Chapter 3

Mediated Qur'anic Recitation and the Contestation of Islam in Contemporary Egypt

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Overview[1]

Islam in Egypt today is contested across a broad media spectrum from recorded sermons, films, television and radio programmes to newspapers, pamphlets and books. Print, recorded and broadcast media facilitate an ongoing ideological debate about Islam – its nature and its normative social role – featuring a wide variety of discursive positions.[2] What is the role of Qur'anic recitation (generally known as *tilawa*) within this debate?

Public *tilawa* is one of Islam's most essential and universal practices, deeply rooted in Islamic tradition and deeply felt by its practitioners (Nelson 2001). Can public *tilawa* participate in ideological struggles to define Islam? Certainly, Qur'anic recitation is immensely moving for Muslims. And yet, *prima facie*, one might expect the answer to be 'no', because the Qur'an's linguistic content is fixed and its recitation highly regulated. Nevertheless, *tilawa* allows significant scope for variation and stylistic variety. In the past, such divergence resulted from localised chains of transmission, shaped by contrastive contexts and did not typically convey widely significant ideological positions. However, over the past century the mass media has generally facilitated the formation and circulation of more broadly recognisable and influential *tilawa* styles within a more autonomous

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[1]   This chapter extends the seminal work of Kristina Nelson. In the postscript to the new edition of her book, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'an* (2001), Nelson comments on the rise of a Saudi style since the first edition appeared in 1985. This is precisely the period I am attempting, in part, to document here. My sincere thanks to Kristina Nelson, for her groundbreaking study and insightful comments on an earlier draft, to Wael 'Abd al-Fattah, Usama Dinasuri, Iman Mersal and Dr Ali Abu Shadi, for their critical insights and feedback, to staff at *al-Musannafat al-Fanniyya*, SonoCairo and the Islamic Research Academy of al-Azhar University, and to numerous Egyptians (reciters and others) with whom I've conducted countless informal discussions. This research was supported by generous grants from the American Research Center in Egypt (2003–4) and from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2004–6).

[2]   Multiple discourses have been documented in recent years by a wide range of scholars including Kepel (1993), Gaffney (1994), Abed-Kotob (1995), Ibrahim (1996), Johansen (1996), Abdo (2000) and Wickham (2002).

sonic field. In this chapter, I aim to show how the cassette medium, embedded in the historical circumstances of its emergence in Egypt, has recently enabled a new ideological distinction between 'Egyptian' and 'Saudi' *tilawa* styles.[3] By means of this distinction, the latter powerfully represents, and promotes, influential reformist-revivalist Islamic ideology within contemporary Egyptian society.

Introduction to *Tilawa* in Contemporary Egypt[4]

For Muslims, the Qur'an is Divine Revelation (*wahy*), the fixed Speech of God (*kalam Allah*) as revealed in the Arabic language to the Prophet Muhammad, starting around the year 610 CE and continuing until the Prophet's death in 632 CE. Following the dominant *Ash'ari* creed, most Egyptian Muslims accept the Speech of God as a Divine Attribute, hence uncreated and eternal with God Himself. The Qur'an is inextricably attached to its recitation as solo vocal performance. Muslims rarely read the Qur'an without reciting it and the experience of the Divine text is therefore primarily auditory (Nelson 2001:xiv, Nasr 1995:57). The injunction to recite is explicit in both Qur'an and Sunna.[5] The word 'Qur'an' itself implies 'recitation' (Rahman 1979:30). God revealed (some say 'recited') the Qur'an to the archangel Gabril. Gabril subsequently recited it to Muhammad, who recited it to his Companions (*sahaba*), and so on in a continuous chain to the present. The Prophet said that Gabril taught him the Qur'an in seven '*ahruf*' (dialectical variants) in order to be intelligible to different Arab tribes (Tirmidhi 2000: no. 2867). Phonetic variation, perhaps stemming from the multiple *ahruf*, allowed different schools of recitation to emerge and eventually ten principal variant 'readings' (*qira'at*) were fixed, each associated with a particular teacher, plus sub-variants (*riwayat*)

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3   Since the 1990s, other phonogram formats have emerged, including CD, CD-ROM (a single CD can contain the entire Qur'an plus commentaries) and video. Internet downloads are increasingly common, especially as Internet cafés proliferate, and Islamic satellite television channels (such as *Iqra'*) have greatly expanded synchronous bandwidth for Qur'anic recitation. But cassettes remain central, due to the ubiquity of playback equipment, low cost and the importance of asynchronous channels, as discussed below.

4   A number of studies of Qur'anic recitation have been published in English, the most comprehensive being that by Nelson (2001), which likewise focuses on contemporary Egypt. See also Pacholczyk (1970), al-Faruqi (1987a, 1987b) and Rasmussen (2001).

5   Sunna constitutes the customs of the Prophet Muhammad as passed down through reports (*Hadith*) about his speech and behaviour. The most reliable *Hadith* collections (including those of Muslim, Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Darimi and Ibn Hanbal cited here) are known as '*sahih*' ('true'). The first revealed verse (Qur'an 96:1) begins with the command '*iqra'*' ('recite!') (Lings 1983:43–4; Bukhari 2000: no. 3 [note that *Hadith* citations in his chapter employ the al-Alamiah Enumeration]). The Qur'an itself clearly states (in 73:4) '*rattil al-Qur'ana tartilan*' ('chant the Qur'an in measure') (Pickthall 1953), and from the Prophet's Sunna, 'He is not one of us who does not chant the Qur'an' (Bukhari 2000: no. 6973).

associated with their students. In Egypt, the principal reading is presently *Hafs 'an 'Asim*: the *riwaya* of Hafs bin Sulayman (d. 796) from the *qira'a* of his father-in-law, 'Asim of Kufa (d. 745) (Sa'id 1975:69). Since the manner of the Prophet's recitation carried the force of Divine authority, it was codified as *ahkam al-tajwid*: the fixed 'rules' governing correct recitation of the Qur'an. A large component of *tajwid* concerns phonetics, including proper articulation of each letter and rules for their assimilation (*idgham*), emphasis (*tafkhim*) and de-emphasis (*tarqiq*). Other topics include regulation of the length of the *madd* (long vowels), handling the *waqf* (pause) and *ibda'* (resumption) and the relative speed of recitation (from *tahqiq* to *hadr*) (see 'Abd al-Fattah 2001, Nelson 2001).

Despite the importance of recitation and oral transmission, a written tradition also developed in parallel with the oral one. With the Prophet's approval, some of his literate companions recorded Qur'anic verses in Arabic script and after his death the first textual recension (*mushaf*[6]) was carefully prepared by the first Caliph Abu Bakr (r.632–34 CE). By the time of the third Caliph, 'Uthman (r.644–55 CE), a number of written versions existed (stemming partly from the multiple *ahruf*) and disputes arose over various Qur'anic passages, thus undermining the unity of the *Umma* (Muslim community). Soon after 650,[7] 'Uthman responded by fixing a second authoritative recension and having all other versions burnt (Sa'id 1975:19ff.). This 'Uthmani recension has remained the only authoritative *mushaf*; augmented with diacritical marks (points and vowels), the text corresponds to a particular *qira'a*. The *mushaf* comprises 114 *suras* (chapters), each divided into a number of *ayas* (verses) and arranged approximately in order of decreasing length (the opening *sura* excepted). Independently, the *mushaf* is divided into 30 roughly equal units (*ajza'* [sing. *juz'*]) to facilitate orderly monthly recitation, especially during Ramadan.

What then is fixed and what is variable in *tilawa*? Fixity is an important property of most sacred objects, for the sacred – presumably – does not change. *Tilawa* is fixed, to a large extent, by three discursive sources: the written text (*mushaf*), its phonological 'readings' (*qira'at*) and its rules of recitation (*ahkam al-tajwid*). In the analysis which follows, I define a *variable* as an association of each *tilawa* performance (or each moment in each performance, for time-dependent variables) with a value along a dimension, qualitative or quantitative. Once a *mushaf* passage has been selected for recitation, the range of its possible sonic realisations is sharply limited by *qira'at* and *tajwid*. Yet certain variables, each corresponding to a particular sonic, textual or pragmatic dimension (Bussman 1996:374), nevertheless remain free (within limits). By means of variation along these dimensions, different yet equally acceptable recitations of the same passage in the same *qira'a* may be distinguished. Over time, with the accumulation (inherent

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6   Pronounced '*mus-haf*' ('sh' is not a digraph).

7   R. Paret (2006), 'Kira'a', in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (web edition), Brill Online, University of Alberta, <www.brillonline.nl.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-4383> (accessed 12/12/06).

in oral traditions) of sonic communications through historically-conditioned social networks, such variability enables contrastive *tilawa* styles to emerge.

Given a particular passage and *qira'a*, recitational variation is non-discursive: it does not alter the linguistic text of *tilawa* (Bussman 1996:13, 479). Many free variables capture paralinguistic dimensions of recitation, often with continuous (for instance, pitch, duration, loudness) or complex (for instance, timbre) values, and typically time-dependent, as opposed to the discrete-sequential phonological variables of linguistic discourse.[8] Being non-discursive, such variables also resist discursive description or specification (indeed, the difficulty of specifying continuous time-varying features is one reason they have not been fixed by *ahkam al-tajwid*) and tend to remain out of awareness. Rather, their significance is primarily expressive and affective, selectively emphasising and colouring but never altering the cognitive meaning of a Qur'anic passage. At the same time, their provision for spontaneous, situational expressivity enables great affective power.

Table 3.1 summarises some of the variable aspects of *tilawa*, including sonic and textual variables (under the reciter's direct control), together with others relating to the social context of recitation and the social positions of participants. A fourth set of variables is applicable for commercially recorded *tilawa*.

Table 3.1   The principal free variables defining public *tilawa* style (variables in italics). Media variables apply to recorded *tilawa* only. While the number of variables is arbitrary, this particular set defines a 38-dimensional vector space, within which styles can be represented as distinctive regions.

1. Sonic Variables	
1.1 Timbral	1.1.1 Vocal *timbre*
	1.1.2 Emotional *expression* (as judged by Egyptian reciters and listeners)
1.2 Tonal	1.2.1 *Ambitus* (width of tonal range)
	1.2.2 *Tessitura* (centre of tonal range)
	1.2.3 *Mode* preference[9]
	1.2.4 Extent of modal *modulation*
	1.2.5 *Melodicity* (melodic complexity, development, ornament)

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[8]   While at the phonetic level discourse is also continuous, at the phonological level continuities are aggregated into a discrete set of phonemes; discourse (as the term is used in the field of linguistics) comprises a sequence drawn from this set.

[9]   A mode is a tonal structure comprising a pitch set carrying additional structures, including tonal functions (tonic, dominant, leading tone) and melodic tendencies. In Arabic, mode is known as *maqam* and the same modes are used in secular music and *tilawa*. Commonly used *tilawa* modes include *Bayyati* (D, E half-flat, F, G, A, B half-flat, C) and *Rast* (C, D, E half-flat, F, G, A, B half-flat).

1.3 Temporal	1.3.1 Use of interphrasal *pause*
	1.3.2 *Tone rate*[10]
	1.3.3 *Rhythm*
1.4 Dynamic	1.4.1 *Dynamic level* (*sirran* or *jahran*, plus amplification level)
	1.4.2 *Dynamic range*
	1.4.3 Use of *accent* (stress)

2. Textual Variables	
2.1 Setting	2.1.1 *Melisma* (average number of tones per syllable)
	2.1.2 *Word painting* (*taswir al-ma'na*)[11]
2.2 Text pacing	2.2.1 *Repetition* (of textual segments)
	2.2.2 Average *syllable duration*
	2.2.3 *Syllable duration variation* (standard deviation)
2.3 Text selection	2.3.1 Selection of *textual passage*[12]
	2.3.2 *Textual boundaries* of selection[13]
	2.3.3 Inclusion of *du'a'*, or not[14]
2.4 Phonetics	2.4.1 *Regional accent*[15]
	2.4.2 *Qira'a*

3. Pragmatic Variables	
3.1 Context	3.1 *Occasion* (for example, obligatory prayer, listening *majlis*, study session, *maytam*, studio recording)
3.2 Status	3.2 Reciter's *social position* (status, specialisations, professionalism)
3.3 Presentation	3.3 Reciter's *personal image* (dress, comportment)
3.4 Audience	3.4.1 *Attendance*
	3.4.2 *Listener behaviour*

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[10]   Tones per second (tps). In a monophonic vocal context, I take a 'tone' to be a maximal temporal interval exhibiting approximately constant pitch and bounded by an adjacent pair of syllabic attack points (which would, if transcribed, correspond to a 'note'). Thus the set of tone boundaries comprises the union of (1) syllable onsets and (2) moments of pitch change.

[11]   For example, raising the tonal level to describe Paradise, or matching *maqam* to textual mood.

[12]   Although the *mushaf* is fixed, the particular passage recited is variable; its selection may be influenced by contextual factors, personal preference, or in order to express a particular message through the Qur'anic medium.

[13]   In theory, the reciter may begin and end with any verse. However, boundaries are most typically determined either by *sura* or *juz'* boundaries, especially on recordings.

[14]   During certain prayers (especially dawn and Ramadan *tarawih* prayers), the reciter may append a concluding *du'a'* (supplicative prayer) to his recitation.

[15]   The careful phonetic specifications of *tajwid* manuals do not preclude a certain degree of variability, enabling regional Arabic accents to recognisably emerge.

4. Recorded Media Variables	
4.1 Medium	4.1 *Medium* (for example, cassette, CD, CD-ROM)
4.2 Sound effects	4.2 Artificial *reverb*
4.3 Cover graphics	4.3.1 *Cover text*
	4.3.2 *Cover fonts*
	4.3.3 *Cover images*
	4.3.4 *Cover art*
4.4 Production	4.4.1 *Producer name*
	4.4.2 *Producer specialisation*
4.5 Distribution	4.5 Primary *retail location* (for example, sold from cassette shop, stationery shop, newspaper kiosk, street display)
4.6 Use	4.6 *Use* (for example, pedagogy, background sound)

In Egypt, the reciter is generally called *qari'*, though in the context of congregational prayer he may be the *imam* (prayer leader) or (on Friday) *khatib* (preacher).[16] The teacher of recitation and professional reciter specialist is called *muqri'*. Recitation itself is called *qira'a* ('reading'), *tajwid* ('improving') and *tartil* ('chanting'). Besides their more general meanings, however, each of the latter two terms is also associated with a style of recitation, whose name is derived from the same linguistic root. These recitational styles are called *mujawwad* (derived, like *tajwid*, from the Arabic root j-w-d), and *murattal* (derived, like *tartil*, from r-t-l). These styles, corresponding to distinctive regions of the 'free variable' space defined above, developed in response to social and media forces of mid-twentieth-century Egypt. *Mujawwad* (or *tajwid*) is a slow-paced, melodically elaborate style, designed for the listener's contemplation and requiring great skill from the reciter, who is a highly accomplished (usually professional) specialist. *Murattal* (or *tartil*) is a faster, less melodic style used for individual devotions and study, as well as obligatory prayer.[17] The world-wide influence of the Egyptian *tilawa* tradition has rendered the *mujawwad–murattal* contrast globally significant.

The experience of recitation is never merely a matter of the cognitive apprehension of Qur'anic text and meaning. Rather, it is pre-eminently emotional.[18] Emotional power is stirred both by meanings of the fixed Divine text and by the

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[16]   The following summary of *tilawa* practice is based primarily on my own participant-observations and conversations in Egypt, supplemented by secondary sources (Sa'id 1975, Daoud 1997a, Nelson 2001).

[17]   *Tajwid* may also refer to the rules governing recitation (see below) and *qira'a* applies to any act of reading, not just Qur'anic recitation. As such, the most general term denoting all Qur'anic recitation (no more and no less) is *tilawa*.

[18]   The Prophet himself offered advice concerning the appropriate emotions, both experiential and behavioural, associated with Qur'anic recitation, stating in a *hadith*, 'indeed the Qur'an was revealed with sadness [*huzn*], so if you recite it weep, and if you can't weep then feign weeping' ('*in al-Qur'ana nazala bil-huzni, fa idha qara'tumuhu fabku wa in lam tabku fa tabaaku*') (Ibn Majah 2000: no. 1327). Sufis in particular ascribe great emotional power to recitation (Ghazali 1901:733ff.).

sonic substrate created by the reciter (partly in response to those meanings). As the Prophet said, 'Beautify the Qur'an with your voices, for the beautiful voice increases the Qur'an in beauty' (Darimi 2000: no. 3365). The reciter's personal expression of affective response is sonically communicated through free variables in the domains of timbre, dynamics, accent, timing and pitch.

Recitation may be performed privately or publicly. Quiet private recitation (*sirran*) not intended to be heard by others, occurs in individual prayer, in certain *rak'a*s[19] of congregational prayer (*salat al-jama'a*) and for individual study and devotions. It is never *mujawwad*. By contrast, public recitation, intended to be heard by others (*jahran*), may be performed *mujawwad* or *murattal*. The Prophet himself exhorted public recitation, stating 'I like to hear [Qur'an] recited by someone other than me' (Bukhari 2000: no. 4661), indicating that both reciter and listener receive spiritual rewards (Ibn Hanbal 2000: no. 8138). Public recitation is most constrained during the first two *rak'a*s of dawn, sunset, night and Friday congregational prayers. Here, where there is neither time nor inclination (nor, often, ability) for *mujawwad* and where responsorial behaviour is precluded, the *imam* or *khatib* recites *murattal*. Memorials (*maytam*, *arba'in*, *dhikra*)[20] allow considerable flexibility for professional *mujawwad* recitations, as does the *tilawa* listening session (*majlis*), performed in the mosque before or after prayer (especially before dawn and Friday noon congregational prayers), and on religious holidays. Again, the reciter is usually a *mujawwad* professional. Additionally, listeners can respond, expressing spiritual-aesthetic feeling at the *qafla* (melodic-textual cadence) with cries of '*Allah*!' or '*Ya Salam*!' which stir the reciter to greater expressive heights in a feedback process closely resembling the *tarab* (musical ecstasy) aesthetic of traditional Arab music (Racy 2003). These exclamations stimulate highly affective states, including profound sadness (*huzn*, *shajan*) and mystical or musical ecstasy (*wajd*, *tarab*), the latter highly controversial. Such sessions have often attracted listeners for aesthetic as well as spiritual reasons. Finally, recorded recitations (of any of the above types) allows the listener maximal contextual freedom.[21]

The relationship between *tilawa* and music is complex, one manifestation of what Nelson calls the '*sama'* polemic' (2001:32ff.), related to a long-standing Islamic debate over the admissibility of music generally (Roy Choudhury 1957, Farmer 1957). Whereas music and singing were widely practised throughout

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[19]   Each prayer is composed of between two and four *rak'a*s; each *rak'a* includes Qur'anic recitation, followed by a bow and two prostrations. The *imam* recites Qur'an publicly during the first two *rak'a*s of dawn, sunset, night and Friday congregational prayers. Recitation in other *rak'a*s is private.

[20]   Memorial recitations are generally held outdoors after evening prayers, in a colourful *suwan* (tent) where guests can be received, and are loudly amplified. The *maytam* occurs immediately after burial, the *arba'in* after 40 days and the *dhikra sanawiyya* annually thereafter. Egyptian intellectuals and Islamic reformists alike deem the *arba'in* a pre-Islamic Pharaonic survival; the latter also condemn it.

[21]   See Nelson for a more detailed summary of recitation contexts (2001:xxiii–xxviii).

Islamic societies, normative religious discourse – drawing primarily on *Hadith* – counterposed a Sufi point of view (that under the right conditions music supports spirituality [for example, Ghazali 1901]) with a more puritanical one (that music, at best, is a distraction from God; at worst, an incitation to sinfulness [for example, Dunya 1938]).[22] Unsurprisingly, the 'polemic' intensifies concerning application of music to recitation of the sacred text itself. For Muslims, *tilawa* is not singing, just as the Qur'an is not poetry. Textually and theologically, the distinction is obvious: the Qur'an is unique; its inimitability (*i'jaz*) Divine. Sonically and pragmatically, the distinction is more ambiguous. But, unlike song, *tilawa* contains neither poetic nor musical meters; it is performed as an improvised vocal solo, unaccompanied by instruments, and is sonically marked by *ahkam al-tajwid*.

Yet public recitation is always pitched, exhibiting the tonal logic, and sometimes the complexity, of music. Further, in pre-mass media Egypt a broad region of overlap between musical and religious sonic-social practices prevailed. Public recitation draws upon musical resources, especially the modal system of *maqamat*. Traditionally, *tilawa* and singing were often performed at the same events, even by the same performers. Up until the early twentieth century, *tilawa* experts such as Shaykh Ali Mahmud (1878–1949) and Shaykh Muhammad Rif'at (1882–1950) also sang *qasidas* and *muwashshahat* (elevated art music genres) (Tawfiq 199x:16, 19, 67),[23] and the *kuttab* (Qur'an school) provided vocal training for the greatest singers, including Umm Kulthūm and Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab (Tawfiq 199x:31, Danielson 1990, 1997), at least through the first third of the twentieth century.

Undoubtedly, 'free variables' have always enabled the differentiation of discernable *tilawa* styles, but until modern times such styles could only crystallise and propagate through face-to-face interaction and thus must have remained both numerous and relatively localised, or at least of limited influence. The advent of broadcast and recording technology in the twentieth century, however, has catalysed a new quasi-independent symbolic field of recitations, and a new dimension of symbolic difference within that field. Despite some early reservations,[24] uptake of *tilawa* into the mass media system – starting with phonogram discs in the early twentieth century (Racy 1976:33–4, 1977), followed by radio in the 1920s – was

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   [22]   Thus in one *hadith*, the Prophet allows girls to sing for the *'Id* (Muslim 2000: no. 1479); in another, the devil is told that his voice is *mizmar* (a wind instrument) (Qalamuni 2000:109).

   [23]   Where precise dates of publication are not known, but where the decade is known, the latter is indicated (for example, 199x) in preference to n.d.

   [24]   For instance, the concern that *tilawa* recordings might be played in inappropriate contexts was articulated. Shaykh Muhammad Rif'at consulted with Islamic legal experts before his first radio broadcast in 1934, and was always reluctant to record (lest an impure person touch a phonograph disc) (Tawfiq 199x:66–7). Shaykh Muhammad Salama, who began reciting in 1910, only became convinced of the legality of radio broadcasts in 1948 (Sa'dani 1996:41).

rapid. In 1934, Radio Egypt (*al-Idha'a al-Misriyya*) was launched (ERTU 2004:47) with melodious recitations by Shaykh Rif'at (Rizk 2004, Tawfiq 199x:66) and *tilawa* was aired frequently thereafter. Radio set ownership expanded significantly in Egypt during the 1950s (Starkey 1998:424), and in 1964 the government added a new station called Radio Qur'an (*Idha'at al-Qur'an al-Karim*), specialising in *tilawa* and other Islamic programming (ERTU 2004:47). Egyptian Television (*al-Tilifizyun al-Misri*, founded 1960) soon featured religious programming as well. With direct access to radio archives, the state-owned recording company, SonoCairo (*Sawt al-Qahira*, founded 1964), became Egypt's largest phonodisc producer, offering a wide range of popular music and producing most of the great reciters, including Shaykh Mustafa Isma'il (1905–78), Shaykh 'Abd al-Basit 'Abd al-Samad (1927–88), Shaykh Mahmud Khalil al-Husari (1917–80) and many others, for world-wide export.

What was the impact of mass media on the form and meaning of recitational styles? First, the mediaisation and concomitant commercialisation of audio production (together with the decline of the *kuttab*) induced an unprecedented bifurcation between religious and secular vocal forms, since the commercial value of the latter increasingly profited from a fashionable sexiness unacceptable within the religious domain (though socially acceptable outside it).[25] Singers no longer trained their voices in *tilawa* and Qur'an reciters gradually withdrew from other vocal specialisations. The sonic-social separation of *tilawa* and singing ultimately enabled the former to emerge as an independent expressive field within which disparate Islamic ideologies could potentially be expressed (though that potential was not yet realised). Moreover, mass media – facilitating broad dissemination, repeatability and context-independence – enabled the crystallisation of widely-recognised sonic styles, which therefore attained broader social significance and communicative potential.

In exploring this significance and potential, it is useful to analyse content diversity and concentration of production, and to distinguish between synchronous and asynchronous channels of mass media distribution. Synchronous broadcast media (for example, radio and television) enforce simultaneity on producer and consumer, while asynchronous 'product' media (LP, cassette, CD) do not. The latter thus enable greater user control and repeatability (particularly if user-recordable), and typically offer more diversity as well. Discrete and tangible media products also tend to reify sonic styles through synecdochic relations to them. Asynchronous media therefore enable a more flexible symbolic language of social communication, by which style can be embedded into quotidian discourse at a 'grass-roots' level through local playback operations.

Until the late 1990s, synchronous Egyptian mass media, monopolised by the state, featured relatively low diversity and high concentration, for both ideological

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and economic reasons. Such media therefore represented a coercive form of top-down communication. Until the 1970s, production of asynchronous mass media (LPs) likewise featured low diversity and strong centralisation, due to the high cost of manufacturing equipment and state dominance. Furthermore, the social impact of any diversity was limited by the costliness of playback equipment. *Tilawa* diversity was also constrained by the fact that al-Azhar-trained reciters enjoyed the greatest prestige and therefore provided the ideal models for Qur'anic recitation, both within Egypt and abroad. These factors precluded the development of a *system* of *tilawa* styles adapting in dialectical relation to the social conditions of their production and consumption, in which consumers' playback preferences could constitute utterances in a non-discursive communicative language of style. During this period one main public mediated style – Egyptian *mujawwad* – dominated.

Two related seismic changes of the mid-1970s enabled an asynchronous, decentralised mass media system to emerge in Egypt for the first time: the advent of inexpensive cassette technology and the development of a free market capitalist economy. With the subsequent growth of new Islamic trends in the 1980s came the crystallisation of an additional *tilawa* style and the ideologisation of the entire *tilawa* style system. This development will be extensively analysed below.

A Semiotic Theory of Style Differentiation and Communication

Whereas simple signs (for example, representational photographs) may represent absolutely, *tilawa* style signs are abstract, bearing no autonomous relation to the non-*tilawa* world.[26] As Saussure argued for language, sonic style signs *mean* only relatively, insofar as they, and their meanings, are differentiated from one another.[27] However, sonic style signs and linguistic signs are fundamentally different. While the linguistic system is large and complex, its constituent signs (morphemes) are simple, lacking much internal complexity. By contrast, the sonic style system is simple, while its constituent signs (styles) are complex, providing affective potential. In performance, the affective immediacy of the sonic style sign naturalises its own meaning (see Langer 1957). Speaking of language, Saussure argued that 'the terms *arbitrary* and *differential* designate two correlative properties' (1986:116). However the complexity of the abstract (hence differential) style sign enables it to mean in non-arbitrary (iconic, indexical) ways, while its abstraction implies that even non-arbitrary meanings arise only

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[26]   A note on terminology: Saussure's sign comprises the pair signal/signification (Saussure 1986:67) while Peirce's is a triple representamen/semiotic object/interpretant (Merrell 2001:28). For the moment I will conflate object and interpretant with signification as *meaning*, while signal and representamen will be my *sign*.

[27]   'A linguistic system is a series of phonetic differences matched with a series of conceptual differences' (Saussure 1986:118).

in relation to other such style signs. That is, the system of style signs exhibits both Saussurian and Peircean properties in that it comprises a set of meaningful differences, which may be non-arbitrarily related to meaning.

The total possible meaning of a style sign (in a social space) is the aggregation of such meanings over all active differences in which the sign participates (within that space). By 'active difference' I mean those semiotic contrasts which are socially realised – through cognitive or practical juxtaposition – by agents sharing the social space. By 'semiotic value' I mean a potential meaning for a particular sign user in a particular social space. Then the set of all such semiotic values comprises the value space for a particular sign. I claim that in a social-semiotic system (S), the meaning of one sign relative to another is simply the difference between their respective semiotic values: that is, the aggregated difference in potential meanings.[28] Symbolically, one may write the total meaning (M) of s in S as a sum of differences: $M(s, S) = \sum \{v(s) - v(s')\}$ where s is a sign, v(s) is its set of associated semiotic values and the sum $\sum$ ranges over all signs s' such that (s, s') constitutes an active difference in S. Note that a semiotic value w in v(s) is cancelled by its recurrence in v(s'), but may be highlighted by another sign s" when v(s") does not contain w. We will encounter concrete examples of this phenomenon later on.

Likewise, ideology is always embedded in a system of differences, since one ideology exists only in oppositional relation to others. When aligned with ideological differences, total meaning is ideological: semiotic differences are ideologised and the semiotic system is ideologically activated. In this case, semiotic differences may both express and promote ideological differences with which they are aligned. The mass media serve not only to differentiate ideologically active style signs, but also (subsequently) to empower them.

My claim is that with the advent of asynchronous mass media (and particularly cassettes) and associated political, economic and social changes, the space of Egyptian *tilawa* styles has been ideologically activated and has begun not only to express Islamic ideologies, but also to promote them (non-discursively) through social communication of stylistic preference, concretised in acts of cassette selection. Embedded in activities of cassette production, retail, purchase and playback is a style-selection operation which is also ideological. The dissemination of the selection itself thus constitutes an ideological message and a statement of position.

In the discussion which follows, I contrast a pair of semiotic differences within the evolving semiotic system of *tilawa* styles in Egypt. The first is the non-ideological difference between *murattal* and *mujawwad* styles, as found in the traditional binary style system prevailing up until the 1970s. The second is the contemporary difference between Egyptian *mujawwad* and the 'Saudi' style of

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[28]   In fact, meaning will vary according to the perspective of the agent, who constructs a particular meaning through a process of selection and emphasis for which the system can never entirely account. More accurately, then, meaning is a *weighted* set of differences, where weights represent these selections and emphases.

public recitation (see Hassan 1999, Nelson 2001:236). The latter style entered the Egyptian soundspace in the late 1970s, at a time when the cultural, technological and economic conditions for the ideologisation of *tilawa* style (bifurcation of Egyptian soundspace; decentralised, free-market economy; asynchronous media) were already in place.

I aim to show how a distinctive 'Saudi' style of Qur'anic recitation, by accumulating a distinctive set of meanings within the symbolic system of *tilawa* styles, becomes ideologically activated, powerfully promoting a set of discursive positions collectively comprising a reformist-revivalist Islamic ideology prevalent in Egyptian society today. This ideology, sometimes termed the 'New Islam' (*al-Islam al-Jadid*), opposes the traditional mystical-aesthetic values of Egyptian Islamic practice. In turn, the appearance of this newly-ideologised Saudi style sign has induced the counter-ideologisation of traditional Egyptian *mujawwad* recitation, transforming it into an oppositional style sign evoking traditional Egyptian-Islamic values.

The Traditional Binary Style System

Table 3.2 sets out the differences between Egyptian *mujawwad* and *murattal* style signs in the pre-cassette era.

Table 3.2   Differences between *mujawwad* and *murattal* style signs in the *pre-cassette* era (variables with identical values across the two style signs are omitted). This analysis is rooted in interpretive fieldwork in Cairo; in particular, the concept of 'expression' is based on general consensus among Egyptian listeners.

Free Variable	Mujawwad	Murattal
1.1.1 *Timbre*	More tense	More relaxed
1.1.2 *Expression*	More expressive	Less expressive
1.2.1 *Ambitus*	Wide	Narrow
1.2.2 *Tessitura*	Lower	Higher
1.2.4 *Modulation*	Extensive	Little
1.2.5 *Melodicity*	Elaborate, developmental	Low
1.3.1 *Pause*	Lengthy, following cadence (*qafla*)	Little
1.4.1 *Dynamic level*	High (amplified)	Low
1.4.2 *Dynamic range*	Wide	Narrow
1.4.3 *Accent*	More	Less
2.1.1 *Melisma*	Extensive	Little
2.1.2 *Word painting*	Some	None
2.2.1 *Repetition*	Much	None
2.2.2 *Syllable duration*	Long	Short
2.2.3 *Syllable duration variation*	Higher	Lower

2.3.1 *Textual passage*	Some preference for narratives[29]	No preference
3.1 *Occasion*	*Majlis, maytam*	Prayer, study
3.2 *Social position*	Professional specialist – *muqri'*	Any
3.3 *Personal image*	Traditional reciter image	Any
3.4.1 *Attendance*	Many (public setting)	Variable (private or public)
3.4.2 *Listener behaviour*	Feedback	No feedback
4.1 *Medium*	Phonograph records	Rarely mediated[30]

In order to contrast *mujawwad* and *murattal*, it is helpful to control variables by comparing recordings of the same Qur'anic passage by a single reciter. Thus I present below a transcription and analysis of recordings by Shaykh Mustafa Isma'il (1978) (1999), reciting a single passage in both styles (see Examples 3.1 and 3.2, and Tables 3.3 and 3.4).[31] This passage, from Surat Yusuf (Qur'an 12:4[32]), contains 43 syllables and can be transliterated as follows: *idh-qaa-la-yuu-su-fu-li-a-bii-hi-yaa-a-ba-ti-in-ni-ra-ay-tu-a-ha-da-'a-sha-ra-kaw-ka-ban-wash-sham-sa-wal-qa-ma-ra-ra-ay-tu-hum-liy-saa-ji-diin*.[33]

Transcriptions are prepared using a graph: a continuous-time, relative-pitch system resembling standard staff notation. The horizontal axis represents time, marked in seconds, while the vertical axis represents pitch, on a 6-line quasi treble staff (the top line is F5; the bottom line is C4). The melody is indicated by a heavy horizontal line. Small vertical tick marks along this line appear at the start and end of tones (constant syllable-pitch units).[34]

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[29] Many Egyptians express some preference for listening to narrative Qur'anic passages in the *mujawwad* style, especially the dramatic story of the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph), though this preference is neither universal nor absolute.

[30] Shaykh al-Husari was the first to record the complete Qur'anic text in *murattal* style (*al-mushaf al-murattal)* on LP in the early 1960s (see Sa'id 1975), and his version remains authoritative. However, this recording was innovative and exceptional: from the early twentieth century until the 1980s *tilawa* recordings centred on *mujawwad* performance.

[31] The same passage will be used for analysis of the Saudi style (see Example 3.3, below).

[32] 'When Joseph said to his father: Oh my father! Lo! I saw in a dream eleven planets and the sun and the moon, I saw them prostrating themselves unto me' (Pickthall 1953:12:4).

[33] Arabic syllables are generally of two types, short (CV) and long (CVV or CVC), and frequently cross word boundaries. Here, a dash marks syllable boundaries, long vowels are doubled, and the consonant *hamza* (glottal stop, typically marked ') is not notated when initiating a syllable.

[34] Thus three successive syllables sung on a single pitch will be represented as a heavy vertical line divided into three segments; conversely, a single syllable may be sung on three pitches (melisma).

In the *mujawwad* recording, 12:4 is recited in three breath phrases (with intervening pauses filled by audience response) for a total duration of 93 seconds. The first segment begins with 'idh-qaa-la', ending on 'kaw-ka-ban'; the second begins at 'in-ni-ra-ay-tu', completing the verse. Only the third breath phrase, presenting the entire verse without pause, is transcribed in Example 3.1. This kind of repetition is typical of the *mujawwad* style. Tables 3.3 and 3.4 compare specific variables in the two styles.

Example 3.1 Segment from recitation of Qur'an 12:4 by Shaykh Mustafa Isma'il in the *mujawwad* style (Isma'il 1978). The *maqam* is *Bayyati* on D4 (E4, second line from bottom, is half-flat); absolute pitch is *Bayyati* on D3 (an octave below); the horizontal axis indicates seconds. The text runs as follows (syllables are separated by one or more dashes and asterisks; the latter indicate melismatic tones on the preceding syllable): *idh-qaa-*-la-yuu-su-fu-li-a-bii-*-*-*-hi-yaa-*-a-ba-ti-*-in-*-ni-ra-ay-*-tu-a-ha-da-'a-sha-*-ra-kaw-*-*-*-ka-*-ban-*-*-wash-*-*-sham-*-*-sa-wal-*-qa-*-ma-*-ra-*-ra-ay-*-tu-hum-*-*-liy-*-saa-*-*-*-ji-*-*-diin-*-*-*-*-*-*-.*
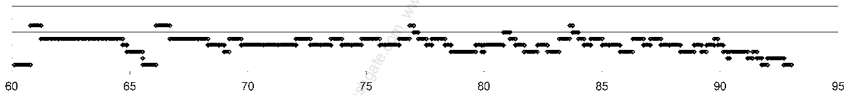
Example 3.2 Recitation of Qur'an 12:4 by Shaykh Mustafa Isma'il in the *murattal* style (Isma'il 1999). The *maqam* shown is again *Bayyati* on D4; absolute pitch is *Bayyati* on G3. Again, dashes separate syllables and asterisks denote melismas. Text: *idh-qaa-la-yuu-su-fu-li-a-bii-hi-yaa-a-ba-ti-in-ni-ra-ay-*-tu-a-ha-da-'a-sha-ra-kaw-ka-ban-wash-sham-sa-wal-*-qa-ma-ra-ra-ay-tu-hum-liy-saa-ji-diin.*
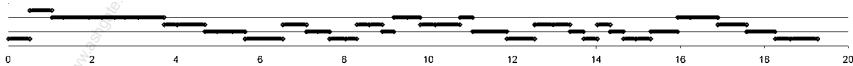
Table 3.3   Differences between *mujawwad* and *murattal* recitations of Qur'an 12:4 as performed by Shaykh Mustafa Isma'il. Note that not all differences listed below are visible in the notations.

Free Variable	*Mujawwad*	*Murattal*
1.1.1 *Timbre*	More tense	More relaxed
1.1.2 *Expression*	More expressive	Less expressive
1.2.1 *Ambitus*	Wide ambitus (7th)	Narrower ambitus (5th)
1.2.2 *Tessitura*	Lower tessitura	Higher tessitura
1.2.5 *Melodicity*	Melodically elaborate	Melodically simple
1.4.2 *Dynamic range*	Wide	Narrow
2.1.1 *Melisma*	Much (1.884)	Negligible (1.047)
2.2.2 *Syllable duration*	Longer (average 0.74 seconds)	Shorter (average 0.45 seconds)
2.2.3 *Syllable duration variation*	Higher (56% of average)	Lower (40% of average)
3.1 *Occasion*	Live recording (*majlis*)	Studio recording

Table 3.4   Differences between *mujawwad* and *murattal* recitations by Shaykh Mustafa Isma'il, considering the same recordings analysed above, now in the context of a longer sequence of verses.

Free Variable	*Mujawwad*	*Murattal*
1.2.4 *Modulation*	Frequent and elaborate modulations	Few and simple modulations
1.2.5 *Melodicity*	High: extended melodic development, climaxing at periodic cadences (*qaflas*)	Low
1.3.1 *Pause*	Long pauses between phrases	None
2.2.1 *Repetition*	Much repetition	No textual repetition
3.4.1 *Attendance*	Many	None
3.4.2 *Listener behaviour*	Ecstatic listener responses during pauses	None (studio)

These contrasts along multiple sonic, textual and pragmatic dimensions enable the differentiation of two style signs, implying contrastive meanings stemming primarily from contrasts in the contexts and purposes which shaped them. *Murattal* is shaped by its uses – among all Muslims – for practice and memorisation, personal devotions, and obligatory prayer (*salah*), all contexts requiring a relatively rapid and simple recitational style. *Mujawwad*, by contrast, is used by trained reciters in public listening ceremonies less constrained by either ritual or pedagogical requirements. Here, recitational complexity can flourish, and this fact has demanded a specialisation and professionalisation in which success is equated with the ability to move the listener using musical and expressive techniques, while remaining faithful to *mushaf*, *qira'at*, and *ahkam al-tajwid*.

The meaning of *mujawwad* relative to *murattal* may then be 'computed' with reference to the semiotic values of each, as shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5   Some partial meanings (third column) of *mujawwad* relative to
              murattal, computed as differences between semiotic values. Until
              the advent of Saudi style, these differences were related to contextual
              contrasts, but not consistently ideologised.

Semiotic values		Differences
Egyptian *mujawwad*	**Egyptian *murattal***	**Partial meaning of *mujawwad* with respect to *murattal* within Egyptian social space**
More musical	Less musical	Music, song, artistry
Tarab aesthetic and behaviour	No *tarab*	*Tarab*
Highly expressive	Less expression	Expressivity
More sonic	More textual	Non-discursive experience
Artistic elaboration of text	Functional performance of text	Artistic form (over function)
Public	Private	Performance
Tilawa professional	General; non-specialised	Professional specialisation
Participation as listener	Participation as performer	Contemplation
Egyptian contexts and reciters	Egyptian contexts and reciters	–
Traditional Egyptian Islam	Traditional Egyptian Islam	–

Despite this differentiation, the meanings of *mujawwad* and *murattal* never consistently attained ideological significance because they were derived primarily from the contexts within which they were performed. As late as 1978, Kristina Nelson found little evidence of *murattal* in the media (2001:xxiii). Even after mediation of the *murattal* style, the same public performers (for example, Shaykhs Mahmud al-Husari, Mustafa Isma'il, 'Abd al-Basit 'Abd al-Samad) recorded *tilawa* in both *mujawwad* and *murattal* styles. Thus *tilawa* styles could not even be consistently associated with particular individuals, much less with any ideological positions.

The Emergence of a Third Style Sign in Egypt: Historical Forces and Trajectories

A reconfiguration of the binary Egyptian *tilawa* style system was effected by three forces starting in the mid-1970s: the technological impact of a new mass medium (audio cassettes) enabling widespread asynchronous communications, the economic impact of laissez-faire capitalism and the influence of Saudi Islamic culture. The incursion of a new Saudi *tilawa* style into the binary Egyptian *tilawa* style system generated a new set of active differences, transforming the meanings of all three styles. In particular, those meanings now acquired an ideological cast not formerly present. It is important to trace the historical process of this transformation, because that history is embedded in their ideological power.

Having escaped the ravages of Crusaders and Mongols, Egypt has continuously remained a principal political, economic, religious and cultural centre throughout Islamic history, largely due to its large population, fertile land and geographical centrality. Cairo has the oldest and most important Islamic university in the world, al-Azhar (founded 972), drawing an international student population. Here, for centuries, reciters trained and disseminated Egyptian *tilawa* styles globally. While Islam's sacred geographical centres – the *ka'ba* at Mecca and the Prophet's mosque at Medina – are located in the Arabian Hijaz, Egypt was politically, economically, educationally and culturally dominant.[35] During the twentieth century, that dominance was magnified as Egypt became the first Muslim country to develop significant media production capabilities. Early mass media (phonodisc and radio) must have consolidated an Egyptian *tilawa* style through the suppression of local variation, while powerfully projecting a small number of reciter-stars to worldwide proportions. Egyptians' sense of their own global importance is captured by their oft-repeated saying, 'The Qur'an was revealed in the Hijaz, copied in Istanbul and recited in Egypt' (Sayyid 2003:24).

Throughout the Mamluk and Ottoman periods (1250–1798) and into the early twentieth century, mainstream Islam in Egypt was thoroughly permeated by Sufi mysticism, for which aesthetic expression and experience (musical, poetic, calligraphic, architectural) constitute both sign and means of spiritual development.[36] The broad overlap between musical and religious domains, as exemplified by chanted religious poetry – *inshad dini* (Frishkopf 2002) – and musical *tilawa* in the *mujawwad* style, as well as the thriving of Sufi orders and rituals among all strata of the population, characterised traditional Egyptian Islam for at least seven centuries. However, the twentieth century witnessed the development of new reformist-revivalist trends in Egypt, trends which increasingly drew close to the Islamic practices of Arabia.

Ever since the eighteenth century, Arabia has featured a different kind of Islamic piety, inspired by the Arabian revivalist-reformer Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–92), and sharply contrasting with the traditional Sufi-inflected

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[35]   From early Mamluk times (thirteenth century) until 1962, Egyptian superiority was symbolised by a splendid annual gift to Mecca: the *Ka'ba*'s magnificent hangings (*kiswa*), carried in an opulent procession (the *mahmal*) replete with music and ritual, and symbolising political protection over the holy places. The gifting of the *kiswa* was interrupted in the early nineteenth century and again from 1926–37 due to conflicts with the Wahhabi *ikhwan* who considered it a heresy (*bid'a*) (Fr. Buhl [2009], 'Maḥmal', in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs [eds], *Encyclopaedia of Islam* [2nd edition], Brill Online, University of Alberta, <http://www.brillonline.nl.login.ezproxy. library.ualberta.ca/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-4789>, accessed 24/03/09). In the early nineteenth century, Egyptian ruler Muhammad 'Ali (r.1805–48) conquered most of Arabia, withdrawing only in 1840 (Vassiliev 2000:140ff.).

[36]   See Heyworth-Dunne (1939:10), Lane (1973:244), de Jong (1978), Fernandes (1988), Taylor (1989), Winter (1992) and Shoshan (1993).

Islam prevalent in Egypt. Rooted in the conservative Hanbali legal school, and influenced by reformist writings of theologian Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), ʿAbd al-Wahhab advocated a return to pure *tawhid* (monotheism), as established in the Qurʾan and Sunna, and an unmediated relationship with God. ʿAbd al-Wahhab's followers[37] advocated strict application of *Shariʿa* (Islamic law), purging medieval accretions they viewed as *shirk* (idolatry) and *bidʿa* (heretical 'innovation'), including saint and Prophet veneration, shrines, concepts and rituals of intercession, musical ceremonies and other popular beliefs and practices especially common among Sufis. The Wahhabi movement acquired political power due to an alliance concluded with the Saʿud family of al-Diriya in 1744 and which formed the basis for the modern Saudi Arabian state, established by ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Al Saʿud (Ibn Saud) during the first third of the twentieth century (Vassiliev 2000:235ff.).

Egyptian reform and revival (*islah wa tajdid*) movements, generally critical of Sufi beliefs and practices, coalesced starting with a group of nineteenth-century thinkers known as the '*Salafiyya*', due to their emphasis on *al-salaf al-salih* ('pious ancestors') of the Prophet's community as an enduring ideal for Muslim societies.[38] From the early twentieth century, such movements began to change the character of mainstream Egyptian Islam, without, however, dislodging Sufism entirely. Diverse reform-revival organisations (most importantly, the Muslim Brothers, *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*[39]) shared a number of characteristics: the revival of Islamic principles as grounded in direct readings of Qurʾan, Sunna and early Islamic society; the rejection of 'heretical innovation' (*bidʿa*), including Sufi or musical ritual, perceived as counter to those principles; reform through *ijtihad* (reasoning) so as to incorporate economic and technological aspects of modernity; focus on the unmediated relation between worshiper and God as idealised on the Day of Judgment; transnational pan-Islamism and *daʿwa* (missionising); and socio-political engagement. Within Egyptian reformist discourse, music and aesthetic experience is widely condemned as *haram* (forbidden) and the historic connections between Islam and aesthetic expression are generally severed. Historically and ideologically, Egyptian reformist movements find their spiritual *élan* both in Arabia and in Wahhabism. The spiritual movement at the heart of the social one is a break with received Islamic tradition via a dual 'return' to Arabia: a *temporal* return to Islamic historical origins (in seventh-century Mecca and Medina) and hence to 'true' Islam, but equally a *spatial* return to these sacred

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[37]   The term 'Wahhabi', widely used in both English and Arabic, is usually pejorative; followers prefer the name *muwahhidun*, 'unitarians'. However, for want of alternatives clearly identifying this religious trend, 'Wahhabi' and 'Wahhabism' (Ar. *Wahhabiyya*) are nevertheless used here.

[38]   Such thinkers included Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839–97), Muhammad ʿAbdu (1845–1905) and Rashid Rida (1865–1935).

[39]   Founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna (1906–49) (Mitchell 1969).

sites as ritualised in the annual *hajj* (pilgrimage).[40] Furthermore, Egyptian Islamic reformism found common ground with Wahhabi ideas. Rashid Rida, for example, commended Wahhabism in several of his writings (Vassiliev 2000:292).

Following independence in 1952, Egypt's leading Islamic and media role was consolidated and empowered, regionally by President Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arabism, and internally by statist-socialist policies of centralisation. The new state monopolised religious institutions (for example, al-Azhar University) and broadcast media, and seized key industries (Roussillon 1998:345) including primary audio media producer Misrphon, known from 1962 as SonoCairo (*Sawt al-Qahira*) (Frishkopf n.d.). Media concentration and expansion entailed the unprecedented amplification of Egyptian media stars – actors, singers and reciters – throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds. At the same time, limitations on imports and foreign investments as well as restrictions on exit visas, inhibited foreign cultural influences. Nasser also repressed the Muslim Brothers and other reformist-revivalist pan-Islamic currents, some of whose members sought refuge in Saudi Arabia where they were welcomed, taking up positions as teachers and influencing the development of Wahhabi thought.[41] These conditions sustained a relatively closed system of Egyptian public *tilawa*, centred on the prevailing *mujawwad* style as epitomised by its most famous exponents and dominating the wider Islamic world.

But Egypt's cultural-religious centrality and closure was shaken by its June 1967 military losses to Israel. Many Egyptians attributed defeat at the hands of a sectarian state to insufficient religiosity, and a national turn to faith for solace and solutions ensued, swelling the ranks of reformist-revivalist Islamic organisations Nasser had tried to suppress (see Toth 2003:548). Soon after Nasser's death in 1970, President Sadat reversed Nasser's socialist course, guiding Egypt instead towards both capitalism and Islam. Expelling Soviet advisors (in 1972), he forged new political and economic links with the United States and Saudi Arabia and loosened restrictions on Egyptian emigration (Ayubi 1983:442, LaTowsky 1984:12).

The crucial turning point came on 6 October 1973 (the 10th of Ramadan and Jewish Yom Kippur), when Egyptian forces succeeded in crossing the Suez canal, overcoming Israeli defences in an operation code-named '*Badr*'. The success of what became known as 'the crossing' was deliberately freighted with reference to the early days of Islamic history, the period of greatest concern to Islamic

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[40] This 'return' contrasts sharply with traditional Sufi-inflected Islam in Egypt, closely associated with mysticism, a profusion of local sacred places (saint shrines), the aestheticisation of spiritual life, and esteem for the continuous, cumulative oral Islamic tradition.

[41] Esther Peskes and W. Ende (2009), 'Wahhābiyya', in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edition), Brill Online, University of Alberta, <http://www.brillonline.nl.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-4789>, (accessed 24/03/09). The Saudi government generally sympathised with the Brothers (Vassiliev 2000:292).

revivalists.[42] As a military hero, Sadat could now initiate another 'crossing'. As detailed in his 'October Document', the *infitah* (economic 'opening') aimed primarily to stimulate state and private sectors by attracting financial and technical aid from Arab and Western sources (Aulas 1982:7, Waterbury 1983:416ff.). New laws now opened Egypt to foreign imports and free market capitalism, as well as foreign ideas (Roussillon 1998:361).

The 'opening' and 'crossing' of Egyptian society was not only westward towards capitalism and Western culture, but also eastward towards Saudi Arabia. Sadat feared the left, whether Nasserist or Communist. In order to counter its return, he allowed *Salafi* movements, formerly persecuted, to proliferate (Ayubi 1980:491–2, Roussillon 1998:370) and a number of Muslim Brothers forced into Saudi exile under Nasser were allowed to return (Ayubi 1980:488). Sadat promoted Islamic revivalists such as the renowned Egyptian Shaykh Sha'rawi (1911–98), who returned to Egypt in the mid-1970s (after teaching at King 'Abd al-'Aziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia) to host an Islamic programme on Egyptian television, *Nur 'Ala Nur* (Lazarus-Yafeh 1983:284). Sadat also reformed the constitution to declare S*hari'a* the primary source of law. Nasser had continually strained Egypt–Saudi relations, assisting the Yemeni revolution against Saudi-supported royalists. Sadat repaired Egypt's relations with the Saudi kingdom[43] (whose support helped enable his pro-Western policy of *infitah*) and the self-styled 'believer president' continued to burnish his Arab-Islamic-hero image as a source of legitimation (Ayubi 1980:488, Roussillon 1998:348–9, Vassiliev 2000:400).

Meanwhile, the 1970s witnessed the ideological rise of Saudi Arabia as a world-wide political player and Islamic power, underscoring connections between Islam and petro-dollars (Ayubi 1980:482). In 1973, retaliating against Western support for Israel, Arab oil producers cut production and Saudi Arabia suspended petroleum shipments to the United States. The price of oil tripled overnight, and producers – especially Saudi Arabia – enjoyed a dramatic increase in revenues and global influence (Vassiliev 2000:401). King Faisal (r.1964–75) exploited post-1973 windfalls to develop his country, a policy followed by King Khaled (r.1975–82). Many Muslims, Egyptians included, interpreted this new wealth and power as a Divine vindication of Saudi-style piety.

Saudi Arabia's newfound wealth and global power modernised Wahhabism, which subsequently drew closer to Egypt's more progressive, and burgeoning, *Salafi* trends. Through the early twentieth century, many Wahhabis had applied a strict concept of *bid'a*, often rejecting even technological 'innovations' such as

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[42]   In Ramadan of the year 624 CE, the Prophet Muhammad first overcame his Meccan enemies at the Battle of Badr. This victory confirmed the early Muslims' faith. Nearly 1,500 years later, Sadat's reputation was boosted through these religious-historical parallels.

[43]   Sadat referred to Saudi King Faisal as 'Commander of the Faithful', the classical expression of caliphal power (*amir al-mu'minin*) (Waterbury 1983:416).

electricity.[44] From the mid-twentieth century, however, mainstream Wahhabi views were tempered – and empowered – by oil wealth (and concomitant close relations to Western powers), as well as by interactions with Egyptian Salafism. Such 'neo-Wahhabism' embraces modern technology, capitalism and consumerism and, buoyed by oil, has become extremely powerful worldwide.[45] In particular, Saudi Arabia has financed many Islamic groups and social projects in Egypt (Ayubi 1980:491).

During the same period (1970s), Egypt was seized by economic turbulence. Free market capitalism enabled some to accumulate vast wealth, but both inflation and unemployment soared, the public sector declined and foreign investments failed to materialise. Government employees on non-indexed salaries were especially impoverished. In 1979, a separate peace with Israel triggered Arab ostracism of Egypt and erased hoped-for investments from the Gulf states. What saved many Egyptian families were remittances from migrant labour, primarily in Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. With Saudi development had come a huge demand for immigrant Arabic-speaking labour and from the late 1970s Egyptian workers migrated to Saudi Arabia in droves, often illegally and under the pretext of performing pilgrimage.[46] There, sometimes accompanied by their families, they observed at first-hand Saudi luxury, together with the neo-Wahhabi creed. For many such workers, the combination of material and spiritual wealth found in the 'holy land' was compelling. Acculturating to the Saudi lifestyle, they came to view Egypt as comparatively poor, both economically and religiously. Far from contradicting religiosity, conspicuous consumption validated the Saudi model as the just reward for uncompromising conformity to Islamic principles: Wahhabi religious ideals were sanctified by Saudi oil.

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[44] For example, Saudi *ulama* (religious scholars) resisted Ibn Saud's introduction of radio and telegraph. In June 1930, an assembly of Saudi *ulama* protested against the teaching of technical drawing and geography, ostensibly because the former paved the way to artistic portraiture while the latter taught that the earth is round (Vassiliev 2000:290, 292).

[45] Esther Peskes and W. Ende (2009), 'Wahhābiyya', in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edition), Brill Online, University of Alberta, <http://www.brillonline.nl.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-4789>, (accessed 24/03/09).

[46] In 1975–76, the number of Egyptian school teachers seconded to Arab countries exceeded 20,000. For four or five years' service in Saudi or Kuwait, the teacher could earn more than a lifetime of Egyptian wages (Ayubi 1983:438). One study of rural migration observed that between 1975 and 1980, Saudi was the preferred destination. After 1980, Iraq was favoured (due to labour shortages caused by the Iran–Iraq war) while Saudi remained popular (Nada 1991:27). In 1976, migrant labour comprised 4.7 per cent of Egypt's total labour force (Aulas 1982:9); there were hundreds of thousands of Egyptians working in Saudi Arabia in the late 1970s (Vassiliev 2000:428). Some scholars estimate that 10 to 15 per cent of the labour force was abroad in 1984. See Ayubi (1983:434–5, 438–9), LaTowksy (1984), Toth (1994:43–4), Kandil (1999).

Many scholars have noted the economic consequences of Egyptian labour migration.[47] Fewer have noted its socio-cultural implications. However, the Saudi influence on Egyptian culture during this period was increasingly direct. As the oil economies cooled after 1986, most workers returned to Egypt, bringing with them new wealth and new ideas (Toth 1994:39). The most visible (and audible) signs of this wealth were electronic media devices, especially televisions and cassette players (Nada 1991:42, Roussillon 1998:364), as well as new small businesses, new construction, and the urban sprawl which sprang up to accommodate it all. The return of migrant workers also brought a Saudi Islam that dovetailed easily with the ideologically-related Egyptian *Salafiyya*. But the new *infitah* bourgeoisie (Infitah 1986), infused with Saudi-Islamic wealth, values and practices, extended far beyond the boundaries of more organised *Salafi* movements. Thus, along with the economic remittance came a *cultural* remittance, forming in Egypt a reflected image of that distinctive complex of Saudi culture – wealth, consumerism and Wahhabi Islam – encapsulated in the alliance between royalty (Al Sa'ud) and the Wahhabiyya.

Powerful influences from both east and west greatly weakened Egypt's former cultural and religious centrality. With traditional ideologies substantially discredited, a new mainstream source of Egyptian Islamic discursive authority split from Egypt-centric, Sufi-inflected traditional Islam (represented as late as 1978 by the al-Azhar rector, Shaykh 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud) towards a more pan-Islamic revivalism-reformism, centred upon the neo-Wahhabi petro-capitalism of Saudi Arabia. Pejoratively, some Egyptian critics dub this mixture 'petro-Islam' (*al-Islam al-nafti*), 'Saudization' (*sa'wada*) or 'Gulfication' (*khalwaga*). Others refer to it more neutrally as the New Islam (*al-Islam al-Gadid*), in contradistinction to the more traditional Egyptian Islam, with its mystical and aesthetic sensibilities.

The Egyptian New Islam is capitalist and consumerist (albeit in Islamised forms, seen for example in Islamic banking) more than socially activist, reflecting Saudi and *infitah* values mixed with Egyptian Islamist emphasis on private ownership (Abed-Kotob 1995:327, Roussillon 1998:392). Further, this new wave of bourgeois Islamisation is not on the whole politically engaged, or even self-conscious as a social movement: it is a 'class in itself' rather than a 'class for itself' (to reuse a Marxist trope) and profoundly conservative, not only due to religious strictures, but because its material interests lie in maintaining political stability. Though often replete with political discourse on unassailable Islamic issues (Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya), the New Islam refrains from overly-public challenges to local authority (Morsy 1988:360, Zubaida 1992:9), focusing on a personal piety of salvation (for example, the obligation to veil, to pray) more than politics. The New Islam is thus an amorphous socio-cultural trend in Egypt, generally subsuming non-violent organised political-social movements (such as the Muslim Brothers), but so much broader as to not be characterised

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[47] See Ayubi (1983:447), LaTowsky (1984), Kandil and Metwally (1990), Nada (1991), Toth (1994), Kandil (1999).

by them. Following the forceful suppression of militant Egyptian Muslim groups (for example, *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*) in the mid 1990s, it has become clear that the New Islam enjoys extremely broad public support, even among political and cultural elites. Beyond its core of *Salafis* and ex-Saudi workers, New Islamic symbols and practices are diffused through social networks defined by family, friends and workplace relationships. Observation suggests that the mass media, especially asynchronous media such as cassette tapes and pamphlets, have also played a key role in this process.

It is no coincidence that the 'cassette revolution' (Castelo-Branco 1987) accompanied the political, economic and social upheavals of the 1970s. Sadat's *infitah* enabled both the import of technology (cassette recorders, duplicators, players and blank cassettes), and the accumulation of capital to pay for it. Phonodisc production and consumption had been relatively expensive, requiring significant capital investments and costly playback equipment, and hence enjoyed a limited market. New *infitah*-era wealth, remittances and free market consumerism precipitated both the formation of private sector cassette production companies and a much broader distribution of cassette players. By the mid 1980s, 'boombox' cassette recorder-players were nearly universal throughout Egypt, supporting the rapid development of a private sector audio cassette industry. A mass 'cassette culture' (Manuel 1993) – including both musical and religious content – escalated.[48]

In the context of *infitah*, the 'cassette revolution' constituted a seismic transformation of Egyptian mass media space from predominantly state-centralised synchronous (radio, television, cinema) towards relatively unregulated, private sector, decentralised, asynchronous (cassette), thus localising control at the level of the social agent. Producing (or selecting and playing) a cassette tape in public now became an act of social communication open to nearly anyone. While state regulatory mechanisms, requiring pre-publication authorisation from the Censor for Artistic Works (*al-Raqaba 'Ala al-Musannafat al-Fanniyya*, for music) and al-Azhar's Islamic Research Academy (for Islamic tapes), enabled some control, in practice only flagrant violations of religious, moral and political codes have been rejected, especially from the 1990s onwards,[49] and 'underground' production

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[48] For instance, SonoCairo's total production in 1970 was 995,763 phonodiscs (LPs and 45 rpm discs); at this time there was little private sector competition. By 1985, SonoCairo's cassette production had reached 1,922,140. In 1995 (by which time SonoCairo no longer dominated the market) it was 2,072,418 (Egyptian Ministry of Information 1999:182). These figures neglect the simultaneous dramatic expansion of the private sector during this period, though for various reasons its output is difficult to estimate precisely.

[49] Conversation with Dr Ali Abu Shadi, former head of the Censor for Artistic Works (2004).

flourished (Khalafallah 1982).[50] Government control of recorded media has thus shifted from active stylistic production to a more limited filtering function.

All these developments set the stage for a double foreign colonisation of Egypt's sonic media space (comprising primarily musical and Islamic recordings) from west and east. By the late 1970s, recorded music was awash with the sounds of Western rock, pop and jazz. A few years later, Islamic cassettes – recorded sermons, lectures and *tilawa* – proliferated, much of it exhibiting a New Islamic-Saudi direction, including recognisable Saudi *tilawa* styles. Such cassette tapes (and later CDs, CD-ROMs and videos) not only introduced foreign ideas, but also amplified and disseminated them throughout Egyptian society.

By the 1990s, whole Cairo neighbourhoods bore the symbolic imprint of New Islamic values and practices, particularly in Nasr City, and, on a humbler economic scale, Faisal Street (aptly named for the eponymous Saudi King). While these symbols do not always necessarily derive from Saudi Arabia, they are often perceived as such. Their rapid reproduction both expresses the New Islam and provides a communicative mechanism for the diffusion of its ideologies. Women veil, often in the Saudi style, yet elegantly so. Men may sport Saudi-style dress (Ayubi 1980:494). Local sacred spaces, especially the shrines of saints, are eschewed as *bid'a*, as is Sufi ritual generally. The Ramadan *tarawih* prayer is extended, resembling Meccan practice. Traditional Egyptian rituals are rejected, including memorials (depriving the *mujawwad* reciter of his main income) and the newborn's seventh-day feast (*subu'*), which is replaced by the Saudi-style *'aqiqa*. New business enterprises typically reflect the Saudi-Islamic values of their entrepreneurs, in products (women's veils), names (such as 'Hajj and 'Umra Market') or Qur'anic signage (for example, 2:172: 'O ye who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you' on a sandwich shop; 37:107 on a butcher's shop; 76:21 on a café, and so on) (see Figure 3.1).

More pertinent to the present discussion are Islamic media production companies founded in Egypt in the mid-1980s and 1990s. Capitalising on the Islamic trends, these companies reproduce and distribute sounds, images and texts signifying the New Islam (Gharib 2001:5–8). Even their names – *al-Risala*, *al-Nur*, *Taqwa* and *Harf* are four examples – imply reformism.[51] Such companies do not traffic in music or Sufi cassettes. Formerly *tilawa* recordings were produced by general audio production companies (such as SonoCairo) whose catalogues also included music and songs. Producing music and *tilawa* under one roof summarised the historically close relation between the two fields. In the New

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[50]   The Reciters' Union and Egyptian Radio also censor *tilawa* recordings (thanks to Kristina Nelson for this information).

[51]   '*Risala*' ('message') connotes both the Qur'an and missionising; '*nur*' ('light') symbolises God (Qur'an 24:35); '*taqwa*' means 'purity'; '*harf*' ('letter') connotes a Qur'anic reading, but also implies literalism.

Islam, that relation does not hold.[52] These companies specialise in Islamic vocal genres, including *tilawa*, *du'a'*, *anashid*[53] (without music), *khutab* (sermons) and *durus diniyya* (religious lectures). Their *tilawa* catalogues feature Saudi reciters and de-emphasise the *mujawwad* style of traditional Egyptian Islam.[54]

Figure 3.1   The Faisal Street branch of *El-Tawheed & El-Nour* ('Monotheism & Light'), a phenomenally successful chain of Egyptian department stores, selling a wide variety of household goods and garments, especially conservative women's clothing (visible in the upper two display windows), at cut-rate prices, all wrapped in Islamic garb. The brightly illuminated glass storefront, brimming with wares, clearly symbolises the consumerist-capitalist New Islam of Egyptian *Sa'wada*, to which it caters. Besides the religious name, short Qur'anic verses and Islamic sayings, displayed on external signage, colours (green for Islam, white for purity) and the goods themselves convey an ethos of religious conservatism. (Photograph by the author.)

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[52]   It should be noted that the unprecedented disconnection between the social field of music and the New Islam in Egypt does not mean that Muslims refuse music in its entirety, but rather that the two fields are separated in practice.

[53]   Islamic hymns, also called *inshad*. New Islamic discourse prefers the term '*anashid*', perhaps since '*inshad*' is associated with traditional Islamic and Sufi performance.

[54]   Thus, in 2003, *al-Risala*'s catalogue contained 12 reciters: nine Saudis, one Kuwaiti and two Egyptians (one of whom is the Saudi-oriented Shaykh Muhammad Gabril).

Through these companies, and increasingly through mainstream audio producers as well, the distinctive sound of Saudi-style recitation (a sound closely associated with the New Islam) has been widely disseminated in Egypt, supplying, and extending, a growing New Islamic market.[55]

What is this Saudi style of public *tilawa*? Though often labelled '*murattal*', Saudi style should not be confused with traditional Egyptian *murattal*. According to a prevailing Saudi view, Egyptian contexts for *mujawwad* (the *maytam* or the mosque *majlis*) are *bid'a* and *tilawa* professionalism is frowned upon. Rather, live public *tilawa* occurs primarily in congregational prayer (*salat al-jama'a*), where the reciter is the *imam* (prayer leader). Even on studio-recorded cassettes, Saudi *tilawa* retains the meaning of prayer because such recordings feature the same imam-reciters and styles. During Ramadan, the longest such recitations occur during *tarawih*, most importantly at the sacred mosques of Mecca and Medina, culminating in a lengthy melodic *du'a'*. These recitations are broadcast and released on cassette and CD.

Certain sonic contrasts between Saudi and traditional Egyptian styles directly support theological interpretations, while others present arbitrary semiotic differences, aligning with theological ones through usage. The Wahhabi philosophy prevailing in Saudi Arabia attenuates melodic elaboration and *tarab*-like repetition characteristic of traditional Egyptian *mujawwad*: by contrast, Saudi recitation is rapid, melodically simple and direct. At the same time, Saudi recitation tends to be more melismatic and is perceived as more emotionally expressive than Egyptian *murattal*, deploying a plaintive, beseeching timbre iconic of supplicatory prayer (*du'a'*).[56] The *tarawih du'a'* is primarily an emotional appeal to God for salvation on the Day of Judgment, and it invokes an enormous upswelling of weeping. To a large extent this supplicatory ethos characterises Saudi *tilawa* generally. While the reciter doesn't actually weep, his voice is typically tinged with remorse far more than that of his Egyptian counterpart – such is the widespread Egyptian perception.[57] The sound of Saudi recitation is shaped by the acoustics of its most common live venues – the enormous sacred mosques at Mecca and Medina.

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[55]   In 1999, even SonoCairo, which had always championed the traditional Egyptian reciters, released recordings of Saudi Shaykhs al-Sudays and al-Sharim.

[56]   This timbre frequently contrasts with the actual meaning of the text; unlike Egyptian *mujawwad*, the Saudi style is not concerned with *taswir al-ma'na* (word painting, sonically 'depicting the meaning'), but rather with expression of the reciter's response to that meaning.

[57]   In Egypt, there is also a misconception – promoted by detractors – that Saudi reciters actually weep while reciting, a practice criticised as distorting the Qur'anic message and as *ibtizaz* ('extortion' of emotion). I have never heard such weeping and I suspect that such accusations have resulted from the confusion of *tilawa* with *du'a'* (with which *tarawih* prayer concludes and which is often featured on Saudi tapes). At the same time, a few Egyptian reciters, notably Shaykh Muhammad Siddiq al-Minshawi, are also prized for a 'weeping voice'.

Reverberating in their cavernous spaces, the reciter's voice becomes an index of the mosques themselves, sounding sacred space. Saudi-style recitation also indexes *salah* (often the context of recordings), the Muslim's fundamental daily obligation, as well as the Saudi Arabian linguistic accent.

These indexical and iconic sonic features of Saudi style, in stark contrast to Egyptian style, express a direct relation to God – affectively coloured with fear, awe, sorrow, repentance and hope of forgiveness – and are strongly linked to Arabia. Through them, Saudi style points to the New Islam with its literalist, anti-intercessionist, Arabia-centric and eschatological emphases. Other sonic contrasts to Egyptian style, including a higher tessitura and a preference for *maqam Rast* (rather than *Bayyati*), cannot be interpreted as indices or icons, and are not directly susceptible to theological interpretation. Resulting from vicissitudes of local oral tradition, such sonic features become arbitrarily associated to the New Islam through usage.

Pragmatic differences also support this semantic contrast of Saudi and Egyptian styles. Public Saudi reciters differ sharply from their traditional Egyptian counterparts in social status and role. The traditional public Egyptian reciter is perceived as a professional performer, an artist specialised in *tilawa* and (formerly, at least) religious song, admired for his vocal artistry and ability to produce *tarab*, close to the world of Egyptian music and far from Islamic politics. Thus Shaykh Muhammad Rif'at has been described as a natural musician who played the *'ud* and enjoyed Western classical music. Likewise, Shaykh Mustafa Isma'il loved music; the popular belief that he even played the piano, though false, is also telling (Khalil and Hafiz 1984:1703, Tawfiq 199x:19).[58]

The Saudi reciter, by contrast, typically rejects recitation as a profession, adopting instead the status of Islamic prayer leader, preacher, missionary (*da'i*), teacher or scholar, with no connection to music, except occasionally to condemn it. Moreover, through sermons and teachings, Saudi reciters may promote religio-political positions. Reciters such as Shaykhs 'Ali 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayfi and 'Abd al-Rahman Sudays are widely known as *imams* (at Medina and Mecca respectively) and for polemical sermons drawing them into global media debates. One of Sudays' sermons, for example, incurred an angry editorial retort from Fox News[59] and his invitation to a Florida Islamic conference stirred protests charging him with anti-Semitism.[60] Al-Hudhayfi has been taken to task for a political sermon, widely distributed on the Internet, in which he reportedly stated 'I am

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[58] Shaykh Mustafa's piano playing is a myth stemming from the fact that an interview in his home showed the piano. Thanks to Kristina Nelson for clarifying this matter with Shaykh Mustafa himself.

[59] John Gibson (2002), 'Saudi Arabia: Time to Draw a Line in the Sand (Foxnews. com)', <www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,54437,00.html> (accessed 11/2003).

[60] Susan Jacobson (2003), 'Islamic Conference Speaker Draws Wrath', <www. orlandosentinel.com/news/local/osceola/orl-locsaudivisit03120303dec03,1,3864465. story> (accessed 3/12/2003).

warning America to stop interfering in the affairs of our region'.[61] Shaykh Ahmad al-'Ajmi is well known for leading *tarawih* prayers in large Saudi mosques, as well as through cassette recordings and broadcasts on radio and television. He is also a preacher, urging reciters to 'call forth visions of the Day of Judgment' in their recitations and warning:

> If you recite for anything other than God – for impermanent worldly things, reputation or fame – then God will hold you accountable, and will ask you: for what did you recite? And you answer: I recited it for you. And He responds: you recited so that it might be said that you are a reciter, and indeed it was said. And then He throws you into the Fire. And you will be among the first to burn in the Fire.[62]

These Saudi reciters are public discursive actors, for whom *tilawa* represents a particularly affective, and effective, form of Islamic outreach (*da'wa*) and education (*tarbiya*) (Mahfuz and al-Zahrani 2002:30).

Live Saudi-style recitation is restricted to mosque prayers. However dissemination is effected through broadcasts and cassette recordings, particularly those recorded during *tarawih* in the mosques of Mecca and Medina as well as in studios, which enjoy broad popularity throughout the Gulf states. Many Saudi reciters decline remuneration for such recordings, thus facilitating rapid diffusion, since their cassettes can be sold for only slightly more than the cost of blank tape. Following the new Saudi influence, there is a broad receptivity to such cassettes in Egypt and over the last ten years they have flooded the Egyptian market, displacing recordings of the traditional reciters.

Studio recordings of Saudi reciters sold in Egypt are frequently enhanced by artificial reverb, indexing the enormous Masjid al-Haram in Mecca. Cassettes also index *tarawih* prayers by deploying the *juz'* (nightly Qur'anic portion during Ramadan) rather than the *sura* as the textual unit, and by appending the concluding *du'a'*.[63] Graphics are also significant. Just as music cassette covers generally feature the singer, traditional Egyptian *tilawa* cassette covers always featured a photograph of the reciter as artist, clad in traditional clothing and framed with traditional medieval arabesques. In contrast, and in keeping with Wahhabi bans on portraying the human form, the reciter's photograph does not

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[61]   Reported in Shaykh 'Ali 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayfi (1998), 'Historic Khutbah of Imaam of Masjid-un-Nabawiy Sheikh Ali Abdur Rahmaan Hudhayfi', <www.islamworld. net/historic_khutbah.htm> (accessed 12/2006).

[62]   Ahmad al-'Ajmi (2006), <www.alajmy.com/> (accessed 10/2006), translation by Michael Frishkopf. Shaykh al-'Ajmi's website also contains sermons, including a diatribe against singing, and political discourse on current events.

[63]   Cassettes containing the Qur'an's final *juz'* (*juz' 'amma*) are particularly popular.

appear on Saudi-style tapes or on other New Islamic media.[64] Instead, symbols, bold contemporary graphics and a preference for smooth-edged fonts and bright colours over traditional calligraphy and arabesques, suggest a simple, direct, yet contemporary Islam centred on the Qur'an, Mecca and Medina, a graphical style – evoking the New Islam – which I call 'Islamic Modern' (see Figure 3.2).

In the contemporary Egyptian soundspace, the traditional *mujawwad* reciter retains an important social role in the widely-celebrated *maytam* and is still heard in mosques.[65] However, in the more widely influential phonogram media, and increasingly even on the radio, the Saudi style now dominates. Its popularity has transformed channels of distribution. While a range of *tilawa* styles is still available in larger cassette shops, smaller kiosks and Islamic bookstores often emphasise *murattal* and Saudi styles. More informally, New Islamic media are sold from sidewalk stands alongside revivalist literature, and even by itinerant street vendors. New distribution channels may be a response to a new and broader audience; they may also result from the trend (as in production) towards separating religious from musical material.

The transfer of Saudi style to Egypt induces an important semiotic transformation. In Saudi Arabia, Saudi style blends seamlessly with the broader social fabric, and thus may not appear as overtly communicative or even recognisable as a coherent style sign. In Egypt, however, the symbolic coherence of Saudi style emerges from its stark contrast to the traditional Egyptian styles against which it is juxtaposed. Taken out of context, Saudi style points unambiguously to Saudi Arabia and the New Islam. As a reaction, traditional Egyptian Islamic practices have also acquired new ideological meanings. In particular, the meanings of both Saudi and *mujawwad tilawa* styles have shifted dramatically since being juxtaposed in a single social system. Self-consciously adopted, public broadcast of the new style sign (via cassette players) becomes an *ideologically* charged communicative act, serving as a proclamation of faith which *opposes* the traditionally prevailing social norms, a non-discursive form of New Islamic proselytisation. All this is to be expected, since social juxtaposition of contrasting styles produces new active differences. It remains to examine these differences in greater detail (see Table 3.6).

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[64]   Capitalising on the increased popularity of *murattal* in the wake of Saudi influence, SonoCairo has re-released the *murattal* tapes of Shaykh Mustafa Isma'il (Isma'il 1999), Shaykh 'Abd al-Basit 'Abd al-Samad and others in new packaging. Significantly, whereas the original tapes featured a photograph of the reciter, the new ones do not. I spoke with the SonoCairo engineer who designs many of their album covers and he confirmed that the reason for this change is the preponderance of '*Sunniyyin*' ('fundamentalists') drawn to *murattal* who consider such images to be *haram*.

[65]   Celebrations of *arba'in* and *dhikra* have abated somewhat.

Table 3.6   The ternary style sign system – principal differences between the Saudi style and the traditional public Egyptian styles, *mujawwad* and *murattal*, as *recorded* (on cassette tapes).

Free variable	Saudi	*Mujawwad*	*Murattal*
1.1.1 *Timbre*	Most tense, nasal	Moderate tension	Most relaxed
1.1.2 *Expression*	Plaintive, awe-filled (*huzn, shajan*)	Mixture of *huzn* and *tarab* (ecstasy)	Least affective
1.2.1 *Ambitus*	Intermediate range	Widest range	Narrowest range
1.2.2 *Tessitura*	Highest	Lower	Middle
1.2.3 *Mode preference*	Focus on *Rast*	Focus on *Bayyati*	Focus on *Bayyati*
1.2.4 *Modulation*	Little	Much	Little
1.2.5 *Melodicity*	Low	Great	Lowest
1.3.1 *Pause*	Few; short	Many; long	Few; short
1.3.2 *Tone rate*	Highest	Lowest	Lower
1.4.1 *Dynamic level*	High	Medium	Low
1.4.2 *Dynamic range*	Narrow	Wide	Narrow
1.4.3 *Accent*	Highest	Moderate	Low
2.1.1 *Melisma*	Less melisma	Most melisma	Least melisma
2.1.2 *Word painting*	None	Some	None
2.2.1 *Repetition*	None	Much	None
2.2.2 *Syllable duration*	Shortest	Longest	Short
2.2.3 *Syllable duration variation*	High	High	Low
2.3.1 *Textual passage*	No preference	Some preference for narratives	No preference
2.3.2 *Textual boundaries*	*Juz'* and *Sura*	*Sura*	*Sura*
2.3.3 *Du'a'*	Yes	No	No
2.4.1 *Regional accent*	Saudi accent[66]	Egyptian accent	Egyptian accent
3.1 *Occasion* (primary)	Prayer, especially *tarawih* (live or recordings), studio (recordings)	*Maytam* and mosque *majlis* (live, recordings)	Prayer (live), studio (recordings)
3.2 *Social position*	*Imam*, preacher, missionary, scholar	Performer, artist, *shaykh*	Performer, artist, *shaykh*
3.3 *Personal image*	Saudi style *shaykh*	Azhari *shaykh*	Azhari *shaykh*
3.4.1 *Attendance*	Congregation or none	Audience	Congregation or none
3.4.2 *Listener behaviour*	None or weeping (especially at *du'a'*)	Ecstatic feedback	None

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66   This Saudi linguistic accent (sometimes pejoratively called 'Beduin' in Egypt) is easily recognised by Egyptians. One Egyptian expert even explained to me that the Saudis, in order to promote their reciters abroad, called for Egyptian *muqri*s to teach them, for otherwise their recitations would be incomprehensible to non-Saudis.

4.1 *Medium*	Cassette, CD, CD-ROM (latest technology)	Cassette	Cassette
4.2 *Reverb*	Often added in studio	None	None
4.3.1 *Cover text*	Name of textual segment central	Name of reciter central (as 'artist')	Name of reciter central (as 'artist')
4.3.2 *Cover fonts*	Straight, modernist	Traditional calligraphy	Traditional calligraphy
4.3.3 *Cover images*	Qur'an and holy places in Hijaz central; no photograph of reciter	Reciter's photograph central	Reciter's photograph central
4.3.4 *Cover art*	'Islamic modern'	Traditional Islamic ornament (arabesques)	Traditional Islamic ornament (arabesques)
4.4.1 *Producer name*	Islamic	General	General
4.4.2 *Producer specialisation*	Islamic (Qur'an, *du'a'*, *khutba*, *anashid*)	General	General
4.5 *Retail location*	Outside music stores	Music cassette shops	Music cassette shops

New Meanings for *Tilawa* Styles

The influence of Saudi *tilawa* in Egypt not only produced a new style sign carrying new meanings, it also transformed the meaning of *mujawwad* itself. This impact is unsurprising once it is understood that all meaning (arbitrary or not) is a function of active differences within a semiotic system operating in a social space. Introducing a new sign into that system may increase the number of active differences for all signs in the system. The particular historical conditions under which the Saudi style entered Egypt freighted it with semiotic values (related to Saudi Arabia) not associated with traditional *mujawwad*. In juxtaposition, the Saudi style consequently came actively to signify the New Islam. Conversely, the principal public Egyptian style (*mujawwad*) also acquired an ideological cast, for this juxtaposition simultaneously served to highlight *mujawwad*'s formerly tacit connection to Egypt's national heritage and traditional Egyptian Islam: more liberal, less politicised, more Sufi and more tolerant of aesthetic expression. In Egypt, the principal semiotic opposition is now the difference between the Saudi style and Egyptian *mujawwad*. These ideas are illustrated in Table 3.7. In the ternary system, Egyptian *murattal* becomes a mediating style, pragmatically connected to the old Egyptian school and sonically connected to the Saudi one, whose meaning is observer-dependent. For exponents of the Egyptian tradition, *murattal* carries many of the meanings of *mujawwad*; for exponents of the New Islam, *murattal* is associated with the Saudi styles.

Table 3.7　　　Some partial meanings of Saudi style relative to *mujawwad*, and *vice versa*, in Egyptian social space. Again, meaning appears as the sum of differences (third column). Unlike the *mujawwad*/*murattal* distinction, the *mujawwad*/Saudi one has become ideological (compare with Table 3.5 above).

Semiotic values		Differences
Saudi	***Mujawwad***	**Partial meaning of Saudi style with respect to *mujawwad* style, within Egyptian social space**
Anti-musical	Musical	*Shariʻa*, beauty of pure Islam (music as *haram*)
Saudi Arabia	Egypt	Holy sites (Mecca, Medina)
Saudi economy	Egyptian economy	Oil wealth
Congregational prayer (especially *tarawih*)	*Maytam, dhikra*	*Shariʻa*, mosques, worship, anti-*bidʻa*
Islamic expression, evoking Judgement Day	Beauty of expression	*Shariʻa*; fear, contrition and repentance
Affective response to text	Melodic elaboration of text	Power of text itself
Qur'an centred	Performer centred	Transcendence of Qur'an
New Islamism	Traditional Egyptian Islam	*Infitah, saʻwada* and New Islam in Egypt
Political discourse from reciter	Apolitical reciter	Politicised, activist Islam
Narrow aesthetic range, straightness	Arabesques, wide aesthetic range	Wahhabiyya, representing Islam's 'straight path' ('*al-sirat al-mustaqim*', Qur'an 1:6)

Semiotic values		Differences
Mujawwad	**Saudi**	**Partial meaning of *mujawwad* style with respect to Saudi style, within Egyptian social space**
Musical	Anti-musical	Music and song
Tarab aesthetic and behaviour	No *tarab*	*Tarab*
Spiritual beauty of expression	Fear of Judgment Day	Spirituality of worldly beauty
Melodic elaboration of text	Affective response to text	Power of reciter
Performer centred	Qur'an centred	Performer as artist
More interpretive, circuitous	More literal, direct	Sufism, traditionalism, arabesque
Specialised *tilawa* professional	Non-professional *tilawa* specialist	Professionalism, profit
Shrine-mosques	*Haramayn* (Mecca, Medina)	Saint veneration, traditional localised Egyptian Islam
Egyptian reciters	Saudi reciters	Egyptian heritage (*turath*)
Traditional Egyptian society	New Islam, *infitah* and *saʻwada*	Pre-*infitah* Egypt
Egyptian secular state	Saudi religious state	Liberalism

Examples

Sonic Differences

In order to illustrate the differences embedded in the ternary sign system, it is helpful to compare instances of all three styles as disseminated through the Egyptian media. In contrast to the examples of traditional Egyptian *murattal* and *mujawwad* presented earlier (Examples 3.1 and 3.2), therefore, Example 3.3 presents a transcription of the same passage (Qur'an 12:4) performed by the Saudi Shaykh Ahmad al-'Ajmi. (Differences in the ternary sign system are presented in Table 3.8.)

Compared with Shaykh Mustafa Isma'il's *murattal*, Shaykh Ahmad al-'Ajmi's performance is extremely rapid. Expression is conveyed by timbre, melisma and high syllable length variation, yet none of this detracts from the forward momentum of a simple melodic line. Melodic speed and lack of ornamentation combined with vocal purity and a 'child-like' tessitura suggest New Islamic emphases: unmediated directness (the 'straight path') and spiritual innocence. Aside from such iconicity is the indexical connection to Saudi Islam via recitation by a famous Saudi *imam* and *da'i*, regarded (in Egypt at least) as representing the Wahhabiyya and the Holy Places (*Haramayn*) of Mecca and Medina, in a Saudi accent. These places are further emphasised by artificial studio reverb, an icon of the real acoustical reverberations caused by (hence indexing) the vast spaces enclosed by the *Haramayn*. Finally, other differences such as the Saudi preference for *Rast*, as compared with the Egyptian preference for *Bayyati*, serve as differential 'hooks' on which to hang arbitrary meanings supported by (non-arbitrary) iconic and indexical factors.

Example 3.3 Recitation of Qur'an 12:4 by the Saudi, Shaykh Ahmad al-'Ajmi ('Ajmi 1996a, 1996b). The *maqam* is *Rast* on C4 (E4, second line from the bottom, is half-flat); absolute pitch is *Rast* on A3 (a minor 3rd below); the horizontal axis indicates seconds. Dashes separate syllables and asterisks denote melismas. Text: *idh-qaa-la-yuu-su-fu-li-a-bii-hi-yaa-*-*-*-*-*-*-*-*-a-ba-ti-*-in-*-*-*-*-*-*-ni-ra-ay-tu-a-ha-da-'a-sha-ra-kaw-*-ka-ban-wash-sham-sa-wal-qa-ma-ra-ra-ay-tu-hum-*-liy-saa-ji-diin.*
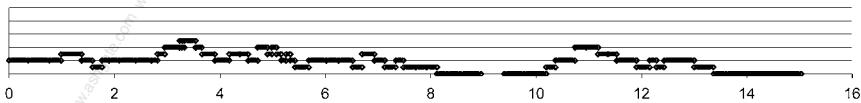
Table 3.8   Differences among Saudi, *mujawwad* and *murattal* style recitations of Qur'an 12:4, as based on recordings partly notated in Examples 3.3, 3.1 and 3.2 respectively. Note that not all differences listed above are visible in the notations.

	Saudi style	*Mujawwad* **style**	*Murattal* **style**
1.1.1 *Timbre*	Most tense, nasal	Moderate tension	Most relaxed
1.1.2 *Expression*	High	Moderate	Least
1.2.1 *Ambitus*	Intermediate	Widest	Narrowest
1.2.2 *Tessitura*	Highest	Lower	Higher
1.2.3 *Mode preference*	*Rast*	*Bayyati*	*Bayyati*
1.2.4 *Modulation*	Little	Much	Little
1.2.5 *Melodicity*	Intermediate	High	Lowest
1.3.1 *Pause*	Few; short	Many; long	Few; short
1.3.2 *Tone rate*	Highest (4.0 tps)	Lower (2.4 tps)	Lower (2.3 tps)
1.4.2 *Dynamic range*	Narrow	Wide	Narrow
2.1.1 *Melisma*	Some (1.419)	Most (1.884)	Negligible (1.047)
2.2.1 *Repetition*	None	Much	None
2.2.2 *Syllable duration*	Shortest (average 0.34 seconds)	Longest (average 0.74 seconds)	Short (average 0.45 seconds)
2.2.3 *Syllable duration variation*	Highest (81% of average)	Higher (56% of average)	Lowest (40% of Average)
3.1 *Occasion*	Studio recording	Live recording	Studio recording
3.4.2 *Listener behaviour*	None or weeping (especially at *du'a'*)	Ecstatic feedback	None
4.2 *Reverb*	Medium	None	None

Visual Differences

Graphics are key to symbolic power and are a universal aspect of phonogram-mediated *tilawa*. Since traditional Egyptian *murattal* and *mujawwad* do not differ in this respect, I contrast instances of Saudi and Egyptian style cassette covers in Figure 3.2 (Sa'idi 1999, Hudhayfi 1995).[67] The cover on the left, featuring the reciter wearing traditional Azhari garb, conveys Egyptian Islamic traditionalism. Here, the *performer* is central, featured as 'artist' just as a secular singer (*mutrib*) would be. His name is rendered in elaborate calligraphy, full of decorative lines and frills inessential to the underlying letters, like an ornamented melody. The effect is completed with a busy arabesque carpet-like background. These features establish a link between *mujawwad* recitation and other traditional Islamic arts. The name of the production company (*Sout el-Tarab*, 'The Sound of *Tarab*'),

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[67]   While they may carry Saudi sound and meanings, it should be noted that most 'Saudi' style cassettes sold in Egypt are produced there as well. As such, although these graphics are associated with the Saudi sound in the Egyptian imagination, they may not be Saudi in origin and in fact are applied to new releases of Egyptian reciters as well.

which also produces Sufi and music cassettes, underscores the connection between *tilawa*, music and mysticism.

By contrast, the image on the right – a clear instance of Islamic Modern style – evokes the New Islam. In the centre, a radiant Qur'an illuminates the night sky, implying cosmic, even apocalyptic, significance. Plain white script foregrounds the names of the *suras*. Arching overhead, in dark letters set aglow by the Qur'an's brilliant light, is the name of the reciter, Shaykh 'Ali 'Abd al-Rahim al-Hudhayfi. Egyptian Muslims will instantly recognise the green dome of the Prophet's mosque in Medina. Much smaller letters just above introduce al-Hudhayfi as the reciter of that mosque, but his image is absent (as per Wahhabi prohibitions). Font design, simple and direct, eschews traditional elaborations and the use of colour, line and light appears 'modern', connecting Revelation to the present. The image thus summarises the New Islam by emphasising the central place of the Qur'an and the Prophet in the modern world, simultaneously subordinating the reciter.

Figure 3.2   Qur'anic recitation cassette covers produced in Egypt. The cover on the left (Sa'idi 1999), centred on the reciter, Shaykh Mahmud Abu al-Wafa al-Sa'idi, is typical of traditional Egyptian *tilawa* tapes. That on the right (Hudhayfi 1995) is an instance of 'Islamic modern', typical of Saudi-style tapes. *Sura* names (Yusuf and al-Ra'd), cosmic imagery and a representation of the Prophet's mosque in Medina, rendered in brightly coloured modern graphics, are foregrounded. This 'Islamic modern' visual style preponderates across New Islamic media productions such as pamphlets and recorded sermons.

The production company, *Mu'assasa al-Risala li al-Intaj wa al-Tawzi' al-Islami* ('The Message Foundation for Islamic Production and Distribution'), specialises in New Islamic media and their publicity literature explicitly underscores the harmonious fusion of private enterprise and *da'wa* (Gharib 2001).

Discursive Representations

If *tilawa* style has acquired significant non-discursive ideological power in Egypt, then one might expect that power to be acknowledged in ideological discourse. Indeed, a sign of the ideological power of a non-discursive channel is its occasional eruption into oral and written language. In Egypt, there are two primary discursive positions concerning the three styles. Firstly, there is a pro-*murattal* (Saudi or Egyptian) position, which is pan-Islamic, Arabia-centric and anti-*mujawwad*. Written sources taking this position comprise New Islamic literature (for example, Murad 199x) seeking to reform many Egyptian practices. The second position is anti-Saudi, pro-*mujawwad* and pro-Egyptian. Written sources adopting this position include those championing the Egyptian Arabo-Islamic heritage (*al-turath al-masri*) (for example, see Qadi 1999) and secularist writings (see various in Daoud 1997a). Both types cherish the Egyptian aesthetic heritage and condemn newer '*Salafi*' trends.[68]

Many sources adopting the first position point to exhortations to *tartil* in the Qur'an (73:4) and Sunna (Husari 196x:20, Murad 199x:111) while criticising music and *tarab* in recitation for distorting the Book of God (Husari 196x:21–5, Sa'id 1975:116–17), distracting from contemplation (Shalabi 1997:57–8, 60, Murad 199x:153–4, 'Abd al-Fattah 2001:83) or venal profiteering (Hilawi 1984?:80, Jaris 199x:21, 'Abd al-Fattah 2001:83). The complexities of *mujawwad* are implicitly critiqued for introducing professional mediators into recitation (Sa'id 1975: 81, 82–3, 111–15, 117) and memorial recitations are condemned (Murad 199x:153–4). The artless but sincere voice is preferred to a musically trained one (Husari 196x:15, Murad 199x:154). A well-known *hadith* stating that non-Arabian melodies are dissolute[69] is invoked and the pure, simple voices of desert nomads (Arabians) are praised (Shalabi 1997:62–3).

In contrast, the second position celebrates *mujawwad* as an instance of Egyptian greatness, demonstrating the beauty and joy of spirituality (Fadl 1997:110). *Tajwid* is regarded as a spiritual art that produced great reciter-artists, many of whom were also great musicians (Khalil and Hafiz 1984:6–10, 161, 170, 174). A number of books purporting to speak of reciters in general implicitly take a nationalist

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68 A third position, which promotes the precision of *murattal* while explicitly denouncing its more emotional (weeping) manifestations as displayed in the Saudi style, is occasionally enunciated as well (Murad 199x:154).

69 Jalal al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman al-Suyuti (2003), 'al-Itqan fi 'ulum al-Qur'an' ('Mastery of Qur'anic Sciences'), <www.alwaraq.com/>, p. 142 (accessed 08/03).

position by documenting the Egyptian *tilawa* tradition only (Bulk 1992?, Qadi 1999, Daoud 1997a, Hamam 2000, Sayyid 2003). Saudi reciters are 'Beduin' in a pejorative sense. For example, Daoud describes the 'torture' of listening to 'Beduin' reciters: their Arabic is incomprehensible, their recitations unbeautiful (1997b:34). According to this position, beauty is spiritual while constant weeping is sanctimonious and inappropriate, obscuring Qur'anic meanings. As Fadl observes, 'You will be surprised to find [Saudi reciters] weeping during *ayat* talking of … Paradise, instead of their hearts dancing with happiness and longing' (1997:109). The 'terrible wave' of *Salafiyya* is a corruption of 'our religious tolerance', sacrificing the inner beauty of religion for the sake of outward appearances (1997:107–10).[70] One of the most strident polemics occurs in an article by Ahmad Yusuf entitled 'The Dissonance[71] of Shaykh al-Hudhayfi'. After emphasising the historical relation between music and *tilawa*, the author goes so far as to actually accuse the Saudi reciters of destroying Egyptian music:

> Suddenly Arab music in Egypt went up in smoke … it didn't occur to us that the true cause … is the spread of *tilawa* in the manner of the Saudi Shaykh al-Hudhayfi or, more precisely, the spread of false Salafiyya trends coming from the petroleum countries, which planted in the sentiments of a broad section of the population this deformed idea: that 'legal' *tilawa* … is that which is free from any tinge of beauty, and which denies completely the relation between the Qur'an and music, to the extent that he who tries to establish such a relation is near to be accused of committing a great sin … The Egyptian people … know by natural intelligence the musicality of Qur'anic rhetoric … and so produced many generations of great reciters who established all of Arabic music via *tilawa*. (Yusuf 1997:70–74, translation by Michael Frishkopf)

Conclusions

Through broad dissemination, the mass media promote the development of widely-recognised sonic styles. The decentralisation of an asynchronous media system, diversifying content and localising control of both production and playback, facilitates the development of a system of contrastive non-discursive style signs circulating as ordinary discourse, moving closer to the real social conditions of their production and consumption. Unlike television and radio, asynchronous media enable the 'end user' to become a 'broadcaster' by freely disseminating style within a local audio sphere, or by circulating recorded media. The individual decision to play a particular cassette tape in a public place, or to distribute copies,

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[70]   Notably, Fadl exempts Shaykhs Sudays and Hudhayfi from his censure, claiming that they are closer to the Egyptian tradition. One suspects, however, that their great popularity in Egypt compelled him to exempt them.

[71]   The Arabic is '*nashaz*', a word also used to describe poor musical performances.

thus constitutes a social act of communication, sometimes an ideological one. As I have argued in this chapter, such an utterance implicitly disseminates and advocates a sonic style together with its attendant meanings. Sonic style signs accumulate broader social meanings (even entire ideologies) both as a function of active differences within the synchronic social system (following a Saussurean logic) and of diachronic socio-historical trajectories along which they accrue iconic and indexical meanings (following a Peircean one). Rhetorically, dissemination of stylistic meaning is rendered 'sensible' through the affective charge of sonic experience, the 'presentational' (Langer 1957) quality of style (instantiated in performance) that naturalises meaning. 'I feel it to be true', one says, and no further justification is necessary. Thus the act of stylistic playback simultaneously conveys messages of personal conviction ('I feel that …') and persuasion ('you should feel that …'). Such messages are all the more powerful for being non-discursive, for ideological positions are then diffused under cover of taste preferences. A non-discursive sign cannot easily be represented, or opposed, in discourse.

Twentieth-century mediation enabled widespread dissemination of a dominant public *tilawa* style (*mujawwad*) in Egypt. The commercial evolution of music media precipitated the extrusion, from what was once a continuous music-*tilawa* field, of a quasi-autonomous field of *tilawa* practice that, divorced from music, could accommodate a greater stylistic range. However, as long as the media remained centralised under state control, one main public *tilawa* style continued to dominate in practice. Then, out of the radical economic, political, social and technological transformations of post-1973 Egypt, two non-discursive *tilawa* style-signs – *mujawwad* and Saudi – emerged, freighted with broadly distinctive ideological meanings. As the Saudi style has become associated with the New Islam (transnational, *Salafi*, consumerist and capitalist), the traditional *mujawwad* style has (reactively) become ideologised as well, coming to signify traditional Egyptian Islam and Egyptian cultural heritage. Installed in thousands of shops, restaurants, markets and taxis, each cassette audio system radiates an ideologically-charged, non-discursive, invisible audio sphere through which Egyptians are constantly passing. In selecting and playing a *tilawa* style, the controller of playback equipment (the message 'sender') is, consciously or not, cryptically disseminating a powerfully affective, non-discursive Islamic sensibility to a localised 'public' (the message 'receivers'), broadcasting an ethos without calling cognitive attention to its associated worldview (Geertz 1973a).

For the religious discourse of sermons and print media demands cognitive attention, and thus triggers the critical faculties which enable the individual to filter, for instance, New Islamic discourse clashing with entrenched beliefs (attacks on music, Sufism or saint veneration, for example). But for Muslims, affective *tilawa* (correctly performed according to *mushaf*, *qira'at* and *tajwid*) is nearly impossible to reject. If the non-discursive meanings of *tilawa* styles are inarticulate, their transformative powers are all the greater for their emotional impact. Operating outside the realm of verbal discourse, the power of Qur'anic recitation is well-nigh incontestable, crypto-rhetorical, since it presents no logical

challenge for the critical faculties to take up, but simply presents the *feeling* of certainty, deftly bypassing the gatekeepers of the self. For the dissemination of New Islamic meanings, then, the act of blaring Saudi-style *tilawa* via cassettes in a public place is far more effective than preaching in the mosque or distributing pamphlets on a street-corner – and less politically dangerous.

The same considerations apply to media gatekeepers of the state. Though asynchronous media production has become increasingly privatised, theoretically the state retains the right to 'filter' cassette productions. However, such censorship relies upon discursively-defined criteria, resting primarily on text. Songs are banned by the state's Censor for Artistic Works only when *lyrics* tread on sensitive ground (mainly politics, religion or sex), not for sonic-stylistic reasons.[72] Likewise, *tilawa* cassettes are banned – by al-Azhar or Egyptian Radio – only for violations of discursive principles of recitation (as fixed by *mushaf*, *qira'a* and *tajwid*).[73] To ban a 'sound' there is neither will nor way. Yet arrayed in a semiotic system, non-discursive *tilawa* styles can become ideologically powerful, compensating with affective persuasiveness what they lack in referential specificity. Such styles carry a covert – even subversive – ideological force, all the more powerful for not being explicitly recognised as such.

In this connection I will cite a single anecdote. In 641 CE the Arab general 'Amr ibn al-'As 'opened' Christian Egypt to Islam, establishing the Arab city of Fustat and building the first mosque in Africa. Often rebuilt over the centuries (see Creswell 1969:58–9, 131, 149–51), over the last 15 years this now enormous mosque, adjacent to Coptic Cairo, has served as a principal centre for the New Islam in Cairo.[74] In 1995, state authorities finally evicted the mosque's outspoken *Salafi* preacher, Dr 'Abd al-Sabur Shahin. However, his *protégé*, the *imam*, reciter and *da'i* Shaykh Muhammad Gabril (principal Egyptian exponent of the Saudi style[75]) was permitted to remain, a stylistic beacon of the New Islam. Dr Shahin has himself testified that the mosque's attendance grew largely on the strength of Gabril's voice (Hassan 1999). Today, the congregation for Shaykh Muhammad's Ramadan *tarawih* prayers exceeds half a million, and his *tilawa* recordings are widely distributed by various companies. Even state-owned SonoCairo, historically charged with promoting the traditional Egyptian musical and Islamic heritage, published Gabril (starting in 1990) and (in 1999) two Saudi reciters as well (Shaykhs Sudays and Sharim) (SonoCairo 199x:47ff.). Here is a vivid illustration

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[72]   Conversation with Dr Ali Abu Shadi, former head of the Censor for Artistic Works (2004).

[73]   Conversation at al-Azhar Islamic Research Academy, Cairo (1995).

[74]   Perhaps because this capacious mosque contains no saint's shrine, resembles the *Masjid al-Haram* of Mecca and symbolises the strength of the early Islamic community.

[75]   Besides similar sonic and pragmatic features, Gabril's Saudi credentials include winning the world Qur'an recitation competition in Mecca in 1986, the first Egyptian ever to do so (Hamam 1996:39–41).

of how Egyptian authorities, far from being able (or even willing) to oppose non-discursive content clashing with traditional Egyptian values, finally embrace it.

Today, the cities of Egypt are increasingly filled with local audio broadcasts of cassette-mediated Saudi-style recitations, a phenomenon both expressing and propelling the waves of Egyptian Muslims moving towards a more Saudi-inflected, New Islamist viewpoint. But this movement is also supported by other symbols of the New Islam, including tracts and sermons. The particular significance of the non-discursive sonic style sign disseminated through asynchronous media inheres in its affective power, its ability to fly 'beneath the radar' of critical thinking, while circulating throughout the social system as ordinary discourse, via localised acts of broadcast and distribution. The implications of these attributes are profound. Just as 'receivers' absorb affective ideological messages without necessarily recognising them as such, equally 'senders' may disseminate them without necessarily intending to do so. As 'receiver' in turn becomes 'sender', potent ideological meanings rapidly circulate throughout the social system, largely independent of the conscious, discursive intentions of its social agents. Recognition of this phenomenon is critical, not only as a means of understanding contemporary struggles to define Islam in Egypt, but for the study of music and power more generally.