The image of an European development worker sitting under a tree in an African village conveying with members of the local population a familiar scene. Much less familiar is the scene of a Saudi aid worker in a similar situation. On an afternoon in April 2004 a team of the Makka al Mukarrama Foundation (foundation of the Holy City of Makka) visited the village of Koumi in southern Chad. The Foundation's director addressed the assembled men and expressed his satisfaction that a large number of the population had turned to Islam. As a reward the Foundation was willing to finance the building of a mosque and a madrasa. The men from Koumi and the surrounding villages expressed their gratitude most eloquently while the women and children followed the event from a distance. After the afternoon prayer the team departed in their 4x4.

The Makka al Mukarrama Foundation is one of the eleven transnational Islamic NGOs—which include one Libyan, three Sudanese, one Kuwaiti and six Saudi organizations—that have been working in Chad over the last two decades. While transnational Islam is often written about with a focus on migration networks or questions of belonging and identity, as illustrated by the case of Arab Islamic NGOs in Chad, the Makka al Mukarrama Foundation is one of the eleven transnational Islamic NGOs—which include one Libyan, three Sudanese, one Kuwaiti and six Saudi organizations—that have been working on the ground in Africa and elsewhere combining charity with proselytizing activities, as illustrated by the case of Arab Islamic NGOs in Chad.

Transnational Islamic NGOs have recently become targets in the War on Terror for their alleged role in supporting terrorism by channelling funds to terrorist groups. Yet for a long time these organizations have been working on the ground in Africa and elsewhere combining charity with proselytizing activities, as illustrated by the case of Arab Islamic NGOs in Chad.

At the grassroots

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Robert W. Hefner in a recent article on "Islam democratis and Islamic violence" post Singapore's lamentations that Indonesian democracies may never be widely recognized because the movement for a democratic Muslim politics was soon overshadowed by a rise in sectarian violence; a mean challenge for Indonesians and democratic Muslims. Hefner has been the move to polity of the Muslim community one for educated Muslims to demonstrate and plurality in polity...