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Global networking and locality  
*Edited by Ron Geaves, Markus Dressler and Gritt Klinkhammer*

## Sufis in Western Society

Global networking and locality

**Edited by Ron Geaves,  
Markus Dressler and  
Gritt Klinkhammer**

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## 4 Globalizing the soundworld

### Islam and Sufi music in the West

*Michael Frishkopf*

#### An Egyptian Shaikh's reception in Edmonton

I first met Shaikh Mohamed el-Helbawy (b. 1946) in 1995, while researching the Hamidiyya Shadhiliyya tariqa (Sufi order) in Cairo.<sup>1</sup> At that time he served as that tariqa's lead munshid (chanter of hymns), as well as principal muqri' (Qur'an teacher and reciter) at their large mosque in the upscale Mohandiseen neighborhood. Shaikh Mohamed is an established Qur'an reciter well-versed in the Egyptian tradition of mujawwad (melodically elaborate tilawa, Qur'anic recitation), regularly performing at mayatim (funeral gatherings) and specializing also in several genres of inshad dini (religious hymnody), especially tawashih (semi-composed dialogues between solo munshid, and choral bitana) and ibtihalat (improvised supplications and praises), as well as the adhan (the Muslim call to prayer); he regularly performs ibtihalat and adhan on Egyptian national radio. He also performs staged versions of these genres with his Firqat al-Inshad al-Dini (Religious Hymnody Group), comprising vocalists, duff (frame drum), and nay or kawala (reed flute). Most Egyptians consider such an ensemble, and its musical sound, to be a representation of Islamic turath (heritage). This perception is reinforced by Shaikh el-Helbawy's traditional dress, training, and milieu. Raised in the medieval Cairo neighborhood of Bab al-Shi'riyya – a district brimming with sights and sounds of mosques, madrasas, saint shrines and Sufi orders – he absorbed the styles and repertoires of traditional Islamic recitation and hymnody from the greatest performers of the twentieth century – Shaikh Mustafa Isma'il, Shaikh 'Abd al-Basit 'Abd al-Samad, Shaikh Taha al-Fashni, Shaikh Sayyid al-Naqshabandi – and from the senior munshidin in the Hamidiyya Shadhiliyya tariqa. More formally, he studied tilawa at the venerable al-Azhar University (established under the Fatimids c.975), and Arabic music theory with co-tariqa member, composer and musicologist Dr Soliman Gamil (see Figure 4.1).

Shaikh Mohamed embodies the traditional intersection, formerly broad, between art and spirituality in Egyptian society. Though locally known primarily for his abilities as a religious performer, he is also indisputably significant as a musical artist, as measured not only by intuitive knowledge and skill in Arab music, but also through extensive concertizing – in Cairo's cultural centers, and

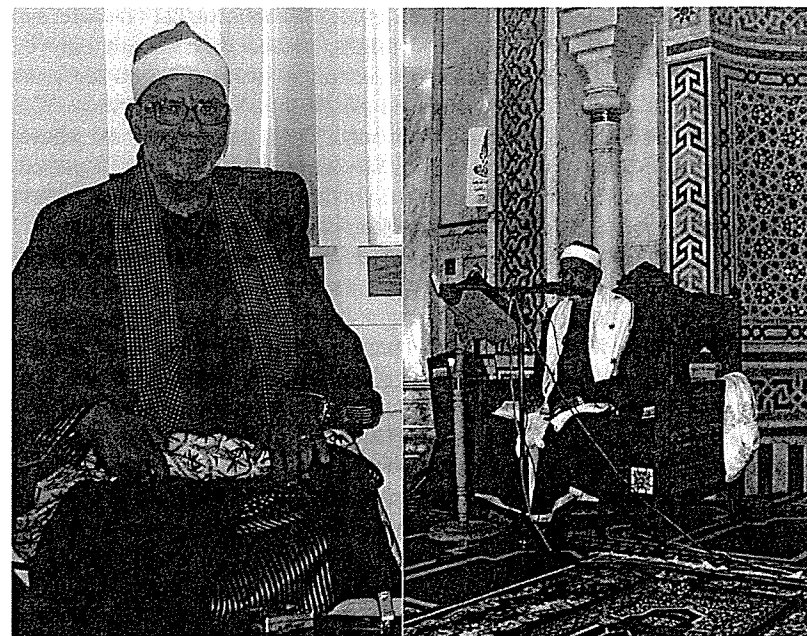


Figure 4.1 Shaikh Mohamed el-Helbawy: teaching in Edmonton (March 2005; left), and reciting pre-dawn ibtihalat at the mosque of Sidi'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin in Cairo, for broadcast on Egyptian radio (April 2007; right) (photographs by the author).

on the World Music circuit in Europe (including the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris) – and through publication of several compact-disc recordings in Europe (e.g. Chazili, 1982; El Helbawy, 2003; "Mozart in Egypt," 2002). Though his recordings present varying proportions of "music" and "Islam" (from World Music fusion to ethnographic representation of Sufi ritual) all are directed primarily toward a non-Muslim market and filed under "World Music" in record shops.<sup>2</sup>

In December of 2003, while on a year's research leave in Cairo, I began mulling a plan to bring Shaikh Mohamed el-Helbawy to the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, where I presently teach in the Department of Music. The University of Alberta provides generous funding for visiting lecturers, and looks especially favorably upon those who would benefit the broader Edmonton community. In the post-9/11 world I felt certain that bringing a Muslim spiritual artist, projecting a humane image of Islam, would receive university support. However I also knew that I would be expected to demonstrate interest from the Muslim community of Edmonton, both on campus and beyond.

Greater Edmonton is a diverse urban community, within the Canadian province of Alberta. According to the 2001 census, Edmonton's population was

666,104; Alberta's 2,974,807 (StatsCan, 2001c).<sup>3</sup> Overall, both Edmonton and Alberta contain a high proportion of Muslims, exceeded in Canada only by Ontario, and the percentage has increased sharply over the previous ten years (see Figure 4.2); the 2001 census indicates 18,790 Muslims in Edmonton (2.9 percent) and 49,045 in Alberta (1.7 percent). These percentages are almost entirely due to the larger urban areas of Edmonton and Calgary (2.8 percent Muslim), and the study and work opportunities they provide; the rest of Alberta (mainly rural) is only 0.3 percent Muslim (StatsCan, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c).

In December 2005, the University of Alberta comprised approximately 32,000 full-time students, of which the graduate student population (4,356) was about 40 percent non-Canadian, including a conspicuous population of immigrant students from Muslim-majority countries, many from the Arab Middle East. By contrast, the undergraduate population is only about 8 percent non-Canadian. Figuring conservatively, the number of undergraduate Muslim students should be about 600 (2.2 percent of the undergraduate student body), 29 percent of these first-generation immigrants and 71 percent non-immigrant Canadians. The number of graduate Muslim students should be about 234 (5.4 percent of the graduate student body), 81 percent of these first-generation immigrants and 19 percent non-immigrant Canadians.<sup>4</sup>

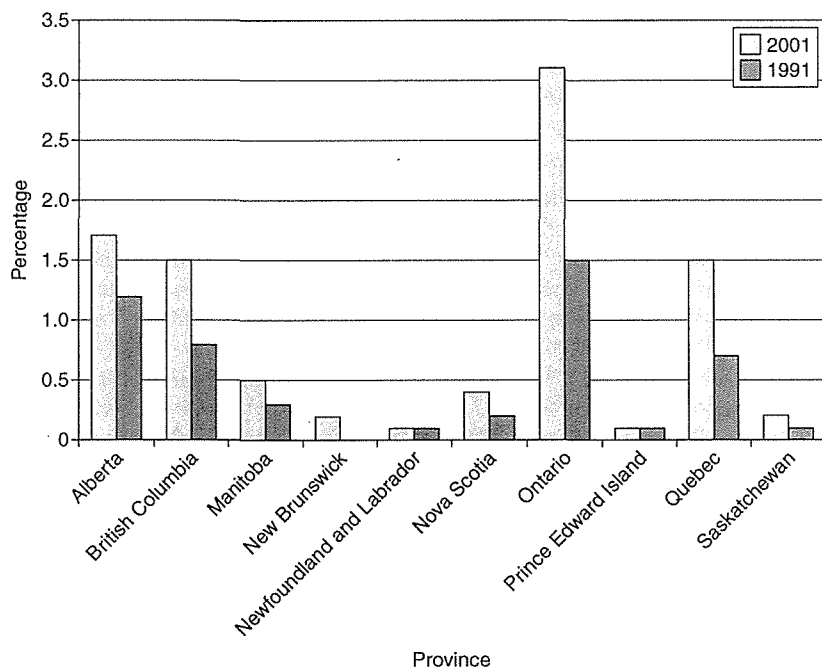


Figure 4.2 Muslims in Canada, by province (2001) (source: StatsCan, 2001b).

Muslims began to emigrate to Canada during the late nineteenth century, although in 1931 there were still reportedly only 645 Muslim residents in Canada, mostly Arabs; Canada's first mosque (al-Rashid) was founded in Edmonton in 1938, by 20 Lebanese Muslim families (Abu Laban, 1983: 138–139). Drawing heavily on the Middle East and South Asia, Muslim populations across Canada expanded rapidly after 1990, particularly in Alberta. Today, Edmonton's pioneering Muslim umbrella organization, the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities (ECMC), represents nine Muslim organizations, and Edmonton houses over ten places of Muslim worship, including six Sunni mosques, and others serving Shia, Ismaili and Ahmadi communities.

In public, Muslim leaders tend toward tolerance and liberality; these attitudes are best demonstrated by the remarkable ECMC. But within the mosques themselves, out of the public eye, a different atmosphere often prevails. Over the course of some eight years living in Edmonton, I have heard even practicing Muslim friends and acquaintances complaining about "Salafi" attitudes prevailing in local Edmonton Sunni mosques. Sermons often (although not always) exhibit a conservative and sometimes even intolerant line: railing against liberal society; warning against making non-Muslim friends; generally opposing "us" (Muslims) to "them" (others). From the perspective of such sermons, the Sunni community appears relatively closed; Shiites are hardly recognized as Muslims, and Ismailis not at all. Fear of *bida* (innovation, i.e. heresy) is rampant. Sufism is not acknowledged in official mosque discourse, and informally statements rejecting Sufism (e.g. "Sufism has nothing to do with Islam") are commonly heard. Even when not hostile to outsiders, the wisdom of caution lies heavily upon the community's public practice.

Clear boundaries between "Sufi" and "orthodox" Islam, so carefully inscribed both by orientalist and Islamic reformist discourses, hardly exist in Egyptian Muslim practice. This ambiguity is best demonstrated in the soundworld,<sup>5</sup> that affectively charged sonic-social intersubjectivity, where sharp boundaries between "Sufi" and "non-Sufi" sound and practice cannot be located. Rather, the whole of Islam is suffused with sonic practices, including *tilawa* (Qur'anic recitation), *du'a'* (supplication), *adhan*, *ibtihalat* and *inshad*, mediated or live, as associated with daily prayer, life-cycle events and religious holidays, as well as with liturgies of the Sufi orders, indicating the interpenetration of Sufi and "mainstream" Islam. Aside from exceptional instances featuring unequivocally mystical texts, and outside of explicitly Sufi contexts, it is impossible to say whether Shaiikh el-Helbawy's repertoire is "Sufi" or "orthodox," because the same recurrent themes (supplication, praise, exhortation, devotion) permeate all Islamic religious poetry and are featured in all Islamic performance contexts. These genres of Islamic vocal performance are highly melodic, powerfully expressive and deeply affecting. The unarticulated, unremarkable prevalence of these sonic forms mediates social relations by linking individual and group experience in an integrated, affectively rich soundworld.

Yet, Islam in Edmonton – as in most North American cities – is comparatively silent. In public, outside the mosque, this silence reflects Muslims'

minority status. In large cities of the Muslim world, calls to prayer, Qur'anic recitation, religious hymns and sermons are broadcast in the streets, and via radio and television media. With few exceptions, such broadcast is controversial where Muslims comprise a social minority.<sup>6</sup>

But in Edmonton even the interior of the mosque is relatively silent. When I arrived in Edmonton in 1999, I wondered why there was no tilawa prior to Friday prayer, a custom which is nearly universal in Egypt. One Egyptian friend told me that some Edmonton Muslims believed such a practice to be *bida* (heretical), an attitude which spread rapidly as representing the "safe side" on which to be. Whereas Ismailis recite a sacred poetic corpus (*ginan* (see Gillani, 2004)), no religious poetry is recited in connection with any Sunni ritual practices I have attended in Edmonton, unlike common practice in Egypt (where *ibtihalat* precede dawn prayer, and Sufi orders are everywhere). On Fridays Muslims gather in the university mosque, sitting or reading Qur'an individually. The call to prayer – object of melodic elaboration in Cairo – is here perfunctory, rarely even elongated, much less beautiful. The sermon is performed in ordinary speech; Qur'anic passages are not melodically elaborated as is often the case in Egypt. Following prayer, all disperse; there is no public *khitam al-salat* (closing) by the imam, a passage often performed melodically in Cairo. During Ramadan the mosques often hire an Egyptian preacher (who may or may not possess a good voice), but never a dedicated Qur'an reciter. Sufism typically carries its own sonic forms, but Sufism plays an exceedingly marginal role among Edmonton's Muslims. There are no Sufi groups operating openly, and in my experience Sufism has never been the subject of weekly sermons or mosque lectures and study groups. (This fact is in stark contrast to other large Canadian cities; for instance, a number of Sufi orders are active in Montreal, often with highly musical *hadras*.)

Such an Islam is not to the liking of several immigrant Muslim acquaintances whose concept of Islam remains defined by practices they grew up with. Nor is it acceptable to the more liberal-minded among them. Some of these have therefore abandoned the mosques. Others attend Friday prayers as a matter of habit, without expecting much spiritual sustenance. Among the second (and subsequent) generation Muslim community, however, the "silence of the mosque" is more accepted, since many have not experienced anything else.

In arranging to obtain letters of support for Shaikh el-Helbawy's visit, I enlisted the help of a Muslim Egyptian-Canadian friend, who expressed the liberal attitude of cultural rapprochement which I had expected to prevail in multicultural Canada, particular among second or third generation Muslims. In an email, she wrote:

Salam Michael

You have my support in bringing Shaykh Mohamad El-Hilbawi. I think it is a great idea and his presence will add another dimension to the religion that is not known to most. People aren't aware that there could be singing and music in Islam. Please, start working on it and I will get you all the letters you need starting with myself.

She suggested I solicit other letters from the president of the Canadian Islamic Center (Edmonton's oldest and largest mosque), the president of the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities (ECMC), the president of the Canadian Arab Friendship Association, president of the Canadian Egyptian Society of Edmonton, and president of the Canadian Arab Professional and Business Club.

I proceeded to write to these individuals, explaining Shaikh el-Helbawy's esteemed position in Egyptian Muslim society, describing his recitational talents and emphasizing the multiple value of his visit: spiritual, educational, aesthetic. Perhaps regarding the issue as primarily a matter of *turath* – cultural heritage – the three non-denominational associations responded positively without delay, despite their multiconfessional memberships. However, the president of Edmonton's oldest (and Canada's first) mosque, al-Rashid, reportedly refused at first, without explanation. Subsequently, my letter to the president of the ECMC stirred a general discussion. The organization's president is well known as a relatively liberal Muslim, eager for dialogue with the wider Canadian society; under his leadership, the organization produced a letter. As a consequence, the mosque also agreed to support the visit.

Having secured the needed funds, and hoping that the university and Edmonton Muslim communities could receive maximal benefit from Shaikh el-Helbawy's visit, now set for March 2005, I sought to identify community groups to be included in his complex schedule of lectures, lecture-demonstrations, workshops and performances. Though the Egyptian community association invited Shaikh el-Helbawy to dinner, the Arab associations did not respond to my scheduling offer.

The Muslim Community of Edmonton mosque – representing primarily the Muslim student body, including a large proportion of immigrants – expressed interest, inviting Shaikh el-Helbawy to recite Qur'an prior to Friday prayer, a most uncommon event. Many worshippers were moved to tears by his performance, and mosque officials (mainly first-generation immigrants) were eager for him to return the following Friday, when he was scheduled to recite at Edmonton's older mosque, al-Rashid, run by non-immigrant Muslims. Here the welcome was decidedly cooler. Shaikh el-Helbawy expressed a clear preference for the first mosque, and – accompanying him – I understood why. The Egyptian Students' Association, comprising almost exclusively male Muslim immigrant graduate students (nearly all of them engineers), invited Shaikh el-Helbawy to lead their weekly *maqra'* (Qur'an recitation session). There followed a fascinating conversation in which several students (evinced Salafi discourse) objected to the shaikh's associating with music; he adopted approximately al-Ghazali's neutral stance: what is forbidden in it is forbidden; what is permitted in it is permitted. But an atmosphere of genuine respect for his skill and common Egyptian patrimony prevailed, and he felt welcomed.

His reception by the University of Alberta Muslim Students' Association (MSA<sup>7</sup>) was at first ambivalent, finally negative. Leadership of the University of Alberta MSA has tended to alternate between undergraduate students (most of whom are not immigrants) and graduate students (who generally are). At the

time I contacted them, the former situation prevailed. I had emailed the MSA president in the autumn of 2004 about the proposed visit, but received no reply.

Finally, in early January 2005, I attended Friday MSA prayers on campus, following which I succeeded in speaking to a thoughtful undergraduate student, who suggested that I write the group's leader (not present) in order that the request be taken up at the following meeting.

Our short email exchange ran as follows:

Assalamu 'alaykum,  
al-Hamdu lillah, I have secured funding from the University's Distinguished Visitor program to bring a renowned muqri', mubtahir, and munshid (specialist in inshad or anashid) from Cairo to the U of A campus this coming spring, for ten days (March 7th to 17th), insha'Allah. His name is Shaykh Mohamed el-Hilbawy. His visit is now pending visa approval from the Canadian Embassy in Cairo.

If possible, I would like to work with the MSA to plan some special events during his stay, for instance durus<sup>8</sup> in tajwid and adhan, either in the evening or during the day, especially directed towards MSA members.

Shaykh Mohamed will also be working daily with a group of students and members of the community to develop a full program of anashid diniyya, to be presented in Convocation Hall on March 17th. I invite members of the MSA with strong and good voices to join this group; we will begin preparation on Mondays evenings starting in January, insha'Allah, since his stay is too short to provide sufficient training.

On the two Fridays that he will be spending in Edmonton, I would also like to escort him to Friday prayers either on campus or at MCE mosque, where he could also conduct some study sessions if there is interest.

I welcome other ideas you may have. If possible let's talk by phone or in person; please send me a contact number. Mine are below.

wassalamu 'alaykum.  
Michael

I neither requested – nor required – any financial support or official endorsement. My message was merely to offer an opportunity. A pregnant pause of about ten days followed. Then on January 25 I finally received the following reply:

WaAlaikum Assalaam Brother Michael,  
Im sorry for the delay in getting back to you. As the MSA we are responsible in insuring that those whom the MSA endorses, and those who are using the MSA for specific purposes meet guidelines that do not transgress the boundaries of the Quraan and Sunnah. After investigation, we feel that Shaikh Mohammed el-Hilbawy practices certain things that are considered innovations in the religion, and other matters which are highly doubtful and

debatable and these matters should be avoided. Therefore, the MSA executive body has agreed that we cannot support this proposed program with the Sheikh. Please do not take any offence to this position we are adopting; we simply choose to remain on the side of caution.

Jazaakallaahu Khairan Wassalaamu Alaikum,  
Muslim Students Association – President

Seeking elaboration of those "certain things," I promptly answered as follows:

Assalamu alaykum brother Abdulmelik,  
Of course I fully respect whatever position the MSA may choose, and thank you for considering the issue. I further sympathize with your felt need to err on the side of caution, and certainly take no offence. In fact as a Muslim you have raised certain doubts in my own mind about this program. I am therefore wondering if you can explain how your investigation led you to conclude that Shaykh Mohamed's practices may be bida, or at least doubtful from the perspective of shari'a. After all, he recites Qur'an and inshad on national Egyptian radio, with the blessings of al-Azhar university. Furthermore practices of tilawat al-Qur'an al-karim and anashid diniyya are well-established even in the most conservative Islamic countries, such as Saudi Arabia. I realize that music itself has often considered haram<sup>9</sup> among Islamic scholars, although even widely respected authorities such as Shaykh al-Qaradawi have endorsed the right of Muslims to hear and perform music so long as it is respectable from an ethical standpoint.

I await your response with sincere interest.

jazaakallahu khayran wassalamu 'alaykum.  
Michael

In retrospect, it is perhaps unsurprising that my questions went unanswered, because, as I came to understand, the MSA's affective subtext is not belligerent, didactic nor even well-informed – rather it is anxious, expressing the fear of uncertainty which seeks safety in conservatism. Often contrasted with "hope" (raja'), the emotion of fear (khawf) occupies a central position in Islamic – and especially Sufi – piety. One fears God, while placing one's hopes in Him. But the fear expressed by the MSA leadership does not appear to be of this sort at all, as signalled by their unwillingness to enter into any sort of discussion regarding the precise source of his supposed bida, and their neglect of his mainstream position in Egyptian society. The MSA's fear, then, appears to be a social rather than a spiritual fear, a fear of what others might say – what might equally be described as "peer pressure" – a stance which accords with their desire to "remain on the side of caution."

I hasten to add that social fear as a motivation for action (or inaction) is certainly not exclusive to the MSA (or indeed to Islam): in a climate of sanctimony,

many fear what others may say or think of their behavior; they therefore conform (outwardly at least) to the way others behave. The result is a feedback cycle of fear, propagating within Muslim social networks, as each Muslim impels network "neighbors" (friends, co-workers, family members) to appear more conservative than his or her peers (or than he or she really wants to be).<sup>10</sup> Such a cycle is checked to some extent in traditional Muslim societies by the inertial force of continuous oral tradition which suffuses the same social network. This force is absent, however, in immigrant societies where Muslims constitute a small minority.

Accordingly, in this era and an immigrant social context – to draw upon an established Islamic triality – it is "islam" (outward ritual performance) that prevails over "iman" (inner faith) and "ihsan" (the continual awareness of God), or (to draw upon a duality in the ladder of Sufi maqamat – spiritual stations) – it is "fear" that prevails over "hope." This attitude of social fear accentuates the external (zahir) – precisely the contrary of Sufi emphasis upon the internal (batin). Fear creates a vicious cycle whose logical endpoint is a retreat to literalism, the relative safety of certainty in the canonical texts, according to maximally conservative interpreters, denying the Islamic cultural heritage which is solidly rooted in oral tradition. Thus Sufism's own terms reveal the anti-Sufi perspective of the Islamist Salafi position.

On the other hand, a local Christian college went furthest in providing a warm welcome to Shaikh el-Helbawy, featuring him as guest speaker, and even providing lunch. I organized an "inshad ensemble," which quickly grew to over 20 members, despite a demanding rehearsal schedule (almost daily for over a week), culminating in a final concert. This ensemble included a significant Muslim component, though nearly all were Egyptian immigrants feeling a strong cultural link to the inshad tradition.

On the whole, the visit itself was, by many measures, a great success, benefiting both the university and broader Edmonton communities. However many events were under-attended, particularly by Muslims, and the final concert performance drew a rather meager Muslim crowd. And interest among undergraduate Muslims was nearly non-existent.

Clearly in the case of Shaikh el-Helbawy, the trigger of disputation was a word carrying a long history of controversy in Islam, but which has lately become a kind of acid test for Muslim conservatism: "music," a word which may have been invoked not only by the Shaikh, but also by my own departmental affiliation. Yet members of the MSA certainly listen to music (including Arab music); it is only within the sphere marked "Islam" that different rules apply, especially in response to increasing conservatism of Islamic practice worldwide. So their objection cannot simply be to music per se from an Islamic perspective. Rather, they object to music *in* (or considered *as*) Islam. Music appears not as forbidden by Islam but rather as dangerous *to* Islam. More generally, the silence of Islam in Edmonton cannot be attributed simply to the general Islamic ambivalence about music. For one thing, Shaikh el-Helbawy's sonic practices are, by and large, accepted as mainstream in Egypt, even by the more conservative

Muslims. For another, his performances and teaching of tilawa, filling the silent spaces of Edmonton's mosques, were welcomed by many, mainly first-generation immigrants.

As for "Sufi music" – it is popular among alternative music connoisseurs and spiritual seekers, but not among most Muslims, for whom the combination of words may even appear oxymoronic. A world-famous American Middle-Eastern historian of Egyptian descent once told me that there is "no such thing as Islamic music." Likewise in Edmonton; the category appears at best to mark two non-overlapping categories; at worst pejorative. A recent Edmonton concert featuring "spiritual" Sufi-inflected performances by the late Nubian artist Hamza el Din and the raucous Gnawa of Hassan Hakmoun drew an enthusiastic world-music crowd. But the Egyptian Muslims I know – liberal-minded Muslims with a strong interest in music – didn't appreciate it at all; for them it didn't represent music of the Arab world, and it certainly didn't represent Islam. And while they appreciated Shaikh el-Helbawy, they'd certainly never heard of him before – perhaps because his persona in the West (like his CDs) is to a great extent manufactured through interaction with, and concern for, a Western non-Muslim audience. While he is a deeply religious man, he also demonstrates considerable skill in communicating to such audiences, in his discourse, in his performances and in his dress – which during his visit oscillated between traditional shaikhly robes (jubba and qufan) and a rather dapper tailored suit topped off with a Central Asian cap.

What is going on here? Why was Shaikh el-Helbawy rejected by some, and welcomed by others, within the Muslim community? Why is "Sufi music" primarily marketed for – and consumed by – non-Muslims in the West? And why is Islamic practice in Edmonton so silent?

My argument is that Shaikh el-Helbawy's own journey from Cairo to Edmonton retraces two fundamental trajectories by which the "soundworld" of Islam in Muslim societies has been – and continues to be – globalized: through global migration, and through global media. In order to make such an argument, I now must make a brief side-excursion into theory.

### Soundworld: soundscape: lifeworld: ethnoscape

By analogy to the lifeworld of Schutz and Luckmann (1973: 3ff.) and Habermas (1984: 113ff.), I define the *soundworld* to be the affectively charged sonic-social intersubjectivity, that lived social world of empathetic understanding, intuitive communication and shared values, as developed, expressed and reproduced in the social experience of pre-linguistic sound.<sup>11</sup> By definition the soundworld links sonic and social aspects, mediated through individual aural experience, an experience that is primarily implicit and affective, and which cannot therefore be rendered in discourse without distortion. Indeed the soundworld references a non-specific semantic domain, which is also somatic, and thus very far from the rational domain of language. The sonic aspect of the soundworld features performed sound, particularly music, the most complexly organized form of



humanly-organized sound, to use ethnomusicologist John Blacking's classic formulation (1973), and is carried primarily by oral tradition. The social aspect of the soundworld centers on face-to-face interactions, through a social network comprising them, which also provides the basis for inertial continuity of the oral tradition.

Now a few theoretical corollaries can be drawn at once. Several stem from biological facts: the soundworld cannot (usually) be selectively silenced; it is pervasive – even more so in an age of amplified media technology. And though it can be the focus of attention, its presence (and effects) frequently remain out of active awareness.<sup>12</sup> The soundworld does not center upon symbolically referential units, in the precise sense exploited by language; though its non-linguistic sounds may acquire symbolic meaning, they do not consistently shift attention from signifier to a signified (as language does), but rather allow consciousness to remain fixed upon the “signifier” without requiring any active effort at resistance (as listening to the sound of ordinary spoken language does).

This fixity enables the soundworld to develop a powerful emotional force; particularly as music, non-discursive sounds become affectively potent “presentational symbols,” offering the “form of feeling,” as Susan Langer observed (1960: 97, 101, 235). The emotion of sound becomes associated too with the context of its listening, and the soundworld thereby provides emotional coloring to all perceptions within its scope. Though defined in subjective terms, the soundworld is also hardly ever a solitary experience (at least prior to the headphone); this property derives in part from the physical fact of sonic diffraction. Unlike light (which proceeds in approximately straight lines), sound navigates around even large obstacles, thus becoming maximally inclusive, and often excluding competing linguistic communications. Unlike vision, hearing thus facilitates an intersubjective social experience through the mere fact of physical proximity. In face-to-face experience, we rarely see the same sights, but we nearly always hear the same sounds. This fact of corporate listening experience, charged also with the emotion of listening, bestows an affective valence upon social relations, providing the “collective effervescence” cited by Durkheim as reinforcing group solidarity (1976: 434). The soundworld is socially powerful, even – through its formalisms, apparent innocuousness and blockage of alternative point-to-point communications – coercive, especially in apparently innocuous corporate music-making; as Maurice Bloch once observed, “you can't argue with a song” (1974).<sup>13</sup>

In affectively supporting the social network, the soundworld becomes a principal pathway for cultural localization. Cultural formations, always mobile, frequently global (even in the past), are fixed in particular socio-affective coordinates by their association with sound experience. Even though the humanly-organized soundworld is theoretically subject to discursively-transmitted norms, in practice it tends to resist them, because it constitutes a separable, quasi-autonomous communicative system. Though speech is expressed through sound, at a theoretical level speech and sound are autonomous systems, incommensurate modalities which always fail to comment on each other precisely.<sup>14</sup>

No better example exists than the various manifestations of the Islamic soundworld in various cultures and places throughout history, and in particular in relation to Islamic globalization. I suggest that from a theoretical point of view this globalization be regarded in two phases (rather unequal in duration). In the first phase (from the early Islamic empires through the eighteenth century), when the Islamic world was globally central, flows of people and sound were carried together – only people could carry the sounds of Islam – mostly from center to margin. During this period what I'll shortly term the soundscape and the ethnoscape were inextricably linked in a soundworld. In the more recent phase, starting with globalizing discourses of nineteenth-century pan-Islamic reform movements but especially with the advent of latter twentieth-century postmodern globalization, and under pressure from Islamic reformism, soundscape and ethnoscape have disengaged, and the soundworld has become undone.

During the first phase, Islamic globalization took place, ironically enough, via localization. It was precisely the adaptability of Islam which enabled its expansion, the ability to absorb local cultures without losing its élan, and this property in turn required a flexible, non-literal interpretation of Islamic practice and doctrine. Sound – and hence the soundworld – was a critical feature enabling such localization. Islamic tradition has always comprised a complex synthesis of oral and written. Only the latter can (potentially) be fixed and universalized; oral transmission is inherently dynamic, ramifying and localizing. The authoritative written sources – primarily Qur'an and Hadith – do not, and indeed cannot, specify sonic dimensions of Islamic practice completely – this limitation pertains of course not merely to Islam but to any tradition, as a consequence of the independence of sonic and linguistic systems. There thus necessarily exist “free variables” in the multidimensional space of sound which cannot be precisely regulated through any discursive mechanism, but only through non-discursive oral transmission.<sup>15</sup> Oral transmission in turn occurs via face-to-face interactions through a social network, closely integrated with the soundworld in each locale.

As Islam encountered foreign cultures and adapted to their local conditions (sonically, and otherwise), sacred sonic dimensions of Islam tended to ramify, while a parallel sacred discursive textual tradition (especially Qur'an and Hadith) remained relatively fixed. Local musical practices were everywhere absorbed, as is evident from a cursory listen to the Islamic soundscape today: Turkish and Iranian tilawa sounds entirely different from Egyptian. Cultural locale is expressed in contrasting timbres, ornaments and modal systems, while the sacred words themselves are identical.

But it was within the context of Sufi groups, themselves absorbing local social structures and ritual practices, that the most distinctive Islamic soundworlds developed, from the elite Ottoman Mevlevi, to the more popular rhythms of the Rifa'iyya in Cairo.

In this phase of Islamic globalization, the core messages of Islam were broadly disseminated, in a million outward guises. This process itself constituted a kind of Sufi message: a single inner meaning (batin) clothed everywhere in variant outward forms (zahir). Functionally, this multiplicity of forms served,

rather than undermined, Islamic globalization, not only by facilitating adaptation but also by enabling Islam to develop affective, social vibrancy in each location, a consequence – to a great extent – of the soundworld, and its affective integration of social and sonic systems.

To appreciate the force of such integration it suffices here to consider the Islamic soundworld of Egypt as it developed over the past century (see Frishkopf, 2002). In the early twentieth century a broad domain of overlap obtained between musical and religious performance, as indicated for instance by the title “shaikh.” The shaikh demonstrated religious knowledge through public oral performance, as imam (prayer leader), khatib (preacher), ‘alim (scholar), munshid (inshad specialist), mu’adhdhin (caller-to-prayer), or qari’ (Qur’an reciter). The art of the latter three practices, though never termed *musiqā* (music) or *ghina’* (song), was nevertheless judged by musical criteria, which these religious practices also helped to shape. Vocal training took place primarily via *tilawa* and *inshad*, and late nineteenth/early twentieth-century secular singers who received such training often retained the title “shaikh” (e.g. Shaikh Sayyid Darwish 1892–1923, Shaikh Zakariya Ahmad 1896–1961). Meanwhile, specialists in *tilawa* and *inshad* frequently crossed into the domain of elevated amorous song. Such performers, such as Shaikh Ali Mahmud (b. 1881) or Shaikh Yusuf al-Manyalawi (b. 1847), also active at the turn of the twentieth century, often specialized in the Sufi repertoire whose mystical love poetry, taken out of context, might in any case be misconstrued as speaking of ordinary love. Such performers were called upon to sing for life-cycle rituals (weddings, circumcisions), as well as religious holidays. Egyptian Muslim life was thus suffused with aesthetically powerful sound; an extended Islamic soundworld that not only integrated individual and society, but also blurred the distinction between secular and sacred spheres. Indeed, religious training served as a touchstone for a performer’s authenticity (Danielson, 1991). This entire tradition of sacred sound was localized, drawing upon specifically Egyptian musical types (e.g. local concepts of melodic mode, or *maqam*), and orally transmitted, especially via the *kuttab* (traditional Islamic school) and the Sufi *halaqat dhikr* (dhikr circles), twin crucibles for the formation of specialists in both secular and sacred sonic performance. The same processes produced localized Islamic soundworlds throughout the Islamic sphere, from North Africa to Indonesia.

But since the mid-twentieth century a bifurcation has developed in the soundworld of Muslim societies, a consequence of twin (though not unrelated) forces of capitalism (specifically the commodification of mediated music) on the one hand, and Islamic reformism on the other. The common ground inhabited by the artist-shaikh (and still represented by Shaikh el-Helbawy), has largely eroded, a result of market forces (always pandering to the most physical, hence most dependable, of human drives) applied to newly commodified music, and Muslim reformist critiques (calling for Islamic purity and unification of the Umma via the deculturation – delocalization – of Islam). The soundsphere has thus developed paradoxically – yet characteristically – postmodern ironies: on the same Egyptian television one hears light love songs on one channel, and Muslim

preachers denouncing them on the next. Popular music “videoclips” featuring scantily clad singers blare from one local café’s wall-mounted television, aurally juxtaposed with *tilawa* emanating from the café next door.

Despite this bifurcation, a characteristically Islamic soundworld persists throughout Muslim societies – most affectively potent through *tilawa*, *adhan* and *du’a’* – suffusing ordinary life in a wash of aesthetically and spiritually charged sound, mediating individual and group, binding both together through a felt sense of belonging. Indeed, even if – due to the commodification of popular music – the sonic span of the new Islamic soundworld has contracted, its intensity is all the greater: the number of mosques and the power of their broadcasts has increased, not only via omnipresent loudspeakers, but new specialized religious channels throughout broadcast media (especially satellite radio and television) as well. Quotidian sonic experience is marked by the regular performance of *adhan*, *iqama* and *tilawa*, often in elaborately melodic styles. On Fridays the sounds of *tilawa* and prayers in progress filter through every Egyptian neighborhood. One regularly passes funeral tents, erected in side-streets, marking a death ceremony – *maytam* (funeral), *arba’in* (fortieth-day memorial), or *dhikra sanawiyya* (yearly memorial); such occasions are accented with *tilawa*, and sometimes with *inshad*. Likewise, the saints populating cemeteries of villages and cities alike are set aglow in an annual *mawlid* festival, ringing with the sound of recitation and *inshad*; here the localization of sound, centering on a shaikh’s tomb, is particularly striking. While some of these contexts and sounds – *maytam*, *mawlid*, excessively melodic *tilawa*, excessively musical *inshad* – are condemned by the Muslim reformers as *bida*, the inertial force of continuous oral tradition allows them to persist.

The traditional soundworld is a harmonious integration of sound with social network, mutually reinforcing one another: the former providing socialized affect (collective effervescence), the latter the social capacity of reproduction. In its pure form, the soundworld is completely localized (without necessarily being local in extent), adaptively supporting a kind of social homeostasis. The soundworld is a critical factor in the dialectical formation of the Islamic *habitus*, to use that keyword popularized by Pierre Bourdieu (1977: 72ff.) to represent the individual’s collection of non-discursive yet strongly inculcated dispositions, values and strategies – structuring social structures, even as it is structured by them. In Muslim societies, even its discursive intellectual detractors often harbor sentimental emotional attachments to the soundworld, which has shaped their spiritual *habitus* from earliest childhood.

The Islamic soundworld is attenuated in the second phase of Islamic globalization, as Islam and Muslims participate in the broader currents of postmodern globalization, a phenomenon many critics and scholars have treated, in respect of the vast scope, speed and quasi-independence of its flows, as qualitatively new.

Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has aptly applied the metaphor of “landscape” to processes of post-modern globalization, deploying the “-scape” suffix to convey the fluidity, irregularity and subjective nature of contemporary global

flows. "Landscapes" of finance, ideology, technology, ethnicity and media (his so-called finanscape, ideoscape, technoscape, ethnoscape and mediascape) are the building blocks of what he terms (following Benedict Anderson (2006)) "imagined worlds," the multiple worlds constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups around the globe. What is significant about contemporary globalization is the growing disjunctures between these multiple "scapes," and the ways in which global flows occur in and through them; at unprecedented speed, scale and volume, following increasingly non-isomorphic paths within the labyrinthine global system (Appadurai, 1996: 33–37). Implicit in his analysis is "a theory of rupture that takes media and migration as its two major, and interconnected, diacritics and explores their joint effect on the *work of the imagination* as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity" (Appadurai, 1996) Global media and migration – the mediascape and ethnoscape – are the focal points of my chapter as well, because they account for the fracturing of the soundworld into independently-flowing sonic and social components, tracing different global trajectories and accumulating contrastive meanings.

Here I'd like to introduce a theoretical refinement to Appadurai's paradigm, a subgenus of the mediascape that I call the *soundscape*. At the same time, I want to indicate a paradigm linkage, by proposing that *soundscape is to soundworld as ethnoscape is to lifeworld*. Whereas the "scapes" suggest the disengagement (politically- and market-driven) of objective relations and meanings to which they were once deeply, even "inextricably" connected, the "worlds" suggest holism. If the ethnoscape is the fragmentation of the lifeworld into an unmoored, even chaotic array of tourists, guestworkers, immigrants, exiles and refugees, for which stable social networks and communications have frequently broken down, equally the soundscape results when the sonic aspect of the soundworld disengages from its social, semantic and somatic groundings, and is thereby freed to flow globally.

Both ethnoscape and soundscape irregularly join (sometimes driven by, sometimes driving) global flows of capital, technology and ideology. In the transition from "world" to "scape" is the disruption and distortion of what was once a *relatively* functional, stable integration of individual within social group, through the mediation of communicative media which no longer effect real integrative communication, but rather serve rational-quantitative forces accumulating capital and power.

In both cases, globalization of the "scape" proceeds through the agency of broader technical-rational systems. The ethnoscape is shaped by systems of technology, law and force (e.g. immigration policy) regulating the flow of people around the globe, while the soundscape depends upon the international entertainment industry, especially its systems of legal regulation (e.g. intellectual property law) and distribution (media technology).

Mobilizing these three theoretical concepts – soundworld, ethnoscape, soundscape – we may better understand the relations between Sufi music and Muslims in Edmonton, Canada, and perhaps elsewhere as well. Postmodern globalization has induced a fracturing of the Islamic soundworld, a rupture between formerly

interpenetrating social and sonic aspects, by which these aspects, formerly integrated, have disengaged and begun to circulate independently – through an ethnoscape and a soundscape, respectively – unmoored from their original contexts and meanings. Though rapid global circulation virtually ensures that such flows will re-cross one another, such re-crossings are typically non-interactive. Ethnoscape and mediascape have been shaped by the global system to very different purposes, so that reintegration cannot occur. On the contrary, the crossing point often goes unrecognized, or may even be the site of social strain, as the Shaikh el-Helbawy example illustrates.

### The Islamic soundworld and the Muslim ethnoscape

Again, my argument is that Shaikh el-Helbawy's own journey from Cairo to Edmonton retraces two fundamental trajectories by which the "soundworld" of Islam in Muslim societies has been – and continues to be – globalized: through global migration (the ethnoscape) and through global media (the soundscape). His simultaneous embodiment of both – as a temporary guest within the Muslim diaspora, and as a producer of Islamic world music – accounts for the multiple, at times contradictory, attitudes toward him. In this section I consider the ethnoscape in greater detail.

To begin, it is necessary to view Islam in North America against the backdrop of early modern Islamic reform. As a response first to Western military power, and subsequently what appeared as an overwhelming technical-civilizational superiority, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Muslim reformers, so-called salafis, sought to reunify the Islamic world on the "sound" basis of reason, usually returning to the early Muslim community (al-salaf al-salih), as understood through canonical texts, as a model for a new pan-Islamism. The socio-political weakness of Muslims, it was argued, stemmed from their failure to unify around their principles. Unable to recognize the ways in which local adaptations via oral traditions, operating in the spaces left by the "free variables" of discursive Islamic regulations, had actually paved the way for expansion during Islam's long period of strength, for the reformists difference could only lead to weakness. The new unity the Muslim Umma required must be a textual, practical unity, a unity of outward discourse and practice, as opposed to an inward spiritual-aesthetic unity. Reformers thus tended to reject cultural localizations, expressed above all in the sonic dimension of Islamic practice.

This move naturally came at the expense of the Islamic soundworld, in both its mystical and aesthetic aspects, which, operating in the discursive spaces was not only diverse (thus presenting the appearance of disunity), but lacking explicit discursive justification within the sacred texts. To the reformist way of thinking, oral traditions not directly supported by recourse to Qur'an and Sunna (or Hadith) constituted heresy, *bida*. Not only Sufism, but all *taqlid* (imitation), the basis for locally adaptive oral traditions, generated unwelcome accretion, which should be eliminated in order to restore Islam's pristine purity and unity. A logical corollary – accelerated perhaps by growing literacy – was a gradual shift

of authority: from an oral tradition (embedded in a social network of authorship), to a written tradition (embedded in an intertext).<sup>16</sup>

The soundworld began to contract as a response, particular in the heartlands of such reformism, e.g. in Egypt where performances by the *munshidin* became increasingly regarded as a “folk” phenomenon, characterizing the backwardness of the peasantry and the farther anti-modern reaches of Upper Egypt. Whereas the early reformers – e.g. Shaikh Muhammad ‘Abdu in Egypt – could be liberal-minded, “opening the door of *ijtihad*” (independent interpretation of Qur’an and Sunna) in order to re-establish Islam on a rational basis, reformism’s institutionalization, e.g. in the Muslim Brothers in the late 1920s coincided with a predictably anti-intellectual turn. Given the pressing need for unity, the door of *ijtihad* was once again firmly shut, in favor of a new *taqlid* (imitation) of reformism itself. With the concurrent rapid social transformations which have continued to the present, it is not surprising that religion and professional life have, especially in recent years, often been clearly demarcated into non-interacting spheres. Technical knowledge is compatible with religion in a way that humanistic (or even scientific) inquiry is not, particularly in its historical and social critical forms. It is not surprising then that the Brothers have thrived particularly among those – lawyers, doctors and engineers – whose critical intellectual training operate within well-defined, closed, ahistorical systems (law, the body, technology). And it is perhaps not entirely coincidental that it was upon precisely this technical class that push and pull forces of migration to the West were most strongly felt.

To further unravel this story requires some understanding of the Muslim ethnoscape, and the emergence of enormous Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries, primarily in the West. As Roy writes:

The phenomenon of Muslims living as a minority is not new, but historically it has been a consequence of conquests or reconquests ... trade and conversions ... or loss of political power ... what is new is the choice made by individual Muslims to migrate to a country knowing that they will live there as a minority.

(Roy, 2004: 18)

Here an important distinction must be observed between postwar immigration to Europe, and to North America. Postwar Europe required immigration to offset labor shortages and depopulation. With European sources unavailable, many countries turned to immigration from ex-colonies from all social strata, presumed linguistically and culturally compatible, hence assimilable. Many of these sources were Muslim; France drew extensively on North Africa; Britain absorbed South Asians (Hollifield, 1986: 116; McNeill, 1998). North American immigration policy – unencumbered by a colonial past – has recently been more influenced by rational economic analysis, setting minimal technical-economic criteria designed to boost economic output, and less concerned with assimilation than productivity. In practice, skill-based immigration policies have tended to

favor professionals, especially engineers who (unlike lawyers or doctors) generally do not require recertification. Intellectuals, artists and the poor have been largely excluded, except in the case of familial reunification.

Contemporary Canadian immigration dates to 1967, when a rationalized “point system” was established, taking into account education, training and demand, as well as family ties. This regulatory system continues to form the framework of Canadian immigration policy to the present (Green and Green, 1995: 1007–1008). Laws governing Canadian immigration today thus effect a kind of “high pass filter” favoring admission of those possessing significant quantities of in-demand technical or financial capital, primarily engineers. Since technical requirements are applied without regard to ethnicity, Muslim immigrants to Canada find themselves juxtaposed with other Muslims representing a wide array of cultural and linguistic groups. These conditions on Canadian immigration exist in dialectical relation to Canada’s self-proclaimed “multicultural mosaic” model (itself in dialectical relation to what Canadians tend to portray as the USA’s assimilationist “melting pot”), celebrating cultural difference.

Ironically, the cultural politics of Canadian multiculturalism pressures minority groups to unify internally as a means of translating “minority capital” into political capital. In the case of Islam, the new North American Muslim community is unprecedented in its cultural diversity. The intra-community juxtaposition of cultural contrasts – for instance the soundworld of the Egyptian as against the Pakistani or Indonesian – highlights the need to erase cultural differences among Muslims, in order to emphasize the purely religious basis for unity. This process, I would argue, is structurally compatible with the strategies of the Muslim reformers, who have for the past century likewise sought to erase internal difference: to homogenize as a means of achieving outward unity of the Umma (not only eliminating Sufi orders, but even seeking to homogenize the multiple schools of law, or *madhahib*). While Islamism, strongly driven by prosperous Muslim communities in the West, has moved in the direction of universalization and homogenization worldwide since the nineteenth-century reformers (a point underscored by Roy (2004: 59)), the process is only intensified in North America where it is precisely those socio-occupational classes (mostly engineers) most partial to Islamic reformism, and least knowledgeable about local oral traditions (whether Sufi or otherwise) who have been selected to immigrate in North America, particularly Canada, either as students or permanent migrants.<sup>17</sup>

The impact of such migration on the Islamic soundworld in Canada has been drastic. Muslim sound specialists – those carriers of the oral traditions who recreate the Islamic soundworld in each succeeding generation – have largely been excluded from Canadian immigration process; while mosques may request a full-time imam, they are unlikely to obtain (or, increasingly, even desire) a *qari’* or *mu’adhdhin*. Engineer immigrants, accustomed to closed, internally consistent systems governed by logical principles, are typically reformist in outlook, favoring the presumed deculturation as a means of purifying and strengthening Islam, and regarding only an extremely narrowed (largely silent) soundworld as

legitimate in the first place. And multicultural politics, ironically enough, seems to contribute real social pressure towards Islamic unity; to criticize (even constructively) the local mosque is a kind of disloyalty. The same factors imply that Sufism itself, spiritual source and practical scene of so much of the Muslim soundworld, does not easily take root in Canada; Sufi activities in larger, more diverse cities (especially Toronto and Montreal) are constantly threatened by more powerful reformist ideology eyeing their activities as un-Islamic, and seeking to unify the Umma on a more "rational" basis.

The strength of oral tradition over a rich social network in traditionally Muslim societies, combined with the affective logic of the soundworld itself, ensures its inertial survival despite the depredations of reformism, and is here compatible with internal unity, since localization is by definition locally unified; there is no social juxtaposition of difference. However, in an immigrant society, this inertia is reduced or eliminated, even as the need to eliminate internal difference is felt more acutely, and equated with the negation of Islamic localizations as a means of seeking a common Islamic denominator. Thus while reformist ideology is longstanding, this erasure of difference due to juxtaposition is unprecedented on such a scale, when not only rapid communication but also immigrant societies tend to facilitate the active perception of difference among the Muslim community. In the context of Muslims' perception of social and political weakness, the deculturization of Islam becomes increasingly rapid, particularly within its marginal position in Western Canada.<sup>18</sup> In the absence of the soundworld, itself providing the most visceral, non-discursive, refutation of its critics, the fear-driven tendency towards conformity, avoidance of anything that might possibly be labelled as *bida*, and hence converging upon maximally conservative Islamic interpretations, is relatively free to propagate unchecked within Muslim social networks

Newer, resource-driven cities such as Edmonton (whose economy is fueled by oil sand deposits located in the northern regions of the province) are especially susceptible to the domination of reformist ideologies and the propagation of conservative conformism. Whereas larger, older, more diversified cosmopolitan centers such as Montreal and Toronto contain much greater absolute numbers of Muslims, and thus an irreconcilable plurality of ideological voices and diversity of sound specialists, Edmonton is far smaller, lacking the critical mass to develop alternative points of view. It is not surprising that the establishment of a Muslim umbrella organization (the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities) first succeeded here. Furthermore Canadian immigration policy, combined with the technology-based Edmonton economy, tends to attract engineer immigrants who readily adopt the reformist posture (see Figure 4.3). Meanwhile, second and higher generation Muslims, cut off from the Islamic soundworld, but increasingly interested in their Islamic roots (in keeping with the general revival) have been learning about Islam through dissemination of reformist discourse, outside the soundworld and its affective-oral traditions.

I suggest that first-generation Alberta immigrants do not actively support the traditional Islamic soundworld for two reasons. In part they are unable to do so,

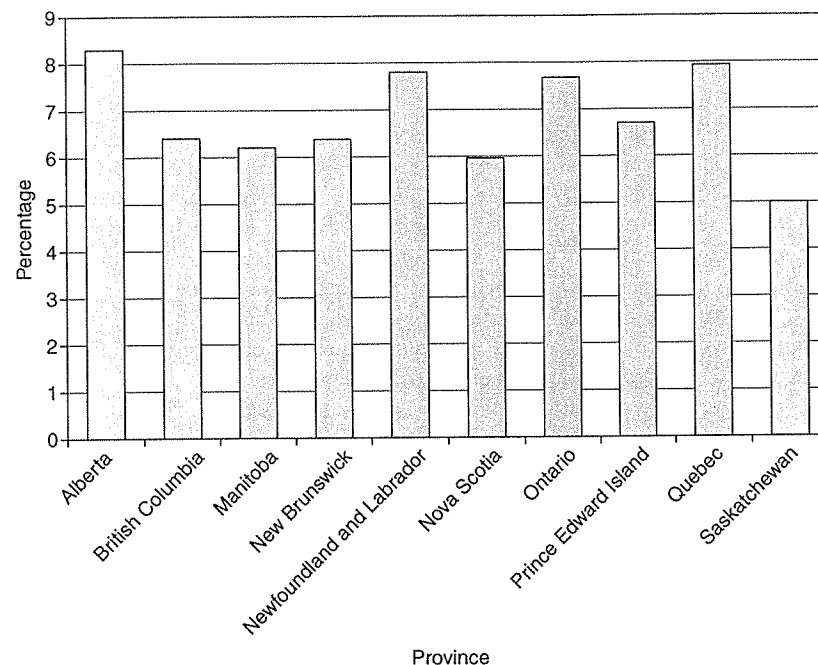


Figure 4.3 Percentage of the labor force working in natural and applied sciences (source: StatsCan 2001d).

because immigration policy, and more specifically labor conditions in Alberta, do not favor its carriers. In part they may discursively oppose it, due to reformist tendencies which tend to become intensified following immigration. Nevertheless, this group's *habitus* has been strongly conditioned by the Islamic soundworld in their countries of birth, and the sound of Islam elicits a strong emotional response. It is for this reason, I believe, that I found tremendous affective receptivity to Shaikh el-Helbawy among first-generation Muslim students and professionals in Edmonton, even when they opposed his musical-artistic persona. On the other hand, non-immigrant Muslims are not merely cut off from the Islamic oral tradition. They have become practicing Muslims in an environment devoid of the Islamic soundworld, an environment suffused on the contrary by discursive signs of Islamic reformism. Therefore they tend to reject a carrier of the traditional soundworld wholeheartedly, as at worst *bida* and at best doubtful – and when in doubt it is best to “remain on the side of caution.” Hence the Muslim Students' Association (whose leadership at this time was primarily composed of non-immigrant undergraduates) and the venerable al-Rashid mosque (run by Edmonton's long-standing Canadian Muslim community) were far less receptive to Shaikh el-Helbawy's religious arts than the immigrant-dominated Muslim Community of Edmonton.

### The Islamic soundworld and the World Music soundscape

If the Islamic soundworld (a sonic-social whole) is drastically attenuated in Canada, the Islamic soundscape is not. Certainly Qur'anic recitation has magnificently retained its vibrancy at the level of global distribution (lately via the Internet), first with Egyptian reciters serving as primary models, though more recently (in an anti-musical turn) a newly popular Saudi model has gained primacy (Frishkopf, 2007). Islamic children's recordings are a particularly important feature of the Western Muslim soundscape, due to their key role in transmission of religious values in a non-Muslim society; the British Muslim Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Stevens) has produced some of the best examples. But this "Muslim directed" material traces global paths primarily within Muslim social networks; though available in local mosques and on Muslim websites, one cannot purchase such material in one's local record store.

More generally accessible within the Islamic soundscape is "Islamic music," especially "Sufi music," filed in record stores under the broader heading of "World Music," produced within an increasingly concentrated, integrated and oligopolistic transnational music industry.<sup>19</sup> Such music is not manufactured for Muslims per se, but rather for World Music consumers, the vast majority of whom are non-Muslim Europeans and North Americans of eclectic musical tastes. "World Music" is thus not music of the world as such, but music drawing upon the vast range of non-Western sounds – suitably selected, transformed and fused so as to appeal to a Western audience.

Clearly that audience represents only a tiny slice of the overall marketing pie. But it is a terribly significant slice because World Music answers to the inclination among select, thinking music consumers to use their purchasing power in order to resist the global music media system and its totalizing control. World Music is the industry response: an attempt (if not by the owners of the music world-system then by others under their virtual control) to commodify precisely those qualities which most unequivocally signify the denial of a globalized, totalizing world-system of music, by pointing to that which appears to lie beyond the range and control of that system. Among those qualities are pre-modern Tradition ("roots," "authenticity"), Otherness ("exoticism"), Spirituality ("metaphysics," "New Age"), and Creative Fusion ("East meets West") – whatever appears to defy the dominance of the world system, breaking free through sound and meaning, or, to be more succinct: whatever appears to *relocalize globality*. The farther afield the music, the more loudly it trumpets such a message. World Music thus stands as a kind of "public service announcement;" in producing World Music, the global music industry proclaims its respect for cultural diversity, while simultaneously closing the leaks in its oligarchic control. Successful marketing of World Music effects a recapture unrecognized by the captive.

In embracing "Sufi music," the music industry tends to return to the pre-bifurcated soundworld of Islamic societies, to the aesthetic-spiritual appeal of that ambiguous performative zone delicately balanced between art and Islam. In this way, the global music system has recourse to the pre-modern integration of

music as art, and sound as spirituality, to construct a soundscape of much greater appeal to non-Muslims (for whom the aesthetic is typically an entrée to exploration of unfamiliar cultural or sacred terrain), and much lesser appeal to contemporary Muslims living in the West (most of whom were raised in the post-bifurcation media world in which "music" and "sacred performance" do not overlap). This crossing (from "traditional Islam" to "contemporary non-Islam") is a significant structural feature of this particular global process (analogous to the appeal of Sufism to non-Muslims in the West).

Understood in this way, it is clear that "Sufi Music" instantiates the ideal "World Music," a rich admixture of Tradition, Otherness and Spirituality. Synthesizing art and the sacred, the Divine yearning of sama' (Sufi spiritual audition) is the perfect embodiment – or "ensoundment" – of World Music qualities. As a consequence its uptake into the global soundscape, if not significant in comparison to the whole, has certainly been remarkably rapid. Besides a wave (mostly earlier) of "ethnographic" recordings issued by specialized scholarly labels with limited distribution, including Arion, Ocora (French radio), Inedit (the French Ministry of Culture's Maison des Cultures du Monde), Long Distance, Auvidis UNESCO, Harmonia mundi<sup>20</sup> and culture centers (e.g. the prolific Parisian Institut du Monde Arabe<sup>21</sup>) came a second wave of music-centric spiritual-aesthetic ones, produced by major music industry labels (e.g. Atlantic, Island, Nonesuch, Rykodisc and Real World), geared more toward listening (the ecstasy of sonic experience) than cultural learning, and hence bereft of detailed contextualizations provided by scholarly liner notes.<sup>22</sup> Ironically it is the latter (focused on non-discursive immersion and insight through the listening experience itself) that is somehow closer to the spirit of the Islamic soundworld (and the Sufi sama'), even if a reactivation of its religious meanings is well-nigh impossible under such radically transformed listening conditions.<sup>23</sup> Indeed it is not only the listening context that is transformed, but the sound as well – minimally due to exigencies of the commodified recording (for instance, the need to select 60 minutes (or, worse, five) out of an all-night sama'), and maximally when sounds emitted by multiple soundworlds are fused together ("east and west," or "east and east") in a newly creative act of audio hybridity (two examples are "A prayer for the soul of Layla," 1997; "Hadhra," 2000).<sup>24</sup>

The rapid uptake of multiple Islamic soundworlds, disengaged from the social network, selectively filtered and transformed into an Islamic or Sufi soundscape, then distributed throughout the globe, has occurred nearly independently of Muslim migrations within the ethnoscape. The various recordings of Shaikh Mohamed el-Helbawy, centered on an early twentieth-century Sufi aesthetic enjoying little popularity among Muslims today (particularly those living in the West), provides a typical instance of that which World Music marketers favor, and most contemporary Western Muslims eschew: the sounds of Sufi ritual, spiritual Arab music and east-west fusion (including a remarkable alignment of Mozart's Requiem K. 626 and Sufi dhikr).<sup>25</sup> Such acclaimed World Music artists as the Egyptian Hamza Ala al-Din, who point (sonically and discursively) to Sufi inspirations, are almost completely unknown within Muslim (or even Egyptian)



communities. Whereas a significant fraction of the Muslim mainstream (especially pronounced among the second generation) in Canada appears to yearn for the deculturization of Islam in order to unify the Umma, *to globalize locality*, World Music/Sufi music consumers seek precisely the opposite: to culturally reparticulate mass-culture, *to localize globality*. For the most part, these two “imagined worlds” coexist without interacting, circulating in disjunctive global fields (a social ethnoscape, a media soundscape), while their messages may occasionally clash. Occasionally the two worlds, projected into a common frame, are forced into interaction, as when a single individual, entering temporarily into the Muslim immigrant community, yet carrying the strains of Islamic World Music, seeks acceptance, and Islamic music stirs nostalgia (among first-generation immigrants) or refusal (among the second).

### Conclusion

Thus locally adaptive soundworlds in Muslim societies have globalized, their sonic and social components disengaging, as Muslims diffuse through the ethnoscape, and as – almost completely independently – Islamic music (mainly “Sufi music”) diffuses through the soundscape, both converging in the West: two contrastive trajectories – driven by completely different forces – with a common destination.

In the Muslim ethnoscape of North America, strongly influenced by reformism, seeking unity and the overcoming of cultural difference through deculturization, filtered by immigration policies effectively eliminating carriers of local oral tradition, the Islamic soundworld is largely silenced. Older, larger Muslim communities in Toronto or Montreal, more densely populated, and perhaps better established before the present wave of Salafism hit so strongly, have developed branches of Sufi orders and on occasion nurtured (or imported) sonic specialists, (particularly within those orders) – though these represent a minute fraction of the Muslim community (Qureshi, 2003). But in the Canadian West, where the Muslim community represents a smaller proportion of a more geographically dispersed urban population, where the vast majority is “white” (even in urban areas) and immigration is more recent, where pull factors select for technical expertise, such specialists hardly exist, and the number of Sufi-minded individuals falls far short of the critical mass required to form sustainable orders. While the first generation population may maintain some sentimental attachment to the soundworld, they cannot (and perhaps do not wish to) reproduce it. Those who are raised within “Canadian Islam” do not even know it, their Islamic *habitus* having been inculcated without it, even against it. In the absence of the powerful, inertial affective force of the soundworld, which makes received Islamic tradition “sound right” despite the critiques of reformers, fear of social difference (the “bida”) propagates unimpeded through the Muslim community, resulting in social conformity converging on the “side of caution,” the most conservative possible stance as judged by prevailing discourse. Hence the relative silence of Islam in Edmonton.

Meanwhile the localized Islamic sounds of Muslim-majority countries, especially those sounds taken to represent a pre-modern harmonious “cosmos” (idealized for a disenchanted, spiritually thirsty West) in which the full spectrum of expressive representations was supposedly infused by spirituality – that “pre-bifurcation” era alluded to earlier – have flowed into an Islamic soundscape. Such sounds, detached from their social sources (though this fact tends to be masked) are absorbed into the “World Music” component of the global Islamic soundscape, marketed to non-Muslims of the West, by emphasizing a generalized spirituality, exoticism and traditionalism. None of these values is particularly attractive to devout Muslims, particularly in Alberta.

The irony of immigration lies in the following. While many Muslims of Edmonton seem to want a deculturized Islam, freed of the ramification of oral tradition, it is precisely the “culture” concept which is every immigrant group’s ticket to wider recognition, since it is only in their *cultural* distinction (not belief, much less truth) that contrasting groups can share the “stage” of public space under multiculturalism. This strategy dovetails with that of Islamic reformism generally. Many Canadian Muslims – at least those with influence – seek a literalist universality, in a deculturized Umma, purified of “cultural” differences. As a consequence, non-discursive spiritual forms, those whose resistance to textual formulation implies they can never be entirely unified, including the sound-sphere, tend to be erased. Second-generation Muslims in particular would globalize all locality by deprivileging oral tradition, a purification of Islam in search of a more powerful social and political position in the world.

Conversely, the consumer of World Music, and of Sufi music in particular, occupies precisely the opposite position. He or she is typically a Western non-Muslim, someone enjoying all the benefits of political and social supremacy and finding it lacking. In seeking out the exotic, the authentic, the transcendently spiritual, he or she is seeking to localize globality – to seek refuge (however fleeting) from the world’s universal material forces (primarily economic and political rather than religious), through immersion in the *representation* of a localized soundworld, a seamless synthesis of sound and social practice, conspicuously operating in a particular place and time (however imaginary), and – thus grounded – poised to catalyze some form of metaphysical transcendence.

At a more abstract level of interpretation – not likely to occur either to Muslim immigrant or World Music consumer – perhaps the apparently contrastive meanings animating Islamic ethnoscape, and Islamic soundscape are not so contrary as it would seem. Both are utopian imaginings of a spiritualized world, but differently shaped by differential access to power. The appeal of a globalized Islam is now inextricably intertwined with a spiritualized search for political empowerment, for Divinely-sanctioned socio-economic justice in a patently unjust world in which a small minority enjoys complete physical security and comfort, the West at the expense of the rest. By contrast, the appeal of Sufi music in the West stems largely from the bourgeois search for meaning in a capitalist society in which basic material needs have largely been met, and in which a certain spiritual-aesthetic longing, pointing nostalgically or creatively outside

of this system, remains unfulfilled. But, again, this equivalence is only an abstraction. For Muslims in Edmonton, as for consumers of World Music, the soundscape and the ethnoscape are disjunctive, worlds apart.

So long as the soundscape is mediated, while the ethnoscape is populated, the two scapes need not interact at all, despite geographical overlap. Not far from my local mosque, it is possible to purchase Sufi World Music on CD. But with the appearance of Shaikh Mohamed el-Helbawy in Edmonton, simultaneously an agent of Islamic soundscape and Islamic ethnoscape in Edmonton, some interaction was bound to occur, throwing subtle differences among Edmonton's Muslims into sharp relief, depending on which of his identities was given priority. Socially, the Shaikh could be engaged primarily as a fellow Muslim (or Egyptian), in which case his performance might be accepted. Or he could be engaged primarily as a purveyor of Islamic World Music, in which case it might be rejected. This ambiguity, due to his journey's retracing the trajectory of both ethnoscape and soundscape, is what makes the nuanced reactions to his presence so interesting to observe. Shaikh el-Helbawy became a kind of litmus test of the silence of Islam in Edmonton.

In particular, his presence revealed significant discrepancies between first and subsequent generations of Muslims in Edmonton. For first-generation immigrants, silence is born of necessity as much as of ideology. First-generation Muslims frequently harbor a deep-seated, though usually unacknowledged, nostalgia for the lost soundworld, which is embedded in their spiritual *habitus*. Their (common enough) discursive adoption of the reformist ideology, by which Islam must be deculturized and (thereby) unified in order to succeed, is belied by the deeper, pre-discursive dispositions of this *habitus*. At an emotional level at least, Islam comprises a set of relatively open texts, unvoiced (as it were), "vocalized" through locally elaborated cultural traditions, orally transmitted, filling discursive gaps with non-referential, affective sound. But the Islamic soundworld is not merely an oral tradition accepted (tacitly) along with the canonic texts; it is intrinsic to these Muslims' core affective identity. Yet, being non-discursive, its absence can scarcely be articulated (or may be actively repressed by competing ideologies) and thus goes unacknowledged – until the missing soundworld is suddenly invoked by the sounds of its presence, for instance when a figure such as Shaikh Mohamed el-Helbawy appears momentarily on the ethnoscape. Only then, with a sudden recognition of what one has lost through emigration, do the tears begin to flow. The intellectual fear of difference ("but music in Islam is *bida*") is emotionally appeased, by the affective certainty of what one "feels" to be right.

But for the second and subsequent generations – represented by MSA and al-Rashid leadership – this is an ideological silence, a silence of the *habitus* itself. This generation has been raised in the silent Islam of Canada, isolated from the oral traditions received by parents or grandparents. No localized Islamic soundworld occupies its deepest memories; many have not even been raised in religious households, but rather experienced the need to return to Islam as young adults. The spiritual *habitus* is disconnected from the sound of Islamic tradition,

and – logically enough – finds no discursive reason to seek a reconnection, since the loss is purely affective. Returning to Islam, this generation perforce seizes upon its texts – not only the sacred sources of Qur'an and Hadith, but Islamic books generally, including the new wave of Salafi publications. Unlike previous generations of Muslims, this one's Islamic identity is recreated almost exclusively via such texts, developing the basis for a new oral tradition detached from the old. Lacking access to the soundworld, discourse is consequently elevated to much higher position than in traditional Muslim societies; texts become, in my theoretical terms (see below), "closed." Oral culture is not invoked to fill gaps, not only because such culture is lacking – but due to the prevailing ideological stance against cultural variation within Islam, as a means of unifying the worldwide Umma. These second-generation Muslims, rediscovering their Muslim roots, but lacking access to the multidimensional Muslim tradition, are driven by fear and conformity to a position of extreme conservatism, a fact consistent with Roy's claim that Western Islam has generated its own neo-fundamentalist forms (Roy, 2004).

I wish to offer a final theoretical distinction, between "open" and "closed" texts. I take it as self-evident that no text is ever complete, in the sense of offering an unequivocal representation. Texts always contain gaps, whether or not they are recognized as such, spaces to be filled by their "readers." Hence "openness" and "closure" are never properties of the text as such, but rather of textual perception or attitude: these are in effect social rather than textual properties. Lacunae of "open texts" are interpreted creatively, elaborated with additional (often non-discursive) meanings, allowed to develop via oral transmission. In Islamic culture, the paradigm is provided by the ambiguity of an unvoiced (unvoiced) Arabic text, a visual-sonic metaphor for the relation between text and social vocalization more generally. The vowels, termed *harakat* (movements) in Arabic, have evolved to a great extent as an oral tradition, varying from one place to another.

Thus the authoritative Qur'anic recension – the 'Uthmanic mushaf – lacks all diacritics (dots, vowels and other marks). Though carefully prepared, and preserved since the seventh century, this mushaf lacks semantic meaning until completed by an oral tradition of readings (*qira'at*) which determine the missing diacritics. Even this much is not sufficient to enable its recitation, which requires additional information from the oral tradition, for instance phonetics (as preserved in the *ahkam al-tajwid*, rules of recitation), and melodic modes (*maqamat*). Necessarily, such vocalization may vary from place to place. But this oral tradition is never open to individual determination, because it is pre-eminently social, part of an intersubjectively negotiated soundworld, a sonic-social whole.

In Islam, the Qur'an is but the most salient instance of this phenomenon. More broadly, one finds in Islamic culture a careful balance between discursive texts and local culture. Textual openness enables local culture to fill textual gaps, hence – in the context of globalization – the production of difference, perhaps even leading to conflict. But this openness also offers an adaptive relation to the



global system, an embedding in the soundworld, and hence in the *habitus*, a psycho-social rooting reaching into the very heart of each individual, and thereby connecting them all. Conflicts over practice are resolved by the recognition of the priority of the *batin* (inner meaning) over the *zahir* (external meaning), the immutability of essence despite external multiplicity. Since no text is ever complete, it follows that the “closed” text can only be that whose gaps go unrecognized, or whose gaps are denied. Such gaps can be filled only with silence.

## Notes

- 1 The Hamidiyya Shadhiliyya has been extensively documented by Gilsenan (Gilsenan 1973), and at least two CD recordings featuring Shaikh el-Helbawy are available.
- 2 On the first of these, Shaikh el-Helbawy performs anonymously with the *munshidin* (chanters) of the Hamidiyya Shadhiliyya order; the disc was recorded in Paris while the group toured there (a visit arranged by Dr Soliman Gamil). On the second Shaikh el-Helbawy is featured prominently with a professional group of musicians and chorus (who are not *munshidin* by training). The third contains a remarkable fusion of *ibtihalat* with Mozart's Requiem.
- 3 In April 2007, Alberta's population was estimated at 3,455,062 (“About Alberta”).
- 4 University of Alberta statistics are inferred from the University of Alberta Databook for 2005–2006 (“University of Alberta Databook for 2005–2006,” 2006). The university does not collect statistics on religious affiliations, but these can be roughly approximated by using population-wide Muslim percentages for Canadians, and by counting according to country of origin (a statistic which is tabulated) for immigrants.
- 5 This term will be more rigorously defined below.
- 6 See for instance the culture wars that erupted in Hamtramck, Michigan, over plans to broadcast the call to prayer in a local mosque there (“Mosque's calls to prayer signal Hamtramck change,” 2005).
- 7 The Muslim Students' Association of the US and Canada was formed at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) on January 1, 1963; the organization mobilizes and coordinates student Muslim organizations at college campuses throughout North America (“MSA National”).
- 8 Lessons.
- 9 Forbidden by Islamic law.
- 10 I would furthermore argue that this “social fear” is a principle force driving so-called “fundamentalism” in the contemporary wave of Islamism worldwide – at least as powerfully as revolutionary politics or heartfelt faith. Donning the veil among women, like removing gold wedding bands among men, is an expression of conformity at least as often as it is an expression of piety.
- 11 By “pre-linguistic” I do not mean to exclude linguistic sound, but rather to consider such sound primarily as sound, not as discourse, i.e. consider such sound in its phonetic, timbral, tonal and rhythmic aspects.
- 12 This fact may only be tautological, in the sense that it is only the discursive portion of experience of which one is usually said to be actively aware.
- 13 The social nature of the soundworld is confirmed also by research demonstrating that the blind (participating more or less fully in the soundworld) find social integration much more readily than the deaf. And the coercive power of amplified sound was adequately demonstrated during the Panama “intervention” (1989–1990), when the US Marines deployed high decibel rock music as a weapon against General Manuel Noriega, holed up in the papal Nunciatura; this track has since been replayed by the FBI in their 1993 standoff with Branch Davidians at Waco, Texas, and with the use of AC/DC by Marines in 2004 during the Iraq War (“U.S. deploys loud music, insults in Fallujah,” 2004).

- 14 The limitations of language to comment upon music was eloquently noted by the eminent musicologist-philosopher Charles Seeger as an instance of the “linguo-centric predicament” (Seeger, 1961), and can also be formulated in systems theoretic terms: language and music communications may be regarded as a pair of structurally-coupled operationally closed autopoietic systems (Luhmann, 2000: 107–108).
- 15 Such is the case for instance in Qur'anic recitation: discursive *ahkam al-tajwid* (rules of recitation) regulate only that which can be talked about, leaving free multiple variables such as tonality, melody, tempo, rhythm, and timbre (see Frishkopf, 2009).
- 16 I have coined the term *interauthor* to denote this social network of authorship (Frishkopf, 2003), in contrast to the textual network, or *intertext*.
- 17 Here an important difference between Canada and the US comes into play: whereas in both countries universities actively solicit international students to fill their technical graduate programs, only in Canada are students allowed to apply for immigration while on a student visa. However such visas are unlikely to be granted in non-technical fields, due to limited employment opportunities. Typically, then, immigrant graduate students studying science and engineering in Canada become Canadian citizens prior to completing the doctorate, and many of these stay on.
- 18 A counter-outcome is the development of “ethnically based” mosques, e.g. in Edmonton where one mosque draws primarily South Asians (with a *khutba* in Urdu). But this fact only underscores the inability to tolerate difference within any particular Muslim community.
- 19 The transnational music industry is currently dominated by the “big four”: Sony BMG, EMI, Universal and Warner.
- 20 (Hear, for instance: al-Tuhami, 1998; “Soufi songs from Tunisia: Ensemble de Cheikh Abdelaziz ben Mahmoud,” 2000; “Sufi songs of Damascus,” 1993; “Transe Soufie d'Alep,” 2003; “Turkish Sufi music: folk lute of Anatolia,” “Turquie: musique soufie: Ilahi et nefes,” 1991).
- 21 (Hear: “Algeria: Ahallil de Gourara: sacred songs from the Sahara,” 1994; El Helbawy, 1999; “Maroc: Rituel de transe: Les Aissawa de Fes,” 1995; “Syrie: Chants d'Alep,” 1994; “Tunisie: Chants soufis de Tunis,” 1999; “Yemen: Chants sacres de Sanaa,” 2001).
- 22 (Hear: Brothers, 1990; “Gnawa music of Marrakesh: night spirit masters,” 1990; Lo, 1995; “Music of the Whirling Dervishes,” 1987; N'Dour, 2004; “The passion of Pakistan: Iqbal Jogi & party,” 1997).
- 23 The fact that ethnomusicological–ethnographic production (much of it with governmental support) typically takes place in France, while music-oriented discs are usually issued by American and British labels, is itself a noteworthy reminder of the need to nuance generalizations about “the West.” France, lacking the global financial and political clout of the Anglo-American alliance, often seeks to strengthen its world position through cultural exchanges. Another noteworthy trend is for African and South Asian sounding Sufi music to be decontextualized by larger music producers for its aesthetic/entertainment value (e.g. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Youssou N'Dour), while Arab Sufi music tends to be presented more ethnographically; this tendency follows the lines of world music popularity generally: first African and African-linked (Latin, Caribbean), then South Asian.
- 24 A more comprehensive taxonomic frame might be developed as follows. Muslim-directed Islamic music comprises traditional genres, plus new studio-oriented ones (e.g. Sami Yusuf), flowing within limited networks worldwide; the overall intention is always spiritual and pedagogical. Western-directed Islamic music comprises at least three mixable intentions (pedagogical/scholarly, aesthetic, spiritual), freely combining in at least four representational forms (ethnographic recording on-site, specially arranged performance on-site, staged concert recording, studio recording) of varying distance from the “original,” with the additional factors of fusion and creative

interpretation (mixing traditions, or inventing new ones) tending to weaken the connection to any particular pre-mediated tradition.

25 (Hear: al-Chaziliyya, 1992; El Helbawy, 1999, 2003; "Mozart in Egypt," 2002).

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## 5 Pluralism and authenticity

### Sufi paths in post-9/11 New York

*Markus Dressler*

Based on research in the New York City area, this chapter explores the ways in which Sufi-Muslim identity is negotiated in a North American metropolitan context post-9/11.<sup>1</sup> It aims to clarify the impact of a secular pluralist framework on the negotiation of religious boundaries between Muslims, with a focus on Sufi Muslims. Particularly, it asks how Sufis engage with the challenges and opportunities within a non-Muslim majority context that is both secular and pluralist. Engaging questions of religious boundary construction, the chapter reflects on the impact of the post-9/11 era on Muslims and Sufis within US identity politics. It then discusses three ideal-typical Muslim Sufi reactions to American society and culture ranging between seclusion from and appropriation of American lifestyles and values, and finally elaborates on those characteristic features of Western Sufism that seem to be furthered by the secular and pluralist situation.

#### Identity politics: pluralism, Islam and 9/11

It can be argued that one of the major aims of US patriotism is to transcend ethnic and religious differences. The ethnic inclusivism of US patriotism, as expressed in the melting-pot metaphor, is based on an implicit model of layered identities and loyalties, espousing a civic patriotism that aims at integrating ethnic identities into the American national mainstream and demanding loyalty to the nation's symbols and values. Throughout the last century, with the inclusion of Catholics and Jews into the American mainstream, the religious landscape of the US has become more diverse. This is reflected in successive identity transformations as a Protestant, Christian and finally Judeo-Christian nation.<sup>2</sup> Most recently, mainstream political rhetoric shows attempts to include Muslims into the American religious narrative by pointing to the common roots of Jews, Christians and Muslims as Abrahamic religions – a rhetoric which I suggest calling *Abrahamicism*.<sup>3</sup>

The ethnic and religious inclusivism of American nationalism is, however, fragile. The layered identity model fails in times when national values and interests are being seen in conflict with those of particular religious or not-yet-Americanized ethnic communities. This is what happened after 9/11, when