

## Muslim Youths on Tablīghī Journeys

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### 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 Jamā'at and more recently its Barelwī counterpart Da'wat-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