Networking the Nomads: A Study of Tablīghī Jamāʿat among the
Borana of Northern Kenya

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Zusammenfassung

Die Tablīghī Jamāʿat (TJ) ist eine in den 1920er Jahren von Maulana Muhammad Ilyas in Britisch Indien gegründete transnationale islamische Laienbewegung. Sie ist seit den 1950er Jahren in Kenia aktiv und hat zu Beginn mit sunnitischen Muslimen asiatischer Abstammung Kontakt aufgenommen. Trotz ihrer relativ langen Geschichte in Kenia zählt die Tablīghī Jamāʿat zu einem weitgehend unerforschten religiösen Phänomen. Die Bewegung verhält sich in der Öffentlichkeit unauffällig. Ihre Aktivitäten zielen vielmehr auf eine Respiritualisierung des Alltagslebens des Individuums ab. Sie lehnt zeitgenössische Medien, wie Internet, Radio und Fernsehen als Mittel der Öffentlichkeitsarbeit ab. Vielmehr bevorzugt sie den direkten persönlichen Kontakt und zieht mit ihrer Botschaft von Tür zu Tür. Politische oder gesellschaftliche Diskussionen innerhalb ihrer Reihen werden nicht geduldet. Zudem vermeidet sie eine direkte Konfrontation mit dem religiösen Establishment. Durch ihre quietistische Vorgehensweise entging sie bislang weitgehend der Aufmerksamkeit der akademischen Forschung. Dennoch handelt es sich um eine der weltweit aktivsten muslimischen „Missionsbewegungen" mit einer enormen Präsenz gerade bei der breiten Basis der Gläubigen. Ihre Mitglieder sind bekannt für ihre hohe Mobilität und ihre jährlichen Zusammenkünfte, die enorme Teilnehmerzahlen aufweisen. Ihre Anhängerschaft in Kenia ist mannigfaltig. Die Bewegung vereint in sich Somalis, Suahilis, Boranas, Digos, Muslime südasiatischer Abstammung und sogar Tablīghīs aus Nachbarstaaten, die allesamt in regem Austausch stehen und ein aktives Netzwerk bilden. Dieses enggeknüpfte Netz an Beziehungen führte zu einer tragfähigen transnationalen Bewegung. Der Erfolg dieser Bewegung vor allem bei muslimischen Laien lässt sich durch überzeugende Rekrutierungsmaßnahmen erklären, die sowohl Herz als auch Verstand ansprechen. Die Bewegung ist nahezu weltweit aktiv. Das Leitthema dieser Dissertation ist die Frage nach den Auswirkungen internationaler und nationaler Grenzüberschreitungen einer derartigen Bewegung, deren Hauptanliegen es ist, innerhalb rasch wachsender und sich gerade islamisierender Gemeinschaften zu predigen, zu rekrutieren und zu wachsen.

Diese Studie zielt darauf ab, die Verortung der Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenia im Allgemeinen sowie in dessen nördlichem Landesteil im Besonderen zu beschreiben, zu dokumentieren und zu analysieren. Die Borana sind der Ausgangspunkt dieser Studie. Bei dieser ethnischen Gruppe handelt es sich um Nomaden, die zu beiden Seiten der Kenianisch-Äthiopischen

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Grenze leben. Des Weiteren leben Borana in Isiolo sowie in einigen informellen Siedlungen in und bei Nairobi. Aufgrund der enormen räumlichen Ausdehnung Nordkenias wurden zwei Gebiete zur genaueren Untersuchung ausgewählt. Einerseits Merti, eine vor allem von Waso Borana bewohnte Stadt im Bezirk von Isiolo, andererseits Moyale, eine kosmopolitische Stadt zu beiden Seiten der Grenze von Kenia und Äthiopien. Die Auswahl dieser Gebiete ermöglicht einen unterschiedlichen Verlauf der Ausbreitung der TJ sowie deren unterschiedlichen Strategien zu beobachten. Hinzu kommt die Tatsache, dass die TJ in diesem Gebiet eine Brückenfunktion hinsichtlich weiterer boranasprechender Gruppen ausüben, die entschlossen sind, bei lokalen Borana sowie bei den Borana Äthiopiens zu predigen. Ihre benachbarten ethnischen Gruppen sind in diesem Gebiet meistens Gabra, Burji, Garre und Sakuye. Im Nordosten Kenias wird ihre Sprache, das Borana, weitgehend von allen Bewohnern gesprochen.

Diese Studie zielt auf die Frage ab, was passiert, wenn religiöse Ideen Grenzen unterschiedlicher Art überschreiten und sich letztendlich in neuen, weit von ihren ursprünglichen Ausgangpunkten entfernten Gebieten festsetzen. Aufbauend auf dieser allgemeinen Leitfrage, wird die Entwicklung der TJ in Kenia im Allgemeinen sowie in Nordkenia im Speziellen untersucht. Hierbei findet die Mitgliederzunahme, die Etablierung und letztendlich die Konsolidierung dieser Bewegung besondere Beachtung. Es kommen die innovativen religiösen Praktiken der TJ, ihre pragmatischen Strategien zur Anwerbung von Mitgliedern und Betreuung Mitglieder sowie ihre dynamische Herangehensweise im Umgang mit der Gesamtgesellschaft zur Untersuchung. Weitere Untersuchungspunkte ist die von der TJ praktizierte „Glaubensbürokratie"; die Vorgehensweise der TJ in der Schaffung und der Nutzung von Raum sowie die Tragweite zwischenmenschlicher sowie inter-regionaler Netzwerke, die die lokale, regionale und internationale Mitgliederschaft miteinander in Solidarität und Zweck verbindet. Beachtung findet auch die Beziehung zwischen der TJ und bereits bestehender islamischer Traditionen im Untersuchungsgebiet, da die TJ ihre Position in einer bereits umkämpften religiösen Landschaft als Neuankömmling bestimmen muss. Hierbei hat die TJ um Anerkennung als eine gleichwertige authentische religiöse Bewegung auf Grundlagen der Hauptlehren des Glaubens zu ringen. Ein besonderes Anliegen dieser Studie sind die Mitglieder der TJ aus der Ethnie der Borana. Hier findet die Untersuchung auf zwei Ebenen statt: einerseits innerhalb ihres angestammten Siedlungsgebietes, andererseits auf gesamtstaatlicher Ebene. Somit beschäftigt sich diese Studie mit der Motivation und der

Art und Weise wie die Borana unter ihresgleichen predigen, den Hauptreiserichtungen sowie mit den konkreten Auswirkungen dieser Aktivitäten auf die religiöse und ethnische Identität.

Diese Studie geht von folgenden vorläufigen Annahmen aus.

1. Die Prediger der Tablīghī Jamāʿat etablierten sich innerhalb der boranasprechenden Ethnien zu einer einflussreichen Gruppe. Verantwortlich hierfür ist die erfolgreiche Neuanwerbung von Mitgliedern aus unterschiedlichen Schichten dieser Gemeinschaften. Diese Neubekehrten engagierten sich stark für die religiösen Ziele und Vorstellungen der Bewegung.

2. Um sich nachhaltig zu etablieren, hat diese Bewegung Strategien der Reterritorialisierung angewandt. Diese Strategien der Reterritorialisierung beinhaltete die Schaffung von „sprengelartigen" Einheiten, die die einzelnen Mitglieder im transnationalen Raum durch aufwändige Netzwerke miteinander verknüpft haben, sowie der Schaffung einer locker miteinander verbundenen, aber dennoch sehr effizienten „Glaubensbürokratie", die die alltäglichen Abläufe dieser transnational agierenden Bewegung überwacht.

3. Boranasprechende Mitglieder der TJ wurden häufig in die Regionen Kenias und Äthiopiens entsandt, in denen ebenfalls Borana gesprochen wird. Die in diesem linguistischen und ethnischen Zusammenhang erfolgte Propagierung des rechten Glaubens (daʿwa) verortete diese Bewegung nicht nur als eine an der Basis erfolgreiche „Missionierungsbewegung", sondern vermochte auch ethno-religiöse Identitäten wiederherzustellen. Hierbei handelt es sich um die bislang voneinander getrennt lebenden Gruppen der Orma vom Tana Fluss, die Waso Borana von Isiolo, die Borana von Marsabit und Isiolo, die in die informellen Siedlungen Nairobis migrierten boranasprechenden Arbeiter und Siedler sowie die Verwandten der Borana im südlichen Teil des Oromia Regional Staat von Äthiopien.

4. Boranasprechende Mitglieder der TJ nehmen an den regionalen, nationalen und internationalen Versammlungen regelmäßig teil. Ihre Reisetätigkeit umfasst sowohl lokale als auch darüber hinausgehende Ziele. Hierbei werden sie mit neuen und auch innovativen religiösen Ideen und Glaubenspraktiken konfrontiert. Durch diese Eindrücke werden sie dazu in die Lage versetzt, bestehende religiöse Traditionen zu hinterfragen. Dies kann dazu führen, dass sie sich der Macht und dem Einfluss etablierten religiöser Experten entziehen.

In dieser Studie wird ein interdisziplinärer Ansatz verwendet. Unterschiedliche, aber miteinander verwandte Disziplinen sollen eine holistische Perspektive auf den Untersuchungsgegenstand gewährleisten. Die Nützlichkeit von ethnographischen Methoden liegen in diesem Zusammenhang auf der Hand. Zur Sicherstellung der Interdisziplinarität wurden anthropologische, geographische, soziologische sowie religionswissenschaftliche Methoden angewendet. Dadurch soll ein holistisches Bild des Untersuchungsgegenstandes gezeichnet werden. Es wurden historische, analytische, ethnographische und komparative Forschungsansätze zur Anwendung gebracht. Methoden aus der Geschichtswissenschaft ermöglichten eine Rekonstruktion der Geschichte des Islam in Nordkenia sowie des Verlaufs der Ausbreitung der TJ in Kenia. Mit Hilfe der „dichten Beschreibung" sollen verschiedene Aspekte der transnational agierenden TJ verdeutlicht werden. In der Forschung zu religiösen Bewegungen in Kenia kam dieser vielfältige Ansatz bislang nicht zur Anwendung.

Zur Ermittlung von Schlüsselinformanten – Mitglieder und Nichtmitglieder der TJ – wurde die Technik der zielgerichteten Stichprobenbildung angewendet. Die Stichprobe ist in drei Kategorien unterteilt: TJ Mitglieder, Adepten der Ṣūfī bruderschaften sowie Anhänger der Salafīyyabewegung. Jeder einzelne dieser Cluster bestand aus Informanten, die aus den beiden Hauptuntersuchungsgebieten stammten sowie aus einem kleineren Gebiet: Moyale mit Merti, Isiolo (Waso Borana) und Nairobi. Es wurde darauf geachtet, dass sowohl Führungspersönlichkeiten als auch normale Anhänger dieser religiösen Traditionen Teil des Clusters waren. Informanten aus früheren Forschungsprojekten zählten zu den Erstkontakten und diese erleichterten Kontakte zu höher qualifizierten Informanten herzustellen. Hierbei wurde die Snowball-Sampling-Methode zum Einsatz gebracht. Bei den ausgewählten TJ Mitgliedern handelt es sich sowohl um altgediente Mitglieder als auch um Novizen. Bei der Stichprobenbildung wurde darauf geachtet, dass Befangenheit hinsichtlich der religiösen oder ethnischen Affiliation, dem Alter oder dem Bildungshintergrund ausgeschlossen wird. Den Interview- und Gesprächspartnern wurde die Forschungsabsicht erklärt und ihr Einverständnis eingeholt. Zur Wahrung der Identität der Informanten wurde Vertraulichkeit vereinbart und Anonymität vereinbart. Bei der Datenerhebung wurden Methoden aus der qualitativen Sozialforschung angewendet. Es wurden sowohl formelle als auch informelle Interviews geführt. Sie lassen sich in zwei Typen unterteilen: Einzelinterviews und Gruppendiskussionen. Informelle Interviews, sprich Unterhaltungen, werden als grundlegende Primärdaten erachtet. Zudem wurden insgesamt 46 formelle Interviews durchgeführt. Teilnehmende Beobachtung fungierte ebenfalls als eine der Forschungsmethoden. Hierbei

wurde strikt darauf geachtet, dass Teilnahme und Beobachtung den ethnographischen Forschungsgegenstand nicht kompromittieren. Die Natur der besuchten Veranstaltungen war vielfältig und reichte von nationalen Kongressen bis zu Exkursionen mit TJ Mitgliedern zu lokalen Moscheen. Diese unterschiedlichen Ereignisse ermöglichten nicht nur das Sammeln von frischen Daten, sondern boten auch die Gelegenheit, wiederholende Muster in der Glaubenspraxis sowie dessen Abläufe zu beobachten. Hinzu kommt der Umstand, diverse Innovationen und Varianten ähnlicher Ereignissen im regionalen Kontext und über einen gewissen Zeitraum zu registrieren. Die Feldforschung erstreckte sich über einen Gesamtzeitraum von neun Monaten und war gleichmäßig über die Forschungszeit verteilt. Das Sammeln von Daten, deren Interpretation und ihre gründliche Analyse war während der Feldforschung ein kontinuierlicher Prozess. Interviewtranskripte und weiteres übersetztes Material sowie Feldbeschreibungen und Zusammenfassungen bildeten für die Analyse einen Teil der Primärdaten. Mündliche Daten wurden transkribiert und aus unterschiedlichen Sprachen, wie Swahili und Borana in das Englische übersetzt. Der Großteil des Erfolgs der TJ Praktiken beruht auf Räumlichkeit. Somit genießen ethnographische Landkarten, Organisationsabläufe und Fallstudien innerhalb dieser Studie einen hohen Stellenwert. Quer durch die Interviews und Unterhaltungen laufende Themen wurden kategorisiert, kodiert, sortiert und typologisiert. Die Leitmotive mit vergleichenden Daten aus Sekundärquellen verflochten und schließlich zum Text der Dissertation verschmolzen.

Diese Dissertation, eine grundlegende Arbeit über die TJ in Ostafrika, ist ein zeitgemäßer Beitrag zur wachsenden Literatur über die aus Indian stammende transnationale islamische Bewegung, die gegenwärtig in Afrika einen starken Zulauf hat. Zudem handelt es sich hierbei um einen beträchtlichen Beitrag für interdisziplinäre Studien, die Mobilität, Transnationalisierung und religiöse Wiederbelebung in einer sich globalisierenden Welt thematisieren.

Abstract

Tablīghī Jamāʿat is a transnational lay Islamic movement started by Māwlanā Muhammad Ilyās in 1920s in the British India. It came to Kenya in mid 1950s and found transnational partnership with the Kenya's Sunni Muslims of Asian descent. Despite its early establishment the Tablīghī Jamāʿat remains one of the least researched religious phenomena in Kenya. The movement maintains a low profile instead focusing on re-spiritualisation of everyday life of individual Muslims. It shuns modern means of publicity such as internet, radio, and television opting for face-to-face and door-to-door preaching of its message. It also mutes discussions of a socio-political nature and avoids direct confrontation with mainstream religious leadership and all this has in a way contributed to its quietist presence that escapes academic inquiry. However, it is one of the most active Muslim 'missionary' organisations in the world with immense presence even at the grassroots level. The members are renowned for frequent mobility and large scale annual congregations. In Kenya, membership is fluid, diverse and multifaceted. It brings together the Somali, Swahili, Borana, Digo, Muslims of South Asian origin and even fellow Tablīghīs from neighbouring countries in engaged interaction and networks. These interactions have led to the resilience of this transnational movement. The success of the movement, especially among lay Muslims is buoyed by convincing recruitment drives that appeals to their hearts and minds. The question that forms the central theme of this thesis is what happens when such a movement crosses international and national borders in order to preach, recruit and grow among rapidly Islamising communities.

Taking the Borana as the starting point, this study attempts to describe, document and analyse the localisation of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya in general and the northern part of Kenya particular. The Borana are a nomadic community that straddles the Kenya-Ethiopia border. The members of the community are found also in Isiolo and in a number of informal settlements in and around Nairobi. Due to the vastness of northern Kenya, two field sites were chosen, namely Merti, a stronghold of Waso Borana in Isiolo County and Moyale, a cosmopolitan town on the border of Kenya and Ethiopia. This second field site avails a different Tablīghī growth trajectory and strategies as well as position the Tablīghīs in this area as a bridge for other Borana speaking adherents opting to preach among the local Borana and the Borana in Ethiopia. In most of these areas, Gabra, Burji, Garre and Sakuye are their neighbours. Their language, Borana, is largely spoken by most residents in this upper eastern region of Kenya.

In this study we ask the question what happens when religious ideas travel across different forms of boundaries to establish itself in new grounds far away from its point of origin. Based on this general guiding question, we shall explore the growth, establishment and consolidation of Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya in general and northern Kenya in particular. We shall examine the Tablīghī innovative religious practices, pragmatic strategies for membership increase and maintenance, dynamic approaches to deal with the larger society, working faith bureaucracy, politics of space use and place making and engaged interpersonal and inter-regional networks that link local, zonally, national and international adherents in a bond of solidarity and purpose. We shall investigate the relations between the Tablīghīs and existing Islamic traditions as the new group navigate an already competitive religious landscape and seek recognition as an equally authentic religious movement based on the core teachings of the faith. We shall particularly concern ourselves with how the Borana Tablīghīs fit within their own region in the north and also within the national movement. Hence we explore how they preach among their own kin, what motivates them, where they mainly travel to and the implication of their efforts on religious and ethnic identities.

This study is based on a few tentative assumptions. One, Tablīghī Jamāʿat is becoming a well-established preaching group among the Borana speaking communities, this has been facilitated by successful recruitment of members from various segments of the communities and the emergence of these converts as committed promoters of the movement's religious goods and goal. Two, to effectively establish itself, the movement has relied on strategies of re-territorialisation that involves creation of 'parish-like' units that link individuals through an intricate web of networks across the transnational space and the establishment of a loose but highly effective 'faith bureaucracy', that oversees the day to day running of the transnational movement. Three, Borana speaking Tablīghīs are often sent to Borana speaking regions in Kenya and Ethiopia. This contextualized *daʿwa* not only localized the movement as successful grassroots missionary outfit but also re-builds ethno-religious identities between the hitherto separated Orma of Tana River, the Waso Borana of Isiolo, Borana of Marsabit and Isiolo, migrant Borana speaking workers and dwellers in informal settlement in Nairobi and their kin in southern part of Oromia Regional State in Ethiopia. Four, Borana speaking Tablīghīs attend regular gatherings in the regions, at national and international levels and travel to several local and translocal destinations, bringing with them new and innovative religious practices and ideas, thus not only contesting with pre-existing religious traditions but

attempting to wrestle from the religious specialists influence and power over the religious behaviour of the lay Muslims.

We employed interdisciplinary approach that incorporated diverse but related disciplines to give the subject of study a holistic perspective. Ethnography proved to be very useful in this endeavour. This study is interdisciplinary in nature, as it has incorporates methodologies from disciplines such as anthropology, geography, sociology and religious studies. The basic approaches used in the research were historical, analytical, ethnographic and comparative. Historical approach was used to trace the history of Islam in the northern part of the country and also to reconstruct the trajectories of growth of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in the country. Ethnographic approach was particularly insightful as the study had to rely on thick description of various facets of the transnational movement, an academic task never undertaken in Kenya before. The approach strengthened materials collected through other approaches.

Purposive sampling technique was used to identify the key Tablīghī and non-Tablīghī informants. The sample population was categorised into three clusters namely, Tablīghīs, *Ṣūfī*s and *Salafī*s. Each of the clusters was composed of informants from two main sites and a minor field zone: Moyale; Merti and Isiolo (Waso Borana) and Nairobi. In each of the clusters care was taken to include leaders as well as ordinary followers of the religious traditions. Informants from former research projects were among the initial contacts and they facilitated inclusion of more qualified informants through snow-balling technique. Tablīghīs chosen included both regulars and novice members. Care was taken so that the sample group was not affected by sectarian, ethnic, age or educational bias. Seeking informed consent was a priority during the field research. Anonymity and confidentiality was maintained so as to protect the identities of informants. Qualitative methods of data collection were utilised. Interviews, formal and informal, were conducted. The interviews conducted were categorised into two types: individual and group discussions. Informal interviews/conversations were an especially crucial source of primary data. In total 46 formal interviews were conducted. Participant observations were carried out but care was taken so that participation and observation did not compromise the ethnographic subject. Events attended were diverse ranging from national conventions, travel with the Tablīghīs to local mosque Tablīghī outings. These varied events not only allowed for fresh data collection, but also provided the opportunity to observe repetitive patterns in practices and schedules as well as diverse innovations and variations of similar events between regions and across time. The field visits were spaced evenly over the

entire study period and totalled about 9 months. Data collection, interpretation and in-depth analysis were a continuous process throughout the field research. Transcription of interviews and other translated materials and field description and summaries provided some of the primary data for analysis. Oral data was transcribed and translated from various languages such as from Swahili and Borana into English. Most of the Tablīghī practices rely on spatiality for its success. Hence, within this study, ethnographic maps, organisational charts and case studies have been given high priority. Themes that run through the interviews and conversations were categorised, coded, sorted and typologies that emerged were merged with comparative data from secondary sources and infuse within the body of the thesis.

The thesis, a seminal one on the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Eastern Africa, is a timely contribution to the growing literature on the Indian-borne transnational Islamic movement currently on the rise in Africa and it is a notable addition to interdisciplinary studies that focus on the theme of mobility, transnationalisation and religious revivalism in a globalising world.

Dedication

In loving memory of my late father
Abdi Wario Huqana

Acknowledgement

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Glossary of terms

Abbreviations of languages: Ar. is Arabic, Bor. Means Borana, Sw. is for Swahili and Ur. is Urdu. Loans words from Arabic are found in Borana, Swahili and Urdu languages.

ḥikma (Ar.) - wisdom, Tablīghī Jamāʿat expects individuals and preaching group to make decisions based on moderation, consensus and wisdom.

aada sera Borana (Bor.) - Borana customary law.

Abba Gada (Bor.) - the father of Gada, he reigns as a leader of the pan-Borana socio-political system for a period of 8 years.

adab (Ar.) - etiquette, good behaviour.

adab al-masjid (Ar.) - refers to the etiquette of mosque, it includes sets of behaviour an individual believer is encouraged to engage in immediately upon entry to such sacred spaces, it also includes those actions that are to be done and those to be avoided, it guard the sanctity of mosque as space in which the divine is to be respected and adored.

adab al-naum (Ar.) - etiquette of sleeping.

adab al-ṭaᶜām (Ar.) - etiquette of eating, table manners.

adabiyāt (Ar.) - those teachings that deal with values, habits and socialization.

adhkār al-masā' (Ar.) - spiritual formulae to be repeated recited in the evening/night time.

adhkār al-sabāḥ (Ar.) - spiritual formulae to be repeated recited in the morning time.

Adhkār-plural of *dhikr*.

afaan Borana (Bor.) – the Borana language.

ahl al-shūra (Ar.) - members of a consultative committee of a specific regional or territorial unit.

ahl al-sunna wa`l-jamā' (Ar.) - the community of followers of the traditions, a term of self-description used by mainly mainstream religious scholars in Kenya to legitimate their religious practices as both authentic and representational of pristine Islam.

aḥwāl (Ar.) – plural of *ḥāl* situation or condition, in the Tablīghī usage it refers to the oral or written reports about the progress of a preaching excursion, the performance of a regional, local or national Tablīghī unit, see also *karguzari*.

akabir (Ur.) - elders, in the case of Tablīghīs, it refers to the senior members of the movement who make crucial decisions about the progress and plans of the movement.

akhīra munājāt (Ar.) - a special supplication offered during the last day of a Tablīghī gathering which attracts hundreds of adherents, often prominent Tablighi leaders lead the prayer.

aʿmāl al-ijtimāᶜ (Ar.) -refers to all those religious practices that can only be carried out in a congregation and that require cooperation of others as a team, it includes the obligatory prayers, visits to general public, *taʿlīm* sessions, *khurūj fī sabīlillāh*, *ijtimāʿ*, *jor* and *ḥajj*.

aʿmāl al-ifrādī (Ar.) - refers to all those religious practices that can only be carried out on an individual basis and require the faithful commitment and sincerity of an individual believer, it includes engaging in *dhikr*, supplications, supererogatory prayers, recitation of Qur'ān.

amal shanaan (Bor.) - the five characteristics that Tablīghīs aspire to establish in every mosque, it is often communal in nature and facilitates the entrenchment of Tablīghī activities in a mosque and enhances the networking of Tablīghīs within an area

amali tano (Sw.) - the five characteristics that Tablīghīs aspire to establish in every mosque. Also called *amal shannan*. See *panch amaal*.

amīr (Ar.) - leader of a temporary preaching team, head of territorial unit such as *ḥalqa*.

amr bi'l-ma^{c}arūf (Ar.) - the Qur'ānic command that Muslims enjoin good deeds and forbid others to carry out evil or sinful deeds, it is an injunction cited by most lay preachers for their involvement in preaching activities.

anbiyā (Ar.) - *sing. nabī,* prophets.

^{c}*aqīda* (Ar.) – the main principles of faith, doctrine.

arga dageti (Bor.) - oral history of the Borana, often it contains past historical events as well as future prophesies by Borana prophets and seers and passed from one generation to another through narratives and poetry.

^{c}*aṣr* (Ar.) - obligatory late afternoon prayer.

^{c}*awra* (Ar.) - something that must be concealed, specific parts of male and female bodies which have to be covered for decency, at times it includes the voice of a female in the public sphere.

balāgha (Ar.) - to relay, to pass a message on to others.

bayān (Ar.) - motivational talks given by Tablīghī speakers to the general mosque audience, it often extols diligence in religious obligations and the virtues of those willing to volunteer of their own accord for preaching.

bayān fajrī- a kind of motivational talk given after the dawn obligatory prayers.

bayān maghrib (Ar.) - a kind of motivational talk given after the early evening obligatory prayer.

bidʿa (Ar.) – unlawful religious innovations, it refers to religious practices that were not sanctioned by the Prophet or his companions as authentic, and hence a later addition to the practices of every day religious life.

biriani (Sw.) – a spicy hot rice and meat dish popular among Asians and coastal communities of East Africa.

borantiti (Bor.) - the state of being a Borana, it also denotes the willing to be part of a community that observes *Nagaa Borana* (Peace of Borana) and ready to cooperate and participate in all matters of communal interest.

Buibui (Sw.) - a black female dress that covers the whole body.

ʾāyat al-kursī (Ar.) - a famous verse of the Qur'ān, 2: 255, widely memorized and esteemed for its description of Allah's immense power over the universe.

chapati (Sw.)- an Indian flat bread made flour, popular in East Africa.

chibra (Bor.) - tradition Borana hair style for married women.

chilla (Ur.) - it refers to forty days preaching tour.

da'wat wa Tablīgh (Ar.) - calling others to the faith, propagation.

da^{c}wat al-nās lilallāh (Ar.) - Tablīghī term referring to the call of Muslims to the path of God, it also means undertaking preaching work so as to reach out to ordinary Muslims to remind them to be steadfast in religious observances, one of the 20 principles to be done in abundance.

dāʿī (Ar.) – a caller to faith, a preacher, a Tablīghī activist

dalīl (Ar.) - a guide, in Tablīghī circles, it refers to a local person, whether he is a Tablīghī or non-Tablīghī, who acts as a guide for a preaching team when they undertake a brief excursion to meet general public in the area in the vicinity of mosque or town, this brief visit is called *jaula* and aims to mobilize the locals to join the visiting team for religious instructions.

daqapsisa (Bor.) - to convey.

da'wa (Ar.) - invitation or call to faith, propagate message of Islam to both to Muslims and non-Muslims.

deema (Bor.) - to go out, for instance for preaching tour.

dhambi (Sw.) - sin, transgression against God and man.

dhikr (Ar.) – remembrance or mention, invocation of Allah by repetition of His names or particular formulae.

dīn wa dunya(Ar.) - sacred and mundane, sacred and profane, the religious and the worldly.

dures (Bor.) - a wealthy person.

durūd sharīf (Ar.) - *dhikr* or supplication that praises the Prophet .

eeb (Bor.) - blessings, supplications.

Eel (Bor.) - a well where pastoralists access water for themselves and their animals.

fā'ida (Ar.) - benefit, it refers to spiritual benefit, rewards accruable from the performance of a religious practice.

faiṣala (Ar.) - decider, in most cases, it is a substitute name for the *amīr,* he makes the final decision on behalf of the members who are under his responsibility; he may be a leader of a preaching team or a residential Tablīghī unit.

fajr (Ar.) -obligatory dawn prayer .

faḍā'il (Ar.) plural of *faḍīla*-Virtues of a religious practice, in Urdu *fazā'il*.

Fazā'il Aʿmāl (Ur.) – Virtues of Religious Practices, a core book of the movement

Fazā'il-i Dhikr (Ur.) -.Virtues of Remembrance of Allah, a chapter of *Fazā'il Aʿmāl*.

Fazā'il-i Qur'ān (Ur.) - Virtues of the Qur'ān, a chapter of *Fazā'il Aʿmāl*.

Fazā'il-i Ramazān (Ur.) - Virtues of Fasting, a chapter of *Fazā'il Aʿmāl*.

Fazā'il-i Tabligh (Ur.) - Virtues of Tabligh, a chapter of *Fazā'il Aʿmāl*.

Fazā'i'l-i Namaz (Ur.) - Virtues of the prayers, a chapter of *Fazā'il Aʿmāl*.

fikr (Ar.) – thought, idea, deliberations on some form of religious actions to bolster the spirit of religious awakening among the Muslims.

fikr al-dīn (Ar.) - deliberations for the faith, in Tablīghī circles it refers to consultative meetings on the state of the affairs of *daʿwa* and how to remedy lax religious observance. Also called *fikr al- jamāʿ*.

fiqh (Ar.) - Islamic jurisprudence.

Gada (Bor.) - refers to the reign of an *Abba-Gada*, *Gada* also refers to the indigenous socio-political system of that administers over Borana.

gadamojji - the last of the eight stages of the Borana generational set,

gusht/gasht (Ur.) - a brief excursion into the mosque neighbourhood by members of visiting Tablīghī team or local Tablīghīs often guided by a local person, also see *jaula*.

ḥadīth (Ar.) - corpus of transmitted saying, deeds and actions approved by Prophet Muhammad, such knowledge forms the foundation of doctrinal and theological arguments and guide the everyday practices of Muslims.

ḥāfiẓ (Ar.) - a person who has memorized the Qur'ān by heart.

ḥajj (Ar.) - annual pilgrimage to the Kaʿba in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, it is a religious ritual that Muslims are expected to fulfil at least once in a lifetime.

ḥalqa (Ur.) - a larger territorial division of Tablīghī Jamāʿat, be it a country or a sub-section of a country.

ḥalqa shūra (Ur./Ar.) - a consultative forum bringing together Tablīghīs belonging to a territorial unit of *ḥalqa*, often far-flung areas send representatives.

ḥidāya (Ar.) - a type of motivational talk given to members of a preaching team before departure for a tour and after their conclusion of the preaching tour, it helps prepare them for the task ahead.

ḥijāb (Ar.) - female dress that covers most of the body, revealing only the face and hands.

ḥikayat-i ṣaḥāba (Ur.) - the stories of the companions of the Prophet, one of the popular chapters of *Fazā'il Aʿmāl*.

ḥirāsa (Ar.) - a team or groups of individuals in charge of security at Tablīghī event or while on preaching tour.

ᶜibāda maᶜa dhikr (Ar.) - to do sincere worship in addition to engaging in constant remembrance to God through recommended litanies, one of the 20 principles.

iᶜlān (Ar.) - announcement, oral public advertisement of an upcoming event or activitiy, to give information.

ijtimāʿ (Ar.) - Tablīghī gatherings held periodically in different parts of the country, at times the gatherings are attended by hundreds of adherents from within a country and from neighbouring countries. It lasts from three to four days.

ikhlās al-niyya (Ar.) - sincerity of intention, one of the principles of *sitta siffat*

ikhtilāf al-ʿulamā' (Ar.) - arguments with the religious scholars, it is one of the 20 principles that forbids members on missionary tours, in order to avert costly debates on doctrinal and sectarian discourses, one is expected to stick to teaching the basics of the faith and leave complicated jurisprudential matters to religious specialists.

Ikrām al-Muslim (Ar.) - honour and respect to Muslims, one of the key *sitta siffat* principles.

ᶜilm (Ar.) - religious knowledge of Islam, corpus of spiritual knowledge.

ᶜilm wa dhikr (Ar.) - religious knowledge and remembrance of Allah, one of the principles of *sitta siffat*.

imām (Ar.) - a person who leads a group of Muslims in a congregational prayer.

imama/surre (Bor.) - a male head scarf.

imān (Ar.) – faith.

imān yaqīn (Ar.) - sincere belief, a Tablīghī term frequently used to refer to the state of pious adherence to religious practices and beliefs.

ᶜishā' (Ar.) - obligatory evening prayer.

ishrāf (Ur.) - to admire other peoples' items while on preaching tours, one of the actions one must avoid, one of the 20 principles.

isrāf (Ar.) – plural of *saraf*, - refers to excesses, extravagance is one of those actions to be avoided while on preaching tours, teams on tour are at all times encouraged to avoid wastage, one of the 20 principles.

istighfār (Ar.) - a supplication for forgiveness of one's sinful deeds.

istiqbāl (Ar.) - the team in charge of the reception of guests and visiting *jamāʿat*s at Tablīghī gatherings, they guide the attendants into Tablīghī sessions going on the mosques. The team also helps in tracing lost and found items at such gatherings.

jahannam (Ar.) - hell, the eternal inferno where sinful people are believed to punished in the hereafter.

jāhilīya (Ar.) - period of ignorance, refers to the period that preceded the advent of Islam in Arabia, where the society was said to be characterized by social injustice, unbridled immorality and lack of religious enlightenment. Sometimes contemporary Muslim preachers compare the current permissiveness and lax religious observance with the pre-Islamic Arabia and warn the adherents to change their ways.

jallab (Bor.) - a Borana clan councillor.

jamāʿat ta'aṣīl (Ar.) - a mobile missionary team sent within an area to advertise an upcoming Tablīghī event

jamāʿa (Ar.) – Tablīghī Jamāʿt (Ur.), a *jamāʿat* (non-capitalized and italicized) refers to a group of Tablīghīs on preaching tour, Tablīghīs from one territorial unit or linguistic zone.

janna (Ar.) - paradise, heaven.

jaula (Ar.) - a temporary excursion into a Muslim community by a group of four to eight Tablīghīs in order to call local Muslims to attend ongoing religious talks and sermons offered by local Tablīghīs or by a visiting foreign team, it is held often in late afternoon or early evening.

jaula itiqādī - a brief excursion made by Tablīghīs from one mosque to the local community of a neighbouring mosque, in order to mobilize them to attend an on-going Tablīghī session.

jaula maqāmī (Ar.) - a brief excursion to mobilize local Muslims in the area surrounding one mosque to attend an on-going Tablīghī session, this kind of *jaula* is carried out by mosque-based *jamāʿat*.

jor (Ur.) - a mini-*ijtimāʾ,* a congregational gathering held by Tablīghīs in one or two sub-
　　ḥalqas, often lasting three to four days.

judud (Ar.) - a novice, an adept, a new follower of Tablīghī Jamāʿat.

juhd (Ar.) - effort, in Tablīghī circles it refers to all those concerted practices an individual or
　　a group of Tablīghīs make in order to revival the faith within their own lives and that
　　of others.

juhd qabla juhd (Ar.) - preparatory activities undertaken by a group of Tablīghī volunteers
　　before events such as *ijtimāʿ* gatherings.

juhūd anbiyāʾ (Ar.) - the efforts made by the prophets in the path of faith, it often refers to the
　　duty of calling others back to faith as done by earlier prophets

juhūd ṣaḥāba (Ar.) - the efforts of the companions of the Prophet, it reflects on *daʿwa* as
　　carried out by the companions of the Prophet.

juhūd ummat al-rasūl (Ar.) - concerns the *daʿwa* efforts to be made by the followers of the
　　Prophet in reminding others of the faith.

Kailula (Ur.) - afternoon siesta, it is the custom for Tablīghī preaching teams to rest between
　　2.00-3.30 pm.

kalām al-dunyā (Ar.) - worldly talk, one is forbidden to engage in worldly talk as it takes an
　　individual away from the goal of the preaching outing, it is one of the 20 principles.

kalām julūs (Ar.) - a practice of giving a 'seated' lecture in the mosque while some members
　　of either a visiting team or local Tablīghīs are simultaneously making a brief excursion
　　into the local Muslim community (*jaula*).

kalima ṭayyiba (Ar.) - the declaration of faith: There is no god but Allah.

kanzu (Sw.) - a male Muslim robe, *jallābīya.*

Karguzari - see *aḥwāl*, refers to oral and written reports from preaching excursions by the lay
　　preachers of Tablīghī Jamāʿat.

khātam al-anbiyāʾ (Ar.) - the seal of prophethood, it also reflects on *daʿwa* as carried out by
　　the last Prophet of God.

khawāṣṣ (Ar.) – plural of *khāṣṣa* upper class, wealthy merchant or business man, a wealthy
　　individual.

khidma (Ar.) - service, refers to a service rendered by a Tablīghī for the sake of God, it
　　includes cooking and all the associated duties such as shopping and serving members
　　of one's preaching team or congregants at Tablīghī gatherings.

khurūj (Ar.) - to go out, it refers to going out for preaching tour.

khurūj fī sabīlillāh (Ar.) - a commonly used term to refer to Tablīghī *daʿwa* tours, individuals
　　are mobilized to volunteer for specific numbers of days to engage in lay preaching at
　　their own expense and away from their home.

khurūj shahrī (Ar.) - a recommended monthly three day excursion, that members of Tablīghī
　　Jamāʿat aspire to organize from among themselves and other mosque attendants.

khuṭba (Ar.) - a public talk, sermon, especially that which is offered on Fridays from the
　　pulpit.

kikoi (Sw.) - a cloth worn around the waist, loin-cloth.

kitāb al-ẓuhr (Ar.) – Tablīghī practice of reading one or two *ḥadīth*s from recommended texts
　　to mosque congregants after midday prayers.

kofia (Sw.) - embroidered skull-cap, often worn by Muslims.

kulm, waldena (Bor.) -congregation, gathering.

kundi (Sw.)- a preaching team, literally: group.

kurta pyjama (Ur.) - a typical South Asian short male robe with matching loose-trousers, it is
　　often worn by Tablīghīs in Kenya.

laff hori (Bor.) - the land for animals, pasture range land ideal for cattle camps.

madrasa (Ar.) - Islamic religious school.

maghrib (Ar.) - obligatory early evening prayer, literally: west.

maḥabbat al-jamāʿ (Ar.) - love of the society/group, for the good of the community

majma-jor (Ur.) - two day consultative forum for local, regional and national Tablīghī leadership, often held in the central national mosque of the movement.

maqbūl (Ar.) - acceptance, to be accepted by God, an appeal to have an answered prayer.

maqṣad (Ar.) - objective, aims or goal of a Tablīghī sanctioned religious practice.

markaz (Ar.) - a centre, a Tablīghī affiliated central mosque in an area.

masā'il (Ar.) - plural of *mas'ala*, refers to all those matters that deal with doctrinal or jurisprudential rationale for engagement or avoidance of engaging in actions, those matters dealing with *masā'il* are some of the issues avoided by members of the lay movement as it requires specialized knowledge and are often contested.

mashwara (Ar.) - deliberation, consultative meeting of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat members, also called *shūra*.

masjid (Ar.) - mosque.

masturat jamāʿat (Ur.) – a special spousal preaching team, composed of married couples and largely geared to make the female Tablīghīs partake in Tablīghī *daʿwa* tours

mata buffacha (Bor.) – the ritual graduation ceremony when the elders enter the last of the cyclic eight stages of the *Gada* generational set, after this, the elders retire and assume the role of ritual specialists.

minbar (Ar.) - a pulpit from where an *imām* or preacher delivers sermon.

miraa (*Carta edulis)* (Sw.) - a leafy stimulant, chewed for mild intoxication, it is commonly grown in Meru region in Kenya, also in Ethiopia and Yemen, it is popular drug among Muslim communities at the Coast of Kenya and pastoralist communities of northern Kenya, also called *khat*.

mithan (Ur.) - compound, in Tablīghī terminology, it refers to the compound of a mosque or *markaz* where *ijtimāʿ* takes place and needs preparations.

mudhākara (Ar.) - study, conversations, learning, memorization. In Tablīghī usage it refers to memorization or learning session in which certain common Tablīghī teachings are often taught, study or learn.

maḥram (Ar.) - a person to whom a person is by the criteria of Muslim person not marriageable to.

mu'min (Ar.) - a believer.

Muntakhab Aḥādith (Ar.) - a popular collection of *ḥadīth*s on the six virtues written by Muhammad Yusuf Kandhalawi.

Musalmano-ki-Mawjoodah-pasti-ka-Waahid-Ilaaj (Ur.) - Muslim Degeneration and Its Only Remedy, an additional chapter of *Fazā'il Aʿmāl* written by Ihtisham al-Hasan Kandhlawi.

mutakallim (Ar.) -.the main spokesman who converses on the objectives of *jaula* to local Muslims, as a Tablīghī team conducts the brief excursion, he often instruct locals on the aims of Muslim life, and urge them to accompany the group back to mosque for religious instruction.

nagaa borana (Bor.) - the Peace of Borana, a traditional custom that ensure that relatively cordial relations exist with the community, those who contravene it are often sanctioned, it is for the common good of all.

nār (Ar.) – fire, hell, see *jahannam*.

naum (Ar.) - sleep, one of the 20 principles of Tablīghī *daʿwa*, one should reduce sleep, setting more time aside for religious actions instead.

niqāb (Ar.) - a female face covering, which reveals only the eyes, used in combination with other body and head covering, especially by female relatives of devout Muslims, nicknamed: Ninja-style.

niyya (Ar.) - intention, before any religious action, a Tablīghī is expected to do it with clear and sincere intention and not out of pride or need to demonstrate their piety.

nuṣra (Ar.) - assistance given to a visiting preaching team by local Tablīghīs, a *qarya shūra* can also dispatch a follow up and motivational team to offer assistance to their local Tablīghīs on preaching tour of duty.

olla (Bor.) – a village, an outlying settlement, a town quarter, a homestead.

paidal jamā'at (Ur.) - a special Tablīghī preaching team that sets to carry out a preaching tour on foot instead of using other means of transport.

panch amāl (Ur.) - the five characteristics that Tablīghīs aspire to establish in every mosque, it is often communal in nature and facilitates the entrenchment of Tablīghī activities in a mosque and enhance networking of Tablīghīs within an area.

pilau (Sw.) - spicy rice and meat dish, popular in East Africa.

Qādiriyya (Ar.) – Ṣūfī Brotherhood founded by Sheikh ᶜAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī of Baghdad in the 12th Century, the most widespread *ṭarīqa* in the world.

qallu (Bor.) - a priest-king, the chief indigenous Borana religion specialists, there are three *qallu*s in the Borana religio-political system of *gada*.

qalole (Bor.) - religious scholars, specialists, madrasa teachers, learned regular mosque attendants, religious preachers, and prayer leaders.

qalole Tabliqa (Bor.) - the sheikhs/leaders/members of the movement.

qarya (Ar.) - a village, an area, a spatial zone that brings together a number of mosque-based Tablīghī groups. A number of *Qarya*s constitute sub-*ḥalqa*.

qarya shūra (Ar.) - an area Tablīghī consultative council.

qoosa (Bor.) - joking relationship, between specific Borana clans.

qudamā' (Ur., Ar.) - senior Tablīghī.

qunūt (Ar.) - lengthy supplication, occasionally embedded in the last *rakāt* of obligatory prayers.

raaga (Bor.)- Borana prophet, seer

rakᶜa (Ar.) - a complete cycle of Muslim prayer, that involves standing, bowing, prostrating so the forehead touches the ground; a prayer may have one to four *rakaᶜāt*.

Ramaḍān (Ar.) - the 9th month of *Hijri* calendar within which Muslims are expected to abstain from food and drink from dawn to dusk, as part of the practice of fasting.

ra'y (Ar.) - opinion, suggestion, an idea.

Riyāḍ-al-ṣāliḥīn (Ar.) - 'The Garden of the Righteous' a popular *ḥadīth* collection compiled by Yahiya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi.

sabbo gonna (Bor.) - the two moieties of the Borana.

ṣabr wa-taḥammul (Ar.) – patience and endurance

ṣadaqa (Ar.) - voluntary alms given by Muslims to the needy.

al-ṣaḥīḥ al-sitta (Ar.) - the six canonical *ḥadīth* collections.

salafī (Ar.) - followers of strict and puritan traditions of Islam who seek to emulate the practices of the pious predecessors, a return to pristine Islam.

ṣalāt (Ar.) - prayers.

ṣalāt al-layl and *Witr* (Ar.) - highly recommended nightly supererogatory prayers; it is often performed by devout Muslim individuals late into the night.

sanawī (Ar.) – literally: annual, a pledge that a regular Tablīghī makes, in order to volunteer for specific number of days on yearly basis, fellow Tablīghīs remind each other of upcoming promises of this nature

shu'ba (Ar.) – department, it refers to five different divisions during *ijtimā'*, it includes services like cooking, recruitment, reception, translation and preaching.

shu'ba ikhtilāl (Ar.) - the department of *ijtimā'* concerned with directing adherents back to the mosque to listen to a lecture, especially away from other competing attractions, such as food and clothes stalls often erected outside the venue by petty traders.

shu'ba khidma - the department of services, such as cooking and other hospitality related services at *ijtimā'*.

shūra (Ar.) - consultative forum, council.

al-shūra al-'ālamī (Ar.) - the highest consultative forum of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, it is held annually in the Indian centre in Nizamuddin Basti in Delhi.

shūra fi'l-bayt (Ar.) - refers to Tablīghī consultative deliberations at home, often this kind of *shūra* involves husbands and wives discussing matters of importance, it may include religious obligations as well as mundane plans.

shūrat al-usbū' (Ar.) - weekly consultative meetings, conducted by members of a mosque-based Tablīghī group on matters arising in the movement.

sifa jahan (Bor.) - the six virtues, also called *amali tano, sitta siffat*.

siffa sitta (Ur.) - the six virtues of Tablīghī Jamāʿat, these form the core teaching of the movement. They are *shahāda, ṣalāt, ʿilm wa dhikr, ikrām al-muslimīn, ikhlāṣ al-niyya*, and *tafrīq al- waqt*. It is also referred to as *sitta siffat* (Arabic), *sifa sita* (Swahili) and *sifa jahan* (Borana).

siyāsa (Ar.) - refers to political discussions, while on tours, it is completely forbidden to engage in such debates, and it is one of the 20 principles.

su'āl al-nās (Ar.) - asking questions, begging.

ṣūfī (Ar.) - a member of mystical brotherhoods

sunna (Ar.) - it refer to the corpus of religious traditions handed down through generations, as the practices of the Prophet and as the guiding principles of every day Muslim behaviour, ranging from mundane engagements to religious observance.

Sūrat al-Fātiḥa (Ar.) - the opening chapter of the Qur'ān

Sūrat al-Imrān (Ar.) -the third chapter of the Qur'ān

Sūrat al-Nās, Falāq and *Ikhlāṣ* (Ar.) - the shorter chapters at the end of the Qur'ān, Chapters 112, 113 and 114.

ṭaʿām (Ar.) - food or consumption, one of the 20 principles of Tablīghī *da'wa*, while on preaching tour a Tablīghī is encouraged to reduce food intake and the desire for its consumption.

Taasīd jamāʿat (Ur.) - a publicity team sent around mosques in a zone to advertise an upcoming Tablīghī event and to mobilize volunteers to attend.

taʿaṭū al-amīr (Ur.) - to follow the commands/instructions of the leader of a missionary team on tour, it is one of 20 practices, that an individual lay preacher must aspire to do with great vigour. It brings discipline, creates one centre of authority and mutes rivalry and rebellion in a preaching team.

tābiʿūn (Ar.) - the generation that took over the leadership and responsibility for the propagation of Islam after the demise of the companions of the Prophet.

tablīgh (Ar.) - to convey, to call people to religion, to pass message of revival to others.

tablīghī (Ar.) - of that which pertains to the transnational lay movement of Tablīghī Jamāʿat.

Tablīghī Jamāʿat (Ur.) - society for propagation, preaching party.

Tablīghī Nisab (Ur.) - it the old title of *Fazā'il-i a'amāl*, the popular *ḥadīth* collection written by Muhammad Zakariya.

tādīm (Ar.) - to praise, to revere, to exalt. When to revere, the term is mentioned in a religious talk, for instance, when you hear '*wa qala lahu ta'ala*' you say '*jalla jallalu*' or *allahu akbar*.

tafsīr (Ar.) - exegesis.

tajiri (Sw) - business person, rich person.

takaza (Ur.) - a term commonly used by Tablīghīs to refer to accepting to do certain responsibilities; it refers to a resolution on the part of an adherent to volunteer to do certain obligations of the movement, an affirmation to undertake a common religious duty on behalf of the movement.

ta^clīm (Ar.) - teaching session of Tablīghī Jamāʿat, readings sourced from Tablīghī recommended texts are given, emphasis is placed on the six virtues. These sessions are done at home, in local mosques, during the preaching tours and at Tablīghī gatherings.

ta^clīm f'il-bayt (Ar.) - instructional/teaching session done by a Tablīghī affiliated family at home, attendants are often drawn from members of the nuclear family, and text reading is given prominence.

ta^clīm f'il-masjid (Ar.) - instructional/teaching session regularly done by Tablīghīs in their local mosque.

ta^clīm wa ta^cllum (Ar.) - to learn and to teach others, a Tablīghī term that encourages the mutual exchange of religious knowledge, one of the 20 principles.

ta^cmīr jamāʿat (Ur.) - a group of individuals who volunteer to stay at a Tablighi *markaz* to give *ḥidayat* and *nuṣra* for *jamāʿat*s who arrive at the *markaz*, to assist in the *tarjama* in case a visiting group requires a local translator, to serve as *dalīl* or guide, to oversee the *khidma* of the *markaz* and also to do the duties of *istiqbāl* for the *kundi*s.

tarāwīḥ (Ar.) - a special long congregational prayer offered at during *Ramaḍān* nights.

targhīb (Ar.) - motivational talk given by Tablīghīs to the general public which aims to encourage volunteering for Tablīghī preaching tours.

ṭarīqa(Ar.) - Ṣūfī brotherhood.

tarjama(Ar.) - translation, a team that renders the main messages from one language into another language for a specific language-based group during Tablīghī talks.

tark-e-laya'ni (Ur.) - Avoidance of petty talks and mundane issues, unwritten 7th principle of Tablīghī Jamāʿat.

ta^crruf (Ar.) – acquaintance, a Tablīghī practice that refers to making acquaintance with specific persons within an area, be they professionals, fellow Tablīghīs, traders or religious specialists.

tartīb (Ar.) - Procedure or steps in the performance of religious practices.

tartīb al-awlīd (Ar.) - etiquette of bringing up children, it is one of the core issues to be taught in the Tablīghī household text reading.

tasbiḥāt (Ar.) - litanies of recommended supplications to make one closer to God, they are to be repeated hundreds of times on a regular basis to enhance one's piety.

tasdīq (Ar.) – believe, faith, to believe sincerely that the message you are listening to during Tablīghī session is the words of Allah and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

tashkīl (Ar.) - formation, it refers to the practice of motivation and recruitment of volunteers from the class of fellow Tablīghīs and the general Muslim public to undertake preaching tours for specified number of days or months.

taṭbīq (Ar.) - to put all Tablīghī messages being preached into action, into practice.

tawwāb (Ar.)- spiritual benefits of religious action.

tusbahi (Bor.) - Muslim prayer beads, mostly used in remembrance of Allah and other supplications

^culamā' (Ar.) – plural of ^cālim, religious specialists or scholars, often it extends to prayer leaders and teachers in Islamic schools.

umma (Ar.) - universal community of Muslim faithfuls.

uṣūl al-daʿwa (Ar.) - principles of mission, principles of preaching Islam.

uṣūl ^cishirīn (Ar.) - it refers to the 20 principles of Tablīghī rule of thumb for undertaking a preaching tour, it is divided into five sets each composed of four actions. The sets deal with four things to do so much, four to be encouraged, four to be reduced, four to be avoided, and four to restrain away from at all costs, as forbidden deeds. It brings uniformity and disciplines errant individuals from breaking the rules of engagement for lay preaching.

^cuyūb nās (Ar.) - refers to talking about the faults of other human beings, a Tablīghī on a preaching tour is forbidden strongly to castigate any member of the general public for

moral laxity or other societal vices, he is expected to neither privately or while in public, to condemn other Muslims or talk ill of them, it is one of the 20 principles.

warr tabliqa (Bor.) - the people of Tablīghī Jamāʿat, a Tablīghī preaching team.

wazee (Sw.) - elders, in the case of Tablīghīs, it refers to the senior members of the movement who make crucial decisions about the progress and plans of the movement, also called *akabir* (Ur.) or *jarole* (Bor.).

worr buyo (Bor.) - the people of grass, a self-descriptive term used by Borana, the name is derived from the materials used by the community for the construction of houses.

worr dase (Bor.) - people of the mat, a term used in reference to Gabra and Sakuye by the Borana.

worr libin (Bor.) - people of Liban, a coalition of pastoralist communities headed by the Borana and includes Garre, Ajuran, Gabra, Sakuye, Konso and Burji.

Wuḍū' (Ar.) - ablutions taken prior to the performance of prayer, water is used where possible.

zakāt (Ar.) - annual Muslim alms required to be paid by those with means.

zinā (Ar.) - illicit sexual relations, refers to both fornication and adultery.

ziyāra (Ar.) - visits, it refers to Tablīghī practices of going out to meet specific individuals within a society with aims of announcing their presence, acknowledging their authority and standing as persons of importance within their society and winning their hearts and souls.

ziyārat ammat al-nās (Ar.) - visit to general public, a practice that aims to mobilize ordinary Muslims to join a Tablīghī group at a mosque, volunteer their time and money for Tablīghī tours.

ziyārat khalf al-dāʿī (Ar.) - refers to visits to homes of fellow Tablīghīs who are at that moment on a missionary tour, it serves to check on the state of their families, it aims at resolve any hardship felt due to absence of the man from his home.

ziyārat al-khawāṣṣ (Ar.) - visit to the homes or business premises of a merchant or wealthy individual in an area; it is a specialized practice aimed to win over such a person to support the group and to volunteer time for Tablīghī tours.

ziyārat al-qudamā' (Ar.) - a practice of visiting a fellow senior Tablīghī, it may be for bonding or to encourage fellow Tablīghīs to remain commited to various practices of the movement such as *khurūj*, *tāʿlīm*, *shūra*, *bayān* and *jaula*.

ziyārat al-ṭabaqāt (Ar.) - a specialized visit to a class of individuals classified as professionals so that during their everyday conduct they adhere to strict rules of moral and ritual purity, Tablīghīs generally target traders, butchers, launderers and barbers in local markets and sometimes they extend the visits to government employees such as teachers and civil servants.

ziyārat al-ʿulamā' (Ar.) - a specialized visit to religious scholars, it aims at reducing resistance to Tablīghī mission in an area and to win approval of the religious class so that the general public can partake in the movements activities as legitimate religious practices.

ẓuhr (Ar.) - obligatory midday prayer.

Note on Transliteration

Transliteration of Arabic words and terminologies followed the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES format. For Borana, words were written as is pronounced by speakers of the language in the upper Eastern part of Kenya. Standard Swahili was used for spelling of Kiswahili words. For Urdu, standard spelling for words and terminologies were also applied.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Study Background

Meet Mohamed Jattani,[1] a middle-aged Borana Tablīghī from Merti in Isiolo County. When I met him in January 2012 he was about to undertake a religiously-motivated journey outside Kenya. He was neither heading to Makkah and Madina for annual pilgrimage nor for advancement of religious knowledge at various universities in the Muslim world. He was heading to Karachi then to New Delhi via Jeddah. His final destination is four month sojourn at the esteemed global headquarters of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, the transnational lay *daʿwa* movement, in Nizamuddin area of New Delhi. This stay is akin to an advance course in the life of career lay *dāʿi*s. They learn a lot. They literally learn at the feet of the elders of the movement inculcating new directives to be taken back to their local mosque communities. Jattani was expected to be back in May 2012. He, undoubtedly, would come back a better Tablīghī man. He hopes to boost the spread of the movement among the Borana speaking areas in the Counties of Marsabit, Isiolo and Tana River. He is not the only one to have done this highly sought stay at Nizamuddin. A dozen others from the region had done it in the last 10 years. About five others were also preparing to do in the first quarter of 2012. He will however join the 'elite' class of local Tablīghīs with a transnational experience of direct learning at the very source of the movement. What is so special about this example? First and foremost, this kind of journeying was unimagined, at least for local Borana Muslims, outside the experience of the movement. It indicates a local engagement of Borana Tablīghīs in an international network of fellow lay preachers. This kind of network is a conduit through which transformative religious and social practices are negotiated, adopted and adapted by the local Borana as legitimate, authentic and worthy of emulation. It shows that the Borana or rather the Borana speaking Tablīghīs are deeply involved in the growth and expansion of the movement in Kenya in general and northern Kenya in particular, an undertaking that requires

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[1] Not real name. Throughout the thesis, for purpose of anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used unless stated otherwise. The travel costs for such journeys as is often the case with other missionary tours is bore by the individuals. The costs of living for the Kenyan Tablīghīs travelling to the centres in South Asia are often subsidised by the managements of the centres. Personal conversations with Jarso Galma, Abdullahi Abdi, Musa Ibrahim, Moyale, October 2010.

their regular and intense interactions with the Kenya's Muslim Asians, the Swahili, the Somali, and other Tablīghīs of diverse ethnic backgrounds in congregational gatherings and *daʿwa* tours. They are part of a bigger phenomenon that transcend their regional boundaries and with greater impact on the self-imagination of being Muslims.

Three decades ago, such journeying described above was rare. Travels were there. Only that then the direction was not to but from the Indian subcontinent. Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi Tablīghīs roamed the northern frontiers of Kenya as they did the coast and the larger East and Central Africa. Language though was a problem; it never appeared to deter these enthusiastic roving preachers. At times, they were accompanied by East Africa's Muslim Asians to help in translation of the messages of the revivalist movement for the local Muslims. The local Muslim communities accommodated them and gave them audience. They often left after a few days with little if any impact. Things changed however. Local Sunni Asians in Kenya, who were the first to volunteer and give logistical support to their fellow South Asians, oversaw the initial implantation of the movement as locally driven *daʿwa* group in a series of mosques in Nairobi, Meru and other towns. This process, though gradual, saw emergence of the Kenyan chapter of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat as extremely instrumental in the East and Central African region with annual gatherings attracting hundreds of adherents from all areas of Kenya and from Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Eastern Congo, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somali. Self-financing *daʿwa* teams dispersed after these gatherings enhance their resilience and expansion within this region in Africa.

Tablīghīs are renowned for their mobility for purpose of preaching. Membership, often drawn from ordinary lay believers, is highly diverse in terms of ethnic, racial, educational, class and generational background. What cuts across the membership is urgent need and effort to establish a return to 'pure' faith in their own life and lives of other ordinary Muslims. The movement, started in 1920s in colonial India by a Deobandi trained scholar called Māwlanā Muhammad Ilyās, aims to re-establish 'pristine' Islam through selective interpretations of the Qur'ān and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad. There is an understanding among the followers of the movement that the present predicament of moral decadence, lack of religious learning and non-observance of the religiously ordained duties among modern day Muslims is due to a lack of a committed group of people to remind others of the 'doing of good and avoidance of wrong' as done by the Prophet and his companions. To do this 'urgent' work seen as obligatory upon all believers, the leaders of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat require that ordinary Muslims form their own self-financed preaching teams in their own areas. A preaching team travels for specified number of days or months away from home. Accommodation is sought in

mosques. Members preach to local Muslims after every five daily prayers. They are expected to learn core teachings of the movement such as the *sitta siffat* (the Six Fundamentals)[2] and on daily basis conduct readings from 'approved' core texts like *Faza'il-e-Aʿmāl* and *Muntakab Aḥadīth* written by some senior elders of the movement.[3] Upon return home, they are urged to actively participate in the movement's daily, weekly, and monthly activities in their local mosques and annually and semi-annually at one of the bigger mosques affiliated with the movement in the region. Furthermore, the transformative programme of religious and social change preached to by the movement is extended to the sanctity of home through daily text readings and consultative meetings. There, however, exist difference in the observance and inculcation of the myriad of Tablīghī practices between regions, countries and even mosques in any given area. How has the Tablīghī Jamāʿat practices and ideas been transposed, adopted, transformed and adhered to by the Borana Tablīghīs and how has these innovative changes transformed their self-perception and identity as part of a transnational religious movement that continuously exposed them to the world of Islam beyond their ethnic boundaries? This remains one of the core concerns of the study. The question that forms the basis of the present study hence is, what happens when a transnational Islamic movement travels, recruits and adapted to by Muslims in far flung area away from its point of origin? Let us briefly turn to the area of study.

Who are the Borana? The Borana are one of the Oromo speaking groups of the Horn of Africa. Their language is categorized under Afro-Asiatic branch. They call themselves Borana, their land *laf Borana* and their language *afaan Borana* (Baxter: 1954). The group has two moieties. Each moiety is composed of a number of clans. This arrangement has historically accounted for nearly neat exogamous marriage, mediated kin relations, equitable distribution of scarce pastoral resources and rotational and representational group leadership. The group is mainly known for their indigenous socio-political and cultural governance twin system called the *Gada* and *Qallu*. Until recently they were ardent followers of their traditional religion. *Aada Sera Borana*, Borana customary laws, governed and to some extent still governs almost all facets of life. Because of this close attachment to their root, the group

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[2] The Six Fundamentals of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat that forms the core teachings are *tawhīd* (strict monontheism), sincerity in prayer performance, religious knowledge and remembrance of God through supplications, treating fellow Muslims with respect and kindness, sincerity of intention in every action and spending time, for the sake of God, on preaching tours (Masud 2000).

[3] Kandhlawi, Muhammad Zakariyya. *Faza'il-e-A'amaal*. Revised Translation of Tabligh Nisab. 5th South African Impression. (Johannesburg: Waterval Islamic Institute, 2000). And Kandhlawi, Muhammad Yusuf. *Muntakhab Aḥadīth: A Selection of Aḥadīth Relating to the Six Qualities of Daʿwat and Tabligh*. (Karachi: Annayyar, 1997).

has over the years emerged as the icon of 'Oromoness' (Legesse 2006). The Borana are one of the most renowned cattle raising communities of Eastern Africa alongside the Maasai. This way of livelihood entailed and still entails great deal of mobility in search of pasture and water. This resulted to their wide and often thin distribution over large swath of land stretching from the present day southern Ethiopia to the dry plains north of Mount Kenya. Presently they number about 160,000 persons in Kenya (2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census Results) and are approximated at 500,000 persons in Ethiopia. In Kenya, they predominate Moyale, Sololo, Marsabit areas of Marsabit County; Isiolo town, Garba Tulla, Kinna, Sericho, Modogashe areas and Merti areas of Isiolo County (also called Waso Borana) and in a number of informal settlements in Nairobi such as Lakisama, Huruma, Kia Maiko, Mathare, Kwa Njenga, Mukuru Kayaba; Mukuru Quarry and Kayole. Sustained migration to Nairobi was necessitated by job searches to supplement nomadic pastoralism, an esteemed livelihood facing bleak future due to frequent drought and famine. In Ethiopia they are found in the southern region of the Oromia Regional State. Their cultural centres such as Liban and Dirre in southern part of Ethiopia, where the present day *Aba Gada* (the political leader of the community) and *Qallu* (religious leader) and other indigenous institutions are based, is revered by both Kenya and Ethiopia Borana, both Muslims and non-Muslims.

The regions that the Borana occupy in Kenya are largely semi-arid and support little if any form of economic activity except nomadic pastoralism (Homann 2005). In areas with favourable weather such as Marsabit, some forms of subsistence farming is practiced. There are also few attempts at irrigation farming along the seasonal Uaso Nyiro River in Merti and Sericho and the Isiolo River in Isiolo. There are thriving economic activities such as retail shops, hotels and markets in most of the urban centres in the area. These towns link the pastoral rangelands to the money economy.

The Borana share this vast upper Eastern Kenya region with other culturally and socio-economically similar ethnic groups. Gabra, Sakuye and Wata groups speak Borana as their language. The Gabra are largely found in Turbi, Bubisa, Maikona, Marsabit, Moyale and North Horr. Sakuye are mainly found in Dabel area and among the Waso Borana of Isiolo. They are also found in almost all Borana settlements in Marsabit and Isiolo Counties. Burji, an enterprising community, own shops and other businesses in Moyale and Marsabit towns. A large number of the Burji born in Kenya speak the Borana as their first language. Garre, a bilingual group that speaks both the Borana and Somali are also found in urban centres in Marsabit County and in neigbouring Mandera area. These communities in addition to some Ajuran Somali clans had historical alliance relations with the Borana, speak Borana and were

part of once a large 'pax Borana' polity. (Oba 1996, 2013, Schlee 1989, Schlee and Shongollow 2012, Schlee and Watson 2009)

The Borana in Kenya were separated from their kinsmen in Ethiopia by expansion of the Ethiopian Empire under the Emperor Menelik II (1844-1913) and by the subsequent establishment of the British colonialism in Kenya (Baxter 1954, Oba 2013). They hence became subjects of two colonial powers and later citizens of two independent countries, Kenya and Ethiopia. Mobility for pastoral resources was largely left unrestricted during and after the colonial period in some areas while proscribed in others. Travels for family visits and for participation in *Gada* ceremonies and other cultural events were and are still largely permitted for those living close to the international borders. However during the colonial period, large populations of the Kenyan Borana were forcefully pushed by the British from Wajir in 1930s into the present day Isiolo County. The Borana-Somali line was established to mitigate against ethnic livestock raids and resource competition. The Borana who were settled in that region became the present day Waso Borana (named after Uaso Nyiro River) (Dahl 1979, Hjort 1979, Aguilar 1998). Almost throughout the entire colonial period strict laws that forbade ethnic mobility and migration restricted the Waso Borana from cultural and socio-political exchanges with their kinsmen in Marsabit, Moyale and Ethiopia. Most indigenous norms and customs fell into disuse. Sustained interactions with the Somali resulted to twin process of gradual 'somalisation' and islamisation (Baxter 1954). Similar gradual conversion to Islam occurred in Moyale and Marsabit through the efforts of religious men and merchants of Arab and Somali origin who resided in the area. The *Qādiriyya and Ṣaliḥiyya Ṣūfī* brotherhoods were the main Islamic traditions until the 1980s. *Duksi*, traditional Islamic schools in which memorisation of the Qur'ān was the main discipline, served as the means of attaining religious education. After the mid-1980s, boosted by enormous investment from international Islamic non-governmental organisations and charities, new form of Islamic tradition took root.[4] The new tradition, affiliated with *Wahabi* Islam, spread with different intensity in the region. In some areas the clash for legitimacy and supremacy between the older and the new traditions were fierce and in areas where the affiliation to the Ṣūfī traditions was superficial, the new tradition gained prominence with ease.

Since the 1980s the area has witnesses rising levels of Islamic awareness. Many *madrasa*s (Ar. Islamic schools) and mosques were built. Mosque attendance has been steady in the urban centres. However pursuance of *madrasa* education differs between the various ethnic

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[4] Personal conversations with Hussein Ganna, Moyale, September 2009.

groups and regions. Garre often prioritise it. Hence they were more inclined towards religious observance, conservatism and stricter interpretation of the Qurʾān and Sunna. They, in fact, tied the religious time tables for fasting and celebration of Muslim feasts with Saudi Arabia. Borana though they constitute majority favoured and still favour secular education for their children over the religious education. They often take their children to elementary *madrasa* education. Only a few pursue religious education to advanced levels every year. This impacted on the inclusion into the class of religious specialists, the ᶜulamāʾ. Borana hence were less represented in religious leadership in Moyale. In this area, this class is dominated by the descendants of the pioneer migrants, that is, Yemeni Arabs, Somali, Garre and Arsi Oromo. This lack of representation and participation in the religious administration as we shall discuss later in the thesis partly accounts for the success of the lay *daʿwa* movement of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat that targeted to recruit among the ordinary Borana Muslims. The participation of Gabra, Burji and Sakuye in pursuance of religious education and representation in Muslim leadership is similar to that of the Borana. Many of the *madrasa*s, built through assistance of Kuwaiti and Saudi humanitarian agencies, were managed and attended by largely non-Borana groups. In Waso, there had been ambitious religious investment that rivaled similar development initiated by the Roman Catholic Church. A number of children of the Waso Borana had opportunity to pursue *madrasa* education to the high school level and then if interested travel to Sudan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia for advanced religious training. Islamic NGOs also assisted local Borana in the construction of schools, dispensaries, water projects and mosques. Within a decade or so, there rose a class of home-grown religious class that reached out to the masses leading to an increased islamisation of everyday life.

The general rising levels of religious consciousness and learning resulted to a large percentage of ordinary believers who though not among the ᶜulamāʾ still harboured the interests of religious revivalism among the masses. A certain constituencies within number of Borana and non-Borana Muslims were easily mobilised by a new brand of Islamic reformists, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. It is this theme that shall constitute the bulk of our inquiry in this thesis. We shall explore the gradual introduction of the movement in Kenya in general and in northern Kenya in particular. We shall interrogate the reasons behind the success of the new movement among the largely religiously illiterate masses. We shall analyze the strategies put in place by the Borana speaking Tablīghīs in particular and in Kenya in general that accounted for successful recruitment and spread. New religious groups like the Tablīghī Jamāʿat enters an arena saturated with inter-religious rivalry and competition. We shall

investigate the relations between the Tablīghīs and other traditions and dig deep into polemical and counter-polemical discourses and negotiations between the groups. Tablīghīs are highly mobile. It has introduced new forms of religious mobility among its followers in the Borana speaking areas. Locals travel within Kenya and transnational *dāʿi*s from various countries visit local settings. This kind of mediated exposure to the world of transnational Islam and religious reform is highly innovative and novel. We shall explore the effects of this re-spiritualisation and reform on religious and ethnic identity, introduction of new religious practices, strategies for regional revivalism of the faith and localisation of the transnational Islamic movement as a local *daʿwa* outfit.

This thesis is, hence, about the Tablīghī Jamāʿat among the Borana speaking regions as it is about the Tablīghīs in Kenya. The vast network established by the leaders of the movement and concomitant elaborate 'faith bureaucracy' managed by committed senior Tablīghīs has linked the grassroot units of the movement to the international headquarters (Reetz 2008). The global is intractably the local. Borana Tablīghīs may differ from their Bengali or Mewati counterparts in some aspects but they share a lot in terms of religious ideology, shared global concerns for revivalism, use of religious texts, need for religious travel for *daʿwa* and attitude towards the religious establishment. It is prudent then to situate or position the Borana Tablīghīs as part of a larger network of Tablīghīs. It is important to note that the term the Borana and the Borana speaking Tablīghīs have been pragmatically opted for in reference to the 'proper Borana' in first instance and corpus of the ethnic communities that use the Borana as first language in this part of Kenya in the latter case. These include the Borana, the Garre, the Gabra, the Sakuye, the Burji and the Orma of Tana River unless stated otherwise. Interestingly, all the Tablīghīs from these Borana speaking groups congregate under '*Borana Tarjama*' at the national Tablīghī gatherings, a corner in the main mosque in which one of their own renders the message of the movement into their language from Urdu or the Swahili. They already constitute a unit within the Kenya chapter of the movement.

1.2 The Statement of the Problem

Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya in general and in the northern part of Kenya in particular is a recent religious phenomenon. The movement comes to an already competitive religious field. Often religious groups contest for the right to be the one and the only legitimate voice of the community and the only group whose teaching is based on the core authoritative sources of Islam: the Qurʾān and Sunna. In the past, in some towns in Borana speaking areas, the relations between the old *Qādiriyya-Ṣaliḥiyya* brotherhoods and the new reformist trends with

its attachment to *Wahabi/Salafī* Islam was fierce resulting in the triumph of the latter. These 'clashes' saw great utilisation of polemical rhetorics, use of external actors such as government officials, competing interpretation of religious texts and moves towards appropriating mosques as one's own turf. The Ṣūfī orders lost most grounds. The Tablīghī Jamāʿat hence has to negotiate for space, legitimacy, recognition and support from the religious constituencies in an already competitive environment. As a movement that is always on the move, the movement's use of mosques for proselytism and accommodation depends on members' good relations with custodian of mosques in any given area. At first the movement lacked any places of worship of their own but has of late not only infiltrated most mosques through strategic semi-permanent mosque-based preaching units but have even established exclusive sacred spaces called *markaze*s to serve as their operational bases in the area.[5] The localisation of the movement is not free from strained relations with the established traditions. As a movement that sought to transform ordinary believers away from home, it wrestles with other existing traditions for influence on the religious behaviour of the masses. This has, in some areas, resulted to open polemics and counter-polemics. Members of the movement cross different forms of boundaries such territorial, generational, linguistic and religious. They bring with them different religious interpretations, different and novel religious practices, different experience of religious mobility, different and emergent spirituality, identity and concern for fellow Borana speaking Muslims and above all a novel version of being a Muslim. At the core of the statement of the problem is, what happens when a religious group and ideas travel and take root in new areas? This transformative trend that involves challenging negotiations, contesting space usage and embodiment of new practices and ideologies shall be the core concern of the study.

1.3 Tentative Assumptions

1. Tablīghī Jamāʿat is becoming a well-established *daʿwa* group among the Borana speaking communities, this has been facilitated by successful recruitment of members from various segments of the communities and the emergence of these converts as committed promoters of the movement's religious goods and goals.

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[5] *Markāz* means centre in Arabic (Plural is *marakiz*). In this thesis, anglicised plural of '*markazes*' are applied. Markāz is a term used by the Tablīghī s in reference to their places of worship and congregation. In Kenya, they have *markaze*s in Merti, Nairobi, Garissa and Mombasa. In places where there are no *markaze*s, one local mosque is identified and performs similar functions of markāz.

2. To effectively establish itself, the movement has relied on strategies of re-territorialisation that involves creation of 'parish-like' units that links individual homestead of Tablīghīs to a local mosque, sum of local mosques to a regional unit, regional units to the national unit then to the global headquarters and establishment of a loose but highly effective 'faith' bureaucracy' that oversees the day to day running of the transnational movement.

3. To successfully establish itself in increasing competitive religious environment, the Tablīghīs in Kenya remains politically 'neutral' and low-keyed but also continuously engage in non-confrontational relations with existing Islamic traditions and religious cadres so as to be permitted to mosque use and to be considered as legitimate a religious tradition that bases its teaching on authoritative sources of Islam.

4. Among the Borana speaking regions, the movement is attractive to mosque-going secularly educated individuals in governmental and non-governmental employment, small scale traders and unemployed youth and it involves a great deal of personal costs in terms of time and money.

5. Most Tablīghī preaching sessions in Borana majority areas and at the sections allocated for the linguistic community at the transnational gatherings in Kenya utilises the Borana language as the most effective tool of customised mobilisation. This strategy promotes participation of ordinary believers as lay preachers as the threshold for use of public religious space is lowered and language requirements eased.

6. Borana speaking Tablīghīs are often sent to Borana speaking regions in Kenya and Ethiopia. This contextualised *daʿwa* not only localised the movement as successful grassroot *daʿwa* outfit but also re-builds ethno-religious identities between hitherto separated Orma of Tana River, the Waso Borana of Isiolo, Borana of Marsabit and Isiolo, migrant Borana speaking workers and dwellers in informal settlement in Nairobi and their kin in southern part of Oromia Regional State in Ethiopia.

7. Borana speaking Tablīghīs attend regular gatherings in the regions, at national and international levels and travel to several local and translocal destination bringing with them new and innovative religious practices and ideas thus not only contesting with pre-existing religious traditions but attempting to wrestle from the religious specialists influence and power over the religious behaviour of the lay Muslims

1.3 Objective of the Study

1. To explore the growth and establishment of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya in general and in northern Kenya in particular.

2. To examine the practices, strategies and approaches that the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya employs in relations to spiritual reform, religious bureaucracy, place and space making and usage and also in engagement with the transnational network of fellow lay preachers in other parts of the world.

3. To investigate the relations between the newly established Tablīghī Jamāʿat and existing *Ṣūfī* and *Salafī* traditions as it contests and negotiates for authenticity and authority as legitimate religious traditions grounded in Islamic orthodoxy.

4. To analyse the participation of the Borana speaking Tablīghīs in the world of Islamic proselytism beyond their region and examine the localisation and adaptation of the transnational movement as local *daʿwa* outfit that employs massive use of Borana language, face-to-face and contextualised *daʿwa* in their areas and explore the implications such mobility and networks on ethno-religious identity and imagination.

1.4 Review of Relevant Literature

In the following subsection, we shall sample some of the relevant literature that related with the subject of the research. These materials have been divided into three themes, namely: recent researches on religion and culture in northern Kenya; Tablīghī Jamāʿat as a global revivalist phenomenon and Islamic reformism. As there are numerous literatures under each of the chosen categories, care was taken to select the most relevant.

1.4.1 Recent Researches on religion and cultures of the Peoples northern Kenya

Communities that occupy the dry frontiers of northern Kenya are largely pastoralists and often are found across international boundaries, for instance the Borana and the Gabra in Kenya and Ethiopia and the Somali in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. The clashes are common over politics and resource use due to scarcity necessitated by rangeland degradation and frequent droughts and famine. The area was minimally governed and developed during the colonial period and suffered marginalisation in the subsequent post-colonial governments. Researchers among these nomadic communities that straddle the national boundaries have been fascinated by issues related to pastoralism, for instance, Dahl (1979) on subsistence and society of the Waso Borana and Hogg (1981 and 1987) on the socio-economic organisation of the Borana of Isiolo and changing property rights among the Borana pastoralists, Fratkin (2001), Fratkin and Roth (2004) *et. al.* on sedentatisation of pastoralist groups, Baxter (1975),

Cossins and Upton (1983) on impact of climatic variation on Borana pastoralism, Helland (1994) on pastoralism and development intervention. Some researchers such as Schlee (1989) and Schlee and Watson (2009) focused on kinship, changing identities and pastoralism and changing identification and alliances in northeast Africa. It is the topic of social organisation and indigenous structures like the Gada system that attracted a large number of researchers, notably Shongollo (1994) on the *Gumi Gaayo* Assembly of the Borana, Asmarom Legesse on the *Gada* (1973 and 2006) and Borana-Oromo indigenous political system, Marco Bassi (2005 and 1994) on the Borana political and juridical processes and Gada as an integrative factor of political organisation and Baxter (1954, 1978 and 1990) on the social organisation of the Borana of northern Kenya and Borana age-set and generation-sets and Oromo blessings and greetings. A notable contribution on indigenous Oromo religious beliefs includes Bartels' (1983) *Oromo Religion: Myths and Rites of the Western Oromo of Ethiopia*. Influence of Islam on the various communities of the northeast Africa has been documented by Trimingham (1964, 1976 and 1980) though little attention was given to northern Kenya. Setegn's (1973) *Shaikh Hussayn of Bale and his Followers* and Ulrich Braukämper's (2002) collected essays on the Sheikh Hussein cult of southern Ethiopia strengthened the discussions on the members of the cult in northern Kenya. *Ayaana* Cult, a possession cult affiliated to the Sheikh Hussein group was focused of Dahl's book (1989) in a collection of articles on healing. Except Baxter's (1964) chapter article titled 'Acceptance and Rejection of Islam among the Borana of the Northern Frontier District of Kenya' in Lewis's (1969) *Islam in Tropical Africa*, considerable numbers of historical and contemporary writings have given little attention to the subject of Islam among the Borana.

Exceptions include Aguilar's *Being Oromo in Kenya* (1998) and *Politics of God in East Africa: Oromo Ritual and Religion* (2009). Both books are some of the most recent works on the Waso Borana. The books focus on the theme of religious diversification and change in the Waso region. In the first book, the author gives detailed ethnographic description of communal rituals of birth and naming (Bor. *waqlal*), wedding and burial and funeral. In the realm of Oromo domestic rituals, the writer analyses prayers, blessings, sacrifice of coffee beans (*Buna Qalla*) and the *Ayaana* Cult associated with the Sheikh Hussein group. The main thesis of the book is that the Waso Borana's religious practices are diversified and complex. Conversion to Islam and Christianity has not resulted to the redundancy of the indigenous religious and cultural beliefs and rituals. The Waso Borana are hence seen as part and parcel of the Oromo polity despite years of separation and conversion to new religions. The second work is a collection of essays that covers diverse subjects such as religious diversification,

Buna Qalla, re-invention of the *Gada*, divinatory processes, ritual performance, and children among the Waso Borana and most importantly spatial and religious analysis of Isiolo and Garba Tulla towns. Both works are a significant contribution to the understanding of Islam among the Waso Borana. The works however make few inferences to other Borana areas such as Moyale and Marsabit. Field sites were mainly in Garba Tulla. Merti, a town that has emerged since the mid-1980s and early 1990s as centre of Islamic learning and religious revivalism has been outside the scope despite being a pivotal centre of the Waso Borana. Focuses of both works were on religious diversification hence it downplays the increasing pivotal role of Muslim institutions such as mosques and *madrasa* for instance the Garba Tulla Islamic Centre built by transnational Islamic humanitarian agencies from the Middle East. Hence this present research picks from where these previous researches left. There is a dearth of studies that document historical and contemporary Islamic trends among the Borana despite tangible transformation in the nature of religious institutions, leadership and adherence.

1.4.2 Researches on the Tablīghī Jamāʿat

There has been considerable growth of literature on the movement particularly in South and South East Asia and the Western Europe over the last decade, a pointer to its rising influence as a movement across the globe. A number of researchers have documented the growth of the movement in West Africa, Southern Africa and the Maghreb. Of importance to the growth of the movement in Africa is the role of South Asian diaspora. However despite existence of such groups in East and Central Africa, there has been lack of any tangible academic interests on the movement. This study hence heralds the beginning of focus not only on the *daʿwa* movement but various networks and interactions between local indigenous Muslims and diasporic communities that have often been least focused in academic research on Islam in Kenya. Studies that had traditionally focused on Islam in Kenya had more often prioritized the historically rich cultures and trends along the mercantile Swahili coast. Few if any pay particular attention to the Islam of the northerners or Muslims of South Asian descent (Salvadori 1989 and 1996; Herzig 2006).

In the book *Islam and Politics in Kenya*, Oded (2000: 57) mentions that the Tablīghī movement came to Kenya from Pakistan in 1990 and established branches in Nairobi, Mombasa, Malindi and Watamu. The date given by Oded may be indicative of the time of its consolidation rather than establishment as reliable Tablīghī sources indicate of its initial entry into Kenya in mid 1950s. The author describes the followers of the movement as visible in public spaces by their beards, long gowns, prayer beads for men and modest black gown for

women. The Tablīghī movement as described in this book was one that did not shy away from socio-political activism such as protests against land alienation by non-locals, proliferation of recreational facilities such as bars and substance abuse and had worked towards unification of various factions within the local Muslim polity. The group was said to have assisted locals establish business and hence due to financial assistance it offered to those willing to dedicate themselves to life of religious piety, it was highly attractive to many youth. While the information given here is indicate of the innovative and pragmatic localisation of the transnational movement to suit the local Muslim concerns especially during its consolidation in the region, this appear far from the reality in current times. Later as the movement gained more membership, move towards standardisation of its practices and ideology occurred as committed members under the supervision of local representatives steered the local chapters towards 'Tablīghī orthodoxy'. This kind of re-socialisation inculcates within such enthusiastic followers that matters of political and social nature are proscribed subjects of discussions or pursuit. However the author offers little on the role of local Muslims of Asian descent in the movement or various mobility-related practices that is its hallmark.

Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat as a Transnational Movement for Faith Renewal edited by Masud (2000) is one of the most comprehensive works on the movement. The book is divided into two sections with the first part on the *Tablīghī Jamāʿat* as a *daʿwa* organization and the second part as a transnational movement. In the first part contributions from leading scholars like Masud, Metcalf and Talib tackled the growth and development of the movement, Tablīghī Jamāʿat and the women and Tablīghī ideology. In the second section, the book deals with historical spread of the movement on global scale (Gaborieau) and country case studies namely: British and Germany (Faust), Morocco (Tozy), Belgium (Dassetto), France (Kepel), South Africa (Moosa) and Canada (Azmi). The detailed contributions insightfully analyse and offer a comparative picture of the movement's working in various parts of the world. Except articles on South Africa and Morocco, there is little that can be learnt from this book on the movement in other parts of Africa, especially East Africa which is home to millions of African Muslims and thousands of Muslims of South Asian descent.

Sikand's (2002) *The Origin and Development of Tablighi-jamaʿat (1920-2000): A Cross-Country Comparative Study* is another outstanding work on the movement. In the initial chapters, Sikand lays the foundation for the subsequent country case studies by outlining Muslim *daʿwa* activism in the early twentieth century India. The author also grounds the reader by discussing Tablīghī concepts, principles and strategies. Sikand in great detail

describes the growth and consolidation of the movement in Mewat, its birthplace before moving to Bangladesh and then crossing oceans to Great Britain. The main contribution of this work to the study is its emphasis on the local concerns and religious traditions having fundamental role in shaping the establishment of the movement as we shall see in the thesis. The study like many other works depicts the movement as entirely South Asian.

Haq's (1972) *The Faith Movement of Mawlānā Muhammad Ilyās* is one of the pioneer works on the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. Haq initiates the discussions on the movement by tracing its roots in the Indian Ṣūfī traditions of the 18th and 19th Century. In this pivotal biographical study, the author traces the life and times of the founder, Muhammad Ilyās and explores his thoughts and contribution towards the growth of the movement. The remaining sections of the book covered the technique, strategies and the organisation of the *daʿwa* movement in India. Similar strategies, organisational structure and motivations are observed in the area of study as we shall see later in this study. It is common for the movement's followers also to write biographical histories and contributions of founders and their successors. Hasani (1967) penned *Sawanih Hadrat Māwlanā Muhammad Yusuf Kandhalawi* on the second *amīr* (leader) of the movement. The book was written in Urdu. It had informative chapters on the gradual spread of the movement in various parts of the world including Africa. Based on oral reports of the pioneer Tablīghīs dispatched to East Africa, the author, in the chapter on Africa, pinpoints the role of the local South Asian Diasporas as hospitable and charitable hosts who not only welcomed the visiting Tablīghīs but offered to travel with them and facilitate establishment of the movement' national chapters. Hasani traces the coming of the movement to Kenya in 1956 and offers some of most comprehensive details about its growth in Eastern Africa. However the period it covers are the formative years of the movement.

Reetz (2008) has published on a number of topical issues on Islam in South Asia in general and on the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in particular. Of the many articles by the author, the most insightful for the thesis was 'The Faith Bureaucracy of Tablīghī Jamāʿat: An Insight into their System of Self-organisation (*Intizam*)'. In this book chapter the writer unravels the intricate faith bureaucratic structures of the *daʿwa* movement that is often invisible to outside scrutiny. The article guided the present research to pay attention to Tablīghī spatiality and territoriality, decentralised decision making strategies, local variations in recruitment and established networks that connects the members of the movement within and without the country. Other country and regional based studies on the movement include Horstmann (2007) in South Thailand, Janson (2005, 2014) in the Gambia, Vahed (2003) on the Sunni-Tablīghī conflict in

South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, Rory Dickson (2009) in Canada, Zolkiple and Sukimi (2011) in Malaysia and De Feo (2007) in Cambodia.

Other informative contributions include Metcalf's (2002, 1993) articles on 'Traditionalist' Islamic Activism: Deobandis, Tablighis, and Talibs' and 'Living Hadīth in the Tablighi Jama`at'. Ali's (2006) doctoral thesis on the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Australia is a recent addition to the growing literature on the movement. Ali (2010), in another article, also articulately explores the revivalist discourses of the movement as it aims to remakes its followers better Muslims. Nelson's (2010) masters thesis shed light on another crucial aspect of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, the delegation of authority. As it would be discussed later, Tablīghīs base most of their communal decisions at each administrative level through councils which are led on rotational basis by committed followers of the movement. This work hence enriched the present study. Tablīghīs also feature on books and articles on contemporary Islamic trends in Africa, for instance, in Østebø's (2008) discussions on Islamic reform movements in Ethiopia, in Salem's chapter on Islam in Mauritania, Brégand's contributions on Muslim Reformists and the State in Benin and Loimeier's chapter on Muslims in contemporary Tanzania in the book *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa* edited by Soares (2007). Beckerleg's (1995) article on 'Brown Sugar' or Friday Prayers: Youth Choices and Community Building in Coastal Kenya' discusses how the entry of the movement in the coastal settlement of Watamu led to religious revivalism and new religious identities and belongingness. Similarly Turner (2009) explores the discourses of Islamic revivalism in contemporary Zanzibar and examines the relations between the Tablīghīs and other competing Islamic movements and also asserts that the apolitical *daʿwa* movement has considerable following among the youth who display their membership in dressing and religious observance.

1.4.3 Islamic Revivalism

In series of collected works on fundamentalism titled *Fundamentalisms Observed* (1991), *Fundamentalisms and Society* (1993), *Fundamentalisms and State* (1993) and *Accounting for Fundamentalisms* (1994), Marty and Appleby present wide collections of comparative and informative works on revivalist movements in Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Confucianism and Buddhism. The underlying motives of all these movements seeking to re-enact a return to the fundamentals of the faith at time in which modernity has engulfed religious communities is not a return to the pristine past but a selective interpretation of core texts and teachings in order to forge a spirituality revitalised future for its followers. Charismatic leadership, selective text usage, formation of exclusivist faith-based

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communities, the urge and efforts to recruit members from mainstream religious communities, strategies and approaches to preach and defend the new-found salvation formula and an elaborative organisational structures to achieve the aims of the movement are some of the common features that cuts across the fundamentalist movements from diverse religious traditions. Most fundamentalist movements are also demonstrated to have relations with the state and the society that ranges from accommodation, hostility, total avoidance to indifference. Fundamentalist movements are argued to be never static and their ideologies, structures and strategies not only change with time but also differ between areas of operation. These ground breaking series hence provide insightful information on how to approach the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, an Indian-borne faith renewal movement with pervasive global presence. It shaped my research tools and analytical skills to note of diverse strategies, trans-local networks, local variations, motivation and reception to the Tablīghī reforms in Kenya. Of direct relevance was an analytical article by Metcalf titled 'Remaking Ourselves: Islamic Self-Fashioning in a Global Movement of Spiritual Renewal' in the book *Accounting Fundamentalisms* that explore the *daʿwa* movement's ideology, practices and growth from global perspective.

Zeidan's (2003) *Resurgence of Religion: A Comparative Study of Selected Themes in Christian and Islamic Fundamentalist Discourses* set clear characteristics that cut across revivalist groups despite their diversity in various dimensions. These 'family resemblance' are rooted in the fact that fundamentalist Islamic and Christian movements are rooted in monotheistic, revelatory, prophetic traditions and are both reactions to modernism. Some of the family resemblance and difference explored in the book include reaction to secularism, theocratic worldviews, attitude towards scripture interpretation and use, stress on social and political activism, reminiscence of a golden past days and eras, eschatology and utopia, sexual behaviour and gender roles, whole area of morality and concept of separatism and relations with competing religious traditions. Some of these themes have been explored in the thesis with relevant field data. Zeidan (2003: 46) describes the Tablīghī Jamāʿat as unique fundamentalist movement as it maintains apolitical stance as politics is viewed by the members as morally corrupting. The author notes:

> For the pietistic apolitical groups, the widespread renewal of individual Muslims as they imitate the pious example of the Prophet in their personal conduct will inevitably lead to the renewal of society and state without the revived members having to engage in the corrupting world of politics.

1.5. Justification of the Study

As seen from the review of literature above there is clearly a dearth of detailed study of Islam in Kenya in general and on the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in particular. Focuses of previous studies have been on historical as well as contemporary issues affecting Muslims in Kenya. The Swahili region that straddles the expansive coastline has undoubtedly attracted lots of attention. Muslims from the coast also played a pivotal role in the spread of Islam in major urban centres of Kenya except the northern region. The coastal Muslims also hold esteemed positions in religio-political leadership and are forefront in activism on behalf of the faith. However, Islam among the nomadic Cushitic communities of northern Kenya has a different historical and contemporary trajectory. It is linked with and still has a strong attachment to Islam of the Horn of Africa. Among the Borana, various studies has limited its focus to issues such as religious diversification, indigenous institutions, pastoralism, ethnic identity formation and resource management. None gives a clear role to the role of Islam as agent of religious transformation and very few links the Islamising trend to other sustained interactions beyond the confines of their ethnic boundaries. Various studies mention Islam among the Borana or the Muslim Borana in passing and often to highlight a few point. This is despite the fact that Islam among the community has a history of about 100 years. Investments in religious institutions in the last 30 years has resulted in establishment of numerous mosques and *madrasa*s, increased conversion and adherence to religious obligations and growth of many locally taught religious specialists.

The Tablīghī Jamāʿat arrived in Kenya in mid 1950s. It was received and nurtured by the Sunni Asians in Kenya. Tablīghīs from the Indian subcontinent frequented various parts of Kenya on their *daʿwa* tours. Later indigenous followers were recruited and in the last 30 years the followers have held massive gatherings in Nairobi, Mombasa and other cities. At any given time dozens of Tablīghīs are on various phases of *daʿwa* tours. They preach and sleep in mosques. They travel within and between countries in Eastern Africa but also to far regions in Asia and Europe. Despite such visible presence in religious public sphere, Tablīghī Jamāʿat has attracted very little academic attention in Kenya. As seen above, there have been studies on the movement in the Gambia, South Africa, Morocco, Cameroon and Nigeria in Africa and in various countries in South and South East Asia, Australia and Western Europe. No such detailed study has been conducted in Eastern Africa. This study hence attempts to fill in this existing research gap. The study shall, for the first time, illuminate, on the sociological organisation of the movement with insightful attention given to mobility related practices, decision making process, leadership, mobilisation and recruitment strategies, self-evaluation and distinct local adaptations of the movement in Kenya.

The Tablīghī Jamāʿat brings about a new kind of religious transnationalism in Kenya. The members regularly form travelling groups and travel that within and between countries. With this mobility come new forms of religious socialisation. New practices are adopted and adapted. Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya as in other parts of the world brings together various languages, groups, cultures and religious affiliation. It brings about a new form of religious cosmopolitanism rarely witnessed before. The movement avails a fascinating inquiry into creation and establishment of networks that serves religious as well as mundane purposes, mobility and congregations that redefine long held ideas about ethnic and religious identities and boundaries and loose but highly effective religious bureaucracy radically different from existing religious hierarchies. This study, hence, explore the less studied theme of religious mobility and its impact on localisation of a transnational Islam. Transnational religious movements like the Tablīghī Jamāʿat bring about new forms of religious change that deserves critical and detailed study. Tablīghī Jamāʿat is an appropriate movement to study as it is highly observable in terms of congregational gatherings, lay preachers on move, preferred literatures, dressings, manner of recruitment, a fluid chain of command that links the smallest unit to the international headquarters and mosque-based consultative forums.

This work, being a seminal work on the transnational movement, it lays foundation for subsequent academic inquiry to focus on more specialised facet of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. It is incumbent upon interested scholars to explore in details themes such as ideology and changing practices of the movement in various locale in Kenya, competing voices within authority at the grassroot and national levels, how the Tablīghīs deal with crisis of indiscipline and uncertainty while on preaching tours and at the national gatherings and in changing socio-political circumstances in Kenya.

Mobility is currently emerging as one of the paradigm in social science. The thesis that the world is dynamic and constantly changing and hyper-mobile is increasing getting current in the global age. Networks and flows are some of the themes that have been gained attention. People, ideas, goods, and practices flow between regions. Technology and ease of transport has lessen costs and brought immense interactions between far flung regions. People are the main connectors in the world of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. Face to face encounter has been the main factor behind its spread and growth in many regions of the world. This thesis is hence timely as it situates itself in the interdisciplinary approach that gives due attention not only to mobility but also related concepts such as social spaces, transnationalism, territorialisation and proselytism.

Though the thesis heavily draws from case studies from the Borana speaking regions of Moyale, Isiolo and Merti and among the Borana Tablīghīs at the regional and national gatherings and in travels with the Borana Tablīghīs, it is also about the Tablīghīs in Kenya in general. The members of the movement travel a lot for their regular activities held in various parts of the country. The region is intractably linked with other Tablīghī units in other neighbouring regions and with national and international headquarters. Through regular gatherings, inculcation of new directives from the national and international headquarters and consensual meetings at the grassroot level, the thesis serves to highlight the localisation of the movement and transnationalisation of religious practices and ideas among the Borana Tablīghīs. The thesis also highlights a new form of religious community that gathers and unifies Kenyan Muslims of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds as they preach, teach, learn, evaluate progress, socialise and network. It also explores how even despite such confluence of interests, the unified community of lay preachers allow for maintenance of diversities based on language, economic class, religious education and commitment to the ethos of the movement.

Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya as it is elsewhere in the world shuns publicity. There are no official spokesmen though a well-defined 'faith bureaucracy' is in place. There are no records available to larger public for academic scrutiny. Unlike other Islamic movements and groups that 'forcefully' attempt to appropriate public space and voice the concerns of their religious constituencies, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat is avowedly apolitical and pacifist. Matters of political and social activism that often throws Islamic groups and personalities into public limelight is missing in the everyday practices of the movement. The goal of the movement appears to be spiritual revivalism through their own procedures and practices. The movement avoids doctrinal and sectarian controversies and is largely dominated by lay Muslims. It hence lacks 'dramatic' features that would have made it visible within academic world despite its massive global reach and impact. This thesis therefore enriches the existing literature on Islam in Kenya and on the emerging studies on the presence of Indian-borne Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Africa.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Religious resurgence in the modern world is a common phenomenon. Secularisation theory that once postulated that adherence to religion will decrease as the world moves towards modernisation has been proved erroneous. Increasingly new Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Buddhist groups emerge and old traditions are renewed as they target to keep their followers 'pure' in a morally indifferent world. New technologies such as the internet had made communication across remote places feasible and cheap. Religious texts are cheaply available. The right to read and interpret these texts, which once was the preserve of religious scholars, has become every day practice for ordinary believers as literacy levels rise.

The Tablīghī Jamāʿat grew out of an uncertain socio-political environment of early 20th century Colonial India. It not only wanted to revive the faith among religiously non-observant Muslims but was also as a response to rival Hindu revivalism movements such as *Arja Samaj*. It certainly wished and worked towards a return to true Islam of the formative years (Haq 1972). Given the heightened ethno-religious tension in British India the founders crafted a path of faith renewal minus political activism. This helped the movement to survive with relative ease the disastrous consequence of separation of India and Pakistan. However it is at the membership levels that the movement shows greater resilience. Ordinary Muslims form the bulk of membership. These followers often lack advanced religious education and are from middle or low class category of the society. Similar classes are attracted to the movement in East Africa. This raises three fundamental questions: why are certain categories of individuals attracted to the movement in Kenya? Does the membership within the movement provide something more than faith renewal? Last but not the least, why now? Why do we witness phenomenal growth of Tablīghī membership and resurgence now though the movement has been around for almost 60 years?

Theorising these questions would lead us to some assumptions. One, proponents of deprivation theory postulates that deprived individuals gravitate towards groups that provide a sense of belonging, self-esteem and importance in an increasing alienating world. Deprivations, whether absolute or relative, may be economic, social, ethical or psychic and that each of these results to formation or attraction to different forms of religious groups whether it is church, sect, healing movement, reform movement or cult Glock (1964). Jean-Paul Carvalho (2009) in an article titled 'A Theory of Islamic Revival' theorise that contemporary Islamic revivalism is based on two forms of relative deprivation, namely envy and unfulfilled aspiration and that raised aspirations, low social mobility, high income inequality and poverty are intricately related causes of Islamic revival. Religious activities produce religious values that make believers cope with envy and unfulfilled aspirations by

placing less importance on objects of envy/aspirations such as wealth and income. The satisfaction of moral superiority is hence argued to help agents cope better with relative deprivation. Carvalho (2009:3) therefore proposes that origin of Islamic revival can be traced to: one, a growth reversal which raised aspirations for upward mobility and subsequently left aspirations unfulfilled among the educated middle class and two, increasing income inequality and impoverishment of the lower-middle class.

Can we say the same for the rapid growth in membership of the movement among the Borana speaking communities of northern Kenya? The northern Kenya witnessed rising levels of Islamic education since early 1980s and saw immense growth in places of worship and Islamic learning with help of Muslim charitable organisations from the Middle East. Increasingly the pastoral economy that once formed the way of life suffered immense loss due to frequent droughts and famine resulting in loss of incomes and forced large number of mobile cattle camps and nomadic families to sedentarise. The indigenous restocking mechanism such as *Buusa Gonofa* (Bor. mutual kinship assistance) that facilitated income recovery through welfare alliance between Borana clans and sub-clans is almost redundant and could not ease the burden of impoverishment. Large numbers of youth, often graduate of local primary and secondary schools, lack gainful and regular employment opportunities. Among this class of youth only a few have advanced levels of religious learning to qualify as religious teachers and prayer leaders. These groups of people unlike the generation of their parents can read religious texts written in Swahili and English. Movements that aspire to recruit among the lay would certainly find a favourable audience among such quarters. Furthermore, the followers may not only temporarily escape the class of deprived youth to be respected Islamic preachers but also have opportunities to redeem their religiosity, travel with fellow lay preachers to neighbouring towns, cities and countries and also raise their status as young men of piety among their peers. In fact as would be discussed further in the thesis, significant numbers of the movement's leadership and members in some areas of northern Kenya are rehabilitated drug users, reformed thieves, government employees and civil servants sacked due to indiscipline case and new converts into Islam. While the relative deprivation theory may seem plausible to explain the attraction and recruitment into such transnational faith renewal movements, it fails to account for subsequent deprivation within the ranks of the movement and motivation to stay within the movement once such needs are adequately met.

While the above theoretical exposition explores membership and motivations, how can we theorise on the Tablīghī Jamāʿat as mobile religio-social phenomenon? Tablīghī Jamāʿat literary means a preaching party. To preach one need to move from place to place and especially to the places of congregation and places of prayer. Therefore the Tablīghī Jamāʿat is in all sense of word, a movement. Members are highly mobile. They cross borders. To be a full time committed Tablīghī is to be ready to move for preaching tours 3 days every month, 40 days every year and to do weekly excursions around in one's neighbourhood for religious mobilisation and recruitment. Every member is a recruiter. Every recruit must volunteer to move to affirm his belongingness to the party of lay preachers. Tablīghī mobility is also intimately linked with locality. A member must at all time belong to a self-operating local mosque-based unit (Ur. *maqāmī*)[6] and must inculcate the reform agenda at home if he is married. Not all mosques are welcoming to these teams of lay preachers. They compete for mosque use with its custodians. Therefore for one to make better analysis of this movement, theories that deal with mobility, spatiality and territoriality are central within this study.

Vertovec (2009: 145) posits that missionary religions such as Islam and Christianity spread through mobility of its proselytisers. Christian missions, Ṣūfī brotherhoods, traders and lay preachers have historically moved, migrated and settled in distant lands in order to convert new people and start new faith communities.[7] To bring the 'good news' is always related to see new lands. Islam in Kenya, whether at the coast through mercantile trade networks and intermarriages or among the northern nomadic neighbours, has impacted on demographic patterns and settlements. One could state with certainty that some territories are predominantly Muslim or Christian or mixed. Towns in other parts of Kenya also have ethno-religious patterns such as Kampi Somalis, Majengos and Eastleigh Ndogos. Nomadic pastoralism is one livelihood strategy with strong spatial connotations. In most of coastal and northern towns, urban spaces are marked by magnificent mosques and the day and night calibrated temporarily by five calls for prayer. People gather at least five times at their local mosques. According to Kong (1993) mosques and other places of worships hence not only form centres for spiritual congregation but also are sacred markers of religious identity for the local populace. Mosques, as mentioned earlier, have custodians and committees. Use of pulpit is a highly guarded duty. Not anyone can preach. It is in the use and appropriation of mosque

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[6] *Maqām* is a Arabic term that mean locality, locality, a point or station. In every day Tablīghī usage it refers to the mosque one frequents for prayer and where the followers of the movement constitute a mosque-based consultative council.

[7] For more discussion on the emerging studies on religion and spatiality, see Warf, B. and S.Arias. (2009) and Chris C. Park (1994).

as centre for Tablīghī mobilisation and congregation that contestation and negotiation over sacred space matters. Because Tablīghī activities are often related with spatiality, it is important to take Tablīghī space, sacred and mundane, with seriousness it deserves.

Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1999) and *Rhythmanalysis*: *Space, Time and Everyday Life* (2010), postulates that human beings produced and reproduce spaces in which they live and that this project is shaped by interests of class, expert, grassroot and other contending forces. Spaces are never neutral. Agents who constitute users ascribed it variety of purposes and symbols. Such ascription of meaning to spaces and its usages are characterised by relations that range from domination to appropriation. As Molotch (1993, 888) puts 'people fight not only over a piece of turf, but about the sort of reality that it constitutes.' Tablīghī sacred space use alters and competes with the alternative mainstream versions held and revered by the ordinary mosque-goers and custodians of mosques. For Tablīghīs, the mosque is no longer a place of congregation for five daily prayers and a revered canopy for the religious elites but a venue for daily consultation, a platform for religious indoctrination, a circle for religious learning and a space for individual and communal spiritual retreat. In fact new spatial names are ascribed to these spaces and spatial practices associated with it, for example *markaz* and *maqāmī*.

Another aspect that runs deep within Lefebvrian works that shed some theoretical exposition in this study is the focus on the quotidian. Every day matters to a Tablīghī. The world is hence seen as a stage for performance of religiously sanctioned deeds on daily basis to earn pleasure of God and to secure an eternal life in paradise. Everything appears to be done at regular interval. The day has a rhythm even if one is not on a preaching mission. There are prescribed number of spiritual litanies for morning hours and more before retiring to bed. There are prescribed sets of supererogatory prayers. There are certain numbers of Qur'ānic chapters to be read. A certain numbers of Muslims are to be greeted on a daily basis. Some practices are daily such as text reading at home or consultative meetings with fellow, others twice weekly like *jaula* (Ar. neighbourhood patrol around vicinity of a local mosque to call people to Tablīghī activities) or *taʿlim* (Ar. religious educational instructions), and others monthly like joint area consultative retreat for local Tablīghīs, while others yearly like annual gatherings. For those on preaching tours, the day is calibrated by standardised programme that maximise their time and space use. To recreate a 'better' Muslim, Tablīghī Jamāʿat has therefore immensely invested in temporal and spatial practices that reconfigure existing versions of everyday life.

Related with spatial practices is territoriality. Religious groups have for ages created zones as territories of influence and jurisdiction (Hervieu-Leger 2002). Governments have states, counties and districts. Religious denominations have territorial units, parishes, dioceses and vicariates. Religious groups strategise to network the grassroot to the top through elaborate territorial structures run by selected individuals. This re-territorialisation may appropriate existing geographical and state administration boundaries or create new groupings. For Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya, re-territorialisation strategies had seen the movement create loose spatially defined units that links mosque-based units (*maqāmī*s) all the way to the international headquarters in Nizamuddin, New Delhi.

In the book *Transnational Muslim Politics* Mandaville (2002) theorizes on what happens when ideas become portable and travel. Mandaville identifies that in translocal spaces, that are often multidimensional and fluid, it is not just people and institutions that travel, ideas and theories do too. In the cultural politics of becoming, that which 'is' in one place becomes undone, translated and reinscribed. Exploring Edward Said's 'Travelling Theory' in *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Mandaville postulates that ideas and theories travel from person to person, situation to situation, period to period and that cultural and intellectual life of a society depends on circulation of ideas. The process of ideas becoming translocal is never smooth or unhindered. Just like humans and goods, ideas are noted negotiate borders a process that involves representation and institutionalisation different from those at the point of origin. This complex process, hence, has immense implications for transplantation, transference, circulation and commerce of ideas and theories. Mandaville further outlines the four stages of travelling theory as theorised by Said. The first being, the point of origin, where the ideas is originated, elaborated and enter everyday discourse. In our case, we may identify Muhammad Ilyās initial religious experimentation with his Mewati disciples in then British India. Second, the act of travel itself as theories or sets of ideas move from place of origin into different time and space. The 'vessel' could be migrant communities or exiled intellectuals. In our case, upon initial establishment of the movement, what can be called 'the way of doing IIylasi *daʿwa*' spread within the Indian subcontinent and then to Hejaz the land of pristine Islam, then to the United Kingdom and then finally to Africa. The time between initial elaboration of Tablīghī ideas and its arrival into East Africa is about 40 years. Who were the vessels? Tablīghī lay preachers took the new message to their fellow diasporic South Asians first. Third, the sets of ideas encounter conditions that mediate its acceptance, rejection or modification in new real time and space. Competing versions of similar ideas already in circulation front challenges for the new ideas. In our case, South Asians hence further

negotiated and culturally translated the revivalist ideas for themselves and later for their host communities. This process of transference and transplantation is shaped by the pre-existing Islamic ideas among the diverse South Asian Muslims and within the mainstream traditions followed by indigenous host societies. Finally, an idea transformed by its new use emerges. In our case, Tablīghī becomes a new Islamic tradition with considerable following at the grassroot level. As we shall discuss later within the thesis, this process of transplantation is continuously shaped and reshaped by various forces and local variations of 'being a Tablīghī' differs between zones and areas. In a sense, to follow the Ilyās ideas for a Borana Tablīghī in Mega in southern Ethiopia may be completely different from that of a Pakistani Tablīghī in the city of Raiwind.

To recap our discussion on the theoretical framework, we need to ask, how can we classify the Tablīghī Jamāʿat as a religious and social movement? Is it a sect or a cult? How does it fit in the vast array of Muslim groups and organisations? To answer this we need to sample the literature on church and sect theories as expounded by leading scholars such as Weber, Troeltsch and Niebuhr among others. Nuri Tinaz (2005: 63) states that social scientists have despite of diversity of religions attempted create categories to theoretically explain different forms of religious movements, organisations, beliefs and ideologies formulating typologies such as church, sect and cult. These categorisations are based on different teachings, objectives and perspectives, meaning systems and forms of organisations, orientations towards the world, and relations with society at large. Quoting Peter Berger (1954) Tinaz summarises the Weberian formulation of church and sect in this manner. Church is said to be an institution that administers religious sacrament in manner of a government ministry with membership, at least in theory, being compulsory and hence proves nothing about the qualities of its members. Sect on the other hand is argued have voluntary membership based on certain religious and ethical criteria. The distinction between sect and church is on the basis of charisma and its routinisation where in the former charisma is attached to the religious leader and the latter to the office. The process of growth of a sect to a church occurs with routinisation of charisma (Tinaz 2005: 66, Chalcraft 2008: 35). Sect has hence been defined as an exclusive tight-knit group that admits new members only once specific criteria have been fulfilled and in which membership implies both 'good character' and a monitoring of behaviour to ensure compliance with high moral standards (Kalberg: 2005; xxviii). Examining the rise of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in the mid-1920s in precarious political and social circumstances and laxity in religious observance faced by Muslims in British India, can one make a conclusive categorisation of the movement as a sect in relation to the mainstream

Sunni Islam predominant in the area? How about close resemblance of sect definition to the movement's stringent qualification as members based on commitment to travel regimes and retinue of unique social and religious pratices, emphasis on puritanism and return to fundamentals and its voluntary nature? Before we answer these, let us examine post-Weberian definitions and conceptualisation of church-sect theory especially by Ernst Troeltsch among others.

Troeltsch's (1931) *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* goes a step further than Weber's church-sect category to add mysticism (later theorised by subsequent scholars as cult) in the understanding of religious groups and shifts from focus on organisation to behaviour of members within each cluster (Swatos and Kivisto 1998). Troeltsch is argued to have posited that the church is overwhelmingly conservative, accepts the social order and dominates the masses; hence, in principle, it is universalistic while sects are comparatively small aiming for direct personal fellowship between members and renounce the idea of dominating the world and with attitude to the surrounding society being one of avoidance, and may be characterised by aggression or indifference (a characteristic of the movement under study). While churches utilise the state and the ruling classes and become part of the existing social order, sects are connected with the lower classes and the disaffected, a feature also observed in the field research on the movement. In church, asceticism is a means of acquiring virtue and of demonstrating a high level of religious achievement, whereas in sect it constitutes merely the principle of detachment from the world and opposition to established social institutions (Tinaz: 2005). Niebuhr's *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929) approach the church-sect categories from the perspective of a continuum determined by dynamic process of religious history rather than distinct and independent groups (Swatos and Kivisto 1998). Others such as Howard Becker reformulated the typologies in form of four categories: the ecclesia, the sect, the denomination and the cult (Becker 1932). Yinger in *Religion and the Struggle for Power* (1946) increased the limitations for specific points along the continuum, extending Becker's four types to six: cult, sect, established sect, class church/ denomination, ecclesia, and universal church in respect to the relations of the category to the social order mainly depicted in range of attitude such as acceptance, avoiding or aggressive (Swatos and Kivisto 1998, Tinaz 2005). In contemporary times, leading sociologists such as Wallis (1975), Beckford (1976), Stark and Bainbridge (1979) and Bird (1979) have tended to move away from the church-sect typology to focus on more sects and cults/New Religious movements and resultant typologies (Tinaz 2005).

A notable application of the church-sect theory to sociological study of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat was Ali's doctoral thesis (2006: 54-63). Ali reviews a host of literature tracing the gradual development of the Church-Sect theory and raises three shortcomings. First the theory is noted not to take into account the fact that not all religious movements start off as sects first. Secondly, citing Stark and Glock (1965), the author posits that many religious movements emerge without having the characteristics of a sect and they need not, contrary to the theory, draw their membership primarily from the lower class. The final point has direct implication on the study of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, Ali (2006: 62-63) states:

> Thirdly, in reference to other religions where there is no Church and sectarian cleavages are based on politics, the theory falls short of providing a comprehensive explanation for the origin and development of religious movements. For instance, within Islam the division between sects such as Isma'ilis and Jafaris is premised on politics. Furthermore, many Islamic movements such as the Tablīghī Jamāʿat do not seek to progress toward the "Church" form. And in the Tablīghī Jamāʿat's seventy-five year history it has always worked, as a distinct religious movement, within the broader framework of *Sunni* orthodoxy. Despite these limitations of the Church-Sect theory, it is still a useful framework and if supported by Deprivation theory, the development of religious revivalism in contemporary modernity becomes much easier to understand.

In conclusion, while the church-sect theory is plausible theoretical framework that can facilitate better understanding of religious revivalism and particularly the growth and establishment of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat especially with respect to membership, attitude towards society, avowedly apolitical stance, in-group solidarity, withdrawal to religious travel regimes as ways of inculcating ethical and spiritual self as well as public display of puritanism and stringent private and public religious practices, often most proponents of the above versions of the theory had formulated them with empirical data from Judeo-Christian traditions and that history of sectarianism within Islam has often been initiated by factors such as political differences, historical peculiarities and varying interpretation of core texts of Islam. The main two divisions within Islam, Sunni and Shiite, are in essence initially separated by succession debates and political schisms that later expressed itself in divergent attitude on some core doctrine of Muslim leadership during the first century of Islam. The members of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat sees themselves as a 'missionary' wing of the Sunni orthodoxy and their vast array of practices as a revival of the pristine Islam. It is common for mainstream religious traditions to declare new groups unorthodoxical and delegitimate their practices as innovative departure from the path laid down by the pious ancestors of the faith. However despite apparent inapplicability of the theory, polemical discourses levelled by mainstream Sunni leadership in various part of the research area often depict the movement as a heretical sect or even a cult.

This debate shall be revisited in the main body of thesis. Tablīghī Jamāʿat's foray into northern Kenya is not free from such depictions, for instance as in the quote below:

> We were fought very much. We were called names, all sorts of names. They said we brought a new religion from India. We were denied a chance to preach in almost all mosques in the area. Not only that we were called a sect that is interested in destroying Islam instead of building it. They even said that we were being paid by our foreign masters to destabilise the religion and that what we were doing is nothing but *bid'a*.[8]

1.7 Scope, Limitations and Challenges

The Borana straddle the Kenya-Ethiopia border. In Kenya they are found in Moyale, Sololo, Marsabit, Isiolo and in a number of informal settlements in and around Nairobi. In Ethiopia, their ancestral home, they are found in the southern districts of Oromia Regional State. In most of these areas, the Gabra, the Burji, the Garre and the Sakuye are their neighbours. Their language, Borana, is largely spoken by most of residents in this upper eastern region of Kenya. Because the region is vast, two research sites were chosen, namely, Moyale in Marsabit county and Merti in Isiolo county.
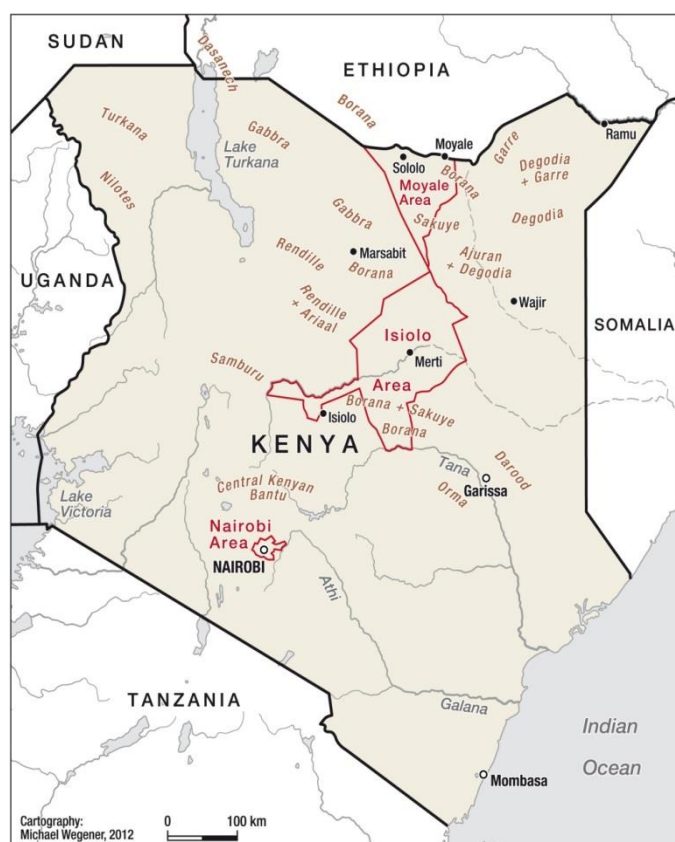
Map 1 Map of Kenya showing the research field sites

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[8] Group Discussions with Mamed Roba, Mamed Arero and other Tablīghī s, September 2009, Moyale.

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Moyale is right on the border of Kenya and Ethiopia. Moyale town and its environs is highly cosmopolitan. It is also a site of confluence of cultures and Islamic traditions. It was once a bastion of Ṣūfī brotherhoods and now fertile grounds for growth of reformist Islam, including the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. It has a different historical trajectory unlike the other selected field site. The Borana in Moyale area are close to the revered centres of Borana culture such as Dirre and Liban. The Borana in this area often travel across the international borders for varieties of reasons ranging from attendance of traditional ceremonies to preaching among their kin. They also compete with other Cushitic communities for resources, symbolic and real. This field site hence avails a different Tablīghī growth trajectory and strategies as well as position the Tablīghīs in this area as a bridge for other Borana speaking adherents opting to preach among the local Borana and the Borana in Ethiopia.

The other research site chosen is Merti. The area is located in Isiolo north constituency and is largely occupied by the Waso Borana. The Waso Borana were once separated from their kin in Marsabit county and Ethiopia due to restriction imposed by the British colonialists. This separation resulted in their faster adoption of Islam and Somali culture from their neighbours the Somali (Baxter 1954). The Waso Borana also experienced firsthand the brutal repression of post-independence secessionist struggles – the so called *shifta* war – initiated by the Somali and sections of Borana. In post-colonial era and especially after the mid-1980s massive investment by Muslim charitable institutions from the Middle East resulted in the construction of numerous mosques and *madrasa*s and subsequent growth of a local religious elite and an increased revivalism of moderately reformist Islam among the local masses. The Borana of Waso also travel to and have increasingly settled in ethnically mixed northern frontier town of Isiolo.

Merti is also home to the first Tablīghī-built mosque (*markaz*) in the Borana speaking region. The Tablīghīs strategically chose the town's *markaz* to serve as the operational headquarters for one of the larger territorial units of the movement called the Waso sub-*ḥalqa*. Each sub-*ḥalqa* is composed of several *qarya*s (Ar. a village, in the Tablīghī usage, it refers to an area). Each *qarya* is constituted by a handful of mosques. Individual Tablīghīs are required to be members of a semi-permanent council that meets daily in the local mosque. This re-territorialisation strategy that seeks to establish the movement in the national landscape places the Waso sub-*ḥalqa* under the Nairobi *ḥalqa*. Moyale on the other hand is a sub-*ḥalqa* under the Garissa *ḥalqa*. The three regional *ḥalqa*s of Mombasa, Nairobi and Garissa constitute the Kenya national *ḥalqa*. Therefore Moyale has been chosen as a Borana majority sub-*ḥalqa* under Garissa regional *ḥalqa* and Merti as one of the most important centres in Waso sub-

ḥalqa that fall administratively under the Nairobi *ḥalqa*. These two sites despite having different histories of the spread of Islam are today re-linked by religious mobility established by the movement. The sites offer a viable representative sample and case studies to explore the localisation of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in the Borana speaking area of northern Kenya. Though these two sites were chosen, national and regional Tablīghī activities that require regular participation of members from Moyale and Waso has been given special attention.

Detailed description of the growth and expansion of the transnational Islamic movement in western part of Kenya, the towns in the Rift Valley and at the coast is outside the scope of this thesis. Special attention has been given to the Orma of Tana River. The Orma are the southernmost Oromo speaking group. Their language, Orma, is mutually intelligible to the Borana and culturally similar in terms of social organisation and way of life. Tana River falls under the Mombasa *ḥalqa*. As we shall discuss later, the Borana speaking Tablīghīs frequently travel to Tana River and the Orma and Wardhey adherents preach in the Borana majority regions.

Finally these sites were selected for practical reasons. I speak the Borana language and have access the history, cultures and the topography of the region. I have done previous field researches on different Islamic research themes and have established reliable network of core informants and gained confidence of the religious leaders and ordinary believers. I have excellent proficiency in the Borana and Swahili; the two most important languages used in proselytism among the Borana speaking communities and hence can comprehend and analyse the various teachings and informal discussions with great ease. Because of close relations I have built with the local Tablīghīs I have had unrestricted access not only to the national and grassroot gatherings but also had numerous one-on-one detailed discussions on various aspects of the movement with relative ease.

1.8 Challenges and Limitations

One of the major challenges of doing research on the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya is its fluid and secretive nature. As mentioned earlier, with a loose network of committed members running the various grassroot, regional and national territorial units on rotational basis, it is hard to identify clearly the chain of command and important persons to contact at the beginning of the research. Decisions concerning whether to grant interviews or avail information must often be discussed in local mosque-based consultative councils. This at time delayed the flow of information. Individual Tablīghīs are also wary of non-Tablīghīs interested in their affairs for any other reasons apart from participation in their *daʿwa* tours. The history of the movement in Kenya appears to matter less as a topic of discussion.

Fortunately there are a number of Borana speaking Tablīghīs who willingly labour to discuss various practices and teachings of the movement despite cautious attitude of some of their counterpart. Anonymity has been maintained throughout the thesis. It was the request of most informants that their identity be kept confidential. Except when stated otherwise, pseudonyms have been used.

Furthermore, my initial contacts and relationship with some of the prominent Tablīghīs from the field sites allowed me to access and attend national leadership forums, general gatherings in Nairobi and other towns, visits to Borana speaking groups on *daʿwa* tours and accompany travel groups for specified number of days. Some of these forums revealed hitherto unobserved sides of the transnational movement such as group and individual evaluation and intricacies of collective decision making that is not free from rivalry, domination and tension.

It is unfortunate that despite the fact that the movement in Kenya generates tons of crucial statistical data on performance and growth on regular basis, such data are rarely availed to non-Tablīghīs. The movement meets at different territorial levels to evaluate of past activities, arrange for execution of present events and plan for future prospects on weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually and annual basis. In these intricate and often bureaucratic appraisals customised forms are filled and sent to higher offices until it reaches the national office and then it is summarised and sent to the international headquarters in Nizamuddin in New Delhi in India. The lack of access to pivotal data on movement's growth in totality has however made me more observant in documenting data on progress during the national and regional public gatherings and in specialised national leadership conventions over the period of the research. A number of times I was lucky to get the concrete duly filled forms. This, coupled with real time observation of the appraisal sessions, have enriched the field data and filled the missing classified information.

As mentioned earlier, the movement in Kenya shuns publicity. It stays clear of the formal and modern ways of advertisements such as radio, posters, internet and television. Events are publicised through the word of mouth via networks of committed followers based in various mosques in the country. However being based in Germany for my studies placed me in precarious position as I do not get to observe announcement and mobilisation of Tablīghīs and non-Tablīghīs for national and regional events except during extended field researches. Fortunately I have been able to travel on short notices to Kenya for varying lengths of time to participate in these events. I have been able to make calls to close informants who kindly update me of upcoming events and developments. In a sense, despite being away from Kenya,

modern means of communication has facilitated continuous and engaged participation in the day to day activities of the field sites. It is as if one is in the field always.

One of the tools that best captures the essence of transnational gatherings and other observable phenomena of the movement is photography. However, the movement in Kenya explicitly bars taking of pictures of the gathered congregants. Those who break this rule are often brought before national leadership council for further investigation. Such persons may be handed to the security agencies that covertly provide logistical support or just banned from attending any of their subsequent meetings. Except a few important shots, much of the data has relied on deep description, formal interviews and informal conversations and spatial reconstruction of Tablīghī gathering and sacred space usage.

It is also important to note that despite enormous growth of the movement in Kenya, Tablīghī Jamāʿat is still continuously evolving and becoming complex. New directives from international headquarters are conveyed on regular basis. New forms of mobility such as *masturat* Jamāʿat for women are gaining currency.[9] Lists of approved books and their preferred use are continuously re-evaluated. More and more Borana speaking Tablīghīs are spending months at Nizamuddin centres and in other parts of the Indian subcontinent bringing with them new embodied practices and teachings. This thesis is therefore not an exhaustive description of the movement among the Borana. It is limited to attempts to reconstruct the history and contemporary trends within the movement in the last 10 years and its relation with other Islamic traditions within the same period. Any subsequent developments after February 2012 may not be reflected within its pages.

1.8.   Methodology

This study is interdisciplinary in nature, as it has incorporated methodologies from disciplines such as anthropology, geography, sociology and religious studies. This has helped in presenting a holistic picture to the subject under study. The basic approaches used in the research were historical, analytical, ethnographic and comparative. Historical approach was used to trace the history of Islam in the northern part of the country and also to reconstruct the trajectories of growth of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in the country. Ethnographic approach was particularly insightful as the study had to rely on thick description of various facets of the transnational movement. The approach strengthened materials collected through other

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[9] *Masturat* is an Arabic word that implies 'the chaste', the concealed, the hidden, the masked, and the invisible. In Tablīghī Jamāʿat circles the term is used in reference to the women travel teams. These specialised teams are composed of married couples. The rules of decency and modesty (Ar. ʿawra) are maintained.

approaches. Tablīghī phenomena differ between field sites and hence the need for comparative approach in capturing the diverse manifestation of the movement. Primarily the historical trajectories of Islam among the Waso Borana and Isiolo and that of Moyale Borana are different and so was the spread of the movement, membership and contemporary structures. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) confirms that ethnographic work has the following features: people's actions and accounts are studied in everyday context rather than settings created by the researcher, data are collected from range of sources including documentary evidence of various kinds but primarily participant observation and informal conversations, data collection for most part is relatively unstructured in that it does not necessarily involve fixed and specific research design and categories for interpretation are generated out of data analysis, focus is on fairly small scale setting or groups of people, and finally analysis of data involve interpretations of meanings, functions and consequences of human actions and institutional practices and how these are implicated in local and wider context.

Purposive sampling technique was used to identify the key Tablīghī and non-Tablīghī informants. A number of Tablīghīs are particularly cautious in discussing matters and maintain reservation to take part in formal interviews. This is mainly the case among non-secularly educated adherents. Informants from former research projects were among the initial contacts and they facilitated inclusion of more qualified informants through snow-balling technique. Tablīghīs chosen included both regulars and novice members. Care was taken so that the sample group was not affected sectarian, ethnic, age or educational bias.

Informed consent was sought before any formal and informal interviews, an important step in field research (Mauss and Allen 2007, Vanderstoep and Johnston 2009: 14, Berg 2001: 50). Anonymity and confidentiality was maintained so as to protect the identities of informants. To most Tablīghīs what matters is how to strengthen the movement's programmes rather than document its contemporary history and trends. One informant explicitly expresses why Tablīghīs are wary of documentation, whether by followers on its various practices or by outsiders as academic research, about the movement:

> In the Tablīghī Jamāʿat there is no documentation. *Wazee*, the elders, discourage documentation. They do not approve of even these things we are doing done for studies. They refuse. For example, the *sitta siffat*, one can write the whole thing that I have told you in a book form so that it can be read for future. The elders say no. Those are dead words. Once something has been written it becomes dead. That is what they say. It is said that the activities become less once it has been written and the efforts to implement would be less. But if it remains oral and practical, you learn it through mobility and effort of *daʿwa*.[10]

Then he makes claims for need for writing and research saying that:

> Though the elders have discouraged the writings, we have learned about the life of Muhammad Ilyās through the books. It is important to write. The reason for refusing documentation is that it lessens activities and brings about laziness and this is disliked by the *jarole* (Bor. the elders of the movement). They say that they want people to move. The *kundi* (Sw. a travel team) that is encouraged in the movement is not the one that moves with planes but the ones who go out on foot. Because it is more involving.

Obtaining consent is one of the thorniest issues for ethnographers and participant observers as it involves seeking approved, at times from a few representatives of a group so as to observe, participate and record words, thoughts and behaviours of individuals (Murchison 2010:61, Hume and Mulcock 2o4). My first field visit was in April 2009. I was lucky to participate for three days in a Tablīghī convention that brought together movement's members from Isiolo, Waso and Meru areas. I was fascinated by the active participation of the Waso Borana Tablīghīs at the convention as the region was one of my prime field sites. One of my close informants introduced me to the *amīr (*Ar. leader) of the Waso sub-*ḥalqa*. The *amīr*, an elderly popular lay preacher, then fixed an appointment for me in an hour so that I could brief the Tablīghī consultative council of the Waso sub-*ḥalqa* about my identity, my research aims and my final objective. The council composed of about seven individuals listened to my personal history and academic introduction as well as the reasons why their movement constituted an interesting subject. As the introductory meeting was held in open mosque space, other Borana Tablīghīs kept joining in. It was a hospitable reception as I was offered fruits and drinks and informed that the best way of learning about the movement is not by a pen and paper to jolt points but travels with the Tablīghīs. My subsequent interactions with the Waso Tablīghīs were hence smooth and cooperative. Similar introduction and consent was sought in Moyale and among the Borana speaking circles at national conventions. By the time of the end of field excursions, considerable numbers of Tablīghīs from Moyale, Marsabit, Isiolo and Waso were acquainted to me.

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[10] Group Discussions with Abdi Rashid, Abdi Hakim, and Galgalo, July, 2010, Moyale.

The sample population was categorised into three clusters namely, Tablīghīs, Ṣūfīs and *Salafī*s. Each of the clusters was composed of informants from three field zones: Moyale, Merti and Isiolo and Nairobi. In each of the clusters care was taken to include leaders as well as ordinary followers of the religious traditions. Another special sample was the Borana traditional elders whose knowledge of the social and religious change within the community was crucial in capturing reliable data on conversions to Islam. Informants were much more than interview partners and providers of insider insights, they served throughout the research periods as teachers, mentors and guides and an archive for reference and clarification of concepts and practices.

Qualitative methods of data collection were utilised. Interviews, formal and informal, were conducted. The interviews conducted are categorised into two types: individual and group discussions. Semi-structured and unstructured questions were availed to the key informants. Unlike the structured sets of questions that delimits the depth and direction of interview data, semi-structured and unstructured sets of questions allowed for flexibility and freedom of the informants to include fundamental issues initially not included in the discussion. Informal interviews/conversations were especially crucial source of primary data. In total 46 interviews were conducted. See the table below.

	Data	Moyale	Merti-Isiolo	Nairobi	Total
1.	Interviews with Tablīghīs	5	4	4	13
2.	Interviews with *Salafī*s	3	6	-	9
3.	Interviews with Ṣūfīs	6	3	-	9
4.	Interviews with Borana elders on history	8	4	-	12
5.	Events attended	3	5	4	12
6.	Group discussions	4	2	2	8

Table 1 Lists of interview information.

Apart from interviews, participant observations were done at various Tablīghī and non-Tablīghī congregational gatherings. Participation and observation are two different things and may appear as hardly possible to simultaneously execute. Can one observe without

participation? It is hard to maintain objective stance as a detached observer. Murchison (2010: 84) notes that that in order to learn about the complex dimensions of society and culture in action, the ethnographer almost necessarily has to become involved on a personal level to one degree or another. Hence one must balance observation and participation. It is only through participation that one can gain the emic (insider) perspective of the research subjects. Complete observer may appear to maintain detachment and distance from the research subject but would certainly miss on the experiences of the informants but complete participant may grow closer to the research subject and lose academic distance. Care was taken so that participation and observation did not compromise the ethnographic subject. In our case, both observation and participation were merged as an approach.[11] Being a Muslim, I participated in regular daily prayers while attending Tablīghī events and when in company of Tablīghīs. Because hundreds of non-Tablīghī Muslims are encouraged to attend Tablīghī gatherings at mosques and *markaze*s around the country, I gained unlimited access to Tablīghī activities. In order to blend with my research subjects and gain acceptability and confidence of my informants, I at times wore Tablīghī-style short robe, loose trousers and a Muslim. Whenever I travelled with the Tablīghīs or attended *ijtimāʿ* (Ar. national congregational convention) or *jor* (zonal convention), I carried with me moderate beddings and Tablīghī texts. I slept like the rest of the Tablīghīs on the floor of the mosque. I also ate and drank same food after payment of my stipulated daily contribution. I affiliated myself to members of the Borana Jamāʿat from Waso or Moyale sub-*ḥalqa* at the national gatherings. In fact I slept among the Tablīghīs from these regions, some of whom were close informants. Events attended ranged from national *ijtimāʿ*s to local mosque Tablīghī tours. These events not only allowed for fresh data collections but provided opportunity to observe repetitive patterns in practices and schedules as well as diverse innovations and variations of similar events between regions and across time. This kind of data is crucial in making analysis on dynamism and resilience of the movement within Kenya. The table below summarises the nature and the location of events attended.

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[11] During the national *ijtimāʿ* of the year 2010, a close informant I met asked me a puzzling question on participation-observation issue. He jokingly inquired, are you here today for your books (implying my current research) or for spiritual nourishment?' I answered him, certainly both. Then he went ahead and encouraged me to go register for international travel to the centre in India or to Pakistan where according to him I shall see the 'proper' Tablīghī Jamāʿat. When I objected to being still novice in matters of the movement, he asserted that I was part of *ʿulamāʾ* though a secular one and that my travel would open more avenues of understanding for my research. Personal conversation with Muhamud Bonaya, May 2010, Baitul Maal Markaz, Nairobi.

No	Event participated in	Location	Host unit	Nature of event	Congregants
1.	Isiolo *Jor*	Isiolo Jamia Mosque	Isiolo sub- *ḥalqa*	Regional gatherings for Waso, Isiolo and Meru sub- *ḥalqa*s	600
2.	Waso sub- *ḥalqa Shūra*	Isiolo Jamia Mosque	Isiolo sub- *ḥalqa*	Consultative meetings for Waso Tablīghīs	30
3.	*Majma Jor* for *Qudamā'*	Baitul Maal Markaz, Nairobi	Tablīghī National headquarters	Leadership consultative forum for Kenya Tablīghīs	500
3	Nairobi *ijtimāʿ*	Baitul Maal Markaz, Nairobi	National Tablīghī headquarters	General gathering for all Tablīghīs	15000
4.	*khurūj fī sabīlillāh*	Moyale	Uran *Qarya*	Travel with Tablīghīs	10
5.	*Jaula*	Taqwa Masjid	Merti *Qarya*	Neighbourhood patrol and sermons	40
6.	Visit to Tablīghī *I'tikāf* session	Ansar Masjid	Isiolo sub- *ḥalqa*	10 day spiritual retreat during the month of Ramaḍān	50
7.	*Kitab al- ẓuhr*	Meru Jamia Mosque	Meru sub- *ḥalqa*	Text reading after mid-day prayers	40
8.	*Purana Saathi jor*	Baitul Maal Markaz, Nairobi	National Tablīghī headquarters	Leadership consultative forum for Kenya Tablīghīs	3000
9.	*Bayān Maghrib, Taʿlim*	Osman Qorane Mosque	Moyale sub- *ḥalqa*	Sermons, recruitment of travel teams	30
10.	*Nuṣra* to a Borana speaking Jamāʿat	Kwa Njenga Mosque, Nairobi	A Borana speaking preaching team	Courtesy call, hospitality visit to a Borana travel team	10
11.	*Ziyārāt* to Mukuru Quarry Mosque	Mukuru Quarry Mosque	A Borana speaking preaching team	Visit to a neighbouring mosque, courtesy call on local Borana Muslims in Nairobi	6

Table 2 List of events participated in field research

The table below summarises the information on field trips and its duration

No	Nature of Field Trip	Dates of field visit	Areas visited	No of days
1.	Pilot Study	April 2009	Isiolo, Nairobi	20
2.	First Field Trip	August-October 2009	Nairobi, Isiolo, Moyale, Meru, Merti, Sololo	90
3.	Second Field Trip	May-July 2010	Nairobi, Isiolo, Moyale, Marsabit, Merti, Kinna, Garba Tulla, Meru,	90
4.	Comparative Field Visit	October 2011	Dewsbury Tablīghī Markaz, the United Kingdom	3
5.	Follow-up Field Visit	December 2011 January, February 2012	Nairobi, Isiolo, Mombasa	40

Table 3 List of field visits

Tablīghī events were a rich source of informative primary data. Field journal was maintained and observation summary were taken on various practices of the movement after events. Except with informed consent and mostly in individual and group interviews, tape recording was avoided. Note taking especially during Tablīghī gatherings were avoided. No one wants to stand out even if he is granted privileged access. It is important to note that in some contexts, however 'well socialised' the hosts, open and continuous note-taking will be perceived as inappropriate or threatening, and will prove disruptive. In other contexts fairly extensive notes can be recorded without undue disruption (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 143). Participation in and observation of *taʿlim* (educational session), *bayān* (motivational sermons), *jaula* (neighbourhood tours), *ḥirāsa (*sentry during gatherings), *khidma* (cooking and related services) and *istiqbāl* (reception team) was enriched by congregational activities such as communal eating, shopping and informal discussions. Care was particularly given to how the Tablīghīs deliver their messages to various ethnic groups. In a sense, observations centred on the place of the Borana and other communities from the north in both national and regional events as well as their integration within the national structures of the movement. Special attention was given to Tablīghī practices of place making and use.

Tablīghī practices are largely centred around mosques. In Kenya, there are a few mosques that were built and managed by the movement as their own centres. These are called *markaze*s (sing. *markaz*). In places where they do not have a *markaz*, local Tablīghīs identify and use 'a friendly' mosque as their base. During the research, the following *markaze*s were visited:

1. Ansar mosque Isiolo
2. Masjid Ali Mombasa
3. Baitul Maal Nairobi
4. Masjid Quba Merti
5. Prison Masjid Moyale
6. Dewsbury Tablīghī Markaz, the European headquarters of the movement, the United Kingdom

A rich array of Tablīghī prescribed literature also were used in the study. These materials are widely used and were available at subsidized prices at Tablīghī gatherings. The literatures include *Fazā'il A'māl*, *Muntakhab Aḥadīth*, *Riyāḍ-al-ṣāliḥīn*, *dhikr* pamphlets and biographical books on founders of the movement. Audio-visual materials related to the fundamental questions of the research were also collected and analysed. These include audio-visual polemical talk by Sheikh Said Bafana and audio-cassette recordings by Sheikh Umal of Eastleigh Nairobi. Both materials contained polemical information against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. Recorded audio and audio-visual sermons by Borana speaking sheikhs such as Sheikh Hussein Abdalla, Maalim Dabaso Dogo and Sheikh Adan Doyo were consulted for historical and contemporary Islamic trends in the region. *Arga Dageti*, a popular Borana audio cassette on predictions of future events and social change among the community was analysed. The themes in the cassette allude to Borana conversions to missionary religions such as Islam and Christianity in an eschatological fashion. Some of the eschatological messages contained therein had been sparingly utilised by Muslim *daʿwa* groups in attempt to convert followers of the Borana traditional customs and religion. Secondary comparative data include books on the movement, on the Borana and various ethno-religious communities in Kenya, on concepts such as mobility, transnationality, revivalism, spatiality and on Islamic history in Eastern Africa were collected and incorporated into the thesis argumentation.

Data collection, interpretation and in-depth analysis were a continuous process throughout the field research. Transcription of interviews and other translated materials and field description and summaries provided some of the primary data for analysis. Oral data were transcribed and translated from various languages like the Swahili and Borana into English. Spaces and movements are essential components of ethnographic studies (Murchison; 2010:131). The Tablīghīs occupy transnational space. They move between spaces and within spaces. Most of their practices rely on spatiality for its success. Spaces at national conventions are demarcated

on territorial and linguistic origin to allow for customised cultural translation of the Tablīghī ideas. Hence, within this study ethnographic maps have been given high priority. The ethnographic maps were used to describe the territorialisation strategies that curve up the national landscape into spheres of influence, to explore politics of sacred space use during Tablīghī conventions, to examine politics of Tablīghī mobility for *daʿwa* tours and to analyze politics of Tablīghī mosque appropriation and contestation at the grassroot levels. Organisational charts were also drawn and incorporated as part of the analysis of the Tablīghī faith bureaucracy in Kenya. Themes that run through interviews and conversations were categorized, coded, sorted and typologies that emerged were merged with comparative data from secondary sources and infuse within the body of the thesis.

1.9 Conclusion

Tablīghī Jamāʿat remains one of the least researched religious phenomena in Kenya. This is largely due to its quietist stance. However it is one of the most active *daʿwa* outfit with immense presence even at the grassroot levels. The members are renowned for frequent mobility and large scale annual congregations. In Kenya, membership is fluid, diverse and multifaceted. It brings together the Somali, Swahili, Borana, Digo, Muslims of South Asian origins and even fellow Tablīghīs from neighbouring countries in engaged interactions and networks. These interactions have led to resilience of this transnational movement. The question that forms the central theme of this thesis is, what happens when such a movement crosses international and national borders in order to preach, recruit and grow among rapidly Islamising communities. Taking the Borana as the starting point, this study attempts to describe, document and analysis the localisation of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya in general and in the northern part of Kenya particular. In the following chapter, we shall focus on the history of Islam among the Borana speaking communities of northern Kenya. Chapter Three delves into the historical and contemporary issues pertaining to the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in the country. Basically it is divided into two sub-sections. The first part focuses on the origin and expansion of the movement across the world and explores the history and ethno-religious composition of the Kenyans of Asian descent, a heterogeneous group that has come to play a pivotal role in the establishment and expansion of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya. The second part outlines a brief history of the movement in Kenya before examining its emerging faith bureaucracy that governs decision making and *daʿwa* strategies. Chapter Four explores three themes that make the movement a unique revivalist group, namely, Tablīghī sacred spaces such as mosques and *markaze*s, Tablīghī regime of reform like ideology, mobility-related

practices, congregational gatherings and the place of gender within the movement in Kenya. Chapter Five positions the experiences and aspirations of the Borana Tablīghīs within the national chapter of the movement and analyses the strategies applied by the local Borana followers in order to revive the faith among their co-ethnics. The chapter interrogates the concepts of contextualised *daʿwa*. It examines the participation of the Borana followers in national events and *daʿwa* tours within their own regions and in neighbouring countries. It especially analyses the cultural translation of the messages of the movement to fit the interests and concerns of the Borana speaking communities and how the movement has re-linked culturally similar communities through the platform created by the Tablīghī networks. In this chapter, we also focus on descriptive case studies of the Tablīghī evaluation sessions in which the followers gather on regular basis to exchange and deliberate on matters of past progress and future prospects. Because these appraisal sessions brings together local Borana Tablīghīs with their counterpart from various parts of the country and the world in mutual exchange about the past, present and the future of the movement, it offers perhaps the best case study to explore the interface of the global and local in the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in northern Kenya. Chapter Six focuses on the Tablīghī relations with other Islamic traditions in the region. The relations though is characterised externally by mutual co-existence and co-operation, there exist growing polemical and counter-polemical discourses between the Tablīghīs and the earlier traditions. In Chapter Seven, we go back to the main focus of the study and in the first part of the chapter explore how the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in the northern Kenya is both intimately local and intricately global through an analytical prism. The chapter also summarises the main arguments of the thesis and forge the way forward for further academic inquiry into the growing influence of the transnational movement in the 21st century Africa.

Chapter Two

Islam among the Borana

2.1 Introduction

In his seminal work on the social organisation of Borana of the then Northern Frontier District (NFD), Baxter (1954) makes an insightful observation. He notes that 'almost all of the Sakuye and the Boran of Isiolo District are Mohamedans; almost all the Borana of other districts are Pagans' and that the former being partly detached from the rest of the Borana, have adopted Islam with Somali tinge.[12] Today, 60 years since this written work, the Borana from Marsabit County are largely Muslims, a trend that begs a thorough scrutiny. It is not only among the Borana of Kenya that Islam made foothold, Gayo Boru, a Borana Muslim elder from Sololo recalls praying in congregation with visiting delegates and with some membership of *Yaa*, a semi-permanent residential resettlement of the *Gada* Council, the highest decision making body of the community. He notes of presence of mosques, churches and schools in towns and settlements in the vast rangelands of Dirre and Liban.[13] While we may not be able to give a detailed historical account for the reasons for conversion, in this chapter we shall trace the gradual spread of Islam and regional and ethnic dynamics of the religious change within the larger northern Kenya.

The Borana, a semi-nomadic Cushitic cattle-raising community, found across the national frontiers of Kenya and Ethiopia are renowned not for the membership within global Muslim polity but as ardent followers of their age-old institutions such as duo religio-political system of *Qallu* and *Gada* and adaptive rangeland management practices. Their abode, shared with other culturally similar communities, stretches from the southern plains of Dirre and Liban in Ethiopia to riverine regions along Uaso Nyiro River to Isiolo in Kenya. Because of observation of their customary laws and their indigenous institutions, they have come over the years to symbolise the archetypical Oromo group. As their livelihood depended largely on management of livestock, the community has historically moved from one place to another in

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[12] Baxter, P. T. W. (1954) pp. iv-v.

[13] Gayo Boru opines 'I have been to *Yaa*. We did prayers in congregations with some attendances from the Yaa settlement. Our meat was even slaughtered and cooked separately. In Southern part of Oromia regional state, there is increased sedentarisation along main roads. Many have abandoned the bush nomadic life. In many settlements, there are schools, mosques, water dams and churches. There are no Borana settlements in which you do not find a mosque. Some may miss churches though. I have prayed in mosques in places like Borbor, Dhaas, Sood, Mega, Nagelle, Dubluq, Diid Hara (in two to three places), Silal, Melbana, and Boku Lugoma. Personal conversation with Gayo Boru, Sololo, June 2010.

search of pastures and water. This meant continual interaction with other pastoralist communities through alliance and networks of trade and exchange but also clashes over resources. The colonial period separated the Kenyan Borana from their Ethiopian co-ethnics but also put permanent boundaries between them and other pastoralist groups hence constructing ethnic enclaves in post-colonial and Kenya (Aguilar, 1996: 352). This however did not prevent social exchanges and changes initiated during the colonial period, prime being their mass conversion to Islam. It is to this point that which shall return as we explore the history of the research area. Islam among the Borana as a mass religious phenomenon is a relatively recent development. This conversion, though gradual in the colonial period and intensive in the post-colonial period, deserves a detailed academic scrutiny. The questions worth asking are: who were the proselytisers that carried out these conversions? What are/were the motivations for the conversions? How were the conversions carried out? What impact do the conversions have on being a Muslim and Borana at the same time? Are there global trends impacting on Islam among the Borana? How does their membership in the *umma* impact on their relations with other ethnic groups that are Muslims and with fellow Borana who are either followers of indigenous beliefs or Christians?

2.2 Northern Kenya: the history of land and People

Oromo belongs to the Cushitic branch of Afro-asiatic language family along with Somali, Afar and other languages such Rendille, Burji and Konso. In terms of geographical extension and number of speakers, Oromo is one of the five or six important languages of Africa. It is spoken as a majority language in west-central and southern Ethiopia with exception of Ogaden area in the east and the Omo River area to the south-west. (Stroomer 1995, 1987: 1) The language has five varieties namely: Orma (Kenya), Borana-Guji-Arsi (Ethiopia/Kenya/Somalia), West Central (Ethiopia), Eastern (Ethiopia), and Waata (Kenya/Ethiopia). [14] Borana is widely spoken in Kenya and Ethiopia by Borana Gutu ('proper'), Gabra, Garre, Sakuye, sections of Ajuran and Burji. The majority of Oromo speaking groups in Kenya are found in Marsabit, Isiolo, Mandera, Wajir, Tana River and Nairobi regions. *2009 Population and Housing Census Results* indicate that in Kenya Borana, Gabra and Orma number 161,399; 89,515; 66,275 persons respectively. The Census also puts the figure of the Kenyan-Somali as 6th most populous ethnic group in Kenya with 2,385,572 persons, a figure that elicited debates about accuracy of the demographic survey. The Census

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[14] http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=gax accessed on 16th October, 2011 at 09.00.

results do not give figures for Burji, Garre, Ajuran, Konso and Waata even though the census enumerators manual allocate codes for each of these groups. It is also possible that bilingual Garre and many of Borana speaking Ajuran were counted under the code of Kenya-Somali and that Sakuye, Burji, Konso and Waata could have been counted separately but their number was never indicated in the general results. Isiolo and Marsabit are among the least populated counties in Kenya with 143,294 and 291,166 inhabitants. In Isiolo, apart from the Borana, Meru, Turkana and the Somali constitute significant numbers. Borana predominate the northern dry hinterlands on both sides of the Uaso Nyiro River, mainly Merti, Sericho, Kom, Garba Tulla, Kinna and Modogashe while Meru and Turkana are found in the commercial hub of Isiolo town and Ngare Mara and Kipsing respectively. Marsabit County is home to Samburu, Rendille, Turkana, Dasanech, Gabra, Konso, Burji, Somali and Borana. There are descendants of Somali, Indian and Hadrami Arab merchants in urban centres of Moyale and Marsabit. Apart from Borana widely spoken by many residents and smaller local languages, the inhabitants of the region, especially the educated generation, speak Swahili and English. The use of Borana is particularly pronounced in Moyale, Sololo, Marsabit, Garba Tulla, Kinna, Maikona, Butte, and Isiolo urban centres.

Borana descent system, notes Bassi (1994: 18), is patrilineal and segmented and that at no level of segmentation are descent group bound by residential norms, so that members of any section may be found in local communities. The group is divided into two exogamous moieties: *Sabho* and *Goona*. The moiety and clan system of the Borana, observes Baxter (1954: 75-78), is as a system, neat and arbitrary and the members of both moieties are distributed throughout Borana country and neither moieties nor clans of which they composed are territorial groups. Moieties are further segmented into *gosa*, then into *mana*, then into *balbala*. (Bassi, 1994: 18) *Sabho* moiety is divided into *Digalu*, *Mattaari* and *Karrayyu* clans while *Goona* is composed into *Harroresa* and *Fullellee*, each further subdivided into seven clan descents.[15] Each moiety has a *Qallu*, a revered ritual specialist ('priest-king') believed to be of divine origin and it is this institution that distinguishes the Borana from 'junior' groups such as Sakuye, Wata and Gabra. Pilgrimages to the Qallu are known as *muda*. Historically the moieties have co-opted 'junior tribes' into an alliance that maintains the Peace of Borana (Bor. *tiriso*). For instance Sakuye and Wata, Gabra *Algana* and *Dolio* were associated with *Sabho*, Gabra *Sarbana*, *Odolla*, *Gara* and *Galbo* with *Goona* (Baxter 1954: 13-14). This

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[15] *Harroresa* are composed of the following clans: *Hawattu, Qarcabdu, Warri Jidda, Malliyu, Dambitu, Nonitu* and *Arusi* while *Fullellee* are composed of *Daccitu, Maccitu, Galantu, Sirayyu, Oditu, Konnitu* and *Baccitu*.

arrangement enhances alliance building, mutual assistance and ritual exchange. *Nagaa Borana* 'the Peace of Borana' is expressly defined by Baxter as follows:

> The 'Peace of the Boran', is not a merely passive absence of strife but an active principle of cooperation and commonality. This is most obvious in the fact that this warrior people, with a name but no settled habitations, dispersed very thinly over a country that extends for nearly four hundred miles from north to south, throughout recognize and obey a common law, though there is no centralised political or judicial authority which can impose direct sanctions or enforce that law.

Legesse (2006: 97) observes that in historic form, the Oromo polity was organised as three principle institutions: the generational organisation (*Gada*), the dual organisation (*Qallu*) and the national assembly (Gumi).[16] *Gada* refers to a generation-set organisation typical of Oromo people in which a succession of named generation-sets passes through a series of named grade and in which individuals are to be enrolled in the set five positions below their father's set (Bassi, 1994: 15). The institution of *Gada* has been invested with different layers of interpretations and meanings by scholars and the commoners alike, emerging over time to become the 'very symbol of Oromo ethnic identity' (Bassi, 1998: 150). Unlike Legesse who gives prominence to the political role played by the institution, its leadership including *yaa gadaa*, the six *hayyuu aduulaa*, the three *abbaa gadaa*, Bassi emphasises the different qualities of ritual and political powers of the institution under the framework of assembly organisation and consensual decision making. Decisions, adds Bassi, are reached by general consensus and members of political elites such as *jallaaba*, *jallaaba abba qa'ee*, *hayyu*, *abba gadaa* and *qallu*. Borana communities in Moyale and Sololo near the Ethiopia border have greater knowledge and direct connection to the institutions of *Gada* and *Qallu* of the Ethiopian Borana than most of their kinsmen in other parts of Kenya (Legesse, 2006: 96).

Before the sixteenth century, the scholars postulate that, the Oromo were once divided into two great moieties called *Borana* and *Barretuma*. On this theme, Legesse (2006: 94) offers the following thesis: that the ancient moieties were politically poised against each other and competed with each other for the top *gada* office of *Abba Gadaa*; that the moieties had separate cradlelands and shrine for *muda* pilgrimages but took part in the same political-military organisation; that after breakup following the great Oromo migration the moieties were replicated in some cases such as *Goona* and *Sabho* among the Borana, *Irdida* and *Barettuma* among the Orma, *Borana* and *Gabaro* among the Maccha, *Sikko* and *Mando*

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[16] Legesse argue that the leaders of *Qallu* and *Gada* institutions differ from each other in terms of their recruitment, succession to office, nature of their authority and terms of their office. The *Gada* leaders are elected and have authority over all Borana for eight years and the office of *Qallu* is hereditary and has authority over half of the Borana (each moiety) and that the two institutions compliment and confront each other in different circumstances.

among the Arsi, *Ania* and *Qallo* among the Barentu, *Saglan Borana* and *Torban Barettuma* among the Tulama; and that the re-establishment of the duo-moiety system among each group served in ritual and political balancing a central feature of the Oromo political life. The author lists the current Oromo groups such as the Borana and the Maccha as being the groups that descended from the ancient *Borana* moiety while, the Arsi and the Oromo were among the groups that descended from the ancient *Barettuma* moiety. The former are currently represented by the Oromo groups in northern Kenya and in southern and south-eastern Ethiopia while the latter by groups in north-western and western Ethiopia. The ancient *Borana*-dominant groups such the current Borana and the Maccha are observed to be more conservative in their migration and adherence to traditions whereas the *Baretumma*-dominant groups are argued to have been pioneers and explorers who have taken the Oromo nation to its further reach as in the case of the Orma in Kenya and Rayya in the far north in Ethiopia.

However despite common origin, until recently the Borana, the most conservative representative of the Oromo do not call themselves as such but only recognise the name as referring to their kinsmen who are spread far and wide. They are noted to call themselves Boran, their language *afaan Borana* and their country *laf Borana* (Baxter 1954: 170-171). The history of the migration and conquest of the Christian kingdoms in the north or narratives of common origin is not prevalent among the Borana. The quotes below summarise the pre-colonial history of the Borana, their attachment to the Dirre and Liban and their relations to other related groups (Baxter 1954: 20):

> Though they have knowledge of people who speak similar languages such as Arussi etc, they are 'not interested in distant historical incident…yet they do not call each other brothers, what profit is there in such a knowledge? Boran are not interested in a past that has not relevance to the exigencies of the present. History for them is divided into two periods -'before' and 'now'.
> Boran do not know and do not care how, or when they came to live in those parts of southern Abyssinia which they call Dirre and Liban, and which they now regard as Borana country proper; what is important is that they have lived there for longer period than can be remembered, that their ritual chiefs lived there and that it is a fine country for cows. It is Dirre and Liban that God is supplicated to make prosperous and peaceful; there that God gave them their first ritual leaders, Qallu, and from whence all good things have their origin and present proper commemoration.

During the pre-colonial period and up to date, the Borana have shared common borders with neighbouring communities, at time assimilating and mostly co-opting them into their cultural milieu through alliance such as *tiriso*. Notably closest to the Borana were and still are the Gabra, a camel herding community. The Borana were the dominant force in southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya from the sixteenth to the threshold of the twentieth century and that their decline began when the Menelik's army arrived from the north and the British from the south

(Schlee and Watson 2009: 204). Prior to this decline, the Borana were able to maintain some form of 'hegemony' incorporating within their alliance the Gabra, Ajuran, Garre, Konso, Burji and Sakuye at different times and with varying degree of inclusion (Schlee and Watson, 1989).

The ancestors of the Gabra, the Garre, the Sakuye and the Rendille i.e. Proto-Rendile-Somali (PRS), are categorised by Schlee (1989: 6), as having common shared culture reflected particularly in their calendrical system and related set of rules for proper camel management. With exception of the Rendile, the rest were at different times integrated into Borana-centred alliance and are said to have adopted Borana dialect as their main language and certain aspects of culture. At one time the PRS groups formed one continuous region in the northern part of Kenya until the Wardey (War Dayya/Wardeh) whose descendants, the Orma of Tana River, pushed from Liban by the Borana, established themselves over the rangeland of the region stretching from northern Kenya to Juba. The Wardey were later raided almost into annihilation by Darood Somali expansion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[17]

As most of the communities that roamed the vast areas from southern Ethiopia to northern Kenya to central and south Somalia are pastoralists, migration, forced and otherwise were common. Competition for pastures and water were intense and often pitted incoming groups against those already in an area. Writing in 1912, when the first administrative and military posts were first established in the Northern Frontier District (NFD), Robert Otter, a British officer notes about that phenomenon said:

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[17] Schlee, 1989, p. 35.

The Darod, having consolidated their gains from Wardeh and the Boran, were once more on the move. The Mohamed Zubeir and the Aulihan aimed at the complete control of Buna, Wajir, the Lorian Swamp and the Uaso Nyiro; and the Telemuggeh were bent on crossing the Tana, just as they had already crossed the Web Shebelli and the Juba, and on pasturing their flocks and herds in the eastern part of Ukambani. The Boni-probably the only representatives of the indigenous peoples of the area – had become the serfs of the Abdalla; the Wardeh, pathetically huddled into a corner of their former kingdom, had to be moved across the Tana by the Government to protect them from total extinction at the hand of the Somali. In the north the Gurreh had found themselves unable to hold to the country from which they had helped to expel the Boran; threatened by the Marehan on the east, and by various Ogaden elements on the north, they compelled to add to their fighting strength by means of an alliance with Degodia Somalis. Within thirty years these Degodia were to expel the Gurreh from much of the country which they – the Gurreh – felt to be exclusively theirs.

To the west, Ajuran (to whom, some two hundred years before, the Boran had given sanctuary) appeared to be in a position of relative security. But they too were subject to the south-westward drive of the Somalis. By a skillful campaigns of family and clan alliance and by individual infiltration, the Degodia were rapidly assuming a dominating position in the Ajuran; and before long, as a result Somali pressure coupled with the duplicity of the very people they befriended, the Boran were to find themselves ousted from the waters, of which, for two hundred years they had been masters.[18]

Describing the rapid migration in the region and the resultant demographic shift and balance of power, Castagno (1964: 167-169) asserts that the Somalis crossed the Juba between the years 1842-48 and by 1885; the Ogaden had broken the supremacy of the Orma in Juba. They marched south-westward and by 1909, having ousted the Borana from the wells of Wajir and Orma further to the edge of River Tana, the Somali clans such as Telemugge and Aulian in Garissa, Muhamed Zubair and Degodia in Wajir and Ajuran in parts of Moyale consolidated their positions. These historic expansions were bolstered by search for better pastures for their livestock and their fighting prowess and assimilation under the banner of Islam.

The late nineteenth century was characterised with colonial expansion. By 1897, the French were in control of present day Djibouti, the British in East African Protectorate and the British Somaliland, the Italians were in control of the region stretching from Juba River to Gulf of Aden (Castagno: 1964). Southward expansion of the Ethiopian Empire absorbed the regions of Bale, Sidamo and Ogaden into present day Ethiopia. In the north, between 1905 and 1910, the international boundaries between the emerging Ethiopian state and the East African Protectorate were twice delineated. The relations between the two powers were often not cordial due to cross-border raids by outlaws from Ethiopia on the British subjects and forced

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[18] Papers of Robert Otter 'The Impact on East Africa of the Galla and the Somali', Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS.Afr.s.520. pp. 8-9.

migration of the Borana, Gabra and Garre escaping harsh Ethiopian taxation into the British East Africa. Moyale, initially called Fort Harrington, was established as the far-most border post in 1905 under the command of a Greek called Zaphiro. The NFD was administered with minimal resources in terms of administrative post, presence of personnel, establishment of law and order and infrastructural development. The region was viewed at best, as desolate wasteland devoid of any economic potentialities and at worst, as a burden to the British tax payers. The NFD was hence maintained as a vast buffer zone against the threats to the railway and the white highlands by the expanding Ethiopian and Italian rule in the Horn of Africa.

The British facilitated the establishment of small urban centres such Moyale, Isiolo as a site for settlement of alien Somalis (Herti and Ishaq) and later the headquarters of the NFD and Garba Tulla as an administrative centre and a fledging livestock market in 1940s and 1950s. Other towns included Marsabit, Wajir, Habaswein, Garissa, and Mandera. The emerging towns were centres of cultural exchange. These towns attracted descendants of Yemeni Arabs who have historically participated in the pre-colonial trade connecting Yemen, Ethiopia, Somalia and northern parts of Kenya; urbanised Somalis; enterprising Indian traders and colonial clerks; labourers and casual workers from Ethiopia especially Burji and Konso and a few wealthy Borana cattle owners who settled in towns to take opportunity of thriving livestock markets.

The British in 1930s also moved the present day Waso Borana from the regions around Wajir to the present day Isiolo County and the Tana Orma across the Tana River and delineated the Somali-Galla lines to keep the inter-ethnic raids minimal and check west-ward expansion of the Somali. These lines obstructed mobility of herds in times of drought and famine and led to permanence of ethnic boundaries that marks Somali and Borana occupied zones. However as these lines were not policed well, people found various ways of transgressing them. The NFD was a closed zone, special permission was required to enter or leave the region and even within the region, various ethnic groups were not allowed to graze their stock outside their designated rangelands and water-points. These colonial restriction on mobility of pastoralist group, especially, the confinement of the Borana of Isiolo from their kinsmen in Marsabit and Moyale and southern Ethiopia affected their participation *Gada* ritual and observation of *aada sera Borana* in totality. Many cultural norms that connected them with their ancestral homelands underwent transformation and the sustained interactions with the Somalis who were predominantly Muslims made a large number of them convert to Islam between the years 1920-1950.

However, the history of the region before the advent of British colonialism and establishment of the international borders was not just that of alliance making or inter-ethnic skirmishes. Migration, peaceful coexistence and interdependence allowed for various form of local and long distance trade. Manger (2006) states that Borana, alongside Swahili, Somali and Arabic were the lingua franca for the flourishing trade route that linked Borana region to the Benadir coast of the Somalia through Luuq, Biedowa and Baardheere. The caravan trade attracted merchants from among the Somali, Borana and Hadrami Arabs from Yemen. This trade decline with the establishment of British administration and was replaced with *duka*-centred shops in the nascent urban centres in the NFD.

2.3 Islam among the Borana during the colonial period

The spread of Islam among the Borana and Borana speaking communities has five distinct characteristics: first, it was initiated by contacts with waves of westward migrating Somali speakers and hence subsequent association with somalisation (Baxter, 1954, 1966); secondly, proper penetration of Islam was consolidated during the colonial period; thirdly, it is the sedentarised Borana rather than the nomadic kinsmen who found adherence to the new faith easy and promising; fourthly, those at the farthest end from the ancestral homelands of the community were more predisposed to convert to the new faith rather than those who kept active participation in *Gada* cycles and *aada sera* and finally, contemporary adherence to the faith differs between the Borana territories but there is a visible trend towards reformist tendencies through heightened translocal linkages beyond the old Somali Ṣūfī Islam. This hypothesis may appear broad and general but as we discuss subsequent spread of Islam in the region, we shall be able to qualify its correctness.

There is no single theory that can account for the overwhelming conversion of, say, Waso Borana within a span of thirty years, between 1920-1950 or the gradual expansion of Islam among the then largely strict adherents of Borana indigenous religion in Moyale and Marsabit in post-colonial era or current trends in conversion among the Ethiopian Borana, a group that still symbolise *borantiti* in *toto* and the esteem icon of 'Oromoness' due to their adherence to their pristine culture of *Gada*. While it is easy to accept that the mass conversion among the Waso Borana during the colonial period was facilitated by increased contacts with Somali clans in the NFD and that being cut off from the kinsmen in Marsabit, Moyale and Ethiopia weakened their attachment to indigenous customs and culture and made them embrace the new faith, what is usually hard to discern from this hypothesis is the question of not why but how. In simple terms, for this accepted explanation to make sense, we need acceptable

description of medium and means of conversion as well as tangible evidence that we are not falling into a trap of reductionism. Who were the preachers? Or more specifically, were there active *dāʿi*s among the Waso Borana who facilitated this wave of conversion? How was this preaching done? What was the nature of adherence to new faith by the new Borana Muslims? Were there instances of resilience of the *aada sera* or admixture of the old customs and the new faith?

Trimingham, Fisher and Horton's theories of conversion offer some form of explanation for the conversion of Africans to Islam. Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses. Trimingham (1964, 1980) offers ranges of reasons that account for conversion chief among them being trade relations, immigration and 'tribal' movements, political conquest and subjugation cultural assimilation. He points out more four crucial subjective aspects for spread and penetration of Islam in Africa. First, Islam appears to offer religio-political reintegration for people whose cultural and social cohesion were broken up by conquest, forcible removal, slave raiding and disintegration through modern changes. Can we say the same in the case of the Waso Borana in the colonial period following their separation from their kinsmen and declining adherence to the *aada sera* Borana and the maintenance of the 'Peace of Borana'? Partly yes, but subsequent academic research argue to the contrary as certain forms of the old culture continue to survive and modified to suit present concerns and ascription to ethnic, regional and religious identities co-exist and are instrumentally used (Aguilar 1998, Tablino 1994). Secondly, Islam's system of intellectual and material culture offered a feeling of superiority and enhanced the status of the new converts. This is especially so when the converting communities are relatively prosperous. Thirdly, Islam was seen as accommodative of the old culture and did not offer a cultural rupture with the pre-existing norms and tradition as it 'does no violent uprooting but offers values without displacement of the old'. This thesis makes sense especially among the Borana in the early days of the spread of the faith as we shall see later. Often the Ṣūfī Islam among the neighbouring Somali groups was often themselves a mixture of local cultures and was largely accommodative of the cultures of the new converts provided some basic rituals of Islam were observed on daily or regular basis. Finally, new converts were indeed attracted not merely to social and cultural advantages but to a religious system that offered better meaning to life. This point assumes that the pre-existing indigenous beliefs systems are localised, unlike the new faith that has consistently similar practices and ideology.

Trimingham's three stages of conversion to Islam, that is, germination, crisis, and reorientation had often been critiqued as generalising as isolating general patterns in the pace

of conversion to Islam among different socio-economic groups is equally difficult. Often even in one single locality, one might see manifestation of the three stages or even 'return' to early stages of conversion. In essence, Trimingham (1964: 44-45) postulates that the first stage of germination is restricted to contacts, visit and settlements of traders and clerics and that this initial contact may involve adoption of certain Islamic culture such as amulets and dress. The second stage coincides with the assimilation of practical elements of religious culture of ritual prayers and certain categories of *halal* and *haram*. The people are classified as religious dualists, consequent concomitant weakening of indigenous culture lead to the third stage, the crisis. In this stage the old religious authority is rejected, the clergy take the place of the priest of communal cults as the guide of religio-social life. The model, though critiqued in subsequent theories such as Fisher and Horton, makes sense when the Waso Borana conversion is viewed through its prism. Trimingham (1964: 44-45) states that:

> The process takes more than one generation and is reciprocal interaction between generations. We may express it this way. A pagan family (generation I) is subjected to Islamic radiation. This affects their children (generation 2) who become Muslims in name, without discarding much of the old, but their children (generation 3), under the influence of clerics, learn to despise the old inheritance, and generation I, in order to preserve its authority and maintain the unity of the family, now become Muslims. So the cycle is complete.

Fisher (1985) on the other hand proposed a similar three phased path to conversion of Africans to Islam, namely: quarantine, mixing and reform. In the first stage the new faith is restricted to specific groups such as traders. In the mixing phase, conversion to Islam by local population is accompanied by mixed practice of the old indigenous belief system and Islam. The phase of reform represents the consolidation of the new faith as strict observances of the religious rituals become the norm. This model just as that of Trimingham offers insightful explanation for the gradual conversion of Borana in Kenya to Islam. The unfortunate dimension is that it is lineal and uni-directional and does not allow for relapse between stages or resilience and return of certain indigenous beliefs and practices due to historical reasons. For instance after the *shifta* wars of 1960s and 1970s, the Waso Borana who were predominantly Muslims felt 'cheated' by their co-religionists, the Somalis, to bore the brunt of the secessionist civil war and this dissatisfaction were observed to be accompanied by a kind of return to certain indigenous Borana rituals, re-identification with other Borana and willingness by some of their kinsmen to convert to other faiths such as the Roman Catholicism. However as we shall see, the stage of reform or reorientation as envisioned by Fisher and Trimingham, took off early in Waso area than other Borana regions in Kenya and Ethiopia.

Horton's model (1971) basically suggests that under pressure from macrocosmic world view of *daʿwa* religions such as Islam and Christianity, the microcosmic world view of indigenous African religions slowly suffers deterioration and later become replaced by universalistic ideology and rituals of new faiths. Aguilar (1998) finds this model as plausible explanation for religious change among the Waso Borana who after being separated from their kinsmen in Ethiopia came under increasing reconstruction of the world views through influence from predominantly Somali Muslims and the colonial experience. Their old worldviews were subsumed under the new Islamic one and syncretistic practices such as *ayaana* cult. They are argued to have been 'Somalised', as their cosmological order was transformed with establishment of political and tribal boundaries separated them from their kinsmen and their own perception of the new Somali culture as an alternative model which is successful, attainable and vigorous (Baxter 1954).

2.3.1 Retracing the common Islamic History among the Borana

Aw Hussein Ilowle is an extra-ordinary Islamic teacher from Garba Tulla. The elderly disabled man, does not have the contemporary 'four walled' *madrasa* institution to teach in. He does not have the established curriculum used by the formal Islamic schools. However his students come from far and wide. Most of them are not even the local Borana. This Somali teacher is in charge of the last remnant of the old Sheikh-centred learning institutions that once dotted towns in the Northern Frontier District and Somalia. The most famous centre of learning that aspiring students flocked to during the colonial period was in Baardhere, Somalia. [19] This form of residential training involves the classic Ṣūfī master-disciple relationship. In Garba Tulla, as in old times, the students gather around the Sheikh in the local main mosque in a circle called *halka* and learn varieties of disciplines such as memorisation of the Qurʾān, exegesis, biography of the Prophet, jurisprudence and moral values. He still runs his traditional way of Islamic learning despite existence of a thriving Kuwaiti built modern Islamic educational complex barely 500 metres away. He represents the old phase of the Somali Islam among the Borana to which we shall turn to. It is for this reason that to understand the spread of Islam among the Borana, one has to understand its spread and consolidation among the Somali groups from whom the Borana and other Borana speaking communities came under intense religious and socio-cultural influence. Hjort (1979) reaffirms Islam among Borana is largely linked with the Somali rather than the coastal Arabs and the

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[19] Personal conversations with Sheikh Hussein Ilwole, September 2009 Garba Tulla.

Swahili. He averts that the Muslim influence of the northern Kenya is connected with the Islam of the Horn of Africa.[20]

The spread of Islam among the Somali speaking communities that have shared common borders with the Borana preceded the conversion of the latter. The Garre and Ajuran Somali, both, were more or less part of the pan-Borana alliance during the pre-colonial period but were exposed to Islamising influence of westward migrating Somali clans as mentioned earlier. Both were bilingual and re-appropriated commonality with the other Somalis and Islam as part of their identity after the ascendancy of the latter in the late part of the nineteenth century. Primarily, the Somali occupy a region that is not only close to the Hejaz but also historically had long coastal settlements that maintained interactions with the people of that region and beyond. For instance Mogadishu was one such city founded between eighth and tenth century that later blossomed into a sultanate, as did Brava and Merca and such examples like the Islamic Ajuran confederacy between 1500-1700 CE in the hinterland of Benadir coast attests to the nature of state formation in the region. (Kapteijns 2000: 228). It worth noting that by the thirteenth century many of the nomadic peoples, who did not form part of any state, such as the Afar and the Somali, had became Muslims. Lewis (1969) observes that within such as acephalous societies such as the Somali with a strongly delineated clan and lineage organisation Islam appeals as a way of bonding unity with minimal criteria of Muslim identity such as the five daily prayers adopted and adhered. Lewis aptly puts:

> Among such egalitarian and habitually warring pastoral nomads, especially in conditions of acute pressure of population on resources, and consequent expansion and migration, Islam, acquaintance with which is rapidly diffused by high degree of geographical mobility and interaction characteristic of these societies, has been warmly embraced as an enhancement to tribal solidarity and exclusiveness. And with its appealing summons to the jihād, the new faith has readily been accepted as both a spur to, and a justification for, further expansion and conquest. Thus, tribal congeries, such as the Somali, lacking any single fount of political authority but possessing a string diffuse sense of cultural identity, have found in Islam new support for their traditional sentiments of ethnic exclusiveness and superiority.[21]

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Borana who grazed their livestock over large parts of the NFD and moved between Dirre and Liban, in alliance with the Ajuran, drove the Orma out of areas such as Wajir towards the Tana River. Ajuran who had until then paid tribute to the *Qallu* of the Borana changed alliance ('Ajuran became Somali') and aligned with the

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[20] Schlee (1989: 26) indicates that the Somali have a putative genealogical system traces the patrilineal descent of every single Somali alive today back to the Quraish, the tribe of the prophet Muhammad and the African ancestry visible in their features exclusively to the female links. This project of identity making is not of a reality but a massive ideological construct. Hjort, Anders. 1979, p. 40.

[21] Lewis, I. M., 1969, pp. 33-34.

incoming Somali in a series of battles that resulted in the removal of the Borana from some areas in the region, at the onset of the arrival of the British. The border restriction on the Waso area was enforced through laws that forbade livestock and human mobility to the rest of the Borana areas in the north and in southern Ethiopia. This resulted in enhanced economic and socio-cultural interactions between the Waso Borana and their neighbouring Somali groups. This was largely reflected in their shift towards diversifying their livestock pastoralism (with the addition of camel into their herds), their increasing participation in livestock trade in the emerging towns such as Garba Tulla and Isiolo, their adoption of Somali way of dressing and most significantly in their mass conversion to Islam (Aguilar 1998). While the conversion to Islam was largely after the transfer of the Borana to the Waso area, some primary data reveal that a few leading families of the Borana had converted to Islam during their time in Wajir.[22] This conversion as with that of the colonial period did not lead into total abandonment of their Borana way of life. There were concurrent adherence to some aspects of new faith and maintenance of the *aada sera* Borana.

With the consolidation of trading centres such as Moyale and emergence of new colonial administrative towns such as Garba Tulla, Marsabit and Isiolo, Somali, Arab and Indian traders established *duka*s (Sw. retail shops) supplying the colonial officials with manufactured goods and trading with local Borana communities in lucrative livestock trade. Most of these emerging towns reflected a confluence of cultures of the Horn of Africa and beyond. For instance, Moyale stands on an 'open' frontier, in a closed province, in which the inhabitants have been segregated in certain areas and whose movement outside the region was controlled.[23] The Borana, Gabra and some Somali groups, based on agreements between the Ethiopian and the British authorities enjoyed some limited transfrontier grazing and watering rights (Hogg 1987). Though these movements often resulted to protracted conflict between the two governments, large numbers of Borana and Gabra who crossed the borders were often offered protection as British subjects. Towns like Marsabit and Moyale also attracted diverse groups of people (Simpson 1996). The surrounding Borana speaking communities supplied the town dwellers with livestock products such as milk, hides, skins and animals for sale.[24]

Just like Isiolo, Moyale and Marsabit were also cultural melting pots. Colonial population survey in 1949 reveals an insightful analysis of the residents of Moyale District, a large area encompassing the present day Sololo, Moyale, Buna, Dabel and Uran. The total population

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[22] Maalim Dabaso on conversion of the family of Galma Dida, Isiolo, April 2009.

[23] M. Mackenze Smith to H De W Waller, Handing Over Report 1950, Colonial and Protectorate of Kenya, MSS.Afr.s.407b, Rhodes House, Oxford, pp. 32-33.

[24] Personal conversations with Sheikh Bulle in Moyale, Jarso Jillo, Gayo Boru, in Sololo, September 2009.

was by then 10,877 persons of whom 350 were government employees and their families. Among the non-native population, there were 9 Goans, of whom 7 were government employees and their families and 41 Indians of whom 6 were government employees. There were 35 Indians who presumably engaged in some economic activities. There were 243 Arabs, including Barawa, in the town. None of these Arabs were in government employment. These Arabs played a pivotal role in the pre-colonial and colonial trades linking towns in Somalia, northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia and had established retail shops in Suftu, Nagelle, Mega, Moyale, Baardhere, Luuq, Kismayo, Mogadishu, Lamu and Wajir. The indigenous population were as follows: Borana, 5073 persons with 93 related with government employment; the Ajuran, 3811 persons with 28 related government employment; the Burji and Konso, 642 persons with 18 related with government employment; the Sakuye, 606 with 6 related with government employment; the Somali, 230 persons with 56 related with government employment; the Gabra, 23 persons with 6 related with government employment; the Garre, 50 persons of who 12 related with government employment; Abyssinians, 19 persons of whom 5 were related with government employment; and some 124 persons from miscellaneous ethnic groups of whom 113 were related with government employment.[25]

While such statistical data may not reveal much about the interactions and exchanges between different groups within these emerging towns, it reveals that from the time of their establishment and growth, these towns were very diverse multi lingually and culturally. Many of the incoming groups such as the Arabs brought with them their religious traditions. Most of these towns had mosques established by these traders. Even in smaller towns such as Merti, the first mosques were constructed through the initiative of Somali traders. In Moyale, the first town mosque was constructed by the Arab and Somali traders. This old mosque, built during the colonial period, still stands adjacent to the present palatial Jamia mosque. In Garba Tulla, the first mosque was similarly put up by the town trading class. In Isiolo, the Herti and Ishaq Somali put up mosques. Colonial records notes of increasing trends of the Borana becoming Muslim. One report observes that the spread of Islam among the Borana was an important pacifying influence but the fear of encroachment of water and grazing rights was constant and any alteration of the present grazing boundaries would immediately inflame hostility. In many *manyatta*s (Sw. village) there were one or two Islamised Boran and this

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[25] Moyale District, Annual Report 1949, Northern Province, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS.Afr.s.407a.,

was seen as an important positive influence for peace.[26] It related the conversion of the Borana with decreased inter-ethnic animosity between the Borana and the Somali groups such as the Degodia, Garre and Ajuran, who were predominantly Muslim.

Were there Muslim *dāʿi*s? Who converted the Borana of Moyale and Waso to Islam? How was it that within a span of thirty years, the Waso Borana embraced Islam *enmasse*? These questions raise fundamental issues on manner of proselytism in the NFD during the colonial period. We have mentioned that the emerging urban centres were the site of economic and cultural exchange and that the centres and its hinterlands were linked in networks of livestock trade and growing consumption of consumer goods by the largely pastoral Borana. As noted among the Orma of Tana River, it is plausible that the Muslim residents of these towns in the NFD as agents of islamisation 'have primarily practiced their faith and paraded a higher civilisation incidental to their functions, and were missionaries only by the way.' There were no mention of organized Muslim missions either among the Borana of Waso and those of Moyale and Marsabit. In areas where repetitive Borana cycles of *Gada* ceremonies were carried out, the conversion to the new faith was then piecemeal and in Marsabit and Moyale. In sum, the spread of Islam in the region was not facilitated by sustained campaigns of proselytism, no Borana Muslim elite to emulate and by then no local centres of Islam to act as stimulators. (Baxter, 1969: 245-246) The Waso Borana cut off, temporarily from their kinsmen, increasing converted to the new faith. Because the Borana the Somali version of Islam the only available version, observes Baxter (1954), so Islamisation has therefore necessarily involved Somalisation. This trend increased with isolation from the homeland and redundancy of the traditional cycle of ceremonies.

2.3.2 The Good Old Days: *Ṣaliḥiyya* and *Qādiriyya* Ṣūfī *Ṭarīqa* in the NFD
The role of Ṣūfī brotherhoods in the spread of Islam in Africa has been very significant. From Senegal to Somalia, from Morocco to Mozambique, various Ṣūfī orders were associated with the conversion of indigenous groups to the new faith of Islam. Ṣūfī orders led to state formation and transformative political and religious reforms as in the case of the Senegambia region and Sokoto in the present day Nigeria. The basis of ṣūfī orders on Islam (Ar.:, sing., *ṭarīqa*, plur.: *ṭuruq,* path), posits Trimingham (1976, 1980), is the belief that the believer who desires to attain communion with God needs the guidance of one who is experienced in the path to act as an intermediary between the disciple and God. The founders of the *ṭarīqa*s are believed to have special charisma or power (Ar. *baraka*), an inheritable or transferable capital,

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[26] M Mackenze Smith to H De W Waller, Handing Over Report 1950, Colonial and Protectorate of Kenya, MSS.Afr.s.407b, Rhodes House, Oxford,, p. 41.

which legitimises their spiritual authority. In East Africa, the *Qādiriyya* was the first order to be introduced into Massawa, Zaila, Mogadishu and the coastal region by Yamanite and Hadramawt immigrants. It was however from the nineteenth century that new orders were founded and old ones revived. One personality behind the resurgence of the Ṣūfī order in the region was Sayyid Ahmad ibn Idris al Fāsī (1760-1837). A number of his students dispersed and established new orders, for instance *Sanūsīyya* by Muhammad ibn Ali as-Sanūsī (1787-1859) in the present day Libya, *Mirghaniyya/Khatmiyya* by Sayyid Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani (1793-1853) in the Sudan, *Rashidiyya* by Ibrahim ar-Rashid (d. 1874) in Massawa and the surrounding region. Muḥammad ibn Ṣaliḥ, a pupil of Ibrahim ar-Rashid founded an order based in Makkah called *Ṣaliḥiyya*. The order, the most influential among the Somalis, was made popular by Shaikh Muhammad Guled ar-Rashidi who was appointed as a regional *Khalifa* (Ar. deputy/successor) by Sayyid Muhammad Ṣaliḥ. It spread to the NFD following migration of Somali groups into the region and also settlement of followers of this and other orders in the emerging urban centres (Trimingham, 1976: 233-236).

Two main Ṣūfī brotherhoods made significant impact on the spread of Islam among the Borana, namely: the *Qādiriyya* and *Ṣaliḥiyya*. *Ḥusseiniyya*, a Ṣūfī brotherhood with origin in Bale, Ethiopia, also spread among the Borana of Waso and Moyale during both colonial and post-colonial periods. The first two were associated with the Somali and Arab residents of the NFD. *Qādiriyya* is one of the oldest and most widespread Ṣūfī brotherhoods in the world. Established by 'Abd al-Qādir Jailānī (1077-1166), the order has had hundreds of offshoots dispersed all over the Muslim world. In the Horn of Africa, it was strong in Eritrea and Harar and became increasing influential in Somalia following the establishment of a farming settlement on the Juba by Sheikh Ibrahim Hasan Jebro (Trimingham 1976). This settlement grew into a flourishing Ṣūfī learning and an important commercial centre of Bardheere. The order later spread widely in southern Somalia through the efforts of Shaikh Uwais ibn Muḥammad al-Barawi.

An active *Ṣaliḥiyya* sheikh with direct links to Kenya was Ali Nairobi (d. 1920), a Herti Somali of the *Ṣaliḥiyya* order. Ali Nairobi, was a stone mason by profession. He was appointed by Muhammad Salih as a Khalifa in Makkah though it is said that he was illiterate. His journey for *ḥajj* is narrated by an elderly follower of the order, in the following way:

Said Ali Nairobi was a mason from Nairobi. He builds home. He was illiterate. He cannot read or write. He got some money and built homes and other buildings for Indians and with Indians. By then Nairobi was just new. He held money that he got like this and said 'Should I use this money for *ḥajj* or should I use it to visit my mother in Las Anod (a town in Somaliland)?' He opted to go to *ḥajj* . After the *ḥajj* , he did *ziyārāt* to the house of Sayyid Muhammad Ṣaliḥ, the renowned sheikh. Ali joined in an ongoing construction of Sheikh's home and without any pay helped in the work to the end. The sheikh asked him who he was and he answered that he is Ali from Nairobi. He came to be known as Ali Nairobi from that time. He was made a *khalifa* of the Somali. He complained that he cannot be a *khalif* of Somali as there are hundreds of educated scholars and that he was uneducated himself. He said he cannot face them. He was led outside by the Sheikh and was shown how to write '*alif*'. That was all.[27]

The *Ṣaliḥiyya ṭarīqa* was successful among the Herti Somali clan. Ali Nairobi was, however, succeeded by a non-Herti disciple called Sayyid Ali Abdi Nur, a Garre. As a disciple of the sheikh, Ali Abdi Nur, also known as Ali Garre, was sent on errands to collect tributes from followers of the order among the Garre. This kind of collection of tributes for Ṣūfī sheikhs were known as *ziyārāt*. The collections were to be used to settle the debts of the sheikh. However, even before he could return with the contributions, Ali Nairobi died. Ali Abdi Nur sold the livestock collected from the followers and settled the debts owed to the sheikh. He declared himself the successor and asked all the disciples and followers of the sheikh to recognise him as their leader. This resulted to opposition from a number of leading Herti disciples at the initial stages. Later the differences were settled and reconciliation attained. Ali Abdi Nur and his disciples consolidated the spread of Islam among the Garre, the Ogaden and the Waso Borana. He was an avid traveler traversing the vast frontiers of Somalia and the NFD. His *ziyārāt* travels (that entailed collection of tributes) frequented pastoralist Waso Borana, the Ogaden, the Ajuran and the Garre Somali.

These bands of 'roving' Somali *Ṣaliḥiyya* sheikhs often visited various parts of Waso. Often they returned with dozens of cattle, goats and sheep. They were said to have carried out mass conversion to Islam in areas they visited.[28] Encouraged by the success of the *ṭarīqa* among the Ogaden and the Waso region, Ali Abdi Nur shifted his base to Habaswein. Several of his Garre followers joined him in the area. This prompted the Ogaden Somali to instruct him to return to his area of origin. He migrated back to Garre stronghold of Takaba, where he later died. The charismatic sheikh was succeeded by his son Sayyid Abbas. After the death of Sayyid Abbas, the *ṭarīqa* was left without a leader and there is no one to initiate new disciples into the order.[29]

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[27] Personal conversations with Sheikh Bulle, Moyale, June 2010.
[28] Personal conversions with Malim Dabas, Isiolo, April 2009.
[29] Personal conversations with Sheikh Bulle, Moyale, June 2010.

The other most influential Ṣūfī sheikh in the region was Sheikh Sayyid Sharif Ali of Kismayu. He also came for *ziyārāt* as far as Moyale and Buna. One of his disciples, Ḥajj Ali Sagari was sent to Buna. His proselytism efforts resulted to spread of Islam among the Ajuran and the Borana. Some of the followers of Ḥajj Sagari, many of whom were the Herti clan, settled in Moyale and others migrated to Ethiopia.[30]

The differences between *Qādiriyya* and *Ṣaliḥiyya* in Moyale and in towns like Isiolo were not wide. One of the most commonly cited difference is the nature of initiation formula (Ar.: *ijāza*), duration of seclusion for spiritual training, the varieties of recommended litanies to be recited on regular basis and nature of congregational gathering and recitations.[31] Each *ṭarīqa* legitimate their authority by tracing back their chain of initiation back to Prophet Muhammad. Trimingham critiquing the nature of *ṭarīqa* initiation in the north-east Africa says that:

> No real apprenticeship was required before initiation. All that was demanded was the learning of the liturgy of the order, while initiation was simplified to the taking of the solemn oath of allegiance to the *shaikh*. Nor did they demand much discipline from the neophytes in the way of retreat, prayer-tasks, and fasting. On the other hand, mass performance of the regular services with *dhikr* songs and dances was exercised immoderately in the attempt to produce psycho-physical effects; the local shaikh of the order was venerated to a degree little short of deification.[32]

The initiations into the *Ṣaliḥiyya* and *Qadiriya ṭarīqa*s were common in Moyale during the colonial period. However such practices were often restricted to those already Muslims, Somali and Arab residents of the town. The display of rival congregation prayers and recitals on Fridays and Thursday between the *Ṣaliḥiyya* and the *Qādiriyya* were a common urban feature in Moyale until late 1980s. Sheikh Bulle, an elderly *Ṣaliḥiyya* follower recalls his own initiation to the *ṭarīqa* in the following way:

> *Ijaza* for me was taken by my father. Ali Abdnur came to Borana area for ziyārāt. My father invited him for a feast. He slaughtered an animal for him. I was made to sit in front of him. He then said ' *laa ilaha illa lah, muhammadrasulu lah, fii kulli lam hatin wa nafasin, adadamaa wa nasihu ilmullah...* All those gathered there also repeated after him. Some already have *ijaza*, so what they did was called *tabaruq*, (Bor. *itt barakefat*). It was like an oath of allegiance, an initiation into the *ṭarīqas*.[33]

It would be erroneous to assume that there existed only a cordial relationship between the *Qādiriyya* and the *Ṣaliḥiyya* followers in these NFD towns. Hjort (1979: 41) mentions the

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[30] Personal conversations with Sheikh Hallo, Moyale, June 2010.

[31] Rules of *Ṣaliḥiyya* are: Renunciation of all earthly vanities and aspiration, solitude and isolation as far as possible from non-adept, avoidance of coffee, tea and tobacco, social drill of congregational prayer and recital of litanies (*adhkār* and *awrād*) at specific times of the day in solitude and in congregation. (Trimingham 1976: 244)

[32] Trimingham, 1976, p. 234.

[33] Personal conversations with Sheikh Bulle, Moyale, June 2010.

existence of considerable animosity between the two *ṭarīqa*s in Isiolo town which sometimes resulted into physical violence. Each had its own mosque. The explanation given for the conflict was traced back to a difference between the two in their attitudes to the British colonial powers. Isiolo was a settlement for some ex-servicemen from Somalia who served under the British forces in the World War I. Some of these ex-servicemen did not actively support the *Ṣaliḥiyya ṭarīqa* which was once associated with the uprisings of Sheikh Muhamed Abdille Hassan (the '*Mad Mullah*') and therefore they were looked down upon as traitors by those who considered the uprising to be a heroic nationalistic war. However the town's Herti and Ishaq clans were not split into the different *ṭarīqa*s according to any predictable pattern.

Similarly in Moyale the relations between the *Ṣaliḥiyya* and *Qādiriyya ṭarīqa* during the colonial period and the period after the independence were not rosy. The two *ṭarīqa*s had one mosque until members affiliated with the *Qādiriyya* split from the *Ṣaliḥiyya*-run mosque to construct their own. The members dissatisfied with the *Ṣaliḥiyya* elite moved *en masse* to the new mosque. The nature of disagreement was on the qualification of the *imām* of the town's only mosque at that time. There were feelings among the religious elite that the main *imām*, Sheikh Said, though a man of exemplary religious zeal, did not have adequate religious knowledge to warrant such an esteemed office. The *imām* refused requests or rather demands to step down from the position, prompting a 'walk out' from some quarters.[34] The conflict that led to the establishment of the new *Qādiriyya* mosque reflects much deeper ethnic animosity between the two main Muslim communities of the town at that time, namely, the Arabs and the Somalis, rather than clear cut doctrinal difference between the *Qādiriyya* and *Ṣaliḥiyya*. In fact, the pattern became clear as most Somali town dwellers prayed at the *Qādiriyya* mosque while most Arabs attended their prayers at the *Ṣaliḥiyya*.[35] There were some Somali elders associated with the *Ṣaliḥiyya* but still preferred to do their prayers at the *Qādiriyya* mosque due to the strength of ethnic solidarity. With time, these clearly ethno-religious patterns were blurred as the young adherents from the two communities and growing

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[34] This was due to disagreement between *jarole* (Bor. Mosque elders). Sharif Nur, the father of Sharif Barigi and other looked down upon the *imām* of the first mosque, Sheikh Said. There were of the opinion that he should step aside as he was not well educated. He refused. So they decided to build this one here and called it Qadiriya. It was constructed using *Dhiri* twigs, iron sheets and nails and coins. Personal conversations with Sheikh Bulle, Moyale, June 2010.

[35] There was disagreement between elders here then. Sheikh Said was not very educated but was a man of great religious zeal. My father was an expert in Islamic law. We were all *Ṣaliḥiyya*. Most Somalis moved to the new mosque. Many Arabs remained within the old mosque. My father became their *imām* too upon request. One of the early *imām*s was buried there. He was called Sheikh Nur. Personal conversations with Sheikh Bulle, Moyale, June 2010.

body of Borana Muslims pragmatically attended the congregational gatherings at either of the two mosques.

Some local sheikhs in Moyale did *daʿwa* activities among the Borana in and around Moyale. Sheikh Said Barawi and Sheikh Salih (also called Sheikh Salah) were among the pioneers. Others like Ibrahim Kanso also converted Borana especially around Helu area of the town. Sheikh Ibrahim Sefder was among those who settled among the Borana populace and carried out similar *daʿwa* works especially in nomadic settlements in Mansille, Helu, Obbu and Moyale. In Sololo, Shiekh Ibrahim's son, Muhammad Sheikh Ibrahim converted a number of local populace in the period after Independence. Conversions were mainly common during the Muslim month of fasting and on the days of Muslim festivals.[36]

As mentioned earlier, during the colonial period, a number of Borana perceived conversion to Islam as 'becoming' a Somali. Converts were often required to change their names and even adopt the name of the sheikh as their father's name. One almost ceased being the son or daughter of his biological father. This reinforced the feeling of alienation felt by the pioneer converts as they were seen as Somali. An interesting example was that of the late Ḥajj Wario, a pioneer Borana Muslim elder in Moyale. Upon conversion he was officially referred to by the name of Mohamed Farah.[37]

In Waso, the leading Somali sheikhs who frequented the areas and carried some form of religious travels included Sayyid Ali Abdi Nur, Sheikh Timaweiyn, Sheikh Abubakr, Sharif Adey and Maalim Ilowle. The spread of the faith should not be seen as organized *daʿwa* outreaches to Borana villages and homes, rather a gradual exposure of the local Borana to the religion and Muslim culture. Traders, government employees and travelling sheikhs often engaged in every day interactions with non-Muslim residents. There were also instances of intermarriages between the Muslims and non-Muslims.[38]

Duksi, traditional Somali Islamic schools, were one of the ways through which the children of Borana converts gained knowledge of Islam. *Duksi*s were found not only in the towns like Garba Tulla, Merti, Moyale, Marsabit, Isiolo, Sololo and Kinna but also in smaller semi-nomadic settlements in Waso. The curriculum of *duksi* essentially focused on memorisation of the Qur'ān. The starting points are Arabic alphabet and were taught in Somali rather than Borana. Teachers were mainly Somali sheikhs who settled in Borana settlements and

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[36] Personal conversations with Abdi Shakur, Mzee Ibrahim and mosque elders of Helu Mosque, June 2010, conversations with Mzee Suleiman, Sololo, June 2010.

[37] Personal conversations with Mzee Suleiman, Sololo, June, 2010. Conversations with Jama and Jeylani, September 2009.

[38] Group discussion with Sheikh Hussein Abdallah and teachers at Garba Tulla Islamic Centre, conversations with Sheikh Hussein Ilowle, Garba Tulla, October 2009.

emerging towns. The wealthy cattle owning Borana converts in Waso, at times employed Somali Qur'ān teachers for their children and those of kinsmen. It was also common for some pioneer Borana converts in Moyale to send their children away from home to budding *duksi*s in the region. Upon completion of their education, graduates of these institutions served as *imām*s in mosques and teachers at the same or new institutions. Pupils used smooth wood boards known as *lohi* to write the verses of the Qur'ān as dictated by the teacher. The writing ink, called a*nqasti* (Bor. black ink), was made out of ground charcoal and water and the pen, *qalinki*, was made from a small flat-headed stick. Classes were done under the shade of trees or in temporary structures. Often all *duksi* pupils sat together as they recited different verses of the Qur'ān. Those at the same level sat close to each other. The teacher moved among them dictating and supervising their progress.[39] To keep harmony and order, *duksi* teachers often meted harsh punishment against errant pupils with sticks, *archumme*. This kind of punishment at times scared pupils and entrenched high dropout rates and truancy. After memorising a portion of the Qur'ān, the pupils wash their *lohi* and proceed to the next level until they finish their studies.[40] These outdoor classes did not require tables and chairs as pupils sit on the ground. Classes are conducted early in the morning after *Fajr* prayer to mid-morning, late afternoon and in the evening around bon fire. There were no classes on Thursday evenings and Fridays. After every *juzu* (1/30 of the Qur'ān), the parents were expected to give gifts (animals) to the teacher and also reward the pupil. Upon completion of the memorisation of the Qur'ān, a graduation practice known as *qalinki chapsa* (Bor: 'breaking of the pen'), were conducted. The parents of the graduands, the pupils and the teachers of the *duksi* participated in a communal feast.[41] The institution however offered little if any specialised Islamic sciences except the memorisation of the Qur'ān. Aspiring graduates of these institutions opt to pursue specialised knowledge in more advanced centres of Islamic learning such as Baardhere in Somalia.

For the adults, religious education was offered through the institution of the mosque. It is however not a structured learning curriculum, and only emphasised the procedure of prayer performance and basic religious recitals. In Waso, the *duksi*s gained prominence in 1940s. By 1952, there were approximately five *duksi*s in Merti and Sericho. Some of the pioneer *duksi* teachers in Merti included Maalim Mukhtar and Maalim Abdub Happi.[42] In Moyale, Isiolo, Marsabit and Garba Tulla towns these institutions were mainly patronized by the children of

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[39] *Duksi, anqasti, qalinki,* and *lohi* are loan words from Somali into Borana language.
[40] Personal conversations with Aw Kulo, Sololo, June, 2010.
[41] Personal conversations with Maalim Abdub Happi, Isiolo, May 2010.
[42] Personal conversations with Sheikh Bulle, Moyale, June 2010.

Muslim town dwellers.[43] *Duksi*s were the main means of religious education and socialisation until 1980s and 1990s when with the establishment of formal *madrasa* schools their influence waned.

The strategy embraced by the Somali and non-Borana teachers and sheikhs, was to invest in religious re-orientation of the young Borana speaking pupils so that they emerge as forces of communal transformation. These sheikhs and other Islamic teachers largely tolerated the local customs; to the extent it did not radically contravene the dictates of the new faith. It is also important to note that the sheikhs of these periods though were highly successful in converting local Borana with minimal efforts, they were not themselves well entrenched in advanced Islamic sciences. The communal nature of the *ṭarīqa* practices and the moderate attitude of the Islamic teachers to the Borana customs and traditions meant that, while a number aspired to carry out religious reform, vast social norms and worldview remain largely indigenous.

The phase of *duksi* education suffered a drastic set-back in the early 1960s and the 1970s with the impact of the secessionist conflicts that pitted a section of the Borana and the Somali against the newly independent government of Kenya over the fate of the NFD. Most Somali sheikhs were displaced by the ensuing conflicts.[44] Most Borana of the Waso areas had voted in pre-independence referendum, opting to be part of Somalia rather than staying within Kenya while a large number of Marsabit and Moyale Borana opted for unity with Kenya. There were splits within non-Borana Muslim residents of the NFD towns, with the Somali favouring secession. Increased political awareness among the populace was manifested by formation, recruitment and consolidation of regional political parties. Some were locally formed; some supported by the new government of Kenya and others were regional branches of Somalia's political organisations (Arero 2010, Turton 1972). The rallying grounds for the Muslim Waso Borana were the commonality that they shared with their co-religionists, the Somali. Therefore for those who favoured unity with Somalia, they felt that they had common livelihood, similar Cushitic culture and common belief system and that the Bantu-led new Kenyan government was seen as not only Christian but also incapable of solving the unique problem of underdevelopment of the region as the area had been a closed zone. For those Borana favouring unity with Kenya, their historical relation with the Somali rather than

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[43] Kenya Police Papers, Marsabit Division 5th November 1943 mentions of 'A small Koran school run by Sheikh Abdurahman in Marsabit Township and a Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society mission not far from the Boma, which at present, has no European occupant, but a native teacher called Petro runs a small and very elementary school there. Kenya Police Papers, 1943, Rhodes House, MSS.Afr.s.1631.

[44] Personal conversations with Maalim Dabaso, Isiolo, April 2009.

religion seemed to be the source of their fear. They felt that their interests would be better protected under the new regime than under a state run by their long time rival and fellow nomadic pastoralists, the Somali.[45]

The *Shifta* wars, as they were commonly referred to, had adverse repercussions on various facets of Borana life, including their attitude to the new faith. Kenyatta government declared a state of emergency in the NFD immediately after the independence, setting in a decade of protracted civil war. The government of Somalia took up an initiative, to raise the grievance of their fellow Somali and other aligned groups in international forums. However with little progress on peaceful resolution of the conflict, clandestine support to arm those in favour of secession took precedence. The Borana areas, especially the Waso, was the buffer zone between the predominantly Somali districts of Wajir, Mandera and Garissa. The government of Kenya established concentration camps in Waso area to curb nomadic mobility and ensure better surveillance of secession supporters and sympathisers. This period of heightened tension and persecution were recalled *gaaf daba*,' which literally means 'when the time stopped' (Aguilar 1998). Immediate impact was massive loss of livestock and resultant deprivation of the once wealthy Borana and Sakuye in Waso. Hundreds of lives were lost on both sides as conflict became embroiled into a violent civil strife. Most of the dispossessed former pastoralists moved in large numbers to the towns of Isiolo, Merti, Garba Tulla, Moyale and Nairobi (Hjort 1979, Hogg 1987). The conflict was abated in the late 1960s, with concessions made by the governments of Kenya and Somalia.

Aguilar (1998: 12-24) postulates that there are generational differences in religious change among the Waso Borana. He identifies four different historical periods between 1932-1992 following their separation from the kinsmen in Ethiopia and Moyale and Marsabit. The first period was when the Borana were first moved to the area around Waso by the British. During this period, they became to be known as the Waso Borana with some converting to Islam. They were however still part of *Gada* system and were in touch with the *Qallu*. The second phase was when the children of the pioneers born in the area were raised as Waso Borana and as Muslims and did not experience the connection with Ethiopia or ceremonies of *Gada*. As new converts, they treasured and upheld the new faith though their knowledge was not deep. The third phase coincided with the *shifta* wars. Islam was religion of the majority. The young Waso Borana of this period bore the brunt. There was general dissatisfaction with Islamic faith as it was associated with the Somali. The fourth phase was that of those children born

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[45] Personal conversations with Maalim Abdub Happi, Isiolo, May 2010, Maalim Dabaso, April 2009, Isiolo, Mohammed Koricha, Mzee Jattani, Merti October 2009.

after the *shifta* wars. The children of this generation though they assumed and labelled themselves Muslims were never close to the proper Islamic practices as most of them were graduates of government or Catholic schools. It is important to add the next generations following this period were children who would be beneficiary of numerous Islamic schools established in the late 1980s and 1990s and would revert back to more refined path of religious observance and awareness.

In sum, Aguilar identifies three generations having distinct attitudes towards *aada Borana* and Islam. The older generation, being descendants of the pioneer Waso Borana and converts, attach themselves to Islam and being more observant of Islamic religious practices as they exercise considerable control as custodians of Islam and respected for their knowledge of *aada Borana*. Those of the middle generation are torn between the Borana traditional customs and their own identity as Waso Borana and therefore as Muslims. They are more inclined to practice like *Buna Qalla* (Bor. ritual sacrifice of the coffee beans) and the syncretistic cult of Sheikh Hussein. The third generation, the 'youngest' during the time of his research, was argued to be even more estranged from Islam and more forceful in their re-enactment of practice of *Buna Qalla* and stress more of domestic traditional rituals than the communal Muslim ones. It is to the subsequent generation after this one that we shall focus on, in the last part of this chapter.

One can discern similar development among the Marsabit and Moyale Borana. Though they were at all times in tandem with their kin in the ancestral home due to their proximity to Ethiopia, the trends of conversion to Islam faith were consolidated gradually during the colonial period and picked up momentum after the independence. Those Borana who settled in the towns like Moyale and Sololo were first among their kinsmen to embrace the faith. This generation constituted colonial casual workers, soldiers and employees. They also established retail shops in small settlements. Some enrolled their children into *duksi*s ran by resident Somali sheikhs. Their children had strong attachment to their ethnic identity and constituted the voices of the community in the post-independence period. The Borana of this area participated in ceremonies of the *Gada.*

Between 1970s to mid-1980s there was more conversion to Islam though this did not necessarily result in stricter observance of the religious practices.[46] There emerged by this

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[46] One informant sums up the ambivalent attachment to the indigenous culture and the new faith with example such as appropriation of both Muslim and Borana rites of passages. He jokingly argue that the Borana accommodate the two by holding *Waqlal* (Muslim naming ceremony) during the day and *Mogass*a (Borana naming ceremony) at night. There are a host of similar accommodative practices. Personal conversations with Mzee Suleiman, Sololo, June, 2010.

period local Borana sheikhs who enjoyed wide popularity such as Sheikh Adan Golicha of Marsabit. He and other pioneer Borana sheikhs expounded Islam to their kinsmen. In the post-independence era, there developed greater connection between the local Borana Muslims and non-Somali Muslims in the rest of the country. This demystified the long held belief, that Islam was part and parcel of the Somali culture as the Swahili and other Muslim clerics made contacts with local Borana Muslims. Emerging class of Borana Muslim elders were also co-opted by the Somali and Arab religious class into mosque committees. In the post-independence period, with the establishment of government schools, many Borana parents sent their children for secular education rather than full-time *duksi* education. This resulted in less representation in the religious leadership.

2.3.3 *Warra Gariba*: The Followers of the Sheikh Hussein of Bale

An influential Islamic group within the region was that of the cult of Sheikh Hussein of Bale. The spread of this *ṭarīqa* was not restricted to Moyale but had adherents even among the Waso Borana. Moyale is territorially close to Bale and the Arsi Oromo, the largest followers of the cult. Sheikh Hussein cult has ambiguous manifestation in the region as it has symbiotic relations with the followers of its constituent possession cult called *Ayaana*. In some areas like Moyale and Sololo, followers of Sheikh Hussein cult (*Warra Gariba*) are affiliated with the Ayaana cult but at times see themselves are separate entity. In Waso, the presence of the *Ayaana* cult is prominent. The cult here is seen as one and the same with that of Sheikh Hussein. The origin of the cult is not clear. Trimingham (1976: 257) posits that when the Oromo conquered Bale in the sixteenth century they took over the cult of the sheikh as it has been developed by the Islamised Sidama and assimilated into it many of their own beliefs and practices resulting to amalgamation of Islamic saint-cult and Oromo *Abba Muda* pilgrimage ceremonies.[47] The pilgrimage to *Abba Muda* was an integral part of the Oromo religion. Among the Borana, *muda* ceremonies are made to the Qallu of each of the *Sabho* and *Gona* moieties.

Setegn (1973) states that, Sheikh Hussein was the son of Sheikh Ibrahim whose family had earlier moved from Merca in Somalia to Bale. He was born in Ana Jina in the north eastern part of Bale approximately eight hundred years ago. He also notes that the origin of the

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[47] Braukämper (2002) also mentions that that the intensification of the cult of Sheikh Hussein in the nineteenth century was to some extent due to the political and economic changes following the conquest by the Christian Ethiopian Empire. Introduction of *Gabbar* system subjugated the people as the *gada* system was adversely affected prompting a desperate search for new cultural orientation. The cult hence not only stimulated the spread of Islam and new cultural identity but also re-appropriation of the indigenous pilgrimage to *Aba Muda* at Hora Wolabo with that of the Sheikh Hussein.

sheikh, his religious training and orientation as well as the time of his existence is not clear. However despite historically sharing a common border with the Arsi among which the cult of Sheikh Hussein was popular, the spread of the *ṭarīqa* among the Borana was a relatively recent phenomenon. It was with the establishment of towns in southern Ethiopia in the late nineteenth century and in northern Kenya that different ethnic groups found abode in these thriving centres. These towns attracted different Ṣūfī *ṭarīqa*s including the followers of Sheikh Hussein. Arsi followers of the Sheikh Hussein cults settled mainly in Moyale Ethiopia. Among the roving bands of Warra Gariba sheikhs, that not only frequented Moyale but also travelled to towns like Nagelle, Mega, Yabello, Sololo and Hidi Lola included Said Roba Garbi, Bar Agal, Aba Kadir and Darban Gaab. The cult attracted mainly the urban poor and was often associated with women.[48] Their main activities included celebration of the birthdays of their chief saints such as Sheik Nur Hussein, Soph Umar and Akko Makko. The annual pilgrimage to Ana Jinna attracted followers from Moyale Kenya, Marsabit, Sololo, various regions of Ethiopia and Somalia. The rituals of the pilgrimage also have semblance with the annual *ḥajj* rites and hence to the followers of the cult, it is a poor man's *ḥajj* (Trimingham 1976, Setegn 1973, Braukämper 2002).

There are two important shrines of the cult in Moyale Ethiopia. Both shrines are tombs of popular saints, namely Abiya Agal (also known as Bar Agal, Abba Hargesa) and Aba Kadir. The two saints were presumably Arsi Oromo sheikhs who travelled widely in the southern Ethiopia and borders towns in northern Kenya. Abiya Agal was first to gather a group of disciples around him in the 1960s and early 1970s. He was revered for his healing powers. Local Moyale adherents as well as followers of the cult from other towns in northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia frequented his abode in Agal, north of Moyale Ethiopia. Also non-Muslims Borana and other communities sought medical and spiritual help from him. Often once healed, non-Muslim patients converted to Islam and became followers of the cult of Sheikh Hussein. Abiya Agal preceded Aba Kadir in Moyale. When Aba Kadir came to Moyale, there was already an established settlement around the residence of Abiya Agal as adherents settled around him. Aba Kadir was observed to be an eccentric saint who exhibited unusual social behavior but at the same time yielded some potent *karama* (Ar. miracle that

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[48] Braukämper also notes that in Bale, the cult is predominantly a cult of the poor and the downtrodden in material and as well as in social and political terms and it also has elements of revivalism and nativism. He observes that the cult of this nature tend to increase in importance in times of crises (Ulrich Braukämper. 2002, pp. 144-145).
Hjort (1979: 43) similarly notes that recruitment to the cult is conducted both among the poor and destitute Borana and Somali Muslims in Isiolo following the forced displacement of once wealth pastoralists due to the insecurity and deprivation caused by the *Shifta* wars. The cult is in antagonistic relationship with mainstream Borana and Somali Muslims as it is seen as unislamic.

God works through a saint).[49] He died in the late 1970s and was buried in Moyale Ethiopia. Around his domed tomb are dozens of houses in which the caretaker and other followers of the cult reside. Mzee Tadi, a *khadim* of Aba Kadir (assistant) is the caretaker of the tomb of his master. The tomb of Abiya Agal has however in recent past, fallen into disuse. The area in which it is located is in recent times inhabited by the Garre who have over years affiliated more strongly with more reformist ideology of *Salafī* Islam and have hence considered *ziyārāt* to the tombs as sacrilege and heretical. [50]
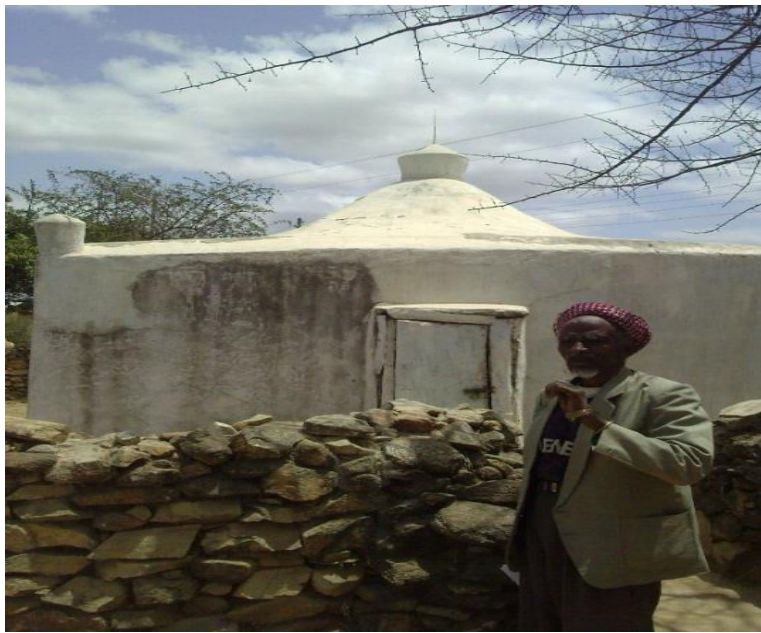
Picture 1 Mzee Tadi, the former *khadim* and caretaker of the tomb of Aba Kadir, Moyale Ethiopia. Picture: personal.

Among the Borana speaking communities, despite condemnation from reformist sheikhs of the activities and practices of the syncretic cult, there are significant followers of *Garib*. In Moyale, Butiye, Somar, Helu and Manyatta Burji have considerable number of *Garib*-related activities such as *Ayaan* healing session and *dhikr* gatherings. In most of the northern Kenyan towns there were *moolas* or *dargas*, makeshift worship centres, which serve as sacred space for religious prayers and ceremonies. These centres are often managed by ardent followers of the cult and are on specific days of the week and months visited by the local followers. These sacred shrines are named after and dedicated to the chief saints of the cults. For instance, in

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[49] He was often remembered for his lunatic outlook such as semi-nudity, public urination and residence in shop verendahs than for learning or performance of miracles. Adherents attribute miraculous traits such as being present at more than one location at the same time (bilocation) and healing powers. Personal conversations with Mzee Tadi (a *khadim*/a disciple of Aba Kadir), Moyale, June, 2010. Personal conversations with Hussein Ganna, Moyale, September 2009.

[50] Personal conversations with Mzee Tadi, Moyale, June 2010.

the town of Sololo, there are three such places, *Mijasid* Soph Umar named after the disciple of Sheikh Nur Hussein, *Misajid* Agal named after the Abiya Agal and Aboy, named after a female saint of the cult. Other popular *darga*s in Moyale area are found in Odda, Butiye (called Abal Qassim), Guto and Golb (near Bor), Helu (called Soph Umar). Some of the renowned local leaders of cult included Nageso in Butiye, Alake Oko in Somar, late Iyya Godana, Guyo Jattani, Hallo Tache, Sharif Mamad, Galgalo Adda in Manyatta and Dima Digge.[51] In Waso the most prominent leader is Buuba Borana. These leaders often serve as *Abayen*, the *Ayaan* cult ritual specialist. They have assistants and retinue of followers and often travel to different places to serve ill clients in need of their spirit management expertise[52].

The relationship between the spread of Islam and the expansion of the cult of Sheikh Hussein is not clear. However one of the remarkable features of the cult is its association with the *Ayaan* healing activities. According to one *Garib* leader, the *ayaan* was given to Sheikh Hussein in order to facilitate the spread of Islam.[53] An ill person who is not a Muslim is required to convert before commencement of the healing process. The followers of Sheikh Hussein pride in having converted many Borana through this method, a claim refuted by reformist leaning Muslim scholars.

The rituals of the *Ayaan* sessions as well as the various religious ceremonies of the *Garib* have translocal influences and serve different purposes within this vast zone. For instance among the Waso Borana, a group that were at one time cut off from their ancestral home, the *Ayaan* cult is part of domestic or household ritual that provides a sacred space for the encounter of an Islamic ṣūfī cultic practices, Borana practices related to the *Ayaan* practices and an actualisation of the Borana traditions and sacred history. It also serves as a substitute for the lost traditional rituals that contribute in maintenance of the *Nagaa Borana*. Together with traditional *Buna Qalla* rituals, the cult is hence part of re-traditionalisation in absence of the break-down of generational set ceremonies and ritual. The *Abayen* takes the role of the *Qallu*. It hence mitigates the possibility of replacement of all traditional rituals by Islamic one. For the many women followers in Waso, it is said to provide them with ritual place in the society and for the many a number, it serves with the opportunity to be Muslims, even when they are not literate in the Qur'ān and in the Islamic law (Aguilar 1998, 2009).

The relationship between the followers of Sheikh Hussein and *Ṣaliḥiyya* and *Qādiriyya* in

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[51] Personal conversations with Mzee Tadi, Moyale, June 2010.
[52] Personal conversations with Sora Baati, Yassin, Merti, October 2009.
[53] Personal conversations with Mzee Tadi (a *khadim*/a disciple of Aba Kadir), Moyale, June, 2010.

Moyale in the late colonial period was moderately cordial. The followers of Sheikh Hussein were not welcomed to carry out their religious activities at the mosques. However apart from verbal condemnation by the sheikhs, the healing session and other religious gatherings were silently tolerated. These two mainstream *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*s though did not subscribe to the syncretic sheikh Hussein cult recognised the founder as a reputed saint but followers as having diverted from the proper teachings. Often they were accused not of tomb worship or mixed-sex gatherings but for non-observance of the five daily prayers. They were considered as unlearned in matters of religion. Similarly, Hjort (1979: 44) observes that despite being viewed by the sheikhs of Muslim Borana and Somali leaders in Isiolo as 'something picked from the bush' and hence unislamic, the cult had significant following.

It is from mid-1980s to date that saw rise of polemics by the young scholars affiliated with reformist Islamic ideology against the cult of Sheikh Hussein. In order to navigate the tense contours of soured relations, members of the cult often ask for permission from local administrative officials such district commissioners and officers, chiefs and the police in order to conduct their activities. With such permission granted for purpose of traditional healing, the cult members cushion themselves against disruption from enthusiastic opponents who proscribe the gatherings as a mark of associationism and heresy. Currently with rising levels of Islamic education and awareness, the cult adherence is low. However *Ayaan* healing sessions are still sought as popular remedy for protracted illnesses. Because of limited communal entertainment opportunities *Ayaan* session in towns like Merti attracts local youth in dozens as it provide venue for socialisation, away from the 'control' of the elders.

2.3.4 The Missions and the Muslims: Christianity among the Borana[54]

There was limited pre-colonial and colonial presence of Christian missions in the NFD. Christian missionary activities were largely post-colonial phenomenon and largely linked to development projects such as schools and hospitals. The government of Kenya set development efforts as condition for missionary activities and was said to have demanded that missionaries should not put pressure on the local population to convert to Christianity (Hjort 46). The desire to carry out evangelism among the 'Galla' were very strong in the mid-19th century when the likes of Johannes Ludwig Krapf (1810-1881) and the Hannover Mission envisioned that once converted the group could become possible evangelizers of all eastern Africa (Tablino, 2004: 102). These efforts did not bear fruits as the furthest these missionaries

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[54] For detailed study of Christianity among the communities of northern Kenya, see Tablino, Paolo. 2004. *Christianity among the nomads: The Catholic Church in Northern Kenya.* Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa

reached were the borderlands of the Pokomo and the Orma and it was among the former that conversion was successful. Tablino (2004) estimates the first missionary activities in the region were carried out by a group led by Father Dal Canton who stayed in Moyale for three years, from 1915 to 1918, in an attempt to reach Ethiopia. In the 1930s Protestant missionaries of the Bible Church Missionary Society (BCMS) preached and established schools and health centres in Wamba, Maralal and Marsabit. It was after 1948 that concerted Catholic missionary activities were carried out with the appointment of Mons. Cavallera as the Bishop of Nyeri with jurisdiction that included the NFD. Diocese of Marsabit, the prefecture apostolic of Garissa, apostolic vicariate of Isiolo, and diocese of Maralal were established in 1964, 1976, 1995 and 2001 respectively (Tablino: 2004 130-151).

There were small Christian communities (Catholic, Protestants and Orthodox) among the Borana of northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia. It was in Sololo town that Bishop Cavallera opened a mission in 1966. The town had a large refugee camp catering for internally displaced persons following insecurity caused by *shifta* wars in early 1960s. The Catholic mission also constructed Sololo Mission Hospital with a capacity of 90 beds and a staff of two doctors and seven nurses. By 1999, the Catholic mission had baptised 1553 Borana. There was an initial rejection of the construction of Catholic mission in Moyale town for fear that the missionaries would proselytize among the predominantly Muslim populace. In 1987 the local county council granted a plot to the Catholic missionaries, who later put up a mission and a St. Mary's primary school (Tablino: 2004: 201-210).

In Isiolo district, outside Isiolo town, Fathers Pio Bono and Franco Givone were instrumental in establishing Catholic missions in Merti and Garba Tulla in Waso region. These missionaries carried out proselytism among the Waso Borana from later 1960s with some success. Under Father Pio Bono, the mission was able to construct a number of churches, health facilities, irrigation schemes and educational institutions.[55] The Catholic mission is situated on the southern side of Merti town and is located in the Christian quarter called Manyatta Father. The town is hence subdivided into two portions with the northern side being predominantly Muslim and the southern side predominantly Christian. The church is hence the focal point for the local Borana converts. While conversions were gradual, the services provided by the catholic mission attracted a number of local Borana some of whom were

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[55] He named his mission centre using a Borana word 'Macci Centre' which mean 'Centre of Joy'. Some of the institutions under Macci Centre One included Macci Boys Secondary School, Macci Girls Secondary School, Macci Primary School, Macci Tailoring College, Macci Centre II and III in neighboring village of Bulesa and Korbesa, Macci Catholic Dispensary, Macci Irrigation Scheme, Macci Shelter Project, Macci Brass Band, Macci Carpentry Workshop, Macci Garage and Macci Mill. Tablino, 2004, p. 264.

nominally Muslims. The relief services provided by the centre during the 1983-1984 famine was remembered by Borana Muslims as the time when a number of their kinsmen converted to Christianity. Those parents whose children studied at the mission school and were beneficiaries of its vast services, found it easy to profess the Christian faith. The missionaries not only tolerated the indigenous rituals that bind the community through 'the Peace of Borana' as *Buna Qalla* and *Eeb* but actively appropriated such practices in their church services under the rubrics of acculturation.[56]

Islam among the Waso Borana until then relied on *Duksi* trained Qalole who were not able to reverse the tides of Christianization until later in 1986 when local Borana scholars educated in universities in Muslim countries were able to channel funds for construction of a rival Islamic centre in Merti to oversee similarly grandiose development projects. The stage in the early 1990s was set for a clash between the Muslim and Christian Centres.

In both Moyale and Merti field research sites, there has been considerably reduction in funds to maintain or expand the Catholic institutions.[57] The bulks of the foreign missionaries managing these centres have left, leaving the centres under the care of Kenyan priests. There is, in a sense, a feeling of delusion among the enthusiastic missionaries as many of the converts to Christianity have tended to convert to Islam upon completion of their education for varieties of reasons. The Borana, whether Muslims or Christians, still largely follow exogamous marriage arrangement and conversions to Islam are common if one of the spouses is from the minority Christian faith. Others convert due to concerted efforts from Muslim *daʿwa* groups or due to pressure from peer and extended families. There is considerable growth in protestant missions in urban centres in Moyale, Isiolo, Sololo, Marsabit and in southern Ethiopian region bordering Kenya over the years.

2.4 Reformist Islam in Moyale and Merti: 1986 to present[58]

The period since the mid-1980s ushered in a new and lasting wave of Islamic reformism in northern Kenya. This period coincides with the spread and consolidation of what has been infamously called 'petro Islam'. The period since 1970s saw growing influence of Islamic humanitarianism and proselytism funded by the oil-rich Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. This wave of reformist ideology has been differently called Wahabism, a

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[56] Personal conversations with Aba Roba, Mohamed Koricha, Mzee Jattani, Merti, October 2009.

[57] Personal conversations with Roba Jillo, Haro Athi, Merti, October 2009.

[58] Much of the historical data on historical of Islam among the Borana of Merti is based on personal conversation, my four years working experience in the area and an outstanding Bachelors thesis by Adan Galgalo title 'History of Merti Qurʾān Centre'. The thesis which was handwritten and unpublished was done at Thika College for Islamic and Sharia Studies in the year 2006. It was personally translated by the author from Arabic into Borana.

literalist authoritarian interpretation of Islamic texts that is fervently antithetical to moderate and tolerant Ṣūfī Islam that has for ages accommodate varied interpretation of texts and absorbed various local customs and traditions. The trajectory of Islam among the Borana hence strongly came under the sway of the contemporary Islamic trend in Muslim world of the 1980s and 1990s. However this wave of reform was to indefinitely overwhelming turn the tide on the *Qādiriyya* and *Ṣaliḥiyya* duo-poly in Moyale and ignite seed of religious awakening and growth of local class of religious scholars and institutions among the Borana. So deep was the impact of the religious transformation in Moyale that within a span of twenty years, almost all the mosques in Moyale and its environs were managed by graduates and scholars antithetical to the old Ṣūfī heritage. This wave of religious change was in some places, empowering for local Muslims as they were able to chart a path of religious re-orientation and identity making but in more cosmopolitan places, the resistance of the elders who were in position of powers in matters of religious were strong and often an all-out generational physical and verbal warfare ensued. For better understanding we need to focus on regional peculiarities.

2.4.1 Religious Reform in Waso Region: Less Resistance, More Religious investment

One person who personifies religious revivalism among the Borana in general and Waso Borana in particular is Sheikh Abdullahi Golicha. He is son of a local Waso Borana from Merti. He attended primary school education and *duksi* in Merti before moving to Nairobi as a young man. There, he got the opportunity to travel to Sudan where he pursued advanced Islamic education in Khartoum. After a lengthy absence, he returned to his home area only to find, by his judgment, a society on the verge of religious decay. He was not impressed with the low levels of religious observance, religious education and adherence to the codes of the Islamic law. The locals, according to him, mixed their indigenous traditions and Islam with utter neglect. He was more so enraged by the rising trend in conversion to Christianity among once largely nominal Muslim Waso Borana. He decried the impact which the massive institutional investments by the local Roman Catholic mission had on the various facets of the Waso Borana life, from health, education, livelihood to religious beliefs. He foresaw that unless this trend is averted there would more pull towards the incentives offered by the Christians. He therefore embarked on an ambitious project of religious and socio-economic empowerment through his networks and contacts in transnational and national Islamic charity agencies. This project had considerable success within a span of ten years from 1986-1996. He, together with other elderly Muslims of the area were able to put up Merti Qur'ān Centre, the first entirely Borana-run Islamic educational and religious complex with multiple network

of satellite mosques and *madrasa*s in the Waso region (Galgalo 2006).

Prior to 1985, Merti had one semi-permanent mosque that was put up in the early days of town's growth by migrant Somali merchants. Prayer attendance was minimal.[59] Water for ritual ablution was fetched using donkey carts from the seasonal Uaso River, a distance of about two kilometres. The only *duksi* operational within the town was that of Maalim Mukhtar, a teacher who was temporarily employed by the Saudi Embassy after an appeal from one local Islamic education primary school teacher and a local Muslim leader through the initiative of the then local member of parliament.[60] Here the Borana children were taught basic fundamentals of faith, some principles of Islamic law and mostly memorisation of the Qur'ān. There were also other locally initiated forms of proselytism with Ṣūfī influence. One such example was religious poetries and praise songs produced by local religious leaders like Malim Dabaso Ali Dogo in format of radio cassettes. Dogo and other local Muslim leaders attempted to reach out to the Borana through this medium. Often the poetry was in Borana and influenced by traditional Borana narrative genre. Unlike Moyale, Isiolo and to some extent Marsabit, the Merti religious landscape was devoid of institutionalized Ṣūfī leadership and culture. While the majority of the population, who were mainly Borana, were Muslim, there was no tangible impact of *ṭarīqa* affiliation. The locals are accustomed to the admixture of the *aada Borana* and relatively nominal adherence to the dictates of Islam.

The first phase of religious change was herald when in 1985 Sheikh Hassan Jattani was employed as a full time *madrasa* teacher. Jattani was a local Muslim who had graduated from a Mombasa *madrasa*. He established the first formalised *madrasa*. He enrolled the *duksi*-going children into different categories based on their progress and taught them an expanded Islamic education curriculum. That marked the foundation of fully fledged Merti *madrasa*. With funds from charity organisations such as Al Muntada Trust, African Muslim Agencies and assortment of individual donors from Middle East, Merti Qur'ān Centre put up *madrasa* classes, an administration office, a social hall, a machine operated water borehole near the river bank that directly supplied ablution needs and even a technical training school (Galgalo 2006). These disparate humanitarian and *daʿwa* agencies lacked a uniform approach to the infrastructural development but were credited for successful construction of different range of institutions.[61] The centre also operated daily feeding programme where orphans and children

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[59] Personal conversations with Mohamed Koricha, Mzee Jattani, Merti, October 2009.
[60] Personal conversations with Aba Roba, Merti, October 2009.
[61] Some organisation took responsibility of payment of teachers and *imām*s salaries, others were associated with construction of *madrasa*, others engaged in establishment of mosques. Some of the prominent Muslim organisations included *Munazamat Al-Muntada, Jamiyat Ihyah Al Turath Al Islamiya* (Society for Revival of

from poor families ate lunch and supper.

Perhaps it is the realm of Islamic education, which had greater impact on religious change. This was done among the adult population through lectures and sermons in the mosque and in various *madrasa*s in the town and in surrounding settlements. In total, approximately over 2000 children from the area have passed through the Islamic schools since its establishment. The availability of these *madrasa*s reduced the need to pursue further elementary and intermediate Islamic education outside the town.[62] Before this development, Al-Falah Islamic Educational Complex in Isiolo, established in early 1980s was a favourite destination for aspiring Borana Muslim scholars. Others headed to flourishing Islamic institutions in Kisauni and Manyankulo in Mombasa and in various *madrasa*s in Nairobi. The structure of the *madrasa* in Merti reflected the standard format of similar institutions in Nairobi, Mombasa and Sudan, namely: *ibtidai* (primary school); *idadi* (intermediate school); and *thanawi* (secondary school). Upon completion of the *thanawi*, the graduates are ready to serve as prayer leaders and teachers in the lower level *madrasa*s in the region or opt to pursue university education at International Islamic University of Africa in Sudan or other universities in Egypt, Uganda and Saudi Arabia or in constituent colleges of foreign Islamic universities in Kenya like Thika College of Arabic and Sharia Studies (Galgalo 2006). A dozen Merti *madrasa* graduates have pursued degree in various disciplines and returned either to join the class of bulging religious scholars or obtained gainful employment in government departments or in non-governmental organisations. There is a number of Islamic religious education teachers in government schools who were graduates from such educational institutions. The Thika College has in the last few years received accreditation from the Kenya's Higher Education Boards and now has a university charter. The institution was constructed with local as well as foreign funding through Islamic charities from Muslim countries such as Kuwait.[63]

The disciplines taught in Merti *madrasa*s include *Sharia*, *Fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, *Qurʾān Tilawa* and *Taḥfidh*, *Tafsīr*, *Tawḥīd*, *Sira*, Geography and *Mirath*. A remarkable feature of this institution was separation of sexes.[64] While the young children below the age of 6 years are allowed to attend mixed-sex elementary classes, those above this age are required to attend either male only or female only classes. The religious leaders and teachers were able to institute a

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Tradition of Islam), Baitul Zakat al Kuwait. One of the social halls was even funded by the late Saudi Mufti Sheikh Ibn Baaz. Peter conversations with Maalim Adan, Merti, September 2009.
[62] Personal conversations with Ibrahim Dida, Mwalim Ali, Merti, October 2009.
[63] Personal conversations with Mwalim Abdub, Isiolo, May 2010.
[64] Personal conversations with Ibrahim Dida, Mwalim Ali, Merti, October 2009.

pragmatic arrangement with local government primary school administrations to utilize the schools for *madrasa* use in the afternoons and during weekends to serve the staggering demands for Islamic education. This is in addition to established *madrasa* classes in the compounds of the main Jamia mosque, Taqwa mosque and at Khalifa mosque. Boys attended classes not only at the mosque attached *madrasa*s but also at Obru and Khalifa Primary schools while girls did the same at Merti Muslim Girls Primary School.[65]

Merti Qur'ān Centre through its translocal humanitarian assistance, was also able to help to establish a number of mosques and primary and secondary schools within the town and in neighbouring settlements. In Merti town alone there are about eight mosques, established through local initiative and assistance from the centre, namely: Merti Jamia Mosque, Taqwa Mosque, Khalifa Mosque, Rahma Mosque, Gammachu Mosque, Olla Ganna mosque, Olla Father Mosque (also called Ansaar Mosque) in the Christian quarters, and Merti Secondary School mosque. In addition the centre was credited for construction of permanent and semi-permanent mosques in Biliqo Marara, Biliqo, Bulesa, Goda, Awarsitu, Saleti, Korbesa, Malka Gala and Basa. [66]

Photo 2: In the background is the Merti Jamia Mosque. Source: personal.

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[65] Personal conversations with Aba Roba, Merti, October 2009.
[66] Personal conversations with Mwalim Ali, Merti, October 2009.

During the booming era of Islamic voluntarism, the centre paid mosque and *madrasa* staff as well as provided prayer carpets, religious texts and maintenance of its various institutions.[67] Government funded primary schools on the Muslim side of the town were partly funded and constructed by the centre. Therefore there is a tendency among the local Borana Muslims that these government schools are 'theirs', as opposed to their Catholic counterpart. Muslim parents were castigated for taking their children to the Christian funded institutions and such debates often degenerated to heightened inter-religious tension. Some schools like Khalifa and Gammachu were almost entirely constructed by the centre. Gammachu primary school is unique in that the choice of the Borana word '*Gammachu*' which means 'happiness' alludes to direct answer to choice of 'Macci' 'joy' that was used by the Catholic mission for most of their projects. The centre also extended its philanthropic assistance to Merti Secondary school, the only government institution of this calibre, by funding the construction of classrooms, dormitories and sponsorship of students whose parents are poor or those orphans who were graduates or current students of their *madrasa*s. The students were also required to attend *madrasa*s in the late afternoons and during the weekend.

As the level of religious re-orientation gained root, there were calls for separation of boys and girls in public primary and secondary schools and expansion of female education in an ideal Islamic environment. This gave rise to Merti Muslim Girls Secondary school. The religious scholars from the centre sit on boards and committees of various primary and secondary schools, health centres, water management, non-governmental agencies, security committee and disaster management boards in times of crisis. The influence of the religious leaders were felt during the recent constitutional debates and as 'unbiased' voice in protracted inter-clan rivalry in civic, parliamentary and presidential elections (Wario 2010).

Of these budding Borana speaking religious scholars, the founder of the Centre, Sheikh Abdullahi commands great respect not only among the Waso Borana but also other Borana and non-Borana Muslims outside Waso. Often the local religious leaders coordinate with national Muslim leadership in making stands on topical issues and convey what they believe is the consensus of Muslims beyond the confines of Waso. Such coordination and networking has seen greater cooperation between Borana and non-Borana Muslim scholars in Merti, Garba Tulla, Isiolo, Marsabit, Moyale and Sericho and other part of the country.[68]

Since August 8 1998 when the United State Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were bombed, there had been a crackdown on Islamic charities operating in most parts of Kenya.

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[67] Personal conversations with Aba Roba, Merti, October 2009.
[68] Personal conversations with Maalim Dabaso, Isiolo, April 2009.

These agencies were accused of terrorism and given short notice to leave the country (Salih 2004). This had direct impact on sustainability of the various projects funded by these agencies and also establishment of new ones. There were general decline in the religious fervour that marked the early and mid-1990s. Parents, for the first time, had to pay some small fees for their children's religious education. Most affected institutions were the Merti Orphanage Centre that has over 200 children and was until then supported by Islamic humanitarian agencies. Also affected were dozens of secondary school and college students who were beneficiaries of the Centre's scholarship programme. *Madrasa* teachers and *imām*s were to face tough times as funds for their salaries were drastically reduced.[69] Efforts to raise money locally though '*harambee*' (Sw. fund raising) has had mixed success. Despite such change of fortune, the Centre still runs various projects and continues to manage mosques and *madrasa*s.

The centre has had instrumental impact on religious observance in fundamental way. Prayer attendance had drastically increased over the years. In public, Muslim attires such as *buibui*s (Sw. dark coloured female dress) for women and *kanzus* (Sw. male robe) and *kofia*s (skullcap) are popularly worn as markers of religious identity. The generation educated in the 1980s and 1990s are more grounded in Islamic faith and are not socialised deeply in traditional customs and culture.

As the Ṣūfī traditions were not fully established, there was not much resistance to the fundamental changes initiated by the Merti Qur'ān Centre. The few elderly scholars were co-opted into the growing religious bureaucracy as mosque elders. The next generations of Muslim leaders were groomed from the hundreds of *madrasa* going children. The influence of the centre was pervasive as its leaders guided not only on religious but also socio-political issues. The only challenges to the monopoly of religious sphere in Merti were the Catholic mission and the syncretic *Ayaan* cult.[70] The backlash on the *Ayaan* cult was strong. It was condemned as heretical. It's free mixing of sexes was called conduit for sexual promiscuity. Its drumming beating labeled satanic and fake and their healing rituals and requirements, exploitation of the poor and the vulnerable.[71] At the height of soured relations, the shrines of the cults were desecrated by enthusiastic *madrasa* going children. It is common for sermons to be dedicated to the ills of the cult. However despite the constant condemnation of the cult by the Muslim religious leaders, the cult is still active in the area. It continues to serve sick

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[69] Personal conversations with Mwalim Abdub, Isiolo, May 2010.
[70] Personal conversations with Mzee Roba, Merti, September 2009.
[71] Personal conversations with Yaasin, Merti, October 2009.

clienteles in need of healing through trance dance. This is done during full moon.[72] The religious scholars are also in competition with the *Ayaan* cult in spirit management venture as they offer a more Islamic way of expelling the spirit rather than the lifelong appeasement offered by the cult. Customers are spoilt for choice.

Picture 2 A section of Waso Muslims attending *Eid al Akbar* prayers at the Khalifa Primary School grounds in Merti town in 2008. Source: personal.

It is in the realm of Muslim-Christian relations that the impact of the centre is most felt. Following the massive investment in educational and development projects by the Catholic mission, the return of Sheikh Abdullahi heralded a rival and equally ambitious Muslim projects. A kind of transnational battle for the religious psyche of the Waso Borana was hence fought between the proxies of the Vatican and those of the Arab-Middle Eastern in this tiny town. At the height of this rivalry, plane loads of Italian missionaries and Arab Muslim *daʿwa* activists flew regularly to the area. The battle for 'the soundscape' is fought on every day as church bells and muezzin calls fill the air. The most imposing structures in even small villages like Bulesa are not schools or shops but the complex network of church buildings and outstanding white-washed mosque with minarets. The divide between Muslim and Christian majority areas was made clear. Schools and dispensaries were either 'Muslim' or 'Christian', though could be accessed by respective religious communities. Muslims were strongly encouraged to attend Muslim institutions and vice versa.[73] Tensions were high during Muslim

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[72] Personal conversations with Sora Baati, Yaasin, Merti, 2009.
[73] Personal conversations with Mwalim Abdub, Isiolo, May 2010.

and Christian religious festivals. The most protracted of the inter-religious conflict was over the status of a cemetery. Both sides claimed that it was their hallowed grounds. It was located at the edge of Manyatta Father, the Christian quarters. The general feeling was that these grounds cannot be shared and that as in life, the dead Christian and Muslims deserved a separate resting place. In any case, while the graves of Muslims were marked with minimal features, Christian crosses erected at the gate of the cemetery and on individual graves marked a clear ownership of that space. This conflict turned violent when it was alleged that enraged Muslims torched the fence of the cemetery. After a long court battle, the conflict was resolved. Within this period of heightened Muslim and Christian religious revivalism, two persons personified the faces of the two rival faiths, Sheikh Abdullahi and Father Piu Bono (Galgalo 2006).

With rising levels of secular and religious education, other Islamic and Christian traditions not related with neither the Macci Catholic centre nor the Merti Qur'ān centre attempted to establish networks of followers within the respective religious communities. Among the Muslims, the transnational lay dāʿis of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat have been visiting the region since 1970s. In the 1990s it recruited a few local Muslims as their representatives and resident lay dāʿis. [74] It was to grow through the recruitment of more followers leading to its establishment of the first post-1986 mosque to be built entirely without the explicit support of the Merti Qur'ān Centre.[75] The growth and mobility related practices of this lay movement shall form the bulk of subsequent sections of this thesis. On the Christian side, Pentecostal churches based in Isiolo have always been eyeing the lucrative Christian constituencies that were under the Roman Catholic Church. These churches have frequently sent missionaries to show religious films, play Christian songs, preach and distribute tracks and pamphlets that marketed their tenets. The most active of these churches were Life Ministries led by Ubshet Mengesha. Dissatisfied lay Catholics were attracted to the appealing message of personal salvation and charismatic preaching of the new church. The youth, especially school leavers, found an easy home in the gospel music and youth fellowship programme. A unique feature of this new church was its reliance not on the formalised Catholic songs but its use of Oromo gospel songs that appealed to the cultural roots of 'culturally uprooted' Borana youth.[76] The

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[74] Personal conversations with Mzee Bidu, Merti, 2009.

[75] Personal conversations with Mwalim Abdub, Isiolo, May, 2010.

[76] During my field visit to Merti, I made personal observations about the newly established evangelical church. I also interacted with some leaders and members. I observed that a number of their members are formerly Catholics. The church itself was built on grounds allocated by one of the early converts to evangelical Christianity. The church plays Oromo gospel tracks by musicians like Magarsa Baqqala through loud speakers.

new church built a small worship centre within the Christian quarter just as the Tablīghīs did in the Muslim side. Both relied and continue to rely to translocal networks, enjoy popularity among the youth and are led by local graduates of the pioneer centres of Muslim and Christian traditions.

2.4.2 Islam in Moyale since the mid-1980s: Ṣūfī -Salafī Crisis
Ṣūfī-Salafī encounter in Moyale and Marsabit from mid 1980s was more dramatic and polemical. It displayed three characteristics. One, it appeared as if it was between the youthful Muslims dispossessed of leadership against the elderly Muslims in charge of religious authority and decision making. Two, it seemed to be driven by the *madrasa* and secular educated followers against the traditionally educated elderly Muslim leaders. Three, it appeared to be a war of ideology backed by more universalistic, orthodoxical and liberating claims against the old 'rustic', conservative and more localised Ṣūfī ideas. In simple terms, the 'Saudi-backed' new youthful Muslims sought public recognition and leadership opportunity away from mainstream Somali and Arab dominated *Ṣaliḥiyya* and *Qādiriyya* religious bureaucracy. This contestation was not a smooth one and involved subtle as well as overt challenge to the duo-poly of the two old *ṭarīqa*s associated with the pioneer Muslim resident of this border town.

The wave of Muslim reformers was referred to with variety of names: *warr assalam aleykumi* (Bor. the people of *Assaalam Aleykum*), *Wahabi* and *ijole kitaab adhii* (the youth of the white books). This new trend was headed by a multi-ethnic mix of secular educated youth and young adults from almost all ethnic groups within Moyale town, namely, Burji, Borana, Garre and Gabra. They are widely travelled. They have been exposed to contemporary religious discourses of their time and they felt disempowered by the largely 'old-school' *Ṣaliḥiyya -Qādiriyya* domination.[77] The group was composed of those who stood to lose little and gain more to the challenge they posed to the old Ṣūfī hegemony. At that time almost all the mosques were associated with the Ṣūfī traditions and hence the new group lacked sacred spaces of their own.

The first initial contestation for place was carried out not in public squares but right in the main *Ṣaliḥiyya* and *Qādiriyya* mosques. The *Salafī* affiliated youth, as a direct challenge with the Ṣūfī elders, started to conduct separate *tarāwīḥ* prayers during the month of *Ramaḍān* behind their own self-appointed leaders. This did not go well with the old Ṣūfī leaders. As a

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The music played can be heard in most parts of the town including the Muslim majority quarters and around the Macci Centre.
[77] Personal conversations with Jeylani and Jama, September 2009.

show of strength and solidarity, the *Ṣaliḥiyya* and *Qādiriyya* sheikhs organised weekly *dhikr* sessions after Friday prayers. There were also impromptu sermons from the new group and counter-sermons and polemics by the *Ṣūfī* leaders. The atmosphere both in Moyale and in the neighbouring Marsabit reached fever pitch. The *Salafī* groups made much progress with co-option of some old sheikhs.[78] Some Arsi-Oromo Sheikhs were sent from Saudi Arabia to spread the new ideas. These sheikhs also brought with them youth from their home area, who were trained and instructed to preach in public in favour of the reformist ideas. These youth were target of police arrests at the request of the *Ṣūfī* elders. There were claims that the leading *Salafī* proponents were 'bought' with millions of Saudi monies.[79]

As the conflict spiraled out of control and animosity stirred by polemics degenerated into open public disputes, each camp attempted to win the police, district commissioner and other provincial administration to their side. The public administrators and the police were in dilemma as to how to solve this conflict. On the one hand, they felt the elders were indeed on the right as the youthful followers were engaging them in face to face confrontation on matters dear to their beliefs and were turning the mosques and public spaces as sites of polemical sermons. But on the other hand, the youthful reformists have not broken any public laws that warrant their proscription. In fact most of their earlier members of this movement were reputable civil servants, teachers and budding businessmen. The youth armed with secular education, could convincingly state that the old sheikhs were resisting 'inevitable' religious change with futility.[80] Furthermore, there were some claims that unlike the elders who were all talks, their youthful opponents were able to 'lubricate' the hands of the law enforcers with some hand-outs.

With coordinated resistance from the custodians of *Ṣūfī* heritage in most of the town's main mosques and the need to be independent of their constant criticism from such quarters, the new movement sought to establish their own sacred space and a marker of identity also adopted a distinct dress. One informant recalls that in this manner:

> Then the youthful followers built a small temporary prayer shed (*moola*) in the compounds of Ismail Aba Gala. They congregated here though there were enough mosques. They stood out by their distinctive long beard and Pakistani *kameez*. They were called the people of long beards and shaking fingers.[81]

With progress of time, the movement transformed more and more along ethno-religious lines.

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[78] Personal conversations with Abdi Galgalo, June, 2010.
[79] Personal conversations with Jeylani and Jama, September 2009.
[80] Personal conversations with Hussein Ganna, Moyale, September 2009.
[81] Personal conversations with Jey Liban, Moyale, October 2009.

One group that became largely associated with the '*Wahabi*' trend then was the Garre. They invested in construction of *madrasa*s through funds from transnational Muslim *daʿwa* agencies. They hence put the first fully *Salafī* permanent mosque in an area of Moyale they predominate. This marked the birth of Taqwa mosque in Nyayo Road area. The management of this mosque and other Garre-led mosques sought complete attachment to the *Ramaḍān* and *Eid* schedules of Saudi Arabia unlike other mosques that often prayed and fasted according to the directives of the Chief Kadhi and other Kenyan Muslim leaders.[82] It is also among the Burji that tangible cleavages started to show due to the rivalry between the Ṣūfī and Salafī followers. The main mosque in Manyatta Burji was managed by elderly leaders affiliated with the Ṣūfī tradition. The informant recalls that:

> The youth followers could make much progress in spreading new ideas. But of all the people, the group that went deep within this movement was the Burji. In Marsabit the levels of animosity was so high as to even border on assassination of rival sheikhs. The old backers of the new group slowly withdrew. The conflict between the old and the young was violent in the Burji mosque in Manyatta leading to a death of man during the month of *Ramaḍān*.[83]

Another angle to the *Ṣūfī-Salafī* rivalry was that of the alleged threats some sheikhs posed to regional peace as some of them, especially Arsi Oromo ones, were allegedly linked with Oromo nationalism and liberation movements. With the fall of the Derg regime in Ethiopia in 1991 and the subsequent fall-out between various factions that fought that regime, some Oromo nationalist movements withdrew from the interim government and went back to bush to wage a war of liberation. The early 1990s saw heightened securitisation of identity and religious traditions such as Salafīsm. Salafīsm had been on the rise in Arsi region for considerable length of time (Østebø, 2008). Therefore the persecution of the *Salafī* sheikhs of Ethiopian origin led to their migration to Nairobi and other towns for safety.

The discourses between the old Ṣūfī and the new *Salafī* followers concerned a number of issues. The core practices of the Ṣūfīs such as praise songs and congregational supplications for the Prophet and leading founders of their *ṭarīqa*s (Bor. *salawat*), the celebration of the Prophet birthday (Ar. *maulid*), visit to tombs, shrines, and graves (Ar. *ziyārāt*), and weekly congregational gatherings and feasts were all declared by the *Salafī* proponents as associationism and heretical.[84] The Ṣūfīs on the other hand, accused them of being literalist in their interpretation of the core Islamic texts, their rapid growth were attributed to Saudi money and proselytism among the illiterate and semi-literate Muslims and that their ideology

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[82] Personal conversations with Jeylani and Jama, September 2009.
[83] Personal conversations with Hassan Ganna, Moyale, October 2009.
[84] Personal conversations with Jeylani and Jama, September 2009.

as being not anchored in any of the established schools of thought.[85] The Ṣūfīs also rationalised that their practices has legitimacy in years of learning under reputed sheikhs and not in classrooms like the *Salafī*s and that their opponents were not proper Muslims as they did not love the Prophet and his companion. The Ṣūfīs also linked the origin of Wahabism to alleged early 'European-Saud Family-Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab pact' to destroy the religion of Islam.[86] The quote below sums up some the feelings among the Ṣūfī about the new religious movement:

> Wahabi was brought about by the Europeans to divide the unity of the *umma*. They destroyed 5 things that bring people together: *salawat, dua jamaati, ziara* at tombs and graves, *maulid*. They also interpret the verses of the Qur'ān that were revealed in relation to the *kufar* (Ar. non-believers) for fellow Muslims like us. The Prophet did *ziara* in the graves of the fallen companions for *dua*. They say all these are *shirk* (Ar. associationism). The Prophet asked us to visit graves for *ziara* to pray for the departed. They say people were worshipping graves. They hide all these truth. They were given a lot of money. There was a lot of *fitna* and debates. They could answer the old sheikhs so they targeted to spread their ideas among the semi-literate and illiterate peoples.[87]

The Ṣūfī hence displayed themselves as men of learning and moderation and as a tradition anchored in the right school of thought and the most orthodox religious heritage. Because they preceded the new reformist in the region, they argued that their opponents were indeed the innovators in religions. The above informant continues:

> Have you seen how we raise our voices in praise of Allah and his prophet; we recite *dua*s in congregation. We do *wardigi* (Bor/Somali. Ṣūfī chants) every Friday. They say all these are wrong. They say that we the old scholars are not learned. But this is a lie. But was the prophet not among the old scholars? Were the companions not among the old scholars? Who are innovators? They are they came recently! They learn their ideas on blackboard and were told to say this and that. The old sheikhs learnt under great sheikhs. These new people use their own opinion in interpreting verses and *ḥadīth* s. We the old scholars use old renowned books to do that not our heads.
> They do not have ʿ*ilm*. They cannot do *tafsīr*. They do not consult books. They do not respect any *madh'hab*. We are *Shafi'i*. They are not in any of the *madhhab* and that is being in a state is *bidʿa*. They do whatever they wish or desire. These *Wahabi*s are like that. Their *duʿas* are not *maqbūl* (Ar. accepted). They do not even do *duʿas* for any one as they know they are not acceptable. Their ʿ*aqīda* is faulty.[88]

*Salafī*s on the other hand, buoyed by investments of translocal network of wealthy Islamic *daʿwa* agencies, established new *madrasa*s and mosques. Students were sent not only to leading *madrasa*s in Kenya but also to Sudan and Saudi Arabia. The younger generations were attracted to the youthful vibrant religiosity and opportunities availed by the Salafī Islam. In the late 1980s and 1990s demographic shift unrelated to the religious change moderately

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[85] Personal conversations with Hassan Ganna, Moyale, October 2009.
[86] Personal conversations with Sheikh Hallo, Moyale, October 2009.
[87] Personal conversations with Hassan Ganna, Moyale, October 2009.
[88] Personal conversations with Sheikh Hallo, Moyale, October 2009.

increased the population of Moyale Kenya and Ethiopia with the discovery of gold in Bethe area on the Ethiopian side of Moyale and the refugee crisis caused by the fall of the Mengistu Haile Mariam regime. This large populace provided fertile ground for the germination of the new religious movement. Within a span of 10 years the celebration of *maulid*, common Ṣūfī gatherings, congregational *duʿa*s after obligatory prayers, various Ṣūfī readings and *dhikr* on Friday, *ziyārāt* and Ṣūfī affiliated recitations in *Tarāwīḥ* prayers started to wane in every day religious practices. These changes were also visible in other towns such as Marsabit and Sololo. The Ṣūfī traditions backed by aging descendants of the pioneer Muslims of the towns could no longer hold its own against the new religious movement. One Ṣūfī informant sums up their 'lose' this way:

> Currently the mosques that uphold *Shafi'i* system and *ṭarīqa* religiosity are too few. They are Qadiriya mosque and Masjid Quba in the town and in Manyatta Burji respectively and the Jamia Mosque of Moyale Ethiopia. The rest have all been taken over by the Wahabi associated *ʿulamā'*. The Manyatta Burji mosque is a contested space. They have tried to turn it to their side but we resisted it and will continue to resist.[89]

Among the bastion of Ṣūfī traditions in early days of Islam in the region to give in to reformist Islam was the *Ṣaliḥiyya* mosque which now functions as the town's Jamia mosque. Today Moyale town has over 15 mosques. The town's residential area itself has a rough ethnic settlement patterns. Mosques in most of these ethnic enclaves are led by *ʿulamā'* from the surrounding communities. Jamia and *Qādiriyya* mosques in the town are the largest and are patronized by the all ethnic groups and still managed by descendants of pioneer Muslim families of the town. Ittisam mosque led by Sheikh Adan Doyo is especially popular with Borana Muslims. The *imām* regularly lectures on topical issues in Borana. Borana majority areas like Butiye, Helu and Sessi has a couple of mosques. Garre majority areas such as Al Huda, Nyayo Road, and Biashara Street have a number of mosques. There are at least two mosques in Manyatta Burji and a mosque in Ola Gabra near Helu. Prison mosque, at the edge of compound of the provincial administration, serves government officials, prison warders, the police teachers, traders and travelers. This mosque is also frequented by the members of Tablīghī Jamāʿat.

There are at least seven *madrasa*s in the town, namely: town, Kuwaiti, Al Huda, Sessi, Itisam, Khulafa ur-Rashideen, and Manyatta Burji *madrasa*s. These *madrasa*s offer classes up to intermediate levels after which aspiring students seek further education in Mandera, Isiolo, Nairobi or Mombasa. Garre pupils constitute a majority in enrolment in town's various

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[89] Personal conversations with Hassan Ganna, Moyale, October 2009.

*madrasa*s. There are tendencies for Borana parents to emphasise their children's pursuit of secular education at the expense of *madrasa*s and *duksi*s that specialises in Islamic education. Therefore they are disproportionally represented not only in enrolment but also in the long-term Muslim leadership within the town as they lack significant numbers of religiously educated class. In neighbouring Sololo town, a Borana majority area, there are two mosques and a small *madrasa*. Similarly under-enrolment and lack of funds and personnel, affected the day to day running of the *madrasa* prompting its amalgamation into an integrated Islamic school offering both Islamic and secular education. The once vibrant Walda Islamic Centre that used to be funded by Muslim humanitarian organisations faces collapse due to lack of funds, students and disinterest of the largely nominal Muslims of the area. The centre has also been turned into an integrated Islamic primary school. This trend has also been extended to a once reputed centre of learning in Isiolo, Al-Falah Islamic Educational Complex. Al-Falah now serves as a primary school-cum-*madrasa*. The rise of integrated schools is not just necessitated by dwindling fund. Private entrepreneurs in Moyale, Isiolo, Marsabit, Sololo and Garba Tulla are experimenting with it to serve both the demands for secular and Islamic education under one roof.

2.5 Conclusion

Islam among the Borana speaking communities has undergone a tremendous change. The transformative reformist wave initiated in the mid-1980s has endured in most places. The reformist tendencies have however in the recent years been steady and less confrontational, especially in contested towns like Moyale and Marsabit. Anti-ṣūfī polemics fronted by religious scholars from certain ethnic groups have subsided too. However while the old *Ṣaliḥiyya* and *Qādiriyya* popularity is almost over, resilience of the cult of Sheikh Hussein is sustained by proximity of Moyale to Ethiopia and the need for healing services offered by its specialists. Religious observance is on the rise buoyed by upsurge in religious educational establishments and mosques. This heightened religious awareness has resulted to an urge, especially among those who could not pursue *madrasa* education to advanced levels due to a competing pursuit of secular government education, to seek for greater spiritual fulfilment in alternative religious trends to the ageing Ṣūfī and reformist and confrontational Salafīsm. Tablīghī Jamāʿat appeared in the region at an opportune time. With dwindling funds being channeled to the religious establishment due to restricted operations of transnational Islamic charity agencies, the reformist Islam that swept the Ṣūfīs out of religious bureaucracy in the 1990s have now to contend with rising challenge to the use of sacred spaces and legitimacy with new lay *daʿwa* movement originating from India. This new transnational apolitical movement with grassroot representation and presence among the Borana speaking communities of northern Kenya shall be the focus of the subsequent chapters of this thesis. The question worth asking is, would the new wave be temporary like the preceding ones or will it have greater inculcation into the religious consciousness of the locals. Only time will tell.

Chapter Three

Tablīghī Jamāʿat: Global-Local History of the Movement and its Internal Self-Organisation and Structure

3.1 Introduction

In July 2010, I conducted an intensive discussion about Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya with three Borana speaking regulars in Moyale. The informants having spent at least a decade within the movement were competent in expounding not only their every day practices as Tablīghīs, their continued motivation to be in the movement but also vast arrays of polemical discourses around the movement and accusations leveled against them by their local and global opponents. Whilst in the middle of the discussions, I felt it was the moment to break the ice and asked a critical question, whose answer has eluded most of my earlier informants. I innocently asked; describe in the best way possible the local, as well as the national history of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. The three were drawn back by this question. Clearly it was not an 'innocent' question with a simple answer, at least to them. After a pause of about a minute, Abdi Rashid raised one of the most remarkable explanations as to why there was no one among them willing or able to tell about the chronological growth of the movement in Kenya. He simply said:

> There is no one who can tell you chronologically the growth of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya. In the movement there is no documentation. *Wazee*, the elders discourage documentation. They do not approve of even things were doing here for studies/ reference. They refuse. For example, the *sitta siffat*, one can write the whole principles that I have told you in a book form so that it can be read for future. The elders say no. Those are dead words. Once something has been written it becomes dead. That is what they say. It is said that the practices become less once it has been written and the efforts would be less. But if it remains oral and practical, you learn it through mobility and effort of *daʿwa*. [90]

The quote above raises three fundamental points. First, the leaders of the movement, whether national or global, do not encourage documentation of any kind, especially of materials seen not to be in any way useful in its growth. This does not imply that documentation does not exist. In fact the opposite is true as the whole business of coordination is practically impossible without registers of names of volunteers and routes, minutes of daily meetings at

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[90] Group Discussions with Abdi Rashid, Abdi Hakim, and Abdi Galgalo, July, 2010, Moyale.

different levels of organisation and other mundane data. Though such necessary documentation is done, the data/information is seldom accessible to outsiders. The documented information is also not seen as source of historical information but purely for planning and evaluation purposes. Secondly, though they were willing to speak to me about the movement, some informants were uncomfortable with such an exercise of documenting information about the movement, its history and practices as the elders do not approve of it regardless the reason, academic or not. The oral conversations revolving around the movement were allowed but written was met with reservations. Incidentally a number of recommended texts describe the practices and tenets of the movement and there exist also rich bibliographical works on the founding leaders of the movement and their successors. Thirdly, there is a strong belief within the movement that action is better than written words and that documentation kills action. Diligent performances of religious practices are seen to be much beneficial than reading about them without actions. Words once written and published into books and pamphlet are seen as not 'alive' (dead, not actualised/ practised). Tablīghī Jamāʿat is not only a movement but also a lifestyle hence deliberately kept oral, practical and mobile; to be elucidated face to face and to be emulated in everyday life.

The chapter thus raises and attempts to answer some questions: How does a researcher document on the unfolding history of a movement that explicitly shuns publicity and maintains a public façade of voluntary and fluid organisation devoid of any bureaucratic trapping? What are the dynamics behind the upsurge of the movement, from a local response to faith renewal among Meos of India to being one of the fastest growing transnational Muslim movements in the world? How did the movement came to Kenya, spread and became established among the largely nomadic communities of Northern Kenya? Who were the 'brokers' that facilitated the establishment and continued growth of the movement in Kenya? How is the 'faith bureaucracy' of the transnational movement organised in Kenya?

Part One

3.2 Tablīghī Inc: Historical Background of the Transnational Movement

The foundation of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat is intractably linked to earlier reformist trends in British India and socio-economic and political challenges that faced Muslims in that region. Since the middle of 19th Century after the fall of the Mughals, the *ʿulamā'* lost prestigious positions that they enjoyed and were persecuted on suspicion of instigating Indian revolts and as a result retreated into old institutions and even founded new ones. One such institution that later had tremendous impact on Islam in South Asia and particularly the global growth of the

Tablīghī Jamāʿat was Darul Ulum Deoband, Uttar Pradesh in India (Masud 2000: xlvi-xlviii, Haq 1972, Sikand 2002).

Founded in 1867, the Deobandi institution trained preachers and prayer leaders, as well as scholars competent to take on the rising tides of polemical debates levelled against the Muslim faith by Christian and later Hindu missionaries (Haq, 1972). The institution was to produce over the years, prominent religious scholars of that era. Masud (2000: xlviii) notes that the influence of Deoband on the religious and political views of Indian Muslims flourished with the establishment of sister institutions, which were modeled on the same curriculum and thought such as Mazahirul Ulum in Saharanpur (where the founder of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat was a student and later a worker/teacher). Other institutions that the Tablīghīs were to keep close contact and alliance with were mosques and seminaries like Nadwa seminary in Lucknow and Aligarth. The close affinity with Deobandi School often leads to the dubbing of the movement, especially by the opponents as a 'Deobandi sect' and characterizing of the movement's mission as the spread of Deobandism - a purist Islamic reformist tradition (Masud 2000: xlvii).

The founder of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, Māwlanā Muhammad Ilyās (1885-1944) was a descendant of a highly respected and deeply religious family 'tree' of scholars from Doab area in Western Uttar Pradesh (Troll 1994: 117). His father, Muhammad Ismail (d. 1898), a reputed religious scholar, ran a small *madrasa* at Bangle Wali Mosque in Nizamuddin area of Delhi. His pupils, though a handful, were drawn from the largely nominal Meo Muslims (Haq, 1972: 80). Muhammad Ismail had by then established special spiritual ties with the Meos, the inhabitant of Mewat (Troll 1994: 117). Ilyās studied and taught in Mazahirul Ulum, Saharanpur and Darul Ulum, Deoband and was spiritually influenced by contacts and works of the leading Indian Muslim scholars of the time among them Khalil Ahmed Saharanpuri (d. 1927), Mahmudul Hasan (1851-1920), and Ashraf Ali Thanwi (1863-1943) (Troll 1994, Haq 1972, Masud 2000).

The late 19th Century and early 20th Century was characterised by intense rivalry among Christian, Muslim and reformed Hinduism missionaries. The competition was highly pronounced among the Muslim Meos of Mewati, whose adherence to communal and individualised religious duties, dressing and manners were perceived to be nominal. Meos were described by local Muslim scholars, as a people who practiced Muslim as well as some aspects of Hindu rituals and rites. They called themselves 'Nau-Muslims', a corrupted word for Neo-Muslims/New-Muslims. Due to religious syncretism among the Meos, the early founders of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat drew an analogy between them and the Arabs of Pre-Islamic

times. Hinduism prior to the establishment of *Arya Samaj*, a Hindu revivalist movement, remained a non-proselytising religion (Haq 1972: 19). *Arya Samaj* the founder of Pandit Dayanand Sarswati (d. 1883) realized that the only way to counter the ways of Islam and Christianity and the rising number of Hindu converts to the two religions was through Hindu missionary activities. This wave of reverse conversion gave birth to the widespread Hindu phenomenon known as *Shuddhi* (purification) (Masud 2000: l). The activities of *Shuddhi* movements were especially active in areas occupied by nominal Meos. Because Meos and other groups retained a number of earlier non-Islamic traditional practices, *Arya Samaj* aimed at 'reclaiming' these groups back to the 'fold' (hindu faith), into which they would be readmitted after ritual 'purification' – *Shuddhi*' (Reetz 2008: 101). The rivalry born out of the contestations over religious space among the missionary groups of the three religions impacted on strained inter-religious relations, consolidated in-group solidarity and led to 'innovative' and better strategies to reach to their targeted religious constituencies.

Prior to the establishment of Tablīghī Jamāʿat and afterwards, a number of similar *daʿwa* outfits operated in the region to call people back to religious observance and also as a counter to *Shuddhi* movements. One of these *daʿwa* organisations that worked effectively among non-Muslim was the Tablīghī Mission of Khwaja Hasan Nizami (1878-1955) that sent preachers out and published religious literature such as books, pamphlets and tracts into Urdu (Troll 1994: 117-118, Haq 1972: 41-42). Another was the Central *Jamiyat al Tabligh al-Islam*, an all-Indian organization with grass root presence, which sent preachers to expound on fundamentals of faith and also to counter Hindu and Christian missionaries. *Himayat-I Islam* was also one such movement that aimed to avert the ever-increasing polemical attacks against Muslim faith through publication of religious literature and teaching. Inayat-u'llah Khan Mashiriqi's movement called *Khaksar*s, that stressed social service and military discipline was also such movement (Haq 1972: 39-40). The Tablīghī Jamāʿat built on the successes and challenges that faced these 'predecessors' in forging pragmatic *daʿwa* approaches.

Mohammad Ilyās was dissatisfied with the range of strategies used by individual Muslim scholars and *daʿwa* groups in bringing tangible religious change in the society. More so, he was disheartened by the minimal role *madrasa*s had on the nature of spiritual reawakening. He himself had served as teacher in these schools and had firsthand experience on their low impact on the society. According to him neither the scholars nor the ordinary Muslims were doing something about the moral decay in the society and the unfortunate state of the faith. He strongly believed that the general public does neither require advanced Islamic sciences nor teachings that the *madrasa*s offer to preach but just the basic fundamentals of faith that

when well understood by lay preachers can form the starting point of religious reawakening. He therefore had a vision of initiating a *daʿwa* group constituted by laymen that shall move from one area to another calling people to the fundamentals of faith.

This vision was realised in 1925, when Ilyās and a few followers started Tablīghī tours in Mewat to propagate the fundamental tenets of Islam namely *tawhīd* (Ar. the doctrine of Oneness of God, the concept of monotheism in Islam) and *namaz* (Ur. prescribed prayers). The first Tablīghī tour was after his second pilgrimage to Makkah (Troll 1994). The question as to when the Tablīghī Jamāʿat formally started has bogged scholars studying the movement. Different dates have been forwarded: Troll 1925, Haq 1927, Metcalf early 1920s, Sikand 1926. Tablīghīs are said to have adapted the idea of moving from house to house calling people to mosque to two reasons: Firstly, Ilyās was divinely 'inspired' to initiate the movement following a dream and the second account attribute the method to the Meos who had similar *daʿwa* outreach though not as systematic as the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. Ilyās accompanied the early Tablīghīs for *gasht* (Ur. going out for outreach) and later proposed changes in content of outreach speeches and in the leadership structure of *gasht* groups. Initially, the movement enjoyed very little success; this did not discourage Ilyās and his followers who relentlessly expanded their operation to include towns with larger Islamic institutions and *ʿulamā'* such as Deoband. Meo pledged to help Ilyās in furthering the renewal of faith among kinsmen and beyond their region. They became the foot soldiers of the movement and its most revered disciples to date. Sikand observes that:

> That Meos, whose Islamic identity had been of only the most nominal concern to them for several centuries, had, in matter of just few years, begun responding so enthusiastically to Ilyās' effort at spreading Islamic awareness is certainly remarkable and merits an explanation. We have already alluded to the increasing importance of Islamic symbols of the Meos as community boundary markers to differentiate them from the Hindus, whom they were increasingly coming to see as responsible for their worsening situation. [91]

The formative years of 1920s and 1930s saw crystallization of some basic teachings and concerns of the Jamāʿat namely: the six principles (*sittah siffat*) and use of certain religious texts authored by scholars associated with the movement such as *Fazā'il Tabligh*, *Fazā'il Zikr* and *Muslim Degeneration and its Only Remedy*. Additionally it is possible that the movement strengthened strategies such as non-involvement in political matters especially at the time of heightened debates prior to the partition of India into Pakistan and India and non-sectarian affiliation despite being still grounded in the *Hanafi* school and Deobandi thought with a tinge

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[91] Yoginder Sikand, *The Origin and Development of the Tablīghī Jamaat (1920-2000): A Cross-country Comparative*, (New Delhi: Orient Longman: 2002), p. 142.

of South Asian Ṣūfī heritage and intense focus on faith renewal through preaching of the most fundamental tenets of Islam. Ilyās belonged to the *Chishtiya* Ṣūfī order and fused ṣūfī-inspired practices and rituals with purist teachings of Deobandi Islam (Reetz 2003, 2008). Though, the turbulent years of late 1930s and mid-1940s were marked with heightened religious and political activism, Ilyās steered his movement from the protracted debates that cut across all the other contemporary Islamic movements about the fate of Muslims in emerging political power houses. He attributed the cause of the fall from grace of his fellow Muslims as a result of the failure to uphold religious obligations that included among others; return to the true faith and calling others to do good and avoid evil. He therefore encouraged each Muslim to allocate time, to participate regularly in *daʿwa* tours to refine their religious practices and remind others to do so too (Sikand 2002).

By 1938, the movement had extended its activities to the merchant class of Delhi. It was observed that overwhelming majority of ᶜ*ulamāʾ* showed an indifference to the movement. Most of the ᶜ*ulamāʾ* also considered the Tablīghī method of Ilyās, as superficial in it effects and shun the simple-minded lay preachers from Mewat (Troll 1994: 119). In 1944, while in his deathbed, Ilyās instructed a group of six of his closest disciples, to choose his successor from among several names he suggested (Sikand 1994: 147). The six included; the son of Ilyās Muhammad Yusuf Kandhlawi (1917-1965), I'namul Hasan, Sayyid Raza Hasan, Qari Daud, Maqbul Hasan and Ihtishamul Hasan. Sharing the charisma, esteemed reputation of erudition and piety, Yusuf was chosen as the natural successor to his father. Meos, the people among who the movement has taken root pledged to abide by the dictates of the movement and remain steadfast in the path of practical faith (Haq 1972: 97).

The period prior to the partition of 1947 was particularly trying for the Meos. Many were displaced as a result of the religious violence that erupted following the partition. A large number of them crossed over to Pakistan, establishing migrant communities of Mewatis in Pakistan, while others remained behind despite the enormous and numerous challenges, to offer the 'troubled' Meos the much-needed leadership, in the wake of heightened insecurity and great sufferings. The tribulations faced by the community led to stronger in group cohesion and emphasis on Islamic identity (Sikand 2002: 153). Despite visible growing presence in India and newly created West Pakistan, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat had until then operated under two limitations: One, it was confined to South Asia (especially Uttar Pradesh and Punjab) and two, it propagated faith renewal among Muslims only (Gaborieau 2000: 120). Ilyās avoided proselytizing among non-Muslims. This partially changed under the

leadership of Yusuf as the movement went global. Centres (*markaz*) were established in East Pakistan at Tongi and Kakrail and Raiwind in West Pakistan (Gaborieau 2000: 13).

Under Māwlanā Yusuf (1944-1965), the movement, boosted by enhanced infrastructure and migration movement, rapidly spread outside the sub-continent. Lay preachers were dispatched from India and Pakistan to several countries: Hejaz (1946); Egypt, Sudan, Syria (1946); Malaysia, Singapore (1951); USA, England (1952); Japan (1956); Turkey (1956/1957); France (1961/1962), and Western Europe, Yugoslavia (1962). It is worth noting that sub-Saharan Africa was 'explored' much later, though the region was critical in the spread of the movement to Western Europe. In 1956, the following African countries were for the first time visited by the lay preachers of the movement: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Mauritius, Reunion and most importantly South Africa. Between 1961 and 1962, West African countries were visited (Gaborieau 2000: 128-138, Hasani 1967: 504). These teams made initial assessment of religious needs of the areas they visited, made detailed observation of socio-economic and political life of the people and established contacts with leading religious leaders especially from the diasporic Muslims of South Asian descent. At the global level, the strategy, observes Gaborieau, was to establish presence in three important centres; Makkah and Medina (Saudia Arabia, the seat of Islamic orthodoxy), London (the heart of Western world) and South-Asia's triple centres of Raiwind in Pakistan, Nizamuddin in India and Kakrail and Tongi in Bangladesh (Gaborieau 2000: 130-131). Māwlanā Muhammad Yusuf was particularly interested in the establishment of the faith movement in Africa, Hasani (1967: 504) on the biography of this second leader of the movement avers:

> Māwlanā Muhammad Yusuf was extremely interested in Africa and he had a clear vision that the proclamation of Islam in Africa will cause a great spiritual awakening. Therefore he started sending groups to Africa. And in a few years the local people adopted the *daʿwa* work. Especially the academics and the influential people and the local traders welcomed Islam and some of them devoted their lives for this mission.
> In 1956 the Tablīghī Jamāʿat began to mobilise in the following African countries: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, East Africa, Rhodesia, North Africa, Mauritius and Re-Union etc. The Tablīghī Jamāʿat workers who went to these countries were from India and the dominant group was from Gujarat. Their leader was Mawlvi Musa Surti.[92]

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[92] For detailed spread of the movement see the biography of the second leader of the movement in Sayyid Muhammad Thani Hasani. *Sawanih Hadrat Mawlana Muhammad Yusuf Kandhalawi*. (Lucknow: Maktaba Islam Queen's Road, 1967) p.504. The chapter 'Mobilization in Africa' was translated from Urdu to English for this research project by Iftikar Ahmad, Oxford, October 2011.

By the time of his demise, Yusuf had consolidated the achievements of the movement by carrying out extensive tours of India and Pakistan and several other foreign countries, conducting mass weddings and public initiation ceremonies in which the adept swore allegiance to him, inaugurating mass gatherings called *ijtimāᶜ*s that later became hall mark of the movement and heightening transnationalisation of the movement. (Masud 2000: 13-17) Yusuf was succeeded by In'amul Hasan (1918-1995) who instituted better and systematic organizational management within the movement, and positioned the *Tablīghī Jamāʿat* as the most widespread Muslim *daʿwa* group in the world. In'amul Hasan was also credited for democratization of the movement as he moved to strengthen the role of *shūra* (consultative meetings) against the *amīr* and the role of daily work with mosque-based groups against ostentatious congregations (Reetz 2008: 109).

From 1995 to 1996, collective leadership of three prominent leaders led the movement: Māwlanā Sa'd al Hasan (b. 1965, great grandson of Ilyās), Māwlanā Zubair al-Hasan (son of In'am, the second *amīr*) and Māwlanā Izhar al-Hasan (d. 1996, related to Ilyās). After the death of Izhar, Zubair and Sa'd formed the top decision-making body of the movement. Zubair is said to concentrate on the internal structure and organisation of the movement while Sa'd is seen as the new 'theoretical', spiritual and symbolic head of the movement (Reetz, 2008: 109). Below is a diagram illustrating the leadership succession within the movement.
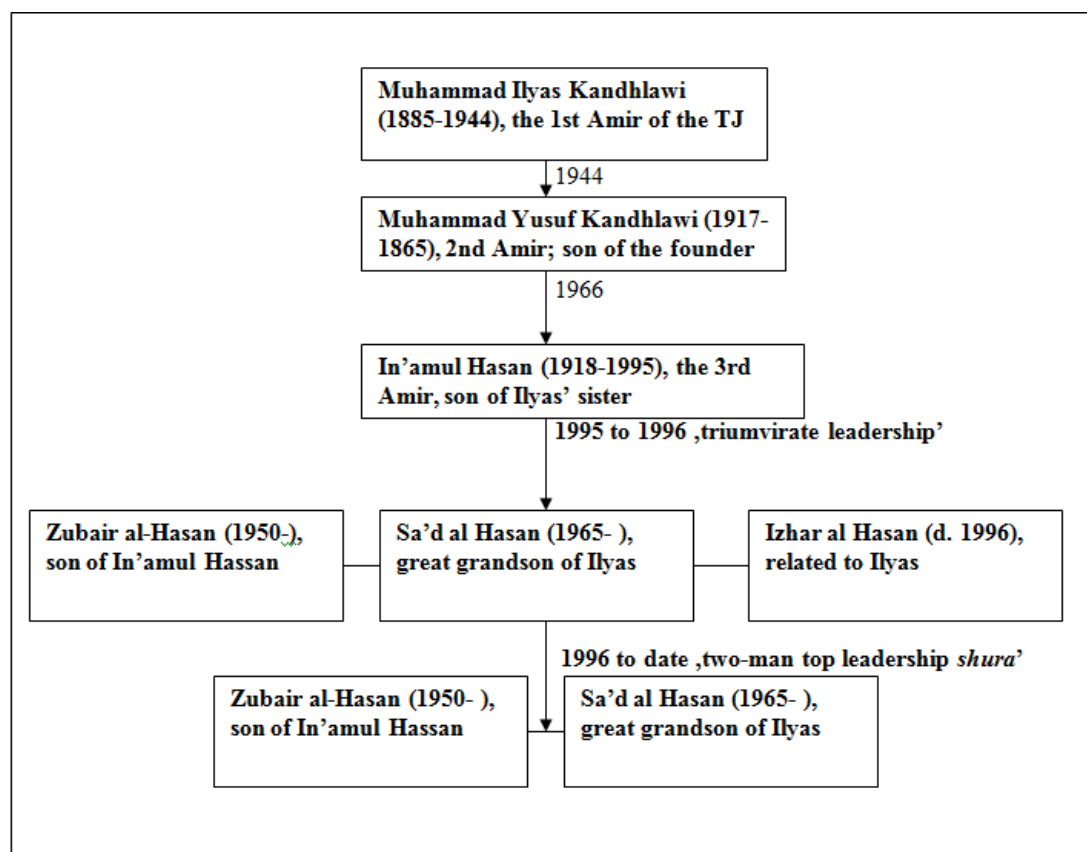
Figure 1 Leadership succession within the Tablīghī Jamāʿat

3.3 Ties that bind: Tablīghī Jamāʿat and Kenya Muslim Asians

3.3.1 Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Africa

As mentioned earlier, the pioneer Tablīghī preachers turned their attention to Africa after the movement became established in Arabia, Europe and South Asia. Between 1946 – 1951 the their established presence in Arabic speaking countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. A number of Eastern and Southern Africa countries had first Tablīghīs visits, from in 1956 (Hasani 1967, Gaborieau 2000). Despite over 60 years of presence in Africa, Tablīghī Jamāʿat had eluded academic researches for two reasons: firstly, the movement abhors publicity and do not publicise their gatherings, preaching and programmes in the formal channels of communications media frequently used by other Islamic movements such radio, newspapers, internet or television. The Tablīghī Jamāʿat largely relies on face-to-face communication and mobility of its members. Secondly, unlike other Islamic movements, the Tablīghīs have succeeded to a great extent to 'divorce' political activism. The movement focuses on individualised and communal commitment to religious obligations and shuns controversial and partisan positions in contemporary Muslim politics. In this way, they managed to keep low profile, which also complimented the nature of the movement as loosely organized hierarchies characterize the movement. The movement also relies on volunteerism of committed members. The movement portrays an image of temporality and mobility that makes academic scrutiny challenging, if not impossible.

Despite such a dearth of data on the movement, a number of scholars have written on the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Africa. In West Africa, the country with strong activities is the Gambia (Janson 2005, 2014). This tiny Muslim majority country is a former British colony and uses English as its official language, was an entry point for Pakistani and Indian Tablīghī s who share similar history. Tablīghī Jamāʿat appear to attract youthful Muslims, who utilise the mobility/travel experience availed by the movement and the alternative religious ideology as a counter to the traditional ṣūfī oriented traditions dominated by the elderly sheikhs. With fully functional *markaz* at Serrekunda, the movement not only made in-roads into the national landscape but also expanded beyond the borders. Over the years, the Gambia *markaz* emerged as a hub for the annual regional gatherings of Tablīghīs from the Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, and Guinea.

Tozy (2000) observes that in Morocco the movement locally known as *Jamāʿat al-Tabligh wa'l-Daʿwa* (JTD) though introduced into the country at the beginning of 1960s, officially came into existence on 6th July 1975 when it statutes were framed and an old church purchased and converted into al-Nur Mosque in the Moroccan capital, to accommodate the

movement. The Moroccan branch of the movement, just like its South Asian original, attempts to remodel the everyday life of its followers through *daʿwa* tours and group and individual rituals. He adds that the life of Tablīghī is a permanent ritual, and his conduct is regulated in its minutest detail so that it conforms in every detail to the life of the Prophet (Tozy 2000: 171).

Beckerleg (1995), analyzing social changes and the youth along the coast of Kenya, notes that there are many challenges facing the young generation in Watamu village. These include drug abuse, unemployment, HIV-AIDS, generational conflict with parents and the need to maintain the Swahili religious and cultural heritage. Some youth, were argued to be joining revivalist religious movement that radically shifts their relation with others and alter their dressing and mannerism to depict acquired new religiosity as a coping mechanism. Tablīghī Jamāʿat is observed to offer these youth, a new sense of identity and belonging in increasingly challenging times. Tablīghī phenomena in Watamu, observes Beckerleg, has brought a glimmer of social cohesion amidst chaotic life and commercialism that comes with unplanned tourism. Eastleigh area is cited as the headquarters of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya. The following areas are also mentioned to having active Tablīghī *daʿwa* presence; Nairobi, Mombasa, Malindi and Kizingitini. *Halali Sunna*, a group that calls for stricter and more orthodox religious observance is associated with the movement in the coastal area. The paper however, does not explore the Tablīghī phenomena at the coast of Kenya in detail.

Discussing the Islamic reform movements in contemporary Ethiopia, Østebø (2008) identifies three Islamic movements that emerged following the new political atmosphere in 1991, which granted religious groups more religious expression and freedom of association. The three; *Salafī*, Tablīghī and Intellectual revivalist movements are depicted as critical for religious configuration and as channels through which many Ethiopian Muslims search for belonging and coherent meaning. Østebø, while acknowledging scarcity of data on the early history of the movement in Ethiopia, points to the role of South African and Kenya's South Asian Tablīghīs in the initial establishment of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in 1970s. The movement is also indicated to be highly active among the Gurage community in Addis Ababa. The movement has grown to be transnational, with its headquarters in Kolfe area in Addis Ababa hosting local, regional and international Tablīghīs as they conduct *daʿwa* tours.

Outside East Africa, the region with highly active and mobile Tablīghī followers is, South Africa. It shares with Kenya one vital element; Muslims of South Asian descents, translocal 'connectors' between Nizamuddin and their respective adopted countries. Moosa (2000) considers the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, as 'perhaps' the strongest and fastest growing Muslim

religious movement in southern Africa and puts forth South African Tablīghīs as the most well organised and mobile Muslim lay preachers from the continent. Between 1830 and 1870, ten-thousands of Indians migrated to South Africa as indentured labourers and later as merchants. Among the immigrants, were Muslim Indians who later became the torch-bearers of the movement in southern Africa. Moosa argues that, a number of factors account for the success of the movement since its introduction through Saudi Arabia in the 1950s namely; strong reformist ideals that resonates with local blend of South Asian Islam, 'natural' and 'symbolic' connections between the visiting South Asian Tablīghīs and Muslims of South Asian descent and the strong presence and support from pro-Deobandi seminaries, ᶜulamā' and graduates. Relative affluence of these Muslims helped propel committed Tablīghīs, to engage in extensive international *daʿwa* travels from Brazil to Bangladesh and beyond. Extended to the region also was the 'primordial' rivalry between Deobandi purist traditions and Ṣūfī-inclined Barelwi traditions. As the former is strongly associated with the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, followers of Barelwi Islam not only released polemical discourses against the movement but also welcomed similar Barelwi lay *daʿwa* outfits such as *Daᶜwat-e Islami,* as a counter-strategy. Tablīghī elders frequent the country and the association between the centres in the Indian sub-continent and South African Tablīghīs; extend to publishing of books and tracts needed for proselytism in Africa. For instance, Muslim owned publishing firms in South Africa often release copies of *Fazā'il Aᶜmāl* in English, among other books.

3.3.2 Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya: From Nizamuddin to Nairobi

Undoubtedly as field data and participant observation reveal, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat is the most active self-organised *daʿwa* group in Kenya. Its annual national gatherings are attended by up to 15000 followers and 'sympathisers'. These gatherings send out up to 120 preaching teams destined for different destinations and for varying length of time. Their central *markaz* in Eastleigh has among other facilities an enormous one storey mosque with the capacity to accommodate hundreds of people. The top leadership, known as Kenya Shūra is dominated by Kenyans of South Asian descent, though indigenous Kenyans are also members of the consultative committee. It is among these Kenyan Muslims, whose ancestors came from the sub-continent, that initial contacts and 'converts' were made This is similar to the case of South Africa, where the beginning of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat were said to be inextricably tied to the fortune of descendants of so –called 'passenger Indians', who arrived in the provinces of Natal and Transvaal toward the close of the nineteenth century (Moosa 2000: 207). Gaborieau (2000 133) confirms that, before reaching the local population, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat first 'aims' at migrant South Asian populations as a more accessible target. Before tracing the

history of the movement among the Borana speaking communities of Northern Kenya, it is essential to outline the initial establishment of the movement among the Kenyan Asians. However, it would be erroneous to consider the so-called, Kenya's Muslim Asians or Muslim Indians, as a monolithic entity. The communities of Muslim of South Asian descent are diverse groups of ethnic and religious communities that are microcosms of communities in the Indian sub-continent. For better comprehension, it is important to attempt to explore the history of Asians in Kenya and the break-down of Muslim of Indian descent and then, finally examine the dynamics of localisation of the transnational movement in Kenya.

3.3.2.1 Wahindi Wakenya: Kenyans of Asian Descent

We shall start with the semantics of the terms ascribed to Kenyans of Asian origin. In Kenya, generally people use the Swahili term 'Wahindi' or Indians (English). Another term commonly used to refer to them is 'Asians'. Salvadori (1989: 5) recognising the ambiguity that the term creates especially to the non-East African readership, clarifies that it is used in her work as used in Kenya, 'to refer to a person (or anything, for that matter) from the Indian subcontinent'. Herzig (2006: 1) affirms that while the term 'Asian' is an ascription used by Africans and Europeans, the Asians themselves rather identify with terms Kenyan Asians or Kenyans of South Asian origin.

The notion of a monolithic 'Asian community', observes Salvadori (1989: 1), exists only in the imagination of non-Asians. They are differentiated by their places of origin, their languages, their religions and their occupation. Almost all of them come from northwestern India, mostly from Punjab, the Sindh, Gujarat (comprising Gurajat proper, Cutch and Kathiawar and Surat) and Goa. A few were from Rajasthan and Maharashtra. All major religions of India are hence represented in Kenya. Namely there are Punjabis who are Hindus (both orthodox *Sanathan Dharmist*s and *Arya Samajists*), Muslims (both orthodox *Sunni*s and *Ahmadiyya*s) and Sikhs (both orthodox and *Namdhari*s). From Gujarat there are Zoroastrians, Hindus of various persuasions, Jains (both *Swetamber*s and *Digamber*s) and Muslims (Sunnis and three Shi'te sects such as *Ismaili*s, *Ithnasheri*s and *Bohra*s). From the Konkan and Goa there are Sunni Muslims and Catholic Christians respectively.

Citing 1962 census, Salvadori points out that approximately 70 percent of the Asians in Kenya were from Gujarat, 20 percent from Punjab and 10 percent from Goa. Religious breakdown was as follows: Hindus and Jains 55 percent, Muslims 23 percent, Sikhs 12 percent and Christians 10 percent. Of the 23 percent Muslims, 17 percent were Shi'ite Muslims while only 6 percent are Sunnis. By this approximation, one can conclude that Sunni Muslims among whom later the Tablīghī Jamāʿat found a base are a relatively small group

within the larger Muslim Asians (6%) (Salvadori 1989). Herzig approximates similar percentages as per research survey done in the year 2000; Hindus and Jains 57%, Muslims 22.1%, Sikhs 9.5%, Christians 2.3%, others 7% and no religion 2% (Herzig 2006: 106)

The Indian connection to Eastern Africa predates the establishment of colonial rule. They traded for centuries and sailed between India and the East Africa coast. They also served as ship-pilots, money-lenders and changers in the emerging East African city states (Herzig 2006, Nanjira 1976, Bhatt 1978, Salvadori 1996). Between 1896 and 1901, 32,000 indentured labourers were recruited for the construction of the Uganda Railway. Of this figure, 16,312 opted to return to India, 6,724 stayed on in East Africa, 6,454 were invalidated and sent back home and 2,493 died as a result of tropical diseases (Nanjira 1976: 4). Apart from arriving at the shores of East Africa as indentured labourers to build the railway, some served as soldiers and others came to seek better economic prospects and open *duka*s (Sw. retail shops) along the railway line outposts and administrative camps. With rapid urbanisation during the colonial period, the Asians were able to set up businesses in almost all the administrative centres- from the coast to the arid Northern Frontier Districts (NFD) (Salvadori 1996).

The *wahindi* enjoyed a relatively better position, in terms of access to education and business opportunities as compared to the Africans, but lower than European settlers and colonial officials. Through social and political activism, they were able to negotiate for better representations and rights and even had members in the Legislative Council (Legco). In Nairobi certain areas such as Pangani, Ngara and Parklands were reserved for them under the segregative colonial urban policy. The gains made in the political front were shattered after independence, as 'Kenyanisation/Africanisation' policies adopted by the African majority government did not favour them. The stereotypes against the Asians, as 'exploiters', discriminative and unpatriotic still lingers among certain classes of general citizenry. Mass out-migration from East Africa to Britain and North America occurred since 1964, so much so that statistics reveal that in 1989 that there were 89,000 Asians from a figure of 182,000 in 1970 (Herzig 2006: 7). On average, the Kenyan Asians are urbanised and relatively wealthy and in most cases maintain social interactions within their diverse ethnic and religious communities.

3.3.2.2 Wahindi Waislamu: Asian Muslims in Kenya
Muslims of Asians descent are commonly referred to *Wahindi Waislamu* in Swahili. They are a diverse group, who primarily differentiate themselves based on their places of origin. Generally five of the groups are orthodox Sunni; the Baluchi (see picture of Mombasa Baluchi Mosque below), the Cutchi Sunnis (who comprise at least twenty different sub-

groups), the Kokni Muslims, the Memons (comprising three groups), the Punjabi Muslims (with great internal diversity), and a few from Kashmir, Marwar, Sindh and Surat. Others include Ahmadiyya, who are considered by most Muslims as non-Muslims. Shi'a Islam is represented by the Ismailis, the Ithnasheris and the Bohras (Salvadori 1989: 187). For our analysis, we shall confine ourselves to the Sunni Muslims, who were at one point or the other attracted to the teachings of the Indian-originated Tablīghī Jamāʿat.

Picture 3 Baluchi Mosque, Mombasa. Photo: personal.

Some of these distinct Muslim groups formed *jamāʿat*s (associations) for purpose of social events such as wedding, celebrations of religious festivals and socialization. Some also have mosques of their own or maintain those built by their *jamāʿat*s, in most parts of the country. For instance there are Baluchi, Memon, Badala mosques in Mombasa. The degree of integration with the rest of Kenyans differs among them, with some having completely cut ties with the Indian subcontinent. Some at independence opted for British passports, instead of Kenyan identity opting to be British immigrants. The first two decades were of great uncertainty for the whole group. These Asian groups also prefer to settle close to each other, for economic support and social networks. For instance the Baluchis are found mainly in Mombasa and a few in Uganda, Eldoret and Nakuru (though a number have migrated to the United Kingdom). The Cutchi Sunnis are found in Mombasa (majority) and other upcountry towns such as Nairobi and are among the most 'indigenized' Asians, evident in their competence to Swahili use and friendly relations with local Kenyans. The Kokni Muslims,

who are sea-faring community, are also found in Mombasa but a large portion moved to Nairobi where they constitute a thriving business class. A handful Koknis are scattered all over Kenya. They ascribe to East Africa's predominant *Shafi'i* School of jurisprudence unlike other Sunni Asian Muslims who follow *Hanafi* School (Salvadori 1989: 94-5).

Most of the Sunni Muslims of Asian descents belong to the heterogeneous Memon community (about 5000). The Halai, the Akai and the Nasserpuria are the three groups of Memons in Kenya. The Nasserpuria to which the majority of the Kenyan Memons belong to, are a tightly knit community who have largely settled in Mombasa where they have well established networks of learning institutions, social halls and mosques. About 20% of the Nasserpurias, moved to Nairobi for commercial reasons. The Halai and the Akai groups, though the 'smallest', are mainly found in upcountry town of Meru and scattered all over the then Northern Frontier District towns such as Isiolo, Wajir, Garissa, Garba Tulla and Marsabit. Mohammed Moti, a pioneer Halai Memon had at one time 60 shops located in towns, in central Kenya to every little administrative centres in the NFD during the colonial period. He literally opened the North to other pioneer Asian traders (Salvadori 1989: 195).

The Memon in Meru are also credited with the construction of the town's Jamia Mosque and community centre. The few Halai and Akai Memons in Nairobi, maintain membership in the Cutchi Sunny Union rather than associate with the Nasserpurias. It is important to mention that, the Halai and Akai are among the first communities to give a home to the Tablīghī Jamāʿat and were the earliest lay preachers in Kenya. Relatively wealthy and philanthropic, the Memon community in Meru also supports construction of mosques and small *madrasas* in rural Meru towns such as Lare, Kianjai, Muthara and Maua. Their assistances have often been extended to *madrasa*s and mosques in Kinna, Garba Tulla and Isiolo. They also built the first fully functional *madrasa* in Kinna, a Borana speaking settlement near the Ameru urban centre of Maua.

The Punjabi Muslims, just like their fellow Sikhs and Hindus, came as indentured, skilled artisans, clerical workers with the Railway and independent migrants seeking better life in Kenya. They are said to be the most amorphous of all the groups and 'have taken to heart', the Islamic injunction that all Muslims are brothers and are proud of their non-sectarian attitude' (Salvadori 1989: 207). The Punjabi Muslims built the first Jamia Mosque in Nairobi and *madrasa* in 1900 and 1904 respectively. The community also built the Railway Landhis Mosque in Muthurwa. Both mosques and others they constructed were 'open' to all Muslims irrespective of ethnic and doctrinal differences. They said to have contributed greatly, not only to the Nairobi Jamia mosque but also a number of mosques and *madrasa*s along the

Railway line and in other parts of the country (Salvadori 1989: 207-210). The Railway Landhis Mosque became among the 'first' mosques to be associated with the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya.

Other smaller Sunni groups include the Kashmiris, the Sindhis and Surati Muslims. For our discussions the last group, is of special interest. The Surati Muslims or Surtis, have their primary loyalties to Islam and to Kenya rather than form their own ethnic organisations. Most Surtis have departed from Kenya. Salvadori (1989: 213) notes:

> Relatively few Surti Khalifas moved up-country. Yet, although there were never more than ten to fifteen families in Nairobi (and hardly a handful elsewhere), they founded their own association there, and built their own community hall in the Eastleigh area where they clustered. This is opposite the Section One Mosque, which they frequented. When the community became so depleted by emigration as to be no longer viable, the Jamāʿat (the Surat Khalifa Jamāʿat) was deregistered and the building donated to the mosque. The five remaining families are now members of the (no longer exclusively) Cutchhi Sunny Muslim Union.

The location of the mosque described in the quotation above, corresponds to the current headquarters of Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya- Baitul Maal Markaz located in Eastleigh Section One. In the compound of the *markaz* apart from newly built expansive mosque, there is the old mosque and adjacent buildings that serve as offices, Qur'ānic memorisation school and boarding facility. It is likely that one of those buildings served, as the social hall of Surati Khalifa until early 1980s when it was handed over to the mosque. It is likely that, by then the mosque was not associated with the activities of the transnational Islamic movement as the Tablīghīs were still actively based at the Landhis Mosque in Muthurwa, Nairobi.

3.3.2.3 Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya: Retracing the history

An attempt to reconstruct, the history of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Northern Kenya is undoubtedly a challenging task. Documentation of the history of the movement, as mentioned earlier, was never a priority to the Tablīghīs. Reports from remote locations given by different travel teams, though collected for purpose of further tours may not be documented for future reference but rather implemented immediately as warranting actions. Communication has largely remained oral, and the word of mouth is the main means through which recruitment of new members, advertisement for upcoming events and reports about field excursion are shared. Tablīghīs, undoubtedly exhibit considerable 'hostility' to publicity, particularly about the movement by both outsiders and members (Sikand, 2002: 5). Low profile enables it to operate in any socio-political environment 'go around' government scrutiny. Therefore, as rightly noted by Sikand (2002: 8) the only history considered of substantive value:

is that of the Prophet and his companions, and to an extent, the *amīr*s or the leaders of the TJ. The rest of the long history of humankind is largely irrelevant, for it is but a story of growing deviation from 'true' Islam and so deserves no mention. In a sense, then, Tablīghī concept of time differs sharply from the linear notion of history as a succession of events in this-worldly realm. Because of this, Tablīghī texts rarely deal with actual events in its own history, and, therefore, as sources for historical research they are of little value.

The above quotation, reminds me of an occurrence in my field research experience that particularly corroborates this worldview. I arrived at the national headquarters of the *Tablīghī Jamāʿat*, in the company of two senior Tablīghīs from Marsabit. They allowed me, to accompany them to a two-day consultative meeting of senior *amīr*s, on the progress of the movement. I accompanied them to get 'the feel of the Tablīghī spirit'. The two, introduced me to a number of Tablīghī *amīr*s and representatives from different parts of the country. I noted, a middle aged man who appeared to be the chief coordinator and organiser of the event. He chaired most of the sessions and called upon each *amīr,* from different parts of the country to give an account of movement's activities in terms of past performances and future targets. Notes were being taken. Tanzania and Uganda representatives were part of this high-level meeting with 300 plus representatives.

Later in the evening, accompanied by one of my informants, we caught up with the 'coordinator'. After a lengthy introduction, about being an academic interested in contemporary Islam and the like, I enquired if he could be available for a brief discussion on the historical growth of the transnational movement in Kenya since the 1950s. He looked perplexed. He said, 'there is nothing perhaps, that I know that your friend here does not know. This movement is about action. Just ask Ibrahim here, to tell you all he knows. Otherwise feel free to stay and observe how beautiful this spiritual work is.' Then he turned to one of my informant, and added, 'Please ensure that this "young sheikh" gets a place to sleep and food to eat.' He did not understand why anyone should write such a history, as it does not add value to the *daʿwa* work. Despite such paucity of information at the beginning, through several interviews, formal and informal conversations, days of travelling with preaching teams and hours of listening to Tablīghī talks in various national and regional gatherings, I was able to 'piece together' bits and pieces of information. It is worth noting that, notwithstanding the difficulties of obtaining data on the history of the movement in Kenya, I successfully put the available data together, and retraced the growth of the movement.

Just like South Africa, the beginning of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat was tied to the efforts of Muslims of Asian descent. More precisely the success and failure of the new movement depended on various Asian Sunni Muslim communities residing in the urban centres such as Nairobi. Naturally, the visiting Tablīghīs from India and Pakistan sought to introduce the

movement to these fellow Asians due to the symbolic connection and relations between them. It is these local Sunni Asians that acted as guides for visiting groups. They were the first to learn the Tablīghī teaching, strategies and to undertake frequent visits to the centres of India and Pakistan. Gaborieau (2000. 137), quoting a biographical work on Māwlanā Muhammad Yusuf, the second by Hasani (1967) confirms that after the introduction of the movement in 1956 to East Africa, 'some people devoted their life to Tablīgh and kept coming to the Centre of Nizamuddin'. I recall reference 1956 in one of the Tablīghī leadership gatherings as the year of its first entry into Kenya. The speaker, himself a committed dāʿi, was admonishing the gathered amīrs that since the movement 'arrived' in Kenya in 1956; there has been lots of progress, though not satisfactory. As mentioned earlier, the centre in India dispatched preaching teams mainly from Gujarat to several parts from Africa starting from 1956.

However, it should be noted that 1950s, Kenya was characterised by heightened political discourses amid struggle for independence. It is likely that the activities of the movement, in terms of travels outside mosques in Nairobi, were largely limited. Accessing or travelling to or from, the then Northern Frontier District were regulated by the colonial administration, as it was a closed district (Castagno 1964). The movement presumably remained a localised phenomenon in Nairobi and urban mosques in other parts of Kenya frequented by diverse Asian Muslims. One such mosque to be associated with the movement in Kenya for a long period of time was the Landhis Mosque, located in Muthurwa. As mentioned earlier, the Punjabi Muslims, a community of Asian Muslims whose interaction with other indigenous Kenyan Muslims was very cordial, built the mosque. They were non-sectarian, they contribute to construction of mosques and madrasas and their mosques were frequented by Muslims of various persuasions be they Wahindi Waislamu, indigenous Muslims or transnational lay preachers.

Another section of Kenya's Muslim Asians, among whom the pioneer Tablīghīs formed a base, was the thriving Halai and Akai Memons of Meru. Some of the first local Tablīghīs were recruited from among them. Some informants even indicate that the movement, first found foot in the town, before moving to the Landhis Mosque. It should be noted that to date, the Tablīghīs from Meru constitute, one of the most active units with outreach programmes to surrounding towns such as Isiolo, Nanyuki and rural Meru countryside. It is common to find visiting local or foreign jamāʿats preaching in the town's Jamia Mosque or at Makutano Mosque. As mentioned earlier, the Memon business community extends financial support to for the running of mosques and madrasas in Meru and some parts of Isiolo region. A renowned person, among the Meru Memon community, closely associated with the early days

of Tablīghī Jamāʿat is Ḥajj Wali. A frequent traveler, the respected elderly Tablīghī, is said to have traveled as far as China, in 1967. Aw Boru, a pioneer Waso Borana Tablīghī, recalls traveling with foreign as well as Kenya's Asian Tablīghī s, in 1970s and 1980s within Kenya and to Somalia and Ethiopia. The quotation by Hasani (1967: 505-508) below gives detailed picture of the state of the movement among the *Wahindi Waislamu* in the 1960s:

> The local Indian traders welcomed them (Tablīghīs from India and Pakistan) and supported the spread of the *daʿwa*. After this, by 1965 in the East and North Africa Tablīghī Jamāʿat work continued and was highly resourceful and committed people were produced. These people devoted their lives for this mission and repeatedly visited the Nizamuddin Centre in India. They took some Indian Jamāʿats from there and mobilized them in Africa. And large gatherings (*ijtimāʿs*) were organized in various cities and areas, and created the system of foot patrols (*paidal jamāʿats*).
> One of the large gatherings of these series was organized in Kenya. Many people came from the adjacent African areas. One old and devoted worker has written his comments like this.
> *"Praise God our last month's gathering in Kenya was the largest in the East Africa. The local Muslim community is small but 250 people came from outside. Some people came from far areas. Some had to travel about 4000 miles both ways to join the gathering. People were travelling through ships, buses, and private cars. One car from Lusaka (Zambia) travelled day and night to join the gathering. From this you can guess the passion of the people. The whole gathering from beginning to end went according to plan: After the Fajr Salah teaching, then the breakfast, then from 10 to 12:30 halqa wali taʿlīm (religious educational instructions), after ẓuhr prayers (lunch) meal was served and teaching on its etiquettes delivered, after ʿAṣr prayers teaching on virtues of zikr (remembrance of God) was given and expressions and (Tablīghī) experiences of people who came from other various areas was given, and some teachings on the akhīra (afterlife). From Maghrib to ʿishā', there was Bayān wa tashkīl (teachings and mobilization). And after the dinner discussion about next day's program. There was translation in coastal language for the local people (Swahili). And it was decided that the next year's gathering would be on 10ᵗʰ, 11ᵗʰ, and 12ᵗʰ March 1966, in Zambia which is the capital of Malawi.*

The quote above also reveals that during this period, South Asian Muslims from countries as far as Zambia participated in the gatherings and that the venues of the annual get-together were shifting between countries in East and southern Africa. The programme outline reflects similar arrangements today. It also reaffirms the pivotal role the Kenyan Asian Muslims play and reveals that even during this period indigenous Muslims whose knowledge of Urdu was limited attended the gathering and to cater for them translations of the teachings and sermons were done into Swahili.

During the formative years of the movement in Kenya, the procedures and practices were not standardized or well followed. Most of my informants believe that, the current emphasis on organizational structure and thus tablīghī bureaucracy was not there in the 'past'. The ambiguity in carrying out *tablīgh*, allowed for 'innovative' practices by the enthusiastic

Kenyan followers, especially in Nairobi. The foreign *jamāʿat*s from India and Pakistan did not stay long enough and seemed not keen enough to impact on the nascent Kenya Tablīghīs the proper Tablīghī ways of proselytism. The rift within the Tablīghī cycle emerged in 1970s and 1980s, in Nairobi and other towns. Some informants speak of an emergence of a splinter group, that carried out *daʿwa* in 'an unorthodox' way. The 'new' group was accused of disregarding gender boundaries by traveling in the company of women and sleeping in mosques. They were accused of free-mixing of sexes while on *daʿwa* tours or rightly put, carrying out their vision of *masturat jamāʿat* (Ur. spousal preaching tours), decades before it was introduced into Kenya. *Masturat jamāʿat*s, were later introduced and strictly demonstrated by foreign *jamāʿat*s through examples, before the locals were allowed to emulate and carry out three day spousal tours. These types of *jamāʿat*s, were recently introduced to the Waso Borana Tablīghīs, through practical examples from a Bangladeshi *masturat jamāʿat*, touring Kenya.

The new group therefore was accused of not following directives of the international headquarters and hence shun by the emergent Nizamuddin leaning Tablīghī group. While the splinter group maintained their practices despite opposition from the mainstream Tablīghī Jamāʿat, their activities remained strictly localized within Nairobi and to some extent Kisumu and Dar es Salaam. There are ambiguities, as to who was the leader of this splinter group but opinions points to one Darwesh, an early adherent of the movement in Kenya. When I put across, the question of the existence of a splinter group within the movement, most of the informants appear to be unaware of such the movement's 'rocky history'. However, it is clear that the movement has shifted from being an Asian- oriented movement to a highly ethnically mixed *daʿwa* outfit, in the last two and a half decades.

The shift of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, from Landhis mosque in Muthurwa to its current headquarters in the expansive Baitul Maal Markaz in Eastleigh Section One of Nairobi, was necessitated by among others issues enormous growth in membership. Hussein Dima, one of my informants, however offers a different explanation. He reveals that, the group led by the late Darwesh, remained active at the Landhis Muthurwa Mosque and extended their *daʿwa* zeal to Kibera, one of the largest informal settlements in Nairobi.[93] If this perspective is to be taken into consideration, the move from Landhis to Eastleigh was hastened by many other

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[93] Personal conversation with Hussein Dima, Isiolo, April 2009. Dima notes that in this splinter group, women activities are prominent. It is possible that these two different visions of Tablīghī proselytism existed 'harmonious' side by side until the mainstream Nizamuddin leaning group found a larger venue to accommodate their expanding numbers leaving the 'indigenous' group behind.

reasons; the resolve to maintain mainstream Tablīghī practices formed the core of it. Below is a picture of the Baitul Maal Markaz, the national headquarters of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat.

Picture 4 Baitul Maal Markaz, Eastleigh, Nairobi. Photo: personal.

Abdi Roba, a former Tablīghī, and now a *Salafī* scholar, recalls that in 1988 he traveled to Uganda for a forty days *tablīghī* tour, from the then operational base of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, Landhis Mosque, Muthurwa.[94] At the time, there were rising demand that there was an urgent need, for a more spacious compound and a bigger mosque to host an ever-increasing number of participants in the annual gatherings. Muthurwa was very close to the Nairobi Central Business District and large public facilities such as Machakos Country Bus Station, thus could not offer a 'calm' environment for the movement activities. It also undoubtedly threw the quietist movement into public limelight. Furthermore, the Landhis Mosque was only offering their facility to the emerging movement on a 'friendly' basis and was never a Tablīghī-owned *markaz*. Therefore Baitul Markaz was built, a Tablīghī-managed massive mosque with wide compounds, that acts as spacious venue for *ijtimāᶜ* gathering, offices for coordination of incoming and departing local and foreign *jamāʿat*s, a store for records of preaching teams within the country, a space for regular consultative meetings of the Kenya *Shūra* (National administrative council) and *amīr*s from different parts of the country and a *madrasa* for Qur'ān memorisation. The compound hosts, up to 15,000 people during the national *ijtimāᶜ*s.

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[94] Personal communications with Abdi Roba, Kinna, October 2009.

There are two mosques within the compound: the old mosque that existed prior to the establishment of the movement and the newly built, one-storey massive mosque with capacity of up to ten thousand persons. It is probable, that the mosque was built and maintained through contributions from among others, the Sunni Muslims of Asian descent within Kenya and with the blessing of the elders in Nizamuddin.

The other part of the country, which witnessed rapid growth of the movement, was Mombasa. Masjid Ali, in Mombasa city served as the centre for the coordination of the Tablīghī activities. Every Thursdays, a dozen preaching teams departed to various towns in the coastal region and mosques around Mombasa. Congregants come from as far as Voi, Malindi to Msambweni.

Among the Borana speaking communities, pioneer Tablīghīs to visit the area were foreign *jamāʿat*s from India and Pakistan. The local Muslims referred to these itinerant preachers, appearing every few months at their mosques as *Qalole Pakistani* (Bor. Pakistani religious scholars) and later with the establishment of the movement, *warr tabliqa* (Bor. the Tablīghī group). They stayed for two to three days at a mosque and moved to the next. These foreign Tablīghīs did not understand local languages and often stood to make speeches in Urdu. Abdi Aziz recalls these early days of the *Tablīghī Jamāʿat* amongst the Borana:

> It is these people from IPB (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh Tablīghīs) who brought the *tablīgh* here. When they came, people did not know what they wanted. All they knew was that the group preached, slept in mosques and said *inshallah*. Then the locals would also say *inshallah* and this is how it continued for some time. In the first place the language this pioneers preached in is not local language and not even the international Arabic, thus all the locals heard was *inshallah*. Whatever is said in the mosque with *inshallah,* is something good remember. The language was foreign; the approach is unique in that we have not seen people staying in one mosque and then move to another and like that. Ten years later, the fruits of *inshallah inshallah* came out, it is now the locals that were going out and doing what the *jamāʿat*s from IPB were doing.[95]

It must be noted that the present well organised nature of the movement in Kenya, was a gradual build-up of, years of commitment that saw it from being a movement patronised by Muslims of Asian origin to a mass lay movement in which indigenous Kenyan Muslims play a greater role in *daʿwa* travels. However decision-making and day-to-day running is still done under the supervision of Asian Muslims, whose financial and logistical support still remains pivotal. The pioneer foreign Tablīghīs among the Borana speaking regions of Isiolo, Waso and Moyale seemed less interested in recruitment of locals into the movement. The directive or to be specific, the motivation to recruit local Kenyan Muslims rather was a move that was popularised in the later 1980s and early 1990s. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number

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[95] Group Discussions with Abdi Rashid, Abdi Hakim, and Abdi Galgalo, July, 2010, Moyale.

of local Muslims who accompanied foreign, Meru and Nairobi Asian *jamāʿat*s were growing. They had learnt, the way of conducting *daʿwa* as approved by the movement. They became the new proselytisers. Abdi Galgalo adds:

> The few local recruits were trained through travels, on the fundamentals of the movement through the travels. They were compelled to concentrate on the *qubul* or the change of the heart of the people here. That they worked only on the fundamentals. The *jamāʿat* chose certain individuals and they were exposed to transformative change through travel and training. These individuals were able to supersede the divisive 'we' problem and abandoned all the "we the Borana, we the Gabra" and so on to focus on self-reform. What I am doing for this religion and not what can society do for us was their main motivation.
> The established guys became the link between our brothers in IPB and Nairobi and this society. It is like the link between village and the globe. Every year the sheikhs hold *mudhākara*, a kind of workshop sometimes in Pakistan sometime in Nizamuddin. The few representatives in the country would go there. These would be trained and bring back the ideas of reform back home. They would hold *ijtimāʿ* and the knowledge are transferred to the zone and national and regional levels.[96]

The few emerging Borana speaking Tablīghīs, invested time and resources in the movement becoming reliable representatives, to be contacted by visiting foreign jamāʿat. Over time, they recruited local preaching teams in the vicinity of towns such as Moyale, Marsabit and Merti. Though the Qalole Pakistani never alarmed the local religious scholars, they were not amused by the newly emerging local *daʿwa* groups appearing to usurp their social and religious capital. Mamed Roba describes the initial reactions from the *ʿulamā'* in this way:

> We were fought very much. We were called names, all sorts of names. They said we brought a new religion from India. We were denied a chance to preach in almost all mosques in the area. Not only that we were called a sect that is interested in destroying Islam instead of building it. They even said that we were being paid by our foreign masters to destabilize the religion and that what we were doing is nothing but *bid'a*.[97]

At one moment, the term *tablīgh* was so much associated with the Urdu speaking pioneer Tablīghī s of 1970s and 1980s that it developed ambiguous connotation, which prompted the local Tablīghīs prefer the term *kundi daʿwa* (Bor./Swa. *daʿwa* group). However despite such latent tension between the local Tablīghīs and their sheikhs who managed mosques, certain mosques became slowly dominated by the Tablīghīs. The national and local Tablīghīs envisioned bringing consensus and building momentum for the renewal of faith among the Borana speaking Muslims of the Northern Kenya, through bringing together all parties interested in the revival of Islam. The strategy was to hold regional *ijtimāʿ*s in small towns and mobilize religious scholars from Nairobi, Isiolo, Moyale, Marsabit and other smaller towns, as a forum to brainstorm on the condition of faith among them. These *ijtimāʿ*s to some

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[96] Group Discussions with Abdi Rashid, Abdi Hakim, and Abdi Galgalo, July, 2010, Moyale.
[97] Group Discussions with Mamed Roba, Mamed Arero and other Tablīghī s, September 2009, Moyale.

extent facilitated consensus building on matters of faith and successfully led to the recognition of the lay preachers as a legitimate authority concerned with religious changes. These gatherings, though it remained a Tablīghī affair, had an abundant benefit for the ailing *madrasa*s and mosques; the visiting Asian and Kenyan Asian Tablīghīs pledged to give financial support. *Ijtimāᶜ*s held in Sololo, Moyale, Merti, Isiolo and Marsabit in the late 1990s and early 2000 attracted up to three to four thousand attendants. These gatherings as are other *ijtimāᶜ*s remain men-only affairs.

One could not approximate how many people belong to the movement at any time in Kenya. This is due to high turnover of members. Joining and exiting the movement is 'fluid'. For instance, if one could do a survey of the number of men who have travelled in Moyale for any specific number of days for *daᶜwa* tours, the percentage could be as high as 70 but this is not an indicator of membership as the core regular members who commit up to 40 days per year remain immensely small. These regulars meet through mosque-based units, and aspire to carry out certain routine Tablīghī practices such as text reading, motivational speeches, neighbourhood tours and recruitment for local preaching tours leading to permanence of Tablīghīs in the Northern Kenya's religious landscape.

The gradual establishment of the movement in the north, as in the other part of the country was facilitated by strategies such as preaching in non-controversial manner the fundamental tenets of Islam, avoidance of politics and doctrinal debates, self-finance that encourages individual commitment, regular local, regional and national gatherings, frequent *daᶜwa* tours and above all a loosely organised faith bureaucracy that allows for smooth running of reform agenda of the movement. In the next section of this chapter, the focus shall be on contemporary organisation of Tablīghī Jamāᶜat in Kenya.

Part Two

3.4 Tablīghī Bureaucracy in Kenya: Contemporary Self-Organisation of the Transnational Movement

Tablīghī Jamāᶜat characterises itself as a grassroots lay movement, devoid of hierarchical power structure and authority. It markets itself as largely voluntary, politically neutral and devoted solely to spiritual revivalism among individuals. However, it is correct to argue that such a definite goal of revivalism requires and creates a 'faith bureaucracy'.[98] It may seem to wrestle or contest with ᶜ*ulamā'* of mainstream Islamic traditions for the right to speak about

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[98] For more discussions on the theme of self-organisation, see D. Reetz, 2008, 98-99.

Islam to the ordinary believers but it also establishes alternative forms of religious career path complete with hierarchy. Reetz (2008: 99) posits though, the Tablīghīs insist that the movement has no special administration hence emphasising its lay character, its internal administration has become highly hierarchical and even rigid with clear in- and out-group distinction. He adds that such, is not observable to an outsider, there is indeed an unwritten rule that determines what issues are to be confronted, how to organise preaching tours, how to attract new members and retain the old ones, and how issues of leadership and guidance are resolved.

This section therefore, addresses some organisational and ideological aspects of the movement that guides its functions, brings about coherence of aims and practices and enables its growth. While local variations occur in Kenya, the Tablīghī phenomenon on global level has largely maintained (almost consistently) similar modes of preaching, self-organisation, worldview, dressing, text use and interpretation, consensus building and travel modules.

However, it should be mentioned that the structure expounded in the section relies largely on field interviews, personal participations in various Tablīghī gatherings and teaching sessions and personal observations with traveling jamāʿats.[99] The East African Tablīghīs look up to the centres in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (IPB) for constant guidance and smooth operation of the movement. It is not uncommon for the local Tablīghīs, to say that there are some new communications from '*wazee*' or the elders in IPB.[100]

3.4.1 Religious Leadership and Authority: the case of Tablīghī Jamāʿat

On 20th -21st April 2009, I accompanied an informant to Baitul Maal, Nairobi for a *majma jor* (Ur. consultative forum for leaders) of the senior Tablīghīs in Kenya. The agenda were to evaluate the successes and challenges of the *daʿwa* efforts in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania and preparation for a forthcoming national congregation at the venue. Out of the 300 Tablīghī men gathered there, I stood out. Almost everyone knew the other because of the frequent traveling tours that they have undertaken. It was indeed; not just a pre-*Ijtimāʿ* meeting of leaders (*amīrs*) or their representatives from each of the *Tablīghī* zones but also a reunion of

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[99] Mohamed Tozy (2000, 167) outlines four different conceptual usage of the term *jamaat*: *Jamaat* as a community of persecuted faithful who defend the faith; *jamaat* as a community of the Faithful as the true inheritors of the Prophetic legacy; *jamaa* or *jam'iyya* as political association and *jamaat* as a group. The Tablīghī Jamāʿat appropriates the second and last the definition. In this thesis, depending on the context it may refer to the movement as a whole, a traveling group, a mosque-based group with special assignment or Tablīghī administrative unit. Prefixes used before it shall clarify as to its usage in every context.
[100] These elders of the movement are also called *akabir*. Borana speakers use the term *jarole* which roughly means the same. Among the Borana, age is a sign of wisdom and elders are custodians of traditions.

qudamā', a rank that these committed *dāʿis*[101] accrue due to their hundred of days on road for the sake of the movement.

As soon as I walked into the spacious mosque that also serves as the national headquarters of the reform movement, I was asked a series of questions by the chief sentry (*ḥirāsa*) at the door, as to my mission. Convinced that my attendance was purely for academic research, I was allowed to sit among the top echelon in the long hours of deliberations and negotiations over the growth of the movement, discussion on the minutest details of the upcoming congregations and hours of supplications and lectures on how to be a good *dāʿi*. It is hard to pinpoint the national head of the movement due to endless and overlapping councils (*shūra*) at national and regional levels. In fact a common picture that conjures in the mind of an observer is that rather than an individual, it is a group of selected seniors that have delegated themselves the office of the national leadership under the auspicious arrangement of Kenya *Shūra*.

Religious authority, as argued by Krämer and Schmidkte (2006:1), can assume a number of forms and functions: the ability (chance, power or right) to define correct belief and practices, or orthodoxy and orthopraxy, respectively; to identify, marginalise, punish or exclude deviance, heresy and apostasy and their agents and advocates. In the world of the Tablīghīs, where in the spirit of pristine Islam all has the right to preach, not everyone has a right to lead a group or zonal territory. Preaching or rather the mobility for *daʿwa* work is a delicate job. It needs months of apprenticeship and confidence building so as not to divert from the established norms and procedure of the movement's theology. Religious knowledge (*ʿilm*) is a desired characteristic. *ʿUlamā'* within and without are indeed a revered category. While having *ʿilm* has been the distinguishing feature among other competing religious traditions, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat gives every Muslim a chance to preach. The movement encourages their recommended texts as source of religious knowledge and guidance and as a determinant of proficiency in their core teachings and practices. This does not mean that classical sciences such as *fiqh*, *ḥadīth* or *tafsīr* are not appreciated; rather for *daʿwa* these are too advanced for the ordinary people and for transformation of religious life. Individuals are encouraged to pursue that kind of knowledge in their own free time.

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[101] *Dāʿi* is literally a person who calls others to the path of a faith, a preacher. It is a word that is derived from *daʿwa*, the act of reminding Muslims to be steadfast in their prayers and calling non-Muslim to the faith. The Tablīghī Jamāʿat prioritizes intra-ummaic *daʿwa* (within the Muslim community) as more urgent than extra-ummaic daʿwa. For more detailed discussion on *daʿwa*, see, Racius (2004).

How is the Tablīghī Jamāʿat organised in Kenya? Who heads the different territorial and zonal administration units? How are the councils at each level composed? How are leadership and other responsibilities delegated within a traveling group and the mosque-based group of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat? Who decides where a travelling team should go or are most needed? How is communication maintained and exchanged between a local mosque groups, say in Sericho in Waso and Nizamuddin in India? To answer these questions, we first have to explore the topography of Tablīghī phenomena. It is appropriate to outline where the Jamāʿat is most active. The spread and establishment of the movement in Kenya, is related to the relative spatial distribution of Muslim communities. The regions predominantly occupied by Muslims such, as the Coast, North Eastern and upper East Province are zones that have witnessed strong Tablīghī presence. Major towns with significant Muslim minorities such as Kajiado, Kisumu, Nakuru, Namanga, Eldoret and Narok are also featured in its activities though not pronounced as around Nairobi, at the coast and in northern and eastern part of the country. Nairobi is an exceptional example, for the city is the home to the national headquarters and the national consultative council.

Hervieu-Leger, commenting on 'the geopolitics of the religious', argues that the conquest of souls is inseparable from practice for reconquest of space. The author notes that, to the followers, the geographical spread of religion and every new conversion is a sort of validation of the truth of the message and establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.[102] Hence once certain areas are overwhelmingly affiliated with a certain religious ideology, it is often labeled Muslim region, Christian region etc. It is not uncommon to hear local members narrate how the efforts of their proselytism are gaining or losing ground in an area.

Tablīghī Jamāʿat leaders divided the country into three major *ḥalqas*[103] and each with approximately 11 sub-*ḥalqa*s. The progress of each *ḥalqa* and each sub-*ḥalqa* is periodically collected and analysed by followers and leaders so as to gauge the geographical spread and progress of their reform programme. 'Halqalization' is a simple administrative strategy centred on conquest of souls for the movement and also a practical modality of occupation of 'the spatial' centred on mosques and markazes.

Garissa *ḥalqa* covers the whole of present day North Eastern Province and the County of Marsabit (formerly Moyale and Marsabit Districts). The communities that are found in this

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[102] Hervieu-Leger, 2002, pp. 102-103.

[103] *Ḥalqa* means a circle, it refers to a group of student studying under a learned person, it also refers to a collective liturgical exercise by a group of member of a ṣūfī order. H. Wehr & J. M. Cowan, pp.235-236. Alexander Horstmann (2009: 42) adds that these circles are the rings of a symbolic chain, which constitutes the force of the Jama'at.

ḥalqa are various clans of the Somali such as; Garreh, Murale, Ajuran, Degodiya, Ogaden, Harti, and Ishaq in North Eastern Province (Chau 2010) and Borana, Burji, Garba, Garreh and Sakuye in Moyale and Marsabit. Rendile and Samburu, also found in Marsabit are largely Christians. The *ḥalqa* is further subdivided into sub-*ḥalqa*s such as Moyale, Marsabit, Sololo sub-*ḥalqa*s in Borana dominated regions and about eight others in the North Eastern Region. The headquarters of the *ḥalqa* is in Garissa, where the Tablīghīs have a *markaz* called Masjid Quba.

Mombasa *ḥalqa* starts from Kitengela, taking the lower part of Eastern Province and the whole region of Coast Province. They are about 10 sub-*ḥalqa*s in the zone. Masjid Ali is the central *markaz* of the movement in the *ḥalqa*. Tablīghīs from the Mombasa *ḥalqa* constitute a significant proportion of the congregation, at the annual *ijtimāʿ* gathering. Insightful for this research, is the active participation of Orma and Wardhey communities from the Tana River who fall under the *ḥalqa*. Originally part of Oromo entity, these two have been pushed south by years of migration, conflicts over grazing lands and intra and inter-communities raids, from the connection to their linguistically and culturally related Borana and other Oromo communities of the Horn of Africa.[104] Orma and Borana as languages are mutually intelligible and hence the two communities cluster under the same translation circle at national events of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. The brotherhood cemented by the pan-Islamic egalitarianism of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, to an extent reinforces the 'ethnically derived' long lost ethnic identities. They come from towns like Hola, Garsen and Bura. Other coastal groups are Digo, Duruma, Swahili, Pokomo, Giriama and Taita.

The rest of the country, save the Mombasa and Garissa *ḥalqa*s falls under Nairobi *ḥalqa*. This includes various towns in Rift Valley, Western and Nyanza provinces, Central Kenya towns such as Nyeri and Muranga, Embu, Meru and Isiolo regions in Eastern Province. The *ḥalqa* just like the other two *ḥalqa*s is further divided into sub-*ḥalqa*s. The *ḥalqa*'s main *markaz* is Baitul Maal. The most active sub-*ḥalqa*s are Nairobi, Meru, Isiolo, Waso, and Kisumu.

The strategy of reterritorialisation was arranged and implemented by the Kenya *Shūra* in consultation with committed Tablīghīs from various zones. Asked why such a lay movement requires such an innovative 'faith bureaucracy', an informant asserts that it is purely for effective administration of *daʿwa* work. 'The objective of having arrangements like *ḥalqa* is

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[104] Patrick Irungu, Cattle Keeping Practices of the Orma People: A Household Survey in Tana River District, (Nairobi: KETRI-ILRI Collaborative Project, 2000), p. 10. See also Fatuma Boru Guyo, Historical Perspective on the Role of Women in Peace-Making and Conflict Resolution in Tana River District, Kenya, 1900 to Present, Unpublished MA Thesis,(Oxford: Miami University, 2009).

to make the work of *daʿwa* easy and effective.'[105] The arrangement also, of course also allows for proper evaluation and create religious career path for committed individuals. Another informant was quick to add that those who are condemning such organisational strategies do not understand both secular and religious schooling systems are all put in place for effective learning and never existed during the time of the Prophet. He laments:

> No one complains about the structure and genesis of our school and *madrasa* system. Tablīgh is something that was formulated as a method of religious revival long after the death of the Prophet. There is indeed a wide gap between the time of its initiation and Prophet's time. *Daʿwa* has been there even then but it not was systematised. Tablīghī as *daʿwa* was lost and forgotten until it was revived. So there is a lot of resistance to it.[106]

Isiolo County is home to Isiolo and Waso *ḥalqas*. Waso sub-*ḥalqa* has its central *markaz* at newly Tablīghī built Masjid Quba in Merti. It serves as regional headquarters for Merti, Sericho, Madogashe, Garba Tula and Kinna areas (*qaryas*). Isiolo and Waso sub-*ḥalqa*s have much in common with Garissa *ḥalqa*. Garissa *ḥalqa* contains the ethnic Somali and Borana. Moyale and Marsabit, home to their Borana co-religionists fall under Garissa *ḥalqa*. This prompted some local Tablīghīs to suggest spatial realignment so that they can be with their 'Cushitic' brothers. One informant puts it this way:

> Recently there was an argument about Isiolo Jamāʿat to be grouped under Garissa so that all the Northern Kenya can be under one roof but the sheikhs said no. The elders refused because it will incapacitate Nairobi. Nairobi would be very small…'[107]

While geographically Nairobi *ḥalqa* is expansive, in terms of *daʿwa* activities it is less active. Therefore Isiolo and Waso are crucial zones of Tablīghī presence, which cannot be moved to another region. Tablīghī spatial management utilizes the already existent historical and political administrative boundaries. Waso sub-*ḥalqa* corresponds with areas occupied by Waso Borana living around the Waso Nyiro River covering; present day areas of Merti, Sericho, Garba Tulla and Kinna and excludes more ethnically heterogeneous Isiolo Central Division. Isiolo sub-*ḥalqa* stretches from Isiolo to Logologo near Marsabit. Despite the enormous size, the sub-*ḥalqa* activities are centred in and around Isiolo town.

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[105] Interview with Mohamed Bonaya, 19th April, 200, Isiolo.

[106] Group interview with three Tablīghī s on 5th July, 2010, Moyale.

[107] Ibid

Map 2 Map of Kenya showing the three ḥalqas. The eastern and upper northern area is Garissa ḥalqa, Mombasa ḥalqa is the area bordering the Indian Ocean and the rest of the country falls under Nairobi ḥalqa. (Source: personal re-constitution of spatial map from ḥalqa arrangement, oral reports and conversations)

Central Tablīghī Shūrā (*Shūrā al-ʿālamī*) at Nizamuddin, India

Other IPB Centres in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh

Kenya *Shūrā* at Baitul Maal Markaz in Nairobi

Eastern African Region e.g. Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya

Mombasa *ḥalqa* at Masjid Ali Markaz in Bondeni, Mombasa

Nairobi *ḥalqa* at Baitul Maal Markaz in Nairobi

Garissa *ḥalqa* at Tablīghī Markaz in Garissa

Tana River Sub-*ḥalqa*

Waso Sub-*ḥalqa* at Masjid Quba Markaz, Merti

Moyale Sub-*ḥalqa* at Prison Mosque in Moyale

Merti town *Qarya* at Masjid Quba Markaz

Moyale town *Qarya* at the Prison Mosque Markaz

Taqwa Masjid *Maqami* at Taqwa Mosque, Merti

Qadiriya Masjid *Maqami* at Qadiriya Mosque, Moyale

A homestead of a Tablīghī

A homestead of a Tablīghī

A Tablīghī individual

A Tablīghī individual

Figure 2 Organisational structure of the movement in Kenya indicating the positions of Moyale and Merti adherents from grassroot to top levels.

3.4.2 Local, Regional and National Councils (*Shūra*)

There are two levels of leadership and self-organisation: At the level of the traveling preaching group and mosque-based group. The former is a temporary assignment for the duration of *khurūj* (Ar. tour) and the leader *(amīr)*, is in most cases appointed or selected. For the mosque-based group also called *maqāmī*, the committed Tablīghīs constitute a council that meets regularly and carries out certain stipulated *daʿwa* activities at the mosque and its environs. Members of such a council are called *ahl al-shūra*.

A cluster of mosques in an area would constitute administrative and consultative council called *Qarya Shūra* (zonal council). A number of *Qarya*s would form the sub-*ḥalqa*. Take the case of a mosque in Helu, a settlement at the eastern side of Moyale town. The local members of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat would conduct meetings, recruitments and preaching as a *maqāmī* at

the Helu main mosque. They would arrange and meet with other Tablīghīs from neighboring mosques in Helu on weekly basis as a *Qarya shūra* and meet with all the Tablīghīs at a central mosque for Moyale monthly consultative meeting (monthly sub-*ḥalqa shūra*). Moyale sub-*ḥalqa* may send preaching teams, evaluate past activities and attend national and regional gatherings as a constituent unit of Garissa *ḥalqa*. If Garissa *markaz* holds an *ijtimāʿ* (gathering), the sub-*ḥalqas* must participate and contribute through volunteer workers to perform duties in various departments and send to preaching teams to be dispatched at the end of event. Garissa *ḥalqa* also keeps in touch with the Kenya *Shūra* based at the movement's headquarters, through sending of *dāʿis* for national leadership consultative forums such as *majma jor* and attendance of different zonal and regional council meetings during the annual Nairobi *ijtimāᶜs*.

Kenya *Shūra* is the top decision making body in the Tablīghī structure in Kenya. Members of the council oversee the day to day coordination of the different zonal and regional units, receive, accommodate, and arrange travel routes of foreign *jamāʿats*, organize national *ijtimāʿs* and meetings of senior Tablīghīs, coordinate travel arrangements of Kenyan Tablīghīs traveling for foreign tours e.g. passport, visa and air or bus tickets and vet such volunteers, process oral and written field reports from various *ḥalqas* and sub-*ḥalqas* and represent Kenya's Tablīghī Jamāʿat chapter at *Shūra al-ᶜālamī* at Nizamuddin international headquarters. The Kenya *ahl al-shūra* are composed of 12 or so individuals, who majorly hail from the Kenya's Asian Muslim communities and selected influential Tablīghīs from Somali, Swahili, Garreh and Borana communities.[108]

Kenya *Shūra* members have gained this rank courtesy of numerous hours of commitment to the movement's activities through frequent travels, endless hours of deliberations and management of various logistical supports. Kenya *shūra* as mentioned earlier, present the country report at the annual *shūra* at the Nizamuddin Markaz in Delhi, India. Kenya *Shūra* also see to it that high-ranking elders of the movement are invited from South Africa, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and United Kingdom for national and regional gatherings. Just above the level of the Kenya *Shūra* are the various councils of the movement in IPB and the most important central Tablīghī *shūra* at Nizamuddin (Reetz 2008:108). Crucial in the whole global leadership structure is a small *shūra* composed of Māwlanā Sa`d and Māwlanā Zubair. The two directly relate with the family of the founders of the movement. (Reetz 2008: 109).

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[108] A number of Borana speaking Tablīghīs participate in smaller national leadership committees that coordinate Tablīghī activities throughout the country. More so these individuals are resourceful during annual *ijtimāᶜs* in Nairobi.

The sheikhs of the movement are also revered and given title of 'elders'. It is not uncommon to hear Tablīghī speak about what the *'wazee'* have encouraged or forbidden while on travel. For instance, I was informed that the *'wazee'* or its Borana equivalent *'jarole'* have encouraged the duration of *shūra* (meetings) at all level, not to be more than 15 minutes.

At the sub-*ḥalqa* levels of Moyale and Waso, where the research was conducted, the ranks and files of the leadership reveal three characteristics: One, the leadership positions are dominated by individuals who have dedicated most of the time to travel tours and to mosque-based Tablīghī activities; leadership strategy differs between zones where some areas prefer monthly amīr ship while others favour weekly or daily arrangement and finally, leadership oportunity is linked with one's knowledge and competence of the objectives, procedures and spiritual benefits of diverse Tablīghī practices, oratory and coordination skills. As they volunteer more time, network with fellow *dāʿi*s and undergo transformative self-reform, committed local Tablīghīs are recruited. These new Tablīghī *dāʿi*s link local units with their *ḥalqa* headquarters and the national and other affiliated sacred spaces of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. Abdi, a one former Tablīghī *amīr,* summed it up in this manner:

> When it comes to decision making, the people who attend and convene are called *ahl al-shūra*. Mostly there are senior regulars who know the way of the *daʿwa*. Some areas elect their *amīr* on monthly, weekly, yearly basis or sometimes just for a session only. It depends on the arrangement of local *dāʿi*s. The *amīr* is *faiṣala*, the decider. Mostly of the time he does not have an agenda of his own. The agenda comes out of the discussion…For Moyale *Qarya*, the amīrship is monthly and for our mosque it is monthly too. Helu also has its own *amīr* and they select it on monthly basis.[109]

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[109] Interview with Ali Abdi on 6th June 2010 in Moyale.

3.5 Conclusion

Tablīghī Jamāʿat, a reformist group originally founded to revive religious observance amongst the nominal Meos of Mewat of colonial India, grew exponentially to become one of the fastest and most widespread *daʿwa* Muslim movements. The core of the movement's strategy is to make every Muslim by default, a lay preacher. Everyone who joins the group travels for specific number of days so as to 'reform' and consequently 'change' others. Politics and doctrinal debates were also proscribed. Over the years and through continued network of the local Tablīghīs with centres in South Asia, the Kenyan branch of the movement has grown to be well established with connections and networks that link mosques in rural areas to Nairobi headquarters through loose but dynamic Tablīghī bureaucracy. Kenyan Muslims of Indian descent, a heterogeneous group, played and continues to play pivotal role in the movement activities in the country. Revivalist movements of various religions often in attempting a return to the path of the founders often invest in innovative structures, selective interpretation of core teachings, charismatic leadership and pragmatic recruitment and mobilisation of new followers and motivation strategies to keep the present membership within its fold. It is perhaps by examining the contemporary practices of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat that we shall obtain the dynamics of a transnational Islamic revivalist movement and understand how such groups introduce new practices and re-interpret old ones in order to impact on the everyday religious and social life of its followers. Therefore the next chapter shall examine three fundamental issues of the transnational movement: space and place making strategies, communal and individual religious practices and gender-specific tours of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya.

Chapter Four

Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya: Positions, Places and Practices

4.1 Introduction

When I met in mid-February 2012, Harun Galma was a worried man. He had just returned from his first forty day Tablīghī tour. He volunteered for this form of tour at the end of the December-January *Purana Saathi jor*, a special gathering for regular Tablīghīs and was part of a Borana speaking team that did a travel circuit within Nairobi's informal settlements with significant Cushitic population. His worries concern his ability to remain on the reformist path of the movement. There are a lot of things to be done on a regular basis. He needs fellow Tablīghīs for guidance and support. He was informed that upon return to his place of work, he needs a *maqāmī*, a mosque-based council composed of regular Tablīghīs to carry out certain practices and remain steadfast on the path of lay ministry. His worry emanates from the lack of such a team in a small urban centre in Nandi Hills where he works as a police officer. Without such a team composed of experienced peers, a novice is seen to lack the ability to sustain and practice the various practices that he learnt on his first tour. The above scenario is a pointer to the role of the mosque-based groups as a pivotal gear within the Tablīghī Jamāʿat Kenya Chapter. In this chapter we shall explore the space and place making strategies of the movement, its various mobility related, congregational gatherings, communal and individual obligations, teaching and learning programmes, and finally explore women-based travel arrangement called *masturat jamāʿat*. These practices and place making strategies are the forces behind the rapid spread of the movement and resilience of its revivalist agenda in different parts of the country. It should be noted that due to firm establishment of the movement through close interactions with the translocal networks, practices and politics of space and place making as well as strategies of proselytism of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya are undoubted similar to those of their South Asian or South East Asian counterpart. There is certain consistency in Tablīghī practices despite its global spread though subtle differences in motivation, adherence, and interpretation of varied practices. The practices discussed in this chapter are however prevalent within the Kenyan chapter of the movement.

4.2 Managing Sacred Spaces: Mosques and Markazes

Mosques form the central venue of Tablīghī Jamāʿat proselytism and recruitment. A mosque is an Islamic institution that conducts prayers and organizes other religious activities to serve the Muslim population. It is also commonly called *masjid* (pl. *masāajid*.). It has been pointed out that in Kenya local as well as foreign sponsors undertake the building, maintenance and management of mosques. Most mosques however were constructed, sponsored and under the management of local communities, including local groups and organizations. Local sponsors of mosques comprise about fifty two percent (52%) of all sponsors of mosques in Kenya (Mwakimako 2007: 25-28). In Northern Kenya most mosques are managed by ʿ*ulamā'* affiliated with *Salafīst* ideology though few purely Ṣūfī mosques exist. Not everyone can lead prayer, call for prayer or be part of management committee. Kong (2001: 405) asserts that mosques fall under sacred spaces, spaces that are characterised by hierarchical power relations of domination and subordination, appropriation and dispossession, involving entrepreneurial, social, political and other profane forces. One can agree with Kong that sacred space is indeed a contested space just sacred is 'a contested category'. To the believers mosques whether old or new, small or large, in town or in the village, are extremely inviolable and sacred.

Without accommodation at various mosques in the country, travelling groups on *khurūj* (Tablīghī tour) have no venue for preaching to other Muslims and learning the faith among themselves. For a Tablīghī residing in an area, he is expected to transform the quality and quantity of religious practices that can be conducted at his local *masjid* through a mosque-based group. There is a strong bond of attachment that is built between a regular Tablīghī and his local mosque so much so that it forms part of identification at national and regional gatherings. For example, one may introduce himself as Ali of Sololo Jamia Mosque, Bashir of Khalifa Mosque, Merti, Jarso of Rapsu Mosque, and Abdurrahman of Al-Rahma Mosque and so on. As mentioned earlier Tablīghīs are encouraged to either join or constitute a *maqāmī*, a mosque-based *jamāʿat* with sets of communal and individualised Tablīghī practices to be executed on scheduled basis. A *maqāmī* especially where a resident mosque is not affiliated with the Tablīghī Jamāʿat would run their activities through negotiation with mosque custodians. It is common to find these mosque-based *jamāʿat* carrying out *shūra* with explicit support of mainstream *Salafī* inclined ʿ*ulamā'*. Such ʿ*ulamā'* may not attend these consultative meetings but would condone them as long as tenets of orthodoxy are not infringed.

In each *ḥalqa* there is a central *markaz* to coordinate Tablīghī activities. Examples of these are Masjid Quba in Garissa *ḥalqa*, Masjid Ali in Mombasa *ḥalqa* and Baitul Maal *markaz* in Nairobi. In each sub-*ḥalqa*, there is a *markaz* or a 'Tablīghī-friendly' *masjid* that would serve as the zonal base for the movement. Examples include Al-Ansar mosque in Isiolo sub-*ḥalqa* and Prison mosque in Moyale. In Waso, Masjid Quba in Merti is the *markaz* of the movement. A *markaz* serves several purposes. It is a place for departure and return of travelling teams going out for scheduled number of days. It serves as accommodation for foreign as well as local *jamāʿat*s en-route. It can act as store of valuable items of travel teams and also a venue for recruitment of new members. Monthly *ḥalqa* or sub-*ḥalqa* consultations are carried out at these venues. Regular zonal or regional gatherings such as *jor* and *ijtimāʿ*s may congregate at these centres. On Merti Markaz, a *maqāmī* member asserts that:

> Markazi Merti can accommodate 400-600 people. Though it is new, it is now a fully functional *markaz*. In that, it is a place where a travel team (Sw. *kundi*) will find accommodation, storage for their valuables such as money and passports. It is also a place for receiving and taking *ḥidāya* (Ar. guidance before and after travelling for *daʿwa*). All *kundi*s leaving from the area must *ḥidāyat* from here and all *kundi*s coming back from tour must take *ḥidāyat* from here.[110]

The guidance (Ar. *ḥidāyat*) is set of instructions on how to carry out *daʿwa* while on travel and how to carry out spiritual reforms at home upon return. The Tablīghīs state that *ḥidāyat* are of two type: *ḥidāyat kharijin* and *ḥidāyat raji'in*, i.e. guidance for departure and guidance upon return (Ar.). Before departure, certain ground rules of preaching and self-reform are imparted to the volunteers including how to introduce the group in new places, how to behave en-route, spiritual supplications to be frequently recited, how to approach *ʿulamā'*, how to preach mosque congregants, how to take care of visited mosques, the powers and duties of an *amīr* and what is expected of the group and a host of motivating narratives, *ḥadīth*s and Qurʾānic verses to bolster these teaching. Upon return, the team breaks up and heads home. Each is expected to disseminate what he has to learn in a gradual and consensual manner with his nuclear family members and also be an active participant in the local mosque-based *jamāʿat*.

A *markaz* is a hub for Tablīghī activities and often there is a class of experienced Tablīghīs that oversees the day to day chores such as security, reception of foreign and local traveling teams and guests and delivery of *ḥidāyat* on rotational basis. These individuals who such duties delegated to are called *ta'mir* jamāʿat. The *jamāʿat* is composed of local Tablīghīs who volunteer for 10 to 20 days to oversee the affairs of a *markaz*. *Ta'mīr jamāʿat* help in giving

ḥidāyat and *nuṣra* (Sw. support or aid) for the travel teams that arrive at the *markaz* or *masjid*.[111] They also offer on-spot translation services (Ar. *tarjama*) to foreign *jamāʿat*s that cannot speak local languages in case need arise. It is not uncommon to find an Urdu or Arabic speaking travel teams being assisted by local *dāʿi*s to translate sermons and teachings into Borana or Swahili. Frequent preaching tours to IPB or numerous travels with travel teams from South Asian region has seen a rise in basic proficiency of Urdu among local Tablīghīs. Many times a Kenyan *kundi* heading to IPB would spend at least four months and that is enough to pick a few words and phrase. Urdu is particularly the main language used by invited elders during national and regional gatherings and a source of terminologies for varieties of Tablīghī practices and travel modules. Some Tablīghīs joking argued that because the message is essentially the same; it is quite an easy task to make a rough recap of idea being delivered in Urdu into local languages. The *ta'mīr jamāʿat* also provides *dalīl*s (Ar. guides) for visiting preaching teams wishing to conduct *jaula* (Ar/Ur. a neighborhood outing) to call people to the mosque for *daʿwa*. The team also assists visiting *jamāʿat*s in duties such as culinary and hospitality services (*khidma*) and act as ushers (*istiqbāl*) to welcome such preaching teams when they arrive and depart.

Every *markaz* is expected to have security all round the clock. *Ḥirāsa* teams are designated for this responsibility.[112] Foreign as well as local travel teams bring with them valuable goods such as travelling documents, personal belongings, phones and books. *Ḥirāsa* keeps unwanted persons and animals out of the *markaz* compound. The *ta'mir jamāʿat* also carry out instructional teachings on daily basis such as *taʿlīm*, recitation of Qurʾān, delivery of *bayān* (inspirational religious talks). This is to ensure that every 24 hours the religious practices expected of a Tablīghī mosque are prevalent and sequentially carried out. Lamenting on how the non-Tablīghīs used the mosque only as a place of five daily prayers, Aw Kombola once remarked that 'people have turned the *masjid* into a prayer mat and that Tabligh Jamāʿat is attempting to revive all the functions of the mosque as taught to us as the noble Prophet. A mosque must be alive for the whole day and the whole night.'[113] Metcalf notes that the use of mosque instead of a separate building is understood as a reviving the multiple roles of a mosque as place of accommodation, seat of council and a forum for organising *daʿwa*

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[111] Interview with Hussein Boru September, 2009 in Merti.

[112] I noticed during national gatherings such as in Nairobi, there are groups of volunteers positioned at the main gate, in front of all mosque doors and in various strategic points for maintenance of security. Visits to *markaze*s also reveal similar arrangements.

[113] *Taʿlim* Session at Isiolo Jor, April 2009, Isiolo.

campaigns.[114] In areas and mosques that they attend their prayers, Borana speaking Tablīghīs have revolutionised these sacred spaces to have more functions than the five daily prayers. In mosques that do not have Tablīghī presence, save the prayer times, the place is largely deserted except very few personnel such as *imām* or his assistant *muezzin*.

An emerging trend in Tablīghī management of sacred space is establishment of Qur'ān memorisation schools (Ar. *Tahfīdh madrasa*) in *markaz* compounds. At Baitul Maal there is such a well-established institution which is patronised by the male children of regular Tablīghīs. The boarding institution prioritises the recitation and memorisation of the Qur'ān above the other Islamic sciences. Such children join their fathers in *bayān* and *taʿlīm* sessions during the annual Nairobi *ijtimāʿ*. In Merti's *markaz*, establishment of such an institution was at an early stage.

Tablīghī sacred space has certain characteristics. Every *maqāmī* teams are encouraged to carry out specific practices in their resident mosques. The practices facilitate the Tablīghīs occupy these spaces through performance of practices on regular basis. To do that, Tablīghīs carry out what is referred to as five deeds or as popularly known *panch amaal* (Ur. the five deeds)/*amali tano* (Swahili)/*amal shanan* (Borana). These practices are claimed to manifest characteristics of the mosques of the Prophet time and those of the rightly guided caliphates. Once the practices are fully sequenced and consistently carried out in one's own local *masjid*, committed Tablīghīs are encouraged to extend it to neighbouring mosques. These practices unlike the travel team modules reinforce mosque-based *jamāʿat*s as the transformative link in the growth of the movement. It leads to resilience of the movement as a religious revival body having far reaching consequences on long term mosque and household management. The *panch amaal* are:-

a. *Mashwera* (regular consultations) done daily with fellow Tablīghīs.
b. *Taʿlīm* (Religious instructions) done at least twice a week.
c. *Jaula* (local neighbourhood outings to call people to mosque to listen to sermons and talks) done once or twice weekly.
d. *fikr al-dīn* (deliberations on the state of affairs of the community) conducted once a week and it brings together *maqāmī* teams from different mosques for collective debates on movement's progress and challenges.
e. *Khurūj shahrī* (monthly excursions for *daʿwa* activities) initiated by the *maqāmī* team to recruit and mobilise their members and general public for proselytism.

Attempts by mosque-based *jamāʿat*s to introduce and carry out these acts have been received at times with hostilities and at times with indifference. The nature of this appropriation and resultant contestation of space shall be discussed in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. The

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[114] B. D. Metcalf, 1993, pp. 603

nature and procedure of the *panch amaal* and other practices of the movement shall be discussed in the subsequent section. Below of a diagram that summarises the role of the *maqāmī* in redefining mosque usage.

Sanctifying Mosque, Owning a Space
(Manifest Traits of a Tablighi Mosque)
What every *maqami* is expected to do own and utilize space for the movement.
- The *Panch Amaal*

1. *Mashwera* (Consultative meetings)
2. *Taᶜlīm* (Religious Teachings)
3. *Jaula* (Neighbourhood outings)
4. *Fikru dīn* (Communal deliberations)
5. *Khuruj Shahri* (Monthly excursion/travels)

Other innovative spatial uses of the mosque
- **Belongingness**, My Mosque, My Identity
- **Spaces of negotiation** with 'ulamā, networking
- **Venue of recruitment**, mobilization of the ordinary believers
- **Place for accommodation**, all stipulated days of travels spent in mosques,
- **Platform for translation** and adaptation of Tablīghī ideas
- **Site for character training**, e.g. patience, cooking, leadership, public speaking, serving others

Figure 3 Spatial characteristics of a Tablīghī *maqāmī*.

4.3 Regime of Reform: A Guide to Practical *Daᶜwa à la* Tabligh

4.3.1 Ideological Teachings of Tablīghī Jamāᶜat in Kenya

Listening to Tablīghī talks and educational sessions in field work in Kenya, I observed that the teachings of the Tablīghīs revolve around establishing 'sincere belief' in their lives and the question of how to go about this explains all the various religious practices constructed to achieve it.[115] The aim of the Tablīghī Jamāᶜat, notes Ali (2010: 149) is not directly to change the world, which it claims has sunk deeply into the 'time of ignorance' which existed before

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[115] Asked what the objective of *tablīgh* is, Aw Bado points out in Borana, *'tabliqi echan akamin dini duga dugicho, deethi rabbi gudda, imaanaf yaaqini, erreddon jaanna, deethi naar jiren jiru ken kessat argam'*. He sums up the whole of the aim in this way: Tablīgh is concerned how to establish proper and true Islam, establish good relationship with God based on reverence, establish faith and sincerity in worship, inculcate the love to achieve the *Janna* (Ar. paradise) and avoiding Hellfire in your lives through proper practice. Conversations with Aw Bado , September 2009.

Islam was revealed, but to contribute to the rebuilding of the Muslim community and a new Muslim identity through the remaking of Muslims. Masud (2000: 77) points out that viewing Tablīghī literature one will notice that the ideology of the movement gradually progressed from general emphasis of religious duties (as defined in Māwlanā Ashraf Ali Thanawi's books) to a socio-political programme as envisioned in the writings of Māwlanā Ihtishamul Hassan to current concerns with spiritual revival of Muslim consciousness as reflected in Māwlanā Zakariyya's *Nisab*. Masud (2000: 79) adds that there has been no official statement of ideology and that one can nevertheless discern major teachings from books written about the Jamāʿat by people associated with them, books recommended by the Jamāʿat for reading sessions and finally available statements and letters by the movement's three *amīr* s and other speeches by the elders of the Jamāʿat.

Faza'il-e-A'maal (Virtues of Practices) formerly called *Tablīghī Nisab* (Curriculum of Tabligh) by Māwlanā Muhammad Zakariyya is one of the most popular texts used in Kenya. English translation of the book is readily available at highly subsidized prices in Kenya. One can buy the book for less than 10 Euros at varieties of temporary bookstalls that are erected by enterprising Tablīghīs during congregational gatherings such as *jors* or *ijtimā*ʿs. It remains one of the most utilized books for instructions and preaching while on *khurūj* and for readings at home with the family. It comprises of six to seven books depending on the edition: Stories of *Sahaba* (*Hikayat-i Ṣaḥāba*); Virtues of the Holy Qur'ān (*Faza'il-i Qurʾān*); Virtues of *Ṣalāt* (*Fazai'l-i Namaz*); Virtues of *Zikr* (*Fada'il-i Dhikr*); Virtues of Tabligh (*Faza'il-i Tabligh*); Virtues of Ramaḍān (*Fada'il-i Ramaḍān*) and Muslim Degeneration and its Only Remedy (translation of the Urdu Book *Musalmano-ki-Mawjoodah-pasti-ka-Waahid-Ilaaj* by Māwlanā Ihtishaamul Hasan Kaandhlawi). [116] *Faza'il-e-A'maal* is currently available in Swahili under the title of *Fadhila za A'maali*. It was translated by Maulid Kayanda of Daawat Ilalkhair Markaz. It was first published in 1992 and the second edition issued in 1996. The constituent chapters are the same as the original English and Urdu versions only in Swahili namely: *Visa Vya Maṣaḥāba*, *Fadhila Za Qur'ani*, *Fadhila Za Swala*, *Fadhila Za Dhikr*, *Fadhila Za Tabligh*, *Fadhila Za Ramaḍāni*, *and Kuvunda Kwa Uislamu Na Tiba Yake Ya Pekee* of Māwlanā Ihtishaamul Hassan Kaandhlawi. It was published by Samnawi Enterprises, Nairobi.

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[116] A copy that I obtained at Isiolo *jor* contains the six books except 'Muslim Degeneration and its Only Remedy' by Mawlana Ihtishaamul Hasan Kaandhlawi. It was the 5th South African Impression published by Waterval Islamic Institute in Johannesburg.

Another popular text is *Riyāḍ-al-ṣāliḥīn* (The Garden of the Righteous) by Abu Zakariyya Yahya ibn Sharaf An-Nawawi. It is a collection of verses of Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* from major *ḥadīth* collections (*al-ṣaḥīḥ al-sitta*). Its simplicity and relevance to the core teachings of Tablīghī *daʿwa* makes its usage widespread. Small pocket-size booklets with range of supplications and remembrance for many occasions are widely circulated among the Tablīghīs in Kenya. *Muntakhab Aḥadīth* compiled by Māwlanā Muhammad Yusuf Kandhlawi is a book that is currently gaining prominence especially among senior Tablīghīs travelling for longer *khurūj* tours of four months. The book is a selection of verses of Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* relating to the six qualities of *daʿwa* and *tablīgh*. The sole authorised translation of the text from Arabic to English is indicated to have been done under personal supervision of Māwlanā Muhammad Sa'd Kandhlawi, one of the two senior elders of the movement and who also is the grandson of Mohammad Yusuf Kandhlawi. It was posthumously published by Annayyar in Karachi, Pakistan in 1997. The book has also been translated into Swahili for local use. The six qualities (also called the six fundamentals/virtues/principles) or *sitta siffat* are what the beliefs and practices of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat rests on of which the first two are also the pillars of Islam, they are:

1. Faith and firm belief in *"lā ilāha ilá l-Lāh, Muḥammad rasūl Allāh"* (*Kalima Ṭayyiba*) - None is worthy worship but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.
2. Concentration and devotion in Prayers (*Ṣalāt*)
3. Knowledge and remembrance of Allah (*ʿIlm wa Dhikr*)
4. Generously fulfilling the rights of a Muslim (*Ikrām-al-Muslim*)
5. Sincerity of intention (*ikhlās al-niyya*)
6. Inviting towards Allah and conveying the message of Allah (*Daʿwat wa Tabligh*)

In addition to the six principles, *Muntakhab Aḥadīth* lists the seventh one which is 'avoiding the irrelevant'. Also known as *tark-e-laya'ni* in Urdu which means rejection of pointless, it includes all those acts that take a believer from the commands of Allah. It has been interpreted as a companion principle of *Ikrām-ul-Muslim* and concerns guarding one's tongue from excessive and vain talks that may lead disharmony, rivalry or rejection of the teachings of the movement by the public. Over years *tark-e-laya'ni* has not been consistently included in the *sitta siffat* but the spirit is said to be pervasive in Tablīghī literature (Nelson 2010: 14-15).

Sitta siffat forms the bulk of basic teachings at home and in teaching sessions of the Tablīghīs on *khurūj*. The Tablīghīs argue that these principles were attributes that were manifest in the lives of the companions of the Prophet and therefore extracted by the sheikhs of the movement as desirable traits to be adopted for success in this world and the hereafter. Each *siffat* is expounded for the followers on three levels and with various *ḥadīth* s and Qur'ānic

verses in support of it: its purpose (Ar. *maqṣad*); its virtues (Ar. *fada'il*) and benefits or achievements (Sw. *faida*) that can be accrued by the performance of that principle. The first two *principles* are as mentioned earlier part of the pillars of Islam alongside *Zakāt* (Ar. alms-giving), *Ramaḍān* (fasting) and *Ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah). The *sitta siffat* are geared towards revival of faith in the life of an individual believer who shall, through travels and sets of practices at home and at mosque, institute himself as an agent of change for himself, his family, his neighbourhood, his community, his region, his county and finally the whole world.[117] On this path of reform, an individual believer is obliged to use his resource and time on the work of reminding himself and others of the fundamentals of Islam. The Tablīghīs are hence perpetually concerned with how to make the faith visible in the lives of individual Muslims: *Daʿwa* hence according to one informant is an obligation with certain aims:

> *Daʿwa* has three aims. First, it is to reawaken the faith in every Muslim so that he can live the religion as done by the Prophet. Second, it is to unify Muslims irrespective of their race, sex, tribe, gender, sect and age and so on into one united umma. Nowadays Muslims are so separated and divided that such a unity is worth a try. Third, aim of the *daʿwa* is to make the whole community embrace Islam fully today and forever.[118]

The first principle of *Kalima Ṭayyiba*, the *shahada* i.e. 'lā ilāha ilá l-Lāh, Muḥammad rasūl Allāh' is divided into two with the first section embracing the concepts such as Allah as the creator of all, helper and the only one worthy of worship while the second part acknowledge the prophethood of Muhammad and emphasizes the need to emulate the teachings, sayings and actions of the Prophet *in toto*. Horstmann (2009: 42), observes that the life of a Tablīghī is a permanent *Ḥajj* , and his conduct is regulated to the minutest detail so that it conforms in every aspect to the Prophet Muhammad's life, *imitatio muhammadi*. *Imān yaqīn* or sincere and concrete faith is cultivated as a virtue of a true *dāʿi*. Ali notes that for the Tablīghīs, the inner struggle and self-purification denotes the awareness of the existence of God at all times in all places.[119]

Ṣalāt (prayers) are diligently performed. What is however important is that the Tablīghīs are consistently asked to cultivate an acute sense of presence of Allah while prayers. In a *taʿlim* session at a zonal gathering of Tablīghīs in Isiolo, Aw Kombola defines this kind of *ṣalāt* is that in which 'the heart and soul' is fully involved; a prayer in which mundane thoughts does

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[117] Tablīghī Jamāʿat is basically men-oriented movement. Leadership, decision making and preaching remains the preserve of the men. Observations at gatherings and on travel reveal minimal participation of women in their activities in Kenya. There are certain teaching and travel modules geared towards the women that shall be discussed later in the chapter.
[118] Interview with M. Qalla, October, 2009, Moyale.
[119] Jan A. Ali, 2010, p. 166.

not infiltrate and weaken it.[120] The best prayers are argued to the congregational one and in which a person shows devotion and concentration as done by the Prophet. *Sunna* (Superorogatory) prayers are highly encouraged too.

To further remodel their spiritual life through *'ilm wa dhikr'*, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat require that members dedicate time on daily basis to recitation of the Qurʾān; varieties of *tasbihat* (Ar. spiritual litanies) such *istigfār*, *durūd sharīf*, *subhanallah* and so on; and different forms of *duat* (supplications). This inculcates in the members a feeling of spiritual self-awareness. It is common for such Tablīghī individuals to gradually withdraw from participation in social activities such as *miraa* (a leafy stimulant) chewing or watching of English premier league the two most popular past time activities in Northern part of Kenya.

Ikrām-al-muslim and *ikhlās al-niyya* outlines the rules of cordial relations within the movement and with larger Muslim community and also emphasises the need for proper intentions when carrying out myriads of recommended practices of the movement. Respect for and hospitality to elders, the *amīr*, and fellow Tablīghīs and to the ʿ*ulamā'* is emphasised. Such acts of simplicity, selflessness and egalitarianism that characterise the movement are anchored in this principle. However some non-Tablīghīs point out that *ikrām* exists only for members of the movement and that preferential treatment exists within its ranks and files.[121]

Da'wat wa Tablīgh is the most defining principle of the movement. It is here that the movement outlines its idea of *daʿwa* as obligatory upon every Muslim and not a preserve of the ʿ*ulamā'*. The notion is informed by the teachings that the work of 'enjoining good' (Ar. *amr bi'l-maʿarūf*) is immediate and compulsory upon all believers as the daily prayers are. Every individual is encouraged to give his time, pay his travel expenses and accompany a travelling team for stipulated number of days or month. The movement sees the *umma* in general and more specifically itself as the successors of the companions of the Prophet and places the duty of reminding fellow Muslim on every novice and regular in the movement. More so verses of the Qurʾān as those listed below inform that the Tablīghī beliefs and strengthen their zeal to mobilise more followers to undertake the work of *daʿwa.*

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[120] He said that if you have misplaced something and could not find it, just do ablution and pray two *rakʿa* and within few seconds, a voice would say to you 'the book that you misplaced is on the shelf and so on' and that as long as such voices are there the prayers are null and void. *Taʿlīm* Session at Isiolo *Jor*, April 2009, Isiolo.
[121] Said Bafana on the Tablīghī Jamāʿat , Video CD lecture recorded in August 2006 at Jamia Mosque Nairobi.

Be a community that calls for what is good, urges what is right, and forbids what is wrong: those who do this are the successful ones. *Surāt Al-ʿImrān*, verse 104[122]

[Believers], you are the best community singled out for people: you order what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in God. *Surāt Al-Imrān*, verse 110

The believers, both men and women, support each other; they order what is right and forbid what is wrong; they keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; they obey God and His Messenger. God will give His mercy to such people: God is almighty and wise. *Surāt al-Taubah*, verse 71

4.3.2 Mobility Related Practices

Tablīghīs as we have seen so far are a group of well organised lay preachers who ground their teaching to the idea that for reform to occur, an individual must leave home and try to change his ways for the better. The individual must then come home and change his home and society. In other words, mobility matters, but the question is what does this mobility means? If society is in a state of decadence why do the Tablīghīs choose for temporary separation and re-socialisation rather than out-right separation and formation of 'pure' societies of faith like other movements influenced by *hijra* narratives? How do the Tablīghīs conceptualise 'leaving home and returning home'?

As a movement in literal sense, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat is renowned for their emphasis on travelling for purpose of self-reform and reform of others. The very word '*tablīgh*' denotes conveyance; its root word *balāgha* means to convey or to make something reach another stage. *Daʿwa*, the idea that the message of Islam should be relayed to new people, reminded to the nominal Muslims and re-emphasised for the steadfast one, is used interchangeably with *tablīgh* in the world of Tablīghī Jamāʿat. The movement asserts that there is no better way of carrying this *daʿwa* than meeting fellow Muslims in streets and in their own mosques. Metcalf (2003: 140) mentions that the Tablīghīs insist that preaching must be face to face and that intellectuality and arguments are irrelevant to influence lives and that what counts is the meeting of heart. In fact, the most picturesque image of the movement is that of groups of 10 to 15 men, young and old, travelling as itinerant preachers on foot, from one mosque to another, reminding Muslims and mobilising new fellow travellers in faith. The members carry minimalist belongings for such travels and are often self-reliant while residing a mosque and only ask for audience from the local Muslim communities.

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[122] Haleem, Muhammad, Abdel. *The Qur'an.* A New Translation. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2005)

To legitimate the novel idea of systematically travelling for the sake of Allah, the movement reinterprets their invitation to practical Islam as done by the Prophet in the same way. The *Taif* motif is a favourite narrative. This was a journey made by the Prophet and one of his companions in the early days of Islam from the hostile and unresponsive city of Makkah to the city of Taif for proselytism. The incident was done on foot. Unfortunately the results were not positive as the residents insulted and threw the two out of the city. The undesirable results aside, the story form the basis on which mobility for the sake of faith is grounded. Going, especially on foot is hence perceived as a noble and blessed endeavour. The conversion stories of early pioneer Muslims to Islam by the Prophet and his few companions are also often re-narrated with Tablīghī terminologies such as *tashkīl* (Ar. formation and mobilisation of new members) *taʿlīm* (Ar. religious instructions) and *ziyārāt* (Ar. visits). One sees a deliberate effort to re-tell the early history of Islam in the light of Tablīghī worldview. For instance, a preacher may remark 'when the Prophet did *tashkīl* among his friends, Abubakr…they did *shūra* at the home of so and so and all the Ṣaḥābas present took *takaza* that there to do the work of Allah…' and so on.

Every religious practice and actions of the early Muslims are re-narrated with a Tablīghī flavour hence legitimating the new movement as based on the core teachings of Islam. The ship narrative is often invoked to show the need for excursion from every day space that is interpreted as corrupting to a life of religious re-socialization on travel retreat with fellow lay preachers. (Tozy 2000: 166). Abdirahim, a regular Tablīghī asserts that a ship in the high seas that develops mechanical problem can only dock ashore and get repair and similarly a believer must leave home and travel with fellow Tablīghīs and practice faith intensively for days so that he can reform his inner self.[123] The underlying argument is that the nature of the current state of Muslim communities is deplorable and contaminating for any progressive spiritual reform to occur. Just like the ṣūfī practice of solitude to gain inner peace and spirituality, the Tablīghīs advocate for a temporary separation from the society is not just commendable but a necessary practice that must be done to revive faith.[124] Some Tablīghīs compare the effects of the mobility experience to a phone recharge for functionality. The narrative below gives perhaps the best rationale of 'leaving home':

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[123] Interview with Abdirahim, October 2009, Moyale.

[124] For influence of Ṣūfīsm on Tablīghī religious practices, see, Reetz (2006): 33-51. The main argument of the paper is that as a typical reform movement from South Asia, the Tablīghīs combines numerous elements of Ṣūfīsm with reformist messages.

When a person is sick, he is taken out of the home environment and put into hospital. The new place will allow for change, proper treatment and recovery. The more sick the patient is, the deeper he goes, from the general ward to special care to intensive care. Thus, a person who is spiritually not well also needs to go out, to change his environment, to go to better surroundings and in better company to be with those performing *Salaah*, making *Dhikr,* thereby getting proper direction in life. He should be with those who are trying to gain closeness and proximity unto Allah, who are trying to reform, change and link themselves to Allah. He should be with those who are inviting towards good and doing the good, who are invited to good rather than to bad and evil. Thus one needs to go out.[125]

The above quote show that reforming the inner self as envisioned by the movement is best done in company of fellow Tablīghīs who have mastered the techniques of personal devotion. It is hence seen as an apprenticeship for an alternative religious career and experience. This travel and subsequent work of preaching is argued to be compulsory on every one, male and female. A popular Prophetic saying '*ballighu anni walau ayah*' (Ar. transmit from me even if it is one verse) that commands that believers should convey to others even if they know a verse legitimizes recruitment of lay preachers. There are three main mobility related practices among the Tablīghīs in Kenya *khurūj*, *ziyārāt* and *jaula*. Let us briefly examine them.

4.3.2.1 Khurūj (Preaching Tour)

Khurūj fī sabīlillāh denotes the travelling for the sake of Allah. These travels are systematized travelling modules with elaborate time plan and routes. Individuals engage in this excursion for two reasons: first, to strengthen and refine their religious practices and hence mould their character and commitment to practical Islam and second to inform their fellow Muslims to be steadfast too and may be get one or two members into the fold of itinerant preachers.

*Kundi*s (Sw. travel teams) can be formulated in four different settings. It could be organized during the frequent zonal and national gatherings of *ijtimā*ʿs and *jor*s.[126] Many *kundi*s depart to different directions in Kenya at the end of such gatherings. Second, it may be formed as a result of successful mobilization by a travelling team in an area. A *kundi* can literary give birth to another *kundi* as local *dā*ʿ*i*s and non-Tablīghīs are encouraged to volunteer and form a team after a visiting travel group leaves the area. Third, a mosque-based group may organize local Muslims to volunteer time on a monthly basis to tour the locality for three days or so. Fourth, committed members at times dedicate a certain number of days every year for tour. All these possibilities of group formations mean that at any time, a *jamā*ʿ*at* from a local mosque jurisdiction, far towns within a sub-*ḥalqa*, other sub-*ḥalqa*s or *ḥalqa*s or even from

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[125] A. H. Elias 'Tabligh Made Easy' www.minsid.com accessed on 11.01.2009.
[126] *Kundi* is a Swahili word that refers to a group of people. The Kenyan Tablīghīs popularly use the term to refer to a preaching team on travel (a travelling *jamā*ʿ*at*).

foreign countries (such as Pakistan, Egypt or Tanzania) are doing their travelling tour. These frequent travels and visits strengthen local Tablīghī units connecting them in sustained interactions with the world of Islam beyond their mosque jurisdiction.

Through consultative meetings a *kundi* is often given a route to take, sets of mosques to visit as based on need assessment obtained from monthly progress reports and an *amīr* to guide on the principles of *daʿwa*. As the movement eschews dependency, each individual is required to contribute a stipulated amount of money needed to cover food and travelling expenses for the period of the tour. The amount varies between countries but it is relatively low as costs are kept bare minimum.

Committed members are hence required to allocate three days per month, 40 days per year (*chilla*) and four months once in a life time to do preaching tours.[127] In practice the travelling modules are dynamic, flexible and customized to the needs of regular members and at time novices. A teacher who has only thirty days of leave may negotiate with the *amīr* of a four months travel team before departure and exit from the team after his allocated time is over. There are also ten day *jamāʿat*s for busy regulars and interested non-Tablīghīs who want to 'jumpstart' their *imān*. One could also volunteer for a twenty day tour in case he has other urgent matters to attend to.

Regular followers give more time especially once they take pledge that they shall dedicate certain numbers of days per year on the works of the movement, a pledge called *sanawi*. Recruitment into the movement is a gradual phenomenon. An individual would be convinced to volunteer to join a team of 10-15 people for a three day tour. He may volunteer for many three day tours and may then go for ten day tours hence enriching his Tablīghī experience. He would then be motivated to go for a 40 day tour. Once such a person travels for a number of 40 day *daʿwa* tours, he may, by then, rise also in rank among the local Tablīghīs holding rotational *amīr*ship or other duties. He would then be self-motivated or convinced by his fellow Tablīghīs to travel for a four month tour. His selected friends would by then be largely being drawn from among fellow Tablīghīs and his family who would at the same time undergo albeit slow but gradual religious transformation. Such numerous travels would make him to go beyond the borders of his local village to cities and towns in Kenya and Southern Ethiopia and some time to far places as South Asia or Nigeria or South Africa. He becomes truly translocal maintaining networks across ethnic, regional and national borders.

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[127] Interview with H. Abuddo, June 2010, Isiolo.

When a travel team arrives in a region, it ideally does a kind of 'reconnaissance' to get familiar with the territory, meet the 'notables' such a chiefs, ᶜulamāʾ, senior resident dāʿis of the movement for acknowledgement, recognition of their importance and to get their blessings, and significantly reduce any resistance to their plan of stay and preaching. Once duties are allocated, the team embarks on routinised day to day chores that range from teaching lessons within the team, excursions to local mosque community, preaching to mosque attendants to individual religious practices.

Through the nature and depth of teachings one is exposed to gradually increase as one progress from three days to four months travel teams. While in three and 10 day tours, superficial understanding and memorisation of the six *siffat* is taught. More elaborate Qurʾānic verses, Prophetic traditions and other Tablīghī narratives in support of the six *siffat* and principles of *daʿwa* are expounded in lengthier tours of 40 days and four months.

One such principle is the popularly quoted *uṣūl ᶜishirīn* (Ar.) or the twenty principles. These principles set the boundaries of what is allowed and desirable, what is encouraged, what is detested and what is 'no-go zone'. *Uṣūl ᶜishirīn* sets out the priorities of practices for a travel team as what is to be done in plenty; what deeds are to be reduced significantly; what practices one must force himself to do; what actions must refrain from and what issues must not even talk about.[128] The principles are for easy memorisation and practise arranged in sets of four. The first four are actions or practices that should be done in abundance: One, *daʿwatu nas ilallah* i.e. calling people to Allah or in other words, dedicating time for *daʿwa* efforts whether one is at home or through regular volunteering for travels. Second is *taᶜlīm wa taᶜllum* (Ar. to learn and to teach) which prepares the Tablīghī to learn and to teach others essentially through teaching modules called *taʿlīm* conducted at home, at local mosque and while on travel tours. This second principle ensures that a novice learns the tenets of the movement and with time and exposure to the different materials and lectures rise to the rank of being an accomplished lay preacher. Third is *ᶜibāda maᶜa dhikr* (Ar. religious obligations with remembrance) in which a Tablīghī is required to conduct varieties of religious duties (worship) such as prayers, *zakāt* (alms-giving), *saum* (fasting) and *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah) in combination with hours of practices of *dhikr* such as recitation of the Qurʾān, *duᶜa*s and *tasbiḥāt*. Four is *khidma* (service to others). While on travel tours, the individuals are motivated to perform acts of sacrifice such as cooking on behalf of others, washing clothes for the co-preachers, running errands for the team, drawing water from wells and so

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[128] Conversations with Hussein Boru in April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.

on. Such acts are argued by the Tablīghīs as spiritually rewarding as it enhances brotherhood, respect and sense of humility.

The second set of principles are those which one is required to reduce. First among them is *al-naum* (Ar. sleep). While on travel or at home, a Tablīghī is required to reduce his hours of sleep to bear minimal. Some put it at six hours a night. More time is hence set aside for hosts of individualised and communal practices. Second is *al-ṭaʿām* (Ar. consumption). Eating food and drinking beverages or water is also regulated. They are seen as just means to furthering the preaching and performance of religious deeds rather than for nutrition or other purposes. Food consumption is kept basic and minimal especially while on travelling tours to cut costs. Food is arguably bonding when eaten in communal manner as the team does while on travel. Third is *kalām dunya* (Ar. mundane talks). According to the Tablīghī Jamāʿat teaching, a lay preacher to talks less about the present world but more about death, the tribulation in the grave, God's judgement and rewards and punishment accrued for various actions. More so, mundane talks are argued to distract the travelling team from the goal of their retreat: self-reform. Fourth is restricted departure from mosque premise without any urgent needs. While on travel, one is expected not to leave the team to attend to private matters without permission of the *amīr*. It may be a pressing but simple matter as the urge to go to the wash room while some form of teaching is going on but permission must be asked. This creates a sense of self-discipline and obedience.

Third set of principles are those that one should force himself/herself to perform. First among those is *taʿaṭū al-amīr* (Ar. obedience to the leader), unquestionable obedience to the leader of the travel team or local unit. The *amīr* is also expected to be consultative, polite, responsible, ready to take extra burden on behalf of the travelling team, diplomatic and ready to listen to diverse views and be a good decision maker. In return the members are to demonstrate complete obedience in as far as his instructions or commands are in line with the teachings of the movement. Second is *a'māl al- ijtimāʿ* (Ar.), performance of communal practices requiring participation of more than one person. The Tablīghīs broadly classify religious practices into two: *a'mal ifradi* (Ar.), individualised deeds such as *Sunna* prayers, *dhikr* and recitation of Qur'ān and *a'mal ijtimāʿ*, congregational practices such as *jamāʿ* prayers, *ziyārāt*, *jaula* and *shūra* among others. One is expected to be co-operative not miss any congregational deeds while on the travel tour. Third is *ṣabr wa-taḥammul* (Ar.), patience. Given the fact that these groups of travellers hail from different social upbringing and must cooperate with each other and divide labour among themselves, conflicts however latent are bound to erupt. Patience is hence marketed as a virtue to be emulated. Fourth is *adab al-*

masjid (Ar.), observing the etiquettes of the mosque. The travelling teams temporarily stay in a number of mosques during their tours. They must ask for permission to use such facilities for accommodation, cooking of food and as venue of proselytism. Care is taken so that the facilities are not destroyed and the place kept ritually sacred. The sacrality of the mosque is hence guarded and respectability of the itinerant preachers maintained for the ease of future visits.

The fourth set of principles concern those acts that one must be refrain from. The first is *isrāf* (Ar.), extravagances. A travelling team travels on shoe-string budget.[129] To cut costs, drastic measures are often taken and any unwanted expenses kept minimal. In fact even bargaining is encouraged and legitimised as a prophetic tradition. Teams sent to market must buy what is required. Alternative goods are sought if the cost of a wanted item is seen as high. In the same line, the travel teams tend to cut excessive usage of electricity (sometime lighting candles at night) and water of a mosque that they temporarily stay in. Second is *ishrāf*, coveting other peoples goods. Jealousness and envy are discouraged and contentment and self-satisfaction promoted a virtue. Third is *su'āl al-nās*, begging. Self-sufficiency and contentment are expected to be characteristic of a travel team and individuals are highly forbidden to beg either as a team or as a person. Fourth is principle concerns taking other people's items without their permission. Members of a travel team are expected to seek each others consent in order to use personal items. Personal space and respect for properties of fellow Tablīghīs on the move is hence inculcated firmly from the very beginning.

The fifth and last sets of principles are four things that are highly proscribed. First and the most significant is *siyāsa*, politics. Politics is seen by the movement as highly divisive and distractive to the urgent need of the reform of the *umma* in general and the individuals in a travel team particular.[130] Individuals at personal level may hold whatever views they wish but on travel missions, in gatherings and the discussions of the *maqāmī* groups, matters of political nature are highly proscribed. This is extended to a social and political state of affairs of Muslim communities that one lives in and visits while on *khurūj*. The Jamāʿat curiously sees that the solution to all the problems that the society face lie in establishing sincere belief in the heart of every Muslim. The socio-political plights of Muslims at local regional, national

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[129] A 10 day tour costs about 10 - 12 Euros, a three day 3- 5 Euros and 40 days a mere 40-60 Euros. However it should be remember that the levels of poverty among the communities in Kenya would make these meagre amounts out of reach of many. The costs are also affected by rising costs of food and fuels and were much cheaper in previous years.

[130] For detailed analysis of Tablīghī Jamāʿat and politics see Y. Sikand, 2006, pp. 175-195

or global levels are undoubtedly ignored and re-spiritualisation of facets of life yearned and worked for. To politick is seen as addressing mere symptoms of social problems. Second, *ᶜuyūb nās* (Ar.), to discuss people's faults. Backbiting and discussions concerning faults in other Muslims is proscribed within the movement in general. Third is *ikhtilāf al-ᶜulamā'*, arguments with scholars. To bolster their chances of acceptance and legitimacy, the Tablīghīs concern themselves with preaching simple religious obligations and avoid doctrinal, jurisprudential and ideological matters as the preserve of the scholars. To the Tablīghīs, scholars are interpreters of religious deeds and belief while the movement members are but reminders. This is because the movement draws members from among the laity. The Tablīghīs are acutely aware of the contestation that they create with the *ᶜulamā'* in terms of quest for authority and power over encouraging or sanctioning religious practices of the lay. Being aware of this potential duel with *ᶜulamā'* meant that they had to put in place strategies to avert a show-down. Fourth and the last principle is pride. The members are forbidden to claim that they are better than the rest of the Muslims. Humility is promoted as desired trait and pride frowned upon as unislamic. To some the fact that the Jamāᶜat claim that there is no other way to salvation except through itinerant preaching is a sign of elevated sense of spiritual self-importance. Polite language is often used to approach people. Insults and unresponsive audience to the message of reform are excessively tolerated.

4.3.2.2 Ziyārāt (Ar. Visits)

Ziyārāt is another Tablīghī practice with strong spatial connotations. *Ziyārāt* are geared towards reaching out on a one and one basis to establish formal relationship and presence, to garner support for Tablīghī work and tours, to advertise the Tablīghī methodology of reform and most importantly to acknowledge different categories of specialised professionals residing in an area. The fact that the society is stratified into different classes, a 'one size fits all' strategy is seen as misleading and each category are pragmatically approached in carefully customised way. A business man is hence approached in a different way from the *ᶜulamā'* or fellow *dāᶜis*. The Tablīghīs argue that like all their practices, *ziyārāt* must be done with sincere intention (Ar. *niyyah*) and proper procedure. *Ziyārāt* is elaborate exercise with aims (Ar. *maqṣad*), procedure (Ar. *tartīb*), virtues (Ar. *faza'il*) and benefits (Ar. *fā'ida*). In northern Kenya, the Tablīghīs conduct six types of *ziyārāt*:

1. *Ziyārāt Qudamā'* (visit to regular Tablīghī s)
2. *Ziyārāt khalf al-dāʿi* (visits to a home of a fellow Tablīghī on tour)
3. *Ziyārāt khawāṣṣ* (visit to merchants)
4. *Ziyārāt al-ʿulamā'* (visit to scholars)
5. *Ziyārāt al-ʿammat al -nās* (visit to the general populace)
6. *Ziyārāt al- tabaqaat* (visit to professional)

Ziyārāt Qudamā'

Qudamā' are senior *dāʿis*. They are stated as individuals who have done the work of proselytism for lengthy periods of time. These individuals may have travelled cumulatively for months or even years, attended hundreds of Tablīghī gatherings, participated in management and expansion of mosque-based groups and have held various leadership positions and sat in many local, zonal or national councils. They are a resource of the movement and hence key promoters of the Tablīghī proselytism in an area. These categories of persons are hence seen to be continuously visited to keep them within the movement.

The visit to the *qudamā'* may be necessitated by many factors. May be the *dāʿi* appears inactive in his commitment to the movement or just plainly uninterested in its affairs as before. Or maybe he needs further support and goodwill from his fellow committed Tablīghīs so as to make longer and foreign *khurūj* to the centres of the movement in the Indian subcontinent or neighbouring countries.

According to the Tablīghīs, caution must be exercised to approach such an esteemed *dāʿi*. If he is directly known to the Tablīghī mandated by the council members of the local mosque-based group to visit him, then he is approached and conversed with politeness and won back. Hussein, an informant clarifies further that:

> If he is a friend or an acquaintance, you proceed directly to him and speak to him in person. If you do not know him directly, there are procedures to be followed. First of this *tartīb* is *taʿrruf* (getting to know the person), then comes come *ikrām* (extending hospitality and courteous deeds for him to show kindness), then you do *tashkīl* (regain and bring him back to the fold).
> If it is a person who has 'backslided' or left the movement, this *qudamā'* must be treated with care and great concerns. You use words that elicit kindness. Like: 'Brother you have become weak in the *juhd* (efforts) of *daʿwa*…'
> You do not say 'what the hell is wrong you? Since you left the work of *tablīgh* is still on even though you just decide to follow *miraa* over the faith! This kind of castigation is completely forbidden. We are encouraged at all time to use *ḥikma* (wisdom).[131]

In other words, *ḥikma* or wise counselling is administered to win back non-committed members. The bond of network gained through travel experience and administration of preaching work through the mosque-based group is viewed as lifelong. The movement hence

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[131] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.

tries to counter tides of defection through customised appeal to negligent *dāʿis* acknowledging the possible reasons for non-participation on human weakness in the contaminated social environment of modern world rather than ostracising such former Tablīghīs. Therefore such 'call back messages' are voiced in a manner to demonstrate to the former *dāʿis* that they are indeed a very important part of the *daʿwa* group and that his colleagues in the movement dearly miss him.

To win back a non-committed Tablīghī, a *maqāmī* group at times coordinates with a visiting regional or foreign *jamāʿat*s in the area to make a visit to such a person. A local Tablīghī acts as the guide (*dalīl*) for the visiting *jamāʿat* and show them the home of the identified individual to be visited. The team would then talk to him and motivate him to start giving time for Tablīghī tours and activities within the area. These strategies are believed to create bonds of global brotherhood and concern and attract the former Tablīghī back to the active participation in the everyday religious practices. The individuals see themselves as being members of a truly unified group of preachers who can fall back on strategies availed by the translocal connections of the movement in order to bolster and strengthen local participation. With improvement in mobile communication in most parts of Kenya, direct calls and text messaging are made to inactive individuals by his Tablīghī colleagues on regular basis until the person yields to the demands of such in-group mobilisation.

The strategies used in the *ziyārāt qudamā'* raises some fundamental questions about voluntary nature of the membership of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. It has often been stated that one may join and leave at any time they want and that there are no official registers of membership. Regular Tablīghīs know each other. They know who among the local Tablīghīs are active and who is not. They know how many travel tours have been made in the areas, when and by whom and with what results. One can however carefully discern that though entry is free and actively sought after by the regulars, as individuals volunteer more time for travels and partake in myriad of Tablīghī activities, he becomes indispensable to the very growth of the movement. His friends would in most cases be drawn from local *maqāmī*, his daily rota keeps him away from other social activities beyond the concern of the movement and *tablīgh* activities becomes his lifestyle. Such individuals are often convinced about the authenticity and orthodoxy of the tenets of the movement and would not easily quit. Therefore if he lessens his commitment, his fellow Tablīghīs would use such practices as *ziyārāt* to win him back.

Ziyārāt khalf al-dāʿi (Ar. visit to a home of fellow Tablīghī who is on tour)

This is a kind of *ziyārāt* organized by the members of the mosque-based group to the home of an active *qudamā'* who has spent many forty days and four months tours and is currently on *khurūj fī sabīlillāh* (preaching tour). The *shūra* of the mosque based group would identify which among the homes of local *dāʿis* en-route that should be visited and by whose family. Abdi, a Tablīghī from Merti outlines this visit this way:

> When we execute this visit, we visit or go to the home of the *dāʿi* with our wives. We must never go alone. We do *ikrām* for their wives and kids by bringing sweets and other gifts. We give it to our wives who will present it to them.
> Our wives will inquire about the *ahwāl* (Ar. conditions) of the homestead of the *dāʿi*. For example my wife would ask 'Sister, how are you? How are the kids? How is everything?' Maybe they have certain difficulties. Maybe they wish to eat meat or something delicious. May be one of the kids is not feeling well. The visited women share domestic *ahwāl* with our wives.
> Our wives then will share the *ahwāl* of the home of *qudamā'* in our home *shūra* and if we as a family can do any *nuṣra* (assistance), we do *ikrām* for them. If the problem is big, we take it to our *markaz* to deliberate over it.[132]

It is important to note that there is clear separation of sexes and certain gender ramifications in such visits as the movement gets entrenched in an area. For instance, Abdi and his wife Nasibo would visit the home of Boru. Boru may be away for a four month preaching tour in Ethiopia at that time, maybe he has finished two months and remaining with two more. He may not be able to communicate with his family and cannot attend to all their needs. Help may be plenty from clan and extended family members but the assistance from fellow *dāʿi*s is privileged for they consider themselves as united by bonds of brotherhood. Abdi and Nasibo would arrive to the home of Boru together. The reason Abdi goes with the wife for such a planned visit is to reinforce the notion that the *dāʿis* are there for each other. He has to accompany his wife as ideally recommended by Islamic law as a woman is not allow to go out of her home alone. They bring with them small gifts such as sweets, sugar, and some vegetables and meat for supper and so on. Such gifts would be remembered and its sweet memories relayed to Boru once he is back thus strengthen his bond of commitment to the movement and gratitude to fellow *dāʿi*.

Nasibo would have in-depth conversations with Boru's wife about the state of the affairs of the home of Boru. Nasibo would share the proceedings of her conversation with the wife of Boru with her husband. As a family they may then solve the immediate problem of the Boru's family but if it is beyond them, Abdi would raise it as an urgent matter at the next day's morning *shūra* of his *maqāmī* for deliberation. It is imperative to note that just as networks of

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[132] Conversations with Abdi, in September 2009, Merti.

purpose and friendship develop between the Tablīghī men in an area, their wives increasingly interact and share ideas. This network that slowly emerges from among the womenfolk would then be utilized for subsequent gender-based Tablīghī practices. It is also clear that a Tablīghī man is forbidden to make such a visit on his own as it is considered as *harām*. Neither do two or three couples make a visit; it is kept at the level of house to house, family to family visit. Multiple levels of *shūra* as we shall see later keep the flow of information, consistency of practices and reconfiguration and delegation of decision making a transformative feature of the movement in areas where such actions never existed before.

Ziyārāt al-khawāṣṣ

Khawāṣṣ refer to class of merchants in an area. A rich person, *tajiri* (Swahili) or *dures* (Borana) are perceived as a special category in need of personalized visit. Business people have different time plans and may not be willing to leave their businesses for the days for spiritual revitalization and tours. However wealthy individuals are among the prominent personalities whose decisions and opinions shape local discourses. In most cases, the rich Muslims often demonstrate and attempt to cultivate a sense of piety and generosity through prompt payment of *zakāt*, *ṣadaqa*, contributing to building of mosques and other social facilities. To win over the merchant class is a valuable asset worth trying as far as the local Tablīghīs are concerned. Their implicit support of the movement through their presence at the Tablīghī gatherings and short interval travels boost the much needed support for social respectability and religious legitimacy.

A visit to the home of a businessman requires adequate preparation. Tablīghīs within the area may appoint a few of their members to make such visit a local 'tycoon'. Abdi cautions that the sheikhs of the movement warn us not to go to such homes on empty stomach:

> If we do not have anything to eat, we should drink water to full stomach. But if we come and he start offering juices and nice food for us, first and foremost, the people of the area would interpret our visit wrongly and secondly and most important, it will distract us from the main objective of the visit. We must dress in good clothes too.[133]

The fear here is that the merchants being men of means may enjoy playing 'the generous host' to such visiting preachers. Being kind to a group of pious lay preachers may make some of their blessings rub off to him. He may also raise his status as a man of faith by lavishly providing food and drinks for such a group. Adorning good clothes also downplays the image

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[133] Ibid.

of desperation and dependency and visually inform the merchant that the group is self-sustaining and independent and not in need of consolation. The Tablīghīs being aware of subtle implications of generosity of the wealthy, they try to play down the enticements and other offers and embark on preaching systematised pep talk on religion and the immediacy of its propagation.

Such talks would start the greatness of Allah moving on to the challenges faced by the prophets and their companions in bringing the faith. The talk would drift to themes about salvation in this world and hereafter being not in acquisition of wealth but in commitment to the faith. Relevant narratives would then be given to back up on the importance of using wealth to buy *janna* (Ar. paradise) and some negative consequence of not doing so. Favourite of such narratives with positive results are that of Abdurrahman bin Auf, Abu-Bakr As-Siddiq, Umar bin Khattab and Prophet Muhammad who were as selfless personalities who used their wealth for the purpose of God and the ones with negative consequence include the story of Qarun who was to have suffered the wrath of God due his misuse of the wealth bestowed on him.

After such heart softening moral stories, the team will immediate try to convince the merchant to give his time for the sake of his own religious reform. If the mobilisation is unsuccessful, the team may ask him to dedicate few hours to sit with the group at the mosque from time to time. If he is adamant to sacrifice his time, the team may wisely counsel him to send one of his sons or other men under his care for stipulated travel tours. Then the team may make a common *dua* and bless him and tell him to make intention (*niyya*) that in near future that he shall join a preaching tour.

Ziyārātul al-ᶜulamā' (visit to religious scholars)

There is an unwritten law that the Tablīghīs must avoid mobilizing the ᶜulamā' for preaching tours. This does not mean that they do not join such teams. As a matter of fact, some ᶜulamā' in northern Kenya would use such platforms to preach, meet fellow believers in remote areas of the region and attempt to guide the members of the movement gradually. The visit to the ᶜulamā' has one major aim: obtaining their blessing, permission and goodwill to conduct *daᶜwa* in an area. One informant puts it this way:

> We must visit the *Qalole* (*ᶜulamā'*) to get their *dua*. *Qallu irra ebbifatan* (Borana)…We seek their blessings to make our *daᶜwa* lighter. We tell them that what we are doing are the works that were done the *anbiyā* (Ar. prophets) and we acknowledge that they are the successors of the prophet as the scholars. So as the teachers of faith, we ask them for their blessings. We do *ikrām* for them. For this reason, we take along head scarves (Bor. *imama/surre*), *kofia* (Sw. caps), *tusbahi* (Bor. prayer beads) etc as gifts.[134]

There is a deliberate move to recognise the importance of *ᶜulamā'* as the teachers of faith. The Tablīghī literature is replicate with ideas about noble treatment and respect for the *ᶜulamā'*. They are hence viewed as the custodian of knowledge especially that deals with jurisprudential and doctrinal matters. Given that the *ᶜulamā'* and the Tablīghīs all target to influence and reform religious priorities of local believers, the relation between the two are anything but cordial. This shall be discussed in details in subsequent chapters using tangible examples from the area of research. The Tablīghīs in simple terms need the *ᶜulamā'* to get permission to use the mosque and other facilities for preaching, accommodation, cooking and washing. The *ᶜulamā'* are in most cases the managers of these facilities. Their tacit support would save the members of the movement from rejection and unwarranted wars of legitimacy and authority. The *ᶜulamā'* hence are be won over as a category of religious specialists. Gifts are given in this case as a gesture of kindness, a sign of sociability and acknowledgement. The Tablīghī Jamāᶜat, in these circumstances, comes to term with the laity that characterises much of its cadre but at the same time make a clear stand that everyone must preach Islam and remind others about it.

Ziyārāt al-ᶜammat al -nās (visit to members of the general public)

This is a visit made to the ordinary people. The visit may be to their homes or in the streets. For this category, the mobilisations for the purpose of preaching tours are done directly. Abdi points out that:

> We inform them that the purpose of our presence here on earth is to worship Allah and that if we do these recruitments, we shall succeed in the life here and hereafter. We then inform that all of us must invest time and resources to reform ourselves and share the faith with others while on travel.[135]

Like all the other *ziyārāt*, the visit to the ordinary believers is legitimized with selected verses of Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions. The main target of these kinds of visits is recruitment and

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[134] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.
[135] Conversations with Abdi, in September 2009, Merti.

mobilization for formation of travel teams. Related to *ziyārāt al-ʿammat al-nās* a mobility related practice called *jaula* that shall be described shortly later.

Ziyārāt al-Tabaha (Ar. visits to professionals)

Ziyārāt al-ṭabaqāt targets those professionals in a locality whose service impact on social upbringing such as teachers, ritual purity such as laundry workers and barbers, and honesty and morality such as civil servants.[136]It is considered crucial that these professionals carry out their work as per the requirements of Islamic law thereby averting societal crisis. Abdirahim argues:

> We do the *ziyārāt al-ṭabaqāt* (professionals) to the barber shops and some *dhobi*s (Sw. laundry). If these professionals are not guided well on how to remove the *najās* (Ar. impurities), our prayers will be null and void.
> Take the case of teachers. They are the ones in charge of our children's education. If these teachers have no foresight and that they are in the work only for material gains, what kind of generations would we have? Their thoughts must be cleaned and be guided by morality. Same case with civil servants. They deal with people daily. They serve them. If they do not fear Allah, corruption will continue. If they have *imān*, they shall do work *fī sabīlillāh* not *fī sabīlil* corruption![137]

All these visits and their objectives show that the Tablīghī Jamāʿat goes beyond the concern with revitalization of sincere beliefs among individuals. It is falling short of a complete overhaul of society through its comprehensive sets of practices that consistently reach out to Tablīghīs and non-Tablīghīs. These spatial practices enhance their contacts with prominent individuals, common people in the streets, artisans and small scale traders, professionals such as government workers and with fellow Tablīghīs.

4.3.2.3 Jaula (neighbourhood outing)

Jaula[138] is closely related to *ziyārāt*. While *ziyārāt* is not time-bound practice, *jaula* is mostly conducted between the two prayers of *ʿAṣr* and *Maghrib* and specific days of the week.[139] It may be conducted at two levels. Visiting preaching *jamāʿat* carry it out to call local residents to the mosque to listen to them. Another possibility is that a *maqāmī* group makes it a weekly practice as part of the *panch amaal* of their local mosque.

The main aim of *jaula* is to convince ordinary believers to accompany the *jaula* team back to

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[136] In South Asia, Reetz (2008, 116) notes, the target of this practice are medical doctors, university students, landowners, industrialists, sportsmen and even ulama.

[137] Interview with Abdirahim, October 2009, Moyale.

[138] It means moving from place to place, an outing, a tour, an excursion, a patrol and a circuit.

[139] Some pragmatic *maqāmī*s sometimes conduct their *jaula* at night in order to reach out to *miraa* chewers in the streets. Such kind of innovative outreaches have been carried out in Isiolo. Personal conversations with Yunus Ali, Nairobi, December 2011.

the mosque where certain teachings are at time going on. *Jaula* is also called *gusht* (or *gasht*) in Urdu. However in Kenya, *jaula* is commonly used terminology in reference to these neighbourhood outings. Broadly speaking, the Tablīghīs in Kenya talk of two kinds of *jaula*:

1. *Jaula maqāmī* - outing to one's own local mosque community
2. *Jaula itiqādī* – outing to a neighbouring mosque and surrounding community

The former is also called in-*gusht* and the latter out-*gusht*.[140] In Waso sub-*ḥalqa jaula* is often conducted on Wednesdays. Often it is used to recruit members for three day *jamāʿat* as fulfilment of one of the *panch amaal*: *khurūj shahrī*. Every month a mosque-based group are expected to send out a team for three day preaching tour in their locality. In fact *jaula* is seen as the main strategy of entrancing the *panch amaal*:

> The *maqṣad* (objective) of this *jaula* is *assasu khamsa aʿmāl*. It is the foundation or the origin of the *panch amaal*. We lay the foundation for the *panch amaal* in our mosque and all the mosques in our area. This is to ensure that all our mosques become like the prophet's mosque and so that in each house there is *nur* (light).[141]

Even more specific objectives are:

> The *maqṣad* of *jaula* is *kharaju jamāʿat*. The objective of *jaula* is how can a *jamāʿat* be found and mobilised. We have to do *fikra* (deliberations) so as to make us achieve the *jamāʿat*s that are needed for *daʿwa*.[142]

Ordinarily, the *maqāmī* group leader would delegate one of their members to give a kind of motivational talk called *targhīb*.[143] The person immediately after the *ᶜAṣr* prayers would ask the local *imām* (Ar. prayer leader) if he could be allowed to say one or two things to the congregants. There are no Sunna prayers after *ᶜAṣr* and so the congregants are urged to spare few moments for the sake of Allah. *Targhīb* is meant to fire up the congregants and appeals to non-Tablīghīs as well as experienced *dāʿi*s.[144] According to informants[145] this motivational speech though very brief must cover five issues:

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[140] A. H. Elias 'Tabligh Made Easy' www.minsid.com accessed on 11.01.2009.

[141] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.

[142] Ibid.

[143] In the October 2009, I took part in the *jaula* conducted by Masjid Taqwa *maqāmī* team. Similar observations as described here ensued. I went out with the team that did the outing and returned shortly before *Maghrib* for prayers.

[144] Interview with Abdirahim, October 2009, Moyale.

[145] Interview with Abdirahim, October 2009, Moyale. Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo. Conversations with Sheikh Rashid June 2010, Helu, Moyale)

1. The talk must be about the primacy and significance of the word of Allah.
2. *Juhūd anbiyā'* – it must mention the deeds of the prophets in carrying out *daʿwa* among the people they were sent to.
3. *khātam al-anbiyā'* – it must state the finality of the prophethood through Muhammad and how he conducted *daʿwa* among his *umma* and the challenges he faced in it.
4. *Juhud ṣaḥāba* – it must also mention the efforts of companions of the Prophet in respect to *daʿwa*, their trials and tribulations that saw the faith reach the congregants.
5. *Juhūd ummat al-rasūl* – it must state the urgency and immediacy of the efforts of the Muslim *umma* to carry out *daʿwa* as the successors of the companions of the Prophet.

Then the speaker in normal circumstances announces that there shall be a short *jaula* tour in the area around the mosque and that people should volunteer time to accompany the *jaula* team. A few people would ordinarily turn up. The remaining congregants would be urged to cluster around a speaker who carries out some form of teaching called *kalām julūs* (Ar. 'sitting talk') where *imān*, sincere faith is the main topic of discussion. In a number of instances it has been observed that a section of the congregants would neither participate in *kalām julūs* nor *jaula* despite the customised appeal to the common goal of *daʿwa*. Often between eight to nine persons may volunteer to accompany the team while up to 10 - 15 persons may opt to stay on for *kalām julūs*. The *amīr* of the *kalām julūs* session would delegate two more specialised duties: one is a person to engage in *dhikr* and the other an usher or receptionist (*istiqbāl*) to receive and guide the 'catch' of *jaula* to the mosque. Hussein comments on the *dhikr* person in this way:

> While there is *kalām julūs* going on in the mosque, the *amīr instructs* one person to sit at the corner of the mosque to conduct *dhikr*. This person is said to be doing *adhkār* (sing. *dhikr*). He seeks blessings and mercy on the *jamāʿat* and the community.
> Another person is stationed outside the mosque on the veranda with bottles of water for ablution for the gathered crowd that will come with the *jaula* team. He will usher in the arrivals in his capacity as the *istiqbāl*. He will provide the arrivals with water, with ritually clean clothes such as *kikoi*s and *kanzu*s in case it is needed, and any other requirements for prayers needed. Hospitality is prime concern here.[146]

Four main activities must be well coordinated and synchronized: *jaula*, *kalām julūs*, *istiqbāl*, and *dhikr*. On this temporal management and sequence, Abdirizak, adds that:

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[146] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.

> The first one is *targhīb*. Then *kalām julūs* . *Jaula* and *kalām julūs* happens simultaneously. There are two others persons engaged in related religious duties. One is called *ṣahib al-dhikr* who does supplications (*dua*) and *dhikr* at the corner of the mosque and *istiqbāl* who receives the 'catch' and ensure that those who do not have clean clothes get one temporarily, the water for ablution is ready and then welcome them into the mosque. All the four are all simultaneous. None ends before the other. All shall end when the *jaula* team comes back. The *jaula* is also to be lengthened so that it just comes back just shortly before the *ṣalah* (prayers). Then everyone takes *Wuḍū'* (Ar. ablution) and joins the Jamāʿat for the *Maghrib* prayers. [147]

The *jaula* team usually meets outside the mosque before departure for *dua* and route planning. The procedure of the *jaula* as prescribed by the movement teaching is often outlined to the volunteers. Two persons among them take responsibilities of *mutakallim* (Ar. speaker) and *dalīl* (Ar. guide). In most cases, these two are appointed in an earlier consultative meeting of the mosque-based *maqāmī* group. In case of *jaula* by a visiting *jamāʿat*, *mutakallim* is often from the visiting *jamāʿat* while the *dalīl* is normally a sources from among the local Tablīghīs.

Tartīb (Ar. an arrangement or procedure) of the *jaula* includes how to walk, what routes to take, what to say when you meet people, who should speak first, what spiritual litanies to recite while going and while coming back, how to behave while on the *jaula* and what to do upon coming back. Some of the ground rules of the spatial practice are: keeping the eyes on the ground, allowing only *mutakallim* to speak on behalf of the team, getting out of the mosque with the right foot, making *dua* before departure, keeping the tongue engaged in *dhikr*, walking in sets of twos and leaving the mosque compound using a path that goes in the right direction and coming back using a path is in the left direction. The *dhikr* that each individual is expected to recite silently while doing the *jaula* includes *subhanallah, walhamdulillah ilallah allahu akbar* (Ar. Glory be to God and Praise to God, and there is none worthy of worship but God, and God is the Greatest) and the ones of return leg is *astagfirullah* (I ask God for forgiveness) for forgiveness.

The actual formulae used to appeal to the local residents to accompany the *jaula* team back to the mosque are also standardised in almost every part of the world as asserted by one informant. This standardisation of approach leads to near universal consistency in practice. First the *dalīl* introduces the *jaula* team and set the pace for the *mutakallim* to appeal to the audience. One informant notes:

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[147] Group discussions with Tablīghīs (Abdirizak, Omar and Molu) in early July, 2010.

> *Dalīl* in most cases is a local guy... For *dalīl*, there are some wordings that they must say all over the world. A *dalīl* who is in Pakistan, a *dalīl* who is in Tokyo and a *dalīl* here in Moyale must use the same formula. The statement or the wording are: 'we are a *jamāʿat* based at the *masjid*, we came here for the sake of Allah… just because of *kalimatu la ilaha illalah* and that Allah has given us the responsibility of taking this message. Now we are alive and soon we shall pass away and which we must all prepare for. As you see we never came with anything for you and we do not expect anything from you either except your audience and we only want you to assist us in this work. Therefore would you mind if we go to the mosque.' That is the internationally used approach.[148]

By the time the *jaula* team returned with a number of local residents, it is often *Maghrib* early evening prayer time. After the prayers, a Tablīghī would often arise and inform people not to rush home because there would *bayān maghrib*. This brief teaching often results in appeals to constitute a three days to four months travel teams. We shall discuss how *bayān* is conducted and mobilisation for formation of a travel *jamāʿat* done (*tashkīl*) in the subsequent section of this chapter. The *jaula* to some extent also serves to establish spatial presence of the local Tablīghīs as valid and legitimate religious group with rights to gather believers and reform their religious practices a task that they complement and compete with ʿ*ulamā*' to accomplish.

Jaula functions in the same breath as a form of advertisement to the locals about the presence of visiting *jamāʿat*s or activities of the mosque-based groups. The movement shuns conventional means of publicity such as posters, radio and television announcement, flyers, internet communications such as web-based advertisement and email communications. The publicity, Tablīghīs argue, has to be kept simple, practical, personal and oral as done in the time of the Prophet and *ṣahabas*. Abdirizak opines that:

> Even publicity is not allowed. We are told not to do *daʿwa* through emails and the rest. Coordination is through practical efforts. If it means a person leave Pakistan to do efforts here, so be it. Islam is a movement. The prophet did not sit down and wait for people to come to him. He did *jaula*. He went out.[149]

Below is a spatial reconstruction of a *jaula* outing around a mosque neighbourhood within urban centres of northern Kenya.

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[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
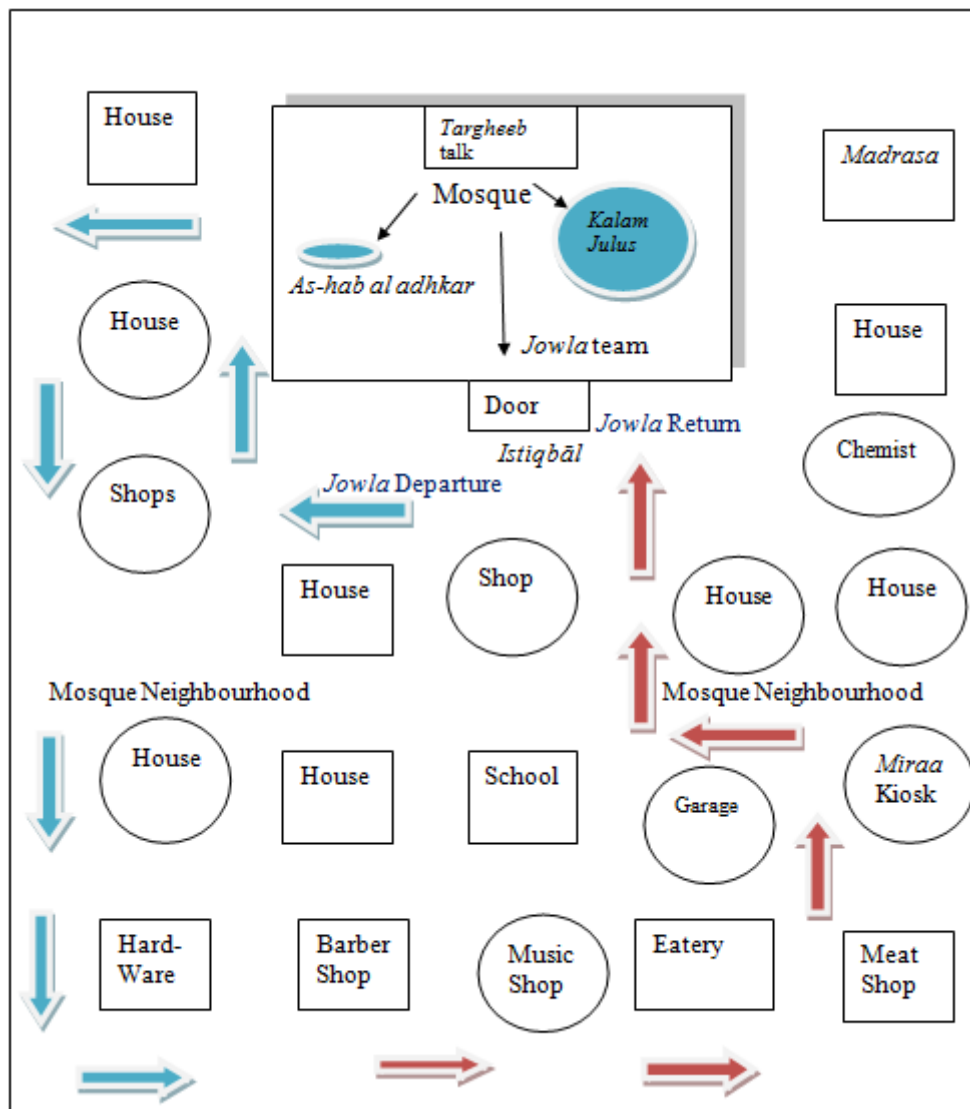
Figure 4 A *jaula maqāmī* around a mosque's neighbourhood

The individuals who participate in the *jaula* are informed that the benefits of *jaula* are achieved in the hereafter. The rewards (Ar. *thawāb*) are said to be immense. This makes the urge to accompany the team a rewarding experience. Hussein notes that:

> The *fā'ida* of *jaula* is narrated to us by the Prophet in this way: he who goes out one morning or one evening for the sake of Allah, his rewards worth more than all that is in the world and all that is in it. And the feet that travel for the sake of Allah and dust touch them, the fire of *jahannam* (Ar. a type of hell) shall be forbidden to it.[150]

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[150] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.

4.3.3 Congregational Practices

a῾māl al-ijtimā῾ as mentioned earlier are diverse. This section shall discuss the most prominent of the Tablīghī congregational practices: *ijtimā῾* and *jor* (gatherings) and *shūra* (consultative meetings). Congregational practices as used here only refer to those Tablīghī activities that involves gathering of Muslims for purpose of the advancement of movement. It does not analyze other conventional Islamic congregational practices such as *jamaa* daily prayers, Friday prayers, Eid festivities, *tarāwīḥ* during the month of Ramaḍān and so on.

4.3.3.1 Ijtimā῾ and Jor[151]

The apex of Tablīghī gathering in Kenya is the annual Nairobi *ijtimā῾*. It used to be held in the month of August before but the last four years have seen a shift to early May. The earlier and the current scheduled days coincide with the school holiday allowing teachers and students a chance to participate in the three day event. The Nairobi *ijtimā῾* attracts up to 15,000 people. Participants hail from all the sub-*ḥalqa*s of the three main *ḥalqa*s in Kenya, a number from Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia (via Moyale), Rwanda, Burundi and parts of Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. In essence, the annual Nairobi gathering is the biggest Tablīghī calendar event in Eastern Africa.

*Ijtimā῾*s bring together different classes of people including the senior Tablīghīs, the members of the Kenya *Shūra*, various *amīr*s from different *ḥalqa*s and sub-*ḥalqa*s, novices, potential recruits, enthusiastic non-Tablīghīs out to get spiritual nourishment from the gathering, invited elders of the movement from IPB, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi and at times ῾ *ᶜulamā'* not directly associated with the movement. In Kenya, the annual *ijtimā῾* is purely men affair. For three days, the mammoth crowd gather, network informally, eat and sleep at Baitul Maal Markaz.

The programme of the *ijtimā῾* and *jor* are similar with that of a travel team. Such teaching modules as *bayān*, *ta῾līm*, consultative meetings such as *shūra*, delegation of duties e.g. *khidma*, *ḥirāsa* are all carried out. Each sub-*ḥalqa* in Nairobi *ḥalqa* contributes the personnel needed for the success of the *ijtimā῾*. There are five duties to which each *ḥalqa* contributes volunteers, namely: *khidma* (cooking and other services); *tarjama* (translation); *ḥirāsa* (security); *istiqbāl* (reception) and *tashkīl* team (mobilises/recruiters).

Prior to the *ijtimā῾*, all the logistical requirements are put in place. The Kenya *Shūra* would invite representatives from most of the sub-*ḥalqa*s in the three *ḥalqa*s to a national consultative forum. Tanzania and Uganda national branches often send representatives to this

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[151] *Ijtimā῾ is* also *kulm, waldena* in Borana, a large gathering. *Jor* is a mini *ijtimā῾*.

high-levelled consultative forum usually called *majma jor*. Unlike the general *ijtimāʿ* called *awami ijtimāʿ* (public gathering), *majma jor* is classified as *khususi ijtimāʿ* (Ar. specialized gathering). The details about approximate attendants and confirmation of the attendance of the *akābir* (*Ur.* invited *Tablīghī* elders) for the *awami ijtimāʿ* are also discussed.

As mentioned earlier modern means of publicity is shunned for oral advertisement of an upcoming event. Members of local mosque-based *maqāmī* group take the responsibility of informing the mosque attendants of events like a *jor* or an *ijtimāʿ*. They note down the names of those who wish to attend the congregation. Later volunteers would hire a means of transport and head to the venue of the *ijtimāʿ* under the *amīr*ship of a local senior Tablīghī. They remain under the command of their local *amīr* during the entire period. Some Tablīghīs on preaching tours would make it a priority to attend the gathering as part of their en-route stops. A common strategy to have widest impact on disseminating information about an upcoming *ijtimāʿ* in Nairobi or any other part of the country is formation of special mobile publicity teams. Hussein notes:

> Before any *ijtimāʿ*, there is a practice called *taasil* where a special *jamāʿat* (*jamāʿat taasil)* or a number of people could be sent around to convey the details about an upcoming congregation that is in preparation. They do what is called *juhd qalba juhd* (preparations).
> In Kenya before the *ijtimāʿ*, a *kundi* is sent from every *ḥalqa* and sub-*ḥalqa* to do *juhd qabla juhd* (Ar. preparatory programme) and to do *iᶜlān* (Ar. announcement). *Jamāʿat taasil* does the broadcasting of the information about the upcoming event.[152]

The main objective of an *ijtimāʿ* according to the Tablīghīs is mobilisation of as many travel teams as possible to be sent to different areas and countries. At the end of an *ijtimāʿ* hundreds of *jamāʿat*s are often obtained including several four months teams for regional and foreign tours, 40 days *kundi*s, hundreds of 10 and three days *kundi*s. During the *ijtimāʿ*, each language group forms a *ḥalqa* of their own i.e. Borana speaking Jamāʿat, Somali speaking Jamāʿat, Swahili speaking Jamāʿat, Urdu speaking Jamāʿat and so on. The volunteers are mainly sent back to their area of origin or neighbouring regions to ensure language barrier is not an impediment for *daʿwa* tour.

Consultative meetings of the senior Tablīghīs decide where the team would be sent. The route that a team takes is identified to ensure that each *kundi* strengthens the already existing Tablīghī networks and practices in a targeted area. For instance if 90 Somalis volunteer for a forty days *jamāʿat*, the group may be split into six different *kundi*s of fifteen persons. The

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[152] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.

shūra would ensure that of the fifteen persons, at least four to five are regulars. It is from among the regulars that the meeting shall choose the *amīr*. Hussein posits that:

> For the *amīr* certain traits are needed. We ask, is the person an experienced *dāʿi* with many years of travel experiences? Has he led a travel team before? Can he take care of the *kundi* well if it is placed under his care? Does he have patience, confidence and creativity to carry out *taʿlīm*?[153]

While all these negotiation and deliberations are going on in the consultative meetings of the senior Tablīghīs, many volunteers are vague unaware of the regions that they would be sent to or if they shall travel with their colleagues whom they are attending the *ijtimāʿ* with. It is indeed a moment of considerable excitement for appointed *amīr*s and the members anticipating the amount of challenges and responsibilities ahead in the anticipated tours. The regulars are put in each *kundi* to guide the new members on proper practices. Hussein put the roles of these experienced persons in this way:

> In each *kundi* there should be 'wazee' or experienced persons. We also require a person with experience of *istiqbāl* and *khidma*. *Khidma* experience is especially important. There should be a person who is creative, patient and able to make quick decisions about urgent matters as required. We need people with good public speaking skills who can move the congregation to volunteer time. So to make a *kundi* we ensure that we put in it various individuals with varied abilities and novices.[154]

A *jor* is a mini *ijtimāʿ*. It is usually held at *ḥalqa* and sub-*ḥalqa* levels. The organisers invite the 'elders' from Nairobi, Tablīghīs from each of the mosque in the sub-*ḥalqa* and visiting *jamāʿat*s currently going their rounds of tour in the region. Just like the *ijtimāʿ*, the movement uses the occasion to mobilise travel teams to be sent on preaching tours. A *jor* lasts three to four days beginning normally on Thursday afternoon until Sunday morning.

The Bishwa *ijtimāʿ* in Bangladesh attended by over two million attendants remain one of the most cherished gatherings to attend among the Kenyan Tablīghīs.[155] The individuals wishing to travel to the Bishwa *ijtimāʿ*, the Indian subcontinent and other foreign countries coordinate their travel plans through the national headquarters. They must well known to the national office as committed and experienced Tablīghīs.

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[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Bishwa *ijtimāʿ* held in Bangladesh attracts up to two million Muslims. In 2011, due to enormous size of the crowd that thronging the venue, the organizers divided the event into two phases. Tablīghīs from all over the world aspire to attend this and other large international gatherings in South Asia.
http://www.allvoices.com/contributed-news/7901785-biswa-ijtema-begins-on-january-222011-in-two-phase

At least twice a year, the *qudamā' jor*s (also called *majma jor* or *purana saathi jor*) are held in Nairobi. These senior Tablīghīs would take stock of the movement successes and failure and deliberate measures to keep the growth figures up.

4.3.3.2 *Shūra (Ar. Council)*

Shūra 'council' refers both to the elite council that oversees the Tabligh Jamāʿat's central activities and local councils that direct the organisation's local branches (Nelson; 2010, 65). *Shūra* is conducted at family level, by the *maqāmī* teams in a local mosque, by the *qarya* levels, at the sub-*ḥalqa*, at *ḥalqa* level, at national level and at international level. A *kundi* on move also conducts daily *shūra* to make decisions and delegate duties. At the *ijtimā*ʿs and *jor*s, *shūra* helps in decision making concerning review of past Tablīghī activities, planning of routes of travel for lay preachers and appointment of group leaders among other functions.

The consultative meetings at home and at the level of mosque-based *jamāʿat*s are done on daily basis. The time for family *shūra* is fixed by the stakeholders i.e. the husband, the wife and the kids. The subject of discussion is also decided by the *shūra* members at home. This is an innovative practice in largely patriarchal pastoralist communities as the Borana. *Mashwera f'il-bayt* (Ur.) facilitates consensus between the family members on a number of issues including upcoming preaching tours have direct impact on their wellbeing. Hussein asserts that

> *Mashwera f'il-bayt* discusses also the *ahwāl* (Ar. conditions) of anticipated *khurūj*.
> You have to inform your home that you intend to go for *khurūj* at specific time. This is
> kind of travels must be discussed, agreed upon and consensus obtained.[156]

Shūra duration is encouraged to be brief and precise. The agenda of the daily *maqāmī shūra* is endless and may include pertinent issues such as implementation of *panch amaal* of which *shūra* is one of them, welcoming of foreign and regional *jamāʿat*s from outside, 'disciplinary' actions against the Tablīghīs contravening the rules of engagement while on travel, solution to domestic challenges facing a family of fellow Tablīghī on preaching tour, personal issues of the *maqāmī* members such as impending marriage, planning and mobilization of *kundi*s for travel, election or appointment of *amīr*s and deliberations about an upcoming *jor*, *ijtimāʿ*, national *qudamā' shūra*, local monthly *shūra* and so on.[157] At all levels *shūra* is often attended by committed regulars and may not be open to the public at all times. A *qarya* unit holds a collective *shūra* for a number of mosques on weekly basis. Abdirahim of Moyale adds

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[156] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.
[157] Ibid.

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that 'there is a daily *shūra* of your *masjid* which you must attend if you are a member of the movement. Then there is a weekly *shūra* of the area mosques in one mosque. Each mosque sends a representative. It is mostly on Tuesdays.'[158] The management and arrangement of *shūra* is almost the same between the two field sites. Hussein confirms that in Merti:

> On Tuesdays, there is *shūrat usbūᶜ* (weekly *shūra*). The activities of the week is planned. *Ahwāl* of the week is taken. All the mosques in the *qarya* (area) are invited, their representatives give their *ahwāl* of the week about *daʿwa* efforts in the mosque i.e. how many four months, how many 40 days, how many 10 days, how many three days, how many foreign *jamāʿats* to IPB; how many *jamāʿats* to neighbouring mosques, etc[159]

Wednesdays are set aside for *jaula*. Abdirizak observes that on Thursday mornings there is *fikr al-dīn* (discussions on matters of faith) where the *dāʿi*s meet at one mosque and discuss *daʿwa*. *Fikr al-dīn* is a meeting done to also fulfil one of the *panch amaal* earlier mentioned. It is deliberation on how to revive and intensify *daʿwa* among the residents. Those mobilized for *khurūj* through the *jaula* on Wednesdays would be required to assembly at one central mosque or *markaz* on Thursday. Hussein outlines that:

> On Thursdays, all the *jamāʿat*s for three, 10, 40 days and four months gathered by different mosques meet at the *markaz*. Their route of *khurūj* is planned. There are given *jemedar* (Ur. commander or *amīr)*. They receive *hidāyat* and leave for their specified days on scheduled route.[160]

Each sub-*ḥalqa* holds monthly *shūra*. This helps the different *maqāmī* groups compare notes on methods of countering slow growth. The different *dāʿis* in the sub-*ḥalqa* would identify areas that need urgent *daʿwa* attention as well as coordinate the Tablīghī activities for greater efficiency. The venue of the sub-*ḥalqa shūra* is intentionally set on rotational basis to enhance participation and fairness among all the different areas. Each *ḥalqa* council does consultation with senior representatives from each of the sub-*ḥalqa*.

Commenting on the significance of *shūra* in the decision making and growth of the movement, an *amīr* interviewed legitimated these multiple levels of councils as a prophetic tradition. He said '*shuura echan, mura Rabbi gudda, sunna rasula, siiffa warr mumina!*'[161] Which simply means that *shūra* is a blessed decision of Allah, a Prophetic tradition and a mark of piety among the righteous. He added that as a *sunnah, shūra* is a procedural practice that was carried out by Prophet Muhammad and that *shūra* is also defining trait of other prophets (*anbiyā*). He authenticated the need for *shūra* on the basis that Allah has instructed

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[158] Ibid.
[159] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Conversations with A. Sora, June 2010, Sololo.

believers to consult among each other. In simple terms, the Tablīghīs ground such multitude of consultation that brings coherence in decisions made as authentic Islamic tradition. Consultations done at all these levels of Tablīghī administration facilitate flow of ideas, networking of senior workers as a leadership class within the movement, evaluation of day to day running of practical *daʿwa* on the ground and link each unit and individual preachers in binding relationship with fellow Tablīghīs. From morning to evening, a Tablīghī is engaged in one or the other of movement's recommended activities whether the activity in question is individualised chores such as *adhkār*, or congregational such as mosque-based and family *shūra*. The week is also punctuated with similar communal commitments from weekly *shūra, fikr al-dīn, jaula, khurūj* mobilisation among others. The fact that it is voluntary and self organised makes the whole endeavour tasking for a regular Tablīghī.

Shūra has the right *tartīb*, the right *maqṣad* and the right benefits. The *maqṣad* of a *shūra* is ambitious. Omar reveals it in this manner 'the *maqṣad* of the *shūra* is to deliberate on how the true faith can be found within the life of a person, of his home, of his neighbourhood, of his town and of the world in general.'[162] Each sitting of a *shūra* is headed by an *amīr*. The *amīr* as *faiṣala* or decider may be selected on basis favoured by the council members, be it weekly, monthly or daily. Each individual is ideally given a chance to give his opinion (*ra'y*). *Ra'y* is perceived as *amana* (Ar. trust) and hence must be shared with others. Respect for opinions of others and sincerity in giving one's own is part of the etiquettes of the *shūra*. The *amīr* sums up all the points raised and make decision. He is not bound to follow the suggested ideas and may come up with alternative decision based on his own understanding but purportedly guided by wisdom, foresight and the common good. To counter waves of dissatisfaction and mistrust following unfavourable ruling from the *amīr,* Hussein warns that:

> You should not celebrate if your *raʿy* is taken. It should elicit strong prayers for forgiveness that Allah shall make good and if your *raʿy* is not taken say 'alhamdulilah' (thank you oh Lord) for you do not know why it was not taken. You should not make a case out of it.[163]

Tablīghīs believe the benefit of *shūra* is that it brings unity of the hearts of the believers and the community (*maḥabbat al-jamāʿ*). *Shūra* if it becomes part of societal decision making mechanism, the Tablīghīs believe that, it withholds calamities from descending on the people of an area. [164]

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[162] Group discussions with Tablīghīs (Abdirizak, Omar and Molu) in early July, 2010.
[163] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo
[164] Ibid.

4.3.4 Tablīghī Teaching Modules

It should be noted that each of the Tablīghī practices discussed here are highly interlinked with each other and should not be seen as distinct and independent. For instance *shūra* organises preaching teams which in turn organise other teams as they travel. The preaching team does *shūra* to delegate duties and make other decisions. At each level certain forms of teaching modules are employed. Such flow and overlap of practices and strategies make it increasingly hard to give a good descriptive ethnographic account unless handled under analytical categories as done here. In this section, the teaching modules to be discussed are *taʿlīm*, *bayān*, *ḥidāyat* and *tashkīl*. The modules are intricately fused and at times one cannot discern when one starts and the other ends. Sardar in his book *Desperately Seeking Paradise: Journeys of a Sceptical Muslim* narrates at the beginning of the text his encounter with the lay preachers of movement. On *taʿlim*, he hilariously observes that:

> I was assigned to join the *taʿlīm*, an educational session by another name. For all their simple faith Tablīghī s seemed to have inordinate talent for developing a whole host of technical terms to distinguish between phases of their repetitive procedures.[165]

4.3.4.1 Taʿlīm (Instructional/Educational Session)

Taʿlim is one of the main teaching modules employed by local Tablīghīs in Kenya to educate people about Islam. One can basically classify this educational session into two: *Taʿlim f'il-masjid* and *taʿlīm f'il-bayt*. The former is organised and coordinated by the local Tablīghīs through the *maqāmī* group and the latter is carried out by the Tablīghīs at home hence linking the mosque and home. During the congregational gatherings of *jor*s and *ijtimāʿ*s, the morning sessions between 9 am-12 pm are set aside for a *taʿlīm* session. Every travelling *jamāʿat* conducts *taʿlim* for their team members in the morning session.

The *taʿlīm* sessions heavily utilize the *Faza'il-e-Aʿamaal* and *Muntakhab Aḥadīth* and at times *Riyāḍ-al-ṣāliḥīn*. Hussein lists the *maqṣad* of *taʿlīm* as follows: 'it is concerned with how the word of Allah and the message of the prophet be found within us, it instils the fear of Allah within our hearts and inculcate genuine desire for *janna* as our lifetime goal. It is meant also to make us avoid sinful deed.'[166]

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[165] Ziauddin Sardar, *Desperately Seeking Paradise: A Journey of a Sceptical Muslim*, (London, Granta Book, 2004), p. 14.
[166] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.

Taʿlīm fʾil-masjid

Each mosque-based group fixes a time within the week when this educational session would be carried out. The speaker normally asks the *imām* after prayers for permission to talk to the congregation and give a small announcement referred to as *iʿlān* so that people would stay behind for the *taʿlīm* or *bayān*. One informant observes that:

> If you have noticed well before any *bayān* or *taʿlīm*, there is something called *iʿlān*. *Iʿlān* is the saying that 'for the sake of the life today here and in the hereafter, we should uphold the obligations bestowed upon us by Allah and follow the *Sunnah* of the Prophet'. Then people realised that we the Tablīghīs are not calling people to themselves but to a power bigger than them to Allah.[167]

The focus of *taʿlīm* is again on *fazaʾil* rather than *masāʾil*. The *tartīb* and *adab* (etiquettes) of *taʿlīm* are numerous. Individuals are encouraged to sit as close as possible to the speaker who is seated among them, have *wuḍūʾ*, be attentive to the teachings and should leave the session only with permission of the speaker who is also the *amīr* . Often regular Tablīghīs would turn up for these sessions with small bottles of perfume that passed around to be applied by the attendants.[168] *Taʿlim* accordingly is listened to with four aims:

1. *Tādīm* - to praise, to revere, to exalt the Almighty. When you hear *'wa qala lahu ta'ala'* you say *'jalla jallalu'* or *allahu akbar*. This is *gudisa* (Bor. exaltation). When you hear the name of the prophet, you say *'allahu salli ala…'* *'alleyhi ṣalātu wa salam'*. When we hear the name of the *ashabas 'radhiallahu anhu'* for male, *'radhiallahu anha'* for female.
2. *Tasdīq*- to believe sincerely that the message you are listening to is the words of Allah and the teachings of the prophet.
3. *Taṭbīq* - to put all these messages into action, into to practice.
4. *Tablīgh*- to convey the message to others. *Baligh* to take the message to the rest of the humanity.[169]

These aims apply to all forms of *taʿlīm*. The rhythmical nature of the first syllable of each aim aids in memorisation.[170] In the *taʿlīm* of a travelling Jamāʿat, after reading of few *ḥadīth* s from *Fazaʾil-e-Aʾamaal* and commentaries and reciting *siffa sittah* and the group splits into smaller units of two persons and memorise short chapters of the Qurʾān from *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* to *Sūrat al-Fil.* Emphasis is placed on correct pronunciations and flow. This session, more than any other, builds the religious capital of a novice especially if he did not attend *madrasa*

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[167] Group discussions with Tablīghīs (Abdirizak, Omar and Molu) in early July, 2010.

[168] Angels are said to love nice smell. In most session I attended, I witnessed the passing around of small bottles. The audience will rub slightly on to back of their hands. Most *kundis* make a point of buying a few bottles from sprawling informal markets that sprout next to the venues of Tablīghī gathering.

[169] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.

[170] Reetz (2008, 110) notes that rhyming of first letter a common feature in the tenets of the movement aid in memorisation, guide uniformity and coherence of it practices.

in his childhood. Other topics for discussions are often drawn from the book include *Fazā'il Qurʾān*; *Fazā'il Dhikr*; and *Fazā'il Ṣalāt*.

Ta'līm f'il-bayt

This educational session is focused on gradual transformation of homestead. The target is to refine and revive the adherence to Islamic obligations and duties required of the family members. *Ta'līm f'il-bayt* is topically concerned with themes of proper Islamic upbringing of children (Ar. *tartīb al-awlād*) and home management including etiquettes of sleeping and eating (Ar. *adab al-naum* and *adab al-ṭaᶜām*). Secondly it is concerned with how a woman can fulfil her duties to her husband and thirdly how she can fulfil responsibilities to her neighbour and fourthly how she can fulfil the duty of five daily prayers and reminder of other obligatory deeds (Ar. *mudhākara al- aʹmāl*) in her home and fifthly how she can preserve and cover herself (decency) at home and away through *hijāb* (Ar. *satar*).[171] The Tablīghīs have increasingly focussed on the prime significance of the nuclear family as not only a unit in need of reform but also decision making. It ignores the extended familial relations when it comes to teaching and deciding on matters of faith. Molu affirms that:

> At house level there is *ta'līm fi bayt,* you take what you were taught in the mosque to house. The father is already transformed and the women picks up and then the kids. It is mostly targeted to the nuclear family. Your father and mother can be inside but mostly it is the nuclear family. Immediate family members matter.[172]

The procedure of the *ta'līm* is that the family gathers for a quarter of an hour or so on daily basis. After giving thanks to Allah, there is reading of two to three *ḥadīth* s from a Tablīghī text that touches on Qurʾān, *dhikr*, *ṣalāt*, or modesty and then the spiritual benefits of such gathering is mentioned.[173] This reinforces the practice and motivates the family members to attend. Abdirahim comments that:

> You mention the rewards of such a gathering. This will motivate the household members to keep attending. They are driven by the statements that if you attend you shall gain this or that from Allah. You also add that the deeds that Allah loves most are deeds that routinely carried out. When you add this they house members would want it more and more. It becomes a regular thing.[174]

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[171] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.

[172] Group discussions with Tablīghīs (Abdirizak, Omar and Molu) in early July, 2010.

[173] *Bayān* at Merti Jamia Mosque, September 2009. The speaker informs the audience that 'the *fadhila* of *ta'līm* is much more. The Prophet said that if his people gather in a mosque for sole purpose of the faith, the *sakina* (tranquillity) and blessings shall descend on them. The angels will descend to listen to the teachings. There will be *maghfira* (forgiveness) or one's sins.'

[174] Group discussions with Tablīghīs (Abdirizak, Omar and Molu) in early July, 2010.

Tablīghīs argue that they conduct *taʿlīm f'il-bayt* through consensus and fairness. Tablīghīs caution that the session's leadership must be rotational with husband, wife and the children given chances to chair the session and read the text. This inculcates gives sense of recognition and responsibility to each member of the family. It also delegates some of the authority that has always been the preserve of the man as the father and husband. While bonding the family closer, the religious practices of the family members are transformed.

One can discern that *taʿlīm* sessions require certain levels of literacy. Reading and comprehending from English, Swahili or Arabic versions of *Fazā'il Aʿmāl* and other Tablīghī texts presupposes considerable proficiency of one of these languages. These texts are readily available and used in most of these teaching sessions. This leads us to look at the nature of the membership of the movement with respect to their educational background, proficiency in use of English or other languages that the texts are written in and the educational background of their spouses and children. For instance in Moyale town the movement appeals to largely secular and to some extent *madrasa* educated Muslims. The same case applies to Merti. Among members are teachers of primary and secondary schools, government employees and self-employed youth. Their marriage partners often have at least basic primary education.

4.3.4.2 Bayān (Religious Talk)

Bayān refers to brief religious talks that are given to mosque attendants immediately after obligatory prayers for inspirational purpose. *Bayān* mostly ends with the mobilisation and formation (*tashkīl*) of travel teams. There are two favourite times for *bayān*s: *Bayān fajrī* (after the early morning prayers) and *Bayān Maghribī* (after the evening prayers). A *maqāmī* would gather people through the *jaula* on Wednesdays after 'Asr prayers and at the end of *Maghrīb* prayers, they offer a *bayān* talk. Names of volunteers are noted down. they are then informed to turn up for travel the next day. Often the volunteers meet a local mosque or a central *markaz* awaiting departure for missionary tours.

The main emphasis on most *bayān*s is the need for each and every Muslim to volunteer time to remind others of the obligations of the religion as done by the Prophet and his companions. *Bayān* also features as one of the outreach strategies by a travelling *jamāʿat* to the mosque attendants of the area that they visit. Such a team also does *tashkīl* among the attendants. *Tashkīl* at times involves one on one chat with the audience to volunteer time or make future intention for the same. Normally *tashkīl* strategies begin to ask volunteers to give the maximum possible time for travel of four months. A few senior regulars would set the pace by raising their hands. Then the audience is asked to allocate just 40 days of their time for the sake of Allah. More regulars who have intentions of the travel raise their hands and a few

non-Tablīghīs may offer to join. The *tashkīl* team writes down the names of the volunteers for each travel module in a special form, see a sample filled forty days travel module with names of volunteers below. The audience would be told to do 'soul searching' and just sacrifice a mere 10 days travel experience to reform their practice and remind others of the faith. Ordinarily many of non-Tablīghīs and a number of Tablīghīs with busy work schedules would opt for this travel module. By then those who have volunteered for four months, 40 and 10 days have been moved to sit aside. Then final *tashkīl* appeal is to the large crowd of non-committed attendants to at least try a life changing three days *khurūj* just in the neighbouring villages. The appeal is also fused with great creativity and convincing appeals to the common good of *umma*. Depending on the oratory skill of the main speaker, it is not uncommon to get more than half of such reluctant audience to commit to some forms of travel modules.

Tashkīl Form – 40 days *Jamāʿat*				
S/NO	NAME	TOWN/MOSQUE (*maqāmī*)	TIME SPENT (before)	REMARKS
1.	Mohamed Farah Jarso	Helu	40 days	Regular
2.	Jattani Ibrahim Boru	Butiye	10 days	Good
3.	Abdrahman Abdirahim Nur	Helu	4 months	Regular
4.	Abdimajid Musa Harun	Somar	3 days	New
5.	Adan Mahmud Mohamed	Helu	40 days	Active
6.	………..	…	…	…

Table 4 A sample of duly filled *tashkīl* form.

4.3.5 Other Tablīghī commitments: *Aʿmāl al-ifradi* (Ar. Individualised Practices)
This refers to individualised practices required of a committed *dāʿi*. A regular member of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, ordinarily, has full daily and weekly schedules of activities. Some activities are individual while others are communal. Hussein[175] based on his own experience in the movement observes that:

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[175] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.

The life of a *dāʿi* is the life of ʿ*ibadāt*. Since morning until the time of sleep, he must punctuate the day with certain practices. Even at night it is glorified to wake up for *ṣalat al-Layl*. In the morning he does *dhikr*, then he may dedicate 2 ½ hours daily to reciting the Qurʾān or other *daʿwa* efforts, he may converse or greet at least 25 persons per day with *assalam aleykum*, do *ziyarāt* etc.

As these individuals give more and more time to the Tablīghī activities, his knowledge and perfection of Qurʾān, *dhikr*, *fardh* and *sunna* prayers increases and he becomes a regular feature at mosque meetings and even be associated with the ʿ*ulamā'* of mainstream traditions. *Dhikr*, the remembrance of God is one the most recommended *aʿmāl al-ifradi*s. As an *aʿmāl al-ifradi, dhikr* according to the Tablīghīs is legitimised by verses of the Qurʾān in which Allah commands the faithfuls to remember him in the morning and in the evening. Therefore Tablīghīs divide *adhkār* into two: *adhkār al-masa'* (Ar. evening *dhikr*) and *adhkār al-sabāḥ* (Ar. morning dhikr). [176]

4.4 *Masturat Jamāʿat*: Women on the Move

So far, with the exception of *taʿlīm f'il-bayt*, there has been little focus on the programmes targeting women. The questions worth asking is, can women travel for preaching tours? If yes, how is their tour organised? How long are they allowed to travel? What are the nature and the composition of their *jamāʿat*? Who preaches? Who listens? Who among the womenfolk in the Muslim community are allowed to go for such tours and who shall not? Are there codes of dressing? First and foremost, it is imperative to state that *masturat jamāʿat* is a travel preaching arrangement designed for women. Before women would go on the *masturat jamāʿat*, the educational sessions of *taʿlīm f'il-bayt* must be well established so that the womenfolk are well accustomed to such the fundamental teachings as six virtues, *uṣūl* ʿ*ishirīn*, rules of decency and *tartīb* of *shūra* among others. *Taʿlīm f'il-bayt*, notes one informant, is crucial because:

> *Taʿlīm f'il-bayt* is all about the word of Allah and his messenger and how it can be found in the lives of all people at home, so that the desire of *janna* (Heaven) and the fear of *nār* (Hellfire) is found in the lives of women at home. It is after that women and men plan to go for three days *masturat*.[177]

In an ideal case, it is the women of the senior Tablīghīs that are targeted for this unique travel experience. Women do not travel for *daʿwa* tours alone and must be accompanied by their husbands. The minimum number of days allowed for the practice of the *masturat jamāʿat* is three days and it is after many successful *jamāʿat*s of this type that a *ḥalqa* or sub-*ḥalqa* is

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[176] The *dhikr* to be done daily in the morning and evening are subhanallah *wal hamdulillah walaila illalah alllahu akbar* 300 times and *wala haula wala quwatan ila billah* 300 times.
[177] Conversation with Guyo Hassan, September 2009, Merti.

allowed to carry out 15 days or 30 days travel *jamāʿat*s. Such restriction places great emphasis on the embodiment of the new practice and guard against corruption of the *tartīb* and *maqṣad* of such tours.

Certain categories of women are often restricted from undertaking the *masturat jamāʿat*: One is expectant women who are about to delivery or with complications; divorced women unless accompanied by a *maḥram*; unmarried girls; breastfeeding women and co-wives cannot go for the *jamāʿat* at the same time. Married women experiencing menstrual periods are not restrained from going for the *jamāʿat*. These types of *kundi*s give a chance to the wives of senior *dāʿi*s to partake in what their husbands have done numerous times. On average the number of couples in the *masturat jamāʿat* is limited to four to five. Strict rules of decency are expected to be adhered to. Guyo Hassan asserts that:

> The wife must accompany the husband for *masturat jamāʿat* with clear adherence to the rules of ʿawra (concealment). She should wear even socks, have *niqāb* (veil), have *hijāb* (headscarf) and so on. Women on these tours should be guarded by decency and simplicity. They are urged to wear *hijāb* and simple Muslim dresses and not jewellery and expensive cloths. Their clothes should be simple and down to earth.[178]

While it is geared towards reforming women, the *masturat jamāʿat* is strictly supervised by the Tablīghī men. Reetz (2008, 100) notes that the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in South Asia is predominantly male oriented although such women activities are organised on limited scale. He observes that given the nature of traditional gender roles, these activities can be considered as emancipatory. One of the men is selected as the *amīr*. The *jamāʿat* takes *ḥidāyat* (advice/guidance) before the departure which outline the principles of proselytism so that the team can accrue spiritual rewards and succeed in the novel Tablīghī practice. The *jamāʿat* then travels in one vehicle. Once they arrive at their point of destination, the whole team heads to a home of a local senior Tablīghī who would have be informed much earlier of the impending team's visit. The men including the man of the homestead head to the local mosque for accommodation while the women reside at the home. For the period that the team is on the tour the couples would not be able to enjoy conjugal rights or have privacy with their spouses and may converse with them for a few minutes every day.

The host is required to construct separate bathrooms and toilets for the women for privacy is he can. He also prepares the venue where invited local Muslim women can sit and listen to *taʿlīm* and other educational sessions. The host acts as the guide (Ar. *dalīl*) of the men's team and *ḥirāsa* (Ar. security) of the women team during the day. The team is expected to live to

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[178] Ibid.

the movement's ideals of self-sufficiency and non-interference in the affairs and resources of the host family. In case the *masturat* Jamāʿat is 15 or 30 day travel module, then it is 'advisable for the team to move to different *dāʿi* homes after every three days period so as not to put strain on a single homestead.

The men team conducts a *shūra* and deliberations would then be brought conveyed to the women. Duties of the day would then be delegated as to which couple should cook, who among the men should conduct *bayān* for the women team and the local women. The *taʿlīm* and *bayān* of the women dwell on *fazāʾil Qurʾān* (virtues of Qurʾān), *fazāʾil dhikr* (virtues of supplication), *fazāʾil ṣalāt (*virtues of prayers) and the six fundamentals.

The duty of cooking is interestingly shared by a couple at a time. For instance a husband prepares the main meal at the mosque while the wife prepares the stew. The unity of family in carrying out *khidma* ensures collective responsibility for the success of the services. It also averts disagreement that may arise if mixed couples undertook the *khidma* responsibilities. Special food is often prepared for this kind of travel teams. One informant shares his experience that:

> I heard from the elders from one of the *jamāʿat*s from India that women should be served with food containing meat throughout the period that they are on the *masturat jamāʿat*. This is because unlike men women have challenges and needs, so to take care of that their *khidma* must be special.[179]

Tashkīl is done among the women from the neighbourhood. In that:

> Women from the neighbourhood should be invited and *tashkīl* done among them. The local women may suggest their names and their husbands' names which is handed over to the men team based at the mosque for further deliberation. The women can take the message to their husband back home and say that they have volunteered to go for these numbers of days and ask her husband to accompany her for the next *masturat jamāʿat*.[180]

Once such new volunteers are recruited, the *masturat jamāʿat* gradually becomes established and refined for perfection by subsequent teams.

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[179] Conversations with Hussein Boru, April 2009, September 2009, Isiolo.
[180] Ibid.

4.5 Conclusion

Tablīghī Jamāʿat is a reform movement on the move. Individuals give time and resource to reform themselves and others. This reform has had a direct impact of entrenchment of the movement as a parallel religious tradition with its organisational structure, preferred practices, favourite texts, innovative management of sacred and mundane spaces. The establishment of the transnational Islamic movement of Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya has been characterised by different trends in spatial reterritorialisation. New geographical imaginations tended to institute a faith bureaucracy that links the individual Tablīghī and his home to the mosque, a mosque to a collection of area mosques, area mosques to a zonal unit of a sub-*ḥalqa*, sub-*ḥalqa* to a regional unit of *ḥalqa*, *ḥalqa* then to the national Tablīghī unit, and the national Tablīghī unit to Nizamuddin Markaz, Delhi. To facilitate these flows and networks, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat has strategised performance of certain practices in the Muslim sacred spaces of mosques in most areas. These practices are comprehensive and require that the itinerant preachers' time is fully preoccupied with perfection of spirituality. There is something for everyone. At home, the homestead is targeted for reform. Visits are made to different class people to mobilise for reform. The *ᶜulamā'* are approached for acknowledgement and support. Basic knowledge is taught in routinised and repetitive manner that appeals to ordinary believers who are constantly targeted for recruitment. In the next chapter, focus on how the Borana have adopted the movement as their own thereby strengthening bonds of ethnic and religious affinities with their co-ethnics in different parts of Kenya and Ethiopia and utilise the network of transnational movement to participate in religious revivalism through travels among their kins and beyond their borders.

Chapter Five

Tablīghī Jamāʿat among the Borana: Translocal Networks, Gatherings and Owning a Transnational Movement

5.1 Introduction

Malim Dabasso, a one-time opponent turned Tablīghī supporter, offers this advice to the local Tablīghīs. He posits that ownership of the movement by the local Borana is what is needed now. The best way to own the movement according to him is by translating the terminologies of the movement into Borana. He adds that if there are no equivalents, the leaders of the movement must invent them. Comparing the joy of ownership with that of what an old man is to his children, he suggests that the movement that is already reviving the faith would get more impetus. Dabasso advises:

> Once local terms are used and accepted, the message will sink even further. There is a difference in levels of thoughts between the old and the young. The elders love ownership. For example if an old man has a young wife, she would make him glad by mentioning 'look at your child'. Same case when the terms are localized, they would own it and inculcate it. When it is *ijtimāʿ* and *jor* they don't own it.[181]

These groups of sheikhs who give moral support to the local Tablīghī activities view it as a phase in religious revivalism, a trend that has been on for several years now. Mobility for religion in Northern Kenya until recently largely involved certain classes of individuals: pilgrims heading to Makkah and to variety of Ṣūfī shrines in Southern Ethiopia; students travel to acquire religious education and apprenticeship in places like Bardhere in Somalia in the past and to *madrasa*s and universities in Merti, Thika, Mombasa, Nairobi, Isiolo, Sudan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The entry of the Tablīghī phenomena has radically changed conceptions of religious travels. Now everyone can travel for religion. Now there are regular gatherings and meetings at most mosques, within the region and in places like Nairobi. Ordinary Muslims with basic knowledge of the faith are being recruited before literally hitting the road. The Tablīghīs market the idea that everyone can travel and preach and learn religion provided they are able to pay the travel costs. Men are the targets. Travels are systemized. It takes these lay preachers from Borana speaking communities to different places, places that they would not have imagined going to. Testimonies abound among the Tablīghīs of travels to international destinations in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, South Africa, Tanzania, Nigeria and

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[181] Interview with Malim Dabasso, September 2009, Isiolo.

Somali; to regional towns both in Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia and to the Orma speaking area of Tana River near the Coast of Kenya. At any given time there is a number of international, regional and local preaching *jamāʿat*s in any area.[182] Such interchange has resulted in a varied growth of translocal networks that reinforce the adherence to Islamic faith and reconfigure identity formation.

In this chapter, the focus shall be on how socio-cultural compatibility and common ethnic narratives of change and belongingness of the Kenyan and Ethiopian Borana have been appropriated by the Kenyan Borana Tablīghīs as an entry point for conversion to Islam in areas, where earlier attempts by rival ethnic groups have relatively failed. Traditionally, Muslim communities such as bilingual Garre who have in recent past adopted relatively conservative *salafī* ideology shun participation and membership in the movement for variety of reasons.[183] The chapter explores the ethnic dynamics in relation to identity formation, membership and ownership of the movement as vehicle of religious change and expression of religiosity in a competitive environment. It also relies on case studies to illustrate how the Tablīghī phenomena have heightened networking across national, cultural, linguistic borders linking regions that as far as Tana River to Moyale and Waso thereby reviving pre-colonial connections between regions. The place of Borana and other Borana speaking communities in the transnational Islamic movement is best explored by examining their participation in national and regional *ijtimāʿ*s and *jor*s. The questions explored therein include: Where do the Borana *jamāʿat*s sit, eat and sleep in the multitude of the congregants gathered at the annual Nairobi *ijtimāʿ*? Who does the translation of the sermons given by the senior elders of the movement into Borana? What are the composition of the Borana speaking *jamāʿat*s at *ijtimāʿ*s and *jor*s? How do they arrive and depart from the national gatherings of Tablīghīs? The chapter ends with a brief description of a ten days travel with Tablīghīs in the Moyale sub-*ḥalqa* and two case studies of the evaluation sessions of the activities of the movement that accounts for its phenomenal growth in Kenya.

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[182] In March 2010, apart from Waso sub-*ḥalqa* travelling *jamāʿat*s, there were other two *jamāʿat*s from outside the zone doing *khurūj*: an Indian *jamāʿat* and a four month Borana speaking *jamāʿat* from Moyale sub-*ḥalqa*. Concurrently a four month Waso *jamāʿat* was on *daʿwa* tour in Orma's Tana River sub-*ḥalqa*.

[183] Garre, Gabra are referred to as *Worr Dase* (people of the mat) while Borana are called *Worr Buyo* (people of the grass). A number of Garre speak both Borana and Somali. Together with the Gabra, the Ajuran and the Degodia they have formed part of *Worr Libin*, a pre-colonial ethnic alliance headed by the Borana before sixteenth to the start of twentieth century. Since the breakup of alliance and especially in the last three decades the relation between the Borana, the Gabra, the Garre, the Ajuran and the Degodia shifts between mutual hostility to peaceful co-existence. Identities ascribed by these groups are in constant flux depending on circumstances with Islamic, cultural and historical options appropriated. Schlee and Watson(2009), p. 203-205.

5. 2 Converting Co-ethnics: Contextual *Daʿwa* of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat among the Borana

In November 2010, a delegation of Ethiopian Borana elders came to Merti. They were not on a mission to emphasise adherence to the long lost traditions and customs of Borana, *aada sera Borana*, neither were they on pan-Borana mission to mobilise resource for the defence of the community against perennial 'foes' such as Somalis nor ask to use vast Waso rangelands for their cattle.[184] They were coming from towns near Dirre and Liban, the ancestral seat of Borana culture for a different kind of help; they want Islamic teachers to educate their children and they want to send their children to *madrasa*s in Merti so that they can later take over the management of Islamic institutions as teachers and *imām*s. The Borana in Ethiopia are the custodians of the traditional customs and were until recently largely followers of indigenous religion and subjects of twin system of religious political governance of the *Qallu* and the *Gada*. However over the years there has been heightened competition between Muslims and Pentecostal groups over them.[185] Histocally they strategise to approach and co-operate with the Somali or Arsi sheikhs for Islamic institutions but increasingly look further south to their kin in Kenya.[186] The recent visit by this delegation crossed over 600 kilometres into Kenya, passing towns like Moyale, Marsabit and Isiolo to the final destination of Waso, a Borana stronghold. Merti was optimally chosen as it has a renowned *madrasa* school system running from nursery to secondary school, it has a large cluster of Borana *ʿulamā'* led by Sheikh Abdullai Golicha of the Merti Qur'ān Centre and it is also a host to the only Tablīghī-built *markaz* in Borana speaking sub-*ḥalqa*s of Northern Kenya. The delegation led by prominent Muslims like Ḥajj Haro Tuto and Ḥajj Boru were on an appeal to fellow Muslim Borana. Consulting both the *ʿulamā'* of the Merti Qur'ān Centre and the Tablīghīs, the Ethiopians sought to know how they can establish Islamic schools and how they can source for teachers for these schools from the area. Often Waso Tablīghīs come back with

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[184] Telephone conversations with Bashir Dima, a former research assistant on 20th November 2010.

[185] Borana Outreach Ministry started by Solomon Yohannes in collaboration with an American evangelical group called Gospel For All joined a host of other Christian missions such Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and Norwegian Lutheran Church in targeting Borana for conversion to Christianity. Commenting on rivalry with Muslim groups for Borana conversion, Yohannes notes 'A few years ago, when I saw all of this happening in my area it broke my heart. I was so worried that our area would be totally Islamised. With the intense efforts of the Islamic movement focusing on this region, the conversion of people to Islam was something seemingly inevitable in the long run.' Source: http://www.gospelforall.org/Newsletters/Spring%2006%202.pdf.

[186] Minako Ishihara observes that the area of Southern Ethiopia around Negelle has had constant close contacts with various ṣūfī *tariqa*s with some establishing shrines and tombs. Focusing on the town of Negelle Borana, Ishihara mentions the influence of Somali and Hadrami sheikhs on nature of Islamic religiosity. Some of the sheikhs are said to have done proselytism among the largely nomadic Borana outside the towns. Ishihara(1993), pp.75-81.

testimonies about the state of their fellow non-Muslim Borana in Ethiopia. Sometimes such *jamāʿat*s leave behind two to three individuals to teach the Borana about the faith.

A favourite destination for Borana Tablīghīs aiming for a four months *khurūj* is the Southern part of Oromia Regional State. Negelle, Mega, Yabello, Dillo, Dubuluq, Tuqa, Hidilola, Dirre and Liban are some of the towns that these lay preachers have targeted in recent years. Through testimonies like *ahwāl* and *karguzari* (Ur. field reports), tales are abound about the deplorable state of their fellow Borana and the urgent need to win them over fellow Borana to Islam. Enthusiastic Tablīghīs compare it with the pre-Islamic Arabia's *jāhilīya* period (era of ignorance) due to strong attachment to *aada sera Borana*.

The Tablīghīs have hence targeted to revive adherence to the faith among Muslims.[187] The Borana speaking Tablīghīs however proselytise among Muslim and non-Muslim Borana. By targeting to convert the followers of indigenous Borana religion to Islam and revive adherence to religious obligations among the nominal Muslim co-ethnics, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat optimally choose to rely on networks of Borana Tablīghīs to capitalise on commonalities such as language, livelihood, clan networks, and membership in *gada* polity, socio-political challenges and mutual concerns about the welfare of fellow Borana. In the past, the Ethiopian Borana exposure to Islamic faith has been via Somali, Garre, Arab and Arsi Oromo sheikhs. These sheikhs and their families settled in urban areas creating networks of Islamic schools, mosques and Ṣūfī shrines. Oba (2009) writing on town formation in the Borana areas of Ethiopian notes that settlement of Borana in towns has resulted in their conversion to Islam as a social strategy where monetary economy weakens the bond of attachment to *aada sera Borana* and conversion facilitated commercial networking with Somali traders.

Kenya Borana Tablīghīs making rounds of tours to the Borana Ethiopian area lament about the laxity of the community and place the blame on the superficial nature of introduction and teaching of the faith. Mamed Roba, a Kenyan Borana Tablīghī points out in an informal conversation that the main reason behind the poor state of adherence to Islam among the Ethiopian Borana is due to a lack of *fikra* (consultations) between them and Arsi and non-Borana who are mainly in position of Muslim leadership.[188] These sheikhs belonging to rival

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[187] The Borana Tablīghīs in Kenya appears to defy the norm and target their fellow Borana across the national borders in addition to outreach targeting Muslim co-ethnics.

[188] Mamed Roba avers that 'the state of Islamisation among the Borana especially the one of Ethiopia is very poor and Arsi are the ones in control of the leadership position in that region of Ethiopia. They are the linkage between the Borana and Muslim world. I believe that there is no *fikra* done together with such Borana by the Arsi and other Muslims so that this faith becomes part and parcel of their lives.' Conversations with M. Roba, Moyale, October 2009. In another interview, Maalim Dabaso of Isiolo blames the laxity of Borana Muslims in

ethnic communities are argued by the Borana informants not to be a good role model for the new converts. In one interview, one Tablīghī citing the move to airlift selected Ethiopian Borana converts for ḥajj , summed up the alleged lack of foresightedness of the non-Borana sheikhs this way:

> An interesting incidence recently is that, some Arsi ᶜulamā' and some sponsors from Middle East took about 100 Borana men to Ḥajj . While there, they were asked if religion has not reached them now. I think such an approach is not very effective. There must a follow up, a change of hearts, *fikr al-dīn* for people to change. We cannot absolve our responsibility to spread the faith through such crude methods.[189]

In perceiving themselves as the 'menders' of an Islamisation process gone wrong and the local members of movement armed themselves with what they perceive as correct methodology and sincere concerns and embarked on cross border travels. These Tablīghī *dāᶜi*s assert that the religion can only with established if it is owned by the locals and if it is presented to them in their language and with sincere concerns for their welfare. For them, professing Islam and having pan-Borana identity despite coming from hundreds of kilometres away from ancestral lands, puts them in a strategic position to win over their fellow Ethiopian Borana. Rendering the earlier efforts of Islamic proselytism as inadequate and inconsequential, the Borana Tablīghīs point out to their fellow Borana that the problem was literally speaking not with the product but the sales team. Mohamed Arero positions the Tablīghīs work in relation to the earlier efforts this way:

> All in all, all these communities bring the faith in their own languages, historical heritage and even biases. They then believe that because they brought the faith, it only belongs to them. There has not been much effort by the Borana themselves to reach their own people and bring salvation. Tablīghī *daᶜwa* is such an effort.[190]

Through frequent *daᶜwa* tours, the nature of religious practices has been gradually transformed. The Borana Tablīghīs from Kenya have re-established a different kind of connectivity between Borana speaking areas. The Tablīghī bureaucratic organization such as sub-*ḥalqas* and *qarya* and practices such as *shūra* helps in planning and review of travels to Ethiopia. Each group that makes excursions shares their experience of the travel with local preachers and advice specifically areas in need of urgent proselytism. Thrust to the region has been facilitated by the strategy of paying recognition to already existing network of leadership

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Isiolo on similar lines of reasoning. He said '*Borani diini mara mari kes dhab, ammo eggi tabliqi kun laf sene, mara marin yadebit*' (Bor. Borana Muslims have been lax because the missed in the faith the practice of consultations and deliberations, but since the entry of Tablīghī Jamāᶜat, these consultations have returned.) Interview with Malim Dabasso, September 2009, Isiolo.

[189] Conversations with Mamed Roba, Moyale, October 2009.
[190] Conversations with Mohamed Arero, Moyale, October 2009.

through *ziyārāt*. Every team that does *khurūj* into the Southern part of Ethiopia acknowledge resident sheikhs whether Ṣūfī or *salafī*, administrators and traditional Borana community and clan leadership such as *jallaba*, *Qallu* and *Abagada* (reigning leader of the *Gada* polity). The *Gada* council and *Qallu* adhere to the Borana indigenous religion. These *jamāʿat*s from areas such as Waso and Moyale frequently visit the *Abagada* and other political leaders of the *Gada* to solicit their support in conducting *daʿwa* among the Borana of Ethiopia. Hassan confirms that many Borana speaking *jamāʿat*s have targeted *yaa Borana* and *Abagada* several times and the preparation for the *ziyārāt* include appropriate introductions both Borana and Islamic, *tashkīl*, and gifts such as *surre* (bor. headscarf for men) and perfumes as *ikrām*. He adds that because they are elders of the community, they always ask for *ebb* (Bor. blessings). Hassan optimistically observed that:

> When we ask them to accept Islam, they always tell us that their time to become Muslims is not yet. They assure us that in the end, every Borana shall become Muslim. They permit us to convert every willing Borana, male and female. So we do *daʿwa* in the towns and villages of Borana area in Ethiopia. We help villages construct *moola*s (bor. temporary prayer structure) under big trees for prayers.[191]

Similar narratives of ambivalent reception by *Abagada* and other prominent traditional leaders has encouraged more and more Tablīghī groups to seek audience with them to legitimate their heightened proselytism among Borana. The permission granted is taken as a validation of the truth of Islam and their appropriateness of the Tablīghī methods as the best way to Islamise the Borana. Informing the ease of conversion according to many Borana Tablīghīs and large section of Muslim Borana are commonly held 'prophesies' such as '*Borani sadiy chibrate sadiy Islane*' i.e. Borana shall in three cyclic waves adopt indigenous traditions and Islam. *Chibra*, a hairstyle common among traditional Borana women are used symbolically to refer to the customs and traditions of the community. The meaning of the saying is that waves of Islamisation and re-traditionalisation shall supersede each in one historical epoch. These and similar narratives are circulated for years orally as *arga dageeti* (Bor. oral history) by Borana historians and elders.[192]

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[191] Interview with Hassan Jarso, May, 2010, Nairobi.

[192] In a popular *arga dageti* audio-cassette recorded in Nairobi by Borana elders, one old man says '*durana Borana fula lamat gargar bay, tok insafara, tok war il dunuffate waaq kadat taa. Guyya sun warr il dunuffat intaini jet jarolen. Warr il dunuffat gada Boru sadeni Boran kesaa dabani jet jarolen* (bor. There shall come a time when Borana shall be divided between two forces: one section shall become Safar (Somali, meaning adopt Islam as religion) and the other section would be become the people who pray with their eyes closed (Christians). The elders who prophesize this cautioned people not to join those who close their and pray to God. Those who close their eyes to pray would disappear from the community during the *gada* reign of the three Boru.

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Bassi and Tache analysing eschatological messages contained in prophetic utterance of Areero Boosaro and other renowned Borana 'prophets' (*raaga*) and such as Moroo Uchumaa, Turucoo, Amuu Areeroo, Hiboo Abbaa Harree, Waariyoo Uudati, Haweecee and Alii Boddee, note that the Borana society is exposed to profound social and cultural transformation that includes urbanisation, abandonment of important cultural rituals, adoption of alien culture resulting in reversal of social order and social stratification.[193]. The response of Borana to these alien cultures, note the two authors, is ambiguous with no active pursuit or resistance encouraged. They add 'there is neither a refusal of nor an enthusiasm for the new ways. Never are these outside influences represented as antagonistic to the Borana; never are integration, fusion and syncretism actively pursued'.[194] Envisaged is the end of the era of transition and beginning of a new social order paralleling the time of Horo the eponymous founder of the Oromo nation.[195] It is important to note that in the *arga dageeti* audiocassette circulating in Borana speaking region of Northern Kenya, the emphasis is placed not only on the prophesies on social changes and resulting chaos but also on the role of Islam as a unifying identity for their community. Muslim Borana *dāʿi*s, to counter tides of proselytism from Christian Pentecostal churches use these selected narratives popular among rural and urban Borana in Ethiopia.[196]

In an interview with an elderly Borana Muslim in Sololo, the informant draws parallels between rituals of *ḥajj* and that of the *mata buffacha* (graduation into elderhood) of *gadamoji* age-set of the *gada* grade. He mentions the state of ritual purity, the use of single loin cloths, use of polite language, and shaving of hair, invocation of blessing on behalf of the community, non-violence as some of the pre-*aada* Islamic survivals. He cites an incident in which a retired clan elder (an adherent of Borana indigenous religion) from Ethiopia almost refused to sleep at a fellow clansman's homestead in Sololo because his host was a Christian. Admonishing the host for not taking heed from his father when he was alive, the retired clan

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[193] Bassi and Tache, 2005, p. 219.

[194] Ibid, p. 210.

[195] Ibid, p. 210.

[196] In one group discussion with Borana youth in Moyale, I came across conversations purportedly held before the audience of *Abagada* council by Tablīghīs and Pentecostal preachers. The Tablīghīs were asked what they believe in and their mission. They were said to have noted that they believe that God is one and that Muhammad is his Prophet and their aim is to make Borana accept the message of Islam. The Pentecostals were asked the same question and were noted to have said that they believe that God is one and that the Godhood is composed of the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and that Jesus, the son of God died on the Cross for the sins of the humanity and that all people have to reach God through the Son. Then the elders are said to have interjected that one cannot ask the son for assistance in presence of the father and that the message of the Muslim team is truthful and that the one of the Christians is not convincing (Bor: *Fula aban jir, ilm waingafatan, wani Islani jed dhugaa wani Kiristani jed fuul inqabdu*). The story ends always with the triumph of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat as they are allowed to convert as many Borana as possible.

elder noted '*mata fula dufef inwalaluu*' (Bor. that the head shall never forget where it came from). This implies according to him that the Borana were at one time in history Muslims and eventually all Borana shall embrace the faith. The informant goes on to appropriate the new faith as not only compatible with being Borana but also as part of its past heritage, noting other myths such as the consumption of Borana *Kitāb* ('Qur'ān') by a cow, the names of the eponymous ancestors of the community sung during naming ceremonies such as Ali Guracha, Gurach Yaaya to legitimate the eventual spread of the faith.[197]

Main reason for rapid expansion and activity of the movement among the Borana is due to pressure on regional and national units to produce tangible results expressed in numbers. Going to Ethiopia hence is a favourable option for Borana Tablighis as it is easy to not only convert many to Islam but also embark on membership recruitment drives. They can fill their quotas and display incredible results at evaluation sessions during congregational gatherings.

5. 3 Ethnic affiliation and membership in a religious movement

Relationship between various ethnic communities in the Northern part of Kenya, where the research was conducted constantly fluctuates. Conflicts are common due to competition over economic and political opportunities, contestation over land, limited water and deteriorated state of rangeland for their livestock. These conflicts impact on religious identities and patterns of proselytism. It is common for mutual 'enemies' not to take messages of faith from each other. These trends also affect to an extent, belongingness and support to the Tablīghī activities. Some communities have a longer history of Islamic identity while others are just partly indigenous partly Islamic. Let us examine the connection between ethnic affiliation and religious membership in the Tablīghī Jamāʿat and other Islamic movements.

5.3.1 Ethiopia

Borana in Ethiopia borders the Garre, the Gabra, the Arsi Oromo and Somali clans to the east, the Burji and the Konso to the west, and the Guji to the north. The relations with these groups have ranged from alliance making to violent ethnic clashes. With human and livestock population increase conflict over rangeland resources is intense putting pressure on inter-ethnic relations. Increased clashes over water and pasture has seen the Borana pushed from areas that were once part of livestock rangeland during the times of drought such as wells of Gof and Laey that have been taken over by the Garre. In the past, the livestock raids and clashes with various clans of Somalis have made them to consider the latter as foes.[198] The

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[197] Conversations with Gayo Boru, Sololo, June 2010.
[198] For detailed analysis of Borana interactions with different ethnic groups and its impact on resource competition, see Oba, 1998.

establishment of the ethnic based federal government since mid-1990s saw disputes erupting over the boundary of the Somali National Regional State to which assortment of Somali clans, the Garre and the Gabra belong and that of Oromo National Regional State to which among others the Guji, the Arsi and the Borana belong to. Contested claims over Moyale by both the Oromo and Somali Regional States are classic examples of the protracted nature of the ownership struggle with duo system of governance established in the border town.[199] The tarmac that runs in the middle of the Moyale Ethiopia hence has been used as the marker of the boundary with the east belonging to the Somali Regional State and west to the Oromo Regional State. The Garre and the Gabra in Southern Ethiopia are largely Muslims and emphasise their Somali identity, though linguistically they mainly use *afaan* Borana (Borana language).[200] With such levels of mistrust, the Borana especially in the rural area find it relatively hard to accept efforts of the Garre and Somali sheikhs to preach among them and considered the faith as a Somali culture. The non-Borana groups have a longer history of Islamic education and practice and as one informant jokingly puts unlike *borantiti* (bor. 'Borannness') there is no *garrititi* (bor. 'Garreness'). Explaining the point, the informant argues that

> The people who brought the faith to them are their traditional foes whom they consider as inferior to them. They despise these Somalis. They do not consider what they bring to them as worthy of their time. When these people come to them to propagate Islam, they are cautious to guard against them as enemies. So they cannot trust to take ideas from them very much. Furthermore if you check properly, the reason why Garre and these other groups took up Islam so easily is because they do not have strong customs and cultures. For a Borana to be a Muslim, he has to convert. Garre don't. Garre are born into it.[201]

However it should be noted that in the urban centres such as Negelle, Mega and Yabello, Borana dwellers largely belong to Islam and their conversion predates the current Tablīghī foray into the area. It is to these classes of the Muslims that the Tablīghīs first propagated *daʿwa* to, encouraging establishment of self-sustaining mosque-based *jamāʿat* s and *khurūj* circuits touring the zone. Tablīghī conventions such as *jor*s are slowly gaining popularity. For instance Dillo an area with up to 6 mosques with the *panch amaal*, held a successful jor on 9th March 2011.[202]

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[199] Adegehe, 2009. p.183.

[200] Schlee and Watson, p. 208.
[201] Group interview with Borana youth, Moyale, September 2009.
[202] Telephone conversation with Hassan Boru, 9th June, 2011.

Depending on the target audience, the Tablīghī *daʿwa* moulds the message in an appropriate way. For the new converts and in areas with little adherence to the practices of Islam, the Tablīghīs teach on how to recite the *kalima*, how to do *wuḍūʾ*, what to wear for prayers, how to pray and how to instil consistency in prayers. In areas with considerable mosque attendance the talks are modelled to deliver the need for consistent performance of sincere prayers and the need to enhance that deep concentration in prayers and the urgency to move out of one's home to strengthen religious practices. The target is that the regular mosque attendants must constitute a travel team to tour neighbouring villages and mosques and return to establish the *panch amaal* in their local mosque and with time aim at making every mosque in their locality entrench Tablīghī associated practices. Most *jamāʿat*s sent from Kenya to these areas are four months teams. In the year 2010, two teams departed from the annual Nairobi *ijtimāʿ* held in early May to the region. One of the *jamāʿat* was composed of the Waso Borana and the other a Borana speaking *jamāʿat* from Moyale. The former headed to Mega and its environs while the latter toured Negelle area.

5.3.2 Moyale

Moyale District is composed of Uran, Obbu, Moyale Central and Golbo Divisions. The first two areas are largely Borana 'proper' settlements while Moyale Central is highly cosmopolitan and Golbo has a significant population of Sakuye and significant numbers of Garre, Gabra and Ajuran. The Tablīghī activities are most active in Moyale Central and in Obbu's main town Sololo. Except the ethnically mixed central part of Moyale town, the outlying areas and suburbs reveal ethnic patterns. The Borana mainly settle in Sessi, Butiye and Odda, Biashara Street is largely a Garre zone, Manyatta is mainly Burji area, and Old Town is where the town's pioneer Somali and Arab families reside. Mosque leadership often hails from the surrounding ethnic group.

The families of the early pioneers of the town manage the two oldest mosques in the town, Jamia and *Qādiriyya* mosque. Though Jamia was initially affiliated with the *Ṣaliḥiyya* ṣūfī brotherhood, it has since early 1990s transformed to *salafī* affiliation while the Qadiriya mosque also known as Misajid Usman Qorane remains *Qādiriyya* as the name suggests. The attendants in both mosques are heterogeneous. *Qadiriya* attendants are largely elderly Muslims of various ethnic origins with Ṣūfī inclinations while youthful Muslims from the Old Town and nearby areas frequent the Jamia. Masjid Quba, the Manyatta Burji mosque is partly Ṣūfī, partly *Salafī* with intermittent clashes between the elders' defence of its Ṣūfī heritage and youthful sheikhs' contestation of its management and religious practices favouring moderate *Salafism*. The clashes between the camps have in a number of instances been

violent. A fresh addition over the years to the Muslim sacred spaces in the town is Ittisam mosque, also of *Salafī* persuasion. Locally it is sometime referred to as, '*Misajid* Borana'. The assumption is Borana like the charismatic, simple and informative sermons given by Sheikh Adan Doyo, the *imām*. Al Huda and Taqwa mosques are in the Garre areas. Together with other smaller mosques, they exhibit strict *salafī* traditions. A host of smaller mosques in the suburbs such as Helu, Butiye, Sessi though *salafī* affiliated they do not display strict conservatism. Most of the major mosques have elementary and intermediate *madrasa*s attached to them. The prominent *madrasa*s in the area include: Al-Huda, Kuwaiti, Khulafaa-ur-Rashideen, Ittisam, Manyatta Burji, Helu, and Sessi. The Borana are observed to be the least attendants of the *madrasa*s, as most of them place more emphasis on secular education.

Until a few years ago, the Tablīghīs used the Jamia mosque as its central base. It constructed a small office to store items for visiting *jamāʿat*s and to serve as coordination venue for its *daʿwa* activities. Disagreement that ensued between the custodians of the mosque and Tablīghī leaders resulted in the latter's eviction and demolition of its office. Afterwards, the movement sought shelter at the rival Qadiriya mosque where they were welcomed to operate freely. Prison mosque built to cater for the staff of Moyale GOK Prison, members of the civil service and security forces such as Kenya Police and Administrative Police and the general public have became *de facto markaz* of the movement in Moyale. Youthful congregants drawn from all ethnic communities with Tablīghīs constituting a significant minority frequent the mosque. It is one of the main venues of the monthly *shūra,* when Tablīghī mosque-based *maqāmī*s from most of the mosques in Moyale Central send in representatives to review *daʿwa* activities, plan for the month ahead and elect the *amīr* of the zonal unit. Each of these mosque-based groups as discussed in the previous chapter carry out certain activities such as *panch amaal* in the local mosque. Members are encouraged to establish *shūra f'il-bayt* and *taʿlīm f'il-bayt*.

Of the entire town's mosaic of ethnic mix, Burji and Garre are singled out by some Tablīghīs, as the opponents to the movement in the region. Amborn (2009) notes that the Burji are a complex social group dispersed both in Kenya and Ethiopia with its original homeland in southern parts of the Amaro Mountains located in eastern side of the Ethiopian Rift Valley. Large population of the Burji are noted to be Muslims, with a sizeable number being Christians of evangelical persuasion.[203] The group dominates wholesale and retail trade in Moyale town. Burji lorries ferry goods and livestock to and from Nairobi monopolising trans-

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[203] Amborn, 2009, pp. 89-90.

border trade in Kenya's industrial goods such as plastics, cement, iron sheets, mattresses, clothes, sugar and steel. They are relatively well off as they do not rely on livestock keeping, unlike other local communities; livestock are vulnerable to drought, famine and theft. Networks that they built and maintain have enhanced their acquisition of wealth and status among the residents of Moyale. Like Borana, the Burji are arguably attached to traditional customs. Amborn quotes Woche Guyo (Burji informant) who points out that Burji in Moyale and Marsabit are at the forefront of the Tablīghī movement.[204] Abdi Galgalo however mentions that:

> One of the biggest opponents of the movement is the Garre. The second one is the Burji. If you look at history, the Garre were the first people to do the Tablīghī *daʿwa* in the area. Burji too participated in the Tablīghī activities so much. They have the largest number of four months and 40 days brothers. But when they come back they did not perform more *amaal* (practices) related to the *daʿwa*. The *maqṣad* (objective) is not just to go and come back but to continue with the efforts of proselytism in the area. They just look it blindly and took the line that if you work for *daʿwa* you do not work for *dunia* (Sw. the world). So what happened was that a person, who was known to have a barber shop or a kiosk, just closes it and continues with the *daʿwa* alone. The mosque (*maqāmī* team) itself was by then not strong enough to offer guidance. So he losses network (becomes destabilised). Then people would just say 'look at what *tablīgh* has done to this man or that'.[205]

The Garre just like the Burji are traders. The time spent on travels for *tablīgh*, according to some Tablīghīs, is hence perceived by large numbers of Muslim Burji and Garre as plainly uneconomical. This does not imply that the Garre or the Burji Tablīghīs are non-existent. On the contrary a significant number of committed Burji and Garre Tablīghīs are part of Tablīghī lay preachers. Abdi Rashid, himself a Garre Tablīghī attests to the challenge of his community to the movement in the following way:

> The other thing is that and I am saying that as a person born of them, the two communities in Moyale, the Garre and Burji, they are very enterprising. If you for 40 days or four months, who will be searching for wealth and livelihood?
> To them, if you do not struggle for survival to make it in life you are as good as dead. The Burji and the Garre are very aggressive entrepreneurs. A Burji houseboy or 'turn boy' (driver assistant) would work hard to own a small kiosk, then a shop until he makes it. They cannot leave their work for anything. Then he will soon own a lorry. Their lifestyle does not allow for *khurūj*.[206]

Of the two, the Garre due to strong *salafī* affiliation, not only refrain from participating in the travels but also at times sanction the use of their mosques by local *dāʿi*s for proselytism. A Borana speaking *jamāʿat* may feel less welcomed to do a *bayān* at the Taqwa mosque.

[204] Hermann Amborn, p. 90.
[205] Interview with Abdi Galgalo, Moyale, June 2010.
[206] Interview with Abdi Rashid, Moyale, June 2010.

Relatively more learned in Qur'ān and other Islamic sciences, large section of the Garre ᶜulamā' feel that the local Tablīghīs have less to offer to them in terms of 'enjoining good and forbidding evil'. They find the lay preachers as not grounded in advanced Islamic learning and oppose them for allowing every person the right to preach. For instance, sometimes novices read a few ḥadīth s from *Faza'il-e-A'amal* to the audience in English and translate it into Borana. It is not uncommon to find in Moyale as well in other regions in the Northern Kenya, a Borana speaking Tablīghī make some basic motivational talks in mosques devoid of the Arabic recitation of Qur'ān or supporting ḥadīth s. Related to who can preach is the question of ethnic rivalry and 'degree of muslimness' and religiosity. Borana, relatively recent converts to the faith are seen by the Garre as 'unworthy' to preach to them. Mamed Roba laments:

> Garre and certain classes of clergy here do not believe that a Borana can or should stand in front of a congregation of Muslims and preach about the faith. They believe that Borana are never capable of such feat due to ignorance despite being Muslims for all these years. They argue that Borana however learned they have nothing to teach them. [207]

The Borana Tablīghīs point out that despite their numerical strength as an ethnic community; they are largely underrepresented in Muslim leadership positions in Moyale. Secular education mainly favoured by the Borana is mentioned as their drawback in access to Muslim leadership position. They are hence portrayed by these lay preachers, as having little to show in terms of economic, religious and social affairs within the town. Mohamed Arero bluntly puts that 'the inaccessibility to leadership position is there because these positions have for a long time dominated by Arab families, Garre, Somali, and even Arsi.'[208] Perceiving their own rise as a 'revolt' against *status quo*, Mamed Roba states that

> Such ᶜulamā' do not wish to see the rise of indigenous class of ᶜulamā', preachers and religious opinions that differs from theirs as they challenge their status quo. The feeling is that things are supposed to be the way it has always been. Apart from *masājid* at the fringes of the town such as Helu, Butiye, Odda and Somarre, almost all mosques in Moyale Central area are in the hands of non-Borana.[209]

Obbu and Uran Divisions are predominantly Borana. The Tablīghī activities in the two areas are largely dormant. Sololo Jamia mosque has an active mosque-based *jamāʿat* that frequently sent preaching teams to Golole, Mado Adi and Uran for *daʿwa*. Moyale and foreign *jamāʿat*s visit the area on a regular basis as it is seen as a fertile zone for proselytism. A significant

[207] Conversations with Mamed Roba, Moyale, October 2009.
[208] Conversation with Mohamed Arero, Moyale, September 2010.
[209] Conversations with Mamed Roba, Moyale, October 2009.

number of youths from diverse backgrounds in Moyale sub-*ḥalqa* has volunteered for some form of Tablīghī travel tours.

5.3.3 Waso

Waso area unlike Moyale is less heterogeneous. Save for Sakuye who are integrated within the region and Gashe and other minority groups in Madogashe, the area is largely Borana with a majority professing Islam. Waso can be roughly divided into two with seasonal river separating Merti to the north from Garba Tulla, Sericho, Kula Mawe, Mado Gashe and Kinna to the south. Merti's Masjid Quba acts as the *markaz* of the Waso sub-*ḥalqa*. In Merti, the Tablīghīs activities are carried out by local adherents through the mosque-*maqāmī* teams in Biliqo Marara, Biliqo, Bulesa, Goda, Awarsitu, Korbesa, Malka Gala, Basa and most mosques in Merti town.

As mentioned earlier most of these mosques in the region were built through the support of the Merti Qur'ān Centre. Initially Gamachu mosque located at the fringe of Merti town served as the base of the movement. Being on the periphery had it demerits; it limited the presence of the movement as an alternative force of religious revivalism to the Merti Qur'ān Centre, a position that remained unopposed for over two decades. The periphery also symbolically thwarted the penetration of the movement and its recruitment for new members. The Tablīghīs repositioned themselves and negotiated for a better space in the religious marketplace. Such invisibility was hence seen as unproductive to the cause of revival of the faith. The local Tablīghīs acquire a large tract of land near the town's livestock market, an area relatively closer to the centre of the town. When asked about the new Tablīghīs *markaz,* one of the *ᶜulamā'* affiliated to the Merti Qur'ān Centre described it in the following way:

> Oh...that is their new *markaz* as they call it. They have built a big mosque for themselves. Remember this is the first and only mosque that has not been built or initiated by the Qur'ān Centre. Now they can do their things away from the supervision of the *Qalole* (bor. ᶜᶜ*ulamā'*). They can now preach freely without having to ask for permission and with no fear of being told 'do it this way or that way'. I heard that it is going to be a headquarters for their activities in the whole of Waso region.[210]

The *markaz* receives *jamāᶜat*s from outside the town, plan their routes and offer accommodation to them. Local regulars in Merti rotationally volunteer for a week or more in order to offer assistance (*nuṣra*) to visiting *jamāᶜat*s such as *khidma* and as *dalīl*, carry out instructional sessions and participate in various *shūra*s. There are vibrant Tablīghī activities in the sub-*ḥalqa* with a large section of populace, though not 'full time' Tablīghīs having gone

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[210] Interview with A. Abdub, Mombasa, October 2010.

for at least three days *jamāʿat*s. In Chari and Cherab, the two main zones in Merti region, there is a well-organised *daʿwa* network. According to Hassan, even in small settlements like Korbesa, up to a dozen men have gone for some forms of Tablīghī travel.[211] The travel teams are sent to every *olla* (bor. village), *laff hori* (bor. cattle camps), and *eel* (bor. boreholes and wells). Foreign *jamāʿat*s from destinations like Sudan, India and Bangladesh have in the last few years visited the area. In the month of March and April 2011, there is a four months *jamāʿat* from Moyale *ḥalqa* doing its *daʿwa* tour in the Waso area. Regulars from Moyale and Waso sub-*ḥalqa*s are well known to each other due to inter-regional travels.

The sub-*ḥalqa* in recent years has been a zone for experimentation and inculcation of new religious practices. The first practical *masturat* jamāʿat was carried out here. A *masturat jamāʿat* from Bangladesh composed of about five couples requested regulars in Merti to join them. Apart from a few couples from Merti town, up to seven couples from Korbesa and Mata Arba, settlements about 25 kilometres north from Merti, joined the specialised tour. Without such practical training, the elders of the movement sanction self-organized *masturat jamāʿat* for fear of unwarranted innovation and criticism from the ʿ*ulamāʾ*. The local Tablīghīs have to get it right by observing and participating in the tour and later carrying it out independently. A *masturat jamāʿat* from Garissa joined the practicals.

The sub-*ḥalqa* conducts a monthly *shūra* on rotational basis in different towns. In these meetings, responsibilities are shared and quotas or targets set for each zones within the sub-*ḥalqa*. For instance, the deliberations may pass a resolution that each zone within the sub-*ḥalqa* mobilises a certain number of four months and 40 days *jamāʿat*s within specific number of months. The representatives sent to attend the monthly *shūra* would inform their *maqāmī* teams about the targets. The monthly meeting also serves to check the progress of the movement and to explore which areas need extra attention from the lay preachers.

Announcements and decisions concerning venues of sub-*ḥalqa*'s *jor* are deliberated in these monthly *shūra*s. The venues are also made rotational so that each town gets a chance to host the *jor*. Towns in the Waso sub-*ḥalqa* that have held *jor*s include Biliqo, Merti, Korbesa, Sericho, Kinna, Garba Tulla, Kinna and Rapsu. The climax of these gatherings is usually a dispersal of teams for four months, 40 days, 10 days and three days tours. The members of the *maqāmī* group inform the fellow mosques attendants of upcoming *jor*s and *ijtimāʿ*s and organize logistics such as vehicles and routes of travels for volunteers. In Moyale sub-*ḥalqa*, Sololo held a successful *jor* in the year 2002, attended by the national leadership of the

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[211] Interview with Hassan Jarso, Nairobi May, 2010.

Tablīghī Jamāʿat as well as non-Tablīghī ʿulamā. Moyale town has held several *jor*s over the years. A sub-*ḥalqa* is expected to hold at least one *jor* a year bringing together Tablīghīs and non-Tablīghīs for *daʿwa* tours.

5.3.4 Membership

In Moyale and Waso, Tablīghī membership has over the years stabilized. A casual observer can say with certainty that indeed there is in-group and out-group membership in as far as the movement is concerned. In a group discussion, two non-Tablīghī informants curiously observed:

> W: What I observed is that in every mosque including Sololo, the Tablīghī team and the sheikh (*imām*) groups are parallel. They do not interact. The *kundi* (group) of Liban (a Tablīghī) and the *kundi* of Aw (Sheikh/*Maʿalim*) Kule and Sheikh Abdullai do not mix. Liban is a member of the movement.
> M: Liban himself is not compatible with Aw Kule or Aw Abdi. But in terms of ʿ*ilm*, the Aw Kule group is more learned. Though these differences exist the sheikhs also do not want to disclose that (to the mosque attendants).[212]

The Tablīghī Jamāʿat attracts a host of individuals from varied income groups and educational background. Largely missing from the membership are ᶜ*ulamā'*, the custodians of most mosques, and *madrasa* teachers in the region. Most trained sheikhs with relatively advanced Islamic learning appear to give the movement a wide berth. This does not imply that they do not attend Tablīghī activities. Far from that, some ᶜ*ulamā'* would even accompany them and preach to Muslims in remote areas. Others attend the Tablīghī *jor*s and *ijtimā*ʿs and address the congregants to be steadfast in their faith.

Individuals working in civil service, banks and non-governmental agencies and residing in the Muslim populated areas are likely to be attracted to the Tablīghī ideals of self-reform. Some may volunteer for a few travel tours and become inactive and finally quit the movement, while others build up their cultural and social capital over years becoming senior members. Teachers, government workers and town council employees with relatively high secular education and in need of building proper religious practices are frequently drawn to movement. This class of people can afford to pay for their travels easily. It is not a financial burden to raise Kshs. 300-500 for three days *khurūj* or at least Kshs. 4000 for 40 days tour. These individuals are literate and can easily read and understand the basic teachings in varieties of Tablīghī literature in English or Swahili. These individuals are also likely to be inclined to gain from a boost to their religious standing alongside their significant role in the social arena. Availability of the Tablīghī religious literature in English and Swahili breaks the

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[212] Group interview with Borana youth, Moyale, September 2009.

monopoly of knowledge of *ᶜulamā'* as the sole propagators of Islamic teaching. The *ᶜilm* (religious knowledge) for a long time has been the reserve of the *ᶜulamā'* due to its association with proficiency in Arabic. The Tablīghī Jamāʿat hence can be considered as revolutionary in this aspect, as Borana speaking Muslims with little or no *madrasa* education attempt to preach to equally less religious educated masses in local languages rivalling the established *madrasa* educated *ᶜulamā'* class.[213] Take Mamed Roba, a prominent Tablīghī originally from Marsabit who was until the year 2000 a Christian. He has a high school education and has never attended *madrasa*. He joined the Tablīghī Jamāʿat shortly after converting to Islam. The movement provided him and many others with a 'crash course' on Islamic sciences. Today he is an epitome of a self-made scholar. His speech is a testimony of his status as he fuses relevant *ḥadīth*s and verses of Qur'ān in Arabic, Swahili, Urdu and Borana. His every day conversations also display a mark of religious refinement and 'piety', as a host of religious litanies emphasise the themes being deliberated.

Members of the movement are more likely also to be dissatisfied with the manner in which the local *ᶜulamā* conduct religious revivalism in the region and feel that their contribution is needed more than ever. An outfit like the Tablīghī Jamāʿat hence provides such a platform. It teaches in simple steps on how to be a good Muslim, starting with a retreat from every day space and retraining on practical approach to religiosity. It then provides these literate individuals with a religious community and a transnational network that espouses similar concern. The individuals constitute or join a mosque-based group at their local mosque in which the time and sacred space is kept occupied almost on daily basis through meetings and neighbourhood tours. The Tablīghī Jamāʿat's bureaucratic structure holds these individuals together as they meet, plan, travel and redefine religious practice of their communities.

Small scale traders and other self-employed individuals in Moyale and Waso sub-*ḥalqa* form part of the movement. These entrepreneurs take precaution to ensure that their livelihood strategies are not compromised. They delegate management of the business to their spouses and relatives. They too can afford to pay for the costs of travel. They are likely to possess lesser levels of Islamic learning than mosque-based *ᶜulamā'* but still wish to impact on religious revivalism. They blame the *ᶜulamā'* for using an inappropriate approach addressing the symptoms rather what they call the real cause of social decadence: weak *imān*. They

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[213] In an informal conversation with a group of Borana speaking Muslims in Moyale, an informant gave an example of an old man who through frequent *khurūj* learned the Quran, vast number of *ḥadīth* sand polished his oratory skill surprising many *ᶜulamā* in town. After listening to him, one of the visiting sheikhs is said to have asked to which university did the preacher went to. Informal discussions with Sheikh Ibrahim and others, Helu, September 2009.

believe that as a thoughtful generation they are better placed to work on the hearts of the people:

> Take the case of the *ᶜulamā'* and the rest; they keep treating the problems such as *zinā* (Ar. adultery), *miraa* (leafy stimulant), *siyāsa* (Ar. politics), hypocrisy and so on. These are their targets. But the Tablīghī Jamāʿat goes beyond all this and target to clean the core of the issue; the heart. If the heart is weak then it will be easily to be tempted to *zinā,* to consume *miraa* and drugs, to do bad things. But if this heart is made to realize that it has to love Allah, it has to fear Allah, it has to worship Allah then change can gradually come. But what this new generation of preachers called *ahl al-sunna waʿl-jamāʿ* does is to condemn, to them everything is *bidᶜa* (Ar. religious innovation). What they see everywhere is *bidᶜa bidᶜa bidᶜa* and they want to correct there and then. They do not want to understand the people. They just want to solve it there and then.[214]

It is common to find male secondary and primary school students, travel for *khurūj* during school holiday. Retired policemen and provincial administration officials with ample time on their hands often join the movement to 'recharge' their religious practices.

Regular membership in mosque-based *maqāmī* teams avail an individual with a chance to lead. Leadership responsibilities being rotational may with time fall on one's shoulder provided a Tablīghī regularly attends most activities in an area, show commitment to the movement and display consistency in travels and mosque attendance. With more travels and participation in the weekly and monthly *shūra* and *jor*s and *ijtimā*ʿs, an individual builds a reputation as a reliable and religious person. Such an individual may gain the confidence and respect of the local Tablīghīs and be appointed an *amīr* for a month with task of coordinating meeting, evaluating progress, communicating with national office and welcoming foreign as well as local *jamāʿat*s into the sub-*ḥalqa* or *qarya*. An individual may gain recognition of his peers and of national leadership as a *qudamā'* and may lead other privileged responsibilities like the Borana translation team at national *ijtimā*ʿ and may upon the closure of gatherings appointed or selected to lead a forty days or four months travel team to Ethiopia, Moyale, Waso, Isiolo, Marsabit or Tana River. Without such a platform such individuals stand slim chances in gaining any position of religious authority within existing institutions.

The Borana prominence in the movement are at two levels. First as the target audience because according to the judgment of the Tablīghīs the levels of adherence to Islamic practices are either weak as in the case of Moyale and Waso or non-existent, as in the case of traditional followers of Borana indigenous religion. Second, a large section of Tablīghīs are drawn from the community. This is essentially true of Waso where the populace is largely

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[214] Interview with Abdi Galgalo, Moyale, June 2010.

Borana. In Moyale, substantial numbers are Borana while a number of Gabra, Garre, Burji and families of the Arab and Somali groups in the urban centres also are part of the movement.

A marker of identity for the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in the region is clothing. Pakistani *kurta* pyjama, *kofia* (Swa. Muslim cap) and pony-tailed *imma* (Ar. headscarf style, also called *duubi* in Somali) and half-coat similar to the ones used by photo-journalists (sleeveless windbreakers) are archetypal wear of a male Tablīghī. Beards are often left untrimmed while moustaches are removed or kept short. Ordinary *kanzu*s (Sw. Muslim robes) are also worn. When on move, collapsible mosquito nets, thin portable mattress or sleeping bag, cooking utensils, handful of *kanzu*s and bed sheets form part of the essential luggage. Wives of regular Tablīghīs are more likely to adhere to strict Islamic codes of dressing when outside their homes. *Hijāb* and *niqāb* are often a must. In the following section, the focus shall be case studies of Borana speaking *jamāʿat*s at Tablīghī conventions.

5.4 Case Studies

5.4.1 Gathering for the good of the umma: Borana at Tablīghī Conventions
The regularity of Tablīghī conventions in Kenya makes it a valuable space to explore how members of this transnational movement travel, interact and deliberate on proselytism. Important for the discussion is, how different Borana speaking *jamāʿat*s from the sub-*ḥalqa*s of Moyale, Marsabit, Isiolo and Waso congregate, network, recruit and disperse from Tablīghī national gatherings as one language group. Therefore case studies from attendance of regional and national gatherings shall be used to explore the dynamics of proselytism and the place of grass-root *ḥalqa*s at the national conventions. Isiolo *jor* held at Isiolo Jamia mosque from 10th to 12th April 2009, national leadership meetings held on 18th and 19th April 2009 and Nairobi *ijtimāʿ* held from 29th April to 2nd May 2010 shall be analysed. The three events are a typical congregational gatherings attended by the *jamāʿat*s from Borana speaking *jamāʿat*s from the area of study.

5.4.2 Isiolo *Jor*: Bringing Waso and Isiolo sub-*ḥalqa* together.
Prior to such regional *jor*s bringing together Tablīghīs from Isiolo and Waso sub-*ḥalqa*, in the monthly sub-*ḥalqa shūra* of Waso and Isiolo, the dates of upcoming *jor* and the allocated number of *jamāʿat*s to be mobilized by cluster of mosque-based *jamāʿat*s are agreed upon and shared. For instance Merti Tablīghīs may be asked to come 'ready' to the *jor,* with two to three 40 days *jamāʿat*s. The teams mobilized are expected to depart at the end of the *jor* to identified destinations. This distribution of recruitment quota is called *takaza* (Urdu).

During the Isiolo *jor*, a number of Tablīghīs from Kinna, Garba Tulla, Kula Mawe, Booji, Ires Aboru, Malka Daka, Sericho, Madogashe, Merti town, Biliqo, Bulesa, Korbesa, Mulanda, Mata Arba, Basa and Malka Gala of Waso sub-*ḥalqa* attended. The Isiolo sub-*ḥalqa* stretches from Isiolo town to Logo Logo, a small settlement at the north of Marsabit. In attendance were the Tablīghīs from the different mosques within the town. Tablīghīs from Meru and Nanyuki were part of the congregation too. They were mainly Kenyan Muslims of Asian descent. Meru has a number of Kenyan Asians some of whom are associated with the movement since its inception in the country. Transnational attendants included an Arabic speaking *jamāʿat* from Sudan composed of six to eight individuals, a *jamāʿat* from Wajir (Garissa *ḥalqa*), a Swahili speaking *jamāʿat* from the Mombasa *ḥalqa* and another from one of unidentified South Asian region. In essence all the three main *ḥalqas* in Kenya as well as the Arabian and South Asian Tablīghīs were represented. It demonstrates the transnationality and partnership for proselytism that recreate a miniature Tablīghī Jamāʿat wherever Tablīghīs meet. It is a common practice for a foreign and local *jamāʿats* doing *khurūj* in an area to attend and preach at Tablīghī *jors* and *ijtimāʿ*s. Kenya *Shūra*, the national leadership council was represented by a couple of individuals who oversaw the logistical support and coordinated the deliverance of sermons and recruitment of travel teams.

Approximately 500 persons attended the *jor*. The Tablīghīs from Isiolo and Waso formed the bulk of congregation.[215] It was held at the town's main Jamia mosque. Adjacent to the mosque is a prominent educational institution called Al Falah Islamic Educational Complex, a modern integrated Islamic school that offers secular and religious education and a health unit. Missing from the *jor* were the regular sheikhs of the mosque and the *ʿulamā'* from Al Falah Complex. The visiting Tablīghīs were accommodated at the centre. They cooked, ate and slept at Al-Falah. The classroom were utilised for accommodation. The accommodation was arranged on the basis of places of the origin of the group, for instance, Merti, Kinna, Meru, India, Sudan, Coast, North Eastern and so on.

Preferences were given to visiting foreign and regional *jamāʿats* to deliver *bayān*s after *Maghrib*, *Fajr*, *ẓuhr* and *'Asr* prayers. There was a team of translators on standby to translate Urdu, Somali and Arabic into Swahili and Borana for the congregants. Similarly when *bayān*s were in Swahili these individuals were attached to Urdu and Arabic *jamāʿats*, to get the message across. Most Urdu-Swahili translators at the *jor*s were Kenyan Asians from Meru

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[215] Isiolo town is ethnically heterogeneous. Borana and Somali form the bulk of the residents. Meru form a significant minority. Other Kenyan ethnic groups found here include Turkana, Samburu and Kikuyu. Waso and Isiolo are intricately connected by constant movement of goods and people. Isiolo serves as the headquarters of Isiolo County.

and some members of the Kenya *Shūra*. None of the *bayān*s were rendered either from Borana to other languages or other languages to Borana. This is partly because Isiolo being cosmopolitan area, the choice of language has immense implication for inter-ethnic rivalry and ownership of the sacred space being utilised. The mosque attendants are drawn from all ethnic groups and use of Borana translation for all may be seen to exclude significant numbers of non-Borana attendants. It is only in *taʿlīm* session on the 11th April that the Borana speaking *jamāʿat*s from different areas of Waso and Isiolo town had a chance to constitute a team for instructional purpose. Concurrently an equally large Swahili speaking *jamāʿat* mainly composed of non-Borana speaking congregants, *jamāʿat*s from Meru, Coast and Nairobi constituted a *taʿlīm* group. Somali, Sudanese and Urdu *taʿlīm* sessions were also conducted in small circles.

The Borana *taʿlīm* had four sections. First, it explored the various *ḥadīth*s and Qurʾānic verses that extolled the benefits of reciting Qurʾān, learning Qur'ān and turning the commands contained in the Qur'ān into practical religious deeds. The climax of the session was regrouping of a hundred or so audience into smaller groups of two to four individuals to recite to shorter chapters of the Qur'ān namely: *Surāt al-Fātiḥa, Surāt al-Nās, Surāt al-Falaq, Surāt al-Ikhlās, Surāt al-Lahab, Surāt al-Nasr, Surāt al-Kafirun, Surāt al-Kathwar, Surāt al-Ma'un, Surāt al-Quraysh* and *Surāt al-Fil*. The exercise lasting 20 minutes, broke the monotony of the instructions and engaged the audience in practical learning. In the second section, there were instructions on different practices encouraged as religiously rewarding as stated in an array of selected *ḥadīth*s and Qurʾān. This includes merits of *wuḍū'* and *ṣalāt* among other *'ibadāt*. The third section was on *mudhākara* of *sitta siffat*, a session that basically re-emphasised the six attributes of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat for easy memorisation. The session was given in Arabic then rendered into Borana. A different speaker was invited to offer the teaching. The speaker displayed proficiency in comprehension of the six attributes, selected *ḥadīth*s and Qur'ān to legitimate the attributes and an immense array of Borana vocabularies to render the tenets of the movement in the most understandable way. In an earlier interaction with him, he shared his travel experiences to the Borana Ethiopian regions of Dirre and Liban. The fourth session was *tashkīl*, the much anticipated recruitment drive. The target is to get motivated individuals to volunteer time to travel. The audience was then split into zonal groupings for intensive *tashkīl* to be supervised by senior Tablīghīs from their own area. Therefore, Garba Tulla, Merti, Kinna, Korbesa and other Tablīghīs from smaller towns and settlements were made to sit in smaller groupings and mobilisation drive carried out among them. The audience was keen and sat through the 1 ½ hours of religious instructions. At the

beginning of the *taʿlīm*, Aw Kombola, one of the most dedicated Tablīghī from Merti town gave a religious peptalk on sincerity in prayers and religious deeds to render the heart receptive to the reverence of God. Before he handed the audience to the main speaker of the *taʿlīm*, also a regular *dāʿi* from Merti, Aw Kombola advised the Borana speaking audience in this manner:

> Let us all fulfil the promise that we made to Allah to attend this occasion. Let us benefit from it. We the Borana people gathered here did not come to Isiolo for sightseeing. All these eyes I am seeing are from Waso, whether it is Isiolo North or South. Maybe a few are from elsewhere. Did any of us come for tourism in Isiolo? Is there any? Did we not come for the *jor*? Therefore let us all use our time, listen and transform ourselves as commanded by Allah and narrated to us by the books. *Sawa*? (Swa. Is that ok?)[216]

Evaluation of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat activities formed the theme of the gathering after ʿ*Aṣr* talk on the 11th April. Each of the sub-*ḥalqa*s gathered at the *jor* gave *ahwāl* (evaluative report) for the last one year. Prior to the start of the *jor*, each sub-*ḥalqa's amīr* were supplied with a form to fill in regarding to the past achievement, present state of affairs and projected growth of the movement in the area. The analysis of this form shall be given in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Fajr prayers and subsequent session on 12th April marked the general end of the mini-*ijtimāʿ*. The *bayān* was done by a sheikh from the Urdu speaking *jamāʿat* and translated into Swahili by an elder from Baitul Maal. The sermon normally serves as *ḥidāya,* a kind of farewell talk about how to remain steadfast on the path of faith. It is especially important for all those who have pledged to travel for stipulated number of days to take guidance from the elders and prominent *dāʿis*.

The names of the volunteer lay preachers were called out loudly. The four months *jamāʿat* volunteers were the first to be called. They passed in front of the seated adherents and went to the *minbar* (Ar. a dais on which an *imām* stand to deliver a sermon) area. Moving from left to right, each volunteer shook hand with a seated sheikh (almost with reverence) and the Swahili translator as a pledge to travel for the sake of *daʿwa*. It was a form of acknowledgement of their undertaking, binding each volunteer before the adherents and the elders of the movement that he shall in deed go for this *daʿwa*. There was a four month local group expected to travel to India, Pakistan and /or Bangladesh. This group comprised of about 26 persons. The next groups to pass the *minbar* were 40 days *jamāʿat*s. They are about 23 persons. Then ten days' *jamāʿat*s and finally a large number of three days jamāʿat volunteers. Finally the elder seated

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[216] Borana *taʿlim*, Isiolo Jor, Isiolo Jamia mosque, 11th April, 2009.

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on the *minbar* begins the much-awaited *dua*. The *dua* was lengthy and emotional. The choruses of 'amīn' were interrupted by sobs from some 'pious' adherents.

An unexpected guest at the session was Sheikh Abdullai Golicha of Merti Qurʾān Centre. Though not a Tablīghī, he asked to be given a chance to say a few things to the congregation. He, as is characteristic of him, extolled that reminding the *umma* about faith as very important. He however cautioned those who travel to take heed and take time not just to travel around but read and learn Qurʾān. He stated that only then a change could occur in an individual's life. His speech took about ten minutes. A tense moment for the Tablīghī Jamāʿat leaders was when he begun to preach about the totality of religion and *umma* as well as concerns about the suffering of fellow Muslims in global hotspots such as Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq, Palestine and Somalia. He asked the audience to pray for global peace and spiritual solidarity with them. The Tablīghī leaders hurriedly took the microphone from him and apologized that time was short. The Tablīghī Jamāʿat being avowed 'apolitical' appeared not to share the contemporary concerns raised by the renowned sheikh. In line with their avoidance of controversial matters such as politics, social-political activism and difference with ʿulamāʾ, they muted the elderly sheikh's sermons.

The Waso *ḥalqa* did a consultative *shūra* for their members before its departure from the *jor* venue. The Sudanese *jamāʿat* was planning to tour the Waso immediately after the end of the *jor*. The questions discussed included: To which towns and mosques should the Sudanese *jamāʿa*t be sent? Who should represent the sub-*ḥalqa* in *majma jor* (Ur. gatherings for senior regulars), the upcoming national leadership *shūra*? Who shall be the *amīr* of the Waso-*ḥalqa* at the coming Nairobi *ijtimāʿ?* How shall the sub-*ḥalqa* contribute volunteers to various departments of the *ijtimāʿ* management to ensure its success? Who shall be part of the publicity team making announcements in mosques in the area about the Nairobi *ijtimāʿ* so as to mobilize as many Tablīghīs and non-Tablīghīs as possible? The Waso sub-*ḥalqa* agreed to send two representatives with a filled-in appraisal form to the national *majma jor*. At the back of the form, names of Waso volunteers for different responsibilities were noted. Waso contributed four person to *tashkīl*; two to *istiqbāl*; three to *khidma*; three to *ḥirāsa* ; three to *tarjama* and another three extras in case of any need.

5.4.3 *Majma jor*: Retreat for the *Qudamāʾ*

Organising an *ijtimāʿ* in Kenya is a collective work. Before an *ijtimāʿ*, there are certain preparations that must be done. One is that the compound of the venue must be prepared. This is called *mithan* (Ar. compound). The preparation include the installation of microphones and loud speakers, wiring and bulbs in the compounds and in the venues to be used, water taps,

adequate temporary and permanent toilets and bathrooms, trimming of grass, collection of garbage, construction of temporary kitchen, crowd management personnel, reception and food tents and cleaning of the main Markaz, the old mosque and offices. Four *shuʿba* (Ar. departments) identified and planned for: First, *tashkīl*, after every *bayān*, there should a team that stand by to write down the names of the volunteers and sits them aside for further instructions. Second, *shuʿba majma jor*, this refers to the bringing together all or most of the senior *dāʿi*s of the *daʿwa* movement from every sub-*ḥalqa* in Kenya. They deliberate the *ijtimāʿ* programme to the last details. Third, *shuʿba ikhtilāl*, this is the team that goes out and does *tashkīl* people to come back into mosque into the *ijtimāʿ* programme rather than waste time on outside mundane activities. Often during the *ijtimāʿ*s the temporary business stalls selling food, clothes and books attracts the *ijtimāʿ* attendants and compete for attention with the religious talks going on the mosque. Many others tired with long hours of sitting and listening to sermons after sermons prefer to stand outside and chat. These categories of individuals engaged in activities that do not add to the success of the gathering have to be motivated to get back on track. This department is mandated to do just that. Fourth, *shuʿba khidma*, the department of service and hospitality. They are concerned with varieties of service including cooking. The Tablīghīs note that all these works are shared out among the volunteers from the different *ḥalqa*s and sub-*ḥalqa*s in Kenya. It is argued no payment is claimed from offering of these services.[217] Often individuals are delegated to the duties that are similar to their everyday profession. For instance, the teachers within the movement form an excellent translation team and recruitment teams and members of security forces do splendid job as sentries, crowd management and security logistics in the massive compound. The *majma jor* was held at the Baitul Maal Markaz. Apart from representatives from most of the sub-*ḥalqa*s in Kenya, there were a number of Tablīghīs from Tanzania and a few from Uganda in attendance. Themes discussed were the performance of various *ḥalqa*s in Kenya and country *ḥalqa*s of Tanzania and Uganda, ways of facilitating further growth of the movement and details about preparations of the upcoming Nairobi *ijtimāʿ* to be held in two weeks' time. Logistics such as accommodation, security, and reception of guests from outside the country and banning of petty traders from inside the *markaz* compounds as they previously disrupted movement's programmes were among topics discussed. The names of

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[217] Interview with Hassan Jarso, Nairobi, May, 2010, He adds that 'all the works in the tablīghī *ijtimāʿ* programme is done on voluntary basis. No pay is given. It is Allah who gives the reward to the volunteers. *La nuridu minkum jaza aww wala shukura* ('We feed you for the sake of God alone: We seek neither recompense nor thanks from you. 76:10) There is no payment for the work. It is all freely done. Even if he get burned or injured on the work, we should not regret but thank Allah

expected elders from IPB and status of their participation were shared.[218] *Majma jor* was also characterized by series of smaller consultative *shūra*s between *ḥalqa*s and different committees, mandated to carry out specialized tasks during the *ijtimāʿ*.

5.4.4 Nairobi *Ijtimāʿ*: Borana at Baitul Maal

How do Borana speaking *jamāʿat*s from Moyale, Isiolo, Marsabit, Kinna and Garba Tulla organize to come to Nairobi national *ijtimāʿ*? Do the *jamāʿat*s travel together or individually find their way to the *markaz*? How and where do they occupy in the expansive and crowded sacred space of the main *masjid*? Who are the translators of main lectures into Borana? Where do the Borana speaking *jamāʿat* eat and sleep? In this section we shall explore the place of Borana speaking *jamāʿat*s in the transnational Tablīghī event.

5.4.4.1 Leaving for Baitul Maal

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, prior to any major Tablīghī convention, a special publicity team called *taasil jamāʿat* is organized by each sub-*ḥalqa* and sent around to inform the general public as well as the Tablīghīs about an upcoming *jor* or an *ijtimāʿ*. The potential attendants would hand in their names to the *tashkīl* team of his local *maqāmī*. Each individual would also give the money for the fare to and from Nairobi and for food while at the *ijtimāʿ*. The local Tablīghīs would then negotiate with vehicle owners for reduced fares. They appeal to sentiment of sacrifice for faith and the motive of the journey being spiritual nourishment and betterment of the society of which the vehicle owner is also a member. If the travellers are a handful, the bargain power may not be much but if the number is large, then the Tablīghīs would hire a whole vehicle to Nairobi. On average the cost of fare from Moyale to Nairobi is about Kshs. 1000. The means of transport favoured by the Moyale Tablīghīs is lorries (trucks). The trucks mainly transport cattle for beef industries in Kenya's capital city and its environ. The passengers hold firmly to the top frame of the truck as seats. It is also a popular and cheaper means of transport supplementing unreliably erratic buses charging at least Kshs. 3000. Following a successful publicity drive in every mosque, the sub-*ḥalqa* can mobilize up to 100 persons. The total cost paid by each potential congregant as part of a group would be far less than self-organised travel. At times the total cost of the fare to and fro as well as three meals daily for four days at the *ijtimāʿ* would barely be above Kshs. 3000. Each person is expected to take care of his food and drinks while on journey. Accommodation enroute is obtained for free at mosques along the way. Below is a popular means of transport

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[218] Some of the elders frequently invited are Haji Muhammad Abdulwahhab, Mawlana Sa'd, and Mawlana Zubair among others.

for people travelling from Moyale to Nairobi. In the last few years, regular bus services are also available.[219]

Picture 5 A typical means of transport in northern Kenya

Before departure, an *amīr* is usually appointed to be in charge of the team. The *amīr* is to be obeyed throughout the journey until return to Moyale. Sermons are briefly offered on the significance of the religious journeying paralleling the travel about to start to historical excursions made by Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Strict obedience to the Tablīghī codes of behaviour such as avoidance of mundane talks is emphasised. No prayers are to be missed. Therefore regular stops for obligatory prayers are made. The Moyale team ordinarily leaves the town at round 10 am aboard such trucks arriving in the compound of the *markaz* around the evening of the next day. The highly exhausting journey covers an approximate distance of 838 kms. Of the 838 kms, 448 kms is tarmac road. Brief stops are made along the way for food and prayers in Sololo, Turbi, Marsabit, Laisamis, Merille, Isiolo and Nanyuki. Upon arrival the *amīr* and other regulars would inform the *istiqbāl* at the *markaz* of the presence of Moyale team. Then the group would be directed to put their luggage at one corner preferably near the Borana speaking *tarjama*. The area serves also as their sleeping place at night.

Being en-route from porous international borders, the Kenya Police often mount barriers to

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[219] The picture is sourced from http://boksbikeadventure.blogspot.com/2010/05/kenya-uganda-kenya.html.

verify identities of road users from Moyale and Marsabit. The last major police check-point is in Isiolo. Senior regulars and the *amīr* ensure that before departure all the travellers have the Kenya national identity cards or if they are Ethiopians all the relevant travel documents. Students being minors are largely exempted from scrutiny though school identity cards may be sought for. The *amīr* and other leaders in the vehicle would at each check-point negotiate with the Police that the passengers are all on spiritual journey to attend Muslim gathering in Nairobi. Often the truck would be released to proceed with the journey.

Merti is about 224km from Isiolo town. The route is all-weather road. The Tablīghīs from Merti rely on similar trucks just like the ones used by Moyale Tablīghīs. However unlike the Moyale one, they use this means of transport up to Isiolo. The local Tablīghī leaders gather the potential attendants and negotiate with vehicle owners for a bargain fare. In Isiolo, they would spend the night either at the Ansar mosque that also serves *markaz* or any other mosque or at homes of their relatives within Isiolo. The next day, the team also leaves together for Nairobi aboard one of the four buses that ply Isiolo-Nairobi route. Upon arrive at midday, the Tablīghīs and non-Tablīghī congregants would walk from 9th Street Eastleigh, Nairobi, where the Isiolo bus stage is to the junction of Juja Road and the Eastleigh First Avenue, a distance of about 1 km.[220] Just like the Moyale team, they upon registration head to join the Moyale team at the Borana speaking *jamāʿat* quarters. Tablīghīs from Marsabit, Isiolo, Kinna, Sericho, Garba Tulla and Madogashe would equally make the journey and join the Borana speaking *jamāʿat* at the *markaz*.

5.4.4.2 Ijtimāʿ: The event

The *ijtimāʿ* held annually at Baitul Maal Markaz attracts up to 15000 people. Women do not attend. Men of all ages, Tablīghīs and non-Tablīghīs, from the three *ḥalqa*s in Kenya, arrive at the *Markaz* on different means of transport namely: on foot from sprawling informal settlements and low housing estates such as Eastleigh, Kariobangi, Huruma, Dandora, and Mathare and by private and public buses and mini-vans. During this event the participants also came from the following countries: Kenya (largest group); Tanzania (second largest group); Uganda (small group); Rwanda (small group); Burundi (small group); Democratic Republic of Congo (small group); Somalia (large group though it is not easy to distinguish between the Kenyan and Somali Somalis); South Africa, Zambia (few, mostly elders of the country); Ethiopia (small group, mainly refugees from Section I and II Eastleigh); small

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[220] Most buses and trucks leaving for northern Kenya have pick up and drop off points in various streets of Eastleigh Nairobi. This somali dominated neighbourhood is hence the final destinations for most buses. Isiolo buses are found on 9th Street while Moyale and Marsabit passengers often pick their own on 10th Street.

groups of Tablīghīs from unidentified Middle Eastern countries and IPB - India Pakistan Bangladesh (foreign *jamāʿat*s in Kenya and invited speakers from centres such as Nizamuddin in Delhi, India). Below is the spatial illustration of the *markaz* compound.
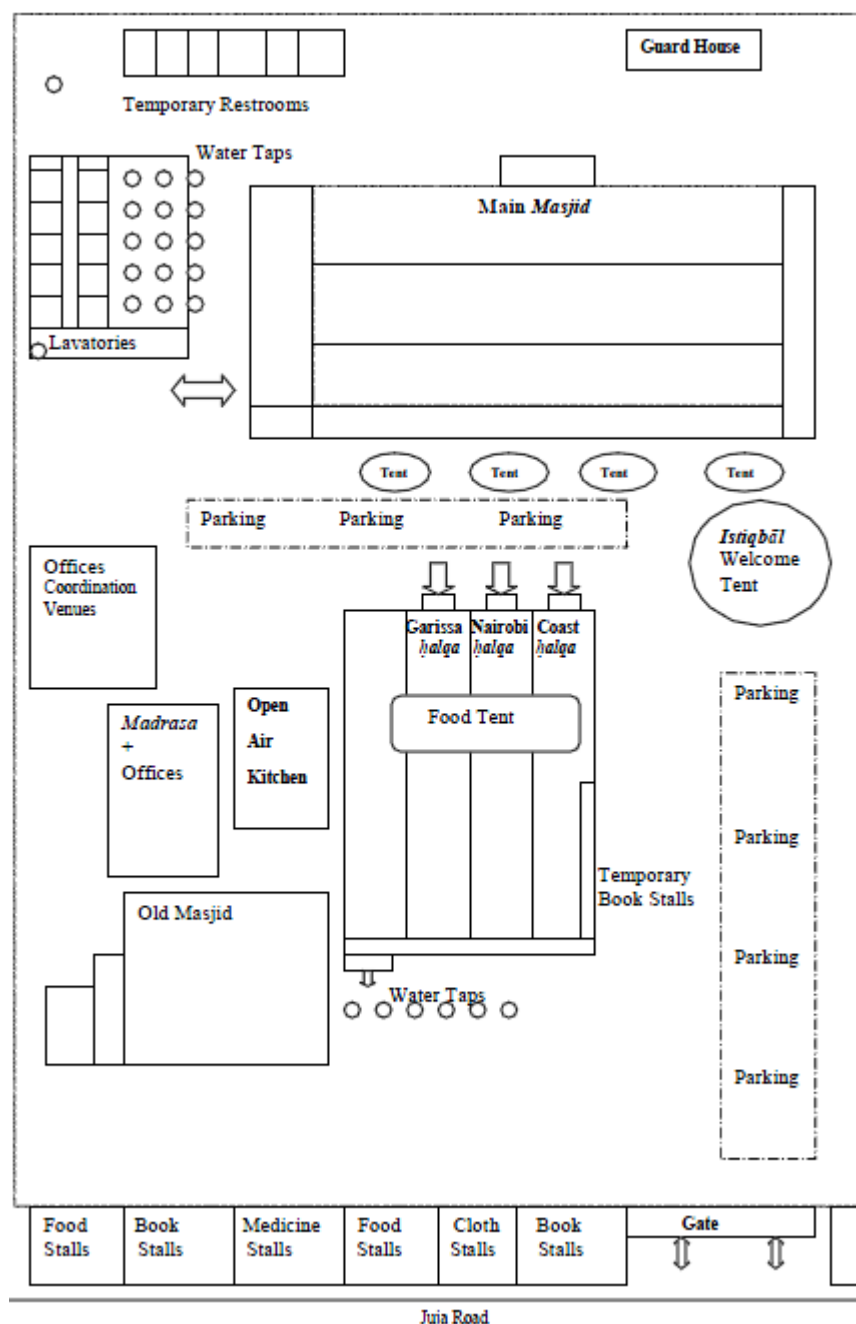
Figure 5 Baitul Maal Markaz

I arrived at the Baitul Maal Markaz on the afternoon of 29th April well prepared for the 4 days retreat. Upon arrival I met some of key informants whom I had earlier interviewed in my previous field excursions. They directed me to join either the Moyale or Merti group of the Borana speaking *jamāʿat*. I placed my luggage in the corner, where the Moyale group was based. Apart from observation about the social patterns of relations, spatial arrangement of

different linguistic groups from various countries and regions, the speeches of the *ijtimāʿ* had one main aim, to ensure that as many people as possible give their time after the *ijtimāʿ* to go for *khurūj* or *daʿwa* tour. The prime objective of *ijtimāʿ* is hence interpreted as mobilisation and dispersal of many *jamāʿat*s for *daʿwa*. The speeches therefore had similar patterns and contents though formulation differed. The speeches centred around:

- The basic tenets of the movement such as *sitta siffat*
- Narratives about the Prophet and his companions
- Primacy of *khurūj* as obligatory and the most appropriate form of *daʿwa* today
- The neglect of the obligation of *daʿwa* by the Muslims and need to get back to the true faith
- Review of activities of different country and regional *ḥalqa*s in the last years

The speeches can be roughly divided into three kinds: *bayān*s after *Maghrib*, *Fajr*, *ẓuhr* and *Asr* prayers; *taʿlīm*s between 9.30 am to 12 pm and various consultative meetings that included in it, motivational talks and deliberations of Tablīghī activities for the coming months. To get a deeper analysis let us turn to translation and language use at the multi-lingua and multi-vocal environment of the *ijtimāʿ*.

5.4.4.3 Translating Tabligh: Language-based congregations and domestication of transnational ideology

On 30th April 2010 after the *Fajr* prayers and just before the *bayān* was to begin, an interesting announcement was made. The announcer informed the congregants that there shall be a series of *shūra*s set to take place mid-morning for different categories of people. The remarkable aspect of the announcement was not the message but how it was conveyed. A middle-aged man gave the same announcement starting first in Swahili, then Somali, then Borana, then English, then Urdu and finally Arabic. With such linguistic proficiency one could say with certainty that certain categories of senior Tablīghīs are indeed truly transnational. Later inquiries revealed that the man was a Borana who grew up in Nairobi and among the experienced coordinators of various programmes of the national events of this nature and magnitude and a well-travelled lay preacher.

It is through preaching and travels that the Tablīghīs have made progress in Kenya. Many South Asian Tablīghīs who transverse the Eastern African region hardly speak any other languages other than Urdu (or Bihari and Bengali for those from Bangladesh) and 'broken' English. It should be noted that such linguistic deficiency, has not hindered their prowess in carrying out what they believe is the best form of *daʿwa*. It is not uncommon to find such travelling preachers being on the road, at times on foot, for up to a year. This has also

remained one of the main points of criticism levelled against the local as well as foreign *jamāʿat*s by *ʿulamāʾ* of mainstream *Salafī* influenced traditions. However with time, Kenyan regulars picked rudimentary understanding of Urdu particularly through *khurūj* for up to 4 months to India and Pakistan.

An observation of the language usage at the *ijtimāʿ* show that while Arabic remained the *lingua franca* of prayers, *ḥadīth* and Qurʾān; Urdu was primarily used to preach on most occasions. This is because Tablīghī elders from IPB and South Africa were often given the special privilege of preaching to the Eastern African Tablīghīs. They are specially invited to give motivational talks and to boost the morale of local followers. Occasionally a Somali or Swahili speaking *ʿālim* may be granted a short chance to say something, but even that remained secondary to the sermons of Urdu speaking elders.

The work of translation falls under a special team also known as *tarjama*. It is one of the five organisational divisions of management of *ijtimāʿ*. Apart from *tarjama*, each of the sub-*ḥalqa*s of the three *ḥalqa*s as mentioned earlier contributes volunteers for *khidma*, *istiqbāl*, *tashkīl* and *ḥirāsa*. The numbers of languages spoken by the congregants are so many. Each of these language groups sat around their *tarjama* speaker who translated the message of the main speaker into local language of the audience. There following were the *tarjama* circles in the main mosque:

a) Swahili *tarjama* and language group

b) Somali *tarjama* and language group

c) Borana *tarjama* and language group

d) Amharic *tarjama* and language group

e) Kinyarwanda *tarjama* and language group

f) Eastern Congo *tarjama* and language group

g) Baganda *tarjama* and language group

h) Arabic *tarjama* and language group

i) Urdu *tarjama* and language group

Each of the language-based *jamāʿat* occupied specific sections of the enormous *markaz*. Each *tarjama* team was provided with an earphone and microphone to listen to if they wish to Urdu original as well as their main source: Swahili translation. Situated strategically around the mosque were hi-fi speakers mounted on the walls belting out the Urdu as well as the Swahili translation. In a number of instances Borana speaking *jamāʿat* complained about 'loudness' of

the loud speaker prompting the Borana *amīr*s to mute it. They seemed to prefer getting the message 'live' in their own language and from their own Tablīghīs.

The Borana *jamāʿat sat* at the far right side of the *masjid* away from the *minbar*. Placards mounted on the wall guided new comers, as to where to find the right circle to join. *Ḥirāsa* and *istiqbāl* teams strolled the corridors of the main mosque and the compound to offer directions and prevent breach of security.

The procedure of sermons and speech translation followed specific patterns. First an Urdu speaking elder (*akābir*) would give a brief talk for five minutes. By then the Swahili translator takes mental notes of the main points in the speech and then relay the message which is then picked up by all the *tarjama* teams to be finally delivered to the eager audience in their own 'mother tongues'. The Swahili language acts as the connector between the Urdu original and various languages of the congregants. The translations were never word for word but rather speakers' understanding of what was said by the guest speaker. It provided leeway for each speaker to render the message comprehensible in the most fitting way. While all the different *tarjama* appropriate and relay the message as best understood to their audience, the Urdu speaker would concurrently be giving the next round of brief talks. It was a cacophony of sounds with overlapping voices and multiple reinforcement of difference and simultaneous confirmation of unity amid diversity. A *bayān* could take at least 1 ½ hours. For spatial arrangement of the different language-based *jamāʿat*s and use of space on the ground floor of the main mosque, see the diagram below:
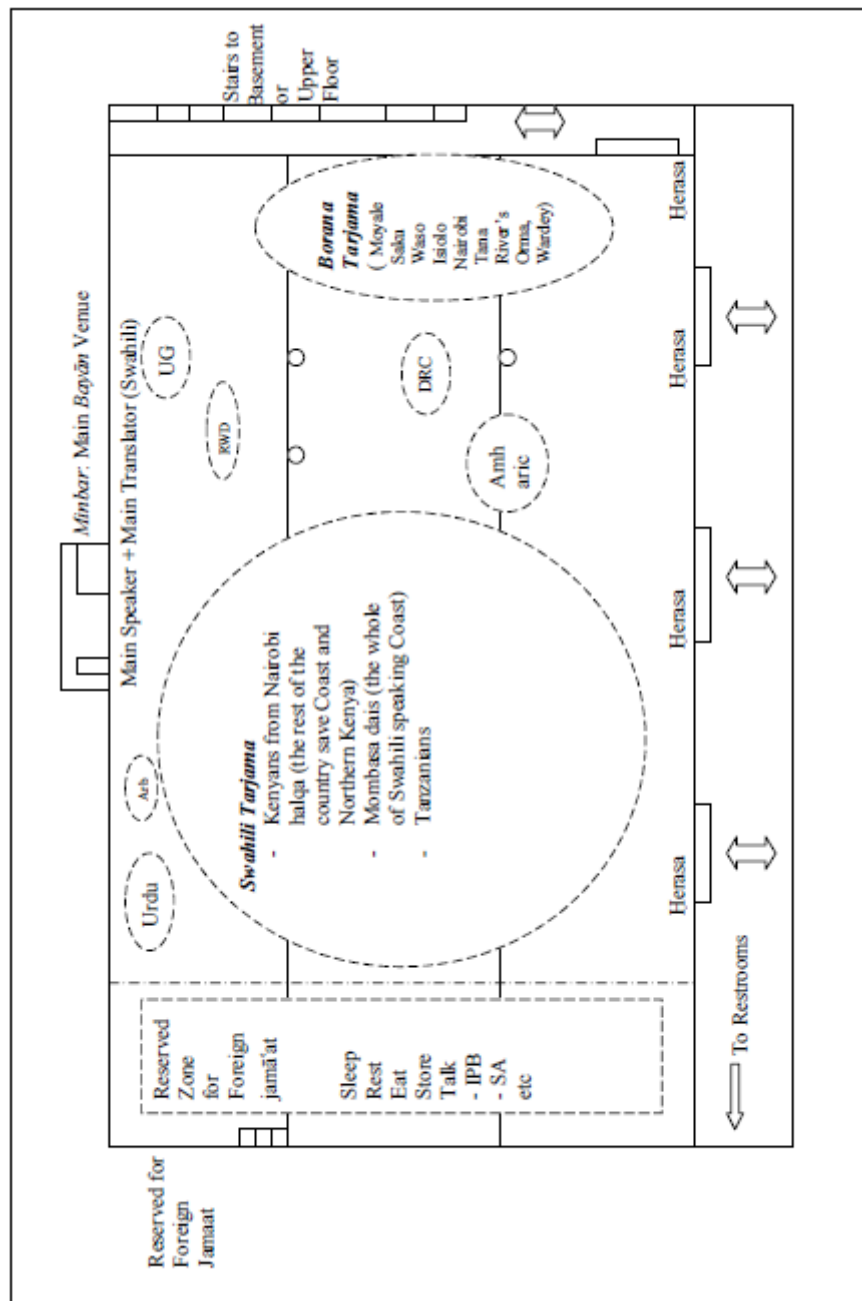
Figure 6 Translation circles in the main mosque ground floor

Spatial distribution of language-based groups in the main mosque ground floor.
Amh is Amharic speaking group, DRC is a group from the eastern part Democratic Republic of Congo, RWD is a team from Rwanda, UG is a team from Uganda, Urdu is an Urdu speaking group from Indian Subcontinent, and Arb is a small group from unspecified Arabic speaking countries.

5.4.4.3.1 Swahili Speaking *jamāʿat*

The largest and the most diverse congregants were in the Swahili group. Here Kenyans and Tanzanians of diverse origin sat and listened directly to the main Swahili translation. The group stretched from the *minbar* to the main doors of the mosque covering over half the space of the main ground floor. The congregants directly faced the Urdu and Swahili speakers. Swahili group was composed of :

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- Kenyans from Nairobi *ḥalqa* (the rest of the county except North Eastern Province, Isiolo, Waso, Moyale and Marsabit)
- Kenyans from Mombasa *ḥalqa* with exception of Tana River.
- Tablīghīs from Tanzania

The Swahili group is hence a microcosm of East Africa. The Swahili translators largely hailed from among multilingual Kenyan Asians. There is enhanced connectivity between this largely naturalized Kenya Asians and South Asian elders and centres from IPB. The Kenyan Asians speak Urdu, Swahili and English have impacted on religious revivalism among indigenous Kenya Muslims and have for years on private basis contributed towards the building of *madrasa*s and mosques. The movement provided this largely 'philanthropic self-made' sheikhs with organisational capacity to impact on Tablīghīs religiosity in a most dramatic way. The movement hence is not only an outreach programme to the indigenous Kenyan Muslims to join a transnational network of lay preachers but also a golden opportunity for these Kenyan Asians to reconnect with 'motherland' in a spiritual way. The role of Kenya's Borana Tablīghīs among the traditional Borana of Ethiopia also alludes to such motives. The Kenya Asians in the movement link the local and transnational dimension of the faith movement.

Coming back to the Swahili group, it should be noted that Swahili is an official language in Kenya alongside English. Over the years due to mass education, Swahili is widely used by Kenyans in almost all forms of interactions. It has served as means of communication between various communities in Kenya and by Muslim and Christians in proselytism. In most urban centres Swahili is used as the main language of Friday *khuṭba*. Somali is used largely in North Eastern Province and Eastleigh mosques, Borana is used in most mosques in Isiolo, most mosques in Waso, Moyale and Marsabit for purpose of preaching and religious instructions. The preference of Swahili in the Muslim communication has not however muted the use of other languages by the movement in order to reach out to others in their own tongue. On the contrary, parallel to demystification of Arabic as language of sermons and its replacement with Urdu, the movement in Kenya downplays the use of Swahili except in urban areas in Central, Rift Valley and Western region and in the coastal region of Kenya. The movement aims to carry out 'contextual *daʿwa*' and packaging of the spiritual goods in the language of the people. Individuals are believed to get the message best when it is relayed in the language of their socialization. There is a tendency within the Tablīghī phenomena that points to facilitation of the ownership of the movement through domestication of the message.

This is highly visible at the *ijtimāʿ*. Despite common understanding of the national language, most large linguistic communities gather around their own *tarjama* teams. Large sections of Kenyan Somalis could understand Swahili if they wished to listen to Swahili *tarjama* so were most Borana speaking Tablīghīs. It should be remembered that in the tier of translation, Swahili was first and all the other languages obtain their translations (or commentaries) from Swahili and not the Urdu original. Outside the markaz preaching sessions, most informal interactions between different Tablīghīs were carried out in Swahili and other local languages. Notices and signs for directions and designated areas were done in Swahili and English. Different members of organisational departments also converse in Swahili.

5.4.4.3.2 Somali Speaking *jamāʿat*

The Somali *tarjama* was the second largest linguistic group at the *ijtimāʿ*. Somali language is spoken by the majority of inhabitants of North Eastern Province, Ogaden State in Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, by large diasporic communities in Europe and North America and by the large Somali population in Eastleigh, Nairobi and various Somali business communities in a number of Kenyan towns.

The Somali speaking *jamāʿat* was composed of:

1. Somali Kenyans from North Eastern Province such as Garissa and Wajir
2. Somali immigrants and Somali Kenyans from the neighbouring commercial hub of Eastleigh
3. Somali Kenyans from various urban centres including the Coastal cities
4. Garre from Mandera, a bilingual community speaking both Borana and Somali (Most Garreh appear to favour to sit in this translation circle than the Borana one)
5. Somalis from Somalia, may be even Ethiopia; Djibouti; Tanzania

The group, due to its large size, was granted the upper floor of the Markaz as their *tarjama* zone and space for accommodation. The upper floor was by then largely unfinished unlike the ground floor that served as the main mosque and where all preaching activities took place. Just like the other *tarjama* teams, the Somali translators were networked with Swahili and Urdu speakers via loud speakers, earphones and microphones.
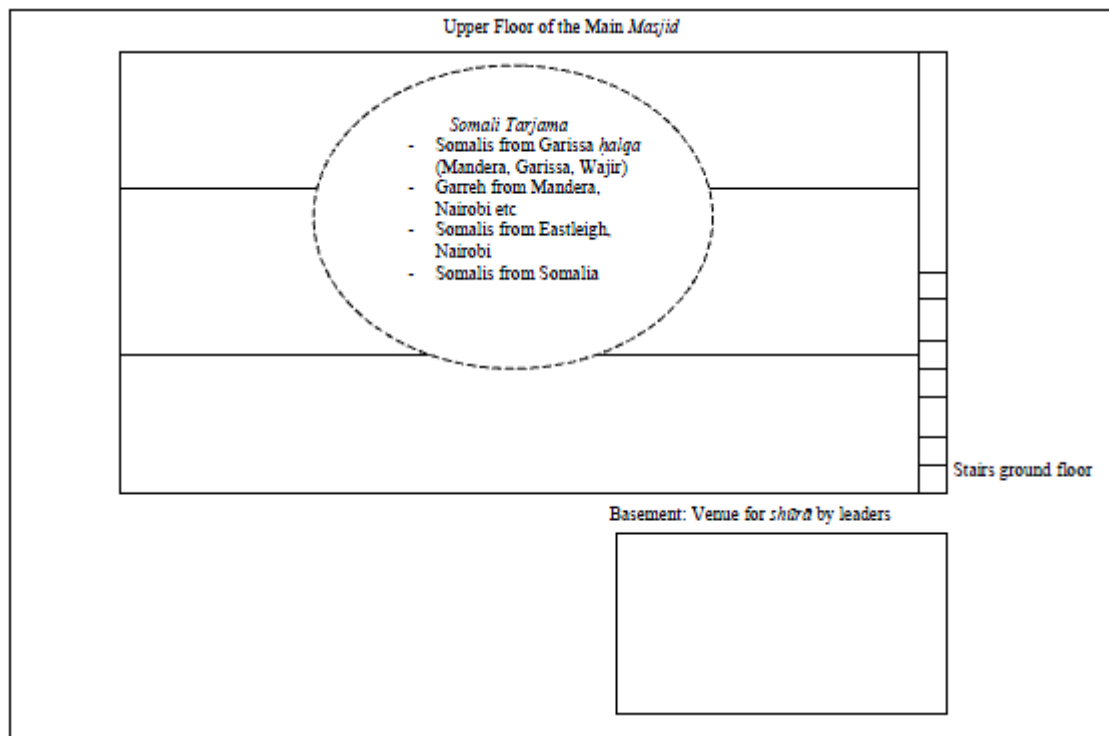
Figure 7 Somali _tarjama_

5.4.4.3.3 Borana Speaking _jamāʿat_

The Borana speaking congregation was the third largest after the Swahili and the Somali and second largest on the ground floor. It was an interesting mix of Borana speaking congregants. Teams from Moyale, Marsabit, Isiolo, Waso and Borana speaking Muslims from nearby Eastleigh, Komarock, Mathari, Huruma, Kariobangi and Dandora sat around the translation team. An interesting addition to the mix are congregants from Tana River namely the Wardhey and the Orma. Orma language is closely related to Borana and is mutually intelligible.[221] This formation of such language-based _jamāʿat_s at such transnational events helps to reinforce inter-ethnic solidarity and belongingness. Orma and Borana, separated by years of outward migration and cut off from each other by colonial rule re-establish commonality through sharing the novel message of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat under one roof and in one corner as a group. In a side chat, one Orma Tablīghī told me that the Borana and the Orma were one and that the two possess similar clan structures and dual moieties.

Such bond of brotherhood is further reinforced by instantaneous friendship and curious interests to rediscover the 'long lost' ethnic kin. For some Tablīghīs and non-Tablīghīs, this is

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[221] Schlee states that Tana Orma are closely related to the Borana and other Oromo speakers of Ethiopia. He observes that 'nam Orma' which means Orma man is used by Borana as designation of all Oromo and ritually associated people. Their clan structure is similar to that of Borana with duality in moieties as well as some clan names corresponding to each other implying a historical split hundreds of years ago Schlee (1992).

the first close interactions with the Orma or the Borana. To bring fairness, inclusion, ownership of the message, equal opportunity and representativity among the various regions under the Borana *tarjama*, the organisers of the *ijtimāʿ* allocated translation opportunities to senior Tablīghīs from Moyale, Kinna, Merti, Isiolo and Tana River. It made the listeners feel at home as they keenly follow the *bayān*s and *taʿlim*s from their own kins. The speakers often urged the audience to squeeze closer to allow for better reception, bonding and more space for new congregants.

The Borana *tarjama* teams appropriated the messages being preached in Swahili and by extension Urdu to their everyday situation back home, a loss of meanings notwithstanding. There is a recurrent personalised appeal to the target audience to improve their religiosity as Muslims who spoke 'our language'. Some speakers decried the moral laxity among the Borana speaking communities, attributing it to a lack of genuine concerns for their faith and urged dramatic changes upon returning home. Others appropriated examples from livelihood challenges, allegorical reference to cattle the prized Borana possession to drive their points home and to Borana cultural survivals affecting proper Islamic revivalism. Some speakers were livelier and infused ethnic anecdotes to break monotony.[222] Others were outrightly conservative and heavily relied on the Swahili translation. A few translators hardly followed the points raised by the Swahili translator and did their own parallel show. Each session had a different speaker hence providing the audience with varied oratory skills and interpretations.

The Borana speaking group ranged between 400 to 500 persons. During the final day of the *ijtimāʿ,* it seemed to hit a hundred people more. At one moment due to the large number of the audience, those positioned at the fringes could hardly hear. One member of the *ijtimāʿ* management committee of Kenyan Asian origin suggested that the audience split into two. Then the Borana translator of the moment asked for the *ra'y* (Ar. opinion) of the audience. The move was highly resisted as divisive and instead the speaker was asked to move right into the middle of the audience. The audience was hence asked to squeeze together even further as the speaker attempted with some success to raise his voice to reach those seated at the periphery. A few tired elderly Tablīghīs dozed off their backs firmly pressed against the wall of *markaz*. In the next session, a successful split of the audience resulted into two Borana *tarjama*. The audience reluctantly divided themselves into two.

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[222] Abdulqadir, a Tablighi from Isiolo and one of the most humorous of the *tarjama* team made a comparison between Borana man and his allegedly constant consultation of wife and Patriarch Abraham and his abandonment of his wife Hajar and son Ismael in the arid lands near Makkah. He jokingly say that 'Abban Libe' (father of Liban, a honorary title used by Borana as a sign of ritual superiority) would never do what Abraham did and that would he even consult the wife if he want to go for three days jamaat. Such humour elicited laughter.

Each session of sermons and preaching always ended with *tashkīl* for formation of travel teams for four months, 40 days follows then 10 days and finally three days tours. The recruitment teams noted down the names of the persons who pledged to go for a *daʿwa* tour. Such moves concluded every preaching session and those who gave no promises to go out for any number of days were urged to pray over it at night and have a decision ready by the next day. Urdu speaking elders from IPB moved among the *tarjama* teams urging the audience to volunteer. In the Borana *tarjama* one of the *akābir* pointed out that each of the congregants must give time as the main objective of the *ijtimāʿ* is not speeches but mobility for faith.

Among the Borana speaking *jamāʿat*s were Tablīghīs who were on varying preaching tours. I met one such team that was set to conclude its 40 days *khurūj* ten days after the *ijtimāʿ*. They asserted that they planned to finish the last leg on the road home. These teams maintained their obedience to their *amīr,* did brief daily *shūra*, ate, slept near each other and socialise together. A few would sneak out of *markaz* compound and head to Eastleigh or other neighbouring areas for personal visits to friends and relatives. This, if done without the knowledge of *amīr,* was considered as unbecoming behaviour.

5.4.4.4 Specialised Shūras: Consulting for daʿwa

On the third day of the *ijtimāʿ*, a number of *shūra* or consultative meetings were conducted targeting *khawāṣṣ* (traders, rich men, etc), professionals, university students and teachers or the educated adherents both new and old, *qudamā'* or regulars who have at least done a four months *khurūj* tour, foreign *jamāʿat*s among others. These *shūra*s were conducted in the *markaz* main mosque, the top floor, the basement, the old mosque, offices among others. Those, who were not in any of these specialised categories remained in their language-based *jamāʿat*s for *taʿlīm*.

The contents of the various *shūra* differed from group to group but the main focus was rooted on how to sustain the *daʿwa*, draw more people into it and guarantee continued assurance and support from the target group to remain steadfast in the *daʿwa* work.

5.4.4.5 Food and the Faithfuls: Consumption within the markaz and without

There were two options available for food at the *ijtimāʿ*. One could eat outside the compound of the *markaz* from a host of makeshift food kiosks or two, from the large food tent within the *markaz* compound. Numerous stalls sprung up during the *ijtimāʿ*s where cheap *chapati*s, *mandazi*s, *samosa*s, milk, tea, bread, stew and *ugali* could easily be obtained. It was brisk business for equally itinerant hawkers serving the lay preachers selling varieties of wares. One Borana woman spoke of operating her temporary food kiosk for the last five *ijtimāʿ*s. Surprisingly, she added that, she did not operate similar business in Kariobangi where she

resides but rather sells vegetables only. Due to the large number of congregants in need of tea and snacks, one has to actually queue for that much needed cup of tea. If unlucky, one may be compelled to eat while standing. There were stalls selling Tablīghī literature, Muslim robes, headscarfs, half-coats and caps, traditional medicine and assortments of other items, all at highly subsidized prices. A number of stalls belong to enterprising followers of the movement. The *markaz* is situated right on Juja Road. During the *ijtimā*ʿs and other gatherings, both sides of the road often witness thick human traffic and petty trade.

Within the *markaz*, the sale of food was proscribed. The task of feeding the hundreds of congregants was systematically carried out by the *khidma* teams from the three Kenya *ḥalqa*s: Garissa, Nairobi and Mombasa. The adherents from each of these regions took their food from these respective points. Attendants of the Borana *tarjama* were split into all the three *ḥalqa* food points. The Orma from Tana River headed to Mombasa *ḥalqa* food point, Moyale and Marsabit groups queued at Garissa *ḥalqa* food point while the Waso and Isiolo congregants joined the line of Nairobi *ḥalqa*. Those on *khurūj* tours from these regions and attended the *ijtimāʿ* in their *daʿwa* tour had the prices subsidized while the ordinary attendants paid a sum of Kshs. 50-100 for every meal. Eating just like obligatory prayers and *shūra* is a communal affair, with a plate of food shared between three to four persons. Rice and stew was offered for lunch and supper. Breakfast was tea and a few slices of bread. At times a banana or orange formed part of the meal. Foreign *jamāʿat*s were normally given special treatment.[223] Their food is often prepared separately and served in the reserved left section of the main *markaz* or in the old mosque. Criticizing the preferential treatment as discriminatory, Sheikh Bafana in an audio-visual polemics against the movement in Kenya lament:

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[223] Foreign *jamāʿat*s especially those from outside the Eastern Africa had an area reserved for them in the Markaz on the extreme left section or at times in the old mosque. It is here that they slept, eat and stored their baggage. There are also bathrooms and toilets located strategically for their use at the left side basement of the Markaz. *Ḥirāsa* teams blocked unauthorized persons from accessing this section of the Markaz to safeguard against theft and invasion of privacy. At times such preferential treatments raise displeasure among non-Tablīghīs.

We have been there many years. Baitul Maal *ikrām* (hospitality) is reserved for people who are white (Asians and Arabs). Indians and Arabs only! They are given their own spaces. Their food is different from others. Their accommodation is special too. The food for ordinary people is cooked just out there in open, for instance, rice and meat soup and that is it. But the food for the special people, especially the wealthy one, is brought from outside by pick-up trucks. In there, you will find pots of *pilau*, pots of *biriani*, and pots of *tambi* to mention but a few. These are specially prepared for these kinds of people, the good people. However the rest of the ordinary people are served with ordinary Pakistani rice and stew made from meat bought at Kariokor (a run-down section of the city).[224]

It is imperative to mention that when it comes to accommodation, the spaces allocated for sleep and rest coincides with the spaces used during the day and night lectures for *tarjama* and prayers hence it reinforce in-group belonging within the *ḥalqa* and between people who share similar or same language and ethnic affiliation. Borana speaking congregants and Orma shared the same area of accommodation. The congregants sleep almost shoulder to shoulder due to size of the *ijtimāʿ* attendants. Amid the sea of bodies, a number of 'pious' Tablīghīs offered recommended *sunnah* prayers such as *Ṣalāt al-Layl* and *Witr* (recommended nightly prayers). By 05:15, almost everyone was up for another intensive day of Tablīghī activities.

5.4.4.6 Dua and Departure: Final day of the Ijtimāʿ

Embedded in the last *rakᶜa* of the *Fajr* prayer on the last day was an elongated and emotionally charged *qunuut*, a 'spiritually rewarding' invocation often recited in times of crisis and to ask for mercies from Allah. The prayer on this occasion is often led by one of the invited Tablīghī elders. Many Tablīghīs break down in sobs. At times the emotion appears to be infectious as those all around join in low tone communal cry. The session was the most attended as Tablīghīs and non-Tablīghīs cash on the abundance of glorious grace (*baraka*) and blessings of Allah on the strength of common *dua* for *umma*. Among the Borana speaking *jamāʿat*s on that day were three prominent businessmen and a popular politician from Moyale. In South Asia, the final prayers are called *akhīra munājāt*. Devotees from all walks of life throng mosques or open fields where the *ijtimāʿ* are held and the session considered as moments of intense spiritual exaltation and that *dua* within it as *maqbūl* (Ar. instantaneously accepted). For instance *akhīra munājāt* on the last days of the Bishwa *ijtimāʿ* held at Tongi in Bangladesh attracts approximately 2 million people. The annual gathering is argued to be the second largest gathering of Muslims in the world after *Ḥajj*, the Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah. In Kenya, the only other gathering that rival the annual Nairobi *ijtimāʿ* is the *Eid*

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[224] Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablighi Jamaat', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

prayers at Sir Ali Muslim Club and closely followed by Friday prayers at Nairobi Jamia Mosque during the month of Ramaḍān.

After the prayers, *bayān fajrī* was offered. More *dua*s were offered, first in Arabic then in Urdu. Chorus of 'amīn' and sobbing filled the sacred space. The climax of the event was calling of the names of all the individual Tablīghīs who have volunteered to travel for a specific number of days. All the four months *jamāʿat* volunteers plus their *amīr*s were called. The speaker also mentions the *daʿwa* destination of each *jamāʿat*. Then the team members passed in front of the *minbar* zone walking from left to right. They shook hands individually with the Tablīghī elder and two other equally conspicuous persons of South Asian complexion (presumably elders too), then finally the Swahili translator. An *amīr* then takes the list of his new team from the Swahili translator and moves to a corner to deliberate on travel plans. The names are read out not by the Tablīghī elders but by a youthful energetic Swahili translator, a senior regular from Kenyan Asian community. The four months *jamāʿat*s departing after the *ijtimāʿ*s during the year 2010 numbered over 35. Then came the 40 days *jamāʿat*s which numbered over a hundred teams. Then 10day *jamāʿat*s. The exercise lasted over two hours and the string of people flowing to and from the *minbar* area formed an endless human chain as new ones were called. The *markaz* team often keeps the names and destination of each *jamāʿat* that depart after *ijtimāʿ* for record. It also keeps track of their progress and route of travel as well as any unexpected indiscipline issues. During this exercise there were no parallel translations by different *tarjama* teams. A large number of congregants stood alert, perhaps waiting for their names to be called or just watched the ensuing event.

Various *jamāʿat*s scheduled to travel for specific number of days or months consulted on logistics. *Amīr*s collected money from the volunteers to cater for transport costs and food while on travel. It is important to note that after this *ijtimāʿ*, a few 40 days Borana speaking teams were sent to Tana River. A *jamāʿat* of this nature is composed of 10-15 persons. A four months *jamāʿat* from Tana River also was sent to Moyale. I met the team in Moyale in the months of June and July 2010. Asked what is the reason behind such networking of *jamāʿat*s, one Tablīghī asserts that those who speak a language close to each other would be best suited to reinforce adherence to the Tablīghī *tartīb*.[225] Two four months Borana speaking *jamāʿat*s were sent to Borana areas of Ethiopia. One was from Waso and the other from Moyale.

Most congregants bid farewell to each other. Some *jamāʿat*s such as those from Tana River, Mombasa, Garissa, Tanzania and Uganda left by hired buses. The Moyale and Marsabit

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[225] Interview with Hassan Jarso, Nairobi May, 2010.

*jamāʿat*s left for Eastleigh's 10th Street where the buses and trucks for plying Moyale-Nairobi route. The Waso and Isiolo *jamāʿat*s also headed to 8th and 9th Street to catch mid-day buses to Isiolo. Most *jamāʿat*s heading for stipulated modules of travels often spend the night and planned well for their journey.

The question is, what happens the rest of the year at the *markaz*? The place is seldom empty. Foreign as well regional and local *jamāʿat*s find accommodation here. Meetings of senior regulars are held at least twice a year at the venue. There is a team of volunteers engaged in receiving *jamāʿat*s, guiding as *dalīl* and offering all sort of *nuṣra* (Ar/Urd. assistance). The *markaz* is operational, as the Tablīghīs say, 24 hours with all the attendant practices. Kenya *Shūra*, the highest council regularly consults here and discuss streams of incoming progress reports in form of *karguzari* and *ahwāl* from travelling *jamāʿat*s and sub-*ḥalqa* updates. Rebuking such 'idleness' of the Markaz all year around, Sheikh Bafana opines:

> Look at Baitul Maal today. Where Baitul Maal is built there is a very precious and large piece of land. A land that is one of its kind! One of the only golden chances Muslims have today. A big tract of land! If you have not seen, please just go to Baitul Maal and see how the land is. It gradually drops up to the end there.
>
> But have you seen school built there? Have you seen a hospital built there? Have you seen a shopping centre built there? Have you seen any development carried out there? Nothing! None! There you will find the biggest mosque in the whole of Nairobi. Unfortunately this mosque is used only in the month of August when there is *ijtimāʿ* and people of movement gather there. After the *ijtimāʿ* of this month, you will not find any one coming to the mosque. Instead the prayers are conducted in a smaller mosque in the same compound. Where is a school? They say that these are worldly matters and should not be emphasised. [226]

5.4.5 Tablīghī Economy

Travels for *tablīgh* cost money. Equally if the man has a home, he is expected to leave something at home for his family while he is away for *khurūj*. It has been observed that often the movement attracts people with means to cover for the preaching tours. Many a time individuals part with meagre resources to pay for *khurūj*. Through *taʿlīm f'il-bayt* and *shūra f'il-bayt*, the women are made to 'misrecognise', to use Bourdieu's term, to see the need to revive faith. She may even willingly encourage her husband to make the journey as she and her family bear with deficiencies.

Tales are common among anti-Tablīghīs in Moyale of people who have suffered closure of business premises due to complete absorption into the movement's endless travels and

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[226] Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablighi Jamaat', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006. Prior to 2008 annual Nairobi *ijtimais* were held in August. Later it was moved to May.

activities. However the Tablīghīs are quick to counter that with a lack of foresight on the part of businessman for not balancing *dīn* and *dunya* (Ar. worldly concerns). Similarly some Tablīghīs who work as teachers and civil servants in the areas have tended to make arbitrary decisions of travelling without prior permissions from their bosses. Such employees convinced about the truthfulness of the Tablīghī *daʿwa* make radical decision of dedicating their entire life to *khurūj*. Sometime such individuals, the Tablīghīs argue, are counselled and urged to go back to work. Such moves threaten their livelihood and those of their dependents, putting a great strain on their domestic economy.

Polemical materials against the Tablīghī point to the existence of foreign finance of their travel and even hint at regular payment of senior *amīr*s in different sub-*ḥalqa*s for the services they offer 'for free'. Little evidence exists to either disapprove or validate these claims. Mamed Roba countering the claim asserts:

> Most people opposed to the Tablīghī *daʿwa* allege that there are people out there in India who pay us monthly salary. Though they say that, none of them wants to join to find out the truth. We all pay for our expenses, our travels and our upkeep.[227]

The fact that some Tablīghīs in Moyale and Waso flourish despite lacking formal employment or business ventures have left to speculations as to source of their livelihood despite spending many days of travels. A popular narrative is that Allah is providing for them.[228] Practical explanations given include engagement in trade such cross border import of goods in Moyale. Other Tablīghīs use the income from regular employment in governmental or non-governmental agencies to finance their travels.

The amount paid for different durations of travels differs. A *jamāʿat* wishing to travel to foreign countries must set aside more money than local *jamāʿat* going for the same period of time. *Masturat jamāʿat* is more expensive than *jamāʿat* consisting only of males. *Masturat jamāʿat is* argued to require special food such as meat, milk and fruits. The amount paid for each of the travel modules are said to have increased with the deterioration of the local economy and rising costs of food and cost of travels. Commenting on this gradual rise in the cost of Tablīghī travel in Kenya, Abdi Rashid observes:

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[227] Conversations with Mamed Roba, Moyale, October 2009.

[228] A story is told especially in Moyale of a senior Tabligh, a government employee who disobeyed his senior and went for 4 months *khurūj* severally. It is said that the pay continued to come even after his senior wrote disciplinary letters to the government. After a while he is argued to have gone to head office to be sacked. It did not happen as he is said to have been given a second chance. Then finally he quit all together. Bees were said to have filled his home and that he is argued to be selling the proceeds from this for his sustenance. The bee incident is used by to validate the truthfulness of the movement and the divine provision of sustenance for committed dais. However a visit to that Waso region revealed that bees nesting in home were common occurrences in that region. There seem nothing unique about the case. For those from far, the narratives such as these, common in the region, legitimate commitment to the movement and travels for faith.

The *masturat jamāʿat* is a bit more expensive than the men-only *jamāʿat*s. It is normal. Before we used to pay Kshs. 100 for 3 days, in fact it was more than enough. We used to get something back and could buy sweets for our children. Then it increased to Kshs. 150. Then that was not even enough to cater well, so it increases to 200. Nowadays am not sure but it is 200-250/-.
40 days tour is now Kshs. 4000. It was at one time Kshs 1500 only then it increased to Kshs. 2000. Four months is Kshs. 10,000. Ethiopia is considered as four months local rates because it is right here.[229]

Hassen, another Tablīghī confirms that currently the charges for three days *jamāʿat*s is Kshs. 300, ten days is Kshs. 1000, and four months *jamāʿat* heading to IPB is about Kshs. 80,000 depending on the United State dollar exchange rate. He adds that while in South Asian, each Tablīghī on *khurūj* pays for his contribution on a daily basis; in Kenya they pay the lump sum amount on or before the date of travel for the entire period. Sometime generous benefactors, themselves members of movement, are mentioned to sponsor travel expenses of poor preachers. This is despite a tacit discouragement of such practices that inculcate dependency.

Some Tablīghīs also take advantage of the business opportunity provided by various travels to conduct legitimate trade. Take for instance the annual Nairobi *ijtimāʿ*, a number of Tablīghīs from border zones such as Moyale bring with them prayer beads (*tasbīh*), Muslim caps and other items for sale. The proceeds are then injected into other goods on demand in Moyale such as *hijāb*, *niqāb*, *buibui*, Islamic literature, prayer mats and perfumes. Through the sales the individual finances his next travels and supports his home.

The movement also provides the Tablīghīs with a platform to network, mobilise resource and engagement in joint business ventures such as shops selling Islamic goods and other income generating projects. It is common for groups of lay preachers to utilise the platform and trust availed membership within the movement to run taxi businesses, retail trade distribution chains, shops, private schools and bakeries in some parts of Kenya. If one compares Moyale and Merti Tablīghīs, the former is more economically organised and networked at social level. Moyale is also a border town with immense economic opportunities and hence the followers of the movement in the town cooperate on a number of business ventures with success than their Waso counterpart in Merti. Let us now turn to case studies of travels with Tablīghīs.

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[229] Interview with Abdi Rashid, Moyale, June 2010.

5.4.6 A 10 day Travel with Tablīghīs

'If you want to learn what Tablīghī Jamāʿat is,' insisted Aw Boru, an elderly Tablīghī from Merti, 'please take your bag and accompany us.' Encouraged by such frequent invitations and need to document travel experience of Tablīghīs on the move, I joined a 10 days *jamāʿat* leaving from Laroke mosque to neighbouring smaller towns and villages. The outlying areas targeted were described by the Tablīghīs in the group as largely nominal with little to show in terms of adherence to daily religious obligations such as *ṣalāt*. The mosque-based *jamāʿat* from the main mosque in this town organised a team to preach, correct and revive Islamic practices of their fellow Borana in the town and in nearby villages.

The main basis of contextual *daʿwa* is that locals are best suited to carry out proselytism. They are knowledgeable of traditional culture, routes of travels, prominent personalities and history of Islam in areas being visited. Besides the teams share same first language, clan affiliations and have kin in most of the outlying areas.

A day before the departure, I inquired if my presence as a participant observer was welcomed. Gora (not real name), the *amīr* who is a senior Tablīghī, accepted by request and added that I shall have time to ask all questions that I required concerning practices of the movement. So on 18th June, 2010 together with nine other individuals we set off from the mosque. Our luggage included a few *kanzu*s, thin sleeping mattresses, mosquito nets, assortment of Tablīghī literature and utensils. Gora is a man of many worlds. He settled in the area nine years ago from Nairobi. He has a well-stocked wholesale shop. Originally he hailed from a town in southern Ethiopia. A self-educated scholar, he is considered as erudite in Islamic matters by the locals and Tablīghīs alike. While he lived in Nairobi, he got linked with the movement in its early days in Kenya making *daʿwa* trips to the Indian subcontinent. Apart from Borana, he speaks Swahili, Amharic, Arabic, Urdu and a bit of English. He is hence a translator for many Urdu speaking *jamāʿat*s that come to the area. He has hence accumulated adequate experience befitting a *Purana Saati*, a senior Tablīghī preacher. He is also the *amīr* of the local Tablīghī unit and coordinates *mashwera* (meetings) and travels within this zone.

The rest of my fellow travellers are disparate hosts of individuals. Three are senior regulars: Mzee Khurūj (a frequent traveller), Abbo Shulah (a retired police man) and Beda. Second timers: Mwalim Ismail (a teacher), Ali Kana (a self-employed man). First timers: Liban (a livestock trader), Guyo (a post office worker on leave) and Kuru (a part time Islamic school teacher). Each of us in the *jamāʿat* paid Ksh. 1000 for the 10 day trip.

Before the departure, the team sat around the *amīr* who gave *ḥidāyat kharijin* (guidance before departure). A group cannot take the responsibility to preach (*takaza*) without being given guidance. In this talk the *amīr* praised the reasons 'why many are called but few are

chosen'. He extolled the virtues of such peaceful excursion for the faith. He likened it to *jihād* and quoting a popular prophetic saying, reminded us that the feet that accrue dust on path of Allah shall not be touched by hell-fire. He also evoked the Taif excursion by Prophet Muhammad and one of his close companion appropriating this incident as *khurūj fī sabīlillāh* similar to the one we were about to embark.

The *ḥidāya* introduces the novices and regulars to the *uṣūl al daʿwa* (Ar. the principles of proselytism).[230] In a way the talk set the Tablīghī ground rule for mobility. The rules were not given all at once but were intermittently reinforced over the whole period of travel. Some of them included: Do not engage in vain talks. Keep your tongue in constant remembrance of Allah. Keep your glances on the ground while on the travel. Be kind to your fellow travellers in the team. Greet every person with *assalam aleykum*. After consultative meetings the decision of the *amīr* is final and must be obeyed. You cannot leave the team for any reason without the permission of the *amīr*. Political discussions is forbidden. Avoid controversial doctrinal issues. Build good network with fellow volunteers. Do not use items of fellow members in the *jamāʿat* without permission. Reform is within you and so engages in obligatory as well as *Sunna* prayers, *dhikr* and Qur'ān reading to enhance your spirituality. Its delivery was grounded in quotes from Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*.

The 10 day journey took us to five different villages and smaller towns. We spent approximately two nights at each stop. The total distances covered were about 30 kms. We travelled the entire distance on foot. This form of *khurūj* is called *paidal jamāʿat,* it is the most favoured and 'blessed' form of travel mode of the movement. The elders of the movement encourage Tablīghīs to carry out this mode of travel. In a popular Tablīghī booklet Tablīghī Jamāʿat Made Easy, the author argues that:

> To go on foot is proven. Most of the *Daʿwa* (invitation to Islam) of *Nabi* (the Prophet) in and around Makkah and Madina was done on foot. In fact, the prophetic sayings announce freedom from *Jahannam* to the feet which are touched by dust in the path of Allah. One companion reports that he heard *Rasulullaah* say, "Allah has forbidden *Jahannam* for the person whose feet become dusty in the path of Allaah."1 Thus 'paidal' (walking) Jamāʿat is laudable and experience shows that it is most effective.[231]

The fact that the team is on an Islamic journey to remind their co-ethnics of adherence to Islamic faith only, did not dampen all encompassing Borana greetings to everyone we met. Greetings for *Nagaa Borana* (Bor. Peace of Borana) are indeed pervasive. Despite the primacy of '*assalam aleykum*' as the opening formula for the greetings, the *amīr* and other

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[230] See *Usul ᶜishirīn* in Chapter Four

[231] Elias A. H. *Tabligh Jamaat Made Easy*. 2009. www.minsid.com, accessed on 11.01.2009. p. 10.

older members of the team engaged in lengthened salutations such as *'Assalam aleykum….babaro…fafaya…nageni isan badada…walgul yaa tu…bon baate robb gete… saa nami nagaa…ad infinitum'*

The greetings were always followed by inquiries about our destination and ended with blessings and good will from the greeted. Relations between the some members also observed the fictive in-law formalities between the two Borana moieties of *Sabbo* and *Goona* (e.g. use of the title *Sodda* or brother-in-law) and the older members even maintained 'joking relationship' (*qoosa*) with those from 'friendly' clans within the Jamāʿat. Borana being an exogamous community, each individual must source for a partner from the moiety other than one's own. Everyday life social interactions address between *Sabbo* and *Gonna* moieties are characterised by respect and pleasantries.

At every destined stop, certain sets of actions were immediately embarked upon. The point of destination was always the local mosque of the settlement. A search party will be dispatched to fetch the local *imām* or the custodian of the mosque. Once the key for the mosque has been obtained, the *amīr* sees to it that the place is swept. Two *rakāᶜat sunna* prayers are then offered by all. After that *shūra* to plan day's activities are done, duties were divided 'democratically'. *Shūra* has certain rules. Everyone should express himself freely. No one should feel sad if his opinion is not taken, as there could be '*baraka*' in that. The seating arrangement is circular with the *amīr* chairing such sessions.

On a daily basis, five duties were delegated: *bayān* and *tashkīl* team to give motivational speech after *Fajr*, *ẓuhr*, *Maghrib* prayers and another to write down names of local volunteers for *khurūj*; *jaula*, a team to conduct local neighbourhood outing to call Muslims to the mosque between 4pm to 5pm; *ḥirāsa*, a security team to guard the items of the *jamāʿat* especially at night as sentries and finally *khidma*, a team concerned with preparation of food and drinks. It was *khidma* that was the first duty to be delegated. The *amīr* noted that of all the duties of a Tablīghī, *khidma* is the most rewarding. Perhaps this is because '*ikrām*' or service to fellow preachers is undoubtedly a selfless undertaking. Each individual in the team was assigned one of these duties on rotational basis.

*Bayān*s took place after four of five daily prayers, namely *Fajr* (5.45am); *ẓuhr* (it is mainly called *Kitabul ẓuhr*) (1pm), *'Asr* (4pm), and *Maghrib* (6.45pm). Almost all the speeches were concerned with reminding the locals to be steadfast in their prayers. In some of the areas the preaching team was more than local mosque attendants. The *bayān*s were delivered in Borana. Most speeches urged the local communities to practice the faith on daily basis and to have firm trust in Allah. The speeches were devoid of complex theological arguments. Instead

it tended to appeal to the audience with simple convincing narratives to encourage the locals to be 'good Muslims'.

The *bayān*s always ended with urging of the locals to volunteer time to form their own *jamāʿat*s in the area. The *tashkīl* team usually stood up and wrote down the names of such volunteers. Senior regulars were privileged to carry out this delicate task of preaching. The first timers got their chances in smaller villages where the criticisms from resident sheikhs were minimal. Liban had his chance at Kaar and so was Guyo. Guyo jokingly confessed that to undertake a *bayān* is easy:

> 'You speak about greatest of Allah, you mention that Islam is the final religion, you add that Allah sent all prophets to enjoin the truth and forbid evil and Prophet Muhammad completed that work. You add that the work of *amr bi'l-maʿarūf* was continued by the companions of the Prophet and their successors and that they suffered a lot on the work. Finally say that today it is each and every one of us gathered here who should carry out this noble duty and then ask for volunteers. That is it.'[232]

These speeches were characterised by four aspects: One, the speakers always drew on commonality and never preached from a position of authority 1st person plural/collective voice (they used 'we' e.g. we have neglected the work of *daʿwa* as Muslim…we Borana have….). Two, there was extensive use of *afaan Borana*, though opening remarks could be made in Arabic. Three, the preaching was tailored to the taste of the audience and sought to mobilise each mosque attendant so convincingly. Four, though not many sizeable volunteers were obtained, someone always responded (cumulatively 19 people). According to local *imām*s, the residents turn up in large numbers when such a team visits but in other times are neglectful of the religious obligations.

Every morning after the daily consultative meeting, there is a *taʿlim* session for the *jamāʿat* only between 9.00 am -12.00 pm. This time the mosque is empty, save for the members of the travelling group. The topic of this instructional session *fazā'il–il Qur'ān* (virtues of Qurʾān), *fazā'il-il dhikr* (virtues of remembrance of Allah), *fazā'il-il ṣalāt* (virtues of prayers) and *sittah siffat* (six attributes). Qur'ān and supporting *ḥadīth*s were given to give emphasis to the teaching. In groups of two persons, each individual recite to a partner short chapters of the Qur'ān from *Surāt al-Fātiḥa* to *Surāt al-Fīl*. Care was given to correct pronunciation. Each member of the group also memorised the six attributes. While the novices could only barely say more than merely listing of the attributes, the regulars would give a few supporting verses of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*s in relation to each of the *siffat*. The *taʿlīm* session is the most

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[232] Conversations with Guyo and Liban, Sololo, June 2010.

educative. Many Tablīghīs who go for *khurūj* frequently compare it with *madrasa*, the only difference the Tablīghī *Jamāʿat* one is mobile.

Between 4-5.30pm, *jaula*, a spatial practice involving a local tour of mosque neighbourhood was usually executed. Led by a local guide (*dalīl*), two to three members of the *jamāʿat* regularly made an excursion to meet locals in the streets and at home to remind them to come to mosque and listen to religious teachings. The *dalīl* helps the team in navigating the social landscape. He helps the visiting *jamāʿat* identify Muslims from non-Muslims, regular mosque goers from the rest, as they approach people. Men, young and old were approached. After ample and fitting introduction from the local guide, the speaker (*mutakallim*) often used the same formula:

> *Assalam aleykum obboleyan. Nu warr tabliqati. Kara rabbi gubba jirra. Jej Kalima ka adunyaf akhara wal qaabisisu dumne. Wo malen isani indumne. Wo male isan iraa infenu. Qabri bor nu egata… Misajid jirr. Misajid nuawa ammum tan.*
> *Assalam aleykum* brothers. We are people of Tabligh. We are on the path of God. We came to convey 'Oneness of God' for the benefit of life here and now and hereafter. We do not bring you anything else. Neither do we need any thing else from you. Grave awaits us…We are based at the mosque. Please come with us now…

Simultaneously, there was usually a special religious instruction going on called at the mosque, this talk is called *kalām julūs* . One of the regulars led the team in the talk. One other person was always asked to sit at the corner of the mosque to engage in *dua* and *dhikr*. Those gathered on the patrol would eventually join, listen and pray the evening prayers with us. This kind of outing served to publicise the presence of the *jamāʿat* to the local community for the few days we stayed.

The *ḥirāsa* team acted as the sentries at night to keep unauthorised persons and animals from the mosque. The night is divided into two. One person stayed guard from 9pm-1am and the other 2am-6am. This duty being rotational almost everyone did it. The weapon, as reminded to us by the *amīr*, was not physical ones but spiritual litanies of *subhānallāh* and assortment of protective verses and chapters of Qur'ān such *ʿāyat al-kursī*, *surāt al-nās*, *falaq* and *ikhlās*.

The *khidma* team shopped, fetched water, cooked, served the *jamāʿat* and washed dishes. As encouraged by the *amīr* those sent to buy food stuff bargained and avoided buying unnecessary goods. All the meals were served and consumed collectively in two groups. Though religious topics were encouraged, the *jamāʿat* engaged in lively conversations about worldly issues at such moments.

After the *ʿIshā'* prayers, the *amīr* would often read *hayat al-ṣaḥāba* (stories of the companions of the Prophet). The session always turns into lessons on etiquettes as done by Prophet Muhammad. The etiquettes were referred to as *adabiyāt* and included *adab al-noum*

(Ar. etiquettes of sleeping), *adab al-ṭaᶜām* (Ar. etiquette of eating), *adab al-masjid* (Ar. etiquette of mosque) and *adab al-akhlāq* (Ar. moral values). The *amīr* practically demonstrated sleeping and eating manners. After taking *Wuḍū'*, each of the members of the *jamāᶜat* tended to put into immediate practice some of the lessons by re-enacting the 'proper' sleeping style. Most recited *surāt al-nās*, *falaq* and *ikhlās* in low tone into their hands and then passed the hands over the body from toes to head for divine protection throughout the night. The *amīr* urged the group members to wake up late at night to perform *Sunnah* prayers of *Ṣalāt al-Layl* and *Witr*. He however cautioned against waking up others unless requested. A few of the team members woke at different times of the night to perform the prayers. During the day, the period between 2.00pm to 3.30pm was allocated for individualised rest. A number of the *jamāᶜat* slept during this time of the day too. This resting time was called *kailula*.

Below is a summarised schedule of a typical Tablīghī day, while on preaching tour:

- 5:45 *Fajr* Prayer
- 6:00-7:30 *Bayān fajrī* and *tashkīl*
- 8:00 Breakfast
- 8:30 *Shūra* (consultations to plan activities of the day and delegate responsibilities)
- 9:00-12:00 *Taᶜlim* (teaching session for the team)
- 13:00 *ẓuhr* Prayer
- 13:15-13:30 *Kitāb al-ẓuhr* and *tashkīl*
- 13:30 Lunch
- 14:00-15:30 *Kailula*, the siesta
- 16:00 *'Asr* Prayer
- 16:10 *Targhīb* (motivational talk to encourage people to accompany *jaula* or remain behind for *kalām julūs*)
- 16:15-18:00 *Jaula* (Neighbourhood outing) and *Kalām julūs* (teaching circle at the mosque)
- 18.30 *Maghrib* Prayer
- 18:45-19:30 *Bayān Maghrib* and *tashkīl*
- 20:00 *ᶜishā'* Prayer
- 20:20 Supper
- 20:45 Narratives on *Hayat al Ṣaḥāba* (Stories of the Companions) and talks on *Adabiyāt* (etiquettes such as sleeping, eating and morality)
- 21:15 Sleep
- Individually performed late night prayers such as *Ṣalāt al-Layl* and *Witr*

Ten days after we left, we came back to the starting point for another round of guidance, *ḥidāyat raji'in*. Individuals were urged to be more steadfast in their prayers and attendance of the daily activities of mosque-based *maqāmī* teams, to volunteer more time preferably 40 days or more soon and to carry out gradual household reform through *taᶜlīm f'il-bayt*. After bidding each other farewell, each of the members of the *jamāᶜat* left for home. This marked the official end of the 10 day *khurūj*.

5.5 Accounting for Growth: Evaluation and Self-Appraisal within the movement

We have so far described the 'faith bureaucracy' of the movement in Kenya, its practices and place making strategies and the place of the Borana and groups at the national and regional gathering. However it reveals little if any concrete data as to how the movement grew and continuously strategises to evaluate the past events and activities, coordinate present programmes and plan future undertakings. A glimpse into the movement self-appraisal mechanism undoubtedly shed light on how the movement has been able to sustain monumental growth in the last few decades. The questions worth asking are: how do the Tablīghīs appraise their activities? Are such evaluative measures oral or written? Are they done on individual or collective basis? Does each level of Tablīghī territorial unit evaluate activities within its jurisdiction? What are the variables that are used in the evaluation process? How do such evaluation measures impact on the commitment of individual Tablīghī to the various mobility related practices that has bearing on their finance? The case studies below and the subsequent analysis shall be used to explore the theme of growth and self-evaluation of the movement in Kenya in general and in northern Kenya in particular.

As outlined earlier, Tablīghī practices can roughly be divided into individual (*a'māl al-ifradi*) and collective (*a'māl al-ijtimāʿ*) deeds. Individuals are expected to carry out the following daily practices without supervision, namely, recite at least a *juz* (1/30th part of the Quran), recite at least 300 *adhkār* (sing. *dhikr*) (supplication for remembrance of God), greet a certain number of individuals with proper Islamic pleasantries, visit a few fellow Tablīghīs, do supplementary recommended prayers aside from obligatory prayers and read some texts from Tablīghī prescribed books such as *Faza'il-e-A'amaal* and *Muntakhab Aḥadīth* for guidance. In sum, a committed Tablīghī is expected to set aside 2 ½ to 8 hours daily for uninterrupted *a'māl al-ifradi*. Aside from that, a Tablīghī who is also often an integral member of a mosque-based *maqāmī* unit is expected to attend on daily basis a consultative forum (*shūra f'il-masjid*). He is also expected to accompany fellow Tablīghīs from his mosque in a weekly neighbourhood *daʿwa* outing called *jaula* between *'Asr* (late afternoon prayer) and *Maghrib* (early evening prayer). A Tablīghī also participate in a collective weekly practice called *fikr al-dīn*, an evaluative session that brings *maqāmī* units from a number of mosques in an area to a central mosque so as to gauge the success of the previous week's activities, plan the present activities and set target for the coming week. Collectively a *maqāmī* team is expected to inculcate the culture of text readings in their local mosque. The reading and discussions are called *taʿlīm f'il-masjid*. As a collectivity, the members of a *maqāmī* team conducts visits (*ziyārāt*) to religious elites (*ūlama*), fellow inactive Tablīghīs and pay courtesy calls to barber

shops, meat shops, markets, schools and hospitals. They are also expected to organise monthly 3 day excursions (*khurūj shahrī*) for local *daʿwa* purpose. On quarterly, semi-annual and annual basis, they are expected to organise teams to attend local, regional, zonal and national three day congregational gatherings called *jor*s and *ijtimāʿ*s. At home, each Tablīghī is expected to initiate daily consultative forum (*shūra f'il-bayt*) and text reading (*taʿlīm f'il-bayt*).

The *maqāmī* team, the most fundamental unit of Tablīghī Jamāʿat at the grassroot level, is expected to contest for sacred space use and own it by conducting corpus of practices called *panch amaal*. Implementation of (five practices) is believed to make the local mosque gain the noble characteristics of the sacred spaces of the pristine Islam.

The question is, with all these expectations and obligations, how does such a lay *daʿwa* movement take stock of its progress and challenges among the Borana speaking communities? The obligations required of an individual Tablīghī tasks him in various capacities, namely, as individual, as a family man, as a member of a mosque-based *maqāmī* team, and a member of local, regional and national Tablīghī Jamāʿat chapters. To facilitate detailed evaluation at various levels, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya has immensely invested in the culture of individual and collective appraisal and report mechanism called *ahwāl* giving or *karguzari*. *Ahwāl* can be given formally in *maqāmī*, *qarya*, sub-*ḥalqa*, *ḥalqa* and national *ḥalqa* levels or informally between individual Tablīghīs.

A *maqāmī* team is expected to hand in a written or oral report of its activities every week in the weekly gatherings (*fikr al-dīn*) that bring a number of the *maqāmī* teams from a number of local mosques. The team also picks the set targets for coming week. A *maqāmī* team, in a sense, attempts to give an 'accurate' report of how many people attend its daily *shūra*, bi-weekly *taʿlīm*, weekly *jaula*, how many volunteered for various travel durations, how many members conduct home-based family consultative meetings and text reading and even how many members set aside 2 ½ hours on daily basis. The sum of the *maqāmī* reports in a sub-*ḥalqa* is discussed in the monthly sub-*ḥalqa shūra* and sent to the *markaz shūra* of the *ḥalqa* in Nairobi, Mombasa or Garissa. Quarterly or semi-annually, the *markaz shūra* consults with various sub-*ḥalqa*s and identify a mosque in which to conduct zonal congregational gathering of *jor*. A *jor* is held on rotational basis in all areas of a *ḥalqa*. Months before *jors* and *ijtimāʿs*, each sub-*ḥalqa* is given targets to mobilise and bring to the gatherings in terms of 40 days and four months teams from their area. Often the *jor* does not end without a specific time set aside to discuss the *ahwāl* of the sub-*ḥalqa*. A table below is a summary of such a session at Isiolo *jor* in 2009. Annually, a few days before national *ijtimāʿ*s are held, representatives of each

ḥalqa and sub-*ḥalqa* attend a consultative *shūra* for *qudamā'* (senior regulars) and they submit the details cumulative progress of their *ḥalqa*s orally in front of others and the national Kenya *shūra* members.[233] This is done from a standard form distributed among the *amīr* s. A sample of these reports, also called *karguzari* (Metcalf 1993). *Karguzari* plays an important role of informing, educating and updating each other on current challenges and development. The reports from the three *ḥalqa*s are summarised and a representative of the Kenya chapter of Tablīghī Jamāʿat presents it in an annual gathering of country representatives at the auspicious headquarters of the movement in Nizamuddin, New Delhi, India. See figure below. *Ahwāl* giving session, especially the formal congregational type, is a tense environment. The sessions are often chaired by invited members of national consultative council, the Kenya *Shūra* or invited elders of the movement from the IPB. These evaluators are thorough in their interrogation of the local and regional *amīr*s appointed to orally submit the reports. The sessions depending on nature of the congregational gathering may be attended by fifty to three thousand persons. New directives are often given. The members are encouraged to do better in all reported practices. Past efforts though not belittled are often summed up as not enough. The members are motivated to believe that they have greater potential to do much better and to take the revivalism of the faith to greater heights. In the following section, we shall briefly examine two such reports. The first progress report was submitted by a representative of Waso sub-*halqa* in a joint Isiolo-Meru-Waso sub-*halqa jor* in April 2009. The second report was a cumulative summary of the national progress report indicating how each of the three *halqa* of Mombasa, Nairobi and Garissa performed in the year 2011.

5.5.1 Case Study I: *Ahwāl* Giving at Isiolo *Jor*

As mentioned earlier, the Isiolo *jor* took place from 10th – 12th April 2009. The *ahwāl* giving session was held on afternoon of the 11th April 2009. This was done shortly after the *Asr* prayers. Representatives of Waso, Isiolo, and Meru sub-*ḥalqa* that falls under the Nairobi *ḥalqa* submitted their *karguzari* reports from a standardised form. The representatives were taken to task why certain practices were not performed, for instance, house-hold *taʿlīm* in Isiolo. Meru representative was particularly asked why very few people volunteered to travel for Tablīghī *daʿwa* tours. Waso representative was asked to account for the falling number of Tablīghī volunteers in the area. An elder from Baitul Maal chaired the session. He kept

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[233] In April 2010, I attended the national *qudamā' shūra*. Approximately 300 persons gathered at Baitul Maal for the meeting. Representatives from various sub-*ḥalqa*s such as Waso, Isiolo, Moyale, Marsabit, Wajir, Garissa, Tana River, Kisumu, Nakuru, Kajiado, Mombasa, Malindi, Kwale, and Nairobi are among the congregation. Few representatives from Tanzania and Uganda presented *karguzari* of their country *ḥalqa*s. The two day meeting coming days before the national *ijtimāʿ*s discussed logistics and other necessary preparations.

lamenting on the sluggish performance of the movement in the region and asked the regulars to put extra efforts. The chair particularly compared the Merti lacklustre achievement with its 'glorious' past when at a previous *jor* held there up to 50 travel teams were recruited (between 500-600 persons). The Waso achievement sounded modest compared with Meru and Isiolo, where the activity seemed limited to a few individuals and mosques. As the session was conducted in Swahili, the foreign *jamāʿat*s from Asian and Sudan relied upon translations done for them by *tarjama* teams.

The *karguzari* report covered the period from October 2007 to May 2009. The form contains set of parameters to gauge success or failure of each zonal unit and give an approximate picture of the organisational strength, weaknesses and potentialities. In a sense, with periodical reviews of their practices, the adherents in an area make a personal effort to reach targets, own the process and commit themselves to the objective of reforming the self and the others to a different level. The categories for review can be roughly classified into six namely: *'ulamā'*; Brothers (active Tablīghīs); Ladies (women); Mosques; Household: and *Jamāʿat* (a travelling group). The first three are about human beings while the last three are of institutional nature. The form is roughly subdivided into two sections. The upper sections deals with details of commitment to the recommended travel regimes such as one year, four months, 40 days, 10 days by *ūlama*, brothers and women and also the statistical details on number of mosques (*masājid* and *musala*) in the area. The second part has 19 entries and each of the entry is subjected to review on basis of its previous status (past), present situation and future expectations. Below is a replica of the Waso sub-*ḥalqa karguzari* report (Spellings and structure same as in the original).

State/Area:	Waso Sub-ḥalqa	Date:		Since October 2007-May 2009		
ᶜUlamā' who have spent 1 year		--	No. of Active			--
ᶜUlamā' who have spent 4 months and 40 days		10	No. of Active			6
No. of 4 month brothers		129	No. of Active			48
No. of 40 days brothers only		519	No. of Active			207
No. of ladies who have spent 40 days		--	No. of ladies who have spent 40 days with *Tartīb*			--
Ladies who have spent 10 days		--	Ladies who have spent 3 days			--
No. of ladies spending 3 days with *Tartīb*		--	No. of places for Ladies weekly *taʿlīm*			--
No. of *Masajid + Musala*		76				

	ITEMS	Previous	Present	Intention
1.	*Masajid* with 5 *A'maal*	26	29	37
2.	*Masajid* with some *A'maal*	19	15	43
3.	No. of *Masajid* doing daily *Abadi* of the *Masjid*	3	--	7
4.	3 days Jamāʿat per month	11	8	30
5.	Brothers spending 2 ½ Hrs Daily	47	23	63
6.	No. of Houses doing daily *taʿlīm* with *muzakra* of six *siffat*	33	16	77
7.	No. of brothers spending 4 months yearly	14	6	40
8.	Brothers spending 10 days monthly	--	--	3
9.	Brothers spending 8 hours daily	--	--	3
10.	No. of 4 months Jamāʿats	5	6	11

11.	No. of 4 months Jamāʿats on foot	5	6	13
12.	No. of 40 days Jamāʿats	34	24	37
13.	No. of 40 days Jamāʿat s on foot	29	21	34
14.	Jamāʿat s sent to other countries	2	5	7
15.	40 days Jamāʿat s with ladies	--	--	1
16.	10 days Jamāʿat s with ladies	--	--	1
17.	3 days Jamāʿat s with ladies	--	--	1
18.	Brothers who have spent two months in Bangle Wali Masjid (Nizamuddin)	--	--	3
19.	No. of remote locations and *karguzari* of the efforts in these locations	--	--	1

Table 5 A sample of Waso sub-*ḥalqa karguzari* report

Brief Synopsis

Though the movement recruits ordinary Muslims for preaching tours, the participation of the religious scholars is highly appreciated even if minimal. It was one of the first categories under review in the report. The number of women (denoted as ladies in the form) who spent 10 days and 3 days *masturat* tours are also noted.

Mosques form a central sacred space for the enactment of a reform agenda as envisioned in the Tablīghī ethos and hence the importance of its exact number, location and nature of its custodians for its future and present success. The Tablīghī Jamāʿat are among the few Islamic groups who have a consistently accurate number of all the mosques in Kenya.

The Tablīghī Jamāʿat envisages that all mosques adopted what they call *panch amaal* (five practices). These practices strengthen the bond of network between the Tablīghīs and also build their religious capital. Hence the first three items on the second section of the report were on in how many mosques that all the five practices are carried out, how many uphold some practices and how many exercise the daily *daʿwa* effort within such as *daʿwa*, *taʿlīm* and *istiqbāl*.

Commitments of ordinary Tablīghīs were also gauged as an indicator of the performance of the movement in the area. The regulars are expected to set aside time for individualized

activities such as few hours for *dhikr* and Qur'ān reading and communal practices approved by the movement like spending 40 days and 4 months on *daʿwa* tours within and outside the country.

The core target of *Tablīghī* self-reform is the household unit and hence its review. It is believed that the practices learnt by a Tablīghī man at the local mosque and on travel can have a lasting impact once the household-based practices such as text readings on the core teachings of the movement are firmly established.

The evaluation places emphasis on the means of transport used by the Tablīghīs on *daʿwa* journeys, for instance bus or other motorised means or on foot. *Daʿwa* travels on foot (Ur. *paidal jamāʿat*) is especially revered as it involves not only greater sacrifice and risks but also closer in experience to the idea of travel for faith as done during the pristine period of Islam. Tablīghīs in Kenya are increasingly encouraged to visit the Bangle Wali Masjid in Nizamuddin, India for advanced training on ways of the movement.

5.5.2 Case Study II: *Purana Saathi Jor* - 29th December 2011-1st January 2012

Currently the Tablīghīs in Kenya have two national gatherings. One is held in early May and the other in late December. The former is open to all Tablīghīs and non-Tablīghīs from Kenya and neighbouring countries and the latter is open mainly to the active members of the movement from all parts of Kenya. The former attracts up to 15,000 people while the latter is attended by about 3000-4000 persons. The former is called *ijtimāʿ al-ʿāmm* (general congregational gathering) while the latter is called *purana saathi jor/majma jor/qudamā' jor* (specialised gatherings for active Tablīghīs).

I arrived on the 29th December shortly before the *Maghrib* prayers. Each attendee was required to report to the *istiqbāl* (reception) tent to register. Details about name, place of origin, mosque of origin, the highest number of travel days or months volunteered in the past, expected number of days or months to be volunteered at the end of the gathering and remarks were entered into a big black register book. I was number 807 on the register. The atmosphere was more cordial and animated. Most of the congregants are regular acquaintance due to *daʿwa* travels and such conventions. The *bayān* and *taʿlīm*, just like in the general *ijtimāʿ*, took into consideration linguistic diversity and had translation circles for the Borana, the Somali, the Amharic, the Swahili, the Arabic and the Baganda Tablīghīs.

The evaluation session was held on the 31st December, first by the Mombasa *ḥalqa* started then the Garissa *ḥalqa* and finally the Nairobi *ḥalqa*. It is important to note that prior to giving of *ahwāl*, an invited scholar give motivational talk in Urdu about the need for accuracy and importance of such reports in the consolidation of faith revivalism. The speeches were

translated into Swahili by one of the local Muslim of Asian descent. The invited speakers play down any tendency of inter-*ḥalqa* rivalry and emphasized that such reports are not for record keeping but a basis for setting better targets for tangible progress.

Each of the *ḥalqa* representatives gave a cumulative summary of Tablīghī activities and achievements for the period between May and December 2011. Apart from general summary, the *ḥalqa* representative was asked to invite a representative from one of the mosque within his jurisdiction to give more detailed grassroot *ahwāl* report. Both the general and grassroot reports from each *ḥalqa* were subjected to rigorous interrogations by a band of invited 'elders' of the movement from the Indian subcontinent. The speakers were at times asked to clarify how they go about some of the Tablīghī practices and advices and new directives were given on the best way to go about it. It is important to note that a number of congregants took notes of the statistical data and new directives for their own record keeping and implementation upon return. Finally, the reports from the three *ḥalqa*s are summarised into one form by the members of the national consultative council as indicated below. The table below is a replica of the original. It was slightly modified for better analysis. While all the rows are as in the original, the column on totals is my analytical addition. Spelling and structure of the original format closely maintained.

	KARGUZARI HALQA:-KENYA PURANA SAATHI JOR DATE:- DECEMBER 2011	ITEMS			
		Nairobi *ḥalqa*	Mombasa *ḥalqa*	Garisssa *ḥalqa*	Total
1.	No. of 4 months brothers	550	324	546	1420
2	No. of 4 months active brothers	280	151	290	721
3	No. of (only) 40 days brothers	1710	841	1321	3872
4	No. of 40 days active brothers	740	331	435	1506
5	No. of *ᶜulamā'* having spent 1 year	8	5	2	15
6	No. of active 1 year spent *ᶜulamā'*	6	5	2	13
7	No. of *ᶜulamā'* having spent 4 months /40days	60	27	39	126
8	No. of active 4months/40days spent *Ulama*	35	12	22	69
9	No. of *Shab guzari* place(weekly programme)	3	2	5	10
10	No. of places having *Hayatus ṣaḥāba taᶜlīm*	3	2	5	10
11	No. of ladies having spent 40 days	20	14	02	36
12	No. of ladies having spent 10 days	84	70	39	193
13	No. of places having ladies weekly *taᶜlīm*	7	25	18	50
14	No. of ladies spending 40 days with *Tartīb*	-	-	2	2
15	No. of ladies spending 3 days with *Tartīb*	11	-	18	29
16	No. of dwellings (villages, towns etc.)	-	-	-	-
17	No. of zones (collection of about 20 dwellings)	-	-	-	-
18	No. of *Masajid*	1071	1400	1200	3671
19	No. of *Masjid*s with 5 *A'maals*	80	57	129	226
20	No. of *Masjid*s with some *A'maals*	145	159	135	439
21	No. of average 3 days Jamāᶜats per month	130	56	71	257

22	No. of brothers participating in 2 ½ hrs efforts daily	350	174	170	694
23	No. of *masajid* doing daily efforts with *abadi* (*dwt,istq,tlm*)	3	-	-	3
24	No. of houses doing daily *taʿlīm*	360	202	215	777
25	No. of houses doing daily *taʿlīm* and six *siffat*	120	-	146	266
26	No. of brothers spending 4 months yearly	52	24	107	183
27	No. of brothers spending 10 days monthly	5	2	12	19
28	No. of brothers spending 8 hrs daily	1	2	11	14
29	No. of 4 months Jamāʿats	13	10	46	69
30	No. of 4 months Jamāʿats on foot	5	9	38	52
31	No of 40 days Jamāʿats	46	40	77	163
32	No of 40 days Jamāʿat s on foot	20	38	56	114
33	No. of *Masjid*s who sent complete Jamāʿat in the country	4M-40D 10	4M-40D-	4M-40D-	4M-40D10
34	No. of *Masjid*s who sent complete Jamāʿat to abroad	4M-40D-	4M-40D-	4M-40D-	4M40 D-
35	No. of Jamāʿats sent to foreign	10	3	9	22
36	No. of 10 days Jamāʿats with ladies	-	3	2	5
37	No. of 40 days Jamāʿats with ladies	-	-	-	-
38	No. of 10 days Jamāʿats with ladies to foreign	-	-	-	-
39	No. of 3 days Jamāʿats with ladies	5	10	9	24
40	No. of brothers who gave 2 months at Nizamuddin	1	1	-	2
41	No. of localities where work started	-	9	12	21

Table 6 A sample of Cumulative Kenya country *halqa Karguzari* report

Brief Synopsis

The participation of *'ulamā'*, religious scholars though is encouraged is so far insignificant. Tablīghīs take great care not to mobilise *'Ulamā'* for their *da'wa* travels as they do with ordinary people.[234] Because the *'ulamā'* are in charge of management of mosques and religious schools, they are respected as custodians of knowledge. The *'ulamā'* are to be acknowledged and their support sought. However when they opt to take part in the travels with them, they are highly appreciated and honoured as men of knowledge. Their travels with ordinary Tablīghīs guarantee the movement legitimacy and a sense of religious orthodoxy in the public sphere. Tablīghīs hence take great pride and interests to document and evaluate the participation of these scholars in the regular appraisal sessions. As with other evaluative measures, they divide the participation of the *'ulamā'* into stipulated categories of travel periods and their regularity in these travels, namely, how many have spent one year, four months and forty days and how many are active participants in these travels. In total 141 religious scholars partook in Tablīghī travels with Garissa, Mombasa and Nairobi *ḥalqa*s contributing 29 %, 23%, and 48% respectively.

5292 Kenyan Tablīghīs participated in 40 days and four months travels during the evaluation period. Of this, 2227 are active Tablīghīs. Of the three *ḥalqa*s in Kenya, Mombasa has the smallest number of Tablīghīs volunteering for 40 days and four months travels. 694 Tablīghīs and 14 Tablīghīs spend 2 ½ hours and 8 hours daily on movement's individualised practices. There are 183 and 19 active Tablīghīs spending four months yearly and 10 days monthly on preaching tours. Only two Tablīghīs, one from Mombasa and Nairobi *ḥalqa* respectively, spent 2 months at Nizamuddin centre during the evaluation period under focus. However at the end of the *jor*, I met at least five Tablīghīs from Moyale and Waso sub-*ḥalqa*s who were about to leave for two to four months stay at the Nizamuddin global headquarters.

229 women have so far spent ten and 40 days on Tablīghī travels. Garissa had the lowest entry with 41. There are about 50 places in Kenya where weekly *ta'līm* for women are held. While no women travel team has been sent to foreign countries for *da'wa*, 24 teams were sent locally for 3 days *da'wa* tours. The report depicts a gradual growth in popularity of women *jamā'at*s in Nairobi and Garissa *ḥalqa*s.

According to the report, out of 3671 mosques in Kenya, 226 have mosque-based *maqāmī* units that carry out all the *panch amaal* such as *ta'līm*, *jaula*, *fikr al-dīn*, *khurūj shahrī*, and *shūra*. Mombasa *ḥalqa* has the lowest number of Tablīghī-affiliated mosques despite the large

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[234] No *tashkīl* only *ziyārāt* for the religious specialists are recommended

number of mosques in the zone. 439 mosques have Tablīghī teams that execute partial *panch amaal*.

There 777 households that conduct *taʿlīm* session on daily basis, of which 306 are from Nairobi *ḥalqa*. 226 households have *taʿlīm* combined with teaching on the six fundamentals of the movement. No household in the Mombasa *ḥalqa* carry out the latter.

During the period under evaluation, 121 groups were dispatched for four months *daʿwa* tours. If each group is, on average, composed of 12 individuals, then 1452 persons undertook this kind of travel. 227 groups were dispatched for 40 days preaching tours. This means approximately 3324 persons volunteered for the stipulated tours within the country. While there were no new areas of growth in Nairobi *ḥalqa*, Mombasa and Garissa *ḥalqas* registered 9 and 12 places respectively.

This statistical data helps the national and regional Tablīghī units to plan on how to boost dwindling numbers of active members and consolidate gains made over time. The national *shūra* subjects the cumulative data to detailed analysis, compare with previous records and set targets for each of the three *ḥalqa*s in the coming period. The practice of allocating quotas for each zone is called *takaza*. The leaders from each *ḥalqa* redistribute targets for the next six months to one year to respective constituent sub-*ḥalqa*s, *qarya*s and mosque-based *maqāmī* units. This loose flow of information, directives and targets in combination with thorough peer-to-peer collective evaluation accounts for the phenomenal growth of the movement in Kenya.

5.6 Conclusion

Mobility characterises Tablīghī phenomena in Northern Kenya. The movement has initiated local followers to ignite religious revivalism within their own respective communities. This strategy has seen increasing transborder travels by the Kenya Borana speaking Tablīghīs roaming the regions settled by fellow Borana in Ethiopia. The movement attracts a certain class of people who can not only pay for the travel cost but also feel dissatisfied with the efforts of *'ulamā'* and want to impact on religiosity of their local mosque-goers. Regular meetings, local neighbourhood tours and regional and national gatherings of Tablīghīs help in reinforcing religious and ethnic identification. Not all ethnic groups are attracted to the novel religious travels of the movement equally. Those with lesser levels of Islamic awareness are hence largely the target for *da'wa*. Gatherings such as Nairobi national *ijtimā'* reflect the heterogeneity of the Tablīghī phenomena. In *ijtimā'*s, one can see that unity in 'enjoining good and forbidding evil' is best achieve in not as one *jamā'at* but as several language *jamā'at*s. The going and coming to the gathering and dispersal for various travel tours put Tablīghīs from different part of the country and the world into contact. The movement has also invested immensely in evaluative strategies that keep track of past performance, present and future plans, a process and programme that has facilitated its growth in many parts of Kenya, including the Borana speaking regions.

The growth of Tablīghī Jamā'at in Kenya as in other part of the world is not without contestation. The Tablīghī being innovative in involving large section of laity in its preaching programme exposes itself to criticism from *'ulamā'* of established Islamic traditions. The nature of their negotiation with the *'ulamā'*, their strategies to counter waves of polemics, nature of polemics against them and their relationship with Ṣūfī *ṭarīqa*s shall form the core focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Six

'We Avoid Controversies': Tablīghī Relations with Other

Islamic Groups

6.1 Introduction

Tablīghī Jamāʿat, a new entrant into the religious landscape of northern Kenya, continuously negotiate with existing Islamic traditions and contests for a niche in order to influence the religious practices of ordinary Muslims. These negotiations and contestations have been marked by a range of responses from mutual cooperation to polemical attacks. Tablīghī Jamāʿat as a new religious trend in an already competitive religious market feels compelled not to forcefully assert its presence. Religious commitment in northern Kenya varies between regions and this variation also influences its negotiation. Certain places such as Merti have greater adherence and strong affiliation with moderately *salafī* traditions while Moyale, the other field site is highly heterogeneous in terms of religious diversity and ethnic mix. In Moyale apart from the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, the *Qādiriyya* and *Ṣaliḥiyya ṭarīqa*s, Sheikh Hussein *ṭarīqa* and moderate *salafī* traditions compete for religious influence. In both areas, the moderately *Salafī* affiliated tradition is the mainstream Islamic trend and they more than the other traditions is affected by the resurgence of Tablīghī Jamāʿat as alternative religious ideology. Much of polemical materials and discourses also emanates from this group. As *ʿulamāʿ*, *madrasa* teachers and *imām*s they feel pressured to not only delegitimise new revivalists but also extend their hegemonic control over the nature of discourses that can be preached in mosques.

This chapter mainly focus on the nature of debates between the Tablīghīs and the *ʿulamāʿ*, the representatives of the mainstream Islamic traditions. It also explores the strategies and counter-polemics levelled by the Tablīghīs against their opponents so as to authenticate their religious practices as not only in line with Islamic teachings but also the most appropriate one. *Ṣūfī* groups unlike the *ʿulamāʿ* of the mainstream Islamic tradition have virtually been 'vanquished' by the *Salafī* affiliated youthful *ʿulamāʿ* in late 1980s and early 1990s. They

lack concerted expression of their religiosity in public domain. Gone were the days of congregational celebration of the birthday of the Prophet (*maulid*) and other practices.

As a strategy of 'survival', the Tablīghī Jamāʿat capitalise on non-interference in already divisive religious sphere by forging a middle path and hence rival religious groups compete to win them over. Speaking about such disunity and the opportunity it presents for Tablīghīs to forge a compromise ground, Abdi Galgalo notes:

> Already each town is already balkanised groups into such categories as *kurrafi*,[235] there are others, who call themselves orthodox Muslims, and others call themselves modern Muslims, there are Ṣūfīs and *Wahabis*. Already *tablīgh* is coming to a divisive zone. If they do not take part or interfere with the disunity further, they are seen as soft spot and everybody wants to win their heart and over to their side but Tablīghīs also wants to win them over.[236]

With realization that the areas that they target to recruit members and impact influence on is a competitive religious market, the Tablīghī have over time learnt to navigate the landscape alternating between co-opting friendly ʿʿ*ulamā*', strengthening bonds of membership, latently critiquing religious establishment and appealing to ordinary masses as alternative religious experience available to all. The ʿ*ulamā*' and non-Tablīghīs who are critiquing the movement as unorthodox and recent innovation into Islam utilise select interpretation of the Qurʾān, prophetic traditions and writings and legal rulings of prominent scholars. In most cases such opponents source their materials from polemics issued by other scholars from outside Northern Kenya.[237] The point of contention raised by ʿ*ulamā*' as would be discussed below concerns themes like knowledge acquisition and its attendant privileges, legitimacy of *daʿwa* tours by the laity, scriptural interpretation and use of (in)authentic books on prophetic traditions, apolitical status of the movement, sacred place making and place use and alleged neglect of masculine responsibilities.

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[235] *Kurrafi* is a derogatory term used to refer to 'old-school' sheikhs who provide divinatory and medicinal services by consulting Qurʾān and assortment of quasi-religious texts. They dispense amulets (Bor. *irsigi*) and blessed water (Bor. *taalishi*) to afflicted person.

[236] Group discussion with three Tablīghīs, Moyale, July 2010.

[237] There are number of audio cassettes and video CDs that are produced in Nairobi that gain from circulation from time to time in towns like Isiolo, Merti and Moyale. Religious writings and legal rulings (Ar. *fatwa*) by renowned scholars are also available. The most popularly quoted *fatwa* is that of the late ideologue of *Wahabism* and the Chief Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Abdul Aziz ibn Abdullahi ibn Baaz (1910-1999). Abdub Boru, young *madrasa*-trained '*ulamā*' sums up the ruling of Ibz Baaz: 'the effort of *tablīgh* is correct and cannot be blocked though the group has some innovative practices. The solution is not to condemn but to accompany them and correct their erroneous ways. If you condemn, you will increase disunity. They are doing these practices out of ignorance.' Personal conversation with Abdub Boru, Kinna, October 2009. Other sheikhs like Sheikh Umal of Eastleigh remark that were Ibn Baaz given greater details of the *bid'a* (innovative practices) of the movement, he would not have release such a Tablīghī-friendly *fatwa* but would have declared the group as deviant sect to be eradicated entirely.

6.2 *ᶜUlamā'*-Tablīghī Relations

Prior to the recruitment of the local followers of the movement and establishment of the Tablīghī 'faith bureaucracy' in the region, the *ᶜulamā'* in the northern parts of Kenya hardly saw any urgent need to respond to perceived threats to their power and authority by Tablīghī Jamāʿat. Initially, in the 1970s and 1980s the Tablīghī phenomena were dominated by South Asian itinerant *dāʿi*s from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and Southern Africa. They then appeared to be minimally interested in motivating the locals in establishing their own self-sustaining *daʿwa* units. They came and went. They travelled from town to town sleeping and preaching in mosques. These pioneer foreign Tablīghīs were largely elderly men. They mainly spoke in Urdu. This meant that apart from verses of the Qur'ān that were quoted in their motivational talks, the local mosque attendants including the religious scholars barely comprehended anything.[238] Often they would travel in groups of four to eight: They were not eager to involve local *ᶜulamā'* in their programmes of preaching except to ask for the permission to use the pulpit. At the initial stages, the responses of resident *ᶜulamā'* were very ambivalent and tolerated the presence of these foreign *jamāʿat*s as long as they respected the sanctity of the mosque. However some opponents, citing the age of the pioneers, criticised the foreign *jamāʿat*s frequently the region as religious 'tourists'. Mamed Roba, a Tablīghī, reflecting on these initial polemics remembers it this way:

> Initially Indian travelling groups that used to come here were composed of mostly of old men. People started saying that these were retired people who had nothing to do at home and that what they are doing was some form of religious tourism. People alleged that they were rich men who had nothing else to do so guised themselves as preachers of Islam. But later the trend changed as young and energetic men started to come to our area and taught us how to conduct *daʿwa*.[239]

After localisation of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat through active involvement of ordinary Muslims, a clearly durable set of administrative and ideological structures emerged. The local *ᶜulamā'*

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[238] Rashid commenting on the initial foray of Tablīghīs from South Asian and the problem of language say: 'All local Muslims could hear from these Pakistani groups preaching and sleeping in mosques was *inshallah* (Ar. God willing). Then the locals would also say *inshallah* and this is how it continued for some time. In the first place the language these pioneers preached in was not local language and not even the international Arabic but all the locals heard was *inshallah*. Whatever that is said in mosque with *inshallah* is something good to remember. The language was foreign; the approach is unique in that we have not seen people staying in one mosque and then move to another and like that.' Group discussion with three Tablīghīs, Moyale, July 2010

[239] Informal conversations with Mamed Roba, Mamed Arero and a few other Tablīghīs, Moyale, June 2010. Criticism of Tablīghī travels as forms of carry-over of Buddhist ascetic practices is also raised by Sheikh Said Bafana a vocal Nairobi based scholar. He labels such religious mobility as *saihun* (tourism) and argues it was condemn by the Prophet himself. On generational dimension of the South Asian travellers, he raises the point that these are old men who even the devil himself have forsaken and are just here to redeem their past. He asks 'Have you ever seen their young adults within their groups? There are none. There are only old men. When their beards have grown long and white and the devil has refused them; that is the time they come to Africa.' Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

welcomed the new energised and self-organised lay preachers as partners in preaching. They even thought that they could rely on them to bring back 'every one' to the mosque for further religious revivalism. The lay preachers were highly mobile and hence flexible to reach remote areas where *ᶜulamā'* could not proselytise. However with its growth and lasting appropriation of mosques as venues of their recruitment and execution of their regular practices, certain classes of *ᶜulamā'* felt that local Tablīghīs pose a formidable threat to their control over the nature of religious practices and a modification of the behaviour of ordinary believers. Adi Abdullah, a young religious scholar, mentions that in the case of Merti, 'the Tablīghīs constitute the most rival group to the authority of the *Qalole* (Bor. *ᶜulamā'*) of the Merti Qur'ān Centre and that the *Qalole* would not be tired of telling them the right thing to do even if they would not stop saying that we are fighting them.'[240]

Zaman admits that despite massive and unrelenting changes in modern world, the *ᶜulamā'*, the traditionally trained religious scholars are not utterly redundant. Mass education and literacy and impact of print and electronic media has made deep inroads into the *ᶜulamā*'s privileged access to authoritative knowledge whereby exposing them more than to highly competitive religious public sphere.[241] The *ᶜulamā'* in northern Kenya as in other parts of the Muslim world see themselves as the custodians of the faith. As a religious class they are not homogenous. There are great diversities in their places and levels of learning, age and ideological affiliation. However as part of religious leadership, they have often arrogated the powers and privileges of interpreting religious texts such as Qurʾān, *ḥadīth* and jurisprudence. So by virtues of their authority over the laity, they also censor the use of religious public space so as to protect unqualified persons from disseminating 'heretical' ideas or misinforming the unsuspecting laity under the guise of religious proselytism. They gauge orthodoxy of new religious groups and ideas based on their criteria of 'proper' Islam. So as Abdullah puts it what the *ᶜulamā'* want is simply to guide the Tablīghī Jamāʿat to preach the correct *'aqīda* (Ar. doctrine) though such attempts he mentions is often met with resistance.[242]

A common narrative in anti-Tablīghī polemical discourse by some *ᶜulamā'* the concern the fear that unless checked, the group being contrary to the 'correct' teachings of *ahl al-sunna waʾl-jamāʾ*, would lead unsuspecting *umma* to the deterioration and eventual disappearance of

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[240] Personal conversations with Adi Abdullah, Mombasa, August, 2009.
[241] Zaman, 2002, p. 1.
[242] Also see footnote above on legal ruling by renowned scholar, the late Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Ibn Baaz.

the faith.[243] By doing so the *Qalole* want new entrants such as the Tablīghī Jamāʿat to be under their supervision, recognise them as religious scholars and to desist from explicitly challenging their authority. Therefore they project their polemics not as attacks on the Tablīghīs but as guidance and advice (*nasaha*) and also as dire warnings. Often the polemics attempt to portray the Tablīghīs as heretical and outside the bracket of the Sunni Islam. Some scholars invoke the idea that God has privileged them to guide the *umma* and that if they did not raise polemics against such groups they argue that the multiplicity of religious interpretations and decentering of authority as witnessed in Christianity shall befell the *umma*.[244] Sheikh Bafana says:

> As you see today concerning the Bible and Christianity, it is on the way to disintegration and in fact it has already disappeared; it just started like this. Their scholars were silent and did not guide as arguments became common with some claiming that Nabii Issa (Ar. Jesus) is son of God while others stated that he was in fact god. Their ʿ*ulamā'* were just watching! Until today there are over 72 versions (multiplicity) of the Bible in the world. All is lost in that faith now.[245]

The range of issues that form the core of *Qalole*-Tablīghī polemics can be divided into nine parts. Each part is interrelated. There is an acute realization on the part of the *Qalole* that despite the perceived 'inappropriateness' of the Tablīghī approach to *daʿwa*, the group has converted a number of people into Islam, literally filled mosques with regular worshippers, reformed individuals deemed to be social misfits into reputed lay preachers and brought the Islamic idea of proper home management to many households. On the other hand Tablīghīs acknowledge the indispensability of the *Qalole* for their own success as an all-out war with them would deny them mosque usage and constrain their mobility and proselytism. However despite such mutuality of dependence, there exists a rich array of polemical discourses between the two groups.

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[243] Personal conversation with Abdub Boru, Kinna, October 2009. Boru warns that this is how *Shia* also started and established their centres in Iran and how Catholicism established itself in Rome in the formative years of Christianity and Protestants like Anglican defected and started rival centres in Britain. He cautions that just like the examples, the Tablīghīs aspire to create alternative religious centres to Makkah and Madina and alternative religious practices to those of mainstream Sunni Islam. It must be checked he adds before it is too late.

[244] Bafana adds 'If we Muslim scholars are silent about these, then the faith shall deteriorate and finally disappear altogether…that is why the Prophet said *'laa tazalu taifatun lil ummatii dhahirina alal haq'* There is no time there would be lacking a small group of people whose work shall be *'dhahirina alal haq'* who would be telling the believers what the truth is…And those who go contrary to them shall be harmed ….Until God Almighty brings justice or the day of judgment arrives! Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006. The video is popularly circulated in northern Kenya and Nairobi. I transcribed and translated the content of the talk from Swahili into English.

[245] Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

6.2.1 Possession of ᶜ*ilm*: Religious knowledge as a prerequisite to preach

The main argument levelled against the Tablīghīs concerns possession of limited knowledge of religion. Possession of specialised religious knowledge is considered by the ᶜ*ulamā'* as being related with competence and authority in talking about Islam to a general public. They see themselves as the sole possessors of ᶜ*ilm,* the religious knowledge. They have invested time and money to acquire it in the local *madrasa*s beyond the basic levels available to all Muslims. Others have graduated from universities in Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and affiliated high educational colleges in Thika and Mombasa. A number of elderly *Qalole* are products of traditional *duksi* (traditional Somali Qur'ān memorisation schools) and *halaqa* systems of education where emphasis were placed on Qur'ān and assortment of other basic Islamic sciences.

The fundamental questions concerning possession of ᶜ*ilm* are, who can speak about Islam and to Muslims? What are the prerequisite for speaking for and to Muslims and about Islam? Does the popular *ḥadīth* that calls upon every Muslim to convey to others even if it is one verse a call upon to all Muslims to preach to every Muslim everywhere? Should lay preach to the laity? As preaching involves interpretations of Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh (*Ar. jurisprudence*)*, *muʾamalāt* (Ar. human interpersonal relations) and *'aqīda (*Ar. belief*)*, who has the ultimate authority to interpret these texts and on what basis should these interpretations be done? Krämer and Schmidkte (2006) notes that the ᶜ*ulamā',* on the basis of their acquired religious knowledge, claim the rights to interpret the foundational texts of the Qur'ān and *Sunna* and to compose authoritative texts themselves. The authors echo the above questions asking the extent to which ᶜ*ilm* equals authority in religious matters.[246] They share the view that religious knowledge and religious authority are related. These include the ability to define correct belief and practice, to shape and influence views of others accordingly and to identify, marginalise, punish or exclude deviance, heresy and apostasy and their agents and advocates.[247]

A significant numbers of the Borana speaking Tablīghīs in the region are drawn not from the *Qalole* but from ordinary regular mosque attendants. The Tablīghīs extol ordinary Muslim men to volunteer time, form groups and travel for a number of days or months in their locality in order to remind other Muslims of the religious obligations. It collapses the virtual monopoly of ᶜ*ulamā'* over the laity by appropriating the use of pulpit for religious instruction. It lowers the requirements to preach to include every Muslim willing to take it up. Though

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[246] G. Krämer, and S. Schmidtke, 2006. p. 7.
[247] Ibid. p 1.

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everyone could ideally preach, within the movement, those who volunteer more time and inculcate the ethos of the movement have more access to this privilege than the novices.

The concern raised by the religious scholars to the lay preachers relate to three issues, namely one, there are fears that illiterate persons given a chance to preach while on Tablīghī tours may give a talk would be basic that it may not be beneficial to mosque audience for religious guidance. Two, there are concerns that the lay preachers may quote Qur'ān or *ḥadīth* out of context or give unconventional interpretation of accepted doctrines. Third, because most of the lay preachers are not versed in advanced religious sciences, they may not be able to answer any question that may arise out of their talks. Though a number of Tablīghīs in northern Kenya have moderate *madrasa* education they are not part of *ᶜulamā'* class. The *Qalole* are dedicated to a lifetime religious career in capacities such as *imām*s, *muezzins*, *madrasa* teachers and learned mosque elders. Asked if there are any *Qalole* involved in the *daᶜwa* of Tablīghī Jamāᶜat in Merti, one informant argues that elderly mosque attendants who form the leadership rank of the movement are honorary *ᶜulamā'* and not learned:

> There are no real learned individuals in the whole of Tablīghī movement in the area. May be a few. Their leaders are not real sheikhs. They have been given these titles due to age and association they have with sheikhs as well as their steadfast attendance and participation in Muslim religious activities such as prayers, meetings and so on. Just like Sheikh Buke, the *muezzin*, he is by the virtue of his position; he has been absorbed into the class of the *ᶜulamā'*. Same case with the people associated with Tablīghī activities, for instance, Aw Bidu, Aw Gombore. The title of 'Sheikh' and 'Aw' has always been extended to regular elderly mosque attendants. The titles are in simple words honorary and have little to do with *ᶜilm*.[248]

Another opposition to the Tablīghīs stem from its apparent disregard for pursuance of *ᶜilm* within the group except the movement's principles such as *siffa sittah* and *uṣūl ᶜishirīn*. Memorisation of shorter chapters of Qur'ān is encouraged during *khurūj and ijtimā*ᶜs. Ordinarily even such memorisation is valued additional knowledge to significant numbers of Borana speaking Tablīghīs who never went to *madrasa* during their childhood. Hence to these groups of people, the movement is indeed a mobile *madrasa* for the adult. Most of the current crop of Tablīghī leadership in Moyale, Merti and Isiolo who had rudimentary understanding of Islam at the time of their recruitment are today considered even by the standards of *ᶜulamā'* reasonably 'learned' persons. However for the opponent, what is learnt is too little and too late.[249] The concerns of the religious scholars also point to the absence of religious

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[248] Personal conversations with Adi Abdullah, Mombasa, August, 2009.
[249] Bafana laments that instead of learning the Quran, what Tablīghī Jamāᶜat teaches is their erroneous ideologies and etiquettes of eating and sleeping. 'Ask anyone who has gone for 4 months or a year if he has memorised the Quran, if he has memorised *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, if he has learnt the rules and regulations by which our noble

educational instructions that could further human to human relations such as *ʿilm* on inheritance and business transactions. To the opponents, the movement appears so other-worldly that it acts as though nothing apart from *dhikr*, *ʿibadāt* and recitation of Qur'ān exist as *ʿilm* worthy to be pursued.

> You will never hear them (Tablīghī Jamāʿat preachers) speaking about *ʿilm* concerning business for instance. How can you conduct *halal* business as taught to us in Qur'ān and Sunna? These kind of *ʿilm* is completely absent from Tablīghī Jamāʿat teachings. They tell us that these are matters to do with the world and we should completely avoid them. Their *ʿilm* is these six principles. They do not have *ʿilm*. What they have is what they call *taʿlīm*. *Taʿlīm* is to sit and listen to strange books like *Hayat us Ṣahāba*, *Fazā'il-i a'amaal*, *Siffat us Sit*, *Azaad-u Dāʿi* and then narrate very unusual tales, and then is considered as *ʿilm*. There is no day you would will see a follower of the movement or one of their sheikhs sit in front of a congregation and give a *darsa* (Ar. lecture) on Qur'ān or *tafsīr* (Ar. exegesis) of the Qur'ān or commentaries on the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet like *Ṣaḥiḥ Bukhāri*.[250]

Sheikh Umal, an influential Somali sheikh and an *imām* of a prominent mosque in Eastleigh categorically excludes the Tablīghī Jamāʿat from *ahl al-sunna wʿal jamāʿ* based on his analysis that the movement implicitly discourages knowledge acquisition. He adds that in the canonical *ḥadīth* collection such as *Ṣaḥiḥ Bukhāri*, *ʿilm* acquisition has been prioritised as more urgent and important undertaking even before preaching. Citing the first *ʿaya* (Ar. verse) to be revealed as 'iqra' or 'read' that situates *ʿilm* as the very foundation of the faith, he faults the Tablīghīs as going contrary to the core teachings of Islam for refusing to attend classes on *Sharīʿa* and other sciences instead opting to 'roam' around with little religious knowledge. His polemics were widely distributed in Isiolo and other towns in formats of audio-cassettes are available in Somali, Arabic and Swahili languages. He condemns what he terms as their inherent lack of interest in *ʿilm* and the superficial understanding and teaching of the foundational principles of Islam such as *tawhīd* (unity of God). In passing the verdict that centres on othering the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, Sheikh Umal opines 'but if a group neglects *ʿilm*, refuses to seek for *ʿilm*, disrespects the *ʿulamā'* and does not encourage people to pursue *ʿilm*, all these in itself is enough to remove such a group from the category of *ahl al-sunna wʿal jamāʿ*.'[251]

Prophet lived. Nothing! He went for 4 months and came back the only things he has learnt is how to eat, how to eat, and how to behave. *Ilm* is zero. That is the most he has learnt. Even if you ask him about the *ahkam* (Ar. prerequisites) of the prayers, what is *halal* (Ar. allowed) and what is *haram* (forbidden), he has no idea or knows little. He is just there where he was before. His *ilm* does not grow and they waste most of their time this way. Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

[250] Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

[251] Sheikh Umal, Sheikh Umal Audio Cassette, recorded in a *darsa* held in 6th Street Eastleigh Mosque, Nairobi.

Recalling the withdrawal of the Garre of Moyale from the movement, Jay Kanu, narrates that the *ᶜulamā'* of the Garre met and passed a legal ruling that no Garre man should stand in front of mosque audience to preach unless he has adequate levels of religious knowledge. The *ᶜulamā'* are said to have put the minimum levels required for giving any form of sermon in their mosques to diploma or degree from reputable Islamic institutions and teaching experience in their networks of *madrasa*s in the region. Furthermore they encouraged their community members to attend various *darsa*s that are held thrice a day in most of their mosques in Moyale. Such classes are not common in other mosques in the Borana or Burji dominated sections of the town.[252] The Garre-managed mosques are at times inaccessible to the local Borana speaking Tablīghīs largely based on the notion that such itinerant preachers are not well-versed in religious knowledge. However in recent times, such rules have been relaxed and the lay preachers moderately welcomed.

The opponents also claim there is a significant number of Tablīghīs whose level of religious knowledge have not progressed despite years within the lay movement. Hence the opponents conclude that the movement succeeded not in educating the laity but in wasting their time, time that could have been used to acquire 'genuine' *ᶜilm* under the care of the *ᶜulamā'* Bafana offers perhaps one of the most hard-line critiques of Tablīghīs on the issue of *ᶜilm*. He argues:

> My Muslim brothers, if Tablīghī Jamāᶜat was following the right *manhaj* (Ar. method*)*, then we Muslims could have progressed so far. If someone went out for four months, it is enough to memorise at least five *juzu*s (Ar. a *juzu* is one of the 30 subsections of Qurʾān) if he is a normal person. Ask anyone who has gone for four months or a year if he has memorised the Qurʾān, if he has memorised *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, if he has learnt the rules and regulations by which our noble Prophet lived. One year is not a joke. It is enough for one to go to an Islamic university and get a diploma.[253]

Why do *ᶜulamā'* insist that the Tablīghīs gain *ᶜilm* first before they could preach? The first reason emanates from the fact that they are in control of the production of knowledge. The *ᶜulamā'* are the religious scholars in charge of *madrasa*s and mosques in Isiolo, Merti, Moyale and Marsabit. They also conduct adult classes from time to time in the mosques. If the Tablīghīs enrol into their classes and recognise them as source of their ideas, then they could have influence on the direction and focus of Tablīghī proselytism. They could then not only coordinate their efforts but also stem any further erosion of their authority. This is not happening at all. The Tablīghīs by surpassing them as custodians of knowledge have put to

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[252] Personal interview with Jay Kanu and Jamal, September 2009, Moyale.

[253] Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāᶜat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

test their significance and impact on the ordinary believers. The credibility test goes further deeper as the lay preachers have invested in elaborate and well organised transnational networks, preferred religious texts, routinised travel modules, self-sustaining religious instructional forums such as *taʿlīm f'il-bayt* and *taʿlīm f'il-masjid* and alternative religious hierarchy. The 'threat' posed by these self organised lay preachers goes beyond the ideological war over whether what they do is right or wrong. The Tablīghīs have appeared to wrestle the control of two important things from the *Qalole*: the minds of the lay through creation of alternative religious experience based on mobility open to all and the sole use of mosque as sacred space.

With such 'liberating' tendencies, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat offers every willing adult male a chance to partake in *daʿwa* tours within and beyond the borders of the region. Fragmentation of the authority of the *Qalole* has been further exacerbated by dwindling external funds that once finance the growth and expansion of a number robust Islamic centres and mosques. The external funds decline over time due to restriction placed on Muslim humanitarian agencies after the August 8 1998 bombing of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and September 11 2001 blasts in the US.[254] In addition, the mass education facilitated by the *Qalole*-run *madrasa* in the last 20 years increased the levels of religious commitment among the ordinary believers. The Tablīghī Jamāʿat provided these religious individuals with an outlet to interpret Islam for themselves and impact on Islamic revival in their own ways.

6.2.2 They use strange *ḥadīth*: Critiquing the Tablīghī texts

Members of the movement are advised to read texts like *Fazā'il-e-A'amaal* and *Muntakhab Aḥadīth* during their *daʿwa* tours and at home with their families. *Fazā'il-i A'amaal* is perceived by most *ʿulamā'* as composed of weak *ḥadīth*s that cannot be used for guidance of the community. Debates about authenticity and authority of prophetic traditions have a long history. The science of classification of *ḥadīth* has progressed over time culmination in the recognition of certain compilation as more authentic than others. Among the authentic collections are two well-known *Ṣaḥīḥ*s: *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhāri* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* by renowned scholars Imām *Bukhāri* (810-870 CE) and Imām Muslim (825-875 CE) respectively. Apart from the two canonical compilations, *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, *Jami' al-Tirmidhi* and *Sunan bin Majah* are considered as reliable and authentic compilations that in combination with the first two books constitute so called *Ṣaḥīḥ Sitta* (the six authentic books).

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[254] Salih (2004) notes that five Muslim NGOs were expelled from the country for alleged links with terrorism. Most of them had offices in Isiolo; they include Mercy International, Al Haramain Foundation, Help Africa People, IIRO and Ibrahim al Ibrahim.

The early traditionists classified the *ḥadīth*s into categories of *Ṣaḥiḥ* (authentic and authoritative), *hasan* (good and acceptable), *dāʿif* (weak) and finally *maudu* (fabricated). Most of the *ḥadīth* in the compilation of *Ṣaḥiḥ Bukhāri* and *Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim* were considered as *Ṣaḥiḥein*. Classification of *ḥadīth*s into different categories were based on factors such as the character of narrators, flow of the chain of narration back to the Prophet Muhammad, narration of the message by a number of renowned *ḥadīth* memorisers, authenticity of the message, correspondence of the message of the *ḥadīth* with other authentic *ḥadīth* and the teaching in the Qur'ān among many criteria. The rationale for stringent scrutiny of the corpus of *ḥadīth*s stems from the belief that the action and sayings of the Prophet are in a way divinely sanctioned and hence complimentary to the Qurʾānic revelation. Imputing actions and deeds to the Prophet were hence considered as one of the most serious sins.

Fazā'il-i A'amaal is classified by most of the *Qalole*s opposed to the movement as a book based on fabricated and weak Prophetic traditions. Such books according to them cannot and should not be used for every day religious instructions. The book according to them fails in authenticity and authority tests, crucial concept in validity of use of *ḥadīth* materials. The question of authenticity, argues Musa (2008), refers to whether or not a particular saying or action reported in a *ḥadīth* can be traced back with any historical certainty or probability to the Prophet or his companions and that authority refers to the position granted to the *ḥadīth* as a source of religious law and guidance. The two concepts are argued to be interrelated and interdependent in that unless a *ḥadīth* is considered authentic, it will have no authority but if *ḥadīth* were not seen as authoritative, the question of authenticity would be moot.[255] The opinions of the opponents of Tablīghī Jamāʿat range from complete dismissal of *Fazā'il-i A'amaal* as entirely inauthentic collection of *ḥadīth*s to large sections of its narrations being fabricated and weak.

In addition, the lay preachers at times are said to recite *ḥadīth*s without mentioning a chain of transmission or even worse in English or Swahili or Borana instead of the typical *Qalole* way of reading it first in Arabic and then rendering it into other languages. English and Swahili version of *Fazā'il-i A'amaal* is widely used. Significant numbers of the local Muslims in northern Kenya have only a very rudimentary understanding of Arabic. Arabic, in the eyes of the religious elite, becomes not only a marker of knowledge but also an authenticating criterion for appropriate preaching.

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[255] Musa,2008, pp. 4-5.

Commenting on the prominence of *Fazā'il-i A'amaal* in Tablīghī discourse, Sheikh Bafana points out that '*Fazā'il-i A'amaal* is to them more important than even the Qurʾān. Closely related with the use of their preferred texts are the issues of interpretation of Prophetic traditions. Some of the popularly used prophetic traditions to give legitimacy to Tablīghī mobility related practices and proselytism are hence dismissed as self-serving, erroneous and fabricated. The Tablīghīs argue the proof that every person should preach is based on a *ḥadīth* in which that the Prophet instructed each Muslim to convey what he knows even if it is an ʿaya but opponents peg such preaching rights to possession of adequate knowledge of Islam and accuse the Tablīghīs of selective interpretation of *ḥadīth*s. Furthermore Bafana observes that:

> Many other *ḥadīth*s are falsely attributed to the Prophet. For example the Prophet is narrated to have said: *balligu anni wa law ayah*…convey for me even if it is an ayah…that even if you know only one *'aya*, it is obliged that you convey that one. However they do not finish this *ḥadīth* to its very end because if they narrated the *ḥadīth* to its end it will condemn them. What does this *ḥadīth* say? It is a *Ṣaḥiḥ ḥadīth*. The Prophet said: *balli anni wa law 'aya...wa ḥadīthu an wa bani israila wala haraj wa man kataba alleya muta'amidaa fal yatabawama qa'adahu min annar!* (Convey for me even if it is an *ayah*, and speak about the *Bani Israil* (Israelites) as that is not a problem, whoever deliberately attributes false sayings to me, let him prepare for his eternal abode in the Hellfire). In reality they have attributed falsely many saying to the Prophet and many times as you just say they hold on one part of *ḥadīth* that favours their ideas and discontinue the remaining section as such *ḥadīth* would condemn them.[256]

Sheikh Umal recalls that there was once a Tablīghī team from South Africa that was on preaching tour that narrated forged *ḥadīth* to unsuspecting Muslims from their book chapter called *Hayatus Ṣaḥāba*, a text that according to him; full of misleading and fabricated narrations. Attributing falsehood to the Prophet, according to him is despicable, despite sincerity of the intention of the lay preachers. Such actions according to him clearly exclude the group from the Sunni Islam and push such groups to the realm of heretical sect.

6.2.3 The Six Principles has replaced the Five Pillars of Islam: Debates over fundamentals of faith

'*Siffa sitta warra taan warri arkanul islam irr jabes* (Bor. They give more significance to their Six Principles even more than the five pillars of Islam)' opines Abdub Boru, a Muslim scholar from Kinna. He ridicules them for their innovative interpretation of the early Islamic history to authenticate their novel practices. He particularly takes issue with the criteria the Tablīghī elders used to formulate the six virtues as the most prominent of the many virtuous

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[256] Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

characteristics of the companions of the Prophet.[257] Boru like many other opponents dismiss the Six Principles as innovative formulations of the Tablīghī elders that cannot be traced to Sunna and Qurʾān. Similar sentiments are cited by another informant:

> Tablīghī Jamāʿat have instituted six virtues as the basis of the Islamic faith. They have replaced the five pillars of Islam and six pillars of *imān*. They never mention the two at all. This innovation alone is enough to exclude one from the category of *ahl al-sunna w`al jamāʿ*. These *sitta siffat* are not mentioned in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of our noble Prophet. They have invented new things that are not in the book of Allah and the traditions of the Prophet.[258]

The main point of contention is that the Tablīghīs are argued to neglect the 'universally' agreed principles that are the fundamentals of Islam for their own 'invented' formulations. The Pillars of Islam (*arkān al-Islām*) are *Shahāda*, *ṣalāt* (performance of five obligatory prayers), *saum* (fasting for a month during the Islamic month of *Ramaḍān*), *zakāt* (alms-giving) and *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah). The Pillars of *Imān* (articles of faith) on the other hand are six in number: Belief in Allah; Belief in the Angels; Belief in the revealed Books, Belief in the commissioned Prophets; Belief in the resurrection and the event of *Qiyama*; and Belief in the predestination by Allah of all things, both the (seemingly) good and the (seemingly) bad.[259] It is not uncommon for opponents to makes statements like this: 'Today the Tablīghī Jamāʿat have taken the whole of Islamic teaching and religion and formulated and summarised it under the six principles. They are holding Islam one half and neglecting the other half.'[260] Beneath the argument of innovation levelled against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat are mutual acknowledgment of both the senior Tablīghīs and the opposing *ʿulamā'* of the relatively short history of the movement. The sheikhs even those not opposed to the movement know that the movement emerged in the early years of 20th Century hence a new player in the field of Islamic *daʿwa*. The opponents hence capitalise on the short historical existence and dismiss the whole arrays of principles, travel modules, books and ideology of

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[257] Personal conversation with Abdub Boru, Kinna, October 2009.

[258] Personal conversation with Ibrahim Adan, Isiolo, May, 2010.

[259] http://www.missionislam.com/knowledge/sixpillarsiman.htm. Both Pillars of Islam and *Imān* are contained in the legendary *ḥadīh* of Gabriel. The narration is about an encounter between Angel Gabriel and Prophet Muhammad. It is in both *Ṣaḥiḥ Bukhāri* and *Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim* See for instance *Ṣaḥiḥ Bukhāri* Volume 1, Book 2, Number 48. *Volume 1, Book 2, Number 48:* Narrated Abu Huraira: One day while the Prophet was sitting in the company of some people, (The angel) Gabriel came and asked, "What is faith?" Allah's Apostle replied, 'Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, (the) meeting with Him, His Apostles, and to believe in Resurrection." Then he further asked, "What is Islam?" Allah's Apostle replied, "To worship Allah Alone and none else, to offer prayers perfectly to pay the compulsory charity (*Zakat*) and to observe fasts during the month of Ramadan." Then he further asked, "What is Ihsan (perfection)?" Allah's Apostle replied, "To worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion then you must consider that He is looking at you."

[260] Personal conversations with A. Roba, Merti, October 2009.

the movement as unwarranted and late addition to the faith. The delegitimising discourse takes on the very founding principles of the movement as flawed. Said Bafana asks:

> How can the Prophet instruct Muhammad Ilyās to start a movement under the 6 seeds (principles) when there is Qur'ān and Sunna! Qur'ān is here! The Sunnah is here! How can the Prophet tell Muhammad Ilyās to start a new group under the 6 seeds? Here it is clearly showing that the Prophet has deeply erred and transgressed. The faith that he was divinely instructed to teach and that he completed it, is no longer valid and so a need for such new things! That these 6 seeds are everything now! But on the contrary the Prophet never told him to tell others to be steadfast in their faith but he was told to prepare the Tablīghī group![261]

The commonalities between pillars of Islam and *siffa sittah* are the first two principles, *shahāda* and *ṣalāt*. The rest of the four fundamentals are *ʿilm wa dhikr* (knowledge and remembrance of Allah), *iklās-ul-niyyah* (sincerity of intention), *ikrām-i-Muslim* (honouring Muslims) and *khurūj fii sabililah* (going on preaching tour for the sake of Allah). The sheikhs opposed to the movement criticise the Tablīghī doctrinal formulation on *tawhīd* as faulty and leaning towards *shirk*.[262] The rest of the six principles are also systematically delegitimised by the opponents through polemics. Their *ṣalāt* are dismissed as that of chance, their intentionality as reactionary, and their hospitality as targeted exclusively towards reinforcing in-group membership and their travel modules and reasons unwarranted and non-Islamic. Bafana adds:

> Let them bring evidence from the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* to validate their interpretation of *tawhīd*, their *siffa sittah*, their apolitical stand, their enjoining only of the good and their avoidance of controversies. It should be remembered that even *Sheitan* (Ar. Satan) taught Abu Huraira *ʿāyat al-Kursī*. This does not make *Sheitan* a good person.[263]

The polemics against the *siffa sittah* is strongest due to its primacy in the day to day proselytism of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. It is one of the first formulae memorised by a novice lay preacher. No *taʿlīm* session ends without the recitation and memorisation of the *siffa sittah*, this is popularly called *muzakara sitta siffat*. The principles are hence taught while on preaching tours, at home and during different forms of congregational gatherings such as *jor*s and *ijtimā*ʿs. The principles have over time come to be the defining ideological basis of the movement.

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[261] Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

[262] There are three levels of conceptualisation of *tawhīd*: *Tawhīd ar-Ruboobiyyah*, *Tawhīd al-Uluhiyyah* and *Tawhīd al-Asmaa was-Sifaat*. Tablīghīs are accused by some sheikhs of being in err in their interpretation of *Tawhīd al-Uluhiyyah*. Bafana and Sheikh Umal point that the Tablīghīs though they accept that Allah is the creator and sustainer of all just as even non-Muslims belief, they do not affirm that second type of *tawhīd* that states that none is to be worshipped with true faith except Allah .

[263] Sheikh Umal, Sheikh Umal Audio Cassette, recorded in a *darsa* held in 6th Street Eastleigh Mosque, Nairobi.

6.2.4 There are only three places to travel to: Critiquing visits to IPB and Baitul Maal

One of the oft-quoted *ḥadīth* to delegitimise Tablīghī journeys especially to IPB centres is this. [264] 'It was narrated from Abu Huraira that the Prophet said: "No journey should be undertaken to visit any mosque but three: al-Masjid al-Haraam, the Mosque of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the Mosque of al-Aqsa." Narrated by al-Bukhari (1132) and Muslim (1397).'[265] The *ḥadīth* in essence hierarchically establishes the three most holy places where believers could make journey to for spiritual purposes.

To most of the *Qalole*, the Tablīghīs have upset the hierarchy of sanctity of the three holy sites by creating alternative places for visiting: IPB centres. They are accused of encouraging their members to travel to their centres in South Asia than to Makkah and Medina. Kenyan Tablīghīs for instance regularly make four to six months tours of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. These tours are the most sought after by financially-able followers. Most of those aspiring to travel for these esteemed tours have not undertaken the obligatory pilgrimage to Makkah. Sheikh Bafana apt put it that:

> They claim that whoever goes there (to IPB) is better than those who go to Makkah. That such a person is better than whoever goes to Medina. That such a person is better than whoever goes to Masjid al-Aqsa in Palestine. They have this as their beliefs. Today you will see a Tablīghī who had gone to India more than 10 times. If you ask him 'Sheikh; have you ever gone to *'Umra*?' 'No I have not gone!' Have you ever gone to *Ḥajj* ? No, I have not gone. Why? He has been told that Muhammad Ilyās said that going to India is better than going there.[266]

Borana speaking Tablīghīs who have made or are planning *daʿwa* tours in IPB are quite a number. These tours are seen by opponents as uneconomical and that the funds should either be spent on making journey to Makkah or utilised in more localised *daʿwa* tours in the areas in dire needs of Islamic awareness. Such *Qalole* advise that the money used on such tours is enough to sponsor more than ten qualified preachers or even build a small *madrasa* for Muslim children in remote areas. One informant ponders on the foreign travels and asks:

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[264] A. Roba dismisses the missionary system instituted by Muhammad Ilyās as recent addition into Islam saying that part they even prefer to travel to IPB than Makkah and Madina. He notes 'if you look at the literature, the places where the Prophet asked believers to visit are Makkah and Madina, where did they get the going to India from?' Personal conversations with A. Roba, Merti, October 2009.

[265] http://islamqa.info/en/cat/2037

[266] Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

Nami qar ulfin min ufiti bahan (Bor. Charity begins at home). We all want our people to go to heaven. Before we preach to other people, we need to Islamise our own. But Borana Tablīghīs' major target is to travel to Pakistan. They love to go to Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Somalia and even Nairobi on annual basis. Most of these areas are 100 per cent Muslim. On the other hand their mothers, fathers and sisters do not pray five times a day. This is religious tourism. How many preachers can you send to just here in Golole, Somare, Tuqa and Bor with such travel expenses? Several. Do they travel for faith or for their own selves? Does one become better Muslim by going to India or Pakistan?[267]

In the recent past, the Kenyan Tablīghīs combine the journeys to the Indian subcontinent with a return leg via Saudi Arabia for *'Umra* or *Ḥajj* . This may have been necessitated by strong polemical discourses and the need to accrue more spiritual rewards from foreign *daʿwa* travels.

6.2.5 They do not forbid wrong: The *Fazā'il* vs. *Masā'il* debates

The duty of commanding or enjoining good and forbidding wrong is considered as duties apparently required to be carried to by all believers. There have been diverse views as to who and how the duty of commanding good and forbidding wrong can be carried out. The role of religious scholars, state authorities, ordinary men and women and children has been subject of a continuous debate since the formative years of Islam. Alongside the role of these diverse classes of people, what constitutes wrong, what constitutes good and the extent to which such duties can be implemented has implication for the relations between the implementer of the duty and those to whom the duty is directed.[268] Qurʾānic verses such as 'Be a community that calls for what is good, urges what is right, and forbids what is wrong: those who do this are the successful ones.', (3:104) '[Believers], you are the best community singled out for people: you order what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in God' (3:110) and many others like 3:114; 9:71; outlines the duty of commanding good and forbidding wrong as obligation that Muslims should implement.

There is a number of *ḥadīth*s that indicate the levels to which an individual or groups of individuals can carry out the duties of commanding good and forbidding wrong. The most popular one compiled in both *Ṣaḥiḥ Bukhāri* and *Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim* is 'Whoever sees something evil should change it with his hand. If he cannot, then with his tongue; and if he cannot do even that, then in his heart. That is the weakest degree of faith.' The *ḥadīth* sets the degree to which the duty can carried out depending commanding authority of the implementer. This brings us to one of the most critical accusations levelled by some *Qalole* against the

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[267] Personal interview with Jay Kanu and Jamal, September 2009, Moyale.
[268] For detailed scholarly discussion on the evolution of the principles of 'enjoining good and forbidding evil' see Cook, 2004, 2007.

Tablīghīs. 'The basis of Islam is enjoining good and forbidding wrong' preached Sheikh Umal 'The Tablīghīs enjoin good but the neglect the noble duty of forbidding evil and this is contrary to the Qurʾān that condemns those who believe some verses and ignore others. To discriminate in matters of religion is one of the bases of disbelief and expulsion from faith.'[269] The question worth asking is how and why do the Tablīghīs fail in forbidding wrong while being able to enjoin good? The answers lie in the different strategies employed by the *Qalole* and the Tablīghīs in carrying out proselytism among rapidly Islamising communities. First the Tablīghīs appear to draw a clear line between enjoining good and avoiding doctrinal, sectarian and social ills that afflict the *umma*. In their 20 point principles (*Uṣūl Ishrīn*) discussed in the preceding chapters, there are certain proscribed topics that should be avoided by the lay preachers at all time: *siyāsa* (politics), *ᶜuyūb nās* (people's faults), *ikhtilāf ᶜulamā'* (arguments with religious scholars), and pride. For Tablīghīs tactfully avoiding divisive matters is a strategy to build broad based consensus among an already polarised religious community. However their strategy of avoiding condemnation of social ills has been counterproductive.[270] Condemning the wrongs especially when they already face accusation of lack of adequate religious knowledge would open them up to more explicit polemics. So Tablīghīs concentrate on reminding the mosque attendants of the fundamentals of the faith. They fear that immediately one engages in righting the wrong verbally, they open themselves to criticism. In avoiding discussion pertaining to people's faults, the members attempt as a tactful strategy to leave 'forbidding wrong' to the religious scholars instead attempting to reform the inner reasoning of the individuals, which is 'heart':

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[269] Sheikh Umal, Sheikh Umal Audio Cassette, recorded in a *darsa* held in 6th Street Eastleigh Mosque, Nairobi. Sheikh Bafana emphasise that that the issue of forbidding evil is non-existent in the movement and the Tablīghīs selectively interpret the verses of Qurʾān confirming 'hypocrisy' condemned in the verse '*Afa tu3minuna bi baadhilil kitab wa takfuruna bi baadh'* (As for those who ignore God and His messengers and want to make a distinction between them, saying, 'We believe in some but not in others,' seeking a middle way, they are really disbelievers: We have prepared a humiliating punishment for those who disbelieve. 3: 150-151). Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.
[270] Bafana notes that 'the issues of making people avoid the bad deeds are non-existent in the Tablīghī world. They tell you that such matters are called *maradi umma* or societal ills. 'Leave societal malaise alone!' If you go somewhere and find societal crisis and decadence and even to the extent of Qurʾān being stepped on! You are told: just watch and do not act at all and do not restrain people! They argue that if you become involved to solve, it will bring about more problem, more division, more arguments, and more destruction, so just leave it the way things are. Allah has commanded us to command people to do good deeds and make them avoid evil, however they come in and say the words of Allah are wrong: let us only command people to do good deeds and leave it at that and we should not get into making them avoid the bad deeds. Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

Take the case of the *ᶜulamā'* and the rest; they keep treating the problems such as *zinā* (Ar. adultery), *miraa* (Bor. leafy stimulant drug), *siyāsa*, hypocrisy and so on. These are their target. But the Jamāᶜat go beyond all this and target to clean the core of the issue; the heart. If the heart is weak then it will be easily to be tempted by *zinā,* to consume *miraa* and drugs, to do bad things. But if this heart is made to realise that it has to love Allah, it has to fear Allah, it has to worship Allah then change can gradually come. We avoid discussing social ills…First look at yourself before looking at others. As the white people say, when you point a finger at a person, four fingers are pointing at you. Before condemning others, we must introspect deeply.[271]

To the Tablīghīs then political matters and vision of political Islam as the blue print of governance and rule of law does not arise. To them, such a stage can only be reached when and if the 'hearts' of the believers have been cured of materialism and Islam became part and parcel of their very existent as an ethical system. Mandaville notes that:

It is in groups such as the Tablīghīs Jama'at – a movement both translocal and post-national – that the *umma*, in the sense of a community of believers unhindered by geographical or national boundaries, finds its truest expression in Islam today. In terms of politics, the Tablīghīs dwell in a translocality that challenges the spatial confines of political community. Theirs is, in essence, an inverse normative model in which the good does not emanate from an ethical institution (i.e. the state) but rather from an emphasis on the collective power of the ethical 'self '.[272]

In Kenya in general and northern Kenya in particular the *ᶜulamā'* do not have the prerogative of forcefully carrying out the duty of 'enjoining good and forbidding wrong'. As religious scholars in a secular state their authority over the lay is limited to give guidance to the believers on religious observance. There is no mechanism in place for them to punish adulterers or heretics or even drunkards. The duty of punishing crimes deemed punishable is preserve of state organs such as police and the court of law. The duties of religious scholars are restricted to merely condemning and instructing the followers verbally on what is right and what is wrong. The *ᶜulamā'* derive their sanctioning power over the nature of the social behaviour from the other duties that they perform in everyday life. These duties include solving marital disputes, officiating marriages, presiding over funeral and naming ceremonies, delivering sermons and talks, teaching at Islamic schools and acting as liaison between local religious institutions and national Muslim leadership and the state. They have greater chance to be listened to than the Tablīghīs when it comes to 'forbidding wrong'. So when the *ᶜulamā'* condemn the Tablīghīs for not joining them in forbidding wrong, their mean concern is that in their daily preaching tours, the Tablīghīs do not verbally preach against social ills such as

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[271] Group discussion with three Tablīghīs, Moyale, July 2010.
[272] Mandaville, 2001, p. 146.

adultery, *shirk*, *miraa* chewing and use of other recreational drugs, desertion of daily prayers and moral decay instead concentrating on individual inner reforms. One informant asks:

> The Jamāʿat avoid solving two kinds of problems that affect the umma. One is societal problems be it politic, social, and physical and so on. Second, they avoid completely in reconciling or arbitrating in controversies involving faith. How can one call himself a person of *daʿwa* if he is irresponsible and indifferent?[273]

To the opponents, the movement's non-confrontational approach to problems does not address social issues. Another informant citing an event in which the Tablīghīs failed to resolve a protracted disagreement between themselves and the ʿ*ulamā'* of a prominent Moyale mosque and point out that the silence maintained by the group on matters affecting the community is not a sign of patience and humility but a mark of cowardice. The incidence resulted in the Tablīghīs being thrown out of the mosque and their office demolished. According to the informant instead of contesting for the use of the sacred space as lawful mosque attendants, the group quietly left. He adds:

> The Tablīghīs could not reveal the anomalies at that mosque. It is not about perseverance but cowardice. They fear fellow human beings at heart. This kind of fear is a ticket to hell. If you avoid controversies, how do you expect to preach? They refuse to reconcile difference in the society. Imagine, how can you call yourself a preacher and a Muslim if you cannot tell people to stop bad deeds? How can you claim to be a good Muslim?[274]

The Tablīghīs in their day to day proselytism emphasise spiritual benefits of performance of religious obligations. For instance, while they may not go into the details of procedure and prerequisite of prayers, recitation of Qurʾān, fasting, *zakāt* or performance of various prophetic deeds such as greetings, they motivate mosque attendants and their family members of benefits that they can accrue by performing these deeds. In simple terms, they insist on preaching on *fazā'il* or virtues and benefit of spirituals actions pertaining to worship and avoid matters of *masā'il* that deals with procedure of these actions and matters that deal with human relations (*muʿamalāt*). To Tablīghīs, matters of *fazā'il* attracts less controversies as there are general consensus among religious scholars while *masā'il* is a minefield due to different doctrinal and sectarian interpretations. In any case being less learned on discourses of *masā'il*, the Tablīghīs implicitly accept that the matters should be left to the ʿ*ulamā'* as they have deeper knowledge of jurisprudence. However to some sheikhs one cannot categorize religious teachings into *fazā'il* and *masā'il* as they are intrinsically fused and those

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[273] Personal conversations with Adi Abdullah, Mombasa, August, 2009
[274] Personal interview with Jay Kanu and Jamal, Moyale, September 2009.

matters of *'ibadāt* constitute only a small segment of revealed knowledge. Abdub Boru interjects that:

> They avoid any thing to do with *mu^camalāt*. They have nothing to do with jurisprudence and law. What they tell people is that if you do this, you get this, and if you do that, you get that. We the *^culamā'* insist that this is wrong. In religion we have more to do with *masā'il* than *fazā'il* and the latter is equally very important. For God, once you pray five times a day and diligently obey all the five pillars of Islam and six pillars of *imān*, you are done. The rest of the *dīn* is about human relations. These include matters dealing with justice, fairness, governance, law, equality, rights and wrongs, good neighbourliness, relations with non-Muslims, debates on violence and so on. It constitutes up to about 80% of religious matters. Anyone who insists that we should avoid these matters for discussion with *umma* is utterly wrong.[275]

The avoidance of politics and related matters are seen not only as worldly but also divisive by the members of the movement. More importantly being 'apolitical' ease mobility across and within national borders and allow state organs in many countries to consider the movement as posing no threats to state security despite its transnationality. The whole avoidance of politics is however interpreted by rival religious movements and *salafī* traditions as acts of 'unmanly' cowardice and deliberate and selective interpretation of Islamic teachings.[276] The opponents often cite examples of how being 'apolitical' means playing right into the hands of the 'primordial enemies' of the faith such the Western powers and culture. The opponents literally accuse the Tablīghī Jamāʿat as making the youth of the *umma* soft, emotional and outer-worldly and cite the current cordial relations between state governments and the movement as a sign of being enemies in their midst. Sheikh S. Bafana sums up the 'apolitical' nature of the movement this way:

> If you want clash with the people of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat; speak about politics! Just say that the Prophet was commander in chief of an army…just say that the Prophet was a head of state and a president….just say that the Prophet was a governor…say that the Prophet was a *qādi* (judge)…they would say that these are worldly matters, so leave it aside please![277]

He argues that the movement relies on inauthentic and fabricated sayings of the Prophet to call for inner *jihād*, a perpetual struggle against one's own soul, vis-à-vis political and military engagements against oppression and unislamic regimes. Accordingly the opponents

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[275] Personal conversation with Abdub Boru, Kinna, October 2009.

[276] Some *ulama* go to the extent of declaring that because of their selective interpretation, the Tablīghīs are among the 72 heretical sects destined for hell because they not only stay aloof of everyday problems of the *umma* but also allowing people with little knowledge to preach, falsely interpreting *tawhīd*, the basis of Islamic monotheism and deserting responsibilities required of a man through unwarranted travels. Sheikh Umal, Sheikh Umal Audio Cassette, recorded in a *darsa* held in 6th Street Eastleigh Mosque, Nairobi.

[277] Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

of the movement to maintain apolitical stance and to avoid of discussion of the present socio-political predicaments is akin having hidden agenda to 'sabotage' the faith from within. Bafana aptly adds that:

> Apart from substituting *jihād* with *khurūj fī sabīlillāh* (preaching tours), they have gone to the extent of changing the term *jihād* and called it *juhud*! (Concerted efforts) If you inform that here what is required is *jihād*, they would object and say that what is needed not is *juhud*. Let's push *juhud*! If you tell them we need to combat these or that, they would argue that we need just *juhud*. *Jihād* has become *juhud*. It is not *juhud* it is *jihād*. What did the Prophet say: *al jihād mafin ila yawm al qiyama*…that *jihād*s hall continue until the day of judgment. Then they claim that it *juhud* not *jihād*.[278]

6.2.6 The Prophet never travelled like this: *Khurūj* as *bidʿa*

'Where do they get prophetic traditions and Qurʾānic verses that support their travels for three days, ten days, forty days and four months? The Prophet never travelled *khurūj* the way they did?' asks Ibrahim Adan.[279] The opponents of the movement often criticise the 'innovative' nature of these travels citing the modules as unwarranted addition to the faith by sheikhs of the movement. To the opponents the travel modules were never systematised during the time of the Prophet and his companions a point that Tablīghīs partly agree to. To the Tablīghīs the whole sets of travel modules are not an end in itself but means to facilitate spiritual growth and inculcate daily observance of religious obligations become manifest in lives of individuals. Some Tablīghīs indeed rationalise the travel system of proselytism that fell into disuse for several centuries until it was resuscitated by Muhammad Ilyās in 1920s. They absolve their founder of any wrong doing as he was guided in his endeavour to remedy the deplorable state of religious observance in colonial India then. Therefore to them *tablīgh* is the only system that could bring back the piety in lives of every Muslim individual.

Some non-Tablīghī sheikhs who attend *ijtimāʿ*s and give moral support to the movement compare it to *madrasa* for adult Muslims.[280] Impressed by the efforts taken by the lay in charting religious revivalism among fellow ordinary Muslims, these sheikhs participate in Tablīghī gatherings and give sermons on general topics. While acknowledging that movement's *daʿwa* system is relatively new and aimed at revival of the *Sunna* of the Prophet in the lives of each Muslim, Tablīghī equally take issue with *ʿulamā'* for not considering their *madrasa* systems as innovation as they did not exist during the formative years of Islam.

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[278] Ibid.
[279] Personal conversation with Ibrahim Adan, Isiolo, May, 2010.
[280] Sheikh Hussein, a prominent Muslim leader from Garba Tulla praise the group for transforming lives of generally lax Muslim youth and compares the movement to a mobile adult *madrasa*. Group conversation with Sheikh Hussein and other *madrasa* teachers, Garba Tulla, October 2009.

Tablīghī accuse the *ᶜulamā'* of not extending their 'wars' against innovation to myriads of others educational systems such as secular school system. Abdi Rashid observes that:

> Our people have a way of opposing things. If for instance I go to elementary *madrasa*, then to *thanaw*i (Ar. high school) then to Sudan for university, who came with this? Is it not just *tartīb* that have been put in place by humans to get knowledge? They do not condemn these. They have no problem against the whole system of school from kindergarten one to three to primary school to secondary to university; they have no opposition to that.
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> The main reason why they condemn the Tablīghī Jamāʿat and spare the secular school system is that in the latter there are visible returns! You eat and see the fruits here and now. If a child passes an examination, he shall get work. Even in Kindergarten 1; if he passes well in his examinations, he is rewarded by the parents. There are visible rewards. But if you go forty days with all its hardship, who would give us rewards except Allah. It's all sacrifice.[281]

The *ᶜulamā'* consider their everyday religious activities such as preaching, teaching, conducting marriage, guiding mosque attendants on spiritual matters as part and parcel of *daᶜwa*. They therefore claim that *daᶜwa* is their lifestyle as they guide the people on daily basis. They often accuse the Tablīghīs of preaching to the public that their *khurūj* system is the only *daᶜwa* and means to revive the faith among the *umma*.

6.2.7 Wars of sources and opposites: Arabia vs. India

Behind the seething conflicts between Tablīghīs and *ᶜulamā* in Northern Kenya, there are underlying rivalry between competing dualities. One could actually ask, is it inherently between *wahabism/salafīsm* vs. *deobandism*? Is it between Arabic influenced reformism vs. Indian influenced reformism? Is it the *Shafiī* school of thought vs. the *Hanafī* one? Is it between *madrasa* educated sheikhs vs. self-trained lay preachers? Is it between 'old custodians' of Islam among the Borana speaking community vs. new youthful enthusiasts from the fringe of religious leadership? All these dualities are plausible dimensions. Let us examine the core underlying clash: that of an Indian-influenced reform vis-à-vis Arabic one.

The relationship, networks and flow between the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya and their centres in South Asian region is strong. The movement was indeed initiated in India by Muhammad Ilyās. It is an offshoot of Deobandism and its Ṣūfī affiliation with *Chishtiya ṭarīqa* is well documented. (Reetz 2006, Masud 2000, Haq 1972, Sikand 2002) In fact a large glossary of terms used in the movement has Ṣūfī origins such as *chilla*, *ḥalqa*, *darood*, and *dhikr*.

The first lay preachers to travel in villages and towns of northern Kenya were Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis who often preached in Urdu and other South Asian languages. These itinerant preachers were few and far between unlike contemporary regular preaching

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[281] Group discussion with three Tablīghīs, Moyale, July 2010.

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teams composed of Kenyan Tablīghīs. In Kenya, the contact persons who acted as local pioneers of the movement were Kenya's Asian Sunni Muslims. They not only provided the movement with much needed operational bases in terms of *markaze*s but also took on the practice of religious mobility to preach to fellow Asians and indigenous Kenyans. They trained local Tablīghīs from different parts of the country linking them up in an elaborate 'faith bureaucracy'. They put in place the spatial administrative unit of *ḥalqa*s, sub-*ḥalqa*s, *qarya*s, mosque-based *jamāʿat*, regular national and regional *ijtimāʿ*s and *jor*s, effective travel modules for men and women and regular evaluation and audits of progress from grass-root to national level. These Kenyan Asian Muslims also dominate the day to day running of the national headquarters overseeing travel plans of different preaching teams, entry and departure of foreign teams, exact locations of each local and foreign team on preaching tours, discipline within movement, consistency and orthodoxy in Tablīghī message proselytism and other administrative works. These Kenya's Asians and a few indigenous Tablīghīs therefore constitute the Kenya *shūra*, the national Tablīghī council. They are hence referred to as *wazee/jarole* (elders) by fellow Kenyan Tablīghīs. They have one thing in common with the Tablīghīs in the South Asian centres: ethnic origin. Being a diasporic community their attachment with home and involvement with the transnational movement make them the best 'brokers' relaying directives from the headquarters, inviting 'elders' and auditing local progress of the movement and sharing the information of progress with their transnational kin. This immense role played by South Asian Muslims in the affairs of the movement makes the *ᶜulamāʾ* of mainstream Islamic leadership highly uncomfortable. They feel their niche is being threatened. Most of the sheikhs among Borana speaking communities were trained in *madrasa*s in Isiolo, Merti, Isiolo, Mombasa and Thika and universities in Sudan Egypt and Saudi Arabia. They are moderately *Salafī*. They believe that they have the right *ᶜilm* needed to guide their communities. Though supportive of the mobilising impact of the movement in bringing reluctant believers back to the mosque, they are uncomfortable with the source of such reform: India. No wonder that when the Tablīghīs started recruiting local Muslims into their fold, the first criticism was directed to its origin than the content of their reform agenda. Mamed Roba recalls the formative days of the movement in the following way:

> We were fought very much. We were called names, all sorts of names. They (*Qalole*) said we brought a new religion from India. We were denied a chance to preach in almost all mosques in the area. Not only that, we were called a sect that is interested in destroying Islam instead of building it. They even said that we were being paid by our foreign masters to destabilize the religion and that what we were doing is nothing but *bidʿa*.[282]

India hence conjures in the minds and discourses of the local sheikhs not as formidable centres of Islamic learning but a place of religious experimentation.[283] Such sheikhs appear to be vaguely aware of the dynamics of a vibrant Islamic reform movement and heritage that characterised Indian subcontinent in the 19th and early 20th century. As a counter narrative, local Tablīghīs extol the role that Indian Muslims play in Islamic revivalism as a blessing and divine providence following neglect of the faith and moral decadence in Arabia. The Tablīghī Jamāʿat is in other words seen as successors of the early Islamic reform movement and the best method that can take Islam to greater heights on a global level. The movement's founders in the Indian subcontinent therefore are presented as the leading light in transforming global Islamic revivalism. The quotation captures the idea in this way:

> But one should remember that Allah brings *fikr al-dīn* (Ar. deliberations to revive the faith) to any people anywhere. Even right here among our people. In India such *fikr* (Ar. thought/efforts) gained grounds and *Alhamdulillah* (Ar. Thanks to God) spread world over. It was first resisted but now it is even more active in Makka Mukarama and Madina Munawara than ever before. Arabs and Muslims in other parts of the world have been sleeping for a long time. They have followed the path of pleasure and self-indulgence. They had ceased to help in the way of Allah. Now those in opposition to *daʿwa* still stick to the idea that out of India only cow worship and ignorance can come out. But it is in the Indian Subcontinent that the best *daʿwa* efforts were found. Thanks to them *daʿwa* has reached everywhere. The *daʿwa* work is hence active in every country in the world, even in the Jewish state of Israel, USA and Europe.[284]

The local Tablīghīs appear independent and no longer look to the non-Tablīghī sheikhs for guidance, religious training and advice on best texts and methods to use in proselytism. For all these matters, they look to Kenya's Asian 'elders' and 'elders' from IPB. To the opponents, Tablīghīs have not only initiated alternative faith bureaucracy but also erode their religious authority as custodians of knowledge. Most sheikhs dislike the influential role

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[282] Informal conversations with Mamed Roba, Mamed Arero and a few other Tablīghīs, Moyale, June 2010

[283] This discourse of rendering the Tablīghī Jamāʿat as unorthodox takes on ethno-religious dimension. The more *salafi* leaning ethnic community is in terms of religious commitment, the more likely their total rejection of the Tablīghī doctrines. One such group is Garre. Large numbers of their sheikhs are more learned in strict *salafi/wahabi* traditions that is linked with Arabia. Mamed Roba notes: 'The other main reason why some Garre and other earlier scholars oppose or opposed tabligh work is because they could not or do not believe that such forces of transforming Islam cannot come out of anywhere else except Arabia. Because of their relations with networks in Arabia, they felt threatened.'

[284] Informal conversations with Mamed Roba, Mamed Arero and a few other Tablīghīs, Moyale, June 2010

Tablīghī elders have on practices and decisions of local adherents of the movement. Abdub Boru, a discontented scholar says that:

> The most serious thing that we religious scholars do not want to hear is these emphases on so called *jarole/wazee* (elders). They do not call them sheikhs. They do not refer to them as *ᶜulamā'*. They do not label them as the Muslim jurists (*mufti*) who deliver *fatwa* (Ar. legal ruling). They just call them elders. In simple terms, we the *madrasa* teachers, we the *ᶜulamā'*, our faith is not tied to some elders out there. Our religion is tied to Qur'ān and Sunna. Our faith is based on Allah and the teaching of his prophet but not on elders of any kind. Above that, we may debate that these verses of the Qur'ān was commented upon by certain renowned scholar in this manner and so on.[285]

The Tablīghīs of Pakistan and India origin who roam the region elicit little acknowledgement as possessors of religious knowledge. They often preach in Urdu with little reference to Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* in Arabic. Great numbers of Tablīghīs travel within the region. It is common to find Tablīghī teams from Tanzania, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, India, Saudi Arabia and South Africa tour a region within a span of a year. Frequently teams of Middle Eastern origins get positive review while those from South Asia are largely viewed by opponents as lacking proper *ᶜilm*. '*Warri hindi gul yaa kunn yomma inbekh qarr* (Bor. These Tablīghīs from Indian subcontinent are indeed illiterate' notes one informant, 'One day an Arabic speaking *jamāᶜat* from Egypt came here (Isiolo). They had great *ᶜilm*. You see Tablīghīs are different; there are those who know and have *ᶜilm* and others who are very illiterate.'[286]

6.2.8 Neglecting home: Issues of travels and its relation to the household

The local Tablīghīs retreat from home for *daᶜwa* tours for duration ranging from three days to four months. During these periods they are expected to ensure that their families have enough provisions to comfortably sustain their livelihood. It is a common practice for a Tablīghī man to allocate a sizeable amount of his income to finance these preaching tours. Frequent absence from home and delegation of homestead leadership to women are highly criticised by non-Tablīghīs as religious innovation that erodes social cohesion and infringe on the rights of women. There is a general tendency within polemical circles that the Tablīghīs expose their women and children to undeserved hardship. Their women are argued to have been complicit in the agenda as they are convinced that it is better for them to miss their husbands for the sake of religion. The arguments raised points to the possible number of days a married man

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[285] Personal conversation with Abdub Boru, Kinna, October 2009.
[286] Group conversations with Garre youthful *'ulamāʿ*, Isiolo, April 2009. In the interview the group noted that while the Urdu speaking preachers were not inspiring, a team from Sudan and Egypt at the then ended Isiolo *jor* appeared very learned, informative and beneficial for the audience.

could stay for whatever reasons away from home. Examples from the formative Islamic history are often cited. Contrasts are made of the Tablīghīs travels. The questions asked often by the opponents are: is it so urgent that each man should leave home to tell others about the faith? Is *daʿwa fardh ʿayn* or *fardh kifāya*? Is it not just adequate to preach to a local mosque and to extended families and neighbours than travel to central Somalia or southern Ethiopia for *daʿwa*? The sheikhs opposed to Tablīghī travels often argue that it is irresponsibly neglectful for any married man to leave home for preaching tours.[287]

'It is not just money that your family requires of you' says Jamal 'They need care. They need security. They need a father figure at home. These Tablīghīs have perfected the art of absentee fatherhood. Their wives have been denied conjugal rights. God forbid that they seek it outside.'[288] Often unpredictable circumstances such as sickness of a family member, death of a relative, expulsion of children from school due to unpaid fees, eviction from home due to accumulation rents are mentioned as some of the ills that can occur and has sometime befallen Tablīghī households. When an individual on travel mission gets information about a sick relative or other urgent matters that require his termination of preaching tour and immediate return, often the *amīr* s are depicted as hesitant dismissing the issue as lures of devil and the world concern.

Related with absence from home is an emerging practice of pledges that individuals take in order to travel. These pledges know commonly as *sanawi* is verbally or informally taken by Tablīghīs in forums such as *masjid shūra*. A Tablīghī may pledge to travel every year for four months or a certain number of days in irrespective of circumstances. Ideally apart from the *sanawi* pledge, individual Tablīghīs are required to set aside three days every month for local outing. Often fellow Tablīghīs reminds one another of the pledges. The individual in such circumstances appear to lack capacity to disregard his peers due to constant pressure to conform by the stringent and time-consuming practices of the movement. As a tactic for mobilisation, Tablīghīs out to convince fellow lay preachers about their impending *sanaw*i would stop at nothing than an acceptance. Pleas such as lack of funds, sickness of a child or general fatigue are often enveloped by spiritual goodies that would be accrued by the impending preaching tour. 'Leave your family to Allah' or better still 'Allah is the sustainer' are of the common lines used to motivate an individual to leave home for the tours. Abdi

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[287] Bafana: Our religion teaches us that everyone and everything has its own right. Your wife has her rights; your children have their rights; your parents; your body; your soul and your time and everything has its rights. *Fa'atu kulu haqin haqahu…*give everything the rights it deserves. It is not like today you neglect one set of rights and emphasize some rights only. Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

[288] Personal interview with Jay Kanu and Jamal, September 2009, Moyale.

Rashid, remarks hypothetically:

> If it happens that the other *dāʿi*s come to you and remind you that the *sanawi* is now. You are broke and don't have any resources to pay for the travel. You try to talk to them that there is a problem as you do not have any food for the family and travel but they still insist that you should leave your family in the hands of Allah. So because your *imān* is strong and you do not want to show weakness or lack of faith you fear to turn back and stay. You fear that you will be affected as the Noah's wife who turned into a pillar of salt. So you go ahead as always whether the family has something to eat or not. Then your family gets into problem while you are away. The hardship would be magnified by the society. Anti-Tablīghīs are so many. They will blow that issue out of proportion.[289]

Absence from home also affects family income in several ways. Apart from dedicating funds and a long period of time in disparate daily weekly and monthly practices as *taʿlim*s, *shūra*s and in regular congregational gatherings such as *jor*s and *ijtimāʿ*, Tablīghīs are at times forced into absenteeism from employment or business. Opponents list names of teachers and other government workers who have either out of their own will quitted job or been dismissed due to desertion after long periods on *khurūj* .[290] Senior Tablīghīs are also accused of motivating novices into quitting jobs while themselves they have steady income from varieties of businesses.[291] '*Ujji tante namat si qore, ujji waqqi si qor demii*' (Bor. you are employed by a human being in your current job, it is better you also have time for the job that allocated to you by God) are some of the convincing narratives used to 'coerce' reluctant novices. As mentioned earlier individuals have to finance their travels. Some travel modules such as four months *khurūj* costs more than Ksh. 10000 (approximately 100 euros). These amounts of money allocated for travels have direct impact on household budgetary plans creating shortfall for basic and luxury goods for family members. The opponents of the movement also

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[289] Group discussion with three Tablīghīs, Moyale, July 2010.

[290] Some Tablīghīs counter the claims by arguing that despite the absence of such Tablīghīs from work, there are often no disciplinary actions taken against them. God appears to cover for their absence. Some Tablīghīs who quit formal employment are seen as doing even better economically as God provides for them in miraculous ways. Strangely though the senior Tablīghīs restrain young enthusiastic novices from making such radical decision as quitting jobs for total dedication to *da'wa*. It is argued that once *imān* of a *dāʿî* reaches a certain level, he shall be sustained in divine way by the bounties of Allah. Such individuals though few are not uncommon in Moyale, Garissa and Waso. One such case cited by Tablīghī and non-Tablīghīs alike is the case of one prominent Tablīghī *amīr* for Moyale. Ali mentions that: 'This man quit his business, left his family to God and travelled to Somali, India, Pakistan etc. His family suffered at times with nothing to eat. But miracles occur. Sometime a person would come from Ethiopia and hand to the family cash just like that of up to 50000/-.' Group discussion with Borana youth, Moyale, September, 2009.

[291] Bafana commenting on this discrepancy says that 'While they tell us to quit your job, *wallahi* (Ar. by Allah) their trucks are on the road transporting! As he goes for *khurūj*, their transport trucks are busy on the road. You see, they have hardware shops for spares. They have hotels. They have chemists. All these businesses of theirs are working but they ask you to quit yours as Allah shall provide and give u more jobs.' Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

observe that in a number of cases shops and other business ventures of Tablīghīs are affected by their absence. One informant observes that:

> If you are a business-man and you volunteer for four months *khurūj*. After ten days, people will forget about you. You lose customers. Goods will expire. Debts will pile. If you leave the business under a third party management, they may mismanage the business. Then you lose your livelihood and work. Then your work becomes *tablīgh*.[292]

'Imagine a person working as a government employee quitting their job to concentrate all the time on *tablīgh* saying that "Allah *nalete*" (Sw. God provides),' asks Boru 'Does God provide only for them? There must be funds that they get.' Boru alleges that a number of times, the expenditure of the gatherings could be partially or fully sponsored by some wealthy Asian benefactors and that international *markaze*s in India and Pakistan subsidizes the costs. The funds collected from the hundreds of the congregants, according to him, are therefore redistributed to different *markaze*s all over the country to support local Tablīghī units. Allegations about senior Tablīghīs getting constant financial support are gaining ground especially buoyed the fact that despite years of *daʿwa* itinerancy and no job, some senior Tablīghīs appear to be living relatively comfortable lives. One informant expresses the claims this way 'There are people from Basa to Merti known to their headquarters in Nairobi as their agents. Every month they get something from their sponsors. Even recently they got five goats each and five cows are what they are waiting for.'[293] These claims are hard to dismiss or confirm given the secrecy with which matters of finance are handled within the movement. The Tablīghīs counter such allegations with clear appeal to the opponents to either prove it or better still join the movement to enjoy the support. They therefore see the opponents as people who are not ready to sacrifice for the faith but make a fuss when others do the same. Mamed Roba denies these allegations and advises the opponents in the following manner:

> Most people opposed to the *tablīghī daʿwa* allege that there are people out there in India who pay us monthly salary. Though they say that, none of them wants to join to find out the truth. We all pay for our expenses, our travels and our upkeep.
> You see, people do not want to pay to preach. When there are no immediate financial gains, they do not want to incur any expense. This is the major stumbling block to *daʿwa* efforts among our peoples.[294]

Some Tablīghīs also support themselves by selling merchandises during national and regional *ijtimāʿ*s and also returning home with goods for their shops.

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[292] Personal interview with Jay Kanu and Jamal, September 2009, Moyale.
[293] Personal conversations with A. Roba, Merti, October 2009.
[294] Informal conversations with Mamed Roba, Mamed Arero and a few other Tablīghīs, Moyale, June 2010.

6.2.9 They have centres everywhere: Tablīghī mobility as a problem

The opponents claim that Tablīghī Jamāʿat has *markaze*s in many countries world. They are accused of having their centres in the every Western countries and even the state of Israel. Their ability to negotiate and comply with strict requirements of state governments through an 'apolitical' approach to religious change has always been cited as their greatest threat to social and political rights of Muslim within these states. However, the fact that they are reluctantly embraced by governments as 'good Muslims' is often pointed out by some non-Tablīghīs as an evidence of their faulty ideology. Sheikh Bafana advises fellow Kenyan Muslims and cautions them against the movement saying:

> Let us educate ourselves as Muslims. Let us not waste our time following such groups likes the Tablīghī Jamāʿat that are being used to break Islam from within; The movement which is today not considered as a threat worldwide. They have free access everywhere including Tel Aviv, Israel. They have permitted to establish centres in Washington where Bush (George Bush, the former president of the United States) was born. They are allowed access even to Russia, where when the communist Soviet was a superpower any Muslim found with a copy of Qur'ān was slaughtered. But the Tablīghī Jamāʿat was allowed to enter. Why? Because it has been known that their *manhaj* or method is faulty.[295]

Tablīghīs generally feel less restricted in their preaching tours. In a country like Kenya where a section of ʿulamāʾ often accuse the government of unfavourably targeting Muslim groups under the pretext of fighting terrorism, marginalising the faith communities and denying the members of the faith travel and national identification documents, the relative ease with which the itinerant preachers of the movement obtain passports and cross national and international borders is viewed with suspicion. 'I sense some sinister moves, this group has unrestricted travels to any where they want,' cautions Yasin Abdi 'They are allowed to move across borders freely and this is something that may indicate that they are not in these things for good.'[296]

6.3 Responding to polemics: Strategies and rationalising *tablīgh*

The Tablīghīs in Northern Kenya counter the claims of initiating new religious phenomena with acceptance that their system was not in existence during the time of the Prophet as it is today. They argue that as a systematized programme with sole aim of reviving the faith among the ordinary believers, it is a good innovative practice. Its aim is hence marketed as revival of the *Sunnah* and practical commitment to every religious obligation by each individual Muslim. However the system is consistently depicted as a long-forgotten practice

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[295] Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.
[296] Personal interview with Yasin Abdi, Isiolo, April 2009.

of early Islam and render corpus of religious travels in formative days of Islam in a Tablīghī motif.[297] The Tablīghīs expected resistance from rival Islamic traditions. There is a section of the religious scholars who oppose the group; others who are indifferent but large numbers of the general public partake in the Tablīghī activities and travels from time to time.[298]

Tablīghīs rationalize that the main reason why there are so many opponents to the movement is not because of its use of weak *ḥadīth* or perceived innovative practices but because of immense hardship and challenges that its followers face for the sake of the faith. They hence delegitimize the religious commitment of their opponents. To further counter their opponents' polemics there is an increasing tendency to draw them as 'lovers' of worldly pleasure who are not ready to leave the comfortable confines of their homes for the sake of the faith. Sample these two arguments, the first one by a Tablīghī sympathizer and the other by a prominent *amīr* of Moyale *ḥalqa*.

Tablīghī sympathiser

> Tablīgh takes you to the correct and definite life of religion. It is the only way that can save the Borana and save the faith. The people who refuse to go have a reason. Once you join the movement, you shall live most times from home, you become wild. You live in another world. You live like Ali and Abubakr (companions of the Prophet). You grow past this world. This is the commitment that many refuse. *Tablīghī warr kanke kesa si bas, beshara irra si daab* (Bor. The movement removes you from your home and impede you from your worldly business). You may take all your wealth and place them at the disposal of religion at the slightest conviction for the faith.[299]

Former *Amīr*, Moyale sub-*ḥalqa*

> The main reason why the opponents are too many is that people love the world so much and they do not like any kind of hardship. In the Tablīghī Jamāʿat there is also of sacrifice in terms of wealth, time, and *fikra* and even when you look at *tablīgh* itself it is about difficulty. Imagine you leave you mattress and sleep on hard floors, you go not eat nice food but just things to keep you alive, you are exposed to cold and heat all the time, you may be insulted, you carry firewood a job that you have never done, you may have to carry a jerrican in the middle of the night, you may be sent on errands for milk in the town, this is sacrifice and this is not loved by the heart.[300]

What they lack in ideological exposition, the Tablīghīs make it up through visible pietistic behaviour. They adorn Islamic dress, carry religious paraphernalia such as prayer beads, books and grow long beards. They demonstrate to the public that they are conservative

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[297] Abdi Rashid aptly put that 'Tabligh is something that was formulated as a method of religious revival long after the death of the prophet. There is wide gap between the time of its initiation and prophet's time. There is a lost time in between. *Da'wa* has been there even before but it was not systematized. The tabligh as *da'wa* was lost and forgotten until it was revived. So there is a lot of resistance to it.' Group discussion with three Tablīghīs, Moyale, July 2010.

[298] Group discussion with three Tablīghīs, Moyale, July 2010.

[299] Group discussions with Borana youth, Moyale, September 2009.

[300] Informal conversations with Mamed Roba, Mamed Arero and a few other Tablīghīs, Moyale, June 2010.

defenders of the prophetic traditions.[301] They hence draw themselves as a group who have successfully fought their inner soul, cleansing it from the desires of this world and its divisive doctrinal and political categorisations. '*Nafs* (Ar. soul) is our enemy. Heart is an enemy. Our flesh is our enemy,' recounts Ali 'But when you go back on the path of faith, you defeat your heart and desires and soul and become a righteous.'[302] There is indeed a strong move to market the Tablīghī Jamāʿat as exclusive divinely sanctioned approach to proper spiritual revivalism.[303]

The ʿ*ulamā'* are therefore displayed as worldly and not bothered with the Muslims beyond their mosque and *madrasa* jurisdiction. The ʿ*ulamā'* are also cited as opposed to them for reviving religious commitment among the lay, a duty that has been neglected for a long time. As full-time religious specialists, the ʿ*ulamā'* are shown in the rhetorics of the Tablīghīs as benefitting from the religious positions they hold and hence not concerned with genuine religious change. They contrast the mainstream religious establishment and their own self-sufficient Tablīghī system as independent of external funding as individuals are expected to pay for their travels and all expenses. 'Unless you pay, you will not feel the sacrifice,' observes Hassan 'These sheikhs want to sit here and wait for people to come to mosque. We go out to the people. We use our own money. We bring them along with us so that they also remind others.'[304] Ordinary Muslims opposed to the movement are also portrayed as strongly attached to everyday life. One informant avers that 'Our people (Borana etc.) here cannot conceive how one can leave his comfortable home, his wife and children for the sake of personal reform and *daʿwa fī sabīlillāh*.'[305]

The Tablīghīs also to some extent perceive themselves as a unifying force in already fragmented landscape that has been characterized by rivalry between different religious traditions and ethnic groups. However as seen in earlier arguments their appeal to 'cluster'

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[301] Omar, one of the three Tablīghīs expresses the perception of people to the Tablīghīs this way: 'The people just look at the person how he was, how he has transformed, his white *kanzu* (Sw. robe), his calmness and withdrawal from their social vices, his prayer beads and then they say that he has become a Ṣūfī . If you look at Ṣūfīsm, a Ṣūfī is a person who has dedicated himself to God. That is positive according to me. But the critics look at from negative perspective because the person has detached himself from the society , he has no issues with people and they think he has cut all his social ties and that he does not even seems to have what to eat and hence no self-worth, he does not seems to work and seems lazy. So they add all these together and then dent the image of the movement. Group discussion with three Tablīghīs, Moyale, July 2010.

[302] Personal conversations with Hassan Duba, Nairobi, May 2010.

[303] One informant observes that '*Tabliqi kara rabbi fars. Kara nami chuf inragan*. (Bor. Tabligh is a path praised by God. It is path that is taken by very few.) To be in that group, you are blessed. One thing I have seen it bring total change in your life.' Group discussions with Borana youth, Moyale, September 2009.

[304] Personal conversations with Hassan Duba, Nairobi, May 2010.

[305] Informal conversations with Mamed Roba, Mamed Arero and a few other Tablīghīs, Moyale, June 2010.

every one under the umbrella of '*shahāda*' suffers constant criticism.[306] In the northern part of Kenya, the Tablīghīs from different ethnic groups consider each other as brothers and cooperate on *daʿwa* tours despite hostilities between and among their ethnic groups.

As proof of their success and legitimacy of their religious agenda, Tablīghīs often talk about the number of people who have gained *ʿilm* through frequent travels and converted to Islam under their programmes. Rehabilitation of 'wayward' individuals such as petty thieves, drunkards and other drug users are often raised as Tablīghī success stories. Such individuals whose behaviour turned better due to membership in the movement number a dozen. The *ʿulamāʾ* to a great extent accept that the Tablīghīs have in a way promoted behavioural change among these classes of people who are deemed 'irredeemable' and misfits. The idea that the local Tablīghī Jamāʿat is some sort of a mobile rehabilitation centre has had mixed outcome. On one hand, the movement has reformed consenting 'rogue' youth whom the *ʿulamāʾ* and parents have given put on. One informant put the dilemma in the following way:

> Our society has a very strange attitude to Tablīghī Jamāʿat now. They look at the movement as some sort of rehabilitation team, so when a family has a wayward youth, they send them on *tablīgh*. But *tablīgh* does not work like that, it works on the consenting individuals who have resolved themselves to reform their everyday life, it is not a programme, it is a path of self-restoration. It's you, your intention and your relationship with God. Some friends also support you to join Tablīghī Jamāʿat because they think that the Jamāʿat is some kind of mental hospital or rehabilitation group to transform bad guys into good guys.[307]

The Tablīghīs also argue that the main reason why the *ʿulamāʾ* have not been able to carry out proper revitalization of faith among Borana speaking communities is because they operate from elevated point of authority. The *ʿulamāʾ* unlike them are argued to have erred to preach from position of self-righteousness thereby condemning the masses to the sins they also engage in. Therefore, the Tablīghīs indirectly hit back at the earlier accusations of 'enjoining good' but refusing to 'forbid wrong'. The best way of forbidding wrong accordingly is hence by being seen as setting a good example in everyday life, abolishing any hierarchy between the preacher and the audience and acceptance that the preacher and the audience are human beings with equal propensity to sin. 'This is not how the *ahl al-sunna wa`l-jamāʿ ʿulamāʾ* operate,' corrects Hassan Duba 'They say that they say that they have *ʿilm*. When you listen

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[306] Bafana concludes, 'the Tablīghīs have a belief that anyone who has said *La illaha illalah* is our brother, that we should forget our differences, our different schools of thought, and our doctrinal uniqueness. That we should just stay firm and united under the flag of *La illaha illalah*. In the Tablīghī movement, they have accommodated all kinds of deviant groups. Shia are inside, *Qādiriyya* are inside, *Shahamiya* are inside, *Nakshbandiya. Tijani*, Ṣūfī are in, *Qurafi* are in and in other every one and everything is in it.' Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

[307] Informal conversations with Mamed Roba, Mamed Arero and a few other Tablīghīs, Moyale, June 2010.

you will hear…I have ʿilm…I I I. We the Tablīghī Jamāʿat preachers use "we" and never "you". We cannot condemn. We never address people as if we are something better or more religious'.[308]

To counter tides of criticism that depict the movement as band of illiterate preachers, the local Tablīghīs utilise visiting jamāʿats from Arabic speaking countries as the bridge to reach to rival mosques and the ʿulamā'. Jamāʿats from such countries as Sudan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are deliberately put on a preaching circuit that will ensure that they preach at mosques run by rival Salafī sheikhs. A good example was in April 2009 when after Isiolo jor, the senior Tablīghīs from Waso sub-ḥalqa planned the route of a visiting Sudanese jamāʿats to include sojourn at Merti Jamia mosque and other larger mosques in the zone. In Moyale, the Garre sheikhs are among the chief opponents of the local branch of the movement, therefore the Tablīghīs strategize in this way to win them over albeit temporarily:

> The Garre understand that Islam came from the Arabs, be taught by the Arabs and the only system that works is from that region only. But unfortunately that is their reason for opposition to the movement. That is why when there was a jamāʿat from Saudi Arabia in the area; we sent it directly to their Taqwa mosque. This was a mosque where Tablīghīs can never step in to preach. The jamāʿat was purely Arab, they used Arabic to preach, their system and procedure was that of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. To the Garre, the fact that the jamāʿat from Saudi, they have ʿilm. It was well received.[309]

In addition local Tablīghīs frequently invite all religious scholars to their ijtimāʿs and regional consultative meetings. Often the ʿulamā' honour such invitation in the hope that they can positively guide the lay preachers to the proper Sunni path. The Tablīghīs also regularly conduct ziyārāt (visits) to resident ʿulamā' to get their blessings, to acknowledge their authority and to get acquainted with them so as to use their mosques and work together on reviving religious observance among the masses. Both groups need each other for mutual co-existence. This symbiotic relationship averts an all-out conflict between the two classes of religious preachers.

6.4 Ṣūfī-Tablīghī Relations

The relationship between Tablīghīs and different ṭarīqas of Ṣūfīs in Northern Kenya is very ambiguous. Some of the Ṣūfī groups such as Sheikh Hussein tariqa do not have access to use mosques as venue of propagation of their practices while decreasing influence of Qādiriyya and Ṣaliḥiyya ṭarīqas in Moyale makes them less vocal in fronting strong ideological arguments to counter the rise of Tablīghī movement in the region. The Ṣūfīs-Tablīghī

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[308] Personal conversations with Hassan Duba, Nairobi, May 2010.
[309] Group discussion with three Tablīghīs, Moyale, July 2010.

relations are less strained than with the mainstream *Salafī* traditions. However individual practising Ṣūfīs express strong reservations against the sudden rise of the movement. There are also regional differences on the relations between Tablīghīs and Ṣūfīs. In Waso, the extent of Ṣūfī-influenced religious tradition is minimal and expressed largely through quasi-Ṣūfī *Ayaan* group that prominently engage in spirit possession healing activities. Moyale however is richer in the diversity of Ṣūfī groups with Sheikh Hussein, *Qādiriyya* and *Ṣaliḥiyya ṭarīqa*s relatively stronger and with active followings. In the section below, we shall briefly explore the relations between Tablīghīs and Sheikh Hussein *ṭarīqa* (*Garib*) and Tablīghīs and *Qādiriyya* and *Ṣaliḥiyya ṭarīqa*s. It is also important to note Tablīghī Jamāʿat itself is indirectly influenced by Ṣūfī Islam in India and such practices as withdrawal from home for reform, dhikr and emphasis on the inner reform point to its Ṣūfī connections.[310]

6.4.1 Tablīghī-*Garib* relations

Sheikh Hussein *ṭarīqa*s or *Garib* as they are popularly known have a number of tomb shrines in Moyale Ethiopia side. These tomb shrines attract pilgrims who pray at these sites in the hope that the saints buried there would intercede on their behalf. One such popular site is Gammo Aba Kadir on Moyale-Ethiopia side. At the Gammo, there are permanent houses that house the custodian of the shrine and his family and a host of other followers and wayfarers. *Garib* have special weekly sessions in which members gather and offer *dhikr*, sacrifices and sing songs in praise of their sheikhs such as Sheikh Hussein of Bale, Aba Kadir, Soph Umar, Bahr Agal, Ako Makko among others. Moyale being on the border is linked with major centres of the Sheikh Hussein *ṭarīqa*s such as Anajina, Bale. Pilgrims from the town participate regularly in religious festivals held in Bale. The group attracts disparate classes of people common among them women. Members are largely impoverished individuals with little religious knowledge and low standing within Moyale and Waso societies. The *dhikr* sessions held at homes of prominent followers feature care-free and festive with free-mixing of sexes and excessive consumption of *miraa*. Often individuals from saintly families claiming inherited *baraka* (Ar. power to bless/charisma) are feted, showered with gifts and revered so that they could bless the followers. Within the group there are very few who

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[310] Similarity between Tablīghī Jamāʿat and Ṣūfī is also known to some Borana speaking Tablīghīs. In a group interview with informants in Moyale, they make the following observation on the subject: 'There are some similarities between the Ṣūfīs and Tablīghīs. They both emphasise *dhikr*. A person is encouraged to do *dhikr* a lot whole day and every day. They also have their own *manyattas* (Sw. centres/secluded hermits): if you look closely at the Tablīghī Jamāʿat there is so much emphasis on the environment within which the person is involved and it's the target of reform. Such is also a similarity. If the environment is bad then the person is in great jeopardy. So he must be taken to new grounds for rejuvenation.' Group discussion with three Tablīghīs, Moyale, July 2010.

possess religious knowledge adequate enough to front ideological defence against relentless polemics.

Consistently the ᶜulamā' of mainstream Islamic tradition in region condemn the followers of *Garib* for a host of improper and 'sinful' behaviours among them carefree atmosphere at their congregations, singing of praise songs for their sheikhs, exploitation of the resources of their followers by their leaders, non-observance of prayers and other religious obligations and worshipping of other beings other than God. Shrines such as Gammo Agal in Ethiopia have fallen into disuse largely due to frequent attacks from Garre ᶜulamā' as idolatry and diminishing number of followers and custodians.[311] In Merti the main opposition to the *Garib* by the ᶜulamā' concerns spirit possession healing activities engaged in by leaders of the group.

Tablīghīs in order to win these groups attempt to tone down condemnation of 'unislamic' practices.[312] Preaching groups that tour the southern part of Ethiopia make a point in visiting the shrines and tombs as part of their spatial practices such as *jaula* and *ziyārāt*. Through these visits, they outline their aims in the area urging all the males in such places to accompany them to the mosque for sermons. In the event that a few followers of the group accompany them to the mosque, the Tablīghīs attempt to convince them to volunteer for some time to go with them for periods ranging from three days to four months. For instance, one informant recalls that one time Bubba, a renowned spirit medium and leader of *Garib* group in Waso was convinced to volunteer for a forty days *jamāʿat*. He joined a team that included a dozen Tablīghīs and a few ᶜulamā'. The preaching tour took them through towns such as Merti, Sericho, Korbesa, Ires Aboru, and a number of smaller villages. For the Tablīghīs, he was a 'star attraction' of the tour as he was given a chance at every mosque to preach on the evils of spirit possession cult. He was said to have recounted how the *Garib* was unislamic, exploitative, a group to be shunned and a practice that he shall 'never' go back to. His testimony as a reformed man who had greatly benefitted from 'spirit management' business was capitalized on by the Tablīghīs as the transformative power of the movement. If Bubba, despite years of ᶜulamā' attempts, can give up *Garib* through *khurūj,* then the movement is

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[311] Personal conversations with Mzee Tadi, custodian of Gammo Aba Kadir, Moyale-Ethiopia, September 2009.

[312] *Ulama* are critical of the all-embracing posture of Tablīghīs and condemn them for targeting 'deviant' groups without correcting their heresy. Bafana asks: 'How can we be one with Ṣūfīs who go and worship graves? How can we be one with people who carry out shirk? They claim that we should hold firm under the rope of Allah. What is the rope of Allah? The rope is not what they say but Qurʾān and Sunnah as informed us by learned scholars. *Wa atasimu bihablilahi jamian wala tafaraqu. Hablilahi* is Qurʾān and Sunnah of the Prophet PBUH. But the Tablīghī people tell us no, we shall unite together under the flag of *La illaha illalah*. They say that anyone who has who has pronounced *La illaha illalah* is our brother.' Sheikh Said Bafana, 'Criticism against the Tablīghī Jamāʿat ', Video CD, Wa'Haqq Films Production, August 2006.

indeed authentic was the underlying discourse. However the celebratory mood was muted as Bubba 'slid back' to the spirit possession cult after a few months. Perhaps he was not convinced by the economic viability of movement as a religious career and that *Ayaan* cult pays much better. Women constitute significant followers of *Garib* group, a constituency that is hardly directly reached by the mainly men-only preaching groups. This has also reduced the interactions between the two groups.

6.4.2 *Qādiriyya/Ṣaliḥiyya*-Tablīghī Relations

Tablīghī Jamāʿat has relatively stronger interactions with formalised Ṣūfī *ṭarīqa*s such as *Qādiriyya* and *Ṣaliḥiyya*. The two main Ṣūfī traditions dominated the religious landscape before the entry of *Salafīst* trend in mid 1980s. They were then the mainstream traditions in Moyale, Waso and Isiolo as well as other part of Northern Kenya. However the ensuing competition between Ṣūfīs and *Salafī* Islam saw gradual take-over of many Ṣūfī-oriented mosques by the more youthful *Salafī* ʿulamā'.

The arrival of Tablīghīs in the region was marked by itinerant preachers of India and Pakistan visiting for a varied number of days. Later as the local base of the movement grew to include a number of youth, the movement established a temporary base at the *Ṣaliḥiyya* mosque in Moyale. The mosque periodically held sub-*ḥalqa jor*s that brought ordinary Muslims from as far as Uran, Dabel, Sololo and various Moyale town mosques. The mosque was the venue for planning and congregation prior to departure for Nairobi annual *ijtimāʿ*s.

Qādiriyya mosque ʿulamā' were initially reluctant to grant local Tablīghīs and other self-organised preachers the chance to use the pulpit for religious instruction. This follows incidents in which mainly youthful Garre sheikhs used the venue to expound *Salafī* ideas deemed hostile to cherished Ṣūfī practices such as *milād al-nabi* (Ar. celebration to mark the birthday of the Prophet), recitation of *qunūt* (a supplication recited by the *ṭarīqa* in the last *rakāʿat* of *Fajr* prayer), audible recitation of *basmala* (Ar. opening verse of any Qur'ān chapters) during *Maghrib*, *'Asr*, *Fajr* and Friday prayers, communal *dhikr* and compulsory congregational supplication after obligatory prayers. These young sheikhs were perceived as attempting to slowly transform the last bastion of Ṣūfī Islam in the town. They were accused of preaching in the mosque without explicit permission from the mosque custodians like the *imām* and other mosque ʿulamā'. This blanket ban on self-organised preachers initially affected the activities of the local Tablīghīs as they were viewed with suspicion. However the restrictions were eased after the religious scholars were convinced that the new group was not what they thought: the *Salafī*s. Then Tablīghīs in Moyale have cultivated good working relations with the *Qādiriyya* mosque management. *Qādiriyya* mosque has a number of shop

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outlets along the outer wall of the mosque compound. One or two of these outlets was at one time rented by a group of local Tablīghīs to sell 'Islamically' themed products such as religious books, women clothes such *buibui* and *ḥijāb*, prayer mats, dates, caps, perfumes and prayer beads. The shops also serve as the meeting point for the youthful Tablīghīs for socialisation.

It would be prudent to revisit the former Ṣaliḥiyya Mosque *ʿulamāʾ* -Tablīghī relations. Until few years ago, Tablīghīs in Moyale had a small 'field office' in the mosque compound. This office served as the coordinating centre for planning and auditing of the movement's activities in Moyale sub-*ḥalqa*. A protracted disagreement between the custodians of the mosque and Tablīghī leaders led to their expulsion and demolition of the Tablīghī structure. The Tablīghīs had to move base to the rival *Qādiriyya* mosque and later to the Prison mosque. This does not mean that there are no mosque-based Tablīghī units in the former Ṣaliḥiyya mosque. Committed Tablīghīs who patronise each mosque in the sub-*ḥalqa* often constitute these mosque-based *maqāmī* teams through which they carry practices such as daily consultative meetings, regular religious instructions, motivational talks, hosting foreign and local *jamāʿat* s among others.

On an individual level, informants who subscribe to a Ṣūfī-affiliated tradition express similar polemical arguments against the Tablīghīs as are the *ʿulamāʾ* of mainstream Islamic tradition. Points raised include: Tablīghīs should first gain *ʿilm* before they preach as most of them are semi-literate; their influence on rural areas are superficial as they spend few days without teaching people about right *ʿaqīda* (Ar. belief), *ṣalāt* and *zakāt*; they do not condemn the wrongs done in the society and concentrate on enjoining good; they have wrong priorities as people in need of being taught about the faith are not in India and Pakistan but in Somarre and Bor (villages near Moyale); their teachings are basic and does not add any value to knowledge acquisition and last but not least the ease with which they cross borders, obtain travel documents and establish centres in Western countries is a pointer to their dubious ideology and complicity in 'destroying' Islam.[313] Elderly Ṣūfī informants also do not very much differentiate the Tablīghīs from their staunch opponents, the *Salafī ʿulamāʾ* arguing that the new youth Muslim generations do not appreciate the long heritage of Islamic traditions in the area. They consider both the Tablīghīs and *Salafī*-affiliated preachers as people without *madhhab* (school of thought) and hence people lacking sincere *imān*. Their arguments point to generational conflict between the faith as practiced by the elderly mosque attendants and

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[313] Interviews with Hussein Ganna, Aw Halle, Aw Ballo, Jirma, Sheikh Abdrahman, Moyale, September, 2009.

competing versions of Islamic religiosity as practiced by youthful Muslims. Hussein Ganna, a practising Ṣūfī critical of both *Salafī* and Tablīghīs, sums up the perception of lay preachers in the following manner:

> Their founder Muhammad Ilyās aimed at reforming Islam but ended with a quietist movement that do not seem to add any value to the spread of Islam. They trace their teachings from *Deobandi* School but now they have moved closer and closer to the teachings of *Wahabis*. Their teachings are not very clear. Just like the *Wahabi*s they have a unique way of dressing and walking. They just roam from village to village without leaving their members to teaching Islam deeply but just stand there, read a few *ḥadīth* and go. You see these people have unlimited access to travel for visa to almost anywhere in the world. They may be working with the enemies of Islam. (laughing) How else can one interpret these activities?[314]

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[314] Interviews with Hussein Ganna, Moyale, September, 2009.

6.5 Conclusion

The ^c*ulamā'*-Tablīghī relations in Northern Kenya is characterised by ambivalence. Both categories of religious preachers require each other for their mutual existence. *Qalole* to some extent acknowledge that these bands of self-organised preachers convince quite a number of people to attend obligatory daily prayers. But what are the impacts of these efforts? The Tablīghīs have gradually created an alternative 'faith bureaucracy' that transcends the local confines of mosque jurisdiction linking each mosque-based unit from their villages to transnational networks all the way to Nairobi and on to India. Tablīghīs have also the wrestled religious public sphere by successfully influencing the practices that laity can engage in. The ^c*ulamā's* authority as the sole custodian of faith and religious knowledge has also been challenged. Now almost anyone can stand and preach. Given the apparent loss of ground, the ^c*ulamā'* as a dispossessed class, continuously attempt to delegitimise various practices of the movement rendering it as only not irrelevant but also a sect bordering on heresy. Despite such a rich array of polemics and counter-polemics, both groups appear to warm up to each other in order to reform the society and stay relevant and useful in the eyes of the laity and for the sake of the faith. The Tablīghīs more than the ^c*ulamā'* have adhere to rules of engagement set by the ^c*ulamā'* and support them lest they lose the rights to use the pulpit for their own proselytism. Tablīghī-Ṣūfī relations are very ambiguous. However given that the movement stand clear of condemnation of social ills and doctrinal debates, their relations with relatively weakened *Qādiriyya ṭarīqa* and quasi-Ṣūfī groups such as the *Garib* and *Ayaan* are moderately cordial. They are targeted for religious mobility on regular basis by the local members of the transnational movement. As a conclusive chapter, the following section would analytically tackle the main concern of the thesis, the interface of global and local in the world of Tablīghī Jamāʿat in northern Kenya.

Chapter Seven

The Interface Global and Local in the Tablīghī North

7.1 Introduction

Two major field events capture the discourse of this analytical chapter, that is, the interface of local and global. The first one is the proceedings of Isiolo *jor* held in mid-April 2009. The Tablīghīs took over the town's Jamia mosque for three days. Followers came from Isiolo, Meru and Waso sub-*ḥalqa*s. From Meru, Tablīghīs from among the Kenyan Muslims of Asian descent were also represented. Prominent national leaders, largely drawn from the Muslim Asian community coordinated the proceedings with their counterpart from Isiolo central. Among these large array of local Tablīghīs and the national leadership were visitors, both from neighbouring regions and from foreign countries. In attendance were a few Tablīghīs from the coastal region, A Moyale and Garissa travelling *jamāʿat* was among the congregants. The transnational guests included an Arabic speaking *jamāʿat* composed of Sudanese and Egyptian Tablīghīs and an Urdu speaking *jamāʿat* from India. It was a microcosm of religious transnationalism. Modern means of transport and communication, elaborate organisational skills and commitment to common religious aspiration and practices have brought together these crowd of diverse Muslims whether they were Borana, Somali, Kenyan Asians, Sudanese, Egyptian, Swahili, Meru, Garre, Gabra or Indians in a central mosque in this northern Kenyan town. They appear to be united in their quest to bring religious change within their own life and lives of others by committing themselves to the ethos of this transnational movement. They preached to each other. They renewed their friendships and made many more friends. They chatted informally about religious and mundane matters, at times with linguistic challenges. Above all they listened, for hours on end to sermons and talks delivered in Urdu, Arabic, Borana, Somali and Swahili that had almost identical themes. They appear not to tire at the often repetitive motivational talks on why it is important to give time and why every Muslim in the world should travel on the path of God. We shall return to this event again.

Picture 6 Isiolo Jamia Mosque[315]

The second event that brings forth the interface of global and local was at a national consultative forum for the top Tablīghī leadership held just two weeks after the Isiolo *ijtimāʿ*. This was not an ordinary meeting for every Tablīghī. It was held at Baitul Maal, the national headquarters of Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya. It congregated regional and grassroot Tablīghī leaders or their representatives from all parts of Kenya. The agenda was threefold: consolidation of growth of the movement, evaluation of regional units and organisation of forthcoming national *ijtimāʿ*. The main language was Swahili. The members gathered numbered up to 300 people. Waso was represented by two people. Here I met Tablīghīs from North Eastern, Nyanza, Rift Valley, Central, Eastern, the Coast and Nairobi Provinces. Muslims of Luo, Somali, Orma, Mijikenda, Kamba, Kenyans of Asian descent, Borana, Luhya and others were in attendance. Evaluative reports were presented and criticised. *Amīrs* were admonished for jobs not well done and motivated to put in more effort. There were other unlikely participants at the national *shūra*: transnational audience from across the borders and other foreign countries. Tanzanian and Uganda Tablīghīs also took part in the proceedings. They too presented their country reports. A dozen foreign *jamāʿat*s listened to the two day proceedings through mediated translation. The five daily prayers and meals broke the monotony of the lengthy discussions. Breaks after meals and after prayers were sessions of networking. Most congregants knew each other. They often meet at national *ijtimāʿ*s. Some have travelled for proselytism together for different lengths of time. Some have hosted *jamāʿat* led by one *amīr* or other in their local mosque. Others have served together as *khidma* volunteers in previous gatherings. From time to time, my Tablīghī guide chipped in on

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[315] Source: http://www.hobotraveler.com/travel-journal/isiolo-kenya.html

'titbits' 'that is the *amīr* of Garissa *ḥalqa*…that guy we travelled with him for forty days…that guy is very kind, their local mosque-based *jamāʿat* offered us great *nuṣra* (Ar. assistance/hospitality)…'. In all these events, the interface of local and translocal are intertwined. Tablīghī Jamāʿat is a transnational movement that aims to reawaken adherence to faith among Muslim individuals. This task involves a great deal of reconfiguration of what exists in most areas as generally agreed religious practices and introduction of new and commonly shared Tablīghī specific practices. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first section deals with those elements that demonstrate 'going beyond local', that is, translocal practices, networks and global undercurrent. The second section examines 'the staying local', that is, appropriation of local symbols, distinctive contextualised proselytism and Tablīghī membership in the prism of local interethnic relations. The two sections flow into each other and overlap as the precise boundary of what is local and what is translocal is hard to discern. After all, Islamic *daʿwa* among the Borana speaking community is first and foremost a product of translocal proselytism and is affected by global trends in Islamic reformism since the faith was introduced in the region and has modelled the community's self-perception and perception by others. As we shall discuss, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat within the region hence not only transnationalised the local followers by connecting the followers with fellow Tablīghīs in Kenya and in the world through travels and religious deeds, they also invested in committed individuals whose target is to act as agents of religious transformation within their own kind.

7.2 Going beyond the local: Translocal links and global undercurrents

Masud (2000) observes that the peripheral Muslim communities, like South Asians, appear to have been more sensitive to their transnational linkages through means like *daʿwa*. On transformation of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat into a transnational movement, Masud raises two reasons. First, physical movement and travel as the most effective personal reform gradually expanded it from a local to transnational travel. Secondly, transnationalism serves as means to seeking legitimacy as the more it expands on global scale the more its ideology is recognized. As we previously saw, as early as 1950s, the movement sought to establish itself in East Africa. Here it found a ready home among some Kenyan Sunni Muslims of Asian descent (Hasani, 1967). These ethno-religious communities, heterogeneous as it were, offered the visiting Tablīghīs from the Indian subcontinent moral and logistical support. It offered the local Asians a more meaningful way of relating to their 'ancestral' home. Being financially stable and having a history of religious philanthropy, a section of the Kenyan Muslim Asians associated with the movement in the early days steering it to make it present among

indigenous Muslim populace.[316] Let us look at some of the elements that would help illustrate the local-global involvement starting with the most obvious one, mobility.

7.2.1 Mobility connects: Travels and the Tablīgh

Common phrases that one encounters at the conventions of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat among the Borana speaking communities include: '*Inshallah, obboleyan, nam agami rabbif ede guyya afurtama bay*?' (Bor. God willing, brothers, how many among you gathered here are ready to go out for Allah sake for 40 days?) '*Meeth nami rabbif rasulki sodaat ka ujjin tan itt mustaidina, ark ool qabada…* (Bor. Where are those who fear Allah and obey his messenger and who are ready and willing for this noble work? May you please raise your hand?) '*Meeth nami rabbif jede kara rabbi bau*?' (Bor. Where are those who, for the sake of Allah, are ready to go on the path of Allah?). The first commitment required of any novice or regular is to volunteer time to travel for *daʿwa*. One has to be willing to remain active and mobile for the programme of the movement. It is a lifetime commitment to a world of mobility. As previously mentioned, this mobility is related to remodeling of an individual's behaviour away from every day space so that he can be more steadfast in observance of the obligatory rituals of Islam. It is an experiment in religious acculturation. It is a site for re-education and inculcation of the value behest of a proper Muslim as envisioned by the Tablīghīs. A group of Tablīghī individuals on travel from place to place also extend their message to local Muslims to form similar groups of lay preachers ready to facilitate religious change within their communities. What remains obscure within the discussion on the movement in the academic circle is the significance of mobility on the resultant religious change. The idea of mass mobility for *daʿwa* by these ordinary believers is a novel practice among the Borana speaking Muslims. It is in matters of mobility that the local Tablīghīs have remained 'truly' transnational.

Emphasising the role of mobility in transnational formation, Dahinden (2010), points out a kind of paradox, that, in order to be able to stay mobile it is necessary for migrants to develop some local ties and to be embedded in specific localities. The author further theorises mobility as physical movement in transnational space and locality as being rooted or anchored in a country of immigration and developing a set of social relations at specific places. One could easily extend the above observation to the Tablīghī phenomena in Kenya. The pioneer Tablīghīs from the Indian subcontinent never made any part of the country they visited their home. They came and went on a regular basis. While at each place, they sought to influence

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316Personal interviews with Abdub Boru, Kinna September 2009, Mamed Roba Moyale October 2009, Hasan Doda, Isiolo, May 2010.

religious observance. They later sought to initiate similar mobile Tablīghī units in visited locales circumstances permitting. Their initial guides, the Kenyan Asians, at times travelled with them but above all facilitated to permanence of Tablīghī mobility. They were the first locals to take up sustained campaigns of *daʿwa* travels. They offered their mosques as bases to conduct Tablīghī *daʿwa*. They established friendly relations with many mosques for ease of propagation. Above all they helped to construct new Tablīghī centres in selected parts of the country. They manage the emerging Tablīghī 'faith bureaucracy' and continue to do so.

Interaction between different Muslim communities, be they the foreign Tablīghīs or local Kenyan Muslims, is of importance to the sustainability of the transnational movement. Some forms of interaction existed between Kenyan Asians and local indigenous Muslim communities. The Asian Muslims have often engaged in financial support and construction of mosques and *madrasa*s in Muslim majority areas such as Kinna and Isiolo. This bond of cordiality that exists also proved useful for establishment of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. Within local indigenous communities, the idea of calling people to faith is not a novel venture. Their *imām*s and *sheikh*s regularly remind them to remain true to their faith and to refine their practices to reflect piety. However the efforts of the local religious scholars remain limited to the confine of their mosque jurisdictions and that it is rare for religious leadership in network of mosques to engage in collective drives of 'enjoining good and forbidding evil'. Unlike the new transnational movement, the local *Qalole* enjoyed relative autonomy in management of mosque and leadership and hence do not see the need to travel far and wide for the sake of proselytism.[317]

The Tablīghī travels always ended up at mosques. Mosques formed places for religious instructions and venue for formation of new mobile groups. Mobile preaching teams staying at the mosque for a few days have a valuable advantage in spreading their message of revivalism. Local people, especially the religiously observant ones, attend the five daily prayers at their mosque. Being religious conscious of the importance of *daʿwa*, regular mosque attendants stay for few more minutes to listen to these lay local or foreign preachers. A few volunteers may be convinced over time to accompany the team or form a group of their own under the tutelage of a local Tablīghī. The local volunteers are encouraged to establish their own travel circuits to outlying areas and position themselves as the link between local, regional and transnational networks of lay preachers.

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[317] Khuri (1990: 171) similarly notes that religious structure whether they are large, small, central or peripheral, operate with a fair degree of autonomy and that often *imām*s and other mosque leaders may consult higher learned men on voluntary basis. Similarly in northern Kenya, mosque leaders maintain some form of independent and may occasionally liaise with visiting scholars. They seldom travel for outreach missions.

A related concept to mobility as mentioned above is locality. Locality elicits the notion of home, a place one has to go back to after days or months of travelling about for *daʿwa*. A novice accompanying a preaching team for three days would return to his home and to his local mosque. He is not necessarily a 'changed man' at this juncture. However he would pick a few Tablīghī terms and fundamental teachings such as basic memorisation of *siffa sitta*. The individual also builds his register of Tablīghī terminologies with words like *khurūj fī sabīlillāh*, *amīr*, *tashkīl*, *bayān*, *khidma* and *shūra*. Because every mobile Tablīghī unit is a sort of miniature global movement, an individual's first experience is crucial in subsequent involvements. Some opt out citing stringent requirements such as self-financing, routine consultative meetings and constant expectation to volunteer more for Tablīghī mobility. Some others stay in an inactive state and only occasionally accompany a team for few days to replenish their spiritual 'arsenal'. A number however may opt to partake in Tablīghī travels on regular basis. They return home, or more specifically, return to their local mosques at home with an agenda of religious change. At the home mosque, those who have travelled for different lengths of time are known to each other. These returnees constitute a network of individuals recognised by Tablīghīs from outside the area as contact persons. They often establish mosque-based *maqāmī* team (*masjid war jamāʿat*), a semi-permanent unit that meets on daily and weekly basis and carry out routinesed Tablīghī activities referred to as *panch alma*. At this point, one can observe the embeddedness of transnational Tablīghī phenomena at the local level.

The *maqāmī jamāʿat* recruits new mobile teams on regular basis and reaches out to regular mosque attendants through religious instructions. It entrenches Tablīghī practices in the religious culture of their home mosque. It contests for the use of the sacred space for religious instructions simultaneously challenging and complimenting the mainstream mosque preaching sessions. It hosts short term visits by other local Tablīghīs to their mosques. It also hosts foreign, regional and local Tablīghīs for various durations of time and provides local translators, guides and linkages.

Each travel team builds on earlier experiences of others. Tablīghī mobility is informed and enhanced by evaluation of an excursion in form of field reports. *Karguzari* and *ahwāl* giving is critical part of the consolidation of the transnational movement at regional and local levels. A team sent for four months to a region 'lax' in religious observance would recommend more teams to be sent. A mobile team is therefore a preaching cum evaluative unit. It preaches. It mobilises. It takes notes of socio-economic and religious activities of local populace. The reports are shared orally in formal and informal Tablīghī gatherings and often in form of

letters to *ḥalqa* and sub-*ḥalqa* leadership council. It is upon various local, regional or national leadership councils to send follow-up mobile units to 'areas in need'. The notion of 'areas in need' is based on religious observance of a visited population.

Tablīghī mobile units also report about slackened commitment by regular Tablīghīs and needs and ways to reverse such trends. It is common to hear regulars converse about lack of *juhd* among Tablīghīs in far away areas. Previous excursions and mobilisation of preaching teams become benchmarks to evaluate subsequent commitment. I recall that during Isiolo mini-*ijtimāʿ*, the Waso sub-*ḥalqa* leaders were taken to task by the combined force of Isiolo and Kenya *shūra* for a report of 'unusually' low achievements in terms of number of people who volunteered for various Tablīghī excursions. They were reminded of the time when up to 50 preaching teams of various travel lengths were mobilised in one gathering in Merti. In such cases, Tablīghī mobility reports act as feedback loop to plan subsequent actions and appraise growth of the transnational movement.

The length of time an individual has volunteered for Tablīghī mobility is also related to his standing within the movement. Those who have spent several 40 days and four months away from home for *khurūj* are considered as highly committed and pious individuals. It is natural for these individuals to have competence of Tablīghī practices. They can effortlessly preach, conduct Tablīghī meetings, organise temporary outings into an area, lead a preaching team for various lengths of time in their capacity as *amīr*s, cook on behalf of mobile groups, master and converse intermittently in languages such as Arabic or Urdu and head local *qarya*, sub-*ḥalqa* and *ḥalqa* leadership councils. The more an individual travels for Tablīghī excursions, the more his religious *habitus* is refined and the more convinced he will be about the legitimacy and authenticity of the movement that he is committed to. One of the first questions a volunteer is asked before travels is: '*Takk duran baate*?' (Bor. Have you ever volunteered to go out/travel for *tablīgh*?). The answer determines your experience and ranking within the movement. This was also the question I was asked by one of my informants at the beginning of the field research. In another incident, in an *ad-hoc* meeting to discuss my research questions, a senior Tablīghī from Merti advised me in this way: *Obboles, oja Tabliqi maani barachu fete, gaafi tanaf bugi tan lafat dabbi, baggi kanke fudadi inshallah nukhaas. Tabliqi deema, deema rabbin jaalat* (Bor. 'if you want to learn about the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, just drop these books and questions and please take your bag and accompany us. Tablīghī Jamāʿat is all about mobility, it is a movement loved by God).

Vertovec (2009) notes that modern forms of transport and communication have accelerated religious transnationalism, that is, the flow of ideologies, access to information on

organisational forms and tactics and formation of formerly elite movement to mass movement. This is observed to have rendered obsolete earlier notions of frontier as defined by geographical boundaries. Roads link villages and towns in Kenya. Buses and trucks facilitate the ease of travel from one section of the region to the other. The Tablīghīs utilise these means of transport. Mobile telephony has rewired every village and town in Kenya. As previously observed, travel to Nairobi *ijtimāʿ* and other gatherings is practically impossible without lorries, buses and personal cars. Some Tablīghīs are fascinated to undertake foreign preaching tours and have therefore acquire travel documents such as national passports and visas. For those with means to pay for foreign tours, distant countries are now reachable through air transport. There are some Borana speaking Tablīghīs who have been to Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Somalia, South Africa and Nigeria. They bring with them new imagination of *umma* beyond their region. All these forms of mobility devoid of secure routes is impossible. Improved security and stability within the northern region and along and on both sides of the common Kenya-Ethiopia borders has been a boost to the growth of the movement. Where roads are narrow or no vehicle exist to use, *paidal jamāʿats* (travel teams on foot) allow Tablīghīs to reach outlying villages and cattle camps. Travel on foot is one of the most favoured forms of transport.

7.2.2 Ritual and Symbols

Tablīghī Jamāʿat as a pietistic Islamic movement ascribes to all the mainstream Islamic rituals. It in fact wants to make Muslim individuals better by stricter adherence to religious rituals. Five daily prayers are emphasised. They are preached to be more spiritually rewarding when offered in congregation and in one's mosque. Rewards (*fazāʾil*) of religious deeds are more emphasised than the doctrinal interpretations and jurisprudential rulings about religious deeds. Controversies are avoided. Scholarly interpretations of rituals are held in high esteem. *Hadīths* that extol observance of prayers are often recited. For instance, to give credibility to the 40 days preaching tour, the Borana Tablīghīs often cite *ḥadīth*s that state that *janna* awaits he who performs obligatory prayers for 40 days behind an *imām* with *takbirat al-ula* (Ar. the first step i.e. *Allahu Akbar* in offering obligatory prayer). No better ways of achieving this is recommended than a 40 day tour with a reaching team away from the hustle and bustle of home life. Other pillars of Islam like *zakāt*, fasting and *ḥajj* are also exalted.

For a Borana speaking Tablīghī as their counterpart in other parts of the world, every religious action, indeed, most human actions have four components: intention, objectives, procedure and benefit. They are referred to as *niyya*, *maqṣad* , *tartīb* and *fazāʾil*. There is an obsession to make every religious practice most spiritually rewarding. Everyday life is in totality hence

modelled on their definition of traditions of Prophet Muhammad. Life on earth is to be modelled on systematised sets of rituals to gain the pleasure of God and to attain his mercies. None puts this urgency to make every action religious than a Tablīghī from Moyale, he confides:

> What is wanted in *daʿwa* is that each minute you have to get *tawwāb* . What you do each second should award you *tawwāb* . We are told that whatever you do as *sunna* is all *ʿibādat*. This includes even sleep if you slept as done by the Prophet. A *mu'min* (Ar. believer) is not rewarded for two acts. One is if he is asleep and secondly if he is mentally ill. But even the sleep is also rewarded if you sleep under prophetic traditions. That is why we have to do *sunna* always.[318]

Tablīghī Jamāʿat is in essence a re-enactment of ritualised lifestyle. Individuals learn from the moments of their acceptance to volunteer for Tablīghī travels that certain things are to be done at certain times whether on *daʿwa* journeys or being at home. Apart of the universally accepted Islamic rituals, the Borana speaking Tablīghīs just like their counterparts from other parts of the world perform specific practices. One can roughly divide the Tablīghī-specific practices into two main categories: individualised and communal/congregational rituals. Both forms are expected to inculcate in individuals a sense of spiritual reawakening and in the case of communal ones, stronger attachment to the bonds of brotherhood, in-group membership and egalitarianism. Tablīghī rituals can also be categorised into two categories: rituals of mobility and rituals of locality. Finally, temporally, rituals can take forms of hourly, daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis. These practices prevalent among the Borana Tablīghīs are transnationally carried out by members of the movement in other parts of the world. The tables below summarise the points raised.

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[318] Group interview with three Tablighis on 5th July, 2010, Moyale.

Individualized Rituals	Congregational Rituals
1. Recitation of the Qur'ān 2. Recitation of recommended litanies and supplications 3. Performance of recommended supererogatory prayers such nightly one like *Ṣalāt al-Layl* and *Witr* 4. Recommended text readings of Tablīghī affiliated books	1. All forms of *da ʿwa* travels and its constituent rituals: men-only, mixed gender; 3 days, 10 days, 40 days, 4 months 2. All forms of visits and its constituent rituals: to religious scholars, to professionals, to fellow Tablīghī s, to lay people, to the merchants 3. All forms of preaching in one's local mosque or neighbouring one 4. All forms of consultative meetings and its constituent rituals: local mosque, area mosques, regional, national, international 5. All forms of gatherings: local, regional, national and international 6. Home-based text reading for family 7. Rituals of sacred space management (*markaz, masjid*): reception of groups, security, hospitality service

Table 7 Individual and communal rituals

From the table above, one can discern two striking issues: There are more communal-oriented practices than individualised ones. This does not mean Tablīghīs underemphasise the role of individual piety. In fact the more committed the individual is to the collective and congregational practices the more he is to the unsupervised individual pietistic practices. However there is greater importance given to religious practices that needs to be done on congregational basis and in which success depends on the unflinching commitment of each Borana speaking Tablīghī. These congregational practices not only bonds the members together but it also allows for those in leadership to supervise, motivate, reward and sanction individual members. The rituals of congregation serves, in different ways, to integrate new members, remodel their lifestyles and allow for upward mobility within the faith bureaucracy of the movement. In fact it is the most effective way of in-group solidarity and often the individuals carrying out these congregational practices see themselves as something other than an arbitrary collectivities but a special translocal group. Others also recognise them as

such. They are hence call themselves and by others as *warr tabliqa* (Bor. the people of Tabligh), *watu wa tabligh* (Sw. the people of Tabligh), *warr daʿwa* (Bor. *daʿwa* people) and other self-ascriptive titles.
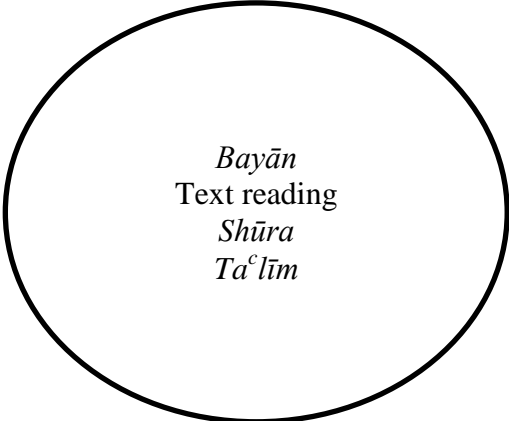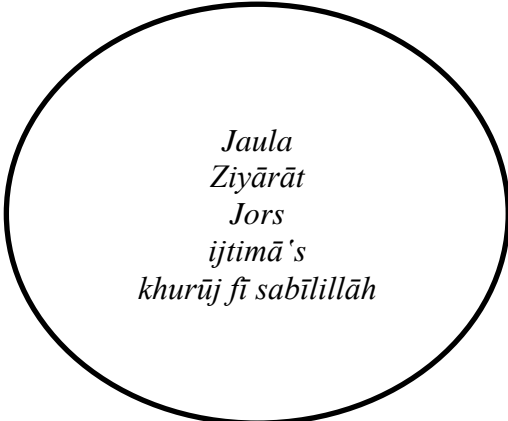
Rituals of Locality	Rituals of Mobility
Bayān Text reading *Shūra* *Taᶜlīm*	*Jaula* *Ziyārāt* *Jors* *ijtimāʿs* *khurūj fī sabīlillāh*

Table 8 Rituals of locality and mobility

If one is to categorise the practices along temporal lines, it is easy to discern that the frequency and consistency in performance of practices enhances gradual inculcation of the norms of the movement. On a daily basis, an individual Tablīghī would either alone or with others, carry out practices that are seen as not only spiritually rewarding but also socially bonding. There are daily practices that one can carry out at home with one's spouses and others to be done alone. There are daily practices that can only be done with fellow Tablīghīs at the mosque. These mosque-based practices range from early morning consultative meetings to scheduled after-prayer motivational sermons to numerous supererogatory prayers. Daily practices are hence emphasised as it is on such basis that transformative spiritual reorientation can be effected. Most individualised practices are often to be carried out on a daily basis. Weekly practices are communal and are aimed at consolidating the societal growth of the movement through recruitment and keeping the members within a system of sustained contacts, deliberations and companionship. Within these weekly practices are collective deliberations on matters of movement by members of local mosque-based *jamāʿat*. Plans for the week are discussed and agreed upon. News from *amīr*s of the larger territorial units such as sub-*ḥalqa* and *ḥalqa* are conveyed. On a monthly basis, Tablīghī representatives from the sum total of all mosques in a sub-*ḥalqa* meet to plan and appraise the progress of the movement within their own region. It is also through such forums members and leaders of the movement socialise and keep themselves updated on the recent developments in their own

individual lives. Information and directives from elders in Nairobi and Nizamuddin are often conveyed in such gathering and then re-transmitted to the mosque-based *maqāmī* units later. Monthly consultative meetings are often done on a rotational basis so as to ensure inclusion of all mosques and to avoid peripherization of those Tablīghīs in mosques at the fringe of a region. For instance in Waso sub-*ḥalqa*, the monthly meeting is held sometime in Kinna, Kula Mawe, Merti, Sericho, Biliqo and other small towns. On monthly basis, the Tablīghīs within local mosque also organise three-day preaching tours to areas within the zone. Annual and semi-annual practices are often congregational. It is here the Tablīghīs display to other Muslims their numerical strength and their universality based on the local and transnational congregants in attendance. The gatherings help in socialisation of local and translocal congregants, formally through sermons, prayers and travels, and informally through chats, discussions and consumption. The gatherings can be divided roughly into specialised (international, national and regional consultative meetings) to general (*jors* and *ijtimā*ʿ s) ones.

Daily Practices

- *shūra fi'l-bayt*
- *shūra fi 'l-masjid*
- Obligatory prayers
- Recommended prayers
- Recitation of texts
- Greeting peoples
- *Taᶜlīm fi 'l-bayt*
- Supplications
- *tasbiḥāt*

Weekly Practices
- *Jaula*
- *Ziyārāt*
- *Taᶜlīm fi'l-masjid*
- *fikr al-dīn*
- *Bayān*
- Weekly evaluation report discussions

Monthly Practices

- Three days monthly excursion for preaching (*khurūj shahrī*)
- Sub-*ḥalqa shūra*
- 40 days preaching tours

Quarterly, Semi-annual, Annual Practices

- *Sub- ḥalqa/ḥalqa* Jors
- Regional or national *ijtimā's*
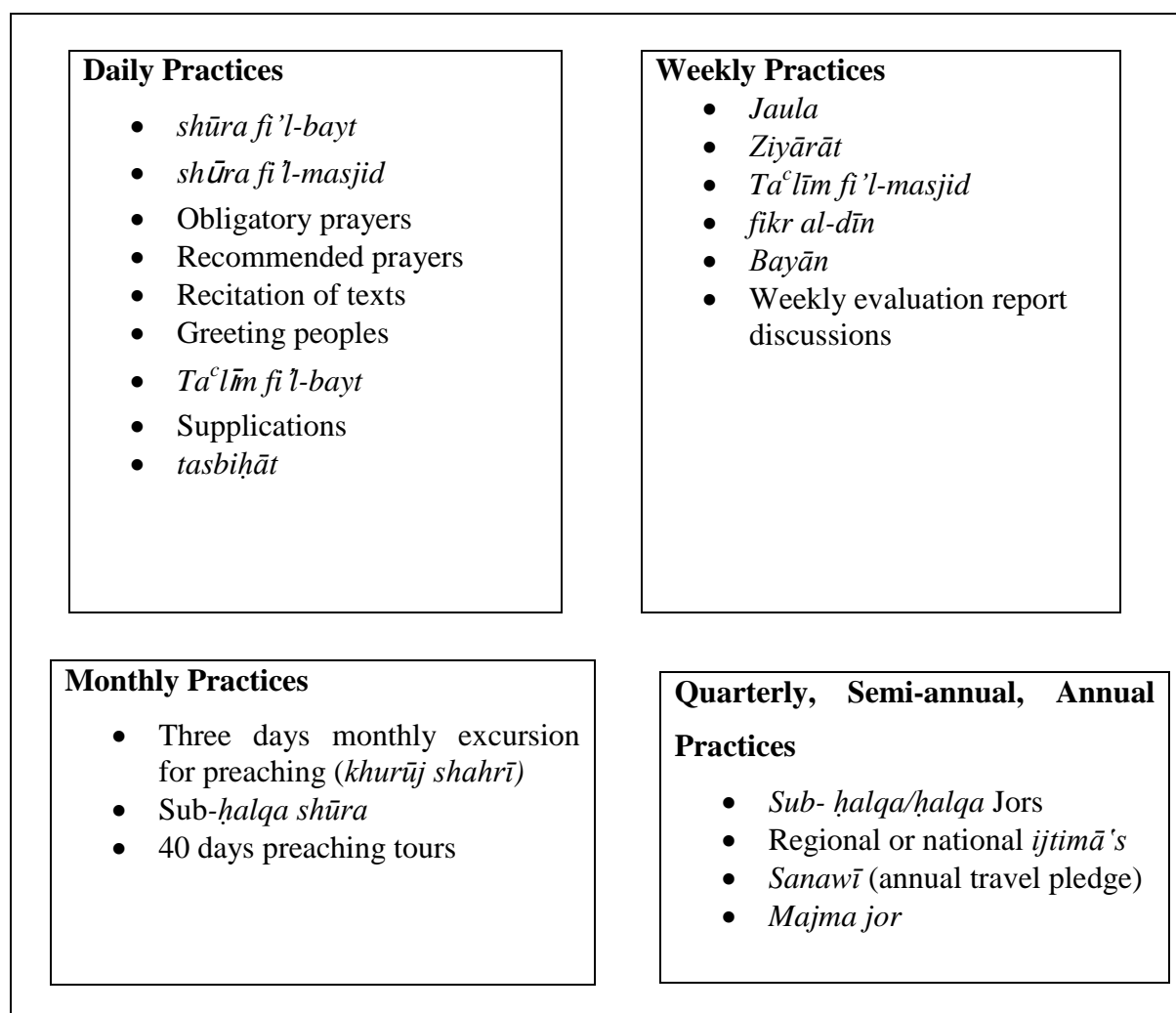- *Sanawī* (annual travel pledge)
- *Majma jor*

Figure 8 Temporal arrangements of main practices of the movement

7.2.3 Ideas and Ideologies

The most vivid image of my field experience was witnessing firsthand the internalisation and transmission of six fundamentals of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat also known as *siffa sittah* by a Borana Tablīghī at a mini-*ijtimāʿ* in Isiolo. The youthful Borana *dāʿi* was delegated by the main speaker to teach congregants in Borana language *tāʿlim* about the six virtues that Tablīghīs believe were spiritual traits prevalent in the lives of the companions of the Prophet. He effortlessly narrated the six points namely: the articles of faith, the prayers, knowledge and remembrance, honour and respect of Muslims, sincerity of purpose and devoting time for *tablīgh*. What was remarkable was not just the fluency with which the speaker gave the points but the way he flawlessly infused each point with explanatory Qurʾānic verses and prophetic traditions so as to reinforce its legitimacy and authority as valid religious teachings. He alternated between Arabic and Borana. One can deduce that the basis of Tablīghī worldview espoused in the six fundamentals form the basis of Tablīghī Jamāʿat among the Borana. Procedure, objectives and spiritual benefits that individual Tablīghīs accrue from performance of myriad of practices remain the same as anywhere in the world. There in fact parallel uniformity in terms of the ideals of the movement and ways of proselytism with observations done by other scholars in the Gambia, South Africa, Morocco, South East Asia, South Asia, Britain, Belgium, Australia and Canada (Janson 2005, Masud 2000, Reetz 2006, 2008, Dickson 2009, Sikand 2002, Metcalf 2003, Tozy 2000, De Feo 2007, Haq 1972, Ali 2010).

Daʿwa remains the prime focus of the Borana speaking Tablīghīs. Volunteerism is exalted. Self-financing is encouraged. *Daʿwa* is marketed as an obligation compulsory on each and every member of their Muslim community. Local *Qalole* are encouraged to participate but often stay aloof of the transnational movement. Tablīghī proselytism among the Borana closely resembles similar outreaches in South Asia in terms of the size of a preaching team, the daily programme of *daʿwa*, delegation of responsibilities, preferred texts for preaching, preferred verses of the Quran and *ḥadīth* and even the way of preaching and motivation. Similarly the titles of leaders and Tablīghī terms of South Asian and Arabic origin have found wide usage among the Borana followers. This include terms such as *tāʿlīm* for teaching, *bayān* for after-prayer preaching, *targhīb* for motivational talks, *amīr* for leader, *qudamāʾ* for senior members, *akābir* for elders of the movement, *shūra* for consultative forum, *ḥalqa* for a territorial unit encompassing sum total of mosques with Tablīghī programme in an area, *khurūj fī sabīlillāh* for *daʿwa* outreach, *ijtimāʿ* and *jor* for congregational gathering, and even *kailula* for afternoon rest between midday prayer and afternoon prayer. The range of terms and other spiritual-inspired pleasantries that have enriched the everyday speeches of committed members and have set them aside from other ordinary Muslims in the region.

Listening to two or three Tablīghīs converse, one can clearly see the impact of their religious transformation and their modified world view. Such repertoires of terms is reinforced through foreign *daʿwa* tours to the Indian subcontinent, travel with foreign Tablīghīs within the country and through transnational and local gatherings in which Tablīghīs from many parts of the country participate in. This facilitates uniformity and consistency of practices and world view. A Borana Tablīghī hence fits almost flawlessly into the mix of transnational *dāʿi*s with ease though he remains uniquely Kenyan.

The world, even among the Borana speaking Tablīghīs, is viewed with suspicion. Believers are reminded that they are only here as sojourners. Their deeds shall be measured on how much they avoid the lure of the world for the sacrifice that they make on behalf of the faith. Prime among that is observance of daily prayers and good behaviour. The best way to avoid the temptation of the world is a retreat, not to a Ṣūfī-like shrine but to the travels and practices of the transnational movement. Borana Muslims listening to local Tablīghīs are often made to believe that their success in this world and hereafter lies not in just praying the five times a day but immediately joining the movement to partake in the work of reminding others of the observance of religious duties. They are reminded in their own language that their redemption lies not just in individual reforms but also their willingness and active participation in saving hundreds of others 'from the hell-fire'.[319] Aw Kombora opines that the world, the properties of the believers, their souls and everything that they think they own belongs to God and that it is only when the retreat from home to contemplate on their precarious situation in an unstable corrupting world that they can reform themselves and help others reform. Home is hence seen as a comfortable and alluring niche to attempt to reform one's practices and behaviour, therefore, Borana Tablīghīs are convinced that it by leaving home that one can break from the bad past and get in to a promising spiritual future. Aw Kombora opines in a speech to fellow Borana Tablīghīs in this manner:

> But if you are together with your family, with your children, and your wife and in the comfort of your home, these narrative will not make sense to you. All of us gathered here must donate our souls, our time, and our wealth for the sake of Allah. Are we not ready? But if you do not like to spend your wealth for the sake of Allah, the love of the world will growth more and more in you. Once the love of the world grows in you, the world and Allah cannot exist in the same soul. So Allah will leave you and you and your world remain together. Is this not great loss? Our inside is still unripe. We must make it ripe by giving time for the sake of Allah.[320]

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[319] '*Nami diram tok yokhaan galgal tok inni rabbi hede gute, nami sun adunyafi waan adunya kes jira isan irr hekma qabaa jed.*' (Bor. He who goes out one morning or one evening for the sake of Allah, he is more of more value and honour than the whole world and what is in) preaches one Borana Tablighi at a *jor* in Isiolo. (Borana tāʿlim Session, Isiolo Jamia Mosque, April 2009)

[320] Aw Kombola, Isiolo Jamia Mosque, April 2009.

Talib (2000, 70-76) similarly observes that Tablīghīs view the world as scarcely worthy of much attention and that it be a waiting room but never the ultimate destination. One is hence required to be vigilant. Talib notes that the Tablīghīs do not propose retreat from the world but they engage in a moral struggle against the established order by living out a blueprint of an ideal life through the programmes of the Jamāʿat. Borana Tablīghīs like their transnational counterparts find the solution to the moral decadence and spiritual laxity in getting themselves and others Muslims back to the path of *dīn*. There is heightened emphasis on the role of the correct and sincere faith (Ar. *imān yaqīn*). If the heart is healed of the love of the world, if it is cured of the laziness to perform good deeds and made to love the work of itinerary preaching then, according to the Borana Tablīghīs, the rest shall all fall in place and the society has be transformed.

In line with the transnational agenda and worldview of the movement, the local Tablīghīs remain avowedly 'apolitical' as a group. Though this does not restrict them from participating in local clan and ethnic politics as individuals, the Tablīghīs as a group generally shun discussion on pertinent matters of insecurity, political rivalry, ethnic clashes, human rights, issues on marginalization, declining trends in acquisition of secular and religious education, substance abuse like *miraa* (*khat*) and other social ills. Their preaching sessions in the mosques in the region are devoid of social and political activism. Personal reform is preached. What is however condemned in private is the failure of religious scholars to effect religious revivalism due to engagement in political discussions and approaching the local Muslims from 'self-righteous' position of authority. Like the Tablīghīs elsewhere, the Borana speaking followers also apply the tested method of building commonality with their audience through persuasive speech and then customizing their message as appealing to each and every individual mosque attendant.

Tablīghī Jamāʿat has strong Deobandi connections and the members of the movement as the rest of the Muslims in South Asia are followers of *Hanafi* School of law. However Muslims in East Africa are largely followers of the *Shafiī* School. This notwithstanding, the local Tablīghīs do not appear to demonstrate any form jurisprudential reorientation. However still, some critics accuse them of being without *madhhab* or propagators of Hanafism within the region.[321] The local followers look to the centres in South Asia for guidance. Take the case of preference to travel to Nizamuddin and to Indian subcontinent. The lure and fascination with all things Tablīghī is immensely strong among Borana followers. Many aspire to make the

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[321] Personal conversations with Hussein Ganno, September 2010, Moyale.

journey to IPB to learn properly the methods of *daʿwa* from the source. Mobile telephony and improved means of transport and communication and astounding commitment to the movements by the local Tablīghīs have facilitated the ease of liaison with worlds beyond Borana speaking regions of northern Kenya. Constant flow of foreign Tablīghīs from as far as South Africa, India, Pakistan and Egypt make the local Tablīghīs imagine themselves as being in a community of lay preachers with immense global presence. This is particularly remarkable for those who have made foreign travels. There is hence a sense of pride in the transnationalism facilitated by the movement. More so, for these Borana Tablīghīs, being a lay preacher is a privilege bestowed upon a select few by God (Bor. *warr rabbi uji ufitif filat*…the people who have been picked by God for his work).

Similarly, the polemics levelled against the local Tablīghīs by a wide range of critics reflects global influence. Issues like the use of inauthentic prophetic traditions, inappropriateness of allowing religiously-illiterate followers to preach, innovative practices and programmes, anti-intellectualism and disinterest in religious schools, unquestioning allegiance to the Tablīghī methods as the best and the leaders of the movement as custodians of faith, apolitical stance, avoidance of doctrinal controversies, deliberate avoidance of issues of social ills, and 'reverence' and desire to do tours of centres of the movement like Nizamuddin has been raised against local Tablīghīs as it has been against Tablīghīs in other parts of the world. It is also possible the critics listened to and read on the movement and about what other religious scholars have to say about them in other parts of the world. On the same note, the responses of the Borana speaking Tablīghī reflect similar translocal influence. For instance, they rationalise that it is duty of every Muslim to preach and they argue that it is better to stay away from divisive issues to build consensus and allow for unity of the *umma* and reawakening of the spiritual synergy first. They point out that they do not innovate in matters of religion in respect to their approach as these were done even during the time of the Prophet and his companions. They too counteract the critics saying that their 40 days, four months and three days *daʿwa* travels are not 'cast in stone' and have been put in place as pragmatic reformative and educational programme just as the religious scholars have put up *madrasa*s and universities that never existed during the time of pristine Islam. The Borana speaking Tablīghīs show the efficacy and legitimacy of their system as 'thugs' have been reformed and the mosque attendance boosted.

It is in the realm of religious career path that the local Tablīghīs immensely borrow from the transnational network. The route to become a committed senior Tablīghī is open to all as anywhere in the world. There are no special requirements to join except the fact that the

willing individual must volunteer to travel for any numbers of days. Three days and 10 days travel experience are generally introductory and the individual learns the basics of proselytism and principles such as six fundamentals, ways of eating and sleeping, and assortment of supplications. It is only after an individual travel for 40 days and four months travels that he is widening his Tablīghī experience but also thoroughly learns the art of making speeches, etiquettes of group leadership, manner of conducting consultative meetings, master the underlying supportive Qurʾānic verses and prophetic traditions for myriad practices and above all various re-educational programmes that can be re-enacted at home. When a regular Tablīghī travels for a number of longer period travel modules and comes back, it is incumbent upon other senior Tablīghīs to test his leadership skills by delegating the authority to lead short duration travel outreaches in the neighbouring areas, for instance, for three days. Such promising individuals would also be given chances to lead neighbourhood excursions and being groomed through chairing the *maqāmī* meetings. This mentoring of budding Tablīghī is boosted by the fact that the local followers of the movement are acquainted with each from childhood and may be linked by bonds such as ethnic and clan-based kinship. The role and the powers of *amīr* as final decision maker whether he is in charge of a travelling group or a localised unit is another transnational Tablīghī phenomenon adopted by the followers in northern Kenya.

A budding Tablīghī often catches the eyes of the local, regional and national consultative leadership. The local Borana speaking Tablīghīs gather on monthly basis. This forum also socializes new and old members as they discuss the affairs of the movement in the previous and coming months and laying out the timetable of upcoming events and set targets. Two things stands out as far as the upward mobility of Borana Tablīghīs are concerned: strong commitment and ability to internalise various Tablīghī practices. An individual's chance of leading is hence attached to his own availability to take part in 'unending' series of local and translocal practices and also his ability to flawlessly display 'piety' in his speech, his clothing, his behaviour, his timely attendance of congregational prayers, his deep knowledge of all facets of Tablīghī practices and his own initiative to guide his family to the path of Tablīghī ideals. In sum, the individual must find it easy to make Tablīghī his way of life, an effortless every day norm.

By being a gradually introduced and nurtured into various practices, an individual Borana Tablīghī acquires cultural capital in form of specialised knowledge available only to the core members of the movement. Interpersonal network across and within a territory enhances his social capital. A mosque-based group may allow one of the budding members to lead the unit

on monthly basis. Once tested and approved such an individual may hold on similar rotational basis sub-*ḥalqa* and even *ḥalqa* leadership. One must also maintain close and friendly relationship with members of the movement within the region. Such maintenance of relationship may at time include formal discussion of personal matters of individual members like impeding marriage, separation or divorce, impending foreign travels, status of families of local members who are on *daʿwa* tours, financial assistance to needy committed elders and disagreement and rivalry within them.

It is perhaps in the manners of clothing that the Borana speaking Tablīghīs appropriate the visible transnational symbols of the movement. The Indian styled *kurta pyjama*s with dark coloured half-coat are prominently worn across the region by the followers of the movement. In addition, Muslim cap and pony-tailed turban are visible markers of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in northern Kenya as in other parts of the world. Other paraphernalia associated with local Tablīghīs include prayer beads and assortments of tiny pocket size Quran and booklets on supplications. For instance, despite coming from different parts of Kenya, neighbouring countries and even South Asia, one can see rough uniformity in the style of dressing by members of the movement at the annual Nairobi *ijtimāʿ*. Furthermore, these events also offer the new and the old members a chance to buy affordable *kanzu*, *kurta* pyjama, caps, half-coats, prayer beads, books associated with the movement, perfumes and other gifts for their families upon return.

7.3 Staying local: Localising Tablīghī, Appropriating symbols, histories and aspirations

Chande (2000) cites a classic case of localisation of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Uganda. Based on an in-depth regional study, he explores the transformation of the movement from transnational Asian-led 'apolitical' *daʿwa* outfit to a radical indigenous militarised group. Tablīghī Jamāʿat came to Uganda in the 1960s through the *dāʿi*s from the Indian subcontinent and saw steady growth in that decade. It attracted Muslims of wide religious affiliation, *Salafī*s and non-*Salafī*s. The leading proponent then included Sheikh Marmazinga and some *Salafī* leaders such as Sheikh Sulaiman Kakeeto. Schism within the *daʿwa* movement led a group of *Salafī*-affiliated leaders to split from the main body to start their own version of the *daʿwa* movement. This followed a Supreme Court legal battle in which the government was said to have favoured the less radical camp within the movement. Following the split, the new splinter group maintained the name and established its own network of mosques, hospitals, orphanages and *madrasa*s. The 'new' Tablīghī Jamāʿat aimed to establish an Islamic socio-political order based on *Sharīʿa*. It also engaged in preaching among Muslims and conversion

of non-Muslims and criticism of the ills of the Uganda society and government in purely Islamic terms. The leaders of this radical Tablīghī Jamāʿat were hence subjected to arrest, imprisonment and exile and largely the mainstream Uganda Muslim leadership often disassociated from their activities. Chande observes that following the radicalisation of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Uganda, Tablīghī *dāʿi*s from India and Pakistan were banned from entering Uganda. Whether this ban is still in place is a different issue all together. What is certainly clear though is that a dozen Ugandan affiliated with the Tablīghī Jamāʿat often attend the annual Nairobi *ijtimāʿ*. Whether they belong to the original movement or the indigenous one is not clear.

The indigenisation of Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Uganda raises three questions: Why did the local Tablīghīs re-orientate the largely pacifist transnational movement concerned with spiritual reawakening into an indigenous radical movement with socio-political agenda? How 'the original movement' fared in the face competition from an indigenous and politically engaged rival group that sought to appropriate a prominent role in public space? What role did the Uganda Asians play in the struggle to maintain Tablīghī orthodoxy and consistency in practice and spiritual orientation in the face of the split within the Uganda's Tablīghī Jamāʿat? It is with the last question that we shall start our discussion as it has impact on indigenisation of the movement in Kenya.

The 1970s was certainly a difficult time for Uganda's Asians, including Muslim Asians. It was the reign of Idi Amin Dada (1971-1979). It is certainly possible that the local Asians involved in managing the affairs of the lay *daʿwa* movements were either exiled or adopted low profiles in religious and social matters. Furthermore, it is presumed that the international *dāʿi*s from the Indian Sub-continent would certainly avoid visiting the country during that regime and even afterwards. The local concerns about Uganda's indigenous Muslims took centre stage in 1970s and 1980s when coups and military rule were the order of the day. There was hence a vacuum of advocacy and political engagement that many Muslim groups and leaders sought to fill. The radical Tablīghīs hence struggled with the existing mainstream Muslim leadership to be the voice of Uganda's Muslim community, a struggle that saw them abandon their pietistic, publicity-shunning and apolitical stance.

The Uganda's case brings forth the question of sustainability of transnational connections and affiliation with the centre in the face of pertinent concerns affecting local Muslim communities. That brings us to the next fascinating but obscure splinter lay movement of Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya, the Darwesh-led *daʿwa* group. However there is little research done on this movement and it has not been focus of this thesis. What can however be

discerned from preliminary information is that: it is a splinter group of the transnational movement, it has bases in Tanzania and Kenya, its members travel for *daʿwa* tours on similar travel modules like the Tablīghī Jamāʿat and it has within its ranks local Muslim Asians.

In the subsequent section, we shall discuss various aspects of the Borana Tablīghī Jamāʿat that alludes to and make use of local symbols, histories and strategies. These aspects are indicative of the localisation of the movement as an indigenous lay *daʿwa* group and are uniquely influenced by local ethnic and socio-political circumstances.

7.3.1 'We are *Daʿwa* Group not Tablīghīs': Shifting Self-Ascription of the local followers of the movement

Initially the Tablīghī Jamāʿat was associated with frequent itinerant bands of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi *dāʿi*s. As we saw earlier, the involvement of the Borana speaking Muslims was a matter of a later development. By then, the local Muslims and their leaders had not only associated Tablīghī Jamāʿat and its form of proselytism as uniquely South Asian but also viewed the mobile preachers as old men engaging in religious tourism to atone for lifetime sins.[322] People never appeared to understand the motivation behind the largely Urdu speaking South Asians crossing borders to preach in incomprehensible languages. Though a few volunteers would lead them from mosques to mosques as they sought accommodation, Tabligh Jamāʿat was never seen as something local. The term '*tablīgh*' developed a slightly negative connotation.

When local Borana speaking individuals joined the movement and oversaw its gradual establishment in mosques in the region, they had to debunk the notion that the movement is South Asian but a transnational lay *daʿwa* group open to all Muslims irrespective of their ethnic origin, sectarian affiliation, age, level of Islamic learning and gender. One such demystification involves utilising known terms for self-ascription. One such term is *daʿwa*. Commenting on the shifting identity, Mamed Roba cautiously notes that they described themselves as '*warr daʿwa*' (people of *daʿwa*) as the term *daʿwa* was freely used, generally accepted as mainstream than '*tablīgh*' that at time has been associated South Asian *dāʿi*s and by extension its respective Hanafi School and Deobandi influence.[323]

Warr daʿwa and *warr tabliqa* (Tablīghī group) are in most cases used interchangeably by the Tablīghīs and non-Tablīghīs in reference to the local adherents. The former is more acceptable to the religious scholars who share with the Tablīghīs a common understanding of

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[322] Conversations with M. Roba, Moyale, October 2009.
[323] Conversations with M. Roba, Moyale, October 2009.

the term. Therefore while among themselves the term '*warr tabliqa*' may be favoured but with the out-group '*warr daʿwa*' or *kundi daʿwa* (*daʿwa* group) is often used in the Borana speaking regions.

7.3.2 We the People who speak our language: Translating *Tablīgh* for the Borana

Borana speaking Tablīghīs have a place within Kenya's Tablīghī Jamāʿat. This is precisely visible during the national and *ḥalqa ijtimāʿ*s as well as during national consultative forums. At the national *ijtimāʿs*, their recognition is manifested through language specific translation cum commentary circles: Borana *tarjama*, as they are called. Announcements made during these transnational gatherings often are done in a number of languages including Borana. Furthermore, there are Borana speaking member(s) or persons who understand the language within the Kenya *Shūra*. As discussed earlier, the work of translating or commenting on speeches made in Swahili and Urdu into Borana at the national gatherings fall on the shoulders of committed senior Tablīghīs from the region. As seen earlier, the translation of direct speeches are not word for word but deliberate appropriation of the messages of the movement to the needs of the followers from the region. Often, the speakers do not follow the Swahili translated or Urdu original but motivate, admonish and guide their fellow Borana speaking Tablīghīs using examples and experiences of their socio-cultural life. As we saw, though quite a number of those gathered at Borana translation circles understand Swahili, they opt to sit among their own co-ethnics. This tendency to own one's space even within the diverse and all-encompassing transnational movement is a pointer to how such movements serve many functions.

Borana speaking translation circles are often a heterogeneous mix of people who speak various dialects of Borana-Oromo. The congregants are from areas as far as Tana River near the Kenyan coast to northern border towns of Moyale and Mandera to central-northern towns as Isiolo, Garba Tulla and Merti. Ethnic communities that sit at these circles include the Borana, Gabra, Sakuye, Garre, Burji, Konso and Orma. Of these, Orma constitute a distinct addition as they have been historically been separated from the Borana for decades due to outward migration, settlement of Somali clans in areas between the two and ethnic clashes. Burji and Konso migrated for job opportunities as labourers in colonial Northern Frontier District towns such as Moyale and Marsabit. Later they settled and have significant presence in these two towns and in Nairobi's Kariobangi area. Burji are enterprising and have accumulated considerable wealth through transport businesses. They are largely Muslims but also have significant population of evangelical Christians among them (Amborn 2009). A number of them are active committed Tablīghīs.

With such an ethnic diverse constituency, speakers during national *ijtimā*ʿs have to be very inclusive in their speeches. They always appeal to the commonality of language. They fall back on common origin, common cultural connections, common livelihood strategies and common territorial home. The most common term used to initiate discussion and self-introspection as a unified group is '*nu warri affan ken dubbat…*', which translates as 'We, the people who speak our language…' In this way, the speakers avoid marginalising those who are non-Borana but speak Borana as their first language and at the same time include the Orma into the Borana category as their long lost brothers.

Similarly, as mentioned in earlier chapters, ways of building consensus and inclusion within the heterogeneous Borana *Tarjama* is by allowing speakers from each of the constituent groups to lead the translation circles. Therefore, a Borana from Waso may chair a *tāʿlīm* session, a Tana Orma translates *bayān fajrī*, an Obbu Borana *bayān maghribī* and a Gabra *bayān ʿaṣrī*, and a Burji *tashkīl* works. Garre though few within the movement often opt to sit among more religious learned Somalis than among the Borana speaking *jamāʿat* at the national gatherings. However despite sitting as one, territorially Isiolo and Waso Borana Tablīghīs are under Nairobi *ḥalqa*, Moyale and Marsabit Borana, Burji and Konso Tablīghīs under Garissa *ḥalqa* and Tana Orma are from coastal *ḥalqa*. This translation circle is the only one that appears to have fair spatial representation of all the three Tablīghī zones in Kenya.

Members of Borana speaking Tablīghīs are often sent to areas where their language is spoken. This further strengthens the ownership and entrenchment of the movement as local revival group. It is common to find groups of Orma Tablīghīs transversing in Borana dominated areas of Moyale and Sololo, Waso Borana preaching in mosques in Mandera, Obbu Borana mobilizing for the movement among the Orma of Garsen and Hola, Gabra Tablīghīs calling people back to faith in Waso and Burji and Borana Tablīghīs preaching in mosques in Kariobangi, Mukuru kwa Njenga and Mathari in Nairobi. At these moments, one does not see at all the South Asian dimension of the movement. When a group of Orma Tablīghīs toured Moyale in June and July 2010, there were considerable interests among the local Borana of these 'Borana speaking brothers' who have travelled hundreds of kilometres to remind them of religious observance. Often interpersonal discussions with these Orma *dāʿi*s shift from '*daʿwa*' to their clan structure, their history and separation of 'them'. In their speeches they also emphasise their unity with Borana and their common brotherhood in Islam and the need to reform themselves by living pious life as done by the Prophet and his companions. In a way, these inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic proselytism bolster ethnic solidarity and mobilisation for religious purpose.

7.3.3 Borana as 'one undivided unit': Tablīghī *daʿwa* to non-Muslim Borana, Muslim Borana

Tablīghī Jamāʿat often does not preach to non-Muslims. Their travels confine them to mosques where they reach out to Muslims who come to pray. Traditionally their *daʿwa* has been directed towards Muslims. However among the Borana, the Tablīghīs have taken upon themselves to 'save' their co-ethnics who are followers of their Borana indigenous religion from 'imminent damnation'. They argue that their outreaches are the most appropriate especially among the Borana followers of the indigenous beliefs unlike earlier efforts by non-Borana Muslims such as the Garre, the Arsi Oromo and the Somali. The failure of earlier attempts were dismissed as superficial and confined to urban centres such as Nagelle, Mega and Yabello with little penetration into the villages and cattle camps. In addition, being non-Borana, the proselytisers were accused of cultural insensitivity, ownership of otherwise universal faith and cultural conversion of Borana to their own way of life. In short, these earlier *dāʿi*s were dismissed as deceptive and unsuitable to present the message of Islam to the community in the way that the Borana could relate to it as way of life and a universal faith. Therefore the Borana speaking Tablīghīs see themselves as the right *dāʿi*s cut for the job as they not only come from the community but share in its concerns for the future. They draw themselves as the children of the community out to bring the faith to their ancestral homelands with the sole aim of making it part of Islamic *umma*.

Therefore, the transnational lay movement comes to serve the growing needs among the more religious observant Borana Muslims to do *daʿwa* among their non-Muslim Borana in Ethiopia and Kenya. Here, the transnational movement serves purely local ethno-religious concerns. The movement remains transnational as the Kenyan Borana *dāʿi*s have to cross Kenya-Ethiopian border and travel around the vast southern region of the Oromo Regional State. They visit urban areas, villages and watering points. In areas with large Borana Muslim populations, attempts are made to establish self-sustaining Tablīghī units to consolidate gains made. Temporary mosques are constructed where conversions are made, often with community consent and support. Their requests for teachers and more Tablīghī *daʿwa* to Kenyan Borana are often honoured.

The region, hitherto connected by the pan-Borana customs (Bor. *aada sera*) and hence seen as one unified cultural zone is increasing redefined and imagined especially by the Borana Tablīghī workers as an emerging part of transnational *umma*. There is a common adage among the Borana that says '*Borani kuta inqab*', that is, the Borana are one undivided whole. This is often cited when there is need for a trans-frontier mobilisation against external attacks, for local and national elections in Kenya, to access pasture and water resources on both sides

of the border, for effective administration of customary laws and customs and now for purpose of Tablīghī *daʿwa*.

Constituent clans of the Borana dual moieties of Sabho and Gona are found in both Kenya and Ethiopia as are those of other Borana speaking communities. Most Borana Tablīghīs from areas like Moyale know the landscape and may even have relatives and contacts in Ethiopia. They also understand the role and the powers played by the Borana political and religious leaders. They are most suited to approach the Gada elders to ask for permission to preach and convert their fellow Borana. They also fall back not only on 'boranness' (Bor: *borantiti*), but also make informal reference to conversion to Islam as a foretold prophesies of past Borana 'prophets' and diviners who predicted that there shall come a time when the community have to choose between Christianity and Islam and that the latter was predicted to be the better option. (Bassi and Tache, 2005) The Borana Tablīghīs make optimal use of the exclusive entry they have to Dirre and Liban and the audience they get from the *Gada* leaders to their *daʿwa* use. The Tablīghīs unlike earlier *dāʿi*s who were often in Borana region for reasons other than preaching are undoubtedly committed as their aim is to 'Islamise' their community. Frequent clashes over resources between Garre and Somali have been cited as the reason why the community has been reluctant to accept Islamic faith from them. There is a tendency within the Borana followers that they have to do something so that their communities 'catch up' with the rest of neighbouring predominantly Muslim communities such as the Garre and Somali. These quotes from informants illustrate this:

> Of all the communities here in this land, Borana are the least Islamized. Our people hold their culture in one hand and religion with the other. They do not embrace the religion fully.

> Whenever and wherever *ᶜulamā'* go out to the Borana area, they are ready to embrace *shahāda*. They are told by the *ᶜulamā'* that it is ok to hold some aspects of their culture. This is hypocrisy. They are also not shown how to pray, what *tawhīd* is, or just how to live as Muslims. Most of the time, after they embrace Islam, they do not have any one to teach them about their new faith. So most of them are Muslims with names only.

> We have seen *kundis* especially from Waso travelling and transversing the vast Borana land from Dirre, Liban, Mega, Sololo, Yabello, and Nagelle and so on. We have had groups from here to who have gone to even Abba *Gada* and *Qallu*. They are very appreciative. They are so eager to learn.

I can with confidence say that Borana have accepted *tablīgh*. They now greatly support *da'wa* effort. In fact they support *da'wa* more than any other community here. We believe that this may be the only *nuṣra* from Allah to lift this people out of ignorance into the light. Many Borana youth are in it, and very ready to sacrifice their time and resources for the sake of Allah.[324]

The focus on non-Muslim Borana is particularly stronger among the Waso Borana Tablīghīs. They retell stories of the squalor and poverty stricken fellow Boranas whose everyday life is compounded by years of alcoholism and in need of spiritual enlightenment. Such narratives form the basis for subsequent *daʿwa* excursions by Borana speaking *jamāʿat*s. These *daʿwa* journeys are more than just Tablīghī tours. For the Borana Muslims it forms some sort of 'sightseeing', albeit one with spiritual dimensions. Before, with restriction on travel between Kenya and Ethiopia, the only people who cross the borders were traders, nomads and selected visitors to distant relatives. Generally, the ancestral lands of Diree and Liban remain a deeply revered area, *arda jila*. It still ignites feelings of belongingness among the Borana Muslim and non-Muslims, a place of their own, a place of 'eventual return'. It is still seat of the *Gada* council and *Qallu*. To Borana Tablīghīs, though these traditional symbols do not hold same old sentiments, it still gives them a rare and privileged opportunity to transverse the land that their fellow Borana reside in for centuries and see beyond it.

It is also this concerted focus on Borana constituency, both Muslim and non-Muslims, that attracts the Borana Muslims to the movement and also make rival ethnic groups such as Garre to avoid it. Ethnic rivalry as mentioned in earlier chapters plays a crucial role in the transnational movement. Though it is often seen as appealing to every lay Muslim to partake in the travels for individual spiritual reform, it is often lay Muslims from certain ethnic groups and certain class within that group that is predominantly attracted to the movement. Mewatis in India were a classic historical example. Among the northern nomadic group, currently the Borana remains the largest followers.

Attraction by the Borana Muslims to the movement is strengthened by certain Tablīghī practices that have parallel manifestation in Borana livelihood strategies and socio-cultural norms. Take the case of *khurūj fī sabīlillāh*. The Tablīghī mobility practices in search of areas in need of spiritual revivalism rings a bell with Borana rangeland management practices of searching for greener and most nourishing pastures for their prized possession, the cattle. Scouts (Bor: *aburu*) are often sent on such missions. Similarly, *ilmatu* (Bor: journeys) are not new. People have travelled for decades from one part of the region to the other for varieties of

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[324] Conversations with Mamed Roba, Moyale, October 2009, Informal discussions with Sheikh Ibrahim and others, Helu, September 2009. Group interview with Borana youth, Moyale, September 2009.

reasons. When they get home they narrate the news (Bor: *oddu*) of the places visited just like the Tablīghī practices of *aḥwāl* giving. They broadcast messages of *Nagaa Borana* (Bor. Peace of the Borana) and any other urgent matters. In case village elders or any other traditional institution want to make an announcements or pass urgent message, the Borana dispatch *lapsa* or *kuta* (Bor: messenger) for that mission. Tablīghī *dāʿi*s among the Borana also allude to their proselytism as a form of religious *lapsa*. The notion of conveyance as used in Borana every day speech is *daqapsisa*. The Tablīghīs often used the term in conjunction or as translation to *daʿwa*. In this case, they often call upon Borana Muslims to volunteer to convey the preaching of Islam to others. *Daqabsisa* hence is preached as a duty compulsory upon all Muslims irrespective of their levels of religious education.

Other Tablīghī practices like as consultative meetings as means of consensus building and decision making rhymes well with traditional Borana strategies such as *korr* (Bor. meeting). It is common for communal decisions to be made by male Borana elders through deliberation. *Korr* can be held for varieties of reasons, namely: *korr gossa* (Bor. clan meetings), *korr dedha* (pasture rangeland meeting), *korr ola* (village meeting), *korr gummi ballo* (pan Borana meeting), *korr gara warra* (family meeting) to name but a few. Disputes have traditionally been solved in this manner. The apex of Borana gatherings is the 8 yearly *Gumi Gaayo* in Ethiopia to deliberate on pan Borana issues under the chairmanship of the reigning *Aba Gada* (Baxter 1954, Legesse 1973).

It is perhaps in reverence for elders that the Borana Tablīghīs find a common ground with Borana equivalent. Elders within the community are a source of blessing and are respected as custodians of the traditions. It is common for elders (*jarole*) to give advice, settle dispute, conduct ceremonies, represent their clans or sub-clans in meetings and convey or enforce communal decisions based on the sanctioning powers. Tablīghīs generally refer to those advanced both in age and experience within the movement as elders. In Swahili, the word used is *wazee*. Among the Borana Tablīghīs they are called *jarole*. Seniority matters in this pastoralist community, so does it among the Tablīghīs. The Borana Tablīghīs refer to members of the Kenya *Shūra* and other senior prominent Kenyan Muslim Asian Tablīghī as *jarole*. The highest ranking *jarole* are those 'elders' at the administrative nexus of the movement in Nizamuddin in Delhi who constitute various councils and who frequently convey directives to the national elders in each country directives for implementation and guidance. Often the Borana Tablīghī leaders would make announcements and new directives in this manner: '*Obboleyan jarolen waan jete…*' (Bor. Fellow comrades, the elders have said that…).

Furthermore unlike the often authoritative and 'self-righteous' sermons of the local ᶜulamā' among the Borana, the Tablīghīs maintain certain forms of self-reflective and persuasive speech and often address the local Borana with collective voice. They do not condemn, at least in public, of transgressions of the moral laws but gently encourage the Borana Muslims to mend their ways through doing good deeds. They are not overtly political or militant. They do not condemn the local traditions in open like the other non-Borana preachers and do not aspire to relegate their traditions to oblivion at the moment. Their bodily adornment is never complete without *surre* (Bor: turban) and *ule* (Bor: stick) a common feature among the Borana males. They also avoid controversies and conflicts with the religious scholars. Their gatherings such as *ijtimāᶜs* and *shūra* just like the traditional Borana congregations always end with *eeb* (Bor: supplication, blessing). They, in all sense of words, appear to maintain the Peace of Borana, *Nagaa Borana*.

Except in Waso, the Borana Muslims are disproportionally represented in religious hierarchy in Moyale. Except in outlying areas, mosques in Moyale central are managed by the families of the founders who were mainly Somalis and of Arab descent. Tablīghī Jamāᶜat hence found an easy niche among the youth from the Borana community and from among secular-educated Borana speaking youth of the communities. It hence provides this constituency with a sense of belonging and importance and also membership and leadership opportunity in a transnational body of lay *dāᶜis* that is not confined to a region like the local ᶜulamā'. They are fascinated by the global reach of the movement and would not hesitate to remind me in the interviews that '*tabliqi kara rabbin ebise, fulan tabliqi arr injirr injir*' (Bor: Tablīghī Jamāᶜat is a blessed path of God and that there is no place in the world where you will not find it'). Unlike the class of the ᶜulamā', every person can join the movement and has a considerably equal chance to rise within its hierarchy based on his own commitment and piety.

With the rise in radicalism in the neighbouring Somalia and protracted secessionist conflicts among the Oromo and Somali dominated Ogaden region in Ethiopia and fear of gradual growth of reformist Islam within Kenya, both Kenya and Ethiopian governments are wary of Islamic movements with overt political agenda. The United State embassy bombing in 1998 in Nairobi and a spate of other attacks committed by terrorist organisations have made the regional governments step up its efforts to avert similar crisis with the help of the United State of America and other western powers through various methods such as intelligence, policies and special police units. Kenya and Ethiopia share a long porous border with each other and with unstable Somalia, a haven for all sorts of groups. It is in the interests of these governments to allow, if not nurture, any 'apolitical' transnational group that would counter

the allure of the militant movements. Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Kenya and on the frontiers of Kenya and Ethiopia hence has the blessing and freedom to proselytise. Transnational acclaimed apolitical stance augurs well with the local needs of such movements in face of perceived increasing radicalisation among youthful Muslims in the Horn of Africa. It is however unpredictable how the regional governments handle the movement in the years to come.

7.4 Facing the future: Tablighi prospects in Kenya

During one of my field visits, I was lucky to meet a close informant returning from a four month travel tour. I asked him a question concerning the future of the movement among the Borana speaking communities, I inquired, what next? He answered in Borana:

> *Ujin tun uji muume jabdunit. Uji nabiyotaf ashaboti ojat. Guyyan isin chit injrit. Ag lubbun nam kes jirt, inum chochoan. Ujin tun dini nam daqapsisa challanit. Isin dandi rabbi itt nam yam. Warr ini filat male name chufti indem. Isin jijiram gudaan namat dufft. Ibadat wal nam eej. Amalat naam qajeel. Warrat naam midag. Sodaa rabbi gudaat nam kessat dalat. Ashaboti waan diqo beet warri isanitin daqapsisite, nuulen warri afaan keen dubat, dams la ilaha illalahu kaan jiru teen war keen daqabsisin.*

> This work does not have an end. It was a duty done by the prophets and their companions. There is no day that it will be over. As long as one is alive, he must remain steady on the work. This duty is not concerned with conveying the message of Islam only. It is a path upon which God calls his faithfuls. Only the one He calls are the one chosen to remain within it. It brings tons of transformative changes in the life of a person. Acts of worship (Ar. *ʿibādat*) become part of one's everyday life. One's behavior becomes good. The home is transformed. The sincere fear of God germinates in one's heart. Just as the companions of the Prophet Muhammad relentless relayed the little they knew to their people, we the speaker of our language shall convey this message of '*La ilaha illalah*' to our people throughout our lifetime.[325]

This comprehensive quotation sums up the motivation and attitude of the Tablīghīs among the Borana speaking communities today. The level of commitment among those who chose the path of lay ministry is high. New recruits are sought, whilst older ones are maintained through carefully thought-out visits, regular local meetings and gatherings and interpersonal networks of fellow Tablīghīs. The followers of the movement are not only convinced about authenticity and orthodoxy of their doctrine and practices but relentlessly assert that due to failure of the mainstream religious leadership to initiate and sustain religious revivalism, it is them and only them who can bring a meaningful change in religious adherence among the Kenya's Muslim communities. Will they sustain the growth and consolidation of the *daʿwa* movement for the

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[325] Personal conversations with Mzee Duub, September 2010, Merti.

next twenty or possibly fifty years? Has the movement reached the apogee of its growth and hence on a downward trend? Only time will tell.

Increasingly the Tablīghī Jamāʿat leaders in Kenya are emphasising the role of mosque-based *maqāmī* units and the house-hold practices. The Borana speaking Tablīghīs are carrying these and other new directives home. They are encouraged not only to strengthen the performance of the *panch amaal* but also to increase text reading and consultative forums at home. New travel teams to be organised by the *maqāmī* and sub-*ḥalqa* committees are instructed to be constituted by few regulars and large number of novices. This places a heavy burden on the local units to mobilise among already wary ordinary Muslim mosque goers. The regulars are also instructed not to postpone or cancel the annual pledges of forty days and monthly pledges of three days for whatever reasons. This daunting task has meant that the regulars dedicate most of their free time doing the affairs of the transnational movement at their own cost. New routes of travel have opened up: more and more local Borana Tablīghīs are saving their money to go to the Indian global headquarters.

Women travel teams and weekly gathering for women are increasingly encouraged and the Tablīghīs especially from the northern Kenya are gearing to experiment and consolidate these directives. Core texts are now available in Swahili. Those who have spent at least 10 years within the movement are growing in number and have inculcated the Tablīghīs practices and undergone self-teaching and learning to be considered religious scholars within their own rights. With all these new directives, developments and prospects, it is for subsequent studies to continue this promising research on the Tablīghī Jamāʿat as the face of transnational Islam within Kenya in general and among the communities of northern Kenya in particular.

7.5 Conclusion

 A question that is often asked among scholars studying transnational religious movement is, what happens when a movement travels, crosses borders and firmly establishes itself in a new area? As we discussed above the options are two: like the case of Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Uganda, it may lose its distinctive transnational and apolitical glamour and go local in matters of its religious constituencies and concerns or maintain a mix between adopting new practices, places and bureaucracy but at the same time appropriating the new movement to local ethno-religious peculiarities in terms of membership, relations with existing traditional customs and needs to effect religious revivalism. Local Tablīghīs are indeed part of this egalitarian movement. Any casual observer who accompanies a Borana speaking group would find it hard to get non-Tablīghī agenda or concerns. They travel for the same type of *daʿwa* tours. They gather in similar way. They preach and dress like their South Asian counterparts. They are joined in the transnational network by select Kenyan Muslims of Asian descent. Their daily, weekly and monthly timetables, whether on travel missions or in mosque-based group, universally similar and they aspire to mobilise locals and transform their families like their counterpart in South Asia. But they too maintain certain form of distinct features. The Borana speaking Tablīghīs aspire to proselytise among their own. In this case, 'their own' category stretches from the banks of Tana River near Kenya coast to the grasslands of Dirre and Liban in Ethiopia. Orma, Garre, Sakuye, Gabra, Burji, Konso and above all Borana are all people to remind on being steadfast in religious observance. They seek their own rightful place in the family of Tablīghī congregation: Borana *tarjama*. They want to maintain their own identity, voice and peoplehood in the cacophony of speeches at national gatherings. They are ready to go beyond traditional Tablīghī Muslim-directed proselytism to an urgent mission to their non-Muslim co-ethnics in Kenya and Ethiopia. International borders do not matter in this case as Borana worldview of undivided whole is evoked alongside other useful strategies. Traditional Borana leaders are visited to get blessing and permission to reach among the non-Muslim co-ethnics. The fusion between what is local and global remains meshed. What is however unique is that to those committed to the ethos of the movement, they argue, it is the most appropriate outfit for religious reawakening and conversion among their own kin.

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