

Technology, Change and the Music of Sufi Chanting in Egypt

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Abstract:

The widespread adoption of cassette, CD, satellite, and Internet technology in the Arab world from the mid-1970s onwards had a particularly telling effect on the sounds of Sufi practices in Egypt. Formerly, this "Sufi Music," comprising melodic hymns and chanting integral to rituals of Sufi orders and saint festivals, lay almost entirely outside the sphere of the music recording and broadcast industries. Sufi music was heard live, whereas music media's limited range, restricted by high cost, government control, and consequent centralization, focussed on widely-popular, widely-acceptable domains of popular music and Qur'anic recitation. This paper addresses ways in which mediation and consequent projection throughout the public soundworld enabled these alternative sounds of Sufism to leap the boundaries of live performance in ritual and festival---as dhikr, inshad and sama`---to resonate in new ways with a new, broader audience.

Keywords: Sufism, chanting, cassette technology, world music, Shaykh Yasin

Introduction

We have recently seen dramatic social change in Egypt, facilitated in part by new modes of mediated communication (e.g., Facebook). In this paper, we focus upon an earlier, but no less significant, media impact, one that transformed the music of Sufi *inshad* (melodic chanting of devotional poetry), from localized minority religious ritual expression into a broad phenomenon of world-wide import.

The key vehicle enabling this significant leap was cassette technology. We argue that Egypt can be utilized as a case study of the ways in which the effects of a uniform technology are highly localized, while rippling broadly to affect not only Sufi-oriented audiences, but popular music audiences in the Arab world, and beyond to Europe and North America. In addition, there was a significant shift in the relation of music to space: whereas *inshad* developed within the relatively private *zawiya* or *khanqah* (purpose-built architectural structures designed to accommodate Sufi rituals), extending outwards, on special occasions, to open public spaces of celebrations and festival centered on shrines (for saint-day festivals, or *mulids*) and family compounds (for life-cycle celebrations, especially circumcisions, weddings, and memorials), cassettes (along with other media, especially VHS tapes, VCDs, CDs, mobile phones, and Internet) allowed this music to move along new trajectories, eventually emerging into entirely new environments, such as international world music venues. Our goal is to unpack some of the crucial structures underlying this technological impact.

Firstly, we are fortunate to be able to address the complex relationship between technology and Sufi chant in Egypt through the twin lenses of our respective researches during what amounts to two generations of analysis of Sufi music in Egypt, from 1969 to the present. Secondly, we will review how technology has both conveyed and in some ways transformed the message of the chant. Thirdly we will describe how mass mediation created a quite different social environment, establishing a wider religious awareness of Sufi themes, while constructing a 'star' system among the chanters (*munshidin*), which some regarded as detrimental to the spiritual purpose of the chant. Fourthly, we will indicate how a wide range of changes brought about new meanings with sometimes ambiguous, even contradictory, relationships to the traditional religious intentions of the chanters. Fifthly, we will connect this phenomenon to the larger musical environment now referred to as "world music," and indicate how this connection has pushed *inshad* in new directions. Finally, we will try to summarize how both continuity and change characterize the developments in this field of research and suggest some perspectives on the way that chant space has evolved under the influence of technology.

1. From *The Munshidin of Egypt: Their World and Their Song*, to *Music and Media in the Arab World: Two Generations of Research*. (Earle Waugh)

While it is not unusual for several generations of scholars to follow each other in the study of a single topic, our work is singular: few areas in the world have had intensive musical investigations on local traditions that shape a distinctive, even, new discourse in international scholarship. In order to clarify how technology and change affect Sufi chant, it will be necessary to give a rather personal perspective, since its study arose out of a personal interest.

My research on Sufi chanting began in 1969, when I studied Arabic at the American University in Cairo. Visiting the Husayn mosque during the Prophet's birthday festival (*mulid al-Nabi*) in the late 60's was always a treat. There each Sufi order (*tariqa*) had a tent, a loudspeaker system and a loyal gathering of adherents who came to support the head of the order, the shaykh, in a performance of *hadra* ('presence'), combining movement, chanting the divine Names of Allah (*dhikr*), and *inshad*.

As the shaykh's *awrad* (devotional prayer) wafted over the heads of believers and bystanders, his followers (*muridin*) arranged themselves in parallel lines and began slowly swaying to the rhythmic sound of the *munshid's* voice. The performers became more and more engrossed in the chant, and the movement of *dhikr* (literally, remembrance) switched from a slow circular movement to rapid wheeling. Some became entranced. At a certain point, the shaykh signalled an end to *dhikr* and *inshad*, and the mood decayed into normalcy. While the focus was clearly on the shaykh, the *munshid* was evidently the individual that the vast majority of onlookers came to hear. Thus *sama`* (literally 'listening') was obviously an important ingredient in the whole performance. I was intrigued by the complex of music, text, movement and spiritual authority reflected in the process.

I returned to study the phenomenon in 1976 and again in the early 80's. The study was not without its controversy. During that period I met with many of Egypt's literati at the *Atelier*, a intelligentsia's salon, and, on one occasion, discussed my project with them. They were almost universally against the study, arguing among other things, that Sufi *inshad* is 'folk' and thus not the 'real' Islam of the country, or simply 'vulgar' cultism, or musically clearly not traditional and therefore not worthy of examination (Frishkopf 2000b; Frishkopf 2001c). When *The Munshidin of Egypt* came out in 1989 (Waugh 1989) after almost 10 years of collecting, interviewing, and editing, some Islamic Studies specialists were split on its significance, because it examined local musical forms as a way to understand Islamic piety. Thus controversy accompanied its release.

Nevertheless the work slowly began to make an impact around the world, and particularly on those who recognized that Islam was not just doctrinal or legal in content, but had also shaped and moulded culture in vigorous and diverse ways. Many young scholars were delighted by the new direction. When Michael Frishkopf read my book in the early 90's, it prompted him to dedicate his work to this new area of knowledge...he set out to explore the world of Sufi *inshad* in Egypt with greater depth, and went on to describe the framework of the phenomenon musically, poetically and structurally in a series of works (Frishkopf 1999a; Frishkopf 2000b; Frishkopf 2001c; Frishkopf 2002d; Frishkopf 2002e; Frishkopf 2003f).

From the perspective of this paper, our careers bridged a critical point in technology and musical form in Egypt, and hence open up interesting insights into the topic of this volume: How has technology transformed music from one kind of expression into something wholly different? The following discussions will help us illuminate some of the crucial developments. In order to do that, we will rehearse briefly the development of cassette technology in the period under discussion, the theme of our second major concern.

2. Technology's Introduction

When I first heard Sufi chanting in 1969, there were no records of chanters' songs in any medium whatsoever. No one had even tabulated chant titles, or catalogued genres. I searched in vain for LP recordings in the streets of the capital. All one could find were LP's of Qur'an reciting. This is to be expected because the capabilities for manufacturing recordings in Egypt were in government hands, in a state company called Sawt al-Qahira (SonoCairo) (Frishkopf 2008). The heavy hand of state control meant that only LP's of 'acceptable' works would be reproduced. Hence, the Qur'an would be issued, along with mainstream religious *inshad*, and recordings of the great popular singers like Mohamed Abdel Wahhab and Umm Kulthum. Apparently, no one thought to record Sufi *munshidin*.

A major change came with the introduction of cheap cassette tapes, recorders and boomboxes. Cassette technology was not available until the mid-70's, which is when I first began a serious study of the Sufi groups, but it was slow in being adopted by the chanters, because to reproduce sound was not to reproduce trance or spiritual realities. Besides, shaykhs were reluctant to allow the chanters too much glory for fear it would damage their spiritual content in chanting. However, at festivals, which were, in a way, public displays of

the various shaykhs' powers to draw adherents, a great chanter could draw a huge crowd. A flavour of this early period is drawn from some of my early fieldnotes:

In February, we travelled to Tanta, that great mecca of Saint Ahmad al-Bedawi, who some regarded as the greatest saint Egypt had produced. Thousands came at the *mulid* or birthday celebration. Here people have come in all manner of conveyances, for all kinds of reasons. Some came to thank the saint for some blessing provided in answer to last year's petition at the tomb, others came just to meet friends and acquaintances. Some came hoping to sell some wares to the almost million pilgrims that clogged the streets.

In the evening, after prayers, we crowded into a narrow alleyway, where, at one end of the enclosure, stood the adherents of the Sufi group hosting this event. In the general hubbub, the shaykh mounted a stage erected at the end of a blind alley. It was wreathed in brightly coloured cloth, crammed with arabesque and bold colours as if to announce that the great moment of transformation was about to take place. The adherents were milling around the shaykh as he mounted the raised platform and pronounced blessings on the wealthy man who had paid for the platform, the decorations and the chanter who would sing the praises of the order. The adherents lined up in parallel lines. A young vigorous man in a turban stepped to the microphone and a ripple of excitement ran through the crowd. Inquisitive, I pressed forward and yelled above the uproar for the young chanter's name. A bystander looked at me with withering eyes, as if I must really be stupid. "Shaykh Yasin!" he yelled in my ear. The noise abated. Yasin began a slow plaintive song. A kettle-type drum [*naqrazan*] chattered off to the side. I saw musicians standing behind Yasin, one with an accordion, another with what looked like rattles, and another with light drums. Along with everyone else, I surged forward to join at least twenty others who had loosely tied their tiny microphones over the loudspeaker microphone, and gently nursed a boxy recorder at the base of the stand, where another dozen small recorder slowly wound their tapes. Cries of "Madad, ya madad," rang out of the loudspeaker, and Yasin launched into another poem as the *dhikr* participants swayed faster and faster. Chant after chant, hour after hour, until weary and exhausted, I slumped down at the bottom of the platform. Then disaster struck. The song ended, Yasin spun around and left and the hoard of recorders jumped and grabbed their tiny microphones from the loudspeaker mike, making off with whatever they could get in their hands. It was the last time I saw my microphone. Yanked from the heavy recorder by the force of the pull, the recorder flipped over and tumbled down to the ground. Stunned, I turned to see mikes flying everywhere. When the melee had cleared, I had no mike, and my recorder was broken. I sat in amazement. This was the new world of recording chanters in Egypt. Such was one of my first introductions to recording the great chanter, Shaykh Yasin at a major festival. It was little consolation that several hours later I heard the same chant from Shaykh Yasin pouring from a tiny kiosk. Clearly someone had been successful the night before. [February 18, 1980]

Undaunted, and wiser, I bought another mike, repaired my broken recorder and soldiered on. I travelled from one end of Egypt to the other, recording both important stalwarts and

new singers. Much of this work concentrated on the weekly Thursday evening sessions in the *zawiyas*, called *hadras*, presided over by the local shaykh who had total control over all aspects of the chant. In the early days, one could not find tapes of these performers in the marketplace. It was commonplace for other recorders to press against me to see what kind of recorder I was using, since *aganib* (foreigners) certainly would be expected to have the latest in recording gear. An early Philips, it was boxy, heavy and recorded in mono. The recordings were acceptable for the time, but they were muffled and difficult to understand. Since I wanted to analyze texts, making recordings seemed a very circuitous way to obtain the classical poetry at the heart of performance, which was always mixed with petty refrains or other religious phrases that had little to do with the theme of the piece. Frustrated again, I sought to buy cassettes from the small shops, looking for better quality. Cassettes there were, but they were not better. Yet all the way home in a service taxi, chants, emanating from the taxi's cassette player, filled the air mile after mile, hour after hour, and I realized this was the birth of a new phase of Sufi chanting expansion, moving from a musical form rooted in the *dhikr* ritual in the closed environment of a *zawiya*, to a broader form of meditative music open to a broader public consisting of individuals who may never have participated in such things. I wondered to myself how much I had had something to do with this development, since my presence may well have been a catalyst for youngsters to find a tape recorder and begin recording. If foreigners wanted tapes they would provide them! Thus did the birth of a major new market for Sufi music unfold in Egypt in the late 70 and early 80s.

By the mid 80's technology had improved immensely: machines were small and easy to carry, mikes were more powerful and it was easy to record in stereo. In addition several chanters, led by Shaykh Yasin al-Tuhami had signed with cassette recording labels. After inquiring after Yasin tapes, I was sent into the back room of a recording company in Cairo and was overwhelmed with the number of cassettes lining the shelves. In less than six years, this technology had developed into a full-fledged industry. Sufi *inshad* could be heard everywhere...in kiosks, in shops, in restaurants, in studios, in homes. It was a stunning development. And clearly this musical form had evolved, even in the few years since the 1970s.

3. Transformations via Early Cassette Technology

A number of changes were brought about by this transformation. The first and perhaps most important for our purposes is that entrepreneurs developed a whole new range of music outside the restrictions imposed by the government. Where the so-called classical singers enjoyed international followings fed by the government recording and broadcasting industries, this subgroup relied only on the small operator. The amount of financial outlay to obtain an interesting musical repertoire was miniscule, attracting a wide range of entrepreneurs, some of whom had no personal interest in Sufi music as a religious form, but were in it to make a few pounds.

Secondly, this industry spawned a whole back-room manufacturing output, where cassettes recorded in anything but ideal conditions would be quickly duplicated and could hit the streets hours after a performance.

Thirdly, oftentimes attendees at the major festivals, like the *mulid* of Sayyid al-Bedawi, would purchase cassettes as souvenirs to take home to relatives who could not attend. Thus the spiritual power of the music was carried far beyond the confines of the local *zawiya* or even *mulid* festival. The extension of the spiritual influence of the music became a tool to extend Sufi consciousness to people who had no time or inclination to attend a *zawiya*, but who liked the music, its cadence, and its message. Those who had no time for the spiritual meanings saw this as a new, money-making industry. Sufi music went pop.

Fourthly, where the most important persona in the traditional *zawiya* was the shaykh, now some of the great chanters overshadowed them. Unable to discipline their famous disciples because of their popularity, cracks developed between the close relationship between the shaykh and his now-famous adherent, the *munshid*. Resentments stirred. Usually the chanters left the order, often saying that they “belonged to no order, or to all of them.” Such independence was unheard of in traditional Sufi *zawiyas*, where the shaykh’s word was absolute. I saw this directly while I was collecting chants: a shaykh refused to let me record his best chanter when I attended his *dhikr* because he didn’t want him to ‘get a big head.’ Sometimes the chanter left the order; some could not handle the demands of the developing star system. Some dropped out, seriously damaging relationships with a whole network of relatives and friends that had originally made up a warm and secure world for them.

Fifthly, the cassette development opened up an entirely new space-sound environment. Where the chant had originally been limited to one-time-only performances in local *zawiyas*, now the sound could move into street cafes and homes, wherever devotees gathered; now they could be played endlessly quite apart from the *zawiya*. Soon they would be sent internationally to become the focus of discussion and perhaps even meditation in other parts of the world, including meeting halls for groups, living rooms of Sufi aficionados and the board rooms of businessmen—the spatial expansion was extraordinarily diverse.

Finally, the industry spawned superstars. Shaykh Yasin is the best example, but there were others who were far better in articulating spiritual verities, such as Shaykh Ahmad al-Tuni, who initially resisted the recording star role. Shaykh al-Tuni told me directly that he did not want to be regarded as anything more than a humble chanter for the brethren, and he refused to shift his chanting to easier and less complicated lyrics, just to please the masses. (Compare the texts of these chanters in Waugh 1989, 99-130). Thus he warned me not to record him if I thought he was just looking for glory. Many people pointed to Shaykh al-Tuni as one who had not bowed to the market gods, and who maintained his spiritual centre. While neither of these great chanters would say a word against the other, it was clear that cassette technology had driven a wedge between them. Shaykh Yasin fully embraced the technology, eventually even forming his own company (see below), developed a market both at home and abroad, and ultimately went to Europe to perform and to market his cassettes. Shaykh al-Tuni considered such commercialization detrimental to spiritual values and would have none of it, at least at first (eventually he too would follow suit).

4. New Technology from the Mid 80’s to the Contemporary Scene (*Michael Frishkopf*)

From the early 1980s Egyptian “cassette culture” (cf Manuel 1993) developed in several directions, with important socio-cultural and religious ramifications (see Frishkopf 2010, 14-17).

a. Development of Commercial Inshad

One of these was the advent of a commercial Sufi cassette industry, not only offering new channels for dissemination of Sufi music, but inducing new modes of consumption, and connecting—for the first time--the world of popular Sufi music to the commercial music industry, consequently exposing Sufi *munshidin* to the issues, models, and even content of the latter. Such recordings—whether live, or studio-produced, were designed to generate profit, and they were marketed like any other audio product.

Professionalism in religious *inshad* is long-standing in Egypt, even among those who thereafter shift to other forms of musical performance. For instance, the great Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum launched her professional singing career performing religious songs with her father (Danielson 1997).

But starting in the 1980s newly mediated *inshad* – participating in a common media-centered music industry – began to co-evolve along with popular music, and accompanying legal, financial, and technological complexities surrounding issues of intellectual property ownership, production, distribution, marketing, and sales came to bear on both, connecting one to the other. The advent of cassettes, besides disseminating *inshad* more widely than before, extended networks of fame and fandom, turning Sufi *inshad* into a kind of popular music, though crucial differences persisted, not only in content, but in the roles of media, and their relation to live performance.

In 1980, while still a young man of 31, Shaykh Yasin al-Tuhami was signed to Idaphone, one of many new, small cassette labels that proliferated in Egypt starting in the late 1970s. However, legal problems followed – Idaphone’s owner believed he had signed Shaykh Yasin for life, and extended litigation followed, though new Idaphone recordings continued to emerge until the late 1990s. Finally, Shaykh Yasin seized control of his own means of production when he established a media company, in the early 2000s, over which he maintains full control: “Ibn al-Farid¹ Yasin for Sound and Audio” (*Ibn al-Farid Yasin lil-sawtiyat wa al-mar’iyat*), now actively producing audio cassettes, CDs, and VCDs of nearly all his major live performances; hundreds of products are available.

Live *inshad* is time-expansive. Religious night-time performances (*layali diniyya*; sing. *layla diniyya*), whether celebrating saint festivals or life-cycle events (circumcisions, weddings, memorials), feature a professional *munshid* performing *inshad*, an instrumental ensemble, a group of Sufis performing *dhikr* (the *dhakkira*) and a large group of onlooker-listeners. Such *layali* may extend to eight hours or more, and thus cannot be captured on commercially viable recorded media. *Layla* performances are necessarily edited in the

¹ Sidi `Umar ibn al-Farid (1181-1235), the most celebrated Arab Sufi poet, is also regarded as a Sufi saint, or *wali* (Homerin 2001). Shaykh Yasin’s repertoire draws extensively from ibn al-Farid’s poems, and he performs faithfully at the saint’s *mulid* every spring, beneath the Muqattam hills in Cairo’s Qarafa cemetery (see Frishkopf 2002e).

studio prior to release. Similar limitations had transformed secular music in the early 20th century, with the advent of wax cylinders and 78 rpm phonograms, capable of holding only a few minutes of music (Racy 1976). But unlike secular music, which simply adapted to the new media formats, the spiritual aims of Sufi *inshad* depend critically on time-expansiveness, and for this reason live performance continued to be preferred, along with non-commercial amateur bootleg recordings, capturing a *layla* on multiple media items.

Commercial recordings of live performances were edited, not only to fit a 60 - 90 minute cassette, but also due to state-imposed restrictions on publication. Texts had to be submitted for approval to the al-Azhar research unit or to the *Raqaba `ala al-Musannafat al-Fanniyya* (the state censor) in order for the cassette to receive the required stamp of approval - otherwise cassettes were subject to seizure and confiscation. Most texts passed, but certain phrases (especially saint veneration as expressed in “madad” sections petitioning these holy men and women for assistance) were eliminated. These restrictions also diminished the commercial appeal of such products. Amateur recordings, on the other hand, subject to no such constraints, better represented live *inshad*, and in addition functioned as personal mementos, invested with experience, evoking nostalgia among those who were present at the live event. Therefore amateur recordings have always predominated among fans of Sufi *inshad* – quite unlike the situation for secular popular music.

Cassette labels were generally small outfits, sometimes combined with a cassette retail shop (with reproduction equipment in the back) – many such were in evidence in Tanta in the commercial zone surrounding the saint’s shrine when I visited the *mulid* of Sayyid Ahmed al-Bedawi in 1992. Others were scattered in Cairo, especially in the `Ataba commercial district downtown. Performers were paid a fixed fee, usually exploitive, with no subsequent royalties, and producers tended to misrepresent sales so as to avoid taxes. While live recordings tended to be preferred for the best *munshidin*, like Shaykh Yasin, many commercial *inshad* cassettes were recorded in the studio, offering far greater control and sonic fidelity. However, control and fidelity came at the expense of reduced authenticity, as perceived by participants, and subsequently by listeners. The same tradeoff often applies to secular popular music, of course, but for Sufi *inshad*, normatively a devotional act performed in a sacred space, the studio setting can sound spiritually synthetic and hollow.

In the mid-1990s I attended one such studio session, including a *munshid*, two percussionists, a violinist, and a man whose job was simply to clap and repeat “Allah”, thus creating an artificial *dhikr* ethos, while a professional sound engineer recorded the proceedings on the latest equipment. The studio-recorded *dhikr* chant, it was felt, would help raise emotion among studio performers, as well as entrance consumers, while bestowing an aura of authenticity on the whole. But this sort of *hadra* could also appear particularly inauthentic, as could the entire for-profit mentality surrounding the commercial cassette business, something that did not appear to jibe particularly well with Sufism’s putative spiritual aims. In this way, *inshad* and *munshid* entered the popular media system, like any other music production.

Many of these problems--the contradictions between Sufism and commercialism, studio recording, censorship, authenticity, and temporal continuity--were mitigated in amateur Sufi-fan recordings of live events. Such recordings developed in parallel to the commercial tape industry, preceding it slightly, as the first such amateur recordings emerged in the early 1970s. *Laylas* resembled Grateful Dead concerts – a free atmosphere of individual recording, followed by exchange. Even in the mid-1990s Shaykh Yasin encouraged such practices, allowing anyone to place a microphone in an enormous bundle surrounding the loudspeaker microphone, into which he sang, and I made many recordings exactly as Earle Waugh had a decade or two earlier.

There were clearly synergies between the two practices, amateur and commercial recording, one boosting the other, but among Sufis in the 1990s, I found fan recordings far more desirable, not only due to perceived authenticity and fidelity to the original event, but also due to their uniqueness, lack of contamination by commercial motives, and connection to the Sufi social network in which they were embedded. Two Sufis would attend an event; one made a recording; the other requested a copy – that request carried a social meaning, based on a spiritual-social relationship among spiritual brethren, the so-called *muhibbin* (spiritual lovers), for whom generosity was not only an ethical ideal but also a logical consequence of spiritual kinship, and the selflessness of Sufi love. Recordings also carried a strong connection to place, people, and the events that gathered them, and continually evoked shared memories of social experiences. Sufis would lend or exchange tapes, or copy them for one another, and thereby reaffirm their connections to those events and places, and to each other. Tapes borrowed (and typically never returned) underscored social relationships, particularly when played.

I obtained a cross-sectional glimpse of this amateur tape world when I volunteered to organize an enormous library for one of Shaykh Yasin's most important contemporary poets, Shaykh `Abd al-`Alim al-Nakhayli, residing in Imbaba, a popular (*sha`bi*) Cairo neighborhood. In the process of sorting, ordering, documenting, and classifying several hundred amateur tapes he'd recorded or collected from the early 1970s onward, I obtained a powerful sense of their tremendous variety, as well as the extent to which they'd been lent out—or borrowed. Shaykh `Abd al-`Alim would listen to a few seconds of any of these tapes, and almost immediately would recall the date, the place, the people, and the occasion of the *layla*, and begin to reminisce, particularly when Shaykh Yasin was singing his own poetry, as if transported in time. More than just the sounds of Sufi music, such personal souvenirs tapes contained many of the most important moments of his life, which he shared with visitors through collective listening sessions in his home. Through such amateur recordings, whose repeatable sounds encode a welter of connected images, emotions, and social relationships, the dense networks of Sufi social-spiritual relations and experiences are extended, communicated, remembered, reproduced, and reified—rendered perpetually present on tape.

If the advent of cassettes shifted Sufi *inshad* closer to the economic structures and processes of popular music, the sound of *inshad* (and *a fortiori* its poetry) remained quite distinctive, in part due to resistance to the song format. In traditional *inshad* there are no songs as such; out of memorized fragments, the *munshid* assembles a textual collage, which

he sets to an improvised melody. But here too there were cross-over effects, as *inshad* and popular music were drawn into a common system. In the unmediated past Sufi *inshad* was either purely vocal (even today this *a capella* style is sometimes termed “*inshad* Sufi”), or featured voice plus rural folk percussion instruments – *baza* (small drum, played with a leather strap), *naqrazan* (kettle drums), and *kas* (cymbals), plus *duff* (the traditionally Islamic frame drum).

Gradually, however, *inshad* ensembles have shifted towards an urban-popular instrumentarium, incorporating the *tabla* (hourglass drum) and *riqq* (small frame drum with jingles), as well as melodic instruments, mainly *kawala* (reed flute) and violin, and sometimes even *org* (synthesizer, an instrument which appears to have replaced the accordion). The ensemble thus appears increasingly contemporary, while at the same time resembling (in its size and heterogeneity) the *takht* chamber ensemble of 19th century Arab art music (Racy 1988). *Inshad* musicians perform *taqasim* (instrumental improvisations) rivaling those of secular art music, and love to introduce melodic quotations from the long art songs of the mid-20th century, by such widely-known pan-Arab singers as Umm Kulthum, Abdel Wahhab, and others, as *lawazim* - fills performed while the *munshid* rests (Frishkopf 2002e). Such music is status-enhancing, and helps to attract a broader audience.

In pushing *inshad* towards popular music, the intrusion of media has also induced a star system not formerly in place, entailing tremendous disparities in wealth and fame among the *munshidin*. Most *munshidin* are amateurs or part-time, earning little, while a few have become phenomenally celebrated and wealthy. This polarization is increasing in *inshad*, as in other domains of popular culture, since media space is limited, and media exposure tends to bring more of the same; the rich get richer. For instance when I first met Shaykh Yasin in 1992 his performance fee ranged from 1000 -2000 LE (Egyptian pounds) for a *layla* (about \$300 - \$600 at that time); by the mid-2000s that figure had increased to around 6000 LE (over \$1000). By contrast, the humble village *munshid* will make do with a few hundred pounds at best.

b. Introduction of Film and Video

But technological change did not end with the audio cassette. During the 1990s video recordings of Sufi *inshad* on VHS cassette began to proliferate as well. During that decade most Egyptians did not own video cameras, but they regularly rented them for special occasions, such as weddings, and cameras often appeared at Sufi *laylas*, particularly where weddings were being celebrated, and increasingly at *mulids*. When attending *laylas* I'd bring along my early-90s Hi8 camera, attempting to make recordings as faithful as possible to the proceedings: I'd alternately film Shaykh Yasin, his musicians, and *dhakkira*, as well as onlookers. Usually the *layla*'s sponsor would have one too. Over the decade cameras proliferated rapidly. New business opportunities arose for videographers, who took advantage of free *mulid* performances to make video recordings, and then sell copies. Throughout the 1990s, one Assiut-based videography firm (actually run by Christians!), initially in the business of videotaping weddings, ran a side-business videotaping Shaykh Yasin, and (apparently with his full cooperation) duplicating and marketing *layla* recordings.

But local video aesthetics deviated considerably from my more ethnographic style. Using built-in camera effects or postproduction software, Egyptian *inshad* video productions featured special effects, highlighting what was for me an over-active cinematographic and editorial role – resembling the production of Egyptian wedding tapes. But for Egyptians such special effects enhance these videos, festooning the *layla* with appropriately honorific glitter. Whereas audio cassettes were mainly edited out of concerns for length and censorship rules, video editing is far more active, particularly in the visual domain. While continuity in the audio track is usually maintained, the visual frame becomes the site of fantastic special effects, added to the *munshid's* central image. Beyond visual overlays of *dhakkira* or saint's shrine (at a *mulid*), one finds images from further afield jostling with the *layla* itself: the Prophet's mosque at Medina is superimposed, the Ka'ba appears under a floating cutout of the *munshid*, now wreathed in scintillating animations; sublime images of nature appear, along with Islamic symbols. This visual vocabulary strongly influenced also by religious programming on Egyptian television. (Of course the video producer also will not fail to insert advertisements for his videographic services, which cover the gamut of social and business occasions!)

Such tapes were for me not ethnographic lenses through which I could view the performance (as I aimed for in my own recordings) but rather became ethnographic data in their own right, materializing—for the first time with such explicitness—cultural aesthetics and commercial sensibilities of their producers, sensibilities which could also return to appear in live performances (for instance in lighting, or stage backdrops). Video gradually evolved to supplant audio, and video recordings are now considered vastly preferable due to their depiction of all the spiritual color of the original event, as enhanced in the editing studio. By the early 2000s these began appearing on VCD (video CD) and DVD as well. But like audio cassettes, amateur video recordings maintain a special appeal, as they capture a more personal *layla* experience.

Greater awareness of Sufi *inshad* through these new media has drastically broadened audiences to include not only members of Sufi orders, as well as urban *sha`bi* populations, and villagers, for whom Sufism is the normative form of Islam, but increasingly also urban elites, intellectuals, media figures, and artists, the vast majority of whom do not subscribe to the Sufi worldview, and many of whom are not practicing Muslims. Yet, having heard recordings or seen videos, they want to participate in the “authentic” cultural event. The *mulid* of Sidi `Umar ibn al-Farid, being small and protected, provides particularly strong evidence of this phenomenon.

New developments in the music video era have shifted Sufi *inshad* even closer to the popular music world. A younger generation is developing an entirely new style of *inshad*, much closer to the secular song audio-visual formats circulating globally throughout mainstream media spaces, and often broadcast on television, particularly on music and religious channels. In this format, mediated music comprises a discrete stream of fixed isolable units: songs (a fixed combination of melody and text) of approximately 3-5 minutes in duration, each with a composer, lyricist, and arranger, which may be developed as a music video, quite unlike the more fluid *inshad* of the *layla*. Such a format can easily be

applied to Sufi music, even if its themes and images are quite different from those of mainstream pop.

The generational shift is best exemplified by Shaykh Yasin's son, Shaykh Mahmud al-Tuhamy, who has followed his father's career, but adopting this new style, personalized to his own taste. For instance, Shaykh Mahmud has appeared on Egypt's Dream channel performing an arrangement of "al-Burda" (a famous praise-poem for the Prophet Muhammad, composed by Egyptian Sufi poet Sharaf al-Din al-Busiri, 1212–1295), featuring guitars and synthetic flutes. The melody, adapted from a traditional one, was composed by Shaykh Mahmud, then harmonized and arranged by a prominent Egyptian musician and professor, Dr Ahmad Gibaly, who recorded the song in his professional studio. A music video was subsequently produced. (Anon. 2010)

Unlike the improvisatory expansiveness of older *inshad*, the new style is suitable for presentation in broadcast media, especially music-videos ("videoclips"). Production evinces greater teamwork, combining talents of lyricist, arranger, videographer, editors, and producers, all of whom are acknowledged for their creative contributions—very unlike the traditional Egyptian Sufi *inshad*, in which the *munshid* is central and maintains complete creative control. Content exhibits more professional polish, including smoothly edited visuals portraying the *munshid* in various religious settings, and is comprehensible and palatable to a wider array of Muslims, in Egypt and abroad, merging with global trends in "*anashid diniyya*," and appearing throughout the broadcast media. Thus with media influence themes are becoming more mainstream (focusing on supplication and praise of God, as well as praise for the Prophet), than mystical per se, linking up (and probably emulating) international popular Islamic *anashid* produced by the most acclaimed contemporary performers around the world, including Yusef Islam and Sami Yusef (in Britain), the Indonesian pop group Raihan, and the Kuwaiti reciter-*munshid* Shaykh Mishari Rashid.

c. Broadcast, media control, and Inshad Culture

In contrast to these "product" media, broadcast media (radio and television) have rarely covered Sufi *inshad*, and thus have produced a much more limited effect. Aside from an occasional performance-interview on a folkloric television show, mediated Sufi music still resides primarily outside centralized media. Even the diversification occasioned by the gradual relinquishing of government control via satellite broadcasts has not enabled the "niche" market of Sufi *inshad*, particularly in an era of Islamic modernism which often rejects such performances as backwards, irreligious, or both. Therefore Sufi performances have been disseminated primarily via decentralized systems of "product" media—physical objects (cassettes, CDs, VCDs, DVDs)—at least until the recent advent of decentralized web-based production and distribution.

A further development is evidence that *munshidin* are beginning to take control of their own mediation, seizing power from both media companies and ordinary fans alike. Lack of media savvy led to exploitive contracts with cassette companies in the 1980s, but these

days *munshidin* are better educated, better informed, and better positioned to chart their own careers, especially as technology has become increasingly accessible and affordable.

As usual, Shaykh Yasin has been in the vanguard but others have followed closely on his heels. Shaykh Yasin's media empowerment as proprietor of the Ibn al-Farid media company (based in Assiut), in collaboration with Ibn al-Khatib distribution (based in Cairo) has led to higher standards of production, and greater realization of his own artistic-spiritual vision. At the same time this empowerment has also come at the expense of the amateur recording scene, since the *munshid* qua businessman is fully aware of the extent (and value) of bootleg recordings. Shaykh Yasin in particular has drastically restricted such recordings. No longer are fans allowed to attach their microphones to his loudspeaker mic, and he does not permit others to make quality video recordings from up close, as he had in the past.

Technological advancement in today's recordings has also affected the standards of media representation, as well as impacted the presentation of self, particularly when *munshidin* are self-producing. Accompanying the shift from VHS to Hi8 to digital cameras was a corresponding change from bulky VHS and delicate 8mm tapes to DVDs and VCDs. Professional equipment is now deployed by production companies specializing in Sufi genres. Shaykh Yasin's production company even deploys an impressively Hollywoodesque camera crane, from which an operator-cinematographer, seated with videocam at its terminus, is capable of filming unprecedented angles and swoops, high and low, near and far.

But there is a social cost to such technology: As in popular music, ordinary people are now kept further from the stage, formerly crowded with fans eager to sit as close as possible to Yasin as he performed, and microphone clusters are now restricted to particular individuals, as Yasin attempts to make each performance into a high-fidelity bestselling recording as well. In essence, high standards combined with commercial interests has impelled the *munshid* to think not only of the present, but also of the media future of his performance – formerly this attitude was more or less restricted to the world of studios – and as a consequence the present-tense audience is distanced, contradicting a core communal Sufi value.

Yet technological ironies abound. The ordinary Sufi, if distanced, is also empowered by the latest wave of video recording technology, now compressed in the sophisticated mobile phones that have become ubiquitous in Egypt over the past decade or so. Indeed smart phones, an important marker of social status, appear far more prevalent in Egypt than in North America. A major shift has thereby occurred. In the past fans brought portable recording devices to *laylas*, holding them aloft or-- ideally-- getting a microphone into Shaykh Yasin's microphone bundle, in order to make the best possible recording. When I attended the *mulid* of the saint Sidi Ali Zayn al-Abidin in 2009 I was astounded when I turned to face the audience, and saw dozens of male fans, restrained several meters from the stage by a barrier, holding their cell phones aloft, video mode activated, to get a good shot of Shaykh Yasin! Like amateur cassettes, such videos are traded, replayed, uploaded, and savoured.

d. *New Forms, New Markets, New Listeners, New Spaces*

Another new development extending the world of Sufi *inshad* far beyond its original boundaries, as well as enabling new modes of discourse, are web 2.0 sites and social media, including forums, blogs, Facebook groups, Youtube channels, and Myspace pages. Shaykh Yasin's fans—and Shaykh Yasin himself—have created all of these, and much media content is available online, as well as opportunities to comment upon that content (e.g. www.yassintohamy.com). Social networking enables new communities to form around these media, influenced by Sufism, but also extending beyond the strictly religious, to resemble other popular culture fan sites.

All this has led to new Sufi musical practices, new social formations, and new musical spaces, the ramifications of which are not yet entirely clear. Perhaps the earlier cassette phase can be safely evaluated now, as cassettes gradually fade from view. Cassettes enabled an historically new Sufi musical practice, one in which I participated extensively during the 1990s, and which rarely occurs in any other musical setting: a group of Sufi friends sit at home and collectively listen to an *inshad* tape, usually made by amateurs. Instead of the chaos of the *layla* or *mulid* there is relative calm, in someone's living room, where the host can serve food and tea, full concentration is possible, and *layla*-time is flexible: the tape can be rewound, fast-forwarded, or paused to enable discussions of the meanings of the Sufi poetry being sung. Such sessions can occur at any time, unconstrained by availability of either *munshid* or event.

In Assiut I encountered a Sufi *tariqa* whose shaykh regularly gathered his muridin (followers) around the tape recorder to study a poetry by one of the great Sufi poets from centuries past, poet-saints such as Ibn al-Farid, al-Bur`i, `Abd al-Karim al-Jili, Ibn `Arabi, or al-Hallaj, as performed by Shaykh Yasin. As opposed to studying the printed version, performed texts are lived, emotional, social, and captivating. While the full emotions and passions of the live performance are absent, there are advantages too: such tape-based study sessions enable new possibilities for social interaction and study not present in the original event. The newer audio-visual media serve a similar function, all the more captivating for saturating the visual senses as well.

While most Sufi music media is consumed in Egypt, these media (especially via Internet) have also triggered (directly or indirectly) new global exposure to this sort of music, and as a result new forms of media have diffused through the global media sphere, especially in the thin (by music industry standards) but lucrative and influential cultural layer known as "world music", catering mainly to Western elites. This has happened in two phases: first, local media have created much larger local stars among *munshidin* than was formerly possible; second, these stars, suddenly more visible to outsiders, have been launched into the wider orbits of the world music industry.

I witnessed segments of this process first-hand. Up until the late 1990s, Shaykh Yasin had travelled abroad only to sing for expat Egyptians working in the Gulf. In the late 1990s I tried to arrange for Yasin to sing at the international WOMAD festival, but failed miserably to bridge two worlds, in one of which he was a major star, the other an unknown quantity. Shaykh Yasin's expectations could not be met by festival organizers.

But an opening was in the air, one perhaps prepared twenty years earlier by Professor Waugh and further by myself in the 1990s. London-based festival producer Prakash Daswani (now Chief Executive of Cultural Co-operation at the UK's Heritage Lottery Fund) traveled to Egypt in search of Sufi talent, heard Shaykh Yasin at a Cairo *mulid* (no doubt attracted by the throngs surrounding the performance), and resolved to bring him to London to sing at his Sufi Music Village festival in 1997. Shaykh Yasin was a hit, and Daswani brought him back the following year for the Sacred Voices Music Village Festival of 1998. Since then one invitation has followed another, and Shaykh Yasin has become well-known throughout the world music circuits of Europe (mainly London, Paris, and Amsterdam), resulting in a 1998 double CD for which I wrote the liner notes (al-Tuhami 1998): a recording of a live Paris concert, geared towards the typical "world music" market: Westerners curious about the non-Western non-Christian world. The recent availability of Internet materials (Youtube, Facebook, etc.) has also created a potentially broad global audience for Egyptian *inshad*, though it's not clear who's actually tuning in to these resources, whose texts usually appear in Arabic.

European world music forays by Shaykh Yasin and other Egyptian *munshidin* has catalyzed a new style of *inshad*, deployed in Western concert settings. This new style centers on music more than poetry, featuring a broad instrumental palette, expressive improvisations, and contemplative ametric formats, arranged in an hour and a half, instead of the endless, driving meters characterizing most Egyptian *inshad*, which is primarily performed in support of *dhikr*. This new "concert style" is evidently designed for an elite, non-Sufi (and typically non-Muslim) non-Arabic speaking "world music" audience, seated in a darkened European concert hall. Interestingly, this new *inshad* style has also migrated back to Cairo, being deployed in similar contexts, particularly at elite cultural festivals, or Cairo's foreign cultural centers – anywhere non-Sufi elites may predominate, whether they are Egyptian or foreign.

e. *Social Changes in Sufi Music Structures*

Other social changes have also followed in the wake of music media revolutions. With increased media exposure, and consequently enhanced performer celebrity, categories of Sufi and fan have expanded, blurred into one another, and often become indistinguishable. Whereas in the past one could, to a certain extent at least, delineate official members of Sufi orders (*muridin* – those who had taken an official "oath" of allegiance to a shaykh of an official Sufi order, and were therefore literally "card carrying" members of the Sufi establishment) from those broadly oriented towards informal Sufism as devoted "lovers" (*muhibbin*) of saints and shaykhs but without any formal affiliations, today's *inshad* fans may also view themselves as *muhibbin* of the *munshid* himself.

The same is true of popular music, and yet in Sufism there is a spiritual dimension to fan-attachments that is absent in the secular sphere. Shaykh Yasin chants the voice of Ibn al-Farid and other saintly-poet figures, and in some sense becomes them in performance (see Frishkopf 2003f; Frishkopf 2001c). At the same time, Shaykh Yasin has become an important celebrity in Egypt, a kind of pop star, capable of drawing tens of thousands to his live performances at the major *moulids*, and these days even a household name, despite

operating largely without the support of important broadcast media channels (on radio and television) that create and sustain most popular music culture today.

Though he lacks the mainstream exposure of popular singers such as Amr Diab, Shaykh Yasin also enjoys a much more intensive, less commercially mediated engagement with his fans, who thus view his stardom as more authentic (because of his unmediated, rural, spiritual roots), a manifestation of his spiritual station, a status that secular pop stars—many of them industry creations, moulded of suitable raw materials (an adequate voice, stage presence, and physical beauty) cannot hope to attain. In other words, unlike most mediated pop stars, Shaykh Yasin's fame remains essentially grassroots, despite all the media support.

But there are signs of other social changes in Egyptian Sufism as well, propelled in part by this music. For instance, with media exposure there's been a proportional shift in the Sufi music fan base, from traditional landed and poorer classes (historically oriented towards popular Sufi music) towards a more urban elite. Shaykh Yasin, like his peers, is now increasingly popular among the educated, sometimes as a representative of Egyptian "folklore" (though his poetry is anything but that), but also as an authentic Egyptian-Muslim voice, drawing the urban middle classes, recently secular, then more fundamentalist, towards mystical Islam. Conversely, many among the rural and lower classes, formerly the bastion of Sufi Islam, have begun to reject a music perceived to violate Islamic strictures as a form of ritual "innovation" (*bid'a*) according to increasingly widespread Salafi and fundamentalist teachings. Such charges, long been levelled at Sufi *inshad* for its mystical poetic content, saint veneration, *dhikr* movements, and ecstatic trances, become even more trenchant with increasing presence of musical instruments, and the blurring of lines between *inshad* and commercial popular music.

f. Global Music Vistas

Technology-driven change has a global reach as well, beyond pushing Sufi *inshad* towards a global audience. Shaykh Yasin's European appearances have not been received solely as exotic aesthetic-cultural performance. Shaykh Yasin believes he carries a spiritual message that transcends cultural and linguistic boundaries in performance, and he is correct: through his European tours he's drawn a number of Western converts to Sufi Islam, some of whom have even traveled to Egypt seeking deeper experiences of the Sufi world. (Indeed the promotion of Sufi music in the West typically reflects a desire among cultural policy makers to celebrate this generally more tolerant thread within Islam, as compared with the fundamentalist and Salafi movements rapidly gaining adherents everywhere, and as a means of combating Islamophobia.)

Europe is also a meeting point for Sufi world music, where Egyptian *inshad* links to the broader audience for Sufi music generally (especially South Asian *qawwali*), and broader spiritual trends in world music; the same sort of convergence happens in the Muslim world, for instance at the annual Fez Festival of Sacred Music (www.fesfestival.com), where Shaykh Yasin has often appeared, following his first European tours.

World music's audience is far-flung, highly influential, and discriminating; its relatively small size (world music accounts for a miniscule fraction of global music sales) belies its tremendous cultural leverage, serving as a springboard for the careers of many non-Western artists, whose fame abroad is often followed by increased attention back home. This has certainly been the case for Shaykh Yasin, whose new-found success on the world music circuit has brought him additional respect among culture arbiters of Egypt, and (ironically) new recognition in the Muslim world as well.

5. Themes of Continuity and Change (Earle Waugh and Michael Frishkopf)

With this background, we are now able to comment on some of the more important aspects of technology's impact on this musical form. Because the issues are significant, we will summarize the leading themes according to both those that continue, and those that have changed dramatically. Each of these points could be expanded, but the following will suffice to provide direction for future research and study.

On Continuity

- Despite all changes in media and consequent shifts in performance practice and social relations, the underlying vocal style and poetic messages of Shaykh Yasin and his peers, all of whom perform in what has become known as the *madrasa* (school) of middle Egypt (centered in Assiut), has remained essentially unchanged for the vast majority of events, performed for *mulids* and life-cycle occasions. The power behind the *inshad* phenomenon as a popular musical genre is still *hadra*-based, shaykh-driven, *zawiya* culture. It is this culture that sustains the musical form in Egypt, and it is this *zawiya*-oriented piety that connects with the larger Islamic environment, and ultimately with world Sufism. It is this rootedness that provides the stability and spiritual content for the phenomenon. Much work has yet to be done to determine the processes involved in this vital movement within Islam.
- While Shaykh Yasin's style has become more widely influential in Egypt, a result of his media-driven fame, other styles have continued to flourish in parallel, albeit on a smaller scale, particularly the highly musical *qisas diniyya* (religious stories) in the Delta region, the *mawaldiyya* (accompanying themselves on the duff as they praise the Prophet) in Qena and Aswan, and the more officially-accepted *inshad* genre of *ibtihalat* (supplications), widely-known through radio broadcasts at dawn and throughout the holy month of Ramadan. While there is no evidence that Egyptian *inshad* has leaped national borders, to be espoused in Sufi orders in other places, say Morocco, it continues to have a marked influence on young chanters in Egypt as they move into a career. Certainly it has established certain guidelines for achievement by the aspiring young *munshidin*.

On Change

- Shaykh Yasin's great fame has, however, entailed the social expansion of his style, by encouraging many others emulate him, not only in Upper Egypt, but even in the Delta, where his style of *dhikr* has enjoyed a new recognition and popularity. As a result of this impact, combined with rising Islamism, *qisas diniyya* have declined.

The formerly predominant solo-chorus *a cappella* style of *inshad* (*tawashih diniyya*), still strong in the 1960s among such luminaries as Shaykh Taha al-Fashni (1900-1971) and Shaykh al-Naqshabani (1921-1976), has rapidly vanished over the last few decades. Today this tradition is maintained by only a few performers, such as Shaykh Mohamed el-Helbawy (Shadhiliyah 1999). This decline is clearly an area requiring additional investigation.

- Musical dimensions of *inshad* have expanded and changed considerably over the years, and much of this change can be attributed to media technology and resultant shifts in *inshad*'s social status, as well as a felt need to compete within a broader commercial music market. The younger generation has introduced entirely new precomposed song-centered *inshad*, a format far more compatible with popular music trends.
- Audio technology has changed the overall live sound. In the past crackly speakers and a single mic were all *layla*-sponsors could afford; nowadays, the "*kahraba'i*" (electrician, responsible for the sound system) is increasingly sophisticated, and louder, using modern speaker systems, multiple microphones, and even computer controllers. Violinists and flautists typically own mic pickups attached to their instruments, and connect pedals supplying additional subharmonic richness (this effect was formerly generated by the musicians acoustically by proper bowing techniques or embouchure to achieve an "octave" multiphonic – the so-called *mijwiz* effect). Volume has extended the range of *inshad*, enabling collective listening across vast spaces.

Yet Shaykh Yasin and others still love some traditional crackle, which has entered the aesthetic canon just like the distortions of electric rock guitar (originally artifacts of analog sound systems, but nowadays deliberately produced as a digital effect). (When Frishkopf tried to record him in 1998 using cleaner sound equipment, Shaykh Yasin rejected the setup and called for the usual "*ahran*" (noisy horns) to be brought instead.)

- Globalization has produced new performance contexts, bereft of the traditional *dhakkira* (*dhikr*-performers) but full of eager fans of spiritual music seated respectfully in darkened concert halls, whether in Egypt or abroad. Shaykh Yasin and others have developed new styles to address this group. Mediation has also enabled new listening contexts in Egypt, including greater access for women, though the woman *munshida* remains exceedingly rare.
- Addressing the new Islamism, there has been a backlash against use of melodic instruments, considered by some conservative Muslims to be *haram* (Islamically forbidden). Ironically, it is the new song-format *inshad*, in many ways most compatible with the popular music world, that has been most exposed to pressures to become "*halal*" (Islamically legal) by restricting instrumentation, in a return to a pure vocal format (though in very new audio-visual style). But this trend is far from universal, and some of the new song-based *inshad* features an even wider range of instrumentation than before (e.g. Egyptian-Nubian pop star Mohamed Mopunir's Sufi album, "Earth...Peace", based on traditional Sufi chant (Mounir 2002)).

6. Concluding Thoughts on Technological and New Forms of Space

While the advent of multiple media technologies and their associated economies have spawned new styles of Sufi *inshad*, have enabled new melodic styles and instrumentations, and have transformed *inshad*'s socio-economic culture, the core live performance style--centered on an improvisatory expressive voice enunciating Sufi poetry, in traditional Sufi contexts, alongside *dhikr*--has nevertheless remained more or less unchanged in its poetic and vocal aspects. But this tradition, modified as detailed above, now continues alongside new forms. Such an occurrence appears on the surface to be counterintuitive. How can an essentially spiritual enterprise tolerate the very modern introduction of technology without losing its 'soul'?

Furthermore, the media has transformed social networks in which Sufi *inshad* is embedded. Media products now mediate social relationships, as well as transforming the performance scene, bringing it into closer relationship to popular music more than folk music, as was formerly the case. But Sufi music is different from popular music in never being transferred entirely to the mediated sphere – live performance is still crucial, due to *inshad*'s spiritual-social functions. Professional *inshad* can now wander quite far from its original home in the Sufi tariqa and *zawiya*, while maintaining an important presence there as well. Even the most famous professional *munshidin*, such as Shaykh Yasin, still sustain crucial relationships to Sufi shaykhs – relationships that are of the utmost economic as well as spiritual importance. Thus Sufi chant appears to have been able to leap across new borders without calling its original impetus into question. That in itself is a fascinating phenomenon warranting additional research.

The media have enabled much wider access to Sufi *inshad*, across time and in space and greater user control over its consumption, now that anyone can have access at any time. This has necessarily further blurred the lines between aesthetic and spiritual uses. It also has allowed those whose religious sensitivities are quite different from the ordinary believer to engage with and accommodate lyrics and musical forms of great diversity, perhaps opening the door both to new musical directions and to new spiritual perceptions. In particular, there are changes to *inshad*'s audience, viewed from perspectives of class and gender. There is a new global audience among foreigner world music fans and music connoisseurs with global horizons, some of whom are actively interested in Sufism as well. While this class is tiny compared to local audiences, it is also important for connections and prestige. Upper class educated Egyptians are increasingly intrigued by this music, while the rising Islamist middle classes have moved away from it. Restrictions on women's involvement are often muted particularly for the upper classes and around Cairo, while in Upper Egypt public performance remains nearly all-male.

Then, too, soundspace has been transformed. From the site of local *zawiya* to an expanded world of listeners, the traditional spatial model of Sufi *dhikr* and sama` has been broken; where the mushid only addressed a handful in the *zawiya*, now he can potentially reach millions. Where the teaching dimensions of the chant rested in the confined physical space of the shaykh, now the chanting transforms by its use in completely different listening spaces and by quite different religious leaders. Where visual connection could only be made in local situations, now TV and Internet deliver instant images around the world, and immense distances are reduced to virtual nothing. Where the spatial assumptions of

traditional Islam rooted the Sufi message to a particular place and time, now Sufism can bring its melodies to cultures and social contexts never before contemplated, and into venues it could hardly have conceived of as little as a quarter century ago. Mediation allows *inshad* into the home, where it can be heard and seen by all.

Because of page limitations, the significance of these new spaces has not been properly explored here, but it is evident that there are ramifications for traditional perceptions of Islam, as well as for the scholarly perception of religious space. Indeed Sufi chanting may be viewed as a case study for examining new kinds of spiritual space within global religion.

Finally, it is evident is that Sufism itself will be transformed by this technological and spatial change. What is not clear is how the new forms will modify and develop traditional Sufi religious style and impact. Nor is it clear whether or how it will impact on an Islam that has embraced rather more conservative visions of itself within the expanding Muslim community. However what is clear is that new, original research will be necessary to help chart the directions of these phenomena into the 21st global century.

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