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THE DAY OF SURPLUS
On the Market in Paradise

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Introduction

In his autobiography, the prominent Jordanian Salafist ʿUmar Sulaymān al-Ashqar (1940–2012) recounts that around the middle of the 1960s, he followed lessons with the famously conservative Saudi scholar, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Ibn Bāz (1910–1999). Lecturing in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, Ibn Bāz warned his students against the 'forbidden things' (*munkarāt*) on display in some of the city's markets, in particular certain 'mannequins (*ṣuwar*) of adorned women, inflated to take on the shape of a large and ripe woman' (al-Ashqar 2010, p. 70). As al-Ashqar recalls, Ibn Bāz not only condemned such practices in the classroom; one day, he went into the markets to reprimand the merchants for their lewd behavior (ibid.). In the wake of Ibn Bāz's intervention, violent clashes erupted between the Medina residents and pious local activists, followers of Ibn Bāz who felt the need to take the Islamic duty of 'commanding right and forbidding wrong' into their hands, instead of contenting themselves with verbal censure (as Ibn Bāz had done) and referring to the police. In retaliation, the Saudi authorities deported some of Ibn Bāz's students from Saudi Arabia, including al-Ashqar (al-Ashqar 2010, p. 71; see also Cook 2000, pp. 180–191; Lacroix 2011, p. 90).

That markets are places of sin, haunted by the devil and his minions, is an old motif in the pious literature of Islam. For example, the Prophet's cousin ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is said to have preached to the people in Kufa that 'on Fridays, the devils enter the markets with their banners, in order to distract people from the congregational prayer' (Abū Dāwūd 1935, vol. 1, p. 343). In his *Revivification of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*), in a chapter on the etiquette of trade, al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) relates how one of the pious Muslim forefathers, the Companion ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, once said: 'Do not be the first to enter the market-place [in the morning], nor the last to leave it [in the evening], because the devil resides there and hatches offspring' (n.d., vol. 2, p. 132).

However, Muslims who declared markets dangerous and warned other Muslims against spending time in them fought an uphill battle, as Muslim jurists entertained a generally positive attitude toward trade. In the Hadith, the vast body of narratives traced to the

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Prophet and his Companions, Muslims are not only allowed to visit markets, but the pleasures to be had in them are extolled.

A striking illustration of the high regard for markets and the titillating prospect of consumption therein is found in a series of narratives attributed to the Prophet about the 'market in paradise' (*sūq al-janna*), an imaginary space of immediate and total gratification. This otherworldly market is mentioned in Muslim eschatological literature in the context of the so-called 'Day of Surplus' (*yawm al-mazīd*, see Qurʾān 50:35), that is, the day of the week – usually held to be a Friday – on which God appears to the denizens of paradise in a public audience. Then, after gently addressing the blessed, treating them to a heavenly concert (in which the houris and the prophet-king David act as entertainers), and granting them the beatific vision, God sends them to shop.

It bears mentioning that not all Islamic narratives about the Day of Surplus include the shopping excursion of the blessed. For instance, two famous medieval authors of parenetic-eschatological works written in Arabic, Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 373/983) and al-Ghazālī, do not mention the market in paradise at all (al-Samarqandī 1427/2006, p. 40; al-Ghazālī n.d., vol. 5, pp. 176–177). However, there is an evident, unbroken tradition throughout Islamic history of transmitting, elaborating, and commenting upon stories about the paradisiacal market. This tradition centers on three Hadiths traced back to the Prophet through the Companions Anas b. Mālik, Abū Hurayra, and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, respectively. In this chapter, I discuss these traditions, examining how widespread they were, what versions of them circulated, and what reactions they elicited. I conclude with a reflection on modern shopping malls in the Arab world and on what the market in paradise contributes to our understanding of Ibn Bāz's and al-Ashqar's run-in with the Saudi authorities, as well as of contemporary Muslim consumerism at large.

The Anas Tradition

The Anas tradition is the most 'orthodox' of the three traditions mentioned above. It appears in Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj's (d. 261/875) highly regarded *Book of Sound Traditions* (*al-Ṣaḥīḥ*). In addition, it is found in a significant number of other 'canonical' collections, such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's (d. 241/855) *Musnad* and al-Tirmidhī's (d. 279/892) *Sound Collection* (*al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*) (see Wensinck et al. 1992, vol. 3, p. 34b.14), as well as in medieval and late-medieval works such as Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 430/1038) *What Paradise Is Like* (*Ṣifat al-janna*), Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Nawawī's (d. 676/1277) *Gardens of the Righteous* (*Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn*), and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) *Shining Full Moons of Eschatology* (*al-Budūr al-sāfira fī ʿulūm al-ākhira*). Here, I quote the Anas tradition from *Urging Souls Forward to the Lands of Happiness* (*Ḥādī al-arwāḥ ilā bilād al-afrāḥ*) by the Damascene scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350). This work conveniently collects many (though not all) Hadiths about the market in paradise:

> Anas b. Mālik related from the Prophet: There is a market (*sūq*) in paradise. People go there every Friday. Then the northern wind blows, caressing their faces and moving their dresses, and their beauty (*ḥusn*) and comeliness (*jamāl*) are enhanced. They return to their families, having become more beautiful and comely, and so their families say to them: 'By God! After [having departed from] us, you have become more beautiful and more comely!' And they [likewise] say to them: 'By God! After we [departed from you], you have become more beautiful and more comely!'
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> *(1432/2011, p. 376)*

The first thing to note regarding this Hadith, besides its wide circulation and 'orthodox' status, is that the word *sūq* is equivocal. It is related to the verb *sāqa* (to drive on, to herd); hence, *sūq* can signify not only a 'market,' as in the most common meaning, but also, simply, a 'place of concourse.' It is understood in this way by the most prominent commentator on Muslim's *Book of Sound Traditions*, the aforementioned al-Nawawī, who explains that 'what is meant by *sūq* is a meeting place (*majmaʿ*), in which they come together like people on earth come together in a market' (1407/1987, vol. 9, p. 172).

The most important motif of this Hadith is the transformation of the inhabitants of paradise into beautiful people, a miracle that occurs because of a gentle wind blowing from the north. Several related Hadiths add further details. They state, for example, that in the *sūq*, there is a dune of musk (*kuthbān min al-misk*), 'whiter than snow,' on which the men take a seat, chatting leisurely, and that when they return to their wives, they not only look better than before but are also perfumed and dressed more colorfully (Ibn Ḥabīb 1427/2006, p. 56; Ibn Abī al-Dunyā 1427/2006, p. 259; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya 1432/2011, p. 379). However, the short, above-quoted core of the Hadith is the most-frequently cited version.

When it comes to traditions about the market of paradise, compilers known for their asceticism (*zuhd*), for example, Ibn al-Kharrāṭ of Seville (d. 581/1185), only relate the Anas tradition to the exclusion of similar narratives, such as the Abū Hurayra tradition and the ʿAlī tradition (Ibn al-Kharrāṭ 1410/1990, p. 327).

The Abū Hurayra Tradition

The second tradition, the one transmitted on the authority of Abū Hurayra, is longer than the Anas tradition. It is embedded in a frame story in which another early Muslim, the traditionist and judge Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab, asks Abū Hurayra whether there really is a market in paradise. Abū Hurayra replies that this is indeed so, quoting the Prophet to the effect that the inhabitants of paradise are invited to enter it on account of their good actions on earth; that they take a seat on high chairs studded with precious stones or on a dune of musk and camphor; that God reveals Himself to them and that the inhabitants of paradise see Him 'without wavering'; that God speaks gently to each one of them; and that perfume rains down on them from a cloud. The Prophet continues:

> Then our Lord, Mighty and Exalted, says: "Rise to receive the bounties that I have prepared for you, and take whatever you desire!" […] Then they come to a market that is surrounded by rows of angels. In it are things the likes of which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind [lit. heart] has conceived. What we desire is carried (*yuḥmalu mā ishtahaynā*). There is no buying or selling in it. In that market, the people of paradise meet each other. The inhabitants of the Lofty Mansions approach to meet those who are below them, while nobody among them is [considered] lowly (*wa-mā fīhim danīy*). They [the inhabitants of the Lofty Mansions] are pleased to see their clothes and appearance. Before they reach the end of their conversation, they assimilate from them what is better than they (*yatamaththalu ʿalayhi aḥsana minhu*). In this way, nobody in it [the market] has to be sad. […] Then we will return to our lodgings and meet our wives. They will say: "Welcome, beloved ones! You have arrived! You are more beautiful and more sweet-smelling than when you left us." We shall say: "God the Almighty kept us company today. We deserved to be transformed the way we were."
>
> *(Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya 1432/2011, pp. 377–378)*

In Islamic religious literature, this Hadith is sometimes simply referred to as 'the Hadith of the market in paradise' (*ḥadīth sūq al-janna*). Al-Tirmidhī, one of the 'canonical' transmitters of this tradition (see Wensinck et al. 1992, vol. 3, p. 34b.11), calls it 'rare' (*gharīb*), a term used to characterize Hadiths that scholars considered to be neither 'weak' (*ḍaʿīf*) nor 'sound' (*ṣaḥīḥ*). Such Hadiths were deemed acceptable particularly in parenetic and eschatological contexts (see Lange 2016a, pp. 82–83). Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya also cautiously accepts the reliability of the narrative (1432/2011, p. 378). Moreover, Muslim theologians often adduced the Hadith in the context of discussions about whether the beatific vision (*ruʾya*) of God in paradise is a physical or spiritual event. What is more interesting for the present discussion, however, is the way the narrative describes the market in paradise.

To begin, note that the Hadith refuses to specify precisely what kind of luxuries the market in paradise has in store: it speaks of things that 'no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has conceived.' This is a statement derived from the New Testament (1 Corinthians 2:9) that Muslim eschatologists repeat a lot (Lange 2016a, pp. 2–3, *passim*), but that, at the same time, is undermined from within Muslim eschatological literature by a plethora of afterlife narratives full of sumptuous, often highly concrete and sensual images and descriptions (al-Azmeh 1995). Thus, in a Shiʿi compilation, we read that the inhabitants of paradise 'pass by the markets of paradise, in which […] there are garments, silk brocade, gold brocade, silk cloth, *rafraf* and *ʿabqarī* cloth, pearls, rubies, and suspended crowns' (al-Baḥrānī 1430/2009, vol. 3, p. 182). And according to an anonymous medieval Sunni compilation, the angels in paradise tell the happy shoppers that 'on earth, you used to walk through your markets, and a piece of cloth would please you, or something else, but it would only be available for you at a price; by contrast, in this market here, your Lord, Mighty and Exalted, has made everything available, so whosoever desires a thing, let him take possession of it, without [paying] a price!'—an invitation promptly followed, as the blessed stroll through the market, 'gazing at pillows, rugs, colorful cushions, and garments, and whatever they see and like, the angels carry behind them' (Anon. 1418/1998, p. 90).

Crucially, according to the Abū Hurayra tradition, there is 'no buying or selling' in the market in paradise. When the market-goers in paradise 'buy' things, as the Egyptian commentator ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Munāwī (d. 1031/1621) explains, they pay with a figurative currency, that is, with the good actions they performed on earth (1415/1994, vol. 10, p. 312). The idea that people in paradise engage in actual trade was, it appears, one step too far, even for those who did not object to the prospect of otherworldly shopping. Nobody in paradise, after all, has to work. Besides, as noted above, the greedy self-interest of merchants and the nervous buzz of markets on earth were something the pious abhorred. The traditionist ʿAṭāʾ b. Yassār (d. 103/721) once confronted a man selling his wares in the Medina mosque by reprimanding him: 'You should sell your wares in the market of this world; this here is the market of the next world!' (Mālik n.d., vol. 1, p. 174). Little did ʿAṭāʾ know what the markets of the next world would look like according to the imagination of later Muslim eschatologists. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, pitching the merits of the heavenly against the pitfalls of the earthly market, puts the sentiment in verse:

> The 'market of getting to know each other' is what it's called. There is no
> noise in it, nor deceit, nor false promises.
> The 'merchants' in it take no pleasure in 'trade deals,'
> nor in 'selling' things, bargaining with the Merciful One […]

> Woe to those who prefer over it the market in which
> the banner of the devil has been set up!
> If you knew the true worth of that market [in paradise] you
> would not trust the market of volatile and ephemeral business [on earth].
> *(1428/2007, p. 1025)*

However, others saw things a little differently. *If* the inhabitants of paradise were allowed to sell things to each other, they would trade in fine cloth and perfume, the Prophet was related to have said (al-Suyūṭī 1416/1996, p. 583), as if to assuage the disappointment of those who were promised paradise but were also passionate about trade. For the medieval merchants of the Islamic world, it must have been difficult to see much virtue in markets devoid of economic activity. As the theologian and popular preacher in Baghdad Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) recounts in his *Stories of Witty People* (*Akhbār al-adhkiyāʾ*), a group of merchants was once asked about how business was in their market? They ironically replied, 'It's like the market of paradise: nothing is bought in it and nothing is sold' (1424/2003, p. 206). 'Our market is the market of paradise' (*sūqunā sūq al-janna*) even became a proverbial expression used to allude to a state of economic depression (al-Maydānī n.d., vol. 1, p. 356).

A final element of the Abū Hurayra tradition that deserves attention is its egalitarian gist. The Islamic paradise is stratified and divided into different degrees of exultation (see Lange 2016a, p. 157). However, on the paradisiacal market, such distinctions are erased, at least temporarily, on Friday. In markets on earth, as gathered from the Abū Hurayra tradition, the kind of clothing one wore was an important social marker, and the poorly dressed were looked down upon by the rich. What a relief, then, to be able to overcome such divisions in the afterlife, where 'nobody is considered lowly,' and where the inhabitants of the expensive mansions in the more exclusive residential areas of the eternal garden might even compliment the less affluent on their looks. And not only that: the average paradise dwellers even take on some of the superior qualities of their posh neighbors in a mysterious process of assimilation (*tamaththul*). This motif takes center stage in the ʿAlī tradition.

The ʿAlī Tradition

The motif of the miraculous transformation of the market-goers in paradise, already present in both the Anas tradition and the Abū Hurayra tradition, is fully articulated in the third and final of the three 'canonical' Hadiths about the market in paradise, the ʿAlī tradition. To quote again from Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Urging Souls forward to the Lands of Happiness*:

> ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib related from the Prophet: There is a market in paradise in which nothing is sold or bought except images (*ṣuwar*) of men and women. If a man desires (*ishtahā*) such an image, he enters into it (*dakhala fīhā*).
> *(1423/2011, pp. 378–379)*

Next to al-Tirmidhī, from whom Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya quotes the tradition, a score of other (non-canonical) Hadith collectors relate this, including Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Hannād al-Sarī (d. 243/857), al-Bayhaqī (d. 459/1066), and other, later ones. As Ibn Qayyim

al-Jawziyya notes, the Hadith is declared 'rare' (*gharīb*) by al-Tirmidhī. Others, such as Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), and al-Suyūṭī, are more critical, plainly classifying it as 'forged' (*mawḍūʿ*), on account of the supposed unreliability of one link in the tradition's *isnād*, a traditionist by the name of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Isḥāq (Abū Nuʿaym 1415/1995, pp. 255–257 [editor's footnote]). This ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Isḥāq, an early second/eighth-century scholar from Medina, who during his lifetime was accused of being a *qadarī* (a defender of the doctrine of free will) and who ended his life in Basra, did indeed enjoy a checkered reputation as a transmitter (al-Mizzī 1413/1992, vol. 16, pp. 519–525). However, the Hadith is also transmitted with an *isnād* that does *not* include ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Isḥāq, albeit in a slightly different version, one in which the verb 'to desire' (*ishtahā*) is replaced by the more chaste 'to like' (*aḥabba*) (Abū Nuʿaym 1415/1995, p. 258; al-Suyūṭī 1416/1996, p. 582–583; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya 1423/2011, p. 379).

Whatever the deficiencies of the *isnād* or the lexical irregularities of the Hadith, there can be no doubt about its popularity over the centuries of Islamic history and across the Muslim world. This fact is demonstrated not only by the number of works that include reference to it but also by the exegetical efforts of Muslim scholars to make sense of it. The first interpretive issue relates to the question of what the word *ṣūra* (pl. *ṣuwar*) means. Are we to understand that in the market in paradise, there are pictorial representations of men and women, or is *ṣūra* something else? In a variant of the Hadith, transmitted by Ibn al-Jawzī and others, it is stated that the market-goers in paradise are presented with actual sheets of writing material with images of men and women on them, 'and on the margin of every image is written: *Those who wish* (tamannā) *to look like me, God will make them beautiful according to my image* (ṣūra)' (Ibn al-Jawzī 1419/1998, p. 131; Ibn Ḥabīb 1427/2006, p. 57; al-Baḥrānī 1430/2009, vol. 3, p. 182). However, the Indian scholar from Uttar Pradesh, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakfurī (d. 1935), in his commentary on al-Tirmidhī's *Sound Collection*, states that the *ṣuwar* in question are 'effigies' (*tamāthīl*) (al-Mubārakfūrī n.d., vol. 7, p. 223), perhaps approaching the question from the perspective of a society famous for its abundance of sacred statues. Writing in Egypt, al-Munāwī simply affirms that 'the word *ṣūra* here means form and shape (*al-shakl wal-hayʾa*),' but he leaves it unclear in what material substrate, if any, the *ṣūra* is seen (al-Munāwī 1415/1994, vol. 10, p. 312).

According to the ʿAlī tradition, the market-goers in paradise can choose between 'images of women or men,' the latter being a reference, so it seems, to male servants (*ghilmān*, see Qurʾān 52:24) and immortal youths (see Qurʾān 56:17, 76:19), perhaps even to homoerotic pleasures in the Muslim paradise (see Lange 2016, pp. 151–152). What this addition does *not* indicate is that the female inhabitants of paradise get to enjoy images-on-sale of males. Although none of the traditions explicitly states that women are barred from retail in the eternal garden, they all agree that the market-goers, after their shopping spree, return home to meet their 'wives.' Unlike in certain shopping malls in contemporary Gulf countries (Baldauf 2008), there are no sections specifically designated for female customers in the market in paradise. Muslim eschatologists often debated whether only men were allowed the beatific vision in paradise or also women, but strolling around the eternal market, it seems, is an exclusively male prerogative. As Franz Rosenthal once remarked, 'nearly all the fantasies about paradise [in Hadith-based eschatology] are meant for men' (1987, p. 254).

A final interpretive challenge of the Hadith is the question of what 'entering the image' means. Some understood the expression literally: to enter the images in the market in paradise is to enter into a new space as if passing through a magical doorway. According

to this view, the shoppers in the eternal market, to use the words of Walter Benjamin, become like children who 'enter into the pages of picture books like clouds, saturated with the brilliant colours of the world of images' (1991, p. 609). This act of entering the 'world of images,' as Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) makes clear in a comment on the market in paradise, is not merely a disembodied flight of infantile fancy. Rather, it happens sensorily (*ḥissan*) and corporeally (*jisman*), 'by virtue of a divine faculty (*qudra ilāhiyya*) that God creates in whomsoever He wishes' (vol. 2, p. 323; see also vol. 5, p. 490). According to an extended version of the ʿAlī tradition transmitted by Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, when the market-goers enter the image they have chosen, 'they meet the houris, singing in a way that no creature has ever witnessed before: "We are the eternal ones, imperishable! We are the happy ones, unperturbed! We are the content ones, never displeased! Blessed are those that belong to us, and we belong to them!"' (Abū Nuʿaym 1415/1995, pp. 254–255; see also al-Suyūṭī 1416/1996, p. 582; al-Baḥrānī 1430/2009, vol. 3, p. 185). This elaboration of the ʿAlī tradition connects it to the well-known motif of the courtesans of the Muslim paradise, the aforementioned houris, female attendants in the eternal garden, there to ensure the immediate gratification of the sexual and other desires of the garden's male inhabitants. What characterizes the houris in the Hadith about the market in paradise, as well as other paradise narratives, is their immaculateness and total availability: there are large quantities of them, growing on trees, from which they are plucked like ripe fruit; they rain down from a cloud whenever the desire of the inhabitants of paradise is aroused, and they are recursively virginal (see Lange 2016a, pp. 142–143).

Most versions of the ʿAlī tradition, however, understand the act of entering the images in a less explicitly sexual way, stressing instead that those beholding the images are themselves aesthetically enhanced. As mentioned above, this aligns with the Anas and Abū Hurayra traditions. In the former, a gentle northern wind increases the market-goers' physical beauty, while in the latter, by rubbing shoulders with the inhabitants of the Lofty Mansions, the visitors of the paradisiacal market miraculously assimilate, by a process of osmosis, some of the features of their more exalted neighbors. The transformation they undergo in the ʿAlī tradition, however, is of a different kind: it requires an act of penetration, and it happens because of the shoppers' own deliberate choice.

What kind of transformation is this? Al-Munāwī argues that the market-goers do not change in their essence (*dhāt*), that is, their bodies, but merely in their attributes (*ṣifāt*), that is, their outer appearance, such as their clothing (1415/1994, vol. 10, p. 312). It is undoubtedly possible to understand the ʿAlī tradition in this way, but some extended versions suggest that many thought not of make-up but actual shape-shifting. In one version of the narrative, a man returning to meet his wife and explaining to her his enhanced status says:

> In it [the market in paradise], God has made beautiful images available for us, and we were transformed into those that we chose for ourselves, so I chose the image in which I now appear to you—what do you think?
>
> *(Ibn Ḥabīb 1427/2006, p. 56)*

The wife's reaction, needless to say, is enthusiastic. 'All those who like a certain image,' we read in another narrative elaboration of the ʿAlī tradition, 'simply look at it, and the image then stays with them, features, adornments, beauty and all, until, by the power of God, it fades' (Anon. 1418/1998, p. 90). Even more fantastically, as the happy shoppers continue to look around, they discover wings on display in the market, the angels encouraging them

to put them on. 'And so they put them on, and their wings carry them through the air to travel wherever they want' (ibid.). In the market in paradise, the blessed are not merely provided material luxuries; they acquire the power to take on new, doctored bodies and thus optimize their selves.

Conclusion

The small but remarkable group of narratives about the market in paradise showcases some of the core features of the traditional, Hadith-based Muslim view of paradise. Joys of a more spiritual kind – music and the beatific vision in particular – and bodily pleasures are seamlessly intermeshed; consumption is limitless and unending; self-sufficiency and creative agency are spectacularly amplified; and gratification is always immediate and all-encompassing. But, of course, not all Muslim eschatological thought conforms to this pattern. In Islamic religious history, thinkers inspired by Neoplatonic ideas – whether philosophers or mystics – preferred to define paradise in terms of a spiritual resurrection and a disembodied afterlife, and pious authors with a penchant for asceticism, though not completely rejecting the idea of a paradise of the senses, felt uncomfortable with the blatant materialism of traditional eschatology and tried to sideline it in their writings (see Lange 2016a). As explored in this chapter, this split in attitudes also runs through the texts about the market in paradise. While some Hadith compilers and commentators seem to welcome and celebrate the prospect of otherworldly shopping, sober-minded authors either only pay lip service to the market in paradise or choose to ignore it altogether.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the influential Saudi scholar Ibn Bāz was vociferously opposed to the effigies (*ṣuwar*) of women that were on display on the Medina market around the middle of the 1960s. Unfortunately, what he thought about the market in paradise cannot be known for sure, although it seems safe to say that the idea did not particularly impress him. In a lecture on *The Gardens of the Righteous* of al-Nawawī, available as an audio file on the internet (as well as on YouTube and Twitter), he briefly discusses the Anas tradition, confirming that the beauty (*ḥusn*) and the sweet smell (*ṭīb*) of the inhabitants of paradise increase (Ibn Bāz n.d.). But he does not dwell on the market motif, nor does he refer to the Abū Hurayra tradition or the ʿAlī tradition.

The images of houris available on the market in paradise and the *ṣuwar* in the Medina market, 'inflated to take on the shape of a large and ripe woman,' bear an uncanny resemblance, echoing each other with their siren song: 'We are the content ones, never displeased! Blessed are those that belong to us, and we belong to them!' Both, I argue, betoken a consumerist utopia. This is a utopia vigorously promoted by governments and corporations in the Gulf region and the wider Middle East today. In the mid-1960s, Ibn Bāz could not have foreseen the building boom on the Arabian Peninsula starting in the 1970s, nor could he have predicted the proliferation of shopping malls in the region, with their dazzling promises of boundless consumption (see Azaza 2006, pp. 31–38). In the early twenty-first century, shopping malls in Dubai promoted themselves using concepts related to traditional Muslim eschatology, deploying the three key themes of unmeasurable size (malls as big as fifty football fields), magical realism (skiing in the desert), and total availability of goods and services (Kanna 2005, p. 67).

In his celebrated 1984 novel *Cities of Salt*, Abdelrahman Munif decried the twentieth-century transformation of Arabian oases into cities 'of glass, iron and stone' for leading to the loss of a pristine past and thus sparking a profound alienation. The consumption-driven

ethos of places like Dubai, Qatar, or Riyadh, however, is more convincingly analyzed in terms of a 'culturally absorbed' and fully validated form of 'utopian thinking' (Kanna 2005, p. 60). As Anette Baldauf aptly puts it, 'Dubai's shopping spaces satisfy… the shopper's desire to escape… to an imaginary elsewhere' (2008, p. 227). In Ahmed Kanna's words, 'the giant complexes of Dubai suggest a […] definition of the human subject […] that ideally finds holistic fulfilment in the act of consumption' (2005, p. 71). In the shopping malls of the Gulf region, just like in the market in paradise, those happy enough to be allowed entry are encouraged to shop themselves into being.

Those intending to disrupt this late-capitalist, consumerist utopia run the danger of being ostracized. Ibn Bāz's critique of the mannequins on the Medina market and ʿUmar Sulaymān al-Ashqar's deportation from Saudi Arabia presaged things to come. Today, militant Islamists like the East African al-Shabaab deliberately target 'Western' shopping malls, thereby squarely placing themselves outside of the social status quo. By contrast, religiously inspired writers who seek to remain contributors to the societies they live in are forced to articulate anti-consumerist sentiments with a level of restraint, regardless of whether their aim is to criticize this-worldly or otherworldly consumerism. An example is Māhir Aḥmad al-Ṣūfī, a scholar based in the United Arab Emirates who produced a 10-volume *Encyclopedia of the Afterworld* (*Mawsūʿat al-ākhira*), a compilation of Hadiths arranged in chapters, each of which contains a brief introduction. In the chapter on the 'markets of paradise,' al-Ṣūfī relates the Anas and Abū Hurayra traditions, but a large part of the latter (the part about what happens in the market) is missing, with al-Ṣūfī conveniently noting that 'the Hadith here continues with the words and the meaning [found in al-Tirmidhī]' (1429/2008, vol. 10, p. 216). Al-Ṣūfī further chooses to omit the ʿAlī tradition altogether, even though the work of al-Tirmidhī, in which the ʿAlī tradition is recorded, is duly listed by al-Ṣūfī as one of the sources of his *Encyclopedia*. Also, in the introduction to the chapter, al-Ṣūfī states that the 'markets' in paradise are simply 'places' (*amākin*) where the inhabitants of paradise meet each other to reminisce about their lives on earth and to praise God (1429/2008, vol. 10, p. 215).

After his ban from Saudi Arabia, al-Ashqar spent the remainder of his life in Kuwait and Jordan, teaching Islamic law and publishing widely on a variety of topics to promote his brand of middle-of-the-road Salafism (Wagemakers 2020). Among his publications is an extensive compilation of eschatological Hadiths (Lange 2016b), in which he relates the Anas tradition, again to the exclusion not only of the ʿAlī tradition, but also of the Abū Hurayra tradition. Al-Ashqar's dislike of interpretation is tangible throughout his writings, and one might therefore expect him simply to accept the common meaning of the word *sūq* as 'market,' just like most classical authors but also most modern ones do (e.g., al-Albānī 2000, vol. 3, p. 269). However, al-Ashqar quotes al-Nawawī to the effect that the word *sūq* merely refers to a gathering of people, not an actual marketplace (1991, vol. 3, p. 241). The blessed in paradise, as al-Ashqar is keen to underline, enjoy each other's and God's company, but they do not care about what is on sale in the market. Whatever one may think of the kind of piety promoted by al-Ashqar, there is something quixotic and oddly passé about this stance. Al-Ashqar's voice is that of the prophet crying out, not in the desert, but in the shopping mall.

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