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التقاليد “السريع” توبربات: رمز العلاقة السلمية بين الجماعات المحمدية عرقياً ودينياً في مزجنة موموك
سومرتون

اللوتري (الخصوص) المقصودة لتاريخ واجوال: Wajo

Not Secular Enough Variation in Electoral Success of Post-Islamist Parties in Turkey and Indonesia
Jaredin Khalid Hassin

Faith on the Move: Inside of the Ijtima’ of Jama’ah Tabligh in Pekan Baru
Kamaruzzaman Btezzan-Abnan

Yusman Roy and the Language of Devotion—Innovation in Indonesian Islam On Trial
Stewart Feurick

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Faith on the Move: Inside of the Ijtima’ of Jamā’ah Tabligh in Pekan Baru


Melalui studi etnografi, penulis mengikuti satu kelompok Jamā’ah Tabligh dari Banda Aceh menuju ke tempat ijtima’ di Pekan Baru, Riau. Penulis juga mengikuti semua ritual yang dilakukan oleh anggota Tabligh di Banda

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Ach dan selama perjalanan. Di samping itu, penulis juga mengikuti ritual selama kegiatan ijtima'. Semua kegiatan ini dapat dikatakan sebagai upaya gerakan Jama'ah Tabligh untuk mengirim sebanyak mungkin anggota mereka ke berbagai tempat, tidak hanya di Indonesia, tetapi juga di luar negeri.

Ritual ijtima' dilakukan selama tiga hari dengan melakukan salat berjamaah, mendengar bayan, dan berbagai kegiatan ekonomi lainnya di sekitar tabligh. Dalam studi ini, penulis memaparkan bagaimana setting dan peran setiap individu yang terlibat dalam program ijtima' tersebut. Denajat dan kedekatan dengan mawlahan merupakan sesuatu keistimewaan, karena ketika ritual ijtima' dilakukan, pusat perhatiannya adalah para mawlahan yang berasal dari India, Pakistan, dan Bangladesh. Mereka secara rutin memberikan ceramah agama setelah salat wajib. Adapun kepentingan lainnya dalam program ijtima' ini adalah mengumpulkan sebanyak mungkin anggota baru dan mengajak mereka berserta anggota lama untuk melakukan khusyuk.


الخلاصة: يتناول هذا المقال الشعائر الدينية لدى الحركة الإسلامية عبر الأوطان وهي جماعة التبلíf، وهذه الحركة الإسلامية التي مركزة في نظام الدين بالهدنة، أنشئت عام 1926 م، وأسسها مولانا محمد إيلياس بن محمد الحنفي الكوهني (1885–1994 م) عام 1942 م في ميقات بدلغي، الهند؛ وفي تاريخها تُحَدِث هذه الحركة في جذب أعضاء لها من مختلف أنحاء العالم مع جعل المساعدة مركزاً لنشاطهم، وходятها إندونيسيا ظهرت جماعة التبلíf كحركة من الحركات الاجتماعية الدينية التي شهدت لها نفوذ يغطي ما يقرب من جميع محافظات إندونيسيا؛ وفي إندونيسيا يتمركز نشاط جماعة التبلíf في حي كيبون جيروك Kebun Jeruk. إنها تساهم في دعم شعائر التبلíf في إنغادروها من نظام الدين، وفي تنفيذها تُتحاطب بشكل مباشر من مركزها في حي سري بيتأنج، ماليزيَا.

تعتبر هذه الدراسة من أمثلة الرد في الاعتقاد، وتأثر جماعة التبلíf على الوعي الديني لدى أعضائها، وانخراط الأساسي للبحث فيهما هو إيقاظ الوعي والشعائر الدينية لدى جماعة التبلíf. وتعد تلك الشعائر نفسها في العديد من الدول، وتحضرها الأف بر ملايين من أعضاء الجماعة؛ وتعتبها ذلك يوجد مصطلح آخر يستخدم للدلالة على اجتماع الجماعة وهو jorat، يفرق هذا المقال بين المفهومين وإن كانت حقيقتهما واحدة في أداء الوظيفة المتزامنة وهم حقق الاجتماع للحصول على أكبر عدد ممكن من الكواذر الذين لم استعدوا للقيام بالدعوة.

من خلال هذه الدراسة الإثنيوغرافية تابع الكاتب مجموعة من أعضاء جماعة التبلíf في سفرهم من مدينة بندا آسيبه Banda Aceh إلى مكان الاجتماع لهم في مدينة بيكان Pekan Baru. 

Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad
Faith on the Move: Inside of the Ijtima’of Jamā’ah Tabligh in Pekan Baru

بناresh kebak dan kalamwhether publican yang sering berbagi pengalaman dalam pembahasan topik-topik tertentu. Penulis juga berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam konteks berbagi pengalaman dalam 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تقوم شعار الاجتماعي لمدة ثلاثة أيام يتم فيها إعادة كلمات جمعية واسعه الاستخدام إلى

البيان أي المحاضرات الدينية وإقامة مختلف الأنشطة الاقتصادية لتعزيز انتقاء الاجتماع;

وفي هذه الدراسة يعرض الكاتب وضع الاجتماع والدور الذي يلعبه كل فرد في

الاجتماع؛ تمثل درجة التوجه من مواليها امتيازا خاصا، لأنه عند أداء شعار الاجتماع

فإن موضوع الاهتمام هم مواليها من الهند والباكستان وبنجلاديش، وهم يلقون البيان

على المحاضرات الدينية الواحد ل:error بعد أداء الصلوات المكتوبة؛ أما الاهتمامات

الأخرى في برامج الاجتماع فهي جزء آخر عدد ممكن من الأعضاء الجدد ودعواهم

إياهم مع الأعضاء القديمة إلى القيام بالخروج.

يكون هذا المقال من عدة أجزاء: يشمل الجزء الأول منها على البحث في

الاستعدادات التي يقوم بها أعضاء جمعية التبلوغ في بداية الأمر، وهم أيضا سرير لما هي

الشعارات والاستعدادات التي يؤدأها وحيوية الأخطاء والأعمال الصغيرة التي تؤدأها طوال الرحلة؛

وفي الجزء الثاني منها التفصيل في أن كل وضع تم ضبطه فإنه بعد أمرأ يتم تحكم فيه

بشكل مشترك في إطار الارتباك بالدعوة، ومن هذه الدراسة يمكن أن يقال إن خط

جمعية التبلوغ في القيام بالمنظمات بينها تماما الأنشطة التي تقوم بها الحركات الصوفية

الأخرى، وهذا يعتبر التجربة الدينية حاسمة في تحديد كيف كاروا يستنودون المفاهيم التي

تقفها إليه كل ولمANA

يظهر هذا المقال أن الاجتماع مثل منهجا تكتونيك التحرير الدينية بين أعضاء جمعية

التبلوغ، وكذالك تقع مشكلة أثناء العملية يتم معالجتها بالتشاور، وتجاوز ذلك فإن دور

مولاها في تلك المناسبة هو أن يكون وسيطا بين المصلحة الأهلية وبين مطالب الكوادر،

هناك أولئك الذين يؤدون مهمة الحروج، كما يظهر هذا المقال أيضا أن الموقف بجانب

مولاها يكاد يكون مثل موقف المزيد من المرشد في الطريق الصوفي؛ العناية بمولاها لها أهمية

في شعار الاجتماع، بل ترى بعض الكوادر أن درجة التوجه من مولاها تعطى أثرا له

 أهمية في تجربتهم الدينية، وذلك فإن للمفاهم الدينية المقلوبة والتحريرية الدينية أهمية في

تقوية شبكات حركة التبلوغ

Jamā‘ah Tabligh is reputed to be the largest of the numerous Islamic movements dedicated to the revival, reform or revitalisation of Islam that emerged in the twentieth century. It was formed by Maulānā Muhammad Ilyas bin Muhammad Ismail al-Hanafi ad-Diyyu‘bandi al-Jīrī al-Kandahārī (1885-1941); a Deoband-associated Sufi-scholar in 1927 in Mewat, south of Delhi in India. From its base in India, Jamā‘ah Tabligh grew rapidly so that now it is active in “almost every country with a significant Sunni Muslim presence.”

Among the places to which Jamā‘ah Tabligh spread and where it has had a great deal of success in attracting new members – initially from members of the South Asian Muslim diaspora and subsequently from among the majority population of ethnic Malays – has been Malaysia. Jamā‘ah Tabligh has also managed to establish a significant presence in neighbouring Indonesia, the country with the world’s largest Muslim population.

In this article I discuss the ijtima‘, an Arabic word meaning a gathering, conference or meeting. In the Muslim world, the term is used to describe a large gathering of Muslims for the purposes of worship (ihādah). Karkūn in Malaysia or Thailand refer to an international meeting of Jamā‘ah Tabligh as jorb, while in Indonesia they might use the word ijtima‘. The word can also refer to forms of voluntary worship such as the ḥajj to Mecca and Medina. However, the ijtima‘ of Jamā‘ah Tabligh in many places – Nizamuddin, Raiwind in Pakistan and Yala in Thailand – are always “spectacularly well-attended [and] have attracted the attention of the media worldwide.” Muntaz Ahmad writes that “the Raiwind International Conference of the Tablighī Jamā‘at has become the second-largest congregation of Muslims after the Ḥajj.”

Here, I differentiate between the terms to distinguish between two types of meeting. The jorb is held in a mosque and every karkūn (a group of karkūn under mahalla, under a provincial markaz) and mahalla must report on their da’wah activities to such a forum. An ijtima‘ is more likely to take place in another venue, such as in a field, and there are no kargzari. Here, the karkūn listen to bayān from maulānā or shīmī at the five daily prayer times. A jorb lasts for two days, while an ijtima‘ takes place over a three-day period. The participants in a jorb come from states or provinces under one markaz which contains no more than 10,000 karkūn. By contrast, for ijtima‘ people come from

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(Year, Volume and Issue Information)
many countries and they are attended by more than 10,000 Tablighists.

The aim of an ijtimāʾ is to gather all karkūn from a single region to spend three days in one place in order send out more Jamaʿah (groups) to do khurūj (Tablighist missions). Thus, the success of an ijtimāʾ is indicated by the total number of Jamaʿah that subsequently perform four-month khurūj in IPB (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh), or forty days. Ijtimāʾ is important because they show how Jamaʿah Tabligh organises its members to be sent out to perform daʿwah. They are also a way to attract karkūn to spend their time away from families and jobs, living, listening, praying and eating together with karkūn from other places. As already noted, Jamaʿah Tabligh has many ways (mawlah maqāṣ, mawlah bayān of sending out groups of karkūn to undertake khurūj, while ijtimāʾ is a method for bringing many groups of karkūn from many provincial markazs to organise Jamaʿah Tabligh rituals by encouraging members to remember the importance of khurūj. An impression of ijtimāʾ can be obtained from my field notes recorded during my trip to Pekan Baru:

IJTIMĀʾ: a meeting of Muslims carried out by Jamaʿah Tabligh to prepare groups of karkūn for doing khurūj, mostly for four months. In this ritual, there are many programs to enhance the spirit of karkūn and non-karkūn candidates to go on Tablighist tours of IPB or elsewhere overseas. Ijtimāʾ are held in every state where there are many Jamaʿah Tabligh groups attended by Tablighists ulama (manāquddin) from Nizamuddin. This ritual is accomplished in three days and ends with a bayān where manāquddin spell out the special blessing of Allah. Ijtimāʾ can be organised to evaluate the strength of Jamaʿah Tabligh in a state or province. It also provides an opportunity for the shaykh to discuss the problems of their markaz with manāquddin Nizamuddin.

Thus, ijtimāʾ should be well organised and coordinated, because during ijtimāʾ, more than 13,000 karkūn will stay together for three days. Karkūn who want to do khurūj may not go back to their home cities after ijtimāʾ. During the ritual, they will be questioned about their preparations by a group of karkūn who manage Tablighists before departing on mission. Nevertheless, ijtimāʾ can also be a place for the exchange of information among karkūn. They get to know each other and they might see famous manāquddin close up. Their informal kargesari also take place during the gathering of provincial heads of the Tablighists.

In this study, I focus on an ijtimāʾ held in Pekan Baru, Indonesia, I discuss the preparations mainly of Acehnese karkūn who attended.

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their involvement in the *ijtimāʿ* and what they did afterwards. The main argument of this study is that *ijtimāʿ* is an occasion for Jamāʿah Tablīgh rituals such as praying together and listening to bayān with elite *karkūn* (mawlānā) from international headquarters in India to think (*piktir*) and hesitate (*risaʿ*) about *khurūj fi sabīlillāh* (going out in the name of Allah). In addition, the *ijtimāʿ* *mawlānā* from Nizamuddin make direct contact with local *karkūn* rather than, as at international *ijtimāʿ*, local *karkūn* having to travel to Nizamuddin or Raiwind. I seek to provide a picture of the religious experiences of those attending the *ijtimāʿ* and also to answer a number of questions about Jamāʿah Tablīgh: What are the sources of *karkūn* views and beliefs, and who and what are the main influences on their ways of life? How does the movement maintain their brotherhood under the same mission (*daʿawāh*). In answering these questions, I also investigate how the level of religious awareness in this movement is constructed. Of special importance is the role of *mawlānā* in building the ideology and missionary thrust of the movement through an appeal to *karkūn* to donate time, self and money to the movement, which is then interpreted by *mawlānā* as a sacrifice in the path of Allah.

**Preparations for departure to Pekan Baru**

In mid-June 2007, I was in Aceh for doing my fieldwork in Cot Goh, Aceh Besar. While in the Cot Goh mosque, a *karkūn* whom I often met during prayers asked if I were going with them to Pekan Baru? I said: “Yes, sure, why not, but why do we need to go to Pekan Baru?” The *karkūn* answered, “It is *ijtimāʿ*, like a regional meeting of Jamāʿah Tablīgh in Sumatra. You need to come with us in order to meet *karkūn* from other provinces”. This reminded me of an earlier experience in Sri Petaling when *karkūn* asked me to join *jorh*, saying the same thing, adding “You will see the power of this movement in Malaysia”. It seems that the time for Jamāʿah Tablīgh to show their power is during *jorh* or *ijtimāʿ*. The word *ijtimāʿ* was repeatedly mentioned by *karkūn* during my fieldwork, especially the *ijtimāʿ* in Raiwind. In 2004, four million Tablīghists attended the Raiwind *ijtimāʿ*. Most *karkūn* told me that two things that a new *karkūn* must do are to go on *khurūj* and to attend an *ijtimāʿ* in Raiwind or Nizamuddin. I would say that through *ijtimāʿ* Jamāʿah Tablīgh creates the same feeling among *karkūn* by attracting them to one place every year or two.
Not surprisingly, the karkūn were very enthusiastic when the date of the ijtima’ approached. They often told me how important ijtima’ is for their da’wah activity. During malam markāz, one karkūn, using a microphone, said that we must mention the ijtima’ at every place where karkūn meet. As a result, everyone remembered the gathering and prepared for it. A month before the actual date, during malam markāz or mushāwarah, they kept asking people to join, asking, “Will you go to Pekan Baru?” ‘Have you registered for departure to ijtima’?” To attract new members, they talked a little about ijtima’, but their descriptions were very brief, because they wanted to make the listeners curious enough to join the ijtima’. Most of the stories I heard were about the last ijtima’ in Pekan Baru – about the place, the number of participants and how many mawālik came from international headquarters. I asked them how karkūn organised catering during the ijtima’. I also specifically asked them about toilet facilities. When I asked this question, the karkūn would turn to stories about the worst places for ijtima’ such as Raïwind or Temboro in Indonesia, where it was very hard to imagine the toilet facilities. I imagined that if the ijtima’ for more than 10,000 karkūn were held in a paddy field, the problems of cleanliness and safety were as likely to be discussed as the worship itself. When karkūn could not answer this question, they ended the story by saying “We must conduct our mukāhabah (give our best effort in the name of Allah) during ijtima’”. The markāz in Cot Goh formed a committee to handle the preparations for travel to Pekan Baru. They sent out the information to all halāqah and mohāllā in Aceh about the coming ijtima’, while some of them also organised a small committee to calculate the number of karkūn going to Pekan Baru. Senior karkūn with experience of attending ijtima’ in Southeast and South Asia said that this ijtima’ would not be as big as the international ijtima’ in India or Pakistan. They said that almost two million karkūn attended the international ijtima’. Usually, as in Bangladesh, the ijtima’ is attended by members of the elite such as the president and his ministers.

National and international markāz must be informed of the schedule of ijtima’. A karkūn disseminates the information around the world at least two or three months before the time of the gathering. In Malaysia, I attended mushāwarah at one mohāllā where they discussed the coming ijtima’ in Indonesia. There was a takaza (request) for the karkūn to take part in this gathering.
The most important part of the ījtima’ is the participation of maulāna from Nizamuddin. While at the ījtima’, they convey bayān over three days to all participants. Those who have already been to IPB will be familiar with maulāna’s bayān. The fixed timetable enables overseas participants to attend several ījtima’ in Indonesia before returning to India. An ījtima’ is not considered successful if there are no representatives from the international markāz. Thus, the presence of maulāna from India is a symbol of the global importance of the gathering.

When I registered my name with jama’ah tasākīl, they informed me that I could choose from three ways of travelling to Pekan Baru. If I joined the karkūn in one group, I would pay only 200,000 Rupiah not including the cost of meals during the trip. Alternatively, the jama’ah tasākīl would organise an air ticket if I wanted to fly at a cost of 600,000 Rupiah one-way. Alternatively, I could ride with other karkūns in their own cars. For this option, I needed to give my name for administrative purposes. The Aceh markāz aimed to send more than 1,000 karkūn to Pekan Baru.

Two weeks before departure, I went to the mosque to register. I had decided to go by bus because I thought it would be good to make the journey with a group. I heard that twelve karkūn were going to take the flight from Banda Aceh to Pekan Baru. When I met the man in charge at the mosque of Cot Goh, he seemed not to trust me, perhaps because I was not wearing the gameez. He asked “Which mohallā do you represent?” I replied, “I do not represent any mohallā or halāqah, because I live in Cot Anoe village, where there is no Jama’ah Tabligh group”.

Among karkūn in Banda Aceh, Cot Anoe is a village known to be hostile to Jama’ah Tabligh. When I mentioned the village, he then questioned me: “Why do you want to join this trip?” I could not answer, because it was very sensitive for me to give my personal reasons. I replied by saying, “I am married to a member of a family in this kampung. I performed khur’ij in Kuala Lumpur and attended malam markūz in Sri Petaling every Saturday night. I come to Cot Goh every Thursday night at malam markūz. But, I do not admit that I am a karkūn in Cot Anoe”.

My answers led to a conversation with him about what I did in Malaysia. How did I come to know about Jama’ah Tabligh? What were
the reasons for my becoming a karkün. I told him about my journey and why I was interested in this movement. I said that in Southeast Asia, only Jamā'ah Tablīgh ties the ummah under the umbrella of da'wah. Other karkün joined our conversation. After ten minutes, there were six karkün behind us. One invited me to have lunch with them. During this conversation I learned that karkün who wanted to go to Pekan Baru had to be members of Jamā'ah Tablīgh.

After that, the karkün said that I could register for the bus trip. I gave him 400,000 rupiah, saying, “Ustālh, I will join the group going by bus and this is the money for a return ticket”. He said: “I receive this money for your trip to Pekan Baru. Alhamdulillah (thanks be to Allah)”. I asked him how many karkün would travel to Pekan Baru. He answered that some had not registered yet; they could do so as late as two or three days before departure. However, those taking the flight from Banda Aceh to Pekan Baru had to register earlier. One told me that the trip by bus would be a good example of mujāhidah (an adjective for jihād), because karkün spend two nights on the bus. Allah will reward them in paradise for every step of the journey.

As in the previous year, the karkün hired two buses. Some karkün maintained that the choice of bus was very important, because most jamā'ah require air conditioning. Nevertheless, if the committee chose a bus without air conditioning, they should not complain, because the trip was for Allah. A committee decided to take the cheapest bus so that everyone could afford it.

Three days before departure, I went to the markāz at noon prayer time. I did not see the karkün in charge of ticketing. Someone told me that they had still not filled their quota. He told me that karkün would come only on the last day before departure. There were two process of registration. First, those who wanted to go as participants in ijtimā' registered; but those who wanted to travel on kburūj afterwards were required to register earlier, because the committee needed to conduct interviews (tafakkud). I was told that the Acehnese headquarters had proposed that more than 1,000 jamā'ah would go only to the ijtimā'. It would be amazing to see 1,000 people going to Pekan Baru, but I still did not believe the number. Karkün like to exaggerate the size of such gatherings.

A karkün named ustālh Muis told me about going overseas for kburūj after attending ijtimā'. Before deciding to do this, he discussed it
with his wife and sons, telling them that he would sell his motor bike to raise the eight million rupiah for the khuruj. His family agreed. He said:

I discussed this issue with my wife. She wanted me to leave some money before my departure. I thought by selling our motorbike, the problem would be solved. I could give her two million for two months. I took six million rupiah for my trip to Pekan Baru and the rest for khuruj. This idea came during my interview with the markaz. They suggested that I discuss it with my family if I needed money. I told the jama'ah tashkil that I intended to go to Pekan Baru and khuruj. The jama'ah said you need to discuss it with your family, but tell them this trip is for Allah.

After he sold the motorbike, he gave the money to another karkun who was in charge of saving money—this is called amanah (trust) for Jama'ah Tabligh activities in the markaz.

Another impression of the trip came from Jubair, an ustazh at the Islamic boarding school in Cot Goh. He told me that he would ask his parents in northern Aceh to lend him money to go on khuruj for forty days on foot in Indonesia. Before I knew of his plan, I asked him about whether he intended to go to Pekan Baru. He would not answer, instead saying that he needed go back to his village. After returning, he still could not give an answer but said that he would go to Pekan Baru in someone's car. I assumed that his parents had not given him the money. Either that or he wanted to save his money for the forty days of khuruj.

Another case is Mr. Lazarus. He works as satpam (security guard) for a small company in Banda Aceh. He used his salary for the trip and asked permission from his office. He said that this trip was more important than his work. He told me that he was also at the ijtima' at Pekan Baru last year and there he had met many karkun from around Sumatra, Java and the Malay Peninsula. He thought that this ijtima' was very important, because it would increase his commitment to Jama'ah Tabligh. During the ijtima', he said, we listen to religious sermons (khutbah or ceramah agama) from maulana. He wanted to go on khuruj to IPB, but could not afford it. But, he has spent time and money travelling to ijtima' every year since he joined Jama'ah Tabligh in 1998.

In sum, preparations to attend the ijtima' involved four steps. First, there was the dissemination of information to all karkun. During the spreading of the announcement about ijtima', karkun described the benefits of ijtima'. For senior karkun or anyone who had already been

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khurāj in IPB, this information is seen as a takāza (request), meaning, they should respond immediately. The zamindar—a karkūn who takes responsibility at halqah (headquarters under the markāz)—must announce the coming of ijtima‘ in every musābirah and other ritual (bhāyan, tarīm, musḥābanah and ġast [inviting people to mosque]). The next step involved setting up a committee of the musābirah, called the amānātah section. This section organises the trip and collects funds from the karkūn. The committee also has an amīr who takes responsibility for the trip. He is appointed by the musābirah based on his experience and seniority.

During ijtima‘, the amīr was very busy deciding where to stop for meals and prayer, responding to the personal problems of the karkūn, assisting the national shūrā to find a representative from Aceh for the services during ijtima‘, reporting to the amīr of Aceh on the progress of da‘wah to shūrā and musavīmīn, and conducting a musābirah to organise the return to Aceh at the end of ijtima‘.

Third, the jama‘āb tarqīl and the committee try to convince karkūn to go on khurāj for at least forty days. Thus during malām markāz, buyūn continuously explained the importance of ijtima‘ for sending jama‘āb khurāj (a Tablighist group tour) around the world. For Aceh, the target was one thousand to attend the ijtima‘, and half of those to go on khurāj. When I met the amīr markāz, we discussed bringing new karkūn with us, as shown in my field notes:

One day before leaving, I left my house around 4:30 p.m. to go to the markāz. Arriving at Cot Goh mosque, I chanced to meet the amīr of Aceh, a karkūn who takes responsibility for all karkūn in Aceh, named ustādh ‘Rdha. He knew that I was going to Pekan Baru by bus. When I shook hands, he asked me whether I had come with my friend from Cot Anoe. I said, “No”. He seemed to understand my answer. In fact, all karkūn are encouraged to bring new candidates to attend the ijtima‘. Thus, during preparation for departure to Pekan Baru, I saw many new candidates for karkūn.14

Fourth, karkūn choose the mode of transport to the place of ijtima‘. However, the most important issue is the intention to attend, even for those who do not have enough funds to go. In this context, the tarbīh and tarkīb (motivational talks) are very important. Karkūn are told to take into account the reward of paradise from God; in attending they would be giving of their time, selves and funds as a sacrifice to Allah. It is believed that if a karkūn even has the intention of going to ijtima‘,
Allah will reward him in the hereafter. Those with limited funds may make the journey by truck, having only to provide their own food.

The departure

Before departure karkūn must attend bayān bidāyah. One day before departure (17 July 2007), I went to the markaz, bringing my luggage. Because I would be away for more than three days. I brought three games, and pants, three T-shirts, three sarongs, my research equipment (camera, digital recorder, batteries, note books), and bedding with a small pillow. I had hoped to find out why karkūn said muṣābādah (make the best effort in the face of any obstacle) on every occasion in the preparation for the ijtima'. How were the mawālnā viewed by the members of Jamā'ah Tabligh? Could I interview them or at least attend the gathering?

I went to the markaz by labī-labi (a traditional form of public transport in Banda Aceh). When I left my house in Cot Anoe, I did not want the Jamā'ah members. I did not want my neighbours to suspect me of going somewhere with Jamā'ah Tabligh members, because I could have problems when I returned. This is because community members are antagonistic towards Jamā'ah Tabligh. Many of villagers told me that the movement was an Islamic deviant group and its members would go to hell. I told them only that I would be away in Pekan Baru for several days.

My labī-labi was full of women who had just finished work in Banda Aceh. They looked at me and seemed to understand that I was a karkūn. Because the labī-labi was going to Cot Goh and because I carried hand luggage, they asked me: “Are you going to Cot Goh?” I replied “Yes”. They understood that someone on labī-labi carrying luggage must be a karkūn. They sat a bit far from me even though we were seated in one line together. When I arrived at the mosque, they smiled, the meaning of which I did not understand.

When I arrived, there were some karkūn who had just finished late noon prayer. Others sat at the table of the istiqbal (receptionist). I told one that I was ready for the trip. He asked whether I would go on ḫurrāj after the ijtima'. I said: “I am planning to do ḫurrāj, but I will decide in Pekan Baru”. I suspected that the markaz hoped many karkūn would decide to go on ḫurrāj, even at this late date. As departure was planned for tomorrow, I thought the markaz would do some rituals.
before trip. At 5:45 p.m. there was an announcement about the bayān from a kāร{kūn. He invited us to sit in the main hall of the mosque. There was no specific announcement for those going to Pekan Baru, but all jamā‘ah sat in front of him. He began a bayān on the important of remembering Allah at all times of life. Allah has created this earth by His own intention and it is our obligation to worship Allah. All human activities must be based on the kalimah (sentence): ū lā ilāha illā Lāh (there is no god but Allah). During the bayān, the kāร{kūn came into the mosque one by one. Many of them carried luggage and bedding. After putting their equipment down, they joined our bayān. The kāร{kūn who delivered the bayān kept to his message, telling us of the importance of missionary activities as part of worship of Allah. Da‘wah can be done if we make our best effort on this path. Tomorrow, he said, is our journey to Pekan Baru to meet the mawāni‘ of Nizamuddin.

At night, more kāร{kūns came to the mosque. I heard that eighty were going by bus. In addition, twelve were flying to Pekan Baru. However, I did not find out the number travelling by private car. Some kāร{kūns even said that tomorrow, the day of departure, more kāร{kūns would come to the mosque to join the trip. At night, most kāร{kūns rested, because tomorrow's would be a long journey. However, I was approached by some young ustādh from the mosque. They told me about ijtima‘ in Indonesia and Bangladesh. One informed me that the ijtima‘ in Raiwind needed more mujāhadi‘ah. He had attended the ijtima‘ in Raiwind twice, with more than two million Tablighis. In Indonesia, he added, the place which most needs mujāhadi‘ah, the ijtima‘ was in Temboro. By saying this, he was telling me about the spiritual and emotional significance of these gatherings and that everyone should understand that ijtima‘is not for tourism, but for da‘wah and spiritual needs.

As usual, after morning prayer there was a bayān. After that, some kāร{kūns went for a shower, while others went back to sleep. I had breakfast at a restaurant in front of the mosque. During the bayān, a kāร{kūn announced that we would depart at 9 a.m. He said that the jamā‘ah would separate into two groups. He called our names on the list to separate into two groups. I was in the first. After we sat in our group, a kāร{kūn informed us the name of the amir for our trip.

I looked at my group to see whether I knew any of the faces. I saw some younger kāร{kūns, but the group was dominated by seniors. Some
karkûn who came from the same kampong were not in the same group. They approached the committee to ask if they could be in a group with their friends. Others came saying that they wanted to sit behind the driver or at least in the second row of seats. A karkûn said to me that it is very hard to organise karkûn in a group. But, I said, we did have a muskâwanah before this trip. He said: “Yes, but in this case muskâwanah was not the issue. They want to follow their nafšu (desire) before the ritual of ijtimâ” I noticed that those asking for special privileges were newcomers, or senior karkûn who had brought new members and wanted to help them during the trip.

After we sat in the group, it was announced that the karkûn should be in the main hall of mosque to listen to bayân bidâyah at 8.30 a.m. After this, I went outside to observe the surroundings. There were some private cars, trucks, pick-ups and vans parked in front of the mosque. Many karkûn were setting up plastic covers over the trucks. In the cars were luggage, food, mineral water and bedding. A karkûn said that this is a real mujâhidah. He added that the cars without air conditioning would get cooling from Allah. I could not imagine how they could sit for eighteen hours in these vehicles, protected from the rain by only the plastic sheeting. Those taking private cars still wanted other karkûn to join them. For some, this was not their first trip to ijtimâ’, so they knew what had to do.

At 8.30 am a call on the loudspeaker came for us to go into the mosque to listen to bayân bidâyah. One by one the karkûn returned to the main hall. One karkûn sat on a chair and started the bayân, which was about the essence of missionary activities. The activities, he said, are from Allah and not for human concerns. The karkûn who make this trip are selected by the Lord in the world, because everyone has the same thing in their heart, so we see it as another journey in the path of Allah. He added that every human has funds, self and time, but not everyone could join this gathering because Allah has not appointed them to be with us. We leave our beloved families to go on the path of Allah. He has put in Paradise those who are going for khurâj. After this message, the bayânis provided information about the trip and our destination. Karkûn should keep their niyâh (intention) in this journey just for Allah. They must not go against the decisions or directions of the amir. If there is a tabâza, karkûn should take into account commands from Allah. During the bayân, karkûn listened seriously.
The *bayān* was closed by a prayer asking Allah for a safe journey to Pekan Baru.

While the *bayān* was being delivered, most *karkūn* were busy with their preparations. I saw many of them still registering their names with the committee. When the *bayān* finished at 9.00 a.m., the *karkūn* were waiting for the bus. The bus came at noon. The *karkūn* were then separated into two groups, each in the charge of an amir. My group was headed by *ustādh* Jamali who had attended many *ijtima‘*, not only in Indonesia, but also in Pakistan. He also became the amir for the *karkūn* from Aceh. So we had a leader with two jobs, meaning that he was also in charge of choosing the route. He was assisted by the committee who had already informed the *karkūn* in Pekan Baru about the departure of *jama‘ah* from Aceh.

After we had assembled in front of the main gate of the mosque, we were called one by one to be seated on the bus. When the bus departed, most recited *alhamdulillah*. Behind me was a man named *ustādh* ‘Umar, a teacher at a senior high school near the district of Montasik. He shook hands and introduced himself to me. During the trip, the passengers began to talk to each other, mainly about their experiences of *ijtima‘* elsewhere in Indonesia. *Ustādh* ‘Umar introduced himself as a *karkūn* of five years standing. He also mentioned the word *majābadah* to me, saying, “Whatever happens to us is a part of *majābadah*”. I did not ask him the meaning of *majābadah*. He only smiled, saying, “The things that you see are not big *majābadah* in *ijtima‘*. You will see that the place of the *ijtima‘* is more uncomfortable”. I could not wait to see the situation of *jama‘ah* in *ijtima‘*. During the trip he told me about his involvement in Jamā‘ah Tablīgh.

Some *karkūn* recited the Qur’an. The amir also gave directions to the *jama‘ah* to read the Qur’an, while others chatted to each other. They started by introducing themselves. Some *karkūn* already knew each other because they came from a different *mohalla* or *halaqah*. I presumed that those sitting in the first and second rows might not understand the rule of travelling in Jamā‘ah Tablīgh. A new *karkūn* for example, not wearing gameez, smoked during the trip. This is usual; most Acehnese smoke on buses, even if the bus is air conditioned. At the first stop, I asked: “We can smoke in this bus, can’t we?” I saw many cigarettes under his seat. I suspected that this was his first trip with the Jamā‘ah Tablīgh community. In fact, my question was intended to
remind him that this was a no smoking bus. The amir had not stopped this behaviour; he was more concerned with worship and rituals on the trip, like praying together at every stop. I told this to usākhī Umar, who said: “We must remember mujāhidadī.”

The bus stopped so that the passengers could have meals and pray together. At one stop the amir asked the jamā’ah to pray together, but not to eat together. At the first stop, after the salat jamā’ah (congregational prayer) the karkūn went outside the mosque. They separated from their group on the bus. In Sare, for example, most karkūn did not eat together. I assumed that this was due to lack of money. Each karkūn carried his money in an anjânk (a small wallet that hangs around the neck). It is well known that food at the places where buses stop is very expensive. Some karkūn buy food and eat it outside the restaurant, because this is cheaper. Thus, karkūn were not “karkūn” in this atmosphere in the sense that they normally follow Tablighi ritual during eating. Besides eating and praying at the stops, some also took showers, usually waiting a long time in a queue – something Acehnese are not used to doing. I took a shower at two stopping places, though the bathrooms were dirty.

When the bus stopped, the karkūn would tell local people that they were travelling to a national Muslim congress in Indonesia, instead of saying ijtima’ or jamboree of Jami’ah Tabligh. The karkūn tend to state their identities as Tablighist. One karkūn said, “We are from Aceh on the way to Pekan Baru to attend a Muslim congress.” Muslim congresses in Indonesia are more about political issues than religious ritual, for example the Muslim Congress in Yogyakarta held by MMI (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, Indonesian Mujahidin Council), where they urged the establishment of an Islamic state and the implementation of Islamic law in Indonesia. In addition, there were other Muslim congresses attended by members of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia to urge the establishment of an international Islamic caliphate. Thus, I wondered whether, when karkūn mention the national congress of Muslim Indonesians in Pekan Baru, this meant that they also wanted to promote these issues. Karkūn, however, did not tell the local people about their identity and the aim of ijtima’.

At two o’clock the next morning we arrived in Medan. The bus parked in the Pelangi company car park. Most karkūn got off the bus. Some went to musalla (a small place for praying) for iḥāṣīd prayer (after midnight prayer with special dhikir). This prayer is a

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very important ritual among Muslims, because during it, Muslims can make requests of Allah. And, it is widely believed that such requests are sometimes answered. It is also recommended that this prayer be performed at a very high level of contemplation and Muslims usually cry when praying. Karkan did not spend a long time on their tahjjud prayers. After an hour and a half at the company car park, the bus departed for Pekan Baru.

The next ritual was the performance of subuh prayer. One karkan told me that he was disappointed about the drivers, who did not join the karkan during prayers. “We seek for Allah’s help for a safe journey”, he added. If the group had an accident on the trip, Allah would forgive the karkan. For their entire journey, prayer is very important as this is the second pillar of Islam. There is a tradition among bus companies in Aceh to stop the buses during the prayer time. However, mostly the drivers do not perform the prayers. Karkan did report on the attitude of the driver to the amir, but I did not see anyone approach the driver himself. During prayer time, the driver just sat in his seat.

Once, the bus stopped in northern Sumatra, known to be dominated by Christian-Batak. Here, the amir asked the driver to stop the bus only at Muslim restaurants which had a place to pray. Bus companies in Aceh on trips to Jakarta, make special pre-arranged stops. The karkan got off the bus and inspected the food and the prayer room. If they saw that the restaurant was good and clean, this meant that the food was expensive. So, the only way to eat was to buy food and eat outside. During the stop, the amir announced the time limit and attitudes of the karkan.

We stopped at a restaurant for noon prayer. Behind the restaurant, was a mini-market with a young woman as the shop keeper. We were not allowed to enter the market with our slippers. She said: “Please take off your sandals before you come in”. We obeyed, but others would not enter. However, the amir asked us to put our slippers back on, saying “This is not a mosque, where we need to take off our sandals and shoes”. Because he was an amir, the karkan put on their sandals and entered the mini-market. I saw that he gave this guidance by looking at every karkan individually. This is part of the Jama’ah Tabligh attitude, that is, always to respect people.

We continued on our way to Pekan Baru city. Once the bus approached the city, the amir coordinated with other buses to find out
where the *ijtimāʾ* was taking place. To reach the area, the bus had to go to the city terminal, where *dalil* (guides) were waiting for us. *Dalil* waited at every meeting point in Pekanbaru: the bus terminal, the airport, the port and on the city border. We arrived in the city at 8:30 p.m. When the bus stopped at the terminal, there were many *karkūn* whom I believed were *dalil*. Some *karkūn* from Aceh got off the bus to meet them. They shook hands and hugged each other. Then, some *dalil* took their cars and followed them. I heard that the place of *ijtimāʾ* was only thirty minutes from the terminal.

The trip had been very tiring and sometimes tested our patience. During it we did not sleep, while some *karkūn* chatted on the bus. However, by saying the word *mujāhādaḥ*, our problems were solved. After two days of travel and three days of the *ijtimāʾ*, I consistently heard the word *mujāhādaḥ* used, as in the following experiences recorded in my field notes:

In fact, the word *mujāhādaḥ* in Jamāʿah Ṭāblīgh can be defined as someone who follows the *ṭāblīgh* (mission) who gives their best effort to reach a situation where *imān* (faith) is in their soul. In addition, there is a serious challenge in the ritual which needs patience, due to Allah. There are three kinds of influence of *mujāhādaḥ* in this ritual. First, when the *karkūn* has no good choices in a given situation. For example, they should use the “emergency tokens”, which is terrible and upsetting to new members. Sometimes, they did not bathe, because of the shortage of water and facilities. Lack of water was one problem which led *karkūn* to talk about *mujāhādaḥ*. Fitaḥ, a *karkūn* who had attended *ijtimāʾ* in Temboro and Riauw, described the water problem during the *ijtimāʾ* and told me that they did not shower for three days because there was not enough water for the 100,000 people who attended the *ijtimāʾ*. Second, when *karkūn* have to sit for two and three hours to listen to the *bāyān*, especially in the early morning after performing the morning prayer; or, when they conduct *maidikīnab* (a study group after breakfast), where some *karkūn* were sleepy. In *bāyān* *shubūb* during the *ijtimāʾ*, *karkūn* were repeatedly reminded not to sleep and the fight against sleepiness they saw as part of *mujāhādaḥ*. Third, *mujāhādaḥ* or a group on *khūrāj* who travel on foot and do not receive a warm welcome also speak a lot of *mujāhādaḥ.*

The *karkūn* intended not to be strict with their new members over ritual regulations during travel. They are received as new family members who should be respected. I suspected that this would make the new members feel comfortable with *karkūn*. Senior *karkūn* or others are expected to follow the regulations of the *jamāʿah* perfectly. However,
during the trip, their behaviour sometimes went against regulations regarding *ikrām muslimin* (respect for other Muslims).

**The Setting**

Once we arrived, we got off the bus. The parking area was opposite the main site of the *ijīmā*. Many *karkān* took charge of parking. Because the bus would go back to Aceh, it parked only a few minutes. After that, our group was received by the *istiqābāl* and proceeded to the main gate of the *ijīmā*. The setting was the Islamic boarding school (*pondok pesantren*) of Darul al-Qur‘ān. At the main gate, some *karkān* received our group. Our amir then registered the group from Aceh. They recorded the total number of *jama‘ah* and the name of our leader. Thus, every *karkān* who came this *ijīmā* had to be registered according to their place of origin. The aim was to place *karkān* together in tents according their place of origin.

**Istiqābāl**

The *istiqābāl* section welcomes guests, guides them to the place of *ijīmā*, handles tickets for *karkān* and registers everyone who comes to the arena. It consisted of two short tables manned by four or five people. *Karkān* who came from inside Riau and Kepulauan Riau (Riau Island province) were registered by one *karkān*. One or two others guided those who had registered to the sleeping quarters. Those who came from other provinces registered with another *karkān* who wrote down the total number of *jama‘ah* and the name of the amir. The last person calculated the total number of daily visitors. I was told that 9,450 *karkān* were in the *ijīmā*. But the *istiqābāl* informed me that this did not include up to 3,000 unregistered visitors.

They worked under the coordination of *amīr istiqābāl* (chief receptionist). They distributed *dalīl* to every meeting point in Pekan Baru city, guiding *karkān* from outside Riau province to the site. *Amīr istiqābāl* was a senior *karkān*, in his forties. Using a mobile phone, he called all *dalīl* when a guest arrived. *Dalīl* may not always guide the *jama‘ah* to site, sometimes only giving directions. But, for special guests – *masālīk* or *majelis shūrā* – *dalīl* along with senior *karkān* pick them up from the terminal. If the *amīr istiqābāl* left the section to meet someone in the city, he appointed a *karkān* to be his deputy during his absence. Thus, the place of *istiqābāl* always had an amir who coordinated
the situation at the *ijtimāʿ* location. This authority included chairing *mushāwara*.

**Kitchen**

On the way to the tent, opposite the *istiqlāl*, there was a big kitchen where *karkūn* cooked for more 12,000 people for the three days of rituals. The cooking staff were *karkūn* who had volunteered for this duty. They cooked for *karkūn*, guests and *mawlānā*. During the first night, *karkūn* were invited to do *khidmat* at the kitchen. I was told that at least sixty people were needed. They cooked rice and other dishes (*laik pasuk*) on a wood fire behind the main gate. During the *ijtimāʿ* they sold a set of *uṭām* (a big plate) for 6,000 Rupee (AUD 1). Usually, one *uṭām* was enough for three or four people. Participants had to buy coupons before mealtimes, for which they queued in front of the kitchen at breakfast, lunch and dinner time. However, special *karkūn* such as *ahl shūnā, mawlānā, khawwās* (invited guests who are not *karkūn*) did not have to pay for meals. In addition, they were served by *karkūn*, which meant that they did not queue; instead, *karkūn* brought food to their rooms. However, every participant was expected to eat in the Tablīgh way with a big plate. Special *karkūn* also were served with additional refreshments such as milk, tea, coffee and bread. *Mawlānā* could request meals from the *ijtimāʿ* committee.

**Bazaar**

Behind the kitchen was a bazaar, in an alley which formed a ring road around the site. This is typical of all Jamaʾah Tablīgh gatherings. I participated in many Jamaʾah Tablīgh activities in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand and these local traders tend to open what are called *warung dadakan* (emergency restaurants) selling noodles, fried rice, drinks and traditional food. I gathered from their accents that they came from Pekan Baru and Padang. They sold their merchandise from morning until late at night.

In fact, there was no *ijtimāʿ* program in the bazaar. The merchants were not allowed to do business in the arena of *ijtimāʿ*. But *karkūn* traders did sell items such as the Qurʾān, gameez, religious books, perfume, etc. This group came from many places in Sumatra and Java. The things that they sold came from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, India and Pakistan, especially perfume produced in South Asia. Among
karkūn, transactions took place as they did in the era of the Prophet in the sense that when they received money the traders always said *halāl* (permitted) and *ikhlāṣ* (sincere) and the buyer replied likewise. Finally, they shook hands as a symbol of transaction. Both recited *al-ḥamdallāh* (thanks be to Allah) to thank Allah for the transaction.

During the *ijīmā‘* the bazaar was open for eighteen hours. The karkūn only visited the market after prayer times. Those familiar with the area understood what to buy and how to negotiate with the traders. Newcomers had to buy the book of *Fadā‘il Amal* about how to do *khurāj*. This aimed to make them more familiar with Jamā‘ah Tablīgh teachings. They also bought Tablīghist clothing, and other accessories and products. Prices were relatively low. A *peci* (a prayer cap) cost 15,000 rupiah. A gameez and trousers cost only 25-35,000. But food was very expensive. It can be said that the local owners of “emergency restaurants” took the opportunity to charge more because it was only for three days.

*Amānah*

To the left of the kitchen there was an area of *amānah* (trust) where valuables such as money and electronic devices could be left during the *ijīmā‘*. This section was opened only until noon. Most karkūn put their money here, because participants were encouraged not to leave valuables in their luggage. During the *ijīmā‘* announcements were made about safety, telling participants that not every one was there to worship – among us there were thieves and pickpockets. I was told about the theft of electronic devices such as mobile phones, portable music players, digital recorders and cash. This announcement was also directed at those going on *khurāj* who had brought lots of money. At the *amānah* they recorded the name of the owner, received the item and put in a safe place. This section also conducted *taʃakkuṭ* (interviews) of those preparing to go on *khurāj*, so that karkūn could save their money daily or monthly to reach the total amount they needed. Thus, in the *ijīmā‘* the section played a similar role to that of the *amānah* at the *markāz* level.

*The administration of *ijīmā‘**

The *ijīmā‘* administrative centre controlled all activities. There were many karkūn in this building since they also had to coordinate with
shāhīn and mawdānā. This building was very close to the place where the shāhīn and mawdānā stayed. In these buildings there were many karkān acting as security guards. They did not carry weapons, but they checked everyone wanting to enter the buildings. I had a chance to enter the building where mawdānā sleep. My impressions were recorded in my field notes:

I was invited to a bayān 'asbar in a building, which I knew was a special place for mawdānā and shāhīn. Many Indonesian and Malaysian senior karkān lived with the mawdānā. They were helped by karkān who were khidmat (servant). During the ijtimā' they conducted daily mushāwarah in this building. So, the only way to be closer to this VIP group was to be a khidmat or provincial amīr. To be khidmat here was not easy, because as a minimum one had to have travelled to IPB or done forty days kharāj. An Acehnese karkān who gave bayān hifdhah before our departure served as khidmat for mawdānā. The sleeping room were special compared with those elsewhere. They slept in a barracks, while ordinary karkān slept in plastic tents. They had beds, while karkān slept on the ground. They had good toilet facilities, while karkān made do with "mujāhabah toilets". Ordinary karkān pray under a tent, the mawdānā and the shāhīn have carpet tents like those used for wedding parties, connected to their bedrooms, and had beautiful accessories. In this hall there were two microphones and a sound system for prayer and mushāwarah. On every side of the room there were many fans. I did not feel mujāhabah in this building. I was surprised with this luxury, because mawdānā teach us to live in an ascetic way. They sometimes mention the lives of the sahābah (the Prophet's companions) as the examples of a simple life.

The attitude of mawdānā also lead me to re-think the role of mawdānā in this ijtimā'. A mawdānā from Malaysia, for example, was not interested in talking to me because he did not know me. However, when someone introduced a young karkān to him saying this is a pesantren student he touched his hat, blessing his studies. The mawdānā spoke in Urdu. I tried to speak with him in Malay, but he did not answer my question when I asked where he lived in Kuala Lumpur. He did not want to speak with me. I thought maybe my attitude was not like a young student, and that the first time I met him I should have kissed his hands. I pushed myself to sit in front of him and waited to see what happen if I did not shake and kiss his hand. It seems he does not want to speak about anything with me. His friend, a mawdānā from India, was not able to speak English, and I could not converse with him in Urdu. In this building most conversations were in English and Urdu. Many young karkān want to be khidmat to their mawdānā?

During ijtimā', all bayān were delivered by mawdānā and bayān.
during noon prayer were given by majelis shura from Indonesia and Malaysia. When a maulana presented his talk he was always accompanied by a karkun who acted as translator. The maulana was very hard to approach because he was always guarded by senior karkun or khidmat maulana. If a maulana gave a bayan, other maulanas sat on the main stage with bodyguards, so that no one could sit behind them. The maulanas were the centre of attention for all participants. They did not join in ordinary conversation and spoke to the other karkuns only during bayan. Only karkun who were khidmat or amir could talk to them. There were two reasons for this: first, the hierarchy among Tablighists means that the longer one is involved in the movement, the higher the stakes they receive during the ijtima. New members may not take part in khidmat. Being close to the maulana is considered good experience for karkun because when they come back to their markat or majbel, they can tell kargesari(stories) about their spiritual experiences. Second, most maulanas were from India or Bangladesh and do not speak Indonesian or English. This problem is evident during the bayan and other conversations. Most bayans were delivered in Arabic or Urdu. Translators were graduates from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh, some of them students as well as karkun. Being fluent in Arabic and Urdu is a mark of privilege in the Jami’ah Tabligh community in the sense that it enables one to become a translator during bayan or conversation with maulana.

The Toilet

Behind the administration building were many toilets. If karkun only wanted to urinate, he said “One”. Otherwise, he said “Two.” Those who want to “One” are given a bottle of water; those who say “Two” are given more. During ijtima, I did not like to approach this place, as I had a friend who was “disgusted” whenever he went. Karkun repeatedly recited the word “mujahadah” to encourage themselves whenever they entered the toilet. An emergency toilet was located about two hundred metres north of the main stage. On the first day of the ijtima, I went there to urinate, but it was so dirty that I abandoned the idea. I told the karkun that I had changed my mind. He seemed to understand my reaction. I thanked him and gave back the water bottle. Because of that situation I did neither “One” nor “Two” for a day. I understood that the other toilet was off-limits to ordinary karkun and there was a 24-hour
security guard near the place. I was shocked at this situation, because I could not imagine not going to the toilet for three days, although I did not tell my friends who slept behind me.

The Tent of ījīmā'

The main place was designed for the ritual of ījīmā'; it was a series of large tents which together could accommodate more than 12,000 karkūn. They were separated into provinces in Sumatra. Each tent could hold more than one thousand people. The tents were made of plastic. They employed more than forty unpaid karkūn to make the tents. This was the largest place for praying that I have ever seen in Indonesia. However, I heard that for other ījīmā’, like in the one in Jakarta in the same year on 3-5 August, the tents could accommodate more than 80,000 karkūn. While I was praying at the back of the tent, I could not see the main stage. In between provincial tents was a big loud speaker, so that during bayān and praying, the karkūn could listen to the message properly. But karkūn were encouraged to sit near the main stage and leave their belongings behind.

Compared with the facilities for the elite, the tent was really needed by the mahākātābah, especially when the rain came. When I was in the mawādā’s building, it was raining. A Malaysian mawādā told his friend that they were lucky. But, he said, “What about our karkūn outside?” His friend who was also a mawādā did not answer, but only smiled. I interpreted him to be saying that if they wanted to be in our building, they should follow our example by becoming being karkūn, which we call istiqāmah (consistent).

Every karkūn must carry his needs for 2-3 days, unless he is planning to go on khurūj. They sleep in the prayer lines. Tony, a karkūn from Johor and an ustadh in Cot Goh, Banda Aceh, told me that the situation in Riau was much worse. This was also good compared with the ījīmā’ in Temboro, which was conducted in a paddy field.

The karkūn were asked to keep their belongings in their provincial tents, and not to sleep in those of other provinces, because each province had its own jama‘ah tasykil, amīr and amānah. Thus, if a karkūn had a problem during the ījīmā’, they could report to the provincial amīr or jama‘ah tasykil. If the problem related to the ījīmā’, then the jama‘ah tasykil forwarded the message to the ījīmā’ staff. This was an efficient way of managing 12,000 people.
During ijtimā', karkūn did visit other tents to see their friends. Some had already met each other during overseas kharāj or at previous ijtimā' in Raiwind or Indonesia. I met several karkūn from Java who only spoke Javanese, but they said they originated from Sumatra.

Close to the main stage was the group from Aceh and Lampung, where I followed the ritual of ijtimā' and put my luggage and bedding there. From my side, I saw that there was a plastic line above me, where we were not allowed to sleep.

I had the chance to stay one night very near the main stage because I was part of the Acehnese contingent. Behind me was a karkūn from Johor who was an ustādh and one from Jakarta who was also an ustādh in Cot Goh. Between us and the main stage was a special row for important people such as maulūmāt guests, khawwās (intellectuals), shari'i, foreigners and other invited guests during the opening ceremony from Riau province. There were karkūn who acted as security guards to protect this row from ordinary karkūn. We could not break this rule because at the start of the ijtimā', the committee had asked for our cooperation in not sitting in this special row. Regarding this special place of prayer and the main stage, I refer to my field notes:

On the main stage, where maulūmāt deliver bayān, there were microphones and a sofa for the maulūmāt and his interpreter. When a maulūmāt gave bayān, the other maulūmāt sat behind, on the sofa. The front of the main stage was filled with karkūn. They sat very close to each other. This main stage was 6 x 7 meters. There were four special rows for maulūmāt guests and foreign karkūn. At the beginning of prayer, the security “cleaned” the area of ordinary karkūn. Thus, the ordinary karkūn prayed on their bedding and plastic. On the first day, the special guest was the governor of Riau province.

The Khawwāz Building

On the first day of the ijtimā', a senior karkūn approached me and told me not to sleep in this tent, because I was an intellectual. He said that it was not good for me to sleep there or to use the toilet. He added that I should sleep at the khawwawāz section of the building just behind the main stage. Inside was a hall that could accommodate all of the guests at the ijtimā'. There were no beds but there was a red carpet and fans. This room was for specially invited people such as
government staff, intellectuals and senior karkūn in Sumatra. I declined the invitation, because I thought it a little unfair on my friends who slept behind me. I enjoyed chatting with them about the ijīma.

But in the end I moved to the building for the toilets, which were so much better than the others, although I still wanted to spend my time with ordinary karkūn. Since this was a special invitation for me, I could not reject their kindness. The building was filled with non-karkūn. They wore their own clothes instead of the gameez and jamban. There was a group of senior karkūn who were called alama in their home provinces. These 'ulama-karkūn promoted Tablíghist teaching to the guests during the ijīma. In every informal meeting, the 'ulama-karkūn spoke about the importance of missionary work because of the decline in Muslim worship of Allah.

In this building kbidmat-karkūn were on duty twenty-four hours a day. They protected the area from other karkūn who wanted to enter the rooms and toilets. They checked anyone coming in and if their names were not on the list, then the person would not be allowed in. During mealtimes, food was served by karkūn, but the guests had to eat in the Tablíghist way. There were four toilets in this building, which were more comfortable than the ordinary ones. All the doors were locked at prayer time. At the main door the security guards kept their eyes on everyone who wanted to approach the room.

For karkūn this promotion was very important, especially when the guests are well known people. The idea was to encourage them to support the Tablígh in their area after experiencing the ijīma. This strategy was never discussed during other meetings among Tablíghists, but it is safe to say that this was a conscious method for the promotion of Jamā'ah Tablígh. When I was in the field, I saw no negative responses from the guests; none of them left until the ijīma finished. This indicates that ijīma can be a method of recruiting new members from elite groups.

On the second day, the khawwis were invited to meet maulānā and majelis shānī in their building. It was an honour to sit and listen to the bayān in this special room. In this meeting, the maulānā discussed the teachings of Jamā'ah Tablígh.

Finally, a karkūn told me that this place was regularly used for ijīma in Pekan Baru. A karkūn from Aceh told me that for him it is not difficult to follow the ijīma every year because the place and
the people were always the same. Seniority in the ritual had nothing to do with age, but with the spiritual journey of participants in the movement. Travelling to IPB, for example, brings special benefits to participants as this is believed to constitute a “bridge” between local and international karkūn.

Conclusion

In this article I have discussed the preparations for, travel to and setting of a regional ijtima’ in Indonesia. By following a single group of karkūn from Aceh, I was able to see that the ijtima’ is an instrument for unifying karkūn through their common emotional experiences and participation in a single religious mission. Since pertemuan (meetings) and perpisahan (endings) among Tablighists are thought to be due to Allah, the ijtima’ can be seen as means of unifying the aims of heart and soul through the common experience of the mujāhada. Travelling from Banda Aceh to Pekan Baru was carried out for Allah, not the individual desires of karkūn. As a result, whatever hardships they faced on the journey are believed to be given by Allah. In this sense, Tablighists believe that there is no situation that does not involve the worship of Allah. Just as the Prophet and his companions were tested by Allah to do mujāhada on their missionary activities, so were the Tablighists travelling to ijtima’. Ijtima’ is therefore one way of following the Prophet. The activities of the ijtima’ include travelling from home to mosque, the passage to Pekan Baru and living in a uncomfortable place. All are seen as important religious activities for a Tablighist. Ijtima’ is therefore a symbolic submission to God in the lives of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

The status of new members during the trip can be understood as a process of negotiation. They do not tell people that they are from Jamāh Tabligh. This leads to process of assimilation in which karkūn behave like ordinary Muslims with common attitudes. However, within their own group, karkūn follow the rules called adab. Breaking the rules may occur when they are outside the community. In this context, ikhšām muslimin (respect for Muslims) is very important for karkūn. They will not stand for overly strict treatment of the members during the ijtima’.

In fact, in Islamic communities, there are many other festivals...
similar to *ijtimāʿ*. In an Islamic mystical sect like the Naqshbandi, this type of festival is called *urs*, as described by Verbrugge:

*The *urs* provides a platform for the *islama*; it is also an occasion which reinforces the supremacy and autonomy of saints and re-enacts the ambivalent relations of dependency between saint and *māulu* [cleric], shrine and mosque. The *urs* is both a ritual and a giant popular religious festival. It is also the hub of the organizational power of a Sufi regional cult, underpinning its reproduction and enabling its continued geographical extension. These three aspects of the *urs*: ritual, popular cultural and organizational, are all essentially intertwined.*

In this article we have seen that *ijtimāʿ* is embedded in the negotiation between South Asian and Southeast Asian Islam. The *urs* is produced by a saint in South Asia which is the same as *ijtimāʿ*. The rituals in *ijtimāʿ* are defined by Middle Eastern Islam (such as prayer and homily), but when they are included in the *ijtimāʿ* they have another meaning. The festival is modelled on South Asian rather than Middle Eastern Islam, the former being influenced by the Hindu caste system. The privileges and security of the *māulu* show that seniority among *karkūn* generates status differences during *ijtimāʿ*. This does not occur, for example, during the *baijj*, where there are no special privileges for prayer at the holy mosque. The higher the status of the religious spiritual journey, the more status *karkūn* gained during such a festival. The centres of attention are the *māulu* from South Asia along with their “bodyguards” (Southeast Asians who have studied in South Asia). The Urdu language, therefore, becomes an important mode of communication. This is not a product of local culture in Pekan Baru or even in Southeast Asian Islam.

The festival also has aims that are quite different from those of the *baijj*. The *baijj* is part of obligatory worship for every Muslim and it symbolises the experience of Abraham and his son, Ishmael. The objective of the *ijtimāʿ* on the other hand is to send *karkūn* on *khurāji* to perform *daʿwah*. There are also different perceptions among *karkūn* of *ijtimāʿ*. They go to meet their *māulu* and to listen to *baijj*. During the *baijj*, by contrast, the main aim is to worship Allah in order to enter His paradise (*baijj* *mabrūr*, the *baijj* that is approved by Allah).

Even though one does not gain a title after returning from *ijtimāʿ*, as one does upon returning from the *baijj*, *karkūn* still feel reborn as
persons. The charisma of the mawlānā acts as a magnet for karkūn, something not found among participants in the bājī. As I have pointed out, the mawlānā produce "religion" for those at lower levels of religious awareness.

Finally, it can be said that the ijtima‘ is one method for the construction of religious experience among Jamā‘ah Tablīgh members. If there is a problem during the process, it will be solved under the system of mushāwarah. In addition, the role of mawlānā in this gathering is as mediator between God’s interest and the needs of karkūn. Thus, the contents of their bayān are likely to be connected to the experience of karkūn, especially those who go on kharāj.
Endnotes


9. Color is an Indonesian word which means to grab. The acronym CAKAR is for colom kariyak (kariyak candidate). This is a group of new kariyak who involve themselves in the ritual of jismat.


11. On history of Jami'ah Tabligh in Aceh, see Busaamam-Ahmad, “The History of Jami'ah Tabligh in Southeast Asia: The Role of Islamic Sufism in Islamic Revival,” Kamaruzaman Busaamam-Ahmad, “From Islamic Revivalism to Islamic Radicalism in Southeast Asia: A Study of Jami'ah Tabligh in Sri Petaling (Malaysia) and Cot Gob (Indonesia)” (Ph.D. Thesis, La Trobe University 2010).

12. On religious awareness see for example Kim Knibbe and Peter Versteeg, “Assessing

15. *Bajin khitab* is a bayan before departing to go on *khurijah*.
18. There are three Acehnese bus company running trips to Jakarta, Pelangi, Karo, and PMTOH. These buses stopped at special restaurants appointed by the management. At these stops the drivers get their meals free, while the passengers must pay for very expensive food. I was told that the reason why the food was very expensive was because the management covered the bus crew's meals. Besides the food, the bus crew could take cigarettes, energy drinks, and some mineral water free of charge. They also have special tables in the restaurant and a special bathroom.
21. On this book see also McCall, "Living Hadith in the Tabligh Jama'at.

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