Muslim Hip-Hop: Politicisation of Kool Islam

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> Yeah, Aicha, for my sister, ya
> Everyday like, queen on her throne
> No, nobody knows how she feel
> Aicha, Lady one day it'll be real
> [Outlandish *Aicha*]

In a modern secondary school hall on a Thursday evening, a crowd of pupils, parents, *imams*, local community leaders and representatives of faith groups, come together to watch a musical performance. A relatively normal occurrence at the end of year in schools throughout the world, but the location of the school and the content of the play destabilise many of the norms associated with theatrical productions by pupils. Breeze Hill School is a 11-16 year old state comprehensive school in the Glodwick area of Oldham, a neighbourhood that witnessed three nights of intensive riots in 2001. Many of the schools' predominantly Pakistani/ Kashmiri heritage, British, Muslim pupils would be connected to the aftermath of those events. The musical being performed, *Aisha Musical[i]*, was inspired by the Dutch Hip Hop group Outlandish,[ii] whose hit album, '*Bread and*

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Barrels of Water, reached number four in the pop music charts in Germany. The musical revolves around the central female character *Aisha*, whose story provides a counter discourse to the popular re-presentation of the Muslim woman. The musical offers a voice through *Aisha* to articulate what it means to be a Muslim women living in the west. Combining and juxtaposing humour, satire and drama, a complex story unfolds that narrates young British Pakistani Muslims' experiences of gender inequality, Islam, drugs, education and family.

The *Aisha Musical* raises interesting questions regarding the relationship between music and Muslim youths. It is clear that *Aisha* is part of the *nasheed* concert genre that is gaining momentum in the west, which is part of a wider trend by young Muslims in creating new "spaces" for multifaceted Islamic identities to be expressed (Werbner, 1996). One key shift in creating these "spaces" is a move away from examining music from a theological premise – summed in the question: 'is music permissible in Islam?' -[iii] to an acknowledgement of the fact that music is a clear part of the social reality of young Muslims. In particular, urban centres of the West music in general and hip-hop in particular is a central part of Muslim youth cultures, regardless of theological contestation. The *Aisha musical* also demonstrates the ways in which Muslim Hip Hop transcends the notion of a passive audience, rather it demands pro-active engagement that allows young people to debate, challenge and push the boundaries of traditional cultural norms. Music in this way is seen as an active symbolic tool in which to articulate ongoing struggles against demonisation, poverty and inequality.

The choice of music for the musical is therefore not random but chosen to challenge popular myths – the assumption of passivity amongst Muslim women and of the perception of hip-hop culture in particular as un-Islamic. Given the predominantly South Asian cultural background of British Muslim youth and the conservative norms regarding gender equality in these communities the play engaged with the audience at a number of levels. Muslim Hip Hop is the best musical form to address some of these difficult issues. Sound tracks for the *Aisha Musical* were carefully selected from popular artists such as *Native Deen*, *Outlandish* and the Canadian folk singer *Dawud Wharnsby*[iv], all of who are on the regular *nasheed* circuit in the UK and the US. *Native Deen's* and *Dawud Wharnsbury's* messages have a popular appeal amongst young Muslims, mostly English lyrical contents of the music and the relatively popular musical forms means that their songs are often memorised and performed by youth, as a standing item in most Islamic conferences and gatherings.

Aisha musical also displays themes of gender equality, particularly the representation of Muslim women. It is clear that both Outlandish's video, which accompanies the music, together with the performances by the pupils and teachers show that the aim is to put forward a positive representation of Muslim women. Aisha is presented as a strong, dynamic, trendy, colourful and a confident *muslimah*. This counter discourse can be seen as a feature within the wider Muslim hip-hop narrative, which is a complete contrast to the mainstream misogynistic representation of women in hip hop, as popularised by the rapper *Tupac, 50cent* and others. The sound track for the *Aisha musical* was sung by male and female students thus pushing the boundaries of accepted traditional norms and adding

to the growing trend of Muslim Hip Hop female artists[v] such as *Miss-understood*[vi] and the dynamic *Sister Haero*[vii] who's lyrics also explore a range of issues such as globalisation, war on terror, inequality, poverty and political leadership.

Aicha Musical although developed and played in Oldham, a run-down northern-mill town, nevertheless is part of a global trend of creating Muslim cultural expressions in the west. Hip Hop is the global expression of disaffected urban youth and it is not surprising that it is this genre which has attracted artists such as Outlandish.

At a time when young British Muslims are asked to focus on the *local cultures*[viii] popular youth cultures are ever engaged in a dynamic that is becoming more global. This is not a process restricted to Muslim youth alone, but given their status as pariah within contemporary western societies, it is not surprising that the idiom most appropriate to express their social and political views is hip hop. The space created by Muslim hip hop also provides a means of expressing intergenerational distinction and creating a distance from the traditional – in this case South Asian- cultures from which parents come. Muslim hip hop in the European context is therefore a way of forging a new identity that is different from the parochial parental migration generation, to one which is seen to transcend ties of kin, race and linguistic solidarity. This is not to deny the particular context out of which Muslim hip hop emerges, which is clearly the streets of the West, or the dominance of English in lyrical content (another local), but to acknowledge that it is an engagement which is self-reflexively global.

Islamic hip-hop and Muslim hip-hop studies

For most people the first encounter with hip-hop music would be at a traffic light signal, whilst waiting for the lights to turn green, the deep thud of the baseline coupled with strong lyrical voice-over have become familiar sounds of urban life. This has led some to "dismiss hip-hop as dead letter of brazen stereotype-mongering among the severely undereducated" or "other critics claim that the deficits of hip-hop are amplified because they blare beyond the borders of ugly art to inspire youth to even uglier behaviour" [Dyson 2003: xi]. It is true that some artists within the hip-hop genre have contributed in creating this impression such as the late Tupac Shakoor and his "thuglife", with excessive glorification of gang violence combined with unwarranted misogyny. Despite these claims, hip-hop studies is big business with many 'red brick' universities in the UK offering modules in hip-hop studies, together with respectable Ivy League universities in the US such as Harvard having a dedicated archive for hip-hop[ix]. Tony Mitchell's (2001) *Global Noise* demonstrates the global reach of hip-hop with Italian posses promoting Marxist politics through music, Basque rappers using punk-rock hip hop syncretic to espouse their nationalist cause and French artists of Moroccan and Algerian heritage challenging social issues in France together and questioning France's role within the Algerian civil war. Mitchell attempts to question the monopoly over hip-hop of African-American culture, by demonstrating how "rap music and hip-hop culture has in many cases become a vehicle of various forms of youth culture" [2001: 10] which has moved away from the African- American idiom. Further research is required in the role of hip-hop groups such as *Shehadin* in Palestine and other groups throughout the Muslim world.

Tricia Rose (1994) and others[x] have published erudite works on hip-hop, which has given the topic scholarly recognition amongst ethno-musicologists, sociologist and cultural critics. Despite this growing scholarly interest the study of hip-hop and its relationship with Sunni Islam has had little recognition, despite the link between mainstream hip hop and Islamicate Black separatist group *Nation of Islam* or the splitter group *Five Percenters*. H.Samy Abdel-Alim (2005) argues that Islam and mainstream hip-hop enjoy a symbiotic relationship that can be traced back to the formative years of the music to artists such as *Afrika Bambaata* and his *Zulu Nation*. Hisham Aidi (2002) has also pointed out the strong connection between Islam and the Black diaspora focusing in particular on the role played by Islam in developing an Afro-American consciousness. This has led some commentators such as Harry Allen to declare: 'Islam is hip-hop's official religion' (Allen, 2006:46).

One key consensus that emerges from the limited studies of Muslim hip-hop is that it is a product of the current socio-political milieu. In this way Muslim hip-hop is similar to Tricia Rose's observation; "oppressed people use language dance and music to mock that in power" (1994:100). The power dynamics and the discourse of speaking truth to power is a thesis which is picked up by a number of Muslim hip-hop commentators, Adel-Alim in particular sees Muslim Hip-hop as able to: "within the hip-hop cultural movement ... create a counter hegemonic discourse that threatens the ruling class and their ideas" (2006:46). Other commentators such as Ted Swedenburg (2006) has demonstrated how some Muslim hip-hop groups in Europe embody strong features of anti-racist movements and further how Muslim hip-hop artists in France are challenging Islamaphobia and other forms of racism.

Whilst the above writers see Muslim Hip-hop as a counter hegemonic discourse, Saud Abdul Khabeer (2007) makes a distinction between Islamic hip-hop and Muslim Hip-hop. Khabeer (2007) argues "I use the term Islamic rather than Muslim to distinguish a genre of hip-hop music and culture created by American Muslims that seeks to comply with Islamic religious standards and practices and whose current and primary audience is Muslims [pg. 126]. Khabeer's (2007) distinction between Islamic and Muslim Hip-hop is particularly helpful in distinguishing the 'mainstream' *Muslim* hip-hop groups such as *Outlandish* to the Islamic group *Native Deen*.

The distinction is further clarified by Khabeer (2007:126) "Islamic hip-hop may restrict the types of musical instruments[xi] used, generally does not employ expletives and frequently refers to issues of doctrinal import. Khabeer (2007:129) sees Islamic hip-hop as serving three objectives: first, to preserving Islamic identity of Muslim youths, second, an educational tool for teaching Muslims and non-Muslims about Islam and finally, Islamic hip-hop grounded in a wider project of creating an authentic American Muslim culture. This typology is also useful in distinguishing between Outlandish and Native Deen. However, this classification does not take into account the more radical and political edges of Muslim hip-hop. For example groups such as Soldiers of Allah, do not neatly fit into the distinction between Islamic and Muslim, as they are much more

interested in a particular form of politics. It is therefore necessary to be attentive to the diversity of music and audiences rather than to prematurely engage in typologies.

Lyrical Jihadis: Soldiers of Allah

'The mic is our weapon, our words are our ammunition and the stage is our battle field' this is the objective of Muslim hip-hop group M-Team, which is short for *Mujahideen Team.*[xii] Muslim hip hop is not a unitary musical phenomenon and like other forms of hip hop there are various sub sections that appeal to different populations and different constituencies. By providing case studies of two groups Soldiers of Allah (SOA) and Native Deen we hope to offer a taste of the spectrum of lyrical content, context of production and means of reception that is engaged by MHH. This is not to propose that these two groups represent or dichotomous positions on the MHH spectrum as both groups may be found in any particular listener's collection, but there are clear demarcations in terms of the intent of each artist, their engagement with the music industry and their desired outcomes for their audiences.

Our rationale for analysing groups as apposed to conducting thematic analysis of issues across a range of artists is to overcome the problem of focusing on lyrics alone when considering the importance of music. Though young people may not pay attention to the outpourings of a generic label (ie Muslim Hip Hop), fan bases demonstrate that groups and artists have an important symbolic influence over young people's imagination.

It may therefore be that the lyrics of particular artists attract a particular kind of audience, which may not be true of a genre as a whole. Analysis of lyrics has been one of the important methods by which sociologists and ethnomusicologists have given significance to popular music (Kalra 2000). The main mode of this analysis has been lyrical realism, which in crude terms is a method of considering lyrics as a simple reflection of social values and norms. Lyrics can either be taken to reflect the society from which they have come or be constitutive of dominant ideology. However, critics of this approach argue that this is an imputation of meaning, by providing case studies of particular groups we hope to overcome some of the problems associated with thematic lyrical analysis.

Whilst both Soldiers of Allah (SOA) and Native Deen are US based these groups allow us to explore the distinctive genres and political economy of MHH. The former focuses on a politicised resistance with a particular objective in mind, whilst the latter focuses more on spiritual, developmental and a personal-politicial message. These groups provide a useful comparison between the political economy of MHH and the means in which music is made accessible – SOA relied on the internet to disseminate their music, all of their songs can be downloaded free of charge. The use of internet in disseminating politically conscious hip hop is a medium which is utilised by many hip hop artists, for example extracts of *Sonic Jihad* by the artist Paris is available via his popular website www.guerrilla.com.

Paris's *Sonic Jihad* received great controversy after his album cover included a cover of a plane flying into the White House. By contrast Native Deen focuses on the commercial

route. Their debut album was produced by *Jamal Records*, *which* is a product of *Mountain of Lights Producti*on owned by Yusuf Islam (formerly known as Cat Stevens). The company is a lead player in the commercialisation of the Islamic *nasheed* genre with a range of artists signed up to the record label such as the South African Artist Zain Bhikha. Whilst many would question MHH's transition from a grassroots, organic expressive art form to a commodity, which is fully commercialised, there are others who argue that this market forces help establish quality assurances to disseminate the "message". Nonetheless, as our case studies of SOA and *Native Deen* will illustrate, these different engagements with the music industry are reflective in the type of 'message' that is being promoted.

SOA are a MHH group from Los Angeles, which had a popular appeal amongst young Muslims during the late 90's. Whilst there is no direct link between SOA and any political Muslim organisation, it is a wildly held view amongst most young Muslims that the SOA furthered the cause for the group *Hizbut Tahrir*. In fact SOA are one of the first MHH group to receive popular recognition in using the net to disseminate their music. SOA's lyric and message were refreshing to a new generation of young Muslims throughout the world who had grown up on a diet of hip-hop.

SOA's music was seen as 'Kool' and rebellious that helped shape an idealised and reified perspective on Islamic history. Their music further developed cultural styles for Muslim youth, which were interpreted as resistance to structural and cultural changes.

Similar to previous subcultures, SOA arrived during the time of socio-political cataclysm within the Muslim world, but unlike previous groups, which were the product of their milieu, SOA disappeared amongst the rubble of 9/11. Internet websites and chat rooms are filled with disgruntled loyal fans abound with conspiracy theories as to the reasons for their demise. In an interview[xiii] one of the lead rappers of SOA dismissed some of the assumptions that some fans may have had about the group. The idea that SOA would have supported   9/11 was strongly dismissed; "9/11 was a tragedy, its sad. Once again, after all the killing, what was accomplished? Nothing. Terrorism has nothing to do with Islam and Muslims and any Muslim who claims it does not understand Islam". One of the most attractive features of the SOA for its fan base was their un-compromising views on the Islamic Caliphate as the solution to the problems of the Muslim world and their outright denunciation of Muslim rulers and Imams who are sympathetic or supportive of the west.

The genre popularised by SOA[xiv] focuses on a counter hegemonic discourse, it aims to replace the west and endeavours to place a unified Muslim *Ummah* at the centre of the world. Its message is presented in an accessible street lingua franca that transcends racial, theological and linguistic barricades. Through focusing on an idealised and romantic past, the root causes of the Muslim malaise is seen as originating from the dismantling of the Ottoman Caliphate by western colonial powers.

The SOA album *1924* clearly illustrates the political stance of the group:

The truth about the state
It wasn't always like this
Let us look back in time
History reminds us
One army
One land
One central authority
Crushing the Romans
Persians put in fear
The Ummah like a Lion
No need to shed a tear

How did they do this
to you and me
We turn on the TV
and all we see
is a world full of casualties
a generation in agony

our Ummah is in misery
let us go back
to beginning of the century
and review our history

SOA then remind their listeners of how once a divinely inspired Islamic system of political governance ruled supreme, focusing primarily on the scientific and military rulers such as Saladin Sultan Murad II and others:

from one side
to the other side of the globe
the system of Islam
Ruled over the world

The demise of this glorious past comes to end in 1924:

Our state was demolished
Hundred years of planning And their plans were accomplished
Kafirs broke our bond
Contaminated our knowledge
Better listen up
because you won't learn this in college
Over million Muslims died
But no one answered their cries

In the 1990's
The Muslim genocide

Bring back Islam!
Bring back Islam!

It's year 2000
And nothing has changed
Past generation has aged
Let us write the next page
It's time for us to change
It's up to you & me
Either we make history
or we become history

The unification of the Muslim *Ummah* is not only held back through the political manipulation of western powers but the Muslim scholars and leaders are also seen as been involved within this process:

Fake Scholars and False leaders
Claiming there're our Healers
Insulting our Intelligence
In so called Islamic Methods
Liars!!!!
Muslim Scholars for hire
Telling us
We need American Islam
Dividing the Ummah into sections…
Working for the system
Selling our land to kufar buyers
Shifting our path like a rolling tire….
Misguiding our Ummah….
Be prepared to be surrounded by Allah's hellfire

Clearly the lyrics of SOA resonate with the rhetoric and politics of many Islamist groups. However, for the listener with limited access to the complexities and contours of Islamic history, there is another simpler message about community leadership – Islam under attack and of a pristine past. In that sense they are similar to some of the more edgier African-American hip-hop groups whose political message has been criticised for being nihilistic, but who in fact carried important messages of community rejuvenation and hope. (Gilroy, 1994) These messages resonate on a much wider level than the specificities of the demise of the Caliphate and any potential return. These politically contentious and more edgy lyrics find resonance amongst young Muslim men in the UK, not only from politicised and aware contexts but also from places like Oldham. Much of the SOA fan base does not necessarily proscribe to the fullness of the politics being

articulated, but nonetheless are attracted to the confrontational style combined with a message of an uncompromised stance on the political nature of Islam.

The Personal is political: Native Deen

Native Deen is a three man band made up of artists; Joshua Salaam, Naeem Muhammad, and Abdul-Malik Ahmad who grew up in Washington DC and all of whom are of African American heritage.   The group originally came through M.Y.N.A Raps[xv] (Muslim Youths of North America), which is an organization dedicated in creating Islamic awareness amongst Muslim youths, together with creating a space for amateur rappers to record their music. MYNA Raps has produced some successful albums such as *'For the Cause of Allah'*. But by far the most successful of the artists who have emerged through the organization are Native Deen who are perhaps one of the most popular globalised Muslim hip-hop groups. Native Deen's style, content and approach are a stark contrast to that of SOA. Native Deen has a cross generation appeal, which transcends national and geographic location. However anecdotal analysis of their fan mail[xvi] demonstrates that it is made up of predominantly young Muslim females. Native Deen's fan mails are from cross sections of the country ranging from Australia, Malaysia, Sri-Lanka, Nigeria, Somalia, Palestine, Pakistan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, USA, Colombia and the UK. Native Deen have performed in most of these countries with most events being fully booked.

It is also clear that Native Deen have important relationship with their fan base, their websites are inundated with letters from fans asking advice on 'what to-do about racism in school' 'What to do if one is feeling depressed' and theological questions regarding the life, meaning of life etc. It is interesting to note that fans view Native Deen more than artists, but as guides, role models and mentors   Native Deen fans also use their songs not for recreational purposes, rather for suggestions for improving conducts or drawing closer to religion. The fan mail has some detailed comments from fans from across the world such as; "your music inspires me and not to be ashamed of my faith… I've learnt a lot", I have given up listening to meaningless music now' and 'you're working magic to help Muslims'.

In contrast to SOA, the politics of Native Deen's music focuses on making use of the discourse of space and place within the Muslim communities addressing personal and social issues such as drugs, paradise, parents and exams. Their name invokes the word Deen, which translates from the Arabic as way of life and this is the main focus of their lyrics and music. Their message is presented with upbeat hip-hop sound and lyrics delivered primarily through drums, synthesized percussion instruments, and vocals. Their popular appeal of giving positive and 'tolerant' messages together with there usage of non-wind and string instruments and their reliance of percussion based instruments has given them wider appeal through performing at conferences, charity events, weddings and holiday events. The question of using percussion is clarified by Native Deen through there popular website:

> Many Muslims believe that wind and string instruments should be avoided in Islam. The Qur'an does not specifically mention musical instruments. Some scholars say that if the lyrics of the music is Islamic, then any type of musical instrument is permissible. However, there are others that say only percussion (drums) instruments can be used. We cannot please everyone, but using only percussion instruments allows more Muslims to enjoy our music. On our tapes we use various percussion instruments

Native Deen has motivated and empowered many young people to focus their energy into music and find alternative and creative ways in getting the message of Islam. For Native Deen the lyrical contents are more important than the music itself, because lyrics are the main vehicle in conveying the message/s. The message Native Deen want to convey to there listeners is a religious message. For example, the *Deen You Know* is accompanied with attractive inlay covers with photographs of the three artists with trendy urban wear with kufiss, within a backdrop of inner city buildings. Another one of the images of Joshua and Abdul Malik Ahad are in '*salah*' position outside on the streets. Furthermore all inlay covers also includes all the lyrics of their songs which appear next to verses from the Quran encouraging the listeners to *be mindful of the Allah*, to *reflect upon the mercy of Allah* and encouraging the *listeners to do good deeds*.

'Doing good deeds' is also one of the key songs within their album, a video of this song is also available from Native Deen's website. The key message of *Small Deeds* is to encourage the listeners to concentrate on small deeds that everyone can do whether in school or outside in the community, the emphasis is placed on the mundane – the local and every day tasks that people can participate and not global politicised ideas as echoed through the messages by SOS:

<div align="center">

Picking up trash on the path in a flash
Taking glass from the grass, as you pass to your class
A smile goes a mile and is sure worthwhile
When a brother's hostile, and has been for awhile
Put a dollar every day in the sadaqah (charity)
It may be small but you do it for the baraka (blessing)
I know you're saving for the Polo and the Nautica
A poor student but you do it just to please Allah

</div>

The message of Native Deen also cuts across generation and gender, as the following lyrics highlight:

<div align="center">

Advice to another sister about a mister
Your wife always go and kiss her, tell her you miss her
At night do quiet dikhr (mentioning God), and pray the witr
Invite a guy who wants to bicker, to share a snicker

</div>

Furthermore, the concluding lyrics remind the listeners that grand plans do not revolve around broader political struggles but rather localised work, as the concluding lyrics of *Small Deeds* conclude:

> Grand plans expand in our small little hands [emphasis added]
> But we overlook demands that just seem like strands
> We get jammed on exams, cause we skip the small things
> Small baby deeds come, bring the blessings!

The localization of global urban themes seem to be the golden thread that runs throughout the album, take the much admired song *Drugs Free* with the reoccurring chorus ' *I don't need to get high, some people do and some people die. The life that I live may not be that long, but while I'm alive I'll be healthy and strong.* The trendy street language included within *Drugs Free* such as "huffin and puffin", "buzz" and "mortal combat" combined with Islamic terminologies such as "sakin", "salah" and "ikhwan" is engaging a captive audience and at the same time appealing to a wider young Muslim audience. It is clear that Native Deen have contributed towards a new phenomenon of 'KOOL Islam', which is hip, upbeat, trendy and above all western. The symbolism around Native Deen's music is also unique in the sense that it replaces the significant images of hip-hop music videos such as 'subways', crews and posses with images of mosques, minarets[xvii] and worshipers praying in a mosque. Native Deen's lyrical contents with the focus on religion and spirituality also replace traditional hip-hop signifiers of the "ghetto" and the "hood" [Murray Forman 2002].

Conclusion

Another Thursday, but this time late into the night, at the Pakistani Community Centre in Oldham, the stage is occupied by a *Shere Kwani*, a musical group singing the words of Sufi poet, Mohammed Baksh accompanied by Sitar and clay pot. The audience of 500 or more, consists entirely of Muslim men from the Northern part of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir and the lyrics are entirely sung in Putohari. In stark contrast to Muslim Hip-Hop this musical performance inscribes a different set of transnational ties but one that does not sit easily within the West. The use of English lyrics, access via the internet and most visibly a modern western identity means that Muslim Hip Hop appeals to generations of young Muslims across the globe from the UK,[xviii] Sweden,[xix] France,[xx] and Australia.[xxi] Muslim hip hop also forms part of the resistance to social inequality and injustice by marginalized and disaffected youths. Between the Shere Kwani and the Muslim Hip Hop the commonality in a locality like Oldham is that both of these musical forms may be consumed in the same household, but certainly not by the same members of a family. Muslim hip hop comes to represent a British experience framed by the global flows that are enabled by technologies such as the internet.[xxii]

Despite the veiled presence of Islam in the origins of hip-hop, the emergence of the MHH musical genre has coincided with the religious revivalism that has marked the 1990s and the new century. The diversity and span of MHH is clearly illustrated by looking at the range of groups that now perform and articulate by making some reference to Islam. Our attempts here have not been too offer a tight classificatory framework within which to locate this music, as this can often reduce the multiplicity and fluidity of musical genres to neat typologies. In the specific case of MHH this almost always leads back to the

debate about theologically acceptable forms of music. Rather, by offering case studies of particular groups we note the importance of the fan base, the means of distribution and the context of production to develop a more nuanced understanding of MHH.

End Notes

i *Aicha* was written by the French singer and songwriter Jean-Jacques Goldman. The original author of *Aicha* was the Algerian musician Khaled Hadj Brahim. See Khaled Hadj Braham's album *Sahra*.

ii *Outlandish* is the popular Dutch Hip Hop group made up of Waqs (Pakistani decent), Lenny (Cuban descent) and Isam (Moroccan decent). Outlandish's music has a clear socio-political message, for example, they recently promoted a campaign '*Music with Meaning'* under the slogan 'if you stand for nothing you'll fall for anything'. Their recent album *'Closer than Veins'* evokes the Quranic verse 'God is closer than you than your jugular vein'.

iii The topic of the role of music in Islam still dominates popular Muslim discourse, the relationship between Islam and hip-hop is discussed at some lengths by Saud Abdul Khabeer (2007)

iv Dawud Wharnsby is one of the pioneers of the popular Muslim nasheed genre along with other contemporary artists such as Yusuf Islam, Zain Bhikha and Sami Yusuf.

v The role of Muslim hip-hop female artists is an increasing trend which is yet to be discussed within the field of academia

vi *Miss-understood* is a New York based Hip-hop artist, she is signed to an independent record label. She has performed in London and Manchester with the British Muslim Hip-hop group Mecca2Medina.

vii *Sister Haero* originally from Northern Iraq, grew up in San Diego; her spoken poetry dispels a lot of myths about women's role in Islam. Sister Haero is politically active in the US.

viii See ongoing debate on Britishness by David Goodhart (2005), Trevor Philips (2006) and community cohesion by Ted Cantle from the Community Cohesion Institute.

ix www.hiphoparchive.com

x Murray Forman [2002]

xi Native Deen put primary emphasis on doctrine which is reflected in the choice of musical instruments. See below for further discussion.

xii M-Team Interview- http://www.muslimhiphop.com/index.php?p=Hip-Hop/M-Team

xiii www.muslihiphop.com

xiv The mantle of SOA is picked up by the British Muslim hip-hop group *Blackstone* which uses its lyrical contents to pursue the establishment of a global Islamic State.

xv http://www.mynaraps.com

xvi www.nativedeen.com

xvii See Native Deen's Small Video: www.nativedeen.com

xviii Mecca2Medina is the popular hip hop group in the UK. See *Truthseekers* by Mecca2Medina

xix Saul Abraham

xx Akhenaton of the Group see Ted Seedenburg (2001) for further discussion

xxi *The Brothahood*

xxii The role of the Internet is making MHH accessible to the mainstream is crucial as most MHH can be easily downloaded from popular Muslim hip-hop websites www.muslimhiphop.com is the most popular website with interviews with artist, information, discussion page together with links.

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Discology

Mecca2Medina *Truthseekers*

MYNA Raps *Cause of Allah*

Native Deen (2006) *Deen You Know*

Native Deen (2007) *Not Afraid To Stand Alone*

Outlandish (2002) *Bread Barrels of Water* (International Version)

Outlandish (2005) *Closer Than Veins* (International Version)

Soldiers of Allah *1924*