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The poetics of "Sufi" practice:

Drumming, dancing, and complex agency at Madho Lāl Husain (and beyond)

A B S T R A C T

I develop an approach to the "poetics" of music and movement, vis-à-vis language, in the context of popular Sufism in South Asia. Bringing Michael Herzfeld's notion of "social poetics" into creative dialogue with Katherine Ewing's notion of the experiencing subject as a "bundle of agencies," I attempt to cope with the problem of "meaning" in a highly heterogeneous event, the 'urs in Lahore, Pakistan, commemorating the death of the Sufi saint Shah Husain. My pragmatic approach to navigating through an excess of meanings is to focus on what I call "common terms of understanding." The analysis illuminates how Islam is popularly grounded in South Asia, more generally, and is suggestive of how music and movement might be construed as forms of religiopolitical "embodiment." [*poetics, Sufism, music, agency, South Asia, ritual, identity*]

The Panjabi poet Shah Husain (Madho Lāl Husain, C.E. 1539–1600) practiced a heterodox, ecstatic, musical, and homoerotically charged version of Islam, which has left an enduring, if problematic, legacy. Drummers and dancers draw on Shah Husain's life history, his poetry, and his associations with related saints when they participate each year at the end of March in the lively, fiery, sense-filling 'urs commemorating his death (see Figure 1). This article is an exploration of the "poetics" of this 'urs and a contribution, more generally, to the notion of "poetics" or what Michael Herzfeld (1997) terms "social poetics" as it applies to music and dance. I observed a broad range of ritual contexts for vibrant drumming and dancing over about two and a half years (1996–99) while doing the initial fieldwork on this project; I have followed up with additional field visits and interviews.

That Pakistan is an Islamic republic does not inhibit its citizens from holding differing ideas of what constitutes Islam, how Islamic practice should be controlled by the state, what the role of religious authorities should be, and how "music" fits into religious practice. But many Pakistanis do share what I call "common terms of understanding": structures, themes, or scenarios that are in clear currency—either redundant, passed down from generation to generation, or acute, achieving relevance at particular historical moments. Many subjects filter or shape their understandings through commonplaces drawn from Sufi poetry, stories about saints and 'urses, and spiritual interpretations of music and movement. The music–dance form called "dhamāl," a focus of this article, engages all these areas of social, spiritual, and musical activity.

When social actors in Pakistan receive and manipulate such "common terms," they engage in "social poetics." This "creative deformation of structures and normative patterns" (Herzfeld 1997:141) draws attention to relationships among cultural form and performance and implicates wider social and political configurations (see also Galaty 1983:363).[1] I explore the analytic potential of social poetics here by showing how some intersubjective forms of coming together and drawing apart at the 'urs implicate processes
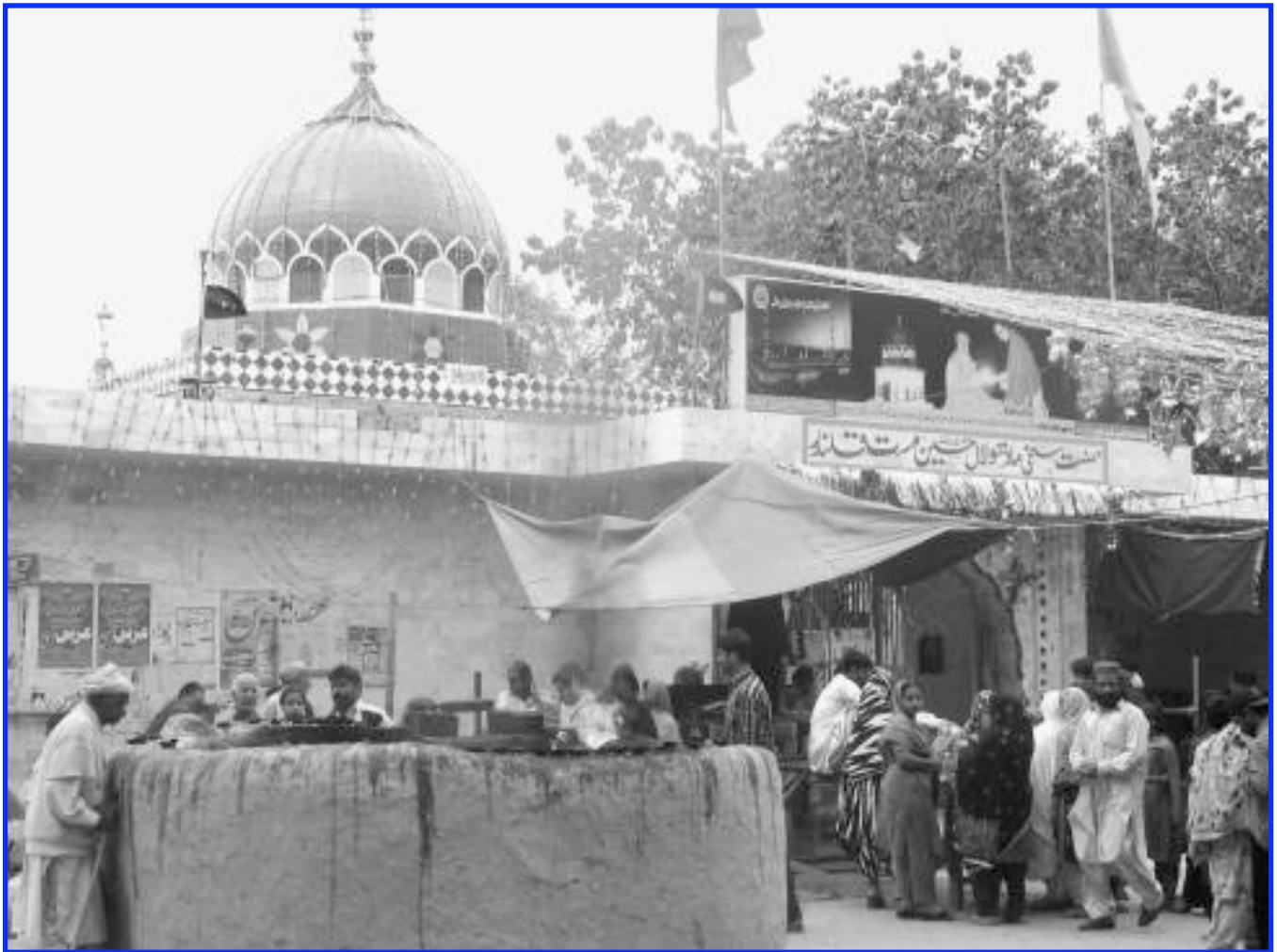
Figure 1. Devotees gather at the shrine of Madho Lāl Husain as the festival's inauguration approaches, March 2005. Photo by R. Wolf.

of social joining and division at encompassing geopolitical and religious levels. These processes are of particular interest here because 'urses are, ideationally, "weddings" of the spirit of the saint to God. Some of the more engaged participants seek, through ecstatic corporeal practices and music, a spiritual transcendence that recapitulates the saint's union with God. These attempts at union are thoroughly implicated in a politics of who gets included in the category of "Muslim" in Pakistan. The link between poetics and politics is strong.

I begin by laying ethnographic groundwork—presenting a scene from the 'urs. Then I introduce one drummer, Pappu Sāīn, who creatively alternates subject positions according to local terms of discourse and behavior. Katherine Ewing's Gramsci-informed work on Sufism in the Panjab provides a useful perspective on the fragmentary and unpredictable effects of hegemony (e.g., modernism, Islam, and the state) on the individual in this context. Gradually integrating models of how individuals and collectivities apprehend and interpret their world, I analyze what it means for individuals at an 'urs to "belong" to social categories (to be a "kind of Muslim," "Pakistani," "musician," etc.) in terms of different kinds of joining and dividing. Poetics lies at the nexus of an individual acting in the world—embracing, dissociating from, and deforming categories—and collective forces (or historical trajectories) that make these categories seem fully formed. Hence, I deliberately emphasize a tension concerning the role of the individual agent as he or she negotiates among various interpretive, or associative, possibilities. This emphasis is registered ethnographically in a discussion that returns to the drummer's case study several times and tacks back and forth between what shrine-goers had to say about the shrine, the saint, and his followers in 2003–04, local memories of what was happening at Madho Lāl Husain's 'urs in 1997, and my own observations at both points in time.

I conclude by moving to locations beyond the 'urs where specific drum patterns and verbal forms appear in significant transformations. These patterns and their transformations, which index national and international expansions of Sufi shrine practices, have served as points of departure for different kinds of regional identity. The poetics of local action in this last case links worldly and spiritual weddings with values of unity and primordialism in Islam.

Our story starts in Lahore, Pakistan, where, in 1997, perched precariously in a banyan tree, I began to videotape parts of the 'urs of Madho Lāl Husain. In describing the following scene from the videotape (see Video 1 at www.aesonline.org, 33/2 issue archive page), I have attempted to convey impressions of the diverse participants and their interactions with one another and with their environment. Images of fire and color, forms of repetition and cyclicity, and simple tenets of Sufi philosophy are all common terms by which Pakistanis understand what happens during an 'urs. My emphasis on the geography of performance is meant to highlight processes of coming together, drawing apart, and mediation. Lahore, where the 'urs is held, is the capital of Panjab province, Pakistan's second largest city, and a longtime site of Islamic political and religious significance.

1997: A scene from the 'urs

At the "festival of lamps" *(mela chirāghān),* as this 'urs is sometimes called, drummers Shahid Ali and his uncle Niamat Ali focused intently on the dancers before them, skillfully striking the *dhamāl* pattern on their *ḍhol* barrel drums. The broad tree stump that someone had turned into a fire pit *(chirāghdān)* that year was still smoking, flaming, and spewing out coals. A bearded dancer with long, gray hair, clad in long, red robes, approached and receded from the churning embers, irresistibly evoking the ubiquitous Sufi image of a mystic lover as a moth attracted to a candle's flame.

In his passion *(jazbah),* the dancer raised his outstretched arms and slowly whirled, his hair billowing out. Facing the burning chirāghdān, he crouched low to the ground and shook his head right and left, synchronizing his shallow footsteps and the vertical movements of his bent forearms with the drum pattern's duple meter. A break. Then, facing the drummers, his back briefly to the flame, he swirled his hair, which seemed to propel his torso around. His feet followed with tiny steps, tracing narrow circles. A ḍhol player followed suit, spinning with increased intensity and velocity, his heavy drum visibly tugging at his neck; he did not miss a single beat (see Figure 2). These forms of musical and kinesthetic synchronicity, coming together, are critically valued from the artistic perspective of some participants.

The dancer, in this case, was a *malaṅg,* a type of Sufi mendicant. He was directing his attention to the burial place of the saint, who is respectfully addressed as "lord" or "master" *(sarkār).* Through the configuration of their performance, such dancers create a "place" *(thāṇ)* for themselves. Those watching the video in 2003 made the "locational" interpretive move (see Feld 1984:8 and discussion below) of noting how this dancer marked his territory by picking up glowing embers in his bare hands and strewing them at his feet. The dancer, through the "somatic mode" (Csordas 1993) of his own ecstatic dance and by paying close attention to the contours of the drumming pattern, was drawing himself closer to the saint and to God. He was also creating a formal barrier between himself and other people—much as he does as a malaṅg in everyday life.

Many nucleated centers of attention, circles of drummers, dancers, and those focused on them gave human form to the shrine complex's milling throngs. The central shrine, graveyard, burning lamps and bonfires *(mac),* and large pots of communal food provided fixed points around which visitors squeezed their bodies. Marginalized, waiting their turn just inside the shrine's walls were a few ḍhol players in search of patrons; as yet, these lesser drummers were being ignored, barely holding their own as people streamed by. Crowds poured out into the surrounding gullies and narrow lanes of fishmongers, knife sharpeners, and vegetable hawkers of the Bāghbānpura neighborhood.

Intepret(ing) moves

Anyone attending the Madho Lāl Husain 'urs carries with him or her a complex personal history and is likely to encounter a confusing array of sensory data. What are the poetics by which an attender apprehends music and movement in such an array? An experiencing subject might engage in what Steven Feld (1984) calls "interpretive moves" to negotiate various "dialectics" in his or her encounter with dhamāl. The "locational" interpretive move of relating a heard "object . . . to an appropriate range within a subjective field of like items and events or unlike items and events" (Feld 1984:8) describes well some of the motivations of musicians, dancers, and listeners when they move and listen. Acting and responding via "somatic modes of attention" (Csordas 1993), key participants are charged with channeling certain activities (genres, dance types, etc.) to the center and others to the periphery. Drummers know to play rapid, repetitive rhythms for dancers near the shrine while reserving more complexly structured patterns for smaller gatherings of connoisseurs on the periphery (see Figure 3). Dancers respond to the movements and the sounds of drummers and attend "to and with" their bodies in their surroundings (Csordas 1993:138), which include other persons as well as elements of the physical environment (such as fire).

The multiple agencies of a performer

I shall take a performer as an example of an individual motivated by what Ewing calls a "bundle of agencies" (1997:5). In

Figure 2. Panjabi ḍhol players have perfected the technique of spinning while they play. Madho Lāl Husain 'urs, March 1997. Photo by R. Wolf.

Ewing's model, the experiencing subject is differentially and unpredictably influenced by prevailing discourses in different social–cultural realms. As they move through time, as they assume different subject positions, subjects may associate themselves with or dissociate themselves from different social categories—or deform those categories—thereby engaging in a kind of social poetics.

Consider Zulfiqar Ali, also known as Pappu Sāīn, a local celebrity in Lahore, who attends the Madho Lāl Husain 'urs every year. As a malaṅg, he is ideologically removed from many mundane forms of order and discipline. Yet, by identifying with this category of mendicants—notable in Pakistan for their tattered robes, beads, and distinctive jewelry—he conforms sartorially to a type. Honorifically called "sāīn" (lord or master), many malaṅgs carry walking sticks, sport dreadlocks, and gather at Sufi shrines to dance to *qawwālī* music or to the sound of the drums (see Figure 4). Pappu Sāīn, unique among them as a drummer (rather than merely a follower), stretches the limit of, deforms, what a malaṅg can be.

When Pappu plays and verbally represents himself as a musician, he conveys the image of one controlled by a disembodied agency—the saint. But when he talks technically about music, religion and mysticism fall by the wayside: He studied music with a recognized master of the classical tabla drums and can articulate how he has adapted their rhythms to his large, barrel-shaped drum, the ḍhol (see Audio 1 at www.aesonline.org, 33/2 issue archive page). Participating in the modern musical world by choice, he is not bound by ascription to a drumming community (an erstwhile "caste"). Yet he also perpetuates the legacy of his father, a drummer who was devoted to his Sufi preceptor *(pīr)*. Pappu technically belongs to the Shī'ī Muslim sect, which often represents itself in opposition to Sunnis. But to me, in 1997, he politely dissociated himself from an identity politics of division and embraced the Sufi ideology of unicity. Finally, Pappu has been caught in a crossfire of managers, promoters, tour organizers, and music fans, the motivations of whom remain difficult to reconcile with Pappu's stated goal of using the ḍhol to propagate the faith.

Knowing enough about an individual, one could presumably identify the subjective categories with which the person chooses, shiftingly, to identify. Among those attending the 'urs or, for that matter, making any weekly Thursday visit to the shrine, the most striking example of this identity

Figure 3. Drummers travel together from different parts of Pakistan and camp at peripheries of the shrine complex, March 2005. Photo by R. Wolf.

shifting occurs in the case of what one consultant called a "part-time malaṅg," that is, the person who adopts the persona of the malaṅg during shrine visits and appears rather more ordinary at home or work.

Belonging

In the case of Pappu and the part-time malaṅg, the theme of unity and division implicates the politics, and the timing, of belonging. Although it remains important for Muslims to assert across time and space that they remain essentially unitary, communities and their leaders often foreground or background differences among sects, offshoots, and subcommunities. One way of mitigating this tension is to limit those who are "truly" Muslim to a select few and, thereby, define unity by reference to a limited community. Another solution, which draws on some forms of Sufi thought, is to efface differences among Muslims and among humans, more generally.

Those who engage in some Sufi disciplines attempt to take this process of union further by trying to dissolve that which separates humans from the divine.[2] But like any ideology, the Sufi ideology of effacing differences can itself be put to political use (see Ewing 1997:72ff.).

The question of who "belongs" at an 'urs such as that for Madho Lāl Husain might elicit the catholic response "anybody." But actors maintain ideologies of unicity at the same time that they promote possible lines of cleavage associated with language identity and provincial politics. Although this point cannot be developed here in detail, Madho Lāl Husain's shrine has been, postcolonially, a strong symbol of Panjabiness as against other linguistic and regional–cultural affiliations. Actors continue to use such examples of linguistic difference to produce ideologically a "diagram" of social difference (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994:60)—Panjabis versus Sindhis or Panjabis versus native Urdu speakers.

As actors adopt possible social models of togetherness or emphasize regionality and difference, they objectify

Figure 4. Two prominent malaṅgs, having watched the 'urs video, dress in finery for interviews and photographs. Madho Lāl Husain shrine, December 2003. Photo by R. Wolf.

moments in their own history of cultural production. They produce "texts" (cultural objects) of their own, which they then receive, transmit, and manipulate. What Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban (1996) call "entextualization" and "contextualization" are critical stages in the enactment of a poetics: For any structure to be "deformed," it must first be constituted, or "entextualized" and then manipulated, or "contextualized."

A good example of such poetics concerns my central musical case, the dhamāl genre, which has come to be known (entextualized), synecdochically, by a few distilled encapsulations of the drum groove; simply put, a "groove" is how a rhythm is felt and danced.[3] As I detail below, actors contextualize these encapsulations in explicit verbal forms, which are made to be iconic with the drum pattern. The indexical relationship of the verbalized texts to their ritual contexts raises questions as to what subjectivities the generators and receivers of these signs are creating and how these subjectivities associate with social–political categories in mod-

ern South Asia. Dhamāl has regional origins in worship at the shrine of saint Lāl Shabaz Qalandar in the province of Sindh. Yet this "residue of past social interaction" (Silverstein and Urban 1996:5) merely adds another layer—be it a pan-Pakistani, pan-Sufic, or specifically Sindhi layer—to what is, for many, still a symbolically Panjabi event and place.

Linguistic and regional associations are some of the broad terms by which 'urs participants may construct an understanding of themselves as Muslim, Panjabi, or Pakistani in relation to the event. More specific interpretations draw from a pool of images in Sufi poetry. Those whose themes are joining and dividing are my concern here.

Joining and dividing in Sufi poetry

In Sufi (and other) poetry of South and West Asia, love and longing of an individual for another person is understood analogically as the craving of the human for the divine. The eroticism of male dancing during the 'urs is connected with

this larger spiritual love theme. The form and content of poetry often combine forces to create an aesthetic in which the listener or reader experiences a multileveled tension (or alternation) among different kinds of joining and dividing. Connoisseurs in the traditional Urdu poetry reading *(mushaira)* could, for instance, frequently anticipate the conclusion of a <u>*ghazal*</u> couplet, which often hinged on a metaphor connecting human with divine love.[4] The momentary social union in which multiple expectations were fulfilled—when audience members might deliver the conclusive words in chorus, along with words of praise—was different from the symbolism of union or separation in the poem itself but was part of a larger aesthetic in which elements of form and content merged.[5] The convergence of multiple forms of union was, socioculturally, part of the poetics of poetry recitation.

The notion of spiritual union has also been thematized in different phenomenological forms. In 17th- and 18th-century Deccan folksongs, for example, circular motions mimicking the grinding of food grains and the spinning of threads were used to create an "ontological link" between the individual, his or her spiritual leader, and God (see Eaton 1974). The songs implicated entrancing Sufi spiritual exercises, called "<u>z</u>ikr" (lit. remembrance; see Qureshi 1994:505ff.), which often consist of such simple phrases as "God is one." <u>Z</u>ikrs are repeated until they become virtually a part of the utterer's inner constitution. Linking bodily practice to philosophical themes remains common in Sufi songs and poetry in many regions to the present day. When Panjabi drummers spin while playing, they may reinforce the Sufi theme of cyclicity and, more importantly, achieve transcendence in a manner consistent with the process of reciting <u>z</u>ikrs. Such virtuosity has the potential to resonate with poetic images when contextualized in a Sufi setting such as the 'urs of Madho Lāl Husain.[6]

The motion of the long-gray-haired and bearded malaṅg dancing by the flames at the 'urs formally reproduces one of the most ubiquitous allegories in Sufi poetry and philosophical writings, that of the moth fluttering about the flame of a candle. The devotee, drawn by his or her love of God, approaches closer and closer, despite the danger; the attraction is sustained as long as moth and flame remain apart. But just as a mortal can never entirely apprehend God while retaining a human existence, so, too, the moth is immolated at the moment of contact with the flame.[7]

The flames around which much significant activity was focused in the 'urs, along with their red color (which they share with some malaṅgs' robes), contain rich metaphorical potentials for union and division in poetry and everyday life.[8] The poetics of fire are suggested by its possible forms: A flame can encompass two flames or be divided without losing its integrity.[9] A flame can incorporate by incineration or deter by the threat of burning. Red is a color of love, union, and fertility. Brides and grooms (not only Muslims) wear red

in many parts of the South Asian subcontinent, and sexuality is implied in the red garb of the *faqīr,* a kind of Sufi mendicant, dancing before the shrine of the "red" saint, Lāl (red) Husain.

Although a broad pool of Sufi images is shared across different languages and regions, one might expect knowledgeable participants in the 'urs of Madho Lāl Husain to be motivated, in particular, by this saint's poetry, which combined the esoteric philosophy of Sufism with common folk themes in the vernacular (Schimmel 1975:384, 388). Devotees become familiar with Shah Husain's epigrammatic poems, called "kāfīs," by listening to South Asian devotional songs, instrumental melodies, and film songs and by participating in didactic reading sessions with experts.[10]

A shrine frequenter with whom I spoke recited (his version of) his favorite Shah Husain kāfī for me.[11] Its building blocks enduringly contribute to the family of features found in all Sufi poetry: the emotions of love and pain, the representation of separation, the images of smoke and redness, and the implications of fire. These compose part of the "familiar background" for ordinary shrine frequenters, not just scholars or mystics.[12] This version also presents unintentional if not creative deformations, such as the substitution of "the bread of happiness" for what was supposed to be "the bread of sadness":

> Oh mother! To whom can I tell
> The condition of pain that separation has caused
> The smoke of my teacher (master) descends
> and when I look it's red inside
> The bread of happiness; the broth of the gallows
> and the tinder of my sighs

Fire, lurking unmentioned in this poem, could be wisdom, knowledge, the "self," or the divine—perhaps all of these. One makes inferences about the fire via the qualisign of redness and the indexes of "smoke" and "tinder." Is this the smoke of an inhaled intoxicant? Is the "smoke" the teacher himself or the knowledge he attempts to convey? What for the ordinary person is sustenance—bread and broth—is equated with that for which the Sufi craves: suffering and death, annihilation *(fanā)*. In a higher sphere, these are forms of life: merging one's self with the divine. Even manifestations of human feeling, like sighs, are tinder for consumption. The imagery combines to express that existential pain that all Sufis feel while on this earth—a pain that may be felt, after all, as a kind of burning.

Verbal symbolism and vivid imagery of uniting and dividing form a significant component of the "linguistic habitus" (Hanks 1987) of most Pakistanis who would attend an 'urs—any 'urs, not just that of Shah Husain. This habitus grounds the ways 'urs goers "interpret" moves. In Peircian semiotic terms, signs in Sufi poetry are rhemes, signs of possibility, for "objects" of embodied practice (Peirce 1955:103;

Turino 1999:229). So, too, are received histories of the lives of Sufi saints, in general, and Shah Husain, in particular.

Shah Husain: Love, inclusion, and social categories in Lahore

Sufism was already well established in Lahore in the 16th century when Shah Husain was actively fashioning a heterodox Panjabi face for the body of Sufi literature that had hitherto been dominated by Persian. A barely concealed sexual side of the saint's transgressiveness is implied in Shah Husain's other name, Madho Lāl Husain. Shah Husain shares his burial place with a Brahmin boy, Madhu, with whom he is said to have been deeply in love. The inseparable joining of their two names and resting places resonates with the many forms of union performed at the shrine. Panjabis commonly associate the homoerotic theme in Shah Husain's life narrative with well-known incidents in the life of the saint Bulleh Shah (1680–1758). After losing favor with his music-loving pīr, Bulleh Shah is said to have apprenticed for 12 years with women in a *kanjar* community of courtesans, musicians, and dancers. He later adopted the persona of a dancing girl and drew the pīr to him with his newly acquired art. The partial iconicities among different kinds of union (of human lovers, disciple and pīr, and human and God), inclusion (the unity of the Muslim community and of the diverse attendees of an 'urs), and phenomenological joining (tight synchronization of intersubjective bodily movements) remain unstated but, for the most part, obvious to 'urs goers.

Since at least the 19th century, the Madho Lāl Husain 'urs has been regarded as a kind of spring festival, not limited to the religious observances of one particular community. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the 19th-century Sikh ruler of the Panjab who had patronized a spring festival at Husain's tomb, was instrumental in making the festival of lamps an occasion for drawing pilgrims from many religious backgrounds, including Sikh, Hindu, and Christian. This drawing together and association with springtime also have roots in life-historical accounts of the saint. An association between the 'urs and the Hindu holiday of *holī,* during which traditional societal restrictions between classes and sexes are suspended or reversed, may have originated from hagiographies that depicted Husain frolicking with Madhu during this ludic Hindu springtime festival (see Kugle and Behl 2000).

The notion that this 'urs is an event in which "people of Lahore rub ... shoulders regardless of class or communal backgrounds" (Jalal 1995:86) is now a nostalgic one. By the mid-1990s, the 'urs at this shrine had already become "merely an occasion for the lower strata of the city's teeming millions to congregate and partake of the celebration" (Jalal 1995:86). In accounting for the distancing of middle and upper classes, Ayesha Jalal points out that conservative Islamist ideologues in Pakistan decried such practices as worshiping at saints' tombs and beliefs in the intercessory powers of saints. Although Pakistan's elites continue to resist the pressures of religious conservatism, the rising bourgeoisie apparently find association with the folksy culture of 'urs goers distasteful. Disentangling the religious from the class issue here is difficult, because "folk Islam," as it were, is linked to class. Yet shrine Sufism and dancing and drumming hold a rather New Age appeal for young members of the Lahore elite. In the late 1990s, students, especially from the trendy National College of Arts, found it fashionable to hang out at the Shah Jamāl shrine and listen to Pappu Sāīn play dhamāl. Dhamāl is a common term for understanding Sufism in the public sphere, but the reception of this term—mediated verbally and through the body—is a matter of poetics.

Social poetics and the deformation of a drum groove

The drum groove associated with 'urses, dhamāl, has come to be known by a simplified version, which can easily be remembered by a series of drum syllables or words. When faqīrs attach the text "[Husain provides] refuge [for the] faith [of Islam]" (Dīn panāh) to this pattern, they find meaning linked to their social group while subtly reworking, or deforming, the drum mnemonics employed by classically trained musicians (see discussion of Figure A7). The key pattern is an entextualization, an abstracted version of the dozens of repetitions and variations characteristic of any performance. The faqīrs' act of contextualization, of deformation, indexes their social category and encodes insider knowledge.

The notion that certain kinds of knowledge, people, and, indeed, God, may be manifest *(ẓāhir)* or hidden *(bāṭin),* is important in Sufi and Shī'ī theology. The significance of this alternative "reading" of dhamāl is not manifest in the drummers' inflection of the rhythmic groove but is, rather, constitutive, covertly, of faqīr subjectivity.[13] In this simple example, then, the deformation of a received structure, a common term, an entextualization, is made socially significant, albeit musically hidden.

Pappu Sāīn temporarily stepped out of his persona as malaṅg, a category of person that overlaps significantly with that of faqīr, to tell me what "the faqīrs" do. At that moment, he identified as the practiced musician who could recognize and convey the reworked mnemonics to me. As Ewing (1997:22–23) stresses, as an individual moves from one social context to another, different kinds of "background understandings," possibly mutually inconsistent, come into play, which relate to the different social groups to which the actor simultaneously belongs (also see Gramsci 1999). Such an outwardly verbalized "interpretive move" on Pappu's part would be unthinkable at the Shah Jamāl shrine on Thursday nights, when Pappu conveys the

persona of one in trance (except for odd, spell-breaking moments when he motions for someone to put away a video camera).

Recognizing and creating resemblances (iconicities)—for example, Pappu identifying the faqīrs' textualizations and the faqīrs taking up a pattern for their own devices—are mutually constitutive acts. They define certain kinds of belonging in socially, politically, religiously, and artistically defined groups—which is not to say that each of these is necessarily separate from the others. In Herzfeld's formulation, poetics is "an analytical approach to the uses of rhetorical form" (1997:142). Recognizing and creating resemblances are "rhetorical" acts not because they reify perfect fits—between, say, the structure of an act and the expectations of a social group—but because they redefine the nature of fits, they "deform," reform, or transform patterns.[14] The process Ewing describes, whereby the individual strategically adopts different, sometimes conflicting, discursive positions, precisely describes social poetics when those actions involve manipulation of common structures, resignification of well-known phenomena in local culture, and inflection of the local in some significant respect with regard to broader encompassing discourses. How, then, does the man or woman dancing dhamāl participate in this poetics?

Dancing dhamāl

> *Dhamāl*: jumping into, or running through fire (a practice of faqīrs or qalandars . . .).
>
> —John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdū, Classical Hindi, and English*

The bearded, red-robed malaṅg dancing dhamāl at the 'urs engaged in several levels of self-identificatory potential or modalities of "subjunctive mood" (Turner 1982:83). Strewing fire, he temporarily occupied the role of an individual marking territory. In anchoring his actions around and, thereby, somatically attending to the bonfire, he was indexing for others, and stimulating in his own consciousness, an indeterminate array of Sufi fire tropes. As a pious follower of Shah Husain, he was willing to be "burned," separated, or, in Sufi terms, annihilated (fanā), completely "lost in the contemplation of God" (Platts 2000:784).[15] Fire also embodies continuity—unity as self-sameness in time—in the form of an eternal flame. Fire iterates spiritual presence when thousands of pilgrims burn lamps and place them around the shrine compound in Shah Husain's honor.[16] One devotee I encountered attributed a Panjabi couplet to Shah Husain: "Neither of the rich nor of the poor, the lamps are lit only for the faqīr" and burn forever. In this man's view, the big, centralized bonfire (mac) was an enormous communal lamp, taking the place of the thousands more lamps visitors might have brought. These verbal commentaries convert some of the signs of fire from rhemes to dicents, from

possibilities to asserted actualities (Peirce 1955:103; Turino 1999:229).

Pakistanis recognize dhamāl in terms of dance movements and drumming patterns. Serious *dhamālis* dance to achieve *hāl,* a higher spiritual state (cf. Qureshi 1994:503ff.). They strive to replicate the 'urs's archetypal form: the spiritual marriage. Locational attention is guided by this overarching goal. Drummers show their respect for the saint by facing the shrine, but they also must watch the dancers for whom they are drumming, and the dancers themselves must face the shrine. So drummers sometimes stand between shrine and dancer and try to pay heed to both. Because the responsibility of such a role requires skill and concentration, ḍhol players are rarely able to engage in ecstatic practices themselves—for they might fail both as musicians and as ritual functionaries.[17]

As a musician playing for the dancers and as a devotee dissolving his being in Shah Husain, Pappu skillfully bridges this divide by alternating subject positions. In achieving hāl while continuing to play competently, Pappu seems to have "sustain[ed] mediated states of multiple or diffuse awareness" (Lewis 1995:231), "dwell[ing] in states of being that are intermediate—between consciousness of bodily presence and unconsciousness as bodily absence" (Lewis 1995:235). Some, however, have expressed skepticism of his ability to manage both. Let us now take a closer look at the contours of embodiment as musicians shift from one rhythm to another, occupy one place or another, or bond with some dancers and avoid others.

Drumming patterns and dance movements

The spiritual aspirations of the drummers Niamat Ali and Shahid Ali are less lofty than Pappu's. These drummers are not malaṅgs, but neither did they express the anxiety regarding the status of their drumming vis-à-vis Islam that I found among some other drummers (who denied their drumming had any connection with Islam). The pair were excellent drummers and had no trouble engaging in a musical conversation. They described playing four drum patterns, dhamāl, *bhangrā, tīntārā (tīntāl),* and *lahrā,* during the public parts of the 'urs, which are appropriate mainly for their brisk tempo.[18] Because dancers recognize common structures across the different duple-meter patterns, they can easily transfer their primary steps or body movements from one groove to another. To invert my theme slightly, as the dancers retain their steps, the drummers deform the pattern beneath the dancers' feet. This reorientation may constitute a slight shift in subjectivity for the dancers simply because it feels different to dance with one's primary steps subdivided in different ways.

Niamat and Shahid told me that ḍhol players also perform for one another in small assemblies *(mehfil)* away from the central 'urs activities, in which they may play any pattern

1				2				3				4			
dhīn			di	nā		di	na	tān			ta	nā		ta	na

Figure 5. Syllabic representation of dhamāl bols.

at all, express aesthetic appreciation for the entire range of the ḍhol repertoire, and compete with one another. This geography of performance is both a result and a cause of interpretive moves regarding location. Drummers join in a higher-level musical discourse with other drummers in the shrine periphery. At the center, musical complexity is backgrounded in favor of attention to dancers and the shrine, the former attention (usually) resulting in synchronicity with the dancers, the latter resulting (all hope) in emotional closeness with the saint.[19]

In the public arena, drum grooves organized around odd patterns of three or seven counts are avoided because they do not fit the dances. In the simpler patterns, drummers create interest for the dancers by inserting breaks *(toṛā)* and tripartite cadences *(tiyās)* as well as other patterned gaps in the otherwise thick texture of strokes. The better dancers anticipate and respond to these articulations with sudden, stylized movements of the head, arms, or legs. Drummers, when they create breaks, also respond to dancers' movements, working articulations musically into the flow of their drumming, resuming a duple groove at the original tempo. From this perspective of mutually rapid response, unicity is a matter of tight intersubjective bonding, an awareness of one another's movements to the point of being able to anticipate them (cf. Berliner 1994:390).

Niamat provided the syllabic representation *(bols)* of dhamāl that appears in Figure 5 (see Audio 2 at www.aesonline.org, 33/2 issue archive page). The numbers are "counts," or, in Hindustani classical terms, *mātras* (measures). The counts are subdivided into four parts, each indicated by a syllable or an empty square.[20]

Dancers tend use these counts to anchor their leg, arm, and head movements. Such syllabic representations, or bols, often used as mnemonics or for teaching, are always incomplete abstractions, or entextualizations. Played on the drums, contextualized, dhamāl is more complicated and exists in many variations (see Figure A1). The basic pattern *(naghma)* serves as a foundation *(bunyād)* over which ḍhol players perform variations, insert rapid patterns, and create changes in density. The Panjabi term *phīran,* which Pappu used in referring to this process, is spatially evocative: "to turn, to return, to go back, to ramble, to make a circuit, to walk; to abandon one's intentions, to bend, to be awry or crooked" (*Punjabi English Dictionary* 1983:911).

Such kinds of "rhetorical" play around standardized forms are common in many musical genres and have many names (like *improvisation*). In Panjabi ḍhol playing, recognitions of sameness and difference and deformations of structure are implicated at other levels of musical perception as well. The difference between dhamāl and bhangrā, for instance, is not dramatic and, thus, may escape those who are not musically attuned.[21] Both patterns consist of four (or two) counts (see Figures A3 and A4 and discussion and Audio 1–4 at www.aesonline.org, 33/2 issue archive page).

Drumming text

Drummers and lay persons sometimes call dhamāl "mast qalandar" because they recognize the common zikr "dam ā dam mast qalandar" in the drum groove. It encodes Sufi ideas: "With each and every breath" [dam-ā-dam], the Sufi qalandar—one who has attained an advanced stage on the spiritual path—will become increasingly intoxicated (be mast) and, thereby, spiritually elevated. The phrase "dam-ā-dam," used in everyday speech to mean "continuously," here also references "breath" (dam): the mystic's life breath and the repeated inhalations of cannabis, hashish, or opium through which he augments his ecstasy. This phrase's significant rhyming counterpart, *'alī dā pahlā "number"* (*number* is in English), means that 'Alī is literally "number one," the first in the hierarchy. This well-known zikr is semiotically overdetermined, indexing a variety of musical and philosophical phenomena in the modern world (see Figures A5 and A6). Those (not just faqīrs or malaṅgs) who chant the phrase while Pappu is playing at Shah Jamāl may not be preoccupied with its semantics (see Audio 5 at www.aesonline.org, 33/2 issue archive page).

In Pappu Sāīn's words, this "mast qalandar" drumbeat is the "call to prayer" *(azān)* for qalandars at the shrine of Lāl Shahbāz Qalandar. In Pappu's view, the first dhamāl was danced by the Prophet's son-in-law, 'Alī, himself. 'Alī circled three times to rejoice after the Prophet raised 'Alī's hand and said "for whom I am sarkār (lord), 'Alī is also sarkār," thus, establishing the key principle of succession followed by Shī'ahs and by many Sufis.[22] Pappu retains "residues" of several different entextualizations clearly in his consciousness: the extraction of dhamāl from the shrine in Sindh and its reduction to simplified versions. He developed the "connotation" (in Roland Barthes's [1970:90ff.] sense) further by pointing out that 'Alī is not "first" but, rather, he stands above the system of succession as "the one who assigns the numbers."

Not all drummers or listeners reduce the pattern to "mast qalandar," yet the phrase remains a common term of understanding. Trained drummers, especially, would rather represent the rhythm with bol (syllable) patterns, as ability to abstract renditions of rhythms in the manner of a classical musician is a marker of high musical knowledge. In the more recondite textualization by which faqīrs give voice to their social group (to which I alluded above), "dīn panāh" is followed by semantically nonreferential syllables, "da na." *Dīn panāh* means "faith refuge": Husain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and son of 'Alī, provided safe haven for Islam through his act of self-sacrifice at Karbala. The "classical"-like, abstract bol pattern (top line of Figure A7) is close to the meaningful one (bottom line), although twice the length. Perhaps complete immersion in the act of reciting the phrase "refuge in the faith" as a zikr itself constitutes the act of taking refuge in the faith and, thereby, produces the self-altering affect William M. Reddy (2001) has ascribed to "emotives" in language, which in this instance might be described as a social poetics of the self.

Recognizing resemblances

To analyze the iconicities of drum patterns, dance steps, and verbal abstraction requires some attention to the processes by which actors make these connections, recognize resemblances, and associate (or deform) patterns. Some aspects of these processes must be inferred, whereas others are verbally indexed. In 1997, Pappu called knowledge (*'ilm*) of music the only thing (*kām*) that is really true (*sacā*): When one is playing a rhythmic pattern (*thekāh*), another person must match it. Music admits no falsehood (*jhūt*); one cannot simply "throw something in." Pappu compared this musical truth with that of the ḍhol player playing dhamāl with intoxication (*mastī*). Completely absorbed in spirituality, the drummer matches his own being with that of the sarkār and, by extension, with God. The drummer whose performance is colored by his temperament (*tābi'at*) or who plays with his eyes open or with money in mind is lacking such truth. By the same token, Pappu views "mast qalandar" as a zikr motivated by the saint Shah Jamāl, who enters Pappu's heart during a performance and causes his lips to utter the phrase. This, in turn, causes listeners to recite the zikr with the drums. Pappu's remarks creatively link a musical form of truth testing with a spiritual one: Playing in unison is morally equivalent to dissolving one's being in the love of God. This is poetics as musical–spiritual ideology.

Dhamāl is the preferred Sufi groove in certain Pakistani shrines; this is the common term. Yet several other patterns are also common and in reality many 'urs goers cannot differentiate closely related patterns, nor do they need to, to dance.[23] Whereas dhamāl's appropriateness is grounded in profound associations with spiritual transcendence and union, the appropriateness of bhangrā (and some other grooves) is grounded in regional identity and associations with weddings or other joyous occasions. "Panjabi culture is bhangrā," as Pappu put it, using the English word *culture* with apparent comfort. With the international circulation of bhangrā (as a dance and a world-music genre), such a remark might be expected from youths in Britain or the United States as well.[24]

Dhamāl and bhangrā, as two kinds of 'urs-appropriate drum genres, one more serious than the other, roughly reproduce the distinction between those who are considered more serious or pious in their dancing for the saint and those who are just fooling around. Interpretations of what constitutes proper movement in these genres are not clear-cut.[25] Moreover, disambiguating personal, transnational, and regional elements is difficult because some regard the setting as a veritable free-for-all. Multiple agencies, for example, may motivate dancers to spin. Spinning has always held a wide potential for signification because of its ubiquity in poetry, folk songs, and philosophy. Now, I am told, whirling Sufi dancers (see Figure 6) are more commonplace in Pakistan, possibly resulting from more widespread exposure of ("whirling") Mevlevi dervishes to Pakistanis via the media and Islamic arts festivals.[26]

The larger effect of these "recognized resemblances" on the structure of the Madho Lāl Husain event as a whole is that dhamāl and, to a lesser extent, bhangrā get, literally, center stage, and the dances at the center begin to look even more "Sufi" (because of the whirling) from a global perspective.

2003: Reflections back on the 'urs of 1997

Accompanied by the anthropologist Adam Nayyar, I showed the 'urs video to two audiences in December 2003. One was a diverse group of five or six men; the other was a group of malaṅgs (see Figure 7). Devotees commenting on the video judged the dancing according to their understandings of the dancers' piety and somatic attention to the shrine, not by movements marked as "dance" alone. The devotees knew or had seen these dancers at the shrine for many years and used this background knowledge in their evaluative statements. One viewer described how easy it is to ascertain the true dhamālī. Such a person, he said (in Panjabi), "will have *lagan* (attachment) and will show attention to the sarkār. He will be mast (intoxicated) in his attachment to the saint and . . . turned to the saint. He who makes 'drama' for himself will do a 'disco,' a bit of this and a bit of that. Straight upside down, right side up . . . a true malaṅg, in his ecstasy, will keep on turning . . . until he falls down unconscious." The dhamālī's actions are repetitious, relatively self-same over time; the fraud draws attention to himself, performs variations seen to lack depth or traditionality. A formal parallel can be drawn with Pappu Sāīn's characterization of a drummer performing with mastī and the one whose performance is colored by his temperament.

Figure 6. Malaṅg spins while dancing dhamāl to the drumming of Pappu Sāīn at the Shah Jamāl shrine, December 2003. Photo by R. Wolf.

Dancers perceived as dancing frivolously—what locals called "disco"—as being improperly dressed, or otherwise behaving improperly are often ushered out of a dancing arena. Seriousness is marked by the excellence of the drummers, the dancers' proximity to the shrine, and the respect the various participants and onlookers give the dancers. The videotape showed a few boys dancing behind two ḍhol players, away from the center area in front of the shrine. Their moves were dismissed by viewers as "disco," confirming my own suspicion that these boys could exercise relative freedom because they were sidelined from the central shrine area.

For those who are not sidelined, the issue of merging and remaining separate hinges on the relationship between drummer and dancer. The drummer provides driv-ing rhythms to help dancers achieve their spiritual goals corporeally. As dancers get into the groove, their leg and body movements normally coordinate with principal drum strokes. But, according to a range of devotees, the true dhamālī is one who can eventually break the bonds of the beat. Synchrony between drummer and dancer is not a direct measure of either the dancer's skill or his or her ingenuous-ness. This slippage between agents who are cooperating but not "keeping together in time" (McNeill 1995) is notewor-thy in light of much writing on public music making, which emphasizes the role of temporal coordination in group co-hesiveness (see Becker 2004:121ff. and passim; Feld 1988; Turino 1999:241; Wolf 2000:96). Here, lack of coordination between drummer and dancer could index a poor sense of rhythm on the dancer's part, but it may also be a symptom of

Figure 7. Malaṅgs suggested the laptop be placed in the area reserved for lamps. Viewers (in ordinary clothes) watch and discuss one of three showings, December 2003. Photo by R. Wolf.

his or her successful spiritual union. Again, unity and division as phenomenological forms remain only signs of possibility until they are made explicit through speech indexicals or undeniable manifestations of physical transformation.

Whether or not drummers and dancers are synchronized on any given occasion, many opportunities exist for particular drummers to work with individual dancers, develop personal and kinesthetic relationships, "tune in," in the words of Alfred Schutz (1977).[27] The embodied communication between some dancers and drummers belongs to a broader class of intersubjective engagement associated with the ways in which followers of the Sufi path receive instruction from their spiritual master, or pīr. Consider the pīr Rashīd Sāīn (see Figure 8), for instance, who used to attend the Madho Lāl Husain 'urs with his disciples every year. In 1997, the bald, crippled master sat at the foot of a tree wearing a geometrically patterned sweater of azure, rust, and white.

Toothlessly grinning, he kept focus on the eyes of the two boys, aged about ten. Bābā Rashīd's garland of yellow flowers dangled as he leaned back and made wavelike patterns with his fingers, flicking his wrist up and down, and attending to each boy. They rapidly shook their heads up and down in time to the drumming, following their master's hand movements (see Video 1 at www.aesonline.org, 33/2 issue archive page). Rashīd Sāīn was "dancing dhamāl with his hand," as my video-watching consultants put it, manually impressing the discipline into the children's bodies, constituting the intersubjective master–disciple domain via the transmission of bodily techniques (Farnell 1999:343). Later, when one of the head-shaking boys became overwhelmed—a dicent sign for approaching spiritual union—others in his group lifted him off the ground to rein in his ecstasy. These are the poetics whereby drumming, dancing, and embodied spiritual knowledge are made to converge.

Figure 8. Bābā Rashīd Sāīn and his disciples at the Madho Lāl Husain 'urs, March 1997. Photo by R. Wolf.

Multileveled mimesis

When is the phenomenology of 'urs practices obvious and when is it recondite? Where are the "structures" to which social actors adhere or from which they depart? Moth–flame and similar analogies remain signs of possibility, which may get activated by word or deed at any point (see, e.g., Tambiah 1985:156ff.).[28] Iconicities of similar-sounding names pave the way for semantic slippages and the agglutination of identities. The prefix *lāl* (red) in Madho Lāl Husain's popular name, refers to the saint's colorful garb, which he wore while dancing to the drums, singing, and drinking. The prefix links the name with that of the saint Lāl Shahbāz Qalandar, who also, reportedly, wore red robes. The name of a third saint, Jhūle La'l of Sindh, tends to appear with those of the first two in songs, chants, and ecstatic outbursts. *La'l,* so spelled in Persian and Arabic, means "ruby" or "gem." It has also become the preferred spelling for *red* in Pakistani public venues (signs and newspapers), for the Arabic letter 'ain (denoted here by ') marks the word as Islamic (i.e., less Indian).

All three (now) "red" saints have been revered by both Hindus and Muslims; all three are associated with musical practices.[29] The homonyms are conduits for a bundle of associations whereby 'urs participants commune with all these related saints when they wear red robes and dance. Their color coding does not activate a core meaning because the implications of red are multiply determined by context. Rather, it participates in a set of parallel associations: Red may evoke fire, light, wisdom, divinity, and annihilation as well fertility and sexual union.

Such multileveled mimesis is extremely important in Sufi behavior. When malaṅgs at Madho Lāl Husain's 'urs dance, swiveling their hips seductively, they foreground the homoerotic implications of Husain's life narrative and index the aforementioned story of Bulleh Shah. Popular histories of both saints spill over into the phenomenology of action at the 'urs of Madho Lāl Husain. Overflowing even further into the social life of Lahore, Madho Lāl Husain is reportedly something of a patron saint for Lahore's gay community as well as for courtesans of Lahore's red-light district, Hīrā Maṇḍī (lit. diamond market).[30] The malaṅg's feminine dances attract the saint's gaze. While metaphorically conveying the desire for union, the very same act also articulates a hierarchy that separates the two. Feminine dancing, here, is

an act of humility that indexes the devotee's status as a mere prostitute before the saint.

These well-known phenomenologies of the dance are controversial; and so, Husain's transgressiveness has resulted in his isolation. Associations with eroticism, ecstatic dancing, and intoxication help explain why Shah Husain's image was missing from a popular poster of important Pakistani saints and why some Pakistani schoolbooks, and the broader institutions of which they form part, deny Shah Husain's status as a Muslim (Jalal 1995). The question of Shah Husain's inclusion in larger moral units in modern Pakistan also implicates language, inasmuch as his folk poetry is so strongly Panjabi. Indeed, after a 1954 demonstration to recognize Panjabi as an official language, Panjabi writers began to use Shah Husain's 'urs as the platform for rallying support for such recognition. The national language, Urdu, does not belong to any Pakistani region and is, in this respect at least, more neutral and inclusive.

Poetics of inclusion

Matters of regional and national inclusiveness may be debated on a local level as well as manipulated by the government. Ewing has documented the ways in which the Ayub Khan and Zulfiqar 'Ali Bhutto governments, inspired by Muhammad Iqbal's vision of a Muslim democracy as filtered through the writings of his son Javid (Iqbal 1959), attempted to neutralize the power of individual religious figures by nationalizing the Sufi shrines. In some governmental rhetoric, " 'caste, creed, and geographical factors' [were identified as] major sources of disruption in the effort to build Pakistan as a nation" (Ewing 1997:72).[31] Countering this, Ewing implied, government pamphlets had emphasized certain saints' association with the concept of "waḥdat al wujūd," "the unity of being," "the transcendence of categories," or "the blurring of borders between the external religious forms" (Schimmel 1975:267, 286), a controversial Sufi doctrine developed by 13th-century Andalusian philosopher Ibn 'Arabi (C.E. 1165–1240) (Ewing 1997:72).

Such refined philosophy appears distant from everyday politics; yet this philosophical doctrine is relevant to two characteristic dhamāl gestures of a malaṅg: dancing on one leg and raising a single finger in the air. For several Pakistani shrine frequenters, these gestures are dicent-indexical signs of oneness or, in more elevated language, waḥdat al wujūd. Before returning to Lahore in December 2003, I was skeptical that the iconic form of these dance gestures could convey such persuasive meaning. Even if they did, I wondered how agents' recognition of iconicity (their willingness to "deform" patterns and see them as "the same") might have been affected by influential writers and politicians who were preoccupied with questions of national unity. My doubts could not be reconciled easily, but one observation struck me as significant on Christmas night 2003, at Shah Jamāl, as Pappu

Sāīn was performing dhamāl. One dancer, bald headed, concentrating his attention on the shrine, had been reiterating a deliberate move for several hours: Slowly raising his finger in the air, he was shouting, "Yaktāī," a Persian (and Panjabi) word that means literally "oneness"—as in oneness of purpose, oneness of mind, or, in this case, the singularity of God—and that is conventionally used in Iran to mean God.

The apparent obviousness of meaning here left me with a series of unanswered questions. Had this kind of physically embodied Sufi philosophy been more or less in a dancer's repertoire for centuries? Was this a kind of aesthetic posturing, adopting of a malaṅg fashion or style? Was it a move inherited from those inspired by the religiopolitical rhetoric of unity in the 1960s and 1970s? Neither of these alternatives need be regarded as absolute or as having any bearing on the spiritual status of the dancer himself, who was judged to be sincere. The same question could be asked of the many rapidly spinning, (possibly) Mevlevi-inspired malaṅgs, whose circular movements have philosophical implications in Sufi thought (and resonate with images in poetry) but appear to be innovations in the local dance.

On the significance of oneness

If verbal and gestural expressions of "oneness" amounted to performances of spiritual unity in these contexts, uttering " 'alī dā pahlā 'number' " ('Alī is number one) in the context of the zikr connected with dhamāl gave prominence to human difference: the social and spiritual hierarchy that is part and parcel of Sufism.[32] Expressions of togetherness and difference are simultaneous in dhamāl. The mystical phrase that underlies " 'alī dā pahlā 'number' " articulates the principle of religious and political succession beginning, after the Prophet, with 'Alī. But it is also a phrase with a "ring" to it: Easy to remember, it appears in many places; the transformative potential of this and other zikrs has at least as much to do with rhythmic organization, repetition, and the aesthetic feeling of the sounds (see Sapir 1925) as it does with meaningful content.

Merely to think or utter the paired phrases "dam-ā-dam mast qalandar—'alī dā pahlā 'number,' " however, does not mean one is on the Sufi path. Neither does the ubiquity of the phrases index the extension of Sufism. Exploring these phrases in a final illustration, we join a drumming group and electronic organ player at a Muslim wedding in Barkas, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh in South India (see Video 2 at www.aesonline.org, 33/2 issue archive page). Their first piece conforms, rhythmically, to bhangrā. When I ask the name of this metrical framework (tāl), their response, "Qawwālī," puzzles me. One drummer elaborates (in Urdu): "What we just presented is called 'Dam-ā-dam mast qalandar.' It's qawwālī. This is played among Muslims. It's there at the very beginning, as a foundation *(uṣūl)*. Its

histories come down to us through the ages; that's why we play qawwālī first. That's the original thing *(aṣal bāt)*. Then later comes the 'filmi system' and so forth. That's all wrong *(ghalaṭ)*."

This calls for some explanation. The Sufi vocal genre called "qawwālī," prevalent largely in North India, Pakistan, and Muslim areas of South India such as Hyderabad, is stylistically and textually recognizable.[33] What this group played, however, conformed to qawwālī merely in a nominal sense. Many texts and melodies can be rendered in different genres, using different styles; hence, text alone (or melody alone) is musically insufficient for genre identification.[34] Clearly, a different sort of claim is being made.

For one thing, this group (others use this terminology too) has entextualized the qawwālī genre synecdochically, somewhat parallel to the way in which Pakistanis did with respect to dhamāl—via the phrase "dam-ā-dam mast qalandar." Just as dhamāl has strong connotational meaning in shrine Sufism of Pakistan, so, too, does qawwālī in many regions of South Asia, including Hyderabad.[35] The connection between the two has been fostered by the mass media, which is responsible for disseminating the phrase "dam-ā-dam mast qalandar" across the Indian subcontinent. The eponymous folk song, also called "Lāl Meri Pat," was recorded instrumentally at least as early as the 1950s (Jogi 1997:track 4), made famous by the singer Reshma in the 1960s (Abbas 2002:25ff.) and later performed internationally by qawwālī singers such as the Sabri Brothers (1991: track 4).

Today the qawwālī version of the song "Dam-ā-dam mast qalandar" is the most well-known and imitated across the Indian subcontinent, downloaded as cell-phone ringtones and piped as insipid background music in express trains. Disseminated as fodder for variously passive or active aesthetic consumption, the song carries very little of its earlier symbolic import. In its associations with Sufi shrines and qawwālī, the song has generalized "Muslim" connotations, but even these have been watered down. Young people hearing the popular melody via multiple media seldom have the tools to connect the song with its source as a mystical phrase associated with a shrine in Sindh. I could not even recognize the popular melody of "Dam-ā-dam mast qalandar" in the Hyderabad performance, so if what I heard was a version of the popular piece, it had been multiply transformed. The only "residue of past social interaction" (Silverstein and Urban 1996:5) that adhered to the piece as played was a generalized sense of Muslim identity in a diverse South Asian context, the sense that this piece should always be played first and that it is foundational even though performers may not quite know why.

The Hyderabad group accompanied the piece with bhangrā (although they chose not to identify it as such), which is somewhat ironic because they do know a pattern called "dhamāl." Members of the group were unaware of the

close connection between the specifically Sufi phrase "dam-ā-dam mast qalandar" and the drum rhythm of dhamāl as played in Pakistan. The bhangrā drum rhythm has become absolutely generalized as a kind of South Asian groove and carries the sense of Panjabiness only weakly. The powerful vehicle for creating Muslim musical identities across the subcontinent is not the individual drummers in shrines but the popular recording artists who disseminate their musical styles and play a role in influencing local musical tastes.

The phrase "'Alī dā pahlā 'number,'" which rhymes with and follows "dam-ā-dam mast qalandar," has significant Sufi (and Shī'ī) connotations in its emphasis on 'Alī as the first link in the spiritual "chain" following the death of Muhammad. In the Hyderabad example, "Dam-ā-dam mast qalandar" had been, in effect, generalized from its multiple origins. Reinscribed as a propitious ritual beginning, it had come full circle: This music provided a link between a worldly wedding and the spiritual wedding, or 'urs, of Sufi saints. "Dam-ā-dam mast qalandar" has become a point of departure for different kinds of regional identity that, at the same time, plug into national and international expansions of shrine practices in Sindh province.

One need not agree with Charles Keil's well-known assertion that music must be "out of time" and "out of tune" to be "personally involving and socially valuable" (1994:96) to accept the idea that music's social character can be read in the ways in which elements of a performance work together. I have focused here on forms of coming together and drawing apart that are acted out in 'urs participants' interactions and referenced through specific gestures and esoteric drum-rhythm meanings. When poets, politicians, musicians, and others envision what it means to belong to a particular social group, whether defined by Islam, language, region, or affiliation to particular saints or shrines, they manipulate a common set of themes and symbols (and, from time to time, they probably create new ones). Many draw on the philosophical potentials in Sufi thought for bringing moral unity in the face of empirical forms of difference.

From a "poetics" perspective, my focus has been on ways in which social actors connect and disconnect formal structures with one another—most broadly, those having to do with the moving body in space and the ambiguous potential of coordination among parts to embody forms of "truth" (as Pappu put it). Because the range of possible ways in which participants act, generate, and receive meanings at complex events such as 'urses remains elusive in its complexity and magnitude, it remains difficult to move much beyond the potential shiftiness of individuals and their "multiple subjective modalities" (Ewing 1997:35; see also Gramsci 1999). Yet commonplace names, gestures, and meanings remain useful points of departure for examining the ways in which individuals create subjectivities and situate them within something larger.

Notes

1. Although the term *poetics,* as Herzfeld notes, derives from a Greek root meaning "action," in wider academic usages, the term often indexes a focus on aesthetics and language and is, therefore, sometimes avoided when the focus is on issues of embodiment or music (Brenneis 1987:248). The whole question of "language" and how it is related to human activities that are "not language" rests on a problematic bifurcation of the two (Hill and Mannheim 1992:382); but beginning with the assumption that something exists in music and movement that lies beyond the grasp of direct language, without foreclosing language's larger role, leaves open rich avenues for exploring the nuances of human communicative activity.

2. Embodying an "excess of meanings" (Ewing 1997:45), Sufism is notoriously difficult to define. It refers both to a diversity of practices actors enact at shrines and to the specific philosophies associated with particular religious and social orders. Its members range from iconoclastic individualists—Madho Lāl Husain was one—to communally oriented practitioners with restrictive interpretations of Muslim law *(sharī'ah).* Many of those who follow what is called "the Sufi path" share the belief that an individual can become closer to and gain a better understanding of God through experiential means. Some seek forms of self-awareness and transcendence that do not directly implicate notions of the divine. Important experiential means include intensive love *('ishq),* reiterative physical or verbal regimens *(zikr),* and the internalization of mystical insights. Although the more internationally visible followers of the Sufi path are known for their ecstatic dancing *(raqs),* love of music, and consumption of intoxicants, several Sufi orders do not support these ways. (Naturally, one would not expect to find drumming at shrines associated with such orders.)

3. James Kippen defines *grooves* as "regularly repeating accentual patterns rooted in bodily movement (i.e. dance)" (2001:1). Kippen argues that certain *tāls* (metrical configurations) in Hindustani classical music now played on the tabla derive from the folk grooves played on drums such as the ḍhol.

4. The ghazal, originally a genre of Arabic poetry whose themes were love and intoxication, accrued mystical dimensions beginning in the 11th century when the form was taken up in Persia. See Pritchett n.d. See also Barbara Herrnstein Smith's landmark study, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End,* which discusses with sophistication and elegance closural properties of repetition in, among other things, rhymed couplets (1968:70ff.).

5. Judith Becker points out, however, that "the distinction [between the message and its medium] is crucial to the Sufis" (2004:81; Qureshi 1986:121).

6. See the related issues of "indeterminacy" raised by Thomas J. Csordas (1993:149ff.), which apply to this and other examples of "signs of possibility" in a Peircian framework; I find Csordas's category of "indeterminacy" rather ill defined, whereas the Peircian concept is well framed within a semiotic model.

7. The noted historian of Islam G. S. Hodgson highlighted the combined force of the moth and flame as a symbol, "that interresonance of disparate points of experience which, through some common structural character, serve to illuminate one another and to enrich one another's implications" (1964:222). This much-exploited image appears not only ubiquitously in world literatures of the present day but can be found in early Hindu and Sikh sources as well (Brockington 1977:448; Fenech 2001:24).

8. Fire, in Sherry Ortner's (1979) terms, is an elaborating symbol, and redness, in Charles Sanders Peirce's (1955) terms, is a qualisign, a quality that serves as a sign when embodied.

9. Nancy D. Munn (1974:580) has emphasized the importance of the sign vehicle's form to the message carried.

10. In December 2003, singing sessions were held on Sundays and readings on Thursdays.

11. The scope of this article does not permit a detailed comparison of his version with more authoritative versions or analysis of variations in his own rendition of the same stanza. I relied on Adam Nayyar for the translation from Panjabi presented here.

12. "Familiar background" is an allusion to William Hanks's discussion of discourse genres (of which Sufi poetic tradition is one) as both formal structures and "orienting frameworks, interpretive procedures, and sets of expectations" (1987:670–671) that form an integral part of a speech community's linguistic habitus. Hanks emphasizes the Bakhtinian notion that "no element can enter . . . without importing its value coefficients with it. Actors take these values for granted, as a familiar background . . . against which their acts are intelligible" (1987:671).

13. Presumably some faqīrs chant "dīn panāh" aloud as well, thereby communicating this textualization to Pappu, who conveyed it to me.

14. This is common in jazz and many world traditions of musical improvisation. See, for example, descriptions of jazz performers deforming one another's patterns in Berliner 1994:362, 390. See also Julian Gerstin's (1998:144 and passim) wonderfully detailed phenomenological description of dancer–drummer interactions, especially in negotiating imprecisions, in Martinican Bèlè.

15. Whether the history of Sufic uses of fire metaphors has any bearing on the origin of fire practices at 'urses is difficult to determine; multiple continuities exist with ancient Hindu and Zoroastrian fire rituals.

16. Fire is also used in a common metaphor for Islamic dynastic succession. Safavid ruler Shah Ismail (1487–1524) invoked it when he declared himself to be "descended from the seventh imam . . . and the bearer of the divine [pre-eternal] fire . . . that preceded the Quran and the creation of the universe" (Lapidus 2002:234).

17. The same might be said of other musicians who provide music for others' transcendent experiences, such as performers of qawwālī, a Sufi vocal and instrumental genre (Qureshi 1986). See also Becker 2004:82.

18. Niamat and Shahid played dhamāl at 130 counts per minute at the 'urs.

19. Also note here the local emphasis on difference in form, played out in degrees of complexity, for drumming repertoire marked as religiously functional; similar kinds of formal differentiation characterize religious from nonreligious language (Keane 1997:52).

20. Important to both this bol pattern (see also Figure A2) and to parallel practices in the Hindustani concert tradition (to which many ḍhol players have access), is the contrast between the aspirated,

voiced syllable *(dhīn)* on the first count and the unaspirated, unvoiced one on the third *(tān)*. The aspirated, voiced bol is iconic of a resounding bass articulation on one side of the drum (left or right; this varies according to performer). The unaspirated, unvoiced syllable corresponds to a stressed treble stroke on the opposite side of the drum; the last pulse of the unvoiced count is marked by a damped bass stroke (see Figure A1).

21. In her discussion of jazz and zouk rhythmic textures, whose components are named rhythmic grooves, Ingrid Monson notes that "while the full range of patterns combine to form the dynamic whole of the rhythmic feel, some layers play a more significant role in defining that sound" (1999:45). In this way, similar components of a larger rhythmic configuration may migrate from a layer of one named unit to a layer of another, and this may or may not have implications for how that rhythm is identified. In the case of dhamāl, bhangrā, and some other grooves, there is room for temporary overlap or mixing, which would necessarily add ambiguity to the classification.

22. Presumably Pappu is referring to the *hadīs* "man kunto maulā fā 'alī-un-maulā" [whoever accepts me as master, 'Alī is his master too]. This is also a foundational text used in qawwālī, in which it is termed the "qaul" (see Qureshi 1986:20–21 and passim). Shī'ahs commemorate the Prophet, Muhammad's utterance of this hadīs on the 18th of Zil Hijjah in the Muslim calendar. The holiday is called " 'Eidul Ghadir."

23. Other rhythmic configurations possess their own potentials, as, for instance, tīntāl, which Pappu Sāī̠n claims caused fire to erupt behind him and his partner Jhura Sāī̠n when they were performing at the shrine of Pīr Pāk Farmān. Pappu Sāī̠n, articulating system-level knowledge, once insisted that dhamāl was the only pattern that could induce mastī with the saint or God in the dancer. Later, in response to queries about his own practices at Shah Jamāl shrine, he admitted that *panjābi lāva* (the name of a particular rhythmic pattern) could have the same effect and, for that matter, so could any rhythm played on the ḍhol—a good example of the kind of position-shifting discussed by Ewing.

24. See Leante 2004 for an excellent musical investigation of bhangrā in Britain. Some Panjabis in Pakistan, who insist that bhangrā is more Sikh than Panjabi, dissent on the matter of bhangrā being essentially Panjabi. To them, the *luḍḍi* dance is emblematic of the region; luḍḍi is also danced at 'urses but bears no particular relationship to Sufism. Whereas such markers of identity and distinction are male, women on both sides of the India–Pakistan border dance their own characteristically Panjabi dance, *giddhā*, by clapping, singing and stepping in and out of a circle (see Middlebrook 2000:652–654).

25. Some say that "real" dhamāl dance involves more emphasis on lower body moves, whereas bhangrā emphasizes upper body movements.

26. This was, in any case, the observation of the journalist Sarwat Alī and the anthropologist Adam Nayyar, as we discussed changes we had observed at Shah Jamāl over the years. We had attended Pappu's performance together that Christmas night (2003) at the shrine.

27. Over and above the common reference to musical togetherness as a sign, or instantiation, of social togetherness, some scholars have become interested in naturalistic and biological models to explain what it means to be in synch. Ongoing research on the phenomenon of "entrainment," whereby two oscillating bodies (machines, insects, etc.) begin somehow to coordinate with one another, is beginning to be explored by ethnomusicologists and music cognitivists. See, for instance the ongoing activities of the "Entrainment Network," organized by Martin Clayton (Open University, Milton Keynes, UK) and Udo Will (Ohio State University), and Judith Becker's recent book, which develops the concept of "struc-tural coupling" (2004:121ff. and passim), the ways human brains and bodies, and other organisms, become "linked through repeated interaction." Becker uses the notion of "structural coupling" to explore the kinds of interactions listeners and dancers experience with musicians under the larger rubric of "trance."

28. Although dancers are not likely to carry images such as that of a moth attracted to a flame in their consciousness while they dance near a fire, everyday images have played an important role in music and quotidian life to transmit aspects of Islamic thought and culture (Eaton 1974).

29. The term *lāl* also means "dear," "son," or "precious one." These associations of endearment infiltrate the meanings of these saint names for Pakistanis.

30. A fine article by Scott Kugle (2000) explains some of the bowdlerization of the Husain narrative in the historical record.

31. See also Iqbal's recent discussion of regional and ethnic forces "which were not anticipated or even contemplated by the founding fathers . . . [and which] superseded the spirit of Muslim nationalism" (2003:361).

32. Such hierachies are found in the separation of master from disciple, the various "stages" through which the Sufi novice passes, and the ranked offices, spiritual and administrative, in a shrine.

33. The genre name *qawwālī* may also get attached to non-Muslim song styles, as it is common for genre names, even *dhamāl,* to travel semi-independently from their musical referents or for song styles to change dramatically while retaining their names. See, for instance, the case of *Bhajan kavvali,* the didactic Hindu genre performed by diasporic Indians in Fiji (Brenneis 1987).

34. In Lahore, the same piece may be rendered, for instance, in kāfī style or qawwālī style.

35. Non-Muslim styles and commercial, seemingly religion-neutral versions of qawwālī do exist on the subcontinent. But, as Sharilee Johnston (2000:52) put it, Sufi performances of qawwālī in the old city of Hyderabad are still considered *mazhabī* (religious, authentic, proper) despite variations in style; she suggests that the term *mazhabī* "becomes an ideological trope for its Muslim participants when used in distinction to a Hindu-ized and commercialized cultural milieu" (Johnston 2000:53).

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Appendix for "The Poetics of 'Sufi' Practice"
by Richard K. Wolf

One of the principal dhamāl patterns as played on the ḍhol is illustrated in Figure A1.

The syllabic representation of the rhythm prioritizes some strokes and ignores others. Moreover, the bols under a given rubric may vary from time to time as uttered by a single performer or by a range of performers. Pappu Sāīn's more skeletal, qualitatively contrasting pattern, uses slightly different vowels and consonants (see Figure A2).

Regarding the distinction between dhamāl and bhangrā, see Figures A3 and A4 and discussion below. Pappu Sāīn (see Audio 1 at www.aesonline.org, 33/2 issue archive page) used these vocal representations of drum patterns to illustrate the limited "scope of the ḍhol" *(ḍhol kā maqṣad)* compared with that of the classical tabla, on which his ḍhol playing is modeled.

The bol patterns of some dhamāl and bhangrā versions are virtually identical; bhangrā counts may be subdivided into three (see Figure A3, A) as well as four (see Figures A3, B; and A4, A and B) pulses, and some dhamāl variations (not shown here) also exploit triple subdivisions. What differentiates the two patterns? Superstructural patterns played on the bass side of the drum. In bhangrā, key bass strokes are on counts one and four (or, counted differently, one and two-and-a-half, and three and four-and-a-half; see bottom line in Figure A4, B; and bols in bold in Figures A3, A and B; and A4, A).

Such emphasis in the bass distinguishes bhangrā from other duple grooves, including dhamāl. Further contrasts with bhangrā appear in bass variations, such as those that combine treble and bass stroke components of basic dhamāl (see Figure A5).

Some of the phrases and their corresponding drum patterns can be repeated fragmentarily. Bass drum pattern B in Figure A5, which corresponds to "dam-ā-dam mast qalandar," can be played or verbally chanted independently; pattern C, which corresponds to " 'alī dā pahlā 'number,' " tends to be verbalized only after phrase B but can be deployed independently as a rhythmic pattern on the drums. Pattern D, which corresponds to "mast qalandar mast," perhaps the smallest unit that represents dhamāl as a whole, can both be chanted and played. The texts line up with the principal counts in Figure A6.

Figure A7 depicts faqīrs' vocalization of dhamāl. The top line is the abstract bol pattern; the lower line is a phrase meaning "refuge [for the] faith."

x			x		x	**x**	•	x		**x**			**x**
X			X			X				o			X

Figure A.1. A basic version of dhamāl as demonstrated by Nazir Ahmed (Multan, March 27, 1997 [see Audio 4 at www.aesonline.org, 33/2 issue archive page]). M.M. (tempo) = 160. Top line (treble): **x** = stressed stroke; x = lighter stroke; • = very light stroke. Bottom line (bass): X = open, resonant stroke; o = closed/damped stroke. All strokes are played with sticks.

dhāg			da	nāg		din		tāg			da	nāg		din

Figure A.2. One of Pappu Sāīn's representations of dhamāl (February 7, 1998).

Figure A.3. Two "unadorned" *(sadāh)* or "simple" *(sīdhe)* bol patterns for bhangrā.

A

1				2			1				2			
dhen			da	na	ka	din	na	dhen			da	na	ka	din	na

B

x				x	x			x	x				x	x				x

| X | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | | X | | | |

Figure A.4. Bhangrā bols spoken and played on the ḍhol by Nazir Ahmed (Multan, March 27, 1997 [see Audio 3 at www.aesonline.org, 33/2 issue archive page]). M.M. = 174.

A

x				x			x	x	•	x		x			x

| X | | | X | | | X | | | | | o | | | X | |

B

X			X	X		X					X	X		X	

C

X		X		X		X					X	X		X	

D

X			X	X		X		X							

Figure A.5. Basic dhamāl pattern (A) compared with bass variants (B–D).

Phrase 5D:

X			X	X		X		X							
mast			qa	lan		dar		mast							

Phrase 5B:

X			X	X		X					X	X		X	
mast			qa	lan		dar					dam	ā		dam	

Phrase 5C (phrase 5B text in parentheses):

X	X		X	X				X	X		X	
(mast		qa	lan	dar)				a	lī		dā	
pah	la		nam	bar				(dam	ā		dam)	

Figure A.6. Correspondences between bass-drum patterns and zikr chants commonly heard as listeners interacted with Pappu Sāīn on Thursday nights at Shah Jamāl. Casually observed 1997, 1998 (see Audio 5 at www.aesonline.org, 33/2 issue archive page), 2003 (Phrases 5B–D refer to Figure A5 B–D).

dhīn			di	nā		di	na	tān			ta	nā		ta	na
dīn			pa	nāh		da	na	dīn			pa	nāh		da	na

Figure A.7. Faqīrs' refiguration of dhamāl (according to Pappu Sāīn).