

An Examination of the Garre Space: The Concept of fulla

Osindo, Oscar

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to study aspects of symbolic organisation such as space (Fulla) within the Garre people of North-eastern Kenya. The Garre claim to be Sunni Muslims of the *shāfi'ī* law school and a close-knit community. Despite the Garre claim of being one united people, they subscribe to multiple ethnicities which enables them to move back and forth among their neighbours in search for necessities. The Garre term for space is *fulla* which they view as open and lets them move freely with their livestock. A study of the Garre religious landscape shows that there are different religious expressions under the single veneer of Sunni Islam. To understand how different expressions of Islam and ethnic affiliations share communal spaces of ideas, land, and habitation, ethnographic and archival data were examined. This examination found out that there is the traditional religion called the War'ayaana which is a mixture of the cult of *Waq*, the sky god, Husseiniya Sufism, Abi Umur and Islam. There is an emerging Sunni reform movement that is locally referred to as the ahl-Sunnat that started from the 1980s. The ahl-Sunnat is contesting for space with the War'ayaana. This contestation is opening space for other entrants like the covert "*Muttaqūn*" who claim to be purer than the ahl-Sunnat. The "*Muttaqūn*" are distinguished by their rite of a whole-body water immersion known as *ṣibghata allāhi* in the Qur'an. They are only a few hundred in number, but steadily growing and are an indication that the Garre socio-religious space is open within the confines of the Sunni Islam identity.