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Religious classical practice: Entextualisation and performance

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ABSTRACT

This article considers a particular contextualisation of the religious classical and practices associated with it within broader sets of linguistic resources or repertoires. Through a description and analysis of religious classical practices occurring in multilingual urban settings in the UK, the article employs the interpretive frame of performance to account for practice. An introductory overview of religious classical practices is provided, which is followed by a brief discussion of the theoretical considerations surrounding performance and entextualisation. This is followed by the sharing of ethnographic data that aim to demonstrate the performance-oriented and highly entextualised nature of religious classical practice. The article concludes with the suggestion that the latter is an example not only of a set of linguistic resources used predominantly for performative practice but has more in common with scripted theatrical performance than with other conventionally referential communicative practices. (Religious classical, language variety, performance, entextualisation, linguistic resources, linguistic repertoire, Muslim, multilingualism, practice)*

INTRODUCTION

In this article I seek to explore, using data collected during a ten-year period, discursive practices involving what some call the "religious classical" (Fishman 1989) in religious and multilingual settings. Also called "liturgical language" (Crystal 1964; Ramshaw 1996; Adams 2006) or "liturgical literacy" (Rosowsky 2008), the teaching, learning, and use of this particularised—historically and culturally—,language variety is a social practice that takes place throughout the world (Wagner 1982). At the present moment of what some call "the space of flows" (Castells 2000) linked to dynamic globalising processes such as electronic communication and human mobility (Appadurai 1996), the presence of different faiths and their accompanying religious languages are a social and linguistic reality in most countries of the western world. The hitherto, but recently marginalised, practice of Latin as a religious classical in Roman Catholic settings in the West has been replaced by, for example, Qur'anic, Punjabi and Sanskrit classicals,

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together with the complementary schooling that teaches them, in the urban spaces of postindustrialised countries. Drawing on previous work in this field, I propose to develop understanding, and further refine definitions, of the religious classical through a number of interpretive frameworks, and in particular, the interpretive frame of performance articulated by Bauman (1974, 2004) and others (Schechner 1988; Bauman & Briggs 1990; Silverstein & Urban 1996; Pennycook 2007).

THE RELIGIOUS CLASSICAL

Fishman (1989) uses the term RELIGIOUS CLASSICAL to denote the language variety associated with the liturgical and ritual discursive practices of many different faith settings mentioning Qur'anic Arabic, Biblical or prayer book Hebrew, and Ecclesiastical Greek, among others. Ferguson (1982) uses the term "sacred language" to denote the same variety while Safran (2008), stressing its relation to notions of both sacredness and ancient provenance, and authority and status, suggests "sacerdotal language." Being a variety almost exclusively tied to a text and reading and recitational practices, "liturgical literacy" has been preferred by some (Rosowsky 2008) when describing the educational practices devoted to the acquisition of the religious classical. The practices involving use (and the teaching) of the religious classical include prayer, recital, song, chanting, sacrament, citation, and exclamation, all or some of which are conducted both privately and publicly. It has been recognised by many that the religious classical often has a longevity and protected status in relation to any associated spoken vernaculars or written standard varieties. Ferguson (1982:101) reminds us that "in voluntary migration… religious affiliation will tend to be language conservative to the greatest extent for the language of sacred texts." Fishman, likewise, asserts that religious classicals remain "robust features of ethnocultural membership throughout the world" (1989:229) and are more "resistant to change" (2006:15). Despite a degree of minimalisation in terms of the acquisition of the religious classical, Safran identifies its acquisition as a key variable in notions of religious identity, stating that "some familiarity with Hebrew has been considered a sine qua non for believers and is studied, albeit often to a minimal extent, by almost all to whom Jewish identity remains important" (2008:186).

It should be borne in mind that in this article I am reporting on and discussing the role of the religious classical exclusively in diaspora and transnational settings where this variety takes its place within the linguistic firmament alongside linguistically unrelated spoken and written vernaculars, majority spoken and written varieties, and other schooled varieties (e.g. the learning of French, German, or Spanish in many English-speaking contexts). The sociolinguistic dynamic in settings where the majority language is related to or is a later (or vernacularised) version of the religious classical (e.g. Classical Arabic alongside modern Standard Arabic in

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Arabic-speaking settings or Biblical Hebrew in Israel) evinces different resonances and is outside of the remit of this article (but see Haeri 2003).

PRACTICES AND LINGUISTIC RESOURCES

Drawing on Pennycook (2010) and his call for an understanding of "language as local practice," I understand all localisations of the religious classical as being "practices" open to theoretical analysis and not as mere backdrops for the application of underlying or overarching systemic structures. It is through language practice, in this view (Makoni & Pennycook 2007), that eventually, through repetition and imitation, "language" becomes "sedimented" and becomes entity-like. I also draw upon anthropological insights around culture, particularly those articulated by Bauman (1974, 1996, 2004; Bauman & Briggs 1990) concerning binaries such as "text" and "entextualisation" and "context" and "contextualisation"—in turn, part of a broader movement in the social sciences to privilege processes over fixed notions and categories—which reflect the more dynamic processes involved when discursive practices are analysed. In this article I seek to share examples of how performance-oriented religious classical practice "intensifies" (Bauman & Briggs 1990:74) the possibility of entextualisation. From such perspectives, languages, varieties, or texts do not exist a priori as systems or structures but are constituted by the discursive and textual practices associated with them (Makoni & Pennycook 2007). However, although I suggest that this is a productive way to understand the place of the religious classical vis-à-vis its social setting and its interrelationship with other social practices, including linguistic ones, there are particular characteristics of the religious classical that resist, in part, such an understanding.

A related theoretical consideration impacting on a discussion or definition of the religious classical is Blommaert's insistence (2010; Blommaert & Backus 2011) that language practice is to be understood not as the mere contextualisation of bounded and fixed entities but as the flow of linguistic resources deployed dynamically and creatively, and inevitably unequally, in social interactions. The linguistic complexity of translocal settings (i.e. urban multilingualism) in the twenty-first century brings into focus the multiplicity of sounds and scripts within and through which human agents negotiate their lived identities. "We are witnessing repertoires here, constructed out of bits and pieces of conventionally defined 'languages' (Blommaert 2010:43)."

Allied to this orientation is the complementary view that multilingual practices are better understood as transidiomatic (Jacquemet 2005) or translingual (Garcia 2007) processes. This view resists an understanding of multilingualism that implies coexisting but separate monolingual practices. Translanguaging (Garcia 2007), or flexible bilingualism (Blackledge & Creese 2010, see below), admits the social reality of lived practices deploying linguistic resources rather than human agents operating with and within separate languages. In this

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way, it becomes more appropriate to include religious classical practices as part of individual and collective linguistic repertoires.

PERFORMANCE AND ENTEXTUALISATION

An important theoretical perspective that appears extremely useful in accounting for religious classical practice is that which draws upon notions of performance and the closely linked cultural processes of entextualisation (Bauman 1974; Bauman & Briggs 1990; Silverstein & Urban 1996; Schechner 2002; Carlson 2004). Most religious classical practices, by their nature, are performance-oriented, whether they are aspects of collective ritual, public recitation, or private prayer. Even a solitary individual at prayer assumes a transcendent audience. Religious classical practices, like other performance-oriented practices, often privilege formal and indexical properties of "ritual speech" over referential or propositional meaning (Keane 1997:53). There is also perhaps a case for claiming that the religious classical is constituted through these performative practices with little or infrequent referential communicative function, particularly in translocal settings. In other words, the religious classical is "performed rather than pre-formed" and, following Makoni & Pennycook (2007), one might argue does not exist independent of the practices through which it is constituted. Yet, at the same time, religious classical "texts" are perhaps one of the few examples in discursive practices more generally where one could propose an ontological reality outside of performance and practice. Although we must be wary of conflating "text" with text-artifact (Silverstein & Urban 1996:2), it is self-evident in many religious classical settings that a sacred text in a variety of guises appears to "exist" independently of the discursive practices that surround it. It is this characteristic of the religious classical that demands special attention in any analysis of religious classical practice.

Entextualisation—"the process of rendering discourse extractable" (Bauman & Briggs 1990:73)—is a key characteristic of performance-oriented communicative practices. First, "the performance forms of a society tend to be among the most markedly entextualised" and, as such, performance forms and genres "tend to be among the most consciously traditionalised in a community's communicative repertoire" (Bauman 2004:8). Furthermore, where ritual speech is concerned, and religious classical practice is invariably a form of ritual speech, entextualisation is characterised by faithful and close adherence to past performances as participants engage in practices that rely heavily on the preserved sacred texts of their traditions. In many instances, religious classical performance can be understood as further entextualisation of an extant entextualisation. Unlike a folk tale that, despite its formal distinctiveness, still shares in the warp and woof of everyday discourse, the original flow of discourse from which the religious classical text has been extracted is often no longer available. Indeed, in emic terms, even the first entextualisation (e.g. the Qur'an at the time of revelation) is but an entextualisation of a transcendental

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entextualisation (for example, this is the 'Mother of the Book' or *Um-al-Kitab*, in Islamic tradition), which exists in the heavens.

Unlike Austin (1962:22), who considers artful language practice as "parasitic" on "normal use," Bauman, with a view to unifying "marked, segregated Kantian aesthetic genres" (1974:291) with other naturally occurring spheres of verbal behaviour, interprets such language practice more positively as performance-oriented and argues that the performance element in such activity draws attention, from an audience, to the act of expression itself, beyond its referential function. He draws attention to two crucial features of performance. First, performance is accountable and subject to the evaluation of an audience: "Performance involves on the part of the performer an assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content…" (Bauman 1974:293). There are notions here of striving for authenticity and accuracy, of the performer "getting it right." Second, performance makes available to an audience the "enhancement of experience": "it is marked as available for the enhancement of experience, through the present enjoyment of the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression itself (ibid.)."

Schechner (1988) ascribes even greater salience to those acts of repetition that, according to Bakhtin (1981), are the normal state of affairs in language utterance: "[W]hat is of interest here isn't the matter of myth but the power of repetition and naming… and the belief that language (i.e. poetry) can make-things-present by naming them" (Rothenburg 1968, cited in Schechner 1988:60).

This "naming," a minimal form of entextualisation, is reminiscent of Baker's (1993) work with the Tidorese and their religious classical practice (Qur'anic) where he draws a distinction between the act of "comprehending" and the act of "apprehending," where apprehending, he suggests, means "coming to grips with what there is to know without necessarily knowing how to subject it to predications, that is, to adequately comprehend it" (Baker 1993:108). He also suggests that this apprehension has a lot to do with the repetition of substantive nouns. Although Baker asserts the "invariance" of the recitations, he notes that "many of the verses that are regularly uttered aloud are learned from hearing others recite" (Baker 1993:103) and, as such, again following Bakhtin's notion (1981:293) of the dialogic nature of language ("we are always using others' words"), are, at one and the same time, invariant and created anew. Baker allows this perspective to direct the greater part of his commentary on the Kalaodi literacy practices and singles out names as playing an important part in the apprehension of the foreignness of the Arabic. In what might be interpreted as an infinite regress of entextualisation, and an example of how performance intensifies entextualisation (Bauman & Briggs 1990:74), he writes: "Not understanding Arabic myself, I can attest from listening to recitations that proper names flash out as recognisable entities in a stream of pleasingly lyrical but uncomprehended utterances" (Baker 1993:110).

Pennycook (2010) also problematises certain dichotomies such as "sameness and difference," "creativity and repetition," arguing that, on the one hand, the

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linguistic norm is more likely to be difference rather than sameness, and, on the other, that all creativity involves repetition with the important caveat that authentic repetition is impossible, because there is always (re)localisation determined by temporal or spatial considerations and circumstances. This links to Schechner's definition of performance as meaning "never for the first time" (1985:36).

What is useful for our discussion of religious classical practices is how foregrounded and characteristic the notion of "repetition" becomes: "Language repetitions, imitations and re-localisations as creative acts may be at least as significant for language learning as acts of creative construction or individual difference" (Pennycook 2010:139). Furthermore, Bauman (1974:303) describes a continuum in verbal art that has at one pole performances with "word-for-word fidelity" to a fixed text and at the other novel, or "generated anew," performances that allow for more negotiated elements. Bauman (2004) reminds us also that in terms of "source" utterances (the "original") and "target" utterances (the "copy"), the more faithful the latter is to the former, the more authoritative it appears, and, conversely, where intertextual gaps appear between them, the more scope there is for more negotiated and novel performances.

> Strict replication of the source utterance by the mediator minimizes the intertextual gap… between the source utterance and the target utterance, thus enacting the authorization of the former in the strongest possible terms. When the source utterance is infiltrated by the mediator's own voice, by contrast, the intertextual gap is widened in the process of recontextualization. (Bauman 2004:153)

Religious classical performances, as outlined below, tend in the main to minimise these "intertextual gaps" and demonstrate much more regular verbatim fidelity to the "source" utterance. Where intertextual gaps appear, invariably other linguistic resources are involved (see extract (9)).

This reworking, or entextualisation, of the already existing words of others, echoes Schechner's (2002:28) notion of restored behaviour as a feature of performance, and is the very stuff of religious classical practices.

> Restored behaviour is the key process of every kind of performing, in everyday life, in healing, in ritual, in play and in the arts. Restored behaviour is "out there," separate from "me." To put it in personal terms, restored behaviour is "me behaving as if I were someone else," or "as I am told to do," or "as I have learned." (Schechner 2002:28)

Naturally, in the light of the above, the role of the audience becomes key in any discussion or description of performance-oriented social practice. A function of the audience is knowledge of "what the performer is trying to do" and performance theorists (Schechner & Schumann 1976; Schechner 1988, 2002; Carlson 2004) make the distinction between "efficacy" and "entertainment" and suggest that all performance-oriented practice occupies a place along a continuum stretching between these two poles. Here, efficacious performance is generally more

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associated with ritual and is about getting "results," often otherworldly. At this end of what he calls "the efficacy-entertainment braid," the "audience participates," "believes," and is "discouraged" from criticism, and there is often a "link to an absent Other" (Schechner 1988:120).

> Whether one calls a specific performance "ritual" or "theatre" depends mostly on context and function. A performance is called theatre or ritual because of where it is performed, by whom, and under what circumstances. If the performance's purpose is to effect transformations—to be efficacious then the other qualities listed under the heading "efficacy" will most probably also be present, and the performance is a ritual. And vice versa regarding the qualities listed under "entertainment" No performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment. (1988:120)

Religious classical practices are, by their nature as understood by their participants, about "results" and about "transformation."

However, religious classical practice problematises the notion of both agency and audience. On the one hand, when performance in this sense sits quite squarely at the pole of the continuum which foregrounds word-for-word and faithful replication of sacred script, the relationship between the performer and the text recited is one of "copier" as distinct from the "originator," which is distant temporally, often geographically, and nearly always linguistically. This has the effect of increasing the "boundedness and autonomous character of certain stretches of discourse" and encouraging "the perception that the words come from some source beyond the present context" (Keane 1997:53). There is also a particular closed circle of entextualisation taking place here for, as Keane observes: "When scripture is believed to report the actual words of divine revelation, the act of reading aloud effectively closes the circuit from utterance in context to written text and back to utterance again" (Keane 1997:63).

This dialectical relationship between entextualisation and contextualisation stresses the boundary between text and context. For example, when ritual language remains incomprehensible to listeners, it maintains a separation between the otherworldly and the mundane, or between authority and compliance. "Because language use moves between the poles of entextualization and contextualization, speech events can also stress the boundary between text and context—as when ritual language remains incomprehensible to listeners—maintaining the separation between worlds" (Keane 1997:64).

On the other hand, audience, while more conventional in role at congregational prayer and public recitation, becomes less straightforward when an individual recites in prayer alone, where his audience is the transcendent divine. In prayer, recitation, and citation there is always a transcendent agenda. Indeed, when such practices move along the continuum too far towards "entertainment," participants can be the target of criticism and accusations of inappropriacy, secularisation, or even sacrilege.

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Bauman & Briggs (1990:76) remind us that any analysis of performance should include how that performance reflects, shapes, or constitutes broader social processes and functions. Religious classical performance is obviously enmeshed within broader social, cultural, and religious practices both collectively and individually. However, there are moments when it breaks out of such delineating parameters to take on broader, more dramatic functions. An illustration of this is the 2011 Arab Spring Uprising, which was publicly and globally shared through the transmodal (Pennycook 2007:49) affordances of the informational age (Castells 2000). The entire period of the uprising was punctuated weekly by calls for nonviolent protest at and after Friday prayers. This reliance on the moment of prayer, and therefore a reliance on religious classical practice, underpinned the attempt to galvanise, inspire, and sustain momentum for the protest movement. These rallying calls were punctuated by the call to prayer in Classical Arabic of the *muezzin*, the orchestrated and collective bodily enactments of thousands listening, responding, and moving to the performative utterances of the ritual prayer, played out simultaneously before an audience of millions on satellite television and on YouTube. Individually and collectively, the religious classical is physically embedded in much wider social, and here, political practice.

Finally, another linguistic resource invoking religious classical practice is the phatic utterance. Here, performers and audience members signal performance-oriented practice by uttering words and phrases in a phatic strategy that often initiates a religious classical performance (prayer or recital or citation) and constructs audience behaviour. During a public recitation of the Qur'an, for example, audience members, at key pauses such as at the end of crescendos, will utter the phatic exclamation *subhanallah* 'glory to God!' in order to express approval (see below). Beyond the referential content of the phrase, this linguistic resource forms part of the communicative repertoires of both audience and performer, who would think there was something awry with the recitation if no *subhanallah!'s* were forthcoming from audience members (Schechner 1988). This public recitation, often to an integral audience of noncomprehending believers, is an instance of what Carlson might argue (2004:79) as "communication carried out above and beyond its referential content."

RELIGIOUS CLASSICAL PRACTICES

The widespread discursive practices involving the religious classical demand an account that is more nuanced than it being just another "variety." The latter term suggests a pregiven and preformed entity that the foregoing discussion appears to complicate. It is even more appropriate in translocal settings, where linguistic repertoires appear "truncated" and "fragmented" (Blommaert 2010:23) and "messy" (Heller 2007:12), to further account for the place of religious classical practice given that it features prominently in these multilingual or multivarietal settings. It would be unwise to marginalise its importance in a similar way to the way Austin (1962) consigned "artful" communication to an analytical backwater.

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Though sharing in the vicissitudes and fluidity of other linguistic resources in these settings, the bounded and script-like characteristics of the religious classical are perhaps more akin to scripted theatrical performance than they are to communicative realisations of underlying competence in the religious classical itself. Of course, there are important differences too. In theatrical performance the audience is invited to infer and to construct meaning around plot, character, and relationships lying under the dialogue, whereas in religious classical practices this is not the case. Moreover, in the paradigm outlined above where language practices come to constitute competence, which is not underlying but is sedimented through repeated usage, religious classical practices, by their nature dependent on sacred texts, are perhaps more usefully interpreted through the lens of entextualisation (Bauman & Briggs 1990). There is no question of these practices being quintessentially rehearsed and repeated and as social practices must be laying down sedimented traces. Linguistically, one might suggest religious classical practices lead to a grasp of phoneme-grapheme correspondences—a sense of prosody, metre, rhyme, or rhythm, a potential for "apprehending the word" (Baker 1993). However, they still fall short of constituting communicatively referential practice and remain characterised often by a high degree of "semantic poverty" (Keane 1997:52). Bauman & Briggs (1990) argue for the saliency of performance-oriented speech acts within theories of linguistics. Yet, here also, the religious classical appears to resist neat categorization, for its definition as a speech act, however defined, is inadequate. It is clear that the analytical tools of "practices," "resources," and "repertoires" appear to be only partially useful in accounting for the religious classical sociolinguistically. It is perhaps the interpretive frame of performance, and the accompanying notions of entextualisation, that can best deal with religious classical practice, and it is this that forms the content of the rest of this article.

To exemplify religious classical practices as enacted and performed in translocal and translingual settings, I draw upon data gathered over a period of ten years from Muslim participants in a study examining liturgical literacy practices in two northern towns in the UK. Participant observations, semistructured and unstructured interviews, and questionnaires sought to shed light on marginalised and often misrepresented literacy practices in these settings. The religious classical practices examined involved Qur'anic literacy and prayer and ritualised practices derived therefrom. The settings involved family homes, community settings such as the mosque, and their accompanying complementary schools.

FAITH-BASED COMPLEMENTARY SCHOOLING

Complementary schools in general are ideal sites for exploring transidiomatic (Jacquemet 2005:265) or translingual (Williams 1996, cited in Baker 2001:281; Garcia 2007:xiii) language practices. Blackledge & Creese (2010) reveal the shifting and fluid patterns of language use in a number of UK complementary schools that confirm the need to go beyond unitary concepts of language, code, and nation-

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state (Makoni & Pennycook 2007) when explaining the use of linguistic resources within complex and sometimes contradictory trajectories of teaching and learning language and culture. Developing the notion of "translanguaging" as an analytical tool, they advocate "flexible bilingualism" as a way to describe and account for the ways their young subjects (and some of their teachers) conceptualise their language use in contradistinction to notions of separate bilingualism (or dual or multiple monolingualism), which presuppose quite distinct development and use of two or more codes distinguished by function and domain.

> These are young people using linguistic resources from a wide range of sources including those associated with religious texts, the 'homeland' national heritage, diverse popular cultural forms, coarse, vernacular insults, academic English, non-standard English, and many more. Their complex linguistic repertoires bear the traces of past times and present times, of lives lived locally and globally. (Creese & Blackledge 2011:1206)

In faith-based complementary schools—the studies of Creese and Blackledge and others are set in mainly secular, "national heritage"-based institutions—"religious texts" and "traces of past times" have more salience and are foregrounded. Nevertheless, the complex presence of multivarietal repertoires, not necessarily "proficiencies" or "competence" persists.

The participants in the study have a variety of Punjabi as their home or community language (known variously as Mirpuri-Punjabi, Pahari, or Pothwari—see Lothers & Lothers 2010), but this variety, as the preferred language for interpeer and intergenerational communication, is undergoing shift to English. Urdu, an accompanying prestigious and co-sanctified (Fishman 2006:21) variety in those families with an Urdu tradition, is experiencing a similar shift (Rosowsky 2008, 2010). For these Muslim participants, language practices are simultaneously rich, resourceful, and "messy" (Heller 2007:12). Their religious classical resources interlace other social and language practices to a lesser or greater degree dependent on time and place considerations. The religious classical regularly punctuates everyday discourse in the form of entextualised exclamations and interjections. Classical Arabic phrases such as *insh'allah* 'if God wills it,' *al-hamdulillah* 'God be praised,' and *subhanallah* 'glory to God' permeate much conversation. In Urdu sermons religious classical examples are cited and explained. Classical Arabic citation is a major part of environmental print (Gorter 2006) as it appears on artifacts such as plaques, posters, and other wall hangings in homes and in mosques and their complementary schools. In ritual, the religious classical is used almost exclusively, both privately and publicly. In the Friday sermon, the vernacular is clearly and sequentially demarcated from the formalised ritual of the Classical Arabic *khutbah* 'sermon,' and in private prayer, vernacular supplication occurs only after the exclusively religious classical rites have been completed. There is, therefore, a continuum of performance-oriented practice involving the religious classical that has at one pole spontaneous but stylised (Rampton 2006) interjections and exclamations

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and at the other exclusively religious classical ritual and recitation. Moreover, the religious classical is both uttered (recited, declaimed, rehearsed, reiterated, repeated) and is apprehended (Baker 1993) by an audience, even when this audience is a "transcendent Other" (Schechner 1988:142), as in prayer and other ritualised practices. These performance-oriented practices come to constitute the religious classical rather than their being the recontextualisation of a preexisting competence or system. In the case of religious classical practices, it would be troublesome to think of them in any other way.

> A performance-centred conception of verbal art calls for an approach through performance itself. In such an approach, the formal manipulation of linguistic features is secondary to the nature of performance, per se, conceived of and defined as a mode of communication. (Bauman 1974:292)

PERFORMANCE-ORIENTED RELIGIOUS CLASSICAL PRACTICES

In what follows, I hope to account for religious classical practices through the frame of performance. This framework draws substantially upon Bauman's understanding that verbal art is about generating words "anew in performance" (1974:303). "Performance sets up, or represents, an interpretative frame within which the messages being communicated are to be understood, and that this frame contrasts with at least one other frame, the literal" (1974:292). Insights from anthropology are useful here and, in particular, the notion of "keying in" of performance frames (Goffman 1974). Framing is achieved through a set of culturally agreed metacommunicative, or paralinguistic, conventions that sets up a frame within which performance-oriented practice takes place and can be understood. Bauman suggests a number of such conventions, some of which are listed below (quoted from Bauman 1974:295).

- special codes, e.g., archaic or esoteric language, reserved for and diagnostic of performance
- special formulae that signal performance, such as conventional openings and closings, or explicit statements announcing or asserting performance
- formal stylistic devices, such as rhyme, vowel harmony
- special prosodic patterns of tempo, stress, pitch
- special paralinguistic patterns of voice quality and vocalization

He stresses that such lists are inevitably culturally contingent and what frames performance in one context will not in another, or will invoke another frame entirely. For example, the recitation of the English Bible in an Anglican context has very different keys to performance than the recitation of Ecclesiastical Greek in an orthodox service. The performance of Russian poetry by its authors is very different to a recital of modern English poetry (flamboyance versus deadpan), though each is a performance in its own context.

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This "communication about communication" adds up to a range of implicit and explicit messages that communicate how to interpret performance-oriented practices. It should be possible, therefore, understanding religious classical practice through performance, to use such a frame to account for religious classical practices as they appear in early twenty-first-century translocal settings. For the purposes of the following analysis, I draw upon these conventions in turn.

Furthermore, one of the distinguishing features of the religious classical is its intimate connection to text. Perhaps more than in any other language practice, the centrality of a bounded and autonomous text or group of texts determining all ritual utterances appears to resist theories of fluid linguistic resources. The contextualisation of religious classical practices inevitably entails the regular and unrelenting entextualisation of the relevant sacred texts. This process, too, is drawn upon to account in the analysis that follows.

In what follows, I present examples of religious classical practices gathered in a number of settings that draw on those constituitive linguistic resources and repertoires that participants deploy in the negotiation of their translingual identities. These take the form of quotations from transcribed semistructured interviews with the author and extracts from field notes. On one occasion I also draw on the data gathered in a survey conducted among young British Muslims designed to gather views on religious and language practices.

Special codes, e.g., archaic or esoteric language, reserved for and diagnostic of performance (Bauman 1974:295)

First, it is perhaps self-evident that archaic language is an invariable feature of the religious classical practice.

> The first philologists and the first linguists were always and everywhere priests. History knows no nation whose sacred writings or oral tradition were not to some degree in a language foreign and incomprehensible to the profane… [O]rientation [toward the alien, foreign word] is the expression of the enormous historical role that the alien word has played in the formation of all the historical cultures. (Voloshinov 1986, cited in Haeri 2003:1)

In the first extract below, we witness a young participant (Latif) in religious classical practices commenting on his emotional response as a member of an audience to a Qur'anic recitation.

(1) I never understood but I liked the tone or the expressions of the person reciting or the reaction of the audience. What is this person saying that is getting so many people smiling? (Latif)

Here we are reminded of the philosopher George Berkeley's comments when he stated: "I think an Humble Implicit Faith becomes us just (where we cannot

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comprehend & understand the proposition) such as a popish peasant gives to propositions he hears at Mass in Latin" (Berkeley 1871/1989).

This "performance in a perfunctory key" Bauman (1974:298) interprets as a "means of preserving performance forms for later invigoration and restoration to the level of full performance." In this relocalisation, or recontextualisation, of religious classical practice, "the level of full performance" is attainable only after serious and long periods of study and would not necessarily be an aspiration for all erstwhile performers, as all practicing Muslims are when engaging in religious classical practices. The following exchange is between the author and a young and very competent *hafiz*[1] of the Qur'an.

(2) A: Author, L: Latif

A: For example, if I were to pick any page from the Qur'an, and asked you to explain to me what it is saying, could you do that?
L: I won't be able to do that…
A: What do you have to do, to get to that stage?
L: You have to go to the Dar-u-Uloom…[2]
A: If I were to ask a regular imam in a mosque in Riverton or in another large town the same thing, would he be able to explain it from the Arabic?
L: If the imam had good knowledge then he would be able to, but not many of them…
A: There's no guarantee that he would be able to then?
L: No.
A: Would he need an Urdu explanation?
L: Yes.

The limitations on understanding imposed by such "alien" words lead to a reliance on discrete "words" rather than longer units of meaning. In extract (3), a student at the complementary school is asked about what he understands in prayer and in recitation.

(3) A: Author, W: Wajid

A: How much do you understand? You have already touched on this when you said that you recognise names… anything else?
W: I recognise the names… there are some landmarks I recognise… like, *Bayt ul Quds,*[3] *Masjid al Haram*, even other people, not only including *rasool*'s of Allah, I'm talking about *Nabi*'s, I'm talking about the people of the Book as well, whether they be good-doers or evildoers… the places… like as I said, *Bayt ul Quds*, *Bani Israil*, 'the children of Israel,' basically the connections between what I have just read, until I read it in English, it doesn't come into any focus… there are some sayings like, *ghafoor ar-raheem*, *rabbi alameen*, where you do have this basic understanding that 'the most gracious, the most merciful.' There are so many different meanings.

This is the "apprehension of the name" that Baker (1993, see above) observed with adherents of the same religion on the other side of the globe to these South Yorkshire worshippers. This entextualisation within entextualisation (or "intensified

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entextualisation," Bauman 2004) is a very concrete example of how the latter process abstracts text for performance.

(4) We understand the names… (Khaleel)
(5) They stand out because you recognise them… (Rashida)

Performance is at the heart of much religious classical practice with prayer and recitation acknowledged emically as performance-oriented practices rather than more conventionally communicative ones.

(6) but because when they have to read the *salah*,[4] the *salah* is going to be *performed* in Arabic. (Munir)
(7) the *durood*[5] is going to be performed in Arabic, you can read the meaning in English if you want to read it, but the actual pronunciation for you to ask to send *durood*, to send *salaam*, to read your prayers, you know, *salah*, it would be observed better in Arabic. (Munir)

Here there is recognition that the "archaic and esoteric" language is reserved (and thus preserved) for the performance of religious classical practice to an extent that such practice would be considered inferior or even sacrilegious if carried out in the vernacular. Even in practices involving co-sanctified varieties (see below), "outsider" languages, such as English, are considered inappropriate (see Rosowsky 2011). The original language (the "source utterance") of the sacred text and its word-for-word fidelity here ("performed in Arabic") heightens authority and formality and also suppresses referential or propositional meaning (Keane 1997). "The entextualisation of the source utterance and its replication in the target utterance in such a way that the intertextual gap is minimised is a potent means of infusing the discourse with authority" (Bauman 2004:157).

Special formulae that signal performance, such as conventional openings and closings, or explicit statements announcing or asserting performance (Bauman 1974:295)

In what Fabb calls "certain kinds of beginning" and "certain kinds of ending" (1997:224), the start of a performance is keyed in by conventions that alert an audience to what is to come. In this religious classical practice a number of phrases and metalinguistic acts communicate, for example, the beginning of the performance of prayer, of recitation, or of citation. In private and in public, hands raised to the ears and the utterance of the Arabic words *allahu akbar* 'God is great,' accompanied by a physical orientation towards Mecca, signal a performative transition from the everyday to the transcendent. This is reminiscent of those liminal acts identified by Turner (1969) that signal a transitional movement from one state—the mundane—to another—the transcendent. The audible clearing of the throat (and nowadays the scratching and bumping of a microphone) followed by the Arabic

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words *audhu billahi min-ashaytan ar-rajim* 'I seek refuge in the accursed Satan' announces to an audience the beginning, and the phrase *sadaq allah al adheem* 'what God Almighty says is true' the end, of a publicly performed recitation of the Qur'an. This power of naming is perhaps what Rothenberg refers to when he writes, "language (i.e. poetry) can make-things-present by naming them" (Rothenberg 1968, cited in Schechner 1988:60).

On a Friday, the imam mounts the steps of his pulpit (*mimbar*), deliberately and carefully, in a liminal performance designed to signal the movement from preliminary individual prayers to congregational attention. The latter, too, keys performance as the words of the recited/performed sermon are in Classical Arabic and the audience is not expected to comprehend (again, as I have stressed before, this is not the case in the Arabic-speaking world). In some settings (mainly South Asian ones), moreover, a certain way of sitting on the floor will accompany this performance of attention. This sitting itself is performative. When the imam makes the traditional pause between the two halves of the Friday sermon, the congregation, as one, shift in their posture, and adopt a different sitting position for the second half of the sermon. Schechner (1988) would place such performance as towards the efficacy pole of the efficacy-entertainment continuum where the audience is as much a participant as the overt performer on the pulpit. Performative movement also takes place on a larger scale with the pilgrim participating in a vast range of religious classical practices while journeying to and staying at the place of pilgrimage (Schechner 2002) and emphasises Bourdieu's (1990) insistence on "the body as a site for the rituals of performativity" (Carlson 2004:79).

(8) Before I went on *Hajj*[6] I wrote a few *naat* down and thought that whilst I was there I would present them. (Akhtar)

(9) A: Author, M: Mahmood

M: [showing me some examples of prayer booklets] This is for when I perform the *Hajj*. These are what I will end up reading on my *tasbeeh*.[7]
A: So you're taking these with you when you go on *Hajj*?
M: Yeah, I'll be taking these… This is for me… and this is for my wife… This is an Arabic one. If I want to make a *du'a*, I will make it out of my heart and I'd say it in English.

Much of the ritual performance of the *Hajj* involves religious classical utterances, though when Mahmood wants to be sincere he will speak in English. This is that "widening of the intertextual gap" (Bauman 2004:158) which allows for the infiltration of the source utterance by the target utterance (here understood as the spoken vernacular of the participant) and "becomes a means of sharing or diffusing authority" (ibid.) for now the plaintiff can address the divine through their own words rather than the authoritative word of the religious classical. For

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Mahmood there is something inauthentic about a supplication in a language he struggles to comprehend.

Formal stylistic devices, such as rhyme, vowel harmony, other forms of parallelism (Bauman 1974:295)

Religious classical resources include an awareness of sensitivity to matters of rhyme and assonance, which, though not linked to referential meaning, provide reciters with familiar patterns of sound collocation that, in the first place, aid memorisation, and, in the second place, acquaint the reciters with the sound system of the classical language. There is also an ever-increasing mastery of phoneme-grapheme correspondences.

(10) and I used to read it [a Qur'anic verse] as *rabbi-jaalni-muqima-salati-wa-min-thuriyaati*.[8] It was because it was transliterated, the punctuation, the sounding of words, seemed concrete, seemed precise… but there were certain points where you were supposed to raise your voice and extend it and whatever, you know. (Mahmood)

The key to such mastery is the quintessential repetition of recitation. The daily recitation of religious classical practices not only leads to ever-confident or ever-automatic performance, but also to that grasp of an entity-like language practice that emerges from these constant, sedimented repetitions.

(11) it is a principle to teach the child *bismillahi rahmani rahim*[9] so at least the parents, they have all their sins forgiven… so that's verbally. That will be repeated every single day until it sinks into the child's mind. (Shabbir)

The sedimented result of such repetition in the case of religious classical practices is very much tied into the memorisation and repetition of a text, the Qur'an. This is perhaps where such practices have more associative resonance with other scripted performances such as those in other aesthetic genres such as plays and films. It might be argued that just such a performative-oriented theorisation of the religious classical has more validity than one that posits the religious classical as merely a language variety, which, by implication, suggests at least a modicum of communicative and referential function.

(12) A: Author, AL: Ali

A: Once you have done this and learnt the Qur'an, how do you keep it?
AL: You keep on reciting it… Every day you should read it regularly…
A: What do you do every day?
AL: One *siparah*…[10]
A: And do you do it in order?
AL: Yes.
A: So every month you go back to the beginning… Do you have to keep going back to the text to check?
AL: Yes. Or you read it to someone, a teacher…

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It should be borne in mind that for many the religious classical repertoire can remain quite minimal, covering material suffice for performing private prayer whereas for others religious classical practice can include extensive daily and weekly recitation of the Qur'an, performance in leading public prayer and opportunities for public citation (more akin to the "full performance" mentioned by Bauman (1974)). In either case Pennycook's (2010) and Hopper's (1998) notions of sedimented or emergent practice apply. This sedimented practice, or entextualisation, is an admixture of linguistic and performative acts that resists any definition of a discrete language system or structural foundation. Indeed, when asked about "knowledge" of the classical language, respondents often deny any such knowledge.

(13) A: Author, W: Walid

A: So your knowledge of just reading the Qur'an, you wouldn't consider that knowing Arabic?
W: No, no. Not at all. Nowhere near. Not even basics. Though I'd like to learn Arabic. Because last year I went to *Hajj* and I was lost, I couldn't… I didn't know… who I was talking to… what I was saying… you know, picked up a few words here and there while I was there, but that's all.

In a related study, from a sample of sixty-six young Muslims in a neighbouring town, all of whom had a similar ethnolinguistic profile and performed religious classical practices at least weekly, only 11% interpreted their use of religious classical as incorporating "knowledge" of Arabic even when the question used the fairly inclusive phrasing "…have *any knowledge* of Arabic?."

Special prosodic patterns of tempo, stress, pitch; Special paralinguistic patterns of voice quality and vocalization (Bauman 1974:295)

By way of illustrating these two items of the performative frame, I provide below extracts from field notes taken while attending the annual Ascension (*Laylat-ul-Miraaj*) celebration held one afternoon in a small mosque and its accompanying complementary school in a northern English town, the congregation of which was almost all made up of migrants from north eastern Pakistan (Mirpur) and their descendants. Here, the performance-oriented religious classical practices are relocalised (Pennycook 2010:3435) and recontextualised. The notes that follow recount in chronological order the event. A performance-related interpretation is offered immediately after each extract. Occasionally, I augment the data with direct quotations from interviews with participants.

(14) The imam begins by speaking in Urdu. He introduces the guests and outlines the programme for the afternoon. Most of the congregation can follow this; even the younger members sitting near the back of the prayer hall can follow this simple information.

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Here there is movement from the referential frame to the performance frame and back again, and throughout the event practice appears to swing from the referential to the performative as religious classical practices predominate within other language practices. In this way we witness how a "given performance is tied to a number of speech events that precede and succeed it" (Bauman & Briggs 1990:60) that may be framed quite differently. When Imran (below) recites publicly, his performance is linked inevitably to other religious classical practices framed for learning, memorisation, and rehearsal to name just three.

(15) A 15-year old boy, Imran, is asked to recite Qur'anic verses which he has spent a week preparing. He has concentrated, with the help of the imam, on achieving as perfect a recitation as possible. This includes accurate pronunciation as well as appropriate tone and rhythm. He is nervous as he has never recited in front of so many people before.

Understood within a performative frame, Imran's recitation here "puts the act of speaking on display… objectifies it, lifts it to a degree from its interactional setting and opens it to scrutiny by an audience" (Bauman & Briggs 1990:73). As attention is initially paid to the formal features of recitation, we move from a focus on referential meaning to performance over and above the needs of communication. Furthermore, paralinguistic features such as tone and rhythm together with a heightened sense of an audience, render "the formal manipulation of linguistic features [as] secondary to the nature of performance, per se, conceived of and defined as a mode of communication" (Bauman 1974:292).

(16) The congregation listens attentively to Imran, and some of the elders interject Arabic expressions such as *subhanallah!*[11] in between verses, a customary practice during Qur'anic recitations in mosques all over the world. No one, neither reciter nor listeners, understand all that is being recited and many comprehend none of it.

The role of the audience here matches Schechner's definition of an "integral" audience, one which participates and shares in the performative shift to the transcendent Other (see above). The quasi-metaverbal and almost phatic interjections (Schechner 1988) uttered as part of the performative role of certain audience members do not, however, necessarily mean attention is full and undivided, for Schechner elaborates his definition of the integral audience to include how in ritual performances "devotion" is often measured by "duration," with audience participants coming and going and dipping into performances spasmodically.

(17) A *qari*[12] from a neighbouring mosque is introduced by the imam and invited to begin his recitation. The *qari* breathes deeply and begins to intone the first verse of chapter 3 of the Qur'an, *Bani Isra'il*, 'The Children of Israel.' The reciter uses his breath to structure and demarcate his recitation with his breaths becoming ever longer as he seeks to recite an ever longer string of words. This process is a very stylised and deliberate method of recitation and is expected at the beginning of every recitation. Again few in the mosque understand what is being recited, though some may recognise isolated words.

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As with young Imran above, the *qari*, whose role is performative by definition, in contradistinction to others present who may have performance as but part of their linguistic repertoires (e.g. the imam when citing during a sermon or the individual when praying), keys in his performance through a number of conventions listed in Bauman's frame and presents it "for evaluation." The artful phrasing punctuated by shorter pauses as each succeeding phrase becomes longer helps frame the recitation as one performed by an expert. The *qari* almost always would have had special training in order to deserve the title, though self-taught reciters abound. Referring back to Schechner's (1988) second important distinction within audiences (see above in PERFORMANCE AND ENTEXTUALISATION), here the audience participates in the "efficacy" of the ritual performance in contrast to an audience that watches in an "entertainment" performance. However, the esteem in which some *qaris* and their recitations are held, and the resulting paraphernalia surrounding them (for example, international reputations and commercially available recordings), confirm Schechner's observation that no performance is ever purely efficacious (1988:120).

(18) The imam's Urdu address then cites Qur'anic verses and Prophetic sayings. Most of the imam's address is understood by the members of the congregation, but as he begins to include Arabic verses and sayings and their more formal translations and explanations into Urdu, his account begins to be rather hard to follow for some of the younger members of the congregation.

Here for many members of the audience and the performer himself there is movement from the purely performative to the referential, though citations remain performative as referential narration gives way to performative citation. Even the Urdu speech will be, in many ways, performance-oriented given its formal and public nature.

(19) Another guest speaker then relates the story of how the Prophet travelled to Jerusalem upon a magical flying beast and ascended to the heavens accompanied by the Angel Gabriel. The imam is wise and canny and knows that the majority of the congregation are Punjabi-speakers, and intersperses Punjabi words and phrases into his formal Urdu account. This makes for much more audience attention especially among the younger members who are more familiar with the Punjabi language than they are with Urdu. They are also helped by the speaker's talents in performance. Those who recognise a verse will occasionally recite with the imam and for some very well-known verses up to half of the congregation will join in, in chorus fashion.

The shift in language from Urdu to Punjabi makes for greater referentiality, though performance is still key. As the speaker injects more familiar cultural and stylistic elements into his narration, the performance moves along Schechner's continuum from efficacy to entertainment. The audience participation goes beyond phatic utterance as familiar verses are recognised. There is a sense here of how the members of the audience share in the efficacy of the performance, which is often emically described as sharing in the *barakah*.[13]

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(20) After the afternoon prayer, the congregation stand and a naat session takes place. *Naat* are religious devotional verses which are declaimed on auspicious occasions, though some mosques will have naat sessions at the end of every Friday prayer. The imam is an accomplished *naat* reciter and he begins with a well-known Urdu *naat* that nearly everyone in the congregation knows. This means that the verses are mainly declaimed by the imam and the entire congregation responds with the chorus.

Fishman (2006) describes the co-existence of co-sanctified language practices where a language variety, historically, due to its intimate association with certain religious practices takes on the attributes of sanctity. Here the religious poetry recited is in Urdu or in literary Punjabi both of which, particularly the former, have co-sanctification status.

(21) I guess it's becoming a little more mainstream in the last couple of years in terms of publicising, mainly more professional videos of *nasheed*[14] artists and it's more business-orientated. It used to be more traditional and localised within *masjids* in small-scale events but now there are a lot more organised events to do with entertainment. (Shahid)

The joint participation of imam and congregation, and the artful performance of poetry, here result in performance that oscillates between efficacy and entertainment (Schechner 1988).

(22) A 14-year old boy, Rashid, has his opportunity to recite the Punjabi *naat* that he has learnt. His voice is still unbroken and his tenor notes ring out across the prayer hall. Through careful control of his breathing Rashid is able to deal with the tricky rhythm and cadence of his verses. At the end of his performance, many of the elders mutter the congratulatory *mà sha'Allah*.[15]

This young person's performance is characterised, as are many of the religious classical performative practices, by memorisation. Although performance theory would suggest that "perhaps all verbal art is generated anew in the act of performance" (Bauman 1974:303), the "rote memorisation and insistence on word-for-word fidelity to a fixed text" (ibid.) that is happening here are common elements of many performance-oriented practices, ranging from the everyday practice of recalling subtle jokes relying on word play (which won't work unless verbatim recall is exercised) to theatrical dramatic performances. Bauman (1974) posits the existence of a continuum with "completely novel" and "completely fixed" texts available within performance practices. The religious classical here, Qur'anic Arabic, and the co-sanctified religious classical of Urdu to a lesser extent, are less integrated and structured varieties than they are "texts" representing scripts that are learned and memorised for performance. Imran and Rashid's "ritualised performances" (Muhleisen 2009:461) are based on the entextualisation of certain linguistic resources that remain dormant until achieving realisation through the human acts of performance.

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(23) The *naat* session is followed by the end-of-event *du'a*, or 'supplication,' session. The imam begins by supplicating in the religious classical, Arabic, using well-known Arabic verses from the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet. The congregation, despite not understanding most of these pleas and requests, respond with the universal *ameen!*. The language of the supplication changes into Urdu and the congregation, understandably, become more responsive as they react to meaningful phrases and expressions. Finally, the congregation is asked to recite the *Fatihah*, the first short chapter of the Qur'an, which serves as a seal on all that has preceded it.

This final section of the event is made of up of interwoven practices involving a range of linguistic resources from religious classical to vernacular ones. The highly stylised manner of making supplication by the imam and the audience responses constitute together a performative practice that all participants are familiar with. We have an example here of practice where the audience has "knowledge of what the performer is trying to do" and is a practice that arises in the midst of "a living tradition which people experience from birth" (Schechner 1988:120–21).

The above extracts are presented as typical of a range of performative ritualised practices within the same speech community. Other religious classical practices that could have been analysed in like manner are prayer (both congregational and individual), the call to prayer, and the Friday sermon, along with other ritual practices such as ablution, appearance, and dress, which remind us of the importance of the body as a site for the rituals of performativity (Bourdieu 1990). Religious classical practices then are a bundle of language and performative practices relocalised through different social settings. Regardless of the fixity of the religious classical form, with its link to the immutable text, its relocalisation (Pennycook 2010) and entextualisation create the practices anew, through the repetition and restatement of the religious classical in different spaces—and as such constitute the spaces that are, therefore, far more than a simple backdrop or context for their enactment or performance.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have shared thoughts and data that focus on what has come to be known as the religious classical. I have adopted, first, the notion of situated practices as an analytical category through which to interpret and account for religious classical activity. This allows for an analysis that views the fluid and shifting dynamic of language, setting, and human agent as practice rather than as fixed and preexisting entities operating against some sort of contextual backdrop. Second, I include religious classical practices as but one element in translingual processes that characterise many urban settings in this age. Finally, I theorise religious classical practice through the interpretive frame of performance and entextualisation. The performance-oriented events, actors, and settings as presented here are understood as elements of social and linguistic practices that, together, constitute religious classical practices. It is possible that religious classical practices, even more than other language practices due to their performance-oriented entextualisation, cannot be

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theorised outside of situated social practice, and that it is only through the prism of performance that they make sense. In such a way, I hope to have related my findings, to a degree, to those emerging sociolinguistic theories that understand linguistic repertoires and linguistic resources as constituting language practice rather than pregiven and preformed languages and varieties operating within and through a variety of contexts. However, I have also argued that this notion is problematicised in performative religious classical practices where, although conventionally understood communicative functions and usage are often infrequent and where linguistic resources are inevitably truncated, the performance-oriented entextualisations that ensue assume an autonomous and bounded text, if not language or variety, outside of any recontextualisation. Moreover, I also hope to have demonstrated how a performance-oriented perspective can enhance understanding of language practice more generally. The potential for further exploration of this perspective in other language-practice settings is considerable, as is the potential for interdisciplinary collaboration.

NOTES

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[1]A Muslim who has memorised the complete text of the Qur'an.

[2]A college for advanced studies

[3]Translations of the italicized words in this extract are as follows:

Bayt ul Quds	'The Holy Mosque in Jerusalem'
Masjid al Haram	'The Holy Mosque in Mecca'
rasool	'Messenger of God'
Nabi	'Prophet of God'
Bani Israil	'The Children of Israel'
ghafoor ar-raheem	'The Forgiving, the Compassionate'
rabbi alameen	'Lord of all worlds'

[4]'prayer'

[5]*durood* 'special prayer for the Prophet'
salaam 'greetings'

[6]*Hajj* 'the pilgrimage to Mecca'
naat 'devotional poems'

[7]*tasbeeh* 'rosary'
du'a 'prayer; supplication'

[8]'o my Lord, render me and my offspring steadfast in prayer'

[9]The opening words of every chapter in the Qur'an meaning 'in the name of God, Most Merciful'

[10]'one thirtieth of the Qur'an'

[11]'glory to God!'

[12]A trained reciter of the Qur'an who can have a local, a national, or even a global reputation.

[13]An Arabic word denoting 'blessings,' often used to describe an atmosphere.

[14]*nasheed* religious 'songs; hymns'
masjids 'mosques'

[15]'what God has willed (is good)'

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