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Muslim Youths on Tablīghī Journeys

Thomas K. Gugler

Summary
Approximately 69 percent of the world's Muslims are to be found in Asia. The vast majority of these people live in South and Southeast Asia. With the "Asian turn" in processes of globalization and the Asian shift of global Islam, South Asian Islam is now more engaged with the wider world than ever before. Repetitive transnational missionary trips by laymen have become an Islamic ritual with an enormous growth rate in recent years. This practice involving spiritual transformation through itinerant preaching has a strong attraction for Muslim youths. In its modern form it was shaped in South Asia by agents of translocal Islamic missionary movements, such as the Tablīghī Jamāʿat and more recently its Barelwī counterpart Daʿwat-e Islāmī. This paper describes the two organizations in detail and explains the pull they have on young Pakistanis today.

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Introduction

Short-term missionary trips are becoming a popular means of deepening one's spiritual life in South Asia and elsewhere (cf. Peterson et al. 2003; Wuthnow 2009; Dearborn 2003; Qasmi 2003; Qadri n.d.). The attraction of translocal missionary trips is linked with the connotation of a meaningful, international missionary trip as a way of converting its subject into an actively engaged global citizen. As this ritual resembles patterns of transcultural lifestyles, it is perceived as a specifically modern and cosmopolitan way of practicing and increasing Islamic piety (Eisenlohr 2012). It is most attractive to poor, underprivileged Muslims who would normally have difficulty obtaining a visa by themselves.

Approach

In the following, I have striven to understand patterns of retraditionalization, such as the osmosis of theological ideas between different traditions, "copy and paste theology," and "ritual theft" (Graf 2011: 8), copying elements from one system of denominational symbols to another by applying the metaphor of religious economics (cf. Gugler 2011b). The rational capitalist logic of spiritual "points" that can be

accumulated is deeply interwoven with the seemingly neoliberal discourse of self-optimization. In this paper, the term "sunna systems" is used to refer to Islamic images, symbols, and behavioral systems that enable religious practice to expand in everyday life and thus integrate everyday worlds (cf. Schrode; Simon 2012). These sunna systems are associated with the transsubstantive power to transform everyday routine into a quasi-religious ritual, making Islam a lifestyle by "sunnaizing" aspects of everyday life, in particular people's clothing, speech, and behavior (Gugler 2010).

Background

These days, around a third of the world's Muslim population is to be found in South Asia. With approx. 180 million Muslims among its citizens, Pakistan is currently the country with the second-largest number of Muslims in the world and can be expected to surpass the leading nation, Indonesia, in the next couple of years (Pew Research Center 2011). Islam is highly fragmented in South Asia (Malik 1996). Around 80 percent of the Muslims in this region are Sunnis (Malik 2008). Sunni Islam is divided into several schools of thought (*makātib-e fikr*), the largest being the Barelwīs (Sanyal 2011) and Deobandīs (Metcalf 2005). The Barelwī and the Deobandī schools of thought have gradually developed tradition-specific faith movements focusing on piety and self-improvement.

The purist reform movement of Deoband is based upon a seminary founded in the North Indian city of Deoband in 1866 by Muḥammad Qāsim Nānawtawī (1832–1879) and Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī (1829–1905). It strives to purify the custom-laden style of South Asian Islam from alleged Hindu and Sikh influences. After 1880 a coalition of shrines started a counter-reformist movement that emanated around the person of Aḥmad Rizā Khān (1856–1921) from Bareilly. This Barelwī school of thought is close to popular Islam and Sufism. Barelwī scholars underline the value of traditional rituals revolving around saints and shrines and highlight the veneration of the Prophet Muḥammad, whom they consider to possess specific qualities (e.g., *ʿilm-e ghaib* [knowledge of the unseen] and *ḥāzir-o nāẓir* [presence of the Prophet, who views all actions]). The majority of Sunni Muslims in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are considered to be closer to the Barelwī school of thought than any other.

These two rival Islamic reformist movements have been competing with each other for members, resources, authority, and the impact they have on society for around 130 years now (Gugler 2011a: 51–87). During the 1920s, the Deobandī scholar Mawlānā Muḥammad Ilyās (1885–1944) founded the missionary movement Tablīghī Jamāʿat, whose headquarters is in New Delhi. Muḥammad Ilyās encouraged ordinary Muslims to work as lay preachers, learning about Islam by delivering their understanding of basic values, i.e., learning through teaching (Masud 2000, Ali 2012). Tablīghī lay preachers travel to nearby mosques in small groups of 5–10 and eat and sleep there in addition to preaching basic knowledge

about Islam (Qasmi 2003). They deliver inspirational religious talks and then urge their audiences to volunteer for missionary journeys themselves. A basic missionary trip lasts three days, while longer missionary journeys may last weeks, months, or even a whole year. When Tablīghī missionary activities began to expand globally in the late 1960s, Muslims in Pakistan and India also undertook missionary journeys in order to be able to visit foreign countries.

When Barelwī youths started going on Tablīghī trips, several Barelwī clerics began to publish anti-Tablīgh literature, declaring many aspects of what happened during a preaching trip un-Islamic. When the denominational condemnation of such practices failed to limit the numbers of young Barelwīs undertaking such trips, a few Barelwī scholars like Arshad al-Qādirī (1925–2002) and the JUP[1] "saint-politician" Shāh Aḥmad Nūrānī (1926–2003) strove to set up a rival Barelwī organization to support transnational missionary journeys for highly religious young men within the framework of a modernized and more pragmatic "neo-Barelwīyat" in an effort to stop Barelwī youths from making Tablīghī trips and switching to Deobandī Islam. After the financial failure of the World Islamic Mission founded by Barelwīs in 1972, they invited other Pakistani Barelwī scholars to collectively agree on establishing the Daʿwat-e Islāmī as the Barelwī version of Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Karachi in September 1981. Daʿwat-e Islāmī was hence founded in an act that could be labeled "ritual theft," as the Islamic short-term missionary journey had been a unique feature of the Tablīghīs until then. As a ritual, however, it proved to be so successful and popular that a niche was developed for it within the denominational framework of the Barelwīyat.

Youth and Islam in Pakistan

More than 110 million Pakistanis are under the age of 25, making the country's youth population one of the largest in the world. According to UNFPA, 63 percent of all Pakistanis are below the age of 25 (in comparison, fewer than 25 percent of Germany's citizens are under the same age). With a youth literacy rate (age 15 to 24) of about 50 percent, educational failure is only one of the major problems young people face in Pakistan these days. The enormous economic crisis alone has resulted in many opportunities in life declining rapidly, and the country's distressing security situation does not give much reason for hope either. Pakistan's endemic energy crisis results in 22 hours of power outages in the countryside *every day* (!) and up to 16 hours of outages in urban areas, making life a struggle for millions of people each day. Corruption on all level of society, consumer capitalism undermining the social foundations of human solidarity, moral relativism, lack of rule of law, high unemployment, soaring inflation, hyper-individualization, infrastructure deficits,

1 JUP stands for *Jamīʿat-e ʿUlamāʾ-ye Pākistān*.

stoppages of development work, routine intoxication combined with the constant availability of hard drugs like heroin and crystal meth at very low prices and – most importantly – increasing disengagement from civic and political life just round off the list of difficulties that cause many young Muslims in Pakistan to lose their way en route to adulthood (cf. Smith et al. 2011). At a time when finding and maintaining a legitimate and dignified place in society is increasingly being left to the skills and resources of the individual (Bauman 2011: 18), one extreme exit strategy in the current socioeconomic crisis is to opt for hashish and heroin. One alternative to this presented by Pakistan's powerful Muslim missionary movements is to turn to Islam for guidance and a sense of belonging (cf. Blair et al. 2012). Hence it will come as no surprise to learn that transnational Muslim missionary movements like Tablīghī Jamāʿat and Daʿwat-e Islāmī – the movements that promise a revitalization of Muslim solidarity – are gaining strength day by day and that they are particularly powerful on university campuses and in college politics (cf. Nelson 2011). Even conventional politics is now forced to focus on young adults, as more than half of the 84.3 million potential voters in Pakistan are aged between 18 and 35. 16.2 million of these are, in fact, between 18 and 25,[2] empowering the younger age group with the potential to change the political landscape of the country now. The transnational Islamic networks of lay missionaries, which are both agents and products of globalization, are particularly attractive to the young generation of adults in Pakistan, for they offer a way for them to travel internationally and obtain visas as well as creating a feeling of dignity and strong ties of trust and solidarity. The approach of these missionary movements can be understood as "youth religion" insofar as they construct "true religion" as opposed to "cultural Islam" and young Muslims criticize their elders and become more stringent than their parental generation, a process that often results in alienation from the family. Islam has become a new medium of self-expression for Pakistani youths. Youngsters embracing digital media are just one aspect of a story that becomes important when glimpsing the future of religion in the contemporary societies of South Asia; it is young people who are at the forefront of cultural change.

"Super-Muslims"

The new transnational communication and social sphere with the Internet, instant chats, and religious debating fora enabled diverse agents of modern religious culture to organize systematic symbol transfer, "ritual theft," and a theological "osmosis" of ideas (cf. Graf 2011). As a result of these processes of transformation involving religious traditions and the new potential to overcome traditionally defined boundaries of communities, new religious movements focusing on self-improvement

2 http://dawn.com/2012/08/06/a-young-electorate/ (accessed: 2012-10-27).

and piety have mushroomed up, which are dramatically reshaping the relationship between religions and denominations (cf. Casanova 2009: 108–114). Muslims now choose from an increasingly diverse set of Islamic identities; today, God speaks in a host of dialects and vernaculars.

The spiritual culture of the invisible or implicit individualized religion is increasingly provided by the particularist universalisms of the so-called new religiosity, mixing motifs of psychological fashion trends, the individual seeking of spirituality, the achievement of personal reform, and systematic perfection of self-mastery.

The new forms of religiosity are communitarian. They are *exclusive* in the sense that a clear line divides the saved from the damned, and *inclusive* in the sense that all aspects of life and each and every aspect of a believer's daily routine come under the aegis of religion. This is the reason why academics often refer to these new and mostly young Muslims as "Super-Muslims" (Malik 1998), "perfect Muslims" (Thielmann 2005), or "neo-Muslims" (Nökel 1999), and why these groups of believers consider more cultural coreligionists "Friday Muslims," "Ramazan Muslims," or "50:50 Muslims," or even just "Muslims by name."

These forms of Islamic piety are individualistic, highly mobile, weakly institutionalized, seemingly anti-intellectual, or rather, emotional, and are embedded in experience. Besides enjoying social support and getting relief from personal anxiety, members of these groups experience the positive benefits of travel opportunities in transnational religious organizations and movements. A constantly high level of social control and repressive enforcement of agreed moral standards of behavior create important structures of trust, which results in tight networks of solidarity being formed. These networks are essential for social and career advancement, not to mention greater prosperity, as they foster a division of labor and reduce transaction costs; in a world in which many businessmen do not pay their bills anymore, trust has become the most important currency of all (cf. Thompson 2011). A piety technique, the *imitatio Muhammadi* (Schimmel 1985) also enables Muslims to autonomously generate social capital, in particular trust and authenticity capital, from which youngsters (and women) benefit most, as the Islamic space is usually dominated by male elders claiming respect, authority, and authenticity.

The transformation of an individual to a "perfect Muslim" usually follows three steps:

Step 1: Visualization

The knowledge of mortality is reflective, and people tend to honor the courage to face the terror of death and annihilation, for humans seem to hunger for immortality (Becker 1973). The deathbed mentality is evoked to issue the most important wake-up call of all. Daʿwat-e Islāmī's spiritual *madanī* transformation (Medina

transformation) – the improvement and remodeling of the mind, body, and character in accordance with the Prophetic principles – begins with a ritual called *Fikr-e Madīna*, lit. "thinking of Medina":

> **Create a Sense of Responsibility:**
> Dear Islamic Brothers! Take a serious look at your character. Repent of your sins sincerely and develop a renewed spiritual enthusiasm in yourselves. **Develop the mindset that I must strive to reform myself and the people of the whole world**. *In shāʾa llāh ʿazza wa-jalla!* Realizing the significance of this great Madanī mission, if you make a steadfast intention to achieve it whilst lost in the love of Allāh and His beloved Prophet, you will succeed not only in the world but also in the hereafter.[3]

In Daʿwat-e Islāmī, self-reform begins with the simple question: "*What do you want? Heaven or hell?*"[4] The first day of an improved new Islamic life usually begins with the request to sit down and visualize the ultimate Islamic reality of Judgment Day. Resembling the idea of "live every day as if it was your last," the ritual *Fikr-e Madīna* ("reflections on Medina") means taking some time every evening to sit alone and reflect on one's purpose and how one has lived one's life today in relation to the ultimate goals in life while imagining that Doomsday is taking place right now. Most importantly, this ritual is about deeply and genuinely thinking about how to improve the next day, how to alter one's daily routine and habits so one is closer to Allāh. The *Fikr-e Madīna* ritual starts rationally and ends rather emotionally, requesting the visualized Prophet Muḥammad to save one from damnation and the tortures of the grave and Hell. Even a few minutes of focused reflection can have a profound impact on the quality of one's life or the perception of it. In this daily ritual the magic of visualization is used to create positive images to influence the mind and make it focus more on a better Islamic lifestyle. From what I heard from the young lay preachers I interviewed, this ritual is the most powerful and highly effective strategy one can follow to achieve personal change – a rekindling session for personal development and self-renewal with a daily reminder of one's mortality and priorities in life:

> A wise person is one who focuses on the afterlife, reforms himself by holding his *nafs* [ego, lower desires] severely accountable; he regrets his sins and fears the severe consequences of them, just as our saints have done. [...] Dear Brothers of Islam! Contemplate deeply about how our noble saints did *Fikr-e-Madīna*. And in order to reform their *nafs*, how they made themselves accountable for it! Even when they did good deeds, they considered themselves sinners and always feared Allah. [...] *They spent their nights constantly crying and wiping away the sleep from their eyes*.[5]

In Daʿwat-e Islāmī, creature anxiety and guilt, the debt for living, can be overcome by the Prophet Muḥammad. Persistence in this ritual of self-renewal, i.e., daily

3 Qadiri n.d. (a): 7–8.
4 Qadiri n.d. (b): 2.
5 Qadiri n.d. (b): 4–5.

practice, making the person visualize the perfect version of him- or herself they might become and believe they actually are this person. It creates a sense of authenticity and ownership ("This is the real me"). The practical effect of such a ritual is to generate positive emotions like gratitude and confidence in salvation (the two other sides of "guilt" and "creature anxiety"). Positive psychology (Seligman 2002) revolves around three elements, viz., "positive emotion," "engagement," and "meaning." Later, "relationships" and "accomplishment" were also added (Seligman 2011: 16–20). While *Fikr-e Madīna* is all about producing positive emotions and activating heroic powers such as self-determination and resilience through mortality salience and the idea of "ersatz immortality," the *madanī card* (see below) focuses on engagement and accomplishment:

Step 2: Exercise and engagement

In order to accomplish the newly set goals created during *Fikr-e Madīna*, there is a list of 72 achievements for Islamic brothers called "Medina rewards," i.e., "spiritual credit" or "paradise points" fostering constant self-improvement. There are 63 of them for Islamic sisters, 92 for male *madrasa* students, 83 for female *madrasa* students, 52 for prisoners in jails, 40 for children, and so on. The baseline for improvement is one's past score of spiritual points, hence there is no competition with others; it is a totally individualized "race against oneself" (people are not supposed to make their paradise points public either). Following this program on a daily basis enables one to experience the remarkable benefits of discipline – and the pleasures of minor victories leading to larger triumphs against one's *nafs*. These *madanī card* rituals, as they are known, revolve around "engagement," to speak in the semantics of positive psychology (Seligman 2002). Most of the 72 points are quite time-consuming and deeply impact on a practitioner's daily routine, if followed properly. Full-time members who devote their entire lives to the *madanī mission* as drafted out in the *madanī card* usually score about 35 points. Filling out the 72 questions on the Medina card means keeping a diary to gauge one's progress, just like keeping a personal success journal. Once a month, practitioners evaluate their answers to the 72 questions on the card, which is then forwarded to their supervisors at the religious organization. This rational – and seemingly capitalist – way of thinking in terms of "otherworldly points" is deeply interwoven with the neoliberal discourse of highly individualized self-optimization. Training one's thoughts, establishing a new routine, and experiencing private victories are not quite enough, however.

Step 3: Attaining public excellence

Spiritual transformation and the achievement of the goals one has in life (like certainty of salvation) are obviously "journeys" rather than "destinations." The method by which to experience the pleasures of proactivity is to practice in public.

The most important way of improving one's mind, body, and character is to undertake a missionary journey, which not only means familiarizing oneself with new symbols and attitudes of Islamic piety in a new environment, but fostering a feeling for the development of an unstoppable character, determined mostly by one's own interpretation of what is happening. Sleep deprivation is a central element of these missionary journeys. The mood during the preaching trips is one of gratitude and could be characterized by such statements as "we learn about Islam by teaching about it" and "we are here to pass it on to others." People who travel for the first time are given the paraphernalia they need to look like a "proper" Muslim qualified to be addressed respectfully as *Mawlānājī* in Pakistan and India, i.e., a white *shalwār-qamīz* (pajama trousers and tunic), a *miswāk* (teeth-cleaning twig) to put in the front pocket of their *qamīz* (tunic), and a green *ʿimāma* (turban) in Daʿwat-e Islāmī as well as a white or brown shawl and optional black leather socks. The period during this ritual is also a time to exercise and experiment with these symbols. Number 50 of the 72 *madanī inʿāmāt* specifies:

> [50] Today, did you spend your whole day (at work, at home, etc.) wearing an *ʿimāma sharīf* (and a *bandanna* if you apply oil on your hair), having *zulfain* (if they grow), having a beard (a fistful of hair according to sunna), wearing a (white) *kurtā* halfway down your shins, with a *miswāk* in your front pocket, and wearing the *shalwār* in such a manner that the bottoms are above your ankles?[6]

Islamic sisters are supposed to wear a black *madanī burqaʿ* made of extra-thick cloth and black gloves. Besides clothing style and behavior, speech is another main area by which to express and experience sunnaization (Islamization is the wrong term for these groups' Islamic project, as they mostly operate among Muslims and do not have a specific political agenda).

As an activity or an apt performance, sunna becomes the norm via which practitioners can make a moral person out of themselves. Expressing the right *niyya* (intention) is the signifier to mark that a daily action is performed as a ritual of worship. To express this ritual commitment, the missionaries make use of Islamic phraseology concerning a person's daily routine that sacralizes and ritualizes everyday life. Presupposing multilingualism, this dynamic relationship between religion and culture results in the increased use of religious phrases in Arabic like *bi-smi llāh*, *in shāʾa llāh*, *mā šāʾa llāh*, *astaghfiru llāh*, and *allāhu aʿlam* and practically extends their use to every single act of communication imaginable.

In Daʿwat-e Islāmī, this phraseology is not only further elaborated, but also branded on people's minds, as Daʿwat-e Islāmī members are requested to add *ʿazza wa-jalla* whenever referring to Allāh. Number 8 and 9 of the 72 *madanī inʿāmāt*, for example, read as follows:

6 Qādirī n.d. (c): 12 (the author's own translation).

> [8] Today, did you say *in shāʾa llāh ʿazza wa-jalla* while having the intention to do any permissible act, *al-ḥamdu li-l-llāhi ʿala kulli ḥāl* when asked about your health, etc. instead of complaining, and *mā shāʾa llāh ʿazza wa-jalla* upon seeing the favors of Allāh *ʿazza wa-jalla* bestowed upon somebody? [9] Today, did you respond to [the greeting] *salām* when others said it to you? In response to another person saying *al-ḥamdu li-l-llāh ʿazza wa-jalla* upon sneezing, did you reply by saying *yarḥamuka Allāh* (in a tone audible to both of you)?[7]

Apart from competing with each other, the lay preachers of Daʿwat-e Islāmī and Tablīghī Jamāʿat compete with modern and secular trends and recreational activities as well. The modernization of religious rituals includes active marketing measures like the staging of religious mass-events (annual *ijtimāʿ*) with regional and national TV and cricket stars.

Structuring missionary trips

For the implementation and experience of *imitatio Muhammadi* as a form of piety of action, the missionary trip probably provides an ideal "anti-structure" to isolate participants from their daily environment and distance them from their mundane daily routine (Gennep 1960, Turner 1969). The exodus or Odyssey experience (Smelser 2009: 1–27) – letting go of one's past life and facing the physical, social, and psychological challenges and dramas of moving through new spaces while acquiring knowledge, strength, and understanding as the journey continues – is essential in a ritual functioning as a change manager.

In Daʿwat-e Islāmī, male members are advised to go on a one-day missionary trip (*nekī kī daʿwat*) in the neighborhood once a week, a three-day missionary trip to another city once a month (mini *qāfila*), a 30-day missionary journey preferably in another country once a year (standard *qāfila*), and spend a year working at a center as a volunteer once in their life (an extended *qāfila*).

Current research on Islamic missionary travel usually only focuses on the travelers as *participants* and on the period while they are in the field. In terms of its structure, however, every missionary trip consists of a pre-field, in-the-field, and post-field phase, or a pre-invasion, invasion, and post-invasion period if one chooses to remain in the semantic field of *khurūj* (Tablīghī Jamāʿat) and *qāfila* (Daʿwat-e Islāmī). The three main participants of a missionary journey are the senders, the "goer-guests," and the "host receivers" (cf. Peterson et al. 2003: 153).

The senders include the sending entity (called the *Madanī Qāfila Maktaba* in Daʿwat-e Islāmī) and the sending supporters, who contribute financially, logistically, emotionally, and/or in prayer. The goer-guests include followers and leaders (*amīr*). The host receivers consist of field facilitators and the intended receivers.

7 Qādirī n.d. (c): 2 (the author's own translation).

A small community or team of short-term mission practitioners is led by a mission leader, who is sometimes also involved in the pre-field preparation of the sending entity, i.e., guest-goer recruitment, organizing visas and round-trip tickets, financial support, logistical concerns like providing airport drop-offs and pick-ups, logistical arrangements for housing, food, and ground transportation, in-the-field orientation and instruction, and handling local political or governmental requirements.

The relatively small size of a goer-guest's team allows full emotional and social interchange among the participants, so they usually experience significant (not to say life-changing) growth during their period in the field. Their post-field duties include making a brief but formal written report (usually around two pages long). These reports are archived by the sending institution and used for briefing and instructing prospective mission leaders.

On a final note, it is also interesting to know that such short-term missions were probably first organized by Dr. Edith Brown from the Ludhiana Christian Medical College and Hospital in Northern India in 1895, who set up student medical teams to provide nursing care for and by women (Peterson et al. 2003: 242).

Organizing educational experiences

During a missionary journey, the participants turn into lay preachers, announcing the word of Islam and demonstrating it by their own deeds. As lay preachers are not religious scholars, they are provided with a book of readings that they are to use for their own character-building training.

Ilyās Qādirī ʿAṭṭārī's opus magnum, the *Faizān-e Sunnat*, is the central vade mecum in Daʿwat-e Islāmī and the movement's *darsī kitāb* (book of readings), its essential manual for lay preaching. The work was first released in 1988 on the day of the *ʿurs* (lit. marriage, death date) of Aḥmad Rizā Khān Barelwī. Later editions were modified in part, as several scholars criticized a large number of weak and even fabricated *hadīth*. Before that date in 1988, lay preachers from Daʿwat-e Islāmī used the *Mukāshafat al-Qulūb* (revelation of hearts), a work penned by the famous 11th-century Sufi scholar al-Ghazālī, for their *dars* (lessons, readings).

The third, completely revised edition of the *Faizān-e Sunnat* (Qādirī 2006) consists of four large books in Urdu. In addition to this, several supplements have been published since then, so this third edition is now like a first volume of a permanently expanded, recompiled *Faizān-e Sunnat* series. Currently, there is no complete translation of it in any European or non-European language.

In several hundred smaller pamphlets, topoi like the politics of angst, competition of world disgust, and erotics of fear (cf. Bivins 2008) result in the "ākhiraization" of contemporary reality (connecting current events to the imagined afterlife existence), motivating for the reform toward "ersatz-immortality." In these new Muslim missionary movements, pious activities result in "paradise points" or "Medina

rewards," serving as incentives for further investments in practitioners' other-worldly accounts. These could be described as postdated checks that – God willingly – will be redeemed in the afterworld. Here and now, this system of making personal piety and morality visible by standardized behavior patterns and clothing as well as the attitude that one has to improve oneself and the rest of the world is meant to contribute to the building of an ideal, Utopian society within the brother- and sisterhood of Medina. Religious visibility requires ostentatiousness or shrill tawdriness. Lay preachers locate the pure form of the ideal society of Medina in the past, in the environment of the first Muslims, as well as in the future, after Doomsday.

Imitatio Muhammadi

The Prophet Muḥammad serves believing Muslims and in particular activists of the new Islamic renewal movements as the eternal role model for all human beings in questions of ethics, moral norms, and conduct in life. The Quran (33: 21) states: "There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allāh an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allāh and the Last Day."

Epithets like *al-Muṣṭafā* (The Chosen One) or *Ḥabīb Allāh* (Beloved of God) illustrate the specific position attributed to Muḥammad and explain why he serves as an example in questions of Islamic behavior (cf. Meier 2002; Nagel 2010). Most Sufis consider him to be the "perfect human" (*al-insān al-kāmil*) and hence declare him infallible. As a whole, the body of normative words and deeds of the Prophet are named *sunna* (lit. habit, usual practice), or more precisely *sunnat al-nabī*.

Besides the Quran, the sunna is also an important source of information in Islamic jurisprudence. In fact, it is considerably larger than the Quran. The latter includes around 200–500 *āyāt al-aḥkām*, which are verses relevant to Islamic law. The number of *aḥādīth al-aḥkām* of relevance, however, is between 800 and 7,000 (Bauer 2011: 145). The concept of sunna is interwoven with the hadīth and describes a custom applying to any religious or legal moment that was commonly practiced in the old Muhammedan community. The opposite of sunna is *bidʿa* (innovation). A norm conveyed by a hadīth naturally results in the norm being considered a sunna. However, not every sunna needs its correspondent in a hadīth. Sunna is basically regarded as a set of guidelines on Muslim behavior (Gleave 2010) and concerns not only social interaction, but one's own behavior – everything from waking up to falling asleep, from birth to death. Sunna includes rules of conduct such as how to greet people, expressions of politeness, and guidelines about good manners, etiquette (*adab*), and clothing (*libās*). *Dār al-Sunna*, or the house of sunna, is the ideal Utopian community of Medina. Neo-fundamentalist interpreters like the agents of the Daʿwat-e Islāmī refer to their acts as the revival of a (dead) sunna and accuse competing cultures of interpretation of "killing" sunna (*imātat al-sunna*). Neo-

orthodox agents like the Tablīghī Jamāʿat tend to refer to their acts as the "killing of innovations" (*imātat al-bidaʿ*).

The opus magnum of the leader of the Daʿwat-e Islāmī movement, (*Amīr-e Ahl-e Sunnat*) Mawlānā Muḥammad Ilyās Qādirī ʿAṭṭār (b. 1950), is the *Faizān-e Sunnat* (2006), a work on the blessings of the sunna. The title and content are modeled on the *Fazāʾil-e Aʿmāl* (Virtuous Deeds) authored by Mawlānā Muḥammad Zakarīyā (1898–1982), the nephew of Muḥammad Ilyās (1885–1944), the founder of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat. Both works are examples of competing strategies of adoption regarding the sunna of the Prophet and his companions, i.e., rival codes of construction and interpretation applied to hadīth to cultivate specific traditions (Barelwī/Deobandī) and refresh the bonds of religious institutions.

Among the missionary movements, Daʿwat-e Islāmī in particular systematically focuses on new "consumer" groups, first and foremost Islamic youths who are traditionally either ignored in their religious fields (Bourdieu 2000) – which are usually strongly dominated by male elders – or put into an inferior subfield and hence had to generate social capital through sports activities, such as joining cricket associations, as in Pakistan's case (Werbner 2002: 222).

Youths and adult women (cf. Schneider 2011) particularly benefit from these ways of generating social capital relatively autonomously – especially denomination-specific trust and authenticity capital – by imitating the Prophet. "Imitatio Muhammadi" is a means of generating *thawāb* (a reward) for the hereafter and a means of empowerment and increased ego strength in the here and now (cf. Tiesler 2006: 26), as this symbolic capital enables adult women and young adults in particular to impact on Islamic practice in their immediate environment and hence experience the attention paid to Islamic authorities. This might also be the reason why Tariq Ramadan (2007) wrote a whole monograph on imitating Muḥammad as opposed to following him (cf. Ernst 2003 as well). In diaspora societies, those Muslim youths with migration biographies who are often confined to isolation in ethnic colonies in small cities find new opportunities to gain mobility in such translocal missionary movements. These movements could also be analyzed in the context of "health & wealth" religions, as they advertise and religiously legitimate a healthy and inexpensive lifestyle without any form of intoxication, love affairs, or clubs – and encourage sports activities as well as integration into existing (import-export) trade networks. The missionary movements hence unfold their powers of attraction and dynamics of mobilization among the younger generation by focusing on lifestyle issues. Such Islamic ways of "lifestyle shopping" (Shields 1992) are intended to countervail the dangers of permanent seduction omnipresent in the diaspora as well as in modern secular Muslim societies due to strongly delimited personal lifestyles. In this case, sunna has become a normative system shaping people's lifestyles, apparently with the power to turn a competition-ridden society of isolated egomaniacs into a caring community of Islamic brothers and sisters.

The written works published and circulated by lay preachers provide examples of how one should reform one's current lifestyle, most of which are taken from the hadīth literature. In the modern context, the concept of the sunna of the Prophet (*sunnat al-nabī*) is decreasingly constructed in opposition to *bidʿa*, but increasingly constructed in opposition to secular or "Western" lifestyles (cf. Metcalf 1993 as well). The construction of *sunnūn* is followed by a call for sunnification (Benedict 1965: 39) or the "sunnatization of life" (Malik 2003: 233), the adaption of one's everyday world to the lifestyle of the Prophet, i.e., the apolitical Islamization of everyday routine and practice legitimated by the hadīth. The imitation of the Prophet is supposed to create or increase people's love of Him. Imitation is hence a kind of "experience factory," one could say, enabling and increasing the absorption of *faiz* (God's grace), constituting a world full of *faiz* (*Faizān-e Sunnat*, *Faizān-e Madīna*, etc.).

Institutional upgrade

Both the Tablīghī Jamāʿat and the Daʿwat-e Islāmī missionary movements are global *daʿwa* movements. They establish centers, mosques and institutions for Islamic education to promote sunna as a way of life. Their Islamic education programs revolve less around traditional Islamic disciplines of knowledge, but focus rather on character education. Their moral or character-building assemblies are usually staged in mosques during preaching tours (*khurūj, madanī qāfila*) or *ijtimāʿ* (regular congregations) and stress the importance of the community, universal brotherhood/sisterhood, mutual respect, good manners, honesty, and other values not specific to tradition.

Although its headquarters is in Karachi, Daʿwat-e Islāmī has become a truly transnational *tablīgh* movement now and has attained a global reach thanks to the Internet (www.dawateislami.net, www.trueislam.info). By the end of 2007, Daʿwat-e Islāmī had officially become the largest religious organization in Pakistan. It is active in more than seventy countries today, mostly among the immigrant communities. In 2008, the movement launched its own television channel, Madani Channel, during Ramazan. This features Islamic programs in Urdu, Arabic, and English, the latter being a recent addition broadcast after midnight in Pakistan.

All centers run their own tertiary educational institutions, the *Madrasat al-Madīnas*, and shops belonging to the movement's own chain, which sell DVDs, VCDs, Islamic software like searchable traditional *fatāwā* collections, devotional paraphernalia, and literature. So far, the *Maktabat al-Madīna* has published over 800 pieces of Islamic literature in fifteen languages. Each center is run as an individual business. The aggressively advertised "non-profit policy" makes sure that the money generated is used for nothing other than the expansion of the center. Most centers operate their own *Dār al-Iftāʾ* – an office for legal advice, which can be contacted in person, via e-mail or instant chat, or by phone. These muftī hotlines have become

particularly popular in Pakistan; open 24/7, a *fatwā* is only a phone call away. Furthermore, these centers organize weekly congregations (*haftawar ijtimāʿ*) in mosques managed by other institutions. An annual *ijtimāʿ* for Pakistan is held in Multan, which is modeled on the Tablīghī *ijtimāʿ* in Raiwind.

While Daʿwat-e Islāmī copies the activities and organizational structures of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, their members differ from them in appearance mainly because of their green turbans. The six points of action of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat have been incorporated into 72 directives, viz., the Medina rewards. The Daʿwat-e Islāmī has an edge over the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, as it has been running its own chain of *madrasas* since 1990. There are more than 1,000 *madrasas* in Pakistan alone, and the movement's own TV channel is broadcast to more than a hundred countries.

Conclusion

The Tablīghīs forced the Barelwī tradition to redefine itself on the market. Barelwīs did so by cultivating specialized identities in order to serve a small market niche. The obvious paradox here is that market logic is not very good at tradition. Markets thrive on innovation and ephemeral fads and fashions; they constantly itch for new products. The tradition's logic as a continuity of memory and commitment must undermine or counterbalance rather than reinforce market logic. At the end of the 20th century, Barelwī leaders had to translate the sets of beliefs and practices serving as benchmarks for Barelwī identity into contemporary language and a system of publicly shared codes and schemata that provide interpretive frameworks and rules that organize action and create an environment conducive to conversion.

The lay preachers support the trend toward consumer autonomy and the individualization of religious participation visible in modern societies transformed by capitalism and created programs for expressive individualism and religious event culture – religion as an "experience factory," in other words. The central elements of this new religiosity are its increasing involvement of the audience in interactive tasks, renewed "voluntarism" (for example, pressuring people to join missionary tours), and a new focus on seeker spirituality, emphasizing expressive individualism and emotional experience over doctrine and ritual. Religious restructuring also seems to be characterized by a new and specific fluidity, allowing different communities to borrow from each other's traditions. The direction of religious change is from confessionalism toward pietism. Revivalists stress individual conversion and the increasing efforts of individuals to lead lives of moral purity. The new moral communities seem to be more personal, privatized, playing down the role of doctrine and dogma, i.e., more therapeutic than theological.

The frontier tradition of reform and revivalism, after redefining the purpose of worship, therefore puts greater emphasis on prayer and preaching than on *kalima* and *shahāda* (words of testimony), i.e., greater importance on individuals' emotional experience.

Another central aspect of this new religiosity is the novel relationship between tradition, community, and authority. The market condition creates an environment in which lay preachers without any formal Islamic education act as religious entrepreneurs, using moral language to sell sunna salvation items in a consumer-friendly way. The participation of lay preachers in these new and largely self-organized tradition systems, which are in a constant state of change, as change is a built-in feature of tradition, transforms these into traditions that are lived out and experienced. Tradition thus becomes an activity.

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