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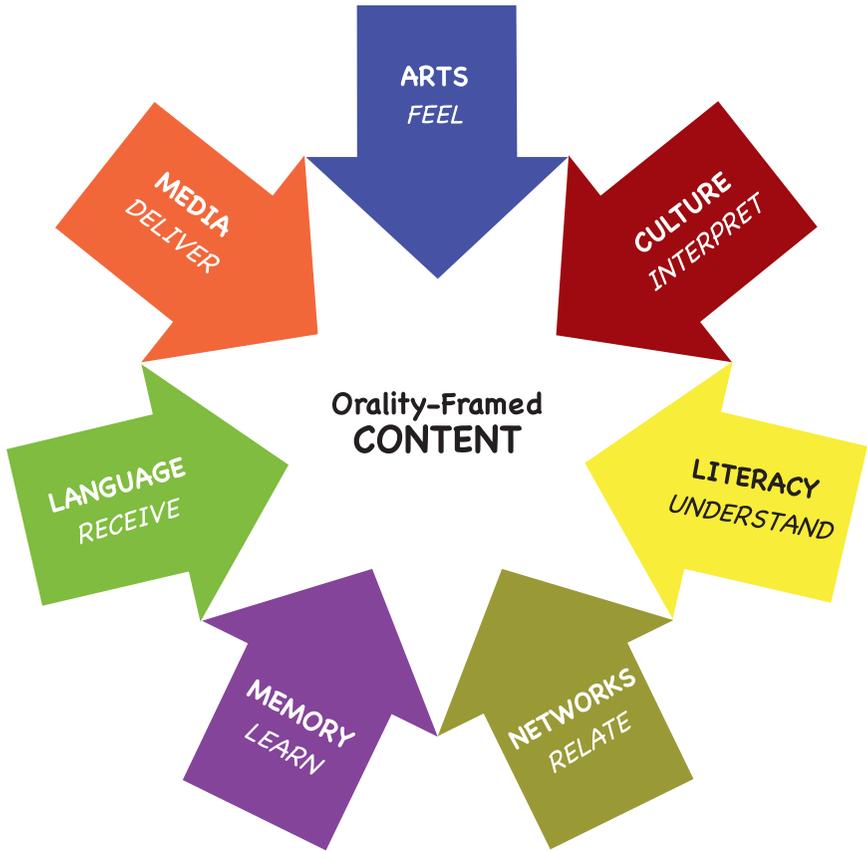
Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

Arts & Orality Part 1: Foundations and Applications

**Piper • Kreider • Hawn • Lim • Oswald • Pierce
Rowe • Carson • Rayl • Ferguson • Unseth
Hoogerheide • Krabill • Bowman • Lowther • Atkins**

The Seven Disciplines of Orality



Courtesy of Dr. Chuck Madinger who leads Global Impact Mission and serves on the International Orality Network's Leadership Team facilitating the Research Task Force.



ION

INTERNATIONAL ORALITY NETWORK

Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

Volume 5, Number 1, 2016

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Cover Photo

A group of women who are part of a choir react with delight as they hear a story told by pastor Elasi, in their mother tongue—Nyanga.

Additional Photos

All photos not otherwise credited have been contributed by members of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE).

Word Art

The word art at the beginning of each article was created using Wordle.net with the font *Loved by the King*.

Articles

All of the articles in this issue—aside from those by authors Atkins, Hoogerheide, and Unseth—have been adapted or directly reprinted with permission from William Carey Library from the volume *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, edited by James R. Krabill, gen. ed., and Frank Fortunato, Robin P. Harris, and Brian Schrag (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013).

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.’”

Exodus 31:1-5 (ESV)

“You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!”

Psalms 30:11-12 (ESV)

Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

Orality Journal is the journal of the International Orality Network. It is published online semi-annually and aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issues of orality, discoveries of innovations in orality, and praxis of effectiveness across multiple domains in society. This online journal is international and interdisciplinary, serving the interests of the orality movement through research articles, documentation, book reviews, and academic news. Occasionally, print editions will be provisioned. Submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement is welcomed.

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Co-Editors' Note

Samuel E. Chiang and William Coppedge

"In the beginning God created..." Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning was the Word..." John 1:1

The International Orality Network and the International Council of Ethnodoxologists are excited to collaborate in both 2016 editions of the Orality Journal. The two networks, through this publication, are exploring the relationship between orality and the arts.

The beginnings of both Genesis and the Gospel of John offer a natural starting point for a consideration of this unique relationship. God Himself is a creative God, creating not from impulse nor for mere utilitarian purposes, but *creatio ex nihilo*: he creates out of the overflow of his creative being. This Creator God is the Triune God - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus far from being an individualized activity, divine creation maintains an inherent communal component as each member of the Trinity participates (Genesis 1:1-2; Isaiah 42:5; Proverbs 8:22-31; John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-4, 11:6) in bringing creation into existence.

This Triune God creates by communicating though: *"All things came into being through the Word."*¹ Creation and communication are inextricably bound together in the nature of the Triune God. Naturally, every human person, made in the image of a Triune Creator, is inherently creative and communicative. The articles offered in this edition of the Orality Journal provide an array of opportunities to consider such creativity and artistic communication from various cultures around the world.

What needs to not be missed, though, is the Trinitarian component that threads its way through these case studies. Whether discussing henna art or music, these stories describe individual artists and their artistic expressions, yet every one of them creates and communicates within a communal network of relationships. Herein lies a subtle witness to Trinitarian nature of the creative God who made all human persons like himself.

The authors and participants within these case studies are seeking to probe the depths of the creative arts and oral communication as both a means to discovering echoes of the Triune Creator but also as a means to understand specific human cultures. Far from extracting human persons from their cultural context, they believe the Incarnation is a testimony to God's commitment to enter into human culture. Like Jesus, they are not mere observers of culture only. These writers and artists desire people from all cultures to be in communion with their Triune Creator which ultimately makes possible the restoration of human creativity (the arts) and human communication. For when one enters into communion with the Triune God, transformation becomes possible, not only for an individual person but for one's cultural community. As editors, we gladly commend these articles to you in the hope that they may stimulate godly artistic creativity in your current cultural context as well as deeper communion with the Triune Creator.

On the journey together,



¹John 1.3.

Note from Guest Editors

Katie Hoogerheide and James R. Krabill

Katie Hoogerheide serves as Associate Director of the Center for Excellence in World Arts at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics in Dallas, Texas. Her work and graduate-level studies include experience in the areas of organ performance, ethnoarts, linguistics, and education. She also works as Associate Editor for the Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith (artsandchristianfaith.org).

*James R. Krabill served from 1978–1996 as a Mennonite mission worker teaching Bible and church history in oral culture settings among African-initiated churches in West Africa. Currently serving as Senior Executive for Global Ministries with the Mennonite Mission Network, Krabill has authored or edited various works, including *Music in the Life of the African Church* (with Roberta King and others, 2008) and *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (2013).*

Resonate. All of us who have a message we want to share with other people want that communication to resonate in their hearts. When the message is the greatest news ever to come to earth, the story of a Savior, the stakes seem particularly high. And so we seek knowledge, pursuing the wisdom of others who have reported some measure of success in their quest for sharing the message across boundaries.

In that quest for shared knowledge, the International Council of Ethnodoxologists has been asked to guest edit this volume of the Orality Journal. We have been tasked with sharing with you just how much impact the arts can have in cross-cultural communication. Their absence impoverishes communication; their distortion disrupts communication; their genuine presence enriches communication. As you read the articles in this edition, you will see over and over again how the arts help messages with brand-new content to be perceived as more familiar, less foreign. The arts form one critical component for making our messages resonate.

The three articles in the FOUNDATIONS section provide a grounding in biblical, historical, and cultural perspectives on engaging the arts. As Piper explains, the inclusion of indigenous artistic expressions in

worship emerges naturally from biblical principles. Looking at the Early Church, Kreider gives us a view of the timelessness of incorporating artistic expressions into worship. In order to introduce us to the range of physical senses that can be involved in worship through the arts, Hawn & Lim draw from various symbols used across cultural boundaries.

The arts have been identified by the International Orality Network as one of at least seven aspects influencing orality-framed content (see “The Seven Disciplines of Orality” graphic on the inside front cover). Although these seven aspects appear as discrete arrows, in reality each of the seven is inextricably woven through the others. None can carry a message independently. All join together to create effective oral communication.

The arts are no exception. This volume highlights the arts, but even a cursory glance through the articles in the APPLICATIONS section shows the great extent to which the arts play an indispensable role in strengthening the other six disciplines in the act of communication. As just a few examples:

- **MEDIA:** Oswald shares how “vivid indigenous arts” in Tibet have brought the story of Jesus to life through film. Authentic arts content makes even the best delivered media resonate more deeply with the local people.
- **LANGUAGE:** Hoogerheide and Unseth address the importance of using language with the nuances of form familiar to an audience. Relevant artistic structures, discourse markers, and storytelling conventions make even the most accurate pronunciation, vocabulary, and word order seem more familiar and less foreign.
- **MEMORY:** Both Unseth and Bowman tap into the arts as ways of internalizing biblical stories and their messages. Familiar artistic expressions provide vehicles for more rapid and satisfying retention of new content.
- **LITERACY:** Unseth mentions the value of written collections of proverbs for understanding how to communicate more naturally within a culture. Only locally-recognized forms and expressions will serve to inform connecting effectively with the oral traditions.
- **NETWORKS:** Pierce, Rowe, Carson, and Rayl (“Sharing Faith”) each illustrate natural relationship building around the arts. Well-loved art

forms draw people to connect with others through their hearts rather than only through their minds or their physical presence.

- **CULTURE:** Krabill and Krabill depict the power of interpreting biblical concepts through the lens of local cultural rituals. Everyday artistic elements speak into local people's lives organically from the rhythms in the place they call home.

In each scenario, we see how arts are part and parcel of communities, inseparable from so many contexts of communication. Our attempts at sharing about Christ in a way that resonates with any group of people will not ring true without the natural colors, gestures, sounds, and communication frameworks familiar to those people. Without them, any incarnation of the gospel remains incomplete, a robotic, lifeless framework, rather than a living creation.

Just as the arts saturate their communication contexts, so the different elements within the realm we call "the arts" also blend together. We often speak of artistic domains such as music, dance, or drama. In reality, any artistic element is nearly always accompanied by several more, blurring our attempts at drawing boundaries between types of artistic expression. Consider the Balinese paintings inspired by another form of visual art, carved masks, and also by traditional dance postures and shadow puppet figures (Rayl, "A Balinese Painter"). Consider the tendency towards multi-arts descriptions such as "dance drama" (Rowe), or the account in which people hearing music spontaneously break into dance (Lowther). We can neither extract the arts from their communicative contexts nor specify one kind of artistic expression as consistently distinct from another.

Terminology changes. Arts research around the world continues to uncover new ways of talking about arts within different societies. The ancient Greeks used to indicate music, dance, lyrics, and poetry all with the one word *mousikē*.¹ English speakers might refer to both lyrics and melody by the term "song" but may or may not think of lyrics when they speak about "music." The point is not to separate and label artistic expressions, but rather to become aware of those elements of artistic expression that make communication contexts authentic for the people in a given culture.

That's why we chose a few artistic keywords from each APPLICATION article for listing in the Table of Contents—as you scan the list, you'll get just a taste of the rich array of artistic combinations within the cultures of the world. For example, through her description of trauma healing, Atkins introduces us to carving, wood burning, hat weaving, wall decorations, songs, laments, and dances. Likewise, Ferguson's journey with storytelling taps into drama, dance, song, painting, henna, and music videos. As you read the articles, you'll discover just how much these different artistic elements interact with each other. The Wordles at the top of each article also provide a sense of how all artistic expressions are connected through the commonality of their communicative effect, although some rise to the surface more in certain contexts compared to others.

It is our hope and prayer that the articles found in these pages will encourage you to new levels of finding and appreciating the power of artistic expression in your own communication contexts. We think you'll start noticing artistic elements in places you might not have thought to look before—in the materials, sounds, sights, and body movements around you. And, as with all the other disciplines of orality, our best results will come from encouraging the people of the culture to share the good news with others around them. They embody communication in a way no outsider ever can.

ICE and ION Collaborate

It has been a special privilege as guest editors of this journal and as representatives of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE) to partner with ION in this important collaborative effort. ICE began in 2003 as a small group of people working in cross-cultural arts ministries with a shared vision “to see Christ-followers from every culture express their faith through the own heart music and other arts.”² In its first decade the ICE network grew to over three hundred associates, some of whom launched their own national and regional initiatives in Latin America, the Philippines, and the Korean diaspora.

Several charter members of ICE (Tom Ferguson, Frank Fortunato, Robin Harris, Roberta King, Paul Neeley, Brian Schrag, and others) were involved in the orality movement in its early years, giving papers at ION gatherings on the ways in which music and arts connected to storying and orality. In 2007, Avery Willis approached ICE leaders to launch a Music and Arts Task Force in ION, and the foundational meetings that took place were energized by the vision of promoting a global movement for the use of all culturally-appropriate arts in making disciples of oral learners.

In addition, the Task Force was committed to the idea that storytelling, singing, dancing, dramatizing, drawing, sculpting, and other local arts are fundamentally interrelated means of telling God’s story. They affirmed that music and arts support other strategies to evangelize, disciple, and empower oral people, but that they can also stand on their own in communicating God’s story. Robin Harris served as the first Task Force coordinator, eventually passing the baton to Frank Fortunato, who served for several years and was succeeded by Erica Logan.

The arts presence grew steadily at ION with Task Force participants teaching and learning about ethnodoxology approaches, and bringing multicultural worship to ION gatherings. Collaboration between the ethnodoxology movement and its orality counterpart also grew, resulting in regular participation in one another’s events, publications,³ and other initiatives. Arts was recognized within ION as one of the “Seven Disciplines within Orality”⁴ and storytelling, once the primary

concern of the orality movement, came to be considered as only one of many effective forms of communicative art forms to be employed in the complex task of discipling oral learners.

The ION and ICE networks thus have much in common in our desire to see God's kingdom grow and mature through every form and means of communication God has graciously put at our disposal. May the collaboration illustrated in this issue of the *Orality Journal* be a sign pointing to even more such efforts between us in the days and years to come!

With special thanks to Samuel Chiang, who first invited us to consider this project, and to Robin Harris, President of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists, who offered invaluable counsel and logistical support as the project took shape and moved toward completion.

¹See, for example, Mike Cartwright's article on "Greek Music" in the *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, online at www.ancient.eu/Greek_Music/ (accessed November 6, 2015).

²From the ICE website at www.worldofworship.org.

³There were several chapters which specifically focused on Bible-storying methods and case studies in ICE's large volume edited by James R. Krabill, Frank Fortunato, Robin P. Harris, and Brian Schrag—*Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (William Carey Library, 2013), www.ethnodoxologyhandbook.com.

⁴Samuel E. Chiang, "Learning from my own mistakes," *Mission Frontiers* 36 (2014):3-4.

The Artful Presentation of a Contextualized Christology

Katie Hoogerheide

Katie Hoogerheide serves as Associate Director of the Center for Excellence in World Arts at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics in Dallas, Texas. With background in both ethnoarts and linguistics/translation, she is particularly interested in how these disciplines intersect in the realm of oral verbal arts. The overseas experiences particularly influencing her work include time spent living, working, and traveling in Europe, the Middle East, and South Africa.

canto
CONFESSIONAL
recitation
narrative

It gripped me the first time I saw it, and the second time, and the third. I kept coming back to it, reading it aloud, being drawn into its flow, wondering how it carried such power. It was called a “Christology,” a proclamation of theology about the Christ. Its author, Martin Parsons, had artfully crafted these truths in the form of a confessional recitation, a kind of creed intended to be presented orally.¹

Second Canto

He alone is the one Creator (*al-Khaliq*) of all things, The Father who dwells in unapproachable light is the source of creation from whom all things came.

From all eternity ‘Isa, the visible form of the invisible God, was with God, and was God. All things were created through Him, without Him nothing was made that has been made.

He is the Creator (*al-Khaliq*), the Maker (*al-Bari*), the Fashioner (*al-Musawwir*) and the Beginner (*al-Mubdi*) of all things. We are His creatures.

He is the one Creator God, the Self-subsisting One (*al-Qayum*) who alone has life in Himself, and has imparted life to His creation through His Spirit, who alone is the Quickener (*al-Muhyi*), the giver of life.

This is our God, the only true God.

We worship Him alone.

Excerpt from the full text, available online: missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/unveiling-god

The entire work was saturated with scripture that I loved, but they were scripture that I already knew well. *Why was I so drawn to this particular presentation?* Finally, after years of wondering, I set aside time to dig into its depths. Unlocking some of its secrets could benefit anyone hoping to present scripture in powerful ways that draw people into engaging with God's story.

I started by spending time with the text itself: comparing it with scripture, looking for discourse and other linguistic characteristics, and drawing connections between what I found and current understandings of the oral verbal arts. Then I contacted the author, who graciously granted me an interview. The more I learned, the more vibrantly the text came alive. Come with me and I'll introduce you to the world of this confessional recitation.

Let's start by imagining that we're walking over to a filing cabinet and pulling out a drawer called "A Christology." As you crack open the drawer, your eyes land on the labels atop each folder, giving you an overview of the drawer's contents. The first five folders are marked with labels denoting five different descriptions of God:

- (1) There is but one God, whom alone we worship
- (2) The Creator of all things
- (3) The Lord of all things
- (4) The Master of the Day of Judgment
- (5) And the only Savior

In Parsons's confessional recitation, these five statements appear as an opening doxology, after which each one of these topics is realized within its own "canto," or subsection. A final, sixth canto, beginning with the same words as the first, presents a fresh reworking of all the material presented in the first five subsections.

Each canto contains a wealth of information about its particular topic, and you may be drawn for quite some time into that material. Upon reaching the end of each subsection, however, you will encounter a phrase nearly identical to the words that open the first and final cantos: "This is our God, the only true God. We worship Him alone."²²

Returning to our file cabinet analogy, it's like spending time in a particular folder and then closing it again, at which point you're back to the top level of seeing the main labels of the whole drawer. The first and final folders catch your

eye, summing up the contents of the whole drawer. Finally, when you've finished perusing all the folders in the drawer, your eyes run over all the labels again as you close it. Similarly, the confessional recitation closes with the original doxology of the five statements about God.

Parsons developed this picture of the filing cabinet as he studied and attempted to imitate Urdu-Persian ways of organizing oral discourse. Of course, the fact that he chose a filing cabinet reflects Parsons' own grounding in a Western, paper-based society, and it's just one possible picture for conceiving of how the human mind organizes information at various levels. Those familiar with computer organizational systems might find similar inspiration by thinking about file directories. Let's move now to another possible picture.

We'll take our imaginations to the base of a large tree, its stately trunk and massive branches towering above us. That trunk carries the load of the whole tree, representing a storyline that occurs over and over throughout the confessional recitation: "God (the Father) empowered 'Isa, who in turn poured out the Spirit." No matter which major branch—presented as cantos

about God as Creator, Ruler, Judge, or Savior—you choose to follow, every branch contains, at its core, this same storyline. Consider two examples:

3rd canto (Ruler): "Therefore the Father...put all things under 'Isa... From heaven He ['Isa] has sent the Spirit of God to His church."

4th canto (Savior): "The Father... sent 'Isa...to save us.... And 'Isa...has poured out the Spirit of God...."

Just as in a tree, other, smaller branches may stem from the larger branches, so each canto contains additional information related to its own primary topic. In the end, however, all of the branches in the tree, and all of the statements in the cantos, return to the trunk, the main line of the story. By the time we've reached the crown of the tree, it's almost as if the sixth canto takes us shimmying down the trunk again, past all that we've learned, making the story line explicit with its review of the descriptions of God we've covered: "We know Him as Father...we know Him as 'Isa... and we know Him as the Holy Spirit."

A local man gave Parsons this picture of the tree in response

to the question, “How do you tell stories?” From his particular cultural background, the picture of the tree made the most sense in guiding him in organizing a narrative structure. Once again, we see evidence of the human mind creating levels in order to remember and recount material.

In his original publication of the confessional recitation, Parsons specifically identified narrative and repetition as key elements to making theology more accessible in oral contexts (2005, 226-227). So far, we’ve seen an overall narrative structured by two kinds of repetition—repeated descriptions about God outline the overall form of six cantos, while the core narrative itself is also repeated in each canto.

Parsons employs yet another powerful feature of repetition—he consistently uses formulaic phrases when referring to certain concepts or characters. For example, God the Father is described in every canto but the first as “The Father who dwells in unapproachable light.” Likewise, ‘Isa is introduced in each canto except the first as “the visible form of the invisible God” or, in one case, with the slightly condensed version “the visible form of God.”³

In addition to reinforcing important theological concepts throughout the course of the recitation, these formulas also provide a “resting place” for purposes of memory recall. The familiarity of a phrase allows someone reciting the poem to say those words on autopilot while mentally preparing for the upcoming subject matter.⁴ In another example, Parsons has also streamlined recall by consistently ordering the terms *tribe*, *language*, *people*, and *nation* despite the fact that the book of Revelation itself only presents those four elements in that particular order one time, in Revelation 5:9.

Space precludes the exploration of the many other devices of narrative and repetition present in Parsons’s work. Already very powerful, this confessional recitation has the potential to become even more so if performed orally in the language of a specific context. The experience of hearing vocal expressive elements such as intonation, rhythm, and choices in syntax will bring out new levels of meaning in the text, as will the experience of being able to see other expressive elements such as gestures and facial expressions.

In presenting this confessional recitation, Parsons intended to

provide a well-grounded prototype from which others can draw to create a gripping narrative account of God's role throughout the history of the universe. His own footnotes on the recitation indicate that he incorporated material from at least 85 verses of the Old Testament and over 250 verses of the New Testament.

Parsons's footnotes also suggest that he has connected concepts of his Christology with at least one hundred lines taken from seventeen different *suras* of the Qur'an. Readers familiar with Islamic practice will also recognize the similarities between the opening of the doxology and the first part of the Islamic *shahadah*—"There is



Having identified a good number of additional direct references or strong allusions throughout the text, I estimate that this confessional recitation embodies concepts from nearly 150 verses in the Old Testament and over 300 verses drawn from nearly every book in the New Testament.

no God but God.”⁵ This compelling story, solidly grounded in God's word, has been intentionally designed both in content and in form to connect with the Urdu-Persian context.

Given Parsons's model as a possible starting point, let us

seek to stimulate local people to create their own confessional recitations. Especially in contexts where established churches expect something resembling a formalized creed, let us encourage them to craft such works in the narrative forms that resonate with the common people. As necessary, let us guide them in discovering the

linguistic and artistic conventions that will make the internalization of such a rich, scripture-infused Christology accessible to the average member of society. Most importantly, let us pray for the creation in every community around the world of an irresistibly compelling presentation of this one God, whom alone we worship.

¹Originally published by Martin Parsons, in *Unveiling God: Contextualizing Christology for Islamic Culture* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2005), 227-238. The full text of the confessional recitation is also available online: missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/unveiling-god (accessed November 7, 2015).

²Only the fifth canto doesn't end with this statement, presumably because the sixth canto immediately begins with very similar words.

³Compare these formulas for God the Father and 'Isa with 1 Timothy 6:16 and Colossians 1:15.

⁴In *The Singer of Tales*, Albert Lord refers to the usefulness of formulas to accommodate the "demands of performance at high speed," in which the performer "depends upon inculcated habit and association of sounds, words, phrases, and lines." Quoted in *The Singer*, edited by Stephen Mitchell and Gregory Nagy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, 2nd ed.), 65.

⁵See Ruthven, Malise and Azim Nanji, in *Historical Atlas of Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 14.





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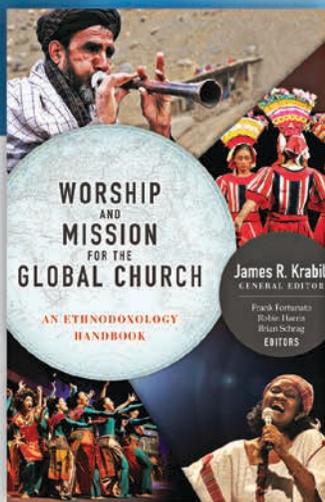
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