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The Abu Dhabi adhan: An orienting soundmark through scaled configurations of space and time

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Abstract

Amid its superdiverse population, the call to prayer, the *adhan*, identifies the UAE as an Arab, Muslim nation state while forming discrete ethno-class publics around its numerous urban mosque calls. I conceptualize the adhan as a soundmark, which functions as a vital sonic place-maker and orients listeners' attendant actions through a series of scaled chronotopes. I posit two intersecting umbrella chronotopes, *masjid* and *jāmi'*, which frame how each adhan is listened to and taken up. For autochthonous Emiratis, the chronotope of masjid opens up a portal of copresence with God and attendant rituals of ethical self-formation. Meanwhile, the chronotope of jāmi' positions Emiratis in the iterative constitution of their nation, community, and family. Through these chronotopes, I examine how members of an extended Emirati family use the adhan to reinforce discourses of ethnonational and gendered socialization within their cloistered urban tribal enclave in the capital, Abu Dhabi. However, as the state gradually divests from full economic dependence on oil, infrastructural transformations are leading young Emiratis toward two-income single-family homes in multiethnic suburbs. Accordingly, I show how the marked reduction in the adhan in new developments becomes a synecdoche for sociopolitical changes and Emiratis' ambivalence toward them.

KEYWORDS

adhan, chronotope, ethnonationalism, interpellation, soundmark

خلاصة

توجّهيّة صوتيّة سمةأذان أبوظبي: من خلال تكوينات محجمة للمكان والزمان

وسط سكانها فائقة التنوع، يميّز الأذان الإمارات العربية المتحدة كدولة قوميّة عربيّة مسلمة، ولكنه في نفس الوقت يميّزمجموعات عرقية بعينها في دعوات الصلاة في المساجد المدنية المتنوعة. في هذه الدراسة، أطرح فكرة مفادها أنَّ الأذان علامة صوتيّة مميزة تعمل كصانعة مكان صوتي حيوي، وفي نفس الوقت توجّه انتباه و استجابة المستمعين عن طريق مترابطة ومحجّمة. بالتحديد (chronotopes) سلسلة كرونوتوبات أطرح أنه يوجد كرونوتوبان متقاطعان، هما المسجد والجامع. يصيغ كل من الاثنين كيف يستجيب المستمعون إلى الأذان ويتفاعلون معه. للاماراتيين الأصليين يفتح كرونوتوب المسجد بوابة لحضور مشترك مع الله وطقوس تشكيل أخلاقي ونفسي، بينما يضع كرونوتوب الجامع الإماراتيين في عملية تكرارية لتعزيز وطنهم ومجتمعهم وعائلتهم. أفحص عن طريق هذين الكرونوتوبين كيف يستخدمن أعضاء عشيرة كبيرة الأذان في تعزّزخطابات التنشئة القومية العرقية والجندرية في حيّهم القبلي المحصور في عاصمة أبوظبي. ومع ذلك، مع تخلي الدولة تدريجياً عن الاعتماد الاقتصادي الكامل على النفط، تقود التحولات البنائية التحتية الشباب الإماراتي نحو منازل الأسرة الواحدة ذات الدخل المزدوج في ضواحي تتميز بتنوع الجنسيات. حسباً لذلك، أعرض كيف يصبح الانخفاض الملحوظ لصوت الأذان في المدن الضاحية الجديدة .مجازمرسل للتغييرات الإجتماعية والسياسية وتناقض الإماراتيين إليها

الكلمات الدالة: الأذان– علامة صوتية–كرونوتوب– استجابة – القومية العرقية

TEA AND THE ADHAN IN AL-ZAAB

It was around dusk on a Friday in mid-September 2017, a few days after I arrived in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, to conduct my dissertation fieldwork. Amna[1] and I were on the roof garden of the two-story patrilocal family home she shared with her husband, four children, and her husband's family in the Emirati downtown neighborhood of Al-Zaab. We had gone up there to have tea away from the flurry of children, relatives, and live-in Filipino housemaids, all markers of the bustling middle-class, extended family lives that many Emiratis enjoy. Amna was planning to show me pictures of the suburban single-family home she and her husband were in the process of moving to.

Prior to beginning graduate school in the United States in 2013, I had worked in Abu Dhabi for several years as an English lecturer at a college for Emirati women. An oil-rich Arabian Gulf state, the UAE has a unique population distribution, comprised of an approximate 85% majority of foreign workers who hail from 196 different countries and a 15% citizen minority (FCSC, 2020). As members of the UAE's minority citizen class, many autochthonous[2] Emiratis in urban centers like Abu Dhabi and Dubai have, until recently, lead cloistered domestic and social lives. With the exception of Asian and African domestic workers, they have had limited interactions with the expatriate majority outside of the workplace. Over the past decade, however, as the UAE began its gradual transition from an oil-dependent economy to a global hub for knowledge industries, there has been a steady integration between Emiratis and expatriates through a rise in private-sector multinational employment, middle-class leisure venues, and multiethnic single-family suburban developments (Government of Abu Dhabi, 2008; Kanna, 2010, 2011; Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, 2024a).

For white-collar expatriates, gaining entry into the domestic world of an Emirati family is a rare and coveted experience, one that entails years of trust building. Fortunately for me, Amna, a former colleague in her late-thirties, had adopted me, a single Arab-American Muslim female, as a sister and aunt to her children. As such, she and her family had been anticipating my return to Abu Dhabi for fieldwork with much excitement.

"Don't you get lonely when you're back in the US?" Amna asked as she served me *karak* tea, black tea boiled in evaporated milk and sugar.[3] "Why would I get lonely?" I replied. Then, as if on cue, the call to the sunset prayer, *maghrib*, burst forth, with the familiar voice of the muezzin, Imam Ahmad, booming onto Amna's roof. Amna grinned as she gestured to the successive calls being released from the surrounding mosques. We both laughed, marking our simultaneous delight at hearing the *adhan*,[4] the call to prayer, and our ambivalence toward the cacophony of competing calls that permeated the city. "This is the heart of it all," she said, her voice barely audible. "This is how you know you're back in the Emirates *with us* and are being spoken to!" [emphasis Amna's].

The adhan is broadcast five times a day across the Muslim world and signifies a belonging to the transnational Muslim community or *Ummah*. It is heard and engaged with in different ways by those who are present at its event. In the UAE, this includes practicing[5] and non-practicing Muslims, non-Muslims, citizens, expatriates, and foreign tourists. It additionally includes those who are amenable to it as a public sound and those who are not (Bell, 2011). In so doing, it serves as an orienting *soundmark*, a term coined by Murray Schafer (1994) to signify a recognizable community sound or sonic landmark. Like a landmark, the adhan soundmark functions as a vital sonic place-maker, serving to emplace listeners and orient their attendant actions in space and time.

Through ethnographic accounts of my fieldwork in the UAE from 2017 to 2019—in particular, this evening on Amna's roof in September 2017—I examine what Amna means by her two-fold assertion above: that the call to prayer situates a listener in the Emirates and speaks to them. I conceptualize the adhan as a soundmark that is central to the curation of Abu Dhabi's and the UAE's urban experience. In turn, I focus on the situatedness of the adhan's uptake, that is the ways listeners apprehend, listen to, and respond to it in space and time. I specifically focus on Amna and her family's engagement with the adhan in order to foreground its vital role in the organization of the everyday lives of the UAE's autochthonous citizen class. I ask: In what ways does the live mosque adhan contribute to the creation of a UAE urban soundscape and the distinct communal life of its minority citizen class? In turn, how do changing sound logics that accompany significant urban transformations in the UAE redefine the adhan experience and what it represents for Emirati citizen subjectivity?

As I ethnographically show, for Emiratis, *being spoken to* through the adhan entails a form of personhood as an addressee of God and the community.[6] Hence, I examine the semiosis of uptake, or embodied ways Amna's extended family responds to the adhan in, first, Al-Zaab, an Emirati tribal enclave in the capital city of Abu Dhabi, and, later, a new multiethnic middle-class suburb which Amna was in the process of moving to with her nuclear family. I show how the adhan emplaces my interlocutors in two concurrent umbrella chronotopes, which I term the chronotope of *masjid*, or time–space of connecting with God, and the chronotope of *jāmi'*, or time–space of communal gathering. In Al-Zaab, as community members take up the call to prayer through these spatiotemporal frameworks, discourses of ethical self-formation, ethnonationalism, and homosociality are brought to bear on their ethnic and gender-segregated, extended family lives.

However, the adhan experience proves to be different in Abu Dhabi's newest style of suburban developments. Unlike the ethnic compartmentalization of urban tribal enclaves and older-style suburbs for Emiratis, new developments are harbingers of Western middle-class cosmopolitan imaginaries. They follow different spatial and sound logics which limit the number of mosques being built. The marked reduction of the adhan and changes in

its manner of dissemination reframe the chronotopes of masjid and jāmi‘ and necessitate different forms of uptake. Here, the organization of Abu Dhabi as a prominent Arabian Gulf city and its transformation as oil reserves decline call attention to shifting notions of citizenship for Emiratis. I conclude with the implications of this research in opening new channels of inquiry into the embodied ways of listening to public religious sounds like the adhan and their quotidian role in curating a sense of place, time, and subjectivity for inhabitants.

THE UAE ADHAN: A POLYVALENT SOUNDMARK

A song-like chant of seven verses, a public adhan is broadcast through mosque loudspeakers and encountered aurally. As a ubiquitous Islamic cultural form, its incantatory aesthetics and sensual *feltness* foreground a sonically situated semiotic ideology, which reveals a penchant for the spoken word, the human voice, and technologies of transmission (Hazelton, 2010; Hirschkind, 2006; Keane, 2018; Spadola, 2014). The adhan thereby plays a significant role in curating the quotidian sonic world of Muslim-majority countries, reminding inhabitants, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, of a foundational Islamic belief: that they coexist in worldly time and God's time (El Guindi, 2008).

Murray Schafer (1994) defines a soundscape as the acoustic environment that shapes the experiences of inhabitants in a particular space. In turn, Charles Hirschkind describes a modern *Islamic* soundscape as the "…ways of configuring urban space acoustically through the use of Islamic media forms" (2006, 6). Thus, the call to prayer is part of a greater soundscape that comprises both religious and secular acoustic media.

Nevertheless, while mosques and their accompanying calls in historical Muslim-majority urban centers, like Cairo, Damascus, or Istanbul, reflect a sonic sedimentation of their thousand-year legacies,[6] in the UAE, they reveal the distinct urbanism of Gulf Cooperation Council states. Indeed, many Arabian Gulf cities, previously sleepy coastal towns, were catapulted into existence in the 1960s and 70s as a result of burgeoning oil economies and importation of foreign labor. Like many of its Arab Gulf counterparts, Abu Dhabi, with its population of approximately 1.5 million, is not quite a megacity. However, over its relatively short history, it has developed into a prominent hydrocarbon hub in the Global South, which boasts an urban scape that is superdiverse yet communally segregated (Davidson, 2008; Dumortier, 2016; Elsheshtawy, 2008, 2010; Kanna, 2011).

Emiratis, notwithstanding their ethnic and socioeconomic diversity, have elite status as the country's citizen minority. Due to their small population, they enjoy cradle-to-grave support initially established under the oil welfare state, which includes free education and healthcare, land allocation, as well as generous marriage, employment, and retirement benefits (Davidson, 2008). Emiratis are additionally distinguished in public through their iconic national dress which became formalized in the 1980s. Despite recent incorporations of colors and styles, and a waning adherence to wearing it among younger generations, the majority of Emirati women are still identified by the black cloak, *abaya*, worn over their clothes, and the black Muslim headscarf, *shayla*, and men by an ankle-length, white-colored garment, *dishdasha*, and accompanying headdress, *ghutra* (TheZayInitiative, 2019).

The UAE's official religion is Sunni Islam. Interestingly, despite the considerable population diversity, census data classify 76% of the total population as Muslim; this includes 100% of the Emirati citizen class (FCSC, 2020). Although the majority of the Muslim population is Sunni, 15% are Shiite, constituting primarily Middle Eastern and South Asian expatriates, but also a minority of citizens. Nine percent of the total population is Christian with the remaining 15% classified as predominately Hindu, Buddhist, and other (ibid).

Accordingly, mosques and their accompanying calls play an integral role in affirming the UAE's Muslim identity and spatially and acoustically forging sub-communities among its

multiethnic urban population. As of 2021, the UAE had approximately 9100 mosques—over 2000 in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi alone—each with their state-appointed clerics and authorization to broadcast the adhans and Friday sermons (Awqaf, 2021; Nasrallah, 2020). Moreover, like many street signs, mosques are often named after Emirati male leaders, thus situating them within the nation's history.

Indeed, as a UAE resident notes, mosques are the national landmark (Khamis, 2014). Like a landmark, an adhan disseminated from a mosque produces a sonic landmark, or soundmark, which "is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by people in that community" (Schafer, 1994, 10). The adhan soundmark designates a particular mosque community but is also layered atop adjacent mosque calls to contribute to the Islamic soundscape through its "polyphony of cantillated Arabic calls" (Eisenberg, 2013, 190). That the adhan is *cantillated* renders the muezzin's voice and style of chanting key to the creation of a soundmark (Eisenlohr, 2018).

Interestingly, the UAE does not have a recognizable style of chanting the call to prayer as is the case in other Muslim countries. This is because only 4% of imams and muezzins are Emirati, thus further highlighting the population imbalance between citizens and foreign inhabitants.[7] Most muezzins are hired from across the Middle East and Asia (Awqaf, 2021; Saeed, 2011; The National, 2014). In general, congregations that cater primarily to Emiratis and Arab expatriates are presided over by Arab clerics, and congregations for non-Arabs are often presided over by South Asian or Iranian clerics. In the UAE, then, the adhan's "polyphony of cantillated Arabic calls" is marked by diverse accents, cadences, and *maqāmāt*, chanting styles which index different regions of the Muslim world.[8]

Nevertheless, while the ubiquity of mosques reinforces the UAE's commitment to its Muslim identity, changing laws around the adhan's broadcast reveal the country's sonic ambivalence. In its quest to create a tolerant society and manage its superdiverse population of foreign residents, public displays and noise, such as loud music emanating from cars, political protests, or disorderly conduct, are severely penalized through fines and incarceration (Bell, 2016). In Abu Dhabi, this has led to legislation to reduce mosque speaker decibel levels and limit the broadcast of the *iqamah*, the second adhan which indicates the start of prayer, to larger mosques (Saeed, 2011; Seaman, 2009). Sound logics across the urban landscape are also changing. In older urban and suburban areas, including tribal enclaves like Al-Zaab, myriad mosques of various sizes cater to different tribal and ethnic communities. However, newly built middle-class, multiethnic suburbs are planned with fewer mosques. This has led to a reduction in the broadcast of the call to prayer, thus designating a new era of urban life in the UAE.

The adhan in Abu Dhabi is, hence, a quotidian reminder of the distinct urban planning of Arab Gulf cities. It is a polyvalent sonic place-marker. That is, unlike other Arab and Muslim countries where the call to prayer is typically characterized by locally distinctive styles of chanting, the confluence of different styles from around the Muslim region delineates, sonically and spatially, the different ethnic communities that reside in Abu Dhabi and the UAE at large. It further indexes the diversity of listeners and their varied ways of taking up the call. Yet, the changing logics of sound and space foreground this as a moment of social change, especially among young Emiratis like Amna who are negotiating the shift away from their hitherto ethnic- and gender-segregated extended family lives. This underscores the interdependence of the adhan's dissemination and the situatedness of its uptake.

LISTENING TO THE ADHAN AS A SITUATED PRACTICE

Based on the root ā-dh-n (ء ذ ن), which can designate verbs meaning *to permit* or *to call*, the ultimate objective of the adhan is fourfold: To assert an Islamic presence in public space,

signal sanctioned prayer times, prompt Muslims to pray, and get community members, traditionally men, to gather at the mosque. Another derivation of the root is *ūḏhun*, meaning *ears*. Thus, the adhan additionally entails a labor of listening. Hence, Amna's idea of being spoken to refers to the way the UAE adhan, as a textured, polyvalent soundmark of voice, chanting style, and broadcast technology, interpellates[9] listeners and shapes their attendant actions in space and time (Althusser, 1971).

Listening to a public sound like the adhan is an embodied experience that presupposes specific aesthetic, social, historical, and political orientations.[6] It is, as I argue, encountered and engaged with through intersecting chronotopes or space–time associations. Chronotope was first theorized in the work of literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, where he shows how particular configurations of space and time frame the context of semiotic behavior and interaction in different literary genres (Bakhtin, 1981). Chronotopes are, hence, ideologically rich, "semiotically mediated spatiotemporal orders [which] shape our *experience* and thus subjective *feel* for history and place" (Wirtz, 2016, 344; see also De Fina, 2023). They exist in relation to other chronotopes at different scales, where "forms of normativity, patterns of language use and expectations thereof are organized" (Blommaert, 2010, 36 in Goebel & Manns, 2020, 83).

Prior work in linguistic anthropology has highlighted how chronotopes enable speakers to leverage ideological frameworks, such as authenticity, tradition, and modernity in order to position themselves relationally to other people, entities, and environments (See Blommaert, 2015; Dick, 2010; Park, 2017; Wang & Kroon, 2020). I focus here on listening as an activity that happens through chronotopic associations. I am concerned specifically with the semiosis of uptake, or the series of embodied behaviors and subjective alignments that one's encounter with a public sound like the adhan motivates. Hence, I examine what happens at the intersection of sound, space, and subjective position that animates a particular hearer (a practicing Muslim, non-practicing Muslim, non-Muslim, citizen, tourist, or foreign worker) and renders accessible relational and metapragmatic scripts which influence their engagement with the adhan.

For example, for the aptly named British blogger, Fred Bell (2011), the Abu Dhabi adhan is marked by the muezzins "yelling … overlapping their calls, sometimes harmonizing and sometimes not." A sonic inconvenience, it reminds him of "church bells in earlier times in the West," thus harkening to a space–time of medieval Europe. As a self-professed subject of a Western, secular modernity, he learns to "tune out," relegating the adhan to background noise. In contrast, Lorraine, an Australian expatriate, notes that the sound of the adhan, and especially her neighborhood mosque's, conjures a sense of coming back *home* to her Abu Dhabi life whenever she returns from vacation. It marks the different stages of her day and accompanying activities within the space–time of her life as a white-collar expatriate. Likewise, for Muslim expatriates, the adhan conjures particular space–time associations that frame their engagement with it, which include rituals of worship for practicing Muslims.

For autochthonous Emiratis, the adhan produces ethical, social, and political ties that are continually reaffirmed in the act of listening and taking up of the call. I use the term ethical here not to simply center my interlocutors' degree of piety or devoutness, but rather to emphasize their listening to the adhan as a quotidian ritual practice, a form of Foucauldian ethical self-fashioning with attendant auditory and embodied attunements that reinforce their relationship with God and their community (Fader, 2009; Foucault, 1988).

I posit two overarching and interdependent chronotopes that frame a practicing Muslim's engagement with the adhan. There are two Arabic words for mosque. *Masjid* means the place where one performs *sujūd*, the act of prostration to God that Muslims do while in prayer (Sakr, 1997). *Jāmiʿ*, derived from the root, *j-m-ʿ*, meaning to gather or collect, refers to the place where the community gathers. I argue that the *chronotope of masjid* puts the worshipper in direct communication with God at prayer times or, what El Guindi (2008) describes as, "the iterative temporality of divine time" (21). Meanwhile, the *chronotope of jāmiʿ*

spatializes the adhan experience by connecting the worshipper with their community at a pan-Islamic, societal, communal, and neighborhood level.

As I show in the rest of the piece, the call to prayer invokes these scaled space–time formations, whereby members of Amna's family engage in reiterative ethical self-formation and a community reinstates itself at a series of nested levels at the five sanctioned prayer times—*fajr* (sunrise), *dhuhr* (midday), '*asr* (afternoon), *maghrib* (sunset), and '*isha* (evening). Significant here is Amna's contrast of the adhan, indexing my being *back in the Emirates with them* to my presumed loneliness in the United States, a supposed secular and anomic place. For Amna and her family, being spoken to through the adhan reflects their own subjective alignments as addressees of God, the ethnonational state, and their own communities. Without the interpellative force of a public adhan in the United States, Amna wonders how I participate in these tiered rituals of belonging.

THE CHRONOTOPE OF MASJID: ANIMATING GOD AND AN ETHICAL EMIRATI SUBJECT

Because Amna married someone from her tribe, both her patrilocal and childhood residences were in the one-square-kilometer superblock of extended family villas of Al-Zaab, couched between the two main thoroughfares of Airport Road and Khalidiya Street in the city center. The area was named after the Zaab tribe who were gifted the land by the ruler of Abu Dhabi in 1968. It has remained one of the few intact urban tribal communities in Abu Dhabi (Dajani, 2012). Over the years, the surrounding cityscape has risen around Al-Zaab in a dense layering of mixed-use high-rise buildings, large roadways, and multiplex shopping malls, markers of the hypermodern urbanism of Arabian Gulf cities.

Tribal enclaves like Al-Zaab consist of clusters of extended family homes often belonging to one particular tribe or a group of related tribes on land allocated by the government during the founding of the UAE nation state and sedentarization of its indigenous population (Dajani, 2012; Heard-Bey, 2004; Maclean, 2017). Historically located in the city center and early suburbs built for Emiratis in the 1970s and 1980s, they reflect a style of compact development, characterized by smaller side streets peppered with corner shops, mosques, and traditionally a *majlis*, or gathering space for men to hold tribal meetings (Abu Ashour & Al-Awadhi, 2017). Amna and her family fondly referred to the area as the *freej*, which means neighborhood in Emirati Arabic and conjures the close-knit extended family life of tribal communities that existed before the establishment of the UAE nation state and remapping of its urban space (Maclean, 2017).

Like many Emiratis, Muslim ritual prayer is an integral part of Amna and her family's everyday experience, and the preponderance of mosques in Al-Zaab is a key visual and sonic index of this commitment within the ethnonational community. Al-Zaab boasts eight mosques within its one-square-kilometer grid of extended family villas. On the main road leading to Amna's residential block and a 3-minute walk east of her home are two larger mosques with designated women's prayer halls. Next to her house is another small community mosque, the *Ḥasan Bin Jubārah*,[10] built by her family and immediate group of neighbors. It is the mosque where men from the surrounding houses go to pray. During the month of Ramadan, when Muslims are required to fast from sunrise to sunset, an airconditioned portable cabin with attached speakers is set up behind the mosque so women can also pray *tarāwīḥ*, the Ramadan night prayers, in congregation.

Amna's roof was adjacent to the Ḥasan Bin Jubārah mosque loudspeakers, and at the onset of the maghrib adhan on that September evening in 2017, they felt like they were directed at us. But it was not a singular call. There was a reverberation of other calls from across the neighborhood and surrounding city streets, creating, to borrow Hirschkind's phrase, a "pious sensorium"

of receding loudness (2006). Amid all this, the adhan is encountered not as a disembodied proxy voice of God, but as a distinct, situated sound, characterized by the voice and chanting style of the muezzin. Indeed, while church bells are analogous soundmarks delineating a parish community and constituting a sense of place, Islamic scholarship has focused on the capacity of a muezzin's voice to interpellate and move listeners through its vocal range (Corbin, 1998; Khan, 2011). Thus, the adhan as a public sound is comprised of both voice and broadcast technology, which together produce the soundmark that orients a listener in space and time.

Imam Ahmad's style of chanting produced resonances of his Egyptian Al-Azhar training, accompanied by the styles of other imams of different nationalities in the adjacent mosques of the neighborhood. This indexed the UAE as an ethnically diverse environment whose experiences of community formation involved the convergence of different cultural influences. In another area of the city, a similar Azhar adhan chant would index another Emirati congregation or an Arab expatriate one. However, Imam Ahmad's long-term residency at the Ḥasan bin Jubārah mosque localized the distinctive sound of his voice and chanting style as a vital soundmark of Amna's corner of Al-Zaab.

As the adhan unfolded around us, Amna raised her hands to the sky. "*Gūlī wará al-mu'adhin, Allāh biyisma'ch* [repeat after the muezzin, Allah will listen to you]," she instructed me, her own whispered responses sounding like breathy birdsong.[11] The chronotope of masjid opens up a vertical dialogic realm with the divine as ethical listeners take up its seven verses as a series of speech acts (Austin, 1975). Through requisite repetitions and formulaic responses, ethical listeners assert Allah's greatness[12] and agree to *hasten to worship* and *hasten to success*[13] through prayer. Moreover, by specifically repeating verses 2 and 3, listeners reiteratively renew their *shahada*,[14] the oath all Muslims have to take by *bearing witness* that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammed is His prophet. Hence, through the repetitions and formulaic responses to the adhan's seven verses, ethical listeners perform their own declarations and oaths to God and, in so doing, uphold their belonging to the pan-Islamic Ummah.

Although the specifics of how Allah listens is its own subject of Islamic scholarship, this dialogic engagement with the call's verses invokes what Naveeda Khan refers to as an appreciation for the "force of the divine in the azan" (2011, 580). By responding to the adhan's speech acts, Amna's formulaic responses animated her as an ethical listener and, in turn, distinguished her from a non-Muslim or non-practicing Muslim listener. Here, within the frame of ritual worship signaled by the adhan, both God and an ethical subject are animated in a space–time domain of copresence.

Within the umbrella chronotope of masjid, other chronotopes open up that further expand this experience of copresence. In her ethnography of prayer among middle-class Iranian women, Nilofar Haeri (2013) describes how the simple act of stepping onto their prayer mat locates her interlocutors, physically and emotionally, in an audience with the divine. It additionally opens up the possibility to talk to God through *dua* or supplication, both through the formulaic Arabic versions and in their own words in Farsi. Likewise, the window between the first adhan and the iqamah, the second call signaling the start of prayer, engenders a similar space–time domain for dua for ethical listeners. These different rites lead to the final ritual of prayer, *ṣalāh*, which literally translates as *connection*. With its prescribed steps, consisting of Quranic verses, utterances, and bodily postures, ṣalāh, whether performed individually or in congregation, is deemed to be the ultimate experience of connection and copresence with God.

The public dissemination of the adhan is, hence, an interpellative force, whereby broadcast technology and voice coproduce the soundmark that animates an ethical listener and frames their ritual actions in an audience with the divine. At the outset, this soundmark emplaces listeners within the Muslim Ummah. Yet, this emplacement is also geographically situated, rendered through the voice of the muezzin and the immediate surrounding environment. Here, we see how the chronotope of masjid and the chronotope of jāmi' are interdependent. To be an ethical listener is to also be located within a particular time and

space. Through the chronotope of jāmi‘, being spoken to becomes spatialized as a geographically specific and embodied cultural experience that emplaces us in the neighborhood of Al-Zaab, in the city of Abu Dhabi, and the country of the UAE. The resonances of Imam Ahmed's voice and his Azhar chanting style underscore the prevalent role of non-Emiratis in the formation of the UAE nation state, even in the curation of its Emirati-only spaces.

THE CHRONOTOPE OF JĀMI‘: TOWARD A GENDERED EMIRATI SUBJECTIVITY IN AL-ZAAB

Praying in congregation: The formation of an Emirati male ethnonational subject

Through the chronotope of jāmi‘, the taking up of the call to prayer for Amna and her family translated into an array of spatialized activities that summoned Emirati homosociality and gendered socialization in Al-Zaab. After the adhan, Amna gathered her boys to go to the mosque while setting up prayer mats for the women on the roof.[15] She yelled out, “*Yallā! Ṣalāh! Ṣalāh!”* [Let's go! Prayer! Prayer!]. Her subsequent words to me “*Hā aḥsanluhum* [It's better for them]. *Abá a‘alimhum inī aṣ-ṣalāh fī wagt muḥadad* [I want them to learn that prayer has a specific time]” pointed to the ways both chronotopes, masjid and jāmi‘, intersect.

Praying is a timed event where community members come together as a collective, *jamā‘ah*, in order to communicate with God, both individually and communally. To encourage her boys to pray at the mosque, the adhan becomes a vital interpellative tool of male socialization. A few weeks prior, when I first returned to the UAE, Amna's eldest son, Khalifa, was away doing his military service. “He lost so much weight. He's not the chubby teenager you remember,” Amna told me. “*Bas hā aḥsanluh* [But this is better for him],” she added. When I noted that she used the same phrase to talk about her boys going to the mosque and Khalifa's conscription, she nodded emphatically. “Worshipping God and serving your country are the most important qualities of being an Emirati man,” she explained.

The UAE began mandatory military service for Emirati men in 2014, so Khalifa was one of the first boys in the family to do it (Alterman & Balboni, 2018). The adhan constitutes Khalifa as an Emirati man and, in turn, requires of him a particular set of actions. For Khalifa, the discipline of body and mind in religious practice is juxtaposed with the time–space domain of military service where he got his body into shape. In both instances, Khalifa leaves home. He goes away to pray at the mosque and, though his family misses him dearly, he goes away to do his military service. Both emphasize the commitment and discipline of participating in an ethnonational male collective.

As Amna ushers her boys to go to the mosque, she plays a significant part in their interpellation as Emirati men. “*Yallā sīr ma‘a abūk* [Come on go with your dad]. *Yallā bsur‘ah, ashabāb biysīrūn* [Come on, catch up, the men are leaving!].” And as one of the younger boys is exhorted to leave his Xbox, *“Yallā sīr aṣ-ṣalāh, habībi, ‘alāshān tsīr dhai abūk we bābā Zayed* [Come on, go to prayer, dear, so that you can be like your father and Baba Zayed].” For men, going to pray, and especially attending the requisite Friday *jum‘ah* sermon and prayer, is equated with not only male sociality but also becoming a man.

Shabāb means young men, and in Emirati Arabic, it also refers to a social group of Emirati men. Here, the chronotope of jāmi‘ summons the spatiotemporal framework of male ethnonational socialization through the shabāb and the activities they engage in. These include going to the desert, participating in the men's tribal majlis,[16] and learning from elders different cultural practices, like tribal poetry, falconry, horse racing, and sword dancing. In invoking the departure of the shabāb to the mosque, Amna includes her boys as part of an Emirati male collective. This is a rite of passage.

In the UAE, the best role model for a man is his father, but the *ultimate* role model is the late founder of the nation state, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, fondly referred to as *Baba Zayed* [Father Zayed]. Amna's invocation of Baba Zayed was quite timely as the UAE was about to begin its year-long celebration of the centennial anniversary of his birth in January 2018 (Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, 2024b). Amna's appeal to her son to leave his Xbox to go to the mosque so he could be like Baba Zayed placed him within a trajectory of nation building like his brother Khalifa. Through the chronotope of jāmi‘, Khalifa and his brothers go to the mosque to pray in congregation with other men. This, like military service and engaging in other collective men's practices, become crucial passage points for the reiterative cultivation of their Emirati male subjectivity. As another Emirati woman interlocutor points out, these activities are how men "get to practice being Emirati."

After the adhan: The unfolding of homosociality

In Al-Zaab, the taking up of the adhan is iconic of the enduring gender segregation in Emirati families and the circumscribed mobility that women experience. While the last three decades have witnessed an increase in women's mosque presence across the Muslim World (Katz, 2023; Mahmood, 2001, 2005), for Emirati women, praying at mosques is not always viable. Amna describes the prayer experience for women in her family as follows:

> In Zaab, everyone knows who you are. You are always either someone's daughter or someone's wife, and so we have to be *mastūrīn* [covered or protected]. *Sitr* means that women are part of a family's private domain. Emirati families are private. Family members, especially the women, are not supposed to be *makshūfīn* ‘*al* ‘*ālam* [exposed to the world]. Praying at the mosque is amazing, especially at the Sheikh Zayed Mosque [in Abu Dhabi], or *Masjid al-Ḥarām* [Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia], but praying at home is sitr.[17]

In this quote, Amna presents a dichotomy between *mastūrīn*, the adjective of the noun sitr, meaning covering or barrier, and *makshūfīn*, meaning exposed. Discourses of sitr stipulate that women are part of the family's private domain and remain protected through modest sartorial choices and restricted mobility outside the home. Amna's phrase, "praying at home is sitr," frames the chronotope of jāmi‘ and its practices of community making for women through modesty and gender segregation at the tribal level. The mosques she and her sisters can pray at need to have appropriate women's prayer areas so that Emirati women can uphold sitr. Moreover, through her reference to al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in Saudi Arabia, the most sacred mosque for Muslims, alongside the UAE's Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and praying at home, Amna demonstrates how the chronotope of jāmi‘ creates a tiered sense of community at a pan-Islamic, national, and communal level.

The way Emiratis uphold sitr in public varies across families. For example, some of Amna's older sisters work in the public sector, where employee offices are usually gender segregated. They maintain sitr through restricted interaction with male colleagues. In public, sitr for women entails maintaining anonymity and going out with male kin or in women-only groups. In more conservative families, women may wear a face covering, *niqāb*, in addition to the headscarf, especially in places where they fear they might be recognized. Interestingly, Amna covers her face only on the streets of Al-Zaab, where there is a risk of being recognized by male community members.

Emirati men's mobility is also restricted. They usually visit neighborhood mosques or mosques that other Emiratis frequent. Here, discourses of sitr are scaled up to ensure the privacy of Emirati families as a whole. Autochthonous Emiratis have, until recently, maintained

physical, social, and cultural distance from expatriate communities, especially in more international cities like Abu Dhabi and Dubai. As such, through discourses of sitr, the chronotope of jāmi‘ in Al-Zaab becomes intimately linked with the chronotope of oil welfare citizenship, which positions Emiratis as members of a distinct citizen class, whose lives are marked by significant state support and ethnic and gender segregation.

The chronotope of jāmi‘ additionally foregrounds a time of homosocial community making in Al-Zaab. This is especially the case on Friday evenings and holidays. The word *jum‘ah*, meaning Friday, also derives from the root, *j-m-‘*, to gather or collect, and emphasizes the importance of community gathering around the weekly Friday midday sermon and prayer. Following the prayer, Amna and her children have lunch with the rest of her consanguineous kin at her parents' house, two doors down the street from her patrilocal home. Afterward, she and a permutation of her seven sisters, also in their thirties and forties, get together. The gatherings include outings to a restaurant, a mall, or women-only venues frequented by Emirati women and children. However, these homosocial home visits are the most relished. Underscoring the role of sitr in these gatherings, one of Amna's sisters explained, “We can relax and not worry about being seen by others.”

Shortly after the maghrib prayers, three of Amna's sisters entered with some of their daughters, housemaids, and containers of dates, snacks, tea and coffee in tow. A flurry of greetings ensued of *as-salāmu-‘alaikum* [peace be upon you] and *hala ḥabībtī* [hello my dear], followed by three kisses on everyone's right cheek. Then, assured by the roof's high fencing, the sisters took off their black abayas revealing ornate floral house dresses underneath that matched Amna's and her daughter's.

The next hour was chatty and festive. One of the sisters, Nouf, poured Arabic coffee, *gahwa*, and *karak* tea in small cups arranged by the housemaids. When the call to the night prayer, *‘isha*, was broadcast, Nouf was chosen to lead the women's prayers on the roof because she had the most Quran memorized and a beautiful recitational voice. Afterward, dinner, which was cooked in both the homes of Amna's parents and her in-laws, was delivered downstairs to the men's majlis and upstairs to the women on the roof by the resident housemaids.

Thus, in the period of time encompassing the sunset and evening prayers, the adhan played a vital role in organizing the gathering and gendered movement of Amna's and other families in Al-Zaab. Through the chronotope of jāmi‘, the call to prayer becomes an important tool of ethnonational and gendered socialization at the familial, communal, and national level. For men, it becomes a tool of ethnonational interpellation. For women, it reinforces discourses of sitr and emphasizes the ways in which Emirati women's mobility is largely restricted to family and homosocial domains. It further highlights how the life of autochthonous Emiratis is circumscribed to the home, neighborhood, and spaces largely frequented by Emiratis in the city.

These discourses illustrate how the adhan is always experienced in a situated and embodied manner which reflects organizing cultural and sociopolitical forces. This is further emphasized as Amna and her sisters start discussing the way infrastructural changes are reshaping the ethnic organization of the UAE's urban life. In the new type of suburban development Amna was moving to, the marked reduction of the adhan becomes a synecdoche for these processes of social change and her family's ambivalence toward them.

RECONFIGURING THE CHRONOTOPES OF MASJID AND JĀMI‘: TOWARD A NEW ERA OF EMIRATI CITIZENSHIP

“Holding hot coal in our hands”

Right after ‘isha prayer, one of the issues broached by the sisters was the law silencing the iqamah. With only a handful of the larger mosques allowed to broadcast it, most Abu

Dhabi imams are now required to chant this second call to their congregation without the loudspeakers—an act reminiscent of the silencing or turning inward of mosque loudspeakers to offset complaints about the adhan's loudness in Singapore and Hamtramck, MI (Lee, 1999; Perkins, 2020; Weiner, 2014). To mitigate this change, the UAE's General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments (Awqaf) stated that this new policy preempts Muslims from rushing to the mosque at the very last minute (Seaman, 2009).

However, as far as Amna was concerned, this was just another of the state's strategies to appease non-Muslims, especially Western expatriates, who were constantly complaining about the adhan (Bell, 2011).

> The government is dissolving our way of life. *Muslims. Emiratis*. To make *them* happy. Al-iqamah is important to let people know that prayer is starting. And that blessed period in between the two adhans when we make dua, we have to now do it on our own[sic]. Little by little, holding on to our customs is going to be like holding hot coal in our hands! [emphasis Amna's]

Amna's final exclamatory prognostication is an oft repeated saying ascribed to Islam's Prophet Muhammad, which warns that in the future, holding on to one's faith will be like holding on to hot coal.

Our in Amna's quote above is indexical of two scaled identities, a greater Muslim one and a nested Emirati one. For Amna, to be Emirati is to also be Muslim. Muslimness for her is also tied to the sound logics of a public adhan and iqamah, which enable the appropriate participation frameworks to perform important religious and social rituals. Emiratiness and Muslimness are also articulated in opposition to *them*, non-Muslims who complain about the adhan. Yet, Amna's frustration lies ultimately with the state for appeasing *them* over its responsibility to the Ummah and Muslims in the UAE, especially Emiratis.

As an autocratic state, there is a tacit understanding that one should refrain from criticizing the UAE government. This is not only the case for the more tentative expatriate residents and guest workers, but also for Emiratis, whose citizenship status has been premised on tribal leaders willingly relinquishing power to the governing tribes in return for the cradle-to-grave support of the oil welfare state (Davidson, 2008). This has led to a paternalistic form of governance that centers on loyalty to state leaders.

As an uncharacteristically outspoken Emirati, Amna's political comments are often met with quelling replies by her husband and sisters which contend that the country's leaders know best. However, on this night, the sisters listened and nodded, indexing the real sense of loss felt by everyone. Amna's use of *our way of life* refers to the chronotope of Emirati life under the oil-based welfare economy, where the country's citizen class live in a world that infrastructurally supports their ethnically segregated and communal way of life. Awqaf's claims that silencing the iqamah will make citizens and residents more independent is an example of the gradual untethering of state infrastructure that organizes Emirati life.

The adhan and the religious and social rituals around it are integral to the maintenance of an Emirati way of life. Shifts in the adhan's logics of dissemination index a reconfiguring of the chronotopes of masjid and jāmiʿ and, in turn, changes in the strategies of ethnonational interpellation and community making. For Amna, these changes are a harbinger of undesirable assimilations with the greater community of expatriates and non-Muslims, whereby maintaining *our way of life* is likened to the Prophet's metaphor of holding on to hot coal. Ultimately, they index an ambivalent recognition of the changing status of Emiratis amid a transforming economic and social infrastructure.

Immigrating to the suburbs

This conversation on societal transformations prompted Amna to begin showing pictures of her nuclear family's new suburban villa on Yas Island, which they had partially moved into. Amna had been trying to convince her husband throughout their 20-year marriage to move to their own home so they could have more autonomy and freedom. This is a common sentiment among many women her age whose college degrees and professional lives contributed to a social and ideological chasm between them and their families. The move entailed much sacrifice, including her husband selling his allocated government plot, which he had planned to build on someday, so they could afford the deposit. Amna additionally contributed to the new home from her income, something they kept secret from their families who expect the husband, as per Muslim tradition, to fully provide for his family. Yet, despite these cultural contradictions, the move aligned with the state's channeling of young Emiratis toward a Western model of a two-income nuclear-family lifestyle.

Amna's new home was in one of the newest types of residences built in the 2010s. Previously, in the early 2000s, there was a move toward building streamlined suburbs for Emiratis on the outskirts of Abu Dhabi, such as Khalifa and Mohammed bin Zayed cities. These new towns represented a shift toward a more spacious suburban sprawl with modern amenities and larger plots of land so homes could easily expand to fit growing families (Abu Ashour & Al-Awadhi, 2017). Though they were culturally similar to the tribal enclaves, with the inclusion of numerous mosques, these suburban towns marked the integration of Emiratis of different tribes in the same residential areas (Maclean, 2017). However, it is the more recent luxury developments like Yas and Saadiyat Islands which represent the greatest shift away from the cloistered freej way of life.

Since around 2007, in response to declining crude oil reserves, the UAE has sought to decrease its reliance on petroleum to only 20% of the GDP and embrace an economic diversification plan, centered on transitioning into a global hub for renewable energy and knowledge industries. Some of these industries include artificial intelligence, solar energy, global higher education, telecommunications, media, and medical tourism (Government of Abu Dhabi, 2008; Koons, 2022; Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, 2024a). As such, state initiatives have prioritized the training and integrating of young Emiratis into these expanding multinational sectors.

While new Emirati-only housing projects continue to be developed in the older types of suburbs (Hartley, 2024), many young Emiratis now have the option to move into single-family developments alongside a rising white-collar expatriate population. These new residential and leisure developments, which became available for families in the mid-to-late 2010s, marked the greatest push from the state toward a more integrated white-collar cosmopolitanism. This integration has been bolstered by a new urban planning agenda which has focused on developing third spaces, in the form of cafés, art houses, parks, and coastal promenades, that are designed to be frequented by Emiratis and white-collar expatriates (Government of Abu Dhabi, 2008; Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, 2024a; Oldenburg, 1989).

Yas Island is a luxury mixed-use development, which houses some of Abu Dhabi's significant landmarks of the 2010s, including Yas Mall, a mega mall adjacent to the famous Yas Marina Circuit, where the annual Abu Dhabi Formula One takes place, as well as several five-star beach resorts. In addition, the island boasts upscale single-family residential communities for citizen and expatriates, making it possible for Emiratis to live alongside white-collar expatriates. Although originally designed in a way that separated Emirati plots from neighboring expatriate ones, the real estate market has made it possible for expatriates or Emiratis to buy homes next to each other. Moving there from the urban enclave would necessitate significant adjustments, and the most prominent among the sisters was surprisingly the sound of the adhan.

In 2023, there were nine mosques on Yas Island's 25 square kilometers, compared to five at the time of the gathering in 2017. The lower density of mosques on Yas has created a perceptibly different soundscape. "*Fī bas masjid wāḥid fī al-manṭiqah wi mā bnisma' wayid al-adhan haggah. Tará sāwina programming li Fajer Clock 'alāshān y'ādhin fil baīt* [there is only one mosque in our area and we hardly hear its adhan. So we programmed Fajer Clock to chant the adhan at home]," Amna said, explaining that they had to resort to a digital adhan player during their previous visits to the new house. *"Hāy, chānnuh Alexa! Khalās bnsīr zay Ūrūba wi Amrīka* [Yes, it's as if it's Alexa! Soon we're going to be like Europe and the US]," Salama said as her sisters laughed at the idea of an Amazon Alexa muezzin. Amna then named her favorite Emirati, Kuwaiti, Saudi, and Egyptian muezzins on rotation on the digital player. "*Ḥilū! Chānnik msāfra fi blād 'arābīyah wenti fil bait* [Nice! It's like you're traveling to different Arab countries while at home]," replied Nouf.

An adhan broadcast inside the home is not novel. Radio and television channels broadcast the adhan and other rituals, like Friday sermons, Ramadan prayers, and the annual Hajj pilgrimage. However, using portable adhan players to broadcast a pre-recorded call at the scheduled times emphasizes the increased individual effort to maintain the Emirati customs that Amna referred to. Salama's claim that the Emirates will soon be like Europe and the United States reveals the sisters' ambivalence toward the new secular sound logics in the new suburbs.

The adhan experience at Amna's new home indexes new associations within the chronotopes of masjid and jāmi'. When Amna described programming different muezzins from across the Arab world to chant the adhan on Fajer Clock, the sisters conjured an AI-mediated future by facetiously referring to Amazon Alexa. Nouf further likened the experience to traveling to other Arab countries and listening to their adhans while at home. Unlike Amna's association of the adhan in Al-Zaab with being "back in the Emirates *with us* and being spoken to," listening to the adhan in the new suburban home conjures an Emirati experience that is not emplaced and consolidated but more atomized and transnational. Communities that make up the *us* for Amna are being reconfigured. Changes in the adhan and prayer experience become a way of identifying these reconfigurations.

Amna's depiction of her husband's experience at the new *Juma bin Mohammed Al-Kaabi* mosque[18] further demonstrates the sense of spatiotemporal distance between Al-Zaab and Yas Island:

> Ali hates going to the new mosque [on Yas]. He doesn't mind the different nationalities there, but he says the other locals there are *khagāgīn* [fake]. He's worried about when we actually move because Al-Zaab will be a thirty-minute drive away, and he won't be able to go there every day. We're going to be in the same city, *bas howa chānnuh bīyhājir lil baīt al-ydīd* [but he's acting as if he is going to be immigrating to the new house].

Amna presents a juxtaposition between the two mosque experiences. First, there is a clear sense of distance. Once they move, it will be difficult for Ali to return daily to Al-Zaab to perform his male tribal rituals, which include praying at the mosque. Furthermore, whereas the Ḥasan bin Jubārah mosque caters primarily to members of the Al-Zaab tribe, their new mosque on Yas accommodates a multiethnic congregation that includes non-Emiratis and Emiratis from different tribes. While praying there, Ali will no longer be participating in the reiterative making of his tribal community. Instead, he will be taking part in the constitution of a new multiethnic and inter-tribal formation.

Amna states that Ali does not mind being with other nationalities at the Yas mosque, yet it is still a change that both of them note. More challenging is his integration with other Emirati men who seem to uphold different values than him. Amna translated *khagāgīn* as fake but

then explained, “They just seem different from us, more modern and less traditional. Many don't even wear national dress. Some of the men wear jeans and shorts around the complex. *Malit ʿalaīhum!* [They're so disappointing!]”

Amna's description of the Emiratis on Yas creates a characterological dichotomy between traditional and modern.[19] For Amna, modern reflects a letting go of traditional practices that index Emiratiness, like the donning of national dress. Changes in the adhan invoke two opposing chronotopes under the umbrella chronotope of jāmiʿ, one of a tribally motivated life in Al-Zaab that strives to sustain Emirati social customs and citizen distinction, and the other of an ethnically and tribally integrated yet atomized life on Yas Island. For Amna and Ali, they are worlds apart, inspiring a sense of immigration. Indeed, Amna's use of *al-baīt al-ydīd* [the new house] presents a juxtaposition between Al-Zaab as a freej and its sense of embeddedness, and Yas as a new, almost foreign physical and social terrain. Meanwhile, Ali's anticipated nostalgia for Al-Zaab adds another layer of temporal distance, indexing an imminent transformation of the Emirati way of life under the oil welfare state.

The new adhan and prayer experience reframe the chronotopes of masjid and jāmiʿ on Yas Island. First, the live adhan is hard to hear due to the mosque's distance from the home. So, it requires that they supplement with a pre-programmed digital adhan player. The effect of this is to insularize the home and hail forth the AI-mediated anomic era of Alexa into Amna's household. Though the Fajer Clock adhan continues to invoke the chronotope of masjid and its associated acts of worship inside the home, the perceived decline of a reverberating call to prayer which asserts itself over the surrounding public space significantly reconfigures the embodied, spatialized, and discursive practices of ethical self-formation around its event.

Moreover, without a long-long standing relationship with a muezzin's voice contributing to the new area's soundmark, there is a profound sense of loss. The nested levels of community making and gendered socialization that arise through the chronotope of jāmiʿ are in question. Amna especially worries that her sons will have no motivation to pray at the mosque. “Who is going to speak to them?” she says. “And how will they organize their days?” These statements highlight the importance of the adhan's encompassing public sound to the organization of daily rituals and activities. More importantly, they gesture to the diminishing interpellative force of male ethnonational socialization. Without a public adhan to mobilize Emirati men to pray at the mosque and engage in traditional shabāb activities, Emirati male subjectivity is also in question.

This marks a critical juncture in Emirati citizenship. If being spoken to through the adhan reflects Amna and her family's subjective alignments as addresses of God, the ethnonational state, and their own communities, then what does that look like it in this moment of transition and ethnic integration? What new subject is constituted through the adhan broadcast from the more distant multiethnic congregation and bolstered by the adhan player at home?

The uncertainty felt by the sisters continued as the gathering on the roof started to wind down. Salama pointed out that after Amna moved, the sisters' coveted get-togethers would be significantly reduced. The room erupted into a chorus of “*la la laysh* [no no why],” indicating that even after the move, the sisters would continue to have their weekly meetings. “*Hāy baʿd al-maghrib bin sawī biknik maʿa al-ajānib we nilbis jīnz* [Yeah, after maghrib prayers, we'll have a picnic with the foreigners and wear jeans],” Amna replied, inspiring an uproar of laughter.

Here, amid a clear anticipation of change, the women express their ambivalence at the ethnic and gender integration in the new complexes. National dress identifies Emiratis. Nevertheless, women often wear abayas and headscarves atop trendy Western clothing, and a growing number is choosing to forego wearing them altogether. However, the playful conjuring of Emirati women having a picnic with a group of foreigners while wearing jeans reflects the potentiality and ambivalence of new forms of mobility and intersubjectivity in the

new complexes. Ethnic and gender segregation are hallmarks of Emirati citizenship under the oil welfare state. The marked reduction of the adhan as an assertive religious and cultural soundmark in the new suburbs is a synecdoche for these new transformations that are integrating Emiratis into a multiethnic white-collar cosmopolitanism.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have focused on the adhan as a central element of Abu Dhabi's urban experience. Chanted by international muezzins with a confluence of styles from around the Muslim region, it indexes the UAE's superdiversity and the distinct urban planning of Arab Gulf cities. As a polyvalent soundmark, it simultaneously affirms the UAE's Muslim identify while forging discrete ethno-class publics around its event. The adhan, hence, underscores the importance of quotidian sounds to creating a sense of place, animating listening subjects, and framing practices of urban sociality.

Indeed, I have specifically examined the adhan not just as a religious sound that forms religious publics, but as a quotidian sound that shapes patterns of urban sociality and emplacement. For autochthonous Emiratis, engaging with the call to prayer is a politics of recognition, whereby *being spoken to* through the adhan entails a form of personhood as an addressee of God and the community. In the tribal enclave of Al-Zaab, the adhan functions as a vital community organizer. Through the chronotopes of masjid and jāmi‘, iterative practices of ethical self-formation and gendered, ethnonational organization reinforce the community.

Nevertheless, in the new middle-class multiethnic suburbs, the reduced adhan presence reconfigures the chronotopes of masjid and jāmi‘ and conjures an Emirati experience that is not communal and consolidated but more atomized and transnational. In the contradictory worlding of Arab Gulf cities, citizens and foreign residents have had to negotiate an urban environment that is simultaneously superdiverse and segregated. As such, this new channeling of Emiratis into a more integrated white-collar cosmopolitanism marks a critical juncture in Emirati citizenship discourses. For my interlocutors, the reduction in the sound of the adhan becomes a synecdoche for these social and infrastructural transformations and their ambivalence toward them.

Ultimately, I hope this article to be an ethnographic illustration of how sounds make cities (not just that cities make sounds)[6] and how people apprehend urban places and their position in them through textured and embodied processes of listening. Here, more research at the intersection of listening and chronotopes is needed to examine the semiotic ways listeners take up the religious and nonreligious sounds that frame their everyday, and the aesthetic, historical, and sociopolitical entailments of such listening.

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ENDNOTES

[1] I use pseudonyms to maintain my interlocutors' anonymity.

[2] I use *autochthonous* to refer to tribe-affiliated Emiratis whose tribes originated in the Arabian Peninsula region and were incorporated into the UAE nation state in 1971. They are distinguished from a small proportion of naturalized Emiratis of other Middle Eastern or South Asian origin whose families were given citizenship in the nation's early years (Kanna, 2010). While both groups make up the citizen class, I focus on autochthonous Emiratis here to highlight the ways tribal communal practices are vital to the production of ethnonational citizenship.

[3] Amna is fluent in English. She and I speak primarily in English when alone with frequent code switching into Arabic, her in Emirati dialect and I in my heritage dialect of Egyptian. During didactic religious moments when she offers knowledge of Muslim rituals, she speaks to me in Arabic. We also speak in Arabic when her sisters or husband are present as they do not speak English well.

[4] I use the Library of Congress transliteration system to transliterate Arabic words and phrases. However, if a conventional English spelling exists, I use that for consistency. For example, I use *adhan*, *muezzin*, *dua*, and *iqamah* instead of their transliterated forms.

[5] I have opted not to use the terms *pious* or *secular* Muslims as general designations so as not to flatten the diversity of Muslims and the ways they, like members of other religious groups, engage in varying degrees of religious devotion while simultaneously participating in quotidian secular activities. Instead, I use the term practicing Muslims, that is Muslims who engage in varying degrees of ritual worship, and who fall along a broad continuum between pious and secular.

[6] I thank an anonymous reviewer for this comment.

[7] Though similar to other Arab Gulf states, the UAE has the smallest proportion of local imams. In comparison, Qataris constitute 5.55% of imams in Qatar, while Kuwaitis make up a third of imams in Kuwait (Ataullah, 2021; Times Kuwait, 2022).

[8] *Maqām* refers to the system of melodies employed in music across North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. It also applies to the different styles of chanting the adhan that have originated from those regions. See (Bakri, 2019; Friscia, 2022; Saber, 2021) for further reading on adhan maqams.

[9] I use Althusser's, 1971 notion of *interpellation* to frame the adhan as an act of hailing that constitutes its subjects through the way they respond to it and position themselves at its event.

[10] Named after one of the original members of the UAE National Council.

[11] Although raised culturally Muslim, it was during my time in the UAE that I began learning more about Islam and partaking in some ritual worship. Here, Amna was resuming a religious didactic role that she had taken on with me when I previously lived there.

[12] The first and sixth verses of the adhan are the duplicated declaration *Allāhu Akbar*, which translates to God is Greatest and which is expected to be repeated by listeners.

[13] Verse 5, *ḥayyah ʻalá as-ṣalāh* [hasten to prayer], and verse 6, *ḥayyah ʻalá al-falāḥ* [hasten to success], are responded to by listeners with *la ḥawla walā qūwatah ilā billāh*, and there is no power or strength except in God.

[14] Verse 5 is the first part of the *shahādah*, *ash-hadu an-lā ilāha illā Allāh* [I bear witness that there is no God but Allah], and verse 6 is the second part, *ash-hadu anna Muḥammadan rasūl Allāh* [I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah].

[15] This included a scarf and abaya for me so I could join the women's prayers.

[16] *Majlis* in Standard Arabic or *mīlas* in some varieties of Emirati Arabic means a gathering or assembly. It refers to both the place of gathering and the gathering itself. While both men and women can have their own gender-segregated majlises inside their homes and other locations, the men's majlis is a vital social institution at both tribal and state levels. In the traditional pre-nation freej neighborhood and post-nation tribal enclaves, there are communal spaces designated for men's majlises. This is where tribal issues are discussed and verbal art is passed down intergenerationally. See Caton (1990) for social rituals of the equivalent Yemeni *mafraj*.

[17] See Abu-Lughod (1999) for an examination of discourses of *ḥāsham* or modesty among the Awlad Ali tribe.

[18] Named after a UAE ambassador killed in Afghanistan in 2017.

[19] See Dick (2010) for a discussion of how Mexican speakers leverage modernist chronotopes in conversations about Mexico–United States migration.

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