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 Islamic Hymnody in Egypt: Al-Inshād al-Dīnī in [Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 6: The Middle East](#), Ed. by Virginia Danielson, Scott Marcus and Dwight Reynolds (Routledge, 2001). 1200pp

Author: [Frishkopf, Michael](#)

Editor: [Danielson, Virginia](#); [Marcus, Scott](#) & [Reynolds, Dwight](#)

Subjects: Islam & Sufism

People: [Frishkopf, Michael](#); [Kalthoum, Oum](#); [al-Tuhāmī, Shaykh Yāsīn](#); [al-Wahhab, 'Abd](#); [Darwīsh, Sayyid](#); [Prophet Mohammed](#); [Danielson, Virginia](#); [Marcus, Scott](#); [Reynolds, Dwight](#) &

Instrument: Drum, frame; Tabla; Drum, hourglass; Violin; Flute, reed; Ud; Voice; Kawala; Mazhar & Lute, Fretless

Place: Egypt & Cairo, Cairo

Cultural Group: Arab; Sudanese & Egyptian

Musical Subject: Modes

Genre: Vocal + Choral: Chant; Vocal + Choral: Chorus & Instrumental: Canon

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Islamic Hymnody in Egypt: Al-Inshād al-Dīnī

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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, *munshidīn*), 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-inshād* 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, *inshād* borders secular singing (*ghinā*) in the form of *aghānī dīniyya*, 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 *inshād* 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 *inshād*.

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 *ibtihālāt* (supplications to Allah) 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 *inshād dīnī*; when the recited text is not poetry, special terms

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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-INSHĀD AL-DĪNĪ

Al-inshād and Arab music share many elements: monophony and heterophony; systems of *maqāmāt* and *tqā'āt*; poetic and musical forms; the centrality of poetry and the solo voice; expressive-improvisatory performance of evocative texts; elaborate ornament and melisma; nonmetric improvisation; and ecstatic feedback from the listener. But *inshād* 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 *inshād* by its special roles and contexts.

The religious import of *inshād* 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 *inshād* 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 *inshād* has continued to thrive. Certain *inshād* genres are performed in conjunction with daily and weekly rituals. *Inshād* 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 *munshid* 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 *inshād*, 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 *inshād*.

Inshād is fundamentally vocal music, comprising mainly solo and responsorial formats; choral *inshād* 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

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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, *muwashshāhdī*), 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 (*madṭḥ*), religious exhortations, and religious stories (*qīṣaṣ 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 *munshidīn* 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 *muṭrib*—a singer of urban Arab music—he jeopardizes it.

But there is some ambiguity in this identity. Nearly all *munshidīn* (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: *ibtihālāt* and *tawāshīḥ*. By contrast, *qīṣaṣ 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, *ibtihālāt* lie close to *adhān* and Qur'ānic recitation (*tajwīd*). Daily before dawn in the larger mosques, following *tajwīd*, a *munshid* performs

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ibtihālāt, 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

separated by silences. In both *tajwīd* and *ibtihālāt*, the performer often repeats text for emphasis, clarification, or emotional effect.

But while Qur'ānic recitation is a resounding of Revelation to mankind, *ibtihālāt* are the reverse: melodic prayer from *munshid* to Allah, and (vicariously) from the listener as well. Whereas Qur'ānic recitation is constrained by rigid rules governing syllable lengths and stopping points, *ibtihālāt* are relatively free, enabling more melisma, more ornamentation, and more personal expressiveness.

Tawāshīh dīniyya

Tawāshīh dīniyya (also *tawāshīh*) is performed by a solo *munshid* together with a small chorus (*biṭāāna*), standing in a semicircle around him. Alternating precomposed choral segments with improvisatory solo segments, the group performs *qaṣā'id* treating a variety of Islamic themes, especially *madīh* and *ibtihālāt*. Other themes are occasional, such as the biographical narratives performed for the Prophet's birthday. *Tawāshīh* 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 *ibtihālāt*, 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-shāfi'u lanā biyawmi mi'ādi* 'You are our intercessor on Judgment Day', using *maqām hijāz* transposed to G, in a pulsed, quasi-metrical, slightly heterophonic style. Following a brief pause, Shaykh Ṭaha al-Fashnī 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 *bayyātī* 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 *munshidm* of the twentieth century

In the early twentieth century, outstanding specialists in *ibtihālāt*, *qaṣā'id dīniyya*, and *tawāshīh dīniyya* included Sayyid Mūsā, Ismā'īl Sukkar (d. 1940), Abū al-'Ilā Muḥammad (1878-1927), 'Alī Maḥmūd (1881-1944?), Darwīsh al-Ḥarīrī (1881-1957), Muḥriz Sulaymān, and Ibrāhīm al-Farrān (d. 1940s). Figures in the mid-twentieth century included Ṭaha al-Fashnī (1900-1971), 'Abd al-Samī' Bayyūmī (d. 1970s), Muḥammad al-Fayyūmī (1906-1976), Sayyid al-Naqshabandī (1921-1976), Naṣr al-Dīn Ṭubār (b. 1921), Muḥammad al-Tūkhī (b. 1925), Kāmil Yūsuf al-Baḥtīmī (1920-1969), Muḥammad 'Umrān (1944-1994), and Ibrāhīm al-Iskandarānī. Two contemporary figures are Sa'īd Ḥāfīz and Muḥammad al-Hilbāwī. Connoisseurs frequently identify Shaykh Ṭaha al-Fashnī as the greatest of all, although Sayyid al-Naqshabandī became more widely popular through his regular radio appearances during Ramadan. Stars of urban Arab *ṭarab* music, such as Salāma Hijāzī (1852-1917), Sayyid Darwīsh (1892-1923), Zakariyā Aḥmad (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,

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(true pitch = minor 7th below notated pitch)

CHORUS: quasi-metric

MAQĀM: ḤIJĀZ on G



SOLO MUNSHID: non-metric

MAQĀM: ḤIJĀZ on G



MAQĀM: ḤIJĀZ on G

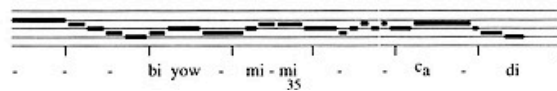
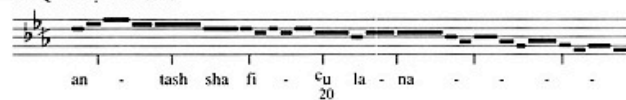


FIGURE 1 Typical example of *tawāshīḥ dīniyya*, excerpted from a performance by Shaykh Ṭaha al-Fashnī (solo *munshid*) and his chorus (*biṭāna*), for the Prophet Muhammad's birthday celebration (*mawlid al-nabī*). From Sono Cairo 76028/601 *Ṭaha al-Fashnī: Ibtihālāt and Tawāshīḥ dīniyya*, side 1. Transcription by Michael Frishkopf. acquired their basic vocal and musical training as *munshidīn*, before turning to non-religious forms of Arab music.

Qīṣaṣ dīniyya

Qīṣaṣ dīniyya 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 *ibtihālāt* and *tawāshīḥ*, *qīṣaṣ* draw heavily on folk traditions and *ṭarab* songs. Live performances attract mostly farmers and rural immigrants in cities; the media present *qīṣaṣ* on folklore programs, and the religious establishment looks down on them. *Munshidīn* 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*, *qīṣaṣ* 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 *qīṣaṣ* features a small number of female vocalists. This exception may result from the proximity of *qīṣaṣ* 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.

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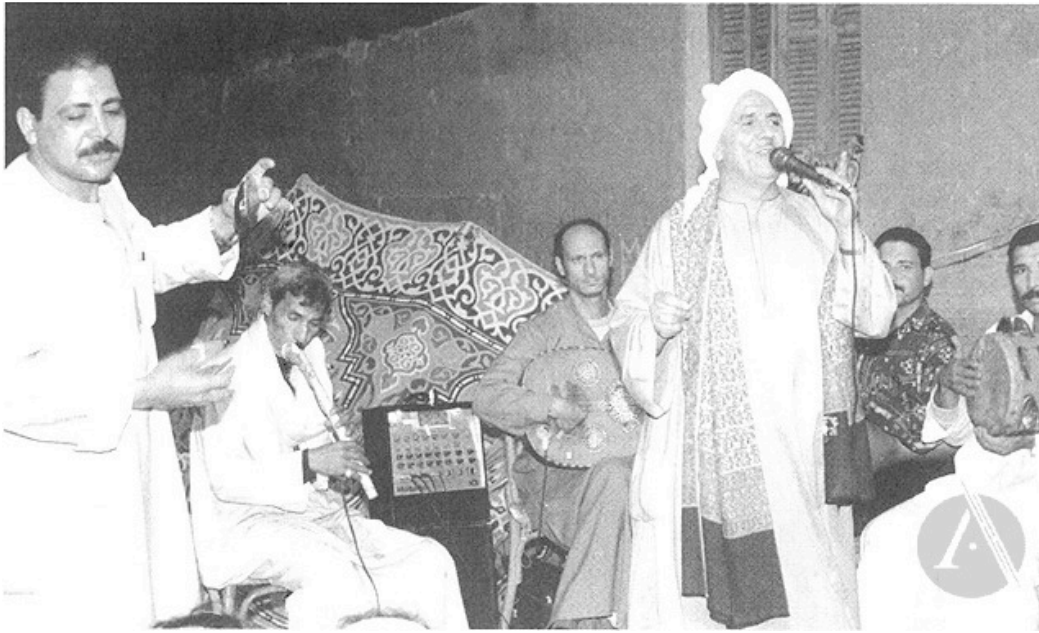


FIGURE 2 Performance of *qīṣaṣ dīniyya* celebrating the saint's festival for the Imām al-Tūnisī, in Cairo, 9 May 1997. The *munshid* (center) is supported by a standard instrumental group comprising (left to right) performers on *tōra* 'large finger cymbals', *kawala* 'reed flute', *ūd* 'fretless lute', *ṭabla* 'hourglass drum' (partially obscured in this photo), and *mashhar* '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', *ūd* fretless lute', frame drums, *ṭabla* '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 *ṭarab* song, or a series of instrumental improvisations, *taqāṣīm*), 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 *ṭarab* songs. Between episodes, the singer inserts a *mawwāl* matching the story's themes, accompanied by melodic instruments and interspersed with *taqāṣīm*. 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-dīnī* is a subcategory: *al-inshād al-ṣūfī*, that is, *al-inshād al-dīnī* 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

spiritually

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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 (*ṭarīqa*) 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'ānic 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 (*ḥaḍra*; plural, *ḥaḍrāt*), 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 *ḥaḍrāt*, in which anyone may participate. The most spectacular public *ḥaḍrāt* take place during saints' festivals.

Al-inshād within the ḥaḍra 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 *ḥaḍra*.

The order's regular *ḥaḍra* 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. *Munshidīn* 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 *ḥaḍra* opens with call-and-response "bidding prayers" (*fawātiḥ*) for the Prophet and saints, followed by a longer group prayer (*ḥizb*). 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 'ūd '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 *ḥaḍra* of the Sufi order (al-Ḥāmidīyya al-Shādhiliyya)

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The musical score is divided into three systems, each with three staves: Dhikr, Mustafih (Clap), and Chorus (Ishad). The tempo is marked as 50 and 60. The lyrics are in Arabic, and the score includes a watermark for the University of Alberta.

System 1:

- Dhikr:** Mustafih alone: Al lah Al lah Al lah
- Mustafih (Clap):** Clap pattern
- Chorus (Ishad):** ish

System 2:

- Dhikr Group:** Al - la h Al - la h Al - la h Al - la h Al - la h
- Mustafih (Clap):** Clap pattern
- Chorus:** rab sha - ra - ba - lis sa fa - ta ral ca ga - yi - bish

System 3:

- Dhikr Group:** Al - la h Al - la h Al - la h Al - la h
- Mustafih (Clap):** Clap pattern
- Chorus:** yi - ib ma ca ri ga - li - il ma^c ri - fa -

System 4:

- Dhikr Group:** Al - la h Al - la h Al - la h Al - la h
- Mustafih (Clap):** Clap pattern
- Chorus:** wal kham ru - ta - yi - ib ma - yi - ib

FIGURE 3 Transcription by Michael Frishkopf, from a recording by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Hilbāwī. in Cairo. While the majority of the brethren bow forward and back, chanting *dhikr* (here, the Name of God, "Allah"), a chorus of *munshidīn* recite poetry. Here they sing the line *Ishrab sharāb āli ṣ-ṣafā tara l-'agāyib ma'a rigāli l-ma'rifa 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 *mustafih*.b, Shaykh Muḥammad 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 *mustafih*'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 *ḥaḍra* closes with prayers particular to the order and with *fawātiḥ*.

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Choral or responsorial *inshād* may also be included as an activity separate from *dhikr*. Figure 4 shows two lead *munshidīn* (first row, at left) with microphones who perform a *qaṣīda*, 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 *qaṣā'id* 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 *ḥaḍra

Sufi *inshād* of the public *ḥaḍra* 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 *mūsīqā* is used; the musical group resembles that of *qīṣaṣ dīniyya* 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 *ḥaḍrāt* 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, *ḥaḍrāt* 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 *ḥaḍrāt*.



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

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Whereas *inshād* is marginal in the orders, it is central in public *ḥaḍrat*. In the orders, performance is unified primarily by commitment to a spiritual master and his practices. But in the public *ḥaḍra*, *inshād* is the central organizing and animating force, forging social and emotional unity through the power of words and music.

Like *qīṣaṣ*, the public *ḥaḍra* 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 (*waṣla*) 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 *taqāsim* 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 *salṭāna* 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 *ḥaḍrāt* wanes. Often he is traveling. More important, in order to become a *munshid* of the public *ḥaḍra*, 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-'Alīm al-Nakhayl has composed poems for several of the greatest *munshidīn*, including Yāsīn al-Tuhāmī [see SNAPSHOT: SHAYKH YĀSĪN AL-TUHĀMĪ]. Experienced singers have memorized at least one hundred to two hundred poems.

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The public *ḥaḍra 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 *ḥaḍra*, 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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