

## Upgrade?

### *Power and Sound during Ramadan and 'Id al-Fitr in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Arab Provinces*

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The Cairo governorate received a question from the governor of the port city Suakin (Sawakin, in the Sudan) in 1877: Should they start and stop fasting based *only* on the telegraph message that they received from Cairo if they were unable to see the moon in the sky with the naked eye? According to Muslim tradition, the month of Ramadan—when fasting is obligatory during the day—starts and ends with moon-sight. The judge of Suakin was not able to decide. The governorate turned to the grand mufti of Egypt. Sheikh Muhammad al-'Abbasi (d. 1897) answered by describing cases when Ramadan started even without direct viewing of the moon, for instance, based on eyewitnesses from a neighboring town. But the telegraph message was not an eyewitness. Therefore, Sheikh al-'Abbasi reasoned, the judge of Suakin should not order the people to fast or break the fast; rather, it should be left to each individual to decide whether or not to believe the telegraph. However, the mufti added hastily, if cannons were shot indicating the beginning of Ramadan, then everyone should start fasting.<sup>1</sup>

The question was an epistemological one: What constitutes legitimate evidence? This case involves four ways to learn of the moon's appearance in the sky: the naked eye, eyewitnesses, telegraphic message, and the sound of the cannon. The naked eye is a subjective perception of the natural phenomena. The eyewitness provides a human testimony of the subjective perception. The telegraph signal and the cannon shot are both indirect signs that transmit a message. There is a hierarchy here: the naked eye enjoys preference over eyewitnesses, but if no direct human perception or reporting is available, indirect messages are relied on next. Why, then, did Sheikh al-'Abbasi prefer the cannon to the telegraph in 1877? Why was the cannon shot accepted as legitimate evidence of the moon's appearance *somewhere* when the telegraph was not?

Recent studies in the history of technology in the Middle East suggest a number of answers. On Barak points out that the telegraph was quite unreliable at first, when the local government of Ottoman

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1. Al-'Abbasi, *Al-Fatawa al-Mahdiyya*, 13–14.

Egypt decided to regulate time centrally, and that many lines were operated by Christians.<sup>2</sup> An anonymous Ottoman sheikh's treatise, written sometime between 1880 and 1900, indeed argues that the telegraph "can only furnish assumption . . . and it cannot serve as evidence for a legal verdict."<sup>3</sup> Daniel Stolz shows, on the other hand, that in Cairo's Citadel a cannon was connected in 1873 to a special lens that triggered it when the sun was at noon.<sup>4</sup> So, in our case Sheikh al-'Abbasi may have preferred the cannon's *automatization* over the telegraph's unreliable technology. Presumably in Suakin there were no special lenses in 1877, so central Cairo time would be announced through the cannon shot in Ottoman Sudan. But, as Vanessa Ogle underlines, sighting the moon, and not the calculation of its rise, was prescribed by the Prophet Muhammad as the method to decide the beginning of Ramadan.<sup>5</sup>

The mufti, I suggest, preferred the noise. This article builds on the insights of existing studies but highlights the less-examined dimension of the acoustic sensorium in the social history of Islam. Sheikh al-'Abbasi's privileging of the cannon shot invites a deeper engagement with sound and power (though his first suggestion, that people should decide on an individual basis whether to believe the telegraph, should be not forgotten). I propose that Sheikh al-'Abbasi favored the sensorial orchestration of collective action in 1877 for two reasons, beyond the telegraph's unreliability: the shot from the local fortress represented the will of military authority, and it did so in a loud way that was immediately available to everyone. The telegraph similarly transmitted the will of authority but without a sensuous component. Given the politics of the localized Ottoman regime in Egypt, the first argument does not need much explanation here,<sup>6</sup> but the second argument necessitates an enquiry into the function of sensuous experience in community politics. Cannons were commonly used to announce time and important events in the Ot-

toman Empire. Like church bells, the shot was a sensorial sign available to every member of the urban community at the same time, without distinction, announcing also a territorial claim.<sup>7</sup> The explanation for the cannon's preference is related to questions concerned with legitimate evidence, authority, old acoustic geographies, and the type of sensory experience that would compel the Muslim community to act in unison.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of extremely fast infrastructural changes in the Ottoman Empire and its most independent province, Egypt. The provincial centers and port cities became firmly connected to global markets while the imperial capital, Istanbul, attempted to use railways, steamships, telegraph lines, and new roads for more effective rule. The life-world in major cities was transformed by urbanization and new sources of energy—canalization, pavement, public illumination, coal, steam, and, by the end of the century, gas and electricity—and by public spaces: theaters, café-chantans, and municipality parks. Codes of public behavior and community practices changed in response to new spatial environments. These changes, occurring within a few decades, challenged older sensual orders but also brought new techniques of political control.

This essay focuses on the ways Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, and its end celebration, *'Id al-Fitr*, was affected in its sounds and symbols by urban change and new technology. Ramadan is a temporal break in the annual routine when believers, in theory, should start fasting at the same time, in the same way. The rhythm of life changes: people eat at night and daily work time is shorter. Did new technologies and urbanization change Ramadan practices? And what was the effect of the then existing norms on the implementation of new technologies? I attempt to answer, first, by mapping the way old sounds of the Ramadan night<sup>8</sup>—cannon shots, the call to prayer, drums,

2. In 1873, for example, the delay of the telegraph from Cairo had caused the Muslims of Port Said to start the fast a day late. See Barak, *On Time*, 123–24, and Barak, "Outdating," 18.

3. Peters, "Religious Attitudes," 93.

4. Stolz, "Positioning," 501.

5. Ogle, *The Global Transformation*, 163. In practice, astronomical calculation could enjoy preference over eyewitnesses in medieval Islam. See Barak, "Outdating," 20.

6. See Toledano, *State and Society*; Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*; and Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism*.

7. Corbin, *Village Bells*, 96. On the history of sound in the Middle East cf. Fahmy, "Coming to our Senses," and Mestyan, "Sound, Military Music, and Opera in Egypt."

8. See Georgeon, Kafadar, and Wishnitzer in the footnotes below.

and singing—were joined by new techniques, such as the telegraph and public lighting, and new sounds, such as entertainment in new public spaces: theaters and municipality parks, partly connected to charity and patriotic activities. Second, I show that *ʿId al-Fitr* became a crucial part of political representation in the Ottoman Arab provinces, especially in khedivial Egypt, widening the scope of the nineteenth-century remaking of Ottoman symbolic politics.<sup>9</sup> In general, I argue that revelation-based and nation-based practices converged during Ramadan and *ʿId al-Fitr* in the late nineteenth century.

The convergence of techniques and sounds of community homogenization directs, in turn, to think about how, in the words of Christopher Bayly, “continuities are empowered by change itself.”<sup>10</sup> Can we think of urban transformation resulting in the emergence of a transitional form of Ottoman (including Egyptian khedivial) sensorium in the period of the 1850s to 1880s? How did it impact revelation-based social practices? And would this form be related to a special kind of Muslim governmentality within the Ottoman lands?<sup>11</sup> If so, how would the later colonial or semicolonial subjecthood relate to such a form of governance?<sup>12</sup> The following is a preliminary enquiry in which I use mostly secondary literature on Istanbul and the Ottoman Syrian provinces, as well as eclectic primary sources, such as archival documents, journal articles, and poems, regarding late Ottoman Egypt.

### Revelation and Nation: The Example of Ramadan

Recent historical scholarship uses the month of Ramadan and its end celebration *ʿId al-Fitr* to highlight two aspects of the changing life-world in the Ottoman Empire: it exemplifies, according to the above literature, how calendrical reform changed the Hijri calendar into a mere “religious” time (however, this project was never *fully* accomplished) and thus technology changed the subjective perception of nature, or the way Muslim communities became normalized parts of global

temporal regimes. Second, Ramadan serves as a telling example of how political authority was related to various types of nocturnal rituals and the technologies associated with the representation of power, as we shall soon discover.

Anthropologists have also been interested in Ramadan and its practices. These studies offer important insights for the historian. Walter Armbrust calls attention to “non-Islamic” new consumption practices, such as television riddle programs and in-program clothing, food, and other advertisements during Ramadan in contemporary Egypt. This “Christmatization of Ramadan” includes that in other countries—Armbrust’s example is the United Arab Emirates—there are nation-building features in the Ramadan riddle show.<sup>13</sup> Samuli Schielke, on the basis of his research in an Egyptian village community, also highlights what he terms “the moral universe of Ramadan”: the coexistence of conflicting identities, moral codes, and transgressions.<sup>14</sup>

Schielke, at another place, proposes also a historical argument concerning the transformation of Muslim festivals of local saints in Egypt (*mawlid*, pl. *mawalid*). He suggests that before the nineteenth century, these had been major sites of prostitution, which “did not constitute a threat to the religious and moral order at the time because . . . relations of power . . . allowed for temporary shifts and did not require (and was not capable of commanding) comprehensive control over the behaviour of the people.” From the 1870s, he suggests, there was a change as a result of new nationalist-colonial Arabic discourses: “The behaviour of people, perceived now as citizens of the nation, at public festivals became a problem of national scale, and reforming them a key to the nation’s progress.”<sup>15</sup> Schielke’s goal with the suggestion of two historically distinct regimes of moral discipline is to modify Talal Asad’s classic formulation of Islam as a “discursive tradition” by labelling all forms of tradition as invented.<sup>16</sup>

Historicizing Muslim practices as invented

9. Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 22–26.

10. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 431.

11. See Foucault, “Governmentality,” and Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. For the Ottoman case see Deringil, “They Live in a State of

Nomadism,” and Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism.” For Ottoman Egypt see Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men*.

12. See Barak, *On Time*, 6, and Jakes, “A New Materialism?,” 379.

13. Armbrust, “The Riddle of Ramadan,” 346.

14. Schielke, “Being Good in Ramadan,” 29–31.

15. Schielke, “Hegemonic Encounters,” 327, 331.

16. *Ibid.*, 349–51.

traditions can even apply to Ramadan. Of course, the fast of Ramadan is an ancient custom, but all associated practices (customs) could be reconstituted as one unified “tradition” that claims normative power.<sup>17</sup> The various historical and anthropological arguments converge around the fact that Ramadan is a revelation-based temporary practice, associated with a number of uncodified social rituals, that today we usually think of as “religious” and has been subject to changing discourses by various Muslim elites in the twentieth century and today, such as the Salafists. Yet, it is not only that there are various moral codes and levels of interpretation about the right execution of fasting and way of life during this month, but there have been elements that have nothing to do with revelation or spirituality but much more with political regimes, nationalism, capitalist entertainment, simple joy, and excessive consumption, which penetrate this supposedly exceptional period of piety.

The second half of the nineteenth century is the period when the two main principles of organizing communities in modern history—revelation and nation—first meet in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. *'Id al-Fitr* and Ramadan at the time are examples through which we can test Schielke’s insights about the governmental penetration into revelation-based practices and explore the second half of Asad’s definition, according to which discourses connect “moral selves,” manipulate populations, and define “appropriate” knowledge.<sup>18</sup> The point is that sensorial signs of epistemological significance—such as artificial sounds—compose the everyday architecture of these programmed (and constantly reprogrammed) codes. Shahab Ahmed stresses the importance of interpretation (equating a scholarly Quranic commentary to poems which refer to the Quran),<sup>19</sup> and, upgrading Asad, proposes that Islam is “the means by which an experience is given meaning, as well as the meaning which the experience is given by that means.”<sup>20</sup> This hermeneutic definition is helpful when one turns to Muslim festivals as rituals of physical togetherness that

have been occasions of interpretative clashes once modern regimes acquired the tools to penetrate the everyday life of populations and claimed ethical justifications to do so.

### Ramadan Nights: Carnival?

The relationship between hegemony and the night, based on European examples, has been usually mentioned in reference to forbidden practices, such as witchcraft or demon worship, that represent a revolt in the face of daytime institutionalized religion.<sup>21</sup> The Ramadan night is different inasmuch as it served as a temporal domain of reinforcing norms of propriety and authority, too.

The codification of fasting during the month of Ramadan is announced in its final form in the Quran verse 2:185. As the day starts at sunset in all moon-based calendars (Genesis 1:5: “And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day”), the first day of Ramadan starts at moon-sighting (the end celebration, *'Id al-Fitr*, starts also at moon-sighting), as we have seen. Ramadan is a full month of daytime fasting that prescribes eating after the evening prayer. The whole community starts to live at night, too.

Here light and illumination are important. Cemal Kafadar argues that in early modern Istanbul a new perception of the night emerged because of coffee consumption and the rise of coffeehouses, which became main locations of Ramadan entertainment (we shall return later to coffeehouses).<sup>22</sup> Avner Wishnitzer shows that the night, especially the Ramadan night, enabled the sultanate regime “to demonstrate its power via spectacles of light.”<sup>23</sup> By the time of the Ottoman Empire, the illuminated night had been a powerful feature of Muslim cities, at least during Ramadan, long before the invention of electricity, and reflected power. We shall see below how the older political uses of illumination translated into new consumption habits and new sounds when public gas and electric lighting of streets became features of late Ottoman cities.

17. Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 2.

18. Asad, *The Idea*, 7.

19. Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 306–7.

20. *Ibid.*, 323.

21. Ekirch, *At Day's Close*, 228–29.

22. Kafadar, “How Dark Is the Night,” 257.

23. Wishnitzer, “Into the Dark,” 514.

On the other hand, the Bakhtinian possibilities of Ramadan nights always captivated European observers of Muslim lands. According to one traveler, in Cairo in the 1850s there was supposedly a legendary poet, Balah (?), who could be seen in the cafes only on Ramadan nights; otherwise he remained in “hiding.”<sup>24</sup> An eccentric French female traveler described Ramadan in Cairo in the 1860s, saying, “During this time the Muslims make carnival of the night and lent during the day”;<sup>25</sup> therefore, “Ramadan is a good time for male and female dancers and singers.”<sup>26</sup> This perception also appears in scholarship. As Wishnitzer points out, François Georgeon once argued that Ramadan cannot be understood as a “carnival” but then, in a more recent piece, stated precisely the opposite.<sup>27</sup> Georgeon advocates the carnival interpretation of Ramadan in late Ottoman Istanbul. He emphasizes that this period was a “time of freedom,” since the schools were usually closed, and during the day there were limited working hours.<sup>28</sup>

*Freedom* and *carnival* are analytical categories often associated with the transgression of daylight and its standard, regulated order of life. I question Georgeon’s analysis of the Ramadan night as an entirely free occasion and his analogy to the European carnival. There is no fully-fledged carnivalesque transmutation during Ramadan, unlike during the Saturnalia of the Roman Empire or in the Middle Ages when social rules were broken, in Mikhail Bakhtin’s interpretation, producing scenes of “carnival hell.”<sup>29</sup> Rather, I argue that in Muslim cities, the Ramadan night culture preserves social divisions, despite the universal fasting during the day. Burlesquing or imitating the socially high by the socially low is not a ritual restricted to this period—indeed, it happens all the time. The division between “the elite” (*khassa*) and “the ordinary” (*’amma*) remains, but what Ramadan does is to enable elite Muslim social groups to enforce a daytime universal discipline or at least its

pretension and the ordinary to reclaim the urban night to some extent. Social divisions remain. For instance, the Orientalist Edward Lane remarks that during Ramadan in 1820s Cairo, what he refers to as “the lower classes,” in particular, went to coffeehouses to listen to music and storytelling after breaking the fast, but some ulama held Sufi *dhikr* in their houses (presumably more closed and elite occasions).<sup>30</sup> The historian Ehud Toledano remarks that “coffeehouses were really an institution for the lower classes of Egyptian society” in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> In sum, Ramadan nights were a legitimate temporal domain of projecting political power through illumination and retained social hierarchies related to economic, political, and cultural difference. Ramadan as a historical temporal domain is more interesting to measure the interaction of technology and revelation-based social practice.

#### The Ramadan Soundscape 1: Sound and Discipline

The nineteenth-century Ramadan night contained a variety of sounds. The old Ottoman Muslim acoustic landscapes were being upgraded. As we have seen, the mufti of Egypt, Sheikh al-‘Abbasi, preferred the cannon shot in the 1870s to announce the beginning of the fast to the unreliable telegraph. There were other sounds that aimed at the synchronized act of the community such as drums and the voice of the muezzin. Sometimes drums were part of a smaller community identity, such as in the processions of Sufi orders. This group of regulatory sounds may not be accurately described as an “ethical soundscape,”<sup>32</sup> but inasmuch as the community’s united actions were regulated through sound, and such united action was considered to be a positive moral norm, this core group of sounds dictating collective action can be identified as having an ethical significance. They regulated communal life during not only the Ramadan night and day but in ordinary periods as well, although during Ramadan their significance

24. Didier, *Les nuits du Caire*, 68–69.

25. Audouard, *Les mystères de l’Égypte*, 422.

26. *Ibid.*, 435.

27. Wishnitzer, “The Transformation of Ottoman Temporal Culture,” 83–84.

28. Georgeon, “Le Ramadan à Istanbul de l’Empire à la République,” 67–68.

29. Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 393.

30. Lane, *Manners*, 475–76.

31. Toledano, *State and Society*, 243.

32. Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*, 8.

was more pronounced. Today, although technically no longer required, the calls to prayer at Ramadan are broadcasted on television for longer periods than during non-Ramadan periods.<sup>33</sup> The old acoustic regime survives through new technology.

Cannon shots were customary Ottoman urban signs. In Istanbul drums and cannons announced the beginning and the end of the fast every day and the beginning of the 'Id or *bayram*. Naturally, cannons were also part of ceremonies: for instance, in 1872, "cannons on the citadel thundered. Thousands of candles lit the darkness of the night" when the new governor of the Palestine district arrived in Ottoman Jerusalem.<sup>34</sup> In Ottoman Beirut, in 1877–78 important events such as the greater 'Id, the Birthday of the Prophet, and the new Ottoman Constitution were all announced by cannon shots.<sup>35</sup> In Mecca as late as the early twentieth century cannons were used to indicate the beginning of the fast.<sup>36</sup> This was also the case in Jidda and Cairo, where drums and cannons announced every Ramadan evening. It seems that in Cairo even the Napoleonic army announced 'Id al-Fitr by cannons during their occupation.<sup>37</sup> By the 1860s, Ramadan always started with a shot from a cannon in the citadel. In late Ottoman Damascus cannons from the Damascus citadel similarly announced the 'Id among other celebrations; Ramadan itself was announced by twenty-one shots.<sup>38</sup> A cannon went off at sunset in Sana'a in Yemen up until the 2000s.<sup>39</sup> As we saw in the 1877 recommendation of al-'Abbasi, the cannon shot was considered the most legitimate nonhuman carrier of the message that the moon had appeared. The cannon shot represented authority as an everyday part of the Ottoman urban sensorium.

Outside of government cannons, there was an almost codified drumming during the Ramadan night that corresponded to the rhythm of prayers and eating times. Lane describes the institution of the *musahhir* in 1820s Cairo who went to houses at night and, beating a drum, greeted each

and every person in the house. His fee for his one-month service was paid at the end of fasting.<sup>40</sup> In Istanbul and the countryside villages, even today drummers with huge drums go around to warn the households to prepare for the last meal before the morning arrives. In a different use, drumming in the Sufi processions started to be viewed as inappropriate in the nineteenth century, and it was ultimately prohibited.<sup>41</sup> A new, sterile acoustics of Muslim soundscapes emerged in which drumming became "traditional."

It is important to note that absence (silence) also has meaning in this old soundscape: at dawn on 'Id al-Fitr the special prayer *salat al-fitr* is not accompanied by a traditional *adhan*; people gather and only say *Allahu Akbar* for this early morning prayer on 1 Shawwal. The above-mentioned sounds and the silence of the *fitr* prayer compose the acoustic toolbox aimed at the sensorial orchestration of pious synchronized action. The administration and the ulama shared the control over these sounds and silences.

### The Ramadan Soundscape 2: Entertainment and Patriotism

New sounds appeared in the newly illuminated night in the late nineteenth century. I propose that the *overlap* of Muslim and patriotic sensorial collective practices and the simultaneous *articulation* of their difference, during Ramadan and 'Id al-Fitr, derive not only from the opportunity for the renewal of loyalty between subjects and ruler, but also from the common experience of the collectivity as an audience of entertainment. This phenomenon is not as paradoxical as it may seem. The Ramadan and Festival of Breaking the Fast night entertainment has always included elements, such as singing and the invitation of non-Muslims, that could be considered inclusive intercommunal gatherings, as compared to the more restricted codified collective forms of religiosity, such as the daily prayers.

33. Armbrust, "The Riddle of Ramadan," 342.

34. The article from *Ha-Havatsalet* is quoted in Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine*, 42.

35. Details about the cannon shots on these events are given in the periodical *Lisan al-Hal*, nos. 18, 20, 45.

36. Grunebaum, *Muhammadan Festivals*, 59.

37. Al-Jabarti, 'Aja'ib, 3:78–80.

38. Grallert, "To Whom Belong the Streets," 28–29.

39. Heiligman, *Celebrate Ramadan*, 12.

40. Lane, *Manners*, 477.

41. Johansen, *Sufism and Islamic Reform in Egypt*, 76–77.

Urban development had the general effect of facilitating mass participation in new public entertainment that brought various practices and times together. Gas street lighting was gradually introduced in Alexandria in 1865,<sup>42</sup> in Cairo in 1865–66, and in Beirut in 1887.<sup>43</sup> In Jerusalem wealthy institutions acquired their own generators (thus electric lights) from the early 1890s,<sup>44</sup> and in Damascus there was regular electric lighting by 1907.<sup>45</sup> Street lighting and improved quality of travel within the city and the new theater buildings were often connected in the press discourse of the time, all over the empire, in Armenian, Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew, and Greek. Religious collectives shared spaces and sites of joy with imagined national ones, and this sharing was made possible by illumination, pavement, and new means of transportation. These, in turn, had an effect on the length of cities' active hours.

Yet again, new illumination upgraded earlier practices rather than bringing a rupture. For instance, fireworks have been an important feature of Ramadan night entertainment in all Muslim cities, along with boating at night in illuminated small vessels where there were lakes, canals, rivers, or the Bosphorus. Light and noise at night were characteristic of all major celebrations, such as imperial circumcision ceremonies and weddings.<sup>46</sup> In the nineteenth century, new national-imperial rituals developed; for instance, Ramadan night music—when Ramadan occurred during the summer—took place not only in cafes and open places but also in new public municipal parks, as happened in Aleppo and Istanbul in 1885, for the birthday celebration of Sultan Abdulhamid II (in itself a nineteenth-century, new ritual).<sup>47</sup>

It is almost impossible to trace whether there are continuities with past practices in the domain of entertainment. In connection with the folklore of Ramadan, anthropologist Laila Nabhan remarks that unlike the Christmas songs in the Western tradition, there is no special music or song for the *'Id* in popular Islam. Today, however, there

is, in Egypt, a colloquial song whose text is only *Leele 'Id* (!), and it is usually sung as a greeting to the Festival of Breaking the Fast. And there is *Wahawi Ya Wahawi*, which announces the beginning of Ramadan. Nabhan cites four twentieth-century art songs about the *'Id*; the first is Umm Kulthum's *Laylat al-'Id*.<sup>48</sup> I hear from Egyptian friends that on the eve of the *'Id*, people in villages start to sing songs that commence with the line *ya leylet el 'id, anistina*; that is, "oh night of the festival you cheer us up." But since this is exactly the first line of Umm Kulthum's song, here must be an interplay between rural songs and new art music diffused through the radio.

Songs and the Muslim calendar could interact. In the Muslim territories of the (ex-) Ottoman Balkans, Ramadan (Ramazan) was significant for the repertoire of rural singers, since they often replied to the question of how many songs they knew with the number "thirty"—one for each Ramadan night. The ethnographer Albert Bates Lord mentions that before WWI a Turkish (presumably meaning "Muslim") landlord in rural Bosnia invited singers to sing for him on Ramadan nights; there was even a Christian farmer who sang Christian songs during the Muslim festival nights. The landlord himself also sang and, in fact, after he lost his land during the Balkan wars, singing became his main source of income.<sup>49</sup>

Ramadan and *'Id* nights provided an occasion to experiment with new forms of entertainment during the nineteenth century in tandem with urbanization. There is also a forgotten business aspect of new mass entertainment. There are examples of hybrid or simply restructured genres. For instance, singing could be staged among new environments, in a theater instead of a coffee house or in open air. This was the case in Egypt, where, beginning in the early 1880s, new theater buildings increasingly hosted "traditional" singers who transformed themselves and their music for a new function and audience. The best example is the singer 'Abduh al-Hamuli (d. 1901), who started

42. Barak, "Scraping the Surface," 192.

43. Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 199.

44. Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine*, 188.

45. Grallert, "'To Whom Belong the Streets,'" 248.

46. Wishnitzer, "Shedding New Light."

47. *Hadiqat al-Akhbar*, 19 Idhar 1885.

48. Nabhan, *Das Fest des Fastenbrechens*, 153–60. Jomier discusses four Ramadan songs that played on the radio in 1956. Jomier et Cordon, "Le Ramadan, au Caire en 1956," 105–6.

49. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 1:15, 18.

his career in a typical ensemble (*takht*), and after khedivial Ottomanization, regularly gave concerts in the Zizinia Theater in Alexandria and in the Opera House in Cairo beginning in 1884.<sup>50</sup> Often these shows were staged for 'Id al-Fitr, but in 1884 the five concerts of 'Abduh al-Hamuli were organized during the days of 'Id al-Adha (end celebration of the pilgrimage).<sup>51</sup> In April 1890, the great Egyptian actor and singer Salama Hijazi (d. 1917) performed during Ramadan with his new troupe from Alexandria in Cairo.<sup>52</sup> To give another telling example, in Egypt at the end of April 1889, 'Abduh al-Hamuli gave an extraordinary concert in the new hotel and casino of San Stefano in Alexandria (opened in 1887) for more than 2,000 people during the second night of the Festival of Breaking the Fast. The audience could now enjoy the new electric lights in the building, which made it possible to remain until late in the evening, and in fact, special train cars were provided for transporting them back to the city center.<sup>53</sup> New energy resources facilitated new sounds and new spaces of listening and joy.

Debate surrounds the exact role of the Ottoman Arab elite in the change in these consumption habits, and especially their role in what was often called "Westernization." In the context of sounds, the question is whether their production and instrumentalization were related to socioeconomic position. Elsewhere, I have argued that Western-style music was appropriated for government representation in Ottoman Egypt during Mehmed Ali Pasha's reign (r. 1805–48).<sup>54</sup> Chronologically, the *zevat* elite used European-style entertainment (specifically the modern theater play) earlier than it became a popular object of experiment. It was during Said Pasha's reign (r. 1854–63), during Ramadan of 1276 (1860), that, perhaps as an imitation of Sultan Abdülmeçid's (r. 1839–61) entertainment, and as a new style of legitimizing

power, a possibly Italian play was staged in his palace.<sup>55</sup> On one occasion, as early as 1858 Ottoman Armenians staged a play in Turkish for Said. In 1861, to celebrate his return from the Hijaz, Said Pasha was again entertained by Italian music during a Ramadan night.<sup>56</sup>

Georgeon attributes a special function to Ramadan in relation to entertainment experiments in late Ottoman Istanbul because, according to him, this was the only time when the city streets were illuminated at night.<sup>57</sup> Though Wishnitzer proves that streets were illuminated for many other occasions in early modern Istanbul, too,<sup>58</sup> Ramadan may have been still an important temporal market for new entertainment in the imperial capital. In 1860, at the new Gedikpaşa Theater in Istanbul, the director Yaver Bey engaged Louis Soulier's (1813–88) circus troupe only for Ramadan.<sup>59</sup> Soon, however, the Ottoman theater became an independent civil enterprise. Some years later, in 1874, there was an Ottoman operetta competition during Ramadan. Dikran Tchouhadjian (d. 1898), the Ottoman Armenian composer, explicitly challenged the Ottoman theater troupe lead by Güllü Agop (d. 1902), another Ottoman Armenian actor, by staging the operetta *Arif Ağa* and a translated piece, Lecoq's *Fleur de Thé*, in Turkish during the month of Ramadan.<sup>60</sup>

However, the first known experiments in (Ottoman) Arabic theater were not related to Ramadan at all, such as Marun Naqqash's theater in Beirut in 1847–52 and James Sanua's experiments in Cairo in 1871–72.<sup>61</sup> The explanation is that they did not consider theater a business enterprise like the Armenians of Istanbul did. That consideration was a later development among Arabic theater directors in the 1880s. The first evidence of the connection between Ramadan and Arabic theater as business is the first theater troupe led by a Muslim in British-occupied Egypt after 1882. The troupe

50. Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism*, chap. 3.

51. *Al-Ahram*, September 27, 1884, 3; *Al-Ahram*, October 4, 1884, 3.

52. See, for instance, *Al-Ahram*, April 3, 1890, 3; *Al-Ahram*, April 5, 1890, 3; *Al-Ahram*, April 9, 1890, 3; *Al-Ahram*, April 15, 1890, 3. See also Najm, *al-Masrahiyya*, 136.

53. *Al-Ahram*, June 1, 1889, 2.

54. Mestyan, "Sound, Military Music, and Opera in Egypt," 647.

55. *Hadiqat al-Akhhbar*, 5/24 Nisan 1860 (13 Ramadan 1276), 2–3.

56. *Hadiqat al-Akhhbar*, 31/9 Idar 1861 (10 Ramadan 1277), 2–3.

57. Georgeon, "Le Ramadan à Istanbul de l'Empire à la République," 34–35.

58. Wishnitzer, "Shedding New Light."

59. *Journal de Constantinople*, March 28, 1860, 2.

60. *Levant Herald*, September 25, 1874, 749. See also And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 422.

61. Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism*, chaps. 1 and 4.



of Ahmad Abu Khalil al-Qabbani (d. 1902), from Damascus, clearly connected Ramadan and entertainment: they performed their first play (*Harun al-Rashid*) at *Laylat al-Id* on July 23, 1884, in the Danub Café in Alexandria.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, the model of Istanbul should be very cautiously extended to any other city in the empire.

Charity, and specifically patriotic charity, functioned to facilitate new entertainment styles by calls to political solidarity. The Ramadan night and the nights of *Id al-Fitr* in particular were convenient for new forms and frames of entertainment because these nights, and especially *Laylat al-Id*, were important moments for charity, too. Charity during *Id al-Fitr* is obligatory (*zakat al-fitr*) and counts more in attaining forgiveness in the afterlife than everyday *zakat*. Music and theater performed for charity during these nights thus had a double power to attract audiences because the admission fee was donated to philanthropy. Some examples prove that these occasions were connected, although not always successfully. In 1893, the Egyptian playwright and lawyer Isma'il 'Asim (1840–1919) (in the name of the “Patriotic Arab Scientific Societies”) requested a night of Arabic plays in the Khedivial Opera House during Ramadan for collecting money to buy books in the free schools, and his request was approved.<sup>63</sup> A counterexample is a certain Habib Salum who also wanted to organize an Arabic performance in the Khedivial Opera House in 1904 “to help a poor family,” but his request was denied by the government.<sup>64</sup> There were several other similar occasions when the new musical Arabic theater was connected to charitable societies and purposes.<sup>65</sup>

### The Ramadan Soundscape 3: Sound and Morals

Did new sounds and consumption habits invite a new ethical discourse about society? Are the histories of soundscapes and moral discipline connected? Did military music in public parks or Arabic and Turkish operettas in cafes and theaters

(and even later gramophones) pose challenges to the calls for prayer? In other words, was there an acoustic war at night and day in the changing Ottoman cities? I use Ramadan nights here to illuminate this question. Georgeon emphasizes that in Istanbul the connection between Ramadan and modern entertainment enabled heavier control of the public by state authorities.<sup>66</sup> Till Grallert argues that in Ottoman Damascus Ramadan, the two festivals, and even *mawalid* were occasions when the public and its morals were defined by the laws and restrictions of the municipality.<sup>67</sup> Schielke points out that *mawalid* and in general “inappropriate behavior” in mosques started to be criticized from the 1870s as part of the small counterhegemonic Muslim scholarly elite’s engagement with progress and civilization.<sup>68</sup> However, as far as the sounds are concerned, there is no known clash of prayer calls and public singing in the last decades of the nineteenth century. One reason is that what was called “public morals” (*al-ahlaq al-'umumiyya*) in Arabic (and Ottoman Turkish) legitimized the participation in bourgeois sociability such as visiting the theater and municipality gardens. In general, although new sounds were of the *afrank*, and some forms were morally condemned (especially from the late 1880s), in the earlier period these were not regarded as symbols of foreign domination, or at least not openly.

On the other hand, the new spaces and social rituals brought a sharpened sense of the mixing of sexes in public. The public space created new gendered sartorial and moral norms. First, as Schielke points out, learned groups and governments had often asserted themselves through enforcing behavior perceived as pious during public festivals. Indeed, the period of Ramadan and *Id al-Fitr* could be a time for violence and public scandals. In a particular incident in 1868 in Alexandria, for instance, Egyptian soldiers gathered to gamble during the Festival of Breaking the Fast, possibly with some prostitutes, and they insulted

62. Isma'il, *Juhud al-Qabbani*, 23.

63. Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya (National Archives of Egypt, hereafter DWQ), 4003-037803, letter dated March 2, 1893, from Isma'il 'Asim to Ministry of Public Works.

64. DWQ, 4003-037914, letter dated November 9, 1904, from Habib Salum to Ministry of Public Works.

65. Isma'il, *Tarikh al-Masrah al-Misri*, 233–62.

66. Georgeon, “Le Ramadan à Istanbul de l’Empire à la République,” 61, 63.

67. Grallert, “To Whom Belong the Streets,” chap. 7.

68. Schielke, “Hegemonic Encounters,” 330.

an Italian woman.<sup>69</sup> In 1881, Shakir Pasha, the chief of police, ordered the police to pay special attention to public order during the three nights of the Festival of Breaking the Fast.<sup>70</sup> These measures may have been prefigured earlier; in early eighteenth-century Istanbul, as Shirine Hamadeh shows, Ramadan nights were particularly supervised, with gender segregation in public.<sup>71</sup> There are examples from 1880s Istanbul and Damascus (and possibly elsewhere) of prohibiting Muslim women from theaters and public entertainment. In 1870s–80s Cairo, elite women (the harem of the khedive) could attend opera performances only in special loges.<sup>72</sup> These occasions reflect new gendered codes of being in public and were associated with class.

There was, as yet, no explicit religious opposition to the sometimes quite new styles of entertainment; for instance, there was no antitheater or antimusic *fatwa* among the *fatawa* of Sheikh al-'Abbasi, the grand mufti of Egypt between the 1840s and 1890s, whose preference for the cannon shot started this essay.<sup>73</sup> Only Rashid Rida, as an answer to a Russian Muslim, condemned the mixing of sexes in theaters, but even then he did not extend this to the genre itself in the early twentieth century.<sup>74</sup>

As an explanation for the Muslim scholars' silence, here is a speculation. I propose that not only government-related bourgeois rituals legitimized new forms of entertainment. We can also explain the silence by what Schielke called hegemonic discourse in Muslim theology *before* the twentieth century (and whose opponents became the hegemonic ones during later European imperial rule).<sup>75</sup> This hegemonic ideology corresponds to the Ottoman Muslim soundscape. While I have no intention of reducing Islam to sharia,<sup>76</sup> the traces of this ideal flexibility could be seen in prophetic traditions concerning music and

singing, especially during Ramadan and 'Id al-Fitr. The first 'Id al-Fitr in history was possibly held in the second year after *hijra*, on 1 Shawwal, in 624 AD, when the first month of Ramadan in history ended.<sup>77</sup> There is a strong hadith that presumably describes a scene and is often used as an argument for allowing music:

'A'isha said: Abu Bakr entered my place when there were two slave-girls who belonged to the *Ansar* [the companions of the Prophet]. They were singing about what the *Ansar* did on the day of [the battle at] Bu'ath. The two girls were not [professional] female singers. Abu Bakr said: How is it possible that the musical instruments of the *shaytan* [devilish spirit] are in the house of God's Messenger? This took place on the day of the festival. The Messenger of God said: Abu Bakr, every people has its own festival and this is our festival.

Next to this gender-inflected tradition ('A'isha, the slave girls), there is another tradition, in which again 'A'isha, the most respected wife of Muhammad, says that she and the Prophet went to watch some Abyssinians who performed with spears in an open field during a festival day.<sup>78</sup> Another hadith says "those who fast will have two joys: he will be happy when the fast is over and he will be happy for his fasting when he meets the Lord."<sup>79</sup> There are further traditions in which the Prophet Muhammad approves the use of music for celebrating the 'Id at night, and these traditions were canonized as early as the ninth century.<sup>80</sup> The eleventh-century scholar al-Ghazali argued that "this festival is a joyous occasion" and the expression of joy is singing and dancing, which is allowed by the Prophet.<sup>81</sup> The existence of these traditions suggests that there were early critical voices that opposed singing, as is clear from al-Ghazali's list of objections, during the 'Id, and he used the authority of the Prophet to reject them. Given these

69. DWQ, al-Ma'iyya al-Saniyya Turki, Micro-film 202, 85/43, letter dated 19 Shawwal 1284 from Ali Küçük, Ma'mur Dabtiyya Iskandariyya to khedive.

70. *Al-Ahram*, April 29, 1881, 2.

71. Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures*, 52.

72. Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism*, chap. 3.

73. Al-'Abbasi, *Al-Fatawa al-Mahdiyya*.

74. Al-Munajjad, *Fatawa al-Imam*, 549–54, 1090–93.

75. Schielke, "Hegemonic Encounters," 338.

76. Cf. criticisms in Ahmad, *What Is Islam?*, chap. 2.

77. Nabhan, *Das Fest des Fastenbrechens*, 35.

78. Al-Bukhari, *Sahih* (Kitab al-'Idayn); see also Lazarus-Yafeh, "Muslim Festivals," 321–22.

79. Quoted in Jomier et Cordon, "Le Ramadan, au Caire en 1956," 30–31.

80. Nabhan, *Das Fest des Fastenbrechens*, 32.

81. Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (Kitab Adab al-Sama' wa-l-Wajd), 748–50.

sources, established religious scholars, especially in high levels of the government, could maintain a public disregard of departure from theoretical social norms until the moment when the government itself changed its attitude toward the public gatherings. The prophetic authority remained a potential source of legal flexibility to be activated until today. A contemporary *Fiqh Encyclopedia*, published by the Ministry of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs in Kuwait, allows singing, playing, and dance (*zafn*) during both Muslim festivals, based on the same prophetic traditions.<sup>82</sup>

The approved relaxation, however, did not include alcohol and drugs. The month of Ramadan posed an extra challenge in this regard. According to Grallert, especially during Ramadan and *ʿId* nights the Ottoman government became the guardian of public morals by banning gatherings, the public appearance of women, and the consumption of alcohol beginning in the mid-1870s.<sup>83</sup> It is hard to estimate the extent of alcohol consumption in Ottoman cities. From sixteenth-century Anatolia<sup>84</sup> to today's Beirut and Cairo, drinking remained in practice at night even during Ramadan. Wishnitzer notes that in 1850 there were 125 businesses that sold alcohol in Galata (part of the Ottoman capital).<sup>85</sup> Toledano takes a somewhat confusing view on alcohol consumption in mid-nineteenth-century Ottoman Egypt. He suggests, first, that the consumption of alcohol was more widespread than is usually supposed,<sup>86</sup> but a few pages later he adds that "drinking was not a 'mainstream' but a marginal phenomenon" even among the lower strata of society.<sup>87</sup> Importantly, he highlights that the elite (including army officers) drank mostly *in private* while the more ordinary went to bars that were licensed by the government of the province.<sup>88</sup> There must have been plural governmental and local policies in various provinces. The new public spaces were accompanied by a new moral supervision, also outside of the "traditional" Ramadan. Just before World War I, in late Otto-

man Beirut, policemen patrolled the streets to ensure that the taverns were closed by sunset.<sup>89</sup> But foreign merchants of wine, particularly the French and Greek merchants, often resisted the ban on alcohol. Especially after the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, not alcohol but hashish was a concern of the government. Yet some Egyptian journalists suggested that gambling was even more dangerous than hashish addiction and thought the government should ban that instead.<sup>90</sup> Before the British takeover, in 1881, the journal of the literary genius 'Abd Allah Nadim (d. 1896) published fictional satirical telegrams during Ramadan, such as "From the [Azbakiyya] Garden: Only hashish is consumed during the daylight, as to whisky and wine, these are only consumed after breaking the fast [at night]."<sup>91</sup> Although this joke is written to condemn hashish consumption, it points to hashish consumption as being known as an elite drug, like whiskey (Toledano, however, notes that hashish was rather the drug of what he terms the "down and out" in the 1850s).<sup>92</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, with the everyday sensorium being transformed, "mental maps" changing,<sup>93</sup> Ottoman discourses of "civilized" representation circulating,<sup>94</sup> and revelation-based practices transmuting to national ones and vice versa, the result was the rise of a new ethical taxonomy containing various freedoms allocated to particular social groups in public. I mean that the notion of "public" changed. The government and associated elite groups started to prescribe and control behavior in the public space. This was also partly due to the Ottoman awareness about European observations of urban Muslim life: "chaos" and "backwardness" had to be hidden. The lower strata of society, or at least their relatively free ways of conducting festivals, were expelled from the new urban public space. This expulsion was accompanied by the change in the acoustic environments.

82. "Id," 31, 117–18.

83. Grallert, "To Whom Belong the Streets," 301–7.

84. Yılmaz, "What about?" 164.

85. Wishnitzer, *Reading Clocks*, 144.

86. Toledano, *State and Society*, 243.

87. *Ibid.*, 247.

88. *Ibid.*, 244–45.

89. Hanssen, *Fin de siècle Beirut*, 208.

90. Al-Baqli, "Halat al-Shabb al-Misri."

91. *Al-Tankit wa-l-Tabkit*, August 7, 1881, 151.

92. Toledano, *State and Society*, 243.

93. Büsow, *Hamidian Palestine*, 437–38.

94. Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," 795.

### Representation of Power and the Politics of *'Id al-Fitr*

Let us move to the morning after the end of Ramadan, the morning of *'Id al-Fitr*, the Festival of Breaking the Fast. In this section, I focus on how the relationship between political power and the Festival of Breaking the Fast was reconstituted in the nineteenth century.<sup>95</sup> This reconstitution was fueled by the same new sense of being-in-public that was made possible by urbanization technologies. Yet not all aspects were entirely new. In fact, this change is an example of when the sensorial manifestation of discursive traditions receives an upgrade, a new operation system through new technologies. This argument necessitates first a short description of how this “smaller” Muslim festival was celebrated in pre-Ottoman times. I then highlight how practices continued and were reformulated in the nineteenth century.

*'Id al-Fitr*, the “smaller” of the two Muslim festivals, is not mentioned in the Quran. It is found only in hadith and legal literature, usually regulating the first prayer after the end of Ramadan (*salat al-fitr*) but not any other aspects.<sup>96</sup> The Quran does not call the believers to celebrate the end of the fast. Like Christmas, *'Id al-Fitr* is a somewhat later invention than the time of revelation, and it is certainly more recent in its form today as a state-sanctified three-day-long holiday.

The Festival of Breaking the Fast had been a major occasion on which to display charity, piety, and political loyalty since the ninth century. The morning of *'Id al-Fitr* served for the renewal of the social contract between Muslim ruler and ruled. On this day, the ruler showed his benevolence and the subjects affirmed their loyalty. This feature may have been connected to the general “renewal” of life after Ramadan; this included buying new clothes, visiting the cemeteries, and performing acts of charity. The *'Id* reception was a uniquely morning practice, although the ruler’s benevolence and charity (a form of loyalty, expressed

toward the subjects) could be expressed at night in the form of dinners or entertainment. As early as the end of the ninth century, there were urban processions led by the ruler to celebrate breaking the fast during the reign of the Tulunid dynasty in Egypt.<sup>97</sup> Later, the Shi'i Fatimids also held festival processions in Cairo. In a special branch of Shi'i thought *'Id al-Fitr* is interpreted symbolically as the revelation of the hidden mission of the Mahdi.<sup>98</sup> Also, in Fatimid times, there was a banquet at night for the entourage of the caliph in the palace in Cairo, and the palace opened the gates to the urban poor for a charity dinner.<sup>99</sup> The urban processions to celebrate *'Id al-Fitr* possibly continued in Mamluk Egypt until the Ottoman occupation; there was certainly one in 1515.<sup>100</sup> In late Ottoman Damascus there were processions of armed young men (*arada*) on every festive occasion, including *'Id al-Fitr*.<sup>101</sup> One may wonder whether the early Shi'i style of celebration transmuted into later Sunni ones in the form of popular practice.

Revelation-based social occasions and politics remained intertwined in the early nineteenth century. On the first morning of *'Id al-Fitr* (Bayram) in Istanbul, Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–39) usually displayed himself, went to the morning prayer, and then received state dignitaries.<sup>102</sup> Later, during the reign of Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), this occasion of loyalty affirmation, called *muayede* in Ottoman,<sup>103</sup> was the only occasion when Ottoman elite men could approach the sultan in public.<sup>104</sup> In the capital, the nineteenth-century sultans started to wear European-style military uniforms for this occasion. It is hard to decide whether the sultans were imitating the governors of late Ottoman Egypt or the other way around. Mehmed Ali Pasha, the governor of Egypt, certainly received both his Turkic elite (*zevat*), the ulama, and the local dignitaries (*a'yan*) in the same fashion. For instance, on *'Id al-Fitr* in 1829, the pasha and some of his officers presented themselves in European-

95. There is another research direction, focusing on what Schielke describes as excess in hashish, porn, and sexual consumption at night during *'Id al-Fitr* in contemporary Egypt. See Schielke, “Being Good in Ramadan,” 29.

96. Lazarus-Yafeh, “Muslim Festivals,” 318.

97. Sanders, *Ritual, Politics*, 48.

98. *Ibid.*, 50.

99. *Ibid.*, 47, 65, 78–79.

100. Shoshan, *Popular Culture*, 75.

101. Grallert, “To Whom Belong the Streets,” 346–49.

102. Reid, *Turkey and the Turks*, 155.

103. Georgeon, “Les usages politiques du Ramadan,” 23.

104. Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 25.

ized uniforms in the citadel of Cairo for a meeting with the local notables.<sup>105</sup> New European clothes were part of a novel style of power representation within a Muslim festive framework.

*‘Id al-Fitr* remained an important manifestation of political loyalty throughout the nineteenth century. Even at the height of celebrating technology, when Ismail Pasha (r. 1863–79) was late to arrive back in Cairo after the Suez Canal opening ceremonies and prolonged excursions, Muslim notables went to deliver their respects, in his absence, to his sons in early January 1870.<sup>106</sup> But during next Ramadan (in the next Hijri year, end of December 1870), the khedive properly received the local elite for the traditional greetings of *‘Id al-Fitr* and thus fulfilled the role of the just Muslim prince: he received first the ulama, then the members of his family, leaders of the army, bureaucrats, consuls, etc.<sup>107</sup> As Johann Büssow notes, spiritual festivals in other Ottoman provinces, such as the Musa Nabi in Jerusalem, similarly served as occasions of displaying loyalty to the ruling authorities.<sup>108</sup>

The *‘Id al-Fitr* reception became a codified, public ritual of the Egyptian khedivate. The Arabic journals (the official government bulletin already in 1866) always communicated the order of the reception by the khedive during the morning of *‘Id al-Fitr*.<sup>109</sup> In August 1882, when it was Ramadan 1299 according to the Hijri calendar, in the midst of the ‘Urabi revolution, the *‘Id* reception of Khedive Tevfik (r. 1879–92) was held in Ra’s al-Tin Palace in Alexandria, not in Cairo. At that time, a journalist wrote in the loyalist newspaper *al-Ahram* that the “whole world of the city” attended, and the journalist, clearly supporting the khedivial regime, hoped they could celebrate the Breaking of the Fast with the khedive in the capital soon.<sup>110</sup>

After the British occupation, the *‘Id* reception of the khedive continued to be a standard ritual; it became even more formalized and publicized than before. It acquired an order of re-

ception that mirrored the political reality; for instance, reception occurred in the following order in 1884: members of the khedivial family, religious scholars, ministers, (British) controllers, leaders of the army, students of schools, leaders of religious minority communities, judges, consuls, bankers and European merchants, and finally local (Egyptian Arab) notables and merchants.<sup>111</sup> As we have seen above, thirteen years before, in 1871, the leaders of the khedivial army preceded the foreign consuls, but in 1884 the British controllers came before the army leaders in the order of reception. By the 1890s, as some journals, such as *al-Ahram*, became more pro-Ottoman, *‘Id al-Fitr* was also connected to the caliph’s authority (Sultan Abdülhamid II) in the Egyptian public sphere.<sup>112</sup>

Breaking the fast is an important symbolic occasion not only at the end of Ramadan, but also, naturally, at every evening of the daytime fast. Georgeon calls attention to the political importance of the grand vizier’s *iftar*, when statesmen broke the fast together. There are similar examples from late Ottoman Egypt. Ismail Pasha invited often hundreds of bureaucrats, notables, and army officials for *iftar* on one night in the 1860s. In 1866, he invited more than 300 guests.<sup>113</sup> Lesser Ottoman elite men also organized feasts. In 1870, Mustafa Bahgat Pasha organized an *iftar* reception in his Cairo palace. At the time he was the minister of public works and schools, and he invited more than a hundred teachers and bureaucrats from the institutions under his care. In an Arabic journal article the event was described, using the old vocabulary, as a *majlis al-uns*, “a gathering of pleasure.” In this way, Bahgat Pasha cultivated a pious, educated, and patriotic public image.<sup>114</sup> In 1881, Khedive Tevfik also invited religious scholars and journalists for *iftar*, perhaps as an attempt to quell critiques of his regime.<sup>115</sup> His son, Abbas Hilmi II (r. 1892–1914) likewise used Ramadan to prove the pious nature of his rule under British occupation. And there are possibly true anecdotes about him

105. “Tahni’at ‘Id al-Fitr,” *al-Waqa’i’ al-Misriyya*, 21 Shawwal 1244 (April 26, 1829), s.p.

106. *Wadi al-Nil*, 8 Shawwal 1286, 1107–8.

107. *Wadi al-Nil*, 7 Shawwal 1287, 2.

108. Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine*, 183.

109. *Al-Waqa’i’ al-Misriyya*, 6 Shawwal 1282, 1.

110. *Al-Ahram*, August 18, 1882, 2.

111. *Al-Ahram*, July 16, 1884, 1. This reception order was the same in 1881.

112. *Al-Ahram*, May 19, 1890, 3.

113. *Al-Waqa’i’ al-Misriyya*, 23 Ramadan 1282, 1.

114. *Wadi al-Nil*, 26 Ramadan 1287 (1870), 2.

115. *Al-Burhan*, August 4, 1881, 4.

visiting the French-style public garden, the Azbakiyya Garden, in Cairo to celebrate the *iftar*.<sup>116</sup>

The political significance of 'Id al-Fitr was part of the general "politics of Ramadan," to borrow again from Georgeon,<sup>117</sup> and the even larger cosmetics of the Ottoman imperial symbolism that Selim Deringil unearthed.<sup>118</sup> It had an economic aspect, too. The amounts the sultan spent on charity during Ramadan were published in the printed Ottoman journals.<sup>119</sup> In Ottoman Damascus, on the mornings of the 'Id it was hoped that the withheld pay of soldiers would be distributed, or special payments would be made.<sup>120</sup> In Cairo, the government during the British occupation was often keen to pay salaries just before 'Id al-Fitr (possibly to spare money for the extra occasion).<sup>121</sup> In general, the ruler—both the sultan and his governors, and the khedive of Egypt—distributed alms and, possibly through the centralized *waqf*-administration, provided food for the poor on this day and also during Ramadan nights. 'Id al-Fitr was also an occasion for governmental promotions and the distribution of medals. The administrative measures and new public rituals, including the use of print publications, discussed below, aimed at preserving (or inventing) the image of a just Muslim government within a new, increasingly patriotic type of public sphere.

### Breaking the Fast in Print

One aspect of such transmutations is the new sense of *being public* through printed products. The literary public sphere and the sensorial, physical being in public (in the street) were intimately connected. Here I turn to the way the reconstitution of Ramadan practices absorbed nationalist features through the codification of political rituals in journals. This was not a smooth process since Ramadan, at least 'Id al-Fitr, interrupted the production of the new public sphere because the printers and journalists, regardless of their religion, also

took a holiday. (Universal holiday in Muslim states is in itself a potential protonationalist feature—everybody is in proud solidarity with the Muslim majority in staying home.)

On the morning of 'Id al-Fitr, poems—which were either read aloud in front of the sovereign (or his representative) or published in print in Arabic journals—were used to demonstrate political loyalty to elites. In late Ottoman Egypt these were usually Arabic poems, not poems in the elegant Ottoman Turkish language (although Turkish and even Persian poems were composed by *zevat* and *ulama* in Egypt until the 1900s). In this way, 'Id al-Fitr served as an occasion for creating an Arab image of the semi-independent but still Ottoman governor. Arabic poetry in print was one medium through which religious vocabulary and patriotic concepts about the collectivity were expressed and circulated: it was a new public form of hegemony.

The "congratulation" (*tahni'a*), a special form of praise, was an important literary-political genre of the day. In Egypt Mustafa Salama al-Najjari, 'Abd Allah Fikri, 'Ali al-Laythi, Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, Salih Majdi, 'Ali Fahmi, and a number of other intellectuals (often Egyptian village heads and rural sheikhs) composed *tahni'a* poetry for the governors and their sons. This was a reinvented practice in connection with power that was specifically new, since, to the best of my knowledge, there was no such practice in the early modern Ottoman Arab world.<sup>122</sup> The sweetness of the festival night even infiltrated these political poems. Consider this *tahni'a* for Khedive Ismail, which is a love song by 'Ali Fahmi (the son of Rifa'a Bey), characteristically printed in an early gazette in 1873:

The flirter arranged a pearl in his bay / ardently  
in love, and saw sweetness so broke the fast  
[ . . . ]  
I remained in the *mihrab* of my joy waiting for /  
the time of greetings to appear  
I restricted my numerous exaltations / praising

116. Qattamish, *Wahawi ya Wahawi—Ramadan*, 18.

117. Georgeon, "Les usages politiques du Ramadan," 25.

118. Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 22–26.

119. Georgeon, "Les usages politiques du Ramadan," 27.

120. Grallert, "'To Whom Belong the Streets,'" 357, 382.

121. DWQ, Council of Ministers, 0075-022955, note from Finance Ministry to the Council

of Ministers, dated July 17, 1884; DWQ 0075-028247, note from Finance Ministry to the Council of Ministers, dated September 9, 1911.

122. However, Ottoman governors must have received panegyrics from local Arab notables as a form of loyalty, and of course Ottoman sultans received poems all the time.

Ismail, unique of this age  
 And I saw all the people came to praise him /  
 and I also did so for a long time, trusting his  
 pardon<sup>123</sup>

With the publication of congratulatory poems in early Arabic periodicals, the festival, poetry, and print technology came together to boost political legitimacy. The congratulations and greetings sent to the sovereign for *ʿId al-Fitr* remained an important social-diplomatic device until the end of the monarchy in Egypt in 1952, and presumably this was similar in other inter-war Arab kingdoms. After the coup d'état of 1952, there was a change in direction: the Nasserist government congratulated “the people” on the occasion of breaking the fast in journals and the radio. This custom may also stem from the late nineteenth century, when, beginning in the 1870s, patriotic journals (often run by Christians) “congratulated” the patriots (*abnaʾ al-watan*), possibly as a sign of Muslim-Christian friendship.<sup>124</sup> These symbolic references to “the people” indicated a new need to ground political legitimacy in claims to represent the popular will. One wonders how these hybrid forms transmuted into nation-state, even socialist, rituals of community in the twentieth century.

The early Arabic weekly or biweekly journals were typically not published during the *ʿId* days, which they communicated beforehand.<sup>125</sup> It is perhaps only a happy coincidence that the issue of the first Egyptian magazine, *Wadi al-Nil*, which announced its suspension during the week of the festival in 1870 and also published serialized *adab*, printed a part of the medieval traveler Ibn Battuta’s description of the way the sultan of India celebrated *ʿId al-Fitr* in the fourteenth century.<sup>126</sup> If it is not a coincidence we may suppose that learned editors ‘Abd Allah Abu al-Su’ud and his son Muhammad Unsi made a conscious connection between old practices and new times through the

medium of the printing press, using two *ʿId al-Fitr* rituals separated by five hundred years. Barak suggests that printed serialization “transformed these texts into classics.”<sup>127</sup>

With journals suspending publication, other urban activities frozen, schools and even ministries closed,<sup>128</sup> *ʿId al-Fitr* constituted a rupture in work time at the origin of the modern Arabic public sphere. The rhythm of life during Ramadan was already a changed one. Work during the day was shorter. The night break, not surprisingly, was expected to be filled with pious or at least useful activities. For instance, in 1881, the salons of Islamic charity societies, where books and journals could be read, remained open during Ramadan nights in Cairo and possibly in Damascus and Beirut as well.<sup>129</sup> Private Muslim literary salons were popular spaces of sociability often most frequented during religious festivals in Ottoman Jerusalem.<sup>130</sup> In 1877, the idea of a “night school” in Alexandria also surfaced among French, Italian, and Egyptian denizens during Ramadan.<sup>131</sup> These initiatives targeted the development of the self, secured by the Hijri calendar, but used spaces that were ultimately counted as spaces of patriotic socialization.

### Conclusion: Upgrade?

Sheikh al-ʿAbbasi preferred the cannon to the telegraph in 1877 because it was part of the old Ottoman acoustic and symbolic regime of power during Ramadan. The telegraph was not yet accepted as a means of transmitting evidence because of theological reasons and technological problems. I have surveyed elements of the Ottoman acoustic environment, the way new technologies upgraded these old sounds by providing a new operation system, and the way discursive practices and physical rituals associated with Ramadan were remade and formalized in a distinctly new way. Such a moment of transition illuminates fundamental questions.

How to govern the community and accord-

123. ‘Ali Fahmi Rifa’a, “Tahni’a Khidiwiyya ‘Idiyya,” *Rawdat al-Madaris al-Misriyya*, 15 Shawwāl 1290, 3.

124. For instance, *Haqiqat al-Akhbar*, 25 Sha’ban 1294, 1.

125. See, for instance, *Al-Waqa’i’ al-Misriyya*, 6 Shawwāl 1282, 1; *Wadi al-Nil*, 28 Ramadan 1286,

1091; and *Wadi al-Nil*, 26 Ramadan 1287 (1870), 2, as well as Christian-owned journals such as *al-Ahram* and *Haqiqat al-Akhbar*.

126. *Wadi al-Nil*, 26 Ramadan 1287 (1870), 36.

127. Barak, *On Time*, 119.

128. On schools, see Wishnitzer, *Reading Clocks*,

91. On ministries, see DWQ, 0075-030366, note from Prime Minister, September 27, 1910.

129. On Cairo, see *Al-Burhan*, August 4, 1881, 4.

130. Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine*, 471–73.

131. *Haqiqat al-Akhbar*, 24 Ramadan 1294, 3.

ing to which collective principle? The Ottoman solution was to use all available ones. The Ottoman imperial system and subsystems (like the Egyptian one) attempted to accommodate both revelation and nation in discourses and physical rituals. This resulted in intertwined public occasions of older Muslim and patriotic practices during Ramadan. Specifically, in Ottoman Egypt this was related to Arabizing dynastic power. A plurality of soundscapes and new public codes emerged that were both gender-inflected and social class-related. The need for the sensorial orchestration of the community remained but increasingly through new technology: today, instead of cannons, amplifiers, the radio, smart phone apps, and television announce that the moon has appeared.

The methodological challenge for historians, thus, is to investigate the simultaneous reshaping of the epistemological categories and the survival (and reinvention) of older practices under particular historical circumstances. The progression of differentiation between what today is religion and nationalism is perhaps the most perplexing process. The reshaping of epistemological categories is not a simple invention of “religion” and “nation.” Revelation- and nation-based practices mutually constituted each other in various ways. The differentiation and rationalization of which sensorial practice—which sensorium—belongs to what category (does the Ramadan night, after all, belong to *religious* practice?) and to whom have been troubled, extremely difficult, dirty processes that are still ongoing today.

One may further ask whether the change-while-preserving techniques—the preservation of spiritual symbols in political rituals—indicate a specific, transitory representation system as connected to a particular Ottoman governmentality in the nineteenth century. Some may reason against such a label, claiming that there have been similar practices in some parts of Europe and the Americas; and politicians never stopped exploiting Christian symbolism. Others again can argue, following Michel Foucault, that this mode of power was a specifically European development from the eigh-

teenth century,<sup>132</sup> making Ottoman governmentality merely derivative—just as, according to this same logic, the Western-originating technologies used in Ottoman provinces belong to economic Westernization. The described changes were certainly effects of nineteenth-century technological globalization. However, I have tried to prove in this article that various sources and traditions of authority were melded together in the historical dialectics of the Ottoman system of representation. Whether this system can be identified as the sensorial facade of a specifically Ottoman form of governmentality or if in fact these sensorial symbols were deployed only to cover for effective European economic control should be the object of further research. □□□□

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132. Foucault, “Governmentality,” 104.



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