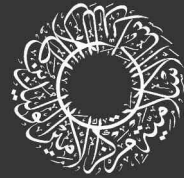


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Muslims in the UK and Europe • I



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MUSLIMS IN THE UK AND EUROPE I



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Religious Travel and *Tablighī Jamā‘at*: Modalities of Expansion in Britain and Beyond

RIYAZ TIMOL

Abstract

Extant academic literature on the Tablighī Jamā‘at provides the rudiments of a schema for understanding its modalities of expansion in new socio-cultural milieus. This paper first explicates these modalities in more detail and applies them to the historical development of TJ in Britain. I then test and amplify this schema utilizing fresh data generated during a 40-day fieldwork khurāj (outing) to Bulgaria as a reflexive participant observer with a British TJ group. The paper argues that the Western branch of the movement has achieved a degree of institutional robustness and autonomy from TJ’s South Asian headquarters. Finally, the paper reflects upon possible future trajectories for British TJ in relation to the author’s ongoing ethnographic fieldwork.

Introduction

The *Tablighī Jamā‘at* (TJ) is frequently described as the largest movement of Islamic revival in the world today.¹ An ‘apolitical, quietist movement of internal grassroots missionary renewal,² its mosque-based activism encourages participants to go out on small group tours inviting other Muslims to faithfully practice Islam. TJ first began in the 1920s through the activities of Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi (1885-1944), an Indian ‘ālim rooted in the conservative Sufism of the Deobandi tradition.³ Conscious of the limitations of traditional reformist methods, Ilyas focused his energies on *da‘wah* to effect large-scale religious reform among the Meos of early twentieth-century northern India.⁴ Under the leadership of his son, Muhammad Yusuf Kandhalawi (1917-1965), TJ expanded its operations globally and is now ‘said to be active in almost every country with a significant Sunni Muslim presence.’⁵ TJ came to Britain with the post-colonial immigration drive and has set up a strong base for itself predominantly amongst the South Asian diasporic community. Yet the modalities through which it transmits and embeds itself into new socio-cultural milieus have, to date, received but scant academic attention. In this paper, based upon current doctoral ethnographic fieldwork, I propose to examine these modalities in

greater depth and offer some tentative reflections about the way the movement functions in contemporary societies.

Setting the Scene: Identifying Key Modalities of Expansion

Edward Said, in an essay entitled ‘Traveling Theory’, sketches a four-fold typology of the way in which ideas and theories may respond to unfamiliar socio-cultural settings: ‘First, there is a point of origin ... a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth ... Second, there is a distance traversed ... Third, there is a set of conditions – ... of acceptance or ... resistances – which then confronts the transplanted theory or idea ... Fourth, the now full (or partly) accommodated ... idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place.’⁶ With reference to the TJ, Marc Gaborieau, in his detailed chronology of the movement’s spread abroad, provides the rudiments of a schema for understanding the modalities through which it seeks to emerge out of its South Asian matrix and embed itself in new socio-cultural milieus.⁷ According to his analysis, visiting TJ delegations work in host countries among local populations based upon a stratified vision of social hierarchy. First, the *ulema* are contacted for support and help, followed by lay intellectuals, then merchants and finally the masses. The publication of several subsequent studies on TJ in disparate foreign settings allows us now to flesh out Gaborieau’s rudimentary schema. For instance, Marloes Janson provides a history of TJ’s spread across both Francophone and Anglophone Africa, focusing in particular on the Gambia.⁸ Farish Noor presents a detailed account of TJ’s spread across the Indonesian island of Java, right from its inception with the very first visit by a Pathan group in February 1955 through to his own fieldwork conducted in July and September 2008.⁹ He also charts the spread of TJ to the neighboring countries of Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.¹⁰ A close reading of these accounts, in particular Noor’s, allows us to posit the following broad generalizations – conceived of as phases – about the modalities through which TJ transmits and embeds itself into new socio-cultural milieus.

Phase One

The primary arena for TJ activism continues to be South Asia, and specifically the Nizamuddin and Raiwind headquarters in New Delhi and Lahore respectively, from where constantly replenished teams of TJ activists are systematically dispatched across the globe to stimulate interest among local

Muslim communities in the TJ's particular vision of religious reform.

Phase Two

Upon arrival into a new socio-cultural context, visiting South Asian TJ delegations seek to firstly locate and win the support of local Muslims of South Asian ethnic origin, relying on historical linguistic and cultural affinities to secure their hospitality and assistance. As South Asian expatriate communities tend to replicate their sectarian differences in the immigrant context, visiting TJ groups can only work within limited segments of the South Asian Muslim diaspora. However, as the case of TJ in the Gambia demonstrates, TJ groups do also meet with success when directly engaging indigenous Muslims in the countries they visit.

Phase Three

Through their protracted stays and tours amongst South Asian diasporic communities, visiting TJ groups hope to cultivate and establish a home-grown presence of TJ activism in the countries they visit which are left as self-sustaining legacies. A home-grown presence of TJ in a new land can only be properly consolidated when citizens of that country journey to the South Asian headquarters at Nizamuddin or Raiwind, normally on a minimum four month tour, to receive training and thoroughly familiarize themselves with TJ techniques and mores.

Phase Four

Once a TJ presence has been initiated in a new land, the South Asian diasporic community is intensely proselytized by local citizens, now TJ activists – albeit predominantly of South Asian background – whose efforts are augmented by teams of foreign TJ groups who continue to visit. Considerable importance is given to the social and religious capital of TJ members-to-be who, once won over to the TJ cause, wield their influence to popularize TJ in the country.

Phase Five

In this phase, the TJ infrastructure of a country is developed and new bases are sought out and established from which TJ activities are further organized, orchestrated and expanded. During this stage, national TJ leaders also set their sights on Muslim populations in neighboring countries and local TJ

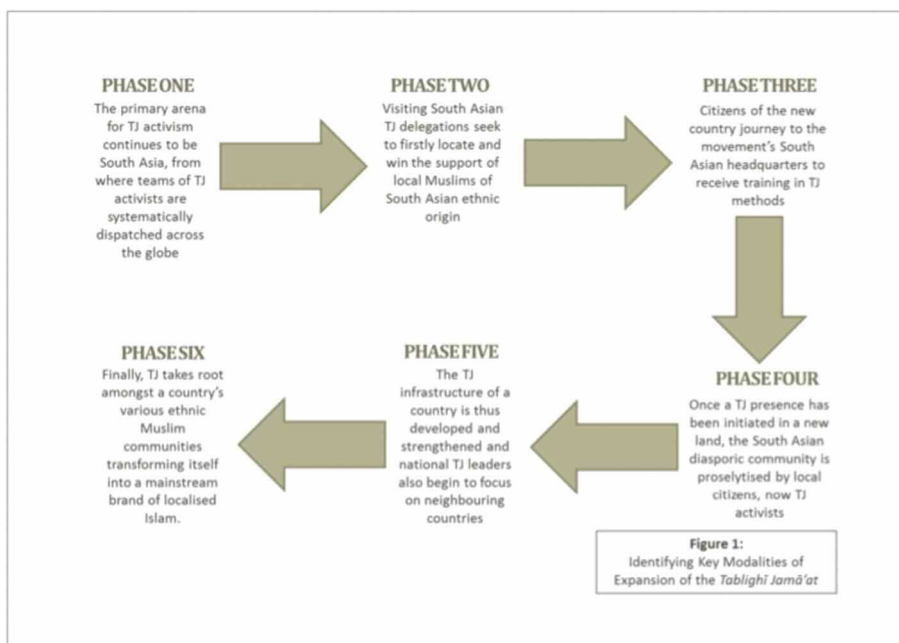
delegations make trips abroad to assess and augment TJ activities taking place there.

Phase Six

The final stage – coinciding with the fourth stage of Said’s typology - occurs when the TJ presence in the land has become sufficiently strong and self-sustaining so as to adapt its tactics to target indigenous Muslim populations directly. Once indigenous populations begin to respond, the TJ starts to lose its particular South Asian identity – tied with the historical realities of immigration - and metamorphoses into a mainstream brand of local Islam. In this regard Noor observes:

What began as a South Asian movement with a distinctive South Asian flavor and feel to it has now transformed itself into a localized mode of normative religiosity that finds adherence and support from the local population of Java. ... Unencumbered by ethnic and cultural attachments or the need to retain its South Asian identity, the *Tabligh* has managed to spread itself from India to Europe, Africa, the Arab world and Asia while localizing itself in each new context it finds itself in.¹¹

This tentative schema, derived largely from Noor’s account of the spread of TJ in Southeast Asia, may be represented graphically as follows:



Expanding Horizons: TJ in Britain and Europe

To what extent can the above schema be applied to the historical development of TJ in Britain? While the first recorded TJ activity took place in Britain in 1946¹² it was only the broader context of economically motivated mass immigration from former British colonies that allowed TJ to substantively root itself in British soil. Early years saw teams of TJ activists systematically dispatched from the movement's Lahore and Delhi headquarters to intensely proselytize the newly settled diaspora community (Phase One). In 1962, Britain's first TJ convocation (*ijtimā'*) was organized in Manchester. Though much smaller in scale than its South Asian counterparts, proceedings ran along the same lines and predominantly South Asian Muslims from as far afield as Leeds, Birmingham, London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Bradford and even Saudi Arabia and British Guyana were in attendance with local preaching groups subsequently dispatched to Coventry (Phase Two).¹³ Subsequent decades saw activist networks gradually develop amongst lower to middle class South Asian communities, particularly of Gujarati origin, as naturalized citizens began to journey back to the homeland for the requisite four month training period in TJ methods (Phase Three).¹⁴ In 1982 the movement's European headquarters opened at Dewsbury, West Yorkshire under the supervision of Hafiz Mohammad Patel, leader (*amīr*) of TJ in the West, and the movement was able to ally itself with the institutional infrastructure of Deobandi Islam relying upon its rapidly proliferating networks of mosques and seminaries to bolster its activities (Phase Four).¹⁵ Recent decades have seen further consolidation and expansion with five regional TJ headquarters (*marākiz*) now active in London, Glasgow, Leicester, Birmingham and Blackburn¹⁶ indicating the extent to which the movement has continued to grow (Phase Five), in spite of Sikand's misgivings:

From its phase of consolidation in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s, the TJ seems to have entered a phase of gradual decline with the emergence of a new generation of British-born Muslims. Many young British Muslims today would seem to find the Tablighi expression of Islam outmoded, if not 'un-Islamic'. By making no significant modifications in its methods and approach to suit the exigencies of the British context, the TJ seems to have little hope for any very significant breakthroughs in Britain in the years to come.¹⁷

My ethnographic fieldwork, consisting of participant observation and a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews, seeks to understand the appeal of TJ to second and third generation British-born Muslims raised in secular contexts. As part of my fieldwork, I undertook a 40-day *khurūj* with the TJ in

late 2013 to the Eastern European country of Bulgaria as a reflexive participant observer.¹⁸ The remainder of this paper considers preliminary findings arising from that trip in relation to the key modalities of expansion identified above. My contention is that TJ in Britain currently operates at the advanced stage of Phase Five as evidenced by the robustness of its internal infrastructure and the frequency with which British TJ delegations are dispatched across Europe and to America, of which my fieldtrip to Bulgaria provides an example. Should my schema prove to be correct, we should see a transition into Phase Six in coming years and a concomitant indigenization of British TJ; a theme which my fieldwork continues to explore in more detail.

My TJ group consisted of five male members, all British-born second or third generation Gujaratis,¹⁹ aged 27-35. Four of the group members hailed from the North West of England while one was from Yorkshire and several group members met each other for the first time in the context of this TJ trip. English was the primary medium of discourse throughout the journey, though each group member was competent in Gujarati and able to speak and read basic Urdu. In addition, the leader of the group (*amīr*) was fluent in Arabic. Each group member had previously undertaken the requisite four month training period to the South Asian headquarters of the movement within the last ten years excepting the *amīr* who had made this trip in 1997 aged 19. In addition, individual group members had already travelled, as part of prior (usually 40-day long) TJ delegations, to countries as diverse as Canada, Guyana, Barbados, South Africa, America, Finland, Trinidad and Tobago, the Philippines and Saudi Arabia. Our *amīr* already had some familiarity with Bulgaria as he had been part of a 40 day British TJ team that visited the country in 2005.

Our journey began in November 2013 at the movement's European headquarters in Dewsbury where the group was formed, the *amīr* selected and the destination decided upon by TJ leaders there. We were instructed to travel by road and a van was accordingly hired. We journeyed through France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Romania en route to Bulgaria and stayed in existing TJ centers (*marākiz*) or mosques sympathetic to TJ in each of these countries. Travelling by road allowed us to tap into local configurations of TJ knowledge and experience en route. At a French TJ center, for example, we learned that teams of primarily French-Arab-African TJ activists were regularly dispatched to Bulgaria from Paris; in Munich we learned the same thing about German-Turkish TJ groups, albeit on a less frequent scale; and in mosques in Hungary and Romania we learned about

TJ delegations from Italy and Qatar who had recently passed through, one of which was en route to Bulgaria. We were also given the contact details of a key French North-African TJ activist, Jemil,²⁰ who had visited Bulgaria on TJ tours so frequently that he was now fluent in Bulgarian.²¹ In this way, I was able to observe the intricate linkages of TJ's transnational networks of activism operating first-hand.

Islam in Bulgaria has a complex and checkered past. In spite of the state atheism instituted by the Marxist-Leninist communism of the Zhivkov regime and its associated suppression of religious identity markers and forced assimilation campaigns, remnants of Bulgaria's Ottoman Muslim past continue to persist and can be discerned, for example, in the architecture of the mosques as well as the state-sponsored system of the Muftiate. This system appoints a Grand Mufti to preside over an assembly of Regional Muftis who in turn supervise the running of the country's mosques and manage the Islamic affairs of its Muslim peoples. Our first priority upon arrival in the country's capital Sofia was to seek an audience with the Grand Mufti to explain the objectives of our visit and seek permission to work in the country's mosques; though, through the visits of previous TJ groups, we had been informed that the Muftiate was aware of TJ activities in the country and approved them. This decision to seek an early audience with the Grand Mufti is consistent with Gaborieau's analysis in which visiting TJ delegations first meet with the native *ulema* of a country before approaching other segments of society.

Having obtained permission to work in the country's mosques, our time in Bulgaria was divided between the Turkish-Bulgarian Muslim communities inhabiting the slum regions of cities such as Plovdiv and the ethnically indigenous Pomak Muslims inhabiting the Southern mountainous regions. The former were proud of their Turkish ancestry and perpetuated a system of religious leadership in which *Hojjas* functioned as the guides of their communities. We found that two *Hojjas* in particular were key supporters of TJ; one had recently undertaken a four month TJ training trip to the Raiwind headquarters in Pakistan and actually joined our group for over two weeks while the other had volunteered his mosque to function as the country's makeshift TJ markaz. Despite its bare simplicity, the mosque had already acted as the key landing and transit point for numerous incoming TJ groups from a range of countries. I witnessed that both *Hojjas* were wielding their

considerable social and religious influence to popularize TJ among their congregations; and the latter Hojja, we were told, had taken over 100 of his congregation with him to a TJ convocation (*ijtimā'*) recently held in Istanbul. I also noticed the presence, in several mosques, of core TJ texts – such as the *Faḍā'il A'amāl* and the *Muntakhab Ahādīth* – in high quality Turkish language publications.

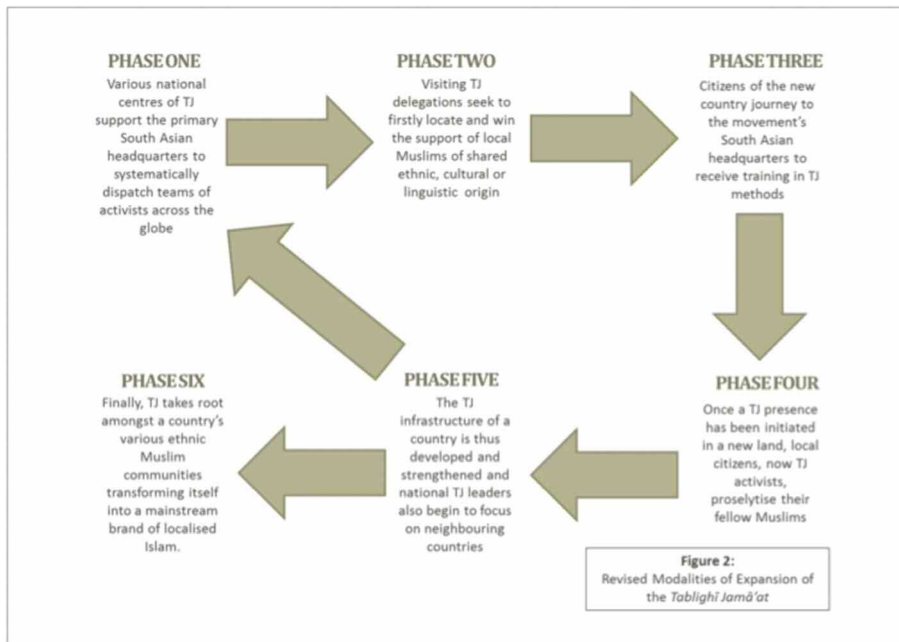
The Pomak Muslims, in contrast to their Turkish-Bulgarian counterparts, were clearly wealthier and sent their religious protégés to Medina to acquire Islamic education. My fieldwork intimated that those appointed to the posts of Regional Mufti had studied abroad, usually in Medina, and invariably hailed from the Pomak Muslim community. Additionally, I was informed that visiting TJ groups from Germany consisting largely of German-Turks would almost exclusively work amongst the Turkish-Bulgarian Muslim communities due to pre-existing ethnic, linguistic and cultural affinities whereas visiting French North African TJ groups would almost exclusively focus on the Pomaks, relying on Regional Muftis and imams to translate from Arabic to Bulgarian. As none of our group spoke either Turkish or Bulgarian, we sought out English translators in each community we visited. It transpired that our translators generally enjoyed a degree of social eminence due to their advanced education – Gaborieau's 'lay intellectuals' – and had often translated for previous incoming TJ groups. I also saw that Medina-trained Pomak *imams* would happily translate for our *amīr* from Arabic to Bulgarian. In particular, Mufti Abd al-Aziz,²² one of the most senior *ulema* in the country, became especially close to our group and, along with a number of his congregation, accompanied us to the mosque of a neighboring town. In situations where neither ethnic, cultural nor linguistic affinities could be evoked, the group relied on the simple yet powerful bonds of Muslim brotherhood and I vividly recall, when translators could not be found, members of our delegation miming and gesticulating animatedly as they attempted to communicate the TJ message to bemused Bulgarian audiences through the medium of an improvised sign language.

Conclusion

Unlike Indonesia or Britain, Bulgaria contains no pre-existing South Asian Muslim diaspora communities and, to my knowledge, has never been visited by a TJ delegation from the South Asian headquarters.²³ Yet some of the key

modalities of expansion identified in Gaborieau's and Noor's accounts can be discerned as operating in the above narrative of my own fieldwork. Firstly, influential *ulema* were contacted and introduced to the objectives of the visiting TJ delegation. Secondly, as can be seen with the focus of the German-Turkish visiting TJ groups, Muslims with shared cultural and ethnic heritages were identified. Thirdly, as can be seen through the activities of our British South Asian group and the French-Arab-African groups, in the absence of shared cultural and ethnic traditions, linguistic affinities were sought out through the common mediums of English or Arabic. Fourthly, it is clear that Bulgarian individuals possessed of social, religious and educational capital are being drawn to TJ, some of whom have already travelled to the movement's South Asian headquarters, and are working to popularize the movement within their spheres of influence in the country. In this way, with some modification to Phases One and Two of my schema, I think it is reasonable to posit that TJ in Bulgaria currently operates broadly at Phase Three.

Most significantly, the trip highlights the institutional robustness and autonomy of the movement's Western branch from its South Asian headquarters. Our group was formed, dispatched and debriefed entirely in Dewsbury with no obvious reference to Nizamuddin or Raiwind; and during my stay at the West Yorkshire headquarters I witnessed numerous other British TJ groups arriving from or departing to various international destinations. The French and German groups seem similarly to operate independently of South Asia; and during our return trip, I witnessed a TJ group form and depart for Switzerland from the Brussels headquarters. It may be that this ostensible autonomy derives in part from what seems to be the movement's global strategy of delegating regional arenas of activity to local headquarters that are geographically and administratively better placed to focus on neighboring countries. In this way, Western European nations with established TJ infrastructures turn a neighborly eye to their Eastern European counterparts – many of whom lag behind, in TJ terms, due to the historical throwback of communism. This implies that the concentration of primary TJ activism to South Asia, as reflected in Phase One of my schema, must now be diffused to regional loci of influence and the cultural affinities mentioned in Phase Two mediated according to local context:



Finally, the age and cultural ambience of my TJ group allows some preliminary speculation about the mechanics through which the future indigenization of TJ in Britain may take place (Phase Six). ‘Religions often enter new and unfamiliar contexts where they undergo subtle changes - or even, depending on their reception, quite dramatic ones,’ points out Peter Mandaville. ‘Much, however, stays the same.’²⁴ Operating on the interface of this ‘inertia and dynamism’²⁵ – and bearing in mind that British Muslims, unlike Javanese ones, exist as a numerical minority and that TJ restricts its activities to Muslim populations only – I would contend that the future trajectory of TJ’s indigenization in Britain will be shaped by the following factors. Firstly, and perhaps primarily given their historical affinity and demographic preponderance,²⁶ the experiences of second and third generation British-born Muslims of South Asian origin who are drawn to the movement will be critical. Secondly, the extent to which TJ is able to shed its South Asian demeanor and be appropriated by increasingly diverse communities of non-South Asian Muslims resident in, for example, London will be important.²⁷ Thirdly, the extent to which the movement is able to accommodate British converts to the faith will determine its future socio-cultural ambience. Each of these factors requires further research and my ongoing fieldwork hopes to provide a framework for understanding better the ways in which the movement may develop in future.

Notes

¹ For instance see Christian W. Troll, “Five Letters of Maulana Ilyas (1885-1944), the Founder of the Tablighi Jama’at - Translated, Annotated and Introduced,” in *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries 2*, ed. Christian W. Troll (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1985), 138-76; Francis Robinson, “Other-Worldly and This-Worldly Islam and the Islamic Revival,” in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Third Series)* 14, no. 01 (2004), 47-58; or Zacharias Pieri, *Tablighi Jamaat - Handy Books on Religion in World Affairs* (London: Lapido Media, 2012).

² Barbara Metcalf, *Traditional Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis and Talibs* (Leiden: ISIM, 2002), 2.

³ Metcalf provides the preeminent account of the development of the Deobandi school: Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982).

⁴ For accounts of Ilyas’s life and the early development of TJ see Anwarul M. Haq, *The Faith Movement of Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1972); Yoginder S. Sikand, *The Origins and Development of Tablighi-Jama’at (1920–2000): A Cross-Country Comparative Study* (Hyderabad, India: Orient Longman, 2002); or Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Life and Mission of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas* (Lucknow, India: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1983).

⁵ Yoginder S. Sikand, “The Reformist Sufism of the Tablighi Jama’at: The Case of the Meos of Mewat, India,” in *Sufism and the ‘Modern’ in Islam*, ed. Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007), 129.

⁶ Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1983), 226-27.

⁷ Marc Gaborieau, “The Transformation of Tablighi Jama’at into a Transnational Movement” in *Travellers In Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama’at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*, ed. Muhammad Khalid Masud (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2000), 134-135.

⁸ Marloes Janson, *Islam, Youth and Modernity in the Gambia: The Tablighi Jama’at* (The International African Library. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁹ Farish. A. Noor, *The Spread of the Tablighi Jama’at Across Western, Central and Eastern Java and the role of the Indian Muslim Diaspora* (Working Paper 175. Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2009).

¹⁰ Farish. A. Noor, *Islam on the Move: The Tablighi Jama’at in Southeast Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

¹¹ Noor, *The Spread of the Tablighi Jama’at*, 48.

¹² Yoginder S. Sikand, *The Origins and Development of Tablighi-Jama’at (1920–2000): A Cross-Country Comparative Study* (Hyderabad, India: Orient Longman, 2002), 217

¹³ See Muhammad Khalid Masud, “Ideology and Legitimacy” in *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama’at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*, ed. Muhammad Khalid Masud (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2000), 108-110; and Azizur-Rahman Bijnori, *Biography of*

Hadhrat Moulana Muhammad Yusuf Sahib - Amire Tabligh (Azaadville, South Africa: Madrasah Arabia Islamia, 2002), 196-200.

¹⁴ For accounts of the historical development of TJ within Britain see Ron Geaves, *Sectarian Influences within Islam in Britain with Reference to the Concepts of 'Ummah' and 'Community'* (University of Leeds: Community Religions Project, 1996); Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain: Religion, Politics and Identity among British Muslims* (London: I.B.Taurus, 1994); Elke Faust, "Close Ties and New Boundaries: Tablighi Jama'at in Britain and Germany" in *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*, ed. Muhammad Khalid Masud (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2000), ch. 6; Yoginder S. Sikand, "The Origins and Growth of the Tablighi Jamaat in Britain." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 9, no. 2 (1998), 171-92.

¹⁵ John King, "Tablighi Jamaat and the Deobandi Mosques in Britain" in *Global Religious Movements in Regional Context*, ed. John Wolffe (Bath: Ashgate Publishing Ltd in association with The Open University, 2002);

¹⁶ Zacharias Pieri, *Tablighi Jamaat - Handy Books on Religion in World Affairs* (London: Lapido Media, 2012), 30

¹⁷ Sikand, *The Origins and Development of Tablighi-Jama'at (1920–2000)*, 251.

¹⁸ Reflexive ethnography is an increasingly widespread method of contemporary qualitative fieldwork. Interested readers may peruse any of the following: Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Amanda Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1999); Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. Second ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher: Using Our Selves in Research* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004); Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. Third ed. (London: Routledge, 2007); Raymond Madden, *Being Ethnographic* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2010); James P. Spradley, *Participant Observation* (Belmont: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 1980).

¹⁹ The *am r* was actually of mixed race ancestry with an Indian-Gujarati migrant grandfather and a white Irish Christian grandmother.

²⁰ Pseudonym

²¹ While these lines may give the impression that there is a concerted TJ focus on Bulgaria, it was only because our group was travelling to Bulgaria that we were concerned to find out about previous TJ experiences in that country specifically.

²² Pseudonym

²³ This is probably due, in large part, to the restrictions imposed by the communist regime.

²⁴ Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001), 112.

²⁵ Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001), 117.

²⁶ The 2011 Census recorded that 68% of the UK's 2.7 million Muslim population were from an Asian background and that Muslims have the youngest age profile of the main religious groups with 48% aged under 25. See www.ons.gov.uk.

²⁷ In this regard, Zacharias Pieri, who conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork on TJ in London, cites the results of a 2010 survey carried out by UK-based consultancy firm Ecorys at the London TJ headquarters – ‘the first and only official source of the composition of attendees’ – to demonstrate ‘a strong trend to a youthful population (41% 20-29 years of age) and a growing ethnic diversity (Bangladeshi 32%, Pakistani 35%, Black African 17%, Indian 11%).’ See Zacharias Pieri, *Tablighi Jamaat - Handy Books on Religion in World Affairs* (London: Lapido Media, 2012), 30-31. Mandaville cites London as an example of a ‘global city’, part of a series of ‘polyglot metropolises [which] bear witness to extraordinary processes of identity (re)formation and sociocultural melange – as well as providing an abundance of material for the morphology of cultural dynamics’; see Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001), 18.