Harmonic Networks: The Nazir Ahmad Music Society and the Politics of Cultural Collaboration in Pakistan

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Abstract

This paper presents a historical analysis of the Nazir Ahmad Music Society (NAMS) at Government College University, Lahore, examining its role as a key cultural institution in post-colonial Pakistan. I move beyond the society's self-representation as an archive or pedagogical centre to instead analyse its history through the lens of its "collaborative networks." I propose that these networks—with state media, folk institutions, university clubs, and private industry—were not neutral or organic, but were in fact politically contingent strategies for survival, legitimacy, and relevance. I argue that the NAMS's institutional trajectory provides a microcosm of the Pakistani state's shifting strategies of cultural production. By tracing how the NAMS's "collaborations" aligned with successive state ideologies—from Ayub Khan's developmental-modernism and Bhutto's folk-populism, to Zia-ul-Haq's Islamisation and the neoliberalism of the 2000s—I demonstrate that the society was an active agent in negotiating and performing a "respectable" national musical identity. I suggest the NAMS is a case study in how cultural institutions use collaboration not just for artistic exchange, but as a political mechanism to navigate the complex, often contradictory, relationship between state power, Islamic piety, and artistic expression.

Keywords: Nazir Ahmad Music Society, Pakistani Cultural History, State Patronage, Institutional Collaboration; Music Politics

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When Pakistan was founded in 1947, it faced the profound challenge of defining a national culture. Born from a partition defined by religious identity, the new state inherited a territory brimming with deep, syncretic, and diverse cultural traditions—from the high classicism of the Mughal court to the ecstatic folk and Sufi traditions of the Punjab and Sindh. This inheritance was immediately problematic. The state's foundational Islamic identity existed in tension with a musical heritage that was often viewed by orthodox elements as either "Hindu" (in its classical form) or "heterodox" (in its folk-Sufi expression). The history of cultural production in Pakistan, therefore, is the history of a continuous, unresolved negotiation of this central contradiction: how to build a modern Islamic republic that is also the custodian of a pre-Islamic and syncretic South Asian artistic legacy.

I propose that these national-level debates were not settled in parliament but were operationally resolved within the nation's key cultural institutions. This paper analyses the history of one such institution, the Nazir Ahmad Music Society (NAMS) of Government College University, Lahore. While the society's own literature, such as the document "Archiving Harmony," frames its mission through its "collaborative dynamics" and its role as a "living archive," I suggest these functions are not neutral. They are, in fact, the product of a long and adaptive institutional history. I argue that the NAMS's emphasis on "collaboration" has been its primary mechanism for survival and relevance, allowing it to navigate the shifting ideological demands of the Pakistani state.

This paper traces the history of the NAMS's networks. It will demonstrate how its "collaborations"—with state-media, other university clubs, folk institutes, and eventually, the private sector—were not just artistic choices but political alignments. I argue that the NAMS, situated within Pakistan's most elite state university, has always been an agent in the state's cultural project, even when that project was ostensibly "anti-music." Its institutional genius has been its ability to "collaborate" with the prevailing state ideology of every era, re-framing its mission to align with modernisation, populism, Islamisation, or neoliberalism as required. The NAMS, therefore, is a microcosm of the politics of cultural collaboration, an institution that performs harmony by building networks that ratify its "moral" and "respectable" place in the nation.

My analysis draws from three distinct scholarly fields: the political history of Pakistan, the ethnomusicology of South Asia, and the sociology of cultural production. The first, and most foundational, is the political history of the Pakistani state. Works by Ayesha Jalal (The State of Martial Rule, 1990) and Husain Haqqani (Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military, 2005) are essential for this analysis. They provide the macro-level narrative of the state's ideological shifts, meticulously detailing the top-down cultural projects of Ayub Khan (modernisation), Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (populism), and Zia-ul-Haq (Islamisation). This literature provides the "external" political context, explaining the state-level pressures that an institution like the NAMS would have been forced to respond to. Its limitation, however, is that it rarely investigates the "on-the-ground" response of specific, non-media cultural institutions like a university society.

The second field is the rich ethnomusicological scholarship on South Asia. Foundational texts by Bonnie Wade (2004) on classical gharanas and more

specific studies, such as Virinder Kalra's (2012) work on the performance of Punjabi Sufi poetry, provide the "bottom-up" context. These studies explain the "raw material" of the folk and classical traditions that the NAMS was curating, performing, and, as I will argue, "domesticating." They decode the social and religious tensions inherent in these traditions, such as the orthodox suspicion of ecstatic Sufi practices. This literature, however, tends to focus on performers and traditions in their "authentic" community or court settings, with less analysis of how these traditions are transformed when "institutionalised" within a modern, secular university and forced to "collaborate" with state power.

Finally, a body of scholarship on cultural production and institutional networks, such as S. M. Siddiqui's (2007) work on Radio Pakistan, provides a model for my analysis. This literature examines how state-media institutions (Radio, PTV) actively "produced" rather than merely "reflected" national culture. I find a significant gap in this field concerning the role of educational institutions and their "collaborative networks." This paper contributes to this field by proposing that the NAMS acted as a critical node in Pakistan's cultural production, linking the state's elite training ground (GCU) to its state-media apparatus, its folk-heritage projects, and, eventually, its corporate-media economy. This paper is, therefore, a history of those "harmonic networks" and the politics that shaped them.

The methodology of a historical case study, analysing the NAMS as a single, revealing institution. My approach is to write an "institutional history," which traces the society's evolution in response to its external political environment. To do this, I periodise the NAMS's history according to the major political eras of Pakistan. This structure allows me to analyse "change over time" and demonstrate how the society's function, repertoire, and, most importantly, its "collaborative networks" were contingent upon the prevailing state ideology. This study argues that the NAMS's "archival" function, as described in the source text, is in fact the result of this politically contingent history, not its a priori mission.

To reconstruct this history, the "Archiving Harmony" document not as a secondary analysis but as a primary source. It is a contemporary articulation of the NAMS's self-perception, and its very language—full of terms like "collaboration," "networking," "fusion," and "heritage"—is a historical artefact of the current neoliberal, globalised cultural era. The "contrapuntal" reading method, juxtaposing the NAMS's internal narrative (as presented in this file) against the secondary historical scholarship on Pakistan's political history. For example, when the source file mentions "fusion workshops, this suggesting something very different in 1975 (a Bhutto-era "folk-classical" fusion) versus 2005 (a "pop-rock" fusion for the corporate market).

This triangulation of sources—the institutional primary source, secondary political histories, and secondary ethnomusicological studies—allows me to deconstruct the NAMS's official narrative. It allows me to propose, for instance, that its "collaboration with other university clubs" (from the file) was not just a matter of campus life. In the Zia era, this "internal" collaboration was a defensive retreat from a hostile state, while in the 2000s, it became a "pre-professional" network to feed the new creative economy. This method, reveals the NAMS not as a passive archive, but as a

dynamic political actor that has masterfully used "collaboration" to ensure its survival.

The Foundational Network: Curating a "Moral" Elite (1947–1958)

Pakistan's cultural landscape at independence in 1947 was one of profound rupture. The Hindustani classical system, long patronised by Muslim and Hindu courts, was bifurcated. Many ustads (masters) who migrated to Pakistan found the system of elite patronage had vanished, leaving them without an economic base (Wade 2004, 78). Simultaneously, the powerful folk and Sufi traditions of the masses were viewed with suspicion by the new state's orthodox and reformist Islamic constituencies, who saw these ecstatic and shrine-based practices as "un-Islamic" (Kalra 2012, 55). The new nation was caught between a "classical" heritage now seen as "Indian" and a "folk" heritage seen as "heterodox."

It is in this precarious vacuum that the Nazir Ahmad Music Society was established, embedded within Government College, Lahore—the very incubator of the nation's new civil-military elite. The NAMS's first and most important "collaboration" was not with other musicians, but with the post-colonial state-building project itself. Its namesake, Nazir Ahmad, the 19th-century social reformer, signals this mission. As Gail Minault (1998, 24) notes, Ahmad's project was one of moral and social "uplift." The NAMS, was founded with a similar mission: to "uplift" music from its "decadent" associations (the courtesan, the "unruly" shrine) and re-brand it as a "respectable," "moral," and "intellectual" pursuit.

This "moral" mission was not abstract; it was a direct response to a deep-seated colonial-era anxiety. The late 19th and early 20th century saw the British-led "anti-nautch" movement, which, as Amrit Srinivasan (1985) argues, successfully re-framed the tawaif (the professional female performer and courtesan) as a "prostitute." This campaign, often supported by indigenous social reformers, effectively severed the link between female artistry and social respectability, decimating a key system of musical patronage and transmission. The NAMS was founded in the shadow of this rupture. Its "moral" network, by being situated in an all-male (at its inception) elite college, was an explicitly "safe," "intellectual," and masculine space designed to "rescue" music from its association with the "fallen" female performer.

The society's founding mission, therefore, was to create a "safe" space for music within the new Islamic republic. It did this by "collaborating" with the values of the new elite. It severed music from "mere" entertainment and linked it to philosophy, poetry, and morality. It established an "institutional" network within the university, linking music to the debating society and the literary club, framing it as part of a "serious" education. This foundational network was ideological. It allowed the NAMS to act as a filter, curating a canon of "respectable" music—refined ghazals, sanitised folk melodies, and "intellectual" classical forms—that was suitable for the new ruling class. This act of "moral collaboration" was its first and most important strategy for survival.

This "moral canon" bears closer inspection. It was defined as much by its exclusions as its inclusions. The "respectable" ghazal tradition, for instance, would have heavily favoured the "philosophical" (Ghalib), the "mystical" (Mir), and the "national" (Iqbal, Faiz). This canon would have actively

excluded the more "decadent" and sensual forms of the ghazal that were associated with the tawaif repertoire, such as the thumri or dadra which often celebrated earthly, romantic love with an explicit sensuality. The NAMS's "collaboration" with the literary society was thus a curatorial act: it textualised music, binding it to "high literature" and "moral philosophy," and stripping it of its "unruly" associations with the kotha (salon) and the body.

Collaboration for Modernisation: The NAMS and State-Media (1958–1969)

General Ayub Khan's 1958 coup inaugurated a "decade of development." This was a project of top-down, centralised modernisation. Ayub's regime was culturally interventionist, creating the great state-media institutions (PTV, Radio Pakistan) to project a single, unified, and "modern" Pakistani culture, one that would supersede "backward" regional and religious loyalties (Jalal 1990, 150). This new state project required a new kind of "collaboration," and the NAMS was perfectly positioned to become a key partner in this new network. The NAMS's "collaborators" in this era were not just other university clubs, but the powerful state-media apparatus itself.

The NAMS became a crucial node in the new cultural-production network, linking the nation's elite university with its national broadcaster. Radio Pakistan, Lahore, was at this time the single most important patron of classical musicians, effectively replacing the old princely courts (Siddiqui 2007, 88). The NAMS formed a symbiotic collaboration with it. The society provided a "feeder system" of educated, middle-class performers and, just as importantly, a trained audience that could appreciate the "high art" of classicism that the Ayub regime wished to promote. In return, Radio Pakistan and PTV provided a professional platform for the society's best students, and its ustads likely served as guest faculty and judges for NAMS competitions.

This "pedagogical collaboration" must be understood in practical terms. The ustads at Radio Pakistan were not just abstract partners; they were the de facto technical instructors for the NAMS. They would have been invited as "judges" for the society's internal competitions, effectively turning these events into auditions for the national broadcaster. A "winner" at a NAMS competition was not just celebrated on campus; they were "discovered," gaining access to the radio station's "B-list" of approved artists. This "collaboration" was, therefore, a formalisation of the "feeder system," a direct pipeline that moved "respectable" university-trained talent into the state's official cultural apparatus.

This collaboration with state media was also a nationalist project, defining Pakistani "high art" against the state's own promotion of Western culture. Ayub's regime, in its desire to appear "modern," also heavily patronised Western classical music and art, which was often performed for foreign dignitaries. The NAMS-Radio Pakistan network provided a crucial indigenous alternative. It allowed the state to "collaborate" with its own heritage, proving that "Pakistani" music (i.e., Hindustani classicism) could be just as "rational," "sophisticated," and "modern" as a Western symphony. The NAMS, in this context, was not just a music club; it was a partner in a nationalist cultural project to legitimise indigenous high art.

The "fusion" mentioned in the "Archiving Harmony" file, in this era, would have meant

a very specific, state-sanctioned fusion: the blending of regional folk tunes with Western-style orchestral arrangements, a common practice at Radio Pakistan. This "collaboration" served to "modernise" and "nationalise" folk music, stripping it of its regional specificity and presenting it as a "Pakistani" sound. The NAMS's network, therefore, was vertical and state-aligned. It collaborated upwards with the state-media apparatus, helping to produce and legitimise the rational, orderly, and "modern" national culture that the Ayub regime demanded. This alignment cemented the society's prestige and utility to the state.

This network was tested and proven during the 1965 war with India. This conflict saw an explosion of cultural production from the state-media network, designed to bolster national morale. As Virindra K. Seth (2006) notes, the war-time milli naghmay (national songs) produced by Radio Pakistan, featuring voices like Noor Jehan, became iconic. The NAMS, as a key partner in this network, would have been fully "mobilised." Its members would have "collaborated" by performing these new patriotic anthems on campus, and its associated poets and composers would have contributed to this "war effort." This "collaboration" for national defence further sanctified the NAMS's mission, inextricably linking its "moral" music to "patriotism."

The Populist Network: Collaboration with "The Folk" (1971–1977)

The 1971 war and the secession of East Pakistan was a catastrophic failure of Ayub's top-down, centralising cultural project. The rise of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto marked a complete ideological reversal. Bhutto built his "new Pakistan" not on elite modernism, but on a populist, "Third World" socialist platform. His cultural project rejected elite "high art" and instead turned to the "folk" culture of the masses as the fons et origo of the nation's "authentic" identity (Haqqani 2005, 115). This was the era of the Lok Virsa Institute (1974), which was founded to "preserve and promote" the folk heritage that the Ayub regime had dismissed as "backward."

This new state ideology demanded a new collaborative network, and the NAMS masterfully pivoted. The society's old network with the "high-classical" radio establishment was now politically suspect, seen as "elitist." The NAMS, to remain relevant, forged a new network. I propose it "collaborated" directly with the Bhuttoist folk-revival project. This is the historical moment when the society's repertoire (as described in the NAMS files) expanded dramatically to include the great Sufi poets—Bulleh Shah, Shah Hussain, Khawaja Ghulam Fareed—who were being championed by Lok Virsa as the "voice of the people."

This "collaboration" was a brilliant act of institutional adaptation. The NAMS used its "moral and philosophical foundation" to "elevate" this "unruly" folk material. It took the ecstatic, raw poetry of the shrines and, through new compositions (like those of Mr. Farani), set them in a "classical-folk" style, making them "respectable" for a university stage. The "fusion workshops" mentioned in the source file would, in this era, have been workshops "fusing" classical ragas with Punjabi kafis. The NAMS's new network was horizontal: it "collaborated" with the newly-validated folk tradition, positioning itself as the "intellectual" interpreter of the people's soul. It was no longer just training civil servants; it was, in line with Bhutto's populism, producing cultural "leaders" who were "in touch with the soil."

This "collaboration" with Lok Virsa was also a concrete, institutional one. Lok Virsa's researchers, who were fanning out across the country to "collect" folk traditions, would have "collaborated" with the NAMS as an urban "laboratory." Lok Virsa provided the "raw," "authentic" field recordings and performers, while the NAMS provided the "intellectual" framework and "modern" composers (like Mr. Farani) who could "arrange" this material for a sophisticated, national audience. This network was symbiotic: Lok Virsa gained academic and "elite" legitimacy for its folk-revival, while the NAMS gained access to a new, politically-sanctioned repertoire of "authentic" Pakistani culture.

This new folk-network was not just a domestic project; it had a vital international dimension. Bhutto's "Third World" populism included a new foreign policy of pan-Islamic leadership. The crowning moment of this was the 1974 Islamic Summit, held in Lahore. I propose that this event was a major catalyst for the NAMS's "folk" collaboration. The state required an "authentic" national culture to perform for the assembled heads of the Muslim world—a culture that was "Islamic" (via its Sufi roots) and "of the people" (via its folk melodies), yet distinct from "Indian" or "Western" models. As noted by Aqil Shah (2014), this event was a massive exercise in "cultural diplomacy." The NAMS and its partner, Lok Virsa, were part of the cultural-production network that provided this "performance," cementing the "classical-folk" fusion as Pakistan's new, "authentic" cultural brand.

Collaboration for Survival: The Internal Network (1977–1988)

The 11-year regime of General Zia-ul-Haq was an existential threat to all musical institutions in Pakistan. Zia's state-sponsored "Islamisation" project was deeply cultural, targeting music and the performing arts as symbols of "un-Islamic" decadence and "Indian" influence. PTV and Radio were purged of "profane" secular music, and the public cultural sphere was dominated by a state-enforced, austere piety (Malik 1997, 203). For an institution named the "Music Society," this was a moment of profound crisis. The NAMS survived by executing a strategic pivot in its collaborative network: it retreated inward.

When "collaboration" with the external state-media (now hostile) and external folk traditions (now suspect) became impossible, the NAMS activated its internal network—the "collaboration with other university clubs" mentioned in the "Archiving Harmony" file. This was a defensive crouch. The NAMS "collaborated" with the university's "safe" intellectual societies—the Debating Society, the literary circles (Bazm-e-Adab), and especially, the Iqbal Society. The Zia regime, as part of its own ideological project, was heavily promoting Allama Iqbal as the "poet-philosopher" of Pakistan and a "thinker of Islam." This was the NAMS's lifeline.

The society's repertoire was "purged" of romance and "fused" with "safe" genres. Its "collaborations" became purely ideological. It would hold joint events with the Iqbal Society, framing its music not as "music" but as the recitation of Iqbal's "philosophy." It would collaborate with religious societies to perform hamd, naat, and "national songs" (milli naghmay). The NAMS, I suggest, amplified its "pedagogical" function over its "performance" function. It was a "society" for "study," not a "club" for "entertainment." This inward-looking, ideological "collaboration" with the idea of Iqbal and the idea of "Pakistan" allowed the NAMS to use

the state's own icon as an ideological shield, keeping its institutional flame alive during the "barren years" (Ahmed 2011, 40).

The specifics of this "internal" network bear examination. The collaboration with the Bazm-e-Adab (Urdu literary society) would have provided a "safe" textual basis, shifting the focus from "music" to "poetry." The NAMS forged a new "collaboration" with the university's explicitly religious societies, such as the society for Qirat (Qur'anic recitation). The NAMS, with its trained vocalists, could provide "technical" support and performers for Naat and Hamd competitions, which were actively promoted by the Zia regime. This "collaboration" allowed the NAMS to "lend" its vocal talent to an undeniably "Islamic" purpose, demonstrating its piety and "utility" to the new moral order while simultaneously providing a "safe" outlet for its members to practice their craft, albeit in a highly constrained genre.

This "internal" network also, created a space for "coded" expression. While the public face of the NAMS was one of pious conformity, the "collaboration" with the literary society—especially in ghazal recitations—allowed for the expression of "safe" dissent. The ghazal form, as discussed by A. S. Ahmed (1992) in relation to Pakistani society, has always excelled at "saying without saying" (batlaan). By collaborating with the literary society to perform the ghazals of Faiz Ahmad Faiz (a poet with socialist credentials, but also an icon), the NAMS could "perform" dissent under the "safe" cover of "high literature." The "collaboration" was the alibi: this was not a "song" (dangerous) but a "poetry recitation" (safe).

Collaboration For The Market: The Neoliberal Network (1990s–2000s)

The return of democracy in 1988 and the subsequent liberalisation of the economy and media in the 1990s and 2000s created a new, complex cultural landscape. The threat to the NAMS was no longer state censorship, but irrelevance. The rise of a massive private, corporate-sponsored media (private TV channels, FM radio) and the explosion of a new pop-rock scene (e.g., Junoon) created a new cultural economy. This economy, famously epitomised by Coke Studio, was built on "fusing" Pakistan's "authentic" folk and classical traditions with a slick, modern, and commercial aesthetic (Ahmad 2018, 110)

This new era demanded a new kind of "collaboration," and I argue the NAMS adapted brilliantly. It re-branded itself as the "living archive"—the very source of the "authentic heritage" that the new creative economy craved. Its new "collaborative network" was with this "creative economy." The "Archiving Harmony" file is a perfect artefact of this new branding. It is full of language that appeals to this new market: "fusion workshops," "creative exchange," "masterclasses," "cultural exchange events." These are no longer just campus activities; they are "pre-professional" training for the new music industry.

The NAMS's "collaboration with other university clubs" also took on a new meaning in this era. It became a "horizontal network" for production. The NAMS (providing the "music") collaborates with the Dramatic Club (providing the "visuals") and the Debating Society (providing the "content") to stage large-scale, professional-quality productions. These events, as the file notes, "bridge the gap between academia, art, and community"—"community" here meaning

the professional arts community. The NAMS has become an "authenticity engine" for the Coke Studio generation, a "living archive" that "collaborates" with the market by providing both the "raw material" of heritage and the "creative" students trained to "fuse" it.

This new "neoliberal" collaboration was also facilitated by new technology. The NAMS's "archival" mission, as stated in the source file, became literal in this era through a new "collaboration" with digital media. The society began to "collaborate" with the university's IT department and, later, with social media platforms. It started to digitally record its performances, "archiving" them on YouTube and Facebook, thereby creating a marketable and accessible "archive." This "digital collaboration," as argued by scholars like M. T. Ahmed (2015) on Pakistan's new media, transformed the NAMS. Its "archive" was no longer just a repertoire; it was a brand, a discoverable online "source" of "authentic" Pakistani music that could be "consumed" globally, attracting a new generation of students and new "collaborators" from the corporate sector.

This "digital collaboration" also forged a new, and critically important, transnational network: a collaboration with the global Pakistani diaspora. As studied by K. H. Khan (2017), the diaspora in the US, UK, and Canada is a key consumer and "virtual patron" of "authentic" Pakistani culture. By "archiving" its performances on YouTube, the NAMS began a "collaboration" with this diaspora. These online videos, showcasing "respectable," "elite" university students performing "authentic" classical and folk music, became a source of cultural pride (and, perhaps, funding) for alumni and others abroad. This new network provided a global audience and a new source of cultural capital that was entirely independent of the domestic state-media or corporate-patronage systems.

The Politics of Collaboration

The NAMS's narrative, as presented in the "Archiving Harmony" file, frames collaboration as a neutral, positive force for "artistic growth," "unity," and "innovation." This study argues, however, that this analysis of the NAMS's history reveals that "collaboration" is never neutral. It is, in fact, a deep political act. For the NAMS, collaboration has been its primary institutional strategy for navigating the demands of state power. The choice of collaborator has always been determined by the prevailing state ideology.

In the 1960s, "collaboration" meant aligning with the state-media to serve a "modernising" agenda. In the 1970s, it meant aligning with the folk to serve a "populist" agenda. In the 1980s, it meant a defensive collaboration with the state's own icons (Iqbal) to survive an "Islamist" agenda. And in the 2000s, it means collaborating with the market to serve a "neoliberal" agenda. The NAMS did not just "archive harmony"; it performed harmony with the state. Its survival is a testament to its genius for "collaborating" with power, seamlessly blending its "moral foundation" with the political demands of the day.

This reveals the NAMS's "collaborative network" not as a simple web of artists, but as a historical map of Pakistan's shifting cultural politics. The "cultural memory" it archives is not a complete memory of Pakistani music, but a highly curated "memory of collaboration"—a record of the alliances it had to forge to continue its work. Its "partnerships," in this light, are its "patrons." By "archiving harmony," the NAMS

is, in fact, archiving its own remarkable political adaptability, demonstrating how to make art "respectable" by ensuring it always collaborates with the "right" people. This entire process is also, of course, a function of class. The NAMS operates within GCU, the Oxbridge of Pakistan, the training ground for the elite. Its "collaborations" are "respectable" because its members are "respectable"—the sons and daughters of the very civil-military-industrial elite whose ideological projects the society is "collaborating" with.

Conclusion

The Nazir Ahmad Music Society, while presenting itself as an "archive" of "collaboration," is in fact a profoundly historical and political institution. I have moved the analysis from one of archival science to one of institutional history. The NAMS's celebrated "collaborative networks" were not simply artistic choices but politically astute strategies for survival, legitimacy, and relevance, adopted in response to the changing ideological landscape of the Pakistani state. The society is a microcosm of Pakistan's entire post-colonial cultural project: the attempt to find a "respectable" and "moral" space for music within a modern Islamic republic.

I have traced the history of these "harmonic networks" through Pakistan's major political eras. The NAMS "collaborated" with the state-modernisation project under Ayub Khan, with the state-populism project under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and, most critically, survived the state-Islamisation project of Zia-ul-Haq by forging a new, "internal" and "ideological" collaboration with the state-sanctioned philosophy of Allama Iqbal. Finally, Its current form—a "living archive" collaborating with the "creative economy" and the "global diaspora"—is its latest adaptation to the neoliberal era. The NAMS's history, therefore, is one of continuous and masterful political navigation. It archived harmony by performing collaboration with the dominant political power of each successive age, ensuring its own survival and, in the process, helping to create the very "national culture" it claimed only to preserve.

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