The Sounds of the Shuhadāʾ:
## Chants and Chanting in IS Martyrdom Videos

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Abstract

This article addresses the various functions of chants and chanting in the context of jihadi martyrdom. Through the examples of IS martyrdom videos, I will identify three different categories: first, live chanting performed by a collective *(ḥudāʾ),* second, live chanting performed by a professional nashīd singer *(inshād)* and third, recorded and post-produced chants *(anāshīd).* In IS martyrdom videos, these sounds convey ritualistic meanings: Ḥudāʾ serves as a rite of separation that often takes place at martyrdom ceremonies to mark the transition from a collective of mujahidin to an individual martyrdom seeker *(istishhādī)*, who will soon carry out a martyrdom operation. To complement this rite of passage, anāshīd serve as posthumous rites of incorporation to integrate the deceased in the hereafter through references to Qurʾanic verses and hadith excerpts mentioning paradise and the rewards for martyrs therein. Sounds thus help to perpetuate the cycle of jihadi martyrdom by promoting this theologically framed concept.

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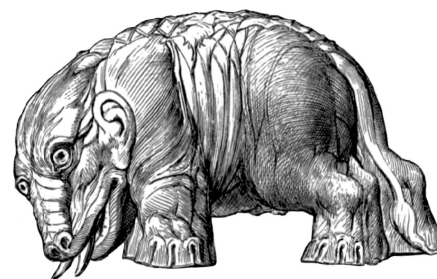
Why Sounds Matter

> Muslims need to be inspired to practice Jihad. In the time of Rasulullah [the prophet Muhammad] (saaws[1]) he had poets who would use their poetry to inspire the Muslims and demoralize the disbelievers. Today nasheed can play that role. A good nasheed can spread so widely it can reach to an audience that you could not reach through a lecture or a book. Nasheeds are especially inspiring to the youth, who are the foundation of Jihad in every age and time. […] (al-Awlaki: *44 Ways to Support Jihad*, number 40)

This chapter, which is entitled *Nasheeds,*[2] is taken from *44 Ways to Support Jihad,* written by Anwar al-Awlaki, who was a leading figure within al-Qaʿida up until his death, brought about by a US airstrike in Yemen in 2011.[3] It shows the significance of sounds within jihadism. Here, al-Awlaki sums up the key strategic function of specific chants, so-called *anāshīd* (singular: *nashīd),* in the view of jihadi groups: They serve as a powerful source of inspiration for jihad, since they can convey jihadi messages to broad audiences, crossing language barriers and speaking to adolescents in particular. Al-Awlaki later suggests several topics that can form the main subject-material of anāshīd. Interestingly, the topic he lists first is not jihad but martyrdom. This nexus between anāshīd and martyrdom becomes apparent when studying the titles of anāshīd produced by jihadi groups such as the Islamic State (IS). One example of this is the IS nashīd *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan (Muʾassasat Ajnād li-l-Intāj al-Iʿlāmī* 2014), which translates as *What a Victory for the One Who Truly Receives Martyrdom*. It explicitly addresses the concept of jihadi martyrdom. This is why it is commonly used in IS martyrdom videos which, for the purposes of this article, I will define as a range of different videos that are produced to celebrate and commemorate deceased *mujahidin* (singular: *mujahid*[4]) as martyrs or *shuhadāʾ* (singular: *shahīd)*. IS martyrdom videos often cover martyrdom operations,[5] including farewell ceremonies or martyrdom ceremonies that mark the transition from a mujahid towards the liminal phase of being an *istishhādī,* an "active seeker […] of martyrdom" (Aran 2018, 13), with the ultimate goal of becoming a shahīd. The use of explosives in martyrdom operations, in particular, leaves neither the possibility for the person carrying it out to survive nor for this person to be buried. Therefore, martyrdom ceremonies serve as rites of passage in lieu of funerals. However, IS martyrdom videos are not limited to martyrdom operations, as I will show through the following three examples that cover a broad range of jihadi martyrdom:

> *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, the fifth episode of a whole series called *Fursān al-Shahāda*, which *Muʾassasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāj al-Iʿlāmī* released in 2008[6]

> *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*, released by *al-Maktab al-Iʿlāmī li-l-Wilāyat al-Raqqa*, also known as *ar Raqqah*, in 2016

[1] *Saaws*, also abbreviated as *saws*, stands for *ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallam,* which translates as *may God bless him and give him peace.*

[2] *Nasheed* is often used as the English equivalent of anāshīd.

[3] The Gregorian calendar is used throughout the article.

[4] A *mujahid or mujāhid* (plural: *mujahidin, mujāhidūn or mujāhidīn)* is a person fighting for jihad.

[5] In accordance with the Arabic expression *ʾamaliyyāt istishhādiyya* used in the IS videos analysed, I will use the emic term *martyrdom operations* instead of the etic term *suicide attacks* throughout the article to highlight the "differentiation between suicide *(al-intiḥār)* and self-imposed martyrdom *(al-istishhād)*" (Pannewick 2004, 6).

[6] *Fursān al-Shahāda* was produced at the time of the IS predecessor Islamic State of Iraq, which existed from 2006 until 2013. Yet, I also apply the term IS martyrdom video for this video for reasons of simplification.

Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands, released by *al-Ḥayāt Media Center* in 2014

These videos also showcase the breadth of the musical range associated with this genre and with IS videos in general. In addition to anāshīd, ḥudāʾ play an important role in IS martyrdom videos. Ḥudāʾ describes a live chanting performance at a martyrdom ceremony which serves as a rite of separation to accompany a process of social transformation, wherein an individual istishhādī is separated from a collective of mujahidin. This can, for example, be seen in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*. While ḥudāʾ can, in principle, be practiced by anyone, anāshīd are recorded chants performed by professional nashīd singers, called *munshidūn* (singular: *munshid)*. When highlighting the "act of performing" a nashīd, the term *inshād*, which is derived from the same roots as nashīd, is used in Arabic (Lahoud 2017, 43). A nashīd consequently represents the "product" of the "process" of inshād (Said 2016, 24). One of the few examples for inshād in IS martyrdom videos can be seen and, more importantly, heard in *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*. Both ḥudāʾ and inshād therefore generally represent intradiegetic sounds of IS martyrdom videos whose source can be located—or at least presumed—within the scene portrayed. Its recording therefore coincides with the recording of the visual footage. Anāshīd, on the other hand, are extradiegetic sounds that serve similar functions to film music. One major difference to film music is, however, that anāshīd in IS martyrdom videos religiously frame and sacralise the concept of jihadi martyrdom by referring to a long-established religious practice and by establishing religious legitimacy through references to the Qurʾan and the hadith.[7] References mentioning paradise and the rewards for martyrs play an especially important role, as will be shown through the example of *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*. In this regard, anāshīd, as parts of IS martyrdom videos, also represent mediated rites of incorporation that not only integrate the deceased in the hereafter, but also help to perpetuate the cycle of jihadi martyrdom by promoting this concept.

Jihadi Martyrdom

The concept of martyrdom is not just used in jihadism, but in a range of different temporal, spatial, political, religious and secular contexts. However, the focus varies significantly between these contexts. Jihadi martyrdom focusses on its active pursuit, for example through actions such as martyrdom operations. In contrast to this, martyrs in Islam in general are described as "those who die (generally at the hands of others) for their faith. In a Sunnī Islamic context, martyrs are primarily those who fight unbelievers for the advancement of Islam, and sacrifice their lives for this" (Raven 2003, 281). This notion is, however, not directly anchored in the Qurʾan. Indeed, the term shahīd in its Qurʾanic usage first and foremost describes a witness or confessor, and only under the influence of Christianity did it become synonymous with a martyr (282). This concept of martyrdom was initially widely used within Sunni Islam for the Muslims who died in the fights against the polytheists

[7] "In Islam ḥadīth is the term applied to specific reports of the prophet Muḥammad's words and deeds as well as those of many of the early Muslims; the word is used both in a collective and in a singular sense." (Speight 2019)

from Mecca, referred to as *martyrs of the battlefield* or *shuhadāʾ al-maʿraka* (Horsch 2011, 66). Here, the Battle of Uhud in the year 625 is central, since the defeat of the Muslim fighters and the heavy losses in this battle required some sort of interpretation or compensation (ibid.). The concept of martyrdom, which promises eternal life and the prospect of rewards in the hereafter, filled this gap and made death retrospectively meaningful. Initially, martyrdom thus served as a compensation strategy for the potentially fatal outcome of a battle (Horsch-Al Saad 2011, 246). In contrast to this, the carrying out of a martyrdom operation allows for no other possibility but death (ibid.). The Islamic Studies scholar Silvia Horsch-Al Saad (245f.) therefore argues that in jihadism, the role of martyrdom shifts away from the interpretation of death towards the practice of death. Yet, from an emic perspective, not death but eternal life in the hereafter is sought through jihadi martyrdom. Horsch-Al Saad's differentiation between the generally 'passive' acceptance of martyrdom through death in battle and the 'active' search for martyrdom within jihadism is still applicable. In Arabic, it is reflected in the terms *shahāda* on the one hand and *istishhād* on the other. While shahāda is used both for martyrdom and the Islamic creed, istishhād means "self-imposed martyrdom" (Pannewick 2004, 6) and "refers to the vanguard who sacrifice themselves intentionally" (Aran 2018, 13). Within jihadism, the notion of martyrdom, shahāda, is almost completely absorbed by its active pursuit, istishhād, as the high number of martyrdom operations, called *ʿamaliyyāt istishhādiyya* in Arabic, an expression referring to the concept of istishhād, demonstrates. Istishhād is thus seen as a central means for shahāda, which suggests a certain chronology of self-imposed jihadi martyrdom: Once a mujahid has made the decision to execute a martyrdom operation, he**[8]** enters the liminal phase of being an istishhādī, who, in turn, is believed to become a shahīd through death.

IS Martyrdom Videos

In order for a deceased mujahid to be commemorated as a shahīd and thereby become part of the collective memory of the respective jihadi group, it is first and foremost necessary that his death be documented as a proof of martyrdom. Therefore, martyrdom videos play an essential role in preserving the remembrance of the deceased as shuhadāʾ. In this regard, they also have ritualistic meaning and can be regarded as rites of incorporation such as those found at the heart of funeral rites (van Gennep 2005, 142). I will apply the term martyrdom videos to all videos produced to commemorate deceased mujahidin who are celebrated as martyrs. They serve various functions, which are "publicizing the martyrs' last wishes, celebrating their actions, informing the martyrs' family and friends of their deaths, and—especially—inspiring others by depicting the martyrs as heroes who should be emulated" (Stalinsky et al. 2017). They thereby help to perpetuate the cycle of jihadi martyrdom. Among IS martyrdom videos, three different categories can be differentiated within the concept of istishhād: First, a substantial proportion of IS martyrdom videos cover the intentional pursuit of martyrdom through the carrying out of martyrdom operations. One example for this category is *Fursān al-Shahāda*

[8] Women do not appear in the selected IS martyrdom videos. However, they also play active roles within jihadism. According to Charlie Winter (2018), "al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) – the antecedent to ISIS – [...] was a trailblazer when it came to mobilising women for terrorist attacks. Indeed, during the second half of the 2000s alone, it dispatched dozens of female supporters on suicide missions". Furthermore, IS "first celebrated its purported deployment of women on the battlefield in early 2018".

5, which portrays three men, each introduced as an istishhādī, steering trucks laden with explosives towards different targets belonging to their perceived enemy. In contrast, the second category encompasses videos that are not necessarily recognisable and were potentially not even designed as martyrdom videos. They celebrate mujahidin who died unexpectedly in battle as shuhadāʾ. *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, which is dedicated to a mujahid who died in a battle over a military airport, serves as an example for this category. The third category includes IS martyrdom videos that also portray mujahidin who died in battle, but who actively sought this goal. In this regard, the third category represents a combination of the first two categories, uniting the intention of istishhād with the environment of the battlefield. One example of this is the video *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* that portrays an IS mujahid who, during his lifetime, longed to die as a martyr and indeed, died in an airstrike during a battle against Kurdish fighters.

Fursān al-Shahāda 5

Fursān al-Shahāda 5 is immediately identifiable as a martyrdom video. It shows three men—who, according to their names, come from Saudi Arabia—[9] carrying out martyrdom operations. Right from the beginning, the theme of martyrdom is introduced to the spectator through a 30-second computer animation of a martyrdom operation, and this remains the leading theme throughout the video. The introduction also includes a sequence symbolising the transformation from an istishhādī to a shahīd by placing images of the preparations for the martyrdom operations and images of explosions next to each other on a split screen, foreshadowing later sequences of the video. The introductory part ends with a recitation of sura 4, verses 74–75:[10]

> Let them fight in the way of God, those who would sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. And whosoever fights in the way of God—whether he is slain or victorious—We shall grant him a great reward. And what ails you that you fight not in the way of God and for the weak and oppressed […]

These verses not only serve as a theological basis for jihad. They also present martyrdom as a reward for those who die 'for God's cause'. The main part of *Fursān al-Shahāda 5* consists of three sections, each dedicated to one person introduced as an istishhādī**.** Although the sequence of the second section differs slightly from the rest, a general pattern is identifiable: Each section first provides biographical data for the istishhādī, before showing him reading out his testament, and, finally, carrying out the martyrdom operation, steering a truck with explosives into strongholds of the perceived enemy in Iraq. Among these targets are Iraqi police headquarters, barracks belonging to the US army and a school used by 'apostates', *murtaddūn* or *murtaddīn* in Arabic, a term used for those who are perceived to have left Islam and are not considered to be 'real' Muslims in the view of IS. These situations are contextualised through texts such as "the istishhādī […] on his way towards the target" *(Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, TC: 00:14:13). All explosions are shown several

[9] All of their names include a geographical indication, the so-called *nisba*, referring to cities and regions in Saudi Arabia.

[10] In this article, I will generally use the English Qurʾan translation *The Study Quran. A New Translation and Commentary* by Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al. (2015).

times, also in slow motion, mostly followed by flashbacks to the istishhāđī to symbolise the transition from an istishhāđī to a shahīd. The concept of istishhād is religiously framed through references to the hadith or Qurʾanic verses such as: "Among the believers are men who have been true to that which they pledged unto God [...]" (sura 33, verse 23).[11] The ending of the video resembles the introduction in reverse order, again placing images of the preparations for the martyrdom operations and images of explosions next to each other. To summarise, all video footage is centred on portraying the martyrdom operation and istishhād as a means to receive shahāda.

Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands

In contrast to this, *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* does not appear as a martyrdom video at first sight, but rather allows for various interpretations. The video is in English, since it is dedicated to a mujahid from Canada who converted to Islam, joined IS and died in the battle over the military airport of Minnigh, Syria. In this regard, *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* is not typical for IS martyrdom videos, which usually portray martyrdom operations. This example is more closely linked to the initial concept of martyrdom used for the martyrs of the battlefield: "He moved during the battle like a man who did not know death. Rather, he knew that true life awaited him." *(Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, TC: 00:07:27–00:07:36) This video, too, fulfils the main functions of a martyrdom video, "celebrating their actions, informing the martyrs' family and friends of their deaths, and—especially—inspiring others by depicting the martyrs as heroes who should be emulated" (Stalinsky et al. 2017). Yet, it lacks the function of "publicizing the martyrs' last wishes" (ibid.), which can be explained by the fact that dying in battle is possible or even probable, but not certain, as is the case for martyrdom operations including explosives shown in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*. In general, the theme of martyrdom in *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* is not as dominant as in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*. Only the last four minutes out of this eleven-minute video address death and martyrdom, which is theologically framed through a hadith that includes the following excerpt: "Whoever does this [perform jihad] of them and then dies or is killed or drowns or is stomped upon to death by his riding animal, it is then incumbent upon Allah to enter him into jannah (paradise)." *(Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, TC: 00:10:46–00:10:54) The same hadith and some screenshots from the video *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, including an image of the corpse, can also be found in an issue of the Islamic State's *DABIQ* magazine published in 2014 *(DABIQ*, Issue 2, Ramadan 1435 [2014], 19).[12] The reference to martyrdom here becomes more apparent than in the video, since the overall narration of *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* is much broader. It encompasses the mujahid's former life in Canada, his conversion to Islam, his *hijra* or emigration to the Islamic State, his new life within IS and his calling on others to also make hijra and support IS. This suggests that the video footage used in *Al-Ghuraba – The*

[11] This is only an excerpt. The Qurʾanic recitation in the video encompasses sura 33, verses 23–24. As these verses show, jihad constitutes a defensive act to "relieve the oppressed", which provides "a legitimate basis for religious warfare" (Nasr et al. 2015, 224). Putting these verses into their historical context, they "relate specifically to those Muslims residing in Makkah who were oppressed and mistreated by their relatives and prevented from migrating to Madinah" (ibid.). In jihadism, however, warfare is legitimised per se, since the *Global War on Islam* is continuously perceived as a legitimate basis for jihad.

[12] According to the issue of the *DABIQ* magazine, the hadith is taken from the *Musnad Aḥmad*, also known as *al-Musnad*, a hadith collection written by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, a Sunni scholar and founder of the Hanbali School of Law. Unfortunately, this source could not be ratified.

Chosen Few of Different Lands was initially intended for other purposes, for instance to propagate the utopia of the Islamic State and call on others to follow the mujahid's example and support IS. While *Fursān al-Shahāda 5* was intentionally designed as a martyrdom video, *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* instead seems to have posthumously and retrospectively become one.

Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim

In contrast to this, *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* is easily identifiable as a martyrdom video—at least for audiences with knowledge of the Arabic language. This is already indicated by the title, which translates as *Rather, They Are Alive with Their Lord*. The title refers to a verse from the Qurʾan: "And deem not those slain in the way of God to be dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, provided for." (sura 3, verse 169) The video is dedicated to a munshid from Saudi Arabia who joined IS, became a famous IS munshid—probably the most prominent example—and died in an airstrike of the Global Coalition during a battle against Kurdish fighters. In contrast to *Fursān al-Shahāda 5* and *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, the video *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* appears as a detailed biography, including video footage from the munshid's former life in Saudi Arabia. This is probably due to his fame both within IS and prior to joining IS. However, working as a munshid in Saudi Arabia did not fulfil him. Following the narration of the video, he only found true happiness and fulfilment as a mujahid. According to one of his friends, he always wanted to participate in attacks and even considered carrying out a martyrdom operation. *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* thus blurs the boundaries between the first two categories of IS martyrdom videos. The mujahid portrayed combines the intention of istishhād with the environment of the battlefield, as the statements "I want martyrdom in His [God's] way." *(Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*, TC: 00:07:43–00:07:45) and "I wished to fight in the way of God and be killed, then to fight and be killed, then to fight and be killed." demonstrate *(Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*, TC: 00:01:43–00:01:52), the latter referring to a hadith reported by Muslim and al-Bukhari (Khoury 2009, 3964). This conception that a martyr wishes "to return to earthly life [as a mujahid] in order to die [as a shahīd] in the way of God again" is a "frequent motif" within jihadism (Szyska 2004, 36). It reflects the entirely positive connotation of martyrdom within jihadism. As is the case in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, martyrdom is the dominant theme throughout the video.

Conceptualising the Sounds of IS Martyrdom Videos

The theme of martyrdom is not only narrated and visually represented in IS martyrdom videos, it is also conveyed through sounds. In *Fursān al-Shahāda 5, Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* and *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, three different types of sounds can be identified: first ḥudāʾ, which describes a live chanting performance by a collective of mujahidin, second inshād, a performance of a professional nashīd singer, called munshid in

Arabic, and third anāshīd, which are recorded chants. The Islamic Studies scholar Behnam Said (2016, 24) defines ḥudāʾ as a musically less complex live performance amongst a group of mujahidin in contrast to anāshīd that are characterised by their studio quality. A nashīd, in turn, is the "product" of the "process" of inshād (ibid.). From a musicological perspective, this distinction can be challenged, for example through Christopher Small's (1998, 2) notion of *musicking*: "There is no such thing as music. Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do." Small's notion thus challenges the conception of anāshīd and inshād, since a nashīd simultaneously evolves through the activity of inshād. While this criticism is to some degree justified, the differentiation between chanting performances in the form of inshād, on the one hand, and chants in the form of anāshīd, on the other, is still applicable to IS martyrdom videos, since they serve different functions. While inshād is performed by a munshid for a certain audience at a particular time and place, anāshīd are recorded, in order to be reused. The key element of anāshīd is not the performance in a recording studio but rather the reusability in other contexts—in the case of IS anāshīd in IS videos. The main difference between inshād and ḥudāʾ is, in turn, that ḥudāʾ can, in principle, be performed by anyone, whereas inshād is performed by a professional munshid. The use of these terminologies within jihadism, however, blurs these boundaries. The Islamic Studies scholar Philipp Holtmann (2013, 226) describes ḥudāʾ as an "uplifting battle chant" that "has become a sub-genre" of anāshīd within jihadism. He illustrates his argument through an advertisement for a video produced by the Islamic State in Iraq. The video has the title *Ḥudāʾ al-Shuhadāʾ*, which translates as *Ḥudāʾ of the Martyrs*, whereas the advertisement claims that the video shows one of the "most beautiful *inshad*-sessions" (ibid.). This synonymous use of the two terms inshād and ḥudāʾ in jihadi contexts can also be seen in the IS martyrdom video *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*. It includes a sequence of a musical live performance in which the istishhādī, who is not, to my knowledge, a professional munshid, acts as a cantor for a chanting group of mujahidin. The term ḥudāʾ would be applicable for this situation. The accompanying description, however, labels this situation as an "inshād session": "the istishhādī [...] at an inshād session with his brothers" *(Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, TC: 00:32:56). This raises the question of whether common parlance makes the differentiation between inshād and ḥudāʾ obsolete. In this article, I still adhere to the distinction between anāshīd, inshād and ḥudāʾ, since they are used as distinct musical forms in IS martyrdom videos, referring to different etymologies.

Etymologies: Anāshīd, Inshād and Ḥudāʾ

The origins of anāshīd and inshād as musical forms lie in "*inshād al-shiʿr*, a protracted poetical recitation delivered in a loud voice", referring to the term "*inshād*, which originally meant raising the voice" (Shiloah 1995, 4). The term nashīd initially "also referred to the raising of the voice; its extended musical connotation probably derived from the melodious reciting of poetry in public as practised in pre- and post-Islamic times" (5). This development of

musical forms can be explained through the metrical arrangement of poetry, which suggests a certain intonation. Anāshīd therefore gradually became synonymous with hymns, chants or pieces of oratory (Shiloah 1993, 975). For centuries, religious chants with a "sacred nature" were predominant in Sufism[13] (Sellheim 1995, 1018). Within Sufism, the term *samāʿ* is used for these chants. As samāʿ covers all sorts of sacred or religious chants and music (Shiloah 1995, 59), anāshīd can be categorised as part of samāʿ, although this is nowhere explicitly formulated (Said 2016, 91). A possible explanation for this is the fact that anāshīd have, in recent decades, increasingly been used for political and jihadi purposes, which are rivals to Sufi interpretations of Islam. Islamist and jihadi groups might therefore avoid the usage of a Sufi term to theologically categorise anāshīd. Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood began to use anāshīd in the 1970s and 1980s, as part of a religious revival and a general rise of Islamism (45). However, they developed a rather pragmatic view of anāshīd and regarded them as a tool for mobilisation (Said 2016, 78; Lahoud 2017, 46). This is what motivated jihadi groups and movements in the 1990s to also use anāshīd (Said 2016, 78). In the view of these groups, jihadi anāshīd represent sacred chants as opposed to worldly music. To mark this difference, jihadi anāshīd are generally sung a cappella, influenced by Salafi[14]-Wahhabi[15] doctrine that forbids the use of musical instruments and heavily restricts the use of rhythm instruments (ibid.). This is also true for IS anāshīd that have certain characteristics: They are performed only by men and have a limited dynamic and melodic range. Furthermore, pitch correction, digital reverb and, at times, delay are applied to make the voice sound uniform and powerful, evoking the sacralising impression of large religious buildings such as mosques.

As is the case with the term nashīd, the meaning of ḥudāʾ has changed over time. It originally described a form of "old Bedouin camel song" (Shiloah 1995, 31) or "caravan [...] song [that] became identified with the *nawḥ* (lamentation or elegy). It is said that the *ghināʾ* (lit. song) was derived from this rudimentary form of singing; in the Muslim era, *ghināʾ* became the generic term for art music" (5). Ghināʾ, in turn, "is associated with secular art music yet is compatible, to a large extent, with folk music" (31). The presumption that ghināʾ is derived from ḥudāʾ is especially interesting, since jihadi groups such as IS that practice ḥudāʾ generally reject ghināʾ due to its secular connotation. This is demonstrated by a *Statement Concerning the Prohibition on Music, Singing and Photos on Shops*,[16] issued by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, short ISIS,[17] in Raqqa in January 2014: "Know [...] that stringed instruments and song [ghināʾ] are forbidden in Islam because they detract from mention of God and the Qurʾan, and they are a source of strife and corruption for the heart." (translation by Al-Tamimi 2015) Yet, as IS still uses ḥudāʾ, this means that IS theologically approves of it. The fact that ḥudāʾ have become synonymous with lamentations over time is of particular importance in the context of IS martyrdom videos, since ḥudāʾ serves as a rite of separation prior to martyrdom operations. Lamentations over a person's death likewise serve as rites of separation in a lot of cultures and societies, also in Muslim ones. Since death only marks the transition from this world

[13] *Sufism* describes various ascetic and mystic orders within Islam.

[14] *Salafism* describes a religious movement within Sunni Islam that aims to return to the roots of Islam, but at the same time absorbs modern political developments (Biene 2015).

[15] *Wahhabism* describes a form of political Salafism that is particularly prevalent in Saudi-Arabia.

[16] I hereby deeply thank Scott Havener for drawing my attention to this document.

[17] The *Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham* is the predecessor of the Islamic State. This name was used from April 2013 until the proclamation of the caliphate in June 2014. Alternative translations of the Arabic name are *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* or *Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant*, abbreviated as *ISIL*.

to the hereafter in Islam, loud lamentations were and are often regarded as inappropriate based on various examples from the hadith expressing the prophet Muhammad's disapproval of intensive mourning (Horsch 2011, 76). Yet, numerous mourning rituals continue to exist within Muslim societies today (ibid.), so that Islamic funerals generally fulfil the social function of "bring[ing] a community of mourners together" (Halevi 2007, 234).

Ḥudāʾ in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*

In contrast to this, mourning plays a minor role at IS martyrdom ceremonies. This can be explained through the perception of death in jihad as a means to directly enter paradise, which therefore represents a joyful event in jihadism. Yet, the absence of a proper burial according to Islamic rites requires some sort of compensation. Martyrdom ceremonies thus act as rites of passage compensating for this exceptional situation. As the example of *Fursān al-Shahāda 5* demonstrates, ḥudāʾ is practiced at martyrdom ceremonies as a rite of separation to mark the transition from a mujahid, who belongs to a collective of mujahidin, towards an istishhādī, who will soon carry out a martyrdom operation as an individual. In *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, ḥudāʾ is used in two sequences, once as a rite of separation. In the first sequence, the practice of live chanting represents a collective practice without any obvious special occasion. The istishhādī fulfils the role of a cantor. He shows the other mujahidin, who cannot be seen, but whose voices can be heard, when to join in. Although this sequence is part of a martyrdom video, it does not seem to be part of a martyrdom ceremony. The lyrics instead create a link to jihad and warfare, since the dominant themes are destroying Israel, condemning Jews and Christians as well as praying for Usama bin Ladin's victory over US troops *(Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, TC: 00:32:52–00:35:01).[18] Ḥudāʾ is indeed also performed prior to battles. Yet, the occasion for this ḥudāʾ does not become apparent from the video. The textual description "inshād session", the casual outfit of the istishhādī and the setting rather suggest that this ḥudāʾ session—I adhere to this term, as it is a performance of a collective of mujahidin and not of a professional munshid—fulfils the social function of community building through collective chanting. The second sequence of ḥudāʾ, on the other hand, takes place at a martyrdom ceremony on the occasion of the upcoming martyrdom operation *(Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, TC: 00:12:10–00:13:56). It shows an individual mujahid, who through this rite of separation becomes an istishhādī, standing in front of the black IS banner, with weapons hanging on the walls. One by one, mujahidin walk up to the istishhādī to embrace him. Two of them carry weapons. During this sequence, a ḥudāʾ can be heard, yet without anyone shown chanting. It still presumably is an intradiegetic element of the video based on the quality of the sound. One person again acts as a cantor, then others join in repeating the part of the ḥudāʾ the cantor has just performed. This ḥudāʾ serves as a rite of separation, as the lyrics demonstrate:

I bid you farewell with tears in my eyes.
I bid you farewell, and you are my precious ones [lite-
rally: my eyes] for me.
I bid you farewell and in my heart is a flame
that increases my grief because of my love for you [lite-
*rally: your love].***[19]**

This is the only sequence in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5* that leaves the possibility of verbalising personal grief. It enables both the istishhādī and his fellow mujahidin to bid farewell to each other and to express their grief. This ritualistic dimension of ḥudāʾ provides stability in a process of social transformation, in which an individual istishhādī is separated from a collective of mujahidin.

Inshād in *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*

While ḥudāʾ constitutes a collective chanting practice performed *by* mujahidin, inshād describes a chanting performance of an IS munshid *for* mujahidin. These live performances are rare among IS. Indeed, the video *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* is one of the few accounts of inshād among IS *(Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*, TC: 00:09:48–00:09:59). The lyrics resemble those of the first ḥudāʾ used in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, again referring to jihad and warfare and constructing Jews as the enemy Other.**[20]** The setting, a cave, which might serve as a hideout for the armed mujahidin, further suggests that this sequence is actually shot prior to a battle. This example shows that the description of ḥudāʾ as "encouraging battle songs" as opposed to anāshīd as "praiseful hymns" (Holtmann 2013, 225) is somewhat misleading, since inshād and anāshīd also address the theme of warfare. The distinction between ḥudāʾ on the one hand and inshād and anāshīd on the other thus lies, instead, in their performers. While ḥudāʾ represents a highly inclusive practice that develops through a chanting collective, which, in principal, anybody can be part of, inshād describes a performance of a professional munshid, in which audiences are not expected to actively chant. In *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*, no mujahid joins the munshid in chanting. Audiences can, theoretically, sing along, however the munshid remains the most important person within inshād, whereas ḥudāʾ develops through a chanting collective. Interestingly, the munshid is shown chanting the 'same' piece twice in *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim:* first among a group of mujahidin, then in a provisional recording area that serves as a recording studio. Both versions sound quite different, because digital reverb and pitch correction are applied in the studio version *(Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*, TC: 00:09:59–00:10:25). Due to this post-production, the sonic and the visual dimension of this sequence do not overlap. While it visually represents the *recording* of a nashīd, it sonically expresses a *recorded* nashīd that already has all the general characteristics of IS anāshīd: It is an a cappella chant that went through post-production, applying processing tools such as pitch correction and digital reverb, which is here rather used as a stylistic element than as a regular mixing tool (Marius Botzenhart 2019, personal communication). This sequence reveals the main difference between inshād and anāshīd: While inshād first and foremost

[19] The Arabic lyrics were provided by Majd Alkatreeb.

[20] I again want to thank Majd Alkatreeb for summarising these lyrics.

means chanting for a certain audience at a particular time and place, anāshīd describe chants that are recorded for the sake of reusability, independent of time and place.

Anāshīd in *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*

The nashīd *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan*, which was recorded by the IS munshid portrayed in *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* and released by *Muʾassasat Ajnād li-l-Intāj al-Iʿlāmī* (=*Ajnād Foundation for Media Production)* in 2014, is (re-)used in IS martyrdom videos particularly often, since it addresses and sacralises the concept of jihadi martyrdom. In addition to this sacralisation of jihadi contents, anāshīd used in IS videos, including martyrdom videos, generally serve similar functions as extradiegetic film music: Anāshīd are added to affectively involve the audiences and to provide additional information by categorising a specific genre, syntactically organising the plot or providing a hermeneutical foundation for interpretations (Weindl 2013, 62). This shows, for instance, *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, which does not necessarily appear, on a purely visual level, to be a martyrdom video. However, there is one particular sonic characteristic that clearly refers to martyrdom. Throughout the video, the nashīd *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan* can be heard, which translates as *What a Victory for the One Who Truly Receives Martyrdom*. The fact that just this nashīd is used throughout the video is not coincidental. Indeed, *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* is one of the few IS videos—if not the only one—in which only one nashīd is used.**[21]** The nashīd must thus carry importance. It provides unambiguous hermeneutical information to the otherwise ambiguous narration of *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* and thereby categorises this video as an IS martyrdom video. One major difference to film music, however, is that the anāshīd used in IS martyrdom videos frame and sacralise their contents in a religious manner. In this regard, they are comparable to Qurʾanic recitations, hadith excerpts and poetic recitations used in martyrdom videos, which mostly represent mediated and posthumously added rites of incorporation, in order to integrate the deceased in the hereafter. This sacralisation encompasses two dimensions: First, anāshīd refer to a long-established religious practice that conveys "a sense of legitimacy, authenticity and historical precedent" (Kendall 2016, 241) in itself.**[22]** Second, their lyrics include theological references to the Qurʾan and the hadith that frame martyrdom as a religious concept. Conceptions of paradise and the rewards for martyrs therein are of particular importance, as the lyrics of *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan* demonstrate:

> *What a victory for the one who truly receives martyrdom.*
> *The sins are removed, when the blood drips. […]*
> *His wounds distribute [the scent of] musk and are perfumed.*
> *[The martyrs] live comfortably in the crops of birds.*
> *Their souls live within them and they live forever.*
> *They have houses and companions in paradise […].*
> *They get so many beautiful virgins of paradise that they*

[21] This applies for videos that are not explicitly designed to illustrate anāshīd, as is the case for video anāshīd which can be understood as 'IS music videos'.

[22] This argument is based on Elisabeth Kendall's (2016, 241) analysis of the jihadi use of classical Arabic poetry: "Classical poetry therefore deftly skips the step of logical argument to convey succinctly and powerfully a sense of legitimacy, authenticity and historical precedent to modern jihadist messages and deeds."

are satisfied.
They will intercede on behalf of their families, when they
are held back [...].
Neither death nor temptation befell them.
In the grave, they are never questioned or subjugated.

As these lyrics show, blood is the ultimate proof of martyrdom, which is remarkable, since blood is perceived to impair one's ritual purity and therefore generally requires ritual purification according to Islamic law (Horsch-Al Saad 2011, 187). To ensure the ritual purity of the deceased, the corpse is usually washed prior to the burial (ibid.). This does not, however, apply to martyrs. Their purity is either ensured through angels that "take over the task" of washing their corpses (Szyska 2004, 35) or through the scent of musk that God awards to them (Horsch-Al Saad 2011, 189). Musk is therefore directly associated with paradise (ibid.). According to a hadith reported by Muslim and al-Bukhari, the wounds of those injured in the way of God will appear at the day of resurrection, having the colour of blood but the scent of musk (Khoury 2009, 3964). Through blood, all "sins are removed", so that the questioning and torment of the grave at the final judgment become obsolete. However, the martyrs' families are not spared from this. Following a hadith reported by al-Tirmidhi, martyrs can therefore intercede on behalf of 70 relatives (3986). Martyrs themselves are believed to enter directly into paradise. In Islamic tradition, the idea is widespread that the souls of martyrs continue to live in "birds", "green birds" or "in the crops [...] of green birds" that "eat [...] from the fruits of paradise" (Raven 2003, 284). "According to some traditions, the spirits of the martyrs will ascend directly to Paradise, there to reside in the craws of green birds near God's throne. During the Resurrection these spirits will be returned to the martyr's earthly bodies and the martyrs will then be given their abode in Paradise." (Kohlberg 1997, 204) Another common conception is that a martyr is given 72 virgins or maidens of paradise as wives. This conception is anchored in a hadith reported by al-Tirmidhi (Khoury 2009, 3986) as well as in sura 52, verse 20: "We shall wed them to wide-eyed maidens." Yet, this sura does not explicitly address martyrs, but includes "the reverent" in general (sura 52, verse 17). The difference, however, lies in the notion that the martyr's wedding coincides with the moment of his death, since martyrs are directly admitted to paradise (Horsch-Al Saad 2011, 220). All these religious references and conceptions can be found in the lyrics of *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan*. They are used to theologically frame jihad, which is carried out in this world, by linking it to the hereafter. The musical expression of *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan* intensifies this impression of a sonic arch between this world and the hereafter. It has a flowing movement that appears rather calm, creating the impression of a mantra. Both syllabic and melismatic articulation are used, the latter especially towards the end of the nashīd, which creates the atmosphere of a lamentation that sonically hints at martyrdom. The nashīd *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan* thus represents a rite of incorporation that is inscribed to and mediated through the martyrdom video *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*. In fact, the making of a martyrdom video itself can be

regarded as a rite of incorporation. These rites, rather than rites of separation, are usually at the heart of funerals, in order to integrate the deceased into the realm of the dead (van Gennep 2005, 142). Martyrdom videos, including anāshīd, thereby not only preserve the commemoration of the shuhadāʾ. They also help to promote the concept of jihadi martyrdom. As the example of *Fursān al-Shahāda 5* shows, this is of particular importance with regard to martyrdom operations: "After being issued on the Internet, martyr songs are supposed to transport this feeling directly to the Jihadi target audience, which is supposed to re-experience the excitement of self-sacrifice, and finally re-enact it." (Holtmann 2013, 225) Anāshīd thereby help to perpetuate the cycle of jihadi martyrdom.

Conclusion

As has been shown through the examples of *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* and *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, sounds in the form of chants and chanting are crucial elements of IS martyrdom videos. While inshād performances are rather rare, anāshīd and ḥudāʾ are commonly used. They not only represent musical elements, but also bear ritualistic meanings. Ḥudāʾ as a rite of separation accompanies the process of separation of an individual istishhādī from a collective of mujahidin, which is marked through a martyrdom ceremony. Anāshīd as rites of incorporation, on the other hand, posthumously preserve the commemoration of the deceased as shuhadāʾ. They thus "play a central role in the ritualistic glorification of martyrs" (Holtmann 2013, 225) and help to promote the concept of jihadi martyrdom by framing death in jihad, including martyrdom operations, as religious acts. Qurʾan verses and hadith excerpts referring to paradise and the rewards for martyrs therein are of particular importance, as the lyrics of the analysed IS nashīd *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan* demonstrate.

This analysis of the use of anāshīd, inshād and ḥudāʾ in IS martyrdom videos has revealed a general confusion of these terminologies, each of which have their own distinct etymology. In jihadi contexts, the expressions inshād and ḥudāʾ seem to be used interchangeably in common parlance. This raises the question of whether the differentiation between inshād and ḥudāʾ is altogether obsolete, a question which further research will need to address. The distinction between anāshīd and inshād can be challenged further from a musicological perspective which highlights musicking as an activity, since a nashīd evolves through the activity of inshād. It is therefore necessary to include (ethno-)musicological perspectives in further academic research, in order to examine the validity of existing musical categories such as ḥudāʾ as a collective live chanting performance, inshād as a live version of a nashīd performed by a professional munshid and anāshīd as recorded and post-produced chants. A deeper understanding of the role of anāshīd, inshād and ḥudāʾ will contribute to our overall understanding of jihadism, by highlighting specific socio-cultural practices that help to explain the mechanisms that attract certain individuals to jihadism.

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