and intention in such their goodness in a correct intention. Whoever prohibited music of the old first generations and the later generations was due to the presence of deviance in the gatherings. There is no difference in the religion of Allah Most High on this question from the scholars of this Islamic nation and thus the jurists gave their refutation to correct the ruling as well as the good Spirituals who know reality gave their refutation to correct this ruling.

Appendix: Scholars whom Allowed Musical Instruments

Ibn `Ajibah said in Sharh al-Mabahith al-Asliyah:

"This issue [of musical instruments] is one of [much] disagreement as no clear primary text has come from the Legislator - and all affairs are mubah by default until a [clear] prohibition is found. And [the fact of the matter is that] listening to musical instruments was not declared unlawful until the idle [wrong-doing] folk took it up and linked it with drinking wine and fornicating..."

There is a narration in Shaykh `Abdal Ghani al-Nablusi's book Idah al-Dalalat: where a man was said to listen to musical instruments and play them until Ameer al-Mumineen `Umar ibn `Abdul `Aziz was informed they stopped because **there is ikhtilaf (difference of opinion) on the matter** as it was narrated.

The list of many of those scholars which have noted, narrated, or accepted that there is a difference of opinion on the issue:

The Maliki jurist **Qadi Abu Bakr ibn `Arabi** who even said every single hadith prohibiting music directly was not authentic.

Muhammad ibn Mayyarah who narrated this opinion in Darr al-Thamin fi Sharh al-Murshid al-Mu`in.

Imam al-Ghazali who narrated his opinion in Ihya `Uloom al-Din.

Imam al-Jazuli, the famed author of Dalail Khayrat, narrated the difference of opinion on this as well,

Shaykh `Abdal Ghani al-Nablusi - the author of the work above excerpted.

Qadi Abu Mansur al-Baghdadi even wrote a full book on music called Kitab al-Sami` where he narrated the opinions of allowance of musical instruments.

Abu Talib al-Makki the great scholar famed for his list of the Kabair (major sins) wrote and narrated the opinions which allowed musical instruments.

Ibn `Ajibah in his Sharh al-Mabahith narrates that there is absolutely no agreement (ijm`a) on this and that all affairs are lawful until proof are found to make them unlawful.

Imam al-Dhahabi in his work al-Siyar narrated the opinion of the people of Madina was the allowance of musical instruments.

Imam al-Shawkani in his Neel al-Awtar recorded the narration of the opinion of the allowance of musical instruments.

Imam Ibn Hazm of the Dhahiri madhab was of the opinion of the allowance of musical instruments.

Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi the great Hanafi Faqih also was of the opinion of the allowance of musical instruments.

Imam Malik even has a narration himself which says he listened to a mizmar (musical instrument) with Harun al-Rashid in a wedding feast (which the majority said was the daff but others said was a musical instrument).

Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio although prohibiting musical instruments extremely strongly still noted that there were opinions that allowed it,

It is a well-known fact that flutes continued to be played in Madina even up to Imam Malik's time!

Muhammad ibn Mayyarah said in Darr al-Thamin fi Sharh al-Murshid al-Mu`in

“Some Maliki scholars have allowed listening to musical instruments.” As well as “there is difference of opinion in the Maliki school concerning the one who takes up playing musical instruments but not as a habitual exercise.”

Imam al-Ghazali said in Ihya `Uloom al-Din:

Music is unlawful in five cases:

- (1) To hear music from a woman whose look excites sexual passion. Beardless boys may also be included in this category if sexual passion is aroused at their sight. This illegality is not for songs but for women and beardless boys.
- (2) Instruments of songs of drunkards are unlawful as they remind of unlawful thing and incite unlawful action of wine-drinking and intoxicants. These are Majamir, Autar and Kubah but not Daf, flute and other musical instruments.
- (3) Obscene talks in music are unlawful . If there is any obscene talks in poetry, useless talks and accusations against God, His Prophet and companions, they are unlawful. If there are descriptions of a particular woman and not of women in general, and narrations of the beauties of a particular woman before the people, they are unlawful.
- (4) If any evil or immoral desire arises in mind or by hearing songs, it will be unlawful.

(5) If habits is formed for hearing music, it is unlawful. Excess of any thing is bad. If too much food is taken it is bad for health.

He also said

“The sound of an animal with life is not separate from the sound of a lifeless instrument. So to hear the sound of a man in whatever form it comes out of his throat is not unlawful except to hear the sounds of such instruments which Divine Law expressly prohibited-Kuba, Majamir and Autar and these (instruments) are not made unlawful because they emit sweet sounds. If it would have been made unlawful for this reason, all things which man enjoys would have been unlawful . The reason of being unlawful is that they were connected with wine which was made unlawful. These instruments helped the drinking of wine, as to live with an unknown woman in a room is unlawful as it helps cohabitation. These instruments also reminded them with wine- drinking. The flute of shepherds, pilgrims drummers which emit sweet sounds are not unlawful as they are not connected with the drunkards. God says : Say, who has prohibited God's beautiful things which He created for His servants and good provisions? So these sounds with rythm are not unlawful.”

Qadi Abu Bakr ibn `Arabi said “No sound hadith is available concerning the prohibition of singing.”

Ibn Hazm said: all that has been reported on this subject is false and fabricated.

Imam Shawkani said in Neel al-Awtar: “The people of Madinah and those who agreed with them from among the Zahiriyyah and the Sufis maintain that singing is permissible, even when it is accompanied by a musical instrument such as the lute or the flute. Abu Mansur Al-Bughdadi Ash-Shafi`i narrate that `Abdullah Ibn Ja`far saw nothing wrong in singing, and he, himself, used to compose the music for his own slaves who used to sing these melodies in his presence. This took place during the time of Commander of the Faithful, `Ali Ibn Abi Talib. Abu Ja`far Al-Bughdadi narrates the same after Al-Qadi Shurayh, Sa`id Ibn Al-Musaiyb, `Ata' Ibn Abu Rabah, Az-Zuhri and Ash-Shi`bi.”

Ar-Ruwaiyani narrates on the authority of Al-Qaffal that Malik Ibn Anas maintained that singing with musical instruments is permissible. Also, Abu Mansur Al-Furani quotes Malik as maintaining that playing the flute is permissible.

Abu Al-Fadl Ibn Tahir narrates, “The people of Madinah never disputed over the permissibility of playing the lute.”

Ibn An-Nahwi narrates in his “*Al-Umdah*”: “Ibn Tahir said, “The people of Madinah showed consensus over this (issue). Also, all the Zahiriyyah maintained the same.”

Al-Mawardi attributes the permissibility of playing the lute to some of the Shafi`i followers and students. This has been narrated also by Abu Al-Fadl Ibn Tahir after Abu Ishaq Ash-Shirazi; and it is narrated by Al-Isnawi after Ar-Ruwaiyani and Al-Mawardi. Again, this is narrated by Al-Adfuwi after Sheikh `Izz Ad-Deen Ibn `Abd As-Salam. It is also narrated after Abu Bakr Ibn Al-`Arabi.