MISCELLANEAE

THE PROBLEM OF THE *BID'A* IN THE LIGHT OF AN ARABIC MANUSCRIPT OF THE 14th CENTURY.

Idris ibn Baidakin ibn ‘Abd-Allâh at-Turkumâni al-Ḥanafi presented in his book *Kitâb al-Luma‘ fi’ l-Hawâdith wa’l-Bida‘* [Berlin (Tübingen) Ms. Orient. Quart. 1681] the, in his opinion, crassest *Bid‘as* and *Hadâths* which were current in his lifetime in the 14th century. As is known to any Islam expert or Orientalist, the *Bid‘as* were convictions or habits which had spread in the course of time, although they could not be traced back directly to the Prophet Muhammad. The *Bid‘as*, or, synonymously, *Mubdâths* or *Hadâths*, were in opposition to the *Sunna* according to orthodox theology, and strictly speaking were thus illegal. At-Turkumâni was only able to deal with the most important transgressions against the *Sunna*, since he was convinced that there were so many that he could have written several volumes.

He categorically and without exception rejected all transgressions whereby his attitude differed basically from that of those legal experts who distinguished between praiseworthy and objectionable *bid‘as*. He did not actually condemn as heretics all who in this sense offended against the basic law; for him they were *Fasaga*, sinners, who did not fulfill the conditions for integrity. Sometimes he described them as *Kafara* or unfaithful, as their sins not occasionally bordered on heresy. He not only discusses the often disputed *bid‘a*, like the allegorical or mystical interpretations and in general the widely circulated biased exegeses of the holy Book of Islam, but also the *bid‘a* of the false veneration of the holy men and relic shrines, with the ornaments in the numerous copies of the Qur‘ân, with the washing before prayer, with the reading of the Qur‘ân, etc. In addition he does not refrain from attacking the State, as for example, when he draws attention to the fact that, according to the pure law, the civil service should not depend on Copts and Jews, as was in fact the case. He deals with certain legal offences against the *Sunna*, for example in connection with the law of inheritance (*al-Wâsîyya*) and certain trade practices which he rejected, and he also considers in this connection peculiarities of Islamic city life and the related *bid‘as*.

At-Turkumâni remained true to orthodoxy in every respect for, as we have said, he was convinced that every *bid‘a* was an error, a *dalâla*. This held not only for the Arabs of the peninsula, but also for the Arabian peoples of Syria and Egypt, about whom the book chiefly deals, and in addition for the countrymen of the author himself, the Turkmens and Turks, who had taken over Islam later than the Egyptians and Syrians. These Turkish peoples should also in his opinion, give up those habits and customs which were, according to the Qur‘ân and the prophetic traditions, objectionable, for only he proves his love of the Prophet, who precisely follows his teachings and does not offend against them.

At-Turkumâni wrote his book in 801 (1397) in Mekka, to gain inspiration from the holiness of the town. He admitted openly that his Arabic was not exemplary, and that he had sought out the scholars of Mekka and the Qâdi of the holy city, in order to hear their opinion of his attitude to the questions of *bid‘a*, as these questions touched all aspects of life, religious, political, social, as well as home and individual life. The main themes of the present manuscript, which as far as I know is the only
available manuscript of the book, and consists of 203 foliopages, are as follows:

1) Bid'as of the associations of Futuwwa and Mystics.
2) Bid'as regarding the Dhimmis
3) Bid'as of women and in home life and fashion.
4) Bid'as for reading and listening to the Qur'an and for praying in the Mosques.

Ad 1: With regard to the Futuwwa associations some famous Şufls spoke of the highest levels of courage and self-sacrifice, which in their opinion had been realised. However at-Turkumâni considered their attitude to be among the most reprehensible bid'ã of his time, as these institutions did not agree with canonical Islamic law, and even the admission of a young man, al-fatâ, into the Futuwwa association was objectionable, as he had to commit himself to opposing the decisions of the leading men of the Islamic state, when the association so decreed. Any opposition against an Islamic government is, however, against the law. As it was customary at the initiation for the head of the Futuwwa association to undress the novice in front of the other members, and then dress him in the characteristic clothes of the organization, the initiation ceremony was also not to be reconciled with the pure law because of its immorality. At-Turkumâni further described the taking of water and salt by the gathering as a bid'ã.

Worse than all these practices was for him the fact, that some writers wanted to trace back the founding of this Futuwwa organization and its rules to the Calif ‘Ali. They maintained that ‘Ali had been the most important fatâ and the real patron of the Futuwwa and that his sword Dhu’l-fiqâr had been the true sword. Thus the saying of the Futuwwa “No sword but Dhu’l-fiqâr and no fatâ but ‘Ali”, which was not binding for at-Turkumâni. In his opinion the Futuwwa was a lie and its followers were dupes, for this organization did not teach the true faith and did not show the right way. Their leader showed the youth how to fight with the knife, and how to free their friends from the prisons of the Emirs and Gouvernors. The claim of the Futuwâ leaders that the traditions of the Futuwwa had been founded by the Caliph an-Nâşir li-Din-Allâh (1180-1225), and since then been handed over from one leader to another, was not therefore a convincing proof for at-Turkumâni of their legality in the sense of the Sunna, since many caliphs were known who had not followed the Sunna. The faithful should not obey the caliphs when they thereby transgress the canonical law. For these reasons he demanded that the leading statesmen of the Mamlûk Empire should ban the Futuwwa organization. Such a ban would be a service which would be rewarded with entry into Paradise.

Where, in the whole history of Islamic religious culture the cities were not able to gain any special rights or privileges from the Gouvernor or Emir, a free development of such Futuwwa organization must have seemed particularly objectionable to an orthodox legal scholar like at-Turkumâni.

As well as these, at-Turkumâni attacked the many hunting associations. According to the Sunna hunting is canonically allowed only with bow and arrow, since firearms were unknown at the time of the prophet Muhammâd. Thus those hunters who used firearms transgressed, in his opinoin, the true law of Islam. They tortured birds and animals, and while hunting damaged fields which did not belong to them. The leaders of the hunting organizations were not elected according to principles of piety or religious zeal, but on the contrary criminals and unfaithful were often to be found