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Frank J. Korom

Abstract

This paper begins with the notion of speech surrogates in the study of music by suggesting the alternate "song surrogate" for forms of non-verbal music that have replaced spoken, chanted or sung communication. The specific example used is the Hosay drums (tassa) of Trinidad. On the island, as East Indian residents began favoring English as their common tongue, the song genre marcee *waned in ritual usage. Simultaneously, the mournful narratives of the* marcee *were "translated" into drum melodies. My contention is that the* tassa *rhythms used to replace the song genre grew in importance as the genre fell into disuse.*

1. Speaking of Speaking Drums[1]

A great deal of literature has been written about "speech surrogates;" that is, non-verbal modes of communication which function in a capacity similar to, if not identical with, language (Stern 1957). Perhaps most prominent in this literature is the emphasis on the numerous varieties of talking drums in sub-Saharan Africa (Carrington 1949), most of which imitate the human voice. The phenomenon exists elsewhere as well, but much less has been written about drum languages in other parts of the world. My usage of the term "speech surrogate" ex-

tends beyond the realm of semantics to include also semiotic aspects of such replacements. This is a necessary methodological elaboration, since the phenomenon under discussion is not simply a matter of "translating" from one mode of communication to another. Rather, language often serves as an apt metaphor for very different media in many cultures. In India, for example, a progression on the *tabla* is termed *bol*, the root of the verb "to speak" in many of the north Indian vernaculars. Although the *tabla* beat onomatopoeically represents the human voice in much the same way as scat singing dialogically interacts with guitar playing, it must nonetheless be considered a speech surrogate because it fulfills a culturally anticipated linguistic function.

This form of "noetics," as Walter J. Ong (1967; 1977) has termed it,[2] is important in the study of music because many cultures metaphorically utilize nonverbal codes to express or accentuate verbal meanings. Such epistemological systems are thus powerful channels for transmitting information about a specific culture's *Weltanschauung*. In the case of music, however, the linguistic term speech surrogate might usefully be altered to read "song surrogate," since what is conveyed is often in a generic form other than everyday discourse.

In the remainder of this paper, I present the development of a Trinidadian song surrogate by exploring the way in which an historical metamorphosis of the chanted word into drum rhythms has occurred in the context of a single aspect of "local" Islam (Eickelman 1982; Jansen [ed.] 1985) practiced throughout the world. My focus, however, is not global but regional, mapping the movement of a musically informed rite through three very different cultural environments: Iran, India and Trinidad. By doing so, I hope to provide a previously undocumented example of the way in which language may inform and interact with musical codes of communication in religious contexts. Beyond this basic illustrative point, I wish to suggest some of the possible reasons why a song surrogate has come to replace chanted speech after 1,300 years of complementary interaction. By using the word "replace" here, however, I do not intend to suggest a mere substitution, a conscious elimination of one mode of narrative expression for another. Instead, I believe that a true transformation has occurred, since the long period of time involved in this case has allowed for a gradual change to take place. Along with this change, community exegesis managed to provide the necessary interpretive modifications to account for the eventual predominance of one form of discourse over another.

I will be dealing primarily with an annual event performed mostly, but not exclusively, by Shī'ī Muslims, focusing my attention on the ritual observances held during the first ten days of Muḥarram, the initial lunar month of the Islamic calendar. The rites performed during this month are the most conspicuous and important signs of piety for the Shī'ah. Yet precisely because of their conspicuousness and intensity, members of other faiths have also joined in on occasion.

It is during the month of Muḥarram that Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī (Imām Ḥusayn), the grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad, was massacred by troops of the

Caliphate for political reasons. Ḥusayn, along with his entourage, was inter-
cepted and massacred on the planes of Karbalā', Iraq in 61AH/680AD during a
march to join his followers in the city of Kūfah. This tragic incident is the central
paradigm for the Shī'ī theological emphasis on suffering as a method for achiev-
ing salvation. As such, the event is enacted in numerous ways throughout the
Shī'ī world in order to reap its soteriological benefits. Although the event is ob-
served in numerous forms far from Karbalā',[3] certain core observances remain
constant in this transnational context. One of these constants is the use of kettle
drums which seem to be cognate forms of a Middle Eastern prototype.[4] The way
these related drums are used, however, is not constant, and depends consider-
ably on adaptation to particular cultural climes.

The drums used in Trinidad during Muḥarram observances serve a function
quite distinct from those used in other regions of the world during the same
event. Here the drums do not only signal phases of ritual action, as they do in
other similar performances in Iran and India, but they also relate the paradig-
matic narrative of Ḥusayn's death. Melodic encoding of the narrative thus oper-
ates to preserve a memory of sacred history as understood by the Trinidadian
Shī'ī community. But before proceeding to the Caribbean ethnographic present,
a few words on the historical past out of which the Trinidadian observance
emerged will be necessary to understand how and why a slow transformation
from a linguistic base to a rhythmic one occurred.

2. The Narrativization of History

Hayden White (1987) has reminded us of a necessary theoretical and meth-
odological concern for the narrative quality of history. Insofar as history tells us
a story about particular events believed to be empirically true, we must think of
history as narrative or storytelling. History, from this point of view, is embodied
in narrative. Indeed, aspects of a community's history are often conveyed and
preserved through the telling of important events that transpired in the group's
shared past. It is also quite common for historic events to be communicated au-
rally through folkloric media such as tales and songs. This is the case with the
events that transpired at Karbalā', for conveying the historical tragedy in every-
day discourse has proven insufficient in and of itself to induce the somber mood
strived for during the first ten days of Muḥarram. Other, more poetic, genres of
conveying history have thus emerged in the Shī'ī world to preserve the tragic
story of Imām Ḥusayn.

While the embodiment of history in narrative forms is a key to understand-
ing mechanisms of transmission, it is also important to remember that narratives
themselves have histories. These metahistories then may provide interesting
clues for understanding narratological interrelationships over time, something

that I hint at below. It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into the theo-
retical implications suggested by "narrative histories about historical narra-
tives," but I only raise this issue as a possible direction for future research. Here,
I only wish to highlight chronologically those narrative functions which bear di-
rectly on the Trinidadian data that I present below.

In Iran, where the Muḥarram observances first developed into a royally
sanctioned ritual event in the 16th century, a unique Persian genre called *maqtal*
developed as a literary medium for emotionally expressing the passion of
Ḥusayn and other Shīʿī martyrs.[5] Verses from Vaʿiz Kashifi's famous work, writ-
ten in Persian but given the Arabic title *"Rawḍat al-shuhadā'"* ("The Garden of
the Martyrs"), were read to private assemblies in the gardens of wealthy patrons
to elicit lamentation *(nawḥ)* from audience members.[6] From this time onward,
these private gatherings became known as *rawẓah khvānīs* or "garden recita-
tions" (Chelkowski 1987:220), during which a series of extended threnodies in-
terspersed with exegetical digressions would occur. Other martyrology books
were eventually written on the model of Kashifi's classic to be used in these
mourning assemblies *(majlis)*, and today they comprise a huge body of popular
literature.[7]

Traditionally, a *muraṣṣaʿ khvān* (someone with good recitation skills) would
read elegies *(marṡīyahs)* embedded in the larger *rawẓah* corpus or recite pithy
ones from memory, while standing at a pulpit or sitting on a raised platform so
that his voice would be heard by everyone in the mourning assembly.[8] Here is a
powerful example from the opening lines of an elegy by the Persian poet Qaani:

> What is raining? Blood.
> Who? The eyes.
> How? Day and night.
> Why? From grief.
> Grief for whom? Grief for the King of Karbalāʾ.[9]

J. M. Unvala (1927:86), who witnessed a number of Iranian *rawẓah khvānīs*
in the early years of this century, described a typical recitation in the following
manner:

> ... [he] sits and recites for about an hour an anecdote of the martyrdom in a sing-song
> manner, interspersed with quotations from the Qoran and his commentaries on
> them. He has got such fluency of speech and such volubility, that he recites some-
> times for hours together without stopping even to think. In order to dispel fatigue
> after every sentence or couplet he draws in the breath with a noise produced at the
> back of the throat ... . His serious and grave features, his lachrymose voice, his ges-
> tures of helplessness and deep mourning, combined with the *crescendo tempo*, in
> which he reaches the climax of the tragic stuff of his recital, is sufficient to make even
> hard-hearted men cry dispairingly like babies and women beat their thighs hysteri-
> cally, shed bitter tears and shriek incessantly *Husein, Husein.*

Such gatherings were, as suggested above, arranged to elicit emotional re-
sponses from audience members and to remind the pious of Imām Ḥusayn's suf-

fering. Through participation in these events, the audience members vicariously experienced the martyr's pain through what we might call "subjective apprehension." By subjective apprehension I mean a personal experience of Ḥusayn's passion on the phenomenological level, a level on which individuals have direct access to the Imām's mediational powers within a larger social collective. This physical and mental dimension of the ritual complex is the most central aspect of Muḥarram praxis, appearing throughout the world, albeit clothed in numerous guises. But rather than generalizing about a phenomenon so richly variegated and complex, let us follow the historical progression of the Muḥarram narrative's development as an entrée into the Caribbean context.

Gradually, special elegies were developed for each of the ten days of the observance, leading up to the tenth ('āshūrā'), the day of the month on which Ḥusayn was actually killed. By hearing these elegies recited on the proper days, participants made the past present, thereby actualizing their sacred history. This actualization was, and still is, complemented by spectacular public events such as processions (dastah) for ritual flagellation accompanied by drum and cymbal beating.[10] Ta'zīyas, the so-called "passion plays" (cf. Chelkowski [ed.] 1979) dramatizing the historic events described in the elegies, also take place during this ten-day period.

Taken together, these multisensory events—stationary and processional, private and public—comprise the Muḥarram observances in Iran, telling a story which is relived each year by the faithful. Step by tedious step, the final ten days of Ḥusayn's life are incorporated into each person's being through acts of bodily neglect (i.e., abstinence, fasting) and emotive upheaval (i.e., flagellation, breast beating). As a performance configuration, these events annually recreate a mood that keeps the historical narrative of Ḥusayn alive in the hearts and minds of those who believe in the martyr's redemptive powers.[11]

The historical consciousness instilled in believers by the Muḥarram narratives continued to remain an integral part of the ritual complex as practiced in India. According to legend,[12] it is said that the great conqueror Timur introduced Muḥarram processions in India at the close of the 14th century. Not being able to make a pilgrimage to Karbalā' on Ḥusayn's death anniversary due to a military campaign, Timur had a model cenotaph built to carry with him. These replicas of Ḥusayn's tomb at Karbalā' came to be known as ta'zīyas in Urdu and other north Indian languages.

Note that in India the object of veneration is given the same name as the staged, dramatic renderings of Ḥusayn's passion in Iran. This interesting terminological and conceptual shift suggests something pervasive about Indian public display events; that is, the importance of external displays and processions during communal rituals. In South Asia, the Iranian root concept of separation between private and public rites remained intact (cf. Fruzzetti 1981), even while localized rituals developed to express grief for Ḥusayn. In India, the ta'zīya procession (julūs) became the most popular display of public veneration, while the

tradition of *majlis* or mourning assemblies became the private expression of grief *par excellence* for the Shī'ah (Qureshi 1981).

Even though the Indic tradition of *marsīyah* writing and recitation goes back to 16th-century Golconda and Bijapur in the Deccan, the tradition flourished in 19th-century Lucknow (Naim 1983:101–2), the center of Shī'ī culture in north India during this period. Based on their Perso-Arabic predecessors, new styles of elegy became prevalent in a number of Indian languages,[13] and their recitation to induce weeping during assemblies continued to preserve the memory of Husayn's passion. As the narrative continued to be the focus of much private Muharram activity, drums began their ascent in importance in terms of performative force.

It is in India that the use of drums begins to acquire a more nuanced meaning with regards to Muharram observances in several regions of the subcontinent. As in Iran, drums are used to set the rhythm for breast beating and flagellation in India; and also like Iran, they are not used generally to accompany elegy performances in mourning assemblies.[14] In other words, drums are most conspicuous during the public processionals. Drums of various sorts started to be used for multiple purposes during Muharram processions quite early on in India.[15] By the 19th century, while the *marsīyah* was reaching its compositional peak as a genre, the independent use of *tassa (ṭāśa)* (Figure 1) and bass drums (*dhol*) (Figure 2) was also becoming fashionable. However, from what we know, the use of eloquent language and drumming to commemorate the martyred Imām were still demarcated along a private/public axis in the middle of the 19th century when Indians began migrating to the Caribbean to work as indentured laborers on sugar cane plantations.[16]

3. Transforming Language to Music

The first Indians arrived in Trinidad in 1845, and the missionary account of K. J. Grant confirms that Muharram ceremonies and processions were being practiced on some plantations less than a decade after their arrival.[17] Muharram observances were being practiced in Jamaica, Surinam and British Guyana as well (Bettelheim & Nunley 1988). From oral accounts, we know that *marsīyahs* (called *marcee* or *marsay* in Trini patois) were being sung in all of the above Caribbean regions. Beckwith (1924:7) writes of women's "mourning songs" lamenting the loss of the martyr: "... the songs are not written down in books but are taught by the priest and ... thirty or forty may be known in one district, all sung to variations of the same tune." This is quite a large repertoire considering the songs were preserved by memory and passed on orally. These songs were sung on the evening of the ninth and during the processions on the tenth in Jamaica. The performance of these songs was accompanied by a number of other events going on simultaneously. Among these, was the use of *tassa* and bass drums

Fig. 1. A tassa *player from eastern Uttar Pradesh, India, circa 1850. Painted on mica in the Banaras region*

(*ibid.*:8–9), accompanied by cymbals called *jainch*, the local rendering of the Persian *sanj*.

Unfortunately, we do not have any accounts of *marcee* singing at the turn of the century in Trinidad. However, oral accounts suggest that songs were, in fact, sung in Bhojpuri, a dialect of Hindi spoken in the area where a majority of the indentured recruits hailed from (i.e., eastern U.P. and Bihar). When the *ta'zīyas* or *tadjahs*,[18] as they are known in the Caribbean, were brought out on the tenth, women would walk behind the objects of veneration and sing "sad songs." Simultaneously, *tassas* and basses were being beaten.[19] But, as "Indian," the term

Fig. 2. A bass player from eastern Uttar Pradesh, India circa 1850. Painted on mica in the Banaras region

currently used for any dialect of Hindi once spoken in Trinidad, continued to creolize and English became the lingua franca of the nation-state, the sad songs were forgotten, according to a number of Trinidadian women whose mothers used to sing the songs.[20]

The tradition which remained pervasive in Trinidad, even as "Indian" declined in usage, was the beating of drums. As I have been suggesting, the use of drums, often accompanied by cymbals of various sizes, was a common phenomenon during Muḥarram observances in many parts of the world. But I have also been attempting to stress that percussive instruments had limited functions in

the Iranian context, functions which were maintained in India. This fact not withstanding, the specific utilization of *tassas* during Muḥarram rituals became associated with India and the places where Indians eventually settled (Dournon & Kartomi 1984:532). Based on what scant information is available, it is safe to say that bass drums and cymbals were used to accompany *tassas* in India, a tradition that diffused out of South Asia along with East Indians who migrated to communities scattered about in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. This conjecture is supported by drummers in Trinidad who say that they play a style brought to the island by their forefathers. Indeed, the whole, complicated Hosay observance, as Muḥarram is known in Trinidad, is believed to have been passed down unchanged through particular Shī'ī lineages from the time of the first arrival (Korom 1994b:140–3).

I have dealt with this indigenous understanding elsewhere *(ibid.)*, so I won't dwell on the matter here. Suffice it to say that there is sufficient reason to speculate that local ritual adaptations were occurring in all ethnic Trinidadian communities over the past 150 years. Moreover, these changes became more drastic as the island community moved rapidly towards independence in the 1950 and 1960s. It is my contention that Hosay, like many religious observances and other aspects of culture on the island, was being creatively altered by practitioners in response to a number of factors. One of these factors was a decline in the active use of Hindi dialects. This is precisely the point at which the relationship between language and rhythm intersects and crystallizes.

Although *tassas* and basses were being used during the plantation period, when *marcees* were still being sung on a regular basis, they seem to have acquired an esoteric "language" of their own as the singing tradition progressively faded out of participants' active repertoires during the last generation. In other words, as the use of spoken "Indian" declined, so too did *marcee* singing. But in response to this development, drumming rhythms became more elaborate, taking on metaphorical and esoteric intricacies whose meanings in earlier times were insipient at best. This is to say that more and more theological attention focussed on the style and meaning of drum "talk" as active use of Indian language and song declined.

It is not possible to trace the transformation temporally because adequate data are simply not available. However, drummers have told me repeatedly that the percussive tradition became stronger as the singing tradition declined.[21] The comments of drummers are further legitimated by the fact that a number of innovations in Hosay drumming style took place during this same period of transition, as is evidenced by the introduction of a special rhythm termed *chalta kabulkhana* by the late Ibrahim Ali, a well-known and highly respected *tassa* player who lived his whole life in St. James, the locus of my research. In essence, what many of my musician friends hinted at was the emergence of a song surrogate.

4. Drumming the Hosay Narrative

Drumming during Hosay is embedded in a larger process of enactment which interconnects the construction and maintenance of drums with the construction and destruction of *tadjahs* on an annual basis. To the knowledgeable observor, these combined elements of performance add up to the Husayn passion, enacted in a fashion uniquely suited to local circumstances. As participants insist, "You can't separate one from another." What they tell us is what social scientists have been propagating since the heyday of anthropological fieldwork (Malinowski 1948): We must contextualize, rather than compartmentalize for the sake of analysis.

At any rate, the merger of craft tradition, music and religious action creates a performance configuration suitable for the completion of annual commemorations for Imām Husayn and the theological realization of his suffering. Through the "sacrifices" (i.e., monetary and physical) of participants, Husayn's ordeal is subjectively apprehended, even here, so far away from Karbalā'. "This is the power of religion," one *tadjah* maker explained, "everybody doing it their own way but at the same time!" Then a drummer standing nearby chimed in, "The power of religion is the power of the drum." This is a lucid point worth returning to at the end of this essay. But for now it is important to reiterate that to understand the drums, one must understand Hosay as a holistic event. This is not necessarily a contemplative understanding for participants, but an experiential one brought about through physical engagement in the work of preparation. Every activity leading up to the actual observance is an opportunity for the individual to assist in the global drama of Husayn's passion.

Four *tadjahs* are built in different "yards" located in St. James, a predominantly East Indian suburb of Port of Spain, Trinidad.[22] Further, with the exception of one yard which hires an outside ensemble to perform alongside their *tadjah* each year, a drum room is associated with each of these. The yards begin building their *tadjahs* at an unspecified time after *baqr i 'id*,[23] which falls in the middle of the month preceding Muharram. This allows artisans to complete their structures within a 20–30 day period. Simultaneous to the commencement of *tadjah* construction, members of the adjoining drum rooms in each yard also begin their work on the maintenance of old drums and the construction of new ones. Work goes on in this fashion until the first day of Muharram arrives. That evening, there is a noticeable difference in the pace of activity.

As the pace quickens during the first few days of the month, drums are brought out to be tested during evening rehearsals (Figure 3). Huge bonfires are built to heat the skins of the *tassa* drums. The *tassa*, a fire-baked clay drum, kettle-shaped and covered with a goat skin, is a sensitive instrument, especially after not being used for nearly twelve months. The skins must be constantly heated to attain the desired pitch, but too much fire results in an overly taut surface which bursts when struck.[24] Thus, only master drummakers and players may guard the

Fig. 3. A practice session on tassa and bass in St. James, Trinidad

fire. Younger drummers, however, who "hang out" in the yards to "take a knock," learn how to beat drums, construct and maintain them by assisting the older masters during these practice sessions. The bass[25] drums, made of mango or spruce, require equal care, although they are tuned by tension rather than by heat. Getting the drums into shape for three evenings and a day of performance is very labor-intensive. It is thus very common for yard members to be up all night building the *tadjahs* and restringing bass drums. All of this allows musician and artist alike to enter the correct frame of mind for the evening processions, beginning on the seventh of Muḥarram.

On the first night of procession, called "Flag Night," each yard takes out a wheeled platform *(kathiya)* covered with flags symbolizing Ḥusayn's party's march. Each *kathiya* is accompanied by its respective yards' drummers, who lead the way for the platform. The groups leave their respective yards at approximately 11 p.m., converge on the main road and continue to "parade" back and forth until 3 or 4 a.m. There is usually a distinct hierarchy of movement that cor-

responds to specific hands played by the drummers. The *kathiyas* are spaced at a comfortable distance from each other on the road, but when the groups must stop and turn at each end of the road, they find themselves facing another yard's ensemble. At such moments, a "clash" takes place, during which the facing groups' drummers and cymbal players break into a "war hand" for a bout of competetive drumming. These symbolic clashes obviously represent martial conflicts between Husayn and his slaughterers, but local crowds view these bouts as tests of musical skill. Everyone enjoys these climaxing moments of quick, loud and penetrating drum rhythms, evidenced by the audience members' supportive cheers, slaps and body movements. After hours of this repetetive action, the groups return to their yards to pray, rest and await the next day's events.

The processions generally follow this same pattern each night. On the second night, called "Small Hosay Night," each yard places a small *tadjah* on their flag *kathiya* after many of the flags have been removed. This is done in honor of the martyred Imam's elder brother, Hasan. The groups once again leave their yards at approximately 11 p.m. As each night goes by, more and more people gather on the streets for the event, and the largest crowds are present on the evening of the ninth, called "Big Hosay Night. "

On this night, the large *tadjahs* are brought out onto the street. It is a public display event locally thought to be almost as great as the famous Trinidad Carnival.[26] Each *tadjah* is moved onto the main road to the constant reverberation of drum beats, while two crescent "moons," said to represent Husayn and Hasan, emerge to "dance" or "twirl" down the street (Korom 1994a). As the whole event reaches its climax, the greatest drum clashes occur, sometimes lasting until dawn.

On the following day, there is a daytime procession from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., during which the *tadjahs* and the two moons follow a different route for the final display. Again, the procession is accompanied by the steady beat of *tassas*, basses and cymbals (Figure 4). The destination for this day's activity is Queen's Royal College (QRC) grounds, where a tract of land was granted by the Queen of England in colonial times to serve as the local equivalent of Karbalā'. Upon arrival at QRC, the two moons are placed on a predesignated sacred site, where a religious official recites burial prayers. Once this occurs, the procession slowly winds its way back onto the main road of St. James and the processions come to an abrupt end. After a day of "lying in state," *teeja* prayers for the dead are said in the morning and, after being rather unceremoniously destroyed, the *tadjahs* are immersed in the ocean.

This whole process of abstinence and discipline then shifts into a happier mode: a catharsis takes place. Drumming shifts to a soca beat, replacing the special hands used during Hosay, and numerous "limes" or parties occur in the yards and on beaches located nearby.[27]

By now, it should be clear that the events leading up to the destruction of the *tadjahs* are a symbolic reenactment of Husayn's tragedy for those who under-

Fig. 4. A line of tassa *drummers heading to the Queen's Royal College grounds with* tadjahs *in the background. Notice the female* tassa *player at the center.*

stand its shrouded galaxy of meaning. This is not apparent to most people in the audience, but very clear to initiates who participate in the ritualistic dimension of the event and the preservation of the narrative which serves to justify it. This includes the drummers, who are not necessarily Muslim, or even East Indian.[28] The question that remains is how the narrative is preserved in the light of the decline of *marcee* singing. As I have attempted to suggest, the drums fill this communicative vacuum.

The fact that the historical narrative depicting Ḥusayn's martyrdom is communicated by drums during Hosay is clear when we look at the names given to the five distinct hands (rhythms) played during the processions in St. James:[29]

			Beginning
(1) *teen chopra*	=	Peace Hand	
(2) *kabulkhana*	=	Marching Hand	
(3) *mahatam*	=	War Hand	
(4) *chalta kabulkhana*	=	Burial Hand	
(5) *nubie salbat*	=	Lamentation Hand	End

These hands are played in a loosely conceived chronological order that corresponds to temporal clues and spatial signals along the processional route, all part of drummers' lore in St. James. Like the numerous *rasas* of classical Indian *ragas* which conjure up specific moods or emotions, the rhythms of the Hosay hands produce intuitive responses in individuals who have been initiated into the esoteric meanings of the tradition. The "peace hand" represents Ḥusayn's original intentions to simply meet his followers, while the "marching hand" suggests movement and solitude. Then, as the conflict with Ḥusayn's enemies ensues, there is a shift to the "war hand." In fact, drummers figuratively speak of the clashes which occur while playing this hand as a battle. Later, battle gives way to grief as the funeral procession and burial occur. At this somber time, the *chalta* (moving) *kabulkhana* centers attention on the sadness of Ḥusayn's burial by slowing down the marching hand to a considerable crawl. Finally, the realization that Ḥusayn is no more leads to a feeling of lamentation.

The five hands described above evoke the same moods earlier intended by the *marcees*. Similarly, the chronological progression of the hands parallels the punctuated recitation of *marṣīyahs* in Iran and India. I have argued in a rather obvious fashion that the gradual decline of *marcee* singing focussed attention on the drums as song surrogates. Although it would be too deterministic to claim that there was a direct cause and effect relationship or a one to one correspondence between the two phenomena, it seems to be the case that one is definitely linked to the other. At least this is how many practitioners understand it. In this example, a song surrogate plays a quintessential role in the transmission of religious knowledge and acts as a catalyst for what I have termed "subjective apprehension;" that is, the direct experiencing or remembering of Ḥusayn's passion through participation. Through the "language" of the drum, the Shī'ah of Trinidad believe that they are participating in a global commemoration of a tragedy that transcends time and space by linking all believers, past and present. Indeed, as the drummer quoted above stated in a philosophical vein: "When the drums speak, we know who we are."

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Notes

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2   Zurbuchen (1987:35) succinctly defines Ong's term "to refer to the specific processes of producing, re-

membering, recalling, and sharing through which different cultures manage their knowledge store."

3   The event is found as far east as Indonesia (cf. Helfrich 1888; Jongejans 1939; van Ronkel 1914) and as far west as Jamaica (Beckwith 1924; Mansingh & Mansingh 1979), Guyana (Mangru 1993) and Trinidad (Chelkowski & Korom 1993; Korom 1994b; Korom & Chelkowski 1994).

4   The instrument I will be concerned about in this article is the kettle-shaped *ṭāśa*, probably of Persian origin, but now used wherever Indian Muslims have settled (see Dournon & Kartomi 1984:532).

5   The tradition of honoring Ḥusayn during a private commemorative service (*majlis al-ʿazāʾ*), however, is much older, as is the public remembrance led by a professional mourner (*nāʾib*) (see Ayoub 1978).

6   Kashifi is said to have finished his book in 908AH/1502AD (see Mahdjoub 1988:74). This is believed to be the first official compendium of Shīʿī martyrology.

7   For a lucid and comprehensive study of this phenomenon, see Thaiss 1973.

8   The *marṣīyah* already had a long history in Arabic verse prior to its emergence as a sub-genre of Persian poetry (see Clarke 1986).

9   As cited in Schimmel 1986:29.

10   In this case, drums are used mainly to keep time for the flagellants.

11   The Shīʿah believe that Ḥusayn has the power to speak to Allah on behalf of those individuals who have suffered for him on earth. Consider the following passage from a *taʿzīya* drama: "Go thou and deliver from the flames every one who has in his life-time shed but a single tear for thee, every one who has in any way helped thee, every one who has performed a pilgrimage to thy shrine, or mourned for thee, and everyone who has written tragic verse for thee. Bear each and all with thee to Paradise" (Pelly 1879:335–48).

12   In his "A Literary History of Persia" (1953), Browne mentions an apocryphal text from Lucknow, India called the *"Timurnamah"*, in which these incidents are described. However, oral accounts about the advent of *taʿzīyas* in the subcontinent are still very much alive.

13   For Urdu, see Karrar 1986 and Naim 1983; for Sindhi, see Schimmel 1979; for Bengali, see Sāklāyen 1969 and for Balti, see Sagaster (1993:309).

14   They could, however, be used indoors to accompany a breast-beating session.

15   Very little documentation exists on this phenomenon. In fact, I have surveyed a number of academic accounts as well as unpublished travel accounts, personal memoirs and diaries from the 18th and 19th centuries, but have turned up very little about drumming techniques, style, meaning, etc.

16   I would not argue that this was a hard and fast rule, since I have already suggested that drums were used indoors on occasion to accompany breast-beating. But from what I have been able to glean from available accounts, the *tassa* and *ḍhol* were used primarily outdoors.

17   See Grant's book titled "My Missionary Memories", published in 1923.

18   In Bhojpuri, the dominant language of the indentured laborers, /z/ is pronounced as /j/; hence the Caribbeanized spelling.

19   For an account of the ritual's daily progression in Trinidad, see Korom & Chelkowski 1994:162–8.

20   My colleague, Peter Chelkowski, recorded a few fragmented lines in 1991 during joint fieldwork in Cedros, Trinidad. However, most participants intimately involved in the observance feel that the tradition of *marcee* singing is over. The decline in *marcee* singing could constructively be paralleled with the drop in the language's usage in Trinidad. For a preliminary overview of Trinidadian Hindi's "development," see Bhatia 1988.

21   This theory does not explain, however, the gendered divisions in the tradition. Although men did sing *marcees* in Trinidad and Jamaica, it was primarily a women's genre. Similarly, drumming was a male domain, even though women can be seen playing *tassas* these days (see Figure 4).

22   Hosay is also observed annually in the town of Cedros in southern Trinidad and sporadically in a few other locations on the island. However, my comments only apply to the St. James Hosay because some variation occurs at the other locations. For some of the differences, see Korom & Chelkowski 1994:157–68.

23   The last major festival of the Islamic year, which commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmail. On this day animals are sacrificed according to Qurānic (22:33–47) prescriptions (see Troll 1988:44).

24   One common analogy, taught to me by master drummaker and drummer, Aziz Ali, is that of a human body. The human body, according to Aziz, is equipped with orifices for releasing "hot air." Similarly, the *tassa* has a small hole at the bottom of the kettle to release excess air produced by heat and intense drumming.

25   Judging from the earliest extant photographs, it seems as though the *ḍhol* was the prototype for the bass,

also known in Trini patois as the *boom*. However, the size is much larger and the sound is much deeper than an Indian *ḍholak*.

26 It is worth mentioning that some of the terminology, sequencing of events and organization of work activities during the Carnival parallel those of Hosay. This has been pointed out by a number of observers (e.g. Gibbons 1979:23–8), but is beyond the scope of this paper. However, Korom and Chelkowski (1994:168–70) have recently pointed out the important social and theological distinction between "inside" and "outside" during Hosay. For an insightful discussion of the "yard" and "road" in the context of the Trinidad Carnival, see Hill (1993:22–43). The contrast between such domains of activity in Trinidad is certainly part of a broader Caribbean phenomenon, as is forcefully suggested by Abrahams 1983.

27 On the logic and structure of the lime, see Eriksen 1990.

28 I have shown elsewhere (Korom 1994b:140–7) that Hosay has become part of a post-colonial discourse on nationalism. All ethnic groups on the island, be they Chinese, Afro-Trinidadian, East Indian, Creole or Lebanese, participate in this discourse. And many non-Indians as well as non-Muslims have joined Hosay yards as active participants. The drum rooms reflect this poly-ethnic milieu best, since many Trinidadians of African descent who practice other faiths have joined simply in order to play drums.

29 Because these terms are part of oral discourse—never written—spellings often vary when the terms are approximated in print media. I have attempted to write them as they are pronounced by drummers. Possible Hindi and/or Persian etymologies for these terms are forthcoming in another paper.

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