Comparative Studies in Society and History 2011;53(3):571–594.
0010-4175/11 $15.00 © Society for the Comparative Study of Society and History 2011
doi:10.1017/S0010417511000259

The Acoustics of Muslim Striving: Loudspeaker Use in Ritual Practice in Pakistan

NAVEEDA KHAN

Anthropology, Johns Hopkins University

INTRODUCTION: THE SATANIC INSTRUMENT

The protagonist of Intizar Hussain's novel *Tazkira* (1987) is a hapless *muhajir*, or refugee, in Lahore, Pakistan in the period shortly after the 1947 Partition of India, which witnessed the pell-mell transfer of Hindus and Sikhs to India and Muslims to Pakistan. He writes that while others were busy seizing abandoned sites in which to live, he was unable to feel at home anywhere. To compound his sense of dislocation, *bu amma*, his elderly companion, complains bitterly that she misses the sound of the *azan*, the call to prayer, in the first house they rent in an outlying area of Lahore, as yet forested and relatively un-peopled. *Bu amma* recollects how the call used to punctuate her days in her *haveli*, or mansion, in a busy neighborhood back in India.[1] Without it,

Acknowledgements: This paper has been "in process" for so long that it has acquired a number of debts. The Social Science Research Council, Fulbright Hayes, Wenner-Gren Foundation, National Science Foundation-Cultural Anthropology Division, American Institute of Peace Studies, Columbia University, and Johns Hopkins University are to be thanked for supporting the research for and writing of the paper. I thank Brinkley Messick, Nick Dirks, Veena Das, Jane Guyer, Bhrigu Singh, Debbie Poole, Aaron Goodfellow, Stuart Mclean, Sharika Thiranagama, Anand Pandian, Asad Ali, Ruby Lal, Anna Bigelow, Katherine Ewing, and David Gilmartin, among others, who have generously read or listened to this paper at various stages and provided many helpful comments. I particularly want to thank Setrag Manoukian for inviting me to present the paper along with other work at McGill University's Institute of Islamic Studies. This was a fruitful and exciting visit. Max Bruce provided help with Urdu transliteration. Thanks to Andrew Shyrock and the two anonymous *CSSH* reviewers for their sympathetic reviews and suggestions for improving the paper. David Akin made for a terrific editor.

[1] The *azan* is a crucial node within the sequence that constitutes obligatory daily worship for Muslims. It sounds five times a day from the mosque summoning the faithful to prayer. It is the *muezzin* who typically delivers the *azan*. Muslims are to respond by repairing to prayer. A second *azan* called the *iqamat* is delivered for the benefit of worshippers already assembled within the mosque to ready them for prayer. The text of the *azan* is as follows:

> Allahu Akbar (Allah is the Greatest Allah) Allahu Akbar (Allah is the Greatest)
> Ash hadu al la ilaha illal lah (I bear witness that there is no God but Allah)
> Ash hadu al la ilaha illal lah (I bear witness that there is no God but Allah)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417511000259 Published online by Cambridge University Press

her days stretch out ahead of her, running uneventfully one into the other. How is it possible, she wonders, that one could be in this place created for Muslims and not hear the *azan*? In their next house, *bu amma* quickly realizes what it means to live in the shadow of a mosque. It was once a *barkat* (blessing), she grumbles, that has been turned into a curse by that satanic instrument (*shaitani ala*), the loudspeaker. The protagonist describes *bu amma*'s efforts to shut out the sounds from the mosque that now invade her thoughts, shred her concentration, and make her efforts to say her prayers a daily battle. They eventually have to leave this house as well.

This story conveys how the *azan*, once desirable in producing a sense of Muslim space, was made into an impinging sound by loudspeakers newly affixed to mosques. It was possibly in the late-1920s that the loudspeaker was first used inside a mosque, but only in the 1950s did it begin to be used to broadcast the call to prayers and the instructions from the imam (prayer leader) to the congregations that spilled out of the mosques. At that time, several well-known ulama (religious scholars) of the Sunni Deobandi pathway in Pakistan held extended discussions on the virtues and vices of the use of loudspeakers in ritual practice, in which they attempted to pin down the material effects of the machine.[2]

I begin my paper with these ulama-based discussions. I look back to the politics of sound in 1920s colonial India, in which I find an apprehension of sound in ritual as noise, which prefigures the introduction of the loudspeaker. I then trace these apprehensions in postcolonial Pakistan from the 1960s through the 1990s, examining discussions among political leaders, the state, theologians, and ordinary Muslims who express ambivalence toward the loudspeaker. These discussions suggest that the earlier fears that ritual sound might be

Ash hadu an-na Muhammadar rasulul lah (I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah)
Ash hadu an-na Muhammadar rasulul lah (I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah)
Hayya 'alas salah (Come to Prayer)
Hayya 'alas salah (Come to Prayer)
Hayya 'alal falah (Come to your Good)
Hayya 'alal falah (Come to your Good)
In the *azan* for the morning prayer, the following injunction is added twice:
As salatu khayrun min an-nowm (Prayer is better than sleep).
As salatu khayrun min an-nowm (Prayer is better than sleep).

[2] While there is excellent scholarship on technology and mediation in Muslim contexts (e.g., Eickelman and Anderson 2003; Hirschkind 2006; Larkin 2008), few have focused solely or closely on the loudspeaker. I have only come across "Technology and the Production of Islamic Space: The Call to Prayer in Singapore," in which Tong Song Lee (1999) shows how restrictions on the loudspeaker were key to regulating the Malay Muslim community in Singapore, and how these restrictions were met by the innovative use of the radio to assert the public presence of the community and increase community interconnectivity. That article does not attend to the material effects of the loudspeaker.

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perceived as noise had been borne out. Moreover, as political and religious conflicts surfaced, they, too, were amplified and broadcast by loudspeakers.

My intent is to plumb these expressions of ambivalence toward the loudspeaker to show how this simple but pervasive technology introduced unsettling acoustic effects of its own, requiring new, auditory techniques to naturalize the technology. At the same time, it enabled a focus on the place of sound more generally in the tradition of Islam, allowing the tradition to be newly inhabited—that is, the technology brought to light previously neglected aspects of Pakistan's history and religious tradition. Finally, because this technology could bring both a heightened experience and disappointment with that experience,[3] loudspeakers in mosques enabled an unexpected expression of manifold ideals regarding what it was to live as a Muslim in Pakistan, and also the sense of unfulfilled expectations accompanying it. Following the presumed ill effects of the loudspeaker across the skein of the social in Pakistan illuminates emergent aspects of religious striving and attendant anxieties within Muslim everyday life.

LOUDSPEAKER EFFECTS ON PRAYER: ULAMA DISCUSSIONS OF THE 1950s

In *Alat-e Jadida ke Shari'i Ahkam* (The orders of the Shari'a on modern inventions) (1996), the well-known Pakistani theologian Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi (1897–1976) informs us that the question of whether it was correct to use loudspeakers, or *mukkabir-e sawt* (literally, instruments that amplify sound), in prayer was first posed by South Asian pilgrims returning from the *hajj* (pilgrimage) in Saudi Arabia in the 1950s. During that period the Saudi Arabian government had begun to use loudspeakers to announce the *azan* and broadcast the instructions of the imam to the millions of *hajji*s (pilgrims) gathered there.[4]

[3] *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) documents a shift in the perceptions of sound transmitted by loudspeaker from it being clear to it being noisy, illustrating the ability of this technological form to evoke both promise and disappointment. From the *OED* we learn that the first reported usage of the term was in 1884. By 1920, *OED* quotes *Telegraph and Telephone Journal* (VI. 111/2) as saying, "It was quite remarkable how far and how distinctly it was possible to hear the talk from the loudspeakers." By 1930, the loudspeaker had ceased to be a marvel and had become an intrusive presence in daily life. The *OED* quotes J. Buchan, from his book *Castle Gay*: "Their ears were greeted by the bray of a loudspeaker to which the wives by their house-doors were listening." For Buchan, the loudspeaker was akin to a noisy beast, but more pernicious because people felt compelled to listen to it, to leave their chores to stand by the doorstep, faces forcibly pointed in the direction of an invisible but insistent aural source (*OED* 2011). In my argument, the loudspeaker provoked irritation and annoyance, but discussions of its use also provided context for voicing disappointment with Muslim efforts at bettering themselves. For an interesting perspective on how disappointment is an opening into the future, see John Su's "Epic of Failure: Disappointment as Utopian Fantasy in *Midnight's Children*" (2001), in which he writes that Salman Rhusdie's disappointment with the failings of postcolonial India was not an expression of nostalgia for an imaginary homeland, but rather one of hope that the future may yet surprise us.

[4] I have been unable to determine the precise date that loudspeakers began to be used in mosques in the Middle East or South Asia. Muhammad Shafi's book includes a copy of a 1928 fatwa by

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Pilgrims concerned about the validity of their prayers asked the ulama of their home countries whether use of such technology was permissible according to the *shari'a*.[5] Their inquiries initiated a volley of fatwas by the ulama in Pakistan that spanned a decade, but also drew upon earlier individual fatwas on the topic issued by famous ulama such as Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi.[6] Muhammad Shafi's book tried to be the decisive word on the topic.[7]

Typically, on such occasions as the Friday prayer, the imam shouted instructions to the congregation. If the congregation was very large, a few were selected to transmit the imam's instructions down the lines. Placing a loudspeaker close to the imam ensured that everyone could hear his instructions and obviated the need for such human transmitters (*muqabbirin*). The first, most important concern raised regarding loudspeakers was about the status of the voice that came over them. While the religious instructions on prayer clearly indicated that one could only be lead in prayer by someone who was mature and of sound mind, the possibility that the voice over a loudspeaker might not be the original human voice raised the worry that one was taking the lead of a machine over a human, which was unacceptable. Mufti Muhammad Shafi recounts, "In the early stage we had declared the loudspeaker unlawful

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi on modern inventions that definitively declares prayer with the aid of a loudspeaker invalid. Thanawi later changed his position (Shafi 1996: 51).

[5] Prayer is obligatory for all Muslims, and missing a prayer intentionally is considered a sin. Having one's prayer invalidated for any reason and not re-doing it is akin to missing a prayer. The onus is on the individual worshipper to determine if his or her prayer has been invalidated, if he or she has the slightest doubt. There are well known reasons for a prayer to be invalid, such as a lack of concentration producing missteps in the sequence of worship, or an expulsion of air that breaks one's state of purity. But for some factors there are no clear rulings and the person will have to consult the relevant religious authorities. See Marion Holmes Katz's *Body of Text* (2002) for a close reading of textual sources that draws out nuances of Sunni norms and laws of ritual purity. The introduction of the loudspeaker in prayer likely perturbed worshippers and prompted them to ensure that it had not invalidated their prayers.

[6] In treating fatwas as textual forms that tell us about general social conditions, shifting concerns within everyday life, and ongoing pedagogical engagements, rather than as instantiations of historical events, I follow the leads of Jakob Skovgaard-Patterson's *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: Muftis and Fatwas of the Dar Al-Ifta* (1997); and Muhammad Khalid Masud, Brinkley Messick, and David Powers' edited volume, *Islamic Legal Interpretations: Muftis and Their Fatwas* (1996).

[7] That this text was intended to provide definitive answers was brought home to me when I found its final position on loudspeakers referenced as an authoritative ruling in another fatwa collection, *Fatawa-e Rahimiyah*, by Maulana Mufti Hafiq Qari Sayyid Abdu'r Rahim Qadri Lajpuri, of India. He wrote the following on "Use of Loud-speaker in Prayers": "The above *fetwa* [referring to his own] has been published in *Paigham* (vol. 1, no. 5) of August 1953. Two months later, a tract entitled *Aala-e Mukabbir u's Saut ke Shari Ehkam* (The orders of the Shari'a on loudspeakers) was published, in October 1953, from Karachi (W. Pakistan), in which the chief *mufti* of Pakistan, Maulana Muhammad Shafi Sahib, discussed this problem at length. Praise be to Allah, and again praise be to Allah, that the Mufti Sahib's *fetwa*, too, supports the *fetwa* of this humble self. In this [Maulana Shafi's] *fetwa*, trusting the scientists' finding, that is, admitting the voice of the loudspeaker to be the real voice of the imam, decision has been given as to the correctness of the following and the validity of the prayer performed" (Lajpuri 1992, vol. 1: 76).

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because at that time we were not sure whether the voice coming over it was the original voice or its duplicate."[8] In an interesting hint of the authoritativeness of scientific knowledge in settling theological issues, this matter was first resolved on the basis of scientific studies that asserted that the voice over the loudspeaker was the original.[9] Later, the matter was once again thrown open when another *alim* (scholar) circulated a scientific article that showed how the voice over a loudspeaker was phonetically different from the original.

A variation of this concern was the question of whether the duplicate was similar to an interjection from outside. Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani, a famous Deobandi scholar, referred to it as a *luqma* (literally "a morsel"), which would compromise the integrity of prayer because it would be as though an agent external to the prayer was leading it.[10] Or was the sound over a loudspeaker an echo (*sada-e bazgasht*)? This was the contention of the Deobandi scholar Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi, who ascertained that a loudspeaker transmitted sound through the collision and concatenation of sound signals and the production of echo effects.[11] If so, then the consciousness, purposiveness, and directionality of the imam's instructions stood to be significantly compromised.

These were all serious challenges, and Mufti Muhammad Shafi considered each in turn. He provided a litany of the second-order "harms and evils of the use of the loudspeaker in *namaz* (prayer)." These may be grouped into its effects on the correct sequence of prayer, and on the state of mind necessary for prayer. He claimed to have observed several instances when chaos broke out in prayer when a loudspeaker failed. Not only was this situation deplorable since it made the prayer worthless and necessary to repeat, but it also indicated the danger of devotees relying excessively upon technological props to aid their practice. Such reliance further suggested that devotees were less-than-actively present in prayer, since they had to be alert to making necessary adjustments to ensure that prayer continued despite extenuating circumstances.

The second significant objection that Mufti Muhammad Shafi raised against imams' using loudspeakers was that it reduced the state of humility (*khushu o khuzu*) vital for prayer. He fretted that imams would compromise prayer due to

[8] Shafi 1996: 42.

[9] This fatwa collection does not specify the names of the scientists or the titles of their works that convinced the Deobandi ulama of this fact. Perhaps they had in mind something like the work on sound fidelity that preoccupied engineers, artists, and consumers in the early years of sound technology. In *The Audible Past*, Jonathan Sterne speaks of the social construction of "perfect fidelity," in which "there is no loss of being between an original sound and its copy," but which was "much more about faith in the social function and organization of machines than it is about the relation of sound to its 'source'" (2003: 218–19).

[10] For a detailed profile of this scholar, see Barbara Metcalf's *Husain Ahmad Madani: The Jihad for Islam and India's Freedom* (2009).

[11] See Metcalf's *Bihishti Zewar: Perfecting Women* (1997) for a portrait of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi.

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their concerns for the quality of the sound reverberating throughout the mosque and the need to position themselves so the microphone could best catch their voices. The humility of worshippers would also be jeopardized since they would have to cast their mind outside of their prayer to determine which broadcasted instructions were coming from the imam of their mosque, to follow a single thread of instructions through intermingling stereo effects:

> The mosque where I say my prayers in Karachi is called Bab-ul Islam. At some distance from it, *jamat* [congregation] is held at the western corner of an area called Arambag. There is *jumah* [Friday prayers] in both places. Every Friday, the *jumah* at Bab-ul Islam starts while the *taqrir* [speech] and *khutba* [sermon] at Arambagh is still going on. You should ask the *namazis* [worshippers] at Bab-ul Islam what they experience. … One should be thankful that the loudspeaker is only used for sermons and speeches and not for prayers. And also that the prayer times are different. Otherwise with the confusion of voices from both mosques perhaps no one's prayers would be valid (Shafi 1996: 44).

While Muslims have long been concerned with maintaining proper concentration in prayer (Parkin and Headley 2000; Bowen 1993), the loudspeaker's introduction magnified the challenge considerably.

This matter was resolved temporarily by Muhammad Shafi's warning that, due to the objections of some ulama, it was preferable to avoid loudspeaker use in prayer and revert to human transmitters. However, he said, given the ambiguity that still attended the voice over a loudspeaker, that is, that it could well be the original human voice, and the beneficial service rendered by loudspeakers in broadcasting those pious sounds that Muslims were enjoined to listen to—such as the *azan*, *tilawat* (Qur'anic recitation), and sermon—prayer conducted over a loudspeaker was valid and did not need to be done over. We see a hint of Muhammad Shafi's dissatisfaction with this resolution in his parting word that if further research gave more insight into the status of the voice over the loudspeaker, then the question would be revisited. In leaving the matter unresolved, he left open the possibility that the sound heard over a loudspeaker might not be imbued with human presence.

This dialogue has continued into the present in fatwas issued in various religious seminaries, posters on mosque walls, and polemical booklets in wide circulation in Pakistan. In it we see a consideration of the effects associated with the loudspeaker outlined in Murray Schafer's 1977 classic, *The Tuning of the World*. This work provides useful terms by which to analyze the material effects of loudspeakers upon sound. Schafer's preferred terms are: *transduction*, *amplification*, *multiplication, interference/noise*, and *schizophonia. Transduction* refers to the loudspeaker's conversion of electrical signals into acoustical signals or sound, and the work of loudspeakers is the *amplification* of sound. A crucial aspect of Schafer's project was to show the *multiplication* of sounds to which the proliferation of loudspeakers contributes. The loudspeaker also introduces *interference* or unwanted sounds in the form of

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hums and hisses. The overall sound that a loudspeaker produces may also be perceived as *noise*, depending on the recipient. Finally, in line with his attempt to show that the modern soundscape with its high concentration of sounds produces cognitive dissonance, Schafer developed the concept of *schizophonia*: "Original sounds are tied to the mechanisms which produce them. Electroacoustic sounds are copies and they may be reproduced at other times or places. Schafer employs this 'nervous' word [schizophonia] in order to dramatize the aberrational effect of this twentieth-century development" (Truax 1999).[12]

The discussions of the ulama I have just sketched are best characterized as a long deliberation on schizophonia, or the loss of bearing associated with the separation of a sound from its source. I found a striking example of this loss of bearing in a fatwa in *Kaifiyat-ul Mufti*, another classic collection of Deobandi fatwas by Maulana Kifayatullah Dehlavi of India, in print in Pakistan (Dehlavi 1972). Under the section on the *azan*, the *mufti* (religious legal scholar) was asked whether a blind man bombarded with *azans* from mosques near and far was obligated to go to the mosque whose *azan* reached him most clearly, but which was a great deal farther away than his neighborhood mosque, whose *azan* he could not hear. While the *mufti*'s response was that the disabled should do what was easiest for them, one gets a vivid sense of how the sound projected over the loudspeaker can disrupt depth perception. Furthermore, the amplification and multiplication of sounds associated with loudspeakers, while beneficial in the case of the *azan*, Qur'anic recitation, and sermon, were considered to undermine prayer. Transduction, or the transformation of electrical to acoustical energy, raised the gravest anxieties since it produced questions about the humanness of the sound heard. In this instance, interference/noise internal to a loudspeaker could be seen as a further obliteration of human presence or, worse, intervention from an external mechanical agent. Thus, the loudspeaker stood to compromise the significance attributed to human presence, which informs Muslim relations to their textual tradition (Messick 1993).

[12] In *The Audible Past* (2003), Sterne is critical of Schafer's use of schizophonia to describe the experience of sound over sound technology. In his view, Schafer expresses nostalgia for face-to-face communication, rarifying the sociality of the past when closeness was said to have prevailed amongst people. He claims such an analysis comes close to erecting a metaphysics of presence of the kind French philosopher Jacques Derrida has shown to inform a Western philosophical preference for speech over writing, insofar as speech is considered to retain an essential relationship to the human that is broken in writing. Sterne considers that Schafer maintains the hubris that something human is lost in the break between sound and its source. Despite Sterne's skillful criticism of Schafer, I am not entirely convinced that such a deconstructive move helps us to understand the everyday investment in the human, with the divine as its other side, or the value attributed to those things that carry some trace of this linkage to the human/divine. In other words, I think it insufficient to uncover the metaphysics of presence; there remains work to be done toward understanding how such metaphysics informs everyday life and spurs various kinds of actions and attachments.

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PREFIGURING THE LOUDSPEAKER: THE COLONIAL POLITICS OF THE *AZAN* IN THE 1920S

In the deliberations of the ulama we see a constant concern with the material effects of the loudspeaker and their theological entailments. Before we consider how these entailments ramify in political and religious life in postcolonial Pakistan, let us consider how the sounds associated with ritual, specifically the *azan*, came into public focus as noise that could be disciplined by authorities in colonial India. The colonial-era fears concerning ritual sounds provide a useful prefiguration of the ulama's concerns about the loudspeaker.

It is noteworthy that in colonial India the *azan* was never a blanket sound to be regulated as unwarranted noise. It was by and large unregulated because the call to prayer did not fall under the rubric of "religious insult," a concept that colonial authorities employed to try to regulate contentious relations between Hindu and Muslim communities. If the *azan* was controlled, it was mostly in local settings where the contending parties seemed all too knowledgeable about the inner workings of the *azan*.

A comparison with colonial Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) will elucidate the different approaches the British government employed toward sounds in ritual practice, reflecting the differential intensities of communal politics in India and Ceylon. Writing about British rule in Ceylon, Michael Roberts says, "The control of unacceptable forms of noise was an integral dimension of the British regime, as pertinent as the control of crime and disease" (1990: 175). The Police Ordinance of 1865 helped the British to classify as noise sounds central to ritual, such as tom toming in Buddhist practices, and to impose institutional constraints upon such noise. Muslims in Ceylon took Buddhists to court for violating the tom toming laws. Roberts described the Buddhist response: "There seems to be little doubt that, severely disadvantaged as they [the Buddhists] were by the Police Ordinance, some Buddhist parties deliberately indulged in intensive *sabda puja* [worship by chanting] in front of offending churches or mosques in order to insult the Catholics or Muslims. At these moments, *sabda puja* became noise rather than *puja*" (ibid.: 168). The demand for bureaucratic uniformity required that different sounds be arbitrarily grouped together, Qur'anic recitation with Buddhist tom toming, for instance (ibid.: 166). In this way, sounds from different traditions were held to a single standard of acceptability.

The context of colonial India demanded a different handling of the problem. Rather than isolate ritual sounds, the British created a broader category of offenses called "religious insults" (Thursby 1975). Grouped under this rubric were acts as diverse as hate speech, music played before mosques during prayers, desecration of places of worship, and in some cases, Muslim sacrifice of cows considered sacred to Hindus. This led to a diverse range of legal measures more far-reaching than Ceylon's Police Ordinance. These included

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press and publication acts, public safety ordinances, and judgments that addressed specific sources of conflict, such as "music before mosques" or "cow sacrifice," to adjudicate contentious relations between religious communities, recast as the problem of "communalism" (Pandey 1990).

Although the *azan* was rarely entangled in such colonial measures to regulate space and speech, we can examine the few instances in which it was in order to understand who was regulating its sound levels, in reaction to what perceived threats. One representative example is found in the Punjab Legislative Assembly proceedings. In 1938, Member Malik Barkat Ali of the Punjab Assembly posed the following question:

> Will the Honourable Premier be pleased to state if his attention has been drawn to the statement published in a local daily in its issue, dated 26th November, 1937, to the effect that *Musalmans* of Raja Jang, thana Lulliani, tahsil Kasur, district Lahore, who number nearly 3,500, are not allowed to call the *azan* by the Sikh proprietors of that place who number about one thousand, and that this state of affairs has gone on for the last several years; if so, whether the Government has made an inquiry to find out whether this statement has its basis in the truth or not and whether it has taken or intends to take any action on this complaint of the *Musalmans* of Raja Jang? (Punjab 1935–1938, 1938: 994).

He was furnished with the following response by "Government":

> A report of this affair, published in the "Inqilab," Lahore on the 26th November, 1937, was brought to the notice of Government. Enquiries were made and these indicated that in consequence of communal disorder in the village about 15 years ago, the Sikhs and Muslims entered into an agreement according to which the latter undertook not to call the *azan* publicly in the village. The *azan* has, however, been called in a low voice in 8 of the 9 mosques in the village and, as a result of the influence of a Sikh proprietor of the village, the Sikhs residing in the neighbourhood of the ninth mosque have raised no objection to the *azan* being called properly. In the circumstances, no action has been taken or is contemplated by Government (ibid.: 995).

In this example, we see how the regulation of the *azan* was largely determined by local perceptions of what constituted the "public" and "proper" calling of the *azan* in "a low voice." The case points to the nature of the enmity amongst Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in that it suggests a deep familiarity with one another's religious practices, which let them fashion effective blows against one another.

Other examples of this intimate enmity can be found in more common instances of violence among the communities, such as that sparked by the aforementioned "music before mosques" or "cow sacrifice." Although local demographics and politics were key factors in violence between communities (Tejani 2007), there also emerged a complex of interrelated communal issues that proved capable of moving across large territories and settling upon specific sites and locales. This complex exuded an existential fabric which, when cast over a setting, made intolerable previous conditions of daily co-existence. Issues such as "music before mosques" and "cow sacrifice" were constitutive

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elements (Datta 1999). Datta writes of instances in which Hindu processions passing by mosques during prayer times were not viewed as particularly disruptive because many Muslim musicians participated in them. However, once the issue of "music before mosques" took root, all sounds before mosques became intolerable and could spark violence. Conversely, while Hindus may have cast a blind eye to sacrifices of cows by Muslims and others in the past, once sacrifice acquired its communal meanings it became impossible to tolerate its continuation under any circumstances. These antagonisms had a knowing feel to them; antagonists knew what was meaningful for the other and what was most likely to hurt or provoke (ibid.).

When Sikhs sought to have the *azan* subdued in their neighborhoods, they may have done so with full knowledge that it was not intended simply to inform Muslims of the time for prayer, but also to deal death to what Muslims perceived to be idolatry and to invite non-Muslims to Islam (Hashmi 1999). In his memoirs, *Shahabnama* (2005), Qudratullah Shahab, a respected Urdu writer in Pakistan and a high ranking civil servant during President Ayub Khan's era, recounts an occasion from his boyhood in a rural village in Kashmir on which he immobilized a spy and possible telltale who saw him duck out of school by chasing after him while calling out the *azan*. The spy retreated in terror with his hands clasped over his ears, which suggested to Shahab that he conceded the *azan*'s power to create havoc in the constitution of a non-Muslim.

Shahab writes that, in the 1920s, Muslim daily practices such as calling the *azan* were newly ascendant due to the efforts of roaming preachers working to reform Muslims who lived lives indistinguishable from non-Muslim neighbors. He hints that it was through the reactions of non-Muslims to such emergent practices that Indian Muslims came to understand the powers latent in them. It is no little irony that it was in Muslims' relations with those from whom they sought to differentiate themselves that they came to appreciate the force of the divine in the *azan*, a force non-Muslims could only regulate by treating the *azan* as noise that had to be produced in a moderate tone.

THE 1965 ORDINANCE REGULATING LOUDSPEAKERS: THE POSTCOLONIAL SEARCH FOR POLITICAL VOICE

In postcolonial Pakistan, this innate forcefulness attributed to the *azan* and other ritual sounds was thrown into question for the ulama by the introduction of the loudspeaker, with its attendant effects of transduction, amplification, multiplication, interference, and schizophonia. These disruptive effects did not impinge only on the divine within sounds, but also provoked regulations of loudspeaker use in the domain of politics, and these carried ramifications for everyday religiosity as understood by leaders of religious political parties.

As we saw for the colonial period, while the *azan* was rarely treated as noise, the concept of noise as something that required regulation was already present.

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As unwanted sound in the context of nationalist movements and communal tensions, noise carried political connotations. That is to say, colonial authorities wielded the power to regulate noise in order to stifle political voices, or offset communal antagonisms. The power to regulate noise became a prominent means of deterring political expression.

In 1956 the commander-in-chief of the Pakistan Army, Ayub Khan, took over the leadership of Pakistan through a military coup. By 1964, he had implemented a constitution that favored a presidential form of government and overhauled the electoral process. In 1965, confident of his success, Ayub Khan called for presidential elections. To his surprise, he found the opposition parties had entered into an agreement to put forward a single candidate, Fatima Jinnah, whose candidacy carried great emotional charge among Pakistanis because she was the sister of Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Ayub's regime had already placed strong curbs on the press through its 1960 amendments to the Press and Publication Ordinance. At this opportune moment, the government tried to instate an ordinance to regulate loudspeaker usage on grounds that it was spreading and amplifying sound without check, and thus contributing to noise pollution.

One of the earliest attempts to pass "The Punjab Regulation and Control of Loudspeakers and Sound Amplifiers Ordinance" was in 1963. It stated that those wanting to use speakers had first to secure permission from the district commissioner. The ordinance was challenged in the Lahore High Court through writ petition and struck down as unconstitutional. The court explained that since the loudspeaker was generally used to communicate one's ideas to a voluntarily assembled crowd, any attempt by the government to control its use would amount to censorship and violate the right of free speech upheld by the Constitution of Pakistan. The government tried to pass a second, very similar ordinance in 1964, but it too was challenged in the High Court and the government withdrew it before judgment could be passed.

In 1965, the Ministry of Law introduced a differently worded ordinance. Under its terms, use of loudspeakers did not require the district commissioner's permission, but in the event of any public complaints against specific instances of their use, the police were authorized to confiscate the equipment and file charges against the offenders. This ordinance was successfully passed in the Punjab Provincial Assembly amidst angry protests by the opposition, comprised of the Muslim League, the National Awami League, and the religious party Jamaat-e Islami (Punjab 1966).

The protestors saw this ordinance to be politically motivated. The debate in the assembly ran along two opposing tracks. Those in the opposition parties took apart the ordinance for being vaguely worded. What was meant by "moderate tone?" How was moderateness to be determined, and by whom? They vigorously protested giving the police force such broad legal powers to confiscate loudspeakers. To give them an authority previously reserved for the district

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commissioner would delegate surveillance to local levels of the bureaucracy that were considered more corrupt, and encourage the rampant misuse of power. Furthermore, members of the Jamaat-e Islami were incensed to find that the standard of moderate tone was extended beyond political rallies and private functions to include any religious speech other than the *khutba* (Arabic sermons) delivered at the time of the Friday congregational prayer. This was considered disgraceful since it would deprive the public of the benefits of learning from such speeches. So while the opposition conceded that there were instances of loudspeaker misuse, they asserted that for the government to muffle the speech of millions, or deprive them of the benefits of technological advances, was unwarranted.

Supporters of the ordinance argued that it was well phrased, for everyone knew that moderate tone meant that one ought not to speak in a high volume that would disturb others, nor use speech to hurt the feelings of others. Thus moderateness was understood both literally and metaphorically. While conceding to the opposition that political voice was also at stake, supporters contended that, given the religious diversity of the country, it was appropriate to impose a standard of moderateness on religious speeches. They reminded the assembly that the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution, such as that of speech, had recently been qualified by the Supreme Court as restrained by "public decency" and "morality." At any rate, they assured their opponents, those aspects of obligatory worship for which loudspeakers were required were not to be subject to restrictions, since, to quote the 1965 ordinance, "Nothing in this section shall be applicable to the use of loudspeakers or sound amplifiers for the purpose of Azan, prayers, or of Khutba delivered on Fridays or at the time of Eid prayers in a moderate tone."

Restrictions upon loudspeakers were extended to those aspects of religious and political life, such as rallies and speeches delivered in mosques, which fell outside a strict definition of daily religious obligations. Thus the ordinance took a very narrow view of what constituted religiosity. For the opponents of this ordinance, the restrictions on sound amplification could only mean further encroachment by the government into politics, and it deprived the polity of their voice. No one was surprised when Ayub Khan overwhelmingly won the 1965 presidential elections.

LOUDSPEAKER BROADCAST OF SECTARIAN DIFFERENCE: A NATURAL HISTORY OF MUSLIM FRAGMENTATION

It is noteworthy that the 1965 Loudspeaker Ordinance exempted sounds very explicitly associated with ritual practice, such as the *azan*, prayer instructions, and *khutba*. Despite the fears of religious leaders in the Punjab Provincial Assembly, the ordinance was only loosely applied in the case of religious speeches. The consequence of this has been a soundscape skewed towards religious sounds and speeches. If this meant that the polity was not entirely

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deprived of a political voice or the benefits of religious speech, the relatively free use of loudspeakers that resulted brought a new set of anxieties about the loss of religious unity.

Those members of the Punjab Assembly who argued for the regulation of the use of loudspeakers usage pointed to the fact that they would multiply sounds and broadcast religious differences, aggravating divisiveness. Many elderly people with whom I spoke about the changes they had experienced in the soundscape of Lahore mentioned that they first became aware of differences amongst Muslims once the *azan* began to be delivered over loudspeakers. Variations within the *azan* seemed to multiply as the number of mosques increased within the city, with differences in both their appearance and the sounds issuing from them. For instance, a highly decorative mosque with "Ya Allah," "Ya Muhammad" written in calligraphic style on its façade was identified as being Barelwi, a second pathway within Sunni Islam in Pakistan different from the Deobandi.[13] "Ya," used in Arabic to address someone who is physically present, in this context signaled that both Allah and his Prophet were present in the world around us, particularly in the space encased by the mosque. This expressed the Barelwi point of view that the spirit of the Prophet, as well as the spirits of other prophets and holy men, oversaw and guided the lives of ordinary people. Deobandi mosques, by contrast, were conspicuous in their lack of ornamentation and the absence of such first-person greetings. This was in keeping with the Deobandi mandate to subject customary and ritual practices to authentication, that is, origination in the Prophet's time with his approval. Anything in excess of what was the Prophet had approved was deemed *bid'a* (unlawful innovation).

Excess and its lack, decoratively wrought, were expressed aurally as well. The *azan* from Barelwi mosques started with the *durud* (prayer dedicated to the Prophet) and sometimes ended with loud *zikr* (repetition of Allah's names) and *na't* (poetry in praise of the Prophet). The *azan* from Deobandi mosques, as well as those associated with the Ahl-i Hadis, a third pathway within Sunni Islam in Pakistan, were notable for the absence of *durud*, *zikr*, or *na't*. "Only" the *azan* was called from these mosques. I put "only" in quotation marks because an *azan* was increasingly recognized by its adornment or lack thereof.[14]

These variations in the calling of the *azan* prompted polemics from religious scholars of different pathways. Let me briefly outline one such tract by a *mufti*

[13] See Khan (2006) for a more detailed exposition of the theological and ritual differences among the three major pathways within Sunni Islam in Pakistan: Deobandi, Barelwi, and Ahl-i Hadis.

[14] I first became aware that there were different *azan*s when, while listening to one *azan*, I remarked to a woman I was speaking with that time had flown. Her ears perked up. She listened for a few seconds and then assured me that we had plenty of time, since this was "only the wahbi *azan*," that is, an *azan* from an Ahl-i Hadis or Deobandi mosque.

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named Abdul Sattar, titled "Bilali Azan ya Bid'ati Azan" (Bilali *azan* or *azan* with innovations), which was enclosed, undated, in a file on loudspeaker usage in the district commissioner's office. The inclusion of this tract within this particular file is important since it suggests the government was either concerned that its tone might aggravate public sentiment or relied upon it for intelligence purposes. While the tract was not particularly harsh, it did provide an interesting theory of the fragmentation of the Muslim community in that Mufti Abdul Sattar portrayed difference, once introduced, as naturally leading to further differences. Although the loudspeaker was not blamed for originating sectarian difference, it was implicated as a powerful force behind advertising these differences and congealing them into established practices.

Mufti Abdul Sattar was undoubtedly a Deobandi scholar given his criticisms of the additions of *durud*, *zikr*, and *na't* to the *azan*, which were generally acceptable to Barelwi ulama. He tells us that the original *azan*, the one revealed by the angels, taught by the Prophet, called by Hazrat Bilal, and followed by all the rightful successors of the Prophet, started with "Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar" and ended with "La Ilaha Illallah." That is, it neither began with the *durud* nor ended with *zikr*. "An emperor of the eighth century, a worshipper of love," by whom the author mockingly referred to those who professed passionate love for the Prophet in the manner of the Barelwi, "introduced the saying of the *durud* in praise of the Prophet in the *azan*." Once introduced, this innovation, albeit motivated by the purest of intentions, produced the possibility of two kinds of *azan*, and thus laid the foundation for sectarian difference. In time, the *mufti* continued, the use of loudspeakers spread these differences, and now this practice had become so entrenched that, "No Muslim may call the real, Bilali azan in the mosques of the innovators for fear of losing his life." This doleful proclamation suggested the heightened tensions around ritual differences in everyday life in Pakistan.

The *mufti* tried to end on a reassuring note, saying that a circular distributed in government offices and institutions by President Zia-ul Haq in the 1980s on the correct manner of saying the *azan* seemed a noteworthy attempt to purify practice. Among other measures President Zia instituted to Islamize Pakistani society was the transmission of the *azan* over television and radio,[15] but this only added to the differentiation in *azans* by introducing the notion of national styles. Thus, *azans* over the television came to be identified as "Saudi *azan*," "Misri *azan*" (Egyptian *azan*), or "Pakistani *azan*."[16] Mufti Abdul Sattar's

[15] See Lee (1999) for another instance of the transmission of the *azan* over the radio.

[16] I asked several *muezzin*s how they distinguished between the three *azan*s. Their collective answer was that the Misri (Egyptian) *azan* tended to be more euphonious, with special attention to musicality and melody; the Saudi *azan* was prosaic, albeit technically well rendered; and the Pakistani *azan* most often sounded bad—one likened it to the "braying of donkeys." The person who made this last comment had won many national and international accolades for his Qur'anic recitation and *azan*, and he was now running a training course on the calling of the

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insight, that any effort to stay the course of difference only produced further differentiation, led him to decry the loss of the spirit of Islam within religious practices:

The custom of *azan* remains, but not the spirit of Bilal
Philosophy remains, but not the religious instruction of Ghazali

He used his discussion of the multiplication of sounds over the loudspeaker as an occasion to bemoan the disintegration of the Muslim community in Pakistan, or rather the failure to unify into one.

EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES OF THE *AZAN*: THE AMBIGUITY OF SELF-POSSESSION

In the late 1990s, while investigating how people experienced the sounds from mosque loudspeakers, I encountered a variety of lively reactions from Lahori Muslims. Some found the call to prayer fundamental to marking space as Muslim. One upper-middle-class Pakistani woman spoke of feeling disoriented during a diplomatic visit to Tibet until she heard the *azan* over a loudspeaker. She immediately relaxed, imagining those with whom she might identify living nearby. Another middle-class family in Lahore, whose house abutted a mosque, did not agree that the sound over loudspeakers felt shorn of human presence. Rather, in their experience, the voice of the imam so saturated this sound that they said they could almost feel flecks of his phlegm upon them.

Those who lived in denser, poorer neighborhoods in the city were subject to a wider variety and higher volumes of sounds than were those in Lahore's spacious suburbs. Here too, I heard of an interesting range of experiences of the *azan*. A close friend of mine, somewhat less observant than he would like to be, spoke of waking once to the thunderous sounds of multiple morning *azans* with his heart beating fast and his mind scrambling to catch up to his

azan and Qur'anic recitation for *muezzin*s. Although women are forbidden to give public *azan*, he included them in his classes because he felt they ought to be able to at least "whisper the *azan* correctly to their children." This difference in national styles is not a new feature of the *azan*, although a heightened awareness of differences is likely the product of heightened broadcast produced by the loudspeaker and the global circulation of new media forms such as cassettes and videotapes. In his nineteenth-century compendium, *A Dictionary of Islam*, Thomas Patrick Hughes writes:

Mr. Lane in his *Modern Egyptians*, says, "Most of the Mu'azzins of Cairo have harmonious and sonorous voices, which they strain to the utmost pitch; yet there is a simple and solemn melody in their chants which is very striking, particularly in the stillness of the night." But Vambery remarks that "the Turkistanees most carefully avoid all tune and melody." The manner in which the Azan is cried in the west is here (in Bokhara) declared sinful, and the beautiful melancholy notes which, in the silent hour of a moonlit evening, are heard from the slender minarets on the Bosphorus, fascinating every hearer, would be listened to by the Bokhariot with feelings only of detestation (1895: 28).

In Pakistan the interdiction against musicality in Qur'anic recitation and the *azan* is much more strongly felt than in Egypt. See Ian Bedford's "Interdiction of Music in Islam" (2001).

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body. In the second before he realized what was happening, he felt as if he were in the darkest grave, with angels delivering to him the baleful news of God's unfavorable judgment of him. "If this experience doesn't set me straight," he said, "nothing will." He began working hard to be more observant.

In another instance, Farooq *sahib*, my pious Urdu teacher, told me that on the days the *azan* did not wake him or his family from their sleep he felt excused from the missed prayer since he thought that the onus for awaking him lay with the *azan.* Missing prayer under such heightened auditory circumstances could only mean that he and his family were more tired than usual and were meant to keep sleeping. Their sleep was a boon from Allah.

Nonetheless, pious sounds that were free to issue from anywhere in volumes far in excess of what was healthy for the human body produced uncertainty as to how one ought to respond to them. I sensed this anxiety that the *azan* over loudspeakers may be confounded with noise when I spoke with a doctor of environmental science who conducted studies on noise pollution for the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency. This expert said that when she went out in her van to take readings of sound levels in different parts of Lahore at different times of day, she was careful to turn off the meters when the *azan* was broadcast from mosques. She said this was because it was inappropriate for a Muslim to consider the *azan* noise. She added that if the meters were left on, their readings would be off the charts. The volume at which the *azan* was called would exceed the scientific standards for safe sound levels set by the World Health Organization.

The doctor was expressing anxiety that the *azan* might be inadvertently recorded as noise by a machine that could not distinguish between meaningful sound and noise like that of ambient traffic. To me, her anxiety spoke to the ulama's concerns with schizophonia as the disorientation introduced by the loudspeaker within worship, but it was different in that it suggested that a distracted condition not conducive to worship might no longer be restricted to prayer time; it had become a generalized condition. Having learned to tolerate pervasive noise, the pious Muslim may become like her machine, unable to distinguish pious sound from an unpleasant noise. The doctor's anxiety spoke to the worry that people may no longer have the self-awareness or the full possession of a self to strive to be better Muslims.[17]

THE *AZAN* AND THE LINGERING QUESTION OF HUMAN PRESENCE

In the introduction to his book *Faza'il-e Azan o Iqamat* (Virtues of *azan* and *iqamat*) (1999), Habibur Rehman Hashmi, an imam of the mosque of the

[17] It is noteworthy that this understanding of the *azan* as noise was very different from that in the colonial context, when the *azan* was not objectively noise but open to regulation as was politically convenient. In this context, the *azan* acquires the status of a sound, and is therefore open to being experienced as noise.

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reputed Nishtar Medical College in Multan, Punjab, says that he wrote the book for the young medical students in his college who confessed to him that they were too embarrassed to give the *azan* before saying their prayers while traveling abroad to sit for their certification examinations. The book attempted to redress this embarrassment about calling the *azan* by describing the world called into being by it. He urged that all Pakistanis read his book so that they could restore the *azan* to its unique place of importance within Muslim lives.

Insofar as Hashmi's descriptions of the power of the *azan* are saturated with an awareness of the existence and ubiquity of the loudspeaker and its effects upon ritual practice, I read his book as a possible rejoinder to people's aforementioned disappointments with their efforts to be Muslim in Pakistan. It reasserted the power of ritual sound above that of mechanical amplification, specifically in how the trace of the divine within the *azan* can attend to the dispossession of the self and the disintegration of the community that amplification has brought into awareness, perhaps into existence. The author's sense of the carrying power of the *azan* was arguably a consequence of loudspeaker usage in its amplification of pious sounds. Yet, in considering how the *azan* came to interpellate others, the author suggested the *azan*'s power exclusively *as* sound.[18] In other words, he read the acoustic quality of the *azan* back upon the textual traditions.

Hashmi relied upon modern geography to suggest that the *azan* never ceased to sound as it roped its way around the world's longitudes and latitudes. In an excerpt titled, "The Voice that Reverberates around the World at All Times," he wrote that just as the *azan* ceased in one city it began in another, moving from country to country on its continuous path: "Have you ever realized that not a second passes in our world without thousands, nay, hundreds of thousands of *muezzin*s announcing the singularity of Allah and the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon Him)" (1999).

Yet, Hashmi said, even as the *azan* traveled it remained embedded in the local, specifically within the concerns of neighborhoods and nations. He

[18] In *The Ethical Soundscape* (2006), Charles Hirschkind draws attention to the fact that early works on the religious sermon were largely in the scholarly tradition of *ilm al-balagha* (rendered in English as "the art of eloquence"), which was less concerned with the art of speaking than that of listening. This branch of knowledge was later supplemented, if not supplanted, by the Egyptian state-endorsed art of oratory (*al-khataba*), which was much more interested in the techniques of rhetorical persuasion. This shift from listening to speaking that Hirschkind places in the context of official Islam in Egypt captures the interest in orality and voice within classical and modern Islam (also see Messick 1993). However, in my argument, the introduction of the loudspeaker brought into sharper focus the place of sound within the tradition, with new attention to how sound impinges upon the pious self, the range of variation in sound quality and volume, and the significance of silence. As a heuristic device, we might distinguish my interest in acoustics from the interest in listening and oratory, although such a distinction is hard to maintain in empirical situations.

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recounted Ibn-Sirin's thirteenth-century text on the Islamic interpretations of dreams, in which the dreamer giving the *azan* was crucial to the dream's importance. If one heard an *azan* or saw oneself giving an *azan* in a known place, then one was destined to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca. If the dreamer saw himself delivering the *azan* while lying on his bed, it meant that he loved his wife a great deal. If he saw himself give the *azan* in a narrow street, he would be a spy. If he saw himself giving the *azan* without his wits about him, he was lovelorn. If an impious man saw himself giving the *azan*, he should consider himself forewarned that he would be caught in the act of stealing. Should a person see himself give the *azan* in his toilet, he would become a *munafiq* (hypocrite to his faith). If he saw himself giving the *azan* from a mountaintop, his king or leader would speak the truth and be led toward God. Even as the *azan* brooked no opposition in traversing space, it was simultaneously caught in the filaments of marital fidelity, passionate love, neighborhood loyalty, and national sentiments. Interesting in this account of *azans* in dreams is that the actual words of the call and their effects upon its listeners —which Hashmi provided an eloquent account of elsewhere in the book— were rendered unimportant. The key was the specific locale in which the *azan* was sounded, which provided the means to interpret the dream.

At the same time, we are told that the *azan* was an arrow of time in the space of being. In these examples, the *azan* gained efficacy from its sonorous qualities, and Hashmi culled several instances from Islamic textual traditions in which it did so. He spoke of the practice, common in many parts of the Muslim world, in which the *azan* was called into the right ear of a newborn baby so that the sound would constitute the baby, a *tabula rasa*, into a Muslim, inaugurating a Muslim life. Here we sense the crowd of competing claims upon the baby and the necessity of dealing a swift blow to these claims through the expeditious calling of the *azan*. Shortly after the calling of the *azan* into the right ear of the baby, tradition bid that the *iqamat* be said into its left ear. The short span of time between the two callings was to suggest to the baby how brief life on earth was in comparison to life hereafter.

Hashmi recounted other noteworthy instances when the *azan* was to be called. It should be called into the ears of invalids to put them at ease. The euphonious sounds of the *azan* would temporarily eliminate discomfort through the suppression of satanic whispers (*waswase*). Another *hadis* quoted by Hashmi prescribed speaking the *azan* into the ear of the human or animal whose behavior had lapsed and who was in need of reform.

Hashmi also recounted occasions on which it is forbidden to say the *azan*. It was never to be said over a dead body or at a funeral. This is because, as Hashmi reminded us, the *azan* is intricately connected with life. If slumber is the closest experience people have to death, then the morning call to prayer effectively awakens people to life. When the call washes over people during

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the course of the day, it awakens in them the impulse to act, to take charge of their spiritual life.

In a curious excerpt in Hashmi's book, "The Life-Affirming Message of the Genuine Lovers [of the *Azan*?]"—curious because it is one of the few instances in a book devoted to a positive appreciation of the *azan* in which he disparages non-Muslims—I find support for my claim that the experience of the loudspeaker produced a particular awareness of the sound quality of the *azan*. In arguing why the *azan* was the most effective means to call devotees to prayer—over cymbals, bells, drums, or fire—Hashmi describes how the *azan* puts to best advantage the capacity of the human body to be a sound-bearing apparatus: "What better instrument (*saaz*) is there to convey sound than the human body's voice box? When the voice from this apparatus ascends, drawing the power and beauty of 'Allahu Akbar' within itself, it creates turbulence in the heart of the *kafir* (infidel), at least momentarily, and even the *kalisa* (church) is overtaken by fury" (1999: 38). This is at once an equation of the human body with an instrument and a demotion of the loudspeaker in favor of the human body as the preferred instrument, as the most effective means of broadcasting the *azan.* It suggests how pervasive the loudspeaker is, to enable such a conception of the body. Hashmi's words also suggest that it is as a sound that the *azan* stands to affect the hearts and constitutions of non-Muslims otherwise closed off to its message. Elsewhere he notes the efficacy of calling the *azan* to strike fear in the hearts of the enemies of Islam before charging into battle (see Padwick 1996).

The possible entanglement of an appreciation of the sonic powers of the *azan* with the experience of the loudspeaker meant that the question of the continuity of human presence across media technology, that of transduction, was present but differently posed within Habibur Rehman Hashmi's text. For him, the question was not whether it was the same voice from the *azan*'s origin to its reception, but rather whether the forcefulness of the *azan* transmitted through the apparatus of the human body was of divine origin or retained any divine powers. His historical account of the advent of the *azan* within Islam allowed him to bring the aspect of its divine nature into sharp focus.

Ahadis presented by Hashmi tell us that the idea for issuing a call to prayer from the highest point in a settlement came to the Prophet's companions when other such details of worship were being worked out under Prophetic guidance. A human call was felt to compel one to listen more than did bells, horns, or fires. Since the latter were already in use by other religious communities, the advent of the *azan* hints at an attempt to differentiate Islam at its beginnings, or at least to read distinction back upon the *azan* from a later point in time. Moreover, the call would serve as yet another felicitous occasion to praise God and the Prophet, because the iteration of the *shahada*, the fundamental article of faith in Islam, was integral to its content (see note 1). Broadcasting the *shahada* would also serve as a complete invitation to Islam, as if serving

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up the entire tradition in miniature. As time went on and the space of prayer was consolidated into the mosque form, and mosques acquired tall minarets, then the *muezzin* began to call the *azan* from the minaret (Khan and Holod 1997).

These historical details did not distract Hashmi from the hint of the divine within the *azan*. The call was not of divine origin; it was not sent to the Prophet in the form of a revelation. However, as *ahadis* tell us, it retained a trace of revelation since it came to one of the Prophet's companions, Abdullah bin Zaid, in a dream. While it is unclear at what point in Islamic history dreams began to be thought of as a fraction of revelation (Mittermiaer 2007; von Grunebaum and Caillois 1996), we do know that the *azan*'s emergence through dreams, at a time infused with the light of revelation and under Prophetic guidance, gained it its enduring claim to divine sanction. In some accounts of the Prophet's Tradition, the man in green who appeared in dreams to provide guidance on the new mode of calling Muslims to prayer is represented as an angel, or the enigmatic figure of Khizr who appears in the Qur'an (Cheetham 2005).

Clearly, the *azan* provides a link between human history and the divine, but its expanded range of effects also suggested to Hashimi how the divine worked in mysterious ways. He produced examples from the *ahadis* in which the *azan* gave life to the inanimate and the non-human. He referred to several *ahadis* that urged Muslims to deliver the *azan* prior to their prayer even if they were in a desolate area. While the *azan* would invite other human beings within earshot to join the worshipper, more importantly it would alert stones, animals, and vegetation to bear witness to the pious act of solitary prayer on the Day of Judgment. It would also hasten Satan's departure from the scene of prayer.

Hashmi presented his valorizing account of the *azan* in the face of Pakistani Muslim youths' ignorance of their religious tradition. Yet, given that he noted their ambivalence to the *azan* in a period when loudspeaker usage was fully entrenched in Pakistani society, when multiple loudspeakers were affixed to the humblest mosque, I cannot help but feel that his effort was also targeted at lingering worries over the pious sounds delivered by means of technology. His contribution was to reaffirm the agential nature of pious sounds, specifically the *azan*, by asserting that these sounds have powerful effects that transcend any effects of their medium. The details he marshaled suggested that if one takes the force of the divine into consideration, then the question of human presence will be rendered superfluous.

IN CONCLUSION, AN UNEXPECTED AFFIRMATION

Thus far I have explored how the loudspeaker introduced a field of specific effects into the South Asian religious milieu, a field designated by the terms transduction, amplification, multiplication, noise, and schizophonia. In following the lead of these effects, I traced how transduction led Deobandi ulama to meditate on the presence of the human and the non-human in prayer. In

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examining the problems of noise related to loudspeaker usage, both as interference internal to the mechanism and as the perception of sound over the loudspeaker as noise, I showed how it raised concerns among the ulama about the possibility of undue influence and external manipulation in prayer. These worries that the loudspeaker stood to compromise Muslim religiosity were prefigured in earlier colonial struggles over noise, which suggested that non-Muslims recognized the latent, divine possibilities within the *azan*. Considering the promise of amplification and the multiplication of sounds offered by the loudspeaker, we saw how the ulama were favorably but not unambiguously disposed to these benefits. In post-colonial Pakistan, this amplification was rendered metaphorically as the voice of the people that the Ayub Khan government sought to quiet, while the multiplication of sounds was bemoaned as sectarian fragmentation. Finally, schizophonia was vividly rendered by the ulama's descriptions of the confusions produced in prayer by the introduction of the loudspeaker, while the ongoing threat of schizophonia in a sound-saturated world was seen in the environmental expert's anxiety that the modern self no longer had possession of itself. This field of ripple effects from the loudspeaker led Habibur Rehman Hashmi to reassert divine presence in the call to prayer.

In following these loudspeaker effects across different times and multiple constituencies, I have attempted to show how each of these material effects not only introduced newness into the milieu, but also served to bring to light earlier conversations on sound, from the historical past and religious tradition. These effects were continually revisited in connection with subsequent developments. I have also highlighted what I perceive to be the shifting contours of striving to be a better Muslim within everyday life in Pakistan. I have shown that this striving is enlivened by the quests to live one's life fully in the presence of the divine, to protect political voice, to safeguard tradition from schisms, and to try to be the master of one's self.

The vignettes I have presented, ranging in context from the 1960s to the 1990s, were marked by disappointment that such quests had been unsuccessful. Yet this did not lead people to give them up. For instance, though unhappy with the introduction of loudspeakers into prayer, the ulama demonstrated a heightened sense of obligation to provide the most authoritative guidance to their questioners. Faced with youth indifference to the *azan*, a concerned religious leader wrote a book richly describing the sonic world of this call to prayer. Fully aware that their efforts to contest an insistent ordinance would likely be futile, opposition members successfully fought it twice before it was passed in the third round. What these examples show is that disappointment was crucial to further action.

I end this paper with the ulama with whom I began, whose resolution regarding the matter of loudspeakers in prayer suggests the importance of small gestures in affirming everyday life in the face of anxieties, such as those expressed by Mufti Abdul Sattar about the self-perpetuating nature of sectarian

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differentiation, and by the environmental expert about the loss of possession of oneself. In discussing the ulama's concerns over the loudspeaker in the 1950s, Mufti Muhammad Shafi expressed a real quandary about whether he should pronounce prayers over loudspeakers to be valid or invalid. To declare them invalid would throw the ordinary worshipper into confusion, for how was it that an act acceptable in Saudi Arabia, the fount of Islam, was not so in Pakistan; it would risk further fragmentation of an already divided community. He also recognized that the loudspeaker was useful, and beneficial to many, especially women who most often prayed at home, since it enabled them to hear the sounds of the *azan, khutba*, and Qur'an *tilawat*.

Finally, a piece of writing from Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi from the late 1930s led Maulana Muhammad Shafi to decide that prayer over a loudspeaker, while not commendable, was not forbidden. Maulana Thanawi noted that prior to the introduction of loudspeakers it was not the actual voice of the imam that directed the worshippers within any congregation. Rather it was the barest hint of a change, the rustle of congregants, a shift in light, the whisper of a new line of prayer that alerted worshippers to the necessity of moving to the next position, and the next:

> It is not the *mukabbir*'s voice that makes following necessary. Rather the *mukabbir*'s voice only gives information about the change in the imam's position. And information about the change in the imam's position can be gained by the imam's voice, by movements in the earlier rows, or by their shadows, or by the call of the *mukabbir* or by the loudspeaker. In any case, it is the imam who is followed. This is mandatory for the followers from the beginning and it is not dependent on their means of hearing or their hearing the imam's voice at all. All this shows is that not to rely on an echo for *sajda-e tilawat* (to bow ones head in respect upon hearing Qur'anic recitation) is one thing, while to follow the imam's movement by getting one's information from an echo is a different thing (Shafi 1996: 58).

In other words, Maulana Thanawi suggested that perhaps it was nothing more than echoes that made people keep time in prayer, but echoes were everything in making the prayer a collective experience. I take this appreciation of the faint lines of interconnectivity among the congregants to be an affirmation of the force of the ordinary that tied them together, a force so fragile that it was easily questioned in the first place. This affirmation enabled Muslims to pray together, temporarily free of anxieties. It made prayer a transductive experience, here in the sense that Stefan Helmreich (2007) suggests, entailing immersion in the flow of things rather than a transfiguration of the human voice into electrical signals.

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