

Against ethnomusicology: Language performance and the social impact of ritual performance in Islam¹

Michael Frishkopf, University of Alberta

(authorized draft)

[Final version](#) published in *Performing Islam*, Volume 2, Number 1, Dec. 2013, pp. 11-43.

Abstract

This article argues that 'music' is unsatisfactory to reference sounds of ritual performance in Islam, not only because the term has been controversial for Muslims, but especially due to its unremovable pre-existing semantic load centred on non-referential aesthetic sound, resulting in drawing of arbitrary boundaries, incompatibility with local ontologies and under-emphasis on the referential language lying at the core of nearly all Islamic ritual. From the standpoint of the human sciences, this study is interested in the understanding of such rituals as combining metaphysical and social impact. Use of 'music' tends to distort and even preclude holistic ritual analysis capable of producing such understanding. As a result, ethnomusicology is misdirected. Theoretically and methodologically, this article develops an alternative concept, 'language performance' (LP), including four aspects – syntactic, semantic, sonic and pragmatic – especially designed for Islamic ritual performance. Applying a linguistic theory of communication developed by Jakobson, it shows how LP can be developed as a comprehensive, descriptive framework for comparative ritual analysis, akin to Lomax's global Cantometrics, but avoiding its flaws through a more flexible design and modest scope, enabling systematic, comparative investigations of performance in Islamic ritual. The article closes with an example of such analysis centred on Sufi rituals in contemporary Egypt.

Keywords:

music
sound
language
performance
ritual
Islam
Sufism
ethnomusicology

I write from the perspective of an ethnomusicologist, situated at the juncture of social science and humanities, trying to understand the social impact of ritual performance in Islam. ‘Music’ was my stumbling block. Typically working within the broader framework of social science, ethnomusicologists train their unwavering focus upon a phenomenon called – etically, first of all, but also sometimes (and confusingly so) emically – ‘music’. This means that the ethnomusicologist’s first task is necessarily to discern what phenomena, in any particular socio-cultural context, the word ‘music’ refers to. But if the word ‘music’ does not correspond, approximately at least, to a locally named concept or a well-bounded local phenomenon (whether analogous, in linguistic terms, to the ordinary language word ‘music’, or to one of its many cognates in other languages, or to something else entirely), the results of such a search will necessarily be inconsistent, since the inherent ethnocentrism (or etic-centrism?) of insisting, everywhere, on ‘music’ then appears as a source of distortion, ensuring misunderstanding of local conceptions about sound. More importantly, ‘ethnomusicology’ as a scholarly practice, in this case, may preclude or at least distort the examination of sonic phenomena that actually exist according to local conceptions.

In particular, it is widely understood, among ethnomusicologists, Islamicists and Muslims, that the term ‘music’ is inappropriate for most genres of sonic Islamic ritual performance. The reason ethnomusicologists and Islamicists (predominantly non-Muslim) have given for rejecting the term ‘music’ to describe these genres is that Muslims themselves not only do not use it, but often reject it as offensive, as a matter of religious doctrine. For instance, Grove Music Online holds that, ‘The practice of orthodox Sunni and Shi‘a Islam does not involve any activity recognized within Muslim cultures as “music”’ (Neubauer and Doubleday 2013).

Semiotically and philologically, this logic is not quite right. For most of Islamic history, Muslims did not reject the English word ‘music’ to describe genres of sonic ritual performance in Islam for the very good reason that they did not use English at all. Before some adopted the English language, in the modern period, and with it the word ‘music’, Muslims rejected the application of certain non-English terms (e.g. for Arabs, the Arabic word ‘*musiqa*’), which western scholars have considered etymological and functional cognates, hence equivalents, of the English ‘music’ (e.g. as both ‘music’ and *musiqa* derive from the Greek μουσική, *mousikē*: ‘art of the Muses’), to describe genres of Islamic ritual performance.

Though as an etic term such usage may be considered possible (since, by definition, etic terms are always available to be redefined as scholars see fit), emic meanings are erased with difficulty, and the ‘music’ always retains an implicit emic sense. Thus, even its etic application to Islamic ritual performance errs by implicitly grouping (usually via cognates) Islamic performance genres – whether Qur’anic recitation (*qira’a*), the call to prayer (*adhan*), or the recitation of blessings upon the Prophet (*salawat*) – with others of a definitively non-religious character (also labelled as ‘music’, *musiqa*, or other cognates), with which they ought not to be associated under a single label.

In other words, the error here lies first in the difficulty of redefining ordinary language words to assume precise etic meanings, and – consequently – in the implication of a culturally grounded isomorphism between linguistic categories, rather than in the use of a particular foreign-language term per se: in languages of the Muslim world, there is

typically no parallel term or concept that subsumes both ‘music’ as secular entertainment and ‘music’ as sacred practice. But the existence of such a term and concept is implied by this broad use of ‘music’.

As Muslims joined the English-speaking world, they may (for the same reasons) have rejected ‘music’, centred on a secular art whose moral legitimacy has occasioned controversy among Muslim scholars from early Islam to the present (Shiloah 1997; Nelson 2001: 32ff; Roychaudhry 1957; Farmer 1957), to describe Islamic genres as well.² However, they did not reject non-cognates, which may also apply to both religious and non-religious genres, words such as ‘sound’, or even ‘art’ or ‘craft’ – especially as such usages are common in languages of the Muslim world, e.g. in the commonly accepted Arabic phrase *fann tajwid al-Qur’an al-Karim* (‘the art of Qur’anic recitation’) – only because ‘*musiqa*’ was translated as (phonetically resembles, and is cognate with) ‘music’ (though the two are clearly not the same). Similarly, Islamic genres in Arabic-speaking regions cannot be characterized as ‘singing’, not only because they are not *ghina*’ (the usual translation of ‘singing’), but because whereas ‘singing’ can be applied to both secular and sacred, no corresponding Arabic term can do so, *ghina*’ being reserved nearly exclusively for secular song.

Semiotically, what is most significant when mapping named concepts from one language to another is to establish an isomorphism preserving ontological structure, following the sense of ‘ontology’ used in linguistics and computer science to denote the explicit specification of ‘the objects, concepts, and other entities that are presumed to exist in some area of interest and the relationships that hold among them’ (Gruber 1993: 199, drawing upon Genesereth and Nilsson 1987), especially relationships of class inclusion (‘A contains B’), i.e., semantic hierarchies and their representations in language, formulated most completely as taxonomies.

That such hierarchies are often quite culture specific (and not simply language specific) – indeed that they may lie at the very core of culture (as a system of representations) itself, and thus are of primary consideration for cross-cultural social science – represents one of the principal insights of cognitive anthropology (D’Andrade 1995). The conundrum that arises, however, is how to represent such hierarchies from the perspective of an etic framework whose purpose is to enable researchers to build knowledge within the human sciences, without disturbing the ontologies that are their foci, yet also without disempowering the building process by subverting its ability to generalize. (This problem, indeed, strikes at the very core of the term ‘human sciences’ itself, by highlighting a potential contradiction between that which is human and that which is scientific, i.e., between the very categories of the emic and the etic.)

In the case of ritual performance in Islam, what is noteworthy, from an ontological perspective, is that while sound is nearly always central the various genres of ritual sound are not grouped under the same heading used to denote other forms of what Blacking generalized as ‘humanly organized sound’ (Blacking 1973) within the broader society, indeed are not even grouped together with *each other* as ‘Islamic organized sound’, but rather are given sui generis labels. Indeed, a genre may be signified by multiple labels, each carrying a particular semantic nuance – contrasting in ‘sense’ rather than ‘reference’, to use Frege’s terms (1948) – or related to style, meaning, scope, text or context of performance. These labels mostly resist clear inclusion relations. Standing quasi-independently, they often refer to themes, usage, a fixed poem or even the rules of

recitation in an oddly disconnected, flattened ontology largely bereft of the hierarchical inclusions typical of taxonomies, even though overlaps are common in practice. Furthermore, such ontologies can vary widely from one cultural location to another, especially when crossing language borders, within the Muslim world.

For instance, in Egypt today, Qur'anic recitation may be called *tajwid*, *tartil*, *tilawa* or *qira'a*. The first term is sometimes reserved for more melodic styles or for the recitational rules themselves; the second for a less melodic style, or for recitation in general; the third simply denotes Qur'anic recitation; the fourth includes reading or recitation, whether of Qur'an or other texts, hence often appears in construct forms, e.g. *qira'at al-Qur'an*. *Murattal* and *mujawwad* are recitational styles contrasting in sound and in context: the former more private or devotional and less melodic; the latter more public and performative, typically heard in the mosque before Friday prayers, or at funerals (Nelson 2001: 72–73, 75, 83, 86, 87–88, 102–132).

Similarly, other related terms appear in Egyptian usage, with slightly variable denotations: the call to prayer (in two varieties: *adhan* and *iqama*), recitations of the Fatiha (opening chapter of the Qur'an) as a blessing (*fawatih*), supplications to God (*ad'iyya*, *ibtihalat*), requests to God for forgiveness (*istighfar*), glorification of God (*tasbih*, *tamjid*, *takbir*, *tawhid*), praise for the Prophet (*madih*, *madih nabawi*, *madh*, *ghazal*), requests to the Prophet (*tawassul*, *istighatha*, *shafa'a*) or saints (*madad*), religious stories (*qisas*), religious hymnody generally (*inshad*, *nashid*, *anashid*, *qasa'id*, *tawashih*), sermonizing and public teaching (*wa'z*, *dars*, *khutba*), 'remembrances' (*adhkar*) of God, and a variety of specialized genres associated with Sufi orders (*hizb*, *awrad*, *wazifa*).

Even particular texts, other than the Qur'an, may become entire recitational genres unto themselves, widely known across Egypt and the Muslim world, such as the panegyric poem 'al-Burda' by the Egyptian Sufi al-Busiri (d. c. 1294); the 'Dala'il al-Khayrat', a prayer for the Prophet Muhammad by the Moroccan mystic, al-Jazuli (d. 1463); or the 'Mawlid', recounting the Prophet's life story, as compiled by al-Barzanji of Madina (Busiri 2009; Jazuli 1864, Barzangi n.d.).

All of these categories of performance, many of which have been systematically explicated by Constance Padwick (1961), are distinguished from one another, and – more importantly – from secular forms aimed at sensory and aesthetic pleasure (in Arab culture: *ghina'* for song, *musiqqa* for that which includes instrumental music, whether song or not, as well as 'music' in a theoretical sense). That is, what is noteworthy in this ontology of Islamic recitations is the following: not only aren't Islamic genres grouped with non-religious ones; for the most part, they aren't grouped together at all, even with each other.

More importantly, the principal basis for the differentiation of these genres, both from 'music' and from each other, lies in their distinctive *texts* and the ways in which those texts are socially performed towards socio-spiritual aims (e.g. unifying a congregation, or supplicating God), as reflected in genre names, which either centre on a manner of recitation (e.g. *qira'a*, 'reading'; *tajwid*, 'melodically reciting') or theme (e.g. *madih nabawi*, praise for the Prophet; *adhkar*, remembrances of God). Such texts thus comprise bundles of linguistic features categorized structurally, by origin or form of the signifier stream (e.g. the Qur'an's Divine source; formal monorhyming Arabic for the *qasida*); thematically, by reference to corresponding signifieds (e.g. the notion of 'praise

for the Prophet’, or ‘Divine love’, *al-hubb al-ilahi*); or pragmatically, by association to performative use and function (e.g. *adhan* as calling; *tawashih* as call-response solo-chorus; *ibtihalat* as free vocal solo for contemplative listening; *dhikr* – in Sufi contexts – as collective chant and movement). Further, the ontology of concepts and their extensions in practice is not isomorphic across cultural-linguistic boundaries.

Using the word ‘music’ doubly distorts this structure, first of all by collapsing distinctions. In fact, all of these genres could be properly labelled ‘music’, so long as one understands the term as a purely etic appellation intended to denote Blacking’s ‘humanly organized sound’, and not as a term carrying any cultural significance, i.e., as detached from any natural linguistic ontology whatsoever. But as the word ‘music’ is also a term of ordinary English usage, with cognates and close phonetic resemblances elsewhere, and as it tends to conflate the sacred and secular, distinguishing a ‘purely etic’ usage proves difficult, and is subject to continual misunderstanding, not to mention disapprobation from English-speaking Muslims.

But, second of all (but perhaps more importantly), ontologies and etic/emic confusions aside, the term ‘music’ is inappropriate in an even more significant sense (indeed, one shared with many other sonic performance traditions around the world): Whereas ‘music’ immediately suggests the centrality of non-referential sound (including aesthetic manipulation of its timbral, expressive, melodic, rhythmic and textural aspects), as reinforced by English-language dictionary definitions invariably centring on ‘the art of combining sounds’ (e.g. in the Oxford English Dictionary: ‘The art or science of combining vocal or instrumental sounds to produce beauty of form, harmony, melody, rhythm, expressive content...’ (Simpson 2013)), genres of Islamic ritual performance invariably focus on the primacy of *language*,³ in relation to which sound functions primarily as carrier and affective substrate. The explicit purpose of such language-centric sound is as a medium for *worship*; its frequent implicit function (and, as I argue, implicit strategic purpose) is as a medium for producing particular *social formations* (from the social breadth of the Umma to more particular structures of Sufi orders). Whether or not such sound is considered ‘musical’ – in someone’s subjective judgement – may be secondary, if not irrelevant.

Language, in other words, is far more central than sound in Islamic performance. This centrality is reflected in the attention paid to language, the respect accorded those who have mastered and memorized it, the intensity of its emotional responses, the lack of clear boundaries separating what is ‘melodic’ (e.g. ‘sung’) and what is not (e.g. ‘chanted’), the importance of correctness, and the consistency of language performance texts, norms, meanings, and practices across individuals, cultures, language areas, and regions. Sound, by contrast, is far more culturally and individually variable, shaped by local tradition; here, idiosyncrasy, artlessness, even error are far more acceptable. Even in oral traditions, language performed in religious contexts displays fixed elements – whether in part, via short, recombinant stock phrases (as in *khutba* or the poetic assemblages presented in Sufi settings) or as a whole (as in *adhan* or *Burda*) – either at the level of *signifier* (words, e.g. the universal Qur’an) presented in a fixed, original language or at the level of *signified* (meaning, e.g. the universal *madih nabawi*), translated into myriad languages (Schimmel 1985). In any case, proper enunciation (proportionate to its sacred character, i.e., most of all for the Qur’an – whose pronunciation is regulated by detailed linguistic specifications, *ahkam al-tajwid*) is

typically far more important and consistent than melody or melodic beauty, which are far more variable. These are essentially recitational traditions, albeit embellished by melody, rather than melodic traditions that can also be recited in plainer styles.

In print, Islamic ritual language is standardized, disseminated far and wide, often in the small booklets available across the Muslim world, especially near larger mosques, where they are typically sold after Friday prayer, often with general titles such as *Salawat* (blessings for the Prophet), *Ad'iyya* (supplications) or *Adhkar* (remembrances), the latter following the Qur'anic injunction to 'remember God' (e.g. 2:152). Such booklets are not linked to any particular Islamic movement, but rather contain prayers for all Muslims.

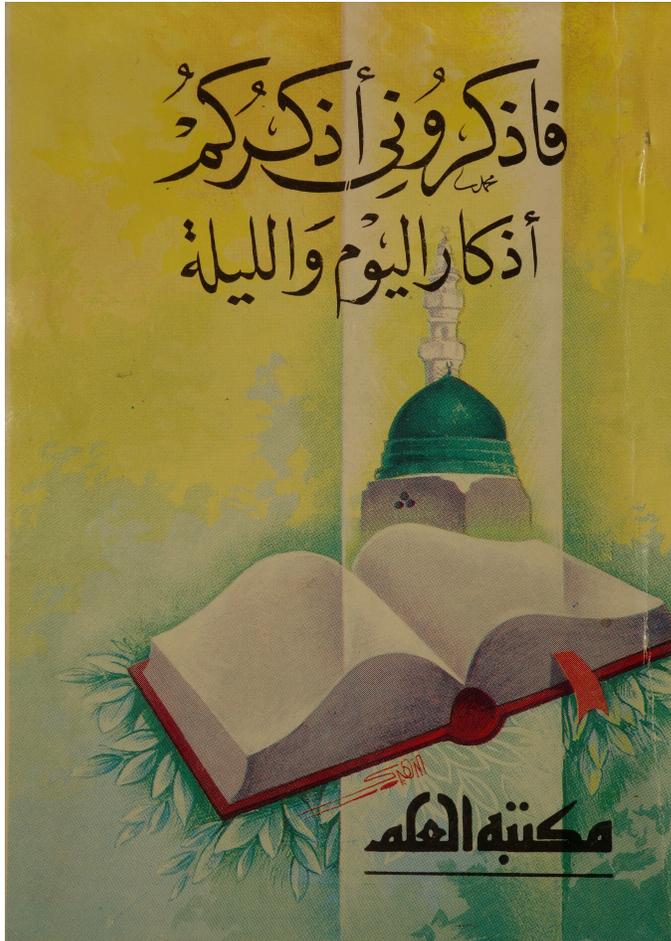


Figure 1: The cover of an Islamic prayer manual entitled *Fa udhkuruni adhkurkum: Adhkar al-yawm wa al-layl* (So remember Me; I will remember you: remembrances of day and night). The first part of the title is derived from Qur'an 2:152. Such collections of *adhkar* typically group them by time of day and use (e.g. in the morning; upon returning home; after evening prayers).

Such booklets are charged with spiritual power, beyond linguistic meaning, a power inhering in their very words – their sacred signifiers – as witnessed by the frequent recitation of those words, in Arabic, by those who do not understand the language. This

power is what I term the ‘ritual mode’ of language performance (explicated below). Such ‘prayer-manuals’ have been most systematically studied by Padwick, who – seeking an explication in Christian terms – notes their ‘sacramental’ role:

Islam, then, for all its simplification of ritual acts and of the surroundings of worship, has not escaped the universal human need for the sacramental; but, as we shall try to show, it has attached this value to words, to *adhkar*, the well-known several phrases of devotion. (Padwick 1961: xxv, xxvii)

Thus, the words’ *baraka* (spiritual blessing), emanating from meaning (the signified), inheres also in the abstract signifiers, even in their printed, material representations, and hence permeates the books themselves. Again, this process is most overt in the case of the printed Qur’an, but also applies to other books, which are typically replete with Qur’anic quotations or references to Hadith.

Yet no corresponding standardization, through notation or in any other way, is attempted for the ‘music’ of such language, named or not, whose existence as an ‘art of tones’ is hardly ever verbalized, in print or even in speech. *Tajwid* manuals, for instance otherwise systematic in their treatment of the art of reciting the Qur’an, routinely ignore it. Nor is any spiritual significance or *baraka* attached to particular tonal sequences. This situation is both cause and effect of the variability of ‘musical’ sound, always ancillary to language, in Islamic worship.

By contrast to religious language itself, its sonic substrate, whether deemed ‘musical’ or not, tends to vary widely across time, space, culture, even individual, especially in its *paralinguistic* characteristics – timbre, expression, pitch, tempo, texture, accent – which rather appear as variables indexing social context. Such ‘music’ shifts radically from one locale to another, or from one performer to the next, or over time, even functioning as a distinctive sound-sign of spatio-temporal-socio-cultural particularity.

The sound of even Qur’an recitation, for instance, varies dramatically from Lomé to Cairo, from Mecca to Istanbul, and has changed rapidly in recent decades as well, especially as mediation has enabled new patterns of non-local flow (Frishkopf 2009b, 2008). Differences may appear as neutral indices of social context (a Turkish sound indexing Istanbul) or of associated ideologies (a Saudi sound indexing a conservative Islam).

But all these sonic differences are secondary, in religious and cognitive centrality, to the recited language itself. As evidence, one may consider that in books compiling the *ahkam al-tajwid*, or instructing on the recitation of the *adhan*, or the proper way to pray ordinary *salah* as an imam, even in compendia of poetry designed to be chanted melodically, instructions always centre on language, but never – at least, never that I have seen – on tonal, rhythmic or timbral properties of the voice. The ‘art of combining tones’, if present, is implicit, a linguistic epiphenomenon, secondary to language itself, left to local processes of variation, but insufficiently important to be taken up except in the most general of terms (e.g. the hadith stating that the Prophet preferred melodies of the ‘Arabs’ (Frishkopf 2009b: 110)).

This is not to say that the sonic dimension of language performance is unimportant, psychologically, sociologically or even theologically. On the contrary, it is very important in all these senses. Sacred books, in the Islamic tradition, are recited, and

their social existence is sonic. The unlettered Prophet (*al-nabi al-ummi*) and the history of his quasi-oral reception of the Qur'an – the word itself implies 'recitation' (Rahman 1979: 30) – spiritually recited by the Archangel Gabriel, and beginning with the Qur'an's own recitational imperative *iqra'* ('recite!', 96:1), all are evidence for the centrality of aurality and orality in Islamic performance. The Prophet admonished his followers 'Beautify the Qur'an with your voices, for the beautiful voice increases the Qur'an in beauty' (Darimi 2000, no. 3365).

Given the importance of the sonic to aural-oral language, it was natural that melody and vocal expressivity should be used to beautify relatively invariable texts, thus drawing attention to them, implicitly praising them, enabling performer to contribute a personalized layer of individual expression, inspired by their faith, their relation to the text, intensified by the sensory immediacy of sounded language and an attentive social environment.

Interpreted as a personal affective response, such sonic expression may be powerfully communicated to listeners as a deeply rooted affirmation of credo, effectively conveying not only linguistic information, but also – paralinguistically – underscoring the performer's belief in what it says, and in its sacred status, enabling the performer simultaneously to proclaim the text, acceptance of its truth and affirmation of its sacrality, and thus to sway listeners towards identical sentiments via empathy. As the performer raises the spiritual level, listeners can, in many contexts, express themselves through verbal or gestural feedback (Frishkopf 2001), even if they are not formally participating as performers, and the number of participants, as well as affective intensity of performance, often grows accordingly. The resulting feedback cycle, producing a potent mix of doctrine and affect, has certainly been critical for re-energizing and extending Muslim communities of faith, and meanwhile serves to transmit procedural knowledge of recitation itself.

Nevertheless, the paralinguistic is highly variable. Unfolding across the Muslim world, feedback processes resulted in diverging sonic traditions, locally ramifying in response to local conditions, and in the absence of any unifying specifications, such as are provided by western musical notations.

Rather, at the core of nearly all Islamic ritual performance is language, with which any accompanying ritual action is tightly coupled. Elaborate melody, when present, usually conforms to the shape of the text, rather than the other way around, illustrated in an abundance of unmetered chant, as well as metric melody conforming to poetic meter. Frequently, but particularly for the most sacred texts – the Qur'an itself – meter is disallowed in order that the text's natural rhythms can clearly emerge.

Similarly, melodic movement and melisma is constrained lest the text become unintelligible. Correct recitation is judged according to textual clarity first of all; no measure of aesthetic beauty suffices to compensate for poor articulation. Explicit recitational rules, when present (mainly for *tilawa*), centre almost exclusively on proper pronunciation. One of the truly impressive features of all *tajwid* manuals is their phonetic precision, specifying, for instance, exactly how each Arabic letter is to be articulated, under the heading *makharij al-huruf*, through detailed anatomical references, often replete with cross-sectional diagrams resembling the articulatory phonetics section of a linguistics textbook (e.g. al-Qala'i 2002: 12–18). Other topics include phonetic assimilations, relative syllable lengths (*madd*) and procedures for starting, pausing and

stopping. But guidance concerning musical matters, such as scales or melodic contours, is invariably absent.

Indeed, Islam's conservative voices sometimes critique 'excessive' melodic embellishment of the Qur'an as distraction (Shalabi 1997: 57–58; Murad n.d.: 153–54; 'Abd al-Fattah 2001: 83), distortion (Husari 1965: 21–25; al-Sa'id 1975: 116–17), professionalization (al-Sa'id 1975: 81, 82–3, 111–15, 117), even profiteering (Hilawi 1984: 80; Jaris n.d.: 21; 'Abd al-Fattah 2001: 83), preferring the simpler mode of chant known as *tartil*, as encouraged in Sunna (Husari 1965: 20; Murad n.d.: 111) and the Qur'an itself (73:4). To some extent, these positions are polemical and ideologically charged, consequences of the notion that aesthetic elaboration, rather than serving as a catalyst for the emergence of genuine spirituality, may divert attention towards its sensuous surfaces, and is thus *haram* (forbidden), or even that it constitutes *shirk*, associationism, following the classical Ash'ari doctrine of the Qur'an's uncreatedness.

Yet the fact is that aesthetic dimensions of textual presentation, while socially important, remain always ancillary to ritual function, social organization and personal devotion, for which the sounded *text* is central, not its aesthetic elaboration. In some sense, this is the foundation of Islam as a universal religion of direct devotion to God, requiring no specialized class of priests or reciters; anyone at all can perform the call to prayer, or lead prayer as imam. Such populism implies the devaluation of aesthetics as a *sine qua non* of worship, even if worship that is aesthetically (aurally, visually, olfactorily...) enhanced is, for many at least, far preferable.

Evidence lies also in the direction of contingency: sonic aesthetics are contingent upon texts, not the other way around. Aesthetic elaboration cannot exist without a text, while the reverse does not hold. Sounded Islamic texts do not *have* to be beautified in ways that may be perceived by ethnomusicologists (or anyone else) as 'musical', any more than written texts must be beautified by elaborate calligraphy, in order to successfully carry their essential sacred, transcendent messages, and there is an indivisible continuum between melodic and non-melodic recitations of the same texts in nearly all genres of Islamic vocal performance. One need not side with religious conservatives rejecting 'overly aesthetic' worship to sense this continuum connecting poles that are, for most Muslims anyway, equally acceptable if not equally preferable. Certainly, there is no reason to split them apart by injecting an alien 'aesthetic' criterion by which musical and non-musical styles of language performance could be distinguished and studied separately, especially because any boundary is, even by etic standards, necessarily arbitrary.

Ethnomusicologically, for a scholar of sound (as opposed to Islamically, for a believer), application of the terms 'music' and 'singing' – whether as technical 'etic' terms or in their ordinary language senses – to genres of Islamic performance is perhaps less disturbing for implying a connection between religious and non-religious genres, i.e., for ontological violence committed by merging discrete performative categories than for the violence committed in rending a melodic–non-melodic continuum, lying wholly within the religious sphere, in an effort to isolate that which is aesthetic (or musical) from that which is not. This violence to the natural categories of Islamic practice makes distinctions dependent upon excessive attention to aesthetic properties of sound, the 'art of combining tones' necessarily applied – to various degrees – to bring texts into sonic

existence, simply due to the historical accident of musical scholarship, rooted in the study of western art music, that gradually sought to broaden its cultural purview.

To do so is to introduce an unnatural separation between, or within, Islamic genres. The reality is that what unifies genres of Islamic ritual performance is language, not sound per se. The average Muslim may not *prefer* an unmelodic unaesthetic call to prayer, one that is shouted more than sung. She or he may not particularly enjoy an *adhan* that eschews conventional melodic patterns, or that is performed in a harsh or grating voice. Such an *adhan* may not be spiritually inspirational, but it is, nevertheless, instantly recognized as the *adhan*, so long as its words are performed clearly, and at the appropriate place and time. But such flexibility is not available in the words themselves.

Unfortunately, this violence is particularly likely to be perpetrated by ethnomusicologists, whose discipline, its name, and its unshakable historical and institutional connections to western art music, predisposes them towards introducing what are in fact often quite arbitrary and irrelevant distinctions between ‘music’ and ‘non-music’ within cohesive genres (such as Qur’anic recitation) when attempting to circumscribe their legitimate professional terrain. In this case, the distinction hinges not so much on analysis of emic categories, but rather on their own aesthetic sensibilities, hardly a wise criterion when attempting to discover something about another culture as more than a mirror for oneself.

Ethnomusicologists have sometimes considered Qur’anic recitation as ‘mosque music’ (Signell 2001, 1980: 134; Shiloah 1997: 39; Sultanova 2011: 75), at least when it falls on what is perceived as the more melodic side of the continuum. On the other hand, a related genre of Islamic ritual performance, the Friday sermon (*khutbat al-jum’a*), is considered outside their purview, the prevailing attitude being that sermons might be studied by scholars of anthropology, religious studies, political science or history, but not ethnomusicologists. They are ‘speech’, not ‘music’.

Yet, I would argue, any scholarly practice that seeks to segregate study of these two genres of textual performance – *tilawa* and *khutba* – into separate disciplines must certainly misconstrue Islamic thought and practice, jeopardizing understanding by refusing to connect that which is very much connected, and that this error is far more egregious than the technical, etic application of the term ‘music’ to, say, Qur’anic recitation (so long as this application is clearly marked as an analytical one). For the Muslim does not distinguish between Qur’anic recitation and the Friday sermon as unrelated categories; rather, they interpenetrate. *Mujawwad* Qur’anic recitation is frequently a component of Friday prayer – coming between the two *adhans* – and is embedded in the prayer itself. Furthermore, the *khatib* (deliverer of the Friday sermon) invariably introduces passages of Qur’an to illustrate his points (typically elaborations of the Qur’anic message), often using a melodic style to do so. The link between Qur’anic recitation and sermon is centred on their texts, which are temporally and thematically connected. Understanding this link helps the scholar to grasp Islamic practice holistically, by considering the entire Friday prayer rite, rather than artificially separating what appears as ‘musical’.

However, the ethnomusicologist whose musical training causes her or him to insist on a rigid division of the sonic world according to a highly subjective aesthetic sense of what does or does not constitute music is unlikely to reach a fair understanding of either.

The problem for the ethnomusicologist interested in comparative study of Islamic genres of performance then becomes the absence of a non-particularistic analytical term to encompass all of them, which implies neither the devaluing of text, nor the merging of religious and non-religious categories, nor the application of aesthetic criteria for boundary determination. This is crucial so that such genres can be examined in relation to one another, as they must be if they are to be understood, for their important semantic, pragmatic, sonic and syntactic (these terms are more precisely defined below) relationships – which can highlight crucial social and historical facts concerning broader connections across subcultures, or the nature of social change – are otherwise obscured. The fact that Muslim cultures have not done so should not dissuade us, for language is a pragmatic tool, and there has been no pragmatic need for Muslims to understand themselves in this way when considering these performative types as devotional. The same does not apply to scholars, whose understanding is a matter of cultural communication more than interpretation and criticism, and who are asking entirely different sorts of questions, more social than theological.

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I therefore define an analytical concept and an etic term, designed to fill this gap, this need for a general, admittedly analytic-outsider, term encompassing many genres of text-centric performance that are linked by Muslims in concept and practice, practice, without introducing (even implicitly) the irrelevant and misleading notion of aesthetic criteria, and without linking these genres directly to non-sacred performance genres (as use of ordinary language terms such as ‘music’ or ‘song’ tends to do).

This term is Islamic ‘language performance’.

What is language performance, and why this particular term?

By ‘language performance’ (henceforth, LP), I mean the sonic realization of language in a social setting, such that the ‘actness’ of performing is recognized, i.e., in which language it is being performed, and participants are particularly aware that they are doing something performative, aware that what they are doing is an act, and conscious of parameters potentially available for manipulation. By ‘social setting’, I do not mean to imply ‘groups’; LP can occur in private contexts in which one person only is present. Rather, I mean to imply that the concept of LP – as a tool for analysis – is intended to take account of social as well as linguistic and sonic features of performance, whatever those features may be.

The tricky part of this definition lies in the condition ‘awareness of actness’. All behaviour consists of acts; with this portion of the definition, I am trying to distinguish that which is self-consciously regarded as such. Such performance need not *necessarily* meet the criteria set forth by folklorists such as Bauman when he says ‘It is part of the essence of performance that it offers to the participants a special enhancement of experience, bringing with it a heightened intensity of communicative interaction...’ (Bauman 1975: 305). But this ‘enhancement’ condition is often *sufficient* for language performance. When experience is enhanced, marked off from more ordinary experience by the presence of a large social group (convened to share that experience), special

linguistic codes, concurrent use of multiple sensory channels (colours, incense, sounds), or aesthetic skill, an awareness of the ‘actness’ of what is going on is more likely, since attention is thereby called to the act of performing as it is differentiated from ordinary life. But my definition is broader, simply attempting to exclude that which is performed without attention being paid to the very fact of doing something, without requiring ‘enhancements’.⁴

Nor is this condition intended to exclude the informal, for informal speech may frequently be the object of conscious manipulation (as when someone is trying to get a raise), while more restrictive linguistic codes, though formal and ‘ritualistic’, are often performed unthinkingly (as when someone says ‘how do you do?’). Awareness of actness implies an active understanding of the potentialities of language, that the act comprises a multitude of parameters available for strategic adjustment towards desired ends, within particular limits. At the very least, there is always an awareness of boundaries: that the performative act starts at some point, and ends at some later point, or that it takes place within a particular spatial domain (defined by architectural boundaries, for instance). A particular domain of space-time is thus brought into active awareness, and the word ‘act’ can legitimately be applied to that which transpires within it.

I mentioned ‘conscious manipulation’ as a criterion for the abstract analytical category of LP. Here lies the crucial significance of this category: language performance always admits of the potential for strategic control in language (even if that potential is not always realized in practice), human beings’ most powerful social tool, because it entails an awareness of the parameters that comprise language (including parameters that might, on occasion, be considered ‘musical’). In order to attempt to control something, one must, first of all, recognize its existence. Therefore, that which is performed without an awareness of the fact of performance cannot be controlled.

My definition of LP can also be briefly contrasted with several related concepts from various fields, in order to show how it differs from them, and why the present definition is preferable for application to performance in Islam.

Linguistics: Noam Chomsky’s concept of linguistic performance. Performance here is used to cover language as a set of utterances produced by speakers, as opposed to the idealized conception of language, the cognitive machinery that produces those utterances, which is denoted as linguistic competence (Crystal 2008: 357). This sense of linguistic performance, including all possible utterances, is much more general than what is desired.

Philosophy: Austin’s and Searle’s speech act (Austin 1975; Searle 1969). Here the focus is on the very general category of acts, within which are distinguished those involving speech. This definition is in one sense too wide, in another too narrow. On the one hand, I want to focus on acts involving the heightened sense of awareness, which the word performance implies; the set of speech acts contains too much. On the other hand, the notion of ‘speech’ is also too restrictive; the word suggests a prosaic style of expression, or at least a lack of interest in performative style (as opposed to content), and is thus not suitable given my concern for singing and chanting in all their multidimensionality. Another problem with ‘speech act’ is its discreteness, or ‘countability’ (thus the plural exists: ‘speech acts’); the notion of speech act does not describe something, but rather *is* something, with a definite beginning and end. Furthermore, the notion of an ‘act’ suggests instantaneousness, and indeed the use of the

term ‘speech act’ by philosophers is generally to refer to very short utterances. Perhaps for this reason the philosophers’ treatment of speech acts also tends to be focussed on the words that are uttered, detached from the larger acoustic and social context in which they occur. My concept of LP is more general for being an attribute, and thus open-ended; no sense of short duration is implied, and the term can be more inclusive of concomitant social and sonic features.

Folklore: Bauman’s concept of verbal arts as performance (Bauman 1975, 1978). I share Bauman’s concern for the multiple features of verbal art as performance, including a focus on performance – as action or event – over texts, with careful consideration of contexts, framing, patterning, roles, genres, emergent qualities and relations to social structure. However, use of the term ‘arts’, as appropriate as it may be for the materials typically addressed in folklore studies (stories, myths, songs, jokes, etc.), is problematic when applied to the content of religious rituals, especially in Islam where the aesthetic attitude implied by ‘art’ may be felt to undercut the spiritual function of language; I prefer simply ‘performance’. At the same time, use of the term ‘verbal’ is less neutral than ‘language’ as a modifier, since it emphasizes the philosophers’ notion of speech. Indeed, Bauman’s bias in this direction becomes apparent when he suggests that the notion of performance may serve to unify all verbal behaviours into a unified conception of verbal art ‘as a way of speaking’ (Bauman 1975: 291). However, my analytical interests go beyond speaking.

Being a neologism, the term ‘language performance’ also carries the advantage of not automatically invoking previous theories or theorists beyond the control of the author, and therefore can be more flexibly shaped for new purposes, without prejudicial biases on the part of researcher or reader creeping in unnoticed. While it has been designed for application to the analysis of Islamic performance, I expect it may well find uses elsewhere as well, because the western category of music is all too often an unwieldy tool for analysing manifestations of performed texts that may or may not exhibit the aesthetic criteria the term music presupposes.

For the same problem afflicts ethnomusicology in many places, wherever language is more central than music. The ethnomusicologist is drawn by a musical appeal that is incidental to the actual social significance of the performance, centring instead on language. The analytical concept of language performance attempts to ameliorate this difficulty. Its use has been driven by the exigencies of studying Islamic ritual performance, but without a doubt Islamic culture merely presents a particularly clear case of the limitations of the ‘music’ concept – and hence of ‘ethnomusicology’ itself – abundantly in evidence elsewhere as well – whenever language is central to performance. In such cases, the boundaries between ‘music’ and ‘non-music’ become highly unstable and subjective since the objective unifying phenomenon is linguistic. Whether language’s sonic aspect can be judged to be musical (or not) is a matter of opinion. What is required in such cases, rather than ethnomusicology, is a holistic linguistics of language performance in which pragmatic and sonic features are considered equally, alongside the more traditional syntax and semantics. This will typically be the case in systems of religious communication, but also in many other contexts (e.g. much music of Native communities, epic recitations, sung poetry) in which language is the defining feature, while the aesthetic manipulation of sound is an epiphenomenon. But categorization based

on discrimination of the sonic aspect – what is ‘beautiful’ and what is not – will always lead to unstable results.

In my own research on Islamic ritual, I am particularly interested in understanding the social impact of language performance, as it is strategically used towards social ends, whether for Sufi orders (*turuq*; singular *tariqa*) seeking to establish or maintain themselves within a social space decreasingly conducive to mysticism or within the broader framework of Qur’anic recitation (Frishkopf 1999, 2009b, 2001, 2009a, 2014). Towards such analysis, I can exclude from consideration that which is performed without such an awareness (while understanding that not everything that is left will necessarily be the object of strategic control).

The focus on *language* performance stems not only from the priority of language as a pre-eminent communicative tool in all societies, but also, more specifically, from the notable centrality of language in both defining and performing genres of Islamic ritual, including obligatory prayer (*salah*), Qur’anic recitation (*tilawa*), supplication (*du’a*), praise (*madih*), sermon (*khutba*) and so on. Islamic ritual is language-centric more than action or symbol-centric, and ritual efficacy is evaluated primarily on correct performance of linguistic content, rather than the paralinguistic qualities of its sonic substrate.

While Islamic rituals are not lacking in other symbolic forms – actions, colours, fragrances, shapes, melodies, dress and so forth – these are to a large extent optional and variable, while language is always central as a dominant agent, empirically (from the standpoint of an outside observer), and doctrinally (from the standpoint of participants seeking spiritual efficacy). Proper ritual performance is nearly always defined in terms of correct performance of language. But language is central: no quantity of vocal beauty can compensate for a linguistic error.

Such language performance is active and participatory, oral and not merely aural. The daily prayer rite (*salah*, and its preliminaries) requires movements of bowing and prostration (*ruku’* and *sujud*), but always tightly coupled with language performance, whether uttered aloud (*jahran*) or just under the breath (*sirran*), such that the elderly or infirm can be excused from proper performance of the former, but not the latter. One recites during daily prayer, but also during the call to prayer (*adhan*), through private responses to public phrases enunciated by the caller (*mu’adhdhin*). Even ritual ablution (*wudu’*) is to be accompanied by performed language, normatively at least, though perhaps the practice has faded somewhat over time (Lane 1836: 78ff).

Language centrality is certainly not unique to Islam, and the concept of LP may be useful in other contexts as well, but Islam, when compared to other religions, and considering a wide range of ritual (from daily *salah* to weekly *jum’a* prayer to annual festivals), appears as particularly language-centric. The notable exception to language-centrality is *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca predating Muhammad as an established tradition, in which ritual action appears to take precedence. But even here, every key ritual action – donning of *ihram* (ritual dress), *tawaf* (circumambulation) of the *Ka’ba*, *sa’y* (running) between Safa and Marwa, imbibing from the sacred well of Zamzam, throwing the *jamarat* (stones), standing at Mt. Arafat, etc. – is accompanied by recitations – formulae of remembrance and supplications – whether recommended (*ad’iyya* of Zamzam) or required (e.g. the *talbiya* while performing *tawaf*), appropriate to each phase of the pilgrimage (Sabiq et al. 1992: 33, 40, 69–71, 81, 90, 107).

Language performance is connected to Islam's universality, since, aside from pilgrimage and local saint veneration, the religion is notably free of spatial or artefactual constraints and encumbrances. The mosque is not sanctified space, but merely a convenient place to gather and pray; prayers can be offered in any clean place whatsoever, and so its importance is far less than that of church. Similarly, though the Qur'an is the sacred book, and the *mushaf* (its written or printed instantiation) is honoured, the Qur'an is conceived in essence as a linguistic abstraction, rather than as an embodied sacred document. Absent in mainstream Islam are essential, material ritual paraphernalia required by other faiths: sacred incense and censers, sacred food and drink, sacred objects, sanctified buildings or clothing, with the sole exception of the Ka'ba and its sacred black stone. Rather, it is language, primarily, that is sacred, most centrally the Word of God in the Qur'an as an abstract text, and secondarily the words of the Prophets (Hadith) and other crucial spiritual teachers, in poetry, prayer or prose.

Thus, what seems to best characterize Islamic ritual is the centrality, therein, of LP, in a variety of different genres, accompanied by a range of different actions, performed in a spectrum of sonic-social styles and contexts, aimed at various spiritual purposes, yet consistently centred upon language, at its core. The specific performance genres employed by Muslims each have particular names, whereas there is no indigenous term corresponding to 'language performance'. This lack highlights the fact that LP is here developed as a convenient etic tool, drawing analytical attention to connections between genres that might otherwise remain disconnected, and illuminating possible parallelisms in their collective analysis. Its convenience stems in part from its generality, enclosing entire continua that might otherwise be arbitrarily divided, abetted by disciplinary distinctions, into 'sermon', 'chant', 'prayer' and 'song', with misleading consequences, limiting the scope of analysis and masking significant relationships.

The fact that participants may not recognize the common basis of these forms as being LP is not of great concern, because analysis, which in any event typically shifts from emic to etic at some point, does not depend on any such recognition. In addition, Muslims frequently *do* recognize it, but in a practical, rather than a discursive, sense; the concept of LP is very much a part of Muslims' unarticulated taken-for-granted universe, in the realm of doxa, as Bourdieu would have it: that which 'goes without saying because it comes without saying' (Bourdieu 1977: 167). By using a general term that is also a neologism, I conveniently avoid some of the prejudices that English readers might attach to such ordinary language words as 'music', 'singing', 'chanting', 'lecturing' or 'preaching', words that gather phenomena that ought to be separated, or separate those that ought to be gathered, which misrepresent performance through arbitrary divisions between musical and non-musical forms. But LP can be differentiated into locally recognizable emic genres (like *tilawa* or *hizb*), to be gathered into analytically useful etic LP types, as needed.

Finally, the focus on LP is also convenient because it provides a neutral framework through which to organize a thoroughgoing comparative analysis. Performance is highly multidimensional, as all fieldworkers know very well, and it is sometimes hard to know where to start when organizing a description thorough enough to serve as the basis for comparative analysis. Use of a comprehensive term such as LP is helpful here. Certainly not everything in Islamic ritual is linguistic, but nearly everything of importance that happens in Islamic rituals is at least closely attached to one genre or

another of language performance. Since language is so central, all analysis can be organized around the central concept of LP, provided that concept is taken in the broadest possible sense.

The notion of LP thus defined is uncountable; LP describes something, but one cannot speak of ‘an LP’. Therefore, I introduce the notion of LP strip, abbreviated as LPS (plural: LPSs). The LP strip is an instance of LP that exhibits continuity along one or more aspects, with definite boundaries in social time and space. Any particular performance can be decomposed (though not uniquely) into a set of LPSs, which may overlap temporally; both sequential and parallel LPSs are possible. The performance can thus be divided into logically coherent performative pieces, such that divisions may run either perpendicular or parallel to the temporal axis of performance. In the former case, the division separates LP ‘before’ and ‘after’ a particular moment and LPSs on either side of the division come in a sequence; in the latter case, the division separates LPSs occurring in different social domains (performed by different subgroups, for instance), and occurring in parallel.

The concept of LP is derived and justified from the centrality of texts (written or oral), and genres of LP are based on texts underlying performance, even if these are oral and ever changing. But in search of analytical breadth, one cannot restrict oneself to the textual level, even while upholding language as primary. Rather, one is led to broaden language performance to include text, sound and social acts. Modifying and augmenting, slightly, Morris’s triad of syntactics, semantics and pragmatics (1943: 248, 1939: 133), these considerations lead to the division of LP into four *aspects*, each of which admits of subdivision into multiple dimensions, features that may be flexibly analysed in terms of *variables* defined in response to the particular ethnographic problem at hand, then applied to LPSs, defined by natural breakpoints in the ostensibly continuous syntactic, semantic, sonic and pragmatic flow of the performance event. The four aspects, on the other hand, are designed to be universal, as they are derived from an abstract semiotic analysis of LP.

Syntactics. Under this aspect, I consider all features of LP, which pertain to the structure of the linguistic signifiers employed in performance, independent of their meanings, including sequencing, corpus (from what universal set are signifiers drawn?), and durations of various grammatical ‘types’.

Semantics. Here it is the signified that is important. This aspect of LP refers to all features that depend on linguistic meaning, from its smallest units (morphemes), through assertions, and up to the broadest considerations of rhetorical tone and force. In analysing LP of Sufi orders, for instance, I was particularly concerned with themes and symbols, textual references to spiritual and human entities, relations between texts (intertextuality) and textual authorities (Frishkopf 1999).

Sonics. When considering LP’s sonic aspect, I disregard semiotic signifier-signified pairings, and consider only the acoustic signal, the ‘carrier’ of the semiotic stream. Most generally, I examine LP as consisting of a set of ‘lines’ (each coming from a particular sound-source), each of which consists of a spectrum of frequencies varying over time. This sound results in large part from the phonology of the underlying performed text. But sonics is broader than the linguistic science of phonology, which is pre-eminently concerned with the units of speech sound, or ‘paralinguistics’, which is generally concerned with vocal timbre and stress. Under sonics is included also longer-

range ‘musical’ concepts, such as tone, tonality and melody; temporal organization; and form.

Pragmatics. In semiotic theory, pragmatics is the third division (after syntactics and semantics, roughly corresponding to my use of these terms), used as a sort of catch-all to cover aspects of meaning arising from the use of language in a behavioural context: speakers, their freedoms or constraints, their social interactions, communications, and assumptions (Crystal 2008: 379–80). I use the term similarly to cover social and contextual aspects of LP, including the use of space (proxemics; see Hall 1974) and movement (kinesics; see Birdwhistell 1972) in human interaction, as well as social features of the performing group: who performs, and to whom, are issues handled under this rubric.

Each of these aspects encompasses a number of feature dimensions, which can be analysed using variables ranging over particular values, tailored to each particular application, as shown in Figure 2 for my comparative study of Sufi corporate rituals (*hadras*) across multiple *turuq* in Cairo. This schema is in some respects similar to Alan Lomax’s ambitious Cantometrics project (Lomax 1976), which has been roundly critiqued for its selective sampling, assumptions of broad cultural homogeneity, subjective coding and biased statistical analysis. However, in my scheme it is only the four broad aspects that are fixed, while individual variables are tailored to the comparative study at hand. The ability to customize a set of variables according to ethnographic scope and research aim offers a distinct advantage over Cantometrics, which attempts to define an analytical system adequate to handle the entire world of vocal music. For instance, Figure 2 includes special categories for *inshad*, due to its central importance in the Sufi *hadra*.

But the underlying idea is the same: to develop and apply an etic, systematic framework ensuring uniform attention to performative attributes, arriving at a thoroughgoing analysis in order to highlight contrasts among multiple cases that might otherwise be missed. Data subjected to LP analysis can derive from a number of sources, including participant observation experience as recorded in field notes; formal interviews; photographs; and audio or video recordings; photographs and AV recordings are particularly useful for pragmatic analysis. Feedback interviews, presenting participants with recordings as the topic for further discussion, are especially useful for understanding meanings of behaviour and text. All this is standard for ethnomusicology; the LP framework, with its rigid aspects and flexible variables, simply helps ensure comparative systematicity, within the bounded framework of a particular study.

Sonic aspect	
<i>Sub-aspects</i>	<i>Representative variables</i>
Temporality	rhythm, pulse, speed, acceleration, meter, metric modulation, unity
Timbre	smoothness, accent, articulation, expressivity, unity
Tonality	pitch definition, intonation, range, <i>maqam</i> , ⁵ modulation, updrift, unity
Melody	form, phrasing, complexity
Texture	degree of heterophony (intra-LPS),

	relation between simultaneous LPSs.
Energy	total amplitude (dynamics), individual amplitude, crescendo, unity
Relation to <i>inshad</i> text	melisma, poetic conformity, clarity
Freedom	melodic entropy ⁶
Syntactic aspect	
<i>Sub-aspects</i>	<i>Representative variables</i>
LP grammar	LP genres used, sequencing rules
Absolute durations	Total duration, durations by LP type, duration by LP mode ⁷
Relative durations	Durations by LP type, durations by LP mode (as percentages of the whole)
Average durations	LPS, <i>inshad</i> LPS, <i>inshad</i> text segments
<i>Inshad</i>	Duration by <i>inshad</i> type, relative durations of poetic types
Symbol rate and type	Word rate in <i>inshad</i> LPS, language level (colloquial to formal Arabic)
Freedom	syntactic entropy
Semantic aspect	
<i>Sub-aspects</i>	<i>Representative variables</i>
Assertions	assertional themes in <i>inshad</i>
Ecstatic symbols	total density, density by symbol type
References	reference density, referent density
Intertextuality	related texts
Authority	authorship ⁸
Freedom	semantic entropy
Pragmatic aspect	
<i>Sub-aspects</i>	<i>Representative variables</i>
General	place, time, occasion, population of performance
Social space	openness, boundaries, geometry
Social organization	<i>hadra</i> roles, statuses, control
Movement	amplitude, unity
Freedom	behavioural entropy
Communications roles	who performs, who listens

Figure 2: LP aspects, sub-aspects and some representative variables used for a comparative analysis of Sufi *hadrās* in Cairo.

Comparative LP analysis provides a powerful descriptive framework by which Islamic ritual performances of the same type – e.g. Sufi *hadrās*, public Qur’anic recitations, sermons – can be compared. However, such descriptions do not account for the social impact of such performance. Ritual is a form of social *work*, and such work has social consequences. To understand these consequences requires a deeper analysis of LP’s causal chains.

Here the etic and emic likewise deviate considerably, at least in their explicit formulation as elicited in interviews. Emically, as elicited in interviews, LP genres produce spiritual effects as acts of devotion, whether for the performer or for someone else, as sanctioned by Qur'an, Hadith and Shari's (law). For instance, obeying Qur'an 33:56, Muslims recite *salawat*, asking God to bless the Prophet Muhammad (most directly, *Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammad*; elaborate poetic formulations abound, particularly among Sufis), and thereby receive blessings in return, according to Hadith (Tirmidhi 2007: 484, 485, 486). Such an effect may be validated by belief, and belief by text, but all this is in itself of little value towards understanding the general social impact of LP.

Closer to the etic pole, however (though also acknowledged by certain insiders in certain contexts), LP genres also carry affective and cognitive impact (which may include the *recognition* of a ritual impact). Such impact, while mostly outside the ken of participants, is crucial to LP's social impact. Combined with an aspect analysis, these impacts may help the analyst to understand why particular rituals produce the social effects they do.

The key to understanding the social work done by Islamic ritual, via the emotional and cognitive impact of LP, is the etic concept of 'LP mode'. In defining mode, I am inspired by the work of the great linguist and literary theorist Roman Jakobson, who analysed the functions of language corresponding to six constitutive *factors* in any speech event, following a standard model of verbal communication adapted from the mathematical theory of communications first proposed by Shannon and Weaver (1964) (and well-summarized by Cherry 1966).

According to this model, an *addresser* sends a *message* to an *addressee*. The message refers to a particular *context*, or referent. In order to be operative, the message must employ a verbal *code* at least partially common to the addresser and addressee, and at the moment of performance there must be a *contact* between them: a physical channel and psychological connection.

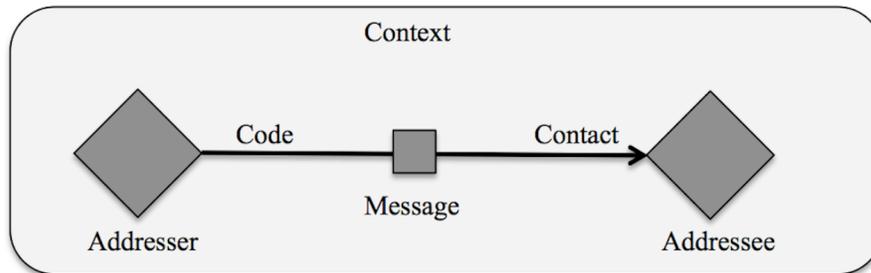


Figure 3: Jakobson's model (after Jakobson 1960: 353).

Corresponding to these six factors, Jakobson discerns six language functions, each oriented towards a particular component. While he notes that most verbal messages cannot be classified according to a single function, as they typically fulfil multiple functions, they differ in their relative functional emphasis, and the verbal structure (at the syntactic, morphologic and phonemic levels) of a message may depend on its predominant function. According to Jakobson (1960: 353–57), the following functions correspond to each factor of the model:

- *Context*: The *referential*, denotative or cognitive function, by which a message communicates information about a context.
- *Addresser*: The *emotive* function, by which a message communicates the speaker's attitude and emotion, whether real or feigned.
- *Addressee*: The *conative* function; an imperative or vocative directed to the addressee; such a message cannot be given a truth-value.
- *Contact*: The *phatic* function – the term is Malinowski's (1946: 315) – by which communication is established, checked, confirmed or discontinued.
- *Code*: The *metalingual* function, in which language is made to refer to language itself for the purpose of checking up on the code employed.
- *Message*: The *poetic* function, an orientation towards the message – its sounds and signs – for its own sake. This is the primary function in 'verbal art', but it is not restricted to language that is overtly creative or artistic. Jakobson points out that while the poetic function is dominant in poetry, poetic genres can perhaps be differentiated based on the presence of a secondary function. Thus, the secondary function in epic poetry is the referential; that of lyric poetry is the emotive; that of exhortative and supplicatory poetry is the conative.

While Jakobson observes that the leading task of many messages is referential (what he associates to 'context'), other functions often combine as well (1960: 353). This observation is especially apropos for ritual LP. Using Jakobson's analysis as a starting point, I differentiate three language functions in LP, calling these 'LP modes'. Like Jakobson considering his functions, I stress that LP will ordinarily evince more than one mode, but that one may often speak of a dominant mode in any particular situation. The modes depend on the effects of LP, and where they occur.

The communicative mode. In this mode, LP is used to convey cognitive information from addresser to addressee. The communicative mode corresponds primarily to Jakobson's referential function, combined with his conative function. (Phatic and metalingual functions may also be gathered in this mode, though they are of lesser importance in Islamic ritual.) While imperatives – petitions (*ad'iyya* or *ibtihalat*) or exhortations (*wa'z* or *khutab*) are not assertions admitting a truth value, they *are* acts of communication with definite cognitive content, by which we get someone to understand what it is that we want, and perhaps to act so as to fulfil our wishes. Thus, the communicative mode creates a cognitive effect in the addressee's subjectivity, whether by providing new information, confirming that which is already known, or making a request that may lead to subsequent action. This effect is created by the referents of language, the 'signifieds'. Metaphysical entities may also be addressed in the communicative mode, e.g. second person praise of the Prophet, or supplications to God.

The affective mode. This mode corresponds roughly to Jakobson's 'emotive' function. However, I distinguish three subtypes. Affect through expression, by which the addresser communicates his own (real or feigned) emotional state via paralinguistic features (vocal tone, pause, stress) is closest to the emotive. Affect may also result from language itself: the connotations of reference – the 'context' in Jakobson's terms – which the listener will not necessarily relate to the speaker's state, or the sounds and signs of the message (Jakobson's poetic function). Finally, affect may result from the perception of the structure of the sonic component of LP as I have defined it (e.g. a rapid tempo, or

loud sound); here the role of ‘musical emotion’ comes to the fore, and the role of language itself may be relatively reduced. In any case, LP in the affective mode creates an emotional effect in the addressee’s subjectivity. This affective effect is not contained in the message itself, but rather is associated with its sonic carrier (perceptual affect), signifiers (paralinguistic affect) or signifieds (affect resulting from connotations).

The ritual mode. All LP comprising Islamic ritual is tautologically ‘ritual’. However, by the ritual mode I mean something more specific: the socially agreed-upon objective, spiritual effect – as sanctioned by Qur’an, Hadith or other venerated texts – produced via the performance of language with correct *niyya* (intention) but often independent of its linguistic meaning or perceptual effects for any of the human participants involved. The possibility of such effects is clear when one considers the power of Arabic performance for those who do not understand the language. Sometimes these effects take place in the addresser or addressee (as an objective transformation of his or her physical or spiritual condition), and sometimes they take place elsewhere in the world. Since there is typically no scientific basis for such effects, they can only exist relative to a particular belief system, that of Islam. Thus, prayer, while its full effectiveness may depend upon understanding, intention and sincerity, may be held to be effective in creating objective effects (in the addresser: self-healing or purifying from sin; outside the addresser: bringing rain, bringing peace) even without any understanding of meaning in the conventional sense. Recitation of particular Qur’anic passages or Sufi *hizbs* is often advised for their spiritual efficacy in meeting life’s challenges, both physical and metaphysical.

At the extreme, the ritual mode comprises ‘magical’ incantations (*sihr*), sometimes in an unintelligible language (Egyptian Sufis may recite in what they claim to be *Suryaniyya*, Syriac, a ‘language’ also used when speaking in tongues), or to be repeated according to mysterious numerological computations. The significance of incomprehensible language or repeat-counts exists as a performative act (and perhaps for this reason such acts, lacking any connection to intention or sincerity, are often rejected by religion). Here the effect stems strictly and automatically from the signifiers of the message. In this case, scrupulous attention to performance is the norm, since a single mistake may suffice to negate the desired effect, or even to bring unintended and unfortunate consequences. In the case of supplications and certain spells, the ritual mode resembles the conative function, but in which the addressee is unspecified, perhaps assumed to be supernatural. Thus, Jakobson gives examples of magical incantations and classes them as conative (Jakobson 1960:355). While some of the ritual-mode LP I consider is no doubt conative in this sense, other examples are not.

However, in attempting to understand the mechanisms and effects of LP, and the strategies that guide it, my primary concern is not with the spiritual effects of language performance (the ritual mode) but rather with the communicative and affective modes, because it is these two modes that together produce objective *social* effects most directly and observably so, particularly when LP takes place in a group setting open to the researcher’s participant observation. Ritual LP, by contrast, exerts a more indirect effect upon social reality, since its primary significance is to produce objective effects in the *spiritual* world, according to believers, as certified by a subscribed-to system of belief. However, it must be remembered that as with Jakobson’s functions, no LPS exhibits only one mode, and even LP in which the ritual mode dominates typically carries emotional

and communicative consequences as well. Furthermore, I in no way exclude from consequences of the communicative and affective modes the construction of social relationships *to* the spiritual world as containing the addressee; indeed, these are very important, even if (to the non-believing social scientist) they can only exist in one direction, because such relationships – for instance love for the Prophet, not to mention submission to God – form the essential basis for communal belief and feeling and hence induce strong bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood among believers as well.

How do these two modes account for the social impact of LP in Islamic ritual? A full accounting is beyond the scope of this article, but may be briefly related to an abstraction of the social structure formation process, based on social network theory (Scott 2000), by which social groups comprise a set of nodes (individuals) connected by links (relationships), imbued with feeling; see Figure 4.

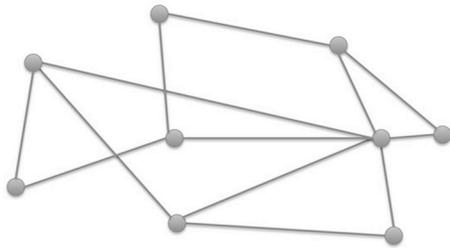


Figure 4: Graphical representation of a social network. Circles are nodes, representing individuals. Links connecting nodes represent relationships, encompassing both cognitive and affective components.

Facebook notwithstanding, social networks are constructed, maintained and transformed largely through face-to-face interaction; collective religious ritual adds a special intensity and unity of purpose, overlaid with an implicit unity of belief, and solemnity of the shared metaphysical orientation, itself reinforced in the process. Relationships comprise cognitive and affective components, which can be constructed, shaped and re-energized by LP's communicative and affective modes (respectively), in all four aspects: syntax and structure, including sequencing and phatic or metalingual signals (confirming insider status); assertions, not simply generating shared knowledge through pedagogical texts (providing a basis for camaraderie) but also stating or modelling relationships, or commands and petitions enacting them, while investing them with emotion (as when love is expressed for the Prophet); abstract sound, building a tremendous store of free emotion, via rhythm, dynamics, melodic form and vocal expression; and through pragmatics of participation, interaction and relation to context, physical, social and metaphysical. In certain cases (especially in Sufism), LP in the Islamic ritual situation may generate that powerful state of collective affective ritual participation that Durkheim termed 'collective effervescence', forging, recharging or re-forming social relationships, investing them with durable emotional energy, and even giving rise to the very idea of religion itself (Durkheim 1995: 217–18); social networks forged during congregational worship have been shown to be related to religiosity (Stroope 2012).

Furthermore, while the ritual function is typically invoked, in any informal conversation, as the explicit purpose of LP, it is clear that communicative and affective

functions are also implicitly manipulated, often strategically, for the sake of achieving particular social results, whether for the sake of the individual's narrow self-interest or towards the broader social and ideological aims of the group as a whole.

As mentioned earlier, I have conducted two in-depth studies of this strategic manipulation of LP in Egypt: Qur'anic recitation (Frishkopf 2009b), where multiple strategies serve to uphold contrastive interpretations of Islam, and collective Sufi ritual (*hadra*), where multiple strategies aim to sustain Sufism in the face of hostility from the broader community.

* * *

How can this analytical framework be applied in practice? For an illustration, I turn to the case of Sufi orders (*turuq*; singular *tariqa*) in contemporary Egypt.⁹ Through the nineteenth century, the Sufi *turuq* of Egypt flourished as integral to mainstream Islam. But the role of Sufism – Islamic mysticism – in Egyptian society has drastically declined since the advent of widespread westernization, Islam's politicization in the 1920s, and rapidly changing social conditions, resulting in sharp critiques from both Islamic reformist and modern secularist discourses, directed particularly against saint and shaykh veneration (both of which are absolutely central to Sufism, which depends crucially on the relation of master to disciple), and vociferous in condemning Sufism's ecstatic practices, including the use of what critics term 'music' and 'dance', sometimes accompanied by musical instruments. Such practices frequently produce states of religious ecstasy (called *wajd*, or *hal*), when participants claim to reach mystical states of self-annihilation (*fana'*) or even union (*ittihad*), threatening mainstream Islam's emphasis on God's transcendence, as well as the rationalist orientation cherished by more secular Enlightenment Muslims. Nevertheless, particular orders, most of them founded relatively recently, have been quite successful in adapting to the new socio-political conditions, and are continuing to thrive, albeit in contracted niches as compared with centuries past.

In my research, conducted primarily from 1995 to 1998, I used the LP concept to analyse *tariqa hadras* – corporate rituals performed once or more each week (usually once or twice at the *tariqa's* headquarters, as well as at local chapters) – of three Sufi orders active in Cairo: the older Bayyumiyya, dating from the eighteenth century, and two newer orders, founded in the mid-twentieth century: the Jazuliyya and the Ja'fariyya. Through such analysis, I wished to understand why the former is declining (along with most other traditional orders), while the latter two are able to maintain social vigour, albeit in very different ways. How have the newer orders managed to attract committed members, maintain identity and defend legitimacy within a social space that has become increasingly hostile to organized mysticism? Conversely, why has the older *tariqa* been unable to do so? What I discovered, through the compilation of *tariqa* profiles elicited by LP analysis, is that the recently founded orders are those able to respond to conditions of modernity through strategic manipulation of LP in *hadra*.

The distinguishing feature of any Sufi *hadra* is LP. Unlike many rituals analysed by anthropologists, one cannot characterize the Sufi *hadra* by means of its visual symbols, or regular behavioural patterns. These features exist but are subsidiary – in objective salience and subjective involvement – or else incorporated within the LP that they accompany, so that LP always emerges as the preeminent ritual activity. *Hadra* LP typically includes *fawatih*, *ad'iyya*, *hizb*, *inshad dini*, *dhikr* and religious speeches (variously called *wa'z*, *khutba*, *mudhakara* or *dars*).

My central hypothesis is that the successful order has adapted to modern conditions by formulating general group-level strategic responses, allowing it to deflect criticism and expand while maintaining its characteristic social identity (the distinctive identity of each Sufi order is primarily ritual and social, not doctrinal), cohesion and centralization, and that the practical realization of these strategies occurs primarily through strategic control of LP in the *hadra*.

At the same time, the preconditions for the formulation, dissemination and application of such LP strategies are primarily social: the cohesiveness and centralization of the order, and the absorption of group identity as the primary component of members' individual identities. The establishment of these preconditions is also a goal of LP strategy, since they are necessary for maintaining group identity, and so a complex interaction between LP in *hadra* and social structure emerges. Strategic LP in *hadra* helps to maintain the group, by attracting and retaining members, guarding against critics, and reinforcing identity; the latter are the social preconditions that make strategic LP possible in the first place. Maintenance of social structure both requires particular patterns in LP and enables the formulation of strategies that produce such patterns. Older orders lack the requisite social preconditions that would enable them to formulate strategies; unregulated, LP is shaped piecemeal by historical and individual strategies, but without regard for the group as a whole. Under such conditions, LP cannot contribute to the group's social needs and may even lead to its fragmentation or dissolution.

Thus, not all Sufi orders are equally capable of enacting effective group-level strategies through LP. What makes the situation interesting is the fact that those that do not all strategize in the same way. Indeed, this is necessarily the case. The field (I use the term following Bourdieu 1985) of Islam in Egypt today provides much less space for Sufi orders than before; the different groups are effectively competing for members within a narrowed social arena. While doctrines hardly differ, strategies develop as a means of asserting characteristic social and ritual identities, and addressing particular demographic targets. Successful Sufi groups possess a unique character, a singular appeal, enabling them to occupy a unique and recognizable 'niche' in the field of Islam. The question to be answered is how do these strategies work?

Michael Gilson, in his monograph on the Hamidiyya Shadhiliyya *tariqa* (formally founded in 1926–1927), shows how this order's attention to regulated social control and centralized administration, combined with a strict adherence to Islamic principles (as well as its relative newness), enabled it to adapt to change and grow in the mid-twentieth century, a period when Sufism was already contracting. Indeed, he claims that the Hamidiyya Shadhiliyya was the most highly organized and active group in Egypt during his research there (in 1964–1966) and that it was the only group to avoid the broader decline (Gilson 1973: 7198–9206).

The importance of central control, strict organization, accountability and Islamic conservatism as important factors underlying the success of the modern Sufi order, and enabling it to adapt, is indisputable. But what are the practices that establish and support these factors? Gilson's study supports the notion that the successful order must actively deploy group-level strategies, i.e., strategies conceived with the group in mind, in order to ensure the order's continued viability. But such strategies must be realized through practical activities facilitated or required by the order.

While members may perform various activities individually, the most effective and economical moment at which a strategy can act upon the whole group is at the moment when the group is socially convened, in a tightly bounded domain of time and space, and communicating with itself. It follows that control of LP in the *hadra* should be one of the most potentially effective tools of any group-level strategy that seeks to maintain the group, and that we may search for evidence of such strategy through careful analysis of *hadra* LP.

In Egyptian Sufi discourse, the explicit functions of LP in *hadra* are ritual and pedagogic. When asked, Sufis will say that LP genres – when recited properly – ought to raise one’s spiritual level, or increase one’s store of religious knowledge. However, certain *turuq* – primarily those founded in the twentieth century – additionally exploit the social potential of LP for the group’s goals: continuity, identity, expansion, solidarity and repelling critics.

Historically, Sufi ritual has tended to attract the brunt of effective Sufi criticism. Ritual control is thus an effective means of stemming this source of decline. But LP is also capable of shaping the social group directly. LP’s four aspects – syntactic, semantic, sonic and pragmatic – offer powerful potential for self-direction, though not all *turuq* are socially structured so as to be able to take advantage of this. But what seems to be required for success in the modern period is precisely the social power that control of LP provides.

The newer orders use LP effectively and completely, leaving very little to chance or individual whim. Features of LP have been determined, which act upon existing members, attract new one and construct a well-honed image for outsiders. In this case, LP can be largely understood as a direct or indirect response to the challenges posed by modernity.

Older *turuq*, due to different historical conditioning and a different social structure, are less able to formulate group-level strategies relevant to modern problems. Although LP is not devoid of social function in these orders, such function exists less by active design than by the inertia of tradition. Thus, one finds that in these orders long-established strategies continue to inform performance even though they no longer respond to the problems of the day; such strategies may never have constituted a complete template for performance, and furthermore may erode over time. Due to such ‘gaps’ in group-level strategies, many features of LP are filled in by local shaykhs or individual participants, sometimes determined improvisationally during performance, and conditioned by individual motivation and local expedience. Such features are therefore not determined by the needs of the group as a whole, but rather reflect the group’s weakened social condition.

Therefore, the profusion of LP among the Sufi orders in Egypt today results from at least two factors: the ability of the order to control the resources of LP for its social, as well as spiritual, goals; and the particular strategy (or absence of one) that the *tariqa* adopts as a means of coping with a modern world less interested in Sufism than before. For those groups that employ LP as an active means of realizing social strategies, the form of LP reflects those strategies, at least to some degree. For those that do not, the form of LP is a relatively passive expression of the group’s history and current state.

By defining and analysing LP as broadly as possible (via the four aspects), it becomes possible to understand how LP can take advantage of the social density of group

ritual to create social effects: to reinforce group identity (including the maintenance of a centralized and cohesive social structure), to recruit new members and to defend against critics. Ritual performance thus helps to secure the group in a defensible niche within a modern Egyptian social space that is either indifferent or actively hostile to the continued existence of the mystical orders.

The successful orders are what I term modernist: born in the modern era, deeply conscious of the challenges it poses, and able to respond to them. The modernist group is relatively new, and still retains the enthusiasm derived from its founder's charisma. Such a group thus constitutes a primary source of identity for members, who are wholly committed to it. Such a situation perhaps always obtains in the early days of any religious movement. But since modern times have straitened the social role of Sufism, it is only the modernist groups that are able to adapt, and they do so in large measure through control of ritual language performance.

Because of the delicacy of their social positions, very little is left to chance in such rituals. LP is controlled completely, not only that which takes place under the direct supervision of tariqa leaders at the *tariqa's* centre, but even at the remote periphery far from central authority, where individual tariqa chapters are led by local shaykhs. Thus, there are virtually no 'strategic vacuums': aspects of performance that, being unregulated by group strategies, are left open to be filled according to the individual motivations of participants. Because they are new, these modernist groups are less likely to feel obliged to employ entrenched Sufi practices simply by force of tradition. However, such traditional practices may be adopted deliberately for a variety of strategic reasons.

Other orders have been much less successful in strategically adapting to modern conditions. These tend to be the older *turuq* – such as the Bayyumiyya, the Ahmadiyya, the Rifa'iyya and the Qadiriyya – most of them founded in pre-modern Egypt (eighteenth century and earlier), and originally adapted to the social conditions of their foundational eras, when Sufism enjoyed a relatively dominant social position. Over time, these traditional orders, unable to adapt to changing conditions, have become decentralized and lacking in group cohesion. Members of such orders tend not to identify with the group as a whole, but rather with local shaykhs (and perhaps with other followers of those shaykhs) who are loosely affiliated with the larger *tariqa*. These orders possess neither the requisite levels of group awareness, nor the unified and cohesive social structure, which would enable the formulation, dissemination and application of effective group-level strategies. They are therefore unable to harness the potential of LP effectively in ritual. Rituals performed by such groups are dominated by hysteresis: performative elements that do not respond to present needs, but rather represent a strategic adaptation to an earlier historical situation, or merely a process of ritual accretion and erosion over time. Hysteresis is a kind of continuity by inertia, by which the past exerts a coercive force upon the present. Modernist groups are relatively free of such restrictions. Among traditional groups, ritual may respond reflexively to modern conditions, passively conforming where external pressure is most intensive (in a highly visible central ritual, say) without the corresponding formulation of an active strategic response at the group level.

In traditional orders, low ritual control, combined with ritual erosion over time, has led to the formation of 'strategic vacuums', uncontrolled aspects of performance, filled by the exigencies of context and the individual strategies of participants acting out

of individual self-interest. Such self-interest frequently aims at producing intensive spiritual emotion in the moment, which may be suitable for neither the long-term spiritual development, which is the ostensible purpose of the *tariqa*, nor for the social adaptation of the *tariqa* itself. While the central rituals of such groups may be controlled by *tariqa* leaders, such control is only effective at short range, and at the group's periphery there is often relative freedom. Therefore, the order as a whole cannot adapt in a coherent way. Although traditional groups are still the largest in Egypt, they depend largely on a hereditary basis of membership in rural areas, now being rapidly depleted by social change. Unable to adapt or to seek new sources of membership, or even to control the rituals of their local chapters, these orders seem destined to decline.

In my analysis, I attempt to show precisely how LP – in its syntactic, semantic, sonic and pragmatic aspects, and via the communicative and affective modes – works for or against the *tariqa*'s social position in the contemporary period, via the presence or absence of a group-level strategy addressing the four principal tasks: to defend against critics, attract and retain membership, uphold a distinctive group identity, and maintain social centralization and cohesion. How exactly can LP in hadra contribute to these goals?

My ethnography of *hadra* – including participant observation, interviews, video and audio recordings, and reviews of all available primary sources (*tariqa* publications: books of prayers and poetry, manuals detailing *tariqa* organization and proper behaviour, biographies of shaykhs and the like) – indicated that *hizb*, *fawatih*, *ad'iyya* and *dhikr* comprise primarily traditional and inflexible material (particularly Qur'an and *adhkar*) functioning mainly in the ritual mode, and hence less effective as strategic tools for social transformation.

However, LP genres of *inshad* and speech (e.g. *wa'z* and *khutba*) function more in the communicative and affective modes. These genres are very effective tools for social transformation, since they can be flexibly manipulated in accordance with group-level strategy. In particular, *inshad* and speech are ordinarily the only LP genres, which clearly carry the voice and authority of the shaykh. The wide range of melodic parameters characteristic of *inshad* are critical, in view of the polemics surrounding the use of music (both melodic content and instrumentation), as well as in determining the emotional power that music provides in performance. Both *inshad* and speech carry the widest range of affective and communicative textual meanings, ranging from passionate mystical love to distant devotion; these meanings are significant both in view of polemics over Sufi ideas and for the influence exerted by such texts in performance.

Space does not allow a full presentation of LP analysis, indicating how features of syntactic, semantic, sonic and pragmatic aspects support the modernist orders. Here I will attend only to strategies addressing one of the four principal tasks – defending against critics of Sufism – because this task alone highlights LP differences between the two *туруq*. In each case, a careful, systematic LP analysis, followed by a synthesis of resulting facts, enables the preparation of a holistic *tariqa* portrait, suggesting – in conjunction with interviews and other data – how these orders deploy LP strategies towards self-positioning in a modern environment generally inhospitable to Sufism.

Founded by Sidi Jabir Husayn Ahmad al-Jazuli (1913–1992) in the early 1950s, the Jazuliyya Husayniyya Shadhiliyya (al-Tariqa al-Jazuliyya 2013) adopt a range of LP strategies for defending relatively ecstatic ritual practices – designed to attract the youth –

against possible charges of heresy (*bid'a*), through carefully calculated adaptation of LP to *hadra* context. Jazuliyya LP includes intensive *dhikr*, accompanied by rapturous *inshad*, what *tariqa* members call *hadra al-inshad* or *dhikr al-hana* (dhikr of the tavern), accompanied by musical instruments, and generating ecstatic responses also through the familiarity of poetry in colloquial Arabic.

But when formulating rules for LP sequencing – and these are strictly applied – the *tariqa* differentiates private and public, centre and periphery *hadra*. Three different kinds of LP sequence are performed: private-periphery, private-centre and public-centre. The public face of the *tariqa* emerges at a *hadra* following public prayer in one of Cairo's principal mosques. Here LP comprises the so-called *hadra shar'iyya* ('legal hadra'): decorous, subdued and highly ordered, this *hadra* includes only *fawatih*, *hizb* and *inshad* with *dhikr*, deploying slower tempos and simpler melodies, entirely omitting speeches, ecstatic poetry or behaviours, musical instruments, or individuality, and muting shaykhly charisma.

Rather, the LP of this *hadra* serves to publicize, among the large group of worshippers who linger in the mosque after prayer, the order's fidelity to the Islamic mainstream, and conformity to traditional Sufism, through primarily ritual mode LP. Such strategies may also serve to attract new members. There are also many local *hadras* (private-periphery) taking place simultaneously in locations around Egypt; these add a focus upon the founder's writings (through study sessions called *mudhakara*), but likewise curtail ecstasy and local charisma, no doubt as these factors tend to result in fissioning.

Ecstatic, musical *dhikr* and charismatic teaching is permitted only at the *tariqa*'s central meeting place, under the firm control and authority of the shaykh, and in a relatively secluded location, isolated from mainstream Egyptian Islam, where the group can perform its rituals undisturbed. Nevertheless, all LP practices are grounded in Qur'an and Sunna, with justifications cited from appropriate passages during teaching sessions incorporated as LP within the *hadra* itself. Finally, even when ecstatic, *hadras* never become out of control; emotional display is permitted only within strict boundaries of time, space and decorum, as internalized by members.

The Ja'fariyya Ahmadiyya Muhammadiyya, formed as a *tariqa* in the 1960s as a teaching circle around Shaykh Salih al-Ja'fari (1910–1979), have taken an entirely opposite strategy towards defence, adopting a far more public posture (al-Tariqa al-Ja'fariyya 2013). Towards that end, they continually affirm, through ritual LP of the weekly *hadra*, two crucial connections: first, an institutional connection to official state-sponsored Islam, especially the venerable institution of al-Azhar University, where founder Shaykh Salih al-Ja'fari was employed as professor and imam, and where he developed a broad popular following; second, a spiritual connection to the Idrisiyya tradition of reformed Sufism, as propounded by Ahmad Ibn Idris (1760–1837), who had responded to Wahhabi critics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As noted Idrisiyya scholar R.S. O'Fahey notes, the Ja'fariyya *tariqa*'s founder Shaykh Salih al-Ja'fariyya, '...more than any other member of the Idrisi tradition in the 20th century...worked tirelessly to find and publish writings by or on Ibn Idris...' (O'Fahey 1990: 172).

These connections, reinforced, in ritual practice, through speeches presented by governmental religious officials at the *hadra*, especially at major festival occasions, and

by *hadra* recitations from the Idrisiyya tradition, position the order as entirely public yet also largely irreproachable, forcing its acceptance as part of the Islamic establishment. For instance, Ibn Idris' long, complex *hizb*, *Kanz al-Sa'ada*, in 30 sections, is recited during every Thursday evening *hadra*; indeed, it forms the *hadra's* very core. While it is said to offer tremendous spiritual benefits, its social impact, regularly emphasizing the link to the Idrisiyya tradition, cannot be overestimated either. In contrast to the Jazuliyya, who centre themselves self-sufficiently on the founder-shaykh and his son (who leads the *tariqa* today), for the Ja'fariyya personal connections to the founder's own shaykh – and thence to the broader Sufi tradition – are also crucial. The *tariqa* is not isolated; it is linked.

Through LP performances in their very public and accessible mosque, located close to al-Azhar, the Hussein mosque, and major arterial roads, the Ja'fariyya raise and strengthen the group's public profile. The *tariqa* is a conspicuous target for anti-Sufis, but simultaneously provides a more defensible position, legitimacy being assured by connections to powerful public figures, irreproachable Islamic institutions and venerable modernist Islamic currents.

Concomitantly, Ja'fariyya LP projects a more conservative version of Sufism, one largely acceptable to the official Azhari Islam considered normative in Egypt. Inshad and dhikr are kept entirely separate, the latter confined primarily to the Idrisi *hizb*. Inshad is spartan and sober; there is neither ecstasy nor instruments; melodies are restricted and repetitive, entirely subservient to poetic structure, completely different from those of the Jazuliyya. Texts are largely in classical Arabic (thus referencing the Azhari tradition of high Islam), and mention of esoteric or ecstatic Sufi themes is unusual. Rather, the focus is on relatively uncontroversial *madih nabawi*, and other mainstream religious themes. Performance is required to be uniform; almost no individuality or emotionalism is tolerated; the primary goals appear to be ritual and communicative. The mood of performance is serious, hushed, still and dignified, as opposed to the jubilant, ecstatic Jazuliyya *hadra*. Performance is also more tightly controlled, since performers of *inshad*, chanting in pairs (and thus without opportunity for individual expression), must select poems from the twelve volumes of Shaykh Salih; most participants have no opportunity to sing as soloists, and the role of speech is extremely limited. Also women are excluded from the *hadra*, whereas in the Jazuliyya *hadra* they are present, in a separate area.

But though this form of Sufism may be labelled conservative, it would be wrong to consider the Ja'fariyya as merely a traditional Sufi group. Rather is in fact their reliance on a tradition of reform (the Idrisiyya), and the active expression of that tradition through centrally controlled ritual, which gives them an aura of legitimacy in the current religious climate.

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What I hope to have shown in this extended disquisition is that from an analytical – and not merely a theological – standpoint, 'music' is not a helpful term for analysing ritual performance in Islam. Indeed, its use distorts the object of such analysis by linking that which should be separated, and separating that which should be linked.

By turning attention away from 'music' and towards 'language performance' as the central phenomenon underlying such practices, while broadening the scope of language performance to include syntactic, semantic, sonic, and pragmatic aspects, and

by carefully analysing the multiple dimensions of those aspects, and differentiating language's multiple modes, the analyst may attain a more holistic perspective, truer to the underlying totality of the phenomenon being examined, focusing attention squarely on the phenomenon that is primary in nearly all Islamic ritual, yet without sacrificing a scientists' precision and the need to maintain a neutral frame for comparative analysis. Some features (e.g. melody), implicitly privileged by 'music', thereby become epiphenomenal, while others (e.g. speech) implicitly excluded by 'music' can swing into full view, enabling the analyst to detect connections and probe relationships among related phenomena that would otherwise have remained obscured by the arbitrary imposition of an alien analytical framework imbued with western aesthetic values (whether 'music' or, equally, 'literature'), as well as by associated disciplinary division between, say, ethnomusicology and literary or religious studies.

It may be even more difficult for an ethnomusicologist to accept the need to reject 'music' in studying Islamic performance when the reasons are scholarly than when they are theological, since acceptance challenges the limitations of his or her training and discipline most directly, and requires that additional study be undertaken. Understanding, however, requires that one reject that which obscures the object one seeks to study, and pursue that which reveals it. I suspect – though the matter is beyond the scope of this paper – that similar conflicts between the analytical frame implied by 'music' and an underlying language-centricity afflict studies of performance in other domains as well, not only in religious ritual, but in myriad other traditions as well, wherever the word is central. But questioning the extent to which understanding may be blocked, a priori, by implicit disciplinary assumptions that eclipse rather than illuminate appears as an urgent task if the 'human sciences' are to uphold both of these terms.

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Contributor details

Michael Frishkopf is Professor of Music at the University of Alberta, an ethnomusicologist and composer. His research interests reflected in his numerous publications include ritual in Islam and Sufism; music of Egypt; music and the built environment; the Arab music industry; the sociology of musical taste; social network analysis; music in cyberworlds; digital music repositories; music of West Africa; and music and global indigenous development. He is a lifetime member of the Society for Ethnomusicology, the International Council for Traditional Music and the Middle East Studies Association of North America. He has received numerous fellowships, including grants from Fulbright, the American Research Center in Egypt, the Social Science Research Council, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, the Killam Foundation (Canada), the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. His edited volume *Music and Media in the Arab World* (Oxford University Press) was published in 2010; two other volumes, *Music, Sound and Architecture in Islam* co-edited with Federico Spinetti, and *The Sounds of Islam*, co-authored with Rizwan Mawani, are in progress.

Contact:

382 FAB, Department of Music, University of Alberta, Edmonton AB T6G2C9, Canada.

E-mail: michaelf@ualberta.ca

Notes

¹ Many of the ideas contained in this article were first developed as part of the theoretical framework for the author's doctoral dissertation (Frishkopf 1999).

² Though not without feeling first the influence of Orientalist-Islamicist thought, a common though often under-appreciated phenomenon; see Ernst's remarkable conclusion that the very name and concept 'Islam' emerged only lately, largely as a consequence of such interactions during the colonial era (1997: xiv–xv).

³ I use the fluid 'language' to avoid the word 'text' due to its implied graphocentrism, its implications of fixity and materiality and its recently broadened metaphorical usage, in semiotics and interpretive cultural studies, to refer to any social or cultural phenomenon to be 'read' (Chandler and Munday 2011, 'text', def. 6).

⁴ In fact, all language use probably exhibits some degree of awareness; this discussion takes place as if the condition were binary, whereas in fact it is a continuum. Thus, one should talk about the 'degree of awareness of actness', a continuous quantity, which would lead to a continuum also in the possibility of strategic control (see below). But the binary simplification will suffice for the sake of this brief discussion.

⁵ Maqam is a modal-melodic concept underlying musics of the Middle East, North African and Central Asian regions.

⁶ The concept of entropy is used to index performative freedom.

⁷ Mode is defined below.

⁸ Sufi authorship is a complex subject in itself (see Frishkopf 2003).

⁹ The following section is adapted from the author's doctoral dissertation (Frishkopf 1999).