

Sacred Spaces/Sacred Sounds: Diversity and Conformity in Muslim Societies

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Paper Abstracts

Anna Bigelow

Religious Studies, NC State University

Sacred Space as Secular Space

Sacred spaces engaged by multiple religious communities in many instances come to represent and manifest an idealized notion of pluralism or secularism and the ability of a religiously diverse people to coexist in harmony. Contrary to the expectation that Muslims cannot share social or sacred space with non-Muslims comfortably, there are literally countless sites attended and worshiped by Muslims and non-Muslims together that are not marked by conflict or antagonism. This does not mean that the significance of these places is uncontested or uncomplicated – quite the contrary. Many such spaces are the products of complex histories of negotiation, interaction, and shifting balances of power. This presentation will illustrate several examples of the production of shared sacred sites as emblematic of a collective identity of peaceful, plural coexistence and the more complicated stories behind these often useful projections.

Aomar Boum

Religious Studies, University of Arizona

The Performance of “Convivencia”: Communities of Tolerance and the Reification of Sacred Space

As the Middle Eastern conflict continues to enlarge the gap of misunderstanding and limit mutual dialogue between Jewish and Muslim communities throughout the world, a few Jewish and Muslim ‘artisans of peace’ continue to hold interfaith partnerships and inter-religious dialogues of reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. In this context, Jewish-Muslim *convivencia* during Islamic Spain has emerged as their historical reference. For instance, *Three Cultures and the Three Religions* based in Seville Spain has become an annual pilgrimage event for these traders of peace. I argue that this form of interfaith dialogue despite its message of tolerance and understanding has largely been a performance. Accordingly, I note that annual festivals and meetings of tolerance remain simply moments of reification of imagined communities of tolerance. I claim that invoking this medieval space of tolerance through sounds of Andalusian music remains a reification. Hence, these meetings of tolerance are Turnerian moments of *communitas* where Muslims, Jews, and Christians gather in an imagined sacred space free from violence and invoke this past of coexistence through music and words.

Michael Frishkopf

Ethnomusicology, University of Alberta

Muslims, Music, and Tolerance in Egypt and Ghana: A Comparative Perspective on Difference

In this talk, I develop a comparative and multisited perspective as a means of interpreting global differences in Muslim tolerance of ritual difference. Towards this end, I focus on an historically controversial variable-- music--in two contrastive countries: Egypt, and Ghana.

Generally speaking, religious tolerance is far higher in Ghana than in Egypt. Ghana's

citizens include Christians (around 69% of the total population) representing dozens of churches, Muslims (16%), and traditionalists (9%). Unlike more homogeneous Egypt (about 90% Sunni Muslim and 10% Christian) many Ghanaian families are multisectarian, conversion--even to and from Islam--is commonplace, and religious categories subdivide into myriad subtypes, with shifting membership. Freedom of religion is enshrined in Ghana's constitution, whereas in Egypt Islam is the official state religion, and Sharia is the principal basis for legislation; freedom of religion is not allowed in practice.

Ghana's Muslim population is itself diverse, including hereditary communities (such as the Dagbamba) in the northern part of the country blending local ritual-political structures with Islam, and Sufi orders, especially the extensive Tijaniyya Sufi network--deriving spiritually from the Moroccan founder Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani (1737-1815) via Senegal (Shaykh Ibrahim Niassé, 1900-1975), combined with Hausa musical influence--characteristic of the West African region. Despite their doctrinal-ritual differences, these traditional groups tend to evince ritual and religious tolerance towards other Muslims.

Yet contemporary Ghanaian Muslim "reform" and missionary organizations, most prominently the *Ahlu Sunna wal-Jama`*, linked to Salafi-Wahhabis of the Arab world (especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia) and the West, are far *less* ritually tolerant than their Egyptian Salafi counterparts. These organizations have flourished in Ghana especially since the 1970s, thanks to foreign (mainly Saudi) financial and educational support, and through connectivity within international reform networks, with links to Arab countries as well as the West.

Such reform groups actively proselytize, and, relying on a strict interpretation of *Sunna* and *Qur'an*, contest (sometimes militantly) the right of other Ghanaian Muslims to practice longstanding musical rituals, such as the Tijani *mawliidi* or the Dagbamba *Damba* (both celebrations of the Prophet's birth), criticizing these practices as *bid'a* (heretical). Tijanis, in turn, denounce these so-called "Sunnis" as "mushiri", deniers (from Arabic, *munkir al-bid'a*), sometimes in song.

Through such negative feedback Muslim communities have divided, to a great extent, into opposing reformist and traditionalist factions, the latter musical, the former not. In short, Ghanaian Salafis appear to feel more threatened by musical practices than do their counterparts in Egypt, whose criticism of analogous musical festivals (*mawalid*) is almost never accompanied by action. Rather, Egyptian reformers of today are more concerned with access to political power.

Drawing upon historical and fieldwork data I attempt to account for these differences in ritual tolerance in terms of demographic, cultural, historical, and political differences between Egypt and Ghana, as well as connections situating both locales within complexly connected transnational networks.

The irony is that religious intolerance among Ghanaian Muslim reformers is closely related to Ghana's broader religious tolerance (and consequent Muslim diversity), a tolerance that enabled Islam to develop as a locally-rooted religious minority in Ghana from the 15th century onwards, and that Ghana's secular, pluralistic, and democratic political culture continues to support today.

Mona Hassan

Religious Studies, Duke University

Recreating Baghdad's Sacred Geography: Remembering the Abbasid Caliphate's Fallen Capital through Music and Literature

In 1258, the Mongols laid siege to and vanquished the city of Baghdad, which had served as the locus of the Abbasid caliphate for centuries. The Mongol troops massacred the majority of the city's inhabitants, including its leading intellectual and political figures, and all members of the Abbasid dynasty were exterminated or enslaved. Baghdad itself was reduced from being the illustrious capital of an Islamic caliphate with universalistic claims to being a provincial center within the expanding Mongol Empire. The dramatic trauma of these events has inspired their

memorialization through Arabic musical traditions and Persian manuscript illustrations, and contemporaries sought to remember and reconstruct these momentous occurrences through their literary and scholarly prose and poetry. This presentation explores the sacralization of Baghdad, as the capital of the Abbasid caliphate, and details how contemporaries and subsequent generations of Muslims have imagined and constructed the city's centrality to Islam.

Maureen Jackson, PhD

NEH Fellow, 2009-10, American Research Institute in Turkey

Staging Harmony: A Jewish Community Participates in Ottoman Cultural Revivals

The synagogue music performed in Turkey today historically represented an integral aspect of broader Ottoman music culture, which was patronized by the Sultan's court and cultivated by multiethnic musicians. Specifically, the Maftirim repertoire parallels the Ottoman court suite, providing a paraliturgical 'sacred suite' of Hebrew religious songs performed in Ottoman synagogues and composed within a multiethnic Ottoman music world since the 17th century. In the context of increased synagogue security and Jewish communal isolation in Istanbul today, what has become of the practice Hebrew religious music? To what extent have cross-religious relationships among diverse musicians, witnessed across the 20th century, transformed themselves or effectively ended, as socio-political and urban conditions have changed? Today there remains a single Maftirim group performing paraliturgically within a secured Istanbul synagogue, as well as a second Maftirim ensemble offering primarily public programs for diverse Jewish and cross-religious cultural events. Based on fieldwork conducted in Istanbul in 2005-06, this paper traces the development of these two Maftirim groups – their genesis, composition, *raison d'être*, and activity – analyzing them in the wider context of the Turkish Jewish community and cultural politics in Turkey today. I propose that the two groups represent religious music that is more or less bifurcated musically and socially: one cultivates living culture behind closed doors, the other performs a politicized cultural product on public stages. Specifically, multiethnic 'tolerance' concerts reconstruct an inclusive "Ottoman music world," offering the security-conscious Jewish community a public forum for their relatively positive Ottoman past, while simultaneously supporting contemporary Islamist party politics of reclaiming an Ottoman imperial heritage. Increasingly, then, Turkish synagogue music divides itself between the in-community and the onstage, where historiographical motives, the Jewish and Islamist, meet to reconstruct a shared music world. Furthermore, by placing such Ottoman Jewish cultural reconstructions in a wider context of European Jewish revivals, we can complicate the dichotomous impression of a public or private, hidden or harmonious cultural life among Turkish Jews. Unlike many European Jewish revivals by non-Jews, it is an active, resident minority in Turkey that promotes such Ottoman reconstructions as one avenue for becoming part of the Turkish nation today.

Abdoul Aziz Kebe

Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar, Sénégal

The Sacred and the Profane in Sénégalese Music

Sufi brotherhoods play an important role in the life of Islam in Sénégal. These are organized into *dabiras* (spiritual circles) that are suffused with religious songs or praises of prophets and saints that are set to music and accompanied by dances and choreographic movements. Sometimes the sounds of the *djembe*, the *tam-tam*, or the large drum (*tabala*) also accompany these religious songs. But are these religious manifestations allowed by Islamic law? To what point may they be justified through their connection to the practice of ecstatic audition of the Sufis, known as *sama*? These questions are important to answer because these religious songs are often punctuated by *wajid*

(ecstatic trances) or that which is termed *faqd al ihsās*, which manifests as a loss of consciousness or unusual behavior.

On another level, one may ask if these religious songs in themselves constitute the sacred music of Sénégal? Do not contemporary music groups also produce sacred music? By rendering the profane sacred, do they not thereby introduce sacrality into a space that is not sacred? These are the questions that we propose to explore as we analyze the spiritual, the sacred, and the profane in the musical expression of Sénégal.

Rizwan Mawani

Independent Scholar, Toronto

At the Intersection of Space and Sound: 'Alid Ritual Practice in Local and Global Contexts

While much consideration has been given to the mosque and to some extent, shrines, as loci of Muslim piety, limited attention has been directed to the range of spaces that co-exist alongside of them. The *khanqah*, *zawiya*, *tekke*, *cemevi*, *jamatkhana* and *busayniya* also serve the needs of Muslim communities in a variety of contexts. Likewise, outside of the *adhan* and *salat*, only a small body of work has dealt with the range of devotional and performative literature that also comprises the Muslim religious soundscape.

To help redress this problem, this paper will explore a number of examples highlighting the complex and pluralist nature of Muslim religious experience with a focus on contemporary 'Alid communities and their negotiation of space and production of sacred sound. These case studies will help highlight the dynamic ways in which sound and space intersect and how culture, economics, politics, language and gender influence religious expression and experience.

On the occasion of 'Ashura in 2005 – the death anniversary of Husayn b. 'Ali, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and Shi'a Imam – the shrine of Sayyida Zaynab in Damascus was one of a countless number of sites throughout the world in which Muslims gathered to express their profound grief and engage in acts of prayer and penitence. Ithna 'Ashari Muslims from a number of countries including Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan gathered at her shrine to observe the event. Organizing themselves in sections of the complex, each group was able – through their own indigenous models of piety and cultural and expressive frameworks -- to participate in one of the most religiously charged events of the Twelver Muslim calendar.

Likewise, in a different type of space – that of a city – Muslim groups of various persuasions and backgrounds co-exist and find their own religious spaces and institutions for their practices. Explorations of three mystically oriented communities – the Alevi, Halveti Ussaki and Mevleviya – and their use of Turkish and musical accompaniment as primary modes of expression in very distinct spaces, namely the *cemevi*, *vakfi* and *mevlevihane*, demonstrate how each express their piety and further cement their faith and interpretations of Islam.

In the final case, a further exploration of theological and physical space will be explored in a study devoted to three branches of the Shi'a Ismaili community – the Dawoodi and Sulaymani communities of the Musta'li branch and the Nizari Ismailis. Each express devotion to their Imam – who in Shi'a theology is always present in this world, but not always directly accessible to his followers -- through acts of performing devotional literature. By doing so, one can explore how the distinct canons that have developed in each community continue to reinforce the relationship between sacred space and sound.

Through these examples, one can begin to explore a number of pertinent questions. Namely, how do space and sound affect each other in the context of Muslim piety? What is the role of Arabic vis-a-vis that of vernacular languages in devotional expressions outside formal modes of prayer such as the *salat*? How do aesthetic modes (both spatial and aural) impact upon religious practice? And is there something specific or distinct amongst 'Alid communities that allow a broader aural and spatial repertoire in relation to faith?

Dwight F. Reynolds

Religious Studies, UCSB

Recreating Algerian Identity in Paris through Music

The vast musical tradition referred to in English as “Andalusian Music” resembles a tree with many branches. Its origins lie in medieval Muslim Spain (Ar. al-Andalus), but even in the Middle Ages it was found in both the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa. By the 12th century it had spread eastward to Egypt, Syria and Yemen. Its melodies and song forms, though originally secular, were adopted for both Islamic and Jewish religious music. It has been preserved and developed in many different paths – as secular “classical” music by social elites, within Sufi brotherhoods, in Sephardic Jewish communities, and most recently, by diasporic communities of Algerians who fled the near civil war conditions of the 1990’s in Algeria (over 150,000 people are believed to have been killed). This presentation focuses on a dozen different social settings for the transmission and performance of Andalusian music among Algerian emigres in Paris that have emerged since the mid-1990’s.

Most Algerians who fled the violence in their home country expected to live abroad for a year or two at most. But as the troubles back home continued, Algerians living in France were faced with the prospect of long-term residence and with the question of how to raise their children as Algerians in an entirely French context. As in most diasporic communities, Algerians have highlighted certain elements of their home culture as emblematic of their identity. For Algerians in Paris, one of the most notable of these cultural symbols is Andalusian Music. The community supports a variety of different associations, each with its own orchestra, and several schools (the largest of which now teaches over 270 children every Saturday during the school year). Andalusian music has even acquired a foothold in the French higher education system with a recent creation of a degree in the performance of Andalusian music at the Ecole nationale de musique et danse in Bourges.

The result of these new venues for the performance and teaching of Andalusian music is a fascinating mixture of medieval and modern, Arab and French, secular and sacred, Muslim, Jewish, and Algerian.

Yousuf Saeed

Independent researcher and filmmaker, New Delhi, India

Remembering Chishti Sufi Saints in the Song-Compositions of Khayal Classical Music in South Asia

This paper looks at the practice of Hindi, Urdu or Braj-bhasha song-lyrics (usually called *bandishes*) rendered in various vocal music genres or styles of north India and Pakistan such as khayal, qawwali or tarana, where the names and attributes of Sufi saints of the Chishti order and other holy Islamic figures are invoked by musicians. Traditionally, the Hindustani classical music compositions have been using references to Hindu gods and deities, especially in *dhrupad* and khayal genres. But many song composers, especially in and after the Mughal era, have composed songs that invoke names of Muslim saints or even the Prophet. The authorship of at least some of these songs is traced to the 13th century poet-composer Amir Khusrau since many of the compositions invoke the name of Chishti saint Nizamuddin Aulia. But such songs might have been composed and rendered since almost 700 years by various musicians, not only in Qawwali but also in classical compositions, and are commonly performed even today by musicians who may or may not be Muslim themselves. The classical vocalists render these songs in any concert stage or private performance, but the Qawwals do perform them in ritual or public performances at the Sufi shrines especially those belonging to the Chishti order. Are these really a "Muslim" substitute for the names of Hindu deities or do they play a different devotional or pietistic role in the performance and

listening traditions? How do the performers as well as the listeners respond to the names in the songs – are some names preferred in certain Sufi shrines over others? Most musicians for instance perform certain body gestures as a response to the names (such as that of Amir Khusrau) while rendering them. Rather than investigating about the “original” authorship of such song-lyrics, this paper will look at the contemporary bearing of these songs in the lives of the musician as well as the typical listeners in South Asia. The presentation will be illustrated with audio and video clips.

Rachana Rao Umashankar

PhD candidate, Anthropology, UNC-Chapel Hill

Multiculturalist Secularism in India and the shared sacred space of Sufi shrines

Sufi shrines, the mausoleum complexes of Sufi saints, are not only sacred spaces, but also contested ones. The main points of contention in the often passionate debate over the legitimacy of shrine-based Sufism are practices such as the reverence of Sufi saints as intermediaries between humanity and God, pilgrimage to their shrines, and various rituals within shrine spaces.

Detractors question the compatibility of these practices and beliefs with Islamic monotheism, characterize these practices as "heretical innovations", and provide proofs for their stance in the Quran and the Hadis. Adherents of shrine-based Sufism have for long also provided proofs of the legitimacy of their practice in Quranic verses and Hadis sayings, and maintain that both Sufi philosophy, as well as much of lay practice, is contiguous and congruent with "classical Islam".

This paper focuses on contemporary arguments made in favour of Sufi shrines in India. I ask if there are ways in which the pro-shrine stance is affected by the multi-religious milieu of the shrine space itself and if they are shaped by the backdrop of the Indian secular nation-state.

Over a year of ethnographic fieldwork in North and South India I have found that in arguing for the legitimacy of Sufi shrines within the fold of Islam, pro-shrine interlocutors often tie the messages of Quranic verses to messages of multiculturalist secularism; they present the shared sacred space of the shrine and the ideals of a religiously-diverse Indian nation as part of the same continuum as the core tenets of Sufi philosophy and belief. That is, arguments for the validity of shrine-based Sufism take into account not only textual and doctrinal proofs, but ground these in the larger socio-cultural and political space in which they play out. Sufi shrines are seen as spaces where ideals like "universal brotherhood" and "communal harmony" are kept alive; ideals that are conceived as being simultaneously Sufi and secular.

Annabel Wharton

William B. Hamilton Professor of Art History, Duke University

Pseudo-Sacrality and Its Dangers: David's Tomb

The Tomb of King David, located outside Zion Gate in Jerusalem, is rather like the Garden Tomb of Jesus beyond Damascus Gate on the opposite side of the Old City. Both are recognized by all competent archaeologists and historians as faux and both are treated by some religious fundamentalists as authentic. The Garden Tomb was the relatively recent Protestant invention of George Gordon in the nineteenth century. The sources of the fabrication of King David's tomb are much older and involve Christians, Muslims and Jews. Through an assessment of the architectural embodiments of "David's Tomb" on "Mount Zion," this paper offers notes on the production and dangers of pseudo-sacrality.

Participant Biographies

Anna Bigelow joined the faculty in Philosophy & Religious Studies at NC State University in fall 2004 as Assistant Professor. She received her MA from Columbia University and PhD in Religious Studies from UC Santa Barbara with a focus on South Asian Islam. Her book, *Sharing the Sacred: Practicing Pluralism in Muslim North India* (Oxford University Press, 2010) is a study of a Muslim majority community in Indian Punjab and the shared sacred and civic spaces in that community. Bigelow's current research, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, involves further study of contested and cooperatively patronized multi-religious sacred sites in South Asia and the Middle East, focusing on the inter-religious dynamics that complicate or ameliorate these relations in plural communities around the globe. She speaks and writes frequently on religious extremism, religion and conflict, and the role of Islam in the world today.

Aomar Boum is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Arizona.

Michael Frishkopf is Associate Professor in the Department of Music and Associate Director of the Canadian Centre for Ethnomusicology, received his doctorate from UCLA's Department of Ethnomusicology in 1999, with a dissertation on Sufi music of Egypt. Specializing in sounds of the Arab world, West Africa, and Islamic ritual, his research interests also include social network analysis, music media, and digital repositories. He has conducted fieldwork for many years in Egypt, and also in Ghana. Recent articles and book chapters include "Globalization and re-localization of Sufi music in the West" (Routledge), "Nationalism, Nationalization, and the Egyptian music industry" (*Asian Music*), "Mediated Qur'anic recitation and the contestation of Islam in contemporary Egypt" (Ashgate), and "'Islamic Music in Africa' as a tool for African Studies", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. An edited collection entitled *Music and Media in the Arab World* is in press, and two books are in progress: *The Sounds of Islam* (Routledge), and *Sufism, Ritual, and Modernity in Egypt* (Brill). Dr. Frishkopf serves as a member of the editorial board for the journal *Ethnomusicology*; he is Associate Editor of the Middle East Studies Association Bulletin and President of the Society for Arab Music Research. He has received major research grants from SSHRC, the Canadian Heritage Information Network (Canadian Heritage), and the National Endowment for the Humanities (USA).

Mona Hassan is Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies and History at Duke University. She is interested in questions of religious authority and interpretation, Islamic political thought and jurisprudence, cultural memory and representation as well as female religious authority and scholarship. She has done extensive research on Muslim reactions across Afro-Eurasia to the disappearance of the Abbasid and Ottoman caliphates in 1258 and 1924, and she is currently preparing a book manuscript entitled "Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A History of Emotions and Religious Imaginaries among Premodern and Modern Muslims."

Maureen Jackson received her PhD from the University of Washington in 2008. Her dissertation, *Mixing Musics: The Urban Landscape of Late Ottoman and Turkish Synagogue Music*, is based on fieldwork conducted in Istanbul and supported by a Fulbright Hays Fellowship. Utilizing ethnographic and archival sources, the study focuses on Jewish and intercommunal social history through the lens of multiethnic musical cultures and their imperial to national transformations across the 20th century. In 2008 she was awarded 2nd prize in the Sakıp Sabancı International Research Awards for her paper, "Crossing Musical Worlds: Jews Making Ottoman and Turkish Classical Music." She is currently an NEH Fellow at the American Research Institute in Turkey, conducting postdoctoral research on a new project, "A View from the Provinces: Multiethnic Music-making in Late Ottoman Izmir." She has received an ACLS/Mellon New Faculty Fellowship (2010-12) to pursue research, writing and teaching at a university in the United States.

Abdoul Aziz Kebe is Professor of History at Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar, Senegal.

Rizwan Mawani has a background in anthropology and religious studies with a focus on Muslim societies. Most recently, he conducted a 4-year, 16-country research project exploring Spaces of Worship and Gathering examining more than 50 Muslim communities from Senegal and Syria to India and Indonesia for The Institute of Ismaili Studies where he was Research Coordinator in the Department of Community Relations. His most recent academic contributions includes a number of entries for the new *Encyclopaedia of Muslim American History*, released in 2010, including entries for “Mosques and Islamic Centers”, “Prayer” and “Imambaras.” He is currently working on a series of articles on the contemporary history of Ismaili communities in Iran, Oman and China as well as a book on Spaces of Worship in the Muslim world.

Dwight Reynolds is professor of Arabic Language & Literature in the Department of Religious Studies, and also Director of the Center for Middle East Studies, at UC Santa Barbara. He has conducted fieldwork on Andalusian musical traditions in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Spain and France. He is the author of numerous articles on aspects of Andalusian music and is currently writing a history of that tradition (*The Musical Heritage of al-Andalus*). He has been a fellow of both the Harvard Society of Fellows and the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton), and has authored and/or edited four books on Arabic oral epic poetry, pre-modern Arabic autobiography, Arabic literature, and Middle Eastern Music.

Yousuf Saeed is an independent filmmaker and researcher based in New Delhi, India, involved in the production of documentary films for last 2 decades. His films on Amir Khusrau, Basant, and South Asian classical music, such as *Khayal Darpan*, have been shown in various international film festivals and TV channels. His interest and research in popular visual culture of South Asian Muslims has resulted in a forthcoming book as well as more documentary videos. Currently, Yousuf is the director of Tasveer Ghar, a digital archive of Indian popular art.

Rachana Rao Umashankar is a doctoral student with the Department of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has spent the past year as a Fulbright-Hays Fellow in India where she has been doing research on the ways in which contemporary debates over shrine-based Sufism intersect with the ideologies of a secular nation-state.

Annabel Wharton is William B. Hamilton Professor of Art and Art History, Duke University, received her Ph.D. at the Courtauld Institute of Art History, London University. Initially her research focused on Late Antique and Byzantine art and culture, but she has more recently investigated the effect of modernity on the medieval past and its landscapes, first in her study of the first generation of American hotels of globalization, *Building the Cold War: Hilton International Hotels and Modern Architecture*, and subsequently in a book titled *Selling Jerusalem: Relics, Replicas, Theme Parks*. Her current project, *Pathological Architectures: Jerusalem and Elsewhere*, considers actual and digital buildings as agents which both endure pain and inflict it.