An Appendix of Texts from the Arabian Middle Ages Concerned with Female Homosexuality

Translated from Arabic by Samar Habib

"On the Mention of Grinding and Grindings." In al-Yemeni, Aĥmad Bin Moĥamad Bin Åli (d. 850). *Rashd al-Labeeb Ila Muåsharat al-Ĥabib*. n.c: Thala Lil Tibaåt Wal Nashr, 2002. Pp. 123-132.

Grinding is an old trait in women and they find pleasure in it which facilitates the exposure of their secret and their becoming famous for it. He [i.e. Prophet Muhamad] peace be upon him (p.b.u.h) said: "women grinding each other is fornication." The first woman to set grinding was the daughter of Hassan Yamani. She came by Nu'man Bin Al-Muthir and so he took her to his wife Hind. She fell madly in love with her. Hind was the best of the folks of her time, she was completely without excesses. The daughter of Hassan did not cease to deceive her and to extol grinding for her and to say: In the union of two women there is a pleasure that cannot be between the woman and the man. To safeguard herself from scandal and knowing that her appetite could be satisfied without accusation or fear of punishment, they had intercourse (*Ijtama'ata*). Hind found a pleasure that was even greater than the other had described and their amorous desire for each other increased—and it had never been so between women before this.

When the daughter of Hassan died, Hind sat at her grave all the time until people began to use her as an example for their sayings. Al-Farzdak said:

> I was devoted to you in a time that you bestowed kindly
> As Hind was devoted to Hassan Yamani's daughter.

Then after them came Rughum and Najda—they romanced each other and they became famous for their grinding, until Rughum's brother was taunted for his sister's behaviour. So he waited until he came upon them one day as they were having intercourse. Then he killed Najda and took his sister away with him. Rughum began to incite Najda's people to kill her brother and a war erupted between them. This serves as an indication of the greatness of the pleasure they find in grinding, as well as an indication of their preference for grinding over the pleasure with men.

There are two kinds of grinders:

Some of them love grinding but do not hate the penis. Their inclination to grinding and the trials of it occur due to one of four reasons: Perhaps due to the intensity of her sexual dissatisfaction, or the dispensation of an appetite that she cannot find satiation for—this causes her great [masculine] arousal and the rubbing of lips against lips, which brings her satisfaction. This woman can be rescued from doubt as to what is just and extracted from mood to truth by a skilled man who is rich in ways of intercourse and who can offer her various forms of fucking, until she finds one she prefers and which agrees with her appetite, and who then administers it to her. We have seen that when some hens are absent from the rooster's company for too long then she begins to behave like the rooster towards the other hens, and mounts them

and crows a cockcrow. However, when she comes by the rooster and hears his crow and learns from him the truth of the mount then she would cease to crow or to mount other hens.

I have seen a woman who became famous for grinding and [masculine] arousal then appeared in her speech, but then she married and left grinding and her attributes became softer.

As for ignorance of the beauty of marriage and overlooking its capacities, then this is also easily demonstrable and the woman is close to returning to what is just. It has been said that a grinder saw the erect penis of a man and so she said:
"There is a pestle like this in the world while I have been knocking at my door with the palm of my hand for twenty years?" Then she left grinding and desired men.

Some resort to this to obviate pregnancy because they hate children, and to avoid scandal. In this way such a woman takes up grinding to fulfil her needs. Sometimes a woman would be from her beginning dominated, commanded by a woman to whom she is a subordinate and whose orders she is unable to refuse. Alternatively what she has hated is then made attractive to her, so that when she tastes the pleasures of the act then she wishes to continue in this, and then likes to do this to another in order to give her the pleasure that she has found. The other woman is then as passive during this act as the beardless (*Amrad,* i.e. young man, boy), who when released from the grips of sodomy then is not concerned with anything more than becoming a sodomite.

The second kind:

This is a woman who is masculine (*Mutathakeera*) in appearance and this becomes apparent in her from an early age. She competes with men and resembles them and scorns (haughtily rejects) submitting to them. She rejects being fucked and undermines penises and competes with men over deflowering other women, and she equals the men in jealousy over and protection of women. Finally she fucks the *Amrad* when she becomes erect. They have said: When she is erect something comes out from below her stomach that looks like a cock's comb. However, this decription is not accurate: it is a thin bone which is found above the penis-entrance [i.e. vagina], which resembles the nose bone. She climbs up on the vagina of her passive subject and she rubs her with it. When she does this they both feel a pleasure greater than marriage—the pleasure is greater for the active one. When she rubs against the vagina of the woman to whom this is done, then it emerges quite significantly like baby-teeth, except that it is long not wide, and they both find a pleasure greater than that to be found in marriage. And if the man intended that particular place in the woman with his penis then it would appear for him, and he would see from her pleasure and her disintegration what I have here mentioned.

The beardless's (*Amrad's*) anus would be made to bleed when she fucks him. He would then be deluded into thinking that this is something that came out of her vagina—it is rather from the roughness of her hair and the intensity with which she feels herself against him. And the grinder does everything during grinding that the man does in marriage, such as embracing, holding and kissing—as well as grinding on each side and sitting between bent and open legs, which is called *Al-Koori*, and this allows her to access the behind. She only does this when fucking the *Amrad*.

If such a woman fucked and became pregnant, then she does not do this because she craves to fuck men, but she does because a particular man suits her own purposes, and so she desires to have sex with him and no other man.

A grinder wrote to a woman who is afraid of pregnancy (*Mutqeeya*) saying:

> This is my parchment; I give to you, by my life
> So look at what I have written in it and consider it
> I see nothing ill about you
> You can reveal what I say or veil it…
> For if you see reason in what I say then accept it
> And if not then leave it be.

And come to me consciously and contemplatively so that I can show you a concubine who is no less beautiful than you are, nor inadequate in perfection, whose hair is black as coal and whose bosom is soft and whose breast is firm and whose hips are even more so, and who possesses an elegant waist and who is as hot as a stout bull, eloquent, elegant, cute, seductive, serious and not clumsy. She will show you peaks and how to grind. So take the initiative and truly taste these pleasures and learn that I have spoken honestly about grinding:

> Miserable slit incised by the penis
> Where the pleasure passes and reproach and shame remain

And in any case if the matter was accepted, then this is easier than the other method. This is minimal and that is wasteful. This is concealed and that is forbidden. And I have advised you and trust that you should not be exposed.

The *Mutqeeya* replied:

> The happy patch came to me
> And by your life I have accepted it
> And understood what you have written and constructed
> And set forth between prose and narrative
> So listen—I have not ignored your advice
> And learn—dearest to my heart—
> That I have not ignored what you said about
> Behaving according to the contract [i.e.marriage]

So I was confused, dear sister—God bless you and raise you in his firmament and protect you—you have denied and not thought, you have attributed and not discerned and offended in what you instigated, and called what I am in shameful and demeaning, and censure and dishonour. You have counted your inclinations reasonable and easy and insignificant and subject for boasting, and you set it forth in proverbs and sayings, and argued for evidence and revealing destination. And then you slipped and called for a matter that I do not deny, like how you deny what I prefer. I will respond to what you have said so that you can learn that what has legitimised handshaking for you has made marriage pleasant for us—and what has made stealthiness agreeable to you has made embracing agreeable to us. The inkwell

is of no use without pens and the filly can only be controlled with hard reins, and palms are the best trees and ripe dates are the prettiest fruit… and the pen is the translator of hearts, and without an axis the wheat-mill wheel cannot turn, and emancipation cannot be got without skewers, and the sail cannot be erected without a pole, and the brush is an instrument used for applying mascara to the eyes, and the oven cannot be used without burning, and further: this slit is for that pestle and this baldhead is for that hairless, and this pursuer is for that watchtower and this prostrate flat surface is for that erect scaffold. And I say:

> Tell her, she who recommends grinding
> How desolate is the slit against slit
> There was comfort[1] for her in the penis
> But she has deviated from the truth

I frankly speak of your excuse and I am not indignant with you because you tried to shame what you don't know and you have proscribed what you have not tried. No one who hasn't tasted it, knows the worth of honey, and whomsoever has yet to smell musk does not know its glory. And if what you have proscribed was not amongst the greatest pleasures among girls, then a woman would never return to that hardness after labour or to that habit after giving birth. As for the man, he works hard for what he possesses on his wedding day. Consider what happens to those orphan (male) lovers who come forward, because he (the groom) has invited them without thinking—some who lost their family, some who killed themselves out of grief and some who died from heartbreak and pining… do you see them love passionately so that they can be miserly or seclude themselves to kill?

Impossible! They have tasted so they have prohibited and veiled and thus burned and tasted and thus yearned and looked and thus broken their fast[2] and romanced and then burned. And so they ran between madness and infatuation, between slenderness and feebleness, and whinging and whining, and increased their insistence for the sake of that need, and lengthened the struggle to feel the pleasure in pleasure, until strangely enough the people of fire boast proudly of firewood, and you offer me a concubine and invite me to her and I teach you what virtue I have over her, and these things can't be known by description but by discovery. So if you want to discover this with a penis between your lips then I have an *Amrad* for you—of good constitution and pleasant countenance, with charming eyelids and of many talents, who is appetising to the mind and who has temples like those of a bride and his cheek is as soft as yours and his body is as light as yours.

> He is of excellent beauty and melodious of voice
> Laudable for his aim, extremely polite
> With a sharp face and a pure mouth
> And a pleasing countenance and a graceful body
> Is the generous type and craves intercourse
> Quite attentive to what you want of him
> Pleasing to fuck, of little dispute and good humour
> Of elegant constitution and rich in speech

[1] i.e. she can relax and let the man "do the work" (raha).
[2] *Fataroo*: If a man gets an erection (simply by looking) during the month of Ramadan, during daylight, then it is said that he has broken his fast.

Like the full moon witty and sensual
Strong bold compassionate jealous
But in possession of a scorching penis
He fucks without trouble
And follows that with five more turns immediately
So welcome to this and grinding obliteration to that
Do not approach grinding which is bad for a creature
And come to me without deviating
And let me arrange a meeting between you.

Sister we have not assaulted you but offered you as you offered us and approached you as you approached us, so if you want this it is between your hands and if you prefer that then good day to you.

A *Mutqeeya* gave a citrus fruit as a present to a grinder, which has inside it the appearance of the vagina, naturally, and she wrote these verses:

When I perused this I said that the citrus tree
Was more entitled to it than humankind
A stupendous vagina, as though seared by fire
That comes between the legs of a concubine
More splendid than the moon—
Yellow, sedating, soft
Born of seaweed and trees.

The grinder replied:

I have been given a citrus fruit that emits a fragrance
That the ambergris emits
And this increases its splendour and adorns it for me
Something of hers free from the male incursion
If something else resembled it better
Then God would not have put it like a sculpture on the trees.

[lacuna]

A *Mutqeeya* sketched a male slave lifting the legs of a woman he was fucking and sent it to a grinder with the following comment:

This, by your life, is my condition
I have naught to do with grinding
This shoots the heart in an instant, like arrows,
having a brow like darkness and a countenance like the moon
And a figure like a reed that glows with evenness

For that is my intimacy and enticement
For which I would lay down my life and fortune.
Since this might burden you,
My deed does not enrich me.

So the grinder sketched her a picture of a concubine grinding her and sent it to the *Mutqeeya* and she wrote alongside it:

> But my vagina succeeds and glimmers between a cheek and a freckle
> Like a dot of musk swinging above the crescent
> Revealing a pure mouth, smiling like pearls
> In which there is a savoury saliva
> Instantly sweet to the taste
> And a fine neck as beautiful as the gazelle's
>
> From what I have seen of her beauty—
> And O how much have I seen!—
> I say glory to whoever moulded beauty from clay
> To create a perfect creature made of beauty
> I came to sip from her and her extreme thirst is at a well
>
> If that is prohibited (*Ĥaram*) then this is not lawful (*Ĥalal*).

And Abu Nuwas has said:

> There is no meaning to grinding that I know of,
> Because it is fats rubbed by fats
> There is nothing in naked friction
> Until the baldhead enters.

He also said:

> God has shamed the grindings of saffron stigmas
> They have incited a war without weapons
> except the clanging of shield against shield

And of what I have said on this:

> They were confused by her grinding and then said:
> What pleasure is there in having straits within straits?
> I said but her miserable vagina is sick,
> For it is being given the counterfeit of marriage.

Al Jaheth (c. 860) quotes Muthana Bin Zuhair. Cited in Saåeedi, Samir. *Asil al-Aeela al-Arabiya Wa Anwa al Jawaz al-Qadeema 'ind al-Arab*. Beirut: Dar al Multaqa, 2000. Pp.157-158.

Muthana Bin Zuhair said:

I have never seen anything in man and woman that I haven't seen in the male and female pigeon.

I have seen a pigeon who did not want anyone besides her male mate in the same way that a woman wants no one besides her husband and master. And I have seen a pigeon

who does not forbid any male, as I have seen a woman who does not deter the touching hand. I have seen female pigeons who do not show their depravity until after much rejection and a great deal of insistence. And I have seen it show depravity to the first male who chooses her and I have seen women of that sort too.

I have seen a pigeon who has a mate (husband) while she allows another male access—I have seen this in women too. I have see one flirt with a male other than her mate, whilst her mate was watching, and I have seen one who won't do this unless her husband flies or flaps his wings.

I have seen a female pigeon who mounts male pigeons and one who mounts another female one. I have seen pigeons who mount nothing besides other female pigeons and I have seen one who mounts female ones but does not allow them to mount her. I have seen a male who mounts one who then mounts him in return. I have seen a female pigeon who feigns masculinity (maleness) and who does not allow another to mount her. I have seen all of these kinds in grinders—feminine and masculine ones—and also amongst men who are sodomites.[3]

Among men there are those who do not want women and amongst women those who do not want men…By God I have seen a male pigeon who would mount whatever he finds in his way without ever marrying. I have seen a female pigeon who gave access to any one wanting her, male or female….

From *Al-Aghani* Al-Asfahani, Abu Faraj (c. 972). Hypertext available from http://www.alwaraq.net P1352 & P1905.

Abu Aisha used to fancy a woman (who worked as a professional mourner) of beauty and goodness, who was called Sada—Abi Fadel also fancied her, and she was their superior. Then Abu Aatiha accused her of loving women and he said on that occasion:

> Hey you dignitaries of grinding in the west and east
> Wake up for fucking is more satisfying than grinding
> Wake up because bread is craved with food
> And it cannot be softened in the throat by bread
> I see you trying to patch holes with holes
> And what kind of wit would try to patch a hole with another one?
> And is the hammer of any use without its handle
> If it is needed one day for knocking?

[The story is retold with minor variation on page 1717 of the hypertext.]

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Al-Maámoon was sitting with a cup in his hand when Bathal[4] began to sing the song:

[3] Original word *Lutiyeen*, referring to the people of Lot.
[4] Bathal was a skilled musician and singer who was renowned for her talent in the court of Al-Maámoon at the time.

I see nothing more delectable than the promise

But she sang it:

I see nothing more delectable than grinding.

Al-Maámoon placed his cup down and turned to her and said: Of course there is, Bathal: fucking is better than grinding. So she became embarrassed and feared his wrath but he picked up his cup again and said: Finish the song and add:

I come to her when the slanderer is unaware
With a visit to a house empty of visitors except me
With a cry during the meeting and then a pause
And all these things are more delectable to me than dwelling [there].

From *Al-Muhalla* by Ibn Hazm Al-Andalusi (d. 1064). Hypertext available from http://www.alwaraq.net P. 2232.

Mohamad's father, God rest his soul, said: "People disagreed over grinding. One denomination said that 'you whip each one of them with one hundred lashes.' As Ibn Shihab has said: 'I have noticed that our learned men have said that a woman who has sex with another woman through the inner thigh and the like, should be whipped one hundred lashes—the doer and the done to.'

"Some denominations licensed it—as Ibn Jareeh has told me about Al-Hassan Bassri who did not see the woman inserting anything as wretched—simply that she was seeking refuge from scandal (*Satr*), and this way she can do it without committing fornication.

"Others have said that it is forbidden, without exception. Mohamad's father, God bless his soul, has said: 'So when they disagreed—as we have already mentioned—we were obliged to look into this. So we looked into what Zahri has said and we found no legitimacy in it. Zahri said: 'As the people of Lot made the act (of sodomy) at the upper limit of fornication, then by the same token this [grinding] is at the lower limit of fornication. So it is the least act of fornication.'

"The father of Mohamad said, God rest his soul: 'And this measure is an obligation to whoever made the act of Lot's people punishable by stoning, because [as they say] it is greater than fornication, then they have no way out of this but to make grinding also greater than fornication, so they should make the act also punishable by stoning, as they must do with the act of Lot's people, since both matters are deviancies in the genitals which cannot be permitted at all.'

"But people are not good at judgement and do not know how to follow guidance and do not know how to reject hearsay and to adhere to their evidence-based analysis, and they do not rely on texts, and they have said here: 'that Al-Zahri knew the original

followers [of the prophet, p.b.u.h], and that he was relating this information from them, but we don't know where he begot his prohibition.' So they apply what he has said if it agrees with their tradition.

"Mohamad's father, God rest his soul, said: 'As for us, the measure [of equating fornication with homosexual acts] is false. Someone's opinion should not be followed without the messenger of God (p.b.u.h), and grinding and the "inner thigh activity" are not fornication. If they are not fornication then they are not to be treated as such. No one has a right to swear by their opinion—setting the limits of this however he likes. This matter goes back to the limits set by Almighty God who has set laws in religion for what he does not permit, and he has said: 'Whomsoever transgresses the limits set by God is being unfair to himself.'

"And whomsoever supports [Zahri's] poor excuse, has gone too far in error and has made tradition triumphant. The father of Mohammad, God rest his soul, has said: 'and if something like Zahri's saying did not come to be said in the Quran, or set in a correct law, then preaching the limits is prohibited, because there are no limits set originally.'

"They have mentioned that the prophet (p.b.u.h) said: 'grinding is fornication between women.' But this is not correct because it comes as a fragment—and it is weak—and it is related by Wathala and Makhool who are not connected [to the original company of the prophet]. But if this was true, it still does not contain instruction on judging acts according to limits, because he (p.b.u.h) has shown in *hadith Aslamy* what the demarcations of fornication are—and that is a man coming to a woman unlawfully, in a manner that is permitted to his parents but not him. And he told us (p.b.u.h) that members fornicate and the genitals make this either true or false, so there is no fornication between a man and a woman except through the penis being inside the vagina. And this saying should deter those who claim that the act of Lot's people is at the upper limit of fornication. They do not have an authentic text to support this and if they found some such text then they would tyrannize and oppress.

"So this claim is disproved by one sentence.

"Then we looked into what Hassan said about permitting this and we found fault, because God Almighty says: 'Those who expose their genitals to anyone besides their spouses are not keeping their faith and are transgressing.' And this is true given the guidance in the Koran and the *Ijma'a* that a woman is prohibited from being seen by her *Mahram.*[5] God Almighty, however, unveiled [the head only of] the wives of Mohamad before their slaves and their close female relations.

"It is true, however, that the slave can also be entrusted as a *Mahram* by his master; therefore, if the woman displayed her genitals to anyone besides her husband then she is not guarding it and she has disobeyed God Almighty by doing this. It has also been truthfully said that her skin is not permitted to anyone besides her husband, so if she

[5] A woman's *Mahram* is a male relation such as her father, uncle, brother, cousin and also husband. In this instance, the woman is forbidden to make her skin (except face and hands) visible to these men, with the exception of the husband. In some Islamic cultures, past and present, women are not permitted to travel on their own or without the company of a *Mahram*.

displays her skin to a woman, or a man who is not her husband, then she has acted unlawfully.

"We have also related that… the messenger (p.b.u.h.) has said: 'A man does not look at another man's genitals and the woman does not look at another woman's, and the man does not come to (*yafud*) another man in one blanket, and the woman does not come to another woman in one blanket. Abd Allah Bin Massud said: 'The messenger of God (p.b.u.h) put an end to a woman embracing[6] another woman under one blanket—in case she describes her to her own husband thus making him virtually able to see her.'

"Ibn Abbas has said: 'The messenger of God (p.b.u.h.) has damned men who try to resemble women and women who try to resemble men.'

"The father of Mohamad has said: 'These texts are very intent on forbidding sexual contact (*Mubashara*) between men and women among themselves, and whoever engages in such activity is disobeying God Almighty, and if this sexual contact was made with the genitals then this is even more unlawful and a double insubordination. If the woman inserts anything in her vagina that she is not permitted to insert, such as her husband's genitals or whatever she needs during menstruation, then she is not guarding it, and if she does not guard it then she is increasingly insubordinate. Therefore Hassan's saying is erroneous."

"The reason for some women's preference for grinding." In al-Samaw'uli, Abu Nasr bin Yaĥya bin Åbbas al-Maghribi (d. 1180). *Kitab Nuzhat al-Asĥab fi Muåsharat al-Aĥbab*. Chapters 6-8. P13-17. Edited and compiled from original manuscripts by Taher Ĥaddad. PhD. Diss., Friedrich Aleksander University, n.d. Pp. 3-29.[7]

Some women prefer grinding because they are slow at cumming, due to the coldness of their womb or the coldness or scarcity of their fluid. For if they had intercourse they would be beaten to cumming and thus they rise without having achieved their need. Whenever the man separates from one such woman and where the flame of her sexual appetite is ablaze then she would go so far as to bring down a horse on her, if she could. That is, if nothing stops her and women who are slow at cumming have little to stop them. Alternatively she would resort to a female lover whom she choses or a eunuch who will be at her disposal. Should a woman with this trait come by a man who is slow at cumming then he would distract her from grinding and turn her away from it.

Some women develop a preference for grinding as a result of the shortness of their wombs or a result of the great length of their (male) partner's device. This causes such women pain during intercourse and does not rouse their appetites, thus, nothing suits them except men with small devices.

[6] *Mubashara*: more closely resembles the concept of foreplay than embracing, and may involve nudity.
[7] Taher Haddad's compilation of the Arabic text relies on Gotha manuscript # 2045 and Berlin # 6381.

If a woman who is quick at cumming comes across a man who is slow at doing so then, no sooner does he enter her, does she cum. If her fluid reaches his penis then this cools it and slows his cumming even more—if he continues on inside her then she might cum a second time. Should her mood not be so inclined, then she would (after the second cumming) have no desire to do anything except lie motionless and ease the matter for her womb. At such time the man would be at the peak of his going to and fro and at the most extreme of his carefulness as he nears cumming—so she sighs and becomes bored and restless and thus her desire for men weakens. As a result she begins to grind. If she comes across a man who is quick at cumming then he would be suitable for her.

Some women have deficiencies or illnesses in their wombs and as a result intercourse causes them pain. These women compensate by grinding and become satisfied with it.

There are some women whose problem lies in wanting to kiss a mouth that is not roughened by a beard and wanting to press their cheeks against a soft cheek. If one such woman managed to find a young unbearded man (*amrad*) then she would attain her satisfaction. Alternatively she would compensate with a girl[8] grinder where she can be choosy about her beauty. This is better for her [to be able to choose whom she likes] than to be warranted to the thick blackness [i.e. beard] that she cannot bear. So what think you of this low-life gathering at the place of such a morally venomous snake?

It has been said that A'anan Natafi's concubine used to fancy a young son of one of the merchants. She would try to get his attention but he would not acknowledge her and she would write to him but he would not reply—so she forgot him. After some time she came by him accidentally. He had grown a beard and he was pleased to see her and tried to speak to her. She ignored him and went to her house and wrote to him:

> O how you were desired for the softness of your face—
> The temperance of your youth… and you were granted purity
> And now time has veiled you with a beard
> Which, for my sake, is best plucked.
> You were a face that came and went
> And now, however you turn your face, it is a backside.

And for some of them who share this opinion:

> You are a full moon that has been aggrieved by the eclipse
> From whose darkness there is no escape.

And for some:

> O how you came to be desired for the softness of your face
> The temperance of youth on your hairless visage
> Now a beard has appeared on your cheek and has

[8] *Fatat*—an adolescent, not a child and not quite a woman.

Taken your beauty and given you a donkey's reins
Like the delectable juice freshly fermented which becomes sour vinegar

There are some of them who exceed others in intelligence and deception and in their nature there is much that resembles men. So much so that one of them might resemble men in her movements and her speech and her voice. Such a woman is a lover[9] because she is the active partner and so she needs someone she can be on top of and not be ashamed to seduce every time her appetite is roused. It does not suit her to have intercourse at the time when her appetite is dormant. So this, together with the difficulty in cumming under the pleasures and command of the man, leads her to grinding. The greatest number of those who possess these traits are among the witty women, and the writers and the Quranic readers[10] and the scholars. Some of them are drawn to grinding due to the intensity of restriction imposed on them, where they are unable to be alone safely and privately except with other women.

And some women whose womb is dominated by coldness, find pleasure in the heated friction and there is no pleasure like it in intercourse, because the friction of the two bodies causes high temperatures. The act then heats up the fluid channels which open up and draw the fluid out.

On grinding:

Hey you grinders of east and west
Wake up for fucking is better than grinding
Wake up because bread is craved with food
And it cannot be softened in the throat by bread
I see you trying to patch holes with holes
And what kind of wit would try to patch a hole with another?

From *Nihayat Al-Arb Fi Funoon al-Adab* by Al-Nuwayri (c. 1241). Hypertext available at http://www.alwaraq.net Pp. 1323.

Kassi said that Kaáb said: The people of Rus were many and they built a city forty miles long, and they named it Rassan, which was also the name of their king. They lived a long time in their country worshipping God Almighty, the way he ought to be worshipped, and then they deviated from this and worshipped statues, and they began to practice sodomizing women and swapping them. Every man would send his woman to another. This became unbearable for the women, and so the devil came to them as a woman and taught them grinding and so they did it. And they are the first people to sodomize women and whose women grinded each other. These uglinesses spread amongst them.

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[9] As opposed to being a beloved.
[10] *Mukaree'at*: women who read the Quran by singing it.

"On the Literature of Grinders and their Grinding." In Tifashi, Ahmad Ibn Yusuf. *Nuzhat Al-Albab Fima La Yujad Fi Kitab* (c.1250). Reproduced in a modern edition by Jamal Juma'a, ed. London: Riaad Al-Rayyes, 1992. Pp. 235-247.

Doctors noted that the origin of this illness was within women's physical constitution, and then there was disagreement over the reason for this. Some of them noted that the nature of the womb was inverted and that the woman's womb was congenitally the same as the male member, no difference between them except that the male member is evident from the outside and is narrow, while the woman's womb, which is inverted within, is broad. They noted that if the male member became erect inside the woman's womb he blocked it from all sides lengthwise and width-wise. And for this reason the woman and man find the touching and union of the two members pleasurable.

They said: Just as the male's member varies in length and shortness, so it is with the woman's womb. So if the dimensions of the woman's womb were suited to that of the penis, then she would like him, and if it was not suited to her then she would hate him.

For example: Should the length of her womb be short and the man's member long, then she would be harmed by it and hate men and like grinders. Or should he possess a short penis and where her womb is long, then she could not be satisfied except by those with a very long device.

Wherever [female homosexual] grinding[11] activity is caused by a shortness in the womb, then hatred of men is continuous for its owner, for whom this ailment is a constant companion.

***

And it has been said that Son of Massoyeh said:

"I read in the old books that grinding is created when the breast feeder eats celery and watercress and sweet clover,[12] if she consumes too much of these things and then breastfeeds, she then transfers the adverse effects of this to the labia of the infant. For then itchiness is created and this illness is woman's harlotry because, in the man, this is an itchiness that appears in the anus.

Or perhaps Lesbianism was a kind of attachment to a habit of using concubines, from an early age for this, where they mature on it and they continue to crave it. In the same way as licentiousness, as we will reveal later, whenever grinding is self-

[11]The term *sahq*, which is best translated as "grinding" refers specifically to female-to-female eroticism primarily focused on the clitoris, which, it is clear from the text, was neither properly investigated in the medical discourse of the time nor properly discovered. Later we learn, from Tifashi himself, the specific mode of clitoral stimulation undertaken by the grinders. The text suggests that there were no other modes for clitoral stimulation or same-sex sexual practices, which is perhaps more of an indication of the limited resources available to Tifashi than the cultural truth the text aims to reflect.
[12] Melilotus Indicus.

generated[13] then it is easily soluble, easily transferable, but when it is due to physical constitution, then it is difficult to recover from and is far from accepting treatment, as we have noted.

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Some wise men have said:

"Grinding is a natural appetite that occurs between the labia, that is concave like an inverted boil out of which vapours are generated. These increase and consequently heat is generated as well as itchiness in the hair floccules of the labia. This does not go away or cool except with the grinding and the going (or coming) down on her from another woman. And if this happens then the itchiness will cool and be extinguished, because the woman's water (fluid), that comes from grinding is cold, whereas the one that comes from the man is hot, and for this reason she does not benefit except from the woman's water (fluid) which can only be extracted by grinding.[14]

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And I know that this matter is known among its masters as wit[15] and by this name they are called, meaning, they call themselves: The witty ones. So if they said that so and so is "witty" then it becomes known amongst them that she is a grinder. And they romance each other like men, but more intensely: one of them will spend money on the other in the same way that a man does on his lover, but much more, until the spending is exaggerated to hundreds and thousands.

I witnessed one woman of them in Morocco. She had a great deal of money and an extensive estate, so she spent a great deal of jewellery-money on her lover. So when she ran out of this and people began to reproach and blame her exceedingly, she conceded to her lover the entire estate, which came to about five thousand dinars.

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Moreover they use a lot of fragrance/perfume beyond what is usual, and the cleanness of their clothes is more than is characteristic, and as for furniture, food and devices,[16] of these they have better and more beautiful things than capability can attain or place and time contain.

***

[13] i.e. adopted, chosen.
[14] Fedwa Malti Douglas translates grinding as tribadism, which is a particularly accurate description here. See Fedwa Malti Douglas, "Tribadism/Lesbianism and the Sexualised Body in Medieval Arabo-Islamic Narrative" in Francesca Canadé Sautman and Pamela Sheingorn, eds., *Same Sex Love and Desire Among Women in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 123-141.
Note that the first time Tifashi refers to wise men, they appear to be speaking or analysing in favour of homosexual grinders. Later when he reveals to us his own experience and encounters in the matter, we find him offering such superlative descriptions of the women's cleanliness and highly stylised tastes.
[15] The original word used is *Tharaf.*
[16] This is the same word—device—that appears as a euphemistic term for the penis in the beginning of the chapter.

And about their condition:

That the lover be on top and the loved one below except if the lover is thin and the loved one robust. In such a case the thin one is placed below and the robust one on top, so that the heaviness of her waist is nearer to the friction/grinding, as it (the heavy waist) is better suited to fulfilling that purpose.

***

A description of what they do:

That the lower one sleeps on her back and extends one thigh and leg and embraces the other revealing her vulva, leaning to one side. And then comes the top one and hugs the elevated thigh and places one of her lips on the lips of the lower one and grinds (rubs) to and fro at the length of the body, up and down and for this reason they liken it to the grinding of saffron because similarly, saffron is *difficult to grind*.

And if she had begun by placing her right lip then she would rub it for an hour and then transfer the rubbing to the left one, until the couple[17] satisfy their carnality. As for placing both lips atop the other lips, this is not useful for them nor is it pleasurable and the reason for this is because the place of pleasure remains empty of an occupant, and perhaps they facilitate their activity by applying ben-oil ointment.

Moreover, the most practised of their conditions and the most variant, which are also necessary and indispensable, are the rules of "Cuteness" and the expertise in moaning and groaning and the mastering of the trade of sweet talk that arouses the appetite at the time. They even discuss this and teach it and expend desirables on women who are wise in it, so that they can teach it to the ones who are not good at it.

***

It has been said of the urban[18] Huba, who was the most renowned of grinders, that she said to her daughter: "you have to groan well during the banging (to and fro) and know that I let out a scream in the desert once that so startled Othman bin Affan's camels, God bless him, they haven't managed to re-collect them to this day."

***

One of the scholars in Damascus engaged me in conversation and said: "one of the highest-ranking Egyptian judges told me:

'"I went out one night to the cemetery, and this cemetery was for the use of the Egyptian householders where they met their female friends. It is a place where women gather every week, so they are not forbidden to meet there and spend the night or use it as a dwelling. Within the cemetery they have built residences, on which a considerable sum of money has been spent," he said. "So I decided that I would leave

[17] The word originally used in one of the manuscripts is *jawzatan* which can also mean, or at least can have the connotations of, "two wives." The editor of the modern Arabic edition, Jamal Juma'a informs us that the word was then replaced by "the two women" (238).
[18] i.e. from the city.

my home with the intention of staying there with my family, supplying myself with whatever I needed for sleep as well as food and hay for the mule and so on. I closed the door to my house and darkness progressed with its lamp and I traversed on my own, riding the mule, until the hour became late and I arrived at the cemetery after sunset and at the onset of darkness. And as I was walking amongst the graves, in a remote place in one of the corners of the cemetery, I heard, in one of the graves, a moaning and groaning and a kind of panting that strips the mind and steals the heart. I had never heard anything like it and I didn't think anyone did it as such: with measured movements and natural rhythms and sayings of internal rhyme that cause one to forget the melody of strings and render the mistresses of the flute invisible.

'And so I steered my mule to the wall of the tomb and then I climbed up and looked in, to find two women. The one on the bottom was a Turkish concubine who was more beautiful than the full moon and more balanced than the branch. She was white, soft and busty, and on top of her there was a short woman, robust, nice looking, clean clothes, except she didn't look like the one below her, as she grinded her and treated her to this talk. Meanwhile, the woman below replied a little inadequately as though she was learning from her.[19]

'And so when I saw this I could not hold myself together and I yelled out at them and said: "Rise, God damn you!" And I rode towards the tomb with the intention of locking them in, and then calling on passers-by to discipline them. By the time I was at the door, the one who was on top had got up, and the bottom one had begun to get up, and so she said to her: "Stay where you are." And so she remained lying on her back and then uncovered her belly and navel and her chest, by removing a blue robe that was on her, and there appeared a chest like marble, and breasts like pomegranates, and a belly like a mound of snow, in which the naval appeared as a fat vial that has crystallized into a hot white curd, tinged with redness. I had never seen anything with its greatness or pureness. And then she said to me:

'"Damn you, you beast, you oppressor, have you ever seen anything like this?" So I said to her: "By God no." She said to me: "Here is before you a rare feast that God has prepared for you, so go on your way."

'He said: When I saw and heard this I was stripped of reason and morality and I could not control myself, so I said to her: "Damn you, I have this mule." She said: "So I'll hold it for you."

'He said: I alighted, and as God is my witness, I was going against my nature in doing this, and then I gave her the reins and the whip and I entered the tomb. I undid the flag's knot[20] and placed it on my leg and then I loosened my pants and threw the end of my pallium over my shoulder, and I inserted my hand and removed my tail.[21] I drew near the concubine and I bent over her and when I brought the head of my penis to the lips and found their softness and warmth, I did not feel anything other than the hooves of my mule departing and the woman yelling: "I've let go of the mule."

[19] Alternatively this could be translated as "And the one below was making only very few replies, as though she was a student of hers."
[20] Presumably here, the judge is wearing a banner or flag that would distinguish his social standing. It may have been tied to each of his shins with cords, or across his torso.
[21] Original word *Thuwuul* which is plural for tail or appendix.

‘So I got up, devoid of reason and sensibility, and I went outside, and there was the mule departing among the graves in the gathering darkness. Since I lost sight of him, I did not know where he went, but I ran after him in that condition: member erect, pants undone, the flags on the top of my feet, my pallium tangled up—getting up one minute and falling again at another.

‘And the mule continued in his early departure and I continued to run after him, and moreover the damned woman, when she had let him go, struck him on his waist with the whip, so the mule began to move towards anyone who approached him and to kick at them with his heels. I ran after him in a condition which if it had only been a sketch on paper would have caused the melancholic much laughter and stopped those in a hurry, so how much funnier would it have been to see in reality!

‘And it so happened that the mule had passed his feeding time, and he was better at finding his way to the city than the sand grouse, and he continued to run and I to run after him, unable to catch him, and so he would disappear in the darkness or someone would find him and ride him and then I could see nothing more than dust. And I came across some people and they saw me in that condition and they spoke to me, but I was out of my mind because of what happened to me as a result of that whoreson woman’s amusement—because when I ran after that mule I heard their laughter behind me and she yelling out to me: “Come back, judge! Come on, where are you going?” And the others laughed in my face as I was running.

‘The mule did not stop until he put his head through the house door, and there I was met by many people, in that same scene, some who knew me, and some who didn’t.’”

***

One of the wise men said to one of the brazen-faced, when a mention of tribadism was made: “By God I crave to know how women fuck/grind each other.” He said: “If you like that, then go inside your house bit by bit [a little bit at a time].”

***

In Praise of Grinding and its Admonition

They said:

Women go to it for fear of pregnancy and ugliness.

***

I conversed with Ismael bin Mohammed, who said: “Koraisha, the pimp, conversed with me. She said:

‘”I said to a concubine once: so and so loves you. She said, ‘I love him too,’ so I said: ‘Why don’t you visit him?’ ‘For fear of us becoming three.’”

***

And it was said to a man: "your woman grinds." He said: "If she excuses me of what causes weaning in the belly, then let her do whatever she likes."[22]

And it was said to Mazeed: "Your wife grinds." He said, "Yes, I ordered her to do so" and so it was said "Why?" He said: "because it is softer on her lips, and purer to the opening of her labia, and more proper, should the penis be presented to her that she should know its grace."

***

Warda, the grinder, said:

"We accompany the grinders; any one of us can be joined with one who is white, soft, flirtatious, succulent, tender-skinned as though she is a bamboo stalk, with a mouth like daisies, and ringlets like dark beads, and a cheek like anemone or the apples of Lebanon, and a breast like pomegranates, and a stomach with four folds, and a vagina that conceals fire, with two lips that are coarser than the Israelite's cow, and a hunch like the hump of Thamood's camel, and a behind as though it is the fat-tail of Ishmael's sheep, in the colour of ivory, and with the softness of a silken garment, shaved and perfumed, anointed with musk and saffron as though it is king Anushurwan in the midst of the palace, where temples are decorated with small ringlets, and throats are ornamented with pearls and hyacinth and Yemeni slips and Egyptian headscarfs.

"So we isolate ourselves with them with impassioned reproaches and a benevolent tone, and charming eyelids that strip the heart of its blackness. So that if our chests are superimposed upon each other, and throats embrace throats and lips are fitted to lips, and each of them quivers against the other, then the breathing heightens and the senses are preoccupied and fever is raised from the head, and then there would be no measure of this left, as you look for erotic moves and illusory consciences and instinctual drives and amorous civility, between sucking and pinching, and going to and fro, and inhalation and sighing and moaning and murmuring and groaning, that should the people of Malta hear, they would call out: it's the bugle![23] With raising and placing and winking and suggesting, and embracing and smelling and consistency and kisses, and pleasure taken in the work, and the turning of sides without worry....

All this with a royal literature and fragrant moaning, so that if unloading came and the decorations decreased, you smell like the breeze of flowers in March and the fragrances of wine in a bottle of alcohol, and you look to the shaking of the ben-oil tree branch in the rain. For if the philosophers looked at what we are in, it would confuse them, while the masters of romance and delights would have been caused to fly.

***

Regulations/Laws in this

Some of them have said:

[22] A peculiar way of saying that he does not wish to have sex with her.
[23] Original word n*afeer*, which is a "musical" instrument that is used in summoning the people of a village or an army regiment.

One of the strangest things in her time
And God is neither forgetful nor a breaker of promises
That when two stay overnight together
That a third would come between them.

Another:

I drank wine for love of romance/courtship
And I inclined to grinding for fear of pregnancy
So I had sex in remoteness, with my lover
And I exceeded the men in the proficiency of the work
If my grinding was convincing then it made me rich and caused me to reject the man

Another:

How much have we grinded sister, ninety pilgrimages
More delightful and invisible than the entries of the penis head,[24] and than
A pregnancy that pleases the enemy and worse than that, the reproaches
Of the censurers
And we are not limited in grinding,
Like in fornication, even though it is more
Delicious to the inclined.

***

Another:

I was convinced by my lover and rejected a penis
Whose disadvantages in that fate, shame us.

If it is said that I became pregnant, then annihilation of
Illegitimate children narrows my chest
So what excuse for the parents would I give?
For fornication has broken
The ropes of my back.

Denouncement of Grinding

Hashima spoke. She said:

"A Woman wrote to a lover of hers who had married and ceased to see her:
'My sister if everyone who saw a walking stick then started walking on it, because of whatever weakness he had, and benefited from it, then I would have excused you for not being able to walk except with a stick. But there is no admiration for your leaving

[24] The original word is *Fayashil* which refers to the stimulation of the clitoris with the tip of the penis.

what is in your nature, in order to walk in the darkness,[25] because this impoverishes your body.'

"So she wrote her a reply: 'My sister, I used to enjoy the beating of the drum before I enjoyed the sound of the flutes. So when I heard it, something in my heart knotted up that nothing except death can resolve. So make it easy on yourself, by not making my fate your business, because it has become easier on me, because of the privilege that I now have in my hands.'"

***

And another wrote to a lover of hers who had tasted a man and accompanied him: "If the Muezzin never came down from the Mimbar, then no one would pray in the dwelling. So what is this admiration for a bucket that has been dipped in a thousand wells and then became yours, when its edges are dented and its rope is corroding? If you return to what is fair, then you will find that walking in the garden is easier than walking the arduous mountain road."

So she wrote a reply: "My sister, I used to eat onion without knowing the taste of damask rose, and radish. So when I ate them I swore that I would eat nothing else besides. No, [I swear] by your life, you did not come into my house ever, so expunge my love from your heart, because I have put, in place of your love, something that will only come out with breath [spirit]."

***

And it was said to a grinder who married: "How was your night, last night?" She said: "I used to crave meat and I was not satiated until last night."

***

And a grinder looked on a man with a large penis and she said: "There is a pounder such as this in the world and I beat my clothes with my hand? This won't be forever." And so she married.

The Laws In This

God has damned the grindings of saffron stigmas[26]
Because they have exposed[27] the fires of humans
They have aroused a war without stabbing
Only the clanging of shield against shield

***

To another:

[25] Primary use for a stick: to guide you in darkness, also a reference to poor execution of the sexual act.
[26] Originally *Waras* which refers to the part of the Saffron plant (Crocus Sativus) that is yellow in colour; the stigma which is also known as the pistil is the female reproductive organ of the plant.
[27] Exposed in a scandalous manner.

For by God, should my penis come by you
In the darkness between dawn and sunrise, at the time of Suhoor[28]
Then you would learn that all grinding is false
And that the truth is in the tip of the penis.

***

Another:

God damn you, you unfaithful whore
How do you rub your pubis with another pubis
When every house that is covered by a ceiling
Must have a pillar in the middle of it.

***

Another:

Hey you—dignitaries[29] of grinding in west and east
Wake up—for fucking is better than grinding
Wake up—because food[30] is craved with bread
And bread cannot be softened in the throat by bread

If they were to patch holes in the same manner
Then what kind of wit would patch a hole with a hole?
And is the hammer of any use without its stick[31]
If it was needed one day for hammering?

***

Another:

Leave the grinding that has exhausted you falsely
For no grinder is satisfied by grinding
And there is beneath you the tip of a knob that thickens and lengthens
With which you could do whatever you like in terms of pounding and thinning out.
When, on your life, have you ever seen an attempt to fill a hole with a hole?

Another:

[28] *Suhoor*: A time before daylight where the faster, especially during the month of Ramadan, can eat her/his last meal before abstinence from food throughout the daylight. The faithful also abstain from sexual thoughts and activity during the light of day. An erection, for a man, during daylight in the month of Ramadan, constitutes breaking the fast.
[29] The original word is *Thawat* which may mean "dignitaries" or simply "those in possession of." Since the word has such an interesting connotation, contrary to the reprimanding tone of the poem, I thought it fit to preserve the contradiction.
[30] i.e. food filling eaten with bread.
[31] i.e. handle.

> Say to whoever fancies grinding, which God has prohibited because there is no good in it:
> You have erred, you who are full of virtue, if you put Isaac in place of Zabeer.[32]

From *Diwan Al-Sababa* by Ibn Abi Hajala (c. 1421). Hypertext available from http://www.alwaraq.net P. 87.

The *Amrad* are preoccupied with promiscuity
and the people's women are preoccupied with grinding.
Every sex is unto itself sufficient
And such is the solace to the kinsfolk of wantonness.

****

The following is a polite response to a woman who deserves to have it said, if only to be fair to her:

> Enamoured of grinding
> You have been crying over it with every eye
>
> [Lacuna]

It has been told that a man entered a house where he found two women grinding. So the one on top pulled him and put him in her place, and he said that this is a matter that requires ropes and men.

Our Sheik Zein Addin Ibn Al-Wardi recited a poem about women of our time:

> Say to whoever fancies grinding
> Which the Good God has prohibited
> You err perfectly good lady
> When you put Isaac in place of Zabeer.

And another said:

> Say to her who grinds, what are you grinding for?
> Nothing satisfies your burning thirst
> Except these poor, bald, shaven saddlebags.

From *Kanz Al-Umal* by Al-Mutqee Al-Hindi (c.1597). Hypertext available at http://www.alwaraq.net P. 675.

[32] The sounds of these names, which are in themselves references to figures in the Judeo-Christian-Muslim theological tradition, also connote the phonetics of the Arabic words for "grinding" and "penis" respectively.

From Wathala: Women grinding each other is fornication.

There are at least ten reasons for Lot's people's annihilation: Men having sex with each other, and their throwing of arrows and oars, and their playing with pigeons and beating of drums, for their drinking of alcohol, and cutting their beards and having long moustaches, for their whistling and wearing silk, and for women having sex with each other. Taken from Ibn Askar from Al-Hassan.

Women cannot marry each other, and a woman cannot marry herself, except the fornicator: she marries herself. Taken from Abi Hurreira.

From *Salwat Al-Ahzan lil Ijtinab 'an Mujalasat al-Ahdath wal Niswan* by al-Mashtoolee (c. 1787) Hypertext available from http://www.alwaraq.net P. 49.

Women having sex with each other is one of the major transgressions. Wathila Bin Al-Aska said: The messenger of God (p.b.u.h) said: "Grinding is women fornicating together."

He also said, p.b.u.h: "Female genitals on each other are like male genitals on female ones." He also said: "Women cannot have sex with each other without fornicating."[33] He also said: "And thirdly God does not accept their doxology 'there is no God but Allah'—the rider and the ridden upon, whether they are a male or female couple."

And Ali said, God bless him: "If men became satisfied with men and women by women, there will be disfigurement and bombardment and hammering from the heavens." And Atta, citing Abi Harrira, God bless him: "The messenger of God (p.b.u.h) said: 'There comes a time when people marry male slaves and not women and they alternate between male slaves and women.' This sin is reinforced whenever the doer is not deterred from it."

Al Sheik Taki Addin Al-Hassani, God rest his soul, said in his explication of Abi Sjuja's book: "Women grinding each other is prohibited and they are reprehended for this because it is an unlawful act."

And the judge Abu Al-Tayib, God rest his soul, said: "This sin is the same as the sin of fornication on the strength of his saying (p.b.u.h): 'If a woman had sex with another woman then they are fornicators.' Also this is apparent when we are told that if a woman mounted another woman then God commands an angel to dress her in seventy garments and seventy armours of fire."

Effeminacy in Men and what it Entails.

[33] Can also be read: Women can only have sex with each other if they are fornicators.

The meaning of effeminacy: The man attempts to resemble woman in his speech and dress and all other demeanours. This is one of the greatest sins which calls for damnation—not only for the man's attempt to resemble a woman but for the woman's attempt to resemble man. Ibn Abbas, God bless him, had said: "The messenger of God (p.b.u.h) has damned effeminate men and man-acting (masculine) women." And this is a true *hadith*. Abu Harria, God bless him, has said that "the messenger of God (p.b.u.h) has damned the men who wear women's clothes and the women who wear men's clothes."

From *Wafi Bil Wafiyat* by Al-Safadi (d. 1787). Hypertext available from http://www.alwaraq.net P. 2716.

[The following is an extract from a poem intended to censure a woman identified as the mother of Ahmad Sahyoon]

My vagina was reared in disobedience
With elderly men and young boys
And grinding is a permanent fixture
They call me the mother of malice
And among scandals I came to be.
If I was thrown in fire
Then by my magic it would disappear.

I am the old hag, the mother of riding
Between an elephant and a mule
And I drive them without halter or leash.
In grinding I came to know vaginas
And in sodomy a target is my rear.