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Anthropological Quarterly, Volume 87, Number 4, Fall 2014, pp. 989-1015  
(Article)

Published by George Washington University Institute for Ethnographic Research

DOI: [10.1353/anq.2014.0067](https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.2014.0067)



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# Techniques of Inattention: The Mediality of Loudspeakers in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

*This article examines the religious use of loudspeakers on churches and mosques in Jos, Nigeria. It examines the medial form of the loudspeaker, how this medium technologizes urban space, and how urban residents generate cultural techniques to live with the sounds it produces. More precisely, I focus on how loudspeakers seek to compel attention by dis-bursing religious messages and how, in a city riven by religious conflict, residents cultivate practices of inattention in order to ameliorate the possibility of religious violence. [Keywords: Loudspeaker, Nigeria, Islam, attention, noise]*

One day, when I was shopping in the cloth section of the main market of Jos, northern Nigeria, a Christian trader took out a small loudspeaker mounted on a stand, shuttered his stall, and in the narrow lane of the market began to preach. Surrounded by other customers and dealers who blithely carried on trading, and still others sitting, eating food from a nearby seller, or weaving their way en route to another part of the market, the trader invoked Jesus' glory and the benefits of letting Him into your life. The loudspeaker weakly amplified his voice to the largely inattentive audience nearby and its most remarkable effect was distortion, making the content of his speech somewhat difficult to understand. After about

ten minutes, he stopped, picked up his speaker, opened the shutters to his stall, and carried on selling cloth. I was taken by the quotidian nature of an act, which I had seen many times in differing guises, and all of which made me ask questions about what is at stake in an exchange such as this when the technical function we usually see as integral to loudspeakers—amplification—is not a dominant feature of the event. Why, one could ask, use a machine at all when its main effect seems to prevent the clear comprehension of language rather than facilitate it? What are the consequences of publicly broadcasting a religious message to a crowd consisting of (at least on this day) members of the opposite faith and in a city that was only recently beset by religious violence?

One can read this preaching first in simple evangelical terms, as an attempt to disburse religious messages designed to persuade others to follow a particular vision of Christ. But if so, one has to remember the largely inattentive audience, dominantly Muslim, who displayed total disinterest in what was being said. One can also read it less as a communicative event and more as an act of religious labor, a sacrifice to God regardless of whether anyone heard or attended to the message. Or it can simply be a mode of presence-making, a forcible, audible reminder that Christians exist. As Jacques Attali (1985) has argued, the imposition of one's own noise is also a way of silencing others; an attempt to assert "mastery of airborne space," as the historian Alain Corbin (1998) has written.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, all of these were at stake. Even so, it is important to recognize that the loudspeaker displays a meta-reflexive desire, that is, the desire to be *seen* relaying a message as well as simply relaying a message. It reminds us that a loudspeaker is a visual device as well as an aural one, drawing attention to itself as a medium of relay.<sup>2</sup> In its admixture of religious practice, information dispersal, and inattentive listening, the moment seemed to be revelatory of an assemblage where medial form, religious discipline, and the human body combine to constitute urban life.

Ephemeral moments such as this are revelatory of the way in which the ambient environment of everyday life is technologized. Conceived of in this manner, what we refer to as "urban life" is a series of cultural techniques by which people learn to live in a specific environment constituted by medial technologies. Media are thus not simply technologies humans use to achieve particular effects, but what it is we call human is always already technologically mediated in that we grow and take shape in a world organized by media. This is an argument made forcibly by Friedrich Kittler

(1990, 1999) and the school of German media theory he gave rise to. For Kittler, discursive formations—the Foucauldian systems that form the condition of possibility for human action—rely upon material technologies whereby those discourses are stored and transmitted. These media are not simply neutral technologies, but are the affordances that any particular medium possesses to order human life and “culturalize the natives of that society” (Kittler 1986: 159).

I borrow the term “cultural techniques” from German media theory (Siegert 2008) but adapt it to refer to the forms of life and sets of practices that media give rise to (where Siegert is more interested in the techniques that constitute media a priori). Following Kittler, these practices have a medial base in that the operation of technology is a constitutive part of collective existence. But technology is part of a broader assemblage. It enters into reciprocal interaction with other domains from religious practice, to political rule, to cultural norms and the conscious and unconscious practical techniques humans develop to live in the world are ordered by the particular configuration of any assemblage. In Jos, an evangelist using a loudspeaker to disburse religious messages thus generates an ambient environment for others living in the space who have to comport themselves in relation to this sound and practice. That comportment, the virtuosity of daily living, is constituted by the medium of the loudspeaker as it enters into interaction with techniques of religious discipline and the forms of life generated in a post-conflict situation.

Such ephemeral moments occur everywhere in Nigeria. To take a bus from one city to another might mean having a passenger stand up half way through the journey to evangelize to a captive audience of passengers. Cassette sellers, stationed at busy intersections all over the city, play religious preaching and music. Sufi followers tie speakers across the narrow alleyways of urban districts and perform impromptu “*yabo*” (praise) sessions, singing praise to the Prophet Mohammed. Muslim movements sponsor cars with large loudspeakers fixed to the top, relaying their *wa’azi* (preaching) as they drive slowly from street to street, using the mobility of the car to extend the sound from the speaker. Churches of all kinds—from tiny storefronts to huge megachurches—make great use of loudspeakers, amplifying their services to the surrounding neighborhood, and mosques send forth the *azan*, the call to prayer, over streets and houses. These are all practices mediated through the *na’urar magana*, literally the “talking machine,” of the loudspeaker.

While religious preaching is common in Nigeria, it has been extended to a remarkable degree in the city of Jos. There, the early-morning call to prayer can be followed by a mosque playing cassettes of preaching for 45 minutes to an hour. These wa'azi are played by reformist mosques as a form of *da'wa*, or call to reform, many of which are associated with the movement *Izala*,<sup>3</sup> the dominant Muslim reform movement in Nigeria and one of the first groups to use the loudspeaker in this way. For them, loudspeaker use is part of the renewal and education associated with *da'wa*. As a consequence, Sufis see *Izala*'s loudspeaker use as a direct attack, and have become more militant in asserting the symbols of their adherence. It used to be that Sufis would string up loudspeakers and celebrate *Mauluds* (birthdays of the Prophet and important saints) a few times a year, but now, as one person said to me, "it seems like every week." Depending on where one lives in Jos, then, one can hear several mosques all emitting their sounds at the same time often in direct "retaliation" to other mosques.

It is churches, though, that have most pioneered the religious use of sound. Church services, revival meetings, all night prayer vigils, and religious processions all make extensive use of loudspeakers, often at times when the rest of the city is still.<sup>4</sup> I even heard tell of some that played hymns at the same time as early morning call to prayer in open competition with Muslim ritual sound.

The religious use of loudspeakers is thus ubiquitous in Nigeria and it is only one way these tools are used in a country where musicians, shopkeepers, civic meetings, and politicians continually use loudspeakers. The consequence of this for ordinary Nigerians is that urban streets are technologized and everyday life emerges in relation to the machine of the loudspeaker. To live in this environment, urban Nigerians have to develop certain cognitive and practical skills. Julia Elyachar (2011) has referred to these skills as a form of virtuosity. These are cultural techniques of movement and gesture which we develop as part of the cultural competence of living in a city. Scholars often write about the dominance of visual culture and modes of visual perception that organize everyday life, but in places such as Nigeria, public sound is a far greater presence and comes to constitute the ambient environment.<sup>5</sup> In this article, I aim to examine these quotidian, ephemeral uses of sound to see how loudspeakers comprise part of the everyday ambient world of Nigerians and how that world produces a particular experience of urban living. Loudspeakers are not

neutral relayers of information, but cultivate what Jonathan Sterne (2003) has referred to as *audile techniques*—practices of listening that distract people or call them to apply and that take place in relation to religious norms and the medial quality of the loudspeaker, and constitute part of a broader social, religious, and psychic configuration of urban life. I want to use this concept to bring together work in religion and in media theory—which are often seen as constitutively distinct—and place the two into interaction to shift how it is we conceive of the relation between religion, media, attention, and the technologizing of everyday life.

### **Attention and Inattention**

In his book *Ambiguous Adventure* (2012), first published in 1962, the Senegalese novelist Cheikh Kane opens with a famous passage of a young boy reciting the Qur'an to his teacher in Qur'anic school. These schools teach rote learning of the Qur'an, which remains the dominant way that most West African Muslims begin their religious education. Kane describes the situation of a boy, one of the stars of his class, who makes an error in his recitation. The teacher immediately reacts, taking the boy's earlobe and squeezing it so tight that his nails meet and the boy begins to weep with pain. "Samba Diallo's whole body was trembling, and he was trying his hardest to recite his verse correctly and to restrain the whimpering that pain was wresting from him" (2012:3-4). The teacher then commands Samba to recite again:

Once more, trembling and gasping, he repeated the flashing sentence. His eyes were imploring, his voice fading away, his little body burning with fever, his heart was beating wildly. (2012:4)

Samba realizes his mistake and he agrees with his teacher that the words he was reciting were a miracle given to him from God and that to misrecite them is a profanity. This sentence "which he did not understand—he loved for its mystery and its somber beauty. This was not a word like other words. It was a word that demanded suffering, it was a word come from God..." (2012:4). The teacher then picks a burning cigarette from the fire and holds it to the boy's face. He tells the boy to recite the prayer, "God Give Me Attentiveness."

“Here, come close! When vain thoughts distract you from the Word, I shall burn you...Pay attention: you can do that. Repeat with me, ‘God give me attentiveness.’”

“God give me attentiveness.”

“Again:

“God, give me attentiveness.”

“Now go back to your verse.”

Trembling and submissive, the child took up the impassioned intoning of the incandescent text. (2012:6)

Kane, here, vivifies the form of bodily training within a specific religious discipline that produces intense affectual experience. While dramatic, experiences such as these impress upon adherents a particular affectual relationship to holy objects, and it is this type of training that Talal Asad (1993) refers to when he writes of the importance of “authoritative discourse” in regulating religious practice.<sup>6</sup> Asad’s concept of discourse is not just about language, but about how signs work on the body. For him, religion is about practice, not belief, behavior, or meaning. While these practices begin as external directives, ultimately religious followers internalize them, generating what he terms an “inner binding.” This is the process Samba Diallo undergoes in learning the Qur’an, and is what Saba Mahmood (2005) means when she refers to the cultivation of behavior as part of attaining a proper form of religious deportment. She examines the attempts by pious Egyptian women to develop an affect of shyness, which, for Mahmood, is not a quality one has, but a quality one trains over time until it takes on an habitual, unthinking aspect.

The haptic practice Kane details in the passage quoted above is intended to produce a specific cognitive ability—attention—that emerges as a result of religious discipline. To be inattentive is to profane the Qur’an by not showing proper respect for the miracle God has given to mankind. Charles Hirschkind (2006), writing about Islamic adepts in Egypt, makes this point when he argues that attention is key to the practice of what he terms “ethical listening,” the audile technique that is produced through Islamic practice. Hirschkind traces the laws and practices in Islam—the authoritative discourses—that enjoin what proper listening should be. A young scholar describes to him how listening should ideally be organized in Islam:

One need listen intently (*yunsit*) rather than just hear (*yasma'*), so it is done with intention and directing the sense to the words...Close attention entails a stillness in order to listen so as not to be distracted... God commanded man to listen to the Qur'an with attention. (2006:70)

Listening, Hirschkind argues, is not something one does with the ear, but with the heart. It is a self-discipline, a way of preparing oneself so one is in the correct frame of mind to *feel* the Qur'an rather than hear and understand it. "To listen to an Islamic cassette sermon with the heart," Hirschkind points out, "means to bring to bear on it those honed sensory capacities that allow one to 'hear' (soulfully, emotionally, physically) what would escape listeners who applied only her ear or *al-aql* (mind)" (2006:98).

Attention, in this lineage of thought, is an effect of religious discipline. It emerges from theological directives and is embodied in practices which religious followers repeat to cultivate proper behavior. Asad describes it powerfully in relation to early modern Christian practice:

the divine word, both spoken and written, was necessarily also material. As such the inspired words were the object of a particular person's reverence, the means of his or her practical devotions at particular times and places. The body, taught over time to listen, to recite, to move, to be still, to be silent, engaged with the acoustics of words, with their sound, feel, and look. Practice at devotions deepened the inscription of sound, look, and feel in his sensorium. (1993:37-38)

According to this lineage of thought, to understand how attention exists as a cognitive attribute of people, one must understand the religious disciplines that produce it.

### **Medial Attention**

Media theorists, by contrast, argue that the production of attention derives not from religious practice or cultural techniques, but is a result of the way that machines operate upon the body. In film studies, this approach came to be associated with apparatus theory,<sup>7</sup> a body of work that examined the role of machinery of cinema in producing a series of ideological and psychological effects on viewers (Baudry 1974-1975, Comolli 1980). In

mainstream western cinemas, the projector is arranged behind the spectator and hidden from view; the auditorium is shrouded in darkness; external sound is muffled; and spectators are arrayed in neat rows, isolated from one another while watching a screen arranged above their heads. In this way the apparatus arranges bodies in relation to itself in order to produce particular cognitive and psychological effects.

Analyzed from this point of view, the loudspeaker takes its place as one of a plethora of modern urban technologies geared toward the soliciting and management of attention. In *Suspensions of Perception* (2000), Jonathan Crary argues that in the waning years of the 19th century attention emerged as an issue of public concern and medical intervention for a range of thinkers—from philosophers to scientists, engineers, doctors, media makers, and social reformers—particularly as they grappled with the realities produced by rapid urbanization. Georg Simmel (1971) argued that whereas the rhythms of rural life were slower and more stable, the modern city was marked by intensity, fragmentation, and excitation, a cumulative network of effects that Freud (1922) described as “shock” (drawing on the language of technological trauma produced during World War I). Transformations in industrial capitalism, the technologizing of the urban labor process, the rise of new transportation industries, and the everyday stimulus of living in mass urban space combined to generate new ambient experiences of everyday life that made the production of attention—or rather the inability to be attentive—a fraught process. Attention thus emerged at the turn of the 20th century as a quintessentially modern phenomenon defined as an activity of exclusion, of rendering parts of a perceptual field unperceived and disengaging from “a broader field of attraction, whether visual or auditory, for the sake of isolating or focusing on a reduced number of stimuli” (Crary 2000:24-25). It is a process of ordering vision, defining what it is we choose to focus on and for how long.

These ideas were taken up by Walter Benjamin and his friend Siegfried Kracauer (a student of Simmel), who argued that perception is not an invariant cognitive process, but a historically contingent one: “Just as the entire mode of existence of human communities changes over long periods, so does their mode of perception” (Benjamin 2003:255). For them, the defining perceptual paradigm of modernity was distraction, the inability to achieve attention brought about by the cognitive effect of new relations of capital organized around consumption rather than production. Distraction was thus not just a mode of perception, but evidence

of an entire shift in political economy as the management of attention became the basis for the production of economic value (what Jonathan Beller [2006] has termed the “attention economy”<sup>8</sup>). Where the 19th century produced a contemplative bourgeois subject, Benjamin argued that the shift to consumptive capital made that sort of contemplation impossible. Now the new urban subject was confronted by a series of technologies designed to capture and secure his attention from arcades and department stores to photography, panoramas, world exhibitions, and, particularly, cinema. Kracauer argued along similar lines in *The Salaried Masses* (1998), claiming that the desire for distraction is a byproduct of the exhaustion produced by the new forms of mass labor. For him distraction is a technique developed as a mode of existence in a world where the human and the technological comprise one assemblage. “Thanks to the intellectual labour invested in [industrial] equipment,” he argues about the new factories, “its handmaidens are spared the possession of knowledge...Just one thing is required of them: attention. This cannot wander free but is under the control of the apparatus it controls” (1998:42). In a world where work is carried out by machines, human labor is no longer about the physical body but about the mind that supervises the machines. The aftereffect of this effort at concentration for Kracauer is mental exhaustion and it is why workers in their leisure time plunge into new spaces of distraction, the “optical fairylands” whose glittering surfaces create a “total artwork of effects [that] assault all the senses using every possible means” (Kracauer 1995:323-324).

Kracauer deploys a classic truth of media theory that the medium shapes the user rather than vice versa. Attention “cannot wander free but is under the control of the apparatus it controls.” The body and senses are regulated by the apparatus. Attention does not result from the daily discipline of religious practice but is the outcome of the operations of a technology upon the human sensorium. Apparatuses are thus “machines that makes one see or think” (Deleuze 1992:160). The apparatus, here, is a form of capture, of subjectivation, a technology that in the last instance has “the capacity to orient, determine, intercept, model, control or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions or discourses of living beings” (Agamben 2009:14).<sup>9</sup>

What we have here are two radically differing conceptions of how attention is produced in modern life. One, writing of advanced commodity economies in Europe, sees it as an after-effect of media and the political

economy in which those technologies are enmeshed. The other, writing of societies in which religion remains a powerful normative orientation, compellingly argues for attention as the outcome of religious discipline. Yet these two worlds, written as if they are wholly separate, are mutually imbricated. Cairo and Kano are saturated with modern technologies (even if they are not secularist, commodity economies imagined by classic sociologists), just as Los Angeles and Berlin are filled with citizens shaped by the sorts of religious disciplines Hirschkind writes about. One can read the literature on attention and religion and think it addresses two wholly separate worlds, when in fact we need to understand the striated nature of contemporary societies that are made up of a multitude of differing sorts of communities not easily arrayed along a linear trajectory separating modern from traditional. We need to examine how both the medial and the religious interact in the shaping of modern communities, to place these literatures into conversation with each other.

In this article, I bring these orientations together as a means of inquiring into the distinctive character of urban life in a situation of religious and ethnic contest. The loudspeaker is at once an ephemeral yet a ubiquitous presence in Nigeria, but its sound is historical and particular. It is not now what it was two decades ago, its role in Lagos is not the same as its role in Jos or in Kano—and my interest is in its use in the last decade in Nigeria, a time of intense conflict and deep division.

### **Ambient Violence**

To give a sense of the context of the urban environment in which these loudspeakers operate, I wish to recount a scooter ride I took years ago with Sunday, a Christian Nigerian, born and raised in Kano, the heartland of the Muslim north. We were buying and installing an antenna for a television and as we left Sunday's shop, as is common in the north of Nigeria, a number of young Hausa men were hanging out chatting with each other in front. Sunday bantered with them, joking, and we mounted his scooter to ride to my flat in the old city. We drove along the road to the university, by the Muslim heart of the old city, and Sunday was voluble and high-spirited. When I asked him to turn off into the old city to where I lived, he fell quiet. We dismounted and I, in turn, bantered with the youths hanging outside where I lived. Once inside my house, Sunday turned to me and asked, "How can you live here?" referring to the fact that I was a Christian

living in a Muslim area. I replied that I had been there for a while and felt comfortable, fully understanding the import of his question. He said that it was impossible for a Christian to live here, "You see those boys outside my shop. Some of them I have known my whole life, but if something happened tomorrow, they would do nothing to save me. Nothing. And some of them would kill me."

Sunday is expressing a sensibility many Nigerians in the north share that is borne out of the deep fissures caused by religious violence. In 2000, the northern city of Kaduna was rent by an enormous riot in the wake of the introduction of *sharia* law, which left thousands dead. Riots in Aba, southern Nigeria, followed as southern Christians sought to avenge the deaths of their fellows living in the north. In 2001, the same happened to Jos, as the city was wracked by a massive conflict which again claimed thousands of lives. Both Jos and Kaduna were colonial cities, built by the British, with large, religiously mixed populations. They were famous as places where Muslims and Christians could live as neighbors. The riots in Kaduna in 2000, and Jos in 2001, events people still refer to as the crises, might be the worst conflagrations in Nigeria since the civil war, and they shook both cities so deeply that they resulted in mass internal migration and the division of these cities into more homogenous Muslim and Christian areas. Since then, violence has become depressingly common in Kaduna and especially in Jos. Riots occurred in Kaduna in 2002 over the Miss World events, when a journalist was accused of insulting the Prophet. In 2004, Tarok Christian militia massacred 600 Muslims in Yalwa, near Jos. A few weeks later, retaliatory riots saw Christians attacked in Kano. Over 400 people died in the Jos riots in 2008. Four days of rioting and the deaths of several hundred people occurred again in 2010, and over 900 were killed in Plateau State (where Jos is located) alone. More recently, in 2010, 2011, and 2012 there have been targeted bombings of Christian churches by the movement Boko Haram,<sup>10</sup> some of which have been followed by retaliatory Christian attacks on Muslims. In all, Human Rights Watch estimates that over 14,500 people have been killed in inter-communal violence since the end of military rule in 1999 (Human Rights Watch 2012).

The nature of these conflicts and the reasons behind them are diverse and complex. They involve claims for indigeneity, ethnic tensions, vigilantism and intra-religious tensions.<sup>11</sup> Generic characterizations of "Muslim" or "Christian" violence do not adequately address distinctions in the uses

and aims of violence within and between differing Muslim and Christian groups, and one can argue, as Murray Last (2007) does, that violence needs to be understood on a city-by-city basis. I do not have the space to go into this complexity here, as this article is not about violence per se but about the conditions that the reality and fear of violence brings about. Specifically, I am interested in the ways in which mosques and churches—and the loudspeakers on them—are often at the heart of the riots where they are both targets of assault and destruction, and the means of amplification whereby adherents are called on to protect their community from attack. Loudspeakers have been central to these efforts, becoming the focus of intense criticism.<sup>12</sup> After the 2001 crisis, the Tobi Commission recommended a ban on the use of loudspeakers in mosques as one of several recommendations aimed at identifying the cause of the crisis. Tobi was supported by the Governor of Plateau State, Joseph Dariye, and by the then President Olusegun Obasanjo.<sup>13</sup> However, the call for a ban on the use of loudspeakers for religious purposes has been as frequent as the riots themselves, only far less effective.<sup>14</sup>

The reality of violence goes some way toward explaining the sensibility crystallized by my friend Sunday and evident in many other ways as part of the habitus of everyday life. Religious conflict has roots in broader ethnic, religious, and political tensions, but its origins flare up as a result of small, everyday interactions: a woman who walks too close to other people praying, or an argument in the market between a trader and a customer. Once these quarrels gather fuel and grow, they are swept up into the choreography of violence in Nigeria, in which all know their place, and many are paid to enact it. Distinctions within religions tend to be erased in moments of crisis as groups become totalized as “Muslim” and “Christian.” Roadblocks are established, cars and buses are stopped and their occupants are pulled out. If it is a Christian gang, Muslim passengers are killed. If it is a Muslim gang, the reverse happens. Roads are barricaded for protection, churches, mosques, and businesses are destroyed. The reasons for violence are often multiple and always uncertain. Rumors fly in these environments. Why was this church burned out and not that one? Was it actually Christians who destroyed that Muslim business or was it a Muslim rival? Many Nigerians believe powerful elements in society are able to take hold of violence when it occurs, to use it for their own ends, and that nothing is as simple as the terms “Muslim-Christian” or “ethnic conflict” seems to suggest.<sup>15</sup> But analyzing the course of the riots is not

an exact science, and the nature of religious sensibility, ethnic hatred, and political contest makes this a fragile and uncertain process.

I am not interested in analyzing riots or their dynamics, but instead in their after-effects on people's sensibilities and how they generate a background context to the daily practice of living in urban areas. The now seemingly serial repetition of riots creates histories of trauma that wear into people's memories like ruts in a road. All riots are dialogical, harking back to violence that happened in the past while looking forward to the violence that will occur in the future. It is a classic theme of modern sociology that urban living produces a particular psychic experience. Simmel (1971) argued that the modern psyche is borne out of the tension produced from constant interaction with strangers, whose norms and actions one cannot know. This stress results in a continual, rapidly shifting stimulation of the nerves, forcing "...the nerves to make such violent responses, [and] tear them about so brutally that they exhaust their last reserves of strength..." (1971:329). Simmel's argument is that the types of social and monetary exchanges with strangers demanded by urban living produce a particular effect on everyday comportment, a type of reserve that people need in order to maintain a measure of distance and protection. Freud (1922) referred to this as the stimulus shield; the protective shield individuals develop to prevent the "...flooding of the psychic apparatus with large masses of stimuli."<sup>16</sup> For Simmel's turn-of-the-century Berliners, the pressure of urban living results in the peculiar cultivation of reserve, a blasé outlook, which protects them from stimulus by reducing everything to a "...homogenous flat and gray colour..." (1971:330). Living side by side in situations of sustained conflict produces its own sensorial effects. Nigerians like Sunday have to cultivate a sensibility, albeit one that takes place in a different historical assemblage than Simmel's Berlin, and responds to different pressures. It allows urbanites to engage in the quotidian transactions of everyday life while maintaining a background understanding that, at any point, any one of those interactions carries the possibility of scaling up to confrontation. This sensibility also produces a structuring uncertainty, a preparedness, a necessary awareness, a recognition that although things seem normal one cannot ever quite trust that they will be. It creates a sense that the urban landscape is charged, and that both violence and the pregnant possibility of violence remain part of everyday life. Their sensibility is not the blasé attitude Simmel saw as the quintessential demeanor of modernity, but is rather one rooted in the

sustained violence that has rent northern Nigeria. And all who live in cities like Kano, Jos, or Kaduna adopt this attitude as part of their implicit understanding of how to move and act in the city.

### **Mediality of the Loudspeaker**

All of this is given a distinctive coloring by the loudspeaker, which has particular conditions of auditory existence that contribute to the formation of this sensibility. A loudspeaker's discharges are not oriented to a specific listener. Its sounds are promiscuous, in that they cannot easily be targeted to delineated listeners but move in and out of differing areas. The literary theorist Walter Ong (1967) has referred to sound as a "reciprocating sense," one that situates man in actuality, the here and nowness of co-present listening versus the delay and reproduction of recording. "At a given instant I hear not merely what is in front of me or at either side but all things simultaneously" (1967:129). Ong helps to account for the assaultive quality that many associate with this instrument. Naveeda Khan (2011) refers to this as its "impinging" character, the sense it is transgressing a boundary and one is helpless to control it.<sup>17</sup> Loudspeakers discharge sounds without the ability of listeners to control them. For most within ear-shot, one cannot turn it on or off, up or down. One mostly cannot control the timing of its eruption. One is subject to it rather than in control. And what one is subject to is not voice, but voice that has been transduced, converted from electrical impulses back into coherent, or semi-coherent speech, affected by what Hillel Schwartz refers to as the "buzz, rattle, and snap" of distortion (2011:637). It is this distortion, coupled with the ability of loudspeaker sounds to travel across borders shorn of any sense of control that leads to the feeling of impingement.

The distinctive technical qualities of the loudspeaker can be seen clearly by comparing it with another auditory technology, the cassette—particularly as it has been used in religious practice (see Hirschkind 2006, Miller 2007). The power of Hirschkind's analysis of ethical listening is that it forcibly introduces religious discipline into our understanding of media and is a powerful corrective to the secular bias inherent in media theory. But to make this argument, Hirschkind relies upon the medial nature of the cassette as a technology that creates the preconditions for the dispositions he describes. He describes Ahmed, a Cairene university graduate who listens to cassettes after work. By taking the cassette into a quiet room and

closing the door on the cacophony of the city. Ahmed can listen when he is not distracted and has the time to summon the requisite “relaxed attentiveness” that he sees as religiously required of him. But he can do so because cassettes isolate and separate out sound, making it alienable, portable, and reproducible on demand. Certainly, Hirschkind describes many situations in which cassettes are used in other ways—the restricted public of the taxi-cab, for instance—but it is precisely that alienability brought about by the cassetteness of the cassette that allows this range of options to be realized. It also shapes practices of circulation. While, theoretically, cassettes are available to a large, disparate, and anonymous public, the examples Hirschkind gives of cassette exchange reveal that they are often passed around within delimited religious and social networks. One listener receives a cassette from a sister, another from a friend at the university, a third from a sheikh in the mosque circle. This form of restricted circulation does not replicate the “...closed genealogical network...” and chains of transmission that Brinkley Messick (1993) depicts as constitutive of older modes of Islamic practice, but it does effect a framing and curation of information that restricts the openness often associated with commodity exchange. It means that of all the vast numbers of cassettes, all the variety of preachers, and all the subjects they consider, the adept’s attention is directed to a particular preacher and sermon, matching listener to sermon in a very direct way.

Compared to the cassette, the loudspeaker has very different conditions of auditory existence. Its sounds are indiscriminate in that they hit everyone regardless of whether they are Salafi or Sufi, Pentecostal or Catholic, Muslim or Christian. The housewife who is preparing breakfast, the motorbike taxi driver picking up early fares, the tailor preparing his premises, the butcher beginning to open up shop, all of these people are in the midst of the routine daily actions of life which they continue as the words pour over them. They cannot stop, set time aside, turn down the noise of the street, or prepare their bodies and minds in a proper, attentive way, even though for Muslims the norms of attentiveness that Hirschkind lays out are also required of them. For others not from the same religion or for those opposed to the messages they are hearing, who nonetheless become subject to sound and to a message they cannot control, loudspeakers are often experienced as assaultive and as a direct attack.

What both cassettes and loudspeakers point to is the way in which human experience takes place in relation to a medial base which interacts

with the disciplines of Islamic theology. "Listening" in this situation becomes a cultural technique, a practice shaped by media but also by the broader assemblage of which media are a part.

A friend of mine in Kano, the largest city in the north of Nigeria, lived in-between a Sufi and a reformist mosque, both of which were active in using loudspeakers. This experience created, for him, a particularly intense sonic environment, one he disliked but felt powerless to change. "You know religion in our country," he said to me, referring to the danger that might result in making open complaints. When I was living in the old part of the same city, Sufi followers periodically used the local mosque for all night praise singing. Residents would emerge in the morning crossly citing *hadiths* in which the Prophet warned against excess in religious devotion. But few felt they could openly complain. In Christian areas, this assaultive experience of sound can be even more intense particularly when different churches in close proximity begin to compete with each other. The cumulative effect can be overwhelming. In 2009, Lagos Governor Babatunde Fashola embarked on a "war" against noise pollution, pointing out how the mounting sounds of the city had become unbearable. According to the Lagos State Commissioner for the Environment, Muiz Banire, "religious organizations or places of worship top the list of the source of noise pollution" (Okachie and Duru 2010). Banire continued, "Take, for instance, a street in Shangisha where 17 churches and three mosques are located in a residential area. The effect of this is that there was a natural competition to outdo one another in the process of seeking attention. In the process the entire neighbourhood...became uninhabitable...To God be the glory that peace has returned after our intervention and enforcement of...the law" (Okachie and Duru 2010). Fashola and Banire's campaign provoked huge controversy, particularly after they shut down a parish of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, and two parishes of the Mountain of Fire Miracles church for excessive noise.

The assaultiveness of loudspeakers can derive from the content of what is transmitted, from both the sheer loudness of the messages relayed and the distortion of the messages produced. The latter is not necessarily a complaint about amplitude, but results from pushing a piece of equipment beyond its capacity resulting in tremendous distortion and a particular aesthetic experience of sound. In Nigeria, the market for audio equipment is dominated by the Indian company Ahuja, who provides a range of microphones, amplifiers, and horn loudspeakers specifically

for mosques. Ahuja are prized for their cheapness and durability, and have a virtual monopoly on the cheaper end of the market but are often marked by a high degree of distortion. Ahuja recognize this themselves and address the issue in their instructions for how to set up a mosque P.A. system:

During the call to the faithful for prayer or azaan, the sound level of speech of a muezzin...varies...and generally goes to a very high sound level...This high sound level...overloads the microphone input stage thereby clipping and distorting the sound at input stage of the amplifier itself. This distortion not only affects the quality of sound, making it sound harsh but also results in damage to the driver units/speakers.<sup>18</sup>

Their recommendation is to install a microphone compressor between the microphone and amplifier to regulate sound level and prevent distortion.

All of this speaks to the ways in which urban space is conformed by sound and how collective life in Nigeria takes shape in a world organized through the medial base of the loudspeaker.

The difficulty of living with sound is an important part of Nigerian life. However, it is just as important to recognize that there is an enormous acceptance of public sound in Nigeria. The widespread legitimacy of the profusion of loudspeakers that marks urban space is difficult to appreciate for those raised in cities with stronger noise abatement laws. Nigerians oscillate between complaining bitterly about “noise terrorism”<sup>19</sup> on the one hand, while accepting the right of religious groups to make public sound even when that sound can be intensely invasive. Tijani and Qadiri Sufis stage public *dhikr* sessions, turning their ritual recitation of the names of the Prophet into visual and aural spectacles. Evangelical churches, even tiny ones, broadcast their services to the neighborhood at large, as do Friday mosques to the huge numbers who cannot fit inside. These more formalized uses of sound are vastly amplified in the run-up to Christian revival meetings or during major Muslim celebrations (such as Maulud, when loudspeakers are used all over the city all night long).

The sounds mosques and churches emit are diverse, coming from different origins and for varying reasons. The key issue, for Christians, is the commitment to witnessing and evangelizing, rooting sound in a specific religious purpose. For Muslims, sound is used as part of da’wa, a

call to Islamic reform. Loudspeakers have been a crucial material means by which that call has been relayed. As one follower explained, preaching over the loudspeaker helps people know "...the injunction of Islamic teachings and their religious responsibility."<sup>20</sup> The Tijani cleric Muktar Adamu Abdalla argued that Sufis only began to respond in kind because they felt that they had to. "[T]heir [Izala's] preaching is against Sufism. We have to tell the truth. They are telling many, many things about Sufism which are wrong, so we have to clarify things, that is why we are doing it."<sup>21</sup> Sufis also seek to prevent the domination of aural space by reformers. One follower argued that he uses loudspeakers "...to let our followers know there is a Tijaniyya mosque in the area."<sup>22</sup>

Religious sound in Jos is, thus, complexly constituted and diversely deployed. It is both oppositional and intensely conflictual, while being broadly accepted at the same time. Loudspeakers do not have only one use or a single meaning; rather, there is a repertoire of religious speech events in which loudspeakers figure prominently, making any totalizing description as to whether they are valued or despised difficult to assert. In addition, they are used at political meetings, civic events, and in musical performances, and are available for purchase in everyday markets. McCain argues that for many groups—religious and secular—loudspeakers operate almost as a status symbol as well as a means of amplification, such that "a meeting is not really a significant meeting unless it has a good strong PA system."<sup>23</sup>

### **Techniques of Inattention**

For Jonathan Crary and Georg Simmel, inattention is the byproduct of attention or its failure. And, as Durkheim stated, "We are always to a certain extent in a state of distraction, since the attention, in concentrating the mind on a small number of objects, blinds it to a greater number of others ..." (as cited in Crary 2000:8). If one attends to something, one isolates an object of attention as a perceptual act. Inattention/distraction is thus the effect of paying attention. In some respects, it is a failure to attend, in others, an inability to be able to do so due to the disruptions of modern life with its panopoly of attention-seeking technologies. In Nigeria, inattention is part of the process of "attunement" (Elyachar 2011) to living in a city technologically mediated by the loudspeaker; it is a conscious, willful act and not simply an inability to attend as a result of the distractive nature of

modern stimuli. The structure of urban life in Jos and other non-Western cities does not take the form of the advanced commodity-cultures of Berlin or Paris that Simmel and Benjamin analyzed, but these spaces are just as mediated by technology. How those technologies operate and the forms of life they give rise to depends on the specific nature of the apparatus, organizing and conforming bodies to create a technologically mediated experience that enters into reciprocal exchange with religious discipline. The cultural technique of inattention takes shape in this ecology, formed by the pamphlets, public preachers, radio and television broadcasts, and loudspeakers on cars, from mosques, and from churches that all solicit and compel attention in new and, often, contentious ways.

Moreover, the prevalence of religious and communal violence in Nigeria—between Muslims and Christians, but also within Muslim groups themselves—means that these sounds are discharged over a tense and volatile urban site. The endemic, repetitive nature of religious conflict means that in order to operate in the urban arena one has to cultivate inattention, the ability not to hear the messages that carom around the urban landscape. All messages have addressivity, what Bakhtin referred to as the “...quality of turning to someone...” (1986:99), in that they are aimed at a certain audience. Attention places focus on the issue of recognition, the closing of a circuit of communication, which occurs when a message is issued: the addressee encoded in that message, by paying attention, recognizes that the message was aimed at them. The complex ecology of religious sound in a city such as Jos—which mixes together Christians and Muslims of all stripes—means that there is a proliferation of what Goffman (1981) refers to as “unratified listeners,” the people present listening to a message not directed at them, as well as the addressees. That ecology and the violence attached to it means that the possibility of crossing boundaries is deeply fraught; inattention is the skill one develops in uncertain situations where one pays attention, but only in order to realize that one does not have to pay attention. Louis Althusser (1971) made a famous example of this sort of practice when he argued that ideology “recruits” individuals through a process of address and recognition. His example was the police officer with a loudhailer who shouts, “Hey, you there,” in a street. If one turns around, “by this mere one-hundred-and-eighty degree physical conversion he [the person turning] becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail is ‘really’ addressed to him...” (1971:174). Yet, Althusser also mentions that there are others

on the street, who hear the hailing but realize it is not addressed to them and do not turn around. They can be seen as subjects *in potentia*, that is, subjects who do not complete the circuit of recognition, but only through a complex operation of recognizing they are not being addressed.<sup>24</sup> To exist in variegated social arenas and, in particular, in ones marked by intense degrees of conflict, one has to cultivate a technique of not attending. This can be compared to what Marcel Mauss (1973) referred to as the “manual knack” of habitus. It is something learned slowly, over time, and through constant repetition so that, once learned, it becomes an unconscious process (see also Sapir 1985).

To cultivate willed-mode inattention is a necessary skill in situations when messages that are seen to reach unauthorized listeners can be a dangerous thing. The *dispositif* of the loudspeaker in Nigeria, its implication in histories of violence, the potential for that violence to recur at any time, or for provocative messages to stimulate responses, means that each message is too fraught with danger to simply be unattended to as noise. Inattention is not not attending. It is attending enough to know one does not have to attend. The consequences of recognition or not can be high. In 1991, the visit of the German evangelical preacher, Reinhard Bonnke, to the Muslim city of Kano erupted into three days of rioting which, at that time, marked a distinctive shift in the nature of religious conflict.<sup>25</sup> As with all riots, the conflict had diverse origins and came after a long escalation in religious and political tension on both a local and national level.<sup>26</sup> But one precipitating factor mentioned frequently to me by Muslims was the decision of Bonnke supporters to hand out pamphlets printed in Arabic script (*ajami*) rather than Roman script (*boko*). As is common in revival meetings, Bonnke’s supporters saturated airwaves with advertisements, papered posters over the landscape, and handed out pamphlets advertising the event. Like loudspeakers, these pamphlets partake in a sort of tacit agreement in that they disburse messages to all who can hear, but they are presumed to be addressed only to co-religionists. Most Muslims felt they could safely believe that the call to become born-again was not directed at them. But when pamphlets were distributed in *ajami*, it was widely believed that Christians were seeking to convert Muslims—an address Muslims felt they could not ignore. This address made inattention impossible, and the pamphlets were seen as enormously incendiary and cited as a key contributing factor to the outbreak of violence.

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## Conclusion

In an important article, Tong Soon Lee argues that the loudspeaker generates "...a sacred acoustic space" that "facilitates the cohesion of the Islamic community" (1999:94). This is an argument echoed by Charles Hirschkind who describes the call to prayer as creating as a "pious landscape": "[F]ive times a day the city [Cairo] is engulfed in a sort of heavenly interference pattern...These soaring yet mournful, almost languid harmonic webs soften the visual and sonic tyrannies of the city, offering a temporary reprieve from its manic and machinic functioning" (2006:124). Both scholars point to the ways in which the mediation of sound generates an affective experience to which urban residents become attuned. The loudspeaker generates a sound which residents comport themselves to, learning to live with it, developing cultural techniques whereby they either tune in to the loudspeaker or ignore it. Either way, the practice of urban life takes place in relation to this medial base. Hirschkind is right that harmonic webs generated by loudspeakers shape religious practice, but these are part of the machinic functioning of the city, not a reprieve from it.

Yet, these cultural techniques do not just derive from the interaction of machine with the human body, but take place in an environment organized by religious disciplines and in a city marked by post-conflict trauma. In Jos, loudspeakers are also attached to histories of violence through their role in religious conflict. They are central actors in those conflicts, symbolic objects to defend and instruments of attack. Ousmane Kane (2003) states that in the Sufi city of Kano, Tijanis focused their anger at Izala mosques using loudspeakers, seeking to pull them down and destroy them. Barbara Cooper (2003) describes a similar event that occurred during a riot against a Pentecostal church in a Hausaphone area of Niger (the country to the north of Nigeria). A particularly aggressive Nigerian Pentecostal church, the Vie Abandante, had begun to use the radio, cassettes, and loudspeakers, sparking a war between Pentecostals and Muslims over what Cooper terms "audible capital." This culminated in a riot against the Pentecostals in which the church was burned down. As the church was being demolished, Cooper describes how attackers took particular joy in destroying the amplification equipment. "'This is the last day...' the little boys reportedly crowed in triumph over the loudspeaker before it, too, was destroyed. People could hear them taunting, 'Testing, testing, this is the last time,'" as they smashed it to pieces (Cooper 2003:502).

The symbolic marking of loudspeakers as icons of modernity or objects haunted by histories of violence, makes them dense and palpable signifiers. As they operate in their diverse daily ways—broadcasting hymns over urban streets, issuing the call to prayer, or instigating resentment through inflammatory preaching—the meta-reflexive quality of the machine plays into their influence on the subjects who hear their sounds. As machines, loudspeakers address and constitute subjects. They train listeners in complex practices of attention and inattention, which are developed in response to the everyday forms of worship, disturbance, and violence in which loudspeakers are caught up. These are processes that draw together the religious and the mechanistic, they point to the impossibility of arbitrarily privileging one over another. One cannot understand the logic of the machine without taking into account its intimate imbrication in forms of religious practice, and the mutual encounter between techniques and doxa that governs its influence. ■

**Acknowledgments:**

I would particularly like to thank Muhammad Sani Umar, Abubakar Dawood Mohammed, and Nasiru Wada Khalil for the conversations I had with them on the topic of loudspeakers in Nigeria. Abubakar Dawood, who acted as my research assistant, diverted time from his own studies to conduct interviews with members of mosques in Jos. He also used his broad knowledge of religious reformism to guide me to clerics to interview. I am very grateful for his help. This article was first written for the conference “Secular Sounds, Islamic Sounds” at the University of Amsterdam and I am grateful to Jeanette Jouilli and Annelies Moors for their invitation to speak. Later versions of the paper were presented to the Department of Anthropology at UC Berkeley and New York University, as well as to the Program for African Studies at Indiana University, the IKKM, Weimar and the Global Prayers conference at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin. I am grateful for the questions and comments I received at these venues.

**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>Corbin’s (1998) observation was made in regard to the use of bells in revolutionary France. His interest is in the contest between the sounds of religious authority—bells—and the competition they entered into with the new public sound of the revolutionary state—the drum.

<sup>2</sup>I thank Reinhold Martin for this observation.

<sup>3</sup>The full name of Izala is the *Jama’atu Izalat Al-Bida’ah wa Iqamat Al-Sunna* or Movement for the Removal of Innovation and in Favor of the Sunna. See Larkin (2009), Loimeier (1997), and Umar (1988, 1993).

<sup>4</sup>According to the church leader and religious scholar Danny McCain, one pastor in Jos—whose church was located in a Muslim community—used to get up at 2 a.m. to preach. He did so because it was the time when everything else was quiet and the message less likely to be lost in the noise of the day. (Personal communication on January 29, 2013.)

<sup>5</sup>Patricia Spyer (2008, 2013), however, has written about the visual constitution of ambient space in a situation strikingly similar to the one I discuss. She writes of the giant murals and billboards of Christ that suffuse the urban landscape in Ambon, Indonesia, in the aftermath of violence between Muslims and Christians. Spyer is interested in the iconography of these images, but also in their scale and their ubiquity, which together generate a form of presencing that creates a distinctive affectual experience for urban Ambonese.

<sup>6</sup>See also David Scott's interview with Talal Asad (2006:271).

<sup>7</sup>Apparatus, or *dispositif* in French, is most associated with students of Althusser—Jean Louis Baudry (1974-1975) and Jean-Louis Comolli (1980); also see Agamben (2009), Althusser (1971), Baudry (1974-1975), Comolli (1980), Deleuze (1992), Foucault (1980), and Kessler (2006).

<sup>8</sup>This is an argument that has taken on increasing importance in the contemporary digital economy and alongside the realization that, in a world of information abundance and competing screen devices, the capturing of attention (by Google, Facebook, and other social media) has become an increasing part of the production of value in society.

<sup>9</sup>An apparatus has an everyday meaning in French referring to "... the way in which the parts of a machine or of a mechanism...are arranged..." (Agamben 2009:7). For Foucault (and Deleuze and Agamben), the *dispositif* is a "heterogeneous ensemble" of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, scientific statements, etc., which constitute fields of knowledge—conditions of what is sayable and doable and what is not (Foucault 1980:194). Agamben (2009) argues that the apparatus emerged in Foucault's work alongside his interest in governance and governmentality, and we can see the overlap with Althusser, who was also focused on how (ideological) apparatuses produced social subjects.

<sup>10</sup>Boko Haram is a radical religious movement in Nigeria seeking to use violence against the Nigerian state (particularly police and the military), Christians (particularly in Plateau state), traditional Muslim royal elites, and, more recently, Western style schools, as part of an effort to institute a more correct Islamic state (see Anonymous 2012, Aghedo and Osumah 2012, Last 2012). Since their appearance in 2012, Boko Haram have fundamentally changed the nature of religious violence in Nigeria by focusing on kidnapping, suicide bombings, and attacks on schools once seen as outside the realm of religious conflict. Their rise, and the violent response they have elicited from the state, has been seen as creating a new "crisis" distinct from the earlier crises of 2000 and 2001 in Kaduna and Jos. For a bibliography on Boko Haram, see <http://progressivegeographies.com/resources/boko-haram-an-annotated-bibliography/>.

<sup>11</sup>See for example, Danfulani and Fwatshak (2002), Danfulani (2006), Higazi (2008), and Human Rights Watch (HRW) 2001.

<sup>12</sup>The HRW report on the 2001 crisis, *Jos: A City Torn Apart*, recounted the experience of one Christian, a school principal, who narrowly avoided death. He told HRW how he passed gangs of marauding youths: "I also heard an announcement on the mosque loudspeaker saying, 'Finish these people off if you catch any of them'" (2001:14).

<sup>13</sup>Dariye's call was reported in *Humanitarian News and Analysis (IRIN)*: "Nigeria: Plateau State Adopts Measures to Ease Religious Tension," September 28, 2001. Available at <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/27306/NIGERIA-Plateau-State-adopts-measures-to-ease-religious-tension> (last accessed April 23, 2013). Obasanjo's call for a curb on the religious use of loudspeakers was reported in the Nigerian *Guardian*, in an article titled "Nigeria: Unease in Abuja, Obasanjo Blames Jos Crisis on Bad Leadership" (Oloja et al. 2001).

<sup>14</sup>In 2009, Martin Elechi, Governor of Ebonyi state, called for a reduction of noise from religious loudspeakers and was summoned to meet with then-President Yar'adua and the Sultan of Sokoto following rumors about a jihad being called against him (Agbo 2009).

<sup>15</sup>During his tour of Jos after the crisis of 2001, President Obasanjo made direct reference to this mode of hermeneutics: "I noticed the selectivity in burning of property. You see houses in-between other houses that were selected to be burnt. Why? You see shops in-between other shops that were selected to be burnt. Why? You see places of worship that were selected to be burnt, and it is not limited to just one side but both sides. Why?" (Oloja et al. 2001). Obasanjo is voicing an argument that occurs frequently on a popular basis after religious and ethnic conflicts, warning darkly about the influence of "elites" who can shape events to meet their own interests. See also Casey (2009); Umar Danfulani (2006), provides a good introduction to the broader struggles over land that underlie religious conflicts. See also Danfulani and Fwatshak (2002), and Higazi (2008).

<sup>16</sup>Freud (1922), section IV, paragraph 9.

<sup>17</sup>In her study of mosque loudspeakers in Pakistan, Khan (2011) goes on to both confirm Ong (1967) and historicize him using the fascinating example of a theological debate over the legality of loudspeaker use. A mufti, Muhammad Shafi, wrote an attack on what he termed the "harms and evils" of using the loudspeaker, one of which addressed the potential confusion that occurs when several mosques all emit sound at the same time. As Shafi explained,

The mosque where I say my prayers in Karachi is called Bab-ul Islam. At some distance from it, *jamat* [congregation] is held at the western corner of an area called Arambag. There is *jumah* [Friday prayers]

in both places. Every Friday the *jumah* at Bab-ul Islam starts while the *taqirir* [speech] and *khutba* [sermon] at Arambagh is still going on "... with the confusion of voices from both mosques perhaps no-one's prayers would be valid. (as quoted in Khan 2011:576)

As Khan points out, loudspeakers disrupt depth perception and can potentially create a loss of bearing and recognition of where and how close a particular sound originates from. Muslims are enjoined to attend the mosque one hears the azan from, but if a neighboring mosque broadcasts at higher amplitude Khan argues this further distorts concepts of proximity and space. From my perspective, she perfectly encapsulates how the mediality of the loudspeaker interacts with religious discipline to create a particular cognitive, affectual experience of urban life in Pakistan. For another discussion of loudspeakers, transgressive noise, and public space, see Eisenberg (2010).

<sup>18</sup>The system for mosque P.A.'s can be found here: [http://ahujaradios.com/Literature/MC-110\\_AF\\_ENG.pdf](http://ahujaradios.com/Literature/MC-110_AF_ENG.pdf) (last accessed on August 28, 2013).

<sup>19</sup>For an example of this, see the YouTube video, "Nigerian Church and NOISE TERRORISM," posted by the user PolititrickswithKO. It shows "Typical Sunday with loud church broadcast via loudspeakers. Lagos residential area Ayobo-Ipaje Alimosho." Accessed from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5ePFh2V\\_3A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5ePFh2V_3A) on September 18, 2014.

<sup>20</sup>These quotes derive from a series of interviews with members of Sufi and Salafi mosques on the use of loudspeakers, carried out on my behalf by Dawood Abubakar of the Religious Studies Department of the University of Jos, in January 2002.

<sup>21</sup>Interview with Muktar Adamu Abdalla, Jos, January 2002.

<sup>22</sup>Personal communication with McCain on January 29, 2013.

<sup>23</sup>Personal communication with McCain on January 29, 2013.

<sup>24</sup>Althusser makes the slightly bizarre claim that "Experience shows that the practical telecommunication of hailings is such that they hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one who is hailed always recognizes that it is him who is being hailed [and not someone else]..." (1971:174). This universalist, ahistorical instance is odd, because someone who shouts the generalized, unspecified address, "Hey, you there!" is almost guaranteed to cause many to turn around, particularly if that call is issued by a representative of the state such as a police officer. "There are individuals walking along. Somewhere (usually behind them) the hail rings out: 'Hey, you there!' One individual (nine times out of ten it is the right one) turns around believing/suspecting/knowing that is it for him i.e. recognizing that 'it really is he' who is meant by the hailing." (1971:175). Surely, however, one needs to attend to the message in the first place to realize that it is addressed to someone else.

<sup>25</sup>Previous to the Bonnke riots, religious conflict in Kano had frequently taken the shape of Hausa rioting in Christian areas. The Bonnke riots were the first in Kano where as many Muslims died as Christians. It was seen locally as fundamentally shifting the dynamic of religious violence.

<sup>26</sup>Tensions were heightened because, previous to Bonnke's visit, the South African Islamic preacher, Ahmed Deedat, had been denied entry into Nigeria. Deedat had actually landed at Kano airport and possessed the appropriate visa, yet was still prevented from entering the country despite his huge popularity in the north. Muslims argued that Christian pressure pushed the state to revoke his visa and from their point of view Bonnke—who had long talked of the need for a "crusade" in the north—was allowed to come to Kano while Deedat was denied. This certainly formed part of the background to events preceding the riot.

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#### Foreign Language Translations:

Techniques of Inattention: The Mediality of Loudspeakers in Nigeria

[**Keywords:** Loudspeaker, Nigeria, Islam, attention, noise]

注意匮乏的相应科技：奈及利亚扬声器运用的媒介性 |

[**关键词:** 扬声器，奈及利亚，伊斯兰，注意力，噪音]

Técnicas de Inatenção: A Medialidade dos Altifalantes na Nigéria

[**Palavras-chave:** Altifalantes, Nigéria, Islão, atenção, ruído]

Техника невнимательности: посредничество громкоговорителей в Нигерии

[**Ключевые слова:** громкоговоритель, Нигерия, ислам, внимательность, внимание, шум]

تقنيات السهو: اعلام مكبرات الصوت في نيجيريا

الكلمات الدالة: مكبرات الصوت، نيجيريا، الاسلام، الانتباه، الضوضاء