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NOT SECULAR ENOUGH? VARIATION IN ELECTORAL SUCCESS OF POST-ISLAMIST PARTIES IN TURKEY AND INDONESIA

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Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad

Faith on the Move: Inside of the *Ijtimā'* of Jamā'ah Tabligh in Pekan Baru

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji ritual keagamaan pada gerakan Islam transnasional Jamā'ah Tabligh. Gerakan Islam yang berpusat di Nizamuddin, India, ini lahir pada tahun 1926 dan dicetuskan oleh Mawlānā Muhammad Ilyas bin Muhammad al-Hanafi al-Diyubandi al-Kandahlawi (1885-1994) pada tahun 1927 di Mewat, Delhi, India. Dalam sejarahnya, gerakan ini berhasil menarik anggota dari berbagai penjuru dunia dengan masjid sebagai pusat kegiatan mereka. Di Indonesia, Jamā'ah Tabligh hadir sebagai salah satu gerakan sosial keagamaan yang pengaruhnya terasa hampir di setiap provinsi. Di Indonesia, pusat kegiatan Jamā'ah Tabligh berada di Kebun Jeruk, Jakarta. Namun, untuk tingkat Asia Tenggara, kegiatan-kegiatan Jamā'ah Tabligh dikendalikan dari Nizamuddin dan dalam koordinasinya juga berhubungan langsung dengan markaz di Sri Petaling, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Studi ini menggambarkan dampak pemahaman agama dan pengaruh Jamā'ah Tabligh bagi kesadaran beragama anggotanya. Masalah utama yang dikaji adalah tentang spirit dan ritual Jamā'ah Tabligh dalam *ijtimā'*. Ritual itu sendiri dilakukan di beberapa negara dan dihadiri ratusan hingga jutaan anggota Jamā'ah Tabligh. Selain itu, terdapat istilah lain yang digunakan untuk menggambarkan pertemuan Jamā'ah Tabligh, yaitu *jorh*. Artikel ini membedakan dua konsep tersebut, walaupun secara substansi kedua istilah memiliki fungsi yang sama, yaitu berkumpul untuk mencari sebanyak mungkin karkun yang mau melakukan dakwah.

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

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

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

Artikel ini terdiri dari beberapa bagian. Bagian pertama berisi pembahasan mengenai persiapan anggota Jamā'ah Tabligh di Banda Aceh. Lalu dijelaskan pula apa saja ritual dan persiapan yang dilakukan oleh mereka serta dinamika sikap dan karakter anggota Jamā'ah Tabligh selama perjalanan. Pada bagian kedua, dijelaskan bahwa setiap setting yang dibangun merupakan sesuatu yang dikendalikan secara bersamaan dalam ikatan kepentingan dakwah. Dari kajian ini dapat dikatakan bahwa pola Jamā'ah Tabligh membuat acara jambore persis seperti aktivitas gerakan sufi lainnya. Di sini pengalaman agama sangat menentukan bagaimana mereka menyerap reproduksi pemahaman yang disampaikan oleh mawlānā.

Artikel ini memperlihatkan bahwa ijtima'ah merupakan salah satu metode untuk membentuk pengalaman keagamaan di antara anggota Jamā'ah Tabligh. Ketika terjadi persoalan selama proses tersebut, akan diselesaikan melalui musyawarah. Selain itu, peran mawlānā dalam acara tersebut adalah sebagai mediator antara kepentingan Tuhan dan kebutuhan karkun. Dengan demikian, isi dari bayān mereka dihubungkan kepada pengalaman karkūn, khususnya orang-orang yang pergi khurūj. Artikel ini juga memperlihatkan bahwa perlakuan terhadap mawlānā hampir serupa dengan perilaku murid kepada mursyid dalam dunia tarekat. Perhatian terhadap mawlānā menjadi penting dalam ritual ijtima'ah, bahkan beberapa karkun memandang bahwa kedekatan dengan mawlānā memberikan pengaruh yang cukup signifikan dalam pengalaman keberagaman mereka. Karena itu, hubungan reproduksi pemahaman agama dan pengalaman keagamaan menjadi penting dalam memperkuat jaringan gerakan Jamā'ah Tabligh.

Faith on the Move: Inside of the *Ijtimā'* of Jamā'ah Tabligh in Pekan Baru

الخلاصة: يتناول هذا المقال الشعائر الدينية لدى الحركة الإسلامية عبر الأوطان وهي جماعة التبليغ، وهذه الحركة الإسلامية التي تركزت في نظام الدين بالهند أنشئت عام ١٩٢٦م، وأسسها مولانا محمد إلياس بن محمد الحنفي الديوبندي الكندهلوي (١٨٨٥- ١٩٩٤م) عام ١٩٢٧م في ميوات بدلهي، الهند؛ وفي تاريخها نجحت هذه الحركة في جذب أعضاء لها من مختلف أنحاء العالم مع جعل المساجد مركزا لنشاطهم، وفي إندونيسيا ظهرت جماعة التبليغ كحركة من الحركات الاجتماعية الدينية التي شوهدها لها نفوذ يغطي ما يقرب من جميع المحافظات الإندونيسية؛ وفي إندونيسيا يتمركز نشاط جماعة التبليغ في حي كييون جيروك Kebun Jeruk بجاكرتا؛ إلا أنه في جنوب شرقي آسيا يتم التحكم في أنشطة جماعة التبليغ من نظام الدين، وفي تنسيقها أيضا يتصل مباشرة بمركزها في حي سري بيتالينج Sri Petaling بكوالالمبور، ماليزيا.

تعرض هذه الدراسة عن آثار المذهب الديني وتأثير جماعة التبليغ على الوعي الديني لدى أعضائها، والمحور الأساسي للبحث فيها هو إيقاظ المهتم والشعائر الدينية لدى جماعة التبليغ في اجتماعهم، وتقام تلك الشعائر نفسها في العديد من الدول ويحضرها آلاف بل ملايين من أعضاء الجماعة؛ وبجانب ذلك يوجد مصطلح آخر يستخدم للدلالة على اجتماع الجماعة وهو *Jorh*، يفرق هذا المقال بين المفهومين وإن كانت حقيقتهما واحدة في أداء الوظيفة المنوطة بهما وهي عقد الاجتماع للحصول على أكبر عدد ممكن من الكوادر الذين لهم استعداد للقيام بالدعوة.

من خلال هذه الدراسة الإثنوغرافية تابع الكاتب مجموعة من أعضاء جماعة التبليغ في سفرهم من مدينة بندا آشييه Banda Aceh إلى مكان الاجتماع لهم في مدينة بيكان

بارو Pekanbaru محافظة رياو Riau، واشترك الكاتب أيضا في جميع الشعائر التي يقوم بها الأعضاء من جماعة التبليغ سواء في بندا آتشيه أم طوال فترة السفر؛ بالإضافة إلى اشتراك الكاتب في الشعائر المقامة طوال انعقاد الاجتماع؛ كل هذه الأنشطة يمكن أن يقال عنها إنها جهود لحركة جماعة التبليغ لإرسال أكبر عدد ممكن من أعضائها إلى مختلف الأماكن ليست إلى داخل إندونيسيا فحسب وإنما إلى خارجها أيضا.

تقام شعائر الاجتماع لمدة ثلاثة أيام يتم فيها إقامة الصلوات جماعة والاستماع إلى البيان أي المحاضرات الدينية وإقامة مختلف الأنشطة الاقتصادية بمناسبة انعقاد الاجتماع؛ وفي هذه الدراسة يعرض الكاتب وضع الاجتماع والدور الذي يلعبه كل فرد في الاجتماع؛ تمثل درجة القرب من موالينا امتيازًا خاصًا، لأنه عند أداء شعائر الاجتماع فإن موضع الاهتمام هم موالينا من الهند والباكستان وبنجلاديش، وهم يلقون البيان أي المحاضرات الدينية الواحد تلو الآخر بعد أداء الصلوات المكتوبة؛ وأما الاهتمامات الأخرى في برامج الاجتماع فهي جذب أكبر عدد ممكن من الأعضاء الجدد ودعوتهم إياهم مع الأعضاء القدماء إلى القيام بالخروج.

يتكون هذا المقال من عدة أجزاء : يشتمل الجزء الأول منها على البحث في الاستعدادات التي يقوم بها أعضاء جماعة التبليغ في بندا آتشيه، وفيه أيضا شرح لما هي الشعائر والاستعدادات التي يؤديونها وحيوية الأخلاقيات والمواقف للأعضاء طوال الرحلة؛ وفي الجزء الثاني منها التفصيل في أن كل وضع تم ضبطه فإنه يعد أمرا يتم التحكم فيه بشكل مشترك في إطار الارتباط بالدعوة؛ ومن هذه الدراسة يمكن أن يقال إن نمط جماعة التبليغ في القيام بالمعسكرات يشبه تماما الأنشطة التي تقوم بها الحركات الصوفية الأخرى، وهنا تعتبر التجربة الدينية حاسمة في تحديد كيف كانوا يستوعبون المفاهيم التي نقلها إليهم كل من مولانا

يظهر هذا المقال أن الاجتماع يمثل منهجا لتكوين التجربة الدينية بين أعضاء جماعة التبليغ، وكلما تقع مشكلة أثناء العملية يتم معالجتها بالتشاور، وبجانب ذلك فإن دور مولانا في تلك المناسبة هو أن يكون وسيطا بين المصلحة الالهية وبين مطالب الكوادر، خاصة أولئك الذين يؤديون مهمة الخروج؛ كما يظهر هذا المقال أيضا أن الموقف تجاه مولانا يكاد يكون مثل موقف المريد من المرشد في الطرق الصوفية؛ العناية بمولانا لها أهمية في شعائر الاجتماع، بل يرى بعض الكوادر أن درجة القرب من مولانا تعطي أثرا له أهميته في تجربتهم الدينية، ولذلك فإن للمفاهيم الدينية المنقولة والتجربة الدينية أهمية في تقوية شبكات حركة التبليغ

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.¹ It was formed by Mawlānā Muhammad Ilyas bin Muhammad Ismail al-Hanafi ad-Diyubandi al-Jisti al-Kandahlawi (1885-1944); 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."² 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.³ Jamā'ah Tabligh has also managed to establish a significant presence in neighbouring Indonesia,⁴ the country with the world's largest Muslim population.

In this article I discuss the *ijtimā'*, 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 (*ibādah*). *Karkūn* in Malaysia or Thailand refer to an international meeting of Jamā'ah Tabligh as *jorh*, while in Indonesia they might use the word *ijtimā'*. The word can also refer to forms of voluntary worship such as the *hajj* to Mecca and Medina. However, the *ijtimā'* 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."⁵ Mumtaz Ahmad writes that "the Raiwind International Conference of the *Tablighi Jamā'at* has become the second-largest congregation of Muslims after the *Hajj*."⁶

Here, I differentiate between the terms to distinguish between two types of meeting. The *jorh* is held in a mosque and every *halaqah* (a group of *karkūn* under *mohalla*, under a provincial *markaz*) and *mohalla* must report on their *da'wah* activities to such a forum. An *ijtimā'* is more likely to take place in another venue, such as in a field, and there are no *karguzari*.⁷ Here, the *karkūn* listen to *bayān* from *mawlānā* or *shūrā* at the five daily prayer times. A *jorh* lasts for two days, while an *ijtimā'* takes place over a three-day period. The participants in a *jorh* come from states or provinces under one *markaz* which contains no more than 10,000 *karkūn*. By contrast, for *ijtimā'* people come from

many countries and they are attended by more than 10,000 Tablighists.

The aim of an *ijtimā'* is to gather all *karkūn* from a single region to spend three days in one place in order send out more *Jamā'ah* (groups) to do *khurūj* (Tablighist missions).⁸ Thus, the success of an *ijtimā'* is indicated by the total number of *jamā'ah* that subsequently perform four-month *khurūj* in IPB (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh), or forty days. *Ijtimā'* is important because they show how *Jamā'ah* Tabligh organises its members to be sent out to perform *da'wah*. 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, *Jamā'ah* Tabligh has many ways (*malam markaz*, *mushāwarah*, *bayān*) of sending out groups of *karkūn* to undertake *khurūj*, while *ijtimā'* is a method for bringing many groups of *karkūn* from many provincial *markazs* to organise *Jamā'ah* Tabligh rituals by encouraging members to remember the importance of *khurūj*. An impression of *ijtimā'* can be obtained from my field notes recorded during my trip to Pekanbaru:

Ijtimā': a meeting of Muslims carried out by *Jamā'ah* 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* candidates⁹ to go on Tablighist tours of IPB or elsewhere overseas. *Ijtimā'* are held in every state where there are many *Jamā'ah* Tabligh groups attended by Tablighist ulama (*mawlānā*) from Nizamuddin. This ritual is accomplished in three days and ends with a *bayān* where *mawlānā* spell out the special blessing of Allah. *Ijtimā'* can be organised to evaluate the strength of *Jamā'ah* Tabligh in a state or province. It also provides an opportunity for the *shūrā* to discuss the problems of their *markaz* with *mawlānā* in Nizamuddin.

Thus, *ijtimā'* should be well organised and coordinated, because during *Ijtimā'*, 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 *ijtimā'*. During the ritual, they will be questioned about their preparations by a group of *karkūn* who manage Tablighists before departing on mission. Nevertheless, *ijtimā'* can also be a place for the exchange of information among *karkūn*. They get to know each other and they might see famous *mawlānā* close up. Their informal *karguzari* also take place during the gathering of provincial heads of the Tablighist.¹⁰

In this study, I focus on an *ijtimā'* held in Pekanbaru, Indonesia. I discuss the preparations mainly of Acehnese *karkūn*¹¹ who attended,

their involvement in the *ijtimā'* and what they did afterwards. The main argument of this study is that *ijtimā'* is an occasion for Jamā'ah Tabligh rituals such as praying together and listening to *bayān* with elite *karkūn* (*mawlānā*) from international headquarters in India to think (*pikir*) and hesitate (*risau*) about *khurūj fi sabīlillāh* (going out in the name of Allah). In addition, the *ijtimā' mawlānā* from Nizamuddin make direct contact with local *karkūn* rather than, as at international *ijtimā'*, local *karkūn* having to travel to Nizamuddin or Raiwind. I seek to provide a picture of the religious experiences of those attending the *ijtimā'* and also to answer a number of questions about Jamā'ah Tabligh: 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 (*da'wah*)? In answering these questions, I also investigate how the level of religious awareness in this movement is constructed.¹² 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 *ijtimā'*, like a regional meeting of Jamā'ah Tabligh 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 Jamā'ah Tabligh to show their power is during *jorh* or *ijtimā'*. The word *ijtimā'* was repeatedly mentioned by *karkūn* during my fieldwork, especially the *ijtimā'* in Raiwind. In 2004, four million Tablighists attended the Raiwind *ijtimā'*.¹³ Most *karkūn* told me that two things that a new *karkūn* must do are to go on *khurūj* and to attend an *ijtimā'* in Raiwind or Nizamuddin. I would say that through *ijtimā'* Jamā'ah Tabligh 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 *ijtimā'* approached. They often told me how important *ijtimā'* is for their *da'wah* activity. During *malam markaz*, one *karkūn*, using a microphone, said that we must mention the *ijtimā'* 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 markaz* or *mushāwarah*, they kept asking people to join, asking, "Will you go to Pekan Baru?" "Have you registered for departure to *ijtimā'*?" To attract new members, they talked a little about *ijtimā'*, but their descriptions were very brief, because they wanted to make the listeners curious enough to join the *ijtimā'*. Most of the stories I heard were about the last *ijtimā'* in Pekan Baru – about the place, the number of participants and how many *mawlānā* came from international headquarters. I asked them how *karkūn* organised catering during the *ijtimā'*. I also specifically asked them about toilet facilities. When I asked this question, the *karkūn* would turn to stories about the worst places for *ijtimā'* such as Raiwind or Temboro in Indonesia, where it was very hard to imagine the toilet facilities. I imagined that if the *ijtimā'* 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 *mujāhadah* (give our best effort in the name of Allah) during *ijtimā'*". The *markaz* in Cot Goh formed a committee to handle the preparations for travel to Pekan Baru. They sent out the information to all *halaqah* and *mohalla* in Aceh about the coming *ijtimā'*, 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 *ijtimā'* in Southeast and South Asia said that this *ijtimā'* would not be as big as the international *ijtimā'* in India or Pakistan. They said that almost two million *karkūn* attended the international *ijtimā'*. Usually, as in Bangladesh, the *ijtimā'* is attended by members of the elite such as the president and his ministers.

National and international *markaz* must be informed of the schedule of *ijtimā'*. 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 *mohalla* where they discussed the coming *ijtimā'* in Indonesia. There was a *takaza* (request) for the *karkūn* to take part in this gathering.

The most important part of the *ijtimā'* is the participation of *mawlānā* from Nizamuddin. While at the *ijtimā'*, they convey *bayān* over three days to all participants. Those who have already been to IPB will be familiar with *mawlānā's bayān*. The fixed timetable enables overseas participants to attend several *ijtimā'* in Indonesia before returning to India. An *ijtimā'* is not considered successful if there are no representatives from the international *markaz*. Thus, the presence of *mawlānā* from India is a symbol of the global importance of the gathering.

When I registered my name with *jamā'ah tasykīl*, 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. Alternately, the *jamā'ah tashkīl* would organise an air ticket if I wanted to fly at a cost of 600,000 Rupiahs 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 *markaz* 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 *mohalla* do you represent?" I replied, "I do not represent any *mohalla* or *ḥalaqah*, because I live in Cot Anoe village, where there is no Jamā'ah Tabligh group".

Among *karkūn* in Banda Aceh, Cot Anoe is a village known to be hostile to Jamā'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 kampong. I performed *khurūj* in Kuala Lumpur and attended *malam markaz* in Sri Petaling every Saturday night. I come to Cot Goh every Thursday night at *malam markaz*. 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 Jamā'ah Tabligh? What were

the reasons for my becoming a *karkūn*? 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 *karkūn* joined our conversation. After ten minutes, there were six *karkūn* behind us. One invited me to have lunch with them. During this conversation I learned that *karkūn* who wanted to go to Pekan Baru had to be members of Jamā'ah Tablīgh.

After that, the *karkūn* said that I could register for the bus trip. I gave him 400,000 rupiah, saying, "Ustādh, 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 *karkūn* 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 *mujāhadah* (an adjective for *jihād*), because *karkūn* spend two nights on the bus. Allah will reward them in paradise for every step of the journey.

As in the previous year, the *karkūn* hired two buses. Some *karkūn* 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 *markaz* at noon prayer time. I did not see the *karkūn* in charge of ticketing. Someone told me that they had still not filled their quota. He told me that *karkūn* 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 *khurūj* afterwards were required to register earlier, because the committee needed to conduct interviews (*tafakkud*). I was told that the Acehese 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. *Karkūn* like to exaggerate the size of such gatherings.

A *karkūn* named *ustādh* Muis told me about going overseas for *khurūj* 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 *khurūj*. 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 Pekanbaru and the rest for *khurūj*. 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 tasykil* that I intended to go to Pekanbaru and *khurūj*. 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 *karkūn* 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 *ustādh* 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 *khurūj* for forty days on foot in Indonesia. Before I knew of his plan, I asked him about whether he intended to go to Pekanbaru. 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 Pekanbaru 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 *khurūj*.

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 *ijtimā'* at Pekanbaru last year and there he had met many *karkūn* from around Sumatra, Java and the Malay Peninsula. He thought that this *ijtimā'* was very important, because it would increase his commitment to Jama'ah Tabligh. During the *ijtimā'*, he said, "we listen to religious sermons (*bayān* or *ceramah agama*) from *mawlānā*". He wanted to go on *khurūj* to IPB, but could not afford it. But, he has spent time and money travelling to *ijtimā'* every year since he joined Jama'ah Tabligh in 1998.

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

khurūj in IPB, this information is seen as a *takaza* (request), meaning, they should respond immediately. The *zumindar* – a *karkūn* who takes responsibility at *halaqah* (headquarters under the *markaz*) – must announce the coming *ijtimā'* in every *mushāwarah* and other ritual (*bayān*, *ta'lim*, *mudhākarah* and *gast* [inviting people to mosque]). The next step involved setting up a committee of the *mushāwarah*, called the *amānah* section. This section organises the trip and collects funds from the *karkūn*. The committee also has an amir who takes responsibility for the trip. He is appointed by the *mushāwarah* based on his experience and seniority.

During *ijtimā'*, the amir 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 *ijtimā'*, reporting to the amir of Aceh on the progress of *da'wah* to *shūrā* and *mawlānā*, and conducting a *mushāwarah* to organise the return to Aceh at the end of *ijtimā'*.

Third, the *jamā'ah tasykil* and the committee try to convince *karkūn* to go on *khurūj* for at least forty days. Thus during *malam markāz*, *bayān* continuously explained the importance of *ijtimā'* for sending *jamā'ah khurūj* (a Tablighist group tour) around the world. For Aceh, the target was one thousand to attend the *ijtimā'*, and half of those to go on *khurūj*. When I met the *amir markaz*, 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 *markaz*. Arriving at Cot Goh mosque, I chanced to meet the amir of Aceh, a *karkūn* who takes responsibility for all *karkūn* in Aceh, named *ustādh* Ridha. He knew that I was going to Pekanbaru 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 *ijtimā'*. Thus, during preparation for departure to Pekanbaru, I saw many new candidates for *karkūn*.¹⁴

Fourth, *karkūn* choose the mode of transport to the place of *ijtimā'*. 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 *tarhīb* and *targhīb* (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 *ijtimā'*,

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 hidāyah*. 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 gameez 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 *mujāhadah* (make the best effort in the face of any obstacle) on every occasion in the preparation for the *ijtima'*. How were the *mawlānā* viewed by the members of Jamā'ah Tabligh? Could I interview them or at least attend the gathering?

I went to the *markaz* by *labi-labi* (a traditional form of public transport in Banda Aceh). When I left my house in Cot Anoe, I did not wear the Jamā'ah Tabligh accessories. 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 *labi-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 *labi-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 *labi-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 *istiqbāl* (receptionist). I told one that I was ready for the trip. He asked whether I would go on *khurūj* after the *ijtima'*. I said: "I am planning to do *khurūj*, but I will decide in Pekan Baru". I suspected that the *markaz* hoped many *karkūn* would decide to go on *khurūj*, 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 *karkūn*. 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): *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (there is no god but Allah). During the *bayān*, the *karkūn* came into the mosque one by one. Many of them carried luggage and bedding. After putting their equipment down, they joined our *bayān*. The *karkūn* 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 *mawlānā* of Nizamuddin.

At night, more *karkūn* 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 *karkūn* even said that tomorrow, the day of departure, more *karkūn* would come to the mosque to join the trip. At night, most *karkūn* rested, because tomorrow's would be a long journey. However, I was approached by some young *ustādh* from the mosque. They told me about *ijtimā'* in Indonesia and Bangladesh. One informed me that the *ijtimā'* in Raiwind needed more *mujāhadah*. He had attended the *ijtimā'* in Raiwind twice, with more than two million Tablighists. In Indonesia, he added, the place which most needs *mujāhadah*, the *ijtimā'* 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 *ijtimā'* is not for tourism, but for *dā'wah* and spiritual needs.

As usual, after morning prayer there was a *bayān*. After that, some *karkūn* 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 *karkūn* 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 *karkūn* 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 *karkūn*, but the group was dominated by seniors. Some

karkūn 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 *karkūn* said to me that it is very hard to organise *karkūn* in a group. But, I said, we did have a *mushāwarah* before this trip. He said: "Yes, but in this case *mushāwarah* was not the issue. They want to follow their *nafsu* (desire) before the ritual of *ijtimā'*". I noticed that those asking for special privileges were newcomers, or senior *karkūn* who had brought new members and wanted to help them during the trip.

After we sat in the group, it was announced that the *karkūn* should be in the main hall of mosque to listen to *bayān hidāyah* 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 *karkūn* were setting up plastic covers over the trucks. In the cars were luggage, food, mineral water and bedding. A *karkūn* said that this is a real *mujāhadah*. 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 *karkūn* to join them. For some, this was not their first trip to *ijtimā'*, 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 *bayān hidāyah*.¹⁵ One by one the *karkūn* returned to the main hall. One *karkūn* sat on a chair and started the *bayān*, which was about the essence of missionary activities. The activities, he said, are from Allah and not for human concerns. The *karkūn* 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 *khurūj*. After this message, the *bayānist* provided information about the trip and our destination. *Karkūn* should keep their *nīyah* (intention) in this journey just for Allah. They must not go against the decisions or directions of the amir. If there is a *takaza*, *karkūn* should take into account commands from Allah. During the *bayān*, *karkūn* 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* Jumali who had attended many *ijtimā'*, 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 *jamā'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 *alḥamdulillāh*. 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 *ijtimā'* elsewhere in Indonesia. *Ustādh* 'Umar introduced himself as a *karkūn* of five years standing. He also mentioned the word *mujāhadah* to me, saying, "Whatever happens to us is a part of *mujāhadah*". I did not him ask the meaning of *mujāhadah*. He only smiled, saying, "The things that you see are not big *mujāhadah* in *ijtimā'*. You will see that the place of the *ijtimā'* is more uncomfortable". I could not wait to see the situation of *jamā'ah* in *ijtimā'*. During the trip he told me about his involvement in *Jamā'ah Tabligh*.

Some *karkūn* recited the Qur'an. The amir also gave directions to the *jamā'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 *ḥalaqah*. I presumed that those sitting in the first and second rows might not understand the rule of travelling in *Jamā'ah Tabligh*. 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 Tabligh* 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 *ustādh* 'Umar, who said: "We must remember *mujāhadah*".

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 *unjank* (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 *Tabligh* 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 *Jamā'ah Tabligh*. The *karkūn* tend to state their identities as *Tablighist*. One *karkūn* said, "We are from Aceh on the way to Pekanbaru 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.¹⁶ In addition, there were other Muslim congresses attended by members of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia to urge the establishment of an international Islamic caliphate.¹⁷ Thus, I wondered whether, when *karkūn* mention the national congress of Muslim Indonesians in Pekanbaru, 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 *muṣallā* (a small place for praying) for *tahajjud* prayer (after midnight prayer with special *dhikir*). This prayer is a

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. *Karkūn* did not spend a long time on their *tahajjud* 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 *karkūn* told me that he was disappointed about the drivers, who did not join the *karkūn* 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 *karkūn*. 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. *Karkūn* 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,¹⁸ make special pre-arranged stops. The *karkūn* 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 *karkūn*.

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 *karkūn* put on their sandals and entered the mini-market. I saw that he gave this guidance by looking at every *karkūn* individually. This is part of the Jamā’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 *ijtimā'* was taking place. To reach the area, the bus had to go to the city terminal, where *dalīl* (guides) were waiting for us. *Dalīl* waited at every meeting point in Pekan Baru: 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 *dalīl*. Some *karkūn* from Aceh got off the bus to meet them. They shook hands and hugged each other. Then, some *dalīl* took their cars and followed them. I heard that the place of *ijtimā'* 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 *karkūns* chatted on the bus. However, by saying the word *mujāhadah*, our problems were solved. After two days of travel and three days of the *ijtimā'*, I consistently heard the word *mujāhadah* used, as in the following experiences recorded in my field notes:

In fact, the word *mujāhadah* in Jama'ah Tabligh can be defined as someone who follows the *tabligh* (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 *mujāhadah* in this ritual. First, when the *karkūn* has no good choices in a given situation. For example, they should use the "emergency toilets", 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 *mujāhadah*. Fitan, a *karkūn* who had attended *ijtimā'* in Temboro and Raiwind, described the water problem during the *ijtimā'* 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 *ijtimā'*. Second, when *karkūn* have to sit for two and three hours to listen to the *bayān*, especially in the early morning after performing the morning prayer; or, when they conduct *mudhākarah* (a study group after breakfast), where some *karkūn* were sleepy. In *bayān shubuh* during the *ijtimā'*, *karkūn* were repeatedly reminded not to sleep and the fight against sleepiness they saw as part of *mujāhadah*. Third, *mujāhadah* or a group on *khurūj* who travel on foot and not receive a warm welcome also speak a lot of *mujāhadah*.¹⁹

The *karkūn* tended 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 *jama'ah* perfectly. However,

during the trip, their behaviour sometimes went against regulations regarding *ikrām muslimīn* (respect for other Muslims).

The Setting

Once we arrived, we got off the bus. The parking area was opposite the main site of the *ijtimā'*. Many *karkūn* 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 *istiqbāl* and proceeded to the main gate of the *ijtimā'*. The setting was the Islamic boarding school (*pondok pesantren*) of Dārul al-Qur'ān. At the main gate, some *karkūn* received our group. Our amir then registered the group from Aceh. They recorded the total number of *jamā'ah* and the name of our leader. Thus, every *karkūn* who came this *ijtimā'* had to be registered according to their place of origin. The aim was to place *karkūn* together in tents according their place of origin.

Istiqbāl

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

They worked under the coordination of *amīr istiqbāl* (chief receptionist). They distributed *dalīl* to every meeting point in Pekanbaru city, guiding *karkūn* from outside Riau province to the site. *Amīr istiqbāl* was a senior *karkūn*, in his forties. Using a mobile phone, he called all *dalīl* when a guest arrived. *Dalīl* may not always guide the *Jamā'ah* to site, sometimes only giving directions. But, for special guests – *mawlānā* or *majelis shūrā* – *dalīl* along with senior *karkūn* pick them up from the terminal. If the *amīr istiqbāl* left the section to meet someone in the city, he appointed a *karkūn* to be his deputy during his absence. Thus, the place of *istiqbāl* always had an amir who coordinated

the situation at the *ijtimā'* location. This authority included chairing *mushāwarah*.

Kitchen

On the way to the tent, opposite the *istiqbāl*, 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 (*lauk pauk*) on a wood fire behind the main gate. During the *ijtimā'* they sold a set of *ta'ām* (a big plate) for 6,000 Rupiah (AUD 1). Usually, one *ta'ām* 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 shūrā*, *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 Tabligh 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 *ijtimā'* committee.

Bazaar

Behind the kitchen was a bazaar, in an alley which formed a ring road around the site. This is typical of all Jamā'ah Tabligh gatherings. I participated in many Jamā'ah Tabligh activities in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand²⁰ 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 *ijtimā'* program in the bazaar. The merchants were not allowed to do business in the arena of *ijtimā'*. But *karkūn* traders did sell items such as the Qur'an, 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 *ḥalāl* (permitted) and *ikhhlās* (sincere) and the buyer replied likewise. Finally, they shook hands as a symbol of transaction. Both recited *al-ḥamdulillāh* (thanks be to Allah) to thank Allah for the transaction.

During the *ijtimā'* 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 *Faḍā'il 'Amal* about how to do *khurūj*.²¹ This aimed to make them more familiar with Jamā'ah Tabligh teachings. They also bought Tablighist 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 *ijtimā'*. 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 *ijtimā'*, 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 *khurūj* 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 *tafakkud* (interviews) of those preparing to go on *khurūj*, so that *karkūn* could save their money daily or monthly to reach the total amount they needed. Thus, in the *ijtimā'* the section played a similar role to that of the *amānah* at the *markaz* level.

The administration of ijtimā'

The *ijtimā'* administrative centre controlled all activities. There were many *karkūn* in this building since they also had to coordinate with

shūrā and *mawlānā*. This building was very close to the place where the *shūrā* and *mawlānā* stayed. In these buildings there were many *karkūn* 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 *mawlānā* sleep. My impressions were recorded in my field notes:

I was invited to a *bayān 'ashar* in a building, which I knew was a special place for *mawlānā* and *shūrā*. Many Indonesian and Malaysian senior *karkūn* lived with the *mawlānā*. They were helped by *karkūn* 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 amir. To be *khidmat* here was not easy, because as a minimum one had to have travelled to IPB or done forty days *khurūj*. An Acehese *karkūn* who gave *bayān hidāyah* before our departure served as *khidmat* for *mawlānā*. The sleeping room were special compared with those elsewhere. They slept in a barracks, while ordinary *karkūn* slept in plastic tents. They had beds, while *karkūn* slept on the ground. They had good toilet facilities, while *karkūn* made do with “*mujāhadah* toilets”. Ordinary *karkūn* pray under a tent, the *mawlānā* and the *shūrā* 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 *mujāhadah* in this building. I was surprised with this luxury, because *mawlānā* teach us to live in an ascetic way. They sometimes mention the lives of the *ṣaḥābah* (the Prophet's companions) as the examples of a simple life.

The attitude of *mawlānā* also lead me to re-think the role of *mawlānā* in this *ijtimā'*. A *mawlānā* from Malaysia, for example, was not interested in talking to me because he did not know me. However, when someone introduced a young *karkūn* to him saying this is a *pesantren* student he touched his hat, blessing his studies. The *mawlānā* 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 *mawlānā* 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 *karkūn* want to be *khidmat* to their *mawlānā*.²²

During *ijtimā'*, all *bayān* were delivered by *mawlānā*, and *bayān*

during noon prayer were given by *majelis shūrā* from Indonesia and Malaysia. When a *mawlānā* presented his talk he was always accompanied by a *karkūn* who acted as translator. The *mawlānā* was very hard to approach because he was always guarded by senior *karkūn* or *khidmat mawlānā*. If a *mawlānā* gave a *bayān*, other *mawlānā* sat on the main stage with bodyguards, so that no one could sit behind them. The *mawlānā* were the centre of attention for all participants. They did not join in ordinary conversation and spoke to the other *karkūn* only during *bayān*. Only *karkūn* 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 *ijtimā'*. New members may not take part in *khidmat*. Being close to the *mawlānā* is considered good experience for *karkūn* because when they come back to their *markaz* or *mohalla*, they can tell *karguzari* (stories) about their spiritual experiences. Second, most *mawlānā* were from India or Bangladesh and do not speak Indonesian or English. This problem is evident during the *bayān* and other conversations. Most *bayāns* were delivered in Arabic or Urdu. Translators were graduates from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh, some of them students as well as *karkūn*. Being fluent in Arabic and Urdu is a mark of privilege in the Jamā'ah Tabligh community in the sense that it enables one to become a translator during *bayān* or conversation with *mawlānā*.

The Toilet

Behind the administration building were many toilets. If *karkūn* 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 *ijtimā'*, I did not like to approach this place, as I had a friend who was "disgusted" whenever he went. *Karkūn* repeatedly recited the word "*mujāhadah*" 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 *ijtimā'* I went there to urinate, but it was so dirty that I abandoned the idea. I told the *karkūn* 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 *karkūn* 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 Ijtimā'

The main place was designed for the ritual of *ijtimā'*. 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 *ijtimā'*, like in the one 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 *mujāhadah*, especially when the rain came. When I was in the *mawlānā's* building, it was raining. A Malaysian *mawlānā* told his friend that they were lucky. But, he said, "What about our *karkūn* outside?" His friend who was also a *mawlānā* 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 *ustādh* in Cot Goh, Banda Aceh, told me that the situation in Raiwind was much worse. This was also good compared with the *ijtimā'* 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 *jamā'ah tasykīl*, *amīr* and *amānah*. Thus, if a *karkūn* had a problem during the *ijtimā'*, they could report to the provincial amir or *jamā'ah tasykīl*. If the problem related to the *ijtimā'*, then the *jamā'ah tasykīl* forwarded the message to the *ijtimā'* 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 *khurūj* 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 *mawlānā*, guests, *khawwāš* (intellectuals), *shūnā*, 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 *mawlānā* deliver *bayān*, there were microphones and a sofa for the *mawlānā* and his interpreter. When a *mawlānā* gave *bayān*, the other *mawlānā* 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 *mawlānā*, 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 Khawwaz 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 *khawwaz* 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 *ijtimā'*.

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 the gameez and *surban*. There was a group of senior *karkūn* who were called ulama in their home provinces. These '*ulamā'*-*karkūn* promoted Tablighist teaching to the guests during the *ijtimā'*. In every informal meeting, the *ulamā'*-*karkūn* spoke about the importance of missionary work because of the decline in Muslim worship of Allah.

In this building *khidmat-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 Tablighist 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 Tabligh in their area after experiencing the *ijtimā'*. This strategy was never discussed during other meetings among Tablighists, but it is safe to say that this was a conscious method for the promotion of Jamā'ah Tabligh. When I was in the field, I saw no negative responses from the guests; none of them left until the *ijtimā'* finished. This indicates that *ijtimā'* can be a method of recruiting new members from elite groups. On the second day, the *khawwās* were invited to meet *mawlānā* and *majelis shūrā* in their building. It was an honour to sit and listen to the *bayān* in this special room. In this meeting, the *mawlānā* discussed the teachings of Jamā'ah Tabligh.

Finally, a *karkūn* told me that this place was regularly used for *ijtimā'* in Pekanbaru. A *karkūn* from Aceh told me that for him it is not difficult to follow the *ijtimā'* 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 *ijtimā'* in Indonesia. By following a single group of *karkūn* from Aceh, I was able to see that the *ijtimā'* 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 *ijtimā'* can be seen as means of unifying the aims of heart and soul through the common experience of the *mujāhadah* during the *ijtimā'*. Travelling from Banda Aceh to Pekanbaru 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 *mujāhadah* on their missionary activities, so were the Tablighists travelling to *ijtimā'*. *Ijtimā'* is therefore one way of following the Prophet. The activities of the *ijtimā'* include travelling from home to mosque, the passage to Pekanbaru and living in a uncomfortable place. All are seen as important religious activities for a Tablighist. *Ijtimā'* 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 Jamā'ah 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, *ikrām muslimīn* (respect for Muslims) is very important for *karkūn*. They will not stand for overly strict treatment of the members during the *ijtimā'*.

In fact, in Islamic communities, there are many other festivals

similar to *ijtimā'*. In an Islamic mystical sect like the Naqshabandi,²³ this type of festival is called *urs*, as described Werbners:

[T]he *urs* provides a platform for the *ulama*, it is also an occasion which reinforces the supremacy and autonomy of saints and re-enacts the ambivalent relations of dependency between saint and *maulvi* [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.²⁴

In this article we have seen that *ijtimā'* 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 *ijtimā'*. The rituals in *ijtimā'* are defined by Middle Eastern Islam (such as prayer and homily), but when they are included in the *ijtimā'* 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 *mawlanā* show that seniority among *karkūn* generates status differences during *ijtimā'*. This does not occur, for example, during the *hajj*,²⁵ 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 *mawlanā* 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 *hajj*. The *hajj* is part of obligatory worship for every Muslim and it symbolises the experience of Abraham and his son, Ishmael. The objective of the *ijtimā'* on the other hand is to send *karkūn* on *khurūj* to perform *da'wah*. There are also different perceptions among *karkūn* of *ijtimā'*. They go to meet their *mawlanā* and to listen to *bayān*. During the *hajj*, by contrast, the main aim is to worship Allah in order to enter His paradise (*hajj mabrūr*, the *hajj* that is approved by Allah).

Even though one does not gain a title after returning from *ijtimā'*, as one does upon returning from the *hajj*, *karkūn* still feel reborn as

persons. The charisma of the *mawlānā* acts as a magnet for *karkūn*, something not found among participants in the *ḥajj*. As I have pointed out, the *mawlānā* produce “religion” for those at lower levels of religious awareness.

Finally, it can be said that the *ijtimāʿ* is one method for the construction of religious experience among Jamāʿah Tabligh 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 *khurūj*.

Endnotes

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- 1. On *Jama'ah Tabligh*, see generally Muhammad Khalid Masud, ed. *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Yoginder Sikand, *The Origins and Development of the Tablighi Jama'at (1920-2000)* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2002); Yoginder 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 Howel (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007). On *Jama'ah Tabligh* in Southeast Asia, see generally Farish A. Noor, "Pathans to the East! The Development of the Tablighi Jama'at Movement in Northern Malaysia and Southern Thailand," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 1 (2007); Farish A. Noor, "The Spread of Tablighi Jama'at Across Western, Central and Eastern Java and the Role of the Indian Muslim Diaspora," (Singapore: RSIS, 2009); Farish A. Noor, "The Tablighi Jama'at Movement in the Southern Provinces of Thailand Today: Networks and Modalities," (Singapore: RSIS, 2009); Farish A. Noor, "The Tablighi Jamaat as Vehicles of (Re) Discovery: Conversion Narratives and the Appropriation of India in the Southeast Asian Tablighi Movement," in *Islamic Connections: Muslim Societies in South and Southeast Asia*, ed. R. Michael Feener and Terenjit Sevea (Singapore: ISEAS, 2009); Farish A. Noor, "The Arrival and Spread of the Tablighi Jama'at in West Papua (Irian Jaya), Indonesia," (Singapore: RSIS, 2010).
- 2. Sikand, "The Reformist Sufism of the Tablighi Jama'at: The Case of the Meos of Mewat, India." 129.
- 3. On history of *Jama'ah Tabligh* in Malaysia, see K.S. Jomo and Ahmad Shabery, "Malaysia's Islamic Movement," in *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, ed. Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Koh Wah (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992). pp.79-205; Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional Di Malaysia Sejarah Dan Pemikiran: Jamaat Tabligh & Darul Arqam* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Kintan, 1992).
- 4. Abdul Aziz, "The Jamaah Tabligh Movement in Indonesia: Peaceful Fundamentalist," *Studia Islamika* Vol. 11, Number 3, 2004, pp. 467-518.
- 5. Masud, ed. *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*, p.vii.
- 6. Mumtaz Ahmad, "The Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-I-Islami and the Tablighi of South Asia," in *Fundamentalism Observed*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p.510.
- 7. See also Barbara D. Metcalf, "Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at," *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol.52, No.3 (1993), pp. 594-608.
- 8. On *kburuj*, see Ernesto Braam, "Travelling with the Tablighi Jama'at," *ISIM Review*, no. 17 (2006), pp. 42-3.
- 9. *Čakar* is an Indonesian word which means to grab. The acronym CAKAR is for *calon karkun* (*karkun* candidate). This is a group of new *karkun* who involve themselves in the ritual of *ijtima'*.
- 10. Field notes 24 July 2007.
- 11. On history of *Jama'ah Tabligh* in Aceh, see Bustamam-Ahmad, "The History of *Jama'ah Tabligh* in Southeast Asia: The Role of Islamic Sufism in Islamic Revival." Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, "From Islamic Revivalism to Islamic Radicalism in Southeast Asia: A Study of *Jama'ah Tabligh* in Sri Petaling (Malaysia) and Cot Goh (Indonesia)" (Ph.D. Thesis, La Trobe University 2010).
- 12. On religious awareness see for example Kim Knibbe and Peter Versteeg, "Assessing

- Phenomenology in Anthropology: Lessons from the Study of Religion and Experience,” *Critique of Anthropology* 28,1(2008), pp. 47-64; Joachim Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religions*, ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).
13. “4 Juta Sertai Ijtimak Tabligh Di Bangladesh,” *Berita Harian*, 6 December 2004.
 14. Field notes 24 July 2007.
 15. *Bayān hidayah* is a bayan before departing to go on *khurūj* or *ijtimā’*.
 16. See generally, Irfan Suryahadi Awwas, *Risalah Konggres Muhajidin I Dan Penegakan Syariah Islam* (Yogyakarta: Wihdah Press, 2001).
 17. Khamami Zada, *Islam Radikal: Pergulatan Ormas-Ormas Islam Garis Keras Di Indonesia* (Bandung: Teraju, 2002).
 18. There are three Acehnese bus company running trips to Jakarta: *Pelangi*, *Kurnia*, 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 crews could take cigarettes, energy drinks, and some mineral water free of charge. They also have special tables in the restaurant and a special bathroom.
 19. Field notes 23 July 2007.
 20. See also Jomo and Shabery, “Malaysia’s Islamic Movement.” In Alexander Horstmann, “The Tablighi Jama’at in Southern Thailand: A Case Study from Nakhon Si Thammarat,” in *The Ninth International Conference on Thai Studies* (DeKalb, Illinois, 2005).
 21. On this book see also Metcalf, “Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama’at.”
 22. Field notes 24 July 2007.
 23. On this see also Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1975). Martin van Bruinessen, “The Origins and Development of Sūfī Orders (*Tarekat*) in Southeast Asia,” *Studia Islamika* Vol. 1, Number 1, 1994, pp. 1-23; Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Nasyabandiah Di Indonesia*, Revised ed. (Bandung Mizan, 1998); Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 1997).
 24. Pnina Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love: The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult* (Indianapolis & Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2003), p. 242.
 25. See also William R. Roff, “Pilgrimage and the History of Religions: Theoretical Approaches to the Ḥajj,” in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, ed. Richard C. Martin (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985).

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