

STUDIA ISLAMIKA

INDONESIAN JOURNAL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume 20, Number 3, 2013



PUBLIC ISLAM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: LATE MODERNITY,
RESURGENT RELIGION, AND MUSLIM POLITICS

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Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies
Vol. 20, no. 3, 2013

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STUDIA ISLAMIKA (ISSN 0215-0492; E-ISSN: 2355-6145) is a journal published by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta (STT DEPPEN No. 129/SK/DITJEN/PPG/STT/1976). It specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies in particular, and Southeast Asian Islamic Studies in general, and is intended to communicate original researches and current issues on the subject. This journal warmly welcomes contributions from scholars of related disciplines.

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STUDIA ISLAMIKA has been accredited by The Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia as an academic journal (SK Dirjen Dikti No. 56/DIKTI/Kep/2012).

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Editorial Office:

STUDIA ISLAMIKA, Gedung Pusat Pengkajian
Islam dan Masyarakat (PPIM) UIN Jakarta,
Jl. Kertamukti No. 5, Pisangan Barat, Cirendeu,
Ciputat 15419, Jakarta, Indonesia.

Phone: (62-21) 7423543, 7499272, Fax: (62-21) 7408633;

E-mail: studia.islamika@uinjkt.ac.id

Website: <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika>

Annual subscription rates from outside Indonesia, institution:
US\$ 75,00 and the cost of a single copy is US\$ 25,00;
individual: US\$ 50,00 and the cost of a single copy is US\$
20,00. Rates do not include international postage and
handling.

Please make all payment through bank transfer to: **PPIM,
Bank Mandiri KCP Tangerang Graha Karnos, Indonesia,**
account No. **101-00-0514550-1 (USD),**
Swift Code: bmrriidja

Harga berlangganan di Indonesia untuk satu tahun, lembaga:
Rp. 150.000,-, harga satu edisi Rp. 50.000,-; individu:
Rp. 100.000,-, harga satu edisi Rp. 40.000,-. Harga belum
termasuk ongkos kirim.



Pembayaran melalui **PPIM, Bank Mandiri KCP Tangerang
Graha Karnos, No. Rek: 128-00-0105080-3**

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Hak Angket Haji:

Pilgrimage and the Cultural Politics of
Hajj Organization in Contemporary Indonesia

Abstract: *The hajj may provide political support for Indonesia's image building, home and abroad, and invaluable financial resources for the state or state-owned companies, and political concessions between different individuals, groups and institutions. This paper seeks to explain how the case of parliamentary examination of the hajj affairs in 2008 suggests the recent struggle over hajj affairs, in which the hajj has been increasingly seen as one of the nation's strategic problems. This struggle provides not only a foundation for the state in its improving efforts for the better treatment of pilgrims in hajj affairs, but at the same time it has recently been a medium where many groups and parties exercise the balance of power. Using the Hak Angket Haji, the lawmakers have cast a signal to their Muslim voters that they did evaluate, monitor, and participate in decision making in the country's hajj affairs.*

Keywords: Pilgrimage, *Hak Angket Haji*, hajj administration, hajj bureaucracy, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia.

Abstrak: *Haji menyediakan dukungan politik bagi pembentukan citra Indonesia, di dalam dan luar negeri, sumber-sumber finansial yang sangat besar bagi negara atau perusahaan-perusahaan yang dimiliki negara, serta konsesi-konsesi politik antara individu, kelompok, dan insitutsi yang berbeda. Artikel ini berupaya memahami bagaimana kasus investigasi parlemen atas persoalan-persoalan haji pada tahun 2008 menunjukkan betapa rumit dan peliknya masalah haji, di mana haji makin dilihat sebagai salah satu problem strategis bangsa. Upaya ini tidak hanya menjadi fondasi bagi negara dalam memberikan pelayanan yang lebih baik bagi jamaah haji, tapi pada saat yang sama menjadi wadah di mana banyak kelompok dan partai politik menunjukkan kekuasaannya. Menggunakan Hak Angket Haji, para anggota parlemen memberi sinyal pada pemilih Muslim mereka bahwa mereka turut mengevaluasi, memonitor, dan berpartisipasi dalam pembuatan keputusan berkaitan dengan persoalan haji.*

Kata kunci: haji, Hak Angket Haji, administrasi haji, birokrasi haji, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia.

الخلاصة: يتيح الحج تأييدا سياسيا في سبيل تكوين صورة عن اندونيسيا، سواء داخل أو خارج البلاد، والموارد المالية الكبيرة للدولة او الشركات التابعة للدولة، وكذلك الامتيازات السياسية بين الأفراد، والجماعات، والمؤسسات المختلفة. يحاول هذا المقال أن يفهم كيف كانت قضية الاختبار البرلماني لمشاكل الحج عام ٢٠٠٨ تنتهي إلى ظهور جهود للتغلب على مشاكل الحج حيث يتم النظر فيها على أنها مشكلة استراتيجية قومية. لم تكن هذه الجهود تمثل قاعدة للدولة في تقديم الخدمات الأفضل إلى الحجاج، ولكنها في نفس الوقت كانت وسيلة لكثير من الجماعات والأحزاب السياسية أن تظهر سلطتها. كان لجوء البرلمان إلى حق استفسار الحكومة إشارة للمنتخبين المسلمين على أن الأحزاب السياسية تشارك في القيام بالمرابعة والتقييم، وتسهم في صنع القرارات المتعلقة بمسائل الحج.

الكلمات الاسترشادية: الحج، حق الاستفسار، إدارة شؤون الحج، بيروقراطية شؤون الحج، إندونيسيا، المملكة العربية السعودية.

In recent years, as a response to the spirit of reform, the Indonesian government has made some serious efforts to bring changes in state administration, including its national hajj organization. However, on February 17, 2009, a Plenary Session of Indonesia's House of Representative (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* or DPR) approved a submission of the Rights to Inquiry into the state-sponsored organization of the hajj, also known as *Hak Angket Haji*. This is the first investigation on Hajj issues by the House in nearly sixty years, after the *Interpelasi Amelz* in 1951, in which the Indonesian legislative body scrutinized the Minister of Religious Affairs through a public hearing.¹ The two events are examples of how the Hajj affairs enter Indonesian politics, marking yet again the political importance of the hajj (Bianchi: 2004) in the world's most populous Muslim country. This study asks: What does the House's *Hak Angket Haji* tell us about religion and the state, and the cultural politics of the biggest state-sponsored program on Islam in public life in Indonesia?

Despite the recent success of Indonesia's free elections and emerging civil society groups, a number of efforts to reorganize the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches of government have resulted in what Stephen Sherlock calls as a "complex and contradictory" issues (Sherlock: 2009).² These issues are of central significance in hajj affairs and how the government organizes them has become part of public concerns for decades. Since the 1970s, the state systemically began governing the hajj affairs from its central offices and this quickly resulted in public protests from several private hajj organizers and social organizations against such state monopoly, i.e. the Gambela case in 1970, the public outcry over the increased hajj fees in 1976, and the liquidation of the Arafat hajj shipping company in 1978. As the hajj fees gradually increase, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, and whenever the government announces them, the public response through the House gets stronger each time. The public has continued to raise the questions of reforms on these hajj affairs, especially since the era of *Reformasi* following the downfall of Suharto regime in 1998. The more intricate "complex and contradictory" problems of governing the hajj affairs have come to the fore as the government continues to maintain its "national" project to control the hajj. Meanwhile, as many perceive it, the hajj has become a global industry.

In what follows, I want to address these questions by examining the current booming hajj industry, its impact on the state-Islam relations and public responses to them. I argue that while the current hajj bureaucracy requires massive government support (Darmadi: 2007), it also *may* provide political support for Indonesia's image building, home and abroad, and invaluable financial resources for the state or state own companies, and political concessions between different individuals, groups and institutions. The current hajj affairs and its bureaucracy in Indonesia have made the hajj a "regularized" ritual, not only for its important theological basis for any Muslim individual, but also for its significance influence on expanding, broadening, and to some extent, justifying the state power, especially during the recent thriving business of the hajj in the Muslim world (Darmadi: 2004) as the modernization of the hajj facilities and the remaking of Mecca is under way in Saudi Arabia.

Drawing on another work on the studies of legislative institutions and the political culture of parliament members (Robison and Hadiz: 2004), this paper explains how the case of parliamentary examination of the hajj affairs in 2008 suggests the recent struggle over hajj affairs, and pushes further some thorny questions on religion and public affairs in Indonesia in which the hajj has been increasingly seen as one of the nation's strategic issues. This struggle, in turn, provides a foundation for the state in its improving efforts for the better treatment of pilgrims in hajj affairs. But, at the same time, it continues to suggest those ambiguities and contradictions a decade after the Reformasi era and its subsequent democratization processes.

Robert Bianchi, in his comparative study of the hajj asserts that the hajj has been one of the most important indicators of Indonesia's "deepening Islamization." He interestingly uses the term "greening the Pancasila state" to describe the rise of Indonesia from "the fringe of the Islamic world to center stage" in just over thirty years (Bianchi: 2004). But, we may ask: how is it that modern practice of the hajj has transformed political culture and at the same time the hajj as an institution has been transformed by state and, perhaps market institutions? I suggest that these phenomena should also be read in the context of, and more importantly in its connection with, the burgeoning hajj reform movement within Saudi Arabia—as the host country—with all its systematic schemes to reinvent the hajj from a ritual of personal piety into a significant part of state control.

Organizing the Hajj in Indonesia

The hajj has a long history in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, and it is no longer possible to conduct research on the hajj, or Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca in general, without taking into account the ways in which all aspects of the hajj are tied to state and market. The burgeoning hajj industry in Muslim countries also prompt me to link my ethnographic focus to wider social, economic and political structures. Hajj bureaucracy, as any kind of bureaucracy, is far from the rational system we and policy makers might think, as Max Weber (1983, 1958) himself had indeed explained long time ago.³ In this paper, I observe the emergence of hajj bureaucracy and its industry in Indonesia as a category of anthropological investigation. By focusing on the cultural politics of Indonesia's modern hajj organization this paper seeks to examine the political ramifications of pilgrimage, as an Islamic ritual, and its administration by the state in the world's most populous Muslim nation.

A recent study of Indonesian hajj writings suggests that the stories of Muslims from the Indonesian archipelago going on hajj had been written as early as the late 15th Century (Chambert-Loir: 2013). Since 1850s, a large number of Indonesian Muslims traveled to Mecca and Medina to perform the hajj (Bruinessen: 1997; Douwes and Kaptein: 1997; Barnard: 2009; Tagliacozzo: 2009) to engage in Muslim trade and business network (Cooke and Lawrence: 2005; Ho: 1997a, 2006), settle and start families and to study Islamic knowledge leaving behind a tremendous legacy in trade as well as scholarly networks along the way from Batavia, Banten, Padang, Singapore, Penang, Aden, Jeddah and Mecca (Azra: 1992, 2004; Ho: 1997b, 2004, 2006). The effect of increasing importance of the hajj can be clearly seen in its regional politics. In 1828, when the Suez Canal has yet to exist and even before the use of hajj steamship, an elite political group in the archipelago had seen the reconstruction of political legitimacy through the hajj, as Timothy Barnard has interestingly argued in his study of Raja Ahmad and Bugis elite of Riau (Barnard: 2009), as the group tried to strengthen their military and economic powers in the region. In Banten, through sending hajj emissaries, the ruling families often sought the cooperation of the Mecca rulers to legitimize their power and strengthen their Islamic identity (Bruinessen: 1995). In modern Sulawesi, Islamic ritual such as the hajj can symbolize the penetration of what Thomas Gibson refers

to as the kind of “official Islam and the developmental state especially in the post-independence Indonesia (Gibson: 2007). As many past rulers during their waning political authority and prowess before him, President Suharto made the hajj in an effort to allegedly gain more supports from Muslim groups in the 1990s (Hefner: 1995, 2009); and the image of the president in hajj garment (*ihram*) may significantly convey a political message to Indonesian Muslim population (Lukens-Bull, 2005: p. 86). Where Islam is presented in cultural events, such as in the case of Indonesia’s Qur’anic recital competition tradition, the hajj has often been considered one of the the highest rewards (Gade: 2004). In these cases, the hajj was not only a spiritual orthodoxy but also a mediating political means and cultural symbols, used in negotiating alliances and cementing loyalty.

In Indonesia today, pilgrimage to Mecca is a public service—some suggest it is one of the only public service areas still being handled by the government—a multi-billion industry, and in the past decade, a burgeoning bureaucracy within the Departemen Agama (Ministry of Religious Affairs, henceforth called MORA), which has continuously organized the hajj since six decades ago.⁴ More than two hundred thousand pilgrims from Indonesia, which carry the biggest quota than any other country, make the hajj and travel to Saudi Arabia every year. In 2009, more than 900 thousand Muslims registered to become *Calon Haji*—prospective pilgrims—most of whom paid at least IDR 20 million or US \$ 2100 each as downpayments just to get their names listed on the waiting list.

Through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the government has had a monopoly on organizing the hajj. For the Ministry, organizing the hajj is one of the most important jobs; since 1999, the Ministry has considered it a “constitutional task” (*tugas konstitusional*) and, for the government in general, a “constitutional obligation” (*kewajiban konstitusi*), referring to Act. No. 17/1999, and recently the newly revised Act. No. 13/2008, a set of *Undang-undang Haji* which endorsed and legitimized such monopoly on organizing the hajj. In recent years, for example, by making it a government obligation, the Ministry was approved by the House to receive state-budgets (APBN) to support the hajj’s indirect cost.⁵

The snapshot of extensive state in sponsoring its hajj program in this paper shows how the Indonesian state has followed the booming market

in hajj industry by empowering themselves (hajj officials are public servants), and organizing the hajj around their control (the making of hajj affairs as one of the Ministry's top programs), in order to negotiate the public with the state over the years the hajj has become more and more regularized. What seems to be crucial, however, to return to what Sherlock says, are the questions of power balance, and the political game between the executive and legislative branches of government—in this case between MORA and the House (DPR) members, especially those of Komisi VIII whose responsibilities include to monitor the hajj program—which often invoke the multifaceted, intricate and ambiguous solutions to the public. Here, Sherlock's study illustrates how concensus decision making often facilitates corruption among the House members especially during the early years of Reformasi era in 1998; the Komisi often function as a money machine for the House to receive concessions from big, lucrative projects such as housing, health and hajj pilgrimage (Sherlock: 2009).

In 2009, MORA invested IDR 7 billion from the Hajj Funds (*Dana Haji*) and People's Endowment Fund (DAU) in the government issued Sukuk, an Arabic term for *Shari'ah* compliant financial certificate, Islamic equivalent of a bond.⁶ According to the Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani, these hajj and DAU funds are a great source of finance that can be used "to cover the state deficit financing".⁷ This was hardly surprising. The hajj has been a great financial source for state-owned companies like Garuda Airlines, the national flag carrier which, despite possessing limited number of airplanes, has monopolized the air transport of pilgrims for nearly four decades (since 1970s); as one of Garuda's top managers, once told me: "... the money from the hajj gives Garuda some kind of *dana segar*, fresh funds, to pay or restructure its debt."⁸ A huge debt indeed, especially when in 1998, after a tumultuous past, the company was saddled with huge debts to the tune of US \$ 1.8 billion. In his study of New Order's developmentalism (*pembangunan*) Dorodjatun Kuntjoro-Jakti mentions that Soeharto regime used the hajj funds, among others, to finance New Order's political economy (Kuntjoro-Jakti: 1980, 1983; Mas'ood: 1983).

The hajj industry also gave rise to several privatized sectoral and commercial structures: the private hajj and umrah travel agents, religious and commercial structures for hajj training and management groups—all created by a new generation of hajj bureaucracy, which

has been actively engaged as middlemen, recruiters, and state patrons, and the hajj banking system. Despite the recent changes, Hajj saving accounts, popularly known as *Tabungan Haji* in Indonesian banks are not traditionally offered to one and all but on a purely selective basis to specially chosen, authorized banks such as the Bank Mandiri, Bank BRI and Bank BNI.

Drawing on Peregudov's recent studies of bureaucracy and business in Russia, the recent growth of Hajj industry in Indonesia has developed not from "below", but from "above"—that is the will of the legislative and executive branches of Indonesian government (Peregudov: 2009). From this perspective, both the "disappointing" results of state implementation of the hajj and its public scrutiny by the House were two interlocking parts of the "above" discourse interweaving the interests of the state, religion, and its bureaucracy.

By authorizing the hajj organization to be implemented solely by MORA, the Indonesian government has frequently emphasized the notion that "only states who could legitimately" organize the hajj (even if, in the case of Garuda Airlines, has to charter hajj fleets from Iceland, Alaska or China) and turning the hajj from a ritual of individual piety into a significant part of state enterprise. Despite the seemingly rigid and feudalistic nature of the "above" framework to develop the hajj, it is interesting to see the fluidity, and to some extent the flexibility of state in operating its scheme. In his studies of state monopolization of the legitimate means of movement, John Torpey (Torpey: 1998, 2000) reminds us that modern states have often been "embracing" populations—instead of forcefully "penetrating" them—in order to control their movements. As many suggest, this problem is not uniquely in the context of state-Islam perse. In his fascinating study of religion in Bali, Richard Fox has suggested that prevailing state-sanctioned concept of religion and the presence of the state in Balinese *tradisi*—many were inherited from the deeply rooted legacy of the New Order—have often obscured the larger religious and cultural landscape of the island (Fox: 2005).

The *Hak Angket Haji* Case

In Indonesia, the House's Rights to Inquiry (*Hak Angket*) into strategic problems is not something new, it has been in existence for some time. But in recent years, the democratic reform, and perhaps some

inner politics within the House since the beginning of the Reformasi era in 1998 have brought new dynamics: several high profile cases such as the increase of oil price in 2005 have forced some members of the House to unearth, bring to light and use the *Hak Angket* for certain cases.

Although we have not been aware of any record of the use of such Rights for hajj affairs by the House during the New Order era, Indonesia had an interesting case involving the executive and the legislative branches of the government on the political economy of the hajj in the past. In 1951, Teungku Haji Amelz (Abdul Manaf El Zamzami), a lawmaker from the Masjumi party, submitted an interpellation to the Parliament. He made the case against the government (in this case MORA) which, on August 8th 1951, agreed to postpone the departure of approximately 10,000 Indonesian pilgrims to Mecca because it had received the news about the outbreak of bubonic plague in Saudi Arabia. As a consequence, a day later, during its public announcement, the government cancelled the operation of “foreign” hajj shipping companies, most notably the Kongsy Tiga, a Dutch-led shipping company, which had brought pilgrims from the Dutch East Indies to Hejaz for decades (Arsip Depag, Reg 88, 1951).

Amelz saw the postponement and cancellation of hajj 1951 hajj season for Indonesian pilgrims was a major mistake, and for this view he gained support from H. Siradjuddin Abbas, another Masjumi party member, who thought that the government’s move was both politically and economically motivated. The interpellation was submitted to criticize the government for allegedly “preventing the Muslims to carry out their religious obligations,” also an argument against the government for religious reason.

On October 17th 1951, Wahid Hasjim, as the Minister of Religious Affairs, responded to the interpellation, arguing that the government was forced to postpone, and eventually cancel the hajj season, for rigorous reasons. In July 1951, some international newspapers broke the news that the epidemic, known as the bubonic plague, was raging in Northern Yemen, near the Saudi Arabian border, but the government had yet to receive a formal notification from its Embassies in Cairo and Jeddah for its validity. However, after a brief consultation with the Ministry of Health, the government reached a conclusion that, considering the major impact of the outbreak had the government

allowed the Indonesian pilgrims, and avoiding the monopoly of “foreign” shipping companies over hajj business in the future, MORA firmly backed up their earlier decision. At any rate, the government argued that during such condition, in an atmosphere of doubt, the hajj is not obligatory—a less desirable religious argument the government itself had to make (Arsip Depag, Reg 88, 1951).

The Amelz Interpellation, of course, does not end here. The government still had to pay the deposit to the European shipping company for a large sum of money, as the hajj budget for those 10,000 pilgrims was approximately IDR 20 million. The case also prolonged the public debate on how the government should handle hajj affairs, and arguably contributing to the political crisis involving several major Islamic organizations, most notably with the NU, the organization to whom Wahid Hasjim belonged, officially quit the Masjumi in 1952.⁹

In the meantime, the *Hak Angket*, the topic of this study, is one of the Parliament rights to conduct investigations into government policies which have strategic importance and impact on public and social life that allegedly violated the country’s laws and regulations.¹⁰ The *Hak Angket Haji* of 2009 implies similar political reasonings. The move began sometime in mid December, 2008 following a public uproar seeking justice for Indonesian pilgrims over housing crisis in Mecca. The majority factions of the House voted for this *Hak Angket Haji*, as it was popularly known, and claimed that the recent factual circumstances in the state-organized implementation of the hajj—pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the pillars of the Islamic faith and a duty for all Muslims—was very disappointing, and it needs to be investigated. Some 121 members of the House, led by Abdullah Azwar Anas, a young parliament member from PKB,¹¹ believed that they need to use the Rights just two weeks after the 2008 hajj ended, for the better implementation of the hajj program in the future (Ruslan: 2008).

We may ask here, were the government efforts to bring change in hajj administration a significant indication of reform, or was it merely a new style of rhetoric when it was challenged by public? Or was it a smoke screen for increased state control over Islam and Muslims and its ritual affairs?

The House’s *Hak Angket Haji* was supported by almost all of the factions in the House although previously the Demokrat, PDS, and PPP party rejected it. The proposers have two main questions focusing

on the problems found during the 2008 hajj season: *Firstly*, how government policies was made in dealing with Indonesian pilgrims' housing in Saudi Arabia in during the 2008 hajj season. *Secondly*, how the Indonesian government policy was developed in dealing with transportation for pilgrims. In addition to this, at the back mind of these two was the infamous case of mismanagement and mishandling in hajj catering for pilgrims during the 2006 hajj season or the Food Fiasco case in Arafah-Mina where for nearly two days the tens of thousand of Indonesian pilgrims because they did not receive foods and water supplies during the most crucial moments in the hajj in the most barren land of Mecca (Darmadi: 2010). If, in the process of investigation it found the involvement of the President, then an impeachment is not impossible—a hurking of the success of the House in toppling down Abdurrahman Wahid in 2001 by impeaching him from his presidency.

The House investigated that the recent service quality offered by MORA, Indonesia's sole government body to run the hajj management, was considered to be worsening compared to previous years. But the government, the House said, never learned from mistakes to correct, improve, and increase the quality of implementation of the pilgrimage in the following years (*Kompas*: December 17, 2008; *Pikiran Rakyat*: December 15, 2008).

The House also stated that one of the worse aspects of the Hajj management in 2008 was, for example, that the location of pilgrims housing (*maktab*) was far from Masjidil Haram, Mecca's Grand Mosque. Some of them were in walking distance of 2-4 kilometers but many of these lodgings were located some ten kilometers away from this center of worship. Many pilgrims complained about the difficulties in getting access for praying in the Grand Mosque because of long distance lodgings, the lack of market facilities, lack of water supply and other supporting facilities in the designated maktab because these lodgings were situated in the new area outside Mecca. A number of pilgrims also complained the poor quality of transport services from lodging to a place of pilgrimage after the transportation fleet was not in accordance with the plan as the government promised. During the prayer's peak hours, instead of praying in the mosque, many pilgrims spent their time commuting between maktab and Masjidil Haram, or stuck in the worse traffic somewhere in between (*Koran Tempo*: December 15, 2008).

The regularized factor has also turned the hajj into a routinious activity, creating a largely passive attitude of pilgrims to imposed hajj regulations in Indonesia. Some pilgrims and pilgrimage travel agents I spoke to were fairly skeptical about MORA's monopoly on the hajj, but many of them felt they could not avoid participating in the hajj administration. Through participation, albeit passive, they have been drawn into MORA's advanced regulatory system. The emerging hajj bureaucracy also scrutinizes the classification of pilgrims into "authorized" pilgrims,¹² and "unauthorized" pilgrims.¹³

Another interesting result from the hajj being a regularized ritual is that in recent years, thanks to the hajj quota system, Indonesia with nearly 200 million Muslim population, has become the largest hajj group. A recent survey of the hajj by Harvard researchers suggests that, among others, Indonesian pilgrims have fared quite well, they are known as "well-behaved" and "docile"—submissive pilgrims, who are readily to accept control and instructions, as opposed to, i.e. some Iranian pilgrims who have often been described politically active; i.e. in the past they stood in protests against the US foreign policies and Saudi's ways of handling differences in religion.¹⁴ At this point, it is also interesting to see how the image of Indonesia was often played out between the "positive" image of pilgrims and the "negative" images of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, especially the female domestic workers, known as TKW.¹⁵

As a result of burgeoning hajj bureaucracy of this kind, people's hajj funds (mostly taken from the hajj fees, or *Ongkos Naik Haji*) have virtually become "state funds," at least temporarily managed by the state, until these money are used to pay the actual costs by the pilgrims. For many years, the hajj downpayments paid by the pilgrim candidates have been deposited in the Minister's bank account, legally. In 2009, nearly 900 thousand prospective pilgrims had transferred IDR 18 trillion or nearly US \$ 2 billion into government hajj saving accounts. In many provinces, where hajj seats are usually distributed, prospective pilgrims have to wait three to five years before able to make the hajj. By 2013, in many cities, the waiting list for the hajj is up to 12 years. There have been nearly 2 million Muslims on this hajj waiting list, enabling MORA to accumulate approximately IDR 80 trillion or nearly USD 7 billion from the hajj funds (*Koran Tempo*: January 7, 2013).

In Malaysia's Tabung Haji scheme, the "hajj funds" are normally invested in various economic projects at a rapid rate. In Indonesia, the government, the House and the public still eagerly debate at how the government might be best at using the hajj funds. In Malaysia, despite some accusations of being similar to a Ponzi scheme,¹⁶ the Tabung Haji facilitates people's hajj savings through a variety of financial investments in *shari'ah* compliant vehicles. Thus, while waiting for their turn to go on hajj, Malaysian pilgrims often get financial benefits before embarking to Mecca. But, given the recent escalating political climate, how a "sibling rivalry" between Indonesia and Malaysia intermittently takes place and affects its national policy, it will perhaps take sometime for Indonesia to follow Malaysia's hajj management system. In 2008, during a public seminar on hajj, an Indonesian hajj bureaucrat once explained to me and my informants that the hajj needs a national administration. And, for what it is worth, the hajj is a national project that deserves a national pride, "... it is a matter of losing a national pride,"¹⁷ if Indonesia was to follow the neighbor's hajj system.

The Indonesian government did take an important step to effectively use the hajj funds. In 1995 the Minister of Religion Tarmizi Taher started setting up a governing body to collect the hajj funds, and called it "Dana Abadi Umat"—DAU. While the Indonesian government has continued to provide significant contribution for building its hajj bureaucracy—i.e. recruiting the hajj officials as their civil servants or part-time employees, and providing DPR's approved state supplemental budgets for hajj affairs—these fortunes of DAU, of course, were not obtained from the "state" but from the hajj funds collected and accumulated from downpayments paid by pilgrims or the efficiency savings from the hajj over the years.

But as it turned out, the problem has later become more political than anything else. MORA has gone through its rise and fall because of this fund. In 2004, the newly elected Minister of Religion, Maftuh Basyuni gained much recognition for bringing down, as the news media would call it, the "hajj mafia," in his Ministry that brought two former top managerial personnel for hajj affairs to jail for hajj graft scandals, including its former Minister (Mr. Said Aqil al-Munawwar). But three years later, Basyuni was officially reported to the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) by Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW)

for suspicion of the unlawful use of DAU funds (*Koran Tempo*: April 1, 2011). By law, the unused hajj pilgrimage funds must be kept in one account and used for the benefit of the pilgrims. Despite the general scheme of using the hajj funds mainly taken from its massive bank interests (in Indonesian term, it is commonly called, *diambil bunganya saja*), however, in the previous years there have been allegations that the funds were found to be allocated to pay for a number of other expenditures (i.e. MORA inviting top officials inside or outside the Ministries, the House members—sometimes with their families—to perform the hajj).

Of course, Indonesia is not alone, and not all of problems in the hajj affairs are home affairs. Many people are still enthusiastic to talk about Mecca—perhaps the same Mecca of a decade or even a century ago—something that has been part of folklore about Islamic holiest city. Many would not realize the recent Mecca's makeover; the Saudi Kingdom has invested massive projects to modernize hajj facilities, and what has been going on in Mecca would have tremendous effects at how the hajj is organized, and what it means to be a hajji in the future. In fact, for Indonesia, one of the biggest issues in organizing the hajj is how to respond adequately to this unprecedented changes, and how to communicate them to pilgrims in Indonesia. Since the hajj organization was set up between the host and sending countries, thus the only way to understand the whole chaotic situation of these hajj affairs in Indonesia is by also looking at the current development of the hajj industry in Saudi Arabia and how its government handles the situation for pilgrims.

Remaking Mecca

Seeing Mecca from an old manuscript may be misleading; now most of the old buildings in the city had been razed to the ground to make way for new hajj facilities and the recent major expansion project around the Masjid al-Haram. Extended prayer halls, skyscrapers commercial buildings and pilgrim housing complex are scattered around the Grand Mosque. Some European writers in the 19th and 20th century (Burton: 1874, 1879; C Hurgronje: 2007; Keane: 1881; C. Hurgronje: 1931, 1970) predicted that from topographic viewpoints, the antiquities of Mecca would not endure the test of time. A Bandung regent, a witness to the last years of Sharif of Mecca gave an interesting comment in the

1920s that impoverished middleages old style buildings remained, but the number of pilgrims increased each year (Wiranatakoesoema: 1925; Wiranata Koesoema: 1927).

Then, during the 1980s Mecca saw an unprecedented major makeover. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia showed the Muslim world that he is the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (of Mecca and Medina)—a self-adopted tittle “Khadimat al-Haramain” since 1986, in which he proudly maintained until his death. 1986, the year in which was also the turning point of Saudi’s increasing presence in the Muslim world, indicated by the collapse of oil price and the year the Kingdom began seriously launched the hajj quota system backed by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

In 1982, King Fahd launched one of the biggest restoration projects in Islamic history, giving funds of no less than SR 30 billion (approx. US \$ 8 billion) for the project to build a new religious complex. The current Saudi ruler, King Abdullah does not seem content with what he has seen in Mecca. So in less than two years after taking the throne in 2006, he also began his multi-billion dollar reconstruction projects surrounding the Mecca Holy Mosques with the building of the Jabal Omar and Abraj al-Bait complex, a supertall building in Mecca, which indicates this holiest site of Islam soon to be a skyscraper city.¹⁸ The buildings adjacent to the Masjidil Haram area will become the hotels for the rich people on their hajj (Darmadi: 2008) and this expansion project have major impacts for pilgrim housing in Mecca. Already, some people gave a comparison, and commented that this would turn this Islamic holiest city into a conservative version of Las Vegas.

Recently, a Saudi scholar issued a controversial fatwa that the Grand Mosques should be reconstructed and turned it into a some 30-floor high building. The reasons are not so much for accomodating the increasing numbers of pilgrims, but mostly to ensure full-blown sex-segregation; men and women praying in separate halls and floors. For some conservative Muslims, securing the segregation between male and female pilgrims has been one of the biggest problems, especially in Mecca. According to Shafi’ite madhhab, men cannot touch women’s body even if it is unintentionally so. Although this comes as an anecdote for many, this incident clearly shows the crisscrossing elements of Ulamas, their religious authority, theology, the hajj, and pilgrimage as industry in Saudi.

Many pilgrims were first mesmerized and shocked in awe by this massive building, but soon they realized that, at the end of the day, there is no way that they could stay in these fancy pilgrim housing there during the hajj unless they pay extra dollars. The hajj has become a very expensive project to execute, and with the overall economic condition of pilgrims, the poor and destitute pilgrims have been pushed out; ordinary pilgrims, like some of those of Indonesian hajjis, have become more marginalized, praying and living in the peripheral regions of Mecca. This was what happened to more than one hundred thousand of Indonesian pilgrims in 2008 where they had to endure long distance commute between their lodgings in the remote area some 10 k.m. away and the Grand Mosque to pray five times a day during their pilgrimage because the Saudi had recently demolished 1,400 hotels in the surrounding area of the Grand Mosque giving way to the new skyscrapers and towers just fifty meters away from it.

All these came after the unprecedented implementation of hajj quota system in 1986, issued by the Organization of Islamic Conference in Jordan. According to this rule, the number of pilgrims has to be taken from the ratio one out of one thousand Muslim population in each country. Following this ruling, Saudi Arabia began to rebuild its pilgrimage bureaucracy into a more powerful machine. By the early 1990s, Saudi Arabia has operated a full-pledged Ministry of Hajj affairs, administered by well-educated bureaucrats and professionals¹⁹ and supported by a hierarchial, higher body for pilgrimage issues led by Saudi royal families.

How do these changes influence the hajj organization in countries outside Saudi Arabia? How do these countries respond to this remaking of Mecca and the modernization of hajj facilities? And, what it means for Indonesia hajjis to perform the hajj during such major overhaul? These three questions are very important to consider for both Indonesian pilgrims and Indonesian government. This study suggests that the Indonesian government has adequately responded to such challenges however, the changes in Saudi Arabia were often rather quick than anticipated. Therefore, understanding the external dynamism in hajj affairs in Saudi Arabia is equally important for making senses of internal processes in hajj affairs in Indonesia, including its debate on hajj between the executive and the legislative branches of government.

A Twist Ending?

In the past few years, following the downfall of the New Order authoritarian regime in 1998, optimism about change in state bureaucracy, public administration and enthusiasm for it have predominated among government officials, legislative body members and leading social organizations. Returning to earlier, among the many hajj issues that seem to be at stake especially in the context of hajj bureaucracy, the recent change of hajj regulation from the much-criticized Haji Act of 1999—which gave too much power to the Minister of Religious Affairs—to that of 2008 was fairly anticipated by many to bring a new optimism and fresh air in hajj administration. But months after its release, the question remained: are these changes in state administration of hajj any indication to reform, or is the current ferment in Islam and state relations merely another indication of the same, old rhetoric? Many saw the current changes in hajj legislation as narrow solutions to particular problems in the hajj rather than as a working, solid alternative to the Indonesia's bureaucratic model of hajj administration.

Seven months after the House's approval of *Hak Angket Haji*, after some seventeen House meetings, they came to one final conclusion. On September 29, 2009, in their concluding remarks, recited by Zulkarnaen Djabar, a lawmaker from the Golkar party, in the House Press Conference Room, the committee of the House's *Hak Angket Haji* concluded that MORA had failed to deliver its services. The House also declared that, according to their investigation, MORA's move to invest the hajj funds in *Shari'ah* compliant bond issued by the Indonesian government (sukuk investment), too, violated the law. For that, the House demanded that the government take firm actions against the Minister of Religious Affairs, as the head of MORA (*Kompas*: November 29, 2009; *Detikcom*: November 29, 2008). That was such a bold statement, perhaps one of the most critical statements launched by the House against an active member of the President Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono administration that year.

Bold as it was, however, this important statement was released just three weeks short before President SBY, the incumbent who won a landslide in his second term presidential appointment, announced his new cabinet on October 21, 2009. By this time, media frenzy had been focusing on investigating who would be selected as the new members

of the new elected administration. There is no way that during this time the President would take any action against anything related to the hajj condition. This left pilgrim union organization, hajj NGO activists, and hundred thousands of Indonesian prospective pilgrims in the cold. They remained as enthusiastic but powerless clients of the state hajj program.

The *Hak Angket Haji* had been completed but their recommendation did not receive sufficient responses. Mass media hardly reported this news while most of political commentators ignored it. MORA and the House have successfully “embraced”—to use John Torpey’s concept (Torpey: 1998, 2000) once again—the Muslim population by suggesting that they did what they had to do.

On a rather positive light, the *Hak Angket Haji* made a significant and immediate impact: MORA agreed with the House’s advice to stabilize the hajj fees for 2009 pilgrimage season. Since the public scrutiny involving the members of the House, in 2008, MORA, for the first time in a very long time, did not increase the hajj fees. The declining price of oil might have contributed to the decreasing or stabilized hajj fees, but the strong response from both the House and pilgrim union organizations against the worsening condition of hajj management cannot be ignored; it was perhaps one of the biggest factors.

Concluding Remarks

The government efforts to bring change in hajj administration has paved the way to the increased political importance of Islam in public life, a new style of rhetoric when necessary, a smoke screen for increased state management control at the very least. Large-scale bureaucracy has expanded into every sphere of hajj industry, driving out and dominating communal and traditional forms of hajj organizations. In an increasingly market-oriented economy and heavily administrated by state bureaucracies the hajj has become a ritual that has evolved with such rapid growth that perhaps many have never seen before.

While Sherlock, Robison and Hadiz have argued that the parliament has been the “site of competition between forces from the old order” and the “excluded,” marginalized groups” to direct the newly elected government (Robison and Hadiz: 2004; Sherlock: 2009), this study suggests that the recent case of the hajj affairs has recently been a medium where many groups and parties *exercise* the balance of power.

The hajj's governing body risks losing all of its power if it dithers over the case, but by maintaining the balance power in the government and in decision making, the majority members of the House, using their *Hak Angket Haji*, have cast a signal to their Muslim voters that they did monitor, evaluate and participate in decision making, however ambiguous and contradictory they are.

One specific lesson to be learned is that whatever changes happen in Saudi Arabia, it will automatically affect the preparation and the condition of pilgrims from all countries, including Indonesia. Diplomatic ties between Saudi and Indonesia are not only tightened because the increasing volume of trades, business investments and migrant workers, but also the religion factor (Islam), in which the hajj and umrah obviously stand out. At any rate, while the hajj budget is annually examined by the House back home in Indonesia, more than 70% of all hajj expenditures are usually spent in Saudi Arabia, and because of Indonesian government monopoly on the hajj, any IDR (Indonesian Rupiah) spent by the state in hajj affairs must be transparent, accountable and held responsible.

Endnotes

- An earlier draft of this paper was presented at a panel on “Red, White, and Green? Islam in Indonesian National Politics and Political Culture,” the 2010 Annual Meeting of Association for Asian Studies, Philadelphia, USA, March 25, 2010. My deep appreciation goes to Michael Buehler, Aryo Danusiri, Richard Fox, Noorhaidi Hasan, Ronald Lukens-Bull, Francois Raillon and especially James B. Hoesterey for their insightful comments of the draft. The basis of this work is a dissertation research project between 2007 and 2009 on the rise of pilgrimage bureaucracy in the Muslim world financed by the Wenner-Gren and SSRC, and I am very grateful for their financial supports. I am deeply indebted to Professors Azyumardi Azra, Steve Caton, Byron Good and Mary-Jo Good, Engseeng Ho and Mary Steedly for their advice and guidance. I would like to thank Professors Frederick M. Denny, James Fox, Bruce Lawrence, and James Peacock for their inspiring support. I am also grateful to anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments. The mistakes in this essay are my own.
- 1. Interpelasi Amelz, occurred on October 17, 1951, was considered the first interpellation addressing the issue of hajj in the history of Indonesian parliamentary. The interpellation was initiated by Amelz, a member of the Masjumi Party, who questioned, K.H. Wahid Hasjim (he was also a member of the Masyumi Party Masjumi), following the chaos in the organization of the Hajj, in which the government (MORA) was considered responsible for willfully thwarting the pilgrims departure for health and safety reasons. I am grateful to Kevin W. Fogg for sharing this information and making some important archives on the subject available for this study.
- 2. I would like to thank Professor William R. Liddle and Stephen Sherlock for their reference to this issue of democratic polity among Indonesia’s law-makers. By the same token, Djayadi Hanan, in his study of Indonesian presidentialism has helped me understand the concept of “pork barrel politics” in Indonesia.
- 3. Michael Herzfeld says that bureaucracy as a system is also influenced by other factors such as “local-level ideas about chance, personal character, social relationships and responsibility” (Herzfeld: 1993).
- 4. The hajj, and increasingly the optional pilgrimage called the umrah, have also been perhaps Islam’s most advertised rituals—commercials on TV, radio, text messages—because they constitute a massively lucrative business. In Bandung, an umrah package was offered through customer membership and accumulated points as though it is an airline’s frequent flyer programs.
- 5. In 2005, the government budget for supporting the hajj program was IDR 188,165,698,217 (approximately US \$ 20 million).
- 6. In Indonesia, the sukuk is also called Surat Berharga Syariah Negara (SBSN).
- 7. *Republika*. April 22, 2009.
- 8. *Interview*. Riyadh, May 25, 2007.
- 9. For an excellent and recent study of the NU and Masjumi see Ali Munhanif, “Ties That Would Divide: Explaining the NU’s Exit from Masyumi in 1952,” *Studia Islamika*, Volume 19, No. 2, 2012.
- 10. This is a literal translation of the regulation of the Rights of Inquiry in Indonesia’s House of Representatives as stated as follows: “*Hak Angket adalah hak DPR untuk melakukan penyelidikan terhadap kebijakan pemerintah yang penting dan strategis serta berdampak luas pada kehidupan bermasyarakat dan bernegara yang diduga bertentangan dengan peraturan perundang-undangan.*” Explanation of Article No. 27, Letter C, Act No. 22 of 2003.
- 11. PKB is Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, or the National Awakening Party, a nationalist but Muslim-based political party with the largest constituency from the traditional Muslim organization especially in rural areas of Java.
- 12. Those pilgrims who follow the standardized procedures imposed by Departemen Agama or MORA (i.e. paying the hajj fees as regulated, using the brown hajj passports

- [until 2008 after which the green regular passports are used for the hajj] with hajj visa in accordance with quota etc.).
13. i.e. those non-quota pilgrims who use the green regular passports, or overstay their umrah visas during the month of Ramadhan until the hajj season.
 14. See Clingingsmith, Khwaja and Kremer. 2008. *Estimating the impact of hajj: religion and tolerance in Islam's global gathering*. Cambridge, MA: Center for International Development at Harvard University.
 15. *Tenaga Kerja Wanita* (Female Worker).
 16. A Ponzi scheme is an investment model that appears to be actually paying high returns by paying the supposed returns out of victims' own capital..
 17. *Interview*. Jakarta, August 12, 2008.
 18. Since 2008, Mecca has been set for 130-skyscraper redevelopment. Saudi has build the Abraj al-Bait, a gigantic, sort of 9-buildings-in-1 skyscraper immediately adjacent to the Masjid-al-Haram, which houses the Ka'bah, the holiest site in Islam. This 485 meter high new complex and other construction project are aimed at receiving millions of pilgrims who descend on the modestly sized pilgrimage city for the hajj and umrah.
 19. For example, in 2008 the Saudi Minister of Hajj Affairs was a well-experienced bureaucrat who graduated from Duke University, North Carolina, USA.

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Editorial Office:
STUDIA ISLAMIKA, Gedung Pusat Pengkajian
Islam dan Masyarakat (PPIM) UIN Jakarta,
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لسنة واحدة ٧٥ دولارا أمريكا (للمؤسسة) ونسخة واحدة قيمتها ٢٥
دولارا أميركا، ٥٠ دولارا أمريكا (للفرد) ونسخة واحدة قيمتها ٢٠
دولارا أميركا. والقيمة لا تشمل على النفقة للإرسال بالبريد الجوي.

رقم الحساب:

خارج إندونيسيا (دولار أميركا):

PPIM, Bank Mandiri KCP Tangerang Graha Karnos, Indonesia
account No. 101-00-0514550-1 (USD).

داخل إندونيسيا (روبية):

PPIM, Bank Mandiri KCP Tangerang Graha Karnos, Indonesia
No Rek: 128-00-0105080-3 (Rp).

قيمة الاشتراك السنوي داخل إندونيسيا:

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٤٠,٠٠٠ روبية. والقيمة لا تشمل على النفقة للإرسال بالبريد الجوي.



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مجلة إندونيسيا للدراسات الإسلامية
السنة العشرون، العدد ٣، ٢٠١٣

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السنة العشرون؁ العءء ٣؁ ٢٠١٣



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