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Characteristics of *al-Inshād al-Dīnī*

**Characteristics of the Munshid**

**Genres and Contexts of *al-Inshād* Outside the Sufi Sphere**

**Al-Inshād in Sufi Contexts**

*Al-inshād al-dīnī* (often simply *inshād*) is the melodic vocal performance of Arabic poetry as an Islamic practice. The vocalist, called a *munshid* (plural, *munshidūn*), is usually male; he is addressed as *shaykh* to indicate his elevated religious status. By text or context, *al-inshād* is regarded as a form of worship, though it lies outside the core of Islamic ritual. But even when intended as a religious act, *al-inshād* may produce a wide range of emotional experiences, from mystical rapture to aesthetic enjoyment.

*Al-inshād* thus lies on the border between music and Islam, art and spirituality. Its materials, performance, and emotional
impact draw on both. Historically, al-inshāḍ is closely associated with the tarab tradition—musical performance that induces ecstasy—for which it formerly served as an important training ground. On one side, inshāḍ borders secular singing (ghinā) in the form of aghānī diniyya, songs combining the urban Arab musical tradition with religious texts but lacking a serious religious context or sincere religious intention. On the other, with regard to performance inshāḍ is close to several vocal forms central to Islamic practice, such as the call to prayer (adhān) and Qur'ānic recitation (tajwīd), which may be melodically elaborate. Yet these are not inshāḍ.

The prevailing impression among scholars and laypeople alike is that Islam forbids music in religious ritual and frowns on music in any context; the use of singing in Sufi (mystic) orders is often cited as a rare exception. But in fact melodious use of the voice is seldom absent, even in mainstream Islam.

The prevalence of the melodic voice in Islam stems from the central position of recitation in Islamic practice. Muslims developed melodic versions of recitations in order to beautify and extol them, to draw the listener's attention, to facilitate retention, to clarify meaning, and to develop appropriate emotional responses. In Egypt one hears tajwīd, adhān, and ibtiḥālāt (supplications to Allāh) in ornate melodic style every day.

These recitations are not considered mūsīqa, a term that connotes the sounds of instruments, associated with taboo dancing and drinking. Mūsīqa is frowned on in religious contexts. Even the term ghinā 'singing' is too laden with secular connotations to be applied to true religious performance. Therefore, intoned recitation of poetry as a religious act is termed inshāḍ dīnī; when the recited text is not poetry, special terms such as tajwīd or adhān are used. Melodically these genres share many features. Differences are determined more by text and context than by musical style.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AL-INSHĀḍ AL-DĪNĪ

Al-inshāḍ and Arab music share many elements: monophony and heterophony; systems of maqāmāt and ṭaqqāt; poetic and musical forms; the centrality of poetry and the solo voice; expressive-improvisatory performance of evocative texts; elaborate ornament and melisma; nonmetrical improvisation; and ecstatic feedback from the listener. But inshāḍ also presents some distinctive features, resulting from three formative factors: (1) the conservative nature of the religious domain, which has preserved features prevalent in Arab music before the 1930s; (2) the tendency of practitioners to parry accusations of heresy by establishing terms and practices distinct from secular music; (3) the functional requirements placed on inshāḍ by its special roles and contexts.

The religious import of inshāḍ is deeply rooted within particular performance contexts, which condition and socialize meaning while establishing the performer's authority and sincerity and enabling the intensification of emotion through feedback. Although inshāḍ has been disseminated and popularized by the media, including phonodisks (from the early 1900s), radio (from the 1920s), television (early 1960s), and cassettes (1970s), these media favored more context-independent commercial entertainment; unlike Arab music, live inshāḍ has continued to thrive. Certain inshāḍ genres are performed in conjunction with daily and weekly rituals. Inshāḍ is performed for annual holidays—especially the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, the holy month of Ramadan, and saints' festivals—and for occasions in the life-cycle, such as weddings, circumcisions, and memorials.

The munshīd intends to generate powerful emotion. Ideally, performance intensifies his own true feelings; using musical, textual, and expressive techniques, he tries to evoke similar feelings in the listener. While such emotion is normatively religious, in practice and discourse it is ambiguous, interpreted spiritually as wajd 'spiritual ecstasy' or aesthetically as tarab 'musical ecstasy'.

Listeners play an active role in live inshāḍ, responding vocally and with gestures after melodic cadences. Performers make use of such feedback to guide their decisions, and thereby optimize the emotional power of the performance. Such optimization requires live performance as well as improvisatory flexibility in the genre. Before 1930, this "cybernetic" process was essential to most Arab music, whereas today it is preserved mainly in inshāḍ.

Inshāḍ is fundamentally vocal music, comprising mainly solo and responsorial formats; choral inshāḍ exists in Sufi orders. The use of instruments is discouraged by Islamic strictures and is considered by some to be heretical. Pronunciation is precise, facilitating textual communication. The voice is powerful, penetrating, often nasal, and highly expressive; its
timbres and long breath-phrases resemble Qur'ānic recitation. Within a wide range, the tenor tessitura is emphasized. Melody features elaborate melisma and subtle ornamentation. The solo munshid is ultimately in control of all musical dimensions; traditionally there is no other composer, arranger, or conductor. Much of this control is exercised during the performance, enabling the munshid to express inner feeling spontaneously and adapt to context. However, group inshād is precomposed. All melody is monophonic or heterophonic in texture.

Most inshād uses classical Arabic—the language of the Qur'ān—cast in classical forms such as qaṣīda (plural, qaṣā'id) and muwashshah (plural, muwashshahā), which are two genres of metered, rhymed poetry. There are also colloquial styles of inshād (especially in the Delta region), using popular forms such as mawwāl and zajal, but they are criticized by elites as an ignorant degradation. Usually a solo munshid selects his own poetry.

Mainstream themes include supplications to Allah (ibtihālāt), praise and love of Allah, requests to the Prophet Muhammad for intercession, praise and love of the Prophet (maḍṣī), religious exhortations, and religious stories (qiṣāṣ diniyya), especially stories recounting prophetic miracles. Sufi inshād also includes expressions of mystical experiences, intense longing for Allah and the Prophet, and guidance for the Sufi path, often using esoteric or heterodox symbols.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MUNSHID

Most munshidn are men, because of Islamic conservatism and the public nature of the work. A munshid ordinarily receives some formal religious education that provides a general knowledge of Islam and a strong foundation in Arabic language and literature. He memorizes the Qur'ān and learns to recite it. However, there is no formal instruction in inshād. The munshid memorizes his poetic repertoire from books or aurally. He learns the art of musical performance by listening, imitating, and participating; no musical notation is used. The solo munshid is a musical creator; using practical knowledge of the maqāmāt and poetics, he sets poetry extemporaneously. He must have an excellent memory, clear diction, a deep feeling for poetry, and the ability to express this feeling vocally.

The munshid is distinguished from other singers by his religious identity, which stamps his performance with religious authenticity, even when the text is not overtly religious or when he benefits financially from performance. This identity is supported by his religious education and apparel and certified by the title Shaykh, attributes that link him to other religious authorities. By excelling in inshād and restricting his performance to religious genres, he attains and protects his status as Shaykh; if he performs secular music or presents himself as mutrib—a singer of urban Arab music—he jeopardizes it.

But there is some ambiguity in this identity. Nearly all munshidn (except within Sufi orders) are professionals, concerned with profit and recognition; some become celebrities. Most consider themselves artists and are well acquainted with the Arab musical tradition; some have performed both religious and secular music, and some have crossed over entirely to the latter.

GENRES AND CONTEXTS OF AL-INSHĀD OUTSIDE THE SufI SPHERE

For the elite religious and media establishments, al-inshād comprises two closely related genres sharing performers and themes: ibtiḥālāt and tawāshīḥ. By contrast, qiṣṣās diniyya is a "folk" genre.

Ibtihālāt

Ibtihālāt 'supplications' request blessings, mercy, and salvation from Allah, while glorifying him and praising his Prophet. The central poetic genre is the qaṣīda, often mixed with prose prayers. The munshid is usually a professional, performing adhān and often reciting the Qur'ān as well.

Temporally and stylistically, ibtiḥālāt lie close to adhān and Qur'ānic recitation (tajwīd). Daily before dawn in the larger mosques, following tajwīd. a munshid performs

ibtiḥālāt, closing with the adhān. (One such performance is broadcast daily on government radio.) All three entail a vocal soloist, who uses ornamented, unmeasured, improvisatory melody to set a text melismatically; long breath-phrases are
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But while Qur'anic recitation is a resounding of Revelation to mankind, *ibtiḥālāt* are the reverse: melodic prayer from *munshid* to Allah, and (vicariously) from the listener as well. Whereas Qur'anic recitation is constrained by rigid rules governing syllable lengths and stopping points, *ibtiḥālāt* are relatively free, enabling more melisma, more ornamentation, and more personal expressiveness.

**Tawāshīḥ dīnīyya**

*Tawāshīḥ dīnīyya* (also *tawāshīḥ*) is performed by a solo *munshid* together with a small chorus (biṭāāana), standing in a semicircle around him. Alternating precomposed choral segments with improvisatory solo segments, the group performs *qasā'id* treating a variety of Islamic themes, especially *maḍīḥ* and *ibtiḥālāt*. Other themes are occasional, such as the biographical narratives performed for the Prophet's birthday. *Tawāshīḥ* used to be the prevailing genre of *al-inshād al-dīnī*, a staple for all occasions. Although it is rarely performed today, recordings are broadcast, especially during Islamic holidays.

The heterophonic chorus uses precomposed melodies to perform a line or two, without repetition or pause. Choral melodies are pulsed, but the meter is weak because long melodic phrases transcend metrical units. The soloist then takes up the same text, exploring it in the unmeasured style of *ibtiḥālīt*, often using a higher tessitura and more melisma. This order may also be reversed, with the soloist leading.

In the excerpt notated in figure 1, the chorus introduces a line of poetry in praise of the Prophet, *Anta al-sha'ī'u la'ā biyawmi mi'ādī 'You are our intercessor on Judgment Day', using *maqām ḥijāz* transposed to G, in a pulsed, quasi-metrical, slightly heterophonic style. Following a brief pause, Shaykh Ṭaha al-Fashnū reviews this textual material in an unmeasured solo. After beginning simply in a narrow range (between the 10- and 15-second marks), he pauses, and then he restates the entire poetic line using an elaborate wide-ranging melody—mainly on the syllable *nā*—while modulating to *bayyāt* on G. This example is transcribed using a modified staff notation, in which the duration of a pitch is approximately proportional to the horizontal length of its extended "notehead"; the scale is given in seconds. (Accidentals are indicated just below the notehead and affect only one note.) Below this notation, the choral section is approximately represented in ordinary notation, although meter is ambiguous. True pitch is roughly ten semitones below notated pitch.

**Outstanding munshīd of the twentieth century**

In the early twentieth century, outstanding specialists in *ibtiḥālāt*, *qasā'id dīnīyya*, and *tawāshīḥ dīnīyya* included Sayyid Mūsā, Ismā'īl Sukkar (d. 1940), Abū al-‘Ila Muhammad (1878-1927), 'Alī Maḥmūd (1881-1944?), Darwīsh al-Hartrī (1881-1957), Muḥrīz Sulaymān, and Ibrāhīm al-Farrān (d. 1940s). Figures in the mid-twentieth century included Ṭaha al-Fashnī (1900-1971), 'Ābd al-Samī' Bayyūmī (d. 1970s), Muḥammad al-Fayyūmī (1906-1976), Sayyid al-Naqṣabandī (1921-1976), Naṣr al-Dīn Ţūbār (b. 1921), Muḥammad al-Tūkhlī (b. 1925), Kāmil Yūsuf al-Baḥṭīrī (1920-1969), Muḥammad 'Umran (1944-1994), and Ibrāhīm al-Iskandarānī. Two contemporary figures are Sa'īd Ḥāfīz and Muḥammad al-Hilbāwī. Connoisseurs frequently identify Shaykh Ţaha al-Fashnī as the greatest of all, although Sayyid al-Naqṣabandī became more widely popular through his regular radio appearances during Ramadan. Stars of urban Arab *tarab* music, such as Salāma Hījāẓī (1852-1917), Sayyid Darwīsh (1892-1923), Zakariyā Ahmad (1896-1961), Umm Kulthūm (1904?-1975), and Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1910?-1991), along with most other singers and composers born in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,
Qiṣṣa diniyya

Qiṣṣa diniyya are religious stories performed by a munshid, accompanied by a small ensemble of urban and rural instruments combining the sounds of ṭarab and folk music. Each story, related in contrasting literary and musical styles, lasts one or two hours; two stories—separated by an intermission—constitute an evening’s entertainment.

In contrast to ibtiḥālāt and tawāshīḥ, qiṣṣa draw heavily on folk traditions and ṭarab songs. Live performances attract mostly farmers and rural immigrants in cities; the media present qiṣṣa on folklore programs, and the religious establishment looks down on them. Munshidin learn performance through participation, but since texts are usually memorized from books, there is little textual variation between performances of the same story.

Although the atmosphere of the performance is lighter than for other genres of al-inshād, qiṣṣa have narrative and exhortative features reminiscent of the Friday sermon. In appearance, the male munshid closely resembles a mosque preacher. Yet, of all al-inshād genres, only qiṣṣa features a small number of female vocalists. This exception may result from the proximity of qiṣṣa to folk entertainment and from the fact that they are performed outside the mosque; also, propriety is often ensured by the presence of a male family member in the ensemble.
Figure 2 Performance of qīṣaṣ dtnīyya celebrating the saint's festival for the Imām al-Tūnisī, in Cairo, 9 May 1997. The munshid (center) is supported by a standard instrumental group comprising (left to right) performers on tār‘ large finger cymbals, kawala 'reed flute', ʿūd 'fretless lute', ṭablā 'hourglass drum' (partially obscured in this photo), and mazhar 'large frame drum with jingles'. The use of amplification equipment by vocalist and melodic instrumentalists is standard. Photo by Michael Frishkopf.

Qīṣaṣ are most commonly performed in the Delta for celebrations of the Prophet's birthday and saints' festivals. Wealthy households may sponsor the munshid, or a village may raise funds collectively. Formerly, qīṣaṣ also provided entertainment at weddings, though today popular singers are preferred.

Performances generally take place in a brightly lit tent near the home of the sponsor, or near the saint's shrine, starting after the night prayer. The amplified ensemble performs on a stage and usually includes violin, kawala 'reed flute', ʿūd fretless lute', frame drums, ṭablā 'hourglass drum', and finger cymbals (figure 2).

Often the munshid begins with a Qur’ānic recitation or a short dhikr (described below). Following a musical overture (a ʿtarab song, or a series of instrumental improvisations, taqāstm), he sings a religious mawwāl—a colloquial poem presented in non-metrical improvisatory style — without percussion. Then he begins the first story. Stories are of two types: prophet stories (qīṣaṣ nabawiyya) from the Islamic canon, and moral fables (qīṣaṣ khiyāliyya) drawing on Islamic themes and symbols; the latter are more popular among young people.

The story comprises a series of narrative episodes presented as both colloquial poetry (zajal, performed metrically with heterophonic accompaniment) and unaccompanied speech. Following each metric portion, the ensemble plays instrumental excerpts from ʿtarab songs. Between episodes, the singer inserts a mawwāl matching the story's themes, accompanied by melodic instruments and interspersed with taqāstm. In instrumentation and musical style, the ensemble resembles the takht of early twentieth-century Arab music. Qīṣaṣ are also shortened and decontextualized through the mass media. Besides television performances, a thriving cassette industry centered in Tanta produces dozens of artists, usually in the studio. Shops in the Delta do a brisk business selling these cassettes, which are frequently played in other shops, taxis, and the homes of connoisseurs.

AL-INSHĀD IN SUFI CONTEXTS

Within al-inshād al-dtnī is a subcategory: al-inshād al-ṣūfi, that is, al-inshād al-dtnī incorporating explicitly Sufi themes or occurring in explicitly Sufi contexts. However, the boundary is never sharp; Sufi concepts, beliefs, and practices permeate Islam, and musically there is interpenetration as well.

Sufism is the mystical aspect of Islam. Motivated by a deep love and longing for Allah and his Prophet, the Sufis seek to rise spiritually through supererogatory devotions. In their view, some people are closer to Allah than others; those who are
advanced provide seekers with spiritual help (madad), including blessings, guidance, and intercession. The Prophet Muhammad, being closest to Allah, is the greatest source of madad. Next are the saints, pious Muslims whose miraculous deeds indicate their high spiritual level. After death, a saint's blessing radiates from his or her shrine, where a yearly festival may be centered. Among the saints are the founders of the Sufi orders.

The Sufi's spiritual program is formalized in the order (tariqa) of his spiritual master (shaykh). The shaykh guides disciples in the doctrines and practices of the order and monitors their spiritual progress. The central practice is dhikr 'remembrance'. Broadly, dhikr includes prayers, Qur'anic recitation, religious study, and inshād, all of which are "reminders" of Allah. Specifically, dhikr refers to rhythmic group chanting of the Names of Allah, with attendant physical movement. In a group meeting (hadra; plural, hadrāt), held once or more each week, disciples perform various forms of dhikr, including the chanted kind, which is commonly accompanied by inshād.

Sufism extends far beyond the formal orders. Although each order has distinctive features, the general contours of practice and doctrine are shared. Further, many individuals who are not active in any particular order subscribe to the Sufi worldview. Such commonalities both indicate and support a broader concept that may be termed "informal Sufism"—a larger system of thought, feeling, and action from which the orders emerge as social and ritualistic crystallizations. When a community is permeated by Sufism, all holidays and life-cycle occasions are cause for celebration with informal public hadrāt, in which anyone may participate. The most spectacular public hadrāt take place during saints' festivals.

**Al-inshād within the hadra of Sufi orders**

Sufis consider poetry the linguistic vehicle most apt for expressing and eliciting mystical feelings and for communicating Sufi teachings. Performed as inshād, poems are easier to absorb and retain; singing also heightens the spiritual and emotional atmosphere. Group inshād coordinates performance and increases solidarity. But music and emotion are controversial in Islam, so orders must regulate inshād and behavior in the hadra.

The order's regular hadra is strictly organized; each participant has a specific role. The shaykh presides and maintains ultimate control. The mustaftih 'starter' regulates dhikr tempo, movement, and chant. Munshidin are usually amateurs: members with good voices and memories, although in several popular orders they are semiprofessionals. A lead munshid may select poetry and serve as musical director; occasionally there are accompanying instrumentalists as well.

After night prayer, disciples take seats in formation. Usually there are two or more facing rows. The hadra opens with call-and-response "bidding prayers" (jawātih) for the Prophet and saints, followed by a longer group prayer (hizb). Next comes dhikr chanting, comprising a series of short segments, each characterized by a single chanted phrase and physical movement.

Frequently, dhikr is accompanied by inshād, which may be performed by a soloist (possibly with a responding chorus), by a chorus, or by antiphonal choirs. Nonmetrical inshād may occur in the pauses between segments. The solo munshid improvises, delivering poetry in stock melodic motives. Choral inshād uses a fixed melody, which ordinarily repeats for each strophe (figure 3). Melodic style often varies with cultural background. Thus, for example, the Burhaniyya, a Sudanese order, use pentatonic scales in their center in Cairo (where many Sudanese live), whereas their branches in the Egyptian Delta use maqāmāt. Instrumental accompaniment is usually limited to frame drums, though occasionally a kawala or even an 'ād 'fretless lute' appears. No instruments are used in mosques, or by conservative orders.

The example transcribed as figure 3 shows an initial segment of dhikr accompanied by choral inshād, from the weekly hadra of the Sufi order (al-Ḥāmidiyya al-Shādhiliyya)
While the majority of the brethren bow forward and back, chanting *dhikr* (here, the Name of God, "Allah"), a chorus of *munshid*īn recite poetry. Here they sing the line *Ishrab sharāb ṣafā bi ṣafā tara l-ʿagāyib maʿa rigāli l-maʿrifā wa l-khamru tāyib* 'Drink the drink of the people of purity and you'll see wonders with the men of gnosis, for their wine is well-aged'. The *mustaftih.b*, Shaykh Muhammad al-Hilbāwī (who is also the lead *munshid*), controls tempo by handclaps. Note that the *dhikr* chant becomes unpitched and metrically regular as soon as the *inshād* begins.

Each *dhikr* segment builds in energy. Its tempo and length are regulated by the *mustaftih*’s handclaps, which gradually accelerate as the *dhikr* movements become more rapid and energetic. There is a gradual rise in tuning; the solo *munshid* may also modulate to raise the tonal center. The volume increases, and the melodic phrases become shorter. After several such segments, the *ḥāḍra* closes with prayers particular to the order and with *fawātib*.

Choral or responsorial *inshād* may also be included as an activity separate from *dhikr*. Figure 4 shows two lead *munshid*īn (first row, at left) with microphones who perform a *qaṣāda*, setting each strophe to a fixed melody. The congregation responds with a recurring refrain, led by a third amplified *munshid* (first row, third from left). All *qaṣāʿida* performed as...
inshād are selected from the twelve-volume poetic oeuvre—housed in the open wooden box in front of the lead munshidīn—of the order’s founder, (Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Ja’farī). Such inshād is not accompanied by dhikr chant or movement, and no instruments are used.

Munshidīn frequently perform poetry composed or selected by a shaykh of the order, which may be published as a hymnal. Poetry is also selected from the works of well-known Sufi poets, or from traditional collections. Written poems are usually qaṣā‘id. In popular orders, colloquial poetry (zajal or mawwāl) from the oral tradition is also performed. Besides poetry, munshidīn perform requests for madad ‘spiritual help’, directed to the Prophet and saints.

Thematically, Sufis divide al-inshād into two main types: that which petitions or "remembers" Allah, and that which praises the Prophet (madīḥ). Madīḥ is most common, for it complements the dhikr: while disciples "remember" Allah, munshidīn praise the Prophet. Other poems exhort disciples on the Sufi path or express the mystical experience itself.

While emotion is important, al-inshād of the order is often pedagogical, supporting its spiritual program.

Al-inshād in the public ḥadrā

Sufi inshād of the public ḥadrā is more emotionally charged and ambiguous than that of the orders and unfolds outside the jurisdiction of any order. Participants represent a broad spectrum of beliefs and intentions, and strictures are relaxed.

Behavior is more ecstatic, and mūṣiqā is used; the musical group resembles that of qīsāṣ dīnīyya but is smaller.

Performances begin late and often last until nearly dawn, when the channels between earth and heaven are considered to be most open. Although munshidīn who perform in public ḥadrāt are professionals, many perform free at large saints' festivals, for the saint and for publicity; such performances may draw thousands of participants. In areas where Sufi beliefs and practices are deep-rooted, ḥadrāt are sponsored by families and communities for a wide variety of holidays and life-cycle occasions; in Upper Egypt, weddings are commonly celebrated with public ḥadrāt.

FIGURE 4 Performance of strophic responsorial inshād during the weekly ḥadrā of the Ja'fariyya Ahmadiyya Muhammadiyya order, at their mosque in Cairo, 20 February 1998. Photo by Michael Frishkopf.

Whereas inshād is marginal in the orders, it is central in public ḥadrāt. In the orders, performance is unified primarily by commitment to a spiritual master and his practices. But in the public ḥadrā, inshād is the central organizing and animating force, forging social and emotional unity through the power of words and music.
Like qisas, the public hadra takes place in a tent, with munshid and ensemble on a stage at one end of the facing lines of dhikr performers. Males may perform dhikr or join the crowd of onlookers; older women mingle and even perform dhikr in the more liberal Delta, though not in Upper Egypt. Attendees include those drawn by the occasion, local residents, and the munshids fans. Members of different orders mix freely. Motivations vary; participants may seek spectacle, aesthetic pleasure, or spiritual fulfillment.

Socially, participation is more open than in the orders, while performance is more restricted. Munshid and ensemble dominate both sonically and visually, owing to the high amplification and their position on the stage. But sonically, the performance is more flexible here than in the orders. According to the exigencies of the context, performers spontaneously adjust content and form to maximize aesthetic and spiritual power.

The performance comprises a sequence of suites, separated by brief intermissions. Each suite (wašla) contains an unbroken series of dhikr segments. At the climax of each segment, dhikr becomes ecstatic, and the munshid switches from poetry to madad. Melodic instruments follow the munshids improvisations heterophonically or play short ostinatos reinforcing meter and tonic. Following the munshids cadence, musicians fill in with taqāṣīm or melodies from tarab songs.

The munshid juxtaposes poetic excerpts, gauging listeners' reactions to guide his selections. Especially in the Delta, he may use colloquial poetry to increase comprehension. Responding to context and mood and drawing on a store of melodic fragments, he spontaneously constructs a textual patchwork of authors, themes, and styles. Often he repeats words and lines to emphasize, clarify, or intensify meaning.

The munshid's aim is emotional power, not pedagogy. Texts are often presented more for emotional impact than comprehension. Free of any direct doctrinal or organizational framework, poetry tends toward daring or arcane symbolism. Poetic fragments are further fractured by repetition, allowing the listener to delight in partial meanings and the surfaces of sounds. Vocal technique emphasizes expression: melismas, sighs, and timbral variations that communicate inner feeling. Poetic emotion blends with powerful musical affect generated by strong percussion, improvisation, instruments, popular melodies, and modulation. The munshid raises tonality to build emotion or scans to locate the most affective maqām, seeking a state of modal concentration called saltāna as a means toward spiritual ecstasy.

Typically the munshid belongs to at least one order, which may have provided his first performance opportunities. But after he becomes a professional, his attendance at this order's hadrāt wanes. Often he is traveling. More important, in order to become a munshid of the public hadra, he must weaken his allegiance to any particular order. He may even join many orders in order to strengthen his connection with the larger Sufi community.

Skill in selecting and learning poetry is critical to his reputation, for it is on the quality and range of the poetry performed, as much as his musical and expressive skills, that audiences judge him; he is the poet's voice. At first, he imitates the choices of his more successful colleagues. He reads, searching for poetry to express his feeling. He may also employ a poet to compose new poetry by which he may distinguish himself from others; the contemporary Egyptian poet 'Abd al-'Alm al-Nakhayıl has composed poems for several of the greatest munshidtn, including Yāsīn al-Tuhǎmī [see SNAPSHOT: SHAYKH YĀSĪN AL-TUHĀMĪ]. Experienced singers have memorized at least one hundred to two hundred poems.

The public hadra munshid has a complex identity. He is a religious figure but also a musician who, like the muṭrib, attends to the artistic aspects of his work. Besides his spiritual mission, he aspires to affective power, renown, and wealth. He promotes his career by traveling to the large saints' festivals, producing commercial recordings, and even appearing on folkloric television programs. A successful munshid is affluent, and he is booked far in advance. He draws throngs to the hadra, including fans who travel great distances especially to hear him. When the munshid is the main object, the meaning of the performance may shift from religious ritual to aesthetic experience, to spectacle, or to celebrity.

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