

# Sounds and Spaces of Muslim Piety

## *Tradition and Transformation*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Unique International Conference reaches across Continents to Explore Diverse Traditions of Muslim Devotion and Culture

**April 15, 2011 (University of Alberta, Edmonton)** – The Canadian Centre for Ethnomusicology at the University of Alberta, in partnership with the Association for the Study of Ginan present **Sounds and Spaces of Muslim Piety: Tradition and Transformation**, a unique International conference that reaches out across countries and continents from North America, Europe, Asia, Middle East and Central and South Asia to explore the diverse traditions of Muslim devotion from April 29<sup>th</sup> to May 1<sup>st</sup> 2011.

Scholars, including internationally renowned keynote speakers and community experts, will explore the wide horizon of Muslim devotional genres, including Ginan, the central Ismaili literature of devotion. Performances will celebrate the plurality of devotional voices of Muslim piety, especially in Canada; a film on Zurkhane of Iran will be shown; and an exceptional display of an early international collection of Muslim sonic expressions from the University of Alberta's Smithsonian Folkways Recordings will be featured.

**Sounds & Spaces of Muslim Piety: Tradition and Transformation**  
**A conference exploring the diverse tradition of Muslim Devotion and Culture**  
**April 29 – May 1, 2011 at the University of Alberta**  
**[muslimpiety.org/live](http://muslimpiety.org/live)**

Human diversity in language and culture has for centuries found expression in sonic form, articulating faith and piety in relation to a plurality of local, historical, and social identities. These expressions of particular groups and individuals are grounded in practices that have deep spiritual roots, aesthetic effects, and a powerful impact on faith.

Muslims across the world have given sonic shape to spiritual words. From spoken declamation to melodic chant, devotional repertoires expressing Muslim piety are abundant in their continuity and vitality. They are anchored in the sonic-oral articulation of the divine Quranic messages through its chanted recitation across Muslim communities as well as in the local traditions of spiritual poetry. Rich melodic variety enhances their consistent spiritual message.

The new era of sound recordings and Internet has resulted in an increasing spread and worldwide access to these spiritual literatures in sonic performance. But dispersals and migration, especially to the West, are also posing new challenges of language and textual retention, and of continuity of trained reciters and their repertoires. Migration also results in challenges to finding places of worship. On the other hand, the diaspora situation sees Muslims of diverse backgrounds coming together, and migration even opens spaces for creativity to finding new ways to teach and reach new generations of Muslim community members.

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**Interview, photo & video opportunities available upon request**  
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