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The Hajj, Reinvented:

Pilgrimage, Mobility and Inter-State Organizations in Saudi Arabia and Indonesia

A Dissertation Presented by

Dadi Darmadi

to The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Harvard University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the subject of Anthropology

Cambridge, Massachusetts

April, 2026

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The Hajj, Reinvented: Pilgrimage, Mobility and Inter-State Organizations in Saudi Arabia and Indonesia

Abstract

This dissertation offers an ethnographic study of the Indonesian hajj as a bureaucratized inter-state arena shaped by colonial legacies, major infrastructure projects, and the persistent role of traditional brokers. Drawing on multi-sited fieldwork in Indonesia and Saudi Arabia and extensive archival research, it traces the evolution of hajj administration from the New Order to the establishment of Indonesia's Ministry of Hajj. The study highlights persistent coordination challenges between Indonesian and Saudi authorities, revealing the fragility of governing the world's largest pilgrimage, even as kyais (Islamic scholars) and their networks continue to mediate pilgrims, state regulation, and commercial interests amid quotas, security protocols, and Mecca's urban transformation.The research analyzes bureaucratic practices, transnational coordination strains, and pilgrims' agency during organizational failures. By integrating concepts of liminality and cultural brokerage with studies of religion and power, it advances a "reinvented ritual" framework, illuminating how traditional authority intertwines with modern state governance of sacred mobility.

Keywords: Hajj pilgrimage, mobility, cultural brokerage, ritual reinvention, Saudi–Indonesia interstate governance.

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Glossary of Terms in the Indonesian Hajj System

This glossary provides a comprehensive overview of key terms related to the Indonesian Hajj (pilgrimage) system, as managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama or Kemenag). It draws from official sources such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama or Kemenag) regulations, Undang-Undang No. 8 Tahun 2019 on Hajj and Umrah Organization (amended by UU No. 14 Tahun 2025), and related documents like the Buku Pintar Penyelenggaraan Ibadah Haji. Terms include administrative, financial, organizational, logistical, and ritual aspects, with a focus on Indonesia's unique state-managed system handling the world's largest Hajj quota.Terms are listed alphabetically, prioritizing Indonesian spellings where applicable, followed by English explanations and relevant context.

Glossary

Akomodasi Haji: Hajj Accommodation. Lodging arrangements in Saudi Arabia (e.g., hotels in Mekkah and Madinah, tents in Arafah and Mina), coordinated by PPIH to ensure comfort, proximity to holy sites, and compliance with Saudi standards.

Al-Muaishim: A tunnel in Mina used during Hajj rituals, particularly for movement between sites; Indonesian PPIH provides guidance on safe navigation to avoid overcrowding.

Amphuri: Asosiasi Muslim Penyelenggara Haji dan Umrah Republik Indonesia (Association of Muslim Hajj and Umrah Organizers of the Republic of Indonesia). A professional body for private Hajj organizers, regulated by the ministry.

Armuzna: Collective term for Arafah, Muzdalifah, and Mina—the core ritual sites during Hajj peak. Indonesian teams manage transportation, health, and supplies here for large groups.

Asrama Haji: Hajj Dormitory. Pre-departure facilities in Indonesia for pilgrim orientation, health checks, and manasik training; located at embarkasi points.

Badan Pengelola Keuangan Haji (BPKH): Hajj Financial Management Agency. An independent entity managing Hajj funds, investments, subsidies via Nilai Manfaat, and the Dana Abadi Umat.

Bank Penerima Setoran Biaya Penyelenggaraan Ibadah Haji (BPS BPIH): Receiving Banks for Hajj Organization Costs. Designated Islamic banks (e.g., Bank Syariah Indonesia, Bank Muamalat) for handling initial deposits and final payments through Siskohat.

Biaya Penyelenggaraan Ibadah Haji (BPIH): Cost of Organizing Hajj Worship. Total operational expenses for Hajj, including flights, accommodation, and services; partially subsidized by Nilai Manfaat and funded by pilgrims.

Biaya Perjalanan Ibadah Haji (Bipih): Hajj Travel Cost. The net amount paid by each pilgrim after subsidies; varies by embarkasi (e.g., around IDR 50-60 million for 2026) and includes direct costs like airfare and lodging.

Blocking Time: A scheduled restriction period during Hajj for certain movements or rituals to manage crowds; PPIH informs pilgrims to adhere for safety.

Cabin Crew: Flight attendants on Hajj charter flights; trained by Kemenag to assist elderly or special-needs pilgrims during travel.

Daerah Kerja (Daker): Work Area. Designated operational zones in Saudi Arabia (e.g., Daker Mekkah, Daker Madinah) serving as bases for PPIH coordination, medical services, and pilgrim support.

Dana Abadi Umat (DAU): Perpetual Fund for the Ummah. A portion of Hajj funds preserved by BPKH; principal remains intact, while returns (Nilai Manfaat) fund community welfare programs like education and disaster relief.

Dana Haji: Hajj Funds. Collective deposits from pilgrims managed by BPKH for operational costs, investments, and subsidies.

Dana Setoran Awal Haji: Initial Hajj Deposit. Minimum upfront payment (typically IDR 25-35 million) required for registration to secure a porsi in the waiting list.

Debarkasi Haji: Hajj Debarkation. Arrival points in Indonesia for returning pilgrims, including post-Hajj health screenings and luggage processing.

Direktur Pelayanan Haji Dalam Negeri: Director of Domestic Hajj Services. Oversees pre-departure planning, manasik training, and domestic logistics under the Kementerian Haji dan Umrah.

Direktur Pelayanan Haji Luar Negeri: Director of Overseas Hajj Services. Manages on-site operations in Saudi Arabia, including accommodation, transportation, and ritual support.

Direktorat Jenderal Penyelenggaraan Haji dan Umrah (Ditjen PHU): Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah Organization. Former unit under Kemenag; its functions were transferred to the new Kementerian Haji dan Umrah in 2026.

Embarkasi Haji: Hajj Embarkation Point. Departure airports or facilities in Indonesia (e.g., Soekarno-Hatta in Jakarta, Juanda in Surabaya); 14 main points in 2026, where final checks and training occur.

Haji Furoda / Mujamalah / Non-Kuota: Invitation Hajj / Non-Quota Hajj. A special visa-based Hajj outside the official quota, often for VIPs or through Saudi invitations; not managed by Kemenag but subject to regulations.

Haji Khusus: Special Hajj. Premium option via private organizers (PIHK), offering enhanced services like luxury hotels; allocated 17,680 slots in 2026.

Haji Plus: Enhanced Hajj. Similar to Haji Khusus, with additional amenities; often used interchangeably but regulated separately.

Heat Stroke: A medical emergency from extreme heat during Hajj; TKHI provides prevention training and on-site treatment for Indonesian pilgrims.

Ihram: State of Ritual Consecration. The intention and attire (simple white garments) marking the start of Hajj prohibitions; begins at miqat, with guidance from pembimbing ibadah.

Ifrad: A type of Hajj where pilgrims perform Hajj alone without Umrah; one of the three Hajj methods explained in manasik.

Istita'ah: Capability or Ability. Prerequisite for Hajj, verifying physical, mental, financial, and security fitness; assessed by Kemenag before final payment.

Jemaah Haji: Hajj Pilgrims. Indonesian Muslims undertaking Hajj; grouped into kloters, with special categories like lansia (elderly).

Jemaah Haji Lansia: Elderly Hajj Pilgrims. Pilgrims over 65 receiving priority assistance, such as wheelchairs and dedicated health monitoring.

Kelompok Terbang (Kloter): Flight Group. A unit of 300-450 pilgrims traveling together, led by a ketua kloter.

Kementerian Agama (Kemenag): Ministry of Religious Affairs. Former overseer of Hajj; responsibilities transferred to Kementerian Haji dan Umrah in 2026.

Kementerian Haji dan Umrah (Kemenhaj RI): Ministry of Hajj and Umrah. New dedicated ministry operational from 2026, handling all Hajj and Umrah affairs.

Ketua Kloter: Kloter Leader. PPIH officer managing a flight group's schedule, discipline, and coordination with Saudi authorities.

Ketua Rombongan (Karom): Group Leader. Assists in subgroup management within a kloter, focusing on welfare and daily needs.

Ketua Rombongan Umum (Karu): General Group Leader. Supports non-spiritual tasks like logistics and dispute resolution in subgroups.

Kuota Haji: Hajj Quota. Annual allocation from Saudi Arabia; Indonesia's 221,000 for 2026 is the largest globally, distributed provincially (e.g., Jawa Timur: 42,409).

Manasik Haji: Hajj Rituals Training. Mandatory pre-departure sessions simulating rituals like tawaf and sa'i, led by pembimbing ibadah.

Menteri Agama: Minister of Religious Affairs. Former head overseeing Hajj; role transitioned to Menteri Haji dan Umrah in 2026.

Menteri Haji dan Umrah: Minister of Hajj and Umrah. Head of Kemenhaj RI, responsible for policy, quotas, and operations.

Miqat: Boundary Points. Locations where ihram begins; for Indonesians, often onboard flights or at Yalamlam, with timing guided by TPHI.

Miqat Makani: Spatial Miqat. Specific geographic points for entering ihram.

Miqat Zamani: Temporal Miqat. Time periods when Hajj rituals are valid (e.g., Shawwal to 10 Dzulhijjah).

Mukimin: Long-term Residents. Indonesian diaspora in Saudi Arabia recruited as TEMUS for local knowledge and support.

Nilai Manfaat: Benefit Value. Investment returns from BPKH funds subsidizing BPIH and funding DAU initiatives.

OKI (Organisasi Kerjasama Islam): Organization of Islamic Cooperation. International body influencing Hajj quotas and cooperation; relevant for Indonesia's diplomacy.

ONH (Ongkos Naik Haji): Cost of Going on Hajj. Outdated term for pilgrim fees; replaced by Bipih in modern regulations.

Pembimbing Ibadah: Worship Guide. Spiritual mentors in PPIH teaching manasik, leading prayers, and fostering inner growth, similar to guides in other pilgrimages.

Pembinaan Haji: Hajj Guidance and Development. Series of activities including counseling and training for pilgrims, as defined in ministry guidelines.

Penyelenggara Ibadah Haji Khusus (PIHK): Special Hajj Organizer. Licensed private companies managing Haji Khusus, regulated for quality.

Petugas Haji: Hajj Officers. General term for all PPIH staff supporting pilgrims.

Petugas Kesehatan: Health Officers. Medical personnel providing care, vaccinations, and emergency response.

Petugas Penyelenggara Ibadah Haji (PPIH): Hajj Worship Organizing Officers. Comprehensive team under the ministry, divided into kloter and Saudi-based units.

Porsi Haji: Hajj Portion. Assigned registration number in the waiting list system via Siskohat.

Regu: Squad or Unit. Smaller subgroups within a kloter for ritual and daily management.

Setoran Awal BPIH: Initial BPIH Deposit. First payment for securing a porsi.

Sistem Informasi dan Komputerisasi Haji Terpadu (Siskohat): Integrated Hajj Information and Computerization System. Digital platform for registration, payments, quota tracking, and data management.

Tenaga Musiman (TEMUS): Seasonal Workers. Temporary recruits (e.g., Indonesian students abroad in Middle East, Africa, etc., and mukimin) for Hajj-season support in logistics and communication.

Terminal Haji: Hajj Terminal. Dedicated airport facilities (e.g., Terminal 2F at Soekarno-Hatta) for embarkasi and debarkasi processing.

Thawaf Ifadhah: Obligatory Circumambulation. Key Hajj ritual around the Ka'bah after Arafah; must be performed post-midnight on Eid day.

Tim Kesehatan Haji Indonesia (TKHI): Indonesian Hajj Health Team. Specialized medical unit under petugas kesehatan for outbreaks and chronic care.

Tim Pemandu Haji Indonesia (TPHI): Indonesian Hajj Guidance Team. Operational guides for ritual execution and crowd management.

Waiting List Haji: Hajj Waiting List. Queue system due to oversubscription; waits can be 20-30 years, managed via Siskohat.

Wuquf Arafah: Standing at Arafah. Hajj climax on 9 Dzulhijjah; PPIH provides tents and transport for this obligatory rite.

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PROLOGUE

This study did not originate in an archive, a government office, or an airport departure hall where contemporary Indonesian pilgrims navigate digital check-ins and biometric systems. It began with a conceptual problem that appeared straightforward yet revealed deeper historical and sociological implications: why, within one of the most bureaucratically organized pilgrimage systems in the contemporary Muslim world, do pilgrims continue to rely on religious intermediaries such as a *kyai*?

Each year, hundreds of thousands of Indonesians undertake the Hajj, a mandatory pilgrimage to Mecca that Muslims perform once in their lifetime, within a highly regulated mobility regime. Prospective pilgrims register decades in advance, are subject to quota arrangements negotiated between states, attend standardized instructional programs, and participate in itineraries coordinated at multiple administrative levels. The pilgrimage today is embedded within the operations of ministries, diplomatic missions, airlines, and surveillance infrastructures that link Indonesia to Saudi Arabia.

Yet despite this extensive institutional apparatus, an older form of authority remains central. The religious scholar, whether referred to as *kyai* or *ustaz,* continues to guide, interpret, and mediate the experience of pilgrims. He provides explanations of ritual procedures, addresses uncertainties, and frames the moral meaning of the journey. The persistence of this authority within a complex bureaucratic environment constitutes the empirical and theoretical starting point of this work.

This study is therefore not solely a study of the Hajj as an act of worship and spiritual renewal. It examines the intersection of mobility and governance, the coexistence of spiritual aspiration and bureaucratic regulation, and the interaction between state institutions and long-standing networks of religious knowledge that predate them.

Before the State

Prior to the formation of the Indonesian nation-state, Muslims of the archipelago were already embedded in an expansive Indian Ocean world characterized by circulations of

people, scholarship, and commerce. The pilgrimage was one component of this wider mobility. Students traveled to Mecca to pursue study, often remaining for extended periods and returning with scholarly prestige. Religious teachers established reputations across ports and islands without occupying formal political roles.

Within this earlier configuration, religious authority operated independently of modern state institutions. The emergence of colonial and postcolonial states in the twentieth century did not eliminate these networks; rather, they encountered and gradually restructured them. The adoption of steamships, the creation of consular offices, the imposition of quarantine procedures, and later the development of air travel, visas, and quotas, transformed the pilgrimage into a form of mobility that states could enumerate, regulate, and manage.

These changes, however, did not displace preexisting intermediaries. Instead, they adapted. The *kyai* entered formal advisory committees, served as ritual instructors, and participated in emerging administrative bodies. Religious authority became intertwined with state mechanisms, not by being marginalized, but by being incorporated into new institutional configurations. Analyses of modernity often emphasize the decline of traditional religious authority in the face of bureaucratic governance, standardized procedures, and technical expertise. In such narratives, personal mediation gives way to institutional rationalization. The Indonesian Hajj challenges this assumption.

Administrative expansion has not diminished the role of religious intermediaries; in many respects it has heightened their importance. While pilgrims navigate formal procedures, their sense of confidence and ritual certainty derives from personal trust in religious figures. The state organizes the logistical aspects of movement, but legitimacy continues to flow through networks of teaching, genealogies of scholarship, and moral authority. The pilgrimage thus becomes a productive site for examining how modern Islam is practiced and understood, less as a rupture between tradition and modernity, and more as an ongoing negotiation between them.

This study follows pilgrims, guides, officials, and administrators across a wide range of settings, from preparatory courses in Indonesia and bureaucratic offices to travel agencies, accommodations in Mecca, and the ritual spaces central to the pilgrimage. Seen through these movements, the Hajj does not appear as a single event but as a multilayered process that connects local concerns with national governance and international coordination. It is at once

a personal act of devotion, a national project of citizen management, and a transnational system of regulated mobility. Understanding the Hajj therefore requires an ethnographic approach attentive to these overlapping scales, tracing how individuals and institutions interact across both spiritual and administrative domains.

Reinvented, Not Replaced

The central argument of this work is that modern pilgrimage does not eliminate older forms of authority; it reorganizes them. Ritual practices are standardized, but their meanings are mediated locally. Bureaucracies expand, yet they depend on actors who can translate administrative requirements into moral and religious terms. Authority is neither exclusively governmental nor exclusively religious; it is produced through their interaction.

The *kyai* persists not because the bureaucratic system fails, but because it requires forms of interpretation that cannot be fully institutionalized. Pilgrims must not only be moved efficiently; they must also be assured that the journey remains spiritually meaningful. Between regulation and belief stands the figure of the mediator. The modern Hajj, in this respect, represents not a break with the past but a reconfiguration of longstanding relationships between religious authority and mobility.

This study moves beyond dichotomies that often shape discussions of Islam and modernity: sacred versus secular, tradition versus modernity, state versus community. The Indonesian pilgrimage reveals how these categories intersect. Administrative systems can reinforce devotional practice, while traditional authority can enable state governance. To follow the pilgrims is to observe a social world in which spiritual aspiration is pursued through administrative structures, and where institutional rationality coexists with personal trust. The journey to Mecca is simultaneously a passage through ritual, regulation, and interpretation.

The chapters that follow trace this composite journey, not from the Kaaba or the airport, but from the moment a pilgrim seeks guidance and discovers that, even within a globalized regime of mobility, faith continues to travel through the hands and voices of people.

Contemporary Indonesians often associate the administration of the Hajj with state institutions, registration systems, quotas, bureaucratic procedures, and the regulatory framework of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. However, long before the Indonesian state existed, and well before modern travel documentation and governmental oversight shaped the pilgrimage, Indonesian religious scholars had already engaged in efforts to safeguard the welfare of pilgrims at an international level.

In the late 1920s, during a period when the Indonesian archipelago remained under Dutch colonial rule, a group of kyais (traditional Islamic scholars) undertook what may be considered one of the earliest forms of international religious diplomacy by Indonesians. Operating through the Hijaz Committee, leading figures of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) traveled to meet Abdulaziz Ibn Saud, the newly established ruler of the Hijaz. Their mission centered on securing the religious rights and physical safety of Southeast Asian pilgrims in Mecca and Medina.

During the 1920s, Indonesians performed the Hajj as colonial subjects, classified within Dutch administrative categories such as “Javanese,” “Sumatran,” or simply “natives.” No independent national authority existed to provide legal or consular protection. Consequently, pilgrims faced a range of vulnerabilities: lengthy and hazardous sea journeys, unclear fees, exploitation by intermediaries, and shifting regulatory practices in Arabia.

The political and religious reconfiguration of the Hijaz following the Saudi conquest introduced further concerns, particularly regarding the continuity of Sunni traditions familiar to Southeast Asian Muslims. For Indonesian ulama, these issues were not merely doctrinal. The kyai’s social role—as a teacher, moral guide, and community protector—meant that the Hajj was regarded as both a religious obligation and a collective responsibility requiring active oversight.

In 1928, NU appointed two delegates, led by Abdul Wahhab Chasbullah, to convey a series of requests to the Saudi ruler. These demands reflected the intellectual foresight of Indonesian ulama at the time. They called for transparent and standardized pilgrimage costs that would protect pilgrims from financial exploitation; the preservation of historical sites associated with Islamic devotional practices so that customary forms of visitation could continue; formal recognition of the four Sunni legal schools to ensure the ongoing legitimacy

of Southeast Asian religious traditions; and the establishment of written regulations governing the pilgrimage, which would introduce consistency and limit arbitrary authority.

Although the meeting with the King was brief, it marked a significant intervention in the shaping of Hajj governance. Through this encounter, the kyais articulated principles that today correspond to administrative transparency, legal certainty, and the protection of religious diversity within the broader Sunni tradition.This story is notable not only because religious scholars engaged in diplomacy, but because they did so in the absence of an Indonesian state capable of representing Muslims internationally. The Hijaz Committee functioned, in effect, as an informal foreign mission. The kyais spoke on behalf of millions of Muslims who shared a regional religious identity but lacked national political representation.

Thus, religious authority temporarily filled the vacuum left by the absence of political sovereignty. This pattern is visible in other areas of Indonesian history: pesantren networks facilitated education before state systems existed; ulama organized charitable initiatives long before formal social-welfare institutions emerged; and, in the case of the Hajj, they provided international advocacy prior to the development of diplomatic channels.

Following independence, the establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs formalized responsibilities that ulama had previously undertaken. Among its most prominent functions was the administration of the Hajj, encompassing quotas, logistical arrangements, and the protection of Indonesian pilgrims abroad. Historically, this institutional framework represents a continuation rather than a departure. What was once negotiated informally by a small group of religious leaders eventually became systematized within the state bureaucracy. Although contemporary administrative processes are frequently criticized for inefficiency or complexity, they reflect the expansion of responsibilities necessitated by the dramatic growth in the number of Indonesian pilgrims.

Despite the presence of modern state institutions, the role of kyais remains integral. They continue to instruct pilgrims, provide ritual guidance, mediate community concerns, and influence public perceptions of government policy. The effectiveness of Hajj governance still depends on both administrative competence and religious legitimacy—an interplay that has deep historical roots in Indonesia.

The 1928 initiative demonstrates that the governance of the Hajj in Indonesia has always been shaped by a partnership between moral authority and institutional power. The contributions of kyais remain essential to maintaining community trust and ensuring that policy aligns with religious expectations. Nearly a century ago, Indonesian scholars undertook a transoceanic journey to advocate for the dignity and safety of pilgrims in a region they did not control politically. They acted without diplomatic recognition or state support, relying instead on communal responsibility and religious authority.

Today's complex administrative system, from digital databases, lengthy waiting lists, to formal regulations, rests upon foundations laid by those early efforts. The underlying principle has remained consistent: the Hajj is not solely a personal act of devotion but a collective endeavor requiring protection and governance. Indonesian kyais recognized this long before independence, and their legacy continues to shape Indonesia's engagement with the pilgrimage.

The Long Arc of the Kyai Networks in Indonesian Hajj Governance

President Prabowo Subianto officially inaugurated Mochamad Irfan Yusuf as Indonesia's first Minister of Hajj and Umrah on Monday, 8 September 2025, at the State Palace in Jakarta. Irfan Yusuf, widely known as Gus Irfan, previously served as head of the Hajj Management Agency (BP Haji) since October 2024. At the same time, Dahnil Anzar Simanjuntak was appointed Deputy Minister of Hajj and Umrah. The new ministry was established following the amendment to Law No. 8 of 2019 on Hajj and Umrah Services, which was approved by the House of Representatives in August 2025. The Indonesian Association of Muslim Hajj and Umrah Organizers (AMPHURI) welcomed the formation of the ministry, expressing hope that it will strengthen governance, improve services for pilgrims, support the national hajj and umrah industry, and enhance Indonesia's diplomatic standing with Saudi Arabia.

The inauguration of KH. Mochamad Irfan Yusuf (Gus Irfan) as Indonesia's first Minister of Hajj and Umrah marked an important institutional development in the state's management of pilgrimage affairs. While it appeared to be a contemporary administrative innovation, the event also resonates with a much longer historical trajectory. The role of religious scholars in overseeing the welfare of Indonesian pilgrims predates the establishment

of the Indonesian state and extends back to the early twentieth century, when kyais undertook transnational advocacy on behalf of their communities.

Gus Irfan belongs to a prominent lineage within Indonesian Islam. As the grandson of Hasyim Asy'ari (also known as K.H. Hasjim Asj‘ari), the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, he was raised within the intellectual and institutional milieu of Pondok Pesantren Tebuireng, Jombang, East Java, a pesantren historically associated with religious authority and social influence. His educational and professional trajectory reflects both continuity and adaptation: formal studies at Universitas Brawijaya, doctoral training at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, involvement in NU’s organizational structures, political engagement through the Gerindra Party, leadership of the Hajj Organizing Agency, and ultimately appointment to ministerial office. While these developments correspond to the career of a contemporary political figure, they also echo earlier patterns in which ulama occupied roles that bridged religious leadership and public administration.

A relevant historical precedent can be found in the 1928 mission of the Komite Hijaz. In that year, NU dispatched two emissaries to meet King Abdul Aziz al-Saud, the new ruler of the Hijaz. Their delegation did not represent a sovereign state, Indonesia had not yet achieved independence, but rather a transregional religious community.

The committee’s objectives included seeking assurances regarding pilgrims’ safety, protection of established devotional practices, recognition of the four Sunni legal schools, and administrative clarity concerning pilgrimage procedures. These efforts constituted an early form of transnational religious diplomacy, undertaken at a time when Southeast Asian Muslims lacked formal political representation. In many respects, the foundations of Indonesian Hajj governance were laid by ulama rather than by state institutions.

The State Arrives, but the Traditional Authority Remains

Following independence in 1945, the Indonesian government institutionalized religious affairs through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which assumed responsibility for Hajj logistics, visa processes, and international coordination. However, the emergence of the

ministry did not diminish the authority of kyais. Instead, state structures often relied on religious legitimacy rooted in pesantren networks.

This institutional configuration, bureaucratic management supported by ulama authority, has remained a distinctive feature of Indonesian governance. The formation of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in 2025 reflects a continuation of this arrangement rather than a departure from it. The appointment of a pesantren-based figure such as Gus Irfan reinforces the historical pattern in which ulama participate directly in the administration of pilgrimage affairs.

The Hajj involves more than logistical coordination across borders; it is a religious undertaking grounded in ritual validity and doctrinal trust. Pilgrims regularly seek guidance on matters such as the correctness of rituals and the preservation of established religious traditions. In Indonesia, these assurances have historically been mediated through ulama associated with pesantren and NU networks. (Darmadi, 2018a).

The Komite Hijaz articulated these concerns on an international stage in the 1920s, and contemporary institutions continue to operationalize similar principles through regulatory policy. Although the mechanisms have shifted, from personal diplomatic missions to formalized ministries, the underlying reliance on ulama authority remains consistent.

Gus Irfan's ministerial role embodies the convergence of several historical layers. It reflects the enduring influence of pre-state Islamic authority rooted in pesantren traditions and the legacy of early NU leadership. It also illustrates the nation-state's incorporation of religious leadership, a pattern visible in the collaborative relationship between ulama and government institutions after independence. At the same time, his position aligns with contemporary forms of bureaucratic governance, characterized by the technocratic management of pilgrimage services in the twenty-first century. His appointment shows that, in the Indonesian context, the modernization of religious administration does not displace traditional authority; rather, it integrates that authority into the formal structures of the state.

Viewed across a century, the evolution of Indonesian Hajj governance traces a clear historical arc. It begins in 1928, when the Komite Hijaz undertook diplomatic negotiations on behalf of Southeast Asian pilgrims. After independence in 1945, the Ministry of Religious Affairs assumed responsibility for the national administration of the Hajj, institutionalizing

functions that had previously been carried out informally by religious scholars. By 2025, the establishment of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah marked a further expansion and formalization of services, reflecting the demands of an increasingly globalized pilgrimage system.

Despite these shifts in institutional structure, the underlying principle has remained consistent: the governance of the Hajj rests on a partnership between state administration and religious authority. The appointment of Gus Irfan highlights the enduring significance of kyais in managing a national religious obligation that is at once spiritual, social, and administrative. Nearly a century after the Komite Hijaz journeyed to the Arabian Peninsula, its legacy continues, now embedded within the framework of a dedicated ministry. The institutional form has evolved, yet the core logic of guardianship persists.

The chapters that follow open a view onto a world in which pilgrimage, governance, and mobility converge in unexpected ways.This study traces how Indonesian and Saudi institutions have transformed one of Islam's oldest devotional practices into a vast, transnational system of regulation and coordination, yet one that remains deeply embedded in moral authority, personal trust, and ritual meaning. By following pilgrims, bureaucrats, kyais, and policymakers across both countries, this study reveals how the Hajj is continually reshaped through negotiations between spiritual aspiration and administrative power. Rather than treating pilgrimage as a static ritual or a purely logistical undertaking, this research uncovers the intricate social, political, and religious dynamics that animate it from village registration offices to the heart of Mecca.

At its core, this thesis argues that the modern Hajj is neither a break from the past nor a straightforward expression of bureaucratic rationalization. It is a living system reinvented across generations, a system in which Indonesian ulama once acted as proto-diplomats, in which states now manage millions of bodies in motion, and in which pilgrims continue to rely on intermediaries who translate regulation into religious certainty. By tracing these continuities and transformations, the chapters ahead demonstrate that pilgrimage today is produced through collaboration, tension, and mutual dependence between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. What follows reveals how the movement of pilgrims is transformed into governance, how governance influences devotional practice, and how the Hajj continues to take on renewed significance in our time.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, stands as one of the most profound rituals in Islam, combining spiritual devotion with intricate social, political, and economic dimensions. This thesis approaches the hajj from an anthropological perspective, focusing on Indonesian pilgrims and the networks that connect them to Saudi Arabia. It examines how pilgrimage is shaped by mobility, inter-state organization, and the interplay between religious aspirations and bureaucratic systems. By situating the hajj within processes of modernization, marketization, and state regulation, this study explores how religious motivations and experiences intersect with institutional arrangements and cultural politics.

The point of departure for this inquiry is the 2006 food crisis among Indonesian pilgrims in Mina. This episode, which exposed systemic failures in service delivery, serves as a lens through which to understand the broader dynamics of hajj administration and its implications for state governance of religion. It raises fundamental questions about the meaning of pilgrimage in contemporary Indonesia. What does it mean to be a haji today? How do pilgrims reconcile the promise of spiritual renewal with organizational shortcomings that sometimes result in suffering and death? Does such failure alter the significance of the hajj, or does it reinforce notions of martyrdom and divine testing? These questions frame the discussion of how the hajj is imagined, experienced, and managed in a modern context.

The introduction develops several interconnected themes. It considers religious motivation and experience, particularly how Indonesian Muslims conceptualize the hajj as a means of spiritual purification and moral renewal. It examines the impact of modernization projects in Mecca and the challenges posed by urban development and infrastructural change. It explores popular concepts such as *haji mabrur*—the ideal pilgrimage—and *badal haji*, or proxy pilgrimage, alongside the proliferation of diverse hajj services ranging from state-sponsored programs to luxury packages. Finally, it addresses the networks of mediation that sustain the pilgrimage, focusing on the role of religious scholars, or Kyais, and their evolving position as spiritual guides, brokers, and intermediaries between pilgrims, state bureaucracies, and transnational institutions.

This thesis argues that the hajj, far from being a purely individual act of piety, is embedded in a web of social relations and institutional arrangements that shape its meaning and practice. Through ethnographic observation, textual analysis, and historical inquiry, the study engages with debates on ritual, pilgrimage, and the state, situating the Indonesian experience within global Islamic discourses. It draws on theories of mediation, agency, and cultural brokerage to illuminate how figures such as Kyais operate as intermediaries, teachers, spiritual guides, and, increasingly, brokers in the hajj industry, while remaining accessible to the broader Muslim community.

The introduction sets the stage for the chapters that follow. Chapter One examines the historical and conceptual foundations of Kyais' authority and their evolving role in hajj networks, beginning with the story of Komite Hejaz and its engagement with King Ibn Saud in 1928. Chapter Two turns to contemporary actors, the so-called "Street Boys of Mecca,"and their informal brokerage systems. Subsequent chapters trace the interplay between state regulation, market forces, and religious aspirations, culminating in a conclusion that revisits the central question: what does it mean to be a haji in today's Indonesia?

Kyais, Pilgrims, and Hajj Networks

This chapter introduces the central actors and networks that shape the organization of the hajj in Indonesia and its connections to Saudi Arabia. At its core is the concept of leadership and mediation in pilgrimage and religion, explored through figures such as the Kyai, the muṭawwif, and the ustadh/ustadhah. These roles are not merely functional; they embody authority, spiritual guidance, and cultural brokerage within Islamic practice. The chapter begins with a historical and conceptual analysis of these terms, situating them within broader debates on religious leadership and intermediation. The notion of *tawassul*, intercession and mediation, serves as a key analytical lens, highlighting how leaders become muṭawwifs and assume responsibilities that extend beyond ritual guidance to encompass social, economic, and political dimensions.

The organization of this chapter takes the Komite Hejaz story of 1928 as its entry point. This episode, in which two emissaries from the Dutch East Indies traveled to meet King Ibn Saud, illustrates the deep historical ties between Indonesian ulama and the Hejaz, as

well as their concerns over religious freedom and pilgrimage practices amid shifting geopolitical realities. Through this narrative, the chapter connects the hajj to questions of religious authority in Indonesia and the evolving role of Kyais and their networks. It also introduces a critical puzzle: the diminishing influence of the Ulama Nusantara in the wake of Saudi control over the Hejaz, contrasted with the flourishing prominence of Sheikh hajjis and their institutionalized roles in the pilgrimage industry.

The chapter sets the stage for subsequent discussions by tracing how the hajj has transformed from an individual act of piety into a significant component of state performance. Contrary to assumptions that traditional Islamic leaders such as Kyais have lost relevance in the face of modern, globalized Islam, this study demonstrates their enduring and adaptive presence. Kyais remain central to the organization of pilgrimage, mediating between lay Muslims, state bureaucracies, and transnational networks. Their authority is not static; it evolves through engagement with the hajj economy, educational institutions, and political structures.

Two themes introduced here recur throughout the thesis. The first concerns the organizers of the hajj and the institutional frameworks that sustain pilgrimage. The second examines pilgrims' perspectives on the hajj and its organization, viewed through the lens of religious experience. These themes converge in an analysis of the interconnected links among religion, agency, and society—Islam as doctrine, fiqh as interpretation, and fellowship as embodied in santri communities. The discussion also considers the relationship between the hajj and local pilgrimage practices in Indonesia, contrasting the orthodox observance of hajjis with the orthopraxy of non-hajjis who venerate sacred sites in Java and beyond.

The chapter then turns to the historical evolution of hajj networks and the figures who animate them. It explores the role of Kyais as religious guides and organizers, alongside their descendants and affiliates such as the Walad Shari,ʿthe "Street Boys of Mecca,"and institutions like Pesantren Gontor. It examines the networks of muṭawwifs, including Hadhramis from Yemen and their descendants in Southeast Asia, whose influence spans the Indian Ocean and the Hejaz. These actors, historically known as Sheikh Haji, Wakil Haji, and muṭawwifs, have long operated as recruiters, managers, and brokers in the pilgrimage industry. The discussion also highlights the Ulama Nusantara, a scholarly network whose members, after years of study in the Hejaz, became prominent teachers and spiritual

authorities across the Indonesian archipelago, from Banten and Padang to Lombok, Java, and Madura, figures such as Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani and Sheikh Yasin ibn Isa al-Fadani.

Finally, the chapter argues that the world of Kyais has expanded beyond the sphere of religious authority into domains shaped by social, economic, and political imperatives. While Kyais continue to function as teachers and spiritual guides, Guru, Tuan Guru, Buya, ʿAlim, they also operate as intermediaries and brokers within the hajj economy. Their role exemplifies the concept of *ulama wa umara* (scholars and rulers), positioning them as patrons of the state while remaining accessible to ordinary Muslims. This duality invites a rethinking of theoretical models of leadership and mediation in religion, drawing on anthropological concepts of agency, middlemen, and cultural brokerage as discussed by Clifford Geertz. At the heart of this analysis is the enduring significance of intermediation in Islamic practice, particularly through *tawassul*, which frames the Kyai not only as a spiritual guide but as a mediator between the sacred and the social.

Street Boys of Mecca

This chapter turns from the historical and conceptual analysis of Kyais in Chapter One to a contemporary ethnographic account of non-state actors who operate within the hajj economy. These actors, often referred to as *pembimbing jemaah* or muṭawwifs, function as intermediaries, brokers, and guides for Indonesian pilgrims navigating the complex terrain of pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. Among their peers, they are colloquially known as the "Street Boys of Mecca," a term derived from *Walad Shariʿ*, meaning "street boys." This Creole expression emerged from a linguistic blend of Indonesian, regional languages of the archipelago, and Arabic, reflecting the hybrid cultural environment in which these middlemen work. Fluent in multiple languages, they occupy a liminal space between formal institutions and informal networks, mediating between pilgrims, bureaucracies, and the pilgrimage fields of Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina.

The chapter examines these independent groups of young pilgrimage guides who operate as a "go-between" workforce. They represent a modern evolution of the muṭawwif institution, functioning alongside travel agencies, religious scholars who have shifted from teaching to guiding pilgrims—often branded as "Ustadh Travel"—and state-sponsored

pilgrim guides. In recent years, additional networks have emerged from Majlis Taklim, women's religious study groups led by Ustadhah, female teachers who now play visible roles in organizing pilgrimage tours. These developments illustrate the diversification of hajj-related services and the growing prominence of private actors in the pilgrimage economy. My aim here is to analyze the roles of these non-state actors and their relationship to the broader hajj administration.

The profession of muṭawwif is not new. For centuries, Arabs and non-Arab communities in the Hejaz have sustained careers as guides, caretakers, concierges, and porters, passing these roles down through generations. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, colonial administrations such as the British and Dutch alternately collaborated with and opposed muṭawwif establishments, underscoring the political significance of these networks. What is striking today is how the institution of the muṭawwif has adapted to modern conditions, taking on new forms and functions while retaining its core role as mediator.

Despite the complexity and diversity of these networks, they remain deeply connected to the figure of the Kyai. Many members of the Street Boys of Mecca are direct or indirect descendants of Kyais, e.g., sons, sons-in-law, brothers, and brothers-in-law, or former students and followers from pesantren communities. Certain pesantrens have cultivated particularly strong hajj networks. Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor in Ponorogo and Pesantren Banyu Anyar in Madura stand out as major players. Graduates of Gontor often enter the higher end of the hajj industry, managing premium packages such as Hajj Plus and Ramadan Umrah after completing studies at Islamic colleges in Jakarta, Mecca, or Medina. As Gontor expands its influence, its alumni increasingly occupy positions within the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), especially during periods of leadership by figures such as Maftuh Basyuni, himself a Gontor graduate. Others leverage their connections to work as middlemen in travel agencies, liaising with Saudi embassies and corporate entities.

By contrast, graduates of Pesantren Banyu Anyar typically lack advanced academic credentials but maintain strong informal ties through the long-standing Madurese migrant community in Saudi Arabia. These networks enable them to enter Mecca and dominate sectors such as catering, housing, and cargo—critical components of the hajj economy. Religious affiliations, whether traditionalist or modernist, shape these networks and influence their modes of operation. Through these examples, the chapter demonstrates that Kyai

networks remain integral to the modern hajj administration and bureaucracy, even as their roles evolve in response to changing economic and political conditions.

Hajj Bureaucracy

This chapter examines the intersection of state power and religious practice through the bureaucratization of the hajj in Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. It explores how pilgrimage, once an individual act of devotion, has become deeply embedded in state structures and political economies. The hajj is not only a ritual obligation but also a site of governance, resource allocation, and symbolic authority. For emerging states with centralized regimes, organizing the hajj represents a strategic means of consolidating power and controlling economic flows. In Indonesia, the management of pilgrimage has long been considered a significant political and economic resource, and its administration reflects broader patterns of state formation and religious politics.

The discussion begins by situating the hajj bureaucracy within the social and political conditions that shaped its development in both Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. These conditions include the quest for political legitimacy, the consolidation of authority, and the institutionalization of religious practices. The chapter traces the historical trajectory of state involvement in pilgrimage, linking modern bureaucratic structures to earlier colonial arrangements under Dutch, British, and Ottoman rule. It then turns to the post-independence period in Indonesia, where the Guided Democracy of the late Soekarno era introduced the concept of a "guided economy." During this time, major industries and enterprises were nationalized, and state bureaucrats assumed control over key sectors, including the hajj. By the 1970s, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Departemen Agama) had emerged as the sole authority responsible for regulating, implementing, and supervising pilgrimage—a transformation that positioned the hajj as a critical domain of political power.

The chapter also examines the 1987 introduction of the hajj quota system, which formalized the allocation of pilgrimage slots and intensified the bureaucratic apparatus surrounding the hajj. This system not only reinforced state control but also created new opportunities for patronage, brokerage, and clientelism. The analysis highlights the interpenetration of state and non-state actors within this system, including Kyais, hajj training

organizations (Kelompok Bimbingan Ibadah Haji or KBIH), travel agencies, and informal brokers. Many of these actors occupy dual roles as religious leaders and bureaucrats, blurring the boundaries between spiritual authority and administrative power. The chapter asks: How do these actors gain access to the hajj bureaucracy? How do they define themselves within this institutional framework? And how are they perceived by others?

Central to this discussion is the cultural politics of pilgrimage, the ways in which hajj administration becomes a site of negotiation between religion, economics, and political authority. The rise of KBIH groups illustrates this dynamic. Initially conceived as training organizations to prepare pilgrims for the hajj, KBIH has evolved into a lucrative enterprise and a mechanism for extending social and religious influence. For Kyais and their networks, KBIH represents both an economic resource and a political instrument. The chapter interrogates whether these organizations function as "money machines" for religious elites and how their growth reflects broader shifts in Islamic authority. It also considers the gendered dimensions of this transformation, particularly the emergence of female religious leadership within Majlis Taklim groups and their role in organizing pilgrimage, a development that signals a significant demographic shift in Islamic authority.

The analysis further explores the institutional ties between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Islamic educational establishments such as pesantrens and madrasahs. These connections underscore the enduring influence of Kyais within the hajj bureaucracy. Many elite officials in the Ministry have familial or educational ties to Kyais, and several Ministers of Religion have themselves been prominent Kyais. Figures such as K.H. Wahid Hasyim, K.H. Masjkur, K.H. Fakih Usman, and K.H. Muhammad Ilyas dominated the ministry during the Old Order, reflecting the prominence of traditionalist Islam (Nahdlatul Ulama) in state religious affairs. The New Order regime, however, reconfigured this landscape by appointing ministers from modernist backgrounds (Muhammadiyah) and military-linked elites, diminishing the direct influence of Kyais. The last Kyai to hold the ministerial position was K.H. M. Tholhah Hasan during the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid (1999–2001). These shifts reveal the contested terrain of religious authority within the state and its implications for hajj governance.

By analyzing the bureaucratization of the hajj, this chapter illuminates the interplay between ritual, politics, and economy in contemporary Indonesia. It argues that the hajj bureaucracy is not merely an administrative structure but a cultural and political institution

that mediates relationships between state and society, tradition and modernity, and local and transnational networks. Through this lens, the chapter contributes to broader debates on the anthropology of the state, the commodification of ritual, and the negotiation of religious authority in an era of globalization.

The Hajj as a Contested Space

This chapter examines the hajj as a contested space where state authority and private enterprise intersect, compete, and collaborate. Building on the previous chapters' discussion of Kyais, non-state actors, and bureaucratic structures, this section explores how these dynamics materialize in the organization of pilgrimage. It interrogates the elasticity of the modern state in managing religious affairs, asking fundamental questions: What is the state in the context of the hajj? When pilgrims navigate state-administered regulations, who do they encounter? Does the state they meet in Mecca resemble the one they know at home? And how does this shifting presence manifest in the terminals of Jeddah, the crowded streets of Mecca, and the temporary housing complexes of Medina?

The chapter begins with the thorny issue of hajj transportation, a recurring source of tension between state and private actors since the 1970s. Garuda Airlines, backed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, became the centerpiece of state efforts to modernize hajj travel, replacing maritime routes with air transport. This transition marked a profound cultural shift, as pilgrims accustomed to seafaring traditions—long associated with cosmopolitan Muslim networks—were compelled to adopt the norms of modern aviation. The idealized vision of a pure, unmediated pilgrimage collided with the realities of bureaucratic regulation and market-driven logistics, revealing the complexities of state intervention in religious practice.

To understand these tensions, the chapter turns to the historical roots of hajj transportation in the nineteenth century. It revisits the scandal involving J.G.M. Herklots and Firma Knowles & Co. in Batavia, whose fraudulent practices in the 1890s left thousands of pilgrims stranded and defrauded. These early controversies underscore the enduring vulnerability of pilgrims to exploitation and the ambiguous role of private intermediaries in pilgrimage economies. The discussion then moves to P.T. Arafat, a private shipping company that struggled to maintain its position before Garuda's state-backed dominance in the 1970s.

This shift illustrates how state intervention reconfigured the pilgrimage industry, displacing older maritime networks and embedding the hajj within national development agendas.

The chapter also examines the collapse of P.T. Tiga Utama during the 1999 hajj season, a dramatic episode that unfolded in the aftermath of Indonesia's economic crisis. Unable to cover skyrocketing airfare costs, the company left hundreds of ONH Plus pilgrims stranded in Jeddah, with unpaid hotel bills and abandoned guides. The Indonesian government, through its consulate and ONH Plus associations, intervened to repatriate the pilgrims, reinforcing demands for stronger state oversight. This case highlights the fragility of private operators and the persistent expectation that the state will act as guarantor of religious obligations, even when privatization dominates the hajj economy.

The chapter concludes by revisiting the 2006–2007 food crisis, using it to illustrate the state's adaptive strategies in the face of privatization pressures. While the state asserts authority through regulation and control, it also demonstrates flexibility by outsourcing services and incorporating non-state actors into its apparatus. Doctors, students, and guides, formally private individuals, are temporarily recruited as state personnel during the hajj season, creating a category of "pseudo-state" actors. These arrangements reveal a state that is neither rigid nor monolithic but capable of reframing its identity to maintain legitimacy and respond to market demands.

Through these cases, the chapter argues that the hajj is not merely a ritual journey but a political and economic arena where authority is negotiated and redefined. The state's ability to collaborate with private actors without relinquishing power underscores its resilience and adaptability. By examining the contested space of pilgrimage, this chapter contributes to broader debates on the anthropology of the state, privatization of religious services, and the commodification of ritual in contemporary Muslim societies.

The Remaking of Mecca

This chapter offers an ethnographic and historical account of Mecca's transformation into a modern pilgrimage city, situating this process within broader themes of bureaucratization, neoliberal development, and the changing experience of pilgrims. Mecca, long imagined as a

timeless sacred center, has undergone dramatic physical and social restructuring over the past four decades. These changes have not only altered the city's skyline but have also reshaped the nature of pilgrimage, creating new tensions between state-driven modernization and the lived realities of ordinary pilgrims.

The remaking of Mecca began in earnest during the 1980s under King Fahd, who adopted the title *Khadim al-Haramain,* Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, in 1986. This symbolic gesture coincided with a turning point in Saudi Arabia's global religious presence, marked by the oil price collapse and the introduction of the hajj quota system under the Organization of Islamic Conference. In 1982, King Fahd launched one of the largest restoration projects in Islamic history, allocating approximately US $8 billion to expand and modernize the sacred precinct. These efforts were framed as acts of piety and service to the Muslim world, yet they also signaled the increasing convergence of religious authority and state power.

The pace of transformation accelerated under King Abdullah, who initiated a multi-billion-dollar redevelopment project in 2006. The construction of the Jabal Omar complex and the Abraj al-Bait towers—dominating the skyline with supertall structures, redefined Mecca as a global city. Former landmarks such as Gaza Street, known to Indonesian pilgrims as *Pasar Seng*, were erased as older neighborhoods were demolished to make way for luxury hotels, commercial centers, and extended prayer halls. By 2009, much of the historic urban fabric surrounding the Grand Mosque had vanished, replaced by high-rise developments catering to affluent pilgrims. These changes have rendered the hajj increasingly inhospitable to the poor, pushing low-income pilgrims to peripheral zones and reinforcing socio-economic stratification within the sacred landscape.

This transformation reflects a neoliberal shift in pilgrimage governance, where market logics intersect with religious obligations. The rise of year-round *umrah* packages exemplifies this trend. Once considered an optional ritual, *umrah* has become a booming industry, filling the spiritual gap created by the seasonal restrictions of the hajj and reshaping the demographic composition of Mecca and Medina. Migrant workers, students, and expatriates now populate these cities in unprecedented numbers, blurring the boundaries between pilgrimage and labor migration.

The remaking of Mecca has also generated new opportunities for Indonesian actors within transnational religious networks. Students from pesantren backgrounds, many funded by Saudi scholarships, increasingly participate in the pilgrimage economy. While some return home as teachers and religious scholars, others leverage their linguistic skills and Saudi experience to work as guides, translators, and brokers in hajj-related businesses. This trend extends beyond Saudi Arabia to other Middle Eastern educational hubs such as Cairo, Khartoum, and Tunis, where Indonesian students supplement their studies by serving as pilgrimage facilitators. For many, a single hajj season provides sufficient income to cover tuition and living expenses for an entire year.

Parallel to these developments, the long-established *mukimin* communities, descendants of Nusantara scholars who settled in the Hejaz, have consolidated their economic position. Families once known for their scholarly lineage now manage hotels, supervise housing complexes, and invest in real estate, while continuing to operate within the centuries-old tawafa system. The simplification of names from al-Bantani to Banten or al-Falimbani to Felimban symbolizes both assimilation and the pragmatic adaptation of these communities to modern Saudi society.

These shifts underscore a profound reconfiguration of the Ulama Nusantara networks. What was once a scholarly orientation toward Middle Eastern learning has evolved into a commercially inflected engagement with pilgrimage economies. The hajj and *umrah* industries have become sites of employment, entrepreneurship, and cultural production, as evidenced by the proliferation of hajj memoirs, religious magazines, and Arabic texts translated into Indonesian. This commodification of pilgrimage experience reflects broader patterns of globalization, where sacred spaces are reimagined through the lens of capital and consumption.

Ultimately, the remaking of Mecca reveals a paradox. For the Saudi state, these transformations represent monumental achievements—a testament to its custodianship of Islam's holiest sites. For many pilgrims, however, they signify a loss: the erosion of historical intimacy, the marginalization of the poor, and the commercialization of devotion. This chapter argues that Mecca has become a field of collision, where competing visions of modernity, piety, and profit converge, producing new forms of inequality and new modalities of religious practice.

The Hajj, the State and the Politics of Failure

This chapter addresses the politics of failure in the administration of the hajj, focusing on the intersection of bureaucracy, technology, and the lived experience of pilgrims. It examines how logistical breakdowns, infrastructural shortcomings, and organizational mismanagement have produced crises that reverberate across national and transnational contexts. These failures are not isolated accidents; they are symptomatic of the structural complexities inherent in managing one of the largest annual human gatherings in the world. The argument advanced here is that failure is not merely a disruption but a constitutive element of bureaucratic expansion: the bigger the system, the harder it falls.

The discussion begins with two recent crises that shook Indonesian hajj administration: the food crisis of 2006 and the housing crisis of 2008. Both incidents triggered parliamentary investigations and public outcry, revealing the fragility of state mechanisms under conditions of scale and speed. These cases underscore the tension between the ideal of a seamless pilgrimage and the realities of mass management, where volume and velocity collide with infrastructural limits. Pilgrims' testimonies from these episodes illuminate the human dimension of bureaucratic failure, the hunger, discomfort, and indignity experienced in spaces imagined as sacred.

To situate these events within a broader historical frame, the chapter revisits earlier tragedies involving Indonesian pilgrims. The al-Muʿaisim tunnel disaster of 1990, which claimed 1,426 lives in a stampede near the Jamarat site, remains one of the deadliest episodes in hajj history. The Colombo air disasters of 1974 and 1978, in which two separate crashes killed over 350 Indonesian pilgrims en route to Jeddah, further illustrate the vulnerability of pilgrimage infrastructures. These catastrophes, while distinct in form, share a common thread: the interplay of technological ambition, organizational complexity, and systemic fragility.

The analysis extends beyond technical failure to consider its political and cultural implications. In the aftermath of these crises, both Indonesian and Saudi authorities intensified security and regulatory measures, embedding the hajj within a matrix of surveillance and control. These developments were catalyzed not only by logistical concerns but also by geopolitical pressures, including the 1979 siege of Mecca by Juhayman al-Otaibi's group and the Iranian-led protests of the 1980s. Such episodes foreground the hajj as

a site of contested sovereignty, where ritual performance intersects with statecraft and international diplomacy.

By tracing these trajectories, the chapter advances two interrelated arguments. First, failure operates as a driver of bureaucratic growth: each breakdown generates new layers of regulation, technology, and expertise, reinforcing the state's infrastructural reach. Second, these failures illuminate the global dimensions of pilgrimage governance, linking local experiences to transnational regimes of mobility, security, and commerce. The hajj, in this sense, becomes a prism through which to examine the contradictions of modernity—the promise of efficiency shadowed by the inevitability of collapse.

The chapter concludes by connecting these momentous events to themes explored earlier: the role of Kyais and hajj networks, the entanglement of state and private actors, and the commodification of pilgrimage. It also anticipates the discussion in the next chapter on social failure, where the politics of management intersects with questions of class, dignity, and access, exemplified by cases such as *Haji Sandal Jepit*. Through this lens, the hajj emerges not only as a ritual obligation but as a contested terrain of governance, vulnerability, and resilience.

Piety, Mobility and the Questions of Illegality

This final chapter offers a reflective analysis of pilgrimage in the context of mobility, legality, and social failure, drawing together themes explored throughout the thesis. It focuses on the phenomenon of *haji sandal jepit,* a colloquial term in Indonesia referring to pilgrims who perform the hajj under precarious and often illegal circumstances. This figure embodies the intersection of piety and vulnerability, illustrating how the bureaucratization of pilgrimage has produced new forms of exclusion and improvisation.

The chapter begins by situating *haji sandal jepit* within broader patterns of migration and seasonality. Two practices, *kaburan* (runaway domestic workers) and *umrohan* (individuals who overstay their umrah visas), highlight the porous boundaries between pilgrimage and labor migration. These strategies reflect both economic necessity and spiritual aspiration, revealing how the hajj and umrah have become entangled with global circuits of

mobility. For many Indonesians, the promise of pilgrimage collides with the constraints of quota systems, visa regulations, and financial barriers, generating a spectrum of legal and illegal practices.

The discussion then turns to the implications of state control over pilgrimage. As the hajj becomes increasingly regulated, pilgrims are not only evaluated in terms of ritual correctness but also scrutinized through the lens of legality. Modern citizenship and immigration law impose conditions that transform a spiritual journey into a bureaucratic ordeal. In Indonesia, the introduction of hajj passports and quota requirements adds another layer of complexity, making access to the pilgrimage contingent on compliance with state protocols. While classical fiqh enumerates seven conditions for the hajj, contemporary practice introduces an eighth: securing a place within the quota system, a prerequisite that underscores the tension between religious obligation and administrative regulation.

This phenomenon is not entirely new. During the colonial era, destitute pilgrims, known as *hajj miskeen,* were subject to surveillance and control under Dutch and British authorities. What distinguishes the present moment is the scale and intensity of regulation, amplified by the global reach of modern states and international law. Pilgrims now navigate a landscape where spiritual legitimacy intersects with legal status, and where failure to comply can result in detention, deportation, or social stigma.

The chapter also examines the Saudi context, where efforts to modernize pilgrimage infrastructure coexist with persistent challenges of illegal immigration. Despite massive investments in facilities and security, the Kingdom struggles to manage the influx of undocumented workers and overstaying pilgrims. These dynamics complicate the image of Mecca as a purely sacred space, revealing its entanglement with labor markets, enforcement regimes, and transnational flows of people.

Through ethnographic accounts and historical comparison, this chapter interrogates the meaning of *haji mabrur,* the ideal pilgrimage, under conditions of social failure. How do pilgrims reconcile the pursuit of spiritual perfection with experiences of marginalization, illegality, and bureaucratic exclusion? What forms of local pilgrimage emerge as alternatives for those unable to access Mecca? These questions foreground the resilience and creativity of Muslim communities in negotiating the contradictions of modern pilgrimage.

In closing, the chapter argues that the hajj, far from being a static ritual, is a dynamic field where piety, mobility, and legality intersect. The figure of *haji sandal jepit* crystallizes these tensions, serving as a lens through which to examine the broader transformations of Islamic practice in an era of globalization and state surveillance. By situating these experiences within the anthropology of religion and migration, the chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of how sacred obligations are refracted through the structures of modern power.

1.2. Research Questions and Objectives

Situating the Inquiry

This thesis examines the Hajj as a religious practice that has been reshaped by modern systems of mobility, administration, and inter-state coordination. While the pilgrimage is often described as a timeless ritual defined by doctrinal obligation, this study approaches the Hajj as a historically situated process whose organization, experience, and meaning are shaped by institutions, infrastructures, and social relations. Focusing on Indonesian pilgrims and their connections to Saudi Arabia, the thesis attends to how religious devotion unfolds within dense bureaucratic arrangements and transnational regimes of governance.

The starting point for this inquiry is the 2006 food crisis among Indonesian pilgrims in Mina. More than a logistical failure, this episode exposed the tensions that arise when large-scale administration intersects with religious expectation. The crisis raised questions that extend beyond that moment: how do pilgrims understand hardship encountered during the Hajj? How are administrative breakdowns interpreted in religious terms? And how do institutions respond to failure in a setting where ritual obligation, political accountability, and global scrutiny converge?

Rather than treating such moments as exceptional, this thesis uses them to examine the ordinary conditions under which contemporary pilgrimage takes place. The Hajj is approached here as a process marked by waiting, preparation, instruction, regulation, uncertainty, and mediation. Within this process, religious intermediaries—particularly kyai

and their associated networks, play a central role in shaping how pilgrims engage with bureaucratic systems and make sense of their experiences.



Table 1.1 Research Questions and Objectives

The travels and research of C. Snouck Hurgronje in Mecca continue to be widely discussed in Indonesia more than a century later, among both the general public and Muslim intellectual circles. His writings and analyses have become a prominent reference for understanding how Dutch colonial policies shaped the development of Islam in modern Indonesia, including the participation of pilgrims from the Dutch East Indies in the Hajj during that period. Infographic source: courtesy of Historia.

Central Research Question

The thesis is guided by the following central question: how has the Hajj been reorganized in Indonesia through expanding regimes of mobility and inter-state governance, and how do religious intermediaries mediate between bureaucratic systems and pilgrims' religious experience? This question directs attention to the relationship between administration and meaning, asking not simply how the Hajj is managed, but how it is lived, interpreted, and sustained in conditions of regulation and scale.

This discussion also builds upon a long genealogy of historical and ethnographic research on Mecca and the hajj, much of which was produced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Early scholars approached the pilgrimage as a social, political, and intellectual phenomenon that connected distant Muslim societies through shared ritual practice, mobility, and networks of knowledge. Among the most influential of these figures was the Dutch scholar Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, whose pioneering studies of Mecca and of Southeast Asian pilgrims provided one of the earliest systematic analyses of the hajj as experienced by Muslims from the Malay–Indonesian world. Through close observation, linguistic competence, and ethnographic attention, Snouck Hurgronje documented how Indonesian pilgrims navigated Mecca's religious institutions, formed diasporic communities, and linked the holy city to reformist and scholarly currents circulating across the Indian Ocean (Hurgronje, 1931).

At the same time, contemporary scholarship must critically engage this earlier body of research by situating it within its colonial and epistemological contexts. While figures such as Snouck Hurgronje laid the foundations for hajj studies by foregrounding lived experience and transregional connections, their work was also shaped by imperial concerns and administrative objectives. Subsequent historians and anthropologists have both drawn upon and revised these insights, shifting attention toward pilgrims' own voices, gendered experiences, material infrastructures, and postcolonial transformations of the pilgrimage. By acknowledging this layered historiography, the present analysis positions itself not as a departure from earlier hajj studies, but as part of an evolving tradition that reexamines Mecca and the hajj through new sources, theoretical frameworks, and ethical commitments.

To address this question, the thesis develops several interrelated lines of inquiry, each corresponding to a major theme explored across the chapters.

Pilgrimage, Meaning, and Religious Aspiration

A first set of questions concerns how Indonesian Muslims understand the Hajj as a religious undertaking under contemporary conditions:

- How do pilgrims conceptualize the Hajj as a moral and spiritual project when access is regulated by quotas, long waiting periods, and standardized training programs?
- How are concepts such as *haji mabrur* articulated in everyday discourse, and how do they shape expectations about conduct, suffering, and outcome?
- In what ways do pilgrims interpret hardship, e.g., delay, discomfort, illness, or death encountered during the pilgrimage?

These questions examine religious meaning as something produced in practice, through engagement with institutional arrangements rather than apart from them.

Religious Mediation and the Role of Kyai

A second set of questions focuses on mediation and authority:

- What roles do kyai, muṭawwifs, and other intermediaries play in organizing, guiding, and legitimizing the pilgrimage?
- How is religious authority established and maintained within networks that link pesantrens, travel agencies, state institutions, and Saudi counterparts?
- How do practices of mediation, such as religious instruction, ritual explanation, and moral reassurance, operate within bureaucratized pilgrimage systems?

Here, mediation is treated not as a symbol of resistance to state power, but as a practical means through which administrative processes become workable for pilgrims.

Bureaucracy, Governance, and the State

A third set of questions addresses the institutional organization of the Hajj:

- How has the Indonesian state historically positioned the Hajj as a domain of governance, political responsibility, and public accountability?
- How have bureaucratic mechanisms such as quota systems, registration procedures, and *manasik* training organizations reshaped relations between citizens, religious leaders, and state authority?
- How do actors who move between religious and bureaucratic roles understand their position within these institutional arrangements?

These questions situate pilgrimage within broader debates on state formation, public religion, and administrative power.

Mobility, Failure, and Illegality

Finally, the thesis examines mobility and its limits:

- How do moments of administrative failure such as food shortages, housing crises, or transportation breakdowns reshape institutional practices and public expectations?
- How does increased regulation give rise to new forms of exclusion, illegality, and vulnerability, exemplified by figures such as the case of *haji sandal jepit*?
- How do pilgrims navigate legal, moral, and religious frameworks when the obligation to perform the Hajj collides with bureaucratic constraint?

Rather than treating failure as an anomaly, these questions treat it as revealing the underlying logics and tensions of governance.

Research Objectives

The research questions outlined above are pursued through a set of concrete objectives, which define the scope and direction of the study. The first objective is to document the Hajj as a process that unfolds over time and across multiple sites. This includes registration offices, training sessions, religious study circles, travel infrastructures, bureaucratic institutions, and

ritual spaces in Saudi Arabia. By following pilgrims and intermediaries through these settings, the study shows how pilgrimage is shaped well before arrival in Mecca and long after return.

A second objective is to examine religious mediation as a central feature of contemporary pilgrimage. Rather than treating kyai as operating outside modern institutions, the thesis examines how their authority is exercised through engagement with bureaucratic systems, market actors, and policy frameworks. Mediation is approached as a form of work, such as interpretive, moral, and organizational, that sustains pilgrimage under conditions of scale and regulation.

The third objective is to situate contemporary practices within a longer historical trajectory. Beginning with the Komite Hejaz mission of 1928, the study traces how Indonesian religious actors have long been involved in organizing, protecting, and legitimizing pilgrimage. This historical perspective shows how contemporary institutions build upon earlier forms of moral responsibility and transregional engagement.

Another objective is to examine how the Hajj functions as a site where state authority is enacted and tested. Through analysis of bureaucratic expansion, public crises, and institutional reform, the thesis explores how pilgrimage administration becomes a measure of state capacity and legitimacy, particularly in a context where religious obligation carries profound moral weight.

The study also aims to show how failure, rather than smooth administration, shapes the evolution of pilgrimage governance. By examining crises and breakdowns, the thesis reveals how new forms of regulation, expertise, and surveillance emerge in response, often relying on religious intermediaries to restore trust and coherence.

Finally, the thesis seeks to contribute to anthropological discussions on religion, mobility, and governance. By examining the Hajj as a regulated yet morally charged form of movement, the study advances an understanding of authority as relational and situational. It challenges accounts that assume the displacement of religious authority by bureaucratic systems, showing instead how authority is reorganized and sustained within them.

Significance of the Study

By focusing on Indonesian pilgrims and inter-state arrangements with Saudi Arabia, this thesis offers an ethnographic account of how a global religious obligation is administered, experienced, and interpreted. It shows that the modern Hajj is neither a purely bureaucratic exercise nor a ritual untouched by institutions. Instead, it is a practice continually shaped through mediation, negotiation, and adjustment.

The research questions and objectives outlined here guide an analysis that treats pilgrimage as a site where religious meaning, political authority, and mobility intersect. In doing so, the study contributes to a broader anthropological understanding of how large-scale religious practices endure, and perhaps change, under modern conditions.

1.3. The 2006 Food Crisis as Entry Point

In late December 2006, thousands of Indonesian pilgrims arrived in Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj. They came as individuals, from villages, cities, islands scattered across the archipelago, but once they entered the pilgrimage zone, they moved as a collective: bused, scheduled, fed, and housed according to a system designed to manage one of the largest annual human migrations in the world. For most of them, the journey had taken years to reach this point.

On the morning of December 28, 2006 buses carried Indonesian pilgrims toward Arafah, where they would observe the most important day of the Hajj, the day of wukuf. Spirits were high. Bodies were tired but alert. The movement felt purposeful, inevitable. This was what they had come for.

Elsewhere, far from the pilgrims' view, a different rhythm unfolded. At the catering kitchens responsible for feeding Indonesian pilgrims, officials reported that the meals had already been prepared by late afternoon. Rice was cooked, food stood ready. Only one small thing was missing: aluminum foil, the material needed to package thousands of meals for transport. Without it, the food could not move.

As evening approached, several large container trucks exited the kitchen compound. Word spread quickly that these were food deliveries bound for Arafah. Indonesian officials followed the trucks, expecting them to stop near the tents where pilgrims were settling in for the night. They never stopped. The trucks passed through the area and continued on to other zones. When they were finally intercepted and inspected, there was nothing inside, only empty boxes. The explanation was brief and technical: the trucks had been sent out prematurely, before the meals could be wrapped. The foil was still being searched for.

Night fell over Arafah. For the pilgrims, the first sign that something was wrong came quietly. Dinner did not arrive. Then midnight passed. People waited, assuming delays were temporary. But as hours stretched on, hunger crept in, not dramatically at first, but insistently. The foil arrived close to midnight. Workers began packaging meals at speed. But the night was already lost. Only one unit of pilgrims could be supplied before dawn.

By the time food reached Arafah, it was around three in the morning. What arrived was far too little. A single food package was divided among several people. In many tents, nothing came at all. In one area, a food container was not opened, not because there was enough to eat, but because people had already gathered outside, tense and exhausted, and no one wanted to trigger a scramble. It was a moment when order began to feel fragile.

The next day, the pilgrims moved to Mina. Mina is never gentle. The tents are closer, the crowds thicker, the ritual schedule intense. Bodies are asked to endure heat, walking, prayer, and waiting in equal measure. Food, under these conditions, becomes more than nutrition, it becomes the difference between endurance and collapse.

But the food did not come. The same catering arrangements were still in place. And once again, meals failed to arrive, morning, afternoon, and night. By the end of the first full day in Mina, most Indonesian pilgrims had not eaten at all. This time, silence gave way to protest. Pilgrims approached officials demanding answers. Group leaders, those responsible for the welfare of entire clusters of pilgrims, found themselves pressed from all sides. Every few minutes, the same question returned: *When will we eat?*

There was no reassuring answer. As frustration grew, the language hardened. Some accused the organizers of negligence, others of indifference. What hurt most was contrast: stories circulated of food being available nearby, of meals eaten elsewhere, while entire

groups in Mina had gone without food for over twenty-four hours. By that night, the problem could no longer be contained at the level of field operations. Responsibility for catering was taken away from the original provider and reassigned. Additional institutions were brought in. On paper, solutions appeared decisive.

On the ground, change was slow. The kitchens now had staff and equipment, but supplies were another matter. Bringing meat, fruits, and vegetables into Mina required permits that could not be issued instantly. Rice was available. Little else was. Administrative decisions made late at night did not translate into meals by morning. In some areas, food finally arrived. In others, nothing changed.

Monitoring teams continued to record clusters of pilgrims still waiting. Meanwhile, protests continued at the mission offices. Leaders spoke openly of their fear, not for their positions, but for the trust placed in them by pilgrims who had followed them across continents and now had nothing to eat. Eventually, the crisis eased. Food distribution stabilized. The pilgrims completed the rituals of the Hajj. The pilgrimage, in its formal sense, was fulfilled. But the hunger did not disappear with the last meal.

What happened in Mina during the 2006 Hajj quickly became more than a logistical failure. It became a point of reckoning. Stories of the hunger traveled home with the pilgrims, folded into family conversations, sermons, and public debates. Questions were asked, not only about who failed, but about how a modern pilgrimage was being organized, by whom, and at what cost.

In later years, Indonesia would restructure how it managed the Hajj: how catering was arranged, how responsibility was distributed, how failures were anticipated rather than explained away. The hunger of Mina became a reference point, a moment when the limits of large-scale organization were felt directly in the bodies of pilgrims. The Hajj continued, as it always does. But from that year on, it continued differently. And that difference, born not of ritual error, but of hunger, marks the beginning of this study.

This episode of hunger in Mina marks more than a tragic failure of catering; it exposes the conditions under which contemporary pilgrimage is made possible, and vulnerable. What unfolded in December 2006 reveals the Hajj not only as a religious journey, but as a complex assemblage of mobility regimes, contractual arrangements, and inter-state

coordination linking Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. The unmet promise of food brings into view the infrastructures that quietly sustain pilgrimage at scale, as well as the points at which responsibility becomes diffuse and failure is displaced onto waiting bodies. This thesis begins from that moment, asking how the modern Hajj has been reorganized through institutions, borders, and administrative logics, and how crises such as the hunger in Mina come to reshape the governance of pilgrimage in Indonesia and beyond.

Read through this lens, the hunger in Mina becomes a moment when the modern architecture of pilgrimage briefly reveals itself. The failure of food distribution exposes the Hajj as a system of managed mobility, dependent on infrastructures that coordinate bodies, goods, time, and authority across national and institutional boundaries. What stalled in 2006 was not movement alone, but governance: the alignment of contracts, permits, logistical chains, and inter-state responsibilities linking Indonesia to Saudi Arabia. The pilgrims' hunger marks the point at which these systems, usually experienced as seamless, gave way, rendering visible how care, control, and accountability are distributed within contemporary pilgrimage. This thesis takes that rupture as its point of departure, examining how the Hajj has been reconfigured through infrastructures of mobility and inter-state organization, and how moments of breakdown reshape the governance of pilgrimage in Indonesia.

1.4. Theoretical Frameworks and Methodology

I began this research with a question that seemed simple at first but grew more complicated the longer I sat with it. Growing up in Indonesia, I had always understood the hajj as a journey of spiritual purification, a moment when the hierarchies of ordinary life dissolved and pilgrims stood equal before God. Yet the hajj I encountered when I began my fieldwork was also a world of waiting rooms and stamped forms, of quotas negotiated between governments, of visas that could be granted or denied, of scandals that filled newspaper pages and corruption that emptied pilgrim savings. I wanted to understand how these two realities coexisted. I also wanted to understand why, against the predictions of so many observers who had argued that traditional authority would fade under the weight of Saudi money and New Order bureaucracy, I kept finding kyais everywhere, in the Departemen Agama (later also known as, the Ministry of Religious Affairs) offices, in the departure halls, in Mecca itself, still guiding pilgrims, still brokering access, still very much at the center of things.

These questions could not be answered from a single location. The hajj is not something that happens in one place. It begins in villages across the Indonesian archipelago, where families save for years, sometimes decades, for a journey most will make only once. It passes through the offices of the Departemen Agama in Jakarta, where bureaucrats manage quotas and process forms and negotiate with their Saudi counterparts. It moves through the airports of Jeddah and Medina, where Indonesian pilgrims enter Saudi bureaucratic space. It culminates in the rituals of Mecca and the reflective days of Medina. And it returns, transformed, to the villages where families await. To understand the hajj, I had to be present in all of these places, to follow the connections that bind them together, to see how the pilgrimage is made and remade across the spaces that constitute it.

I conducted fieldwork across Indonesia and Saudi Arabia between 2004 and 2012, with concentrated periods during the hajj seasons of 2006, 2008, and 2010. I chose this period deliberately. I wanted to understand the hajj after the transformations that had reshaped it in the late twentieth century: the Saudi state's consolidation of control following the 1979 siege of the Grand Mosque, the massive construction projects that were remaking Mecca under King Fahd and King Abdullah, the consolidation of Indonesian hajj governance within the Departemen Agama after the New Order had stabilized. But I also wanted to see the traces of what had come before, to understand how this particular configuration had emerged. So I went to the archives as well as the field, tracing the genealogy of hajj governance across colonial records, state documents, and the personal papers of families who had lived in Mecca for generations.

Jakarta

I spent months in Jakarta at the Departemen Agama, where the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah housed the central node of Indonesian hajj administration. The building itself told a story: it was not the grandest ministry in Jakarta, but it had a certain solidity, a sense of permanence earned through decades of managing the world's largest annual pilgrimage operation. I came to know the rhythms of the place. Mornings brought a rush of pilgrims seeking information, their voices echoing in the corridors. The afternoons were slower, the officials disappearing for prayer and returning with tea, the work resuming at a more leisurely

pace. Evenings saw the scramble to process forms before the offices closed, the staff working late during the peak seasons.

I learned which officials would talk freely and which would only speak on the record, which doors were open and which required an introduction. The bureaucrats I came to know were not the faceless functionaries that popular accounts sometimes imagine. They had entered the Departemen Agama through various paths, some from pesantren backgrounds, others from secular universities, some who saw their work as service to fellow Muslims, others who spoke of the hajj as just another administrative portfolio. Their conversations revealed the internal tensions of the institution: the rivalries between divisions, the frustration with systems that seemed designed to fail, the pride in what they had built over decades, the exhaustion of managing a process that never stopped.

I watched how work actually got done, not how it was supposed to get done according to the official manuals. The formal procedures were often suspended in favor of informal arrangements. The most important decisions were made not in meetings but in conversations over tea. The system ran on personal relationships as much as on rules. I accompanied kyais as they visited the Departemen Agama to secure quotas for their pilgrim groups, observing the performances of deference and authority that structured these encounters. Some kyais had been cultivated by officials over years, their relationships carefully maintained through gifts and favors and mutual recognition. These kyais moved through the offices with ease, their business concluded quickly. Others lacked such relationships. They sat in waiting rooms for hours, their papers examined and re-examined, their requests deferred, their frustration barely contained. The difference was not written in any regulation. It was written in the social fabric of the institution.

East and West Java

But Jakarta was only one node. If the hajj was governed in the capital, it was experienced in the villages. I spent extended periods in East Java, working in the pesantren networks that had long been central to Indonesian Islam. The pesantren of Gontor, Tebuireng, and Lirboyo, each with its own tradition, its own alumni network, its own way of doing things, became key sites for understanding how kyais maintained their authority as intermediaries. I attended

manasik hajj training sessions in these pesantren, sitting on the floor among pilgrims who had saved for years, some for decades, for the journey.

The kyais who led these sessions moved between registers effortlessly. They explained the rituals in the language of fiqh, translating classical texts into terms that villagers could understand. They translated bureaucratic procedures into practical advice: how to fill out the forms, what to do if the luggage was lost, how to manage if separated from the group. They told stories of their own hajj experiences, the moments of spiritual clarity, the challenges they had faced, the lessons they had learned. They warned of the dangers that awaited pilgrims who did not follow instructions, the crowds that could overwhelm, the heat that could kill, the agents who would take advantage of the unprepared. These sessions were not just instruction. They were performances of authority, moments when the kyai's knowledge of both religious tradition and bureaucratic procedure was displayed and recognized.

I also worked in villages and urban neighborhoods where pilgrims prepared for departure and families awaited return. In a village outside Bandung, West Java I spent weeks with a family preparing for the mother's departure. She had been saving for twenty-three years, selling vegetables at the local market, putting aside a little each week. Her children, now grown, had contributed to the fund. The family's home was filled with the material traces of preparation, the special clothes being sewn, the medicines being gathered, the lists being made and remade. When I asked why she was making the journey, she spoke of wanting to stand before God having fulfilled the obligation, of wanting to pray for her children and grandchildren at the places where prayers are answered. But she also spoke of the forms, the waiting, the fear that something would go wrong at the last moment. Her story was not exceptional. It was the story I heard again and again, years of saving, months of preparation, and finally, if all went well, the journey.

Jeddah

In Saudi Arabia, my fieldwork was structured around the three cities that together constitute the hajj arc. Jeddah was the point of arrival and departure, the place where Indonesian pilgrims left one bureaucratic order and entered another. I spent weeks at the King Abdulaziz

International Airport's hajj terminal, a vast structure designed to process hundreds of thousands of pilgrims in a matter of weeks. The terminal was a space of intense emotion. Relief at having arrived mixed with exhaustion from the journey. Anxiety about the procedures still ahead mingled with the excitement of finally being in Saudi Arabia.

I watched Indonesian officials working alongside Saudi immigration officers, negotiating the small frictions of inter-state coordination. A visa that did not match the records. A pilgrim whose name was spelled differently on different documents. A group that had arrived without the proper paperwork. These frictions were usually resolved, but sometimes they were not. I watched a family separated because one member's paperwork was not in order, the mother crying as the father was led away, the officials promising they would sort it out, the uncertainty hanging over everything. The Indonesian Consulate and the Departemen Agama offices in Jeddah became important sites for understanding how these frictions were managed, and how they sometimes were not.

Mecca

Mecca was the ritual and administrative core of the pilgrimage. I worked across multiple pilgrimage seasons, spending time in the Indonesian hajj dormitories (in Indonesian it is called “sektor”) where pilgrims were housed. These dormitories were spaces of collective life. Meals taken together in crowded dining halls. Briefings held in the evenings, the officials explaining the next day's schedule, the pilgrims listening with the intensity of those who know that any mistake could compromise their journey. The sharing of information and rumor, who had heard about a change in the schedule, who knew a better route to the Grand Mosque, who had found a shop selling affordable supplies. The small kindnesses that pilgrims extended to one another when things went wrong, a spare mattress for the pilgrim whose luggage had not arrived, a shared taxi for those who had missed the bus, a quiet word of comfort for the elderly woman struggling with the heat.

I accompanied pilgrims to the Grand Mosque for tawaf and sa'i, experiencing alongside them the physical intensity of these rituals. The crowds pressed from all sides, the heat radiating from the marble floors, the exhaustion that set in after hours of movement. I saw how the Saudi crowd management infrastructure structured this movement, the barriers

that channeled the flow, the security forces positioned at key points, the signs in multiple languages, the loudspeakers broadcasting instructions. The system worked smoothly most of the time, but when it failed, it failed spectacularly. I was not present for the major stampedes that have marked hajj history, but I saw the smaller failures, that is the bottleneck that formed when two flows intersected, the confusion when an announcement was not heard, the moments when pilgrims broke from the designated routes, seeking their own paths.

The Saudi tawafa organizations that guided pilgrims through the ritual sequence were another kind of bureaucratic space. I spent time in their offices, observing how they coordinated with Indonesian officials. The tawafa representatives were mostly Saudi men, many from families that had held these roles for generations, including those of Indonesian or South East Asian family backgrounds. Their knowledge of Mecca was intimate and practical, they knew which routes would be less crowded, which accommodations were adequate, which suppliers could be trusted. They negotiated with Indonesian officials over accommodation and transportation, their conversations a mix of Arabic, English, and the Bahasa Indonesia that some had learned from years of working with Indonesian pilgrims. Disputes were common, e.g., over the quality of housing, the timing of transport, the services promised and not delivered, but they were usually resolved, the parties finding some accommodation that allowed the operation to continue.

A particular site in Mecca became important for reasons I had not anticipated. Gaza Street, an area where many Indonesian mukimin (long-term residents) had settled over generations, was being transformed by the massive construction projects that were remaking the city. The mukimin I came to know there were descendants of the ulama Nusantara from Southeast Asia who had studied in Mecca in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their families had been in Mecca for generations, but they remained Indonesian in language, in cuisine, in the networks that connected them to the homeland. Over time, many had shifted from scholarship to commerce, running hotels, restaurants, and travel services for Indonesian pilgrims.

One family invited me into their home, a modest house on a side street in al-Khalidiyya area of Mecca. The mother had come from West Java in the 1960s to study, had married a man from a diasporic family with deeper roots in Mecca, had raised his children there. He spoke to me in a mixture of Indonesian and Arabic, his Indonesian carrying the rhythms of an older generation. He showed me photographs of his grandfather, a kyai who

had made the journey from Garut, West Java in the 1920s and never returned. He showed me letters exchanged across generations, the handwriting fading on the fragile paper.

He spoke of the transformation of Mecca over his lifetime, the modest houses replaced by high-rise hotels, the small shops giving way to luxury boutiques, the families like his being displaced to the city's periphery. His story was not simply one of loss. He had adapted, building a business that served Indonesian pilgrims, sending his children to universities in Indonesia, maintaining the connections that sustained his family across two countries. His transformation from scholar to entrepreneur, and the destruction of the neighborhood that had been his home, became for me a kind of synecdoche for the broader transformations I was tracing.

Medina

Medina offered a different ethnographic register. During the post-Mecca and MIna period following the hajj, pilgrims visited the Prophet's Mosque and prepared for return to Indonesia. The tempo was slower than in Mecca, the mood more reflective. Pilgrims who had been focused on completing the rituals now began to process what they had experienced. I conducted extended interviews in Medina, sitting with pilgrims in the courtyards near the mosque, listening to their stories of the journey.

These were not the rehearsed narratives that sometimes emerged in formal interviews. They were more tentative, more searching, the words of people trying to make sense of what had happened to them. Some spoke of spiritual transformation, of moments when they had felt the presence of God, of prayers that had been answered. Others spoke of disappointment: the rituals performed but something missing, the crowds that had made concentration impossible, the sense that they had gone through the motions without the inner experience they had hoped for.

Many spoke of the logistical challenges, the heat, the exhaustion, the moments when they had lost their groups and found themselves alone in unfamiliar spaces. Some laughed at these memories; others wept. Their stories reminded me that the hajj was not only what the state made of it, not only what the kyais prepared them for, but something that happened to

them, that they struggled to understand, that would continue to unfold in their lives long after they returned home.

The Archives

The archival research that complemented the ethnographic fieldwork was driven by a conviction that the contemporary hajj could not be understood without understanding its genealogies. In Jakarta, I consulted the archives of the Departemen Agama, working through records of hajj administration from the colonial period through the New Order and into the Reformasi era. These documents revealed the sedimentation of bureaucratic categories and procedures over time. The forms that pilgrims filled out in 2010 had ancestors in forms from the 1970s, which had ancestors in forms from the Dutch colonial period. The categories that organized pilgrim registration, regular versus special, capable versus not yet capable, had been refined across decades, each reform building on what had come before.

In Leiden, my research was hosted by ISIM, and I worked at the KITLV and Leiden University Library, examining Dutch colonial records from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The colonial archive was uncomfortable reading. The Dutch hadji surveillance system, designed to monitor Indonesian pilgrims traveling to Mecca, was a precursor to contemporary practices of visa regulation and pilgrim tracking. The categories the Dutch developed to classify pilgrims, e.g., by origin, by destination, by suspected political leanings, echoed in the categories I encountered in contemporary bureaucratic practice. I found myself tracing a genealogy of suspicion, of the state's desire to know who was traveling and why, that stretched from the colonial period to the present.

In Mecca, I conducted archival research at the Hajj Museum and in the personal collections of mukimin families. The museum's collections provided official Saudi perspectives on hajj governance, e.g., the decrees, the statistics, the institutional histories. The family collections were something else entirely, letters exchanged across generations, photographs of pilgrimage groups from the 1950s and 1960s, travel documents that traced the movements of individuals across borders.

One family shared with me a collection of letters written by their grandfather, a kyai who had settled in Mecca in the 1930s, to his family in Java. The letters documented the transformation of Mecca over his lifetime, the coming of electricity, the paving of streets, the coming of American cigarettes, and beverages like Coca Cola, the arrival of pilgrims from new places. They also documented the networks of mutual support that connected Indonesians in Mecca to one another and to the homeland. These materials gave me a sense of the hajj as it had been experienced before the full consolidation of state control, before the bureaucratization that had become so familiar.

Interviews

Over the course of the research, I conducted more than one hundred formal interviews, with many more informal conversations captured in fieldnotes. I interviewed bureaucrats at all levels of the Departemen Agama, and later the Ministry of Religious Affairs, from senior policy makers in Jakarta to local officials in the KUA offices of West Java and East Java villages. I interviewed kyais and KBIH operators, probing their roles as brokers between pilgrims and the state, their relationships with officials, their understandings of how the hajj had changed over their lifetimes. I interviewed Saudi officials when I could, employees of the tawafa organizations, immigration officers, representatives of the Saudi Ministry of Hajj. These interviews tended to be more formal than my Indonesian interviews, conducted in English or through interpreters, but they provided perspectives I could not get elsewhere.

The largest category of interviews was with pilgrims. I conducted life-history interviews with pilgrims before departure, exploring their motivations, their histories of saving, their networks of support. These interviews, often conducted over multiple sessions, allowed for the depth and narrative coherence that pilgrim trajectories required. I interviewed pilgrims during the hajj, capturing the immediacy of their experiences. And I conducted follow-up interviews after return, attending to how the hajj was remembered, narrated, and incorporated into life trajectories. Some pilgrims I interviewed across all three phases, following their journeys from preparation through performance to remembrance. These longitudinal cases became anchors for my analysis, ways of holding the macro-level transformations I was tracing against the micro-level experiences of individuals navigating those transformations.

Writing and Analysis

I wrote fieldnotes daily during fieldwork, trying to capture not only what had happened but the texture of it, the feel of a place, the quality of light, the tone of a conversation. I maintained two tiers of notation, those of descriptive notes that aimed to record as faithfully as possible, and analytic memos that reflected on emerging themes, connections to the literature, methodological challenges.

During periods away from the field, I engaged in systematic coding of fieldnotes and interview transcripts. I used handphone and gadgets to manage the volume of material, but the real work was reading and rereading, marking passages that resonated, writing memos that traced connections across cases. The themes that emerged, e.g., brokerage, failure, mobility, bureaucracy, tradition, became the organizing structure of the dissertation.

The writing itself was a form of analysis. I found that I did not fully understand what I had seen until I tried to write it, to find the words that would convey not only the facts but the feel of things. Some chapters came together quickly, the scenes arranging themselves in my mind as I wrote. Others required multiple drafts, the right structure eluding me, the voices of my informants not quite finding their way onto the page. I learned to trust the process, to let the material guide me, to accept that some things would remain elusive.

Ethics

Ethical considerations were present in every aspect of the research. I obtained ethical approval from my home institution at Harvard before beginning fieldwork, but the real ethical work happened in the field, in moments that could not be anticipated by protocols. When bureaucrats spoke to me about corruption, I had to decide how to document what I was hearing while protecting those who had shared it. When kyais described practices that existed in “gray areas” between legal and illegal, I had to weigh the value of documenting those practices against the risks that documentation might pose. When pilgrims overstayed their visas and asked me not to ask too many questions, I had to decide how to write about what I had observed.

In all cases, I prioritized the safety and well-being of my informants over the completeness of my data. Pseudonyms are used throughout this dissertation, and identifying details have been obscured where necessary. Some conversations I did not record, some observations I did not write down, some stories I chose not to tell. I made these decisions not because the stories were unimportant but because they were not mine to tell in ways that might harm those who shared them with me.

Reciprocity was not an add-on to the research but constitutive of it. For pilgrims who shared their stories, I offered help with bureaucratic procedures where I could, accompanying them to offices, translating forms, providing information about their rights. For kyais and KBIH operators who granted me extended access, I shared my findings with their communities when I returned, contributing to, for example, pesantren activities in small ways. For bureaucrats who opened their offices to me, I provided copies of my research when it was completed, respecting any requests for confidentiality. These practices built the trust that made the research possible. They also shaped the research, because the relationships I built determined where I could go and what I could see.

Limitations

The limitations of this research are part of its story. My access to Saudi-only spaces was constrained in ways that shaped what I could learn about Saudi perspectives on hajj governance. I could not simply sit in a Saudi ministry office in Jeddah the way I sat in the Departemen Agama, also known as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in Jakarta. I had to rely on Indonesian intermediaries, to work at the interface where Indonesian and Saudi officials met, to conduct interviews with Saudi officials in settings where interpretation was available.

My linguistic limitations in Arabic meant that my engagement with Saudi officials was mediated in ways that undoubtedly filtered the data I collected. The temporal scope of the research captures a particular moment in hajj governance, after the transformations of the late twentieth century but before the full digitization (and, later, the COVID-19 disruptions that would follow). I have followed these later developments from a distance, but they are not the primary subject of this study.

Despite these limitations, the methodology I developed, such as moving across sites, following connections, attending to both human intermediaries and material infrastructure, allowed me to address the questions that had brought me to this research. By following the hajj across the spaces where it is governed, brokered, and experienced, I have been able to show how this pilgrimage has been reinvented as an inter-state arena, how kyais and their network have persisted as brokers within transformed circumstances, and how pilgrims navigate the intersecting powers of states, markets, and religious authority.

A Reflection

I have been asked, over the years, why I chose to study the hajj. The answer has changed as the research has progressed. At first, I was drawn by the scale of it, such as the millions of pilgrims, the billions of dollars, the complexity of the operation. Later, I was drawn by the questions it raised about the relationship between religion and the state, about the persistence of tradition in the face of modernization, about the ways that ordinary people navigate systems not of their making.

Now, looking back on the years of fieldwork, the months in archives, the endless hours of transcription and coding and writing, I think the answer is simpler. I studied the hajj because I wanted to understand how something, to borrow Mircea Eliade's concepts, so "sacred" could also be so "mundane." How the journey to God could also be a journey through waiting rooms and stamped forms. How the moment of spiritual fulfillment could also be a moment of bureaucratic frustration. How the pilgrims I came to know could hold both of these realities together, could see the "hand of God" in the visa that arrived at the last moment, could find meaning in the waiting as well as the arrival.

This dissertation is the product of that wanting to understand. It is not the final word on the hajj, there is no final word on something so vast, so various, so deeply embedded in the lives of so many. But it is, I hope, a faithful account of what I saw and heard during the years I spent following pilgrims and bureaucrats and kyais across the spaces where the hajj is made and remade. It is an account shaped by the relationships I built, the conversations I had,

the moments of shared opportunities that made this research possible.[1] I offer it in the spirit of those relationships, as a contribution to knowledge, yes, but also as a testimony to the people who trusted me with their stories, and to the journey that continues to unfold in the lives of pilgrims long after they return home.

1.5. Literature Review

Ritual, the State, and the Modern Reinvention of the Hajj

The Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca is among the most enduring and widely recognized rituals in Islam. Mandated by divine command and embedded in sacred history, it has been performed for more than fourteen centuries by Muslims traveling across vast regions of the Islamic world. From the perspective of Islamic theology and jurisprudence, the obligation of pilgrimage is neither optional nor historically contingent. Yet despite this deep antiquity, the contemporary Hajj bears unmistakable marks of modernity. It is organized through national quotas and waiting lists, governed by visas and permits, managed by state agencies, surveilled by security regimes, and evaluated through standardized expectations of conduct and return. Far from being a timeless practice unfolding beyond politics, the Hajj today is deeply enmeshed in the institutions and logics of modern state power.

Scholars of pilgrimage have long recognized that religious journeys are shaped not only by belief but also by social, political, and economic conditions. Yet much of the literature continues to treat pilgrimage either as an expression of timeless religious devotion or as a site of symbolic meaning largely insulated from modern governance. This study builds on and departs from this tradition by arguing that while the Hajj itself is not an invented tradition, its modern forms of organization, legitimation, and moral success have been continually reinvented by states. To make this argument, the study draws on Eric

[1] This reflects on my own experience as a native researcher conducting fieldwork among Indonesian pilgrims to Mecca, the necessity to discuss the challenges and strategies of doing ethnography in a familiar cultural setting. I am grateful to Prof. Mary Steedly, whose class greatly shaped my approach to conducting ethnography "at home." While being a native anthropologist facilitates rapport building and shared cultural understanding, accessing locals' interpretations and eliciting nuanced insights can be as challenging as for an outsider, since familiar questions are sometimes seen as "unnecessary." I must therefore remain sensitive to social contexts in order to maintain trust and long-term relationships in the field.

Hobsbawm's influential concept of the "invention of tradition," extending it into the domain of Islamic ritual and transnational religious mobility.

Hobsbawm did not write about Islam or pilgrimage in any sustained way. Nevertheless, his insights into ritual, authority, and state power offer a powerful framework for understanding how modern states reshape ancient religious practices, not by fabricating them, but by reconfiguring the conditions under which they are recognized as legitimate, orderly, and successful. By situating the Hajj within this theoretical tradition, this study reframes pilgrimage as a site where religious devotion and state authority intersect, often uneasily.

More broadly, this framing establishes a central claim that runs throughout the book: the modern Hajj is best understood not only through moments of ritual fulfillment, but through the institutional and symbolic work that surrounds pilgrimage before departure and after return. It is through these processes of organization, recognition, and evaluation that the state's reinvention of tradition becomes visible.

Eric Hobsbawm and the Invention of Tradition

Eric Hobsbawm introduced the concept of "invented tradition" in the early 1980s to challenge the assumption that social traditions are simply inherited survivals from the past. In *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), he defines invented traditions as:

> "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (Hobsbawm 1983, 1).

Crucially, Hobsbawm does not argue that invented traditions are false or deceptive. On the contrary, he shows that they are historically situated responses to moments of rupture, especially those produced by modernity, e.g., industrialization, nationalism, colonial rule, bureaucratization, and the erosion of older forms of authority. Invented traditions emerge most prominently where, as he puts it, "rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed" (Hobsbawm 1983, 4).

For Hobsbawm, the modern state is the principal agent in this process. States rely on ritualized practices, such as ceremonies, titles, uniforms, commemorations, and standardized

narratives, to produce legitimacy, discipline populations, and stabilize authority where inherited traditions no longer suffice. Ritual, in this sense, is not opposed to modern politics; it is central to it. As Hobsbawm later argued in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (1990), modern nation-states require symbolic systems that render abstraction tangible: flags, anthems, ceremonies, and shared narratives of belonging (Hobsbawm 1990, 71–75).

Three features of Hobsbawm's argument are especially relevant for understanding the modern Hajj. First, invented traditions operate through ritualized repetition, relying on formalized practices rather than doctrinal persuasion. Second, they claim continuity with an authoritative past, even when their present form is relatively new. Third, and most importantly, they become most visible in moments of crisis or instability, when the effort required to sustain them becomes apparent.

Hobsbawm consistently emphasizes that ritual functions as a technology of governance through which the state produces political subjects. Rituals teach people how to behave, whom to respect, and how to imagine their relationship to authority. Through repetition, ritual converts contingency into habit and power into moral order. As Hobsbawm notes, invented traditions function to "establish or symbolize social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial" (Hobsbawm 1983, 9).

Historically, these processes are evident in the proliferation of royal ceremonies in nineteenth-century Britain, the codification of military parades, and the standardization of national commemorations across Europe and colonial empires. Such rituals did not emerge organically from ancient custom; they were carefully crafted to legitimize new political arrangements. Their authority derived not from theological depth or popular consensus, but from formal repetition and public recognition.

What matters for Hobsbawm is not whether people consciously believe in these traditions, but that they participate in them. Ritual works by structuring behavior rather than conviction. This insight is especially important for analyzing religious practices such as the Hajj, where belief itself is not in question. What is at stake, rather, is the administration of belief: the conditions under which religious obligation becomes organized, evaluated, and publicly recognized.

Applying Hobsbawm's framework to the Hajj therefore requires a careful distinction. The obligation to perform the Hajj is not a modern invention; it is deeply rooted in Islamic theology and jurisprudence. Hobsbawm's argument does not invite us to dismiss pilgrimage

as fabricated or inauthentic. Instead, it allows us to ask a different and more productive question: how have modern states reinvented the conditions under which the Hajj is organized, recognized, and judged to be successful?

Reinventing the Hajj

Building on Hobsbawm's insight that the modern state is a central agent in the production of ritual continuity, scholars of pilgrimage have increasingly turned their attention to the bureaucratic conditions under which religious mobility unfolds. Nowhere is this more evident than in the modern administration of the Hajj. While the ritual acts performed in Mecca remain grounded in Islamic theology and prophetic precedent, the conditions under which pilgrims travel, assemble, and return have been profoundly reshaped by modern states. Quotas, visas, waiting lists, national pilgrim offices, licensed travel agencies, standardized preparatory training, and health certifications are not marginal additions; they are constitutive of how the Hajj is organized and experienced today.

From a Hobsbawmian perspective, these arrangements can be understood as forms of administrative reinvention. They do not alter the core ritual obligations of pilgrimage, yet they envelop those obligations within formalized practices that render pilgrimage orderly, predictable, and compatible with modern governance. Through repetition and standardization, such practices present themselves as natural and necessary, even timeless, despite their relatively recent emergence in the twentieth century alongside decolonization, mass air travel, and the consolidation of national borders.

In this sense, the modern Hajj exemplifies what Hobsbawm describes as invented continuity. National quotas and waiting lists frame access to pilgrimage as a collective, regulated entitlement; preparatory training sessions (among Indonesian pilgrims it is called *manasik*) standardize pilgrims' understanding of proper conduct; and official recognition upon return confirms that pilgrimage has not only been performed, but performed correctly. These practices do not fabricate religious obligation, but they shape how that obligation becomes visible, legitimate, and socially meaningful.

Mobility and the Historical Foundations of Pilgrimage

If Hobsbawm's work helps us understand how modern states reinvent ritual through formalized continuity, it leaves open a prior question: what exactly has been reinvented? To

answer this, it is necessary to situate the Hajj within longer histories of Islamic movement and circulation. Engseng Ho's work is central to this task, offering a historically grounded account of mobility as a constitutive feature of Muslim religious life, rather than a by-product of modern globalization or state administration.

In "Empire Through Diasporic Eyes" (2004) and *The Graves of Tarim* (2006), Ho challenges territorially bounded approaches to Islam by tracing transregional networks linking Arabia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and East Africa across the Indian Ocean. His work demonstrates that mobility, e.g., through trade, pilgrimage, scholarly travel, and diasporic settlement, has long been a primary medium through which Islamic authority, knowledge, and moral legitimacy were produced and sustained. Religious life, in this view, was not anchored in fixed territories but in circuits of movement that connected distant communities to shared centers such as Mecca.

For Ho, the Hajj was never simply a ritual destination. It functioned as a nodal point within wider mobility regimes, linking pilgrims to scholarly networks, commercial routes, genealogical claims, and forms of social recognition that extended far beyond the pilgrimage itself. Travel for the Hajj overlapped with travel for learning (*talab al-ʿilm*), trade, and kinship formation, producing what Ho describes as a diasporic Islamic world in which authority circulated with people, texts, and reputations. Crucially, recognition did not depend solely on territorial states, but on the validation of peers, teachers, lineages, and communities upon return.

Ho's historical account is especially important because it shows that forms of long-distance religious mobility operated with a significant degree of autonomy from centralized political control. While empires and rulers certainly shaped movement, religious mobility was not neatly contained within sovereign borders. Authority was portable and relational, accumulated through travel and return rather than conferred through bureaucratic certification. In this sense, pilgrimage was both a religious obligation and a social technique of mobility, producing status and legitimacy through circulation.

At the same time, Ho does not portray this mobility as timeless or untouched by power. Rather, his work highlights the profound transformations introduced by colonial and postcolonial states, which sought to regulate, territorialize, and bureaucratize movements that had previously been governed through looser religious and social networks. Passports, visas, borders, and transportation infrastructures did not create mobility, but they fundamentally

reconfigured its conditions. Where movement had once generated authority through personal relationships and shared histories, it increasingly became subject to state surveillance, documentation, and regulation.

Ho's intervention thus provides a critical historical backdrop for understanding the modern reinvention of the Hajj. It reminds us that what contemporary states manage and organize is not mobility as such, but previously existing regimes of religious circulation. The modern Hajj does not represent the sudden politicization of pilgrimage, but rather the emergence of new forms of authority, e.g., state-based, bureaucratic, and inter-state, that seek to reorganize older patterns of movement.

In this context, Ho's work sharpens the analytic focus of this study. If Hobsbawm explains how modern states reinvent tradition by stabilizing ritual meaning, Ho shows that such reinvention operates upon a historical field already structured by mobility. Reinvention, in this sense, involves not only ritual continuity, but the reorganization of movement itself, who may travel, under what conditions, through which channels, and with what forms of recognition upon return.

This perspective is essential for an inter-state analysis of the Hajj, as studied here. The contemporary pilgrimage is no longer governed solely through religious networks or local authority, but through coordinated systems linking sending states such as Indonesia with receiving states such as Saudi Arabia. By foregrounding mobility as historically foundational rather than merely logistical, Ho's work prepares the ground for analyzing how pilgrimage becomes a shared project of modern states, one in which religious obligation, population management, and sovereign authority converge.

Ho's historical account of Muslim mobility provides a crucial bridge to the classical anthropology of pilgrimage. If mobility has long been the condition through which religious authority, recognition, and connection to Mecca were produced, then pilgrimage must also be understood as a structured moment within broader trajectories of movement. This perspective directs attention not only to travel itself, but to the transformative passage that travel enables. It is at this point that the work of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner becomes analytically central. Their theories do not treat pilgrimage simply as movement across space, but as a passage across social and moral states. Read alongside Ho, liminality appears not as an abstract ritual condition, but as an experience embedded within longer histories of circulation,

return, and recognition. Mobility creates the possibility of liminality; ritual passage gives that movement its transformative meaning.

Legibility, Mobility, and the State

James C. Scott's *Seeing Like a State* (1998) provides a final and crucial perspective for understanding how pilgrimage becomes reinvented under modern conditions of inter-state governance. Scott's central argument is that modern states govern by making social practices legible, by simplifying complex forms of life into standardized categories that can be recorded, monitored, and managed. States do not govern lived experience in its fullness; they govern representations of social life that fit administrative systems.

Read in conversation with Engseng Ho, Scott's framework takes on particular significance. Ho shows that religious mobility long predated modern states and operated through flexible, relational networks that resisted territorial containment. Authority traveled with people, texts, and reputations, and recognition emerged through return rather than certification. Scott helps explain what changes when such historically mobile practices become "objects" of state governance. The problem modern states confront is not mobility itself, but mobility they cannot see, count, or control.

In the context of the Hajj, legibility operates across borders. Pilgrims must be rendered visible to multiple sovereign authorities through passports, visas, biometric data, transportation schedules, housing allocations, and official narratives of return. These mechanisms do not replace religious experience, but they reorganize how mobility is authorized and recognized. Scott thus clarifies why modern pilgrimage regimes rely so heavily on documentation and administrative coordination: without legibility, inter-state management of religious movement would be impossible.

Scott's insights also sharpen the limits of liminality identified by Turner. Liminal experience, by definition, resists measurement. Moral transformation leaves no administrative trace. From the perspective of modern bureaucratic systems, such experiences are opaque. As a result, contemporary pilgrimage regimes place increasing emphasis on reintegration, where religious transformation can be translated into legible outcomes. Titles such as *haji*, certificates of completion, and public return ceremonies function as substitutes for

unverifiable experience. They allow states to acknowledge transformation without directly accessing belief.

The modern Hajj emerges as a site where historically mobile religious life is reorganized through bureaucratic vision. What is reinvented is not pilgrimage as such, but the conditions under which religious movement is permitted, coordinated, and socially validated. Mobility is no longer governed primarily through religious networks of reputation and return, but through inter-state regimes designed to stabilize, monitor, and allocate movement across national borders.

This perspective is essential for understanding the Saudi–Indonesian Hajj. Saudi Arabia does not simply host pilgrims, and Indonesia does not simply send them. Together, they participate in a shared system that renders pilgrimage legible as a form of controlled religious mobility. Scott's framework shows how this system operates, while Ho reminds us that it is built upon, and in tension with, much older traditions of circulation. Reinvention, in this sense, is neither total rupture nor simple continuity, but a reordering of movement itself, one that reshapes how pilgrimage is experienced, recognized, and governed.

Liminality and the Classical Anthropology of Pilgrimage

While Hobsbawm foregrounds the role of the state in stabilizing modern ritual life, classical anthropological theories of pilgrimage emphasize a very different dynamic. In *The Rites of Passage*, Arnold van Gennep ([1909] 1960) conceptualizes ritual as a tripartite process of separation, liminality, and reintegration. Pilgrimage, from this perspective, is a structured passage in which participants temporarily leave ordinary social roles, pass through a liminal phase marked by ambiguity and transformation, and return reintegrated with altered status.

Victor Turner extends this framework by placing particular emphasis on liminality itself. In *The Ritual Process* (1969) and later works, Turner argues that pilgrimage exemplifies anti-structure: moments of communitas in which hierarchy is suspended, equality is foregrounded, and participants experience intense moral and emotional renewal. For Turner, the power of pilgrimage lies precisely in its openness and uncertainty. Transformation emerges because pilgrims step outside normal institutional constraints.

These theories have been enormously influential in the study of pilgrimage, shaping generations of scholarship that highlight experience, symbolism, and moral intensity. Yet they

offer only limited tools for understanding how pilgrimage functions under modern conditions of mass administration. Liminality, in Turner's formulation, presumes a degree of distance from formal governance that is increasingly difficult to sustain in contemporary pilgrimage regimes.

When placed alongside Hobsbawm, the limits of classical liminality theory become clearer. Modern states are uneasy with liminality, not because it is religious, but because it is uncertain. Liminal experiences are difficult to observe, verify, or evaluate. Moral transformation leaves no straightforward administrative trace. As a result, contemporary pilgrimage regimes devote far more attention to reintegration than to experience itself.

In highly bureaucratized systems such as Indonesia's national Hajj administration, reintegration is actively organized rather than assumed. The return of pilgrims is marked by documentation, certification, public ceremonies, and the socially recognized title of *haji*. These practices do not negate liminality, but they redirect its social consequences. The meaning of pilgrimage is confirmed not in Mecca alone, but at home, through recognition by institutions, communities, and the state.

From this perspective, return becomes a crucial site of ritual labor. It is at this point that liminal experience is translated into durable social status. Reintegration is no longer merely a social or moral process; it is a public and often bureaucratic event. Here, Hobsbawm's emphasis on invented tradition and Turner's emphasis on liminality intersect—but they do not coincide.

These bodies of literature point toward a central tension that structures the modern Hajj. Pilgrimage continues to depend on liminal passage and moral transformation, as van Gennep and Turner show. Yet its contemporary organization reflects an extensive effort to stabilize, recognize, and authorize that transformation through invented traditions and bureaucratic legibility, as Hobsbawm and Scott explain.

This study does not seek to resolve this tension through theoretical synthesis. Instead, it treats the tension itself as analytically productive. The modern Hajj unfolds between experiential openness and administrative closure. It is neither a retreat from modern power nor a fully controlled ritual system, but a fragile achievement whose success depends on the continuous alignment of devotion, organization, and recognition.

By approaching pilgrimage through this lens, the following chapters trace how ritual life is made legible, meaningful, and authoritative under modern conditions—and how that labor becomes most visible at moments of strain, negotiation, and uncertainty. The Indonesian case offers a privileged site for examining these dynamics, revealing how ancient religious obligations are continuously reworked within contemporary regimes of governance.

1.6. Overview of Chapters

This thesis examines the Indonesian Hajj as a complex socio-religious field shaped by historical continuities, informal networks, state bureaucracies, and global transformations of Mecca, also known as Makkah, or Mekah.[2] Rather than approaching the Hajj solely as a matter of ritual obligation or administrative management, the study foregrounds the interplay between piety, mediation, mobility, and failure. Drawing on historical analysis and ethnographic research, the chapters collectively trace how religious authority, informal brokerage, and state governance intersect in the organization and experience of pilgrimage.

Chapter 1 introduces the central research questions, theoretical framework, and methodological approach of the study. It situates the research within broader debates on religion and the state, anthropology of pilgrimage, and the sociology of bureaucracy. The chapter uses the 2006 food crisis during the Hajj as an entry point to illustrate how moments of breakdown reveal the underlying structures and tensions that shape pilgrimage governance. Rather than treating crises as exceptional, the chapter argues that they are productive analytical moments through which relations among pilgrims, brokers, kyais, and state institutions become visible. The chapter also discusses religious motivations and lived experiences of Indonesian pilgrims, emphasizing how moral expectations, trust, and religious obligation inform their engagement with both informal and formal intermediaries. Finally, Chapter 1 outlines the organization of the thesis and explains how each chapter contributes to the overall argument.

Chapter 2, *Kyais, Pilgrims & Hajj Networks*, focuses on the historical and sociological role of kyais and ulama Nusantara in mediating the Indonesian Hajj. The chapter

[2] al-Qurashī, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, 2008. *Makkah al-mukarramah: Tārīkhuhā wa āthāruhā*. Makkah: Dār Makkah; al-Sibāʿī, Aḥmad, 1984. *Tārīkh Makkah: Dirāsāt fī al-siyāsah wa al-ʿilm wa al-ijtimāʿ wa al-ʿumrān*. Makkah: Maktabat al-Malik Fahd;

traces how kyais have long functioned as religious leaders, brokers, and cultural translators between pilgrims and external authorities. It examines leadership and mediation in pilgrimage, paying particular attention to how trust, charisma, and religious legitimacy are mobilized within Hajj networks. Through a historical discussion of Indonesian ulama in Mecca and institutions such as the Komite Hejaz, the chapter demonstrates that concerns over pilgrimage governance, protection, and moral authority predate the modern nation-state. The chapter argues that contemporary Hajj organization cannot be understood without recognizing these older transregional religious networks that continue to shape pilgrim expectations and institutional practices.

Chapter 3, *Street Boys of Mecca*, presents an ethnography of contemporary pilgrimage brokers operating in Mecca and Medina. Focusing on figures often referred to as *walad shari'* and other informal intermediaries, the chapter explores how unofficial actors facilitate housing, transportation, food, and ritual guidance for pilgrims. Rather than portraying these brokers solely as exploitative or illegal, the chapter analyzes their practices as embedded in moral economies and long-standing social relationships. Particular attention is given to pesantren-based networks and their reach across Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. The chapter shows how informal brokerage thrives in the gaps and inconsistencies of official Hajj management, revealing the limits of bureaucratic control and the persistent demand for personalized mediation.

Chapter 4, *Hajj Bureaucracy*, examines the expansion of state involvement in the organization of the Indonesian Hajj. The chapter analyzes how state and non-state actors are deeply interpenetrated rather than neatly separated. It traces the development of the quota system, the growth of administrative apparatuses, and the increasing professionalization of Hajj management. At the same time, the chapter highlights the cultural politics of Hajj administration, demonstrating how bureaucratic procedures intersect with religious authority, patron-client relations, and organizations such as KBIH (Kelompok Bimbingan Ibadah Haji). The chapter argues that bureaucracy does not replace informal networks but reshapes them, producing hybrid forms of governance that blur distinctions between public and private authority.

Chapter 5, *The State vs. Private: Hajj as a Contested Space*, explores historical and contemporary struggles over control of the Hajj. Drawing on cases such as Herklots and P.T. Arafat, the chapter situates current debates within a longer history of contestation between

state authorities and private actors. It examines processes of outsourcing and collaboration in modern Hajj administration, particularly in sectors such as transportation, accommodation, and catering. Through case studies of fraud scandals and logistical failures, the chapter shows how the Hajj becomes a site where political accountability, religious legitimacy, and economic interests collide. The chapter argues that the boundary between state and private actors is continually negotiated through moments of scandal, reform, and crisis.

Chapter 6, *The Remaking of Mecca*, shifts the focus to the spatial and political transformations of the holy city itself. The chapter analyzes how large-scale urban redevelopment, neo-liberal economic policies, and the expansion of the Umrah industry have reshaped pilgrims' experiences of Mecca. It explores how demolition, commercialization, and the rise of luxury accommodations affect access, visibility, and spiritual intimacy. Within this changing landscape, the chapter pays special attention to kyai-muṭawwif networks and their adaptive strategies. The chapter argues that transformations in Mecca not only alter physical space but also reconfigure religious authority, social hierarchies, and modes of mediation.

Chapter 7, *The Hajj, the State and the Politics of Failure*, returns to the theme of crisis and breakdown as central to understanding Hajj governance. The chapter examines fatalities, food shortages, housing problems, and bureaucratic challenges as recurring features of pilgrimage rather than isolated accidents. It situates these failures within an international context, highlighting the transnational dimensions of Hajj administration involving Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and global Islamic institutions. The chapter argues that "failure" functions as a political category through which responsibility is assigned, reforms are proposed, and legitimacy is contested. At the same time, it shows how pilgrims interpret and respond to these failures through religious frameworks of patience, sacrifice, and divine will.

Chapter 8, *Haji Sandal Jepit: Piety, Mobility and Illegality*, examines forms of illegal or semi-legal pilgrimage, including visa overstays, undocumented mobility, and informal labor arrangements. The chapter analyzes how these practices emerge from structural constraints such as quotas, rising costs, and limited access, rather than from moral deviance alone. Through the concept of *Haji Sandal Jepit*, the chapter explores how pilgrims navigate borders, legality, and religious aspiration. It argues that such practices reveal alternative moral logics of piety and obligation that challenge state-centered definitions of legality and order.

The conclusion part synthesizes the findings of the study and reflects on their implications for understanding religion, bureaucracy, and mobility in contemporary Islam. It revisits the central argument that the Indonesian Hajj is best understood as a field of negotiation rather than a unified system, shaped by overlapping authorities and recurring moments of failure.

The Epilogue offers final reflections on the future of the Hajj amid ongoing political, economic, and urban transformations.

Chapter 2 – Kyais, Pilgrims & Hajj Networks

2.1. Komite Hejaz and Early Inter-State Concerns

On January 31, 1926, fifteen Javanese Muslim scholars gathered in Surabaya, the port city of East Java in the Dutch East Indies. Led by the young, energetic, and Mecca-educated Wahab Chasbullah, they formed a committee to deliberate on the rapidly changing political situation in Hejaz, Arabia. Just weeks earlier, on January 10, 1926, Abdul Aziz ibn Abdul Rahman ibn Faysal al-Sa‘ud, widely known as Ibn Sa‘ud, had proclaimed himself King of Hejaz after overthrowing Sharif Hussein of Mecca. This dramatic political turnover compelled the scholars to organize a swift response to what they perceived as an escalating socio-political crisis affecting pilgrims and learning communities, especially students and scholars from Java residing in Mecca and Medina. Reports in the press, along with rumors and personal accounts relayed by returning pilgrims, described new restrictions on religious freedoms and the destruction of pilgrimage-related and historical sites under the new regime.

For many Javanese Muslims, Hejaz was geographically distant yet culturally and spiritually familiar. Since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, scholars from Sumatra, Sulawesi, and other parts of Southeast Asia had traveled to Mecca and Medina to pursue Islamic learning and to join various Sufi *ṭarīqah* brotherhoods. Above all else, however, Hejaz was the central destination of pilgrimage, home to the *al-Ḥaramayn*, Islam’s two holiest cities. By the early twentieth century, sustained flows of pilgrims and students from the region had resulted in the formation of what Snouck Hurgronje described as the “Java colony,” which encompassed Muslims from broader Malay-speaking regions, one of the largest identifiable ethnic communities in Mecca (Hurgronje 1931).

For Wahab Chasbullah and other Javanese Muslim scholars, locally known as *Kyai*, the Saudi takeover of Hejaz constituted another major challenge in their long-standing struggle against new waves of Islamic reformism. Over preceding decades, these *Kyais* had actively defended their position as *mutamadhhabīn*, those committed to following one of the *madhāhib al-’arba‘a*, the four classical schools of Islamic jurisprudence. From their perspective, Ibn Sa‘ud’s rise to power, and particularly the spread of Wahhabi doctrines with their puritanical interpretations of Islam, posed a direct threat to their religious beliefs, ritual

practices, and scholarly traditions. By the early twentieth century, Javanese *Kyais* had positioned themselves as some of the most resolute defenders of the Shafi‘i *madhhab* in the region, a stance they claimed with evident pride.

This defensive posture was sharpened by developments closer to home. Since the early 1900s, Islamic reformist movements had gained momentum in Sumatra, initially through returning pilgrims from Mecca who declared what they termed a “cultural war” against Muslim traditionalists in West Sumatra. Soon thereafter, reformist Muslim organizations in urban Javanese centers introduced modernist interpretations of Islam that similarly challenged orthodox Shafi‘i traditions. Wahab Chasbullah and his fellow *Kyais* objected strongly to these reformist efforts at purification and to their rejection of the authority of the four legal schools. They particularly resisted reformist critiques of established practices such as visitation of sacred sites and the use of *tawassul* (intercession) in prayer. At the same time, reformist groups were expanding their influence by establishing schools, health institutions, and commercial enterprises. They also capitalized on the unresolved question of the Caliphate following the Ottoman Empire’s collapse in 1924, extending their international engagement through participation in the Islamic Caliphate Conference under King Fu’ād in Cairo (1925, later delayed) and the Meccan congress convened by Ibn Sa‘ud in 1926 (Bruinessen 1994; Laffan 2003: 225; Latif 2008: 189; M.C. Ricklefs 1981: 223). Meanwhile, *Kyais* remained the principal guardians of religious life for traditional Javanese Muslims, most of whom resided in rural areas.

Against this backdrop, the Komite Hejaz emerged from the conviction that political transformations abroad and mounting tensions with reformists at home would have far-reaching religious and social consequences for Muslims in Java. For these *Kyais*, Ibn Sa‘ud’s consolidation of power threatened not only the safety and welfare of pilgrims

journeying to the Kaaba[3] and the Masjid al-Ḥaram,[4] but also the broader fabric of religious practice. Particularly alarming were the potential curtailments on visiting revered shrines and sites where pilgrims traditionally expressed devotion and respect, as well as the uncertainty surrounding new modes of governing and administering the Hajj. In response to these concerns, the committee resolved, on that pivotal day in January 1926, to send two envoys to Jeddah and to compose a formal letter to the King of Hejaz. In doing so, they institutionalized their initiative under the name *Komite Merembuk Hejaz*, later known simply as Komite Hejaz, the Committee for Hejaz Affairs.[5]

The story of Komite Hejaz, unfolding amid a major crisis in the Middle East and a deepening divide between Islamic modernism and traditionalism, provides a critical entry point for this chapter. Here, I examine religious leadership in pilgrimage practices and the

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[3] The Kaaba (Arabic: الكعبة, romanized: al-Kaʿba, lit. 'the Cube') is a cuboid stone structure situated at the center of the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and constitutes the most sacred site in Islam. Muslims regard it as the *Baytullah* (House of God), and it serves as the *qibla*, the prescribed direction of prayer for Muslims worldwide (Hoyland, 2016; Peters, 1994). According to Islamic tradition, the Kaaba was constructed and reconstructed several times, most notably by the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Ismail. The existing structure dates to 683 CE, following damage during the Umayyad siege of Mecca (Peters, 1994). Ritual circumambulation of the Kaaba (*Tawaf*) is a mandatory component of the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages and takes place in the surrounding area known as the *Mataaf* (Denny, 2010). In the formative period of Islam, Muslims initially prayed toward Jerusalem before the *qibla* was divinely reoriented toward the Kaaba, an event associated with Quranic revelation. The Kaaba is visited year-round by pilgrims, with peak numbers occurring during Ramadan and the Hajj season. Its ceremonial cloth covering, the *Kiswah*, is replaced annually on the Day of Arafah, underscoring the structure's enduring religious and ritual significance (Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, 2018). See, al-ʿAnazī, Saʿd ibn ʿAbd Allāh, 2015. *Tārīkh al-ḥajj fī al-ʿuṣūr al-islāmiyyah*. Riyadh: Dār Jāmiʿat al-Malik Saʿūd; al-Anṣārī, ʿAbd al-Quddūs, 1996. *Tārīkh Makkah fī al-qadīm wa al-ḥadīth*. Jeddah: Dār al-Thaqāfah; al-ʿAsīrī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad, 2014. *Taṭawwur khidamāt al-ḥajj fī al-Mamlakah al-ʿArabiyyah al-Suʿūdiyyah*. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Malik Fahd al-Waṭaniyyah.

[4] Masjid al-Haram (Arabic: المسجد الحرام, romanized: al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, lit. 'The Sacred Mosque'), located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, is the most significant mosque in Islam and encloses the Kaaba, the religion's holiest site. It forms the central setting for Islamic pilgrimage, serving as the primary location for both the Hajj and the ʿUmrah, which may be performed at any time of the year (Peters, 1994; Denny, 2010). The mosque encompasses several sites of major ritual and historical importance, including the Black Stone (*al-Ḥajar al-Aswad*), the Zamzam Well, Maqam Ibrahim, and the hills of Safa and Marwa, all of which are integral to pilgrimage rites. Circumambulation of the Kaaba (*Tawaf*) takes place within Masjid al-Haram, underscoring the mosque's enduring role as the spiritual and ritual heart of the Islamic world (Denny, 2010; Hawting, 2009). See also, al-Duhayš, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, 2010. *Al-ḥajj fī al-Islām: Aḥkāmuhu wa maqāṣiduhu*. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd; al-Fāsī, Taqī al-Dīn, 2000. *Shifāʾ al-gharām bi-akhbār al-balad al-ḥarām*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah; al-Ghāmidī, Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī, 2016. *Al-tanẓīm al-idārī li al-ḥajj fī al-Mamlakah al-ʿArabiyyah al-Suʿūdiyyah*. Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj.

[5] The original format of this letter was unknown, but Bintang Islam, an Islamic magazine in 1926 reported and summarized the content of Komite Hejaz's letter. The story of this letter has been a subject of several studies, most of which associate the formation of the Komite Hejaz, among other things, to the birth of of the Nahdlatul Ulama as a traditional Islamic organization and traditionalist responses to Islamic reformist movement in Indonesia, emphasizing their commitment to Shafi 'i madhhab and their pledge to preserve it (Noer 1973, 1985).

concept of mediation in religion among Indonesian Muslims, two analytical frameworks that guide the broader discussion of the Hajj, its administration, and its key actors throughout this dissertation.

This chapter explores the relationships between *Kyais* and pilgrims, as well as the traditional and modern Hajj networks linking Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Viewing the Hajj through the lens of *Kyais* as Islamic teachers and community leaders, I analyze their ongoing struggle to maintain, uphold, and expand religious networks, drawing on Lawrence's conception of Muslim networks as a "medium" (Cooke and Lawrence 2005).

By tracing the historical conditions that gave rise to these networks and examining both older and emerging forms of leadership and mediation in Islamic pilgrimage, this chapter seeks to deepen our understanding of the social foundations of modern Hajj practices. As pilgrimage becomes increasingly embedded within global industries and subjected to expanding bureaucratic controls by states and market institutions, the role of religious intermediaries becomes ever more significant. Finally, I investigate the involvement of *Kyais* across a range of institutions, from private educational settings to state-sponsored religious programs, and relate these engagements to broader questions of leadership and mediation in pilgrimage. Drawing primarily on Indonesian experience, this chapter offers a rethinking of the historical and socio-political dimensions of religious leadership that have shaped the modern practice of pilgrimage as we know it today.

Throughout this chapter, I make a deliberate analytical distinction between *leadership* and *mediation* in the context of Islamic pilgrimage. By leadership, I refer to the recognized authority of religious figures, such as *Kyais*, learned scholars, and ritual specialists, to instruct, guide, and shape the religious understanding and conduct of pilgrims. Leadership operates through moral authority, scholarly knowledge, and pedagogical relationship, often rooted in long-term bonds between teachers and students, or between community leaders and their followers. In the context of the Hajj, leadership is exercised through teaching ritual correctness, interpreting religious obligations, and providing ethical orientation to pilgrims before, during, and after the journey. It is a form of authority that presumes legitimacy derived from learning, charisma, and social recognition within Muslim communities.

Mediation, by contrast, refers to a more situational and relational practice through which religious actors act as intermediaries between pilgrims and broader structures of

power, regulation, and transregional mobility. Mediation does not replace leadership but operates alongside it, particularly in moments of uncertainty, transition, or crisis. In pilgrimage contexts, mediation involves negotiating access to sacred spaces, translating between legal systems, ritual norms, and administrative regimes, and articulating pilgrims' concerns to political authorities. As mediators, *Kyais* and other religious figures move between multiple domains, religious, political, bureaucratic, and economic, without fully belonging to any single one. This distinction allows us to see pilgrimage not only as a religious journey guided by authoritative figures, but also as a field of negotiation shaped by intermediaries who manage tensions between local traditions and global transformations (Darmadi, 2018a).

Seen from this perspective, the Komite Hejaz initiative marks an early and revealing moment in which Javanese *Kyais* acted simultaneously as religious leaders and political mediators. Their intervention was not confined to doctrinal disagreement or ritual debate, but unfolded through correspondence, diplomacy, and the circulation of people and information across colonial and imperial boundaries. The following section, Java–Hejaz Relations and the Pilgrimage Question, situates this episode within the longer history of connections between Indonesian Muslims and the Holy Land. By examining how pilgrimage networks, scholarly mobility, and political negotiations linked Java and Hejaz, I show how mediation became an essential mode of religious leadership in an era when the Hajj was increasingly regulated by modern states and embedded in global systems of governance.

At a broader theoretical level, this chapter advances the central argument of the dissertation, that the modern Hajj is best understood not simply as a ritual journey or a bureaucratically managed religious obligation, but as a historically produced field of mediation in which religious authority, mobility, and governance intersect. By foregrounding the practices of *Kyais* as leaders and mediators, this chapter challenges state-centered and institution-centric accounts of pilgrimage that treat religious intermediaries as residual or supplementary actors. Instead, it argues that mediation, performed through teaching, guiding, negotiating, petitioning, and even brokerage, is constitutive of how pilgrimage functions across time and space. In tracing the emergence of these mediating practices from the Java–Hejaz encounters of the 1920s to later forms of organized guidance and administration, this chapter lays the conceptual groundwork for the dissertation's larger argument, that the authority structures shaping Indonesian experiences of the Hajj are neither solely doctrinal

nor purely bureaucratic, but are forged through layered, historically contingent forms of religious mediation that continue to shape pilgrimage practices in the modern era.



Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of Hajj Organization

Street view in Jeddah as Hajj pilgrims prepare to begin their journey across the desert to Mecca, 1928. Photo by Georges Krugers. Photo source: Leiden University Library Collection, Or. 27.021.

Java–Hejaz Relations and the Pilgrimage Question

The Komite Hejaz was one of the earliest organized political responses by Southeast Asian Muslims to the establishment of Ibn Sa‘ud’s rule in the Hejaz. Emerging in colonial Indonesia, the committee took shape amid the rapid spread of Islamic reformism and profound geopolitical changes in the Hijaz following the breakdown and reconfiguration of political authority, accompanied by the emergence of new religious orientations. Confronted with these transformations, the committee resolved to express its concerns directly to the new ruler. They drafted a formal letter and prepared to send envoys to meet Ibn Sa‘ud. Through the facilitation of the Dutch Consulate in Jeddah, the King of Hejaz granted their request for an audience, scheduled for June 2, 1926.



Figure 1.2 Conceptual Framework of Hajj Organization

In 1928, the committee that later formed the Hijaz Committee convened in Surabaya. Among those present were Wahab Chasbullah and Shaykh Ghannaim al-Misry. The committee planned to deliver a letter from K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari of the Tebuireng Islamic boarding school to the King of Hijaz

The committee initially intended to deliver the letter in person. This first diplomatic effort, however, did not succeed. The designated envoy failed to secure steamship tickets and missed the annual steamer traveling from Surabaya to Jeddah. As a result, the letter was instead transmitted via telegraph cable. Despite this effort, no response arrived from Mecca. Two years passed without any reply, during which anxiety among Javanese Muslim scholars intensified. Kyai Hasjim Asj'ari and other *ulama,* now joined by scholars from towns across Java and Madura, became increasingly concerned about the social and religious consequences of political change in the Hijaz for Muslims in the Dutch East Indies and beyond.

The failure of the first mission did not deter the committee. Rather, it prompted renewed deliberation and strategic organization. On March 27, 1928, just two months before the upcoming Hajj season, the group decided to dispatch a second envoy and to compose another letter addressed to Ibn Sa'ud. Unlike the earlier effort, this second initiative unfolded with greater coordination and public visibility. Within days, news of the Komite Hejaz's renewed mission spread widely across Java, signaling the growing significance of the issue among orthodox Muslim communities.

The second letter, signed by Kyai Hasjim Asj‘ari as General Chairman and Shaykh Alawi ibn Abdoel Aziz as Secretary, once again articulated the committee’s religious and social concerns regarding pilgrimage sites and the administration of the Hajj under the new Saudi government. This document was among the earliest formal collective statements produced by the group and marked an important moment in the consolidation of Javanese scholarly activism. The signatories identified themselves as a group of “awakened Muslim scholars,” translated into Arabic as *Nahdlatoel ‘Oelama*.[6] Over the two intervening years, as uncertainty and mobilization increased, this religious association had evolved into a growing Islamic organization known as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).

On Thursday, March 29, 1928, more than three thousand Muslims from Java and Madura gathered at the port of Tandjung Perak to support and bid farewell to the envoys departing for Jeddah. The large turnout reflected the high expectations placed on the mission by orthodox Muslim communities. The delegation consisted of the young Kyai Wahab Chasbullah, recently returned from six years of study in Mecca, and his senior companion, Shaykh Ahmad Ghannaim al-Amir, an Egyptian-born Arabic teacher. Shaykh Ahmad Ghannaim departed Surabaya one week later.

Before reaching Jeddah, the envoys made a brief stop in Tanjong Pagar, a port in Singapore. There, they met with Islamic leaders and members of local Muslim communities who shared similar concerns about the geopolitical transformation of the Hejaz and its wider religious and social implications for Muslims across Southeast Asia. During these meetings, Kyai Wahab Chasbullah and his colleague sought support for their mission and engaged in discussions concerning prevailing religious practices among *mutamadhhabīn* in the Dutch East Indies and the broader Malay world. The attendance and reception at these gatherings suggested that considerable support was extended to their cause.

On May 7, 1928, the Javanese–Egyptian delegation arrived in Jeddah. Their arrival coincided with a meeting between Ibn Sa‘ud and Sir Gilbert Clayton, a British military intelligence officer and colonial administrator, underscoring the broader geopolitical context in which the mission unfolded. Chasbullah and al-Amir met briefly with the Saudi king, but

[6] The Dutch spelling for Nahdlatul Ulama was Nahdlatoel ‘Oelama.

did not present the letter at that time. With the Hajj season approaching, Ibn Sa‘ud postponed the meeting and promised to receive them after the pilgrimage concluded.

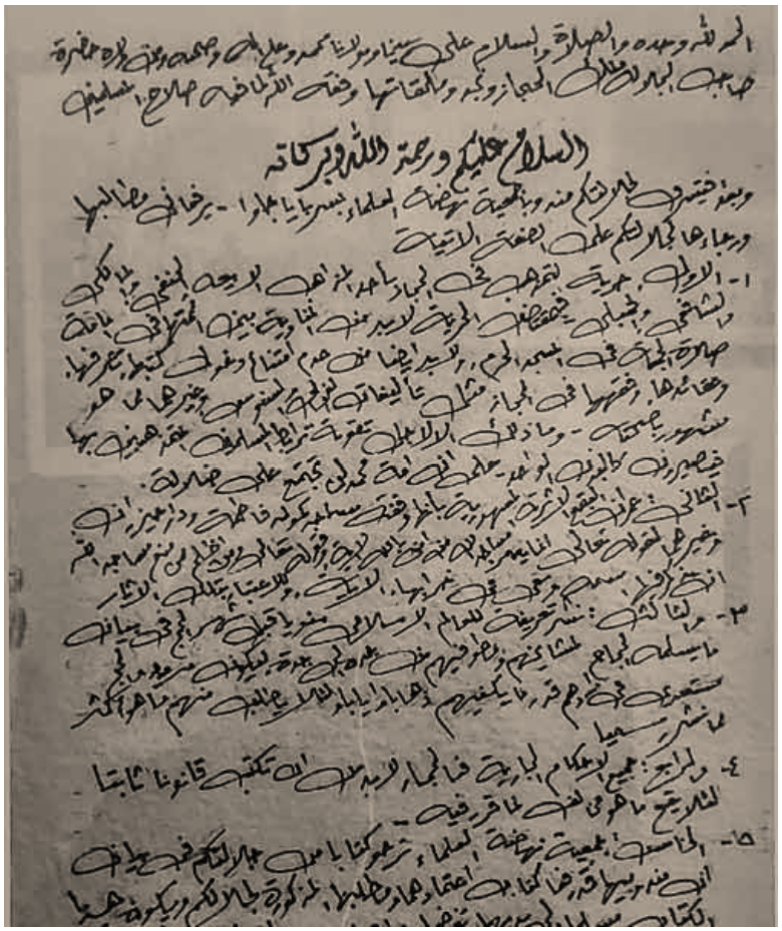


Figure 1.3 Conceptual Framework of Hajj Organization

A letter from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) sent by the Hijaz Committee to King Ibn Saud, Ruler of Hijaz, 1928, as displayed in a recent exhibition. The primary purpose of establishing the Hijaz Committee was to negotiate with King Saud, who, after successfully conquering Mecca and Medina, wanted to eliminate the diversity of Islamic schools of thought, leaving only the Wahhabi school of thought. Photo source: Hijaz Committee Exhibition, February 2023, Jombang City Hall, East Java.

During this period of waiting, Chasbullah traveled to Mecca, where he met with a number of Javanese scholars who had remained there. He organized meetings with members of the Javanese community and encouraged them to support the Komite Hejaz initiative by signing the petition he intended to submit to Ibn Sa‘ud. While some expressed willingness to join the effort, others hesitated, fearing that the initiative might cause a rupture within the long-established transregional network of scholars known in Indonesia as the *Ulama Nusantara,* a group that will be discussed later in this chapter. While awaiting the rescheduled

meeting with Ibn Sa‘ud, Chasbullah proceeded to perform the Hajj, observing firsthand the changes introduced under the new Saudi administration.

In his subsequent reports to audiences in Java, Chasbullah noted several important transformations in Mecca and the improved safety conditions for pilgrims.[7] He described the hospitality he received from Ibn Sa‘ud as “extraordinary” and referred to the royal palace as “the most beautiful building in Mecca.” In another account, he recorded that Ibn Sa‘ud and his religious advisor, an elderly shaykh from Nejd named Shaykh Abu Samah, delivered lectures on Islamic monotheism to him and other guests. Chasbullah also observed infrastructural changes affecting the pilgrimage, including the introduction of new transportation options allowing pilgrims to travel between Jeddah and Mecca by car, autobus, or animal transport such as donkeys. Nevertheless, he noted that road conditions remained poor, less than forty percent were suitable for driving, and that fraudulent and exploitative practices in transportation continued to pose serious problems for pilgrims. Most troubling, in his view, was the lack of sufficient information and general guidance provided by the Saudi government to incoming pilgrims during the Hajj season.

In his travel accounts, Chasbullah did not explicitly mention either the destruction of pilgrimage shrines or restrictions on religious freedom affecting Sunni–Shafi‘i Muslims. As will become clear in the letter discussed below, however, these were among the key issues he raised in his subsequent meeting with Ibn Sa‘ud on June 10, 1928—concerns that had by then become central to Muslim anxieties in Java, as articulated by the Nahdlatul Ulama organization. The letter read as follows:[8]

> *Your Majesty the King of Hejaz, Nejd and Iraq, May God always help him in taking care of the righteous affairs of Muslims.*
>
> *Al-salāmu ‘alaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh. Wa ba‘du.*
>
> *There will come before Your Majesty two envoys from the Nahdlatul Ulama, an organization from Surabaya, Java. The two envoys would kindly raise several issues, and we sincerely hope that Your Majesty may solve some of the following issues:*

[7] *Swara Nahdlatoel Oelama,* No. 12 Th. 1, Dzulhijjah, 1346 H. This part of travel report was written in Javanese with Arabic-*pegon* style.

[8] *Swara Nahdlatoel Oelama,* No. 12 Th. 1, Dzulhijjah, 1346 H. This letter was written in Arabic, recorded in an old collection of internal magazines of the Nahdlatul Ulama published since 1926. The magazine reported the voyage in Javanese, Arabic and Malay.

First: the freedom to adopt one of the Four Schools (ḥurriyat al-tamadhhab), namely the Hanafi, Māliki, Shāfi'i and Hanbali madhhabs. One of the most important implications of this freedom is to continue the regular rotation of imām leadership in Friday prayers at the Masjid al-Ḥaram by an imām from each madhhab respectively. There should be no prohibition imposed by the Kingdom on access to the books of the Four Imams in the Hejaz, including their works on Sufism (taṣawwuf), creeds ('aqā'id), and jurisprudence (fiqh), such as the writings of al-Ghazālī, al-Sanūsī, and other texts that are well-established and widely recognized for their validity. This request reflects the bonds that unite Muslims who follow the four legal schools. All Muslims are like one body, and the followers of the Prophet Muhammad will not concur in error or misguided action.

Second: the preservation of two well-known and historic cultural heritage sites that constitute endowment (waqf) property, such as the Mosque of Mawlid Sayyidatuna Faṭimah and Dār Khayzurān (or Dār Khuzayrān),[9] along with other similar sites. This accords with Allah's statement in the Qur'an, "...innamā ya'muru masājidallāhi man 'āmana billāhi,"[10] and with His words in another verse, "...wa man aẓlamu mimman mana'a masājida Allāhi ay-yudhkara fīhā ismuhu wa sa'ā fī kharābihā."[11] We truly consider these cultural heritage sites to be of great importance.

Third: the systematic distribution of annual Hajj information to Muslims worldwide before each pilgrimage season. This information should specify the costs that pilgrims are required to pay to their pilgrim-chiefs (al-mashāyikh), pilgrim-guides (muṭawwifīn), and other service providers from their arrival in Jeddah until their departure. In this way, pilgrims can adequately prepare their finances and avoid excessive charges that fall outside officially regulated fees.

Fourth: that all laws and regulations pertaining to the Hejaz be articulated clearly and definitively, so that no ambiguity arises that would contradict established provisions.

Fifth: the Nahdlatul Ulama respectfully requests a written reply from His Majesty affirming that the organization's envoys have faithfully conveyed this letter and formally raised the concerns outlined herein. We further ask that this reply be handed directly to the two envoys.

We highly esteem Your Majesty and express our sincere gratitude, respect, and greetings.

Regards,

On behalf of the Nahdlatul Ulama,

Hasjim Asj'ari, General Chairman

Alawi bin Abdoel Aziz, Secretary

---

[9] Dār Khayzurān: a historic home bought and owned by the mother of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the 'Abbasid Caliph, when performing her pilgrimage in 788 AD. It is said that the house was the place where the Prophet used to meet secretly with some of his followers to avoid attacks from their enemy. This house was known by the name of Dāru Khuzairān, or Khayzurān, and up until the early of 20th century it was one of the most important places in the city of Mecca. In 1907, A. Mirza of Delhi, India published some of his photographic works of Mecca, in which he has observed that Dāru Khuzairān was one of the important pilgrimage places in the city of Mecca (Asani and Gavin 1998).

[10] Q.S. 9:18: "The only people to frequent God's masjids are those who believe in God and the Last Day, and observe the Contact Prayers (ṣalat), and give the obligatory charity (zakāt), and do not fear except God. These will surely be among the guided ones."

[11] Q.S. 2:114: "Who are more evil than those who boycott God's masjids, where His name is commemorated, and contribute to their desertion? These ought not to enter therein except fearfully. They will suffer in this life humiliation, and will suffer in the Hereafter a terrible retribution."

On June 13, 1928, just three days after the meeting, Ibn Sa‘ud sent a written response to the Javanese delegation. In his letter, the King acknowledged the concerns raised by his fellow Muslims in Java and affirmed that his government had made efforts to protect pilgrims and uphold religious freedom. At the same time, as the head of the Saudi state, he urged the Nahdlatul Ulama and other Muslim communities to practice Islam properly, to avoid objectionable behavior at pilgrimage sites, and to adhere to the *sharī‘ah* as prescribed in authoritative Islamic sources.[12] Beyond this exchange, however, there appears to have been little further correspondence or dialogue between the Nahdlatul Ulama leadership in Java and

[12] Here is my English translation of the Arabic response letter by King Abdul Aziz to the Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama, June 13, 1928, 24 Dhu al-Hijjah 1346H.

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Number: 2082 - On 24 Dhu al-Hijjah 1346 H

From: ‘Abdul Azīz bin Abdur Raḥmān Al-Fayṣal

Dear Chairman of the Organization of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Java:
Shaykh Muhammad Hasjim Asj'ari and his secretary, Shaykh Alawi bin Abdoel Aziz (May Allah protect them).

Al-salāmu ‘alaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh.

We have received your letter dated 5 Shawwāl of 1346 H. We really understand what you have mentioned, especially about your compassions to the affairs of Muslims that concern you, and we have received the delegates that you assign to, Hadji Abdoel Wahab, the First Secretary of NU, and al-Ustādh al-Shaykh Ghanā‘im Ahmad Al-Amīr, the Advisor of NU who have conveyed the messages to us.
With regards to affairs in the Hejaz region, then it is domestic affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Government in that regard has tried to provide all facilities for pilgrims in the Holy Land as much as possible, and never forbid anyone to do good deeds as long as they are in accordance with Islamic sharī‘ah.

As for the respect of individual freedom, then it is an honor, and thank God, all Muslims have been free to conduct their duties, except on the things in which God forbids them, and there is no argument to justify these actions, both from the Qur’an and the Sunnah, the opinions of the Salaf al-Ṣālih School and the Four Imams Schools (madhāhib al-’arba‘a). For anything that is in accordance with such doctrines, we do support it and we will continue to do so. But for other things that violate them, there is no room for abiding by such created being for the sake of disobediance to Allah, the Creator.

Our goal is actually to carry on a mission stated in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, and this is a religion we embrace. Praise to Allah, we have walked according to our Salaf al-Ṣālih school, from the Prophet Companions to the Four Imam Schools.

We appeal to Allah for His Mercy upon us, and hopefully He would give us all the goodness and truth and good results. This is what we need to explain. May Allah protect you all.

Wa al-salāmu ‘alaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh.

Signatures and seals.

‘Abdul Azīz bin Abdur Raḥmān Al-Fayṣal

Saudi authorities. As Ibn Sa‘ud’s power consolidated in the Hejaz and Wahhabism gained a firmer foothold in Mecca and Medina, Muslims in the Malay-Indonesian world increasingly witnessed the gradual marginalization of Javanese scholars in the two Holy Cities, a development that will be examined in greater detail in a later section of this dissertation.

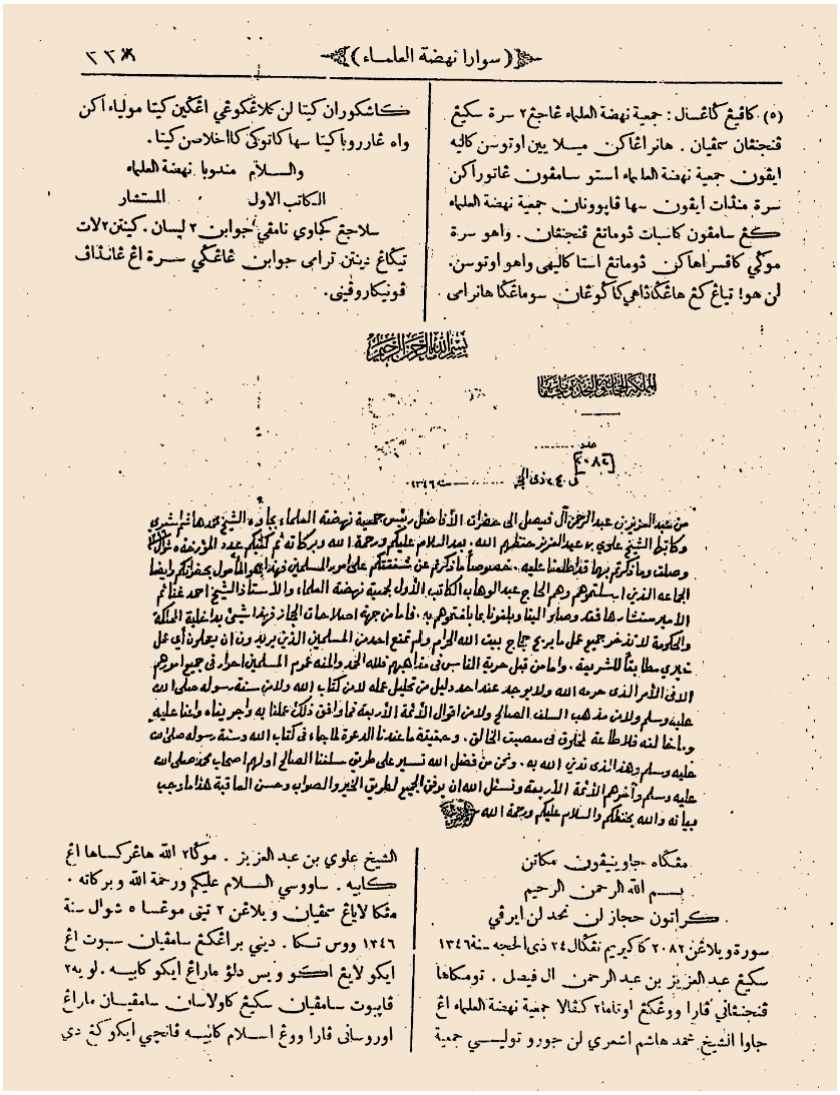


Table 2.1 Kyais and Pilgrimage Leadership

Reply letter from King Ibn Abdul Aziz to Hadratus Sheikh Hasjim Asj’ari concerning the Hijaz Committee from Java, and Hajj administration reforms, 1928. Source: Swara Nahdlatoel ‘Oelama

Despite this period of political negotiation surrounding the destruction of sacred tombs and the regulation of pilgrimage practices by Saudi authorities, and the Javanese responses to these measures, Java–Hejaz contacts did not cease. Rather, they continued in

different forms. As I will argue in subsequent chapters, a number of Javanese *Kyais,* together with Muslim leaders in Padang, Aceh, Sambas, Sumbawa, and other regions, remained actively involved in Hajj-related affairs. They continued to recommend, promote, and encourage Muslims to perform the pilgrimage, even as the Hajj itself increasingly assumed a more orthodox and puritanical form. The influence of these figures extended well beyond pilgrimage alone: through their networks of students, pupils, pilgrims, and colleagues, many *Kyais* later emerged as educators, religious bureaucrats, state officials, and key decision-makers in modern Indonesia.

This chapter, however, focuses primarily on *Kyais*: their contributions to Islamic education and pilgrimage affairs, their relationships with pilgrims, and the ways in which they have transformed from a body of religious authority into cultural brokers, an older typology of Islamic leadership in Java (Geertz 1960), and, subsequently, back into positions of leadership within Muslim pilgrimage traditions. In the modern context, *Kyai* leadership in the Hajj has also raised critical questions about mediation and even collaboration (Ho 1990, 2004, 2006), especially as *Kyais* have become increasingly involved in state-sponsored Hajj administration. Many have emerged as prominent pilgrimage facilitators and, drawing on their extensive networks as a "medium," have worked closely with bureaucrats, tour agents, guides, and other intermediaries as the Hajj has developed into a major transnational industry in recent decades.

In this context, the Komite Hejaz episode and its aftermath illuminate how religious authority among Javanese Muslims was exercised not only through teaching and persuasion, but also through active mediation within the expanding infrastructures of pilgrimage. Kyais did not simply articulate doctrinal positions; they negotiated conditions under which religious practices could continue, intervened in the governance of sacred spaces, and translated local concerns into formal petitions addressed to a new political authority. In doing so, they occupied an intermediary position between pilgrims and power, a position shaped by mobility, communication, and the management of uncertainty. This dual role complicates any clear separation between religious leadership and administrative mediation in pilgrimage contexts and invites closer attention to the institutional forms through which guidance, authority, and control have historically operated in the Hajj.

It is from this vantage point that the chapter now turns to a broader discussion of leadership and mediation in Islamic pilgrimage traditions. The practices embodied by Kyais

in the Java–Hejaz encounter resonate with earlier and parallel forms of pilgrimage leadership, including the roles of *Muṭawwif*, *shaykh al-hajj*, *dalīl*, and other figures who emerged as guides, brokers, and organizers as the Hajj became increasingly collective and transregional. While these actors differed in social background and institutional location, they shared a common function: mediating between pilgrims and the complex religious, spatial, and political orders of pilgrimage. By situating Kyai mediation alongside these older guidance systems, the following section develops a conceptual framework for understanding pilgrimage leadership not as a fixed office, but as a historically evolving set of mediating practices shaped by mobility, authority, and governance.

2.2. Ulama Nusantara and the Hajj Networks

Family, friendship, and community networks have long played a decisive role in Muslim mobility to the Hejaz. As studies of late twentieth-century migration have shown, even amid intensified state regulation, citizenship regimes, and interstate politics, such social networks remained central to patterns of movement in the Muslim world (Boyd 1989). This observation is equally applicable to earlier periods, personal ties continued to structure the movement of pilgrims, students, and scholars from the Indonesian and Malay Archipelago to the Hejaz despite increasing bureaucratic intervention by colonial and imperial authorities.

By the late nineteenth century, Snouck Hurgronje observed established enclaves of Southeast Asian Muslims in the Hejaz, whom he collectively described as the “Jawah” community, or *al-Jawwiyyīn,* the people of Java, among local Meccan society. This community was composed largely of pilgrims, former pilgrims who became residents, students, and scholars, many of whom were later identified as *Ulama Nusantara* (Azra 1992; Hurgronje 1931). From at least the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these scholars played a formative role in transmitting Islamic learning and reformist thought to the Malay Archipelago. As Azra and Hurgronje both demonstrate, flows of pilgrims, students, and teachers originated from widely dispersed regions, e.g., Aceh, Minangkabau, Palembang, Banjarmasin, Sambas, Banten, Termas, Madura, Makassar, Lombok, and converged in Mecca and Medina (*al-Ḥaramayn*) for pilgrimage and advanced Islamic study.

Some of these individuals remained in the Hejaz to pursue scholarship under prominent *ulama* such as Ahmad al-Qushashi (b. 1538) and Ibrahim al-Kurani (1615–1690). Others emerged as influential scholars in their own right, including Shaykh Yusuf al-Maqassari (b. 1626) and Abd al-Rauf of Aceh, also known as Shaykh Abd al-Rauf al-Jawi al-Fansuri al-Sinkili (1615–1693), who were among the earliest Malay-Indonesian intellectuals to transmit the spirit of Islamic renewal back to Southeast Asia (Azra 1992, 1994, 2004). The circulation of Islamic knowledge within these networks was sustained through durable student–teacher and student–student relationships. A later example of this pattern can be seen in Ahmad Dahlan (d. 1923), founder of the Muhammadiyah movement, who studied in Mecca under Shaykh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi (d. 1916). Over the next two centuries, figures such as Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani (d. 1897) and Shaykh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi attracted ever-growing numbers of students and pilgrims seeking religious instruction directly from these *Ulama Nusantara*.[13]

Migration to and residence in the Hejaz, however, were never insulated from geopolitical change. Political upheavals increasingly shaped the contours of scholarly and pilgrim mobility in the early twentieth century. When Ibn Saʿud launched his second revolt in al-Hasa and Najd in 1913, many students and scholars became wary of their political security. The Saudi conquest of the Hejaz in 1926 further intensified colonial oversight. British authorities warned Muslim subjects in India, while Dutch colonial officials tightened controls on exit permits and pilgrimage travel for subjects of the Netherlands East Indies, motivated in part by fears of pan-Islamism and the political repercussions of the Hajj. As a consequence, the number of *Ulama Nusantara* remaining in Mecca declined sharply.

[13] I have been intellectually indebted to the tradition of *kajian manuskrip*, or manuscript studies, that has illuminated the transregional circulation of Islamic knowledge between the Hejaz and the Malay–Indonesian world, particularly through the pioneering works of Azyumardi Azra (2004) on The origins of Islamic Reformism and networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern scholars, and Oman Fathurahman on the writings of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī. Fathurahman's detailed studies of *Itḥāf al-Dhakī,* both as a text and as a manuscript tradition, demonstrate how complex metaphysical doctrines such as *waḥdat al-wujūd* were actively interpreted, reformulated, and transmitted for Jāwī audiences through scholarly networks linking Mecca to the Nusantara (Fathurahman 2002, 2009, 2011; 2012). His codicological and intellectual-historical analyses not only reveal the density of Southeast Asian scholarly presence in the Hejaz but also underscore the role of manuscripts as concrete media through which authority, mediation, and religious ideas circulated across oceans. By foregrounding *Itḥāf al-Dhakī* as a dialogical commentary addressed explicitly to Jāwī scholars, this body of scholarship reinforces the central argument of this chapter, that Islamic knowledge production and pilgrimage networks in the Hejaz were deeply intertwined, sustained by enduring scholarly, pedagogical, and diasporic ties rather than by pilgrimage alone.

By this period, only a small number of prominent Southeast Asian scholars continued to reside in the Hejaz. Among them were Shaykh Ali ibn Shaykh Abdul Hamid Kudus al-Samarani (d. 1944), Shaykh Abdul Qadir ibn Abdul Muthalib al-Mandaili (d. 1965), Shaykh Abdullah Dardum al-Fadani (d. 1987), and perhaps the most prominent of the later generation, Shaykh Yasin ibn Muhammad Isa al-Fadani (d. 1990). This contraction of the scholarly presence coincided with a significant shift in educational orientation: by the 1920s and 1930s, increasing numbers of Indonesian students chose Cairo rather than Mecca as their primary destination for Islamic learning (Burhanuddin 2003, 2006; Abaza 2003, 2007; Laffan 2003a).

Despite the decline in resident scholars, the legacy of the *Ulama Nusantara* did not disappear. Many students returned home and established Mecca-style educational institutions, becoming religious teachers and community leaders in Indonesia. At the same time, Indonesian- and Malay-speaking communities in Mecca retained elements of inherited scholarly traditions. Some younger generations, descendants of families such as al-Fattani (Patani, Thailand), al-Fadani (Padang, West Sumatera), al-Banjari (Banjarmasih, South Kalimantan), and al-Samarani (Semarang, Central Java), managed to endure the new Saudi political environment by adopting pragmatic cultural strategies: maintaining low public profiles, cultivating working relationships with Saudi religious authorities at the Grand Mosque, and sustaining close ties with relatives in Southeast Asia.

Traces of more than three centuries of pilgrim, student, and scholarly networks remain visible today in Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina. Although many contemporary residents are no longer direct descendants of prominent Southeast Asian scholars, family names such as al-Bantani, al-Falimbani, al-Banjari, al-Samarani, and al-Sambasi continue to signal ancestral links to the Archipelago. In the modern period, some of these families acquired Saudi citizenship, often shortening their surnames to Banten, Garut, Felimban, Banjar, Semarang, or Sambas, names that recall districts and regions in Indonesia. In Indonesia and elsewhere, such communities are commonly known as *muqimīn Saudi*, referring to Saudi residents of Indonesian origin, while within Saudi Arabia the term is shaped by contemporary notions of citizenship that distinguish immigrants from indigenous Hijazi or Najdi populations.

During the period in which the Shaykh Hajji network effectively monopolized pilgrimage administration in the Hejaz (Hurgronje 1917, 1931, 1986; Spaan 1994; Bianchi 2004), many Indonesian and Malay descendants became closely associated with Shaykh

Hajjis in organizing pilgrims from Southeast Asia. Pilgrims from the Archipelago were required to follow the regulations of *muṭawwifs,* professional pilgrim-guides, reflecting linguistic barriers and pilgrims' limited familiarity with local conditions. As the *muṭawwif* system expanded, the networks linking pilgrims, guides, and organizers also became more complex and durable. Some pilgrims returned home, while others settled permanently in the Hejaz, contributing to the consolidation of what cooke and Lawrence conceptualize as Muslim networks of travel, pilgrimage, and mission (cooke and Lawrence 2005).

Indonesian and Malay pilgrims have continued to arrive in large numbers, reinforcing the presence of Southeast Asians as providers of *khidma li al-ḥujjāj, that is* services for pilgrims, long predating the establishment of the modern Saudi state. The contemporary population of *muqimīn Saudi* is thus, in many respects, a direct outcome of these intergenerational pilgrim–scholar networks. Boyd's emphasis on family, friendship, and community ties remains especially relevant here, as intermarriage between *muqimīn* and local Saudi populations has been common. Some families marry Saudi Arabs or other nationals, while others marry within the *muqimīn* community, thereby reinforcing shared genealogies (*nasab*, *silsila*). Conversely, many male *muqimīn* continue to seek spouses from Indonesia, often from related families or regions, sustaining frequent mobility between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia and further embedding these transregional Hajj networks.

Since the mid-1980s, when global pilgrim numbers reached the millions, descendants of Southeast Asian students, migrants, and scholars have adapted to new institutional realities. Many have continued inherited professions as *muṭawwifs* under the Saudi state-regulated organization *al-Mu'assasa al-Ahliya li Muṭawwifī al-Ḥujjāj Duwal Janūb Sharq Āsyā*, which oversees pilgrim guidance for Southeast Asian countries. Indonesia, currently sending over 200,000 pilgrims annually, has developed close institutional ties with this body to ensure the welfare of its pilgrims during their six- to eight-week stay in Saudi Arabia.

Seen through this longue-durée history of Ulama Nusantara and Hajj networks, the figure of the *Kyai* emerges as a crucial mediating actor whose authority is not confined to local religious institutions but is constituted through transregional mobility and diasporic ties. Much as the *muqimīn Saudi* operated between pilgrims, guides, and state authorities in the Hejaz, Kyais in Java functioned as nodal points linking pesantren communities, pilgrimage circuits, and overseas scholarly worlds. Their authority rested not solely on textual mastery or charisma, but on their embeddedness in networks of travel, study, and patronage that

extended to Mecca and Medina. In this sense, Kyais may be understood as grounded mediators whose leadership depended on their capacity to translate distant religious centers into locally intelligible practices, whether in the form of pilgrimage guidance, ritual sanctioning, or doctrinal defense. The Ulama Nusantara networks thus provided the structural conditions that enabled Kyais to act as brokers of religious meaning, pilgrimage practices, and social trust across spatial and political boundaries.

This perspective both extends and complicates Clifford Geertz's influential portrayal of Kyais as cultural brokers (Geertz 1960) while bringing it into dialogue with Engseng Ho's diasporic theory of Muslim mobility (Ho 2004, 2006). Geertz emphasized mediation primarily within village-based and state-centered contexts, where Kyais negotiated between local religious communities and broader political forces. By contrast, the Ulama Nusantara–Hajj networks reveal a form of mediation that is fundamentally transoceanic and diasporic, closer to Ho's conception of Muslim scholars as mobile actors whose authority was forged through circulation rather than territorial rootedness. Kyais were not merely local intermediaries; they were participants, directly or indirectly, in Indian Ocean networks of knowledge, pilgrimage, and kinship that connected Java to the Hejaz. This diasporic dimension helps explain how Kyais could mediate between orthodoxy and practice, tradition and reform, and local custom (*adat*) and universal Islam. Framing Kyais within network and diaspora theory, therefore, shifts the analytical focus from static models of religious authority to dynamic processes of mediation sustained by mobility, memory, and long-standing transregional connections, setting the stage for the following discussion of Kyais' leadership in pilgrimage practices and pesantren-based religious life.

When placed within this longue-durée framework of Ulama Nusantara and Hajj networks, the Komite Hejaz appears not as an isolated episode of political lobbying but as a historically grounded expression of mediated religious leadership at a moment of transition. The Komite's intervention represented an effort by Kyais to defend pilgrims' religious practices and scholarly traditions through personal envoys, petitions, and moral authority grounded in transregional networks linking Java and the Hejaz. Their mode of mediation relied on trust, familiarity with scholarly norms, and shared religious vocabularies rather than formal legal authority or standardized procedures.

This sharply contrasts with modern bureaucratic mediation embodied in contemporary state Hajj offices, which regulate pilgrimage primarily through administrative rationality,

documentation, quotas, and contractual service provision. Whereas Komite Hejaz operated through negotiated dialogue and symbolic representation, that is embedding Kyais as intermediaries between pilgrims and sovereign power, modern Hajj administration institutionalizes mediation within impersonal state structures that often displace religious leaders from their earlier brokerage roles. Seen in this light, Komite Hejaz marks a critical historical hinge between network-based, scholar-led mediation and the emergence of technocratic governance over pilgrimage, highlighting how Kyais adapted, and at times contested, the transformation of the Hajj from a religious network sustained by moral authority into a bureaucratically managed global institution.

Read against Clifford Geertz's thesis of the *kijaji* moving from relative "disorganization" to political and institutional "reorganization" in the twentieth century (Geertz 1960), the Ulama Nusantara–Hajj networks complicate linear narratives of religious authority under modern conditions. Rather than emerging solely from postcolonial state formation or party politics, Kyai authority was already reorganized through older transregional networks linking Java, Mecca, and Medina, networks that colonial governance increasingly sought to regulate rather than dismantle.

In this context, the distinction between mediation and collaboration becomes analytically crucial. Colonial and later national Hajj regimes tended to interpret intermediary actors, pilgrimage shaykhs, muṭawwifs, and Kyais, as collaborators whose roles could be absorbed into bureaucratic systems of surveillance, licensing, and control (Hurgronje 1917, 1931; Low 2007; Bianchi 2004). By contrast, drawing on Engseng Ho's diasporic framework, Kyais can be understood as mediators whose authority derived from circulation, genealogy, and moral capital rather than from administrative delegation (Ho 2004, 2006). Like the Hadrami sayyids in Ho's Indian Ocean world, Kyais operated across multiple regimes of power, e.g., colonial, royal, and communal, translating between sovereign authority and lived religious practice without being fully subsumed by either. Situating Kyais within this diasporic and networked history reveals that what Geertz identified as "reorganization" was not simply a shift from tradition to modernity, but a reconfiguration of mediation itself, from scholar-led, morally grounded brokerage embedded in pilgrimage networks to state-centered bureaucratic management that increasingly redefined religious leadership as administrative compliance rather than ritual and social guidance.

2.3. Kyai, Pesantren, and Pilgrimage

In his early and influential essay, Clifford Geertz examines the figure of the kyai (*kijaji*), the Javanese Islamic religious teacher, as a cultural broker occupying a strategic but increasingly precarious position between the traditional village world and the forces of modernization reshaping postcolonial Indonesia (Geertz 1960). For Geertz, the kijaji's authority has historically rested on a distinctive combination of religious learning, spiritual charisma, and deep embeddedness within local agrarian communities, making him simultaneously a guardian of Islamic orthodoxy and a mediator of everyday social life. What distinguishes the kijaji from other religious figures, Geertz argues, is precisely this brokerage function: positioned at the intersection of the sacred and the mundane, the global Islamic tradition and the particularities of Javanese culture, the kijaji has served as a crucial conduit through which external religious influences are translated, filtered, and domesticated into locally intelligible forms. Yet Geertz also observes that this mediating role is under profound stress in the mid-twentieth century context, as the expansion of formal education, the rise of nationalist politics, and the growing influence of reformist Islamic movements increasingly challenge the kijaji's monopoly over religious knowledge and community leadership. The pesantren, once the unchallenged institutional base of kijaji authority, now competes with secular schools and modernist Islamic organizations, eroding the social conditions that had sustained traditional religious brokerage for generations.

While Geertz's framework remains analytically generative, it is not without its limitations and blind spots. His portrayal of the kijaji tends toward a certain structural functionalism, treating the broker figure primarily in terms of the social equilibrium he maintains rather than the active agency, internal contradictions, and political struggles that shape his practice. The kijaji emerges somewhat too neatly as a hinge between tradition and modernity, a framing that risks reproducing the very binary it seeks to complicate. Moreover, Geertz's analysis largely sidelines questions of gender, class, and the internal differentiation within the ulama community itself, dimensions that would significantly complicate his account of religious authority and its transformations. His treatment of Islam is also characteristically thin, subordinating the theological and transnational dimensions of Islamic practice to a culturalist framework preoccupied with Javanese syncretism, a tendency that later scholars such as Talal Asad and Dale Eickelman would subject to sustained critique. Nevertheless, Geertz's core insight, that religious authority in Java cannot be understood apart

from its brokerage function, and that this function is historically contingent rather than structurally fixed, retains considerable relevance for understanding how figures like the kijaji continue to navigate, and be reshaped by, the pressures of globalization, commodification, and state power in contemporary Indonesia.

The kyai's relationship to the hajj represents one of the most revealing expressions of his brokerage function, illuminating how pilgrimage has historically served as both a source of religious authority and a mechanism of transnational network-building within Javanese and broader Nusantara Islamic communities. For centuries, the performance of the hajj was itself constitutive of kyai, the honorific "haji" attached to a returning pilgrim's name was not merely a marker of ritual completion but a signal of expanded spiritual capital, worldly experience, and connection to the global centers of Islamic learning. The kyai who had studied in Mecca or Medina, who had sat at the feet of prominent Hejazi scholars, and who returned bearing books, certificates of transmission, and transnational relationships occupied a position of religious authority that was qualitatively different from those whose learning remained purely local. In this sense, the hajj functioned as a rite of passage not only in the strictly liturgical sense but in a profoundly sociological one, transforming the pilgrim-scholar into a legitimate broker between the universalist claims of Islam and the particular needs of his home community. As Mecca itself has undergone the dramatic commercialization and state-driven restructuring described above, however, this traditional pathway to authority has become increasingly complicated. The proliferation of package-tour hajj travel, the bureaucratization of pilgrimage through quota systems and state-managed travel agencies, and the physical erasure of the scholarly spaces where kyai once gathered and studied have collectively unsettled the conditions under which pilgrimage could straightforwardly confer the kind of religious capital it once did, raising important questions about how kyai authority is reproduced, contested, and reinvented in an age when Mecca has become as much a site of consumption as of devotion.

The Komite Hejaz episode reveals the depth of Kyai Wahab Chasbullah’s commitment to preserving what might be called the cultural capital of Islam for his community and his fellow Javanese Muslims. Through his sustained engagement with pesantren communities and broader Muslim publics, Wahab mediated relations between Java and the Hejaz at a moment of acute religious and political tension, crafting responses to the challenges posed by Islamic modernism and reformism. His status as a *kyai*, which carries a

degree of moral nobility comparable in some respects to the position of a *sayyid* among Hadhrami and other Southeast Asian Muslim communities, enabled him to act as a mediator, a role long recognized in anthropological studies of Muslim societies (Evans-Pritchard 1949; Gellner 1969; Ho 2004, 2006). Through socially recognized authority and leadership, Kyais function as cultural brokers in precisely the sense articulated by Clifford Geertz (1960). As Martin van Bruinessen has emphasized, despite the towering charisma of Kyai Hasjim Asj'ari among Javanese santri, it was Kyai Wahab Chasbullah who played the decisive role in the formation of Komite Hejaz (Bruinessen 1994), and consequently in the emergence of Nahdlatul Ulama as an Islamic organization (Bush 2009; Fealy and Barton 1996; Haidar 1994; Moesa 2007). Well-versed in classical Islamic texts and deeply engaged in intellectual and political debate, particularly with contemporaries such as Kyai Mas Mansur (Aqsha 2005; Noer 1973, 1985), Wahab helped pave the way for sustained links between Java and the Hejaz while defending pilgrimage traditions central to his followers' religious lives.

A closer look at the pesantren education system, the worldview of its Kyais, and the everyday routines of *santri* reveals the deeply embedded Islamic moral atmosphere (*ambience*) in which practices such as *ziarah* are cultivated (Dhofier 1982, 1999). What might appear, at first glance, as exceptional political activism in Wahab's actions in 1926 resonates closely with the quotidian religious sensibilities of pesantren communities. Within pesantren life, values of moderation and tolerance, if not what some would label syncretism, are nurtured organically through disciplined routines of learning and devotional practice (Lukens-Bull 2005). In this context, *ziarah* emerges not as a marginal ritual but as an extension of pedagogical and ethical formation.

In Java, *ziarah* as a pilgrimage practice is intimately linked to *dirāsah*, or religious learning. Paying respect to esteemed teachers, gurus, and Kyais during their lifetimes, and continuing such acts through *ziarah* visits to their tombs after death, constitutes an essential dimension of religious devotion. Muslims study with Kyais when the latter are alive, but their bonds of reverence persist long after death. Kyais thus occupy a dual role, that is they are central figures of religious authority and, simultaneously, destinations of pilgrimage. In this sense, pesantren leadership produces its own sacred geography.

Ethical formation within pesantren is reinforced through classical texts such as *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, a treatise so widely read that it has acquired near-canonical status in Javanese pesantren across Java and Madura. Its teachings on respect for teachers, discipline, and moral

comportment dovetail seamlessly with the practice of *ziarah*, reinforcing the sacralization of scholarly authority.

My own experience during a three-year residence at Pesantren Tebuireng, Jombang, in East Java in the 1980s illustrates how deeply these practices are woven into everyday life. Students were strongly encouraged to visit the tomb of Kyai Hasjim Asj'ari and the *maqbarah,* that is the graveyard of respected family members and former teachers located within the pesantren complex. Students flocked to the site day and night, particularly after class hours, reciting the Qur'an and offering prayers as part of their daily routines. Barefoot and without sandals, male *santri* would walk carefully along the paths leading to the tomb, preserving ritual purity (*wudhu'*) while avoiding contact with the soil. While such practices are rarely codified in texts, they are learned through imitation, socialization, and the example set by Kyais themselves, whose worldview provides an embodied ethical template for students.

During school holidays, pilgrimages to the tombs of the *Walisanga* were also widely encouraged, not formally by the pesantren administration, but through student organizations and informal networks. Although such journeys required financial contributions, parental stipends typically accommodated these expenses, indicating broad social acceptance. For students living under strict disciplinary school regimes, out-of-town pilgrimage offered both spiritual enrichment and a degree of sanctioned leisure. In 1984–1985, approximately 150 students from Jakarta and West Java joined a pesantren-organized "*Wisata Ziarah*," touring sacred sites across Java, from Jepara, Kudus, Muria, Rembang, Tuban, Gresik, to Surabaya. In West Java and Banten, pilgrimage practices similarly centered on regional sacred sites such as Sunan Gunung Jati in Cirebon and Shaykh Muhyiddin in Pamijahan (Pijper 1934, 1987), with these practices remaining particularly strong among communities affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama.

As Pijper observed, many Javanese Muslims historically viewed local pilgrimages as intimately connected to the ideal of pilgrimage to Mecca itself. At Pamijahan, for example, pilgrims visiting the tomb of Shaykh Muhyiddin encounter a narrow cave believed to have served as a passageway for the saint's *tilem,* his spiritual journeys to Mecca, symbolically linking Javanese soil to the Holy City (Christomy 2008). Such connections between Java and Mecca are deeply embedded in Javanese and Sundanese literary traditions. *Babad Tanah Djawi*, for instance, recounts that Sultan Agung of Mataram bore the title *Prabu Pandita* or

King-Priest owing to his piety and reputed spiritual journeys to Mecca for Friday gatherings (Olthof 1941, 1987).

In more recent years, Nahdlatul Ulama has actively mapped and reproduced this pilgrimage landscape. In 2010, during the post-Ramadan *mudik* season, NU distributed a widely circulated pamphlet atlas of *ziarah* sites spanning Java, Sumatra, and southern regions such as Jambi and Lampung. Pilgrimage intensified not only to long-established shrines but also to newly sacralized sites, including the tomb of Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), former president of the Republic of Indonesia, and long-time NU leader. According to local narratives, the inclusion of Gus Dur's tomb effectively completed the sacred circuit, transforming the ninefold pilgrimage of the *Walisanga* into a ten-site network, earning him the epithet *Wali Penggenap* or the saint who completes the cycle.

Kyais themselves, along with lay Muslims, continue to participate actively in pilgrimage. Stories circulate of Kyais performing *ziarah* for personal reflection or moral repair, while *ibu-ibu pengajian* and *Majlis Taklim* groups, often led by female religious teachers (*ustadhah*) trained in institutions such as al-Azhar University of Egypt, organize collective pilgrimages. During fieldwork in August 2010, I encountered one such group traveling across Java and Madura, visiting the tomb of Mbah Kholil in Bangkalan and continuing on to Asta Tinggi and Kali Anget. These journeys often culminate back in Jakarta, with some participants subsequently proceeding to the Hajj.

Mecca remains the ultimate destination, yet Java, with its dense pilgrimage circuitry, continues to function as a crucial religious landscape in its own right. For many, local pilgrimage serves as a spiritual preparation for the Hajj; for others, it constitutes a pilgrimage of equivalent significance (Chambert-Loir and Reid 2002; Chambert-Loir and Guillot 2007; Pijper 1987). Older beliefs held that performing *ziarah* seven times to Demak equaled a pilgrimage to Mecca (Dharma 2000), while sites such as Bawakaraeng in Sulawesi also emerged as alternative pilgrimage destinations (Taroko 2007). In this layered religious geography, Kyais remain central mediators, linking pedagogy, pilgrimage, and moral authority across Java and beyond.

In this context, the practices of *ziarah* within pesantren life, the sacralization of Kyais as living and posthumous figures of authority, and the layered pilgrimage geography of Java point directly to the central role of *tawassul* as a form of ritual mediation. Here, Kyais

function not merely as teachers or custodians of doctrine, but as intermediaries whose moral proximity to God, e.g., established through learning, piety, and lineage, renders them effective mediators in devotional practice. *Tawassul*, whether performed at tombs, through guided prayers, or in collective rituals led by Kyais and shrine custodians (*kuncen*), reflects a broader acceptance of mediated religious access that is deeply embedded in pesantren pedagogy and pilgrimage culture. This ritual logic mirrors, at the level of practice, the broader forms of mediation discussed throughout this chapter: just as Kyais historically mediated between Java and the Hejaz, pilgrims and sovereigns, tradition and reform, they also mediate between believers and the divine in everyday religious life. By foregrounding *tawassul* as both a ritual and social practice, this section thus prepares the ground for the next chapter's exploration of how mediation, once rooted in scholarly authority and pilgrimage networks, becomes increasingly contested, regulated, and redefined with the rise of modern bureaucratic governance over the Hajj and religious ritual more broadly.

Ulama Nusantara and Mukimin Networks

While the modern Hajj is now formally administered through state institutions, ministries, and transnational agreements, its everyday operation has long depended on dense informal networks that predate both colonial governance and the modern Saudi state. Among pilgrims from Southeast Asia, particularly from the Indonesian-Malay world or Nusantara, these networks were sustained by generations of *ulama*, mukimin (settled residents), and *Muṭawwifs* whose roles extended far beyond mere logistical assistance. They formed a social infrastructure of pilgrimage, one that mediated religious knowledge, mobility, trust, and survival in the Holy Cities.

Since at least the nineteenth century, colonial records, travel accounts, and administrative reports have consistently documented the presence of pilgrims from across the archipelago arriving in Mecca and Medina not as isolated individuals, but as representatives, both symbolic and practical, of older Islamic polities and regional centers of learning. Pilgrims hailed from Bima in Sumbawa; Bugis and Makassarese regions of South Sulawesi; Banjarmasin, Sambas, and Pontianak in Kalimantan; Aceh, Deli, Mandailing, Indragiri, Padang, and Palembang in Sumatra; Pattani in southern Thailand; and Banten, Cirebon, Semarang, Kudus, Sedayu, and Madura in Java. These places were not incidental points of

origin: they were nodal centers of Islamic authority, trade, and education within the wider Indian Ocean world.

Over time, these regional origins became embedded in family names and professional lineages in the Hijaz itself. By the early twentieth century, Mecca, Jeddah, and Medina were home to Muṭawwif families bearing names such as al-Bantani (Banten), al-Banjari (Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan), al-Fattani (Patani, Southern Thailand), al-Mandili (Mandailing, North Sumatera), al-Samarani (Semarang, Central Java), al-Maduri (Madura IslandI, and Quds (Kudus, Central Java), each pointing unmistakably to specific Nusantara localities.[14] Far from being mere labels, these names functioned as markers of trust, linguistic competence, and cultural intimacy. For Indonesian pilgrims arriving in a foreign land, these mukimin families constituted the first, and often most reliable, point of contact.

More than a century later, many of the most influential *tawafa* and service networks in the contemporary Saudi Hajj economy continue to reflect these inherited ethnic and regional affiliations. Despite regulatory standardization and bureaucratic oversight, the social memory of origin remains deeply embedded in how services are organized and accessed.

Encountering Hajj Networks: An Ethnographic Moment in Mina

During the 2007 Hajj season, my own encounter with these enduring networks unfolded unexpectedly in Mina. Staying among Indonesian pilgrims in a tent near the Jamarat tunnels, I was immersed in the dense human traffic of the pilgrimage's most intense ritual phase. Amid rows of identical white tents and makeshift offices of service groups (*majmu'ah al-khidmah al-maidaniyah*), a particular signboard caught my attention, the name and photograph of Fawzi Abbas Tamim, listed as a public service officer for Service Group No. 41/6.

This was not a random recognition. Long before arriving in Mecca, I had noted his name in my research notebook. A friend in Indonesia, aware of my Sundanese background,

[14] Dr. Ibrahim Abu Sulaiman, interview, Mecca, 2 June 2007. I am grateful to Dr. Ibrahim Abu Sulaiman, a Saudi great scholar from Mecca for granting me access to a private city library in Mecca that houses rare books and material artefacts produced by Meccan-based Muslim scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this context, one of the most significant statements issued by the *Komite Hijaz* captures the depth of concern felt by Indonesian Muslim scholars at the time. The committee warned: *"With the rise to power of King Sa'ud, who adheres to Wahhabi doctrine, the future of Islamic schools of jurisprudence and religious traditions in Indonesia is being placed at stake"* (Sitompul 1989).

had urged me to meet Fawzi, describing him as a well-known *mukimin* and a key figure among Sundanese–Saudi families in Jeddah and Mecca. Despite repeated attempts during earlier visits, I had been unable to locate him. It was only here in Mina, amid the administrative anonymity of the Hajj, that his presence suddenly materialized.

Fawzi Abbas Tamim is a direct descendant of one of the most influential Nusantara scholarly families in Mecca, that of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani (d. 1897). Originating from Tanara in Banten, Shaykh Nawawi settled in Mecca in the 1830s and rose to become one of the most respected scholars of his generation. While Nawawi's prominence stemmed from his mastery of Islamic sciences, his brother Tamim followed a parallel but less celebrated path. Like hundreds of students from the archipelago, Tamim migrated to the Hijaz to study, later settling permanently and earning his livelihood as an assistant to the *Shaykh Haji*, a profession closely tied to the services provided to pilgrims.

This distinction is significant. While scholarly networks of Ulama Nusantara in al-Haramayn have received considerable academic attention, far less is known about what became of their non-scholarly descendants, e.g., those who remained in Mecca and Jeddah as mukimin, service providers, and cultural brokers after the dramatic political and theological transformations of the twentieth century.



Figure 2.1. Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani and his networks

An artist rendering of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani and the transmission of his scholarly lineage in Indonesia through interconnected networks of teachers, students, and Nusantara pilgrims in Mecca during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Photo: Courtesy of the Official Page of Makam Syekh Maulana Syamsuddin.

After the Saudi Takeover: Decline, Adaptation, Survival

The Saudi consolidation of the Hijaz in the 1920s marked a profound rupture for Indonesian-Malay communities in Mecca. The rise of a state-sponsored Salafi orthodoxy disrupted long-standing religious practices, particularly those associated with Sufism, saint veneration, and Shafi'i jurisprudence, traditions that had formed the backbone of Nusantara Islam for centuries.

The impact was twofold. First, the scholarly presence of Ulama Nusantara in al-Haramayn gradually declined. By the early twentieth century, several towering figures had passed away, including Shaykh Daud al-Fattani, Shaykh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi, and Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani himself. Although figures such as Shaykh Muhammad

Mukhtar al-Bughri al-Bantani continued to teach until the 1930s, increasingly restrictive conditions discouraged new students from settling in Mecca.

Second, and crucially for this chapter, the mukimin communities adapted rather than disappeared. Many recalibrated their public roles, maintaining low religious profiles while strengthening their position in pilgrimage-related services. The profession of Muṭawwif, wakil haji, and sheikh haji, once informal and familial, became a primary avenue through which these communities survived in a changing political environment.

While students and ulama returned to Java, Sumatra, and beyond to establish Mecca-inspired educational institutions, mukimin families remained. They sustained transregional kinship ties, preserved linguistic and cultural fluency, and quietly mediated between Indonesian pilgrims and Saudi authorities. Their influence was rarely doctrinal, but it was deeply practical, without them, the scale and social coherence of the Indonesian Hajj would have been impossible.

By the mid-1980s, the Saudi state had formally dissolved private *tawafa* establishments and incorporated pilgrimage services into centralized institutions, including the *Mu'assasah* for Southeast Asian pilgrims. On paper, this marked the triumph of bureaucratic rationalization. In practice, however, these new entities remained populated, and animated, by descendants of the same Nusantara mukimin families.

The case of Zuhair Abdul Hamid Sedayu, a fourth-generation Javanese Saudi and chairman of the tawafa establishment for Southeast Asian pilgrims, illustrates this continuity. His family name points directly to Sedayu in East Java, a region with its own deep Islamic history dating back to the Mataram Kingdom period. What appears today as a modern administrative apparatus thus rests on an older social foundation, one shaped by migration, inheritance, and long-standing service to pilgrims.

Recognizing these informal networks does not diminish the role of the state in organizing the Hajj. Rather, it reveals a layered reality: the pilgrimage is jointly produced by bureaucratic systems and by historically rooted communities whose contributions are rarely acknowledged in official narratives. Understanding Indonesian Hajj networks in Mecca therefore requires moving beyond ministries and policies to engage with mukimin families, Muṭawwifs, and service lineages whose quiet labor continues to sustain one of the largest pilgrimage flows in the Muslim world.

This chapter has argued that Indonesian Hajj networks in Mecca cannot be adequately understood through the lens of state administration alone. While contemporary pilgrimage is undeniably shaped by bureaucratic regimes, visas, quotas, and ministries, its everyday functioning continues to rely on historically rooted, socially embedded networks maintained by mukimin families, Muṭawwifs, and *walad shar'*. These actors occupy a space between mobility and settlement, formality and informality, legality and legitimacy. Far from being residual or transitional figures, they constitute a durable infrastructure of Islamic mobility in the modern era.

Situating mukimin networks within broader debates on Islamic circulation and diaspora allows us to reconsider prevailing assumptions about movement, authority, and belonging in the Muslim world. Much of the literature on Islamic mobility has focused on itinerant scholars, reformist travelers, or transnational activists, often privileging moments of departure and intellectual transmission. By contrast, mukimin embody a different modality of mobility, one that is rooted in permanence rather than return, service rather than charisma, and practical mediation rather than textual authority. Their presence complicates sharp distinctions between migrants and locals, hosts and guests, or sending and receiving societies.

In this sense, mukimin communities represent a form of *diasporic stability*. They are not diaspora in the classic sense of displacement or exile, nor are they assimilated locals detached from transregional ties. Instead, they form what might be described as *functional diasporas*: communities whose legitimacy derives from their capacity to enable circulation, e.g., of people, rituals, knowledge, and care, across political and cultural boundaries. Their authority is cumulative and relational, built over generations through repeated acts of service to pilgrims rather than through doctrinal production or institutional titles.

The Indonesian case also challenges narratives that frame the twentieth century primarily as a story of rupture in Islamic connectivity, such as colonial restriction, Saudi centralization, and nation-state regulation. While these transformations undeniably reshaped the conditions of mobility, they did not extinguish older networks. Instead, mukimin families adapted by recalibrating their public visibility, professional identities, and political alignments. Their incorporation into state-regulated institutions since the 1980s illustrates not the triumph of bureaucracy over informality, but the mutual accommodation of both.

Understanding the Hajj as a layered social field, where state governance intersects with inherited networks, also reframes debates on Islamic authority. Authority here is neither

purely textual nor purely institutional. It is enacted through mediation, trust, and intimate familiarity with pilgrims' linguistic, cultural, and emotional worlds. Mukimin authority is thus situational and practical: it emerges most clearly during moments of congestion, crisis, fatigue, or uncertainty, when bureaucratic systems reach their limits and interpersonal knowledge becomes indispensable.

Finally, acknowledging middlemen, intermediaries and a larger mukimin networks has ethical as well as analytical implications. These communities have long remained marginal in official histories of the Hajj, despite their central role in sustaining one of the world's largest religious mobilities. Bringing them into view is not merely a corrective exercise; it is an attempt to provincialize state-centric narratives and to recognize forms of labor, care, and belonging that operate quietly beneath formal structures.

The Indonesian Hajj, as this chapter has shown, is not simply administered by states or ministries. It is continuously made and remade by people whose lives straddle Mecca and Nusantara, past and present, regulation and remembrance. Mukimin networks remind us that Islamic mobility is not only a matter of movement across space, but also of continuity across generations, and that the diaspora of Islam is sustained as much by those who stay as by those who travel.

2.4. Leadership in Islamic Pilgrimage

Among Muslims, the Hajj is an ancient pilgrimage ritual whose origins are traced back to Abraham, centuries before the Prophet Muhammad led his followers from Medina to Mecca to perform what became his first and only pilgrimage in 632 CE. During the Prophet's lifetime, leadership in pilgrimage was exercised directly by Muhammad himself. He defined the ritual sequence, organized the logistics of travel and gathering, and guided the community according to Qur'anic revelations. In this early formative period, leadership in pilgrimage was inseparable from prophetic authority.[15]

The various concepts and terminologies of leadership and mediation in pilgrimage as they are understood today, such as *shaykh al-ḥajj*, *amīr al-ḥajj*, *wakīl al-ḥajj*, *dalīl*, and

[15] al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, 1998. *Tārīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk*. Beirut: Dār al-Turāth; al-ʿUtaybī, Khālid ibn Fahd, 2018. *Idārat al-ḥushūd fī al-ḥajj*. Riyadh: Jāmiʿat Nāyif al-ʿArabiyyah lil-ʿUlūm al-Amniyyah.

muṭawwif,[16] commonly translated as pilgrim-guides, emerged only later, most likely as the Hajj became increasingly institutionalized. One early illustration of this transformation can be found in the account of an '*ālim*, or Muslim scholar, who became what might be described as an "accidental" pilgrim-guide.

When the Abbasid Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (d. 809 CE) traveled to perform the Hajj and visited Medina, he instructed his vizier, Yaḥyā ibn Khālid, to find not only reliable security escorts but also a knowledgeable guide. Despite his status as a caliph, Hārūn al-Rashīd sought someone capable of properly guiding him through the pilgrimage and the sacred landscape of Medina. Yaḥyā identified Abu 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar Ibn Wāqid al-Islāmī, better known as al-Wāqidī, a respected scholar in Medina, who accepted the task (Ahmad 1979). Serving as the Caliph's guide, al-Wāqidī introduced him to "places of historic interest," including sites associated with revelation and martyrdom (Donaldson 1953). One of al-Wāqidī's students, Ibn Sa'd (d. 845 CE), narrates this episode in vivid detail (Ibn Sa'd 1957; Ibn Sa'd 2001) as follows:

> Aḥmad bin Musabbiḥ reported and said that ʿAbdullāh bin ʿUbaydillāh said: al-Wāqidī has told me this story. Hārūn al-Rashīd, the Commander of the Faithful, went to perform the Ḥajj and came to visit Medina. He asked Yaḥyā ibn Khālid (his vizier): "Please provide me with a learned man who is well acquainted with the city of Medina and its *mashāhid*; a man who is knowledgeable about how Jibrīl (a.s.) descended and met the Prophet Muḥammad (s.a.w.), from which direction the angel came to the Prophet, and the graves of the martyrs."
>
> Yaḥyā ibn Khālid asked around, and everyone pointed toward me. Yaḥyā then came forward to meet me, and we sat together. "Dear Shaykh," he told me, "the Commander of the Faithful, may God elevate his rank, wishes that you offer your ʿIshāʾ prayer in the mosque later in the night, so that you may show us those *mashāhid* and the place where Jibrīl descended, and so that we may come close to it."
>
> I had just completed the late ʿIshāʾ prayer when I suddenly saw candles outside, and nearby stood two men riding donkeys. Yaḥyā said, "Where is the man?" and I replied, "Here I am." I led them into an area of the mosque and said, "This is the place where Jibrīl descended to meet the Prophet." The two men dismounted, performed ṣalāt, and offered supplications to God for some time. They then mounted their donkeys again while I stood between them. I did not pass by any place or *mashhad* without stopping at it. They would pray at each location, appearing earnest and fully devoted in their worship. We remained in this state until we completed the visit of the mosque, and then the dawn broke and the muezzin came out to call the prayer.

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[16] See al-Qurashī, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, 2008. *Makkah al-mukarramah: Tārīkhuhā wa āthāruhā*. Makkah: Dār Makkah; al-Sibāʿī, Aḥmad, 1984. *Tārīkh Makkah: Dirāsāt fī al-siyāsah wa al-ʿilm wa al-ijtimāʿ wa al-ʿumrān*. Makkah: Maktabat al-Malik Fahd; al-ʿUtaybī, Khālid ibn Fahd, 2018. *Idārat al-ḥushūd fī al-ḥajj*. Riyadh: Jāmiʿat Nāyif al-ʿArabiyyah lil-ʿUlūm al-Amniyyah; al-Zahrānī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, 2012. *Al-khidmāt al-ṣiḥḥiyyah fī al-ḥajj wa al-ʿumrah*. Riyadh: Wizārat al-Ṣiḥḥah.

> As Yaḥyā ibn Khālid was heading to the palace, he told me, "Dear Shaykh, please do not leave." I was offering the morning prayer at the mosque while he was preparing to travel to Mecca. Later that morning, he allowed me to see him. I lowered myself respectfully, and he said to me, "The Commander of the Faithful, may God elevate his rank, was moved to tears. He greatly liked and admired what you showed him, and he has ordered that you be given ten thousand dinars."
>
> It was as though a *badra*[17] had been handed over to me—an enormous sum of money, given so unexpectedly. "Dear Shaykh," said Yaḥyā ibn Khālid, "please accept this. May God's mercy and blessings be upon you. We are continuing our journey today, so you do not need to meet us again until we have settled somewhere, God willing."
>
> When the Commander of the Faithful departed, I returned home with this wealth. I paid off my debts, married off some of my children, and we lived in comfort for some time.
>
> But time changed our circumstances. Umm ʿAbdillāh said to me, "Dear Abū ʿAbdillāh, why do you remain here, when the vizier of the Commander of the Faithful knows you and has invited you to accompany him until you settle somewhere?" So I left Medina, and because I often thought about the people of Iraq, I decided to travel there. When I asked people where the Commander of the Faithful was, they said that he was residing in al-Raqqah.

The narrative recounts how Hārūn al-Rashīd requested a learned scholar familiar with the *mashāhid* of Medina,[18] sites connected to divine revelation, prophetic encounters, and the graves of martyrs. When Yaḥyā ibn Khālid asked around, everyone pointed to al-Wāqidī. During the guided visit, al-Wāqidī led the Caliph and his companion through the mosque, identifying sacred locations where Gabriel was believed to have descended to meet the Prophet Muhammad. The two men dismounted, prayed, and lingered at each site in devotion, following the guidance offered by al-Wāqidī. The encounter culminated in an act of patronage; moved by the experience, Hārūn al-Rashīd ordered that al-Wāqidī be rewarded with ten thousand dinars, a substantial sum that allowed the scholar to settle debts, marry his children, and attain financial stability.

Although Hārūn al-Rashīd performed the pilgrimage as many as five times during his life (Ṭabarī 1989; Williams 1988), there is no indication that al-Wāqidī served as his permanent guide in subsequent journeys. Nor was al-Wāqidī remembered primarily as a pilgrim-guide; rather, he became renowned as one of the earliest Muslim historians. The account preserved by Ibn Sa'd does not use the term *muṭawwif* as it is known today. Instead, it employs the term *dalīl* (guide), implied in expressions such as *fa kullu dallahu 'alayya* ("everyone pointed towards me") and *wa qad a'jabahu mā dalaltahu 'alayhi* ("he really

[17] Badra (pl. badarāt): a huge amount of money (formerly it was equivalent of 10,000 dirhams).

[18] Mashād (pl. mashāhid): place of assembly, meeting, place where a martyr or hero died; religious shrine venerated by the people, esp. the tomb of a saint; scenery, place or object of interest.

admired what I showed him"). As later Hajj travel accounts suggest, *dalīl* was a commonly used term in the nineteenth century to describe guiding functions in pilgrimage contexts.

Despite its seemingly accidental nature, al-Wāqidī's temporary role as a guide during the Caliph's visit had lasting consequences. The experience influenced his decision to leave Medina and relocate to Baghdad, where he eventually established his scholarly career and died as a jurist (Donaldson 1953). Years later, Hārūn al-Rashīd reportedly continued to recall this encounter, emphasizing the emotional and spiritual impact of being guided by the learned scholar through sacred space in Medina.

This episode is not especially prominent in classical Islamic historiography, yet it is illuminating for at least two reasons. First, it reveals the early intertwining of leadership and mediation in pilgrimage, two dimensions that have become increasingly central in modern pilgrimage practices.

Second, it points to the early formation of pilgrim-guiding, whether designated as *dalīl* or *muṭawwif*, as a distinct activity with both religious and economic significance. The gift of ten thousand dinars symbolized the value attributed to this mediating role, informal as it may have been at the time. Over subsequent centuries, such practices would develop into a recognized profession, eventually institutionalized in the form of the guild of pilgrim-guides known as the *muṭawwifīn*.

Al-Wāqidī was likely neither the first individual to guide royal pilgrims nor the earliest figure to perform functions later associated with the *muṭawwif*. Indeed, it remains unclear when the term *muṭawwif* began to circulate in Islamic tradition. In early Islam, the Hajj was conceived primarily as an individual religious obligation, one of the five pillars, placing responsibility on each believer to fulfill the ritual requirements correctly. Yet as pilgrimage expanded and pilgrims increasingly arrived from distant regions, often unfamiliar with Arabic and inexperienced in travel, the need for guides, translators, and intermediaries became more pronounced.

Because the Hajj occupies a central position within Islam, it has been a subject of sustained legal and scholarly discussion since the medieval period. In classical jurisprudence, chapters on pilgrimage, e.g., *bāb al-ḥajj* or *kitāb al-ḥajj*, typically appear alongside discussions of fasting and *zakāt*. The jurist Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (d. 1058 CE), for

instance, introduced the concept of *al-wilāya ʻalā al-ḥajj*, or the administration of the Hajj, in his political treatise *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya*. He treats pilgrimage administration as a matter of governance comparable to the appointment of rulers, provincial governors, and military commanders (al-Māwardī 1996). For al-Māwardī, leadership, and implicitly mediation, in pilgrimage was a political appointment, focused on organizing and managing pilgrims. He refers to the official in charge as *Wālī al-Ḥajj*, not *muṭawwif*. This distinction suggests that the term *muṭawwif* emerged later, as pilgrimage became more transregional and as linguistic mediation and practical guidance became indispensable elements of the Hajj experience.

Al-Māwardī's discussion of *al-wilāya ʻalā al-ḥajj* thus marks an important moment in the political conceptualization of pilgrimage leadership, in which the Hajj was understood primarily as an object of governance, supervision, and administrative order. The *Wālī al-Ḥajj* was charged with organizing and securing the pilgrimage on behalf of the sovereign, reflecting a model of leadership rooted in political appointment rather than religious brokerage. Yet this political-administrative framework alone proved insufficient as the scale, diversity, and transregional character of the Hajj expanded. As growing numbers of pilgrims arrived from distant regions, often lacking linguistic competence, ritual familiarity, or practical knowledge of travel, the exercise of authority in pilgrimage increasingly depended on forms of mediation that operated below and alongside formal state structures. It was within this evolving context that service-based guides such as the *dalīl* and, later, the *muṭawwif* emerged as indispensable actors in the organization of pilgrimage.

This shift becomes particularly visible in nineteenth-century European travel accounts, most notably those of Sir Richard Francis Burton, whose observations offer a rare window into the everyday workings of pilgrimage mediation at a moment when the Hajj had become fully global yet remained loosely regulated. In Burton's writings, the *muṭawwif* appears not as a political appointee or religious sovereign, but as a professional mediator whose authority derived from practical expertise, e.g., mastery of ritual sequences, intimate knowledge of sacred geography, linguistic versatility, and the capacity to manage pilgrims' movements through crowded and often unfamiliar environments. The *muṭawwif* translated doctrine into action, transformed abstract obligation into embodied practice, and navigated pilgrims through overlapping religious, spatial, and economic terrains. This form of mediation, distinct from the political leadership of the *Wālī al-Ḥajj* yet essential to the lived experience of pilgrimage, anticipates the modern figure of the pilgrimage intermediary. It also

provides a critical comparative frame for understanding Indonesian *Kyais*, whose leadership in the Hajj similarly combined moral authority with mediating labor, long before pilgrimage became fully bureaucratized by modern states.

In English-language literature, several of these terms, e.g., *muṭawwif*, *dalīl*, and *murshid,* appear prominently in accounts of the Hajj. Among the most influential observers was Sir Richard Francis Burton, who traveled to Mecca in disguise between 1851 and 1853 and produced what remains one of the most detailed and widely cited pilgrimage narratives (Burton 1874). Burton frequently referred to pilgrim-guides using these terms, employing them to describe figures whom he identified as "spiritual guides" or "the guide at Meccah." He also discussed various shaykhs who worked closely with pilgrims. Crucially, Burton likened the *muṭawwif* to a *cicerone,* a term used in European contexts to denote a guide who conducts sightseers. In the early eighteenth century, a cicerone was understood as "a guide, thought of as having the knowledge and eloquence of Cicero." In this sense, the *muṭawwif* was someone who led, guided, and directed pilgrims through ritual performance and sacred space (Burton 1879).

In one of his detailed descriptions of the *muṭawwif*'s role, Burton observed the conduct of the *ṭawāf* ritual:

> *"Then commenced the ceremony of Ṭawaf, or circumambulation, our route being the Mataf—the low oval of polished granite immediately surrounding the Ka'abah. I repeated, after my Muṭawwif, or cicerone, 'In the Name of Allah, and Allah is omnipotent! I purpose to circuit seven circuits unto Almighty Allah, glorified and exalted!' This is technically called the Niyat (intention) of Ṭawaf. Then we began the prayer, 'O Allah (I do this), in Thy Belief, and in Verification of Thy Book, and in Faithfulness to Thy Covenant, and in Perseverance of the Example of the Apostle Mohammed—may Allah bless Him and preserve!' till we reached the place Al Multazem, between the corner of the Black Stone and the Ka'abah door"* (Burton 1874).

In this passage, Burton portrays the *muṭawwif* as a spiritual leader who actively guides ritual performance. The guide recites prayers aloud, which pilgrims repeat verbatim, especially during the *ṭawāf*. Beyond leading prayers, the *muṭawwif* appears as someone deeply knowledgeable about Islamic ritual forms and sacred sites. Pilgrims followed his instructions not only in bodily movement but also in naming and identifying places and practices, reflecting an acknowledgment of his authority. Burton was careful to emphasize this authority, criticizing other European authors for misnaming ritual practices such as *Nafr* and *Dafa* in Mina and 'Arafah. He explained that he relied on his *muṭawwif*'s terminology, stating explicitly: "I have used the words as my *muṭawwif* used them" (Burton 1874).

By the time of Burton's visit in 1851–1853, *muṭawwifs* had clearly become integral to the organization of pilgrimage in Mecca's multi-ethnic environment. Pilgrims often expressed admiration for the ability of Meccans to converse fluently with foreigners, most of whom were pilgrims or merchants, in multiple languages. Burton famously described Meccans as "admirable conversational linguists…with a volubility surpassing the liveliest of our continental nations" (Burton 1874). Yet he drew a distinction, that among Meccans, it was primarily the *muṭawwifs* who were truly "masters of many languages," owing to their sustained interactions with diverse groups of pilgrims and their professional commitment to serving pilgrims from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (Burton 1874). By the nineteenth century, in addition to Arabic, many pilgrim-guides spoke Persian, Turkish, and Hindustani, languages commonly used by incoming pilgrims.[19]

In later sources, the term *Shaykh Hajjis* began to appear, sometimes used interchangeably with titles such as chief of pilgrims, pilgrim-guide, and the plural Arabic term *al-muṭawwifīn*. Differentiating between the *muṭawwif* system and the *Shaykh Hajji* system is not always straightforward, as their roles often overlapped.[20] However, by the late nineteenth century, the British Empire actively sought to curtail the power of *muṭawwifs* within the Shaykh system. Colonial officials cited what they perceived as fraudulent practices and disorderly conduct, concerns echoed earlier by European travelers to Hejaz and later by Kyai Wahab Chasbullah in 1928. These practices provoked controversies among pilgrims identified as British subjects, prompting imperial intervention (Low 2007).

In 1885, during his extended residence in Mecca, Snouck Hurgronje observed the mediating and leadership roles of pilgrim-guides, known as *shaykh hajjis* or pilgrim-sheikhs, particularly among the *Jawah*, or Indonesian-Malay-speaking pilgrims (Hurgronje 1931). Although some of these guides were of Arab origin, they often employed *wakīls*, assistants drawn from diverse ethnic backgrounds. In one of his final letters on Hajj affairs addressed to

[19] To be exact, Burton observed that: "… *the Meccans in consequence of their extensive intercourse with strangers and habits of traveling, are admirable conversational linguists. They speak Arabic remarkably well, and with a volubility surpassing the most lively of our continental nations. Persian, Turkish, and Hindustani are generally known: and the mutawwifs, who devote themselves to various races of pilgrims, soon become masters of many languages*" (Burton 1874).

[20] al-Azraqī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh, 2003. *Akhbār Makkah wa mā jāʾa fīhā min al-āthār*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah.

the Dutch colonial government on February 27, 1922, Hurgronje again emphasized the central role of Hajj shaykhs, traders, and merchant bankers who maintained close and continuous contact with pilgrims from the Dutch East Indies (Gobée and Adriaanse 1993).

Because pilgrims arrived from many regions, maintaining communication in their native languages was essential. As a result, the organizational structure of pilgrim-guiding incorporated individuals with varied linguistic competencies. Former pilgrims, students, and even scholars became involved in this profession. One prominent example is Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, an Indonesian-born scholar based in Mecca. Members of his family and kin network from Banten became successful pilgrim agents in Singapore, and Nawawi himself reportedly worked as a pilgrim-guide for Javanese- and Sundanese-speaking pilgrims (Hurgronje 1931: 292).

Therefore, the narratives of al-Wāqidī and Burton, along with Hurgronje's late nineteenth-century observations, illustrate a significant transformation in the role of the pilgrim-guide. What began as an informal and sometimes "accidental" form of guidance developed over time into a semi-formal and increasingly professional occupation, eventually crystallizing into organized guild-like associations of *muṭawwifīn*. As the number of pilgrims expanded and the Hajj evolved into a large-scale transregional institution, these mediating roles became indispensable, responding to the growing logistical, linguistic, and ritual demands of pilgrims arriving from across the Muslim world.

This transformation in the role of the pilgrim-guide cannot be understood apart from the broader structural changes that reshaped the Hajj in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The introduction of European steamship travel, the opening of the Suez Canal, and the expansion of imperial surveillance over Muslim mobility dramatically increased the scale, speed, and social heterogeneity of pilgrimage. These developments intensified pilgrims' reliance on intermediaries who could navigate not only ritual obligations but also transportation networks, financial transactions, and administrative controls. As a result, figures such as *muṭawwifs* and *shaykh hajjis* became deeply embedded in the emerging infrastructures of pilgrimage, occupying positions that were simultaneously religious, economic, and logistical. Importantly, these changes also reverberated beyond the Hejaz, strengthening transregional connections between pilgrimage brokers in Mecca, port cities such as Singapore, and religious authorities in Java and other parts of Southeast Asia, a dynamic that will be explored further in relation to Kyai networks later in this chapter.

Seen in this light, the historical emergence of the *muṭawwif* as a professional mediator offers an illuminating point of comparison with Kyai mediation in the Indonesian context. Both figures exercised authority through guidance rather than formal governance, translating religious knowledge into practical action for pilgrims navigating unfamiliar terrain. Yet their modes of mediation were not identical. While *muṭawwifs* operated primarily within service-based systems oriented toward facilitating ritual performance and movement within the holy cities, Kyais mediated pilgrimage from a broader social and moral position rooted in long-term relationships with communities at home. Kyai authority extended beyond the pilgrimage itself, encompassing religious education, ethical instruction, and communal leadership before and after the Hajj.

Nevertheless, both roles depended on trust, expertise, and the capacity to operate across multiple domains, e.g., ritual, linguistic, economic, and political. This comparison underscores a key argument of the chapter, that leadership in pilgrimage has historically taken the form of mediation, enacted through different institutional settings but grounded in shared practices of guidance, brokerage, and the management of sacred mobility.

2.5. *Tawassul* and Mediation in Pilgrimage

> *"Pilgrimages to graves are a widespread phenomenon in Indonesia. They can be observed in almost all regions and in most of the country's cultures and religions. In Java alone, there are thousands of graves, which are visited by varying numbers of pilgrims. This does not mean, however, that such pilgrimages are non-controversial. Orthodox Muslims, for example, condemn the practice, although it is very popular among less strict fellow believers with a more syncretic approach. Among the graves that attract disproportionate numbers of visitors are those of ancestors, village founders, religious apostles, religious leaders, shamans, heroes, monarchs, and secular leaders. Although not all these deceased figures are seen as saints or holy men, their graves are considered sacred places"*
>
> *(de Jonge 2008).*

As de Jonge's observation suggests, pilgrimages to sacred tombs in Java have long been a subject of religious controversy. Muslim theologians critical of tomb visitation often regard certain practices as impermissible, arguing that they verge on *shirk,* that is the act of associating God with other beings, which is understood in Islamic theology as a grave sin. One of the most contested practices within Javanese pilgrimage traditions is *tawassul*, or seeking intercession through saints and esteemed religious figures. Reformist Muslim thinkers and organizations, especially in the early twentieth century, employed theological

arguments against *tawassul* to denounce tomb veneration as religiously deviant (Laffan 2007; Saleh 2001).

Anthropological and historical studies of religion, however, have emphasized the central role of intellectual and ritual specialists in shaping religious practice. In her study of Tuareg religious life, Rasmussen highlights how ritual specialists, e.g., smiths and marabouts, function not merely as religious figures but as key sociopolitical actors, contributing to the formation of moral order and authority within Tuareg society (Rasmussen 1992). Rasmussen's work resonates strongly with Peter Brown's seminal analysis of the cult of saints in early Christianity, where Brown argues that saint veneration was propagated not by popular superstition alone but by the most educated and intellectually sophisticated elites of the Church (Brown 1982). Both scholars underscore the importance of religious leadership in ritual formations and challenge rigid distinctions between orthodoxy and popular practice. Brown's framework is particularly instructive here, as it helps demystify the often-presumed divide between orthodoxy and orthopraxy in religious traditions. Understanding the historical emergence of pilgrim-guides and mediated ritual authority in Islamic pilgrimage thus requires engagement with these broader discussions of leadership and ritual mediation.

Studies of Sufism and *tarekat* traditions in Indonesia consistently point to *tawassul* as a core element of devotional practice and collective religious life (Christomy 2008; Millie 2008; Bruinessen and Howell 2007). As a religious concept, *tawassul* refers to intermediation in prayer and ritual, whereby believers seek closeness to God through figures believed to possess spiritual proximity to the divine. In Sufi traditions, *tawassul* is often practiced alongside *istighātha*, another form of supplicatory intercession; both were widespread among Sufi networks in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Hejaz (Sedgwick 1997). At sacred tombs, pilgrims may pray by invoking the intercession of living saints or deceased *awliya'* on the grounds that these figures enjoy a privileged closeness to God and the Prophet.

In Indonesia, prominent Kyais have actively defended the legitimacy of *tawassul*. In West Java, for example, figures such as K.H. Choer Affandi articulated theological justifications for the practice and composed treatises on *tawassul* in local languages, explicitly addressing lay audiences (Affandi 2008). At pilgrimage sites, pilgrims routinely encounter *kuncen*, shrine custodians or gatekeepers, who guide devotional acts and perform intercessory prayers on behalf of visitors. In this sense, *tawassul* operates as a ritual

enactment of leadership and mediation, making visible the social dimensions of religious intercession.

Importantly, *tawassul* is not confined to the tombs of canonized saints. During a visit to the pilgrimage site of Asta Tinggi on Madura Island, I observed that pilgrims frequently paid respects to the graves of Madurese kings, sultans, royal dignitaries, and community leaders. Under the guidance of *kuncen*, prayers were performed using *tawassul*, indicating that intercessory practices extend well beyond pesantren-affiliated saint veneration. This broader application suggests that *tawassul* functions as a widely accepted mode of ritual mediation in diverse social and political contexts.

Much like the Tuareg smiths and marabouts described by Rasmussen, local Kyais and Muslim teachers in Java regularly lead communal prayers, rituals, and offerings. These practices reflect an understanding that while individuals may pray independently, collective prayer guided by recognized leaders is often preferred and considered more efficacious. This logic parallels Islamic ritual norms such as *ṣalat jamāʿah*, which emphasize the virtues of congregational prayer. From this perspective, leadership, guidance, and mediation are not alien to Islamic tradition but are embedded within its ritual grammar.

Although reformist scholars and movements in early twentieth-century Indonesia condemned *tawassul* as "un-Islamic" (Saleh 2001), other reformist thinkers, such as al-Shawkani in Yemen, adopted more cautious positions, allowing limited intercessory practices among lay Muslims (Haykel 2003). These debates underscore that *tawassul* has never been a monolithic or uncontested practice; rather, it occupies a dynamic space where theology, authority, and ritual mediation intersect. As such, *tawassul* offers a critical lens through which to understand the broader themes of leadership, pilgrimage, and mediation that shape Islamic religious life in Java and beyond.

The controversies surrounding *tawassul* and tomb visitation acquire sharper relief when situated against the rise of Wahhabism and Saudi religious reform in the Hejaz. From the late nineteenth century and especially after Ibn Saʿud's consolidation of power in the 1920s, Wahhabi doctrine advanced a strict theology of *tawḥīd* that rejected mediated devotional practices, including saint veneration, shrine visitation, and intercessory prayer, as illegitimate innovations (*bidʿah*) or forms of *shirk*.

This reformist program directly challenged long-standing pilgrimage cultures shared by Muslims from South and Southeast Asia, where *tawassul* functioned as a recognized mode of ritual mediation embedded in Sufi traditions and scholarly authority. For Javanese pilgrims and Kyais, the Saudi reformulation of sacred space, marked by the destruction or erasure of shrines and the narrowing of acceptable ritual practices, represented not merely a theological disagreement, but a restructuring of religious authority itself. The polemic against *tawassul* thus destabilized the moral economy of pilgrimage in which Kyais, muṭawwifs, and shrine custodians had long served as trusted intermediaries between pilgrims, sacred history, and divine presence.

This contrast also reveals a deeper divergence between Wahhabi reform and network-based Islamic traditions such as those cultivated by Ulama Nusantara. While Wahhabism sought to purify Islam through doctrinal standardization enforced by sovereign power, Javanese Islam privileged relational authority mediated through teachers, saints, genealogies, and pilgrimage circuits linking Java to Mecca. The Saudi state's regulatory approach to religion increasingly replaced embodied mediation with textual and bureaucratic norms, marginalizing figures whose authority rested on personal charisma, lineage, and ritual expertise.

Yet, as the persistence of *tawassul* in Java demonstrates, these practices did not disappear; rather, they were displaced geographically and symbolically, surviving in pesantren life, local pilgrimage circuits, and Kyai-led ritual leadership. In this sense, *tawassul* becomes a critical site of contestation between two visions of Islam: one emphasizing immediacy and doctrinal uniformity, the other sustaining mediation as a legitimate and necessary condition of religious life. Framing this tension clarifies why Kyais' defense of pilgrimage and intercession, historically articulated in episodes such as Komite Hejaz, was not an act of cultural conservatism alone, but a principled response to the reconfiguration of Islamic authority under Saudi reform.

When viewed beyond the shrine and pesantren context, *tawassul* provides an important conceptual lens for understanding mediation in the Hajj itself, particularly through the authority of the *muṭawwif* and other pilgrimage intermediaries. Just as Kyais and *kuncen* mediate ritual access to the divine through proximity, knowledge, and moral standing, *muṭawwifs* perform a parallel role in the pilgrimage domain, guiding pilgrims through rites, prayers, and sacred spaces whose meaning is neither self-evident nor universally accessible.

In both settings, mediation operates on the assumption that religious practice benefits from authorized guidance, e.g., the pilgrim repeats prayers after the guide, follows ritual instruction, and submits to an interpretive hierarchy grounded in religious expertise. *Tawassul*, understood as reliance on a trusted intermediary rather than displacement of divine agency, thus mirrors the ritual logic through which pilgrims accept the *muṭawwif* as a legitimate mediator of religious performance during the Hajj.

This connection helps clarify why the *muṭawwif* historically possessed not only technical authority but also moral and ritual power within pilgrimage networks. Much like shrine custodians and Kyais, *muṭawwifs* derived legitimacy from embodied knowledge of sacred history, ritual timing, and proper conduct, often reinforced through genealogical ties, linguistic competence, and long-term service to particular pilgrim communities. Their authority was enacted performatively, through led prayers, ritual choreography, and interpretive narration, rather than through formal bureaucratic mandate.

Seen in this light, mediation through *tawassul* and mediation through the *muṭawwif* belong to the same religious grammar, in the sense that both presuppose that access to sacred efficacy is relational, socially embedded, and guided by recognized religious leaders. This framing prepares the ground for the next chapter, which examines how such historically grounded forms of ritual mediation came under pressure, and were partially reconfigured, by the rise of modern state regulation and bureaucratic management of the Hajj.

So it is against this background that leadership and mediation in the Hajj pilgrimage emerged as well-accepted concepts and practices. The question, however, remains: what are the religious and social bases of such leadership? As discussed earlier, during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, the Hajj was performed collectively and constituted an integral dimension of the formative Islamic political movement, particularly when the Prophet led the Muslim march from Medina to Mecca. Yet institutionalized notions of pilgrimage leadership, such as *amīr al-ḥajj*, *muṭawwif*, *shaykh al-ḥājjī*, *wakīl al-ḥājjī*, and related terms, were not fully articulated in early Islamic history. It was not until the twelfth century that Muslim jurists began to devote sustained attention to pilgrimage leadership and administration, most notably in the political treatise *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya* by Imam al-Mawardi, where the governance of the Hajj was addressed as a matter of public order and state responsibility.

While the term *kyai* had long been used to denote local religious authority in Java, it was only with Clifford Geertz's intervention in 1960 that this distinctive form of Javanese Islamic leadership received systematic analytical treatment in the social sciences. Geertz described Kyais, whom he rendered as "kijajis" following older Indonesian orthography, as powerful village figures who operated as cultural brokers, mediating between local religious worlds and broader structures of power (Geertz 1960). Much like the forms of intellectual leadership examined by Peter Brown in his studies of early Christianity, Kyais function as intermediary agents between universal Islamic norms and local religious practices, serving as "go-betweens" in state–society relations (Brown 1981, 2014). Geertz noted, however, that such mediating capacity depended heavily on personal experience, political vision, and social acumen; Kyais lacking these qualities could be limited in their ability to act effectively as brokers.

By the 1960s, many *kijajis* had moved well beyond village-level influence and emerged as prominent political actors at the regional and national levels. This transformation was already evident during Indonesia's first general election in 1955, when candidates affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama party, many of them Kyais, became significant vote-getters and, in some cases, front-runners in electoral contests. Although they did not secure overall victory, their performance marked a remarkable shift, given that only three decades earlier Kyais were described by Geertz as largely disorganized. Comparative insights offered by Leonard Binder help situate this development more broadly. Binder observed that village *mullahs* in the Middle East typically possess high status but must carefully navigate relationships with peasants, landlords, and patrons (Binder 1960). The Javanese Kyai shares some similarities with these figures, yet the Indonesian case suggests a greater capacity for political mobilization and leadership. In Binder's comparative framework, Kyais appear alongside other Islamic leadership figures, e.g., *ʿālim*, *ʿulamāʾ*, *mullah*, *akhund* whose institutional roles and ideological functions are broadly parallel, though culturally distinctive (Binder 1960).

Regional variation, however, complicates this picture. Based on her fieldwork among Sundanese Kyais in Garut, West Java, in the early 1970s, Hiroko Horikoshi argues that a clear distinction existed between *ulama* and Kyais, with both groups tending to resist social change and favor locally grounded values as strategies for maintaining authority (Horikoshi 1976, 1987). These leaders were acutely aware of the limitations of their mediating roles,

anticipating circumstances under which the cultural brokerage described by Geertz might fail. Horikoshi further underscores the importance of genealogy in the transmission of religious authority, noting how Kyai leadership often became concentrated within particular families, resulting in a quasi-monopolistic pattern of religious power.

Much of the literature on Islamic reformism has emphasized the perspectives of modernist and reformist movements, often treating tradition and orthodoxy as residual or resistant categories. This study does not seek to defend tradition or orthodoxy per se, but rather to understand leadership and mediation in pilgrimage as they are perceived and practiced by key actors themselves. By situating Kyais and pilgrim-guides within their historical and cultural contexts, this chapter aims to reconstruct the strategies through which religious authority has been negotiated, sustained, and transformed.

The central problematic emerging from this inquiry is that the Hajj, as a modern, large-scale religious practice, requires leadership in the form of teaching, directing, and guiding pilgrims, even as it simultaneously invokes the principle of mediation in religious life. As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, this tension has brought into play both the intellectual authority of scholars and the expanding bureaucratic structures of modern states that seek to regulate and administer the pilgrimage. Building on this foundation, the following discussions will examine the figure of the *muṭawwif*, as a group of learned men and women who work closely with pilgrims, and other key actors in Hajj mediation, exploring how diverse forms of guidance and leadership have contributed to the distinctive features of Indonesian Muslim pilgrimage practices.

Chapter 3 – Street Boys of Mecca

3.1. Middlemen, Brokers and Informal Hajj Networks

In the nineteenth century, pilgrims from the Dutch East Indies were transported to the Hijaz through networks dominated by Hadji Shaykhs, who, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, effectively controlled the Hajj business through cartel-like arrangements (Douwes 1997a; Putuhena 2007b; Spaan 1994). Operating primarily out of Singapore and major Indonesian ports, these Hajj recruiters managed crucial aspects of pilgrimage logistics, including food provision, lodging, documentation, and travel arrangements. Their effectiveness rested on dense alliances with local religious authorities in the villages, e.g., *kyai*, *naib*, *modin*, and *penghulu*, who facilitated recruitment and legitimation at the grassroots level.

Working alongside these figures were the *Muṭawwifs*, also known as *dalil*, that is Meccan shaykhs officially authorized to guide pilgrims in the Hijaz. Together, these actors formed a durable institutional complex that sustained the Hajj economy. The operation further depended on *wakil shaykhs*, representatives responsible for escorting pilgrims from Jeddah to the holy sites (Hurgronje 1931; Douwes 1997a; Bianchi 2004b). For nearly two centuries, the organizational legacy of these *Muṭawwif* networks persisted in the Hijaz. However, beginning in the late 1970s, the Saudi state increasingly recognized the Hajj, and subsequently the *ʿumrah*, as an arena of immense economic and political significance (Bianchi 2004b). This recognition precipitated a major institutional transformation: the dissolution of more than one hundred privately run *ṭawāfa* organizations, their replacement with centralized, state-sponsored management under the Ministry of Hajj and the Saudi Higher Authority for the Two Holy Mosques, and, finally, the introduction of an unprecedented quota system through a Saudi-led effort at the 1986 OIC conference.

Seen in retrospect, the intersecting forces that brought together Hadji Shaykhs, *kyai*, village religious officials, and, more recently, migrant workers, students, and government bureaucrats (now encompassed within a modern definition of *Muṭawwifs*) are essential for understanding the multilayered social meanings of the Hajj. Sustained encouragement of pilgrimage participation not only reinforces religious obligation but also generates substantial

and recurring economic effects. As the Saudi case clearly illustrates, revenue from the Hajj and *ʿumrah* is arguably more predictable and, in some respects, more enduring than oil income. This raises a broader theoretical question: can Islam itself function as a stable moral and institutional foundation for a pilgrimage-based economy, one capable of anchoring and stimulating layered forms of economic activity over time?

Scholarly engagement with the Hajj has expanded significantly since Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje's pioneering studies of Mecca in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Subsequent generations of Dutch scholars retained much of his colonial analytical framework, even as they updated its empirical scope (C. Hurgronje 1976; C. Snouck [Christiaan Snouck] Hurgronje 1931; Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje 1917; Douwes 1997b). By the 1980s, however, Hajj studies shifted decisively away from colonial surveillance toward economically oriented analyses, particularly in African and Southeast Asian contexts (McDonnell 1986; Bawa Yamba 1990; Dhofier and Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial [Indonesia] 1982; Dharma 2000). These approaches were complemented by comparative political analyses (Bianchi 2004b) and, more recently, by perspectives emphasizing conflict, reflexivity, and self-critique among pilgrims themselves (Hammoudi and Ghazelah 2006). Yet despite this rich literature, relatively little attention has been paid to the institutional and organizational dynamics of the Hajj as they operate at the *street level*, where everyday mediation and negotiation occur.

This chapter addresses that gap by examining a contemporary group of middlemen who function as intermediaries, e.g., mediators, liaisons, and agents, between Indonesian pilgrims, Saudi bureaucracies, and the pilgrimage infrastructure. Among their peers, these actors are known as *pembimbing jemaah*, *Muṭawwifs*, or pilgrimage guides. The term "Street Boys of Mecca" derives from *walad shāriʿ*, literally "street boys", a creolized expression combining Arabic with *bahasa Indonesia* and various regional languages of the Indonesian archipelago. Spoken fluently by Indonesian-origin intermediaries living and working along the pilgrimage routes of Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina, the term captures both linguistic hybridity and sociocultural mobility. Their work ranges from guiding ritual practice to managing logistics, negotiating with officials, and brokering accommodation, with individuals often moving between these roles over time.

The chapter focuses on an independent cohort of young pilgrimage guides who operate as a "go-between" workforce within the contemporary Hajj economy. They include

modernized forms of *Muṭawwif* groups, privately run travel agents, *ustadh travel* operators (religious scholars whose primary occupation centers on pilgrimage rather than formal teaching), brokerage firms, and state-sponsored guides. In recent years, new pilgrimage groups have also emerged from *majlis taklim*, religious study circles comprised largely of middle-aged women led by *ustadhah*, or female religious teachers. While these actors perform diverse and specialized roles, my central concern here is with private, non-state intermediaries and their increasing significance within the organization and administration of the Hajj.

Middlemen in Hajj-related activities are far from a new phenomenon. For centuries, both Arab and non-Arab communities in the old Hijaz, and later in modern Saudi Arabia, have developed intergenerational careers as *Muṭawwifs*, guides, caretakers, concierges, and porters. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, British and Dutch colonial administrations alternately aligned with and opposed these intermediary groups. What is historically distinctive in the present moment, however, is not the existence of *Muṭawwifs* as such, but the ways in which the institution itself is being reconfigured under new political, economic, and bureaucratic conditions.

Despite the vastness and internal diversity of Hajj-organizing networks, one figure remains central: the *kyai*. Many members of the Street Boys of Mecca are either direct or indirect descendants of *kyai*, sons, sons-in-law, brothers, and brothers-in-law, or are former students and followers within *pesantren* networks. Some *kyai* and their *pesantren* possess stronger Hajj connections than others; among the most influential are Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor in Ponorogo[21] and Pesantren Banyuanyar in Madura.[22] Graduates of

[21] Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is one of Indonesia's most renowned modern Islamic boarding schools, founded in 1926 in Ponorogo, East Java, and distinguished by its integration of classical Islamic scholarship with modern educational methods. Alongside core religious sciences, Gontor emphasizes mastery of Arabic and English, strict residential discipline, and a structured daily life to cultivate independence, character, and leadership. According to Hamid Naushi, a Gontor alumni in Jakarta and a fellow hajj pilgrim in 2007, Its autonomous curriculum allows flexibility and innovation, while its educational philosophy prioritizes character building over mere knowledge transmission. Supported by a wide and influential alumni network active in religious, academic, and socio-political fields, Gontor promotes Islamic moderation, self-reliance, and social service under its guiding principle of standing "above and for all groups." Interview, 4 November, 2007.

[22] Pesantren Banyuanyar (Pondok Pesantren Banyuanyar) is one of the oldest and most influential *salaf* (traditional) Islamic boarding schools in Madura island, East Java, founded in the eighteenth century and located in Pamekasan. Deeply rooted in classical Islamic scholarship, its curriculum centers on the study of *kitab kuning*, including jurisprudence, Qur'anic exegesis, hadith, and Sufism, taught through traditional methods such as *bandongan* and *sorogan*, with strong emphasis on spiritual discipline. While firmly maintaining its salaf intellectual tradition, Banyuanyar has also adapted to changing times by operating formal educational institutions from elementary to higher education. According to Syamsuddin, an alumni of Banyuanyar working

Gontor, in particular, frequently enter higher-end segments of the Hajj economy, such as Hajj Plus and Ramadan *ʿumrah* packages, often after studying at Saudi Islamic colleges in Jakarta, Mecca, or Medina. As Gontor-style institutions continue to expand, so too does their transnational reach. Many alumni work within government agencies, especially the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Departemen Agama, or Kementerian Agama), notably during the tenure of Maftuh Basyuni, himself a Gontor graduate, while others operate as intermediaries in travel agencies closely connected to Saudi embassies and corporate actors. Many of these figures occupy intermediary positions that are formally bureaucratic yet function through personal networks, discretionary judgment, and informal negotiation. Their authority derives as much from institutional location as from their ability to translate between state procedures and pilgrims' expectations.

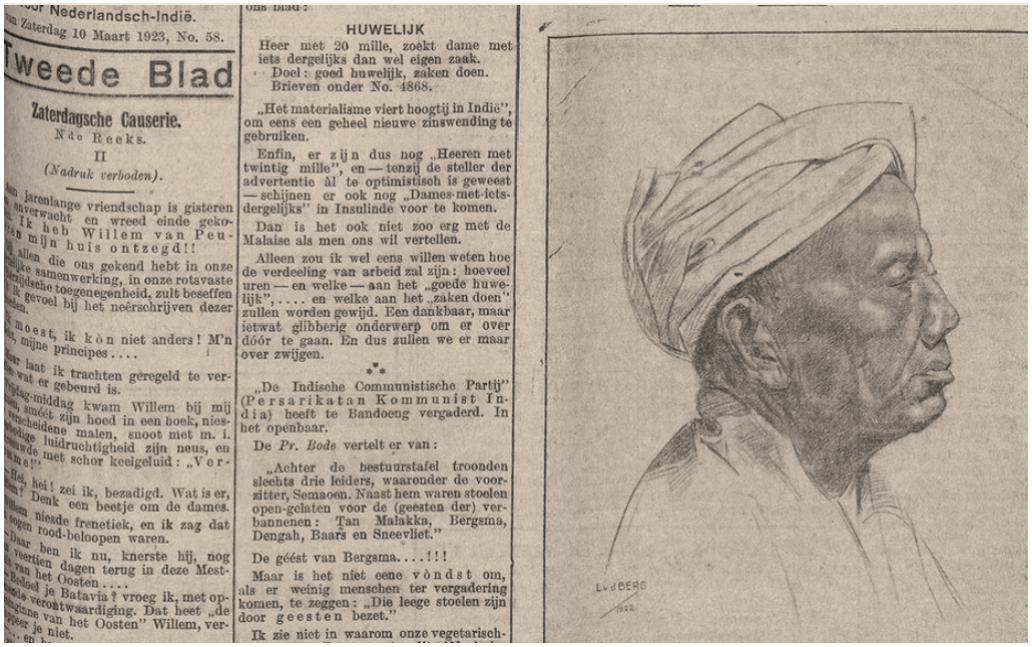
By contrast, graduates of Pesantren Banyuanyar typically lack advanced formal credentials. Nevertheless, through informal yet robust ties with long-established Madurese migrant communities in Saudi Arabia, they have recently become one of the largest support groups within the Hajj industry. Their roles are concentrated primarily in informal and domestic sectors, including catering, housing, and cargo services. These contrasting cases illuminate how affiliations with traditionalist or modernist Islamic institutions shape distinctive positions within Hajj networks. Together, they support my broader argument that *kyai*-based networks have continually adapted and integrated themselves into Indonesia's modern Hajj administration and bureaucracy, a dynamic explored further in the following chapter.

This chapter approaches the Hajj not only as a religious obligation or a state-managed enterprise, but as a field of mediation sustained by a range of intermediary actors. Drawing on extended fieldwork among Indonesian Muslims in Saudi Arabia, I trace how pilgrimage is organized in practice through differentiated forms of intermediary labor. Some figures work primarily within ritual space, guiding prayer, movement, and intention; others focus on logistics, facilitating mobility, documentation, and accommodation; still others operate through bureaucratic institutions or entrepreneurial networks that link religious authority with market mechanisms. These intermediary positions are neither fixed nor mutually exclusive.

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in Mecca, the pesantren has developed a wide alumni network whose members often become *kiai*, teachers, and community leaders. Banyuanyar remains a major center of Islamic authority and social influence in Madura island and East Java. Interview, 5 June, 2007.

Rather, they emerge at the intersections of education, migration, religious knowledge, and state regulation. By examining these roles ethnographically, this chapter shows how the contemporary Hajj is stabilized through a heterogeneous ecology of mediation that operates largely beyond the formal narratives of pilgrimage administration.



Nederlandsch-Indië.
Zaterdag 10 Maart 1923, No. 58.

Tweede Blad

Zaterdagsche Causerie.
Nde Reeks.
II
(Nadruk verboden).

jarenlange vriendschap is gisteren onverwacht en wreed einde gekomen. Ik heb Willem van Peuten mijn huis ontzegd!!
allen die ons gekend hebt in onze lijke samenwerking, in onze rotsvaste rzijdsche toegenegenheid, zult beseffen ik gevoel bij het neêrschrijven dezer leden.
moest, ik kòn niet anders! M'n mijne principes....
laat ik trachten geregeld te verwat er gebeurd is.
ag-middag kwam Willem bij mij smeet zijn hoed in een hoek, niesverscheidene malen, snoot met m. i. dige luidruchtigheid zijn neus, en wde met schor keelgeluid: „Vorma!"
Hè, hè! zei ik, bezadigd. Wat is er, ? Denk een beetje om de dames.
men niesde frenetiek, en ik zag dat gen rood-beloopen waren.
Daar ben ik nu, knerste hij, nog Veertien dagen terug in deze Mestvan het Oosten....
Bedoel je Batavia? vroeg ik, met opde verontwaardiging. Dat heet „de gsme van het Oosten" Willem, verheer je niet.

HUWELIJK

Heer met 20 mille, zoekt dame met iets dergelijks dan wel eigen zaak. Doel: goed huwelijk, zaken doen. Brieven onder No. 4868.

„Het materialisme viert hoogtij in Indië", om eens een geheel nieuwe zinswending te gebruiken.

Enfin, er zijn dus nog „Heeren met twintig mille", en — tenzij de steller der advertentie àl te optimistisch is geweest — schijnen er ook nog „Dames-met-iets-dergelijks" in Insulinde voor te komen.

Dan is het ook niet zoo erg met de Malaise als men ons wil vertellen.

Alleen zou ik wel eens willen weten hoe de verdeeling van arbeid zal zijn: hoeveel uren — en welke — aan het „goede huwelijk", ... en welke aan het „zaken doen" zullen worden gewijd. Een dankbaar, maar ietwat glibberig onderwerp om er over dóór te gaan. En dus zullen we er maar over zwijgen.

***

„De Indische Communistische Partij" (Persarikatan Kommunist India) heeft te Bandoeng vergaderd. In het openbaar.

De *Pr. Bode* vertelt er van:

„Achter de bestuurstafel troonden slechts drie leiders, waaronder de voorzitter, Semaoen. Naast hem waren stoelen open-gelaten voor de (geesten der) verbannenen: Tan Malakka, Bergsma, Dengah, Baars en Sneevliet."

De géést van Bergsma....!!!

Maar is het niet eene vòndst om, als er weinig menschen ter vergadering komen, te zeggen: „Die leege stoelen zijn door geesten bezet."

Ik zie niet in waarom onze vegetarisch-

Table 3.1 Informal Hajj Networks and Brokers

Newspaper coverage in the Dutch-language press actively advertising the Hajj pilgrimage facilitated by the Hajj Sheik networks and their informal hajj brokers operating in the Duct East Indies, 1923. Source: Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië, edition of 10 March 1923

3.2. Finding the Street Boys of Mecca

On a hot, breezy night in May 2007, the smell of lamb kebab and *bukhari* rice lingered in the air as a young Saudi family with two boys strolled past one of Riyadh's favorite local eateries. I was sitting inside the restaurant, sipping my final cup of Saudi *chai* of the night. The *ʿisha'* prayer had ended some fifteen minutes earlier, and the place would soon be packed. My new friend Ahmad, who by then had informally become my guide in the Saudi capital, had recommended this restaurant earlier that evening. Following his advice, I ordered tahini chicken with tomato sauce and a bowl of salad to go. It is always a blessing, especially as a visitor, to encounter someone who knows one's preferred points of interest so well. I

wished I could have stayed longer; had I done so, Ahmad might well have become my ultimate Saudi food guide.

Yet while skimming through a copy of a book chapter on the *kiswah,* which I had received earlier from Abdel Wahed, a Sudanese office assistant at the King Faisal Foundation library in Riyadh, I repeatedly found my thoughts drifting toward Mecca, my next destination. By the end of the month, I would conclude my archival research on the early history of Saudi Hajj administration at the King Faisal Foundation. Shortly thereafter, I would need to ship copies of books and manuscripts to Mecca and prepare for the next phase of my fieldwork. I could hardly believe that six weeks had passed so quickly. Leaving the Indonesian Embassy and its beautiful surroundings in Riyadh's Diplomatic Quarter, a place that had offered me many everyday lessons in bureaucracy and diplomacy, filled me with a sense of disbelief, mixed with anticipation.

Sensing my anxiety about returning to Mecca, about once again witnessing its ever-changing urban landscape, the constant reconstruction of pilgrimage sites, and the overwhelming density of pilgrims, Ahmad offered what he described as a solution. I remember him repeatedly assuring me that I did not need to worry about arriving in Jeddah or living in Mecca, as long as I had someone I knew, or would soon come to know: a *teman baik*, the Indonesian term for a trusted confidant. Ahmad seemed convinced that I would inevitably find such a person.

"*Pasti ada…* There will certainly be one. You just need to find a trustworthy and experienced *Muṭawwif*, *insha'Allah*," he said, flashing his characteristic broad smile. "And, *wallah*, there are plenty of them. Honestly, without good and reliable *Muṭawwifs*, how do you think Indonesian pilgrims would survive in this Arab land?" His baritone voice lingered in my thoughts long after the conversation ended. Despite his reassurances, however, I could not fully shake my unease. Before this visit, I had been to Mecca twice, but neither stay lasted more than three weeks. This time, I told myself, I would remain for at least three uninterrupted months. While passing through Mecca as a pilgrim or short-term visitor might be exhilarating, living there for an extended period was something else entirely.

That anxious feeling almost glued me to my chair. Eventually, the Yemeni cashier called out my order, and I stood up to pay. Shortly afterward, Ahmad called my Mobily phone to let me know he was on his way to pick me up. When he finally arrived, he greeted me with

a warm hug, and we drove back along dusty roads to Umm al-Hamam al-Sharqi, the neighborhood I called home during my stay in Riyadh. Located about twenty minutes from downtown, the area lies some distance from al-Sulaymaniyah, one of the city's more modern and affluent districts, where I commuted daily to conduct archival research at the King Faisal Foundation library.

During the drive, Ahmad shared what he described as good news. Someone from Mecca, he said, would be arriving soon in Riyadh to attend a workshop at the Indonesian Embassy. "He's someone you might already know, or at least someone you *should* know," Ahmad explained. "Besides being a professional *Muṭawwif*, he's also quite like you, a writer." Ahmad had been a kind presence since my arrival in Riyadh in March. He was humorous, generous with stories, and deeply embedded in multiple social worlds. "At one point, you know, I was a *Muṭawwif* too," he added casually. "That's how I know that part of the Hajj world."

Back at my place, we sat on the floor and opened our takeout. Over dinner, Ahmad shared a series of stories that blended memory, nostalgia, and quiet critique. He recalled his childhood in an Indonesian *kampung* and his early years in Jeddah, as well as his teenage life in Mecca, where he and his friends played football in the open yards just outside the Grand Mosque. Growing older in Mecca, he explained, brought a more sobering awareness of social stratification, particularly divisions shaped by ethnicity and skin color. Being half-Arab and half-Indonesian, he noted, did not necessarily ease his position, especially given that only a few members of his extended family had obtained Saudi citizenship.

Ahmad spoke candidly about what he described as a strong sense of ethnic pride among many so-called "indigenous" Meccans. "We're Mecca folks, *Makki ṣaḥrāwī*," he said, repeating a common expression that evokes descent from desert tribes and conveys claims to authenticity and precedence. His comment reminded me of another story once told by a Saudi taxi driver from Mecca: "Remember, we didn't just oppose Saudi rulers; we even expelled the Prophet himself and forced him to migrate to Medina!" Such remarks, half in jest and half in bravado, pointed to deeply rooted narratives of local identity and moral authority.

As we finished dinner, Ahmad and I agreed that the tahini tomato chicken was an ethnic cuisine worth remembering. Our conversation drifted between the personal and the analytical. He asked about my life as a Muslim student in the United States and about my

childhood in Bandung, West Java, while I posed questions about Hajj-related businesses involving both Arab and Indonesian migrants in Saudi Arabia, an industry in which he had been closely involved.

Ahmad is a warm and approachable Arab-Indonesian with a Hadhrami family name, Alaydrus. He grew up moving between Jeddah and Mecca and now lives in Riyadh, where he works as a staff member at the Indonesian Embassy (KBRI). We first met through my frequent visits to the embassy's cultural and educational attaché office for research purposes. His family history reflects a long-standing involvement in trade and logistics linking Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. His father worked as a manager for a local shipping company with special contracts serving Indonesian clients before later joining the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah. Ahmad, his Indonesian mother, a Javanese woman from Banyuwangi, and his siblings have lived in Saudi Arabia since the 1960s, remaining even after his father's death. Despite decades in the Kingdom, Ahmad has retained Indonesian citizenship.

He completed high school in Jeddah, and in 1995 traveled to Jakarta for a family-arranged marriage to a Hadhrami woman. Briefly employed as a store manager in a family-owned business, he found life in Jakarta unsatisfying. Two years later, in 1997, he persuaded his young family to return to Saudi Arabia. His fluency in Arabic, deep familiarity with Saudi social life, and, perhaps most importantly, his inherited business networks enabled a smooth transition. Like his father before him, Ahmad became a deputy manager in a Hajj-related shipping company and occasionally accompanied Indonesian VIP pilgrims, many of whom were business partners, relatives, or clients from various Indonesian cities.

By this period, the Hajj industry was expanding rapidly. Since 1996, the number of Indonesian pilgrims performing the Hajj had steadily increased to approximately 190,000 per year, while those placed on waiting lists had surged to nearly 800,000 prospective pilgrims (Bianchi 2004a; Putuhena 2007a). These figures do not include the growing number of *ʿumrah* pilgrims who travel to Mecca year-round, except during the peak Hajj season of three months. As I will explain later, it was precisely amid this expansion that Ahmad chose to leave the lucrative Hajj business in favor of formal employment within a heavily bureaucratized institutional environment.

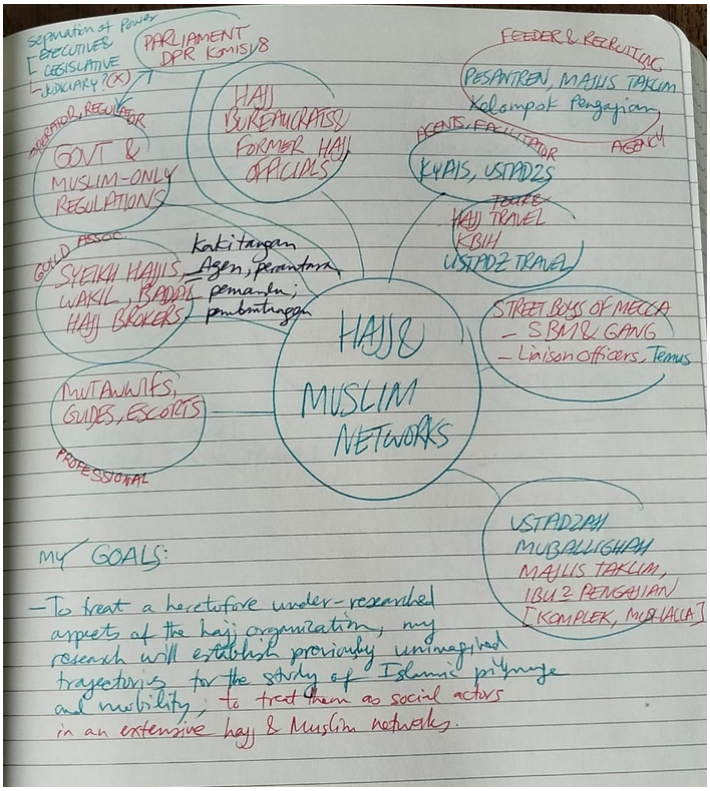


Figure 3.1 Hajj and Muslim networks

Fieldwork notes from my ethnographic research conducted in Mecca, 2007. Photo: Dadi Darmadi

Ahmad's life history and everyday practices illuminate the social and institutional position occupied by what I call the *Street Boys of Mecca*. Moving fluidly between Riyadh, Mecca, Jeddah, and Jakarta, between embassy offices, shipping companies, pilgrimage routes, and informal social networks, Ahmad embodies a form of intermediary agency that is neither fully bureaucratic nor entirely informal. His authority does not derive from formal religious credentials alone, nor from state appointment, but from a combination of linguistic competence, cultural familiarity, inherited networks, and experiential knowledge of Saudi and Indonesian social worlds. In this sense, Ahmad is not simply an individual informant or a helpful guide; he represents a broader category of actors whose labor consists of mediating uncertainty, e.g., navigating visas, logistics, emotions, expectations, and risks, on behalf of Indonesian pilgrims. Positioned between state regulation and lived religious practice, these intermediaries function as translators of space, culture, and power. The following section moves beyond Ahmad's personal narrative to examine how such figures operate collectively, how their intermediary roles are produced and reproduced through education, migration, and institutional overlap, and how they shape the contemporary organization of the Hajj at the street level.

Ahmad's significance lies less in any formal religious authority than in his capacity to manage movement, documentation, and uncertainty. His work points to a form of mediation grounded in logistical knowledge and networked access, operating largely outside formal ritual space yet essential to the pilgrimage process as a whole.

From Journalism to the Pilgrimage Industry

Kang Ridhwan, a Sundanese man born in Bandung thirty-nine years ago, offers a revealing case of movement from the media world of Jakarta into the everyday labors of the pilgrimage economy. His shift from journalism to guiding pilgrims through the crowded spaces of the Haram highlights how personal trajectories are reshaped when professional experience intersects with religious service and economic opportunity.

Before becoming a *Muṭawwif*, Kang Ridhwan worked as a journalist for a weekly national magazine. His professional life once revolved around deadlines, editorial meetings, and field assignments that took him across Indonesia. Among his recurring writings were reports on Hajj and *ʿumrah,* e.g., the long anticipation of departing pilgrims, the complex logistics faced by travel bureaus, and the emotional narratives of *jamaah* coming from villages, towns, and cities scattered across the archipelago. His articles captured the immense scale of Indonesia's participation in global pilgrimage, the country's status as the largest sender of pilgrims worldwide, and the distinctive mix of expectation, anxiety, devotion, and practical concern that Indonesian pilgrims carried with them to Mecca and Medina.

At the time, these stories remained just that, stories compiled through interviews, observation, and note-taking. Kang Ridhwan moved through airports, training sessions, and embarkation points as an observer with a press badge and a recorder. Yet, as he later reflected, little did he realize that the ritual pathways and crowded courtyards he once described from a distance would eventually become the terrain of his own daily labor. Years later, he would return to the same spaces not as a chronicler of others' journeys, but as an active participant responsible for guiding pilgrims through the very rituals he once narrated from afar.

For most Muslims who have performed the Hajj or *ʿumrah*, the term *Muṭawwif* is already familiar. Its significance, however, becomes clearer when examined in everyday

practice rather than as a formal category. During one conversation in Mecca, in the early summer of 2007, Kang Ridhwan described his work in a careful, deliberate manner, speaking with a rhythm that reflected his background as a journalist.

"*Ya, kami mendampingi jamaah agar mereka bisa melaksanakan ibadah dengan sempurna*," he said. *Yes, we accompany the pilgrims so they can perform their worship as perfectly as possible.* The word *afdhal*, meaning optimal, exemplary, surfaced repeatedly in his explanations, signaling both a technical and moral orientation toward the work.

Beyond standard ritual guidance, Kang Ridhwan is frequently asked to perform *Badal Haji*, acting as a proxy for deceased parents, siblings, or close relatives of *jamaah* who wish to entrust the spiritual merit of pilgrimage to their loved ones. This form of labor adds an additional layer of weight and responsibility to his role. He carries not only the physical demands of guiding pilgrims through *ṭawāf*, *saʿi*, and visits to sacred sites such as Jabal Uhud in Medina, but also the intentions, hopes, and unresolved obligations of those who can no longer come themselves. As he once put it quietly, "Ini bukan sekadar pekerjaan." *This is not merely a job.*

Kang Ridhwan's entry into the profession was neither planned nor strategic. He first arrived in the Holy Land around 2001 with the intention of *menuntut ilmu*, seeking religious knowledge.[23] Like many young Indonesians, he imagined Mecca as a place of learning, reflection, and spiritual refinement rather than employment. Four years later, an old friend who had settled there earlier invited him to try working as a *Muṭawwif*. The offer came casually, without grand promises. He accepted with little hesitation. The pay, as he recalled, was *sekedarnya,* or modest, barely sufficient by commercial standards. Yet what mattered more was the sense of purpose that accompanied the work.

"*Awalnya diajak teman menjadi Muṭawwif, kala itu upah yang ia dapat sekedarnya. Namun karena panggilan hati melayani tamu Allah itu kebahagiaan yang luar biasa*," he

[23] This theme of Indonesians, particularly Muslims of Nusantara origin, undertaking the hajj not only as a religious obligation but also as a means of pursuing Islamic knowledge is most clearly articulated in the seminal work of Martin van Bruinessen. His article, *Mencari Ilmu dan Pahala di Tanah Suci: Orang Nusantara Naik Haji* (1990), examines the intellectual and spiritual motivations underlying Indonesian participation in the pilgrimage (*Ulumul Quran* 242–49). The study was later republished in an expanded form as *Seeking Knowledge and Merit: Indonesians on the Hajj* in *Indonesia dan Haji: Empat Karangan* (1997), edited by Dick Douwes and Nico J. G. Kaptein (pp. 37–64; Jakarta: INIS), further underscoring the dual function of the hajj as both devotional practice and an avenue for scholarly and religious engagement.

recalled. At the beginning, a friend invited him to become a *Muṭawwif*. The pay was minimal. But the inner calling to serve the *Guests of God* was, for him, an incomparable reward.

In this context, Kang Ridhwan's trajectory reflects a broader yet still under-examined pathway among Indonesian *Muṭawwifs*, that is the movement from intellectual or observational roles, e.g., journalists, teachers, *santri,* into forms of embodied service labor. What begins as a temporary opportunity or side engagement often solidifies, over years of repetition and recognition, into a stable profession. This pathway does not mark a departure from earlier forms of expertise, but rather their transformation into practical, relational, and ritual competence.

In my most recent meeting with Kang Ridhwan, in the late summer of 2025 in Jeddah, his travel business had expanded considerably. He invited me to visit his office outside Mecca, where this growth was readily apparent. By this time, Kang Ridhwan was well known among Indonesian travel bureaus, particularly in Bandung, Jakarta, and other major urban centers, with his reputation circulating largely through personal recommendation. He now receives bookings not only from Indonesia but also from Malaysia and Singapore. Especially during peak pilgrimage seasons, his schedule is consistently full, and his earnings reflect the trust he has built through years of experience.

Many tour operators proactively reserve his services well in advance for their Hajj and *ʿumrah* packages. When asked about this recognition, his response remains characteristically modest. "*Saya pribadi sangat bersyukur mendapatkan kepercayaan untuk mendampingi jamaah,*" he told me. *I am personally grateful for the trust placed in me to accompany pilgrims.*

Observed in the field, during the 2007-2008 umrah and hajj seasons, Kang Ridhwan moves with quiet competence through the intense sensory landscape of the Haram. He navigates crowds at all hours, gently corrects ritual movements, provides calm explanations in accessible Indonesian infused with Sundanese warmth, and patiently assists elderly or first-time *jamaah*. He performs proxy rituals with deliberate care. His background as a journalist remains perceptible in these moments. He notices small gestures, emotional shifts, moments of hesitation or relief, the anxiety of a pilgrim confronting the immensity of the crowd, the joy following the completion of *saʿi*, the silent tears shed for a deceased parent whose

obligation is being fulfilled. These are the same details he once documented for readers back home, now encountered directly through action rather than writing.

In the broader context of Indonesian *Muṭawwifs*, Kang Ridhwan's story underscores the fluidity of roles within the pilgrimage industry. Observers become practitioners; seekers of knowledge become facilitators of others' devotion. His path from Bandung to the plains of Arafah and the streets of Medina illustrates how the Hajj and *ʿumrah* economy sustains not only collective spiritual journeys but also individual livelihoods and unexpected callings for thousands of Indonesians living and working in Saudi Arabia.

Through figures such as Kang Ridhwan, we can observe the forms of everyday labor that quietly sustain mass pilgrimage, as former observers of the Hajj become practitioners who guide ritual practice and assist pilgrims throughout their journeys. In this context, the cases of Ahmad and Kang Ridhwan above reveal a shared intermediary position shaped less by formal authority than by accumulated mobility, relational trust, and practical expertise. While Ahmad operates primarily through logistical, bureaucratic, and diplomatic channels, e.g., shipping companies, embassies, and informal negotiations, Kang Ridhwan works closer to the ritual core of the pilgrimage, guiding bodies, prayers, and intentions through sacred space. Yet both figures occupy a similar structural location, they bridge Indonesian social worlds and Saudi institutional regimes, translating uncertainty into manageable action. Their credibility derives not simply from religious knowledge or professional credentials, but from lived familiarity with the moral economy of pilgrimage, e.g., knowing when rules may bend, how expectations should be managed, and how pilgrims' spiritual anxieties are to be reassured. In this sense, Ahmad and Nordin exemplify how intermediary labor in the Hajj depends on a blend of cultural fluency, experiential knowledge, and ethical performance rather than formal bureaucratic authority alone.

At the same time, these cases point to important differentiation among Indonesian pilgrimage intermediaries. Ahmad represents a figure whose expertise lies in infrastructural navigation, e.g., transportation, paperwork, institutional access, and behind-the-scenes problem solving, while Kang Ridhwan embodies a more ritually centered form of mediation grounded in bodily proximity, spiritual guidance, and affective labor. Elsewhere in this chapter, other intermediaries will appear such as pesantren-linked brokers, bureaucratic guides, female ustadzah organizers, and seasonal workers, each occupying distinct niches within the pilgrimage economy. What unites them is not a shared occupational identity, but a

shared function, the capacity to operate in the interstices between state regulation, market forces, and religious obligation. By comparing these figures, this chapter argues that the contemporary Hajj is sustained by a heterogeneous support system of intermediaries whose differentiated roles collectively stabilize mass pilgrimage, even as they remain marginal to its formal institutional narratives.

Jakarta–Mecca Connections

As I prepared to move from Riyadh to Mecca in the early summer of 2007 to continue my fieldwork on Islamic pilgrimage in Islam's holiest city, I came to know another young man from West Java. His name was Nordin, widely recognized as a reporter for one of Jakarta's leading magazines. He had come to Riyadh to lead a journalistic workshop sponsored by the Indonesian educational and cultural attaché for Indonesian students living in the Saudi capital. As noted earlier, he was the person Ahmad had described to me, half amused, half admiringly, as a "professional *Muṭawwif*" and a "writer" at the same time. The description intrigued me from the outset and prompted a series of questions about the kind of life such a combination might entail.

When the day of the workshop arrived, I went to the Indonesian Embassy to attend the program. More than the workshop itself, however, I was eager to finally meet this *Muṭawwif*–writer–journalist figure. Mr. Juhdi Syarif, the Indonesian cultural and educational attaché in Riyadh, formally introduced me to Nordin shortly before his session began. In the process, Mr. Syarif mistakenly introduced me as an alumnus of Gontor Pesantren, a mistake that clearly pleased Nordin, prompting me to immediately clarify that I was not. Nordin, in turn, explained that he himself was indeed a graduate of Gontor, but that unlike many alumni who continue into teaching positions, he had chosen to study philosophy at Gadjah Mada University (UGM) in Yogyakarta.

At that moment, it became difficult not to notice that Gontor and its network occupied a recurring place in these encounters. The brief exchange alerted me to the importance of educational institutions not only as sites of learning, but also as durable social networks,

particularly in the Saudi context. The significance of Gontor as a node of connection,[24] recognition, and mobility would become increasingly evident as my fieldwork progressed, and I return to this point later when discussing other Gontor-affiliated intermediaries.

Nordin, as he asked me to call him, was immediately personable and approachable. He handed me his business card, confirming what Ahmad had told me earlier; he was indeed a journalist by profession. He worked as a reporter for a weekly magazine *GATRA*, and was posted individually in Mecca to cover news on Saudi Arabia, the Hajj, Indonesian migrant workers, and Middle Eastern affairs more broadly. During his workshop session, both informative and engaging, Nordin spoke candidly about his experiences as a young journalist. He described how, despite having no formal overseas training, he learned to navigate reporting in Saudi Arabia through persistence, adaptability, and careful cultivation of sources. Approximately seventy participants attended the workshop, most of them senior students from the Indonesian School in Riyadh (SIR), undergraduate and graduate students from King Khalid University and Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University (IMSIU), locally known as Jamiʿa Imam, along with a small number of young Indonesian expatriates living in the city.

If one were to accept that Nordin was also a *Muṭawwif*, he appeared, at least initially, to be an unusual one. From the outset, he struck me as exceptionally well educated; he was articulate, attentive, composed, and carefully dressed. These qualities were evident in the way he responded to questions from the audience, including those that required particular delicacy such as inquiries about the challenges of reporting from a tightly controlled society like Saudi Arabia. He answered with a measured assessment of journalistic ethics and practical constraints, emphasizing the importance of source cultivation, contextual sensitivity, and the ability to write under pressure. His professional confidence became especially apparent when he distributed copies of one of his most controversial reports, an investigative piece on prostitution networks in Jeddah and the involvement of Indonesian women within them.[25]

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[24] During my fieldwork, I repeatedly encountered references to the importance of personal connections in the Saudi context, commonly referred to as "wasta," or "wāsita" (Arabic: واسِطة), an Arabic term commonly translated as "nepotism" or "social clout." It refers to the strategic use of personal relationships, networks, or social influence to secure advantages, access, or favorable outcomes.

[25] One of the most interesting stories he wrote for the magazine was about the phenomenon of "Abu Khamsin," a derogatory slang term circulating in early 2000s in some Indonesian migrant and online contexts that stigmatizes Indonesian women, particularly vulnerable migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, by reducing them to a

This moment crystallized the complexity of Nordin's position. He moved with relative ease between roles that are often assumed to be incompatible, the investigative journalist, the religious guide, the intermediary embedded in pilgrimage circuits. Rather than appearing contradictory, these roles informed one another. The encounter suggested that the boundaries separating observation and participation, reporting and guiding, were far more porous than they might initially appear, particularly within the social world of Indonesian Muslims working in and around Mecca.

3.3. *Shaykh Hajji*, Pesantren Networks and the Hajj

Street Boys of Mecca is a symbolic term I used here to refer to young, mobile, and socially agile Indonesian adults who, in the context of pilgrimage to Mecca, both Hajj and *ʿumrah,* function as intermediaries between Indonesian pilgrims and a range of formal institutions. These institutions include state bureaucracies, Islamic foundations, financial establishments, and social organizations operating across both Indonesian and Saudi Arabian contexts. The term derives from *walad shāriʿ* (*walad syarʿeʿ* in colloquial usage), a creolized Arabic–Indonesian expression that translates loosely as "street boys."

In one of our meetings in June 2007 at Jeddah airport, Kang Ridhwan and his friends were busy preparing to depart, loading large sedans and GMC Chevrolets to pick up an *umrah* group from the ESQ organization in Jakarta. Half-jokingly, he asked me whether they already looked like a group of young men riding motorcycles in American movies. Laughing, he went on to say that they worked without regard for time, always on call day and night. Sometimes, he explained, they did not return home to their houses or apartments at all, but ended up sleeping at the airport or even on the road. "We're like street boys, aren't we?" he said, still joking. He then added, teasingly, that this was why he liked to call his friends *walad shāriʿ* or street boys, laughing as he said it.

sexualized stereotype associated with extreme exploitation, implied by the phrase "fifty riyals." While derived from Arabic (*abu* as a nickname marker and *khamsīn*, "fifty"), the term functions less as a literal description than as a moralizing trope that reflects rumor, gendered violence, and deep power inequalities within transnational labor and migration settings.

It is important, however, to clarify what this term does *not* signify. The *Street Boys of Mecca* should not be conflated with recent urban youth phenomena in Saudi Arabia such as *tafḥīṭ*, that is illegal street drifting or joyriding staged for youthful spectators on Riyadh's wide, polished roads.[26] The usage here points instead to a socially situated group of intermediaries who operate at the forefront of pilgrimage-related services. They maximize their capabilities through dense networks, accumulated experience, and the provision of practical services that sustain the pilgrimage economy. While often positioned at the margins of formal Hajj institutions, these actors are, in practice, deeply embedded in the everyday functioning of pilgrimage logistics—figures who work largely behind the scenes.

Members of this group sometimes refer to themselves as, in Indonesian procounciation, *Walad Syare'*. As is common among migrant communities who speak Arabic as a second language, such terms emerge informally and are used flexibly rather than rigidly defined. In the male-dominated public sphere of Mecca, these Street Boys become especially visible during pilgrimage seasons, when their labor intensifies and their networks are most active. Socially, they emerge from a range of backgrounds. Many are linked to pesantren-based migrant communities such as Gontor and Banyuanyar (Madura), while others come from diverse ethnic groups including Madurese, Bugis, Sambas, Minangkabau (Padang), Bantenese, Javanese, Sundanese, and smaller regional communities across the Indonesian archipelago.

The Street Boys of Mecca are unmistakably middlemen. Their work involves facilitating both formal and informal aspects of pilgrimage, e.g., from documentation and transportation to accommodation, guidance, and problem solving. Yet they are not merely

[26] I am deeply grateful to Stéphane Lacroix (Sciences Po, Paris, France), whose conversations and intellectual generosity between 2024-2025 at UIII campus, Depok, Indonesia helped me make sense of the contours of contemporary Saudi socio-political life. Our discussions extended beyond formal political dynamics to the more textured worlds of Saudi youth, where everyday practices, aspirations, and forms of dissent take shape. These youthful terrains have been examined with particular ethnographic sensitivity by other French scholars, most notably Pascal Ménoret, whose work illuminates the phenomenon of *tafḥīṭ*, or drifting, as a mode of youthful expression and urban intervention, and Amélie Le Renard, who offers a nuanced account of gendered experiences and negotiations among young Saudis. It is worth noting, almost ethnographically, that these interlocutors once shared not only analytical concerns but also institutional space, having all served as visiting researchers at the King Faisal Research Center for Islamic Studies in Riyadh in 2007, a moment of overlapping presence that subtly shaped my engagements with Saudi society in Riyadh. See analyses of contemporary Saudi religious, political, and social life by Stéphane Lacroix (2011), Amélie Le Renard (2014), and Pascal Ménoret (2005; 2021), which together illuminate activism, youth culture, and everyday forms of dissent in modern Saudi Arabia.

brokers. They are also guides whose effectiveness depends on a combination of religious knowledge and practical skill. The nature of Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca demands competence not only in ritual instruction but also in navigating modern labor systems, logistical arrangements, and bureaucratic constraints that have increasingly shaped the Hajj and *ʿumrah* as globalized religious institutions.

The Indonesian term *anak jalanan* ("street children" or "street youth") offers a useful point of comparison. In urban Indonesian contexts, the phrase commonly refers to marginalized youth identified by their visible presence in public spaces and distinctive styles of speech, dress, and behavior. In sociological usage, the term often carries an even narrower meaning, referring to school-aged children who spend much of their time on the streets rather than in classrooms, earning small amounts of money through activities such as street music performances (*ngamen*), and commonly described as *pengamen jalanan* or street musicians. While the *Street Boys of Mecca* differ significantly from these groups in age, social position, and economic role, the comparison is analytically useful in highlighting how mobility, informality, and public presence become socially meaningful categories.

Pinpointing the precise social origins of mobile groups such as the Street Boys of Mecca is not straightforward. One productive way forward is to examine the types of work they perform and the social gatherings they attend, e.g., mosque circles, pesantren alumni networks, informal business meetings, and seasonal pilgrimage assemblies. In a relatively closed society such as Saudi Arabia, where movement is regulated by strict visa regimes and sponsorship systems, it is easy for migrants to become socially disconnected from friends, relatives, or former associates. At the same time, Indonesians living in the Kingdom come from highly diverse educational, regional, and class backgrounds. It is within this constrained yet heterogeneous social landscape that intermediary figures such as the Street Boys of Mecca take shape.

Java and Madura

Often described as Indonesia's first fully modern Islamic institution, Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Gontor has long enjoyed a reputation for combining Islamic scholarship with a modern educational system. Established in 1926 in Ponorogo, East Java, Gontor has served as

a major center of religious education for nearly a century. Its students take pride in the institution's emphasis on bilingual instruction in Arabic and English, and its curriculum has been widely adopted as a model for other modern Islamic schools since the 1970s. Many prominent Indonesian Muslim intellectuals and public figures are either graduates of Gontor or were trained by its teachers.

In recent decades, Gontor's presence in Indonesian Muslim life has grown markedly. Today, more than forty Gontor-affiliated institutions operate across Indonesia, and thousands of alumni have disseminated their knowledge and skills through Islamic schools, public education, social organizations, and state institutions. A significant number of these graduates occupy influential positions in academia, religious organizations, and government (Hefner 2007), including figures such as Nurcholish Madjid, Dien Syamsuddin (Muhammadiyah), Hasyim Muzadi (NU), Hidayat Nur Wahid (MPR), and Maftuh Basyuni, former Minister of Religious Affairs. Since the early 2000s, these individuals have played a central role in shaping public discourse on Islam in Indonesia.

Perhaps nowhere has the influence of Gontor alumni been more striking than in Saudi Arabia itself, raising broader questions about changing Indonesian–Arab relations (Ho 2006). Around 2000, the Indonesian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia was a career diplomat associated with NU backgrounds, yet also a Gontor graduate. At roughly the same time, another Gontor alumnus, who had risen to high rank within the Indonesian military, served as Indonesia's Consul General in Jeddah. Since its institutional consolidation in the 1940s, Gontor has cultivated an image of independence and modernity. While most of its students pursue careers in religious leadership, the institution has also actively positioned itself within wider social and political arenas. In recent years, this expanded presence has been especially visible through the public activities of its leadership.

A prominent example is KH Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi, the longtime director of Pondok Pesantren Gontor. He frequently travels to Mecca on special missions, including a notable visit in the summer of 2007 when he led a group of Islamic leaders from Sulawesi to perform *ʿumrah*. The group included prominent Muslim community leaders from Poso, a conflict-ridden region in Central Sulawesi following Vice President Jusuf Kalla's Malino peace agreements in 2005 and 2006. According to several informants, this *ʿumrah* trip functioned not merely as a religious journey but as a political gesture aimed at consolidation and reconciliation among Muslims, Christians, and the state.

Within certain circles, the Gontor leader was widely regarded as a close associate of Jusuf Kalla and the Minister of Religious Affairs. He was also reputed to have strong ties with Saudi interest groups and Saudi governmental institutions in Indonesia, ties that have led to accusations, in critical circles, that Gontor has served as a conduit for Saudi influence, including the charge that it has promoted Wahhabi-oriented teachings among its students. Regardless of such claims, Gontor's capacity to move across institutional, political, and national boundaries underscores what Engseng Ho has described, in his work on Hadhrami diasporic networks, as the importance of overlapping formal and informal ties shaped by shared identity, mobility, and political experience (Ho 2004).

What is critical here is the transformation of Gontor's institutional position over time. While its early history emphasized a strong independence from the state, more recent developments, particularly visible among its younger alumni, suggest a growing integration into state structures. This is especially evident in the institutionalization of the Hajj in Indonesia and related sectors of the pilgrimage economy. This shift raises an important question: does Gontor's claim to independence function strategically to expand its influence, and if so, who ultimately benefits from this position, the institution as a whole or its leadership and elite networks?

For anyone who has conducted fieldwork in Mecca and Medina, the prominence of Gontor alumni in Saudi Arabia is difficult to overlook. Although precise demographic data are elusive due to constant migration and circulation, their roles are effectively ubiquitous across Saudi contexts, e.g., foreign embassies, government-funded international institutions, offices, markets, schools, universities, *ṭawāfa* organizations, travel agencies, and, most prominently, Hajj and *ʿumrah* services. Their presence has become a defining feature of Indonesia's institutional and social footprint in the Hijaz.

This development must also be situated within the broader expansion of Saudi-sponsored Islamic education since the early 1970s, a period during which Saudi Arabia sought to disseminate its religious outlook globally, often characterized as the spread of Wahhabism (Lacroix 2011). During this period, Saudi Arabia established Umm al-Qura University and the Islamic University of Medina as major centers of religious instruction, followed by additional institutions, including a Saudi-funded Islamic university in Jakarta. These universities were intended primarily to train religious scholars rather than political leaders. Consequently, most Indonesian graduates, or, in many cases, those who did not

complete their studies, returned home to become *ustadz*, rather than *kyai* in the traditional NU sense. By the early 1980s, Indonesian Islam had become an open field in which these Saudi-trained scholars operated with newly acquired credentials and transnational experience.

Yet their influence did not lie primarily in public preaching, particularly given widespread skepticism toward Wahhabi interpretations of Islam in Indonesia (see, among others, Navis 1986; Parlindungan 1964; Hamka 1974; Fealy 2007). Despite their growing prominence as community leaders, Saudi alumni remained relatively marginal to public awareness until the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the Hajj industry began to expand rapidly in Indonesia.

Although the changing landscape of Islamic education has received limited scholarly attention, the pervasive influence of these groups, who move back and forth between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia and effectively claim both as home, became impossible to ignore in my fieldwork. Their trajectories have inspired thousands of younger Muslims, including many from institutions such as Gontor, to pursue study and work in Saudi Arabia, often combining religious learning with economic opportunity.

As this chapter unfolds, the roles of these figures as pilgrimage intermediaries, mediating between pilgrims and the state, open onto a broader set of questions about bureaucracy, governance, and public authority in Indonesia. Tracing their activities led me into an unfamiliar terrain, the inner workings of Indonesia's Hajj administration, and the ways in which the Department of Religious Affairs (Depag) or the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag RI) continuously adjusts its operations under political pressures from both domestic and international actors.

The Hajj emerges here not only as a religious obligation, but also as a massive public works project sustained by the labor, aspirations, and negotiations of young intermediaries, what I have called the *Street Boys of Mecca* (*Walad Syare'*). Although Depag has built a vast network encompassing politicians, *kyai*, traders, and policymakers, its Hajj administration occupies an ambiguous institutional position; neither fully governmental nor wholly private. Over time, this has rendered the institution politically powerful yet increasingly mistrusted, more bureaucratic in form, and less authoritative in the eyes of many pilgrims.

A Muṭawwif from Banyuanyar, Madura Island

Within the dense and often overlooked network of Indonesian expatriates who quietly sustain the pilgrimage economy in Mecca, certain figures stand out not because of formal authority or institutional recognition, but through persistence, adaptability, and moral endurance. One such figure is Ustadz Syamsuddin, a *Muṭawwif* from Madura Island whom I encountered repeatedly in 2007 during my ethnographic fieldwork in the Holy City.

For the past twenty years, Syamsuddin, who was an alumni of Pesantren Banyuanyar, Madura, has worked with an Indonesian tour bureau, guiding *jamaah* through the technical and spiritual demands of Hajj and Umrah rituals. At the same time, he has navigated the layered realities of long-term residency in Saudi Arabia. Having lived in the Kingdom for sixteen years, he embodies what many Indonesians in Mecca refer to as the *mukimin*, long-term diasporic settlers whose lives are deeply entwined with the cyclical rhythms of *tawaf*, the uncertainties of service labor, and the shifting economic pressures of Saudi Arabia.[27]

My conversations with Syamsuddin unfolded in small, unassuming intervals, sitting together in a modest café near the Haram, or during brief pauses between guiding groups, often while he sipped *teh Adeni*, thoughtfully purchased by grateful pilgrims. These moments, mundane yet intimate, offered a window into how structural changes are absorbed and interpreted in everyday life.

One afternoon, as we sat together, Syamsuddin spoke about the tightening grip of daily expenses with characteristic directness. His expression remained unchanged, almost childlike in its lack of dramatic inflection, as if stating an unremarkable fact of life. “Pajak pemerintah Saudi sekarang mahal sekali,” he said. *“Dulu lima ribu SAR untuk dua tahun—untuk saya, istri, dan dua anak. Sekarang naik jadi dua puluh lima ribu SAR setahun untuk keluarga. Laa hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*.” He explains that the Saudi government has

[27] I occasionally encounter two different understandings of *mukimin*: one referring to relatively recent long-term residents, and another grounded in colonial-era Dutch historical records. In this context, the term *mukimin Madura* as applied to Syamsuddin differs from the *mukimin* described in colonial historiography. For comparison, Mufti Ali’s *Mukimin al-Jawi in Mecca and the Diaspora of Their Descendants in Saudi Arabia and Indonesia* (Ali 2024) traces the historical lives of Bantenese *mukimin* who settled in Mecca from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Drawing on Hajj archives from Leiden University Library, the Dutch National Archives, Museum Volkenkunde, and the Snouck Hurgronje collection, the work reconstructs the religious journeys, intellectual pursuits, and everyday lives of the Jawi community in Mecca, illuminating long-standing transregional connections between Nusantara and the Arab world.

sharply increased residency-related taxes; what once cost 5,000 SAR for two years for his family now amounts to 25,000 SAR per year, a rise he describes as financially burdensome and difficult to sustain.

The figures he cited reflect pressures shared by many long-term expatriates. In recent years, Saudi authorities have steadily raised residency-related levies, including *iqama* renewal costs and dependent fees, as part of broader economic diversification in Saudi Arabia. What was once a comparatively manageable financial burden for foreign workers and their families has become substantially heavier.

These reforms coincide with fluctuating oil revenues, regional geopolitical tensions, and wide-ranging fiscal restructuring. Fuel prices, once emblematic of state subsidy, have sharply reversed course, while everyday necessities, such as bottled water, have grown noticeably more expensive. For *Muṭawwif* like Syamsuddin, whose income depends on seasonal Hajj and Umrah flows, rising costs translate into thinner margins and more difficult decisions regarding family life and long-term settlement.

Syamsuddin's circumstances mirror those of many diaspora of Indonesian origin. His livelihood depends primarily on guiding Indonesian pilgrims, drawing on his fluency in Madurese-accented Indonesian, cultural familiarity, and practical knowledge of the sacred sites to ease the journeys of *jamaah* from across the archipelago. Yet the same pilgrimage economy that provides income also exacts its toll. He spoke without complaint or resentment, presenting conditions as they were, occasionally punctuating his account with brief affirmations of trust in divine will.

Similar observations emerged in conversations with others in the Indonesian *Muṭawwif* network. Pak Faridh, a senior coordinator jokingly referred to by his peers as the "the Governor of Mecca" for his decisiveness, had already sent his wife and three children back to Indonesia prior to the previous Dhu al-Hijjah."Nanti kalau kondisi sudah membaik, semoga bisa kita bawa lagi ke sini," he said with cautious optimism.

For men like Syamsuddin and Fuad, abstract discussions of macroeconomic policy, oil markets, regional geopolitics, or Saudization matter less than the immediate arithmetic of sustaining a family while maintaining a livelihood in the Holy Cities. Decisions about

whether one's family can remain, return, or reunite are shaped less by ideology than by everyday affordability.

Such concerns resonate beyond the Indonesian community. A local African woman named Ayesha, whom I encountered near the mosque with her children, laughed wryly as she remarked on rising grocery prices, even while acknowledging the availability of state-provided healthcare and education. Across social strata, a similar orientation prevailed, cautious endurance coupled with the hope that current hardships are temporary, and that ongoing reforms will eventually produce more livable conditions for both citizens and long-term residents. Beneath political and economic currents, the core aspiration remains remarkably simple, an affordable daily life.

For Syamsuddin, *rezeki,* or sustenance and fortune, flows through the pilgrims he serves. His work demands sustained physical and emotional labor, e.g., shepherding groups through crowded *tawaf* at off-peak hours, assisting elderly *jamaah* under the heat of Mina, correcting ritual details patiently, and offering quiet explanations that anchor Indonesian pilgrims within the sacred landscape. In return, he receives modest financial compensation, supplemented by less tangible forms of reward such as prayers, gratitude, and the small gestures that circulate as *barakah*.

As our conversation drew to a close, Syamsuddin offered a prayer that merged personal kindness with religious sincerity, *"Saya doakan Pak Duktur sehat selalu, diberi kelimpahan rezeki, lancar tugas penelitiannya, sehingga tahun depan bisa berjumpa lagi dengan Syamsuddin di Tanah Suci."* Syamsuddin offered a warm prayer for my health, well-being, and success in my research, expressing the hope that we might meet again the following year in the Holy Land. I could only respond with a sincere amen.

Through Syamsuddin, one observes a microcosm of the Indonesian *Muṭawwif* experience in contemporary Mecca, the blending of Madurese resilience and Islamic piety with a pragmatic engagement with expatriate life amid a rapidly transforming Saudi Arabia. His story is neither heroic epic nor tragedy. Rather, it is a grounded ethnography of endurance, where spiritual service, family responsibility, and economic adaptation coexist in the shadow of the Kaaba.

In figures like him, the vast machinery of Hajj and Umrah is rendered human, sustained by quiet voices that teach wisdom not through texts or sermons, but through years of circling the House of God, while keeping one attentive eye on the rising cost of ice cream and residency permits.

Analytically, Syamsuddin's experience illuminates the form of labor that sustains the pilgrimage economy yet remains structurally precarious. As a *Muṭawwif*, his work is neither fully formalized nor entirely informal, it is seasonal, dependent on fluctuating pilgrimage flows, and shaped by regulatory regimes that operate largely beyond his control. Rising residency fees, dependent levies, and everyday living costs intensify this precarity, transforming long-term residence into a continually renegotiated condition rather than a stable status.

From an anthropological perspective, this situates diasporic community like Syamsuddin and others within broader debates on labor precarity in late-capitalist economies, where workers shoulder increasing risk while lacking the institutional protections associated with stable employment. Yet this precarity is lived not as abstraction but as arithmetic, calculations about whether children can remain in Mecca, whether family unity is affordable, and whether endurance remains materially possible.

At the same time, Syamsuddin's narrative reflects a moral economy that mediates economic strain through religious idioms, ethical service, and reciprocal relations with pilgrims. His labor is sustained not only by wages, but by *rezeki*, *barakah*, and the circulation of prayers, gratitude, and moral recognition. Rather than framing hardship as injustice demanding protest, Syamsuddin interprets constraint through patience (*sabar*) and trust in divine provision, situating economic survival within a moral framework that emphasizes service and endurance. This moral economy does not negate material pressures; instead, it renders them livable, meaningful, and socially shared. Seen ethnographically, the *Muṭawwif*'s role reveals how religious labor converts precarity into moral worth, allowing individuals like Syamsuddin to endure structural uncertainty while sustaining the human infrastructure of Hajj and Umrah. In this sense, the pilgrimage economy is not only an economic system, but a moral field in which labor, piety, and survival are inseparably entwined.

Pesantren-based social reproduction takes distinct forms when viewed through the contrasting cases of Gontor and Banyuanyar. Gontor's modernist orientation, emphasis on

discipline, foreign language training, and institutional autonomy tends to channel its alumni into bureaucratic positions, elite travel agencies, and higher-end segments of the Hajj and *ʿumrah* economy, where symbolic capital, educational credentials, and access to state institutions are especially valued.

Banyuanyar, by contrast, reproduces a different kind of intermediary presence through its salaf pedagogy, dense kinship ties, and long-standing links to Madurese migrant communities in Saudi Arabia. Its alumni are more commonly positioned in informal yet indispensable sectors such as catering, housing, transport, and on-the-ground logistical support. These differentiated trajectories reflect not only divergent educational styles but also distinct moral economies and reputational hierarchies attached to each pesantren tradition. Together, they show how pesantren do not simply reproduce religious authority in the abstract, but actively sort graduates into stratified roles within the pilgrimage economy, translating institutional affiliation into specific forms of labor, mobility, and influence.

Lombok Island and Hajj Organizational Networks

Beyond pesantren-linked *Muṭawwifs*, I encountered a smaller group of independent pilgrimage intermediaries working in Mecca and Medina who originated from other regions of Indonesia. Dr. Faridh, widely known among Indonesians in the Hijaz as "Faridh Lombok," was one of them. I first met Dr. Faridh through a senior Indonesian diplomat stationed in Riyadh, who frequently relied on him whenever colleagues or distinguished guests, e.g., Indonesian diplomats from other postings or Muslim dignitaries visiting Saudi Arabia for Hajj or *ʿumrah,* required assistance. Over time, my interactions with Dr. Faridh provided insight into the complex and layered ethnic networks that structure Indonesian social life in Saudi Arabia, particularly in Mecca.

My initial encounters with him took place on al-Ghazza Street, one of Mecca's busy commercial corridors, in early June 2007. In those meetings, he appeared reserved and outwardly cautious. Soft-spoken and deliberate in manner, Dr. Faridh was then in his late forties and carried himself with the composure of someone accustomed to academic settings. His educational background was substantial: he held a master's degree in Islamic law from Khartoum, had previously studied at a *madrasah* in Mataram, and completed his

undergraduate education in Islamic studies in Cairo. Although he had once worked as a *temus,* a seasonal hajj service worker, he eventually returned to Mecca by maintaining and expanding a small yet resilient Lombok-based network. Since 1997, he had lived in the Holy City, working at various times as a freelance writer and interpreter for a Saudi-run Hajj bulletin, a teacher, and ultimately as a *Muṭawwif* and intermediary.

Dr. Faridh left Lombok when he was eighteen and became one of the few Indonesian students admitted directly to al-Azhar University from *Madrasah Aliyah*. He came from a deeply religious family affiliated with Nahdlatul Wathan (NW), a large traditional Islamic organization based in Lombok with transregional reach. When he first arrived in Mecca in 1992 to work as a *temus*, he encountered fellow Lombok students studying at Madrasah Shaulatiyah al-Hindiyyah, one of the oldest surviving Sunni and *tarekat*-affiliated madrasahs near the Grand Mosque.[28] Maintaining close ties with these Lombok networks proved decisive. After several years as a writer and interpreter for the Indonesian-language section of the Hajj bulletin, he was invited to teach at Madrasah Shalatiyah itself.

His academic trajectory continued alongside this work. While alternating between teaching, interpreting, and occasional *Muṭawwif* duties, he applied to a graduate program at his former institution in Khartoum. His efforts culminated in early 2002 with the award of a PhD in Islamic Studies from the International Institute of Khartoum. Shortly thereafter, he received a one-year postdoctoral fellowship in the United Kingdom and spent 2003 as a visiting fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

"But now, I am here," he told me with a brief smile. "Somehow, living and working here feels more meaningful, despite all these problems." After completing his fellowship, he returned to Indonesia for the first time in seven years. His family encouraged him to settle in Lombok and marry, but his concerns lay elsewhere. He expressed deep unease about what he

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[28] Madrasah Al-Shaulatiyah is one of the oldest Islamic schools in Mecca, founded in 1292 AH (1875 CE) by the Indian scholar Shaykh Rahmatullah ibn Khalil al-Hindi al-Dahlawi. As the first private madrasah established in the Hijaz, it became an important center of traditional Islamic learning and produced scholars from across the Muslim world, including the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. Indonesian students studied there alongside South Asian Muslims, forming early transregional networks of learning that later shaped pesantren traditions and religious authority in Indonesia. See, al-Qurashī, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, 2008. *Makkah al-mukarramah: Tārīkhuhā wa āthāruhā*. Makkah: Dār Makkah; al-Sibāʿī, Aḥmad, 1984. *Tārīkh Makkah: Dirāsāt fī al-siyāsah wa al-ʿilm wa al-ijtimāʿ wa al-ʿumrān*. Makkah: Maktabat al-Malik Fahd.

perceived as the deteriorating religious and social climate in Indonesia following the *Reformasi* period. In his view, Islam had become increasingly instrumentalized in local and national politics. His criticism extended sharply to Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), whom he condemned both for his political leadership and for what he viewed as an overly liberal interpretation of Islam.

These statements revealed a marked ideological shift. While emphasizing his cultural proximity to NU, given Nahdlatul Wathan's long-standing affiliation with NU networks, Dr. Faridh also distanced himself from what he described as the liberal turn within NU circles during and after Gus Dur's leadership. Yet this ideological rigidity did not prevent him from collaborating pragmatically with a wide range of Indonesian Muslim groups in Mecca and Jeddah. In 2007, he was appointed to lead an ICMI[29] branch in Mecca, while the larger ICMI office in Jeddah was headed by an Indonesian engineer-turned-cargo entrepreneur. These arrangements underscored the coexistence of ideological divergence and practical cooperation within Indonesian Muslim networks in Saudi Arabia.

Notably, despite his sharp criticism of religious and political figures in Indonesia, Dr. Faridh rarely expressed overt judgment toward Indonesian or Saudi Hajj authorities. This stood in contrast to my own growing frustrations upon arriving in Mecca, shaped by observations of bureaucratic opacity within Indonesia's Hajj administration, the apparent impunity of the Department of Religious Affairs (*Departemen Agama*, Depag), and the uneven effects of Saudi urban redevelopment, which increasingly displaced historic neighborhoods and disadvantaged working-class pilgrims.

After several additional meetings, including a visit to his Lombok-based headquarters in Mecca, I began to understand why he found continued life in Mecca more meaningful than returning home, despite his academic credentials. He married a woman from Lombok, and

[29] The Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI) was established on 7 December 1990 following a national meeting of Muslim intellectuals held in Malang on 6–8 December, at which B. J. Habibie (25 June 1936 – 11 September 2019) was unanimously appointed as its first chairman. Habibie later served as Indonesia's third president from 1998 to 1999, assuming office after Soeharto resigned on 21 May 1998. From the outset, ICMI articulated a mission that extended beyond Muslim interests, positioning itself as a contributor to national development and social welfare. The organization was envisioned as a platform linking Islamic intellectual life with state bureaucracy and political decision-making, through which policies supporting human development and spiritual life might emerge. Over time, ICMI developed into a broad national and transnational network, with regional branches across 35 provinces in Indonesia and overseas chapters in countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United States, Europe, Southeast Asia, and Timor-Leste.

they settled permanently in the city. Alongside his ongoing teaching at Madrasah Shalatiyah, his popularity among Indonesian students increased steadily. In 2007, approximately seventy Indonesian students, many from Lombok and Sumatra, were enrolled there. In his large three-story residence about five kilometers from the Grand Mosque, roughly thirty Lombok students lived and studied under his supervision. Families in Mataram regularly sent their children to Mecca specifically to study with him. Over time, these combined roles positioned him not only as a religious guide and educator, but as a broker operating within the economic infrastructure of the pilgrimage itself.

In addition to teaching, conducted nearly every morning after *subuh* prayers at his home and twice weekly at Madrasah Shaulatiyah, Dr. Faridh engaged in a range of seasonal occupations. During peak Hajj periods, he served as managing editor of the Hajj bulletin, supervising four or five assistants. Nordin, whom I discussed earlier, had once worked under him translating Arabic news into Indonesian. The bulletin, funded by the Saudi Ministry of Hajj but operated through a licensed Saudi contractor, was published every few days and distributed widely to Indonesian pilgrims.

Outside the Hajj season, Dr. Faridh worked as a freelance *Muṭawwif*, offering customized guidance for *ʿumrah*. Unlike Nordin and his team-based operations, he maintained no formal affiliation with a particular pilgrimage establishment. Instead, his work relied on longstanding Lombok networks and increasingly close relations with Indonesian embassy and consulate officials. These connections generated regular assignments, often requiring his team to meet arrivals at Jeddah airport and arrange transportation, accommodation, and catering in Mecca. In recent years, he also became adept at securing short-term *ʿumrah* visas, particularly for business travelers. A morning phone call from the Indonesian embassy or an informal meeting with a consular official could generate transactions worth thousands of Saudi riyals, typically conducted on a cash basis, in keeping with Saudi business norms.

Another significant aspect of his work, less visible yet highly consequential, involved acting as a middleman in the Hajj housing market. With nearly a decade of experience in Mecca, Dr. Faridh possessed detailed knowledge of the city's topography and property dynamics. He was acutely aware of Indonesia's ongoing difficulties in securing long-term accommodation for approximately 200,000 pilgrims annually. The Indonesian Hajj administration allocated around SR 2,000 per pilgrim for housing, amounting to nearly SR 4

billion (approximately USD 1.1 billion) each year. This situation created persistent constraints and corresponding opportunities.

Over the preceding seven years, Dr. Faridh had entered joint ventures with Saudi property dealers and real estate brokers. His company regularly participated in competitive bidding at the Indonesian Hajj office in Jeddah, alongside other intermediaries, to secure housing contracts. With nearly 500 hotels, apartments, and large residences required each year, competition was intense. As with many Indonesian brokers, Dr. Faridh often dealt not with property owners directly but with secondary brokers, driving prices upward, particularly when bidding processes were delayed, a recurring weakness of Indonesia's Hajj administration.

In the weeks preceding the Hajj season, the Indonesian Hajj Consulate in Jeddah became densely populated with brokers and intermediaries. In June 2007, Dr. Nursamad Kamba, then Hajj Consul, described the scene to me as resembling a *pasar malam*, a night market so crowded and chaotic that sustained work became nearly impossible. Middlemen occupied the office daily; influence extended even to custodial staff, who, according to one informant, could sway decisions regarding catering or housing. Dr. Faridh never disclosed the scale of his earnings, but other informants suggested that he consistently secured some of the largest accommodation contracts.

Housing prices peaked dramatically during my fieldwork in 2007–2008, coinciding with the expansion of the Grand Mosque. By the 2008 Hajj season, costs rose beyond control, forcing Indonesian authorities to place approximately 65 percent of pilgrims in locations 7–12 kilometers from the Haram, the farthest recorded distances in Indonesia's Hajj history. Public outrage followed. Indonesian media broadcast images of Minister of Religious Affairs Maftuh Basyuni publicly apologizing, at times in tears, for the failure.

In his everyday life, Dr. Faridh appeared as an unusual figure within Saudi religious settings. He dressed consistently in white, a *thawb*, a thin white *sorban*, and skullcap, marking him visually as a Sunni and *tarekat*-affiliated teacher. Like many Indonesians in Saudi Arabia, he held an *iqamah*, obtained through sponsorship rather than formal employment. His work as a bulletin editor and interpreter did not grant him a work visa; instead, he relied on the *kafala* system, paying approximately SR 8,000 for sponsorship, renewed every four years.

As with his thirty Lombok students living under the same arrangement, this status reflected a broader pattern among Indonesian migrants in Saudi Arabia, where *iqamah* sponsorship can be purchased through informal channels. “At times I was angry with myself,” he admitted. “How could someone with a PhD still not be legally recognized here? But this is how things work in Saudi.”

The cases examined in this chapter point to a differentiated field of intermediary labor that sustains Indonesian pilgrimage to Mecca. Ritual intermediaries such as Kang Ridhwan guide pilgrims through embodied religious practice, translating doctrinal knowledge into reassurance and care within sacred space. Logistical intermediaries like Ahmad operate largely behind the scenes, managing movement, documentation, and everyday uncertainty. Bureaucratic intermediaries, represented by figures such as Syamsuddin, derive authority from institutional position while relying in practice on discretionary judgment and personal networks. Entrepreneurial intermediaries such as Dr. Faridh combine religious authority with brokerage, linking pilgrims, state agencies, and Saudi markets through long-term networks. These categories are not rigid. Individuals often move between them or occupy multiple positions simultaneously over time. Therefore, they show that the Hajj is not sustained by any single institution or actor, but by layered forms of mediation that translate religious obligation, regulatory constraint, and economic opportunity into workable practice.

3.4. Ethnography of Contemporary Pilgrimage Brokers

Ḥamlah Company in Riyadh

In this section, I also examine the organization of domestic Hajj pilgrimage within Saudi Arabia through the case of an Indonesian-led *ḥamlah* company in Riyadh. Analytically, the case speaks to a broader concern of this chapter, how pilgrimage governance operates at the intersection of formal regulation and everyday practice. While Saudi authorities have increasingly tightened bureaucratic control over both international and domestic pilgrims, the persistence of intermediary actors such as middlemen, brokers, and negotiators reveals how state authority is enacted, negotiated, and sometimes circumvented at the street level.

During my archival research at the King Faisal Foundation in Riyadh in the spring of 2007, I observed that in recent years the Saudi government had significantly tightened its control over local companies organizing domestic Hajj pilgrims from within the Kingdom. "Domestic pilgrims" here refers to both Saudi citizens and legal residents, many of whom are Muslim migrant workers residing in Saudi towns and cities. Historically, these pilgrims have performed the Hajj and ʿUmrah through locally organized travel companies. Over the past decade, however, the rise in domestic pilgrimage has given birth to a new institutional form: the *ḥamlah*, literally, a carrier or transporter.

As an organizing institution, the *ḥamlah* is not new. Yet its contemporary operation is subject to far more stringent regulation. Today, a *ḥamlah* company must obtain a Hajj operator's license and written authorization from the state, and every pilgrim it carries must possess a *taṣrīḥ*, an official permit issued by local government offices, without which they are legally barred from entering Mecca during the Hajj season.

In response to the growing number of pilgrims, the Saudi government has also introduced a regulation limiting citizens and legal residents to performing the Hajj once every five years. While this rule is not formally a quota system, its primary function is not the regulation of international pilgrims, it nonetheless carries similar legal force. Together with international regulations endorsed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and its fifty-seven member states, Saudi authority over pilgrimage now extends to pilgrims coming from both outside and within the Kingdom.

Notably, no such permit is currently required for performing the ʿUmrah, which can be undertaken during the Hajj off-season. Even so, the requirement that domestic pilgrims obtain a *taṣrīḥ* has generated widespread controversy among Saudi citizens and legal residents alike, particularly among the Kingdom's six million foreign workers, who constitute nearly half of Saudi Arabia's workforce. In support of these regulations, a number of Saudi scholars have issued religious edicts emphasizing that obedience to state authority, specifically, obtaining a *taṣrīḥ,* is a necessary condition for a valid Hajj.

While state control has undoubtedly restricted access for many Muslims, it has not diminished interest in pilgrimage. On the contrary, the past decade has witnessed the rapid growth of the *ḥamlah* as a professional institution mediating between pilgrims and the state. These companies navigate bureaucratic hurdles, negotiate permits, and craft practical

solutions when official channels fail. As a result, local Hajj travel agents and *ḥamlah* companies now organize pilgrimages from cities across Saudi Arabia.

Among pilgrims, word of mouth remains the most powerful means of evaluating the trustworthiness of these companies. At the same time, *ḥamlah* operators actively market their services: glossy pamphlets, stickers, and flyers advertising Hajj and ʿUmrah packages circulate widely in public spaces, ethnic restaurants and shops catering to migrant workers, barbershops, mosques, street walls, and even public buildings. In Riyadh, I encountered *ḥamlah* advertisements printed in multiple languages, including Urdu, Bengali, and Indonesian, suggesting the extent to which ethnicity has become a defining feature of the domestic pilgrimage industry.

With approximately 850,000 Indonesians living in Saudi Arabia, Indonesians in Riyadh are deeply embedded in these networks. The case I present below illustrates how state rules are enacted on the ground, and how social actors respond creatively to shifting bureaucratic regimes. It is the story of a domestic Hajj organization led by Indonesians, and of how a *ḥamlah* company emerges amid rising demand, regulatory constraint, and entrepreneurial opportunity.

Encountering Pak Hendra

Pak Hendra is an Indonesian man in his early forties who has lived in Riyadh for many years. I first met him at a weekly social gathering at the Indonesian Embassy in Riyadh's Diplomatic Quarter. Held every Wednesday evening, on the eve of the Saudi weekend, these gatherings bring together Indonesian families, diplomats, embassy staff, and migrant workers in an open-air setting behind the embassy complex. Food plays a central role, the atmosphere resembles a potluck commonly found in the United States, supplemented by a lively bazaar selling popular Indonesian street foods such as *sate Madura*, *bubur ayam*, *nasi rawon*, and *es cendol*.

I had just concluded an interview with Pak Haji Teguh and his wife, an Indonesian couple who had recently returned from performing ʿUmrah, when Pak Hendra arrived. Pak Teguh greeted him warmly and invited him to join us. Indra apologized for his sweat-soaked

shirt, explaining that he had just finished playing badminton at the embassy's indoor sports facility. Pak Teguh introduced him to me as his "senior," despite Indra's younger appearance, and as an *orang berpengalaman*, a person of extensive experience.

Indra immediately struck me as open and personable. After learning about my research, he began sharing stories about his own Hajj experiences, punctuated by jokes about food and everyday culture in Mina. One remark stood out. "You know," he said, "Arab street vendors are now selling *Indomie* in Mina, not only because it's halal, but because Indonesian domestic workers have been feeding it to Saudi kids since the 1980s." Over the following days, intrigued by his hints about domestic pilgrimage organization, I arranged a longer conversation with him.

Pak Hendra first came to Saudi Arabia in 1994. Two years earlier, after completing a three-year paramedical training program in Surabaya, he joined a health service company that deployed Indonesian medical workers to the Kingdom. He began working as a male nurse in an emergency medical clinic in Riyadh. Since the late 1980s, thousands of Indonesians have followed similar paths, filling positions in hospitals and healthcare centers throughout Saudi Arabia.

Compared to most Indonesian migrant workers, many of whom labor in unskilled or domestic sectors, healthcare workers like Indra earned relatively stable and higher incomes. Were it not for his strong Javanese accent, he often told me, he was mistaken for Filipino, a nationality long associated with Saudi Arabia's healthcare professions.

Like many Indonesian Muslim migrants, Indra performed the Hajj soon after his arrival. "Usually your *kāfil* will offer it as a courtesy," he explained, noting that the Hajj season coincides with a general holiday period. By the time he invited his wife to join him in Riyadh in 1997, he had already become a *hajji*. They would later perform the Hajj together again.

The Checkpoint Incident

Indra's deeper involvement in pilgrimage organization began when he and his wife joined a domestic Hajj tour organized by an Indonesian *ustādh*, Pak Haji Ahmad, a long-term Riyadh

resident. Indra recalled that in 1995, Pak Ahmad's group numbered no more than two hundred pilgrims; by the time Indra joined, it had grown to over four hundred, transported in nine chartered buses.

The journey from Riyadh to Mecca, lasting nearly twelve hours, felt to Indra like an "Indonesian bus tour." Despite the presence of a few Bangladeshi pilgrims, most participants were Indonesian, talking, praying, eating, and traveling together. The experience left a profound impression on him, shaping not only his religious sensibility but also his awareness of the Hajj as an economic and organizational enterprise.

Before entering Mecca, however, the buses encountered a series of *taftīsh* (checkpoint) stations, where Saudi security forces intensify surveillance during the Hajj season. Prior to the first checkpoint, Pak Haji Ahmad and his assistants collected pilgrim documents, e.g., *iqāmah* cards for residents, passports for dependents, and *taṣrīḥ* permits allowing entry into Mecca.

The inspection did not proceed smoothly. Five pilgrims aboard Indra's bus were unable to present valid *taṣrīḥ*. The police interrogated Pak Haji Ahmad and detained the entire bus for several hours. Tensions mounted as pilgrims grew exhausted and anxious; some of the undocumented pilgrims began to cry.

It was at this moment that Pak Hendra stepped forward. Drawing on his years of experience communicating with Saudi professionals in hospitals and clinics, he volunteered to mediate between the police and the pilgrimage leader. What followed was a prolonged and difficult negotiation lasting nearly two hours.

Ultimately, the police allowed the other eight buses to continue their journey, while detaining the pilgrims lacking permits for further investigation. In a final move that would prove consequential for his future career, Indra engaged one of the officers in a private conversation. Shortly thereafter, Pak Haji Ahmad did the same. Eventually, the matter was resolved.

When I asked Indra directly whether bribes had been involved, he hesitated. "In situations like this," he said carefully, "sometimes something has to be done." Then,

switching to Indonesian, he added simply: "*Ya, kita selesaikan.*" No matter how, "we get it fixed."

This incident marked a turning point. Pak Haji Ahmad was deeply impressed by Indra's ability to communicate with Saudi authorities, linguistically, culturally, and psychologically. Months later, after the Hajj season ended, he invited Indra to join his *ḥamlah* operation, an offer that Indra would eventually accept under specific conditions.

Analytically, Pak Hendra's story illustrates how intermediary authority in the Hajj does not derive solely from religious knowledge or formal credentials. Rather, it emerges from situated competence: familiarity with bureaucratic procedures, experiential knowledge of Saudi institutions, and the ability to mediate uncertainty in moments of crisis. His case exemplifies how state regulation, far from eliminating informal practices, often generates new spaces for negotiation, entrepreneurship, and brokerage at the street level. In this sense, the domestic *ḥamlah* industry reveals the limits of centralized control and underscores the enduring importance of intermediaries in sustaining mass pilgrimage under increasingly bureaucratized conditions.

From Assistant Manager to Independent Ḥamlah Operator

After joining Pak Haji Ahmad's pilgrimage company, Pak Hendra became an assistant manager, one of whose primary responsibilities was to recruit new pilgrims and coordinate their participation in the domestic Hajj program. His involvement in the *ḥamlah*, however, proved to be relatively brief. After only two Hajj seasons, he decided to leave the company, citing what he described as "too many problems handling pilgrims' paperwork."

According to Pak Hendra, these problems stemmed from the *ḥamlah*'s inadequate internal system for screening pilgrims' documentation. Only after becoming deeply involved did he realize that Pak Haji Ahmad maintained an old and risky practice: accepting last-minute pilgrims who lacked valid *taṣrīḥ* permits. For years, this practice had apparently gone unpunished. Yet by the time Pak Hendra joined the operation, Saudi authorities had begun to revise pilgrimage regulations and apply significantly harsher penalties for *taṣrīḥ*

violations. In Indra's view, the *ḥamlah* failed to adapt to these changes and did not sufficiently tighten its filtering procedures despite rising demand.

This growing frustration was compounded by his sense that his particular skill set—his ability to negotiate with Saudi authorities, was being exploited. At one point, he recalled, he seriously considered quitting altogether, feeling that Pak Haji Ahmad relied on him primarily for his "uncanny" capacity to mediate problems at security checkpoints, rather than addressing the underlying structural weaknesses of the operation.

Approximately one year before he ultimately left the company, Pak Hendra faced another serious incident. While accompanying Hajj pilgrims traveling from Riyadh, three members of the group were again found to be without proper documentation and were detained at a *taftīsh* checkpoint. As before, Indra attempted to intervene on behalf of the pilgrims. This time, however, negotiations failed. The Saudi police allowed pilgrims with valid paperwork to continue their journey, but insisted that the undocumented pilgrims might not be permitted to perform the Hajj at all.

The situation escalated further when the authorities formally charged the *ḥamlah* with violating the updated *taṣrīḥ* regulations. As a consequence, the company was fined SR 10,000 and its operational license was revoked. Pak Haji Ahmad was reportedly shocked and devastated by the outcome. For years, he had managed to evade serious sanctions; he did not anticipate that the regulatory environment had changed so decisively or that penalties would be enforced so strictly.

The crisis deepened when the three stranded pilgrims threatened to report the company to the police. They argued that although they lacked official permits, they had paid higher Hajj fees and had been explicitly guaranteed entry into Mecca. Pressed by the pilgrims and facing the prospect of further legal consequences, Pak Haji Ahmad once again turned to Pak Hendra to find an alternative solution.

After a prolonged period of negotiation, Pak Hendra eventually made contact with a *badu shaykh*, a Bedouin sheikh familiar with informal desert routes. The sheikh agreed to transport the pilgrims covertly to Mecca via an old Bedouin pathway. "I had to pay him a lot of money," Indra recalled. "He charged us SR 300 per pilgrim; normally it's about SR 200,

but with the Hajj schedule on the line, I had no choice." The operation succeeded, and the pilgrims arrived in Mecca just in time to perform the Hajj.

Despite this last-minute success, the consequences for Pak Haji Ahmad were irreversible. The financial penalty and license revocation effectively destroyed his *ḥamlah* as a viable enterprise, eliminating his ability to organize the Hajj in the following year. Forced to abandon pilgrimage organization, he redirected his efforts toward the food and catering business, supplying meals to pilgrims as an auxiliary service rather than coordinating their travel.

Founding an Independent Ḥamlah

Following a two-year hiatus, Pak Hendra re-entered the pilgrimage sector on his own terms. In 2003, he began organizing domestic pilgrims independently, inaugurating his own *ḥamlah* company. By this time, the Saudi government had launched a broad "Saudinization" campaign in the private sector, requiring companies to employ Saudi citizens, especially in managerial positions. To comply with these regulations, Pak Hendra asked a long-time Saudi acquaintance, Abdullah al-Shamrani, whom he had known through his work in healthcare clinics, to serve as *mudīr* (director) of the company.

The operation began modestly, with eighty pilgrims traveling on two buses from Riyadh. Within two years, however, Pak Hendra's *ḥamlah* was consistently organizing trips for no fewer than three hundred Hajj pilgrims annually, all of them Indonesian residents of Riyadh and surrounding areas. To support the operation, he recruited his friend Rasyid Siregar as a senior assistant and hired three high-achieving Indonesian students from King Saʿud University to serve as Hajj guides.

By late April 2007, when we conducted this extended series of conversations, Pak Hendra had already received 180 applications from prospective pilgrims, with five months still remaining before the Hajj season began in November. His clientele even included a small number of Bangladeshi pilgrims, many of whom were co-workers or acquaintances of Indonesian applicants.

Despite their earlier conflict, Pak Hendra occasionally subcontracted services from Pak Haji Ahmad, particularly for catering and food provision in Mecca and Medina. Over the course of nearly a week of observations and conversations, I was struck by Indra's renewed optimism. He proudly showed me his modest office on the outskirts of Riyadh, located near two popular Indonesian restaurants. Though small, the office was sufficient for evening and weekend operations. Much of his work, however, took place elsewhere, helping pilgrims complete applications at Indonesian shops, restaurants, and private homes.

The *ḥamlah* officially operated under the name of Abdullah al-Shamrani, who was rarely present except for formal meetings. As Pak Hendra acknowledged pragmatically, more than anything else, what the operation required was a Saudi name, particularly in an era when Saudinization policies continued to reshape labor relations and provoke tensions throughout the workforce.

Pak Hendra's experience organizing domestic pilgrims from Riyadh demonstrates that not all Indonesian *muṭawwifs* or pilgrimage intermediaries emerge from Islamic educational institutions. Many of the most crucial skills required to facilitate the Hajj are not primarily theological, but social and technical: communicating effectively with Saudi authorities, cultivating reliable business partnerships, navigating bureaucratic constraints, and ensuring pilgrims' safety during travel to Mecca and Medina.

Although Pak Hendra does not present himself as deeply versed in Islamic jurisprudence or theological debates surrounding the Hajj, his case shows that he nonetheless possessed the practical competencies necessary to organize large-scale pilgrimage operations successfully.

More broadly, this story illustrates how domestic Hajj pilgrimage has become a thriving enterprise amid expanding state bureaucracy and increasingly restrictive regulation. While the Saudi state has tightened control over pilgrim mobility from both outside and within the Kingdom, these measures have not eradicated informal practices. Instead, they have reconfigured the terrain in which intermediaries operate, creating new risks, constraints, and opportunities for negotiation.

Through Pak Hendra's trajectory, we see how Hajj regulations formulated at higher levels of state authority are tested, interpreted, and sometimes undermined at the level of

street-level bureaucracy. Even as formal control intensifies, its effects remain uneven, contingent upon interpersonal negotiation, situational judgment, and pragmatic compromise.

Since 1987, when Saudi Arabia successfully persuaded the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to implement the unprecedented Hajj quota system of one pilgrim per one thousand Muslims per country, the Kingdom has steadily expanded its regulatory reach. Beginning in the late 1990s, stricter controls on Hajj permits were introduced, culminating in the state campaign *La ḥajja bidūni taṣrīḥ,* "no Hajj without a permit" which restricts citizens and legal residents to performing the Hajj once every five years. These measures have been reinforced by religious edicts issued by prominent Saudi institutions, including the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and Fatāwā and members of the Saudi Council of Senior ʿUlamāʾ. In 2009, penalties for *taṣrīḥ* violations had increased tenfold, from SR 10,000 to SR 100,000.

As I discuss in greater detail later in this chapter, these developments underscore how pilgrimage governance in contemporary Saudi Arabia is sustained not only by formal regulation, but also by the everyday labor of intermediaries who navigate, and at times exploit, the gaps between law and practice.

Seen in this light, Pak Hendra's trajectory from migrant healthcare worker to *ḥamlah* operator closely resembles the social position and practical ethos of the Street Boys of Mecca discussed earlier in this chapter. Like those intermediaries, Indra occupies a space neither fully inside nor fully outside formal pilgrimage institutions. His authority does not derive from religious office, bureaucratic rank, or formal Islamic learning, but from accumulated mobility, experiential knowledge, and the ability to operate effectively in moments of institutional breakdown. He translates state rules into workable strategies, manages risk on behalf of pilgrims, and intervenes at key points where official procedures falter. In this sense, Pak Hendra exemplifies the type of street-level intermediary whose labor quietly sustains mass pilgrimage by resolving problems that formal structures are ill-equipped to handle.

At a broader analytical level, the case underscores how pilgrimage governance is not exhausted by regulations, quotas, or religious decrees issued by state authorities or scholarly institutions. Instead, it is continually enacted and reshaped through the practices of intermediaries operating on the ground. The tightening of Saudi pilgrimage regulations, far

from eliminating informal mediation, has in fact intensified the demand for actors capable of navigating ambiguity, negotiating enforcement, and absorbing risk.

The Street Boys of Mecca, whether based in Mecca itself or, as in this case, operating from Riyadh, emerge precisely at this intersection of expansion and constraint. They are not merely marginal figures operating at the edges of legality, but central agents in the everyday functioning of pilgrimage. By examining figures such as Pak Hendra, this chapter argues that the modern Hajj is sustained not only through formal bureaucratic order, but through a dense ecology of street-level brokerage in which regulation, negotiation, and improvisation remain inseparable.

Chapter 4 – Hajj Bureaucracy

4.1. State and Non-State Interpenetration

Indonesia occupies a central position in the governance of the global Hajj, owing to the sheer scale of its participation. With more than 200,000 pilgrims departing annually, accounting for over ten percent of all international pilgrims, Indonesia consistently ranks as the largest contributor to the Hajj worldwide. Although countries such as Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey developed formal Hajj management systems earlier, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, Indonesia emerged as a dominant actor from the 1980s onward. This prominence was made possible through large-scale investment in air transportation and the adoption of innovative strategies for seasonally chartering flight fleets, enabling Indonesia not merely to fulfill its quota but to do so consistently and efficiently.

The dynamics of Indonesia's relationship with Saudi Arabia became increasingly visible following the implementation of the international quota system in 1986. In the early years, Indonesia frequently redistributed unused quotas to neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Singapore. However, as Indonesia's logistical capacity expanded, particularly through its management of chartered air fleets, it began to push for more favorable treatment. This shift was most clearly expressed in Indonesia's objections to the 20 percent quota reduction imposed in 2013, as well as in its delegation's repeated challenges to the population-based quota formula itself (Bianchi, 2015). Indonesian officials argued that quota allocation should instead reflect demand and transportation capacity, rather than demographic proportion alone.

Indonesia's bargaining position was further strengthened by the rapid expansion of its Hajj waiting list, which has reached 5.6 million registered pilgrims, with an average waiting period of approximately 26 years.[30] Indonesian authorities have even claimed to have secured informal commitments for substantial quota increases, up to 60 percent, and potentially

[30] Indonesia is facing an increasingly prolonged Hajj waiting period due to a sharp rise in the number of registered pilgrims. Government data show that the surge in Hajj applicants has significantly lengthened the national queue, with prospective pilgrims now facing waiting times that extend beyond two decades. According to the newly established Ministry of Hajj and Umrah (Kemenhaj), Indonesia's Hajj waiting list has reached 5.6 million people, with an average waiting period of 26.4 years. This information was delivered by Hasan Afandi, Head of Kemenhaj's Public Relations Bureau, during a training and education program for Hajj officers in Jakarta for the 1447 H/2026 M season.

toward 500,000 pilgrims annually. These proposals, which ground quota allocation in economic strength and logistical capability, may benefit resource-rich countries such as Turkey, but they also risk exacerbating inequality for poorer Muslim-majority states. The Indonesian case thus illustrates that Hajj governance is not merely a religious matter, but one deeply entangled with politics, economics, and international negotiation.

This chapter approaches Hajj governance through a political-anthropological lens, drawing primarily on the concepts of governmentality, biopolitics, and imagined communities. Hajj regulation is understood not simply as administrative coordination but as a historically layered project of governing religious mobility.

Regulation of the Hajj by the Dutch colonial government from 1825 onward can be read as an early form of governmentality in an Islamic context. The colonial state did not merely permit or prohibit pilgrimage; it administered the Hajj in detail, determining who was allowed to travel, how they were required to journey, and how long they could remain in the holy lands. Instruments such as Hajj passports, fines, and return-ticket requirements were not neutral bureaucratic tools. Rather, they operated as technologies for managing Muslim mobility as a population deemed politically sensitive and requiring surveillance. Within the logic of governmentality, the Hajj passport functioned not only as a travel document, but as a classificatory mechanism through which Muslim bodies were rendered legible, sortable, and controllable.

Colonial discourse further reveals how power operated through the production of knowledge. The label *"Islamic priests,"* applied to returning pilgrims, exemplifies how the state framed Muslims through stereotypes rooted in fear and ignorance. Pilgrims were constructed as *"risky subjects,"* capable of transmitting Pan-Islamic ideas that threatened colonial stability. Here, governmentality functioned discursively: the state generated narratives of danger and used them to legitimate bureaucratic intervention into religious life.

Policies such as the mandatory return ticket requirement introduced in 1922 and the authorization to deny passports to "suspicious" individuals in 1928 illustrate that colonial governance extended beyond regulating behavior to managing possibility itself, deciding who could move, who could worship, and who counted as politically "safe." These practices constitute a form of biopolitics, through which the state managed social life and political belonging by regulating bodies, circulation, and access to sacred space.

Viewed through the lens of governmentality, colonial Hajj regulation was not simply an administrative response to security concerns. It formed part of a broader project of power that combined surveillance, discursive production, and population management. The colonial state sought to *"govern at a distance"* religious practice that was assumed to possess latent political force, deploying techniques that were often subtler and more technocratic than overt repression (Foucault, 1991).

This framework is further enriched by Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities. Anderson argues that nations are not natural entities but collectively imagined constructs, produced through shared symbols, institutions, and narratives, many of them bureaucratic in nature, such as censuses, maps, and administrative classification. In the context of the Dutch East Indies, Hajj regulation can be understood as an attempt to manage Muslim identities perceived as existing outside the colonial imagined community.

Pilgrims, by virtue of their transnational mobility and their connections to global Islamic centers such as Mecca, were viewed as foreign elements capable of disrupting colonial cohesion. They occupied an ambiguous position, that is legally subjects of the colonial state, yet spiritually and imaginatively oriented toward a global Islamic community. Through policies such as Hajj passports, fines, and return tickets, colonial bureaucracy sought to draw imaginary boundaries between obedient subjects and dangerous others. In Andersonian terms, Hajj regulation functioned as a form of "ideological census," one that did not merely count, but classified and excluded.

Colonial anxieties surrounding Pan-Islamism further illuminate this dynamic. Pilgrims who remained in Mecca for extended periods were feared as vectors of alternative political imaginaries grounded in global Islamic solidarity. Pan-Islamism represented a counter-imaginary that challenged the legitimacy of the colonial order. Hajj governance thus became a site of contestation between competing imaginations, the colonial community being constructed from Batavia and the Islamic community envisioned from Mecca.

By situating Hajj bureaucracy within these theoretical frameworks, this chapter argues that the governance of pilgrimage in Indonesia must be understood as a long-term genealogical process. From colonial surveillance to post-colonial administration and contemporary techno-bureaucratic management, Hajj governance has functioned as a key arena through which the state has sought to regulate mobility, produce religious subjects, and

negotiate its authority in relation to Islam. The sections that follow reconstruct this history in a genealogical manner, highlighting the persistence and adaptation of techniques of control, documentation, and legitimation across colonial, post-colonial, and contemporary contexts.

From Colonial Regulation to Post-Colonial Bureaucracy

By the early nineteenth century, colonial governance of the Hajj in the Dutch East Indies had moved from a fragmented and situational mode of regulation toward a more systematized administrative regime. This shift was grounded in an increasingly explicit framing of Islam, and in particular, the mobility of Muslim subjects, as a potential threat to imperial stability. As Vredenbregt (1962) demonstrates, pilgrimage regulation became embedded within a broader strategy of monitoring Muslim movement, transforming the Hajj from a tolerated religious practice into an object of sustained bureaucratic attention.

This transformation found concrete expression in the 1825 colonial resolution mandating that all prospective pilgrims obtain a special Hajj passport, priced at 110 guilders, with penalties reaching as high as 1,000 guilders for non-compliance. These measures were not merely fiscal in nature. Rather, they functioned as mechanisms of population management, simultaneously restricting access to the Hajj and generating detailed administrative records of those who undertook the journey. The passport system thus exemplified the fusion of economic extraction with surveillance, producing legible subjects whose religious mobility could be tracked, quantified, and regulated by the colonial state (Vredenbregt, 1962).

Colonial discourse surrounding these regulations shows how pilgrims were narrowed into a politically charged category. In official documents, returning hajis were frequently described as *"Islamic priests,"* a label that collapsed religious standing into assumptions of political authority and ideological threat (Meulen, 1941). This characterization reflected both limited understanding of Islamic social distinctions and a broader unease about the circulation of religious knowledge acquired in Mecca. Within this interpretive framework, the haji was not treated as an ordinary subject fulfilling a religious obligation, but as a figure whose overseas experience rendered him potentially disruptive and therefore suspect.

Although the colonial administration revised the policy in 1831, reducing the penalty for non-compliance to twice the passport fee (220 guilders), this adjustment did not signal a substantive shift in governing logic. Rather, it represented a pragmatic recalibration in response to widespread evasion of Hajj regulations, particularly among pilgrims originating from outside Java and Madura who traveled via Sumatra. As De Haan documents, these evasions exposed the uneven geographical reach of colonial authority, prompting bureaucratic adaptation rather than abandonment of regulatory control. The underlying objective of managing Muslim mobility remained unchanged, even as specific enforcement mechanisms were modified.

These nineteenth-century regulatory frameworks did not emerge in isolation. They were rooted in earlier patterns of colonial ambivalence toward Islam and the Hajj, as evidenced in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century V.O.C. practice. Even before formalized passport regimes were introduced, colonial authorities oscillated between accommodation and repression. Permissions to travel were occasionally granted to religious figures at the request of indigenous elites, such as the Sultan or Prince of Banten, reflecting the political necessity of maintaining alliances with local powerholders. At the same time, repressive actions were taken against pilgrims deemed socially disruptive, including the refusal of re-entry to three Bugis hajis in 1664 and the surveillance of figures such as Haji Raden Prawata, as well as the controlled landing of ten hajis in 1716 (De Haan; Vredenbregt).

These cases illustrate that the Hajj had already been transformed into an object of bureaucratic scrutiny well before the nineteenth century. Eisenberger's interpretation is particularly instructive here: rather than viewing Hajj regulations as straightforward acts of religious persecution, he situates them within the V.O.C.'s broader strategy of mercantile monopolization and maritime control. Restrictions on pilgrimage travel, including bans on using Company vessels, must therefore be understood as extensions of efforts to regulate shipping routes and circulation more generally. The persistence of pilgrims traveling aboard V.O.C. ships despite such bans underscores both the limits of colonial enforcement and the opportunistic pragmatism of Company governance.

This historical genealogy is crucial for understanding how post-colonial Hajj administration took shape in Indonesia. Independence did not erase colonial modes of governance; rather, it reconfigured them. When the Indonesian state assumed responsibility for organizing the Hajj, beginning with the establishment of the *Panitia Haji Indonesia* in

1948 and later the Directorate General of Hajj Affairs under the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 1964, it inherited not a blank slate, but a repertoire of administrative techniques developed under colonial rule. Documentation, centralized coordination, quota management, and surveillance of mobility were retained, though reframed within a discourse of public service and citizens' rights.

As Harahap (1994) notes, this dual character, that is facilitation on the one hand, regulation on the other, continues to define the Indonesian state's role in Hajj governance. What changes in the post-colonial context is not the existence of bureaucratic control, but its legitimation. Where colonial regulation framed the Hajj as a potential threat to be contained, the post-colonial state presents administration as a means of ensuring equitable access, efficiency, and accountability. Yet the underlying rationality, a commitment to managing religious mobility through standardized procedures and institutional oversight, exhibits a striking continuity.

Seen in this light, contemporary Hajj bureaucracy in Indonesia, including the expansion of waiting lists, quota systems, and increasingly sophisticated regimes of documentation and monitoring, cannot be understood solely as responses to demographic pressure or logistical necessity. They are also the latest iteration of a longer historical process through which the state has sought to render Muslim pilgrimage legible, governable, and administratively manageable. The modern Hajj bureaucracy thus represents not a rupture from colonial governance, but its transformation into a post-colonial bureaucratic form oriented toward service provision, fiscal management, and population governance.

In 1852, the colonial government formally abolished the Hajj tax while retaining the requirement for pilgrims to obtain a passport. This policy adjustment marked a brief, relatively expansive phase in colonial Hajj governance before a return to stricter regulation in 1859. The partial relaxation of economic restrictions did not indicate a relinquishing of control, but rather a recalibration of governance instruments in response to shifting political and administrative considerations. The continued insistence on documentation underscores the colonial state's enduring commitment to monitoring religious mobility, even as fiscal strategies were modified.

Sharp criticism of colonial Hajj policy by C. Snouck Hurgronje during this period illuminates an internal tension within the colonial apparatus itself. As an adviser deeply

familiar with local Islamic dynamics, Snouck warned that excessive restriction of pilgrimage practices could ultimately undermine Dutch interests in the Indies. In his view, overt repression risked alienating Muslim populations and intensifying resistance, whereas more indirect and nuanced strategies of governance would prove more effective in managing Islam as a social force. Snouck's critique thus did not reject regulation as such, but advocated a subtler mode of colonial control, one that relied less on prohibition and more on careful observation, classification, and selective intervention.

Despite such cautionary advice, anxieties regarding Pan-Islamism increasingly shaped colonial Hajj policy in the early twentieth century. Concern that prolonged residence in the Hijaz might expose pilgrims to transnational Islamic networks and radical political ideas provided the justification for new regulatory measures. In 1922, the colonial government introduced a requirement that all pilgrims possess a return ticket before departure (Arsip Nasional, 2001).[31] Although this policy appeared to contradict Snouck Hurgronje's emphasis on moderation, it was in fact consistent with the broader colonial logic that viewed pilgrims who remained too long in Mecca as politically suspect.

This logic of suspicion was further formalized in 1928, when colonial authorities authorized officials to deny Hajj passports to individuals classified as *"suspicious"* (Douwes, 1997). With this regulation, routine administrative procedure became a means of political exclusion. Decisions presented as technical judgments about eligibility were in practice shaped by assessments of loyalty and perceived risk. The issuance of passports thus operated as a filtering mechanism through which the colonial state determined who could undertake the pilgrimage and who could not, binding Hajj administration to concerns over security and political order.

Colonial regulation of the Hajj can be read as an early form of biopolitics (Foucault 1978; Stoler 1995). The colonial state did not merely regulate individual bodies through passports, fees, and sanctions (Vredenbregt 1962; Tagliacozzo 2013), but also sought to shape Muslim perceptions of sacred space and transregional movement (Anderson 2006; Gilsenan 1982). The Hajj was therefore treated not simply as a ritual obligation, but as a politically charged form of mobility requiring containment (Eickelman & Piscatori 1990; Laffan 2003).

[31] Arsip Nasional, Biro Perjalanan Haji di Indonesia Masa Kolonial: Agen Herklots dan Firma Alsegoff & Co (Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2001).

Post-Colonial Hajj Governance

The transformation of the Hajj from a religious obligation into a large-scale religious travel industry emerged most clearly in the post-colonial era. From the standpoint of political and economic anthropology, this transformation cannot be explained solely through market dynamics or technological advances in transportation. It also reflects a fundamental shift in how states and civil institutions conceptualize, regulate, and manage Muslim religious mobility.

During the colonial period, Hajj services were largely organized by private actors and local communities. Three major travel agencies, Kongsi Tiga, Herklots, and Alsegoff & Co., served as intermediaries connecting pilgrims to transoceanic transportation networks (Majid 2008; Miller 2006). Beyond these formal commercial arrangements, a range of non-state actors played crucial roles in structuring the pilgrimage experience. Figures such as the *Shaykh* (group leader) and the *Muṭawwif* (local guide in Mecca) performed essential social and spiritual functions throughout the journey. These actors were not merely logistical facilitators; they were custodians of religious meaning and experience. From an anthropological standpoint, *Shaykh* and *Muṭawwif* can be understood as cultural brokers, mediating between the pilgrims' local lifeworlds and the transnational Islamic landscape of the Hijaz.

In the 1920s, efforts to reform Hajj services emerged from within Muslim civil society itself. Modernist and traditionalist organizations such as Muhammadiyah, Sarekat Islam (SI), and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) attempted to intervene in what they perceived as an exploitative system by organizing their own pilgrimage arrangements and chartering ships independently. These initiatives reflected the growing institutional consciousness among Islamic organizations regarding the importance of autonomy in managing religious obligations. At the same time, the failure of these efforts revealed the structural limitations facing civil society actors: logistical complexity, the weight of colonial bureaucracy, and the continuing dominance of commercial intermediaries proved difficult to overcome.

Following Indonesian independence, the newly established state confronted the challenge of constructing both administrative authority and religious legitimacy capable of

replacing colonial structures. Hajj administration became one of the most important arenas in which this process unfolded. The organization of the pilgrimage was not only a matter of managing transnational mobility, but also a symbolic test of the state's capacity to govern the religious lives of its Muslim citizens. Post-colonial Hajj governance thus emerged at the intersection of bureaucratic rationalization, economic coordination, and the politics of religious legitimacy.

Rather than marking a sharp rupture with colonial practice, post-colonial Hajj administration reorganized and repurposed inherited techniques of documentation, coordination, and control. What distinguished the post-colonial configuration was not the disappearance of regulation, but its reframing: from an apparatus of suspicion to an apparatus of service, from colonial surveillance to national administration. This continuity-through-transformation forms the crucial analytical bridge between colonial Hajj regulation and contemporary Hajj bureaucracy in Indonesia.

During the Japanese occupation and the Second World War, Hajj services in Indonesia were effectively suspended. No new policies were introduced to replace Dutch colonial regulations, while wartime conditions and severe economic disruption rendered long-distance travel virtually impossible. In this context, the organization of the Hajj entered a phase that may be described as "a vacuum of religious mobility," produced by the absence of a functioning state apparatus and the limited capacity of civil society organizations to independently sustain transnational pilgrimage.

This period demonstrates that the performance of the Hajj does not depend solely on religious intention or moral obligation. Rather, it is contingent upon the existence of political, economic, and logistical infrastructures that enable cross-border movement. The interruption of the pilgrimage during this period reveals the extent to which religious mobility is structurally embedded within broader regimes of governance, transportation, finance, and international coordination.

Viewed longitudinally, the evolution of Hajj services from the colonial era through the Japanese occupation illustrates that Muslim religious mobility has always been shaped through ongoing negotiation among state actors, private intermediaries, and local communities. In anthropological terms, the Hajj cannot be understood merely as a ritual practice. It is a social process involving networks of actors, material infrastructures, forms of

knowledge, and relations of power. The post-colonial transformation of the Hajj into a form of organized religious travel, and later, a large-scale pilgrimage industry, must therefore be situated within this longue durée of negotiated access, control, and meaning surrounding sacred space.

The Indonesian Hajj Committee (PHI) as a Singular Authority

The institutional reorganization of Hajj governance following Indonesian independence marked a decisive moment in the consolidation of state authority over religious mobility. Through Decree A.III/1/648 dated 9 February 1950, the government formally designated the *Panitia Haji Indonesia* (PHI) as the sole institution recognized to organize Hajj services. Four years later, this position was reinforced by Minister of Religious Affairs KH Masjkur through Ministerial Decree No. 9/1954, which established the PHI Foundation (*Yayasan PHI*) as a legally sanctioned body with exclusive credentials in Hajj administration (Jajasan Pedjalanan Hadji Indonesia, 1972).

PHI was not merely an administrative body. It functioned as a symbolic articulation of emerging state authority in the religious domain. Through PHI, the Indonesian state positioned itself as the legitimate mediator between the national political center and the sacred center of Islam, linking Jakarta and Mecca as twin poles of political sovereignty and spiritual obligation. PHI thus embodied the state's claim to represent and regulate Muslim religiosity at a national scale.

To support PHI's operations, the state established the *Bank Hadji Indonesia* (BHI) and the shipping company *Pelajaran Muslimin Indonesia* (MUSI). These institutions were designed to provide financial and logistical infrastructure for Hajj administration. However, Indonesia's fragile post-independence economy limited the scope of this ambition. MUSI did not own any vessels and was forced to charter ships from other companies, highlighting the state's constrained capacity to independently control the material means of religious mobility. From an institutional perspective, the creation of BHI and MUSI nevertheless reflects deliberate efforts by the state to manage the Muslim population through financial and logistical instruments, even under conditions of limited resources.

The *Majelis Pimpinan Haji* (MPH) was subsequently established to provide guidance to prospective pilgrims, both prior to departure and during the performance of the pilgrimage. MPH functioned as a pedagogical institution responsible for transmitting ritual knowledge, travel ethics, and procedural norms. At the same time, it played a crucial role in producing an idealized image of the Indonesian pilgrim as orderly, modern, disciplined, and nationally oriented. In this sense, MPH can be understood as a state pedagogical machine that combined educational and ideological functions to shape pilgrims' identities as religious citizens.

The institutionalization of Hajj services in the early post-independence period thus formed an integral part of Indonesia's broader nation-building project. Through the regulation of pilgrimage, the state did not simply organize travel to Mecca; it actively produced narratives of Islam as a national community embedded within the framework of the modern nation-state. PHI, BHI, MUSI, and MPH can be read as institutional artifacts of the state's attempt to construct religious authority and govern spiritual mobility as a domain of modern governance.

Within the field of political anthropology, the post-independence institutionalization of Hajj administration reflects not only the consolidation of bureaucratic authority, but also an arena of negotiation among state power, religious communities, and competing national ideologies. As a form of transnational religious mobility, the Hajj became a critical site where ritual practice, bureaucratic rationality, and national imagination intersected. The 1950 decree establishing PHI as the sole organizer of the Hajj, followed by its formal reinforcement in 1954, marked the initial phase of the Indonesian state's long-term project to render Muslim pilgrimage administratively legible, politically governable, and symbolically national.

During the period of Guided Democracy (*Demokrasi Terpimpin*), when the doctrine of NASAKOM (Nationalism, Religion, Communism) was institutionalized as the official ideology of the state, President Sukarno sought to reform Hajj services through a series of policies that reflected the state's hegemonic ambitions over the religious sphere. In this ideological configuration, Islam was neither marginalized nor fully autonomous; rather, it was incorporated into a carefully managed political framework in which religious practice was expected to align with broader national and ideological objectives.

One significant manifestation of this approach was the attempt to privatize the *Panitia Haji Indonesia* (PHI) through Ministerial Decree No. 36/1959, which transformed PHI into a

private foundation. This policy marked a critical shift in the relationship between the state and Muslim communities, from one of protective oversight to one mediated increasingly through commercialization. The transformation of PHI illustrates how the state sought to govern Muslim religious life not only through direct administrative control, but also through market mechanisms and semi-private bureaucratic arrangements. In this sense, privatization did not signal a retreat of the state, but rather a reconfiguration of governance techniques.

At the same time, Presidential Decree No. 3/1960 reaffirmed that Hajj services ultimately remained under full state control, specifically through the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This apparent contradiction, between privatization and reaffirmation of state authority, reveals the unstable and contested nature of Hajj governance during the Guided Democracy period. The subsequent dissolution of *Pelajaran Muslimin Indonesia* (MUSI) and the *Bank Hadji Indonesia* (BHI) in 1962, along with recurrent threats to the existence of PHI, further underscore the extent to which Hajj services became entangled in broader political struggles. These developments were closely linked to the dissolution of the Masyumi Party, which was accused of involvement in the PRRI/Permesta rebellion. Within this context, Hajj administration functioned as a politically sensitive arena in which Islamic institutions were scrutinized for signs of disloyalty to the state.

Hajj services during the Guided Democracy era can be understood as a liminal space, a zone in which religious identity, political loyalty, and state legitimacy intersected and were continuously renegotiated (Turner, 1969). The management of pilgrimage became a site through which the state sought to classify, discipline, and symbolically integrate Muslim citizens into the national project (Noer, 1983), while simultaneously neutralizing perceived political threats.

The broader transformation of Hajj services in the early Republican period and during Guided Democracy demonstrates that the state was not merely managing religious ritual, but actively shaping Islamic identities as part of the nation-building process. Hajj bureaucracy functioned as an instrument of governmentality, a technology through which the state sought to regulate populations by structuring conduct, norms, and subjectivities (Foucault, 1991). At the same time, it served as a site for the production of an imagined religious community, bound together by the logic of nationalism, state ideology, and internal political dynamics within the Muslim ummah.

Hajj governance reforms between 1962 and 1966 reveal a crucial phase in the consolidation of state religious authority and the bureaucratization of ritual practice. Through key figures such as Muljadi Djojomartono and Minister of Religious Affairs KH Saifuddin Zuhri, the state attempted to reform a Hajj system widely regarded as inefficient, while simultaneously integrating religious practice into the ideological framework of national governance. These efforts highlight the personalization of bureaucratic reform, in which former Islamic activists from the colonial era were repositioned as representatives of the post-colonial state.

Despite these ambitions, post-colonial Hajj governance during the Sukarno era remained deeply constrained. As I have described elsewhere, although not all colonial regulations were retained after independence, a significant number of administrative procedures and regulatory mechanisms continued to structure Hajj management during the first one to two decades of the Republic. This continuity was largely pragmatic, reflecting the limited institutional capacity of the newly established state rather than ideological commitment to colonial models (Darmadi (2018).

Under Sukarno's leadership, repeated efforts were made to improve the Hajj management system. However, political instability and chronic economic pressure throughout the 1950s and 1960s severely restricted the government's ability to provide effective services to prospective pilgrims. According to the report by Willard A. Hanna (1956), economic constraints led the Indonesian government to impose Hajj quotas, forcing would-be pilgrims to participate in a lottery system in order to secure the opportunity to travel to Mecca. This mechanism illustrates how scarcity was bureaucratically managed, transforming religious aspiration into an administratively rationed privilege (Hanna, 1956).

Hanna also criticized the delegation of Hajj management to the *Yayasan Perjalanan Haji Indonesia* (PHI), highlighting persistent operational difficulties and administrative shortcomings (Hanna, 1956). His analysis is particularly valuable because it offers a clear depiction of the structural complexity of Hajj governance in a post-colonial state marked by limited resources and competing political priorities. Hanna's work reveals how the Hajj remained an arena of tension between popular religious aspirations and the evolving capacities of state bureaucracy.



Figure 4.1 Hajj Diplomatic Routes

The first Indonesian Hajj mission in 1948. Source: Abubakar Atjeh, 1957.

The establishment of the *Panitia Perbaikan Perjalanan Haji* (P3H) by President Sukarno in 1962 marked the beginning of a new reform phase aimed at overcoming stagnation and systemic dysfunction. The appointment of Muljadi Djojomartono as head of P3H signaled a notable shift, as former Islamic activists from the colonial period were absorbed into the state apparatus as managers of religious ritual. P3H can be understood as a *transitional institution*, functioning as a space of negotiation between colonial administrative legacies and emerging national aspirations.

P3H was mandated to formulate technical guidelines, delineate roles between state and private institutions, and draft new regulations aligned with the spirit of the 1945 Constitution. Moral and political support from Minister of Religious Affairs Prof. KH Saifuddin Zuhri further strengthened P3H's legitimacy as a state actor within the religious sphere. The renewed involvement of PHI in Hajj services reflects an attempt to restore relations between the state and non-governmental Islamic institutions, albeit within a more centralized regulatory framework.

A more dramatic bureaucratic reconfiguration followed with Presidential Decree No. 122/1964, which significantly altered the landscape of Hajj governance. Authority over Hajj affairs was no longer concentrated solely within the Ministry of Religious Affairs, but was transferred to the Coordinating Ministry for People's Welfare. This institutional shift indicates that the Hajj was redefined as a *national task*, rather than merely a religious obligation. Within the framework of *imagined communities* (Anderson, 2006), the Hajj was elevated to a symbol of national belonging, to be managed by the state as part of a broader project of spiritual nationalism.

The subsequent formation of the *Dewan Urusan Haji* (DUHA), which replaced P3H and was again led by Djojomartono, further reinforced this trend toward centralization. DUHA functioned as a national coordinating body, integrating PHI and PT Arafat as official state partners. This consolidation reflects the state's ambition to exert comprehensive control over Muslim religious mobility in the name of development and political stability. DUHA thus stands as a concrete example of the *bureaucratization of ritual*, in which the state governs worship as part of population management and ideological legitimation.

In sum, reforms in Hajj services during the Guided Democracy era demonstrate how the Indonesian state reconstituted religious authority through bureaucracy, regulation, and institutionalization. The Hajj during this period was not merely a transnational ritual, but a critical arena for the production of power, identity, and national imagination. The state did not simply regulate travel to Mecca; it actively produced narratives of Indonesian Muslims as disciplined, loyal citizens integrated into the national project.

The Corporate Turn in Hajj Services

The establishment of PT Arafat on 1 December 1964 marked a decisive phase in the history of Indonesian Hajj bureaucracy, in which the state formally began to combine administrative authority with commercial logic in the management of pilgrimage. This moment reflects a structural shift from a predominantly religious–bureaucratic model toward a hybrid governance arrangement that fused state functions with market mechanisms within a single institutional entity.

As Chairman of the *Dewan Urusan Haji* (DUHA) and ex-officio Minister Coordinating for People's Welfare, Muljadi Djojomartono occupied a dual position that was institutionally unprecedented. He acted simultaneously as a representative of the state and as the head of a state-sanctioned corporate body, PT Arafat. This dual role illustrates how the Indonesian state, during the Guided Democracy period, deliberately blurred the boundary between public authority and corporate interest in the governance of religious ritual. The formation of PT Arafat demonstrates that the state did not govern Hajj mobility solely through regulation and administration, but increasingly through the creation of economic entities designed to corporatize religious mobility.

PT Arafat was established with the explicit purpose of purchasing and managing Hajj ships, financed through funds collected directly from prospective pilgrims. In his widely broadcast radio address on 28 October 1964, Djojomartono declared that all prospective pilgrims were required to deposit funds with Bank Indonesia as *"shares"* toward the acquisition of ships. Those who failed to make the required deposit would be denied permission to depart. This policy statement is analytically significant: it marks a moment when pilgrims were no longer treated solely as citizens to be served, but as investors in a religious development project initiated by the state.

The symbolic and material dimensions of this transformation were widely publicized. Contemporary advertisements, such as those published in *Madjalah Islam KIBLAT* in 1967, depicted PT Arafat transporting Indonesian pilgrims to Jeddah using three ships, visually reinforcing the image of a modern, state-backed Hajj infrastructure. These representations contributed to the normalization of a new governance imaginary in which pilgrimage was embedded within national development discourse (Suryadi, 2017; *KIBLAT*, No. 19, March I, 1967).

The management of the Hajj shipping fleet by PT Arafat during the mid-1960s reflects the administrative and logistical complexities faced by the Indonesian government in constructing a coordinated system of pilgrimage transportation. From an anthropological viewpoint, ship procurement and fleet management cannot be understood as merely technical operations. They constituted integral components of a broader national project involving multiple state institutions and competing bureaucratic interests.

PT Arafat managed seven Hajj vessels: Gunung Djati, Tjut Njak Dhien, Ambunombo, Pacific Abeto, Belle Abeto, Le Havre Abeto, and La Grande Abeto. Of these seven ships, only *Tjut Njak Dhien,* formerly *Princes Irene,* was purchased outright from a Dutch company. The remaining vessels appear to have been acquired through hire-purchase arrangements, a financing mechanism commonly employed by developing states to procure large capital assets under conditions of fiscal constraint. In the context of post-colonial development, this strategy reflects a pragmatic attempt to reconcile limited state resources with the logistical demands of mass religious mobility.

Ownership and control of the Hajj fleet required extensive coordination across ministerial boundaries, particularly with the Ministry of Sea Transportation. A ministerial decree issued by Ali Sadikin (No. Kab.4/19/8, 13 July 1965) granted PT Arafat rights of *penguasaan* (control) and *pengusahaan* (operation) over the ship *Tjut Njak Dhien*. Similar decrees were subsequently issued for *Gunung Djati* and *Ambunombo*. These decisions illustrate a mode of governance in which authority was not centralized within a single institution, but distributed across an interacting network of state agencies, each exercising partial control.

The legal status of these ships was not fully transparent. PT Arafat was not the formal owner but functioned as an operator acting under administrative mandate. Rather than indicating bureaucratic failure, this ambiguity demonstrates the adaptive flexibility of the post-colonial state in devising operational arrangements suited to evolving economic and institutional conditions. Authority, in this context, was exercised through functional delegation rather than unequivocal ownership.



P. T. PERUSAHAAN PELAJARAN

„ARAFAT"

Djl. Djohar no. 8 Djakarta – Indonesia

Alamat kawat/cable address	: ARAFATLINES
Tromol pos/P.O. Box	: No. 399/Djakarta
Telepon/Phone	: 49757 dan 49158
Banker	: Bank Negara Indonesia Unit I, Djl. Thamrin no. 2 Djakarta.

TUGAS – UTAMA

1. Menjelenggarakan pengangkutan DJEMAAH HADJI Indonesia-Djeddah p.p. sesuai dengan keputusan J.M. Menko Maritim/Menteri Perhubungan Laut tgl. 17 Sept. 1965 No. DRP 7/3/17.
2. Mendjalankan segala usaha dalam rangka membantu usaha PEMERINTAH jang baik setjara langsung maupun tidak langsung berkenaan dengan bidang pelajaran.

HUMAS P. T. „ARAFAT"

Isi diluar tanggungdjawab Pertj. Seno N.V.

Table 4.1 Hajj Transportation

Advertisement for PT Arafat transporting Indonesian Hajj pilgrims to Jeddah on three ships in 1967 (Dr. Suryadi, 2017); Photo source: Islamic Magazine KIBLAT ("Islamic Magazine KIBLAT, No. 19 – March 1, Year 13 – 1967: 52," 1967).



Table 4.2 Hajj Transportation

Documentary evidence from a female prospective Hajj pilgrim and shareholder in Pekalongan, Central Java, indicating the purchase of PT Arafat shares valued at IDR 50,000 at the time, with the expectation of performing the Hajj by sea transport provided by PT Arafat. Source: Rosidin Karidi Collection.

Documentation relating to ship ownership and management appears in official publications such as *Laporan Penyelenggaraan Urusan Hadji Tahun 1386 H/1966/67 M dan 1387 H/1967/68 M*, issued by the Directorate General of Hajj Affairs. These reports signal an official commitment to transparency and accountability, even as administrative and technical challenges persisted. Such reports may be understood as forms of "ritual documentation," paper practices that reaffirm state legitimacy by rendering complex transnational logistics legible and auditable.

The management of Hajj ships by PT Arafat, combined with the involvement of the Ministry of Sea Transportation, exemplifies the Indonesian state's effort to construct an integrated and responsible system of pilgrimage transportation. Anthropologically, this policy demonstrates that the state was not merely regulating ritual practice, but actively constructing infrastructure and inter-institutional coordination as part of a broader project of religious nationalism. Flexible, cross-sectoral governance arrangements reflect the state's attempt to adapt to the intertwined challenges of development, religious obligation, and public service provision.

The financing model introduced by PT Arafat generated a new bureaucratic logic within Indonesian Hajj administration: worship was framed as investment, and pilgrims were reframed as shareholders. Djojomartono even suggested the possibility of dividend distribution should PT Arafat generate profits. This rhetoric marks an early moment in the commodification of religious practice, in which spiritual value was explicitly connected to economic value.

This transformation signals a profound rearticulation of the Hajj. What had historically functioned as a collective religious ritual increasingly came to resemble a religious product, managed through corporate instruments and market logic. This development did not eliminate the sacred dimension of the pilgrimage, but reembedded it within institutional forms characteristic of modern bureaucratic capitalism.

In this sense, PT Arafat represents more than a logistical solution to transportation challenges. It stands as an institutional experiment through which the Indonesian state explored new configurations of authority, economy, and religiosity. The legacy of this

experiment would continue to shape subsequent debates over Hajj governance, particularly in relation to state control, commercialization, and the financialization of pilgrimage in later decades.

The Formation and Dissolution of the Ministry of Hajj Affairs

The establishment of the Ministry of Hajj Affairs through Presidential Decree No. 180/1965 on 19 June 1965, amid an increasingly volatile political climate following the events surrounding G30S, reflected the Indonesian state's effort to consolidate control over the religious sphere as part of a broader project of national stabilization. The creation of this ministry, the first of its kind in modern Indonesia, cannot be understood as a purely administrative gesture. Rather, it functioned as a symbolic enactment of the state's ambition to regulate, shape, and guide Muslim citizens as *religious nationals* within a fragile post-colonial polity.

Under the leadership of Prof. K.H. Farid Ma'ruf, the Ministry of Hajj Affairs was endowed with expansive authority. Its mandate included formulating policy, managing Hajj services both domestically and abroad, and fostering religious consciousness and nationalism among pilgrims. One of its central tasks was explicitly articulated as the responsibility to "guide the souls of pilgrims upon their return to the homeland so that they may be useful for religion, nation, and state." This mandate positioned the ministry as a biopolitical instrument, one that sought not only to regulate the physical movement of pilgrims, but also to shape their moral dispositions and political subjectivities. The pilgrim was thus framed simultaneously as a religious devotee and as an object of national formation.

During this period, the Ministry of Hajj Affairs also issued Decree No. 16/1965, which reaffirmed and strengthened the position of the *Panitia Haji Indonesia* (PHI) as the state's official partner in Hajj administration. At the same time, the role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) was significantly curtailed. Its responsibilities were largely confined to technical and administrative functions, such as the issuance of *surat mahram*, indicating a temporary reconfiguration of bureaucratic authority within the state's religious apparatus.

This arrangement, however, proved short-lived. In April 1966, the status of the Ministry of Hajj Affairs was downgraded to that of a ministry with a deputy minister, although it continued to be led by the same figure. Only two months later, on 4 August 1966, the ministry was formally dissolved through Presidential Decree No. 170/1966 and absorbed into the Ministry of Religious Affairs as the Directorate General of Hajj Affairs. This rapid sequence of institutional creation, demotion, and dissolution illustrates the volatility of state bureaucracy in response to political instability and pressures for administrative efficiency. Anthropologically, this episode represents a reorganization of religious authority, revealing the state's shifting strategies in governing the religious domain under conditions of crisis.

One significant innovation emerging during this transitional period was the introduction of the Haji Berdikari program. Under this scheme, pilgrims were permitted to perform the Hajj using their own foreign currency and Indonesian rupiah for the return journey, rather than relying on state-allocated foreign exchange. Despite this apparent autonomy, participants were still required to register with MORA and remain subject to official quota regulations. *Haji Berdikari* constituted a new form of independent religious mobility, combining spiritual aspiration with individual economic capacity.

The program offered an alternative for prospective pilgrims seeking to bypass long and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures. Yet the persistence of state control, e.g., through registration requirements and quota enforcement, demonstrates that even ostensibly autonomous forms of mobility remained firmly embedded within regulatory frameworks. As Lyon has argued, *"surveillance is not only about watching, but also about structuring access and movement"* (Lyon, 2007; 2022). In this sense, *Haji Berdikari* did not represent a retreat of the state, but rather a recalibration of governance mechanisms in response to economic constraints and social demand.

Overall, the formation and dissolution of the Ministry of Hajj Affairs, alongside the emergence of *Haji Berdikari*, reveal how the Indonesian state in the mid-1960s managed the religious sphere amid acute political and economic crisis. From an anthropological standpoint, Hajj bureaucracy during this period functioned as a critical arena in which the state sought to produce nationalist religious subjects, regulate spiritual mobility through administrative and economic logics, and continually renegotiate its authority within a rapidly shifting religious and political landscape.

Hajj Bureaucracy under the New Order

Hajj bureaucracy under the New Order functioned not merely as an administrative apparatus for organizing pilgrimage travel, but as a technology of power through which the state produced legitimacy, managed loyalty, and regulated the Muslim population within the framework of developmental nationalism. The administration of the Hajj became an institutional site where religious obligation, bureaucratic governance, and political authority were systematically intertwined.

Under the leadership of President Soeharto, the organization of the Hajj was firmly placed under state control through the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The state monopolized all aspects of pilgrimage services, encompassing registration, transportation, accommodation, and ritual guidance. In practice, this bureaucratic monopoly also operated as a channel of political patronage. Access to Hajj services often depended on proximity to bureaucratic elites or local power networks, embedding pilgrimage administration within broader structures of state–society relations. Anthropologically, Hajj administration served to sort pilgrims, distinguishing those authorized to participate in the state-defined national religious community from those who were not.

Beyond logistical coordination, the state actively disciplined pilgrim behavior through systems of guidance, training, and surveillance. Prospective pilgrims were shaped into religious subjects expected to be orderly, compliant, and nationally oriented. From an institutional perspective, Hajj bureaucracy became a means through which the state regulated attitudes, ethical conduct, and modes of religious expression, integrating Muslim citizens into the broader project of national development. The Hajj thus operated not only as an act of worship, but also as a state ritual that reproduced idealized images of religious citizenship consistent with New Order ideology.

Mass media played a critical role in sustaining this bureaucratic project. News coverage of pilgrim departures officiated by high-ranking officials, testimonials celebrating smooth organization, and narratives emphasizing logistical success became integral to the production of state legitimacy. The Hajj was repeatedly represented as evidence of developmental achievement and political stability. Within the logic of *imagined communities* (Anderson, 2006), Indonesian pilgrims were portrayed as embodiments of a modern, disciplined, national Muslim subject, faithful yet loyal to the state.

Behind these narratives of success, however, existed persistent practices of exclusion. Islamic groups perceived as independent, oppositional, or critical of the government often encountered obstacles in accessing Hajj services or obtaining official permission. This reveals that Hajj bureaucracy also functioned as an instrument of political regulation, selectively enabling or restricting religious mobility. In this sense, pilgrimage administration became a *"zone of ideological surveillance,"* where the state exercised discretion over who was allowed to participate in transnational religious movement and under what conditions.

Hajj bureaucracy under the New Order thus offers a concrete illustration of how the state mobilized religious ritual as an instrument of governmentality and political patronage. From an anthropological standpoint, the Hajj during this period cannot be understood solely as ritual practice. Rather, it constituted a strategic arena through which the state shaped, regulated, and imagined Islam as a disciplined component of the national order. The pilgrimage emerged as a domain where power, religiosity, and national identity were continuously produced, contested, and negotiated.

4.2. Cultural Politics of Hajj Administration

The Monopolization of Hajj Services

> *"The government does not intend to restrict the freedom of Muslims in fulfilling their religious obligations. Rather, it seeks to organize the pilgrimage so that it may be carried out in an orderly and responsible manner, protected from irresponsible practices by private agents."*
>
> — President Soeharto, address commemorating Israʾ Miʿraj, State Palace, 9 October 1969[32]

President Soeharto's statement, delivered shortly after the consolidation of New Order power, offers an instructive entry point into understanding state control over Hajj services during this period. Framed as a reassurance rather than a declaration of authority, the speech articulated a

[32] Rapat Evaluasi Pelaksanaan Penyuluhan dan Informasi Haji Serta Kinerja Kelompok Bimbingan Ibadah Haji Tahun M/1420 H. 2000. Evaluasi Pelaksanaan Penyuluhan dan Informasi Haji Serta Kinerja Kelompok Bimbingan Ibadah Haji (KBIH) Tahun 2000 M/1420 H, Jakarta, 9 Mei 2000. [Jakarta]: Departemen Agama RI, Ditjen Bimas Islam dan Urusan Haji, Direktorat Pembinaan Urusan Haji.

moral and paternalistic rationale for bureaucratic intervention. The language of *protection*, *order*, and *responsibility* positioned the state as a benevolent guardian of religious life, while simultaneously asserting its exclusive right to regulate the conditions under which pilgrimage could be performed.



Figure 4.2. Cultural Politics of Hajj Administration

President Suharto and King Fahd in Saudi Arabia, 1991. Maftuh Basuni (later Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia after the reform era, 2004-2009) served as translator at the time. Source: (Mubarok, 2022); (Photo: Maftuh Basuni Family Collection; Mahpudi, Pak Harto: The Untold Stories, 2012).

This framing was not merely rhetorical. It provided ideological justification for a decisive restructuring of Hajj governance through Presidential Decree No. 22/1969 and Presidential Instruction No. 6/1969, which together established a state monopoly over Hajj services. In anthropological terms, these policies marked a critical turning point in the history of Indonesian Hajj bureaucracy. They did not simply reflect administrative ambition, but redefined relations of power within the religious sphere through mechanisms of exclusion and centralization.

After maintaining earlier transitional arrangements for several years, the New Order regime moved to assume full control over the organization of the Hajj, citing widespread failures and abuses committed by private travel agencies. Organizations such as Mukersa Haji, Al-Ichlas, and YAMUʿALIM were publicly labeled as *"irresponsible agents"* responsible for the failure of many prospective pilgrims to reach Mecca. In this narrative, administrative disorder and pilgrim suffering were attributed to the absence of strong state control, legitimizing the reassertion of centralized authority. The state thus positioned itself as the sole legitimate actor capable of governing religious mobility, claiming jurisdiction over pilgrims' health, safety, documentation, and logistics.

Presidential Instruction No. 6/1969 explicitly stipulated that the government bore responsibility for all aspects of Hajj services, including quotas, costs, registration, passports, transportation, and pilgrim protection. Article 1 paragraph (3) went further by prohibiting individuals and private institutions from organizing Hajj services altogether. This clause marked the total exclusion of non-state actors from the formal management of the pilgrimage. As Noer (1983) argues, this policy amounted to a form of *"ritual nationalization,"* transforming the Hajj into an administrative domain closed to civil-society participation. Worship, in this sense, became a matter of state planning and bureaucratic authorization rather than communal organization.

The monopoly policy provoked sharp criticism from prominent Muslim figures and organizations. Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, chairman of HUSAMI, condemned the policy as an attempt to *"obstruct the performance of the Hajj"* and *"prevent Muslims from visiting the Sacred Mosque."* His critique articulated broader tensions between the state and religious communities over authority, autonomy, and access to sacred space (Prawiranegara, 1970). These criticisms underscored the contested nature of Hajj governance, revealing how state regulation of pilgrimage was inseparable from struggles over religious legitimacy.

The New Order's Hajj monopoly can be interpreted as a form of symbolic domination, through which the state sought to control access to sacred sites as part of a broader project of political legitimation. By excluding independent Islamic organizations from the management of pilgrimage, the state reconfigured Muslim citizens as administrative subjects rather than autonomous religious actors. Bureaucratic procedures replaced communal mediation, and obedience to state regulation became a moral imperative framed in the language of safety and order.

Behind its rhetoric of efficiency and protection, the monopolization of Hajj services also functioned as a political instrument to reinforce the New Order's ideological hegemony. By exerting comprehensive control over pilgrimage travel, the state did not merely regulate the movement of bodies; it actively shaped representations of Indonesian Muslims as orderly, disciplined, and compliant citizens. As Anderson (2006) observes, *"imagined communities"* are produced through shared institutions and rituals that bind individuals to national projects. In this context, the Hajj was transformed into a state-managed national ritual, governed by the logics of development, stability, and authoritarian modernization.

The New Order monopoly over Hajj services thus offers a concrete illustration of how religious bureaucracy functioned as a tool of social control and political legitimation. It demonstrates that religious practice under authoritarian regimes cannot be understood solely in theological terms. Instead, it must be analyzed as a site where power operates through regulation, exclusion, and moral discourse. The Hajj, in the New Order period, became a ritual not only of faith, but of governance, one in which the state asserted its authority to define the conditions under which religious obligation could be fulfilled.

Hajj Bureaucracy and Moral Pedagogy in the 1980s

> *"The Hajj is not merely a spiritual ritual. It contributes to the formation of the Indonesian person as a whole, advanced, faithful, and devout. Hajj officers are public servants who serve with dedication, not for personal gain. The provision of Hajj services is itself a form of worship, and sincerity in carrying it out will be rewarded spiritually."*
>
> — Alamsyah Ratu Perwiranegara, Minister of Religious Affairs, closing address at the National Conference on Hajj Affairs, 1982[33]

Alamsyah Ratu Perwiranegara's remarks at the conclusion of the 1982 National Conference on Hajj Affairs offer a revealing vignette through which to understand the reconfiguration of

[33] Rapat Kerja Urusan Haji Seluruh Indonesia. 1982. Himpunan Risalah Rapat Kerja Urusan Haji Seluruh Indonesia Ke-XIV Di Cisarua, Bogor, 27 S/D 30 Januari 1982. Jakarta: Departemen Agama, RI, Direktorat Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam dan Urusan Haji.; See also, Rapat Kerja Urusan Haji Seluruh Indonesia. 1983. Himpunan Risalah Rapat Kerja Urusan Haji Seluruh Indonesia Ke XV, Di Cisarua, Bogor, 26 S/D 28 Januari 1983. Jakarta: Departemen Agama RI, Direktorat Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam dan Urusan Haji.

Hajj governance in Indonesia in the early 1980s. His statement reframed the Hajj not only as a religious obligation, but as a formative process in the production of a national religious subject, faithful, disciplined, and development-oriented. At the same time, it articulated a moral vision of bureaucracy in which administrative labor itself was sacralized as a form of devotion. In this formulation, Hajj governance became a site where spiritual ethics, developmental ideology, and bureaucratic rationality converged.

This discursive framing corresponded with a renewed institutional consolidation of Hajj administration under the New Order state. In the early 1980s, the Indonesian government reaffirmed its commitment to managing the Hajj through centralized and coordinated bureaucratic mechanisms. This commitment was formalized through Presidential Decree No. 53 of 1981, commonly referred to as Peraturan Dasar Haji dan Umrah (PDHS) 1981, which reinforced the institutional role of the state in ensuring that the pilgrimage was conducted in an orderly, secure, and equitable manner.

PDHS 1981 established three foundational principles. First, the organization of the Hajj was explicitly defined as a national task (*tugas nasional*), elevating pilgrimage administration from a sectoral religious concern to a matter of state responsibility. Second, the operational execution of Hajj services was placed under the coordination and authority of the Minister of Religious Affairs. Third, the determination of Hajj costs (*Ongkos Naik Haji* / ONH) was centralized under presidential authority, based on recommendations from the Minister of Religious Affairs and input from the Ministry of Finance. Collectively, these principles articulated the state's role as the manager of the collective religious life of the Muslim population, responsible for logistics, financing, and inter-institutional coordination in facilitating a complex transnational ritual.

Importantly, this reassertion of state authority was framed not as domination, but as responsibility. Official discourse emphasized protection, service, and fairness, portraying bureaucratic intervention as a necessary response to the risks inherent in mass pilgrimage—health hazards, financial exploitation, transportation failures, and diplomatic complexity. In this sense, the state represented itself as a guardian of pilgrims' welfare, aligning administrative control with public service ethics (Latief, 2012).

The consolidation of inter-sectoral coordination was further strengthened through Minister of Religious Affairs Decree No. 2 of 1982, which expanded institutional

involvement in Hajj administration to include multiple ministries: Home Affairs, Health, Transportation, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Finance, Trade and Cooperatives, Defense and Security, and Information. At the regional level, the Ministry of Religious Affairs cooperated with governors and district heads as provincial and regency-level Hajj organizers. This arrangement reflects a bureaucratic architecture in which pilgrimage governance was distributed across multiple levels of the state while remaining centrally coordinated.

In this context, the state did not appear here as a monolithic actor, but rather as a network of interacting institutions mobilized to manage religious mobility. The Hajj was conceptualized as a cross-sectoral task requiring coordination between central and local authorities, between technical and spiritual domains, and between logistical planning and public communication. Bureaucratic complexity thus emerged not as dysfunction, but as an institutional response to the scale and risk of the pilgrimage.

The determination of ONH through cross-ministerial mechanisms further illustrates this logic. By incorporating financial oversight from the Ministry of Finance, the state sought to balance fiscal sustainability with social accessibility. This policy demonstrates an attempt to calibrate economic rationality with moral obligation, ensuring that pilgrimage costs remained within reach for pilgrims from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, while preserving budgetary discipline.

The reassertion of state authority in Hajj governance during the early 1980s therefore represented more than administrative consolidation. It reflected an effort to redefine the relationship between religion and development under the New Order. Through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the government began to explicitly articulate the Hajj as part of national development discourse, aligning religious practice with the vision of "*pembangunan manusia Indonesia seutuhnya,"* the holistic development of Indonesian citizens who were religious, disciplined, and economically productive.

Alamsyah Ratu Perwiranegara's 1982 speech encapsulated this vision. By portraying Hajj officers as ethical public servants and Hajj services as acts of worship, the state sought to construct a religious bureaucracy endowed with moral legitimacy. In doing so, it did not merely regulate pilgrimage. It actively shaped religious subjectivities, producing pilgrims and bureaucrats alike as participants in a spiritually inflected development project.

In this configuration, the state emerged simultaneously as facilitator of worship, manager of risk, and mediator between sacred space and administrative order. The early-1980s Hajj bureaucracy thus exemplifies how the New Order state sought to govern religion not only through control and regulation, but through moral pedagogy and developmental symbolism. The Hajj became a ritual through which bureaucratic authority was normalized, spiritual meaning was nationalized, and public service was sacralized (Darmadi, 2004).

Transformations in Hajj Governance in the Early 1990s

In 1991, President Soeharto undertook the Hajj together with his family and a number of senior cabinet ministers. The decision was widely publicized and warmly welcomed by Islamic organizations across Indonesia. In religious and public discourse, the honorific *"Haji Muhammad Soeharto"* began to circulate informally, signifying a new symbolic register through which presidential authority was articulated. Soeharto's pilgrimage functioned not merely as an act of personal devotion, but as a ritualized political gesture, through which the New Order state re-signaled its moral alignment with Islam at a critical historical juncture.

This gesture did not occur in isolation. It followed closely on the heels of the Mina Tunnel tragedy of 1990, one of the deadliest disasters in the history of the Hajj, in which more than 600 Indonesian pilgrims lost their lives in the Mu'aisim tunnel near Mina, Saudi Arabia. The tragedy marked a profound rupture in Indonesia's collective experience of the pilgrimage. In response, the government officially recognized the victims as *syuhada Mina,* martyrs who died in the course of fulfilling a sacred obligation. This designation elevated their deaths from administrative casualties to morally and spiritually meaningful sacrifice.

The state's response went beyond symbolic acknowledgment. As a concrete institutional reaction, the government established Hajj hospitals in Medan, Ujung Pandang (Makassar), Surabaya, and Jakarta. In practical terms, these hospitals were intended to improve health preparedness for future pilgrims. Yet anthropologically, they functioned as sites of collective memory, materializing the state's commitment to safeguarding pilgrimage while memorializing loss. These institutions operated simultaneously as medical facilities and as mnemonic structures that embedded the tragedy into the national narrative of the Hajj.

Within this context of mourning, responsibility, and moral recalibration, Soeharto's decision to perform the Hajj in 1991 acquired heightened significance. His presence in Mecca, publicly documented and symbolically staged, can be read as an act of empathetic alignment with the Muslim community. It was also a gesture of reassurance, signaling that the highest authority of the state shared in the risks, obligations, and spiritual aspirations of ordinary pilgrims. Photographs of President Soeharto conversing with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia during the pilgrimage circulated widely, reinforcing Indonesia's position as a major Muslim nation with diplomatic standing in the Islamic world.

Soeharto's Hajj can be understood as a performative correction to earlier modes of New Order religious governance that emphasized control, monopoly, and bureaucratic discipline. Without dismantling the centralized structure of Hajj administration, the regime sought to soften its image by foregrounding empathy, piety, and moral leadership. The president's pilgrimage functioned as a ritual bridge between the bureaucratic state and the religious sensibilities of the population, particularly at a moment when the legitimacy of state-managed pilgrimage had been shaken by tragedy.

At the same time, this episode illustrates how symbolic action and bureaucratic reform operated in tandem. The early 1990s marked a phase in which Hajj governance was increasingly adjusted to changing social and economic dynamics within Indonesian Muslim society. Rising levels of education, expanding middle-class participation in the Hajj, and growing public scrutiny of state performance placed new pressures on the bureaucratic apparatus. The state's response combined institutional strengthening with gestures of moral proximity.

Anthropologically, this period reveals that Hajj governance under the New Order was not static. Rather, it was adaptive, capable of reworking its legitimacy through symbolic politics while maintaining administrative control. The Mina tragedy compelled the state to respond not only with technical reform, but with expressions of shared grief and responsibility. Soeharto's pilgrimage the following year crystallized this shift, allowing the state to reaffirm its role as both regulator and participant in the sacred journey.

In this sense, the early 1990s represented a moment of re-moralization of bureaucracy, in which the management of the Hajj was framed not only as a matter of efficiency and order, but also as an ethical and emotional duty. The transformation of Hajj governance during this

period thus reflects a broader reorientation of New Order religious politics, one that sought to stabilize authority through symbolic inclusion, institutional responsiveness, and the careful cultivation of Islamic legitimacy.

4.3. Quota System and Bureaucratic Expansion

The Surge in Pilgrims and Technological Innovation

The mid-1990s marked a critical phase in the history of Indonesian Hajj bureaucracy, characterized by a sharp increase in the number of aspiring pilgrims. This surge reflected deeper social transformations, in which the Hajj increasingly became part of both religious aspiration and the expanding mobility of a growing Muslim middle class. The state, acting through the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), responded to this development with a set of innovations aimed at strengthening bureaucratic capacity and administrative control.

In 1995, approximately 231,000 Indonesians registered to perform the Hajj, exceeding the official quota of 195,000 pilgrims allocated by the Government of Saudi Arabia. This quota was based on an agreement reached at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Conference in Amman in 1987, which determined that each country could send only 0.1 percent of its Muslim population per year. At this juncture, the Indonesian state faced the challenge of managing the religious aspirations of its Muslim citizens within the constraints of an increasingly rigid international quota regime, while simultaneously maintaining principles of fairness, order, and administrative legitimacy. As a result, many prospective pilgrims were compelled to postpone their departure to subsequent years, exposing the limitations of existing administrative mechanisms and creating pressure for more sophisticated solutions.

In response to these challenges, MORA developed the Sistem Komputerisasi Haji Terpadu (SISKOHAT), an integrated digital system designed to manage pilgrim data in a centralized and real-time manner (Departemen Agama, 2000). The system was developed with technical support from the Information Systems Bureau of PT Garuda Indonesia and banking technology units, signaling a new phase of collaboration between religious bureaucracy, state-owned enterprises, and financial institutions.

SISKOHAT represents a concrete example of how the state adopted digital infrastructure to enhance the capacity of religious bureaucracy, accelerate administrative processes, and minimize human error. Through SISKOHAT, the government was able to carry out more accurate verification of pilgrim data, manage quotas with greater precision, and monitor registration procedures more transparently. The system also strengthened coordination between central and regional offices, as well as between government agencies and private partners involved in the organization of the pilgrimage.

In this configuration, the state did not merely function as a regulator, but increasingly assumed the role of an innovator, deploying information technology to improve the quality of public religious services. The development of SISKOHAT illustrates how Hajj administration evolved into a domain where spiritual aspiration, bureaucratic rationality, and technological governance converged. The mid-1990s thus reveal a form of adaptive governance in which state authority was reproduced not only through regulation, but through technical expertise and system integration.

The surge in Hajj registrants and the introduction of SISKOHAT demonstrate that Indonesian Hajj bureaucracy during this period was neither stagnant nor purely coercive. Rather, it was responsive and progressive, adjusting to demographic pressure and rising public expectations. In anthropological terms, the state appeared as a facilitator of religious mobility, one that managed quotas and logistics while also responding to the aspirations of its citizens through technological innovation and service-oriented discourse. The Hajj, in this context, became a space in which spirituality, digital technology, and public policy intersected within the broader framework of national development and administrative reform.

Within the broader framework of Indonesian Hajj bureaucracy, the management of funds contributed by pilgrims constitutes a crucial domain through which state responsibility, accountability, and moral legitimacy are articulated. The Ongkos Naik Haji (ONH) fund, which developed gradually from the 1970s onward, became a central symbol of the government's effort to reorganize Hajj financial management in a more transparent and systematic manner (Dhofier, 1984).

The ONH fund originated in the Presidential Social and Spiritual Fund (Dana Sosial Kerohanian Presiden) established by President Soeharto in 1970. This fund was accumulated from pilgrim contributions and surpluses generated through Hajj services. Under the

leadership of Minister of Religious Affairs Tarmizi Taher, the fund was institutionalized as part of broader reforms aimed at improving financial accountability and efficiency in Hajj administration. These reforms illustrate how the state sought to manage religious resources in an orderly fashion, oriented toward service provision and the development of the Muslim community.

The amount of pilgrim contribution to the ONH fund was adjusted periodically, and between 1989 and 1998 it was set at Rp 10,000 per pilgrim. Additional sources of funding included bank interest generated from ONH deposits and insurance reimbursements for pilgrims during the Gulf War (1991–1993). Through these mechanisms, religious obligation became linked to long-term financial planning and institutional accumulation.

In 1996, the government established the Badan Pengelola Dana Ongkos Naik Haji Indonesia (BP-DONHI) as a formal body responsible for managing ONH funds. The creation of this institution marked a significant step toward separating administrative execution from financial oversight, thereby strengthening professional governance of pilgrim funds. BP-DONHI funds were utilized to support Muslim community development and religious organizations, including the construction of Hajj hospitals and Hajj dormitories (asrama haji) in various embarkation cities.

The formation of BP-DONHI reflects the state's commitment to professionalizing the management of religious resources while maintaining claims of moral stewardship. Although critics from civil society and non-governmental organizations accused the state of "doing business" through Hajj services or of channeling funds toward organizations close to political power, the government consistently asserted that ONH funds originated from the ummah and were returned for the benefit of the ummah.

This position was reinforced by public gestures aimed at demonstrating transparency. In 1992, Minister Munawir Sjadzali transferred more than Rp 1 billion to Bank Muamalat Indonesia as a contribution from pilgrims, while explicitly rejecting the idea of making such contributions mandatory in the future. In official publications, Minister Tarmizi Taher emphasized that the construction of Jakarta Hajj Hospital was financed through multiple sources, including President Soeharto, the Saudi Arabian government, Muslim communities, and local governments. These statements were intended to counter perceptions that ONH funds were being used unilaterally or without accountability.

Criticism from NGOs and segments of the public who viewed Hajj services as a form of state commercialization constituted part of a broader and healthy public debate. Anthropologically, such critiques reveal an ongoing negotiation of meaning between public service, religious obligation, and the management of collective religious resources. The ONH fund thus became not merely a fiscal instrument, but a symbolic arena in which questions of trust, legitimacy, and moral governance were continually contested.

In sum, the ONH fund represents a critical component of Indonesia's effort to construct a sustainable and accountable system of Hajj finance. This fund is not simply a budgetary mechanism, but a manifestation of the state's collective responsibility toward its Muslim citizens. Through ONH management, the state positioned itself simultaneously as manager, facilitator, and protector of pilgrim interests, while remaining responsive to public criticism and gradually reforming its institutional practices.

Hajj Bureaucracy in the Reformasi Era

Hajj bureaucracy in post–New Order Indonesia has undergone a profound transformation that reflects shifting relations between the state, Muslim citizens, and the market. The Reformasi period, inaugurated after 1998, opened new political and institutional spaces characterized by decentralization, democratization, and greater public transparency. Within this context, the governance of the Hajj was reconfigured not only at the level of administrative procedure, but also in terms of how the state imagined Muslim citizens, religious authority, and national belonging.

The decentralization of Hajj bureaucracy after 1998 formed part of a broader restructuring of public governance in Indonesia. Regional governments became increasingly involved in the registration and preparation of pilgrims, while private travel agencies and Islamic organizations gained greater room to operate in the technical organization of Hajj services. This process produced a fragmentation of authority in which the state no longer appeared as a singular, monopolistic actor, but rather as one among multiple participants in a pluralized governance landscape.

As Ichwan (2008) notes, *"the complexity of Hajj services is driven more by political and economic interests than by religious considerations alone"* (p. 5). From the perspective of governmentality (Foucault, 2007), Reformasi did not signal the withdrawal of the state from religious governance. Instead, it marked a shift from direct control toward a model of facilitation, regulation, and oversight, in which market actors and civil society were allowed to occupy operational space while remaining subject to state supervision (Foucault, 1991).

Digitalization played a central role in this transformation. The continued use and expansion of SISKOHAT (Sistem Komputerisasi Haji Terpadu) enabled the state to manage pilgrim data with far greater efficiency, transparency, and temporal precision. At the same time, however, digital infrastructure also expanded the state's capacity to monitor individuals, producing new forms of religious surveillance. Pilgrim data became a form of *"digital body,"* a dataset that could be classified, sorted, and governed through algorithmic systems. In the context of the Hajj, digitalization thus functioned as a biopolitical technology, structuring access, mobility, and conduct through data.

The Reformasi era also accelerated the commodification of the Hajj. The expansion of private travel agencies gave rise to differentiated pilgrimage packages, including *Hajj Plus*, VIP services, and variations in accommodation quality. These developments fragmented what had previously been imagined as a relatively unified ritual experience. Access to comfort, speed, and services increasingly reflected economic capacity, producing stratified pilgrimage experiences among Indonesian Muslims. This commodification reveals the social life of religious goods. As Appadurai (1986) observed, *"commodities, like persons, have social lives."* In this sense, the Hajj emerged as a religious commodity that indexed class position, economic capital, and social distinction within Indonesian Muslim society.

At the same time, Reformasi opened new spaces for the articulation of religious identity beyond direct state mediation. The proliferation of social media, online communities, and personalized narratives of pilgrimage experience enabled pilgrims to produce and circulate religious meanings independently. These digital and narrative practices gave rise to new forms of *imagined community* that were no longer fully structured by bureaucratic discourse. Following Anderson's formulation, *"communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined"* (Anderson, 2006). Indonesian Muslims increasingly imagined themselves as participants in a global religious

community (*ummah*), even as they remained embedded within national regulatory frameworks.

The Reformasi period reveals that Hajj governance in Indonesia did not move from control to freedom, but rather from centralized monopoly to distributed and multi-layered governance. While authority became more fragmented, surveillance more technologically mediated, and ritual more commodified, the state retained a crucial role in structuring access, determining legitimacy, and regulating mobility. The Hajj thus remained a site where religious aspiration, bureaucratic rationality, market logic, and national imagination intersected.

In this sense, contemporary Hajj bureaucracy must be understood not as a departure from earlier regimes of governance, but as their transformation. If the colonial state sought to control pilgrimage through suspicion, and the New Order through monopoly and moral pedagogy, the Reformasi state governs through regulation, data, markets, and negotiated authority. The governance of the Hajj therefore continues to function as a key arena in which the Indonesian state produces religious subjects, manages collective resources, and negotiates its legitimacy in relation to Islam.

Over time, the organization of the Hajj and Umrah in Indonesia has evolved into a form of religious travel with significant economic value, involving complex arrangements between the state and the private sector (Ichwan, 2008). Hajj bureaucracy is not merely an administrative system designed to facilitate pilgrimage. Rather, it constitutes a dynamic arena in which spiritual values, political interests, and economic logics intersect, conflict, and are continuously negotiated (Darmadi, 2013).



Table 4.3 Asia's Hajj Quota

Seasia Stats reports that for the 1445H/2024M Hajj season, Indonesia received the largest allocation in Asia with 241,600 quotas. Within Southeast Asia, Malaysia was allocated 31,600 quotas, while Thailand received 13,000 quotas (Seastat, 15 June, 2024).

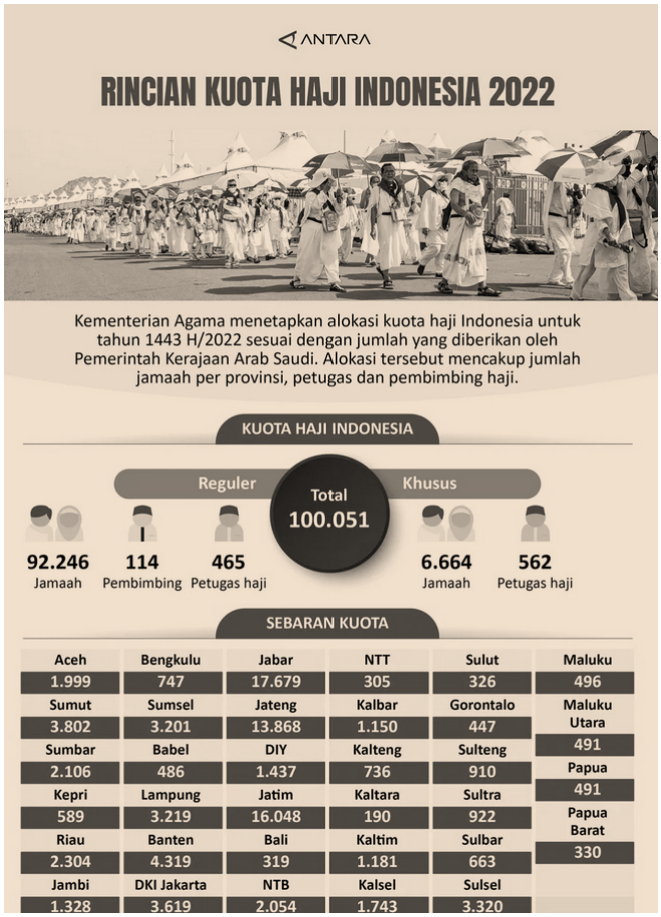


Table 4.4 Quota System and Bureaucratic Expansion

Indonesian Hajj quota allocation for 1443 AH/2022 in accordance with the amount allocated by the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This allocation includes the number of pilgrims per province, Hajj officials, and guides. Source: ANTARA, 2022.

Since the introduction of the state monopoly over Hajj services in 1969, the Indonesian government has assumed a dual role as both regulator and operator. This role has been justified through a discourse of public service, collective responsibility, and protection of pilgrims, yet it has simultaneously generated structural challenges for bureaucratic reform. The involvement of private travel agencies through *Hajj Plus* schemes since the 1980s, although institutionally significant, has remained firmly embedded within a state-coordinated framework rather than constituting genuine liberalization. In this configuration, the state's position as both rule-maker and service provider has produced persistent tensions between administrative control and market flexibility, shaping the limits and outcomes of reform initiatives.

Efforts to reform Hajj and Umrah services are therefore frequently constrained by the complex entanglement of three forces: pilgrims' moral commitment and religious sincerity, the state's political and administrative interests, and the economic orientation of private service providers. Pilgrims approach the Hajj with expectations rooted in devotion and spiritual fulfillment, while the state and its private partners must simultaneously address logistical capacity, fiscal sustainability, and institutional stability. These competing imperatives render reform a deeply contested process rather than a purely technical undertaking.

From the standpoint of political anthropology, bureaucratic reform in Hajj governance cannot be reduced to questions of efficiency or managerial competence alone. It necessarily engages entrenched structures of interest, authority, and legitimacy that have accumulated across successive historical periods. As a result, proposed reforms often encounter resistance or partial implementation, not because of administrative incapacity alone, but because they touch upon foundational relationships between religion, state power, and economic circulation.

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that Hajj bureaucracy in Indonesia must be understood as a dynamic and historically layered field, in which the state continually attempts to balance its religious responsibilities with its administrative obligations. Through a sympathetic anthropological lens, the state appears not merely as a technical manager of pilgrimage, but as an actor confronted with enduring moral and structural dilemmas in governing one of the most sacred practices in Islam. Despite its limitations and contradictions, the reform of Hajj bureaucracy remains part of a long and ongoing process toward more equitable, transparent, and meaningful public service.

Naik Haji and the Bureaucratization of Pilgrimage

The history of Islam in Indonesia began with the formation of Muslim communities and, in certain regions, Islamic polities as early as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Some scholars suggest that until that period, Muslim communities in the Indonesian archipelago consisted largely of foreigners from Arabia, Persia, Gujarat, and Bengal. Prior to the spread of Islam, local populations practiced Buddhism, Hinduism, and various forms of animism and

dynamism, traditions that had become deeply embedded in social life. It is therefore not surprising that Islamic practice in Indonesia, particularly in Java, developed through a process of accommodation and synthesis, producing religious forms shaped as much by local cultural traditions as by scriptural norms.

The process of Islamization in the archipelago has often been described as gradual and largely peaceful, or, as some historians have termed it, *penetration pacifique*. This process encouraged tolerance and compromise in the encounter between Islamic teachings and existing social and cultural value systems. Indonesia's distance from the historical heartlands of Islam further contributed to this dynamic. Geographically remote from Arabia, Indonesian Muslim communities were, until relatively recently, among the least Arabized in the Muslim world. This distance gave rise to distinct religious expressions and social configurations of Islam, as famously described by Clifford Geertz in his account of the *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi* streams of Javanese social life (Geertz, 1960; 1976).

Despite this diversity, certain Islamic practices acquired particular symbolic intensity across regions and social groups. Rituals such as Islamic marriage, circumcision (*khitanan*), and the fasting month of Ramadan have long been central to Muslim social life in Indonesia. Yet none of these practices carries the same combination of symbolic weight, moral authority, and social consequence as the Hajj. Although only one of the five pillars of Islam, the Hajj occupies a distinctive place in Indonesian Muslim society as a marker of distinction, transformation, and social recognition.

Those who perform the pilgrimage are publicly acknowledged as *Pak Haji* or *Bu Haji*, titles that confer respect and mark a shift in social standing. The honorific signifies not only religious accomplishment but also credibility, trustworthiness, and moral authority. In many communities, returning pilgrims assume roles as religious figures, community leaders, or moral exemplars. Historical episodes underline this significance, several leaders of the Banten revolt of 1888 had recently returned from Mecca, and prominent figures such as K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari (Kyai Haji Hasjim Asj'ari) of Tebuireng and K.H. Zainal Mustafa of Tasikmalaya, both recognized as national heroes, were themselves hajis whose authority was inseparable from their pilgrimage experience.

The popular Indonesian expression *naik haji* captures this symbolic elevation. Literally meaning "to go up to the Hajj," the phrase conveys the sense that the pilgrim

ascends to a higher moral and spiritual standing upon completing the obligation. At the same time, the term *naik* also means "to increase," a double meaning that has become the subject of popular humor in reference to the rising cost of pilgrimage, known as *Ongkos Naik Haji* (ONH). In Javanese and Sundanese, similar expressions such as *munggah haji* convey the same connotation of ascent. Other commonly used terms—*ziyarah haji*, *pergi haji*, or *berangkat ke tanah suci*—likewise emphasize movement toward a sacred center that lies outside the national territory.

The social significance of the Hajj is concretely enacted through a series of communal practices surrounding departure and return. In Java and many other regions, prospective pilgrims typically organize a *selamatan* before departure, inviting neighbors, relatives, and friends to mark the occasion. Often described today using the Arabic term *walimatus-safar*, this gathering serves not only as a prayer ritual but also as a public declaration of status and transition. Religious sermons are delivered, food is shared, and gifts are distributed. As the pilgrim leaves the house for embarkation, the call to prayer (*adzan*) is recited, accompanied by emotional farewells that underscore the physical risk and spiritual gravity historically associated with the journey.

The return from Mecca is marked by similar ceremonial intensity. Pilgrims commonly host another gathering and distribute gifts brought from the holy cities, *Zamzam*[34] water, dates, prayer rugs, rosaries, calligraphy, clothing, perfumes, and medicines. These objects circulate as material signs of proximity to sacred space, reinforcing the pilgrim's transformed status. Such practices are widely expected by the surrounding community. The haji or hajjah

[34] The Zamzam Well (Arabic: بئر زمزم, romanized: Biʾru Zamzam) is a sacred well located within the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, approximately 20 m east of the Kaaba, Islam's holiest site. In Islamic tradition, Zamzam is believed to be a miraculously provided source of water that emerged when Hajar was left in the desert with her son Ismaʿil (Ishmael) by Ibrahim (Abraham), symbolizing divine mercy and providence (Peters, 1994; Denny, 2010). Zamzam water continues to hold deep ritual and devotional significance for pilgrims performing Hajj and ʿUmrah (Hawting, 2009; Peters, 1994). See also, al-Qurashī, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, 2008. *Makkah al-mukarramah: Tārīkhuhā wa āthāruhā*. Makkah: Dār Makkah; al-Sibāʿī, Aḥmad, 1984. *Tārīkh Makkah: Dirāsāt fī al-siyāsah wa al-ʿilm wa al-ijtimāʿ wa al-ʿumrān*. Makkah: Maktabat al-Malik Fahd.

assumes the role of patron, redistributing symbolic and material capital accumulated through the journey in exchange for recognition and moral authority.

Sociologically, this exchange has far-reaching implications. The Hajj title positions its holder not only as a religious patron but often as a social and economic one as well. The obligations and privileges associated with the title reshape networks of authority, trust, and influence within the community. In many cases, the Hajj becomes a resource through which individuals consolidate social standing and, at times, political influence. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that the pilgrimage has historically functioned as a vehicle for social mobility and leadership.

It is also common for returning pilgrims to mark their transformation through changes in personal identity, including the adoption of new, explicitly Islamic names. This practice, particularly among those whose earlier names lacked clear Islamic connotations, reflects the understanding of the Hajj as a threshold between past and future selves. The pilgrimage is experienced not simply as a journey to Mecca, but as a passage into a morally redefined life.

Seen in this light, the Hajj in Indonesia has never been a purely individual act of worship. It is a deeply social institution that produces status, authority, and recognition, while linking local communities to transnational Islamic centers. Precisely because of this social power, the Hajj also became an object of sustained attention by colonial and post-colonial states. The symbolic elevation conferred by the pilgrimage, the authority of returned hajis, and the transregional connections forged in Mecca help explain why the movement of pilgrims was treated as a matter of governance rather than devotion alone. The bureaucratization of the Hajj, examined throughout this chapter, must therefore be understood against this longer history in which pilgrimage functioned as a source of moral legitimacy, social power, and political consequence.

4.4. A Pilgrim’s Tale: Navigating the Bureaucracy

For many Indonesian Muslims, Mecca is the most sacred place on earth and an absolute destination in life. Pilgrims from across the archipelago often recount vivid stories of the city upon their return, describing the Hajj as an extraordinary, once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Some speak of the profound emotional intensity of simply *being there*; others express the wish to die in Mecca itself. In everyday language and popular symbolism, Mecca is associated with solemn piety and deep moral authority. The city figures prominently in cultural expressions, from Aceh's designation as the *"Verandah of Mecca"* to commercial branding such as shops named *Makkah Optical* in Banda Aceh. These references point to the depth with which Mecca, and the Hajj more broadly, is woven into everyday moral imagination.

At the same time, the traditions and practices surrounding the Hajj in Indonesia are complex and socially differentiated. The pilgrimage carries meanings that extend beyond ritual obligation. Visiting sacred places (*ziarah*), for instance, is already a well-established practice in many Muslim communities, particularly in Java. In this context, the Hajj is often described as *ziarah haji* or *ibadah haji*, terms that situate it within a broader repertoire of sacred travel. Performing the Hajj thus carries a symbolic weight that far exceeds the ritual itself (Darmadi, 2018a)..

To illustrate how these meanings intersect with bureaucratic regulation, I turn to the experience of a woman I interviewed during my research. Ibu Rahimah was a pilgrim from Jakarta during the 2007–2008 Hajj season. In her early forties, she was a mother of three and worked six days a week as a teacher at a public school. She lived with her family in a large house in South Jakarta. Her husband worked for a private company in the city center and earned enough to support the family comfortably. In early 2006, after receiving a sizable inheritance from her family, Ibu Rahimah told her husband that she wished to go on Hajj, ideally together with him.

This was not the first time she had raised the idea. In the preceding years, she had repeatedly spoken of dreams in which she met her deceased mother, experiences she interpreted as signs of a divine calling (*panggilan haji*). Her husband, however, hesitated. Although socially respected and active, he did not consider himself sufficiently prepared for the moral weight of the *Haji* title. Each time the issue arose, he deferred his consent, asking his wife first to secure permission from her school.

Before her mother's death, Ibu Rahimah and her siblings had received a message that any inheritance they obtained should first be used to perform the Hajj. When the family later agreed to sell inherited property in central Jakarta, relatives and religious advisers reminded

her that this might finally be the right moment. Similar encouragement came from her *majlis taklim*, where an *ustadzah* often quoted the saying that there was no better reward for a successful pilgrim (*haji mabrur*) than paradise. Ibu Rahimah felt that the call to go on Hajj was close, even if the pathway remained uncertain.

When she approached the local office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), she was initially told that she could apply, begin the paperwork, and make an initial deposit of IDR 20 million into a Hajj savings account at an appointed bank. Soon after, however, she learned that South Jakarta's Hajj quota was already full. Roughly four thousand prospective pilgrims were ahead of her. She was placed on the *daftar tunggu* (waiting list) and informed that she would need to wait approximately three years before traveling through the regular channel. Although *Hajj Plus* packages were available for that season, at around USD 6,500, they were beyond her reach.

At this point, Ibu Rahimah began to explore alternatives. In contrast to the piety movements described by Saba Mahmood (2005) in Egypt, where informal religious networks often operate outside or against the state, many *majlis taklim* in Jakarta functioned as extensions of state-regulated Hajj organization. These groups often operated through officially recognized Hajj guidance groups (*Kelompok Bimbingan Ibadah Haji*, KBIH). Membership came with additional costs, sometimes exceeding IDR one million, and promised access to guidance, coordination, and occasionally strategic assistance. Over time, competition among KBIHs intensified. The number of pilgrims required to obtain a free guiding seat (*FOC*) increased from thirty to forty-five. Public figures, e.g., preachers, artists, and politicians, were increasingly enlisted to attract registrants.

Through her religious network, Ibu Rahimah was introduced to a young *ustadz*, a graduate of the Islamic University of Medina. Originating from South Sulawesi, he was part of overlapping ethnic and educational networks that connected Saudi-trained scholars, Jakarta-based foundations, and Hajj travel agencies. Using these connections, he assisted pilgrims who were unwilling to accept the waiting list. Soon after returning from Saudi Arabia, he had been recruited by a travel agency offering *Umrah* and *Hajj Plus* packages, which combined ritual performance with hotel stays, special meals, and guided tours.

Through him, Ibu Rahimah was brought to an Islamic foundation (*yayasan*) in Bekasi, West Java, some forty kilometers from her home. Officially, Hajj regulations required

pilgrims to register in accordance with their residential address. In practice, certain foundations were known for accepting applicants from other districts or provinces. Using ethnic ties, educational affiliations, and personal connections, they assembled large groups of candidates who wished to bypass the waiting list. This involved various forms of accommodation: transferring registration to another district, altering identity documents, paying informal fees to local officials, and, in earlier years, even compensating bank staff responsible for entering data.

The introduction of SISKOHAT, the Integrated and Computerized Hajj Management System, was intended to eliminate such practices by centralizing registration and enforcing first-come, first-served rules. Yet, as Ibu Rahimah's story suggests, new technologies did not eliminate brokerage. Instead, they reshaped it. As Hooker (2008) observes, the Hajj constitutes a complex enterprise in which both the state and individuals pursue distinct interests. In this case, demand was actively mediated by layers of intermediaries who knew how to work within, around, and occasionally against official procedures.

Through a series of adjustments, Ibu Rahimah eventually departed for Mecca. She was registered as a *calon jamaah haji* under a residential district other than her own. Her experience was far better than that of many others who paid more and never reached Mecca at all, or those who traveled on *paspor hijau*, entering Saudi Arabia on non-Hajj visas. It was also far removed from the experience of *jamaah haji sandal jepit*, a pejorative term for pilgrims who overstayed their *Umrah* visas until the Hajj season began.

Ibu Rahimah's journey illustrates how contemporary Hajj bureaucracy produces not only order and regulation, but also inequality, brokerage, and moral tension. The quota system, far from being a neutral administrative mechanism, shapes religious aspiration, social networks, and everyday strategies of negotiation. In this sense, the Hajj emerges not simply as a ritual obligation, but as a bureaucratically mediated passage in which faith, documents, money, and access are tightly entwined.

Overall, the experience of Ibu Rahimah shows that the state's presence in the Hajj is not limited to visible institutions such as ministries, quotas, or digital systems. State power appears instead through a dispersed set of procedures, e.g., waiting lists, registration categories, banking requirements, residential eligibility, and data entry, that quietly structure what is possible and what is not. These mechanisms do not operate as blunt prohibitions;

rather, they shape the timing, cost, and moral framing of pilgrimage. In this sense, the state governs not only through rules, but through the management of anticipation, delay, and uncertainty. The waiting list (*daftar tunggu*), far from being a neutral administrative tool, becomes a lived condition that organizes religious aspiration over years, sometimes decades.

What emerges from this vignette is not a picture of bureaucratic failure, but of bureaucratic saturation. The introduction of SISKOHAT did not eliminate informal mediation; it changed its form. Access to pilgrimage increasingly depends on familiarity with procedures, institutional pathways, and intermediaries who understand how to navigate them. This pattern reflects what James Scott has described as the state's effort to render complex social practices legible, even as those practices generate new forms of opacity and negotiation at their margins (Scott 1998). The Hajj, in this respect, is neither fully controlled nor fully autonomous. It is governed through a system that produces order while simultaneously creating spaces in which brokers, religious authorities, and pilgrims adapt to bureaucratic constraint.

Seen within the broader argument of this chapter, Ibu Rahimah's journey illustrates how Hajj bureaucracy functions as a field in which religious devotion, administrative rationality, and unequal access intersect. The state does not simply facilitate a ritual; it actively shapes the conditions under which pilgrimage becomes imaginable, attainable, or deferred. As M. B. Hooker has argued, Hajj administration in Indonesia exemplifies a form of religious governance in which Islamic obligation is enacted through bureaucratic form rather than doctrinal debate (Hooker 2008). In this sense, the Hajj emerges as a bureaucratically mediated passage, one in which faith moves not only through sacred space, but through offices, databases, and documents that define who may go, when, and at what cost.

4.5.Gendered Pilgrimage and the State

Each year, the movement of Indonesian pilgrims to Mecca unfolds not merely as a spiritual journey but as a vast bureaucratic project shaped by gendered assumptions, bodily needs, and state imaginaries. For women, the pilgrimage (haji) is experienced at the intersection of devotion, endurance, and institutional governance. As the proportion of female pilgrims steadily rises, reaching 55.5 percent in 2023, surpassing male pilgrims for the first time in

Indonesian hajj history, the question of gender can no longer be treated as peripheral to hajj administration. Instead, it becomes central to how the Indonesian state conceptualizes care, order, and religious citizenship.

This section offers an ethnographic narrative of gender in Indonesian hajj bureaucracy, situating women's embodied experiences alongside the policies and administrative logics that seek to manage them. Drawing on policy data, institutional reforms, and phenomenological descriptions of pilgrimage spaces, the chapter explores how gender emerges not only as a demographic category but as a lived condition, negotiated through tents in Mina, queues for sanitation facilities, medical checkpoints, and encounters with female hajj officers (*petugas haji perempuan*). In doing so, it shows how the state responds, sometimes proactively, sometimes inadequately, to the feminization of pilgrimage.

For many Indonesian women, the hajj is the most physically demanding journey of their lives. The climate of the Hijaz, the density of crowds, and the prolonged periods of standing, walking, and waiting place intense demands on the body. Yet these bodily experiences are not gender-neutral. Women pilgrims repeatedly confront structural vulnerabilities shaped by sanitation access, privacy needs, reproductive health concerns, and security.

In ritual sites such as Arafah, Muzdalifah, and Mina, the gendered nature of space becomes most palpable. Overcrowded tents, insufficiently segregated sleeping areas, and limited access to clean, enclosed sanitation facilities disproportionately affect women, especially elderly pilgrims and those with chronic illnesses.

Menstruation adds another layer of complexity, both physically and theologically. Although Islamic jurisprudence provides flexibility, women frequently describe anxiety and confusion regarding ritual validity, especially when guidance is delivered in male-centered language. In this context, the presence, or absence, of female religious guides (muthawwifah) significantly shapes women's sense of spiritual reassurance. These experiences reveal that the pilgrimage is not merely a sequence of rituals but an embodied negotiation of space, health, and dignity. Gender, here, is lived through sore feet, long queues, improvised solutions, and quiet resilience.

Historically, Indonesian women's access to hajj was circumscribed by norms of dependency, particularly the requirement of traveling with a mahram. This practice reflected

broader patriarchal assumptions about women's mobility and vulnerability. However, recent transformations, most notably the Saudi policy change in 2022 allowing women to perform hajj without a mahram if traveling with an official group, have reshaped the moral and administrative landscape of pilgrimage. This shift marks a subtle but significant reconfiguration of gender relations. Women are no longer framed primarily as dependents but as autonomous religious subjects, though autonomy here is mediated through bureaucratic oversight, surveillance, and regulation.

Women as Service Providers

Gender dynamics in hajj are not limited to pilgrims; they are equally evident among service providers. Over the past decade, both the Indonesian government and Saudi authorities have expanded the involvement of women as hajj officers, medical staff, security personnel, and religious guides. This expansion is closely linked to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, launched in 2016, which seeks to increase female labor participation and modernize public services.

Under Vision 2030, women in Saudi Arabia now serve as drivers, airport staff, hotel workers, and security officers at Masjid al-Haram and Masjid Nabawi. For Indonesian pilgrims, the presence of Saudi women officers, especially in security screening and crowd management, often generates a sense of comfort and reduced anxiety.

Indonesia mirrors this trend on a smaller scale. In 2024, female officers constituted 1,350 of 4,200 Indonesian hajj personnel, serving as health workers, kloter officers, KBIHU guides, and counselors. Their presence is particularly vital in medical contexts, where issues of privacy and modesty discourage women from seeking care from male health workers. Encounters with female officers often carry emotional significance. Women pilgrims frequently describe these officers not only as professionals but as moral companions, listening, reassuring, and translating bureaucratic procedures into culturally resonant care.

The rise in female pilgrims poses concrete challenges for the Indonesian state. Hajj administration, traditionally modeled on standardized, masculine assumptions of endurance and uniformity, must now reckon with differentiated needs. In bureaucratic terms, this translates into questions of resource allocation, staffing composition, facility design, and policy prioritization.

Despite measurable progress, structural inequalities persist. While women constitute the majority of pilgrims, they remain underrepresented in strategic and decision-making roles within the hajj bureaucracy. Most female officers are assigned to technical or caregiving positions, while senior managerial roles remain dominated by men. This reflects broader patterns of patriarchy within Indonesian state institutions, where gender inclusion often stops short of power redistribution.

Gender in Indonesian hajj bureaucracy is neither a marginal concern nor a resolved issue. It is a dynamic field where embodied experiences of women pilgrims intersect with reforming states, transnational Islamic governance, and evolving social norms. The increasing feminization of pilgrimage challenges administrators to rethink not only facilities and staffing but the underlying assumptions about religious subjects.

4.6. The Future of Hajj Governance

In 1916, approximately three decades after his six-month stay in Mecca, C. Snouck Hurgronje, arguably one of the most influential figures in Dutch colonial scholarship on Islam, reflected on the global character of the Hajj. He observed that each year hundreds of thousands of Muslims from across the world gathered in Mecca, and suggested that the Prophet Muhammad could never have foreseen that a ritual rooted in Arabian custom would, in later centuries, draw Chinese, Malays, Indians, Tatars, Turks, Egyptians, Berbers, and Africans to the same barren desert landscape, all carrying home vivid impressions of the international significance of Islam.

Many Muslims would contest Hurgronje's characterization of the Hajj and his understanding of its place in early Islamic history. Nevertheless, few would dispute his prediction regarding the growing global scale of the pilgrimage. Hurgronje himself never succeeded in observing the Hajj directly, despite his original intentions, and could not have anticipated the magnitude and complexity the pilgrimage would assume in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Nearly a century later, the Hajj has indeed become one of the largest recurring gatherings of human mobility in the world, drawing close to three million pilgrims annually to Mecca. In recent decades, nearly ten percent of these pilgrims have come from the Malay

world, with approximately 200,000 originating from Indonesia alone, a country Hurgronje knew well, having spent almost fifteen years as Adviser on Native Affairs to the colonial government of the Netherlands East Indies.

With an estimated population exceeding 230 million, of whom more than eighty-six percent identify as Muslim, Indonesia is now the world's fourth most populous country and home to the largest Muslim population globally. Since the introduction of country-based pilgrimage quotas in 1987, allocating one thousand Hajj visas per million inhabitants, Indonesia has gradually become the largest sending country in the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. In this context, Indonesia occupies a central position in global Hajj participation and management.

This section situates the making of Hajj pilgrims in Indonesia within a broader body of scholarship on pilgrimage, mobility, state–Islam relations, the rationalization of religious institutions, and transnational networks. Much of the classical literature on pilgrimage has focused on the meanings pilgrims themselves attach to ritual experience (Hammoudi and Ghazelah 2006; Matheson and Milner 1984; McDonnell 1986; Metcalf 2004; Turner 1979; Turner and Turner 1995; Yamba 1995). More recent studies have emphasized movement, circulation, and physical mobility as defining features of pilgrimage (Adler 2002; Eickelman and Piscatori 1990; Morinis 1984, 1992), as well as the role of global networks and political–economic forces in shaping those movements (Bianchi 2004; Coleman and Eade 2004; Eade and Sallnow 1991; Werbner 2002).

In the Indonesian context, pilgrimage to Mecca in the colonial period was closely associated with the pursuit of religious knowledge and the acquisition of political and moral authority among Muslim elites (Bruinessen 1997; Hurgronje 1970 [1931]; Laffan 2003; Vredenbregt 1997). In contemporary practice, however, the Hajj increasingly intersects with state interests, national politics, tourism, and market differentiation. Scholars have noted how pilgrimage has become entangled with projects of governance and citizenship (Bowen 2003; Emmerson 1999; Hefner 2000), as well as with class formation, gendered access, and expressions of modern religious identity (Abdurrachman 1996; Aritonang 2002; Madjid 1997; Shihab 2000).

While these strands of scholarship are essential, the inherently international nature of the Hajj, and its political and economic dimensions at the level of inter-state relations, calls

for sustained attention to the role of states and market actors as organizers of pilgrimage. The meanings and motivations of pilgrims cannot be understood solely in religious or experiential terms. The Hajj has been profoundly reshaped by processes of bureaucratization, regulation, and institutional expansion, embedded within broader projects of modernization.

Drawing on James Scott's analysis of how state expansion renders societies legible (Scott 1998), this research asks what attention to inter-state negotiations and bureaucratic management of pilgrimage reveals about changing conceptions of religious obligation and mobility. In Indonesia, the governance of the Hajj offers a particularly revealing case through which to examine how religious practice is shaped by administrative rationality, political authority, and economic organization.

A parallel argument is advanced by M. B. Hooker (2008) in his study of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Hooker identifies Hajj administration as one of the ministry's most consequential domains, arguing that Islamic law in Indonesia, however fragmented or contested, has been transmitted in practice through a comprehensive bureaucratic apparatus. The organization of the Hajj, in this sense, exemplifies what he terms a "total shari'a bureaucracy," in which religious norms are enacted less through doctrine than through administrative form.

Building on these perspectives, this chapter approaches the Hajj in Indonesia as both a religious institution and a bureaucratic process. It treats the Hajj not only as a ritual obligation, but as a social and political field shaped by historical regulation, contemporary governance, and anticipated futures. By focusing on the actual workings of state-sponsored Hajj administration, rather than its idealized representations, this chapter foregrounds the interactions between state officials, bureaucrats, intermediaries, and pilgrims, and examines how these encounters shape pilgrims' experiences and understandings of the Hajj over time.

Governing the Crowd

From the perspective of the Saudi state, Hajj is not merely a ritual to be protected, but a movement of bodies that must be choreographed with near-absolute precision. Each pilgrim's step unfolds within a dense administrative landscape: permits issued months in advance, arrival slots allocated at overseas airports, RFID cards embedded with personal data, buses

released in calibrated waves, and footpaths opened and closed according to algorithmic predictions of density. In official discourse, crowd management during Hajj is often described as a triumph of modern governance, an annual demonstration that millions of individuals, speaking dozens of languages and carrying diverse bodily capacities, can move through a confined sacred geography without chaos.

On the ground, this governance materializes through a vast assemblage of institutions. The Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA), the Royal Commission for Makkah City and Holy Sites, and the Saudi Red Crescent operate in tight coordination. Control rooms equipped with live camera feeds, heat maps, and crowd-density simulations monitor the holy sites continuously, while tens of thousands of security personnel, medical workers, and volunteers translate abstract data into bodily interventions, redirecting pilgrims, cooling overheated elderly men, gently but firmly breaking the flow of people to prevent bottlenecks.

In many years, this system works. The pilgrimage proceeds with remarkable order. Timetabled departures from Mina reduce pressure on pedestrian corridors, multi-story Jamaraat bridges separate flows that once collided, and surveillance systems identify abnormal crowd behavior before it escalates into panic. Since the mid-2000s, Saudi authorities have repeatedly pointed to declining incident rates as proof that tragedy has been tamed by infrastructure and data. Yet the promise of control has never been absolute.

The 2015 Mina disaster stands as a rupture in the official narrative of mastery. On the morning of 24 September 2015, two massive streams of pilgrims converged at the intersection of streets 204 and 223 during the ritual of stoning the devil. The result was not a sudden stampede triggered by fear, but what crowd-science experts describe as “progressive crowd collapse,” a slow, crushing accumulation of human pressure that stripped individuals of physical autonomy. Pilgrims lost the ability to stop, turn, or breathe freely. Many died standing, suffocated by the sheer density of bodies.

Official Saudi figures reported 769 deaths, while independent counts by journalists and affected governments placed the toll above 2,000, making it the deadliest Hajj disaster in history. The disparity itself became an object of political and ethical dispute, exposing how numbers, like bodies, are governed in moments of crisis. Accounts from survivors complicate simplistic explanations that blame individual pilgrims for ignoring schedules. Many recall confusion caused by sudden road closures, unclear commands issued in unfamiliar languages,

and conflicting flows that should never have intersected. What failed in Mina was not the absence of authority, but the brittleness of a system that left little room for improvisation once conditions deviated from the plan.

Saudi crowd management operates at an uneasy intersection of care and command. Security forces are trained not only to enforce compliance but to act as guardians of pilgrims' dignity. Their presence is deliberately calibrated: firm enough to keep bodies moving, gentle enough to respect the sacred mood of worship. Volunteers distribute water; medical teams patrol on foot; multilingual officers translate instructions. In ethnographic terms, governance here is tactile, authority enacted through the hand that guides, blocks, or lifts a pilgrim from the ground.

At the same time, the scale of Hajj demands standardization. Pilgrims are sorted into national contingents, assigned colored wristbands, and moved according to fixed timetables. These techniques have reduced risk, but they also compress human diversity into logistical categories that cannot fully account for fatigue, devotion, fear, or sudden acts of compassion, such as stopping to help a stranger, which themselves alter the flow of crowds.

In the years following Mina, Saudi authorities introduced unprecedented technological reforms. Satellite-based mobility tracking, AI-assisted congestion prediction, and mandatory digital identity systems such as the Nusuk card now govern pilgrim movement with granular precision. These reforms are repeatedly framed as lessons learned, evidence that tragedy has been converted into institutional memory.

Yet ethnographically, Mina remains present, not as a single failure, but as a reminder that even the most elaborate systems hover at the edge of collapse. Hajj crowd management succeeds precisely because it assumes failure is always possible. In this sense, Saudi authority during Hajj is less a story of total control than of continual recalibration: adapting plans, absorbing criticism, and governing in the shadow of past loss.

Hajj thus exposes a paradox at the heart of modern governance. The more perfectly order is planned, the more catastrophic its breakdown can become. Between success and tragedy lies a narrow margin, measured not only in meters and seconds, but in human judgment, ethical responsibility, and the fragile trust between pilgrims and those who guide them.

A Technocratic Turn in Saudi Hajj Governance

In the context of sweeping economic and administrative reforms, the Saudi government has undertaken a significant reconfiguration of its Hajj and Umrah administration—an area that sits at the intersection of religion, logistics, and global mobility. One symbolic yet substantive moment in this transformation occurred when Mohammed Saleh bin Taher Benten was appointed Minister of Hajj and Umrah, replacing Bandar bin Mohammed bin Hamza Hajjar. The appointment formed part of a broader ministerial reshuffle initiated at the highest level of government, signaling a renewed emphasis on efficiency, expertise, and modernization.

From this perspective, Mohammed Saleh bin Taher Benten represents a distinctly technocratic profile within Saudi governance. Although born in Saudi Arabia, his family lineage traces back to Indonesia, specifically to Banten, a region long associated with Islamic scholarship and transoceanic pilgrimage networks. This transnational genealogy is not incidental: it resonates strongly with the global constituency of Hajj pilgrims, many of whom originate from Southeast Asia. His background thus reflects both Saudi national identity and the wider Muslim world that the Kingdom serves through the Hajj.

Benten's academic formation further reinforces the technocratic ethos shaping contemporary Hajj management. Trained as a computer engineer, he earned his doctoral degree from the University of Colorado Boulder in 1989, after completing undergraduate and master's studies in electrical engineering at King Fahd University. This educational trajectory situates him firmly within a globalized scientific and managerial tradition, one that prioritizes systems thinking, data management, and technological solutions.

Before assuming the ministerial post, Benten held a series of strategically important positions within the Saudi state apparatus. His career included leadership roles such as President of the Saudi Post Corporation, Assistant Deputy Minister of Hajj, and later Deputy Minister of Hajj. In parallel, he served as Dean of the Faculty of Computer Science and Engineering for several years. These overlapping experiences in administration, infrastructure, and academia illustrate how Hajj governance has increasingly been entrusted to individuals skilled in organizational design rather than purely religious authority.

Such credentials matter greatly in the contemporary organization of Hajj. Managing millions of pilgrims from across the world requires advanced logistical coordination, digital systems, and evidence-based planning. Under leaders like Benten, the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah has increasingly embraced research-driven policy, technological innovation, and

international standards of management. His record of more than one hundred published scientific studies, extensive contributions to technical reports for international bodies, and frequent participation in global academic forums underscores this orientation.

From the standpoint of ethnographic observation, the Saudi state's evolving approach to Hajj administration reveals a redefinition of religious service as a domain of modern governance. The pilgrimage is no longer managed solely as a sacred ritual, but as a complex global operation requiring expertise comparable to that of large-scale infrastructures and transnational events. The rise of technocrat-ministers such as Mohammed Saleh bin Taher Benten signals how the Saudi government articulates religious responsibility through the language of professionalism, efficiency, and reform.

In this sense, contemporary Hajj organization offers a window into how the Saudi state negotiates tradition and modernity, maintaining custodianship of Islam's holiest sites while actively reengineering the administrative systems that sustain one of the largest annual human mobilizations on earth.

One of the initiatives taken during his admisnitration was that Saudi Arabia may allow women to perform Hajj without male guardian. Women could be allowed to perform the Hajj without a male guardian, Arab News has learned, with the government studying various visa options. Women are currently required to travel to Saudi Arabia to perform pilgrimages with a mahram (male guardian), or be met by him on arrival in the Kingdom, although women over the age of 45 may travel without a mahram if they are in an organized tour group.

If women travel with a group and without a mahram they must submit a notarised letter of no objection from someone who could be considered their mahram, authorizing travel for Hajj or Umrah with that group.[35] Saudi media has learned that the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah is conducting studies to issue visit visas for both tourism and Umrah purposes, and that this process is expected to pave the way for allowing women to come without the need for a mahram.

[35] Fatima Muhammad, "Saudi Arabia may allow women to perform Hajj without male guardian," https://www.arabnews.com/node/1571366/saudi-arabia, October 20, 2019.



Figure 4.3 The Saudi Minister of Hajj, 2019

In 2019, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Hajj and Umrah, Dr. Mohammed Saleh Benten, approved a series of updates to Umrah services. Photo: Courtesy of the Arab News.

The rise of technocratic leadership, digital systems, and managerial reforms in Saudi Hajj administration does not mean that religious authority has disappeared; rather, it has taken on a new form. Today, the Hajj is organized through databases, algorithms, and risk-management protocols, yet it remains grounded in a moral world shaped by devotion, endurance, and intention. The journey is planned with technical precision, but its meaning is never fully predictable or controllable.

This tension is embodied in the figure of the technocrat-minister, tasked with making the pilgrimage run smoothly while carrying responsibility for an act of worship whose significance reaches beyond any spreadsheet or procedure. Hajj bureaucracy therefore reveals something fundamental about how modern states govern religion. Faith is not replaced by administration, nor fully absorbed by it. Instead, it is reorganized through systems that must constantly balance efficiency with trust, control with surrender. In this uneasy balance, bureaucracy does not diminish the sacred journey; it becomes one of the fragile frameworks through which that journey unfolds, supported, challenged, and sometimes tested at its limits.

Chapter 5 – The State vs. Private: Hajj as a Contested Space

The Hajj has never been governed by a single authority. Long before the emergence of modern nation-states, the organization of pilgrimage to Mecca unfolded through overlapping regimes of power: religious scholars, merchants, shipowners, local brokers, imperial authorities, and later bureaucratic states. What distinguishes the contemporary Hajj is not the appearance of contestation between public and private actors, but the institutionalization of that contestation within modern forms of governance. Today's pilgrimage is produced through contracts and quotas, ministries and markets, airlines and consulates, surveillance regimes and religious intermediaries. It is within this dense institutional landscape that the Hajj emerges as a profoundly contested space, one in which authority is continuously negotiated rather than definitively settled.

This chapter examines the Hajj as a field of struggle between state power and private enterprise, tracing how control over pilgrimage has historically shifted, fractured, and recomposed itself across colonial and postcolonial periods. Rather than treating the state and the market as distinct or opposing domains, the chapter approaches their relationship as relational, contingent, and unstable. The administration of the Hajj repeatedly exposes the limits of state authority and the indispensability of private actors, even as states seek to assert sovereignty, accountability, and moral legitimacy over religious mobility. Pilgrimage thus becomes a privileged site for observing how the modern state governs religion not through monopoly, but through delegation, incorporation, and selective intervention.

At the heart of this analysis is a simple but important question: what happens when a religious duty that depends on shared trust is managed through scattered and overlapping lines of responsibility? The Hajj makes this issue especially visible because any breakdown, e.g., missed transportation, unpaid hotel bookings, lack of food, or overcrowded tents, has immediate physical consequences for pilgrims. When such problems arise, most pilgrims do not distinguish between government and private providers. Instead, blame tends to flow upward, settling on the state, which is widely seen as the ultimate guarantor of a sacred

obligation. This creates a paradox: even as governments privatize services and outsource logistics, they remain the primary focus of moral and political accountability.

This chapter develops this argument by situating contemporary debates over outsourcing, fraud scandals, and transportation crises within a longer historical genealogy. From colonial-era shipping companies in the Dutch East Indies to post-New Order airline monopolies and private Hajj agencies in Indonesia, struggles over pilgrimage administration reveal recurring tensions between profit and protection, efficiency and legitimacy, market rationality and moral obligation. The Hajj has long attracted private entrepreneurs, but it has also repeatedly generated moments of scandal that provoke calls for stronger state intervention. These cycles of privatization, crisis, and reform form the empirical backbone of this chapter.

The Hajj and the Problem of Governance

The organization of the Hajj poses a structural problem for modern governance. It involves the mass movement of citizens across international borders for a purpose that is religious rather than economic or political, yet it demands levels of coordination comparable to large-scale migration or disaster management. For sending states such as Indonesia, the Hajj is simultaneously a matter of religious service, diplomatic negotiation, public welfare, and political reputation. For receiving states such as Saudi Arabia, it represents both a theological responsibility and a massive logistical undertaking tied to security, urban management, and international prestige.

Because the Hajj is transnational in scope, it resists being fully contained by any single institution. No one authority can completely control how it unfolds, yet many different bodies claim a role in organizing it. Airlines move pilgrims across borders, government ministries issue visas, private companies handle lodging and meals, banks manage payments, and religious authorities define what counts as proper ritual practice. As a result, governance is necessarily spread across many actors. The key issue, then, is not whether the Hajj is governed, but how authority is pieced together from diverse institutions whose goals and interests do not always align.

Anthropological approaches to the state emphasize that governance rarely operates through uniform command. Instead, states often rule through intermediaries, informal

arrangements, and hybrid institutions that blur the boundary between public and private. The Hajj exemplifies this mode of rule with particular clarity. State authority over pilgrimage is exercised not only through law and policy, but through contracts with airlines, agreements with catering firms, licensing of private organizers, and reliance on religious figures who mediate between bureaucratic procedures and pilgrims' moral expectations. These arrangements make the Hajj an arena of governance rather than a closed administrative system.

This chapter treats the Hajj as a contested space of governance, where state authority is exercised through relationships rather than absolute control. Contestation does not usually appear as open conflict. More often, it takes shape through negotiations over who is responsible, who is to blame, and who holds legitimacy, especially during moments of breakdown or crisis. Scandals play a crucial role in these moments. They expose how fragile existing arrangements are and compel states to reconsider and renegotiate their relationships with private actors involved in organizing the pilgrimage.

5.1.Historical Contestations

This chapter explores historical and contemporary struggles over control of the Hajj. Drawing on cases such as Herklots and P.T. Arafat, the chapter situates current debates within a longer history of contestation between state authorities and private actors. It examines processes of outsourcing and collaboration in modern Hajj administration, particularly in sectors such as transportation, accommodation, and catering. Through case studies of fraud scandals and logistical failures, the chapter shows how the Hajj becomes a site where political accountability, religious legitimacy, and economic interests collide. The chapter argues that the boundary between state and private actors is continually negotiated through moments of scandal, reform, and crisis.

The Hajj as a Contested Space

This chapter examines the hajj as a contested space where state authority and private enterprise intersect, compete, and collaborate. Building on the previous chapters' discussion

of Kyais, non-state actors, and bureaucratic structures, this section explores how these dynamics materialize in the organization of pilgrimage. It interrogates the elasticity of the modern state in managing religious affairs, asking fundamental questions: What is the state in the context of the hajj? When pilgrims navigate state-administered regulations, who do they encounter? Does the state they meet in Mecca resemble the one they know at home? And how does this shifting presence manifest in the terminals of Jeddah, the crowded streets of Mecca, and the temporary housing complexes of Medina?

The chapter begins with the thorny issue of hajj transportation, a recurring source of tension between state and private actors since the 1970s. Garuda Airlines, backed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, became the centerpiece of state efforts to modernize hajj travel, replacing maritime routes with air transport. This transition marked a profound cultural shift, as pilgrims accustomed to seafaring traditions, long associated with cosmopolitan Muslim networks, were compelled to adopt the norms of modern aviation (Darmadi, 2018a).. The idealized vision of a pure, unmediated pilgrimage collided with the realities of bureaucratic regulation and market-driven logistics, revealing the complexities of state intervention in religious practice.

To understand these tensions, the chapter turns to the historical roots of hajj transportation in the nineteenth century. It revisits the scandal involving J.G.M. Herklots and Firma Knowles & Co. in Batavia, whose fraudulent practices in the 1890s left thousands of pilgrims stranded and defrauded. These early controversies underscore the enduring vulnerability of pilgrims to exploitation and the ambiguous role of private intermediaries in pilgrimage economies. The discussion then moves to P.T. Arafat, a private shipping company that struggled to maintain its position before Garuda's state-backed dominance in the 1970s. This shift illustrates how state intervention reconfigured the pilgrimage industry, displacing older maritime networks and embedding the hajj within national development agendas.

The chapter also examines the collapse of P.T. Tiga Utama during the 1999 hajj season, a dramatic episode that unfolded in the aftermath of Indonesia's economic crisis. Unable to cover skyrocketing airfare costs, the company left hundreds of ONH Plus pilgrims stranded in Jeddah, with unpaid hotel bills and abandoned guides. The Indonesian government, through its consulate and ONH Plus associations, intervened to repatriate the pilgrims, reinforcing demands for stronger state oversight. This case highlights the fragility of

private operators and the persistent expectation that the state will act as guarantor of religious obligations, even when privatization dominates the hajj economy.

The chapter concludes by revisiting the 2006–2007 food crisis, using it to illustrate the state's adaptive strategies in the face of privatization pressures. While the state asserts authority through regulation and control, it also demonstrates flexibility by outsourcing services and incorporating non-state actors into its apparatus. Doctors, students, and guides, formally private individuals, are temporarily recruited as state personnel during the hajj season, creating a category of "pseudo-state" actors. These arrangements reveal a state that is neither rigid nor monolithic but capable of reframing its identity to maintain legitimacy and respond to market demands.

Through these cases, the chapter argues that the hajj is not merely a ritual journey but a political and economic arena where authority is negotiated and redefined. The state's ability to collaborate with private actors without relinquishing power underscores its resilience and adaptability. By examining the contested space of pilgrimage, this chapter contributes to broader debates on the anthropology of the state, privatization of religious services, and the commodification of ritual in contemporary Muslim societies.

The Herklots Case and Colonial Hajj Exploitation

The history of the hajj in the Indonesian archipelago is inseparable from the structures of colonial power that mediated, regulated, and often exploited the movement of Muslim bodies across the Indian Ocean. Long before contemporary scandals involving fraudulent hajj and umrah agencies in Indonesia, the late nineteenth century already witnessed systematic abuses committed by private agents operating under the permissive gaze of colonial authorities. One such figure was Gregorius Marianus Herklots, whose case vividly illustrates how faith, mobility, and colonial capitalism intersected in ways that left pilgrims profoundly vulnerable (Schmidt 1995).

Some scholars identify Herklots as a paradigmatic example of the moral and institutional failures of private hajj agencies during the Dutch East Indies period (Majid 2008; Rahmawati 2018). Herklots, an Indo-European (Javanese–Dutch) from Indramayu, built his career within the burgeoning industry of colonial pilgrimage travel. His early professional life began at Knowles & Co., a Batavia-based hajj travel firm widely regarded for its logistical reliability and administrative competence. Within this highly competitive and increasingly

profitable sector, Herklots distinguished himself through diligence and entrepreneurial initiative, earning the trust of Keukenis, the firm's owner.

This trust culminated in Herklots being dispatched to establish a branch office in the Hijaz, where he would manage the return journey of pilgrims from Mecca to Batavia. In February 1893, consular reports confirm his arrival in Jeddah, accompanied by official requests from Knowles & Co. that the Dutch consul provide Herklots with authorization and oversight. This detail is crucial, Herklots did not operate in a legal vacuum. On the contrary, his activities unfolded under formal colonial protection, revealing how imperial bureaucracies enabled private exploitation while insulating themselves from its consequences.

Armed with permits from the Dutch consulate in Jeddah, Herklots began organizing return voyages for pilgrims to Java. He chartered steamships from the British India Steam Navigation Company Limited, capitalizing on late nineteenth-century technological advances that dramatically shortened travel times between Southeast Asia and the Arabian Peninsula. Yet technological progress did not ensure ethical practice. To attract as many pilgrims as possible, Herklots invested in aggressive advertising that promised exceptional service and security. His limited capital, however, forced him to seek additional funding locally in Mecca.

It was at this juncture that Herklots crossed a critical moral and cultural boundary. Knowing that a non-Muslim would be unlikely to gain the trust of Mecca's ruling elite, he assumed the Muslim name "Abdul Hamid." Under this false identity, he secured financial backing from the Sharif of Mecca, who provided a substantial sum, 150,000 gulden, to support what he believed was a Muslim-run pilgrimage enterprise (Majid 2008; Rahmawati 2018; Schmidt 1995). The deception reveals not only Herklots's opportunism but also his acute awareness of the religious economies that structured access to power in the Hijaz. Islam became, in this moment, both the object of pilgrimage and a resource to be manipulated.

The infusion of capital proved disastrous. Rather than investing in sustainable logistics, Herklots focused on maximizing passenger numbers, disregarding the carrying capacity of his chartered ships. Pilgrims departing Mecca were first transported overland to Jeddah, yet even this leg of the journey, traditionally part of the broader hajj route, was monetized. Herklots charged pilgrims additional fees for transportation from Mecca to Jeddah, despite the fact that many had already paid in full for their return passage.

The coercive nature of this arrangement became starkly visible when pilgrims who refused or were unable to pay the extra charges were threatened with abandonment. Those

who wished to return to the Dutch East Indies were forced to pay a total of 37 ringgit, a substantial sum that many could not afford after months in Mecca. Payment, however, did not guarantee immediate departure. Herklots's steamships were overcrowded, and thousands of pilgrims, at least 2,000 by some accounts, were left stranded in Jeddah, forced to wait for subsequent voyages.

This liminal space is telling. Pilgrims who had fulfilled the religious climax of their journey found themselves sleeping under open skies, lacking shelter, sanitation, or certainty. Some record that they were compelled to camp outdoors, their bodies exposed not only to environmental hardship but also to profound existential disillusionment (Majid 2008; Rahmawati 2018). The promise of spiritual renewal collided with the brutal realities of colonial logistics and private profit.

Eventually, another ship, called the *Samoa*, was chartered to accommodate the backlog of pilgrims. Though large in tonnage (4,507 tons), the vessel was ill-equipped to ensure health or safety. Overcrowding, poor ventilation, and unsanitary conditions persisted, underscoring how scale was prioritized over human welfare. Complaints from passengers finally prompted intervention by the Dutch consulate in Jeddah, leading to Herklots being brought before colonial legal authorities in Batavia (Majid 2008; Rahmawati 2018; Schmidt 1995).

Yet the trial revealed the limits of colonial justice. Despite extensive evidence of misconduct, Herklots was declared not guilty by the Batavian Court of Justice and released under supervision (Schmidt 1995). This outcome illuminates a deeper structural violence, pilgrims, largely indigenous Muslims, bore the material and emotional costs of exploitation, while European or Indo-European agents benefited from legal leniency and institutional protection. Although Herklots attempted to revive his business afterward, public trust had evaporated. His career in the hajj travel industry effectively ended, not through conviction, but through reputational collapse.

Pilgrimage, Brokerage, and Colonial Power

The Herklots case can be read as more than an instance of individual fraud; it represents a structural moment in which pilgrimage became entangled with colonial regimes of mobility, capitalist brokerage, and unequal moral economies. The hajj, often theorized as a

paradigmatic form of religious travel, occupies a unique position in anthropology because it combines ritual obligation, transregional movement, and intense moral expectation.

As Victor Turner argued, pilgrimage constitutes a liminal process, in which participants temporarily exit ordinary social structures to enter a sacred interval characterized by communitas, vulnerability, and transformation (Turner 1969). In the late nineteenth-century Dutch East Indies, however, this liminality was increasingly colonized by administrative and commercial actors who reinserted hierarchy and extraction into what pilgrims understood as a sacred journey.

From this perspective, the pilgrims stranded in Jeddah under Herklots's management were not merely victims of logistical failure; they were subjects caught in a colonial distortion of liminality. Having completed the ritual climax of the hajj in Mecca, they found themselves unable to return to their everyday social worlds. This suspended condition, e.g., camping outdoors, lacking shelter, money, and certainty, represents what might be called a failed reintegration, in which the promise of spiritual completion was undermined by economic coercion. The hajj's moral horizon, oriented toward piety and purification, collided with the colonial infrastructure of steamships, contracts, and debt.

The figure of Herklots himself can be analytically situated as a broker, a category long examined in political and economic anthropology. Brokers mediate between worlds that are asymmetrically connected, here, the Dutch colonial administration, European shipping companies, the Hijazi elite, and Southeast Asian Muslim pilgrims. Herklots's ability to move between these domains depended not only on technical skill but also on cultural performance. His adoption of the Muslim name "Abdul Hamid" was not a superficial act of deception but a strategic manipulation of religious identity that enabled access to capital controlled by the Sharif of Mecca. Religion, in this sense, functioned as both faith and currency.

This brokerage was structurally enabled by colonial governance. Drawing on Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality, the Dutch colonial state did not simply repress the hajj; it sought to regulate, monitor, and indirectly profit from it (Foucault, 1991). By granting permits, recognizing private agencies, and positioning consulates as nominal overseers, the state externalized risk while maintaining plausible deniability. When Herklots was later acquitted by the Batavian Court of Justice, the verdict reflected not the absence of harm but the unequal valuation of lives within colonial legal rationality. Indigenous Muslim pilgrims,

despite their numbers and suffering, did not constitute legal subjects worthy of full protection.

The financial dynamics of the case further resonate with the concept of the moral economy to analyze expectations of fairness in economic exchange. Pilgrims entered contractual relationships with hajj agents under the assumption that religious obligation entailed ethical responsibility. The demand for additional payments between Mecca and Jeddah violated these expectations, producing not only economic hardship but moral outrage. Yet this outrage had little institutional outlet. The colonial economy of pilgrimage normalized extraction at precisely the moment when pilgrims were most dependent.

Mobility itself emerges here as a site of power. Scholars of mobility studies emphasize that movement is never neutral; it is differentially enabled, constrained, and valued. Steamship technology promised speed and efficiency, but for pilgrims it also introduced new forms of immobility, e.g., overcrowded ships, enforced waiting, and bureaucratic delays. The case of the roughly 2,000 pilgrims stranded in Jeddah highlights how, in the colonial era, the freedom to move was often shaped, and limited, by private actors operating within imperial structures.

Seen this way, the Herklots scandal resembles problems that still shape hajj and umrah management in Indonesia today. The basic conditions have changed little, journeys are handled by private middlemen, information is unevenly shared, trust is rooted in religious obligation, and government oversight is often weak. What has changed is not the nature of exploitation, but the technologies and bureaucratic systems through which it operates. Placing this case within an anthropological perspective allows us to see it not as an isolated historical episode, but as part of a recurring pattern linking faith, money, and power.

Ultimately, this analysis suggests that the colonial hajj was not merely a journey across space, but a journey through layered regimes of power. Pilgrims moved between villages, ports, ships, and sacred sites, yet at every stage their mobility was refracted through colonial capitalism. The tragedy of the Herklots case lies not only in deception and neglect, but in the systematic transformation of a sacred obligation like the hajj pilgrimage into an extractive industry, one in which the spiritual aspirations of pilgrims were rendered secondary to profit and administrative convenience.

5.2. Remembering the Sea

For Indonesian Muslims who performed the Hajj between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s, pilgrimage was not merely a religious obligation or a bureaucratic process. It was a long, physically demanding, and emotionally formative journey across oceans. The route to Mecca unfolded on the decks of passenger ships, where weeks at sea shaped collective memory, social relations, and a specifically maritime understanding of pilgrimage.

Among this generation, Hajj was recalled not through the language of quotas, embarkation points, or flight numbers, but through the names of ships: *KM Gunung Djati*, *Tjut Njak Dhien*, *Pasific Abeto*, *Mei Abeto*, and *Le Havre Abeto*. According to Hajjah Ummi, a Batavian elderly woman in her late sixties, to ask someone about their pilgrimage was to ask, "What year did you go, and which ship carried you?"[36]

These ships were inseparable from PT Arafat, a private shipping company that became synonymous with Hajj transportation during this period. The intimacy between pilgrim, vessel, and company produced a social memory in which Arafat was not just a transport operator, but a moral actor embedded in the religious life of the ummah. The sea journey itself constituted a rite of passage, marked by shared prayers, illness, endurance, and solidarity, experiences that would later disappear with the transition to air travel.

One recurring theme in oral histories and family narratives is the recollection that traveling to the Hajj by sea was undeniably long, yet deeply enjoyable and socially meaningful. The two to three weeks aboard ship were remembered not as idle time, but as a densely populated social and religious space. Pilgrims filled the journey with collective activities such as performing *qasidah* and *rebana*, staging small magic performances, and holding regular *pengajian* and Qur'anic recitation sessions. These practices transformed the ship into a moving religious community, where devotion, leisure, and sociability intertwined. Such experiences are vividly recounted in the family narratives of KH Ilyas Ruhiat, as documented by Iip D. Yahya, which describe maritime pilgrimage as a formative period of spiritual cultivation long before arrival in the Holy Land (Yahya 2006).[37]

This memory stands in sharp contrast to what followed. By 1978, the Indonesian state, through the Department of Transportation, officially terminated Hajj travel by sea. By 1979,

[36] Hajjah Ummi, interview. Jakarta, 4 September, 2007.
[37] These stories were also confirmed from my interviews with other pilgrims. Hajjah Ummi, interview. Jakarta, 4 September, 2007.

PT Arafat itself vanished from the institutional landscape, buried both administratively and symbolically. The disappearance of Arafat marked not only the end of maritime pilgrimage, but also the closure of a particular configuration of power, one in which a private, umat-based corporation could play a central role in managing an Islamic obligation of immense national significance.

PT Arafat as an Umat-Based Project

PT Arafat did not emerge simply as a commercial venture. Its establishment in 1964 was explicitly political and religious. The initiative came from H. Moeljadi Djojomartono, then Chairman of the *Dewan Urusan Haji* (DUHA) and simultaneously Minister of People's Welfare (*Menteri Kompartemen Kesejahteraan Rakyat*). The founding vision was to reform Hajj transportation by freeing Indonesian pilgrims from dependence on foreign, particularly Dutch, shipping companies, collectively remembered as the "Kongsi Tiga" (Majid 2008; Miller 2006).

Arafat was structured as a shareholding company of the Muslim community. Every prospective pilgrim was required to purchase shares valued at Rp 50,000 (old rupiah). By the late 1960s, the company's ownership base had grown to approximately 554,947 pilgrims, making it a mass-based corporate entity unprecedented in scale. Between December 1964 and June 1968 alone, over half a million pilgrims contributed funds totalling IDR 16 billion. Had its trajectory continued uninterrupted, PT Arafat may have become one of the largest umat-owned enterprises in the world.

This structure blurred lines between worship and investment, devotion and capital. Participation in Arafat was framed not merely as economic contribution, but as collective religious struggle (*jihad*) in the field of maritime capacity. A contemporaneous editorial in *PEHAI* magazine (August 1964) framed the company's birth as the culmination of nearly half a century (1921–1964) of Islamic struggle in shipping, worthy of "*sujud syukur"* (prostration of gratitude) before God. Such language positioned Arafat within a moral economy rather than a purely market-based one, where profit, infrastructure, and piety were interwoven.

Significantly, Arafat's shareholder list included elite political figures such as Vice President Adam Malik and General A. H. Nasution. Their presence illustrates how the company bridged grassroots Muslim participation and state elite endorsement, complicating

any strict separation between “state” and “private.” Arafat was formally private, but politically enabled; umat-based, yet closely entangled with governmental authority.

Although PT Arafat had raised enough funds to buy up to twelve ships, reality proved far more challenging. Passenger ships were scarce on the global market, and over the course of three years the company was only able to purchase three second-hand vessels, one from the Netherlands and two from Norway, at a total cost of Rp 7.49 billion. These aging ships eventually became the backbone of Arafat’s operations, carrying thousands of Indonesian pilgrims across the sea to Mecca.

Before Arafat’s fleet became fully operational, approximately 15,000 pilgrims during the 1964–1965 seasons still relied on ships owned by Pelni, Djakarta Lloyd, Afan Lines, and even vessels from the Indonesian Navy stationed in Halmahera. It was only in the 1965–1966 season that Arafat’s own ships, e.g., *KM Gunung Djati*, *Ambulombo*, and *Tjut Njak Dien*, began actively transporting pilgrims, supplemented by the Pakistani vessel *Safinatul Hujjaj*. By the 1966–1967 season, around 15,000 pilgrims were carried by Arafat’s ships alongside *Tampomas* owned by Pelni.

These details underscore that Arafat’s dominance was neither instantaneous nor absolute. Its authority emerged gradually through operational experience, symbolic legitimacy, and increasing monopoly over maritime Hajj transport. At the same time, the aging nature of its fleet posed persistent challenges. *KM Gunung Djati*, for example, was a ship built in 1928, a veteran of the Second World War, and notoriously problematic during pilgrim embarkation.

Early Signs of Contestation

Despite these material limitations, PT Arafat demonstrated remarkable resilience. Outside the Hajj season, its ships were deployed for commercial operations that supported the national economy. Even during the 1966 currency denomination, when the rupiah was redenominated from Rp 1,000 to Rp 1, Arafat remained financially stable. The company recalibrated share values from Rp 50,000 (old rupiah) to Rp 300 (new rupiah), obliging shareholders to add an additional Rp 200 in capital contribution.

This adaptability helped build trust among pilgrims and investors alike. PT Arafat presented itself as a company with a clear and hopeful future. Within five years, it planned to

own ten ships and begin distributing dividends. By June 1969, the company had reportedly earned profits of Rp 500 million, a significant amount that suggested Arafat could remain viable, even though it relied on aging vessels.

Yet beneath this apparent success lay the beginnings of future problems. Arafat's near-monopoly over sea-based Hajj transportation, its large pool of funds collected directly from pilgrims, and its unusual position as a private company backed by state figures made it especially vulnerable to changes in government policy. When air travel came to be seen as more modern, efficient, and easier for the state to manage, the space that Arafat once occupied was gradually taken over by the government. This shift eventually led to policies that no longer viewed pilgrimage by sea as necessary, or even acceptable.

At the time, PT Arafat appeared confident and forward-looking. The company spoke openly about expansion, planning that within five years it would own ten ships and begin distributing dividends to its shareholders. By June 1969, it had reportedly recorded profits of Rp 500 million, a remarkable achievement for a company operating second-hand vessels. To many pilgrims, Arafat seemed not only stable, but destined to grow.

Looking back, however, these successes also concealed growing weaknesses. PT Arafat's future depended almost entirely on one crucial condition: the continuation of Hajj travel by sea. Its near-monopoly over maritime pilgrimage, the vast sums of money collected directly from pilgrims, and its close, but informal, relationship with government officials made the company highly sensitive to changes in state policy. As air travel increasingly came to represent modernity, speed, and efficiency, the long sea journey that had once defined the Hajj began to be dismissed as slow, old-fashioned, and difficult to regulate.

Gradually, and without any dramatic public announcement, the ground beneath PT Arafat began to give way. Decisions made quietly within ministries and transportation agencies narrowed the space in which the company could operate. What had once been celebrated as a collective achievement of the ummah was now treated as a logistical problem best handled by the state. When policy finally turned decisively against maritime pilgrimage, Arafat was left with ships it could no longer use, debts it could not repay, and hundreds of thousands of pilgrims whose hopes and investments had become entangled with the company's fate.

State Power and Private Authority

The case of PT Arafat demonstrates that the organization of the Hajj in Indonesia must be understood as a contested institutional field, rather than a neutral administrative domain. Far from being a purely logistical matter, Hajj organization has historically been a site where state authority, religious legitimacy, and economic power intersect and collide. The rise and fall of Arafat reveals a struggle over who could legitimately govern mobility, faith, and Muslim bodies across national and international space.

Anthropologically, this contest can be read through the lens of the state as a project, rather than a fixed entity (Mitchell 1991; Trouillot 2001). In the 1960s and early 1970s, the Indonesian state had not yet fully monopolized the organization of pilgrimage. Instead, it coexisted with, and at times actively relied upon, private and umat-based institutions. PT Arafat emerged precisely within this porous institutional moment, when religious authority, economic participation, and political legitimacy overlapped rather than being clearly separated.

PT Arafat represented an alternative model of pilgrimage governance grounded in what can be described as a moral economy of the ummah (Scott 1976). Pilgrims were required to buy shares not simply as consumers of transport services, but as participants in a collective religious project. Economic contribution was framed as part of religious devotion, often articulated in the idiom of *jihad* and *sujud syukur*. In this sense, Arafat blurred the boundaries between worship and investment, infrastructure and piety.

This model resonates with anthropological work on religious economies that emphasizes participation, reciprocity, and moral obligation over market rationality (Maurer 2005; Peletz 2007). The ships operated by Arafat were not simply vehicles; they were moving moral communities. The weeks-long sea journey created what Victor Turner (1969) would describe as a form of liminality, in which pilgrims lived temporarily outside ordinary social structures, forming bonds through shared prayer, hardship, and leisure. This moral economy also depended on time and space. The temporal slowness of maritime Hajj allowed religious discipline, sociability, and collective memory to develop. These features, while meaningful to pilgrims, posed challenges to bureaucratic governance.

From the perspective of the modernizing state, pilgrimage increasingly appeared as a problem of administrative legibility (Scott 1998). Long sea voyages were difficult to monitor, regulate, and standardize. Informal religious activities, extended time at sea, and reliance on

aging ships generated uncertainty—precisely the opposite of what a bureaucratic regime sought to manage.

The shift from sea travel to air travel therefore marked a profound transformation in how pilgrimage was conceptualized. Air travel enabled the state to compress time, standardize procedures, and centralize authority. Pilgrims could now be counted, scheduled, documented, and transported with greater efficiency. In Foucauldian terms, this represented a move toward governmentality, where religious practice was reorganized through techniques of regulation and logistical control (Foucault 1991).

This transformation did not eliminate religion from the Hajj; rather, it redefined how religion was governed. The pilgrimage became a bureaucratic ritual, managed through quotas, embarkation points, and official documentation. Private institutions like PT Arafat, whose legitimacy rested on moral participation rather than administrative efficiency, found themselves increasingly marginalized.

By closing Hajj travel by sea in 1978, the state did not explicitly reject umat-based organization. It simply removed the material conditions that made such organization possible. Ships became unusable, debts accumulated, and the company collapsed under structural constraints it could not control.

The impact of this shift was deeply felt. Pilgrims who had once been more than just travelers, who were also shareholders and co-owners of the system that carried them to Mecca, were gradually reduced to administrative passengers. Their connection to the Hajj became increasingly personal but also more regulated, shaped by forms, schedules, and official procedures. What many lost was not only money, but a sense of belonging to a shared religious effort that brought together faith, mutual responsibility, and mobility.

The story of PT Arafat shows how the modern state strengthens its role in religious life not by pushing religion aside, but by reshaping the systems that support it. In Indonesia, the Hajj did not become less Islamic; it became more tightly managed. What disappeared in the process was a once-powerful vision of pilgrimage as something the ummah could build, own, and run together, alongside, but not fully under, the control of the state.

The memory of maritime Hajj survives in personal narratives and collective remembrance, even as the institutional arrangements that sustained it have vanished. As such,

PT Arafat stands as a reminder that modern Hajj organization in Indonesia was forged through struggle, and that alternative possibilities once existed.

5.3. Air Travel, Risk, and the Politics of Mobility

The transition from maritime to aerial transport fundamentally reconfigured Indonesian pilgrims' experience of the hajj, not only as a logistical shift but as a transformation in how risk, authority, and religious meaning were encountered in motion. For pilgrims, air travel condensed time and space, collapsing weeks of ocean crossing into hours in the air. Yet this compression also intensified vulnerability: danger became sudden, technologically opaque, and catastrophically final. In ethnographic terms, the airplane emerged as a charged site where modern state rationality, global aviation systems, and Islamic notions of fate and sacrifice intersected.

For much of the twentieth century, the sea had structured the experiential tempo of the pilgrimage. Sea voyages allowed gradual bodily and spiritual adjustment, fostering communal life onboard and embedding pilgrims in long-standing Indian Ocean networks of Muslim mobility. The state's decision to replace these routes with air transport, culminating in the late 1970s, thus marked not merely modernization but an epistemic break. Pilgrims were now subject to checklists, boarding passes, schedules, and international airspace regulations, administered by state-backed airlines and bureaucratic regimes that promised safety and efficiency but were only partially intelligible to those they governed.

This promise was profoundly shaken in December 1974. On the night of 4 December, a Martinair DC-8 carrying 182 Indonesian pilgrims crashed into the hills near Adam's Peak, Sri Lanka, barely fifteen minutes before its scheduled landing at Bandaranaike International Airport (Wibowo, 2022). All passengers and crew perished. The disaster reverberated unevenly across the archipelago: Blitar Raya alone accounted for 111 victims, with others from South Sulawesi, Lamongan, East Kalimantan, Gresik, and Surabaya. Entire villages lost fathers, mothers, and elders simultaneously, producing a geographically concentrated grief that continues to shape local memory through monuments and commemorative rituals.

The state's response to the tragedy revealed how air travel disasters are managed not only technically but symbolically. Then–Minister of Religious Affairs Abdul Mukti Ali addressed the nation via TVRI and RRI, urging Muslims to accept the calamity as divine decree and declaring the victims *syuhada haji*, martyrs who died on the sacred path (Wibowo, 2022). This designation did crucial political work. By framing the crash within Islamic moral cosmology, the state reframed technological failure as spiritual elevation, transforming bureaucratic crisis into ritual meaning. In anthropological terms, this was a performative act of governance: the state soothed collective trauma while reaffirming its legitimacy as a moral guardian of the ummah.

Yet the reassurance was fragile. Only four years later, on 15 November 1978, another catastrophe unfolded at the same Sri Lankan airport. Loftleiðir Flight 001, chartered by Garuda Indonesian Airways to transport pilgrims home from Jeddah, crashed during approach, killing 183 of the 262 people onboard, most of them pilgrims from South Kalimantan. Competing investigations attributed the crash variously to pilot error (Sri Lankan authorities) and to equipment failure and air-traffic-control mistakes (Icelandic authorities), exposing fault lines in international aviation accountability (The New York Times, 1978).

For Indonesian pilgrims and their families, such technical debates mattered less than the repetition of loss. The Sri Lankan transit route, the very artery of modern hajj mobility, came to symbolize danger. Unlike maritime disasters, which were imagined as gradual and collective struggles against nature, aviation accidents appeared abrupt and incomprehensible. Survivors' families described a sense of helplessness before machines, foreign airports, and distant investigative commissions beyond national reach. Air travel magnified the asymmetry between pilgrims and the systems charged with protecting them.

State responses again relied heavily on moral consolidation. Following the 1978 tragedy, the government built the Makam Syuhada Haji in Banjarbaru, interring the victims and inscribing their names in stone (Saurin, 2018). The site soon became a locus of pilgrimage in its own right, a sacred geography linking national soil to global disaster. Through such memorialization, the state localized transnational risk and domesticated its aftermath, embedding technological catastrophe within an Indonesian Islamic landscape.

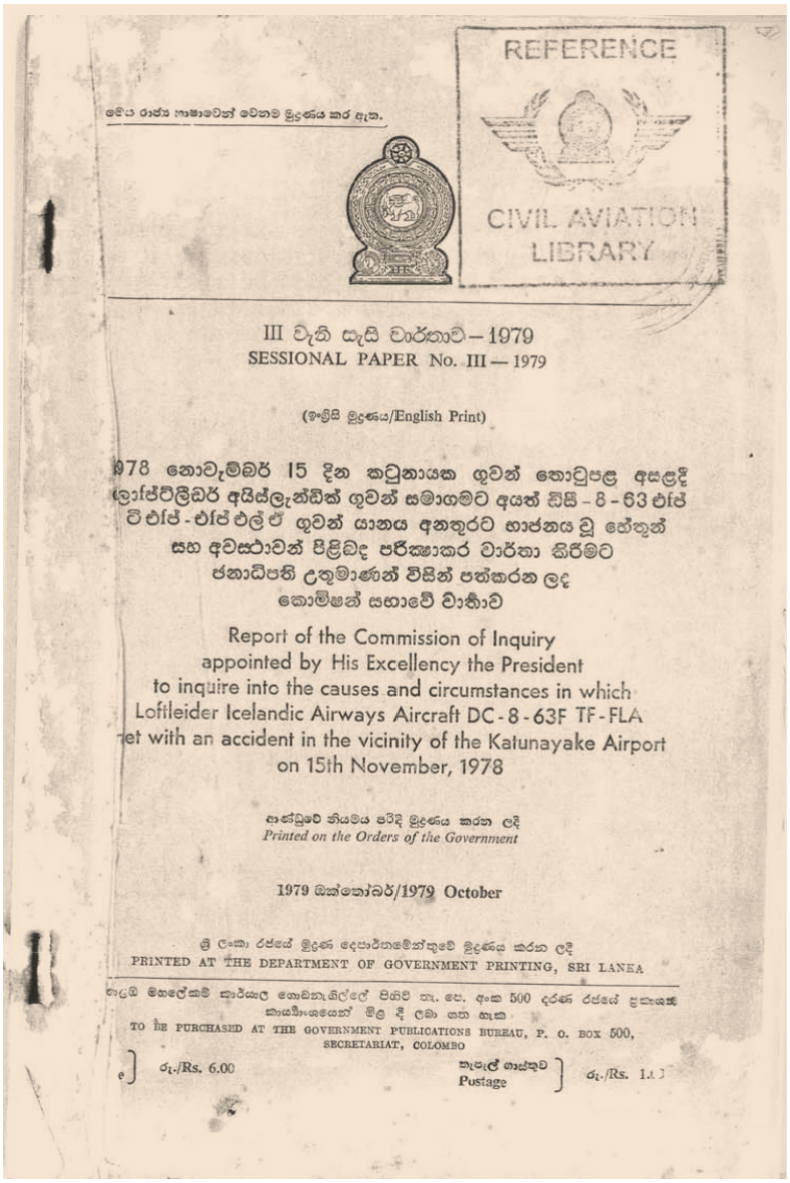


Table 5.1 Fatalities and Bureaucratic Challenges

Front page of the official report of the fact-finding commission into the crash of Garuda Indonesian Airways Flight Loftleiðir 001 as it was about to land at Bandaranaike International Airport, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Source (https://Atcsl.Tripod.Com/Sri_lanka_loftleider.Htm, n.d.)



Figure 5.1 Fatalities and Bureaucratic Challenges

Most of the bodies of Indonesian pilgrims from the 1974 Hajj tragedy in Sri Lanka were buried in Maskeliya, Sri Lanka. One Hajj martyr's body arrived and was buried in Surabaya. (Source: Wibowo, 2022)

At the same time, these accidents intensified debates over governance. Muslim leaders and parliamentarians called for a return to sea travel, arguing that longer journeys afforded spiritual preparation and reduced dependence on foreign aviation systems. The government, however, rejected these proposals, citing efficiency, capacity, and international safety standards. This decision underscores a central tension in hajj governance: the state's obligation to respect religious sensibilities while managing mass mobility under modern constraints. Choosing air travel was not a denial of Islamic values but an assertion of administrative rationality, framed as necessary for serving a rapidly expanding pilgrim population.

Air travel rendered the state hyper-visible at moments of crisis yet abstract in day-to-day pilgrimage experience. Pilgrims encountered the state not as a singular entity but through airline crews, medical staff, consular officials, and emergency statements. In moments of disaster, however, these dispersed encounters coalesced into a singular expectation: that the state would intervene, explain, mourn, and assign meaning. The repeated designation of crash

victims as *syuhada haji* thus became a ritualized state practice, translating bureaucratic failure into theological consolation.

These dynamics reverberated into later decades. The collapse of private operators, such as P.T. Tiga Utama in the 1999 hajj season, further reinforced the perception that air-based hajj travel, however privatized, ultimately required state backing. When hundreds of pilgrims were stranded in Jeddah due to unpaid airfare and hotel bills, it was again the Indonesian state, through its consulate and affiliated organizations, that orchestrated repatriation. Air travel, in this sense, entrenched the expectation that the state must act as guarantor of religious mobility, even amid market liberalization.

Indonesian Hajj air travel reveals that movement itself is never just technical. The airplane is not merely a way to get pilgrims from Indonesia to Mecca; it is a space where faith, state authority, and modern risk intersect. Inside the cabin, pilgrims encounter government procedures, machines they do not control, and the belief that their fate ultimately rests in God's hands, all at once.

Aviation disasters such as the Martinair crash in 1974 and the Colombo tragedy in 1978 exposed the limits of bureaucratic control over mass pilgrimage. Yet these moments of failure also drew the Indonesian state more deeply into pilgrims' religious lives. Through public mourning, official narratives of martyrdom, and the creation of memorials, the state sought to give meaning to loss and to affirm its responsibility for those who died while fulfilling a sacred obligation.

In this shared airspace, pilgrimage becomes a constant negotiation, between trust in divine will and reliance on human systems, between surrender and regulation. The modern Indonesian state does not simply fade away once pilgrims leave the ground. Instead, it reappears in announcements, emergency responses, and rituals of remembrance, asserting its presence at the very edge of vulnerability. Even thousands of meters above the earth, the sacred journey to Mecca unfolds within a fragile balance of faith, infrastructure, and political care.



Table 5.3 Fatalities and Bureaucratic Challenges

Table 5.3. The Makam Syuhada Haji (Hajj Martyrs' Cemetery) in Landasan Ulin, Banjarbaru, was established to bury pilgrims from South Kalimantan who died in the Colombo Tragedy, the crash of a hajj aircraft returning from Saudi Arabia in 1978. Over time, the site has become an important place of religious pilgrimage, situated alongside the Bumi Kencana Heroes' Cemetery, linking the memory of hajj-related tragedy with Indonesia's broader national commemorative landscape. Source: Wibowo.

5.4. Privatization and Pseudo-State Actors

If air travel rendered the hajj faster, riskier, and more tightly coordinated, it also reorganized the political economy of pilgrimage. Beginning in the late New Order period, the consolidation of air transport created the conditions for partial privatization, most visibly through the emergence of *Ongkos Naik Haji Plus* (ONH Plus). While officially framed as an optional premium service, ONH Plus fundamentally altered the moral grammar of hajj mobility, introducing differentiated access, market logics, and new expectations of state responsibility within an increasingly stratified pilgrimage regime.

ONH Plus was made possible precisely because of aviation. Unlike maritime travel, whose long durations and collective logistics limited differentiation, air travel allowed modular packaging: flexible departure dates, varied accommodation tiers, shorter stays, and individualized itineraries. Pilgrims who could afford ONH Plus were promised not only

physical comfort but also temporal control, shorter waiting times, expedited departures, and smoother transit through airports and Saudi infrastructures. In this sense, air travel did not simply modernize the hajj; it commodified time itself as a religious resource.

The distinction between regular (regulated) hajj and ONH Plus crystallized most sharply at airports. Departure terminals became spaces where class difference was materially staged: separate counters, distinct documentation, and differentiated handling by airline and ministry personnel. Pilgrims narrated these distinctions not simply as economic inequality but as moral ambiguity. While many acknowledged the legitimacy of paying for convenience, others questioned whether a ritual premised on equality before God could accommodate such stratification. Air travel thus intensified debates already latent in Islamic discourse, placing them within the visible architecture of the state-managed airport.

For the Indonesian state, ONH Plus functioned as a strategic compromise. On one hand, it allowed the government to offload some logistical burdens to private operators, reducing pressure on state quotas, housing allocations, and transport coordination in Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, it generated new regulatory challenges. Because ONH Plus relied almost entirely on air travel, frequently through chartered or leased aircraft, the boundary between state authority and private enterprise became increasingly porous. Private operators marketed pilgrimage packages, but pilgrims continued to perceive the state as ultimately accountable for their safety, movement, and ritual completion.

This expectation was dramatically reinforced during moments of failure. The collapse of P.T. Tiga Utama during the 1999 hajj season exposed the structural fragility of privatized air-based pilgrimage. Unable to absorb soaring airfare and accommodation costs in the wake of Indonesia’s economic crisis, the company abandoned hundreds of ONH Plus pilgrims in Jeddah, leaving hotel bills unpaid and guides absent. For pilgrims, the distinction between private provider and state guarantee collapsed instantaneously. Appeals were directed not to the company but to the Indonesian consulate, religious officials, and ONH Plus associations, all of whom intervened to repatriate the stranded jamaah.

This episode is critical because it reveals how privatization did not erode state authority but rather reconfigured it. Air travel enabled privatized services, yet every aviation-related failure, such as missed flights, charter disputes, cost overruns, or airline insolvencies, reactivated demands for state intervention. In anthropological terms, the state remained the

imagined guarantor of religious mobility, even when operational responsibility was dispersed across private actors. ONH Plus thus expanded the state's moral exposure without proportionally reducing its political liability.

Air travel also intensified the bureaucratic rationalization of pilgrimage risk. Unlike sea travel, where delays and uncertainties were expected, aviation required precise scheduling and compliance with international safety regimes, insurance frameworks, and bilateral agreements. Pilgrims were increasingly subject to forms, briefings, and medical screenings, encountering the hajj as a dense administrative process long before departure. ONH Plus amplified this encounter. Private operators often imposed additional requirements, such as fitness assessments, financial guarantees, contractual clauses, introducing pilgrims to market rationalities layered atop state bureaucracy.

Yet these rationalities were unevenly understood. Many ONH Plus pilgrims described themselves as purchasing "peace of mind," only to discover that air-based hajj mobility multiplied points of failure beyond their control: aircraft leasing arrangements, foreign aviation authorities, transit airports, and shifting flight schedules. The tragedies of 1974 and 1978 remained vivid reference points in collective memory, shaping perceptions of flying to the Holy Land as an act of both trust and surrender. Even for wealthier pilgrims, air travel carried existential risk that could not be fully mitigated by payment or privilege.

The state responded to these tensions through a dual strategy of regulation and moral framing. On the regulatory side, tighter oversight of ONH Plus operators was introduced, particularly in relation to flight arrangements, financial solvency, and coordination with Indonesian diplomatic missions. On the moral side, the state continued to deploy religious language, emphasizing sincerity (*ikhlas*), patience (*sabar*), and divine providence, in public communications and crisis responses. This combination allowed the state to justify differentiated services while reaffirming an overarching narrative of collective religious responsibility.

From an anthropological perspective, ONH Plus reveals how air travel transformed the hajj into a layered assemblage of sovereignty and markets. Pilgrims navigated overlapping regimes: civil aviation authorities, private tour operators, Saudi regulations, and Indonesian religious bureaucracy. None of these regimes alone constituted "the state," yet together they produced what might be called a distributed state effect, experienced most

acutely at moments of disruption. When flights were delayed or accommodations vanished, pilgrims did not appeal to abstract market forces; they invoked the state, expecting it to restore moral and logistical order.

This expectation persisted into the 2000s, shaping state responses to subsequent crises, including shortages of food and services during peak seasons. The recruitment of doctors, students, and guides as temporary state personnel can be read as a direct response to the vulnerabilities amplified by air-based mass mobility. These "pseudo-state" actors filled gaps left by privatization, performing care and coordination functions essential to maintaining legitimacy. Their presence underscores that privatization did not diminish the state's role but multiplied the forms through which it appeared.

Air travel, then, did not simply enable ONH Plus; it reformulated the relationship between faith, mobility, and governance. By accelerating movement and fragmenting responsibility, aviation exposed pilgrims to new risks while binding the state more tightly to their outcomes. ONH Plus emerged as both a symptom and a catalyst of this transformation, illustrating how the commodification of pilgrimage operates alongside enduring moral claims on state authority.

In this context, the hajj remains a contested space not because the state withdraws, but because it must constantly negotiate its presence across marketized infrastructures of mobility. Airplanes, contracts, and charter agreements become sites where the boundaries of religious responsibility are tested. The state's resilience lies not in monopolizing these spaces, but in its capacity to reassert meaning, protection, and legitimacy when the promise of smooth flight toward the sacred inevitably confronts the turbulence of modern pilgrimage.

The proliferation of what pilgrims commonly encounter as "official helpers" during the hajj, e.g., doctors, student volunteers, temporary guides, airline liaison officers, and consular facilitators, demands theoretical attention beyond categories of formal employment or institutional affiliation. These figures are neither fully private nor unequivocally state agents, yet they perform functions critical to the maintenance of state legitimacy in moments of uncertainty and crisis. In this chapter, they are best understood as pseudo-state actors, provisional extensions of bureaucratic authority whose legitimacy derives less from legal status than from their capacity to act credibly in the name of the state.

Pseudo-state actors complicate conventional understandings of bureaucracy as a stable institutional apparatus. Rather than a fixed hierarchy, the hajj reveals bureaucracy as an elastic field that expands and contracts in response to risk. Air travel, by accelerating mobility, compressing schedules, and amplifying the consequences of failure, produces precisely the conditions under which such elasticity becomes necessary. When flights are delayed, pilgrims stranded, or services disrupted, the demand is not merely for technical solutions but for recognizable agents of authority who can translate disorder into an intelligible moral and administrative frame.

From the perspective of pilgrims, what matters is not whether these actors are formally employed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, a private operator, or a professional association, but how convincingly they embody the state's promise of protection. A doctor recruited temporarily during the hajj season, for example, may lack permanent bureaucratic rank, yet their uniform, access to facilities, and affiliation with Indonesian delegations position them as representatives of state care. Similarly, Indonesian students studying in Saudi Arabia are often mobilized as translators or informal guides, inhabiting a liminal status that allows them to mediate between pilgrims, Saudi authorities, airlines, and consular offices. Their authority is situational, contingent, and fragile, yet indispensable.

Seen through the anthropology of bureaucracy, these actors materialize what might otherwise be understood abstractly as "the state." Rather than appearing solely through documents, regulations, or centralized commands, the state becomes present through conduct: calming distressed pilgrims, negotiating with hotel managers, arranging transportation, or providing medical reassurance. These everyday bureaucratic rituals, e.g., briefings, lists, guides, stamps, and signatures, produce what has been described elsewhere as a state effect: the sensation of a coherent authority emerging from disparate and often improvised practices.

Air travel intensifies this effect precisely because it destabilizes routine governance. Unlike sea travel, where delays were predictable and collectively endured, aviation creates sharp temporal ruptures: missed connections, sudden cancellations, or catastrophes requiring immediate explanation. In these moments, pseudo-state actors function as shock absorbers. They absorb uncertainty, translate technical failures into moral narratives, and prevent the attribution of blame from crystallizing uncontrollably. Their presence does not eliminate risk, but it reframes it as governable.

Crucially, privatization does not diminish the importance of these actors; it multiplies it. The expansion of ONH Plus and the outsourcing of logistical functions fragment responsibility across operators, airlines, and foreign regulators. Yet pilgrims do not experience this fragmentation symmetrically. For them, the failure of a private tour operator is still a failure of the pilgrimage as a state-sanctioned obligation. When P.T. Tiga Utama collapsed in 1999, leaving hundreds of pilgrims stranded in Jeddah, the decisive interventions were not made by market mechanisms but by consular offices, religious officials, and ad hoc coordinators who stepped into the vacuum. These figures, often operating without clear mandates, nonetheless restored order by performing the state.

Pseudo-state actors reveal an important imbalance within privatized hajj services. Even when private operators handle logistics, responsibility for failure continues to fall on the state. Pilgrims do not separate technical error from moral obligation; when problems arise, they turn to the state for answers and protection. Pseudo-state actors therefore do not stand in for the state, they allow it to remain present in places and moments where formal authority is hard to see.

This development also points to a broader concern with care and control in hajj governance. With air travel, pilgrims increasingly come to be seen as a population that must be closely supported and kept stable, physically, logistically, and emotionally. Temporary doctors and health workers focus on health and bodily well-being; guides and coordinators help manage movement and schedules; student volunteers assist with communication and translation. Together, these actors form a loosely connected system of care that supports safety and order, even though much of it operates informally or only for the duration of the hajj season. In this context, bureaucratic authority is less about enforcing rules than about keeping people moving, calm, and connected throughout a highly demanding journey.

What sets pseudo-state actors apart is the way they speak and act in moral terms. Instead of relying only on rules and instructions, they often use religious language—inviting pilgrims to remain patient (*sabar*), sincere (*ikhlas*), and trusting in God's plan. This does not weaken bureaucratic authority; it helps it work. By connecting administrative decisions to Islamic values, these actors make state intervention feel meaningful rather than merely technical. Delays and problems are reinterpreted as spiritual tests, and compliance with procedures becomes part of religious devotion.

This moral labor is particularly visible in moments of aviation crisis. Following tragedies such as Martinair 1974 and Colombo 1978, the designation of victims as *syuhada haji* did not emerge solely from ministerial statements but circulated through a broader infrastructure of clerics, officials, and intermediaries who repeated, embodied, and localized this framing. Pseudo-state actors play a similar role in less spectacular disruptions, ensuring that the logic of governance is absorbed into the moral grammar of pilgrimage.

Seen this way, pseudo-state actors help us understand the flexibility of the modern Indonesian state. Rather than retreating in the face of privatization, the state extends itself through people, situations, and everyday practices. Authority becomes mobile and intermittent, appearing most clearly at moments of risk, when the smooth conduct of pilgrimage is threatened. The hajj therefore does not reveal a weak or disappearing state, but one that endures by multiplying its points of contact with pilgrims.

In this sense, the anthropology of bureaucracy helps us move beyond questions of whether the state is present or absent in the organization of the hajj. The more pertinent question is, rather, how the state appears, through whom, and at what moments. Pseudo-state actors are not anomalies or stopgaps; they are structural features of contemporary governance in a context where faith, mass mobility, and technological risk converge. By tracing their emergence and operation, we see that the management of pilgrimage is not simply a logistical enterprise but an ongoing project of moral and political stabilization in the skies, terminals, and temporary infrastructures of modern Islam.

Chapter 6 – The Remaking of Mecca

Mecca is often imagined as timeless, the sacred center of Islam, unchanged despite the passage of centuries. For pilgrims, it is the place where history, faith, and devotion converge, a city defined less by buildings than by ritual and memory. Yet Mecca today is undergoing one of the most dramatic transformations in its long history. Towering hotels now rise where old neighborhoods once stood, luxury shopping arcades line the paths of pilgrimage, and vast redevelopment projects reshape how pilgrims see, move through, and experience the holy city.

This chapter shifts the focus from institutions and administration to Mecca itself as a lived and contested space. It traces how large-scale urban redevelopment, market-driven planning, and the rapid expansion of the Umrah industry have reconfigured the physical and social landscape of the city. These changes have profoundly altered the experience of pilgrimage, not only in practical terms such as housing, transportation, and crowd movement, but also in more intimate dimensions of access, visibility, and spiritual proximity to the sacred.

The remaking of Mecca has been driven by a powerful combination of state ambition and global capital. Demolition of older districts has cleared the way for high-rise developments catering primarily to affluent visitors, while poorer pilgrims are increasingly pushed to the margins, both spatially and socially. Sacred sites that once unfolded within dense urban neighborhoods now stand amid commercial zones designed for efficiency, profit, and spectacle. The result is a city that feels simultaneously more orderly and more unequal—grand in scale, yet often distant from the everyday lives of ordinary pilgrims.

Within this rapidly changing environment, older forms of religious mediation have not disappeared. Instead, they have adapted. The chapter pays close attention again to kyai–muṭawwif networks, religious guides, brokers, and intermediaries with deep ties to Indonesian pilgrims, who help translate the complexities of the new Mecca into meaningful religious experiences. These actors navigate between pilgrims and authorities, between ritual obligation and commercial infrastructure, sustaining trust in a city that is increasingly difficult to read on its own terms.

The central argument of this chapter is that the transformation of Mecca is not merely a story of urban change. It is also a story about shifting religious authority, emerging social hierarchies, and new forms of mediation shaped by neoliberal development. As the city is rebuilt, the meaning of pilgrimage itself is being renegotiated, through architecture, markets, regulations, and the everyday practices of those who guide pilgrims through a sacred landscape that is no longer familiar, even to those who have returned many times before.

This chapter offers an ethnographic and historical account of Mecca's transformation into a modern pilgrimage city, situating this process within broader themes of bureaucratization, neoliberal development, and the changing experience of pilgrims. Mecca, long imagined as a timeless sacred center, has undergone dramatic physical and social restructuring over the past four decades. These changes have not only altered the city's skyline but have also reshaped the nature of pilgrimage, creating new tensions between state-driven modernization and the lived realities of ordinary pilgrims.

The remaking of Mecca began in earnest during the 1980s under King Fahd, who adopted the title *Khadim al-Haramain,* Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, in 1986. This symbolic gesture coincided with a turning point in Saudi Arabia's global religious presence, marked by the oil price collapse and the introduction of the hajj quota system under the Organization of Islamic Conference. In 1982, King Fahd launched one of the largest restoration projects in Islamic history, allocating approximately US $8 billion to expand and modernize the sacred precinct. These efforts were framed as acts of piety and service to the Muslim world, yet they also signaled the increasing convergence of religious authority and state power.

The pace of transformation accelerated under King Abdullah, who initiated a multi-billion-dollar redevelopment project in 2006. The construction of the Jabal Omar complex and the Abraj al-Bait towers, dominating the skyline with supertall structures, redefined Mecca as a global city. Former landmarks such as Gaza Street, known to Indonesian pilgrims as *Pasar Seng*, were erased as older neighborhoods were demolished to make way for luxury hotels, commercial centers, and extended prayer halls. By 2009, much of the historic urban fabric surrounding the Grand Mosque had vanished, replaced by high-rise developments catering to affluent pilgrims. These changes have rendered the hajj increasingly inhospitable to the poor, pushing low-income pilgrims to peripheral zones and reinforcing socio-economic stratification within the sacred landscape.

This transformation reflects a neoliberal shift in pilgrimage governance, where market logics intersect with religious obligations. The rise of year-round *umrah* packages exemplifies this trend. Once considered an optional ritual, *umrah* has become a booming industry, filling the spiritual gap created by the seasonal restrictions of the hajj and reshaping the demographic composition of Mecca and Medina. Migrant workers, students, and expatriates now populate these cities in unprecedented numbers, blurring the boundaries between pilgrimage and labor migration.

The remaking of Mecca has also generated new opportunities for Indonesian actors within transnational religious networks. Students from pesantren backgrounds, many funded by Saudi scholarships, increasingly participate in the pilgrimage economy. While some return home as teachers and religious scholars, others leverage their linguistic skills and Saudi experience to work as guides, translators, and brokers in hajj-related businesses. This trend extends beyond Saudi Arabia to other Middle Eastern educational hubs such as Cairo, Khartoum, and Tunis, where Indonesian students supplement their studies by serving as pilgrimage facilitators. For many, a single hajj season provides sufficient income to cover tuition and living expenses for an entire year.

Parallel to these developments, the long-established *mukimin* communities, descendants of Nusantara scholars who settled in the Hejaz, have consolidated their economic position. Families once known for their scholarly lineage now manage hotels, supervise housing complexes, and invest in real estate, while continuing to operate within the centuries-old tawafa system. The simplification of names from al-Bantani to Banten or al-Falimbani to Felimban symbolizes both assimilation and the pragmatic adaptation of these communities to modern Saudi society.

These shifts underscore a profound reconfiguration of the Ulama Nusantara networks. What was once a scholarly orientation toward Middle Eastern learning has evolved into a commercially inflected engagement with pilgrimage economies. The hajj and *umrah* industries have become sites of employment, entrepreneurship, and cultural production, as evidenced by the proliferation of hajj memoirs, religious magazines, and Arabic texts translated into Indonesian. This commodification of pilgrimage experience reflects broader patterns of globalization, where sacred spaces are reimagined through the lens of capital and consumption.

Ultimately, the remaking of Mecca reveals a paradox. For the Saudi state, these transformations represent monumental achievements, a testament to its custodianship of Islam's holiest sites. For many pilgrims, however, they signify a loss: the erosion of historical intimacy, the marginalization of the poor, and the commercialization of devotion. This chapter argues that Mecca has become a field of collision, where competing visions of modernity, piety, and profit converge, producing new forms of inequality and new modalities of religious practice.

The remaking of Mecca is not merely an urban development story but a carefully orchestrated project of state legitimacy, in which the Saudi monarchy has systematically fused religious authority with sovereign power. Beginning with King Fahd's symbolic self-designation as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in 1986, and accelerating through King Abdullah's multi-billion-dollar redevelopments of the 2000s, the Saudi state has increasingly positioned itself as the indispensable steward of global Islam. Yet this custodianship has come at a profound cost. The erasure of historic neighborhoods, the displacement of low-income pilgrims to the urban periphery, and the replacement of centuries-old landmarks with luxury towers and commercial complexes reveal a pilgrimage economy governed less by principles of universal spiritual access than by the logics of capital accumulation. The hajj, once a great equalizer that dissolved distinctions of wealth and status beneath the white cloth of the ihram, now reproduces and even amplifies the socioeconomic hierarchies pilgrims bring with them, stratifying the sacred landscape into tiers of comfort and proximity determined by purchasing power.

This commodification of devotion has simultaneously generated new transnational actors and reshaped existing religious networks in ways that defy simple narratives of loss or decline. Indonesian students, mukimin families, and pilgrimage brokers have not merely been passive witnesses to Mecca's transformation; they have actively carved out economic and cultural niches within it, translating scholarly prestige, linguistic fluency, and diasporic connections into viable livelihoods. What is most striking, however, is how these adaptations signal a broader epistemological shift within the Ulama Nusantara tradition, one in which the pursuit of sacred knowledge and the pursuit of material opportunity have become increasingly difficult to disentangle. The proliferation of hajj memoirs, translated religious texts, and umrah tourism packages are not incidental byproducts of globalization but symptomatic expressions of a deeper transformation: the sacred is now also a market, and

pilgrimage is now also an industry. Understanding Mecca today requires holding both of these truths simultaneously, resisting the temptation to reduce its complexity to either triumph or tragedy.

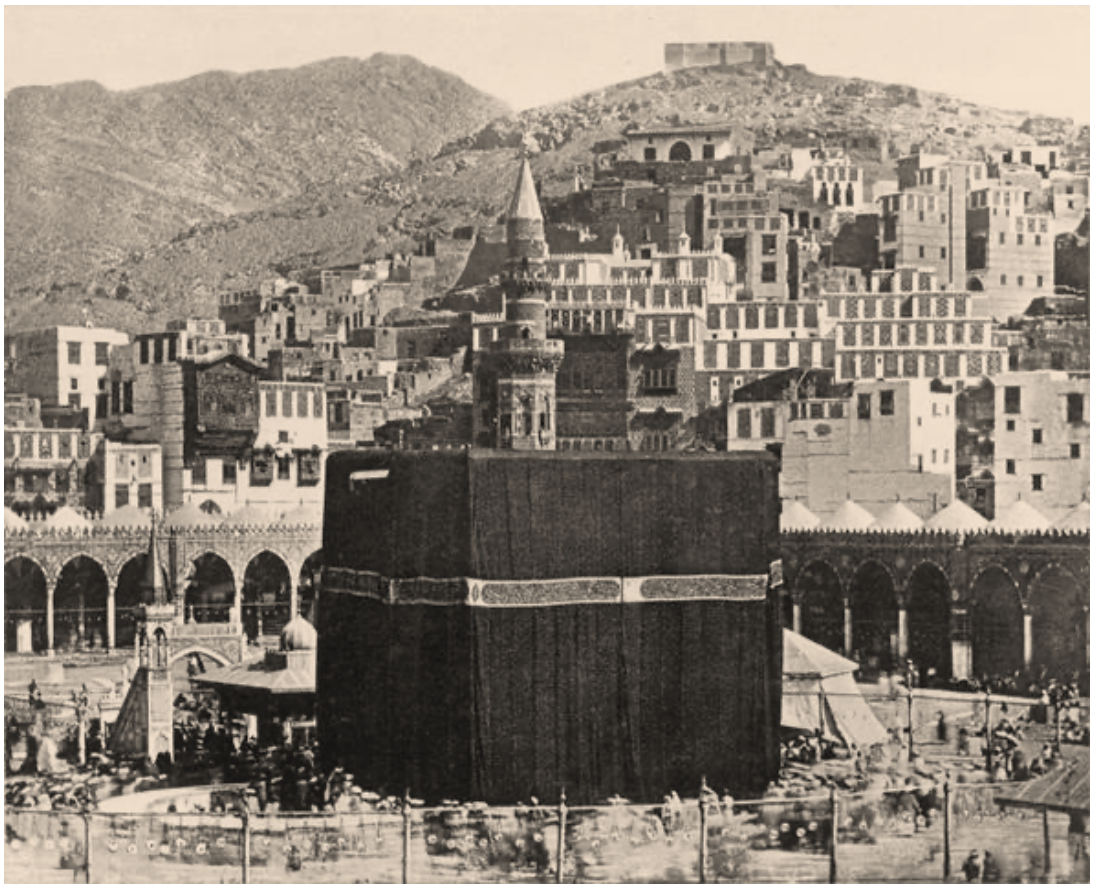


Table 6.1 Major Transformations in Mecca

Early photographs of Mecca taken by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje in the late nineteenth century were auctioned at Sotheby's in London for €250,000 (approximately Rp 4 billion). Considered among the earliest photographic records of Mecca and its inhabitants. Source: courtesy of Kumparan & Algemeen Dagblad.



Table 6.2 Major Transformations in Mecca

Recent photos as of 2025 emerged from Mecca; the Islamic holiest city is having another major transformation since early 2000s. Source: Courtesy of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, KSA.

6.1. Mecca, Urban Transformation and Pilgrimage Industry

In the early hours before dawn, groups of Indonesian pilgrims gather in the lobbies of luxury hotels overlooking the Masjid al-Haram. Men in identical batik jackets and women wearing neatly color-coordinated hijabs wait for their muṭawwif, clutching smartphones and laminated identity cards distributed by their travel agencies. From the hotel lobby, the Kaaba is visible, framed not by history or memory, but by glass façades, escalators, and branded retail outlets. For many pilgrims, this is their first encounter with Mecca, mediated not through inherited imaginaries of the sacred city, but through the infrastructures of the contemporary Umrah industry.

Over the past two decades, Umrah has become one of the most rapidly expanding religious industries linking Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Once understood primarily as a supplementary act of devotion, Umrah is now embedded in a dense network of travel agencies, hospitality corporations, religious brokers, and state regulations. This transformation has reshaped not only how Indonesians arrive in Mecca, but how they move through it, perceive it, and experience its sacredness. Mecca, in this sense, is no longer encountered as a timeless religious city; it is increasingly accessed through the logics of tourism, consumption, and global capitalism.

This part examines how neo-liberal urban redevelopment and the expansion of the Umrah industry have remade Mecca as a spatial, economic, and moral landscape. Drawing on Indonesian Umrah practices, it explores how demolition, commercialization, and luxury redevelopment have reorganized access to sacred space while simultaneously reconfiguring religious authority and mediation. Particular attention is paid to the adaptive strategies of Indonesian kyai-muṭawwif networks, who operate at the intersection of devotion, service, and market demands.

The scale of Umrah participation from Indonesia has expanded dramatically. In 2011, approximately 500,000 Indonesians performed Umrah; by the early 2020s, annual figures approached one million pilgrims. This growth has been facilitated by relaxed Saudi visa regulations, increased flight connectivity, and the rapid professionalization of religious travel services (Gallarotti & Al-Filali, 2012. By 2017, the number of registered Umrah travel agencies in Indonesia had nearly tripled compared to the early 2000s, reflecting the consolidation of Umrah as a lucrative sector within Indonesia’s religious economy.

These agencies market Umrah through a language that blends devotion with consumer aspiration. Promotional brochures highlight five-star hotels, shopping centers, and "Umrah plus" itineraries that include tours to Turkey, Dubai, or Al-Ula. Celebrity preachers (*ustadz* and *ustadzah*), social media influencers, and charismatic kyai are routinely deployed as endorsements, offering spiritual legitimacy to packages differentiated primarily by price, proximity to the Haram, and luxury amenities. In interviews, pilgrims often describe selecting Umrah packages in the same manner they would choose an international holiday, comparing facilities, comfort, and prestige, while simultaneously framing their decision as a response to what many ustadzs call as *panggilan Allah* or divine calling.

The Umrah industry thus reframes pilgrimage as what middle-class Indonesians increasingly describe as *experience spending*, an investment in spiritual fulfillment that is inseparable from lifestyle, mobility, and status (Jahroni, 2022). High levels of expenditure, averaging over USD 2,600 per pilgrim, position Indonesian Umrah travelers among the most lucrative religious tourists in Saudi Arabia. Mecca, consequently, has become a key destination within global religious tourism, shaped as much by Indonesian consumer expectations as by Saudi development agendas.

For Indonesian pilgrims arriving today, Mecca is materially and sensorially different from the city encountered by earlier generations. Large-scale demolition projects have erased much of the old urban fabric surrounding the Masjid al-Haram, replacing modest neighborhoods with luxury hotels, shopping malls, and high-rise towers. The Abraj al-Bait complex, with its clock tower looming over the Kaaba, has become both an icon of modern Mecca and a symbol of growing inequality in access to sacred space.

Access to proximity has become stratified. Pilgrims staying in premium hotels can reach the mosque within minutes via private escalators, while others must navigate long, crowded pedestrian routes and shuttle systems. Many Indonesian pilgrims are acutely aware of this spatial hierarchy. During first my fieldwork in 2004, several described feelings of ambivalence, gratitude for comfort and proximity, paired with unease about praying within spaces dominated by commercial signage and surveillance technologies. One pilgrim from Bandung remarked, "We are close to the Kaaba, but it feels like being inside a mall."

These transformations have altered not only physical access but also the sensory experience of devotion. The rhythms of prayer now overlap with the rhythms of consumption, shopping before *tawaf*, resting in air-conditioned lounges between rituals, and

documenting the journey through selfies and live streams. Sacred intimacy, once associated with physical hardship and immersion, is increasingly mediated through comfort, efficiency, and visual consumption.

Aa Gym and MQ Travel

Within this transformed landscape, Indonesian kyai-Ustadz-muṭawwif occupy a crucial mediatory position. Traditionally responsible for guiding pilgrims through rituals, these figures now operate within corporate travel structures that demand punctuality, crowd management, and customer satisfaction. Many kyai describe their role as increasingly managerial, balancing ritual instruction with logistical coordination, conflict resolution, and emotional support.

Yet rather than disappearing, religious authority is being reshaped. Kyai-muṭawwif adapt by incorporating motivational sermons, curated narratives of Mecca's history, and moral reminders about sincerity amid consumption. Some explicitly address the contradictions of luxury pilgrimage, urging pilgrims to reflect on humility while staying in five-star environments. In doing so, they translate the moral economy of pilgrimage into a language compatible with the Umrah industry, sustaining religious meaning within a highly commodified setting.

Among Indonesian Islamic preachers who came to occupy a central position in the expanding Umrah and Hajj travel industry in the early 2000s, Abdullah Gymnastiar, widely known as Aa Gym, stands out as a formative figure. Renowned for his *Manajemen Qolbu* (MQ, "Heart Management") teachings, Aa Gym embodied a form of religious authority that translated easily into the emerging circuits of packaged pilgrimage. His sermons, emphasizing sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), emotional discipline, humility, and inner calm, resonated strongly with Indonesia's urban middle classes at a moment when Umrah was becoming increasingly accessible, repeatable, and commodified.

Aa Gym's involvement in pilgrimage was not limited to endorsement or symbolic leadership. Through MQ Travel, the pilgrimage wing associated with his Da'arut Tauhiid (DT) foundation, he actively organized and led Umrah and Hajj groups, positioning himself simultaneously as kyai, motivator, spiritual guide, and brand. MQ Travel promoted Umrah not only as ritual compliance but as a chance for personal transformation, a journey of

emotional management as much as devotional fulfillment. Pilgrims were encouraged to see Mecca and Medina as sites where the heart could be disciplined, anxieties calmed, and moral selves recalibrated.

I joined one of Aa Gym's Umrah groups in the summer 2004, which also marked my first period of ethnographic fieldwork in Mecca and Medina. Traveling as a pilgrim-researcher within an MQ-organized group provided early insight into how religious authority operated inside tightly managed pilgrimage infrastructures. Aa Gym did not accompany the group continuously, but his presence was palpable through recorded sermons, shared narratives, and the moral vocabulary that shaped group interaction. Before and after rituals, pilgrims listened to brief motivational reminders emphasizing patience in crowds, restraint in emotion, and humility amid proximity to the Kaaba, all core MQ themes translated into pilgrimage practice.

What struck me during this journey was how seamlessly emotional pedagogy merged with tour organization. Group discipline, i.e. punctual assembly, coordinated movement, adherence to schedules, was framed not as bureaucratic necessity but as an exercise in self-control (*pengendalian diri*). Delays, exhaustion, and discomfort were interpreted as tests of the heart rather than logistical disruptions. In this sense, Aa Gym's MQ framework functioned as a moral technology that helped pilgrims reconcile spiritual aspiration with the realities of mass religious tourism.

Within the hotels, buses, and prayer corridors of Mecca and Medina, Aa Gym's teachings circulated as a form of moral infrastructure. Pilgrims repeated MQ slogans softly to one another, especially during moments of frustration. Rather than critique the commercial environment surrounding the sacred sites, sermons redirected attention inward, urging pilgrims to safeguard intention (*niat*) regardless of external conditions. Luxury accommodations, standardized itineraries, and group branding were thus rendered morally neutral, provided the heart remained properly oriented.

Aa Gym's role illustrates how charismatic religious figures became key intermediaries in Indonesia's pilgrimage economy. His authority did not depend on traditional jurisprudential expertise alone but on his ability to translate ethical reflection into formats compatible with marketized pilgrimage. MQ Travel exemplified a model in which spiritual reassurance, emotional management, and consumer trust were bundled together. Pilgrims

traveling with Aa Gym, or under his symbolic guidance, often expressed confidence that their worship would be "guided correctly," both ritually and morally.

This positioning was particularly significant in the early expansion phase of Indonesia's Umrah industry, when regulatory oversight was uneven and trust was placed less in abstract institutions than in recognizable moral figures. Traveling with Aa Gym was widely perceived not simply as purchasing a package, but as entering a protected moral space. His reputation for sincerity insulated the pilgrimage experience from anxieties surrounding commercialization, fraud, or excessive luxury.

Aa Gym's involvement in Umrah and Hajj travel illustrates how religious authority adapts within a marketized sacred landscape. Rather than opposing commercialization, he reframed it ethically. The task of the pilgrim was not to resist infrastructure, but to manage the heart within it. My 2004 journey with his group revealed how this form of guidance shaped pilgrims' movements, emotions, and interpretations of sacred space, long before Mecca's transformation reached its current scale. In this sense, Aa Gym and MQ Travel were not peripheral to the Umrah industry; they were integral to the moral grammar through which Indonesian pilgrims learned to inhabit a rapidly changing Mecca.

Haji Ipep and the Genealogies of Care

If Aa Gym represents a highly visible, charismatic articulation of religious authority within Indonesia's Umrah industry, figures such as Haji Ipep, based in KBIH al-Mufassir, Majalaya, Bandung, exemplify a quieter but no less consequential mode of mediation. Haji Ipep is not a national celebrity preacher, nor does he operate a recognizable commercial brand. Yet for many pilgrims, particularly elderly Jamaah, his authority is grounded in something equally powerful, that is genealogy, embodied care, and practical reliability.

Formally, Haji Ipep works as a staff member within the public health sector, seconded to Hasan Sadikin Hospital in Bandung. Over the past decade, however, he has also served as a hajj and umrah ritual guide (pembimbing ibadah) affiliated with his family's pesantren, repeatedly leading groups of between forty-five and ninety pilgrims per journey. Among the pilgrims who travel with him, especially older participants, Haji Ipep is widely regarded as a reassuring presence. He is valued not only for his mastery of ritual procedure, but for his ability to navigate the bodily vulnerabilities that emerge during pilgrimage, i.e. fatigue,

dehydration, chronic illness, anxiety, conditions that are amplified within Mecca's densely managed and physically demanding religious infrastructure.

In interviews, pilgrims consistently framed their trust in Haji Ipep through the language of "*aman"* and "*tenang",* meaning safety and calm. His medical knowledge allows pilgrims to experience Umrah and Hajj with a sense of protection that is as moral as it is physical. This form of guidance foregrounds care as mediation, positioning religious authority not only as instruction or motivation, but as the capacity to manage risk and bodily precarity within the sacred city. In this sense, Haji Ipep's role complicates dominant portrayals of the Umrah industry as purely commercial or symbolic. His practice reveals pilgrimage as an embodied process, structured by age, health, and fragility, and mediated through figures who can translate ritual obligation into sustainable bodily practice.

Haji Ipep's authority, however, cannot be understood solely through contemporary function. It is embedded in a dense genealogy of pesantren knowledge and transregional Islamic networks. He is the son of Kyai Emas, founder of Pesantren al-Mufassir in Majalaya, and part of a lineage connected to prominent West Javanese ulama, including descendants of KH Hasan Basori of Kiarakoneng and Mama Cileunyi, figures whose networks extended across Sunda pesantren circles in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These genealogies are not merely symbolic; they structure claims to legitimacy that pilgrims continue to recognize in the present.

Historical traces of this lineage appear even in colonial archives. During his late nineteenth-century journeys through pesantren in Java, Madura, and Sunda, Snouck Hurgronje recorded the names of ulama whose educational trajectories linked local pesantren to Mecca. Figures such as Kiai Muhammad Garut, whose studies carried him from Priangan to Surabaya, Bangkalan, and eventually Mecca, exemplify a long tradition of transregional scholarly mobility. This genealogy extended through teachers such as Syaikh Muhammad al-Zawawi, Syaikh Muhammad Hasbullah al-Makki, and Syaikh Khatib Sambas, the latter also known as a murshid of the Qadiriyah-Naqshbandiyah order. Within this tradition, Mecca functions not only as a ritual destination but as a site of scholarly formation and moral authorization.

Kyai Emas himself, Haji Ipep's father, followed a similar trajectory. After studying with KH Dimyathi at Pesantren Sukamiskin in Bandung, he was sent to Mecca, where he studied at Madrasah Shaulatiyah, an institution known for its South Asian and Southeast

Asian scholarly networks. During this period, Kyai Emas and his contemporaries frequently encountered pilgrims from West Java in Mecca, forging durable connections that later facilitated organized hajj and umrah departures. These encounters laid the groundwork for what would later become pesantren-based pilgrimage mediation.

In the post-independence period, this mediation increasingly took entrepreneurial form. During the 1970s and 1980s, figures such as Haji Badruddin, part of the same extended lineage, became known as *kyai-entrepreneurs*, organizing large-scale hajj departures from the Priangan region. Utilizing familial and scholarly connections in Mecca, Haji Badruddin was reportedly able to coordinate pilgrim groups numbering up to two full flight groups (kloter)—nearly nine hundred pilgrims at a time. One particularly distinctive strategy involved bringing Jamaah to Mecca during Ramadan for Umrah and having them remain there until the Hajj season began. According to Haji A. Sahal, an NU figures in West Java, this practice later came to be known as an early form of "Haji Sandal Jepit", a phenomenon that blurred the line between formal regulation and informal religious mobility.[38]

Within this longer historical arc, Haji Ipep represents neither rupture nor simple continuity. He does not travel to Mecca as a long-term student, nor does he operate on the scale of his predecessors. Instead, his role reflects a recalibration of pesantren authority within a regulated, medicalized, and highly infrastructural pilgrimage regime. His dual expertise, ritual knowledge and health competence, allows him to mediate between pilgrims, Saudi infrastructures, and Indonesian regulatory expectations. Care, here, becomes a form of authority that is both genealogical and modern, moral and technical.

Anthropologically, Haji Ipep's practice highlights how religious authority in the Umrah–Hajj industry is not monopolized by large travel corporations or celebrity preachers. It is also sustained through minor figures of mediation, whose legitimacy rests on embodied trust, familial genealogy, and the capacity to manage pilgrims' vulnerabilities. In a marketized sacred city where access, speed, and proximity are increasingly calibrated through capital, figures like Haji Ipep anchor pilgrimage within an ethics of care, one that renders the sacred not only visible or proximate, but survivable.

For Indonesian pilgrims, Umrah unfolds through tightly managed schedules, color-coded group identities, and standardized ritual routines. Each day begins with collective

[38] Interview, Bandung, 4 August, 2015.

prayers, brief motivational sermons, and instructions delivered through headsets or loudspeakers as pilgrims move through crowded corridors leading to the Masjid al-Haram. The ritual is performed not only in proximity to the Kaaba, but within an architecture of control, crowd barriers, surveillance cameras, security personnel, and digital navigation systems that regulate movement and time.

Pilgrims often experience this organization ambivalently. On the one hand, many express gratitude for the efficiency and safety afforded by package tours. Elderly pilgrims, in particular, emphasize the reassurance provided by muṭawwif guidance, hotel proximity, and medical support. On the other hand, several pilgrims voice discomfort with the sense that Umrah feels "too fast," "too orderly," or overly choreographed. One woman from Yogyakarta remarked that she felt as if she were "following a tour guide rather than meeting God," noting that moments of spontaneous prayer were difficult to find amid the prescribed itinerary.

This tension reveals a central contradiction of contemporary Umrah, the very infrastructures designed to facilitate devotion also regulate and domesticate it. Ritual intimacy is no longer forged through physical hardship or prolonged immersion, but through managed proximity and visual access. The Kaaba becomes something to be *reached efficiently*, photographed, and shared, its sacred presence filtered through hotel windows, shopping arcades, and digital screens.

Neo-liberal redevelopment has restructured Mecca into a vertically stratified city, where access to sacred space is increasingly determined by purchasing power. Indonesian pilgrims staying in high-end hotels often describe their experience in terms of ease and comfort, that is short walking distances, private elevators, and panoramic views of the Haram. For others, particularly those on budget packages, the journey to prayer involves long walks, shuttle buses, and navigating congested streets far from the mosque.

This spatial inequality is not lost on pilgrims. During interviews, comparisons between hotels were common, framed not only as consumer assessments but as moral reflections. Some pilgrims justified luxury as a practical necessity, especially for elderly or first-time travelers. Others expressed unease, questioning whether comfort diluted humility and patience, virtues traditionally associated with pilgrimage. "It feels strange," a middle-aged man from Central Java observed, "to talk about suffering and sincerity while sleeping in a five-star hotel."

These reflections illustrate how Mecca's remaking produces new moral hierarchies alongside material ones. Proximity to the Kaaba, once shaped by happenstance, timing, or collective endurance, is increasingly purchased. The sacred is no longer spatially egalitarian; it is stratified, commodified, and priced. Yet rather than rejecting these conditions outright, most pilgrims negotiate them pragmatically, reconciling comfort with sincerity through intention (*niat*) and self-reflection.

Within this environment, Indonesian kyai-muṭawwif play a crucial but increasingly complex role. Traditionally responsible for ritual instruction and spiritual guidance, they now function as mediators between pilgrims, travel agencies, and Saudi authorities. Their days are filled with logistical coordination, i.e. managing schedules, resolving complaints, liaising with hotel staff, alongside moments of moral exhortation and religious teaching.

Far from being marginalized by commercialization, kyai-muṭawwif adapt by reframing the meaning of Umrah within consumerist settings. Many explicitly address the contradictions of luxury pilgrimage in their sermons, reminding pilgrims that comfort should not undermine humility, and that sincerity lies in intention rather than hardship alone. Through stories, jokes, and moral reminders, they translate abstract ethical concerns into vernacular lessons suited to middle-class experiences.

This adaptive strategy allows kyai-muṭawwif to retain religious authority without directly opposing the Umrah industry. Instead of critiquing market structures themselves, they emphasize personal ethics, patience, gratitude, modesty, as ways to sacralize consumption. In doing so, they help stabilize the moral economy of Umrah, enabling pilgrims to participate in commodified rituals without perceiving themselves as spiritually compromised.

The remaking of Umrah is also inseparable from digital media. Pilgrims document their journeys extensively, posting selfies in front of the Kaaba, hotel views overlooking the Haram, and group photographs in matching attire. These images circulate widely on social media, transforming Umrah into a public performance of piety and success. Devotion is no longer only enacted before God, but displayed before family, peers, and online audiences.

For many pilgrims, these practices are framed not as vanity but as testimony. Photographs and captions emphasize gratitude, prayers for loved ones, and reflections on spiritual transformation. Yet the visual repetition of Mecca, similar poses, similar captions, similar backdrops, also reveals the standardization of experience. Mecca becomes

recognizable not only as a sacred site, but as a visual genre shaped by tourism aesthetics and platform algorithms.

This digital circulation extends the reach of Mecca far beyond its physical boundaries. Even for those who have not yet performed Umrah, the city is encountered through images, videos, and promotional content long before arrival. Anticipation itself becomes consumable, as future pilgrims imagine their own photographs, captions, and narratives within the same visual economy.

The rapid growth of the Umrah industry has also been accompanied by recurring scandals involving fraud and mismanagement. High-profile cases such as First Travel and Abu Tours have exposed the vulnerability of pilgrims, many of whom invested life savings in the hope of reaching Mecca. These scandals circulate widely in Indonesian media, fueling public anxiety but rarely dampening demand.

Pilgrims often frame these risks in religious terms. Interviews reveal a recurring narrative of trust in God, where uncertainty is accepted as part of devotion. Rather than withdrawing from the market, many become more discerning consumers, seeking reputable agencies endorsed by religious figures or personal networks. Moral evaluation thus shifts from the system itself to individual actors within it.

This persistence highlights the strength of religious longing. The desire to encounter Mecca outweighs economic rationality, even in the face of repeated failures. Umrah, in this sense, is sustained not only by market logic, but by affective economies of hope, patience, and longing (*kerinduan*). These emotional investments bind pilgrims to an industry that is simultaneously enabling and precarious.

Consuming Mecca

The Indonesian experience of Umrah demonstrates how Mecca is increasingly consumed, not only materially, through hotels and packages, but symbolically, through images, narratives, and expectations. Pilgrimage becomes a site where devotion and desire intersect, producing religious subjects who are both pious and consumerist, critical and complicit.

Yet this does not signal the disappearance of meaning. Rather, meaning is reworked. Umrah remains transformative for many pilgrims, shaping prayer practices, moral

commitments, and social status upon return. The remaking of Mecca does not empty pilgrimage of significance; it relocates it within new infrastructures, hierarchies, and modes of mediation.

For Indonesian pilgrims, Mecca is increasingly encountered not as a lived city but as an infrastructure. Movement toward the Kaaba is carefully orchestrated through ramps, tunnels, security checkpoints, and digital signboards directing pedestrian flow. Access is regulated by time slots, crowd density, and package schedules that determine when rituals can be performed and how long pilgrims may remain in particular locations. The holy city thus operates through a form of logistical governance, where sacred devotion is organized, optimized, and managed at scale.

These spatial arrangements are not neutral. They reflect the broader neo-liberal transformation of Mecca into a city designed for high-volume religious tourism. Redevelopment projects around the Masjid al-Haram have prioritized efficiency, visibility, and commercial return, often at the expense of historical neighborhoods and informal devotional spaces. For Indonesian pilgrims, this transformation becomes palpable the moment they arrive, Mecca appears less as an organic urban environment and more as a purpose-built pilgrimage machine.

Many pilgrims express awe at the scale and orderliness of the city, describing Mecca as “advanced,” “modern,” or “well organized.” At the same time, others articulate a sense of estrangement. The disappearance of older buildings, gravesites, and modest residential quarters erases forms of historical intimacy once associated with pilgrimage. What remains is a monumental landscape dominated by towers, malls, and controlled visibility. Sacred space becomes spectacular, but also distant, something to be accessed, consumed, and documented rather than dwelled within.

The remaking of Mecca has introduced new regimes of visibility. Being able to *see* the Kaaba, whether from a hotel window, a prayer hall, or a smartphone screen, has become a key marker of proximity and privilege. Many Indonesian travel agencies explicitly market “Kaaba view” rooms as premium spiritual assets, collapsing visual access into religious value.

This emphasis on visibility reshapes devotional hierarchies. Pilgrims who can afford nearby accommodation experience Mecca vertically, gazing down at the Haram from elevated spaces. Others encounter the Kaaba horizontally, from afar, after long walks or

crowded commutes. These differences produce unequal experiences of intimacy, even when rituals performed are formally identical.

Yet rather than framing inequality as injustice, many pilgrims rationalize these differences through moral reasoning. Comfort is justified through age, health, or divine provision; distance is reframed as patience or trial. Such interpretations help domesticate structural inequality within individualized ethical narratives. In this way, spatial stratification is absorbed into the moral economy of pilgrimage, allowing the Umrah industry to expand without overt resistance.

As Mecca is reshaped by infrastructure and capital, religious authority is neither displaced nor diminished, it is reconfigured. Indonesian kyai-muṭawwif remain central figures in organizing pilgrimage experience, but their authority now operates through mediation rather than direct leadership. They translate sacred practices into timed schedules, devotional instructions into crowd-appropriate behavior, and moral teaching into motivational language compatible with package tourism.

Rather than opposing commercialization, many kyai align themselves with it strategically. They endorse particular travel agencies, lead premium Umrah groups, and use their religious credibility to attract pilgrims seeking “safe” and “proper” experiences. In doing so, kyai become nodes within the Umrah industry, combining moral legitimacy with logistical expertise.

This form of authority is pragmatic rather than oppositional. Kyai rarely critique the destruction of historical Mecca or the dominance of luxury capital directly. Instead, they focus on safeguarding pilgrims’ intentions and emotional states. Moral responsibility is thus relocated from structural critique to personal sincerity. The sacred is preserved not by resisting commercialization, but by managing its ethical consequences.

The transformation of Umrah does not end upon departure from Saudi Arabia. Mecca travels back with pilgrims through stories, images, souvenirs, and embodied dispositions. Photographs displayed in homes, social media posts, and gatherings celebrating return all contribute to the circulation of Mecca within Indonesian social life. Through these practices, Mecca becomes a shared cultural reference—familiar even to those who have never traveled.

This circulation reinforces Umrah’s status as both a spiritual achievement and a social marker. Returning pilgrims are recognized not only for having completed a ritual, but for

having accessed a particular form of global religious mobility. Umrah thus contributes to new distinctions within Indonesian Muslim society, where piety, consumption, and cosmopolitanism converge.

At the same time, repeated Umrah performances generate anxiety. Religious leaders, commentators, and ordinary Muslims question whether repetition deepens faith or merely reproduces status. These debates reflect broader unease about the moral consequences of ritual abundance. When pilgrimage becomes accessible, repeatable, and market-driven, its transformative power is no longer assumed, it must be actively defended.

The Remaking of Devotion

What emerges from the Indonesian Umrah experience is not the erosion of devotion, but its rearticulation. Mecca is no longer encountered solely through endurance, marginality, or historical imagination. It is accessed through hotels, elevators, tour leaders, and digital platforms. Devotion unfolds within infrastructures of speed, comfort, and visibility. This does not render Umrah meaningless. Instead, meaning is negotiated under new conditions. Pilgrims learn to balance comfort with humility, documentation with reflection, and consumption with sincerity. Religious authority adapts by mediating rather than commanding. The sacred persists, but it does so within, and not outside, market logics.

This chapter has shown that the remaking of Mecca is inseparable from the expansion of the Umrah industry. Neo-liberal urban redevelopment, commercial hospitality, and global tourism infrastructures reshape how pilgrims access sacred space, how devotion is practiced, and how religious authority is exercised. Mecca is not simply a passive backdrop for pilgrimage; it is an active agent in restructuring Islamic practice.

For Indonesian Muslims, Umrah becomes a site where global capitalism, state projects, and personal piety intersect. The transformation of Mecca alters not only the city's skyline, but also the moral and sensory conditions of worship. Pilgrimage is no longer merely a journey to the sacred, it is participation in a global religious economy that remakes devotion itself. Over the past decade, the Indonesian Umrah industry has expanded into one of the largest transnational religious travel markets in the Muslim world. According to Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of Indonesian visitors to Saudi Arabia reached 1.57 million in 2024, of whom over 90 percent traveled primarily for Umrah and Hajj,

making Saudi Arabia Indonesia's largest Middle Eastern destination by a wide margin (Nirwesthi, 2015; Tirta, 2025).

This number far exceeds Indonesia's annual Hajj quota, 241,000 pilgrims in 2024, confirming Umrah's role as the main channel through which Indonesian Muslims access Mecca outside the highly regulated Hajj system. On the supply side, the industry has grown rapidly following the pandemic. By early 2024, the number of licensed Umrah travel operators (*Penyelenggara Perjalanan Ibadah Umrah*, PPIU) had increased from roughly 700 before COVID-19 to more than 2,300 companies, reflecting both regulatory deregulation and surging consumer demand. These firms form a dense intermediary infrastructure that links Indonesian pilgrims to Saudi visa systems, airlines, hotels, and ground services, effectively positioning Umrah as a continuously operating religious tourism economy rather than a seasonal pilgrimage.

The economic value of this sector is substantial. Indonesian Umrah pilgrims are among the highest-spending religious travelers in Saudi Arabia, with an average expenditure of US$2,633.92 (approximately Rp 44.4 million) per trip, a figure significantly higher than spending in ASEAN destinations and comparable only to high-cost countries such as Japan and the United States (Nirwesthi, 2015; Tirta, 2025). This level of expenditure translates into billions of dollars in annual revenue flowing from Indonesia to Saudi Arabia, supporting airlines, hotel chains, retail complexes, and pilgrimage infrastructure in Mecca and Medina. Saudi authorities have actively facilitated this flow through visa liberalization, the introduction of electronic tourist and Umrah visas, and the extension of permitted length of stay from 30 to 90 days, further blurring the boundaries between pilgrimage and tourism. At the same time, the scale of the industry has raised concerns in Indonesia over capital outflow and domestic tourism substitution, prompting debates within policy circles about how religious mobility reshapes national tourism economies and middle-class consumption patterns.

Despite its formal expansion, the Indonesian Umrah industry remains marked by structural fragility and uneven regulation. Data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs' SISKOPATUH system show that approximately 1.4 million Indonesians traveled for Umrah through registered PPIU operators in 2024, while Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah records indicate nearly 1.8 million arrivals from Indonesia, leaving an estimated 400,000 pilgrims traveling outside official regulatory channels. These unregistered flows include pilgrims

using tourist or non-Umrah visas, those departing via neighboring countries such as Malaysia or Singapore, and individuals participating in so-called *umrah mandiri* (independent or "backpacker" Umrah). This discrepancy highlights a significant regulatory gap in a sector where religious obligation intersects with high financial risk. The economic stakes are substantial: total annual turnover of Indonesia's Umrah industry has been estimated at Rp 12–15 trillion, making it attractive not only to established Muslim entrepreneurs but also to speculative and fraudulent actors.

The vulnerabilities of this market were made visible through major scandals such as First Travel and Abu Tours, which collectively defrauded more than 100,000 prospective pilgrims and generated estimated losses exceeding Rp 1.8–2 trillion between 2017 and 2019. In the First Travel case alone, authorities recorded 63,310 victims and losses of approximately Rp 905 billion, revealing how religious trust could be systematically exploited through Ponzi-style Umrah promotions priced far below market rates. These scandals did not significantly dampen public demand; instead, they contributed to a moral economy in which risk is reframed through religious idioms of *niat* (intention) and surrender to divine will. Consequently, state regulation, consumer protection, and religious authority are continually renegotiated within the Umrah industry, underscoring how Mecca is accessed by Indonesians not only through ritual desire but also through complex political-economic infrastructures that mediate mobility, trust, and vulnerability.



Table 6.3 Umrah Fraud and Scandals



Table 6.4 Umrah Fraud and Scandals

In 2018, the national media widely reported cases of fraud committed by Umrah travel service providers, including the First Travel scandal, which was not an isolated incident in Indonesia. In response, the government urged prospective pilgrims to exercise greater caution in selecting Umrah travel agencies. Source: tirto.id.

The contrast between the heavily state-regulated Hajj and the liberalized organization of Umrah illuminates the structural risks embedded in non-state pilgrimage regimes. Hajj is governed through a dense apparatus of quotas, bilateral agreements, state supervision, and mandatory pilgrim management systems that, while often criticized for their bureaucracy and rigidity, provide mechanisms of accountability and collective risk management (cf. Asad on state regulation and the governance of religious practice (Asad 2003); Fealy & White on Indonesia's Hajj administration (Fealy & White 2008).

Umrah, by contrast, has increasingly been deregulated and outsourced to market actors operating across transnational religious, commercial, and informal networks. This liberalization has expanded access, flexibility, and frequency, but it has also displaced responsibility from the state to private intermediaries whose legitimacy rests more on moral reputation than institutional oversight. Pilgrimage thus becomes governed less by public regulation than by trust, affect, and charisma, a mode of governance consistent with what Aihwa Ong describes as "graduated sovereignty" under neoliberal conditions, where state authority is selectively withdrawn and reconfigured. In this context, fraud, mismanagement, and speculative practices are not aberrations of the Umrah system but systemic effects of a regime in which religious longing circulates through weakly regulated markets, revealing the limits of neoliberal governance when applied to sacred obligation (cf. Ong; Tsing on capitalist friction (Ong 2006; Tsing 2005).

Ethnographic encounters with Indonesian pilgrims further highlight how this asymmetry between Hajj regulation and Umrah liberalization is lived and interpreted. Pilgrims frequently invoke the state's role in Hajj as a benchmark of safety and legitimacy, even as they turn to Umrah precisely to escape its long waiting lists and bureaucratic discipline. When Umrah journeys collapse due to fraud or miscoordination, the absence of a clearly accountable authority becomes painfully visible. Yet rather than demanding stronger regulation, many pilgrims reframe loss through religious idioms of *niat*, patience, and divine testing, a pattern that resonates with Talal Asad's emphasis on how ethical self-formation can redirect attention away from structural critique and toward embodied moral discipline. This moral rationalization absorbs systemic failure into individualized ethics, allowing market breakdowns to persist without generating collective political claims. In contrast to the Hajj, where failure is typically attributed to administrative malfunction, harm in Umrah is often

internalized as fate. Drawing on Appadurai, this can be understood as part of an affective economy of aspiration, where hope, risk, and uncertainty are normalized as the price of mobility. Non-state pilgrimage organization thus becomes dangerous not only because it enables fraud, but because it mobilizes devotional ethics to domesticate uncertainty and neutralize political anger, stabilizing a precarious pilgrimage infrastructure through moral means rather than institutional accountability (cf. Appadurai 1996; Fealy & White 2008).

6.2. Kyai-Muṭawwif Networks in a Changing Landscape

Studies of Indonesian hajj organization have tended to privilege bureaucratic reform, state administration, and logistical management, often casting religious intermediaries as either technical functionaries or residual figures operating in the interstices of formal regulation. In such accounts, the *Muṭawwif* appears primarily as a guide who executes ritual instructions rather than as an authoritative religious actor in his own right. This study proposes an alternative reading. Drawing on ethnographic encounters and historical genealogy, I argue that Indonesian *Muṭawwif,* particularly those emerging from pesantren milieus, have long functioned as central moral and cultural mediators whose authority cannot be reduced to administrative delegation. Their work organizes not only movement and ritual compliance, but also meaning, affect, ethical aspiration, and interpretive coherence during the pilgrimage.

This argument requires a shift in analytical focus, from hajj as a bureaucratic system to hajj as a moral field structured by intermediaries whose legitimacy precedes the modern state. Rather than treating KBIH and related institutions as the origin of mediation, I approach them as contemporary institutional surfaces through which older forms of kyai-based authority are rearticulated. The case of Kyai Syahid, a qāriʾ, pesantren founder, Sufi representative, and long-time hajj guide, offers a particularly clear window into this longer genealogy.

A Geertzian Point of Departure

To theorize this form of mediation, I draw on Clifford Geertz's classic formulation of the kyai as a cultural broker in Indonesian Islam. In *The Religion of Java* and *Islam Observed*, Geertz

described the kyai not simply as a transmitter of doctrine, but as a mediating figure who translates textual Islam into locally intelligible and emotionally resonant forms, positioning himself between abstract religious norms, everyday moral life, and shifting institutional orders (Geertz 1960; 1976). Crucially, this brokerage function was not limited to the pesantren or the village; it extended to moments of social disruption, mobility, and encounter with unfamiliar normative regimes.

When read genealogically, the figure of the *kyai–Muṭawwif* during the colonial period exemplifies precisely this form of mediation. Long before the formalization of Indonesian hajj administration, kyai accompanied pilgrims, assisted them in navigating ritual complexity, mediated linguistic and cultural disorientation in Mecca, and embedded the hajj within vernacular moral expectations concerning intention, endurance, fate, and divine reward. Their authority derived not from bureaucratic delegation, but from accumulated religious capital, i.e. Qur'anic mastery, teaching lineages, and reputational trust, recognized by pilgrims long before departure.

From this perspective, contemporary hajj intermediaries such as Kyai Syahid appear not as responses to modern bureaucratization, but as inheritors of a longue durée form of religious brokerage. The establishment of KBIH structures in the late twentieth century marked neither the invention of mediation nor the displacement of kyai authority. Rather, it represented the partial institutionalization of a role already embedded in pesantren culture and pilgrimage practice. What changed was the administrative form; what persisted was the mediating logic.

This genealogical continuity matters analytically because it challenges narratives that frame Indonesian hajj organization primarily in terms of rationalization, standardization, and state control. Figures like Kyai Syahid demonstrate how kyai-based authority adapts to regulatory regimes without surrendering its moral autonomy. Their presence within the pilgrimage system sustains interpretive frameworks through which pilgrims experience the hajj not merely as a sequence of obligatory acts, but as a morally charged journey oriented toward transformation, blessing (*barakah*), and ethical recalibration.

K.H.Q. Ahmad Syahid, popularly knows as Kyai Syahid, emerges within this genealogy as a paradigmatic example of pesantren-based religious authority translated into the domain of hajj mediation. Long before his involvement in formal hajj organization, his

standing as a *qāriʾ*, pesantren founder, and respected kyai in West Java endowed him with a depth of religious capital that was publicly recognized across multiple social fields. His authority was cumulative and relational, built through sustained Qur'anic pedagogy, institutional leadership, and moral reputation. From this perspective, his later role as Muṭawwif did not constitute a professional shift so much as a re-siting of an already established authority into a new ritual and organizational arena.

This helps explain why Kyai Syahid's position as a hajj guide was widely accepted and respected among pilgrims without requiring heavy emphasis on bureaucratic credentials. His legitimacy preceded the pilgrimage itself. Pilgrims who joined KBIH Al-Falah often did so not because of technical guarantees or administrative efficiency, but because they had long recognized Syahid as a kyai whose religious competence and ethical standing could be trusted in moments of ritual uncertainty. In this sense, his Muṭawwif role was anchored not in functional specialization, but in moral continuity between pesantren life and pilgrimage practice.

The establishment of KBIH Al-Falah in 1995 should therefore be understood less as an entrepreneurial initiative than as an act of institutional translation. It provided an organizational framework through which Kyai Syahid's pesantren-based authority could operate within the increasingly regulated landscape of Indonesian hajj administration. Rather than marking a rupture with earlier modes of mediation, the KBIH served as an interface, aligning the expectations of the state with the moral economy of pilgrims grounded in kyai leadership.

This translation process is central to the genealogy of Indonesian hajj intermediaries. As hajj governance became more centralized and bureaucratized, kyai such as Kyai Syahid did not withdraw from the pilgrimage field. Instead, they adapted by adopting formally recognized organizational forms while maintaining substantive autonomy in how guidance was actually performed. The KBIH thus functioned as a *bureaucratic surface* behind which pesantren ethics, pedagogical styles, and relational authority continued to shape the pilgrimage experience.

Kyai Syahid's case also clarifies the limits of bureaucratic authority in the hajj context. While formal regulations determine quotas, schedules, and movements, they do not resolve pilgrims' anxieties, moral concerns, or affective vulnerability. It is in these domains

that pesantren-based religious capital becomes decisive. Syahid's authority rested on his perceived capacity to accompany pilgrims not only through spatial transitions, but through moral and emotional ones as well.

This distinction becomes analytically important for understanding why pilgrims consistently deferred to him in moments that lay outside procedural scripts: moments of fatigue, fear, confusion, or ethical questioning. His ability to respond authoritatively in such situations did not derive from administrative command, but from a long-standing reputation for moral discernment (*hikmah*) and spiritual care (*pengasuhan*). As with earlier kyai–Muṭawwif in the colonial period, authority here was enacted relationally rather than hierarchically, through trust cultivated over time rather than through formal sanction.



Figure 6.1. Kyai-Muṭawwif Networks

Kyai Syahid delivers a sermon in front of Masjid Tan'im in Mecca prior to the pilgrims' preparation for umrah and tawaf, December 2007. Photo: Dadi Darmadi.

Situating Kyai Syahid genealogically prevents his case from appearing exceptional or idiosyncratic. Instead, it reveals structural continuities in how Indonesian Muslims organize the hajj through intermediaries who combine religious learning, moral authority, and institutional adaptability. His career illustrates how pesantren figures have remained central to

the moral organization of pilgrimage even as its administrative architecture has grown more complex.

By the time of my field encounters with Kyai Syahid during the 2007 hajj season in Mecca and Jeddah, his role as Muṭawwif had already been institutionalized through KBIH Al-Falah for more than a decade. Yet what stood out ethnographically was not bureaucratic competence, but the *mode of authority* through which guidance was enacted. Throughout the pilgrimage, Syahid was consistently accompanied by his son, Haji Rif'at, whose presence revealed an intergenerational pattern of mediation deeply characteristic of pesantren culture. Authority was not monopolized by the kyai alone, nor entirely delegated downward; instead, it circulated relationally between father and son.

Haji Rif'at handled much of the everyday practical work, such as coordinating movements, checking on elderly pilgrims, explaining procedural steps, while Kyai Syahid occupied the moral and symbolic center of the group. This division of labor resembled pesantren pedagogical arrangements, where senior kyai embody ethical authority while trusted aides manage instruction and discipline. The Muṭawwif role here was less a singular office than a distributed form of care, combining administrative functionality with moral presence.

That year, KBIH Al-Falah brought forty-five pilgrims, amounting to a single hajj bus, fewer than in earlier years when they had guided close to ninety jamaah. Rather than diminishing Syahid's authority, the smaller group intensified the intimacy of guidance. Pilgrims were known individually; concerns were addressed conversationally; supervision bore the tone of familiarity rather than command. Although I was not formally registered with KBIH Al-Falah, both Syahid and his aides received me openly during interviews and informal interactions, extending a pesantren ethos of hospitality into the highly regimented environment of the hajj.

The social composition of the jamaah accompanying KBIH Al-Falah reveals key features of the moral economy sustaining pesantren-based hajj mediation. Pilgrims came from diverse social backgrounds: regional politicians affiliated with three different political parties, gold traders and market vendors, farming families, a schoolteacher, and many women, mostly housewives, whose pilgrimage costs were paid by their children. Such

heterogeneity complicates explanations of pilgrimage affiliation based on class, profession, or economic rationality alone.

What unified the group was not socioeconomic similarity, but trust in Kyai Syahid's moral authority. Pilgrims repeatedly described their decision to join KBIH Al-Falah in terms of *ketenangan* (a sense of calm), *percaya* (trust), and the expectation that guidance under a kyai would ensure spiritual safety in an unfamiliar and emotionally demanding environment. In daily interactions, pilgrims referred to Kyai Syahid less as a *pembimbing haji* in a bureaucratic sense and more as a *kyai sepuh*, a senior religious figure whose calm presence itself carried protective and interpretive force.

Within this moral economy, social distinctions were routinely softened. Traders shared space and conversation with farmers; politicians queued alongside housewives. What mattered were shared dispositions: patience, sincere intention (*niat*), endurance, and the readiness to interpret hardship as meaningful rather than as failure. The role of the Muṭawwif in this context was not to enforce uniformity, but to sustain a moral frame within which difference could be temporarily suspended.

Kyai Syahid's authority became most visible not during moments of smooth ritual execution, but precisely when procedures proved insufficient, during episodes of exhaustion, confusion, or emotional overload. These were moments in which bureaucratic scripts fell silent, and pilgrims sought moral reassurance rather than instruction. Syahid's responses in such moments were rarely directive. Instead, he listened, reassured, and reframed difficulties as part of the pilgrimage's ethical labor.

This mode of mediation illuminates why pesantren-based Muṭawwif remain indispensable within a system otherwise characterized by standardization and control. While formal hajj governance can organize bodies in time and space, it cannot organize meaning. The intermediary work performed by figures like Kyai Syahid addresses this gap, translating the pressures of large-scale pilgrimage into experiences that pilgrims can morally inhabit. In doing so, pesantren authority does not resist bureaucratic order directly; rather, it operates alongside it, compensating for its affective and interpretive limits.

Circling the Kaaba Forty-Nine Times

One ethnographic moment during the 2007 hajj crystallizes the distinctive form of mediation exercised by Kyai Syahid and helps clarify why pesantren-based Muṭawwif remain central within Indonesia's hajj economy. An episode during *tawaf* vividly illustrates the embodied spirituality cultivated within this group. As I joined their tawaf, Haji Rif'at said casually, *"Nanti kita mau tawaf empat puluh sembilan kali. Mau ikutan?"* ("Later we're going to do tawaf forty-nine times. Do you want to join?"). I responded with disbelief, since forty-nine circuits amounted to seven times the regular tawaf. Haji Rif'at clarified that although the practice could take two to three hours or even more, many jamaah actively wished to do it, particularly those with backgrounds as traders, businesspeople, and politicians. For them, extended tawaf was not a misunderstanding of ritual obligation but a deliberate practice of endurance and emotional release.



Figure 6.2. Taking miqat at Tan'im, Mecca

Haji Rif'at, Haji Asep, and the author had already taken miqat at Tan'im Mosque and were preparing to depart for Masjid al-Haram, Mecca, December 2007. Photo: Dadi Damadi

They wanted to remain near the Kaaba, to cry while praying repeatedly, and to exhaust the body so that deeper spiritual longing might surface. Kyai Ahmad Syahid neither promoted nor prohibited this practice; instead, he allowed it to unfold quietly, creating a moral space in which pilgrims could negotiate their own hopes for forgiveness, clarity, and perhaps *barakah* in the sense of divine blessing.

This episode recalled earlier ethnographic and historical descriptions of Javanese pilgrimage practice. It reminded me of R.A.A. Wiranatakoesoemah's accounts from the 1920s, describing pilgrims who carried rice, hoes, or gold while circling the Kaaba in hopes that their farms and businesses would be blessed. While contemporary pilgrims no longer carry such objects and the hajj today is subject to intense bureaucratic regulation, the underlying moral logic persists: the hajj continues to be imagined not only as ritual compliance, but as a site for negotiating worldly anxieties and moral futures.

When a Phone Is Lost in Mecca

Stories imbued with moral interpretation and subtle mysticism circulated frequently among the jamaah. One such incident occurred when I lost one of my mobile phones, the Sony Ericsson I used for writing ethnographic notes during fieldwork, while riding a Dallah bus from Tan'im for another tawaf umrah. I was carrying two phones, one for SMS communication and another for field notes, and the latter disappeared and could not be located for two days.

When I recounted this loss to members of another hajj group, an ustadz named Zoel asked me, *"Boleh tahu nggak, handphone itu dibeli pakai uang halal?"* ("May I ask, was that phone bought with halal money?"). I replied, *"Insya Allah halal, Ustadz"* ("God willing, it was halal, Ustadz"). He then remarked, half-seriously, *"Di Mekah ini, barang-barang yang berbau haram biasanya nggak betah"* ("In Mecca, things associated with what is haram usually do not last"), and advised me that if the phone was truly lost I should *ikhlaskan saja* (let it go sincerely). Two jamaah added jokingly, *"Ya Pak, ikhlaskan saja, hitung-hitung ngurangin dosa"* ("Just let it go, Sir, consider it as reducing sins").

The following day, to my surprise, I received an SMS from Haji Rif'at: *"Ini ada sopir bus dari Tan'im bilang nemu handphone warna coklat-oranye. Jangan-jangan itu punya Anda?"* ("A bus driver from Tan'im says he found a brown-orange phone. Could it possibly be yours?"). I retrieved the phone that afternoon; it had been left on the bus during the earlier journey.

That evening, Ustadz Zoel approached me again and joked, *"Wah, sudah main handphone lagi nih. Berarti sudah ketemu ya?"* ("Ah, you're using your phone again, so it's been found?"). When I confirmed this, he announced to the surrounding jamaah, *"Alhamdulillah! Ini berarti handphone-nya halal!"* ("Praise be to God! This means the phone is halal!"). I responded with my own *alhamdulillah*, accompanied by a faintly embarrassed smile.

When the phone initially disappeared, fellow pilgrims did not treat the event simply as misfortune. Instead, it prompted questions about *niat*, sincerity, and the moral status of possessions carried into the sacred space. Remarks about whether the phone had been purchased with *uang halal* and suggestions to *ikhlaskan saja* (accept the loss sincerely) framed the incident as a test rather than an accident.

When the phone was later recovered this reversal was immediately reinterpreted as moral confirmation. Joking declarations that the phone had proven itself *halal* were not expressions of naïve superstition, but part of a shared moral language that rendered contingency meaningful. Loss and recovery were integrated into a moral narrative about intention, divine testing, and ethical clarity. What mattered ethnographically was not whether these interpretations were "correct," but that they were socially stabilized within the group.

This episode illustrates how ordinary disruptions during the hajj such as lost objects, bodily fatigue, unexpected recoveries are readily interpreted through a moral and spiritual lens. Within Kyai Ahmad Syahid's KBIH, such moments were neither dismissed as superstition nor rigidly disciplined away. Instead, they were incorporated into a shared moral economy of intention, sincerity, and divine testing. In this sense, the Muṭawwif's work extended well beyond ritual instruction; it involved cultivating an interpretive framework through which pilgrims could experience the hajj as morally meaningful within the sacred geography of Mecca.

These episodes also illuminate a core feature of pesantren-based Muṭawwif authority: the ability to regulate meaning without formal discipline. Where bureaucratic systems regulate time, space, and movement, kyai-mutatwwif regulate interpretation, affect, and ethical orientation. They neither oppose bureaucratic order nor attempt to replace it; instead, they compensate for its limits by addressing dimensions of experience that procedural governance leaves unresolved.

This regulatory style resonates strongly with Geertz's depiction of the kyai as a cultural broker who mediates between doctrine and lived experience. Yet in the context of the hajj, the brokerage extends further, into a transnational ritual field saturated with vulnerability, unfamiliarity, and emotional intensity. Here, Kyai Syahid's authority functioned not by issuing rules, but by sustaining a moral atmosphere in which pilgrims could pursue intensified devotion, interpret hardship constructively, and navigate uncertainty without losing ethical footing.

Situating these ethnographic moments within a longer genealogy clarifies their broader significance. Practices such as ritual excess, moral interpretation of misfortune, and reliance on kyai authority are not anomalies produced by modern disorganization. They echo earlier Javanese pilgrimage traditions documented during the colonial period, when pilgrims carried symbolic objects while circling the Kaaba in hopes of blessing their worldly endeavors. What has changed is not the moral logic of the hajj, but the institutional environment within which it unfolds.

Kyai Syahid's role as Muṭawwif demonstrates how pesantren-based authority adapts to the modern hajj regime without relinquishing its core mediating functions. KBIH Al-Falah operates not simply as a service provider, but as a moral community temporarily relocated into the sacred geography of Mecca. Through figures like Syahid, the pilgrimage remains embedded in a relational economy of trust, interpretation, and ethical aspiration that modern administrative systems alone cannot generate.

Reframing the Indonesian Muṭawwif

This chapter section has argued that Indonesian Muṭawwif, particularly those emerging from pesantren traditions, should be understood genealogically as moral and cultural brokers rather than as technical intermediaries. Through the case of Kyai Syahid, we see how religious

capital accumulated over a lifetime enables forms of mediation that address dimensions of pilgrimage experience beyond procedural control. His authority during the 2007 hajj did not derive from bureaucratic command, but from the capacity to sustain moral coherence amid ritual intensity, emotional vulnerability, and interpretive ambiguity.

Reframing the Muṭawwif in this way allows us to reconsider Indonesian hajj organization itself, not merely as an administrative system, but as a moral infrastructure sustained by actors whose legitimacy predates, and exceeds, formal regulation. In this sense, pesantren-based kyai do not simply accompany the hajj; they continue to shape its meaning, discipline, and ethical texture across generations.

6.3. New Mecca and Fragile Bodies

In contemporary scholarly and popular discourse, Mecca is often described as a city in the midst of constant remaking, expanded mosques, transformed skylines, regulated flows of bodies, and increasingly technocratic systems of crowd management. These material transformations are typically justified in the language of safety, efficiency, and hospitality for the growing numbers of pilgrims performing Hajj each year. Yet for pilgrims themselves, Mecca is not only encountered as a redesigned urban space; it is experienced through bodies pushed to their limits, through moments of vulnerability, and through episodes of illness that collapse the distinction between spiritual aspiration and physical fragility.

For many pilgrims, particularly those arriving from rural or economically marginalized contexts, the scale and intensity of Mecca's contemporary pilgrimage infrastructure can be profoundly disorienting. Climate-controlled corridors, vast marble courtyards, surveillance, medical triage points, and regimented schedules coexist with a moral landscape saturated with expectations of endurance, sacrifice, and spiritual purification. The remaking of Mecca thus does not merely reorganize space; it reorganizes how suffering is perceived, narrated, and morally evaluated.

Illness emerges within this landscape not as an interruption of pilgrimage, but as one of its defining experiences. Heat exhaustion, dehydration, fainting, panic, confusion, and chronic disease exacerbation are common occurrences during Hajj. Yet these conditions are rarely understood by pilgrims as random or meaningless biomedical events. Instead, they are frequently interpreted as spiritually charged moments, e.g., tests of intention, signs of divine

intervention, or opportunities for repentance and transformation. As in Pak Sahroni's collapse before he could even glimpse the Kaʿbah, physical breakdown often occurs precisely at moments of heightened symbolic intensity, when the moral weight of the pilgrimage presses most heavily on the body.

Drawing on Byron J. Good's insistence that illness must be understood as an interpretive and narrative process, the remade Mecca becomes a site where medical realities and religious meanings are tightly entangled (Good 1994). The hospital ward, the ambulance, and the temporary separation from ritual participation do not stand outside the pilgrimage; they are folded into its moral geography. For pilgrims witnessing others faint, cry uncontrollably, or become disoriented, the sight of illness reinforces a shared awareness of human limitation in the face of divine enormity. This awareness, rather than undermining faith, frequently intensifies it.

Mental and emotional distress are similarly woven into the remaking of pilgrimage experience. Pilgrims often describe overwhelming fear, guilt, and anxiety when confronted with their own bodily failure in a place where spiritual perfection is imagined but rarely attainable. Moments of collapse, physical or psychological, become moments of existential reckoning. In this sense, Mecca's transformation into a hyper-regulated, medicalized pilgrimage city may amplify rather than diminish spiritual intensity, as pilgrims become acutely conscious of their dependence on both divine mercy and biomedical intervention.

Pak Sahroni's interpretation of his illness as *kifarah* illustrates how pilgrims actively rework the meaning of sickness within the moral economy of Hajj. His collapse is not framed as a failure to complete the pilgrimage properly, but as evidence that the pilgrimage worked, burning away accumulated "rust" through bodily suffering. This narrative allows him to reconcile the technological and institutional realities of modern Mecca (hospitals, diagnoses, medication regimes) with deeply rooted Islamic metaphors of purification and rebirth.

Seen from this perspective, the remaking of Mecca is not only about construction cranes, expanded courtyards, or logistical innovation. It is also about the remaking of pilgrims themselves through encounters with vulnerability, illness, and fear. Bodies that falter do not simply signal risk to be managed; they become sites where the spiritual promise of Hajj is tested, intensified, and reimagined. Illness, both physical and mental, thus stands at the crossroads of modern pilgrimage, simultaneously biomedical, moral, and theological,

revealing how remade sacred spaces continue to generate deeply personal journeys of transformation.

Illness and Spiritual Awakening

In early November, the fierce hammer of the Saudi summer finally begins to soften, replaced by a deceptive, heavy warmth that settles into the valley of Mecca as the sun dips lower. The late fall air carries a different weight, less like a furnace and more like a thick, golden shroud that clings to the skin during the long afternoon prayers.

For Pak Sahroni, a 50-year-old farmer from the humid riverlands of South Kalimantan, this transition was a sensory bridge between the tropics he knew and the high-desert sanctity he had sought for decades. He arrived in our group carrying the silent, volatile baggage of acute diabetes and hypertension. His story is not merely one of medical crisis, but a story of "Kifarah", spiritual reckoning that occurs when the physical body breaks under the shadow of the Ka’bah, forcing a soul to confront its own accumulated "rust" in the quiet, cooling winds of the Meccan autumn.

I remember Pak Sahroni standing in the middle of our group, he had that quiet, weathered look of someone who had worked the land his whole life, but there was a flicker of something unsettled in his eyes.

He’d spent decades saving every spare rupiah from his harvests to be here. But Pak Sahroni carried more than just his prayer rug. He brought with him a body struggling against acute "kencing manis" and "darah tinggi," also known as adiabetes and blood pressure, that spiked with the slightest stress.

We had just reached the outer courtyards of the Great Mosque. The marble was white-hot under the midday sun. Pak Sahroni was walking beside us, clutching his identification lanyard, when he suddenly stopped. His breathing became shallow, his face turned grey, and his eyes rolled back.

His blood sugar had plummeted while his blood pressure soared to a breaking point. Before he could even set eyes on the Ka’bah, he was being rushed away on a stretcher by pilgrim guide and medics. His face went a greyish-pale, and before anyone could grab his arm, he collapsed onto the tiles. While tand he rest of us were out in the crowd of the Grabd

Mosque, and later on standing on the plains of Arafat in Mina, Pak Sahroni lay motionless in a hospital bed.

But when Pak Sahroni finally opened his eyes days later, he didn't wake up confused. He woke up terrified. He looked like a man who had seen the bottom of a well and finally found the light. He told me later, that the faint wasn't a blank sleep. He felt as though he was being held in a forge. He described a vivid, crushing awareness of every moment he had wasted in his fifty years, the "rust" of a life lived without real intention as a Muslim.

Many Muslims believe that there's a saying of the Prophet that Hajj wipes away sins: "the way a fire burns the rust off iron and silver." Pak Sahroni said he felt that fire. He told me it felt as if his old, negligent self was being melted down. The physical pain of his diabetes and the pressure in his chest became a gateway to a spiritual scouring. He wasn't just sick; he believes he was being reconstructed.

By the time we were performing the Tawaf Wada (farewell) circumambulation, Pak Sahroni was back with us. He was weaker in body, leaning on a cane and monitoring his sugar levels with a new, fierce discipline, but his spirit was renewed.

During those final days, Pak Sahroni spent his afternoons tucked into a corner of the mosque, tears streaming down his face as he whispered his prayers. A fellow pilgrim smiled at him and told me, "He's catching up on a lifetime of missed connections with God." As we flew back to Indonesia, Pak Sahroni was still a man living with an illness, but he wasn't just going home; he was starting over as a renewed spiritual being.

Pak Sahroni's collapse at the threshold of the Grand Mosque is not adequately understood as a purely biomedical event; rather, it exemplifies what Byron J. Good describes as the fundamentally interpretive nature of illness. In "Medicine, Rationality and Experience," Good reminds us that illness is "not simply a physiological state but an experience given form through language, narrative, and symbolic systems" (Good, 1994, pp. 48–52).

From this perspective, Pak Sahroni's failing body, his collapsing blood sugar, the spike in blood pressure, and the overwhelming weather of Mecca, cannot be separated from the meanings he ascribes to them. What appears, from a clinical standpoint, as a moment of physical breakdown just before encountering the Ka'bah is, within Pak Sahroni's own moral and religious framework, a deeply charged event. His body becomes a site where years of

deferred piety, quiet neglect, and spiritual longing converge, transforming physiological crisis into something of existential interruption.

This transformation becomes especially clear in the way Pak Sahroni tells the story of his collapse after he regains consciousness. As Byron Good observes, illness narratives are "active processes through which sufferers seek to make sense of, and thus in some measure control, their condition" (Good 1994, pp. 137–138). Pak Sahroni's account reflects precisely this kind of meaning-making work. Rather than describing his collapse as a medical accident or simple loss of bodily control, he narrates it as a moment of reckoning that gave shape to emotions and moral concerns he had carried for years.

When Pak Sahroni describes being held in a "fire" that burned away the "rust" of his past, he transforms physical suffering into a process of moral purification. This imagery draws on widely shared Islamic metaphors of repentance and renewal, allowing his illness to be understood not merely as pain endured but as a form of divine intervention, a difficult yet necessary reordering of the self. As Good reminds us, "medical realities are always also cultural realities" (Good 1994, pp. 65–70), and in Pak Sahroni's case the hospital bed cannot be separated from the sacred landscape of Hajj itself. He returns not simply as a recovering patient, but as a changed person, newly attentive to his medications and bodily limits, while also recommitted to prayer and repentance.

Seen this way, the transformation of Mecca cannot be understood only through cranes, crowd-control systems, or architectural scale. The city's remaking is also etched into bodies that struggle, falter, and sometimes collapse under the combined weight of heat, exhaustion, fear, and hope. Far from undermining the spiritual meaning of pilgrimage, illness often deepens it. Moments of physical breakdown bring pilgrims face to face with their own limits, forcing an encounter between the vulnerability of the human body and the enormity of divine presence. In the hyper-organized, intensely monitored Mecca of today, sickness becomes one of the most intimate ways pilgrims experience the sacred, an unexpected passage through which the promise of Hajj is tested and, for many, fulfilled.

Chapter 7 – The Hajj, the State and the Politics of Failure

The modern Hajj is one of the most demanding enterprises of contemporary governance. Each year, several million pilgrims must be coordinated, transported, housed, fed, and cared for as they move across national borders, bureaucratic systems, and some of the most crowded sacred spaces on earth. This immense undertaking relies on layers of administration, technological infrastructures, and international agreements designed to ensure order, safety, and ritual continuity. Yet the story of the modern Hajj is not defined only by successful organization. It is also marked by repeated crises—fatal accidents, shortages of food and shelter, logistical breakdowns, and public scandals that echo long after the pilgrimage ends.

These moments of breakdown are not rare exceptions. They are central to how the Hajj is governed, debated, and reimagined. This chapter takes "failure" as its point of entry, not to catalogue disasters, but to understand what they reveal. Crises expose the hidden structure of pilgrimage governance: who is responsible when things go wrong, how authority is shared or deflected, and how systems meant to manage millions begin to strain under their own weight. From stampedes and transport accidents to food shortages and housing failures, each episode brings into view the fragile connections linking pilgrims, brokers, state agencies, and foreign governments.

Focusing on Indonesian experiences of the Hajj, this chapter situates bureaucratic failure within a broader, transnational landscape involving Saudi authorities, Indonesian institutions, and global Islamic organizations. As the country responsible for the world's largest national contingent of pilgrims, Indonesia often confronts these pressures most directly. When crises unfold, whether in Mina, Mecca, or along the routes of travel, they produce competing interpretations. Officials describe breakdowns as technical challenges or unavoidable risks of scale. Critics frame them as evidence of negligence or corruption. Pilgrims themselves often understand hardship through religious ideas of patience, sacrifice, trial, and divine will. These differing responses show that failure is not only managed from above but also lived, narrated, and morally absorbed from below.

Seen in this light, failure is not simply destructive. It is also productive. Each breakdown generates new rules, new technologies, and new forms of expertise, expanding the reach of the state while simultaneously revealing its limits. At the same time, failure raises enduring moral questions. How much suffering is acceptable in the administration of a sacred obligation? When does logistical failure become political failure? And how do pilgrims continue to seek spiritual fulfillment within systems that repeatedly falter? The pages that follow take these questions into the lived spaces of crisis, where hunger, waiting, fear, and endurance shape how the politics of failure is experienced, interpreted, and contested.



Figure 7.1 Tunnel leading to the Jamarat area in Mina, 2022.

Hajj pilgrims exiting the tunnel en route to perform the stoning ritual (ramy al-jamarat), Mina, Saudi Arabia. Source: Ilham Khoiri Collection.

7.1. Five Tragedies in Mina and Beyond

The history of the Hajj is not only a story of devotion and spiritual endurance, it is also marked by moments of mass tragedy. Over the past several decades, a series of deadly incidents during the annual pilgrimage in Mecca and surrounding ritual sites has claimed

thousands of lives. Stampedes, fires, structural failures, and overcrowding have repeatedly turned sacred spaces into scenes of disaster, raising urgent questions about safety, crowd control, and the limits of large-scale religious management.

The deadliest of these incidents occurred in 1990, when more than 1,400 pilgrims died inside a crowded tunnel in Mina. But that catastrophe was not an isolated event. From fires in tent cities to deadly congestion at the Jamarat Bridge and a crane collapse in the Grand Mosque, the Hajj has witnessed multiple tragedies that continue to shape how the pilgrimage is organized and remembered today.

On 2 July 1990, the world was shaken by a tragedy in Mina that would become one of the deadliest chapters in the history of the Hajj. Thousands of pilgrims were making their way through the Al-Muaisim Tunnel, a passage connecting pilgrim accommodations to the site of the stoning of the devil ritual at Jamarat.

The tunnel was never meant to hold such density. As waves of pilgrims entered from multiple directions, movement slowed, then stopped entirely. With limited ventilation in the enclosed space, oxygen levels dropped rapidly. Pilgrims became trapped, unable to move forward or retreat. By the time the situation could be brought under control, 1,426 pilgrims had lost their lives. Among them were 631 Indonesians. The tragedy left families grieving across continents and forced the global Muslim community to confront the dangers posed by overcrowding during peak moments of the pilgrimage.

To this day, the 1990 Mina tunnel disaster stands as the deadliest Hajj tragedy ever recorded. At the time, I was a college student in Jakarta, and news of the Mina tunnel disaster arrived with a force that unsettled our daily routines. What turned distant tragedy into something immediate and deeply personal was the realization that one of our classmates at IAIN Jakarta had been directly affected. Abas al-Jauhari, a fellow student in the Department of Religious Studies from Cilegon, Banten, lost both his father and his mother in the disaster. The shock rippled through our classrooms and informal gatherings. Lectures continued, but attention wavered; conversations drifted repeatedly back to Mina, to the tunnel, to the question of how something so devastating could occur during a sacred journey.

In the weeks that followed, our class moved collectively into a state of quiet mourning. Prayers were offered constantly, before lectures, after discussions, in small informal circles. Even those of us who had never met Abas's parents felt the weight of their absence through him. The trauma lingered far longer than the news cycle. It shaped how we

spoke, how we listened, and how we understood the risks folded into the hajj as a religious devotion. For weeks, the event haunted our days, not as spectacle, but as shared unease, a realization that the failures of distant institutions could fracture lives close to us, and that such loss could sit silently among us in the classroom, unresolved and heavy.

Seven years after the suffocating darkness of the Mina tunnel in 1990, tragedy returned to the same valley. In 1997, Mina, once again crowded with rows of temporary tents housing pilgrims, was transformed into a scene of devastation when a massive fire broke out. Fueled by intense heat and strong winds, flames spread rapidly from tent to tent, leaving little time for escape. By the time the fire was contained, 340 pilgrims had lost their lives and more than 1,500 others were injured, many of them caught while sleeping or resting between rituals. The disaster led authorities to introduce fire-resistant tents, a reform that was widely publicized as proof of institutional learning. Yet the fire also revealed how fragile the infrastructure of pilgrimage remained when exposed to weather, density, and improvised living conditions.

From Mina, the story of disaster shifted to another critical ritual site, the Jamarat Bridge. Beginning in 1998, and recurring repeatedly over the following years, this bridge, where pilgrims perform the symbolic stoning of the devil, became synonymous with fatal stampedes. In the first major incident, panic followed when pilgrims fell amid heavy congestion, leading to the deaths of 180 people. The tragedy did not end there. Similar scenes unfolded again in 2001, 2003, 2004, and 2006. Each incident followed a familiar pattern: overwhelming crowds pressing toward a fixed ritual goal within limited time windows, bodies falling, movement collapsing, and lives lost underfoot.

Despite successive redesigns, expansions, and new crowd-control measures, the Jamarat disasters exposed a persistent problem. The rituals themselves demanded simultaneity, while the management of millions required separation and delay. The bridge became a narrow point where devotion, urgency, and institutional limits collided. Each tragedy was treated as an isolated failure, yet together they formed a record of repetition, different years, the same structural vulnerabilities.

On 11 September 2015, tragedy struck in one of the most sacred places in Islam. As pilgrims were preparing for the Maghrib prayer in the Grand Mosque in Mecca, a large construction crane collapsed amid heavy rain and strong winds. The fallen crane tore through the mosque’s courtyard, killing 87 people and injuring 184 others. A significant number of the

victims were Indonesian. The incident highlighted the risks posed by large-scale construction projects taking place even during the Hajj season, as efforts to expand and modernize holy sites continued alongside ongoing pilgrim activity.

Still in 2015, the cycle returned decisively to Mina. Only days after a construction crane collapsed into the Grand Mosque in Mecca, killing dozens of pilgrims, the world was confronted with another catastrophe at the heart of the Hajj rituals. During the stoning of the devil, massive congestion once again gripped the Mina area. The result was a deadly stampede several kilometers from Mecca, crushing and trampling hundreds of pilgrims. As with earlier disasters, the true scale of the loss quickly became contested. Different casualty figures circulated internationally, deepening confusion and grief among families waiting for news.

For many, the Mina tragedy of 2015 felt less like a singular accident than the culmination of decades of unresolved dangers. Mina and Jamarat, spaces meant to accommodate ritual movement and spiritual intensity, had repeatedly become sites of death. Fires, stampedes, and suffocation all traced back to the same underlying pressure: managing millions of bodies within constrained spaces, under rigid schedules, and amid overlapping layers of authority.

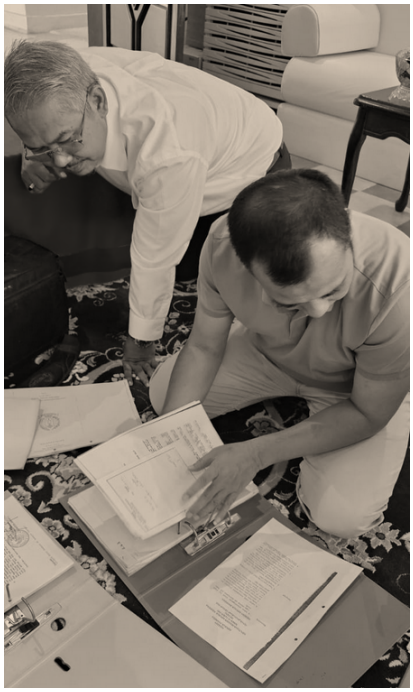


Table 7.1. Researching archival materials

Researching archival materials related to the Mina Hajj tragedies at the Indonesian Hajj Data and Documentation Center in Jeddah, August 2025. Photo: Dadi Darmadi.

In this context, these events tell a continuous story rather than separate episodes. The geography remains the same, the rituals repeat, and the risks resurface. Mina leads to Jamarat, and Jamarat returns to Mina, not only as places on a pilgrimage route, but as recurring stages where institutional limits are exposed, and where the costs of failure are measured in human lives.

These five tragedies are reminders that the Hajj, despite its profound spiritual meaning, is also a massive human undertaking with very real risks. They highlight the importance of effective communication, responsible crowd management, and continuous evaluation of safety systems, especially during peak moments in Arafah, Muzdalifah, and Mina. For the families left behind, these incidents are not statistics or historical footnotes. They are personal losses, carried quietly across generations. As the number of pilgrims continues to grow each year, the challenge remains, how to honor the sacredness of the Hajj while ensuring that no more lives are lost in the process.

The Mina tragedies also demand analysis through Victor Turner's theory of ritual process and liminality, combined with Foucauldian formulations of biopolitics. In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969), Turner conceptualizes pilgrimage rituals such as the Hajj as paradigmatic liminal phases, moments in which participants temporarily exit ordinary social hierarchies and enter conditions of *communitas* marked by egalitarianism, humility, and intense bodily proximity (Turner 1969: 94–131). The rites of Mina, particularly the stoning of the devil, exemplify this liminal condition, in which social distinctions dissolve and collective religious intensity peaks. Yet, as Turner himself noted in later reflections (*Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 1978), large-scale pilgrimages also generate structural pressures that strain the ideal of communitas.

This tension becomes more pronounced when read through Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics, as articulated in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* (1976) and *Society Must Be Defended* (1975–76 lectures). Foucault describes modern power as increasingly oriented toward the administration of life itself, e.g., through surveillance, spatial ordering, statistical calculation, and risk management (Foucault 1976: 139–145).

In Mina, liminal bodies are no longer simply participants in ritual transformation but are rendered objects of biopolitical management. Controlled movement corridors, surveillance technologies, crowd-density modeling, and temporal scheduling reconfigure sacred ritual into a technocratic problem of population governance. The resulting friction

between Turner's communitas and Foucauldian biopolitical rationality produces zones of acute fragility, where pilgrims are reduced to numerical units rather than moral subjects. When disasters occur, they expose the limits of biopolitical control over liminal populations and reveal how modern governance struggles to reconcile transcendental religious experience with bureaucratic logics of risk, security, and optimization.

In the aftermath of the Mina tragedy, which officially claimed at least 769 lives, the Saudi Arabian government was met with strong international criticism, indicating how the disaster quickly exceeded the boundaries of a technical incident and entered the realm of geopolitical and moral scrutiny. Saudi Arabia's response, articulated publicly by its Ambassador to Indonesia, Mustafa bin Ibrahim Al Mubarak, emphasized restraint and procedural caution. He repeatedly urged observers not to speculate, stressing that an official investigation was still underway and that conclusions would only be shared once the process had been completed (Detik.com, 2020). This emphasis on investigation and transparency framed the tragedy as a matter to be resolved through administrative and institutional channels rather than political contestation or public accountability.

At the same time, the diplomatic context revealed visible tensions, particularly with the Islamic Republic of Iran, which emerged as the most outspoken critic of Saudi management of the Hajj. The Saudi ambassador refused to comment on diplomatic frictions, underscored how narratives of responsibility were carefully managed. Expressions of mourning, such as public prayers for the victims to be recognized as *syuhada* (martyrs), coexisted with a reluctance to engage substantive questions of preventability or systemic failure. The tragedy was repeatedly described as deeply saddening and historically recurrent, language that acknowledged loss while subtly normalizing it as part of a long record of past incidents.

Agamben's work might help us think about Mina not by assigning simple blame, but by clarifying how certain spaces come to operate under extraordinary conditions. In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), Agamben argues that modern power increasingly works through the ability to declare exceptions, such as situations in which normal legal and ethical protections are partially suspended in the name of necessity. This argument is developed further in *State of Exception* (2005), where he shows that emergencies are no longer temporary moments of rupture but are often built into everyday systems of governance. Read through this lens, Mina becomes an exceptional space not because of

deliberate neglect, but because the Hajj concentrates extraordinary demands, e.g., ritual simultaneity, extreme bodily density, and rigid temporal schedules, into a limited geography. In such settings, pilgrims are treated primarily as biological lives to be protected statistically and logistically, what Agamben calls *bare life* (*zoē*), rather than as individual political or juridical subjects (*bios*) capable of full protection (Agamben 1998; 2005). The resulting vulnerability is therefore structural, it emerges from the scale and intensity of ritual itself as much as from the systems designed to manage it.

Approached in this more careful way, Agamben's notion of the state of exception does not imply intentional abandonment or moral failure by authorities alone. As Agamben suggests in *Means Without End: Notes on Politics* (2000), exceptional spaces are often characterized by blurred responsibility, where regulation and exposure coexist without clear lines of cause and intent. Mina exemplifies this condition. Pilgrims are highly regulated, channeled through routes, schedules, and surveillance systems, yet they remain exposed to risks that no amount of planning can fully eliminate.

Responsibility is therefore distributed across multiple layers, such as religious obligation, collective ritual momentum, infrastructural limits, environmental conditions, and administrative rationality. When tragedy occurs, it reveals not merely governance failure, but the limits of any system attempting to manage sacred intensity at massive scale. Agamben's framework allows us to understand Mina as a space where care and risk are inseparable, and where the ethical challenge lies not in identifying a single source of blame, but in recognizing how modern pilgrimage inevitably operates within zones of heightened vulnerability.

7.2. Hunger in Arafah and Mina

In late December 2006, during the peak days of the Hajj pilgrimage, tens of thousands of Indonesian pilgrims in Saudi Arabia experienced an unexpected crisis: many of them went without food for hours, and in some places for more than a full day. What was meant to be a carefully organized system of meals collapsed at the very moment when pilgrims needed nourishment most, during the intense rituals in Arafah and Mina. This episode, later known in Indonesia as the *Haji Kelaparan* or Hajj catering crisis, quickly became national news and a political controversy at home. Yet beyond headlines and official explanations, the event was lived by pilgrims as a deeply human experience of waiting, confusion, and hunger, revealing

how fragile the massive infrastructure behind the modern pilgrimage could be when even a small part of it failed.

I did not witness the catering crisis of the Indonesian Hajj of 2006 directly. I arrived in Saudi Arabia several months after the event, when its consequences were still unfolding. In Indonesia, it remained headline news—widely discussed, politically charged, and emotionally raw. The hunger experienced by pilgrims in Mina had become a public scandal at home, provoking parliamentary debates, media investigations, and widespread anger directed at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. By the time I arrived, the crisis was no longer occurring, but it was not over.

My encounter with the event began through fragments: chronologies compiled after the fact, quoted voices lifted from tense moments, timestamps that attempted to impose order on confusion. These documents present themselves as explanations—who failed, when decisions were made, how responsibility should be assigned. Yet as I read them, what became visible was not simply administrative failure, but a particular experience of pilgrimage shaped by waiting, rumor, uncertainty, and hunger.

In Saudi Arabia, these documents were accompanied by people. During fieldwork, I conducted interviews with individuals who had been directly involved or closely connected to the events. In Riyadh, on 30 April 2007, I spoke with Teguh, who described the lingering frustration and exhaustion of those days, not only among pilgrims but also among field officers caught between institutional hierarchies and immediate human need. A few weeks later, on 3 June 2007, I interviewed Salim Segaf Al-Jufri, then Indonesia's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, who reflected on the crisis not only as a logistical breakdown, but as a diplomatic challenge requiring careful negotiation between national authorities and Saudi institutions. These conversations added texture to the archival record, filling in what timelines could not fully convey: the emotional weight of decision-making under pressure, and the slow pace at which responsibility could be acknowledged across bureaucratic boundaries.

The narrative preserved in the documents begins, as many Hajj narratives do, with movement. On the morning of 28 December 2006, Indonesian pilgrims were transported from their accommodations toward Arafah. This movement is recorded with precise hours and locations, as if temporal accuracy itself might stabilize what followed. In the archive, food appears before anyone eats it, reported as cooked, then delayed, then deferred. The gap between "ready" and "arrived" stretches across the day.

By late afternoon, officials monitoring the contracted kitchens reported that meals had been prepared. Yet aluminum foil, an object with no ritual meaning but immense logistical importance, was missing. In the archive, this absence grows increasingly significant. Containers that appeared full turned out to be empty. Trucks crossed zones without delivering anything. What circulated at this moment was not food, but reassurance and suspicion, each intensifying the other.

What struck me, reading and hearing these accounts, was how often authority is described as being on the move, trucks chased, vehicles stopped, containers opened and inspected. Power travelled with uniforms, vests, and access to infrastructure. Yet no one appeared fully in control. What was called "monitoring" repeatedly arrived just after something had already passed elsewhere.

Midnight marks another turning point. Packaging finally arrived. Meals were wrapped hurriedly, so late that dawn approached before distribution began. By the time food reached Arafah, pilgrims were already hungry. Hunger here was not merely physiological; it reorganized social space. One portion was divided among four people. Containers were left unopened because crowds had formed. Distribution no longer promised order, it risked escalation.

When the scene shifted to Mina, the pattern repeated rather than resolved. Responsibility for catering had not yet changed hands. According to later estimates, around eighty percent of Indonesian pilgrims went without food throughout an entire day. Protest entered the narrative, not chaotic, but persistent. Pilgrims approached officials. Voices rose. Appeals to be *sabar*, to be patience circulated, increasingly disconnected from the immediacy of hunger.

As I continued my fieldwork in Saudi Arabia, what became visible was how slowly and carefully this crisis was being negotiated after the fact. Meetings took place between Indonesian representatives and Saudi counterparts. Responsibility passed from a private contractor to a Saudi muasasah, and was then partially redistributed again to other catering providers. Each transition appeared firm in official language, yet on the ground it unfolded cautiously, shaped by diplomacy, permits, and institutional face-saving.

I observed visits and discussions involving Sheikh Yasin Garut, who at that time acted as a representative of Muassasah Asia Tenggara, or the Southeast Asian Hajj Service Foundation. His presence signaled the attempt to stabilize relations and reassert institutional

cooperation after the crisis. These negotiations were quiet, procedural, and incremental. There were no dramatic public resolutions, only a steady effort to prevent the same failure from happening again.

Within these processes, group leaders occupied a crucial position. One kloter leader, quoted in the archive, declared that he did not care if he lost his job, as long as his pilgrims were fed. His statement was emotional, even confrontational, but also ethical. Hunger, for him, was not inconvenience; it was a breach of trust.

Reading across documents, interviews, and observations, I noticed how food, once it reappeared in certain areas, became evidence of inequality rather than relief. Where meals were available, wrappers lay scattered on the ground. Elsewhere, pilgrims had waited more than twenty-four hours. Hunger became comparative. It sharpened perception and redrew moral boundaries.

What the archive does not fully capture, but cannot entirely suppress either, is the lingering impact of this episode on how the Hajj was remembered and governed. Later retellings would label the event a catering crisis or a logistical failure. Yet what emerges ethnographically is something more intimate: the rupture of a promise embedded in contemporary pilgrimage, that devotion organized at such scale would be supported by systems of care.

This is the Hajj revealed across documents, interviews, and negotiations, not abolished by failure, but reconfigured by it. The rituals were completed. Pilgrims returned home. But hunger traveled with them, becoming part of how the pilgrimage of 1427 H was remembered, an embodied reminder of how faith, governance, and infrastructure intersect when systems falter, and bodies are left waiting.

Chapter 8 – Haji Sandal Jepit: Piety, Mobility and the Questions of Illegality

This final chapter brings together the central themes of the thesis, piety, mobility, bureaucracy, and illegality, through an ethnographic and historical analysis of what Indonesians colloquially call *haji sandal jepit*. The term refers to pilgrims who perform the hajj under precarious, informal, or illegal circumstances, often by overstaying visas, working without authorization, or bypassing official hajj quotas altogether. Far from being marginal anomalies, these practices illuminate how the modern hajj has become a field of negotiation structured by inequality, regulation, and moral improvisation.

The concept of mobility, when examined through the lens of seasonality, offers a powerful analytical framework for understanding how hajj organization operates as a rhythmic, temporally bounded system of mass human movement. Unlike conventional forms of migration or religious travel, the hajj compresses the movement of millions of pilgrims into a narrow liturgical window, creating what might be understood as a seasonal surge of sacred mobility, one that strains infrastructure, reshapes urban economies, and demands extraordinary feats of logistical coordination. This seasonality is not merely a logistical constraint but a structuring principle that governs the entire apparatus of hajj organization, from visa quotas and airline schedules to housing allocations and crowd management protocols. For Indonesian pilgrims, whose journey involves navigating a complex bureaucratic landscape of state agencies, private travel operators, and transnational brokers, mobility is never simply physical movement but a socially negotiated process shaped by institutional calendars, economic capacities, and religious aspirations. Understanding how seasonality disciplines and channels this mobility, who gets to move, when, and under what conditions, is therefore essential to grasping the deeper inequalities and power relations embedded within the hajj system.

Rather than treating illegality as a question of individual moral failure, this chapter approaches *haji sandal jepit* as a social figure produced by broader structural constraints: escalating costs, limited access to quotas, prolonged waiting periods, and the intensified bureaucratization of pilgrimage by both sending and receiving states. Through this lens,

illegality appears not as deviance but as a mode of ethical reasoning and religious striving within conditions of exclusion.

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that the Indonesian hajj is best understood not as a unified system but as a terrain of overlapping authorities and recurring moments of breakdown. Food shortages, overcrowded housing, transportation failures, document irregularities, and sudden policy shifts are not exceptional disruptions; they are constitutive features of the pilgrimage in its modern form. These failures reshape institutional practices and public expectations, compelling pilgrims, brokers, and officials alike to improvise.

In this context, increasing regulation paradoxically generates new forms of vulnerability. Each layer of bureaucratic control, e.g., quota systems, biometric registration, specialized passports, permit regimes, produces new thresholds of exclusion. Those who cannot meet these administrative requirements are not relieved of the religious obligation to perform the hajj; instead, they are pushed into alternative pathways that blur the boundary between legality and illegality.

Haji sandal jepit exemplifies this dynamic. The figure stands at the intersection of intense piety and legal precarity, revealing how Islamic obligation collides with the infrastructures of the modern nation-state. The question is not whether pilgrims "follow the rules," but how they navigate competing moral, legal, and religious frameworks when those rules render the hajj inaccessible.

The regulation of pilgrims is not a new phenomenon. During the late colonial period, both Dutch and British authorities subjected Southeast Asian pilgrims, especially the poor and undocumented, known as *hajj miskeen,* to surveillance, restriction, and confinement. Colonial regimes framed destitute pilgrims as sources of disorder, disease, and political subversion, instituting systems of registration and контроля.

What distinguishes the contemporary moment is the scale, intensity, and moralization of regulation. Since 1987, when Saudi Arabia successfully persuaded the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to adopt a global quota system, that is one pilgrim per one thousand Muslims per country, the hajj has been governed through international coordination, numerical rationality, and modern administrative technologies. For Indonesia, the world's

largest Muslim-majority country, this has meant waiting periods that often exceed twenty years.

The result is a profound temporal disjuncture between religious obligation and bureaucratic possibility. Pilgrims grow old, fall ill, or die while waiting for their turn. Within this waiting, alternative imaginaries of access emerge. Since the 1987 OIC ruling, the Kingdom has steadily expanded its regulatory reach. Beginning in the late 1990s, stricter controls on hajj permits were introduced, culminating in the state campaign *La ḥajja bidūni taṣrīḥ* ("no hajj without a permit"), which restricts citizens and legal residents to performing the hajj once every five years. These measures have been reinforced by religious edicts issued by prominent Saudi institutions, including the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and Fatāwā and members of the Saudi Council of Senior ʿUlamāʾ. By 2009, penalties for *taṣrīḥ* violations had increased tenfold, from SR 10,000 to SR 100,000.

If, in recent decades, illegal migration has posed a growing challenge for the Saudi government, pilgrims performing the hajj without permits have only intensified this existing concern. This issue involves not only the host country, Saudi Arabia, but also sending countries such as Indonesia.

Moreover, these developments have transformed the nature of established, centuries-old *manāsik al-ḥajj* jurisprudence (*fiqh manāsik al-ḥajj*). Traditionally, Islamic jurisprudence identifies five *shurūṭ al-ḥajj* (conditions for the obligation of hajj): being Muslim, adult, of sound mind, free, and financially capable of undertaking the journey. In the contemporary context, this has effectively expanded to six conditions, with the addition of possession of an official hajj permit (*taṣrīḥ*).

In this chapter, I examine the interlinks between piety and mobility, and between pilgrimage and the legal status of pilgrims. As pilgrims are subjects of the modern state and immigration law, undocumented pilgrims are rendered "illegal" and are subject to intense scrutiny, one of the most striking features of the hajj in the era of the modern nation-state (Darmadi 2013). This condition has given rise to what is commonly referred to in Indonesia as *haji sandal jepit*.

8.1. *Haji Sandal Jepit* and Illegal Pilgrimage Practices

Few objects are as ubiquitous in everyday Indonesian life as the *sandal jepit*. Cheap, lightweight, and functionally minimal, it circulates across social spaces with remarkable ease, from village footpaths and mosque courtyards to urban markets, bus terminals, and informal workplaces. Composed of little more than a thin rubber sole and a Y-shaped strap, the sandal jepit is designed not for durability or protection but for immediacy, mobility, and easy replacement. Its very form indexes transience: it is worn briefly, lost easily, stolen casually, and discarded without ceremony. Precisely because of this banality, it is often rendered invisible, excluded from ethnographic attention and moral reflection. Yet it is this ordinariness that makes the sandal jepit a dense social text, one that encodes histories of labor, class, religious practice, and economic precariousness in Indonesia.

As a mass-produced object, sandal jepit emerged alongside postcolonial industrialization and the consolidation of domestic rubber industries. Brands such as Swallow, which transformed a proprietary name into a generic category, exemplify how commodity circulation operates not merely through markets but through cultural saturation. The sandal's affordability made it the most democratic form of footwear in Indonesia, accessible across class, gender, and age. At the same time, its near-universality denied it prestige. Unlike leather shoes or branded sneakers, sandal jepit carries little symbolic capital; it is not worn to claim distinction, but to signal sufficiency. To wear sandal jepit is to declare that one has *enough*, enough to walk, enough to move, enough to arrive, without excess.

This logic of sufficiency is key. Sandal jepit is closely tied to ideas of modesty (*kesederhanaan*) and frugality (*hemat*), virtues that carry particular resonance within Islamic moral economies in Indonesia. It appears frequently in religious spaces: outside prayer halls, in pesantren compounds, and in pilgrimage preparation narratives, where elaborate worldly possessions are often framed as moral distractions. To walk lightly, unburdened by material attachments, is a recurring ethical motif. Sandal jepit, as a material practice, makes this motif literal. It is footwear for those who expect to remove their shoes often, to enter and exit spaces fluidly, to remain adaptable.

At the same time, sandal jepit is inseparable from informality. It is the footwear of the informal economy: street vendors, day laborers, motorcycle taxi drivers, domestic workers, and migrant laborers. It allows for quick movement and long hours but offers little protection against injury or exhaustion. In this sense, sandal jepit materializes precarity. It does not

shield the body from heat, sharp objects, or pollutants; rather, it exposes the foot to them. To wear sandal jepit is to accept vulnerability as a condition of movement. The sandal therefore becomes a quiet index of economic positioning, not destitution, but persistent insecurity.

This symbolic convergence, e.g., simplicity, mobility, vulnerability, and informality, provides the cultural backdrop against which the figure of the *haji sandal jepit* emerges. The phrase itself does not primarily describe attire; many such pilgrims do not literally perform the hajj wearing flip-flops. Instead, the term condenses a moral and social judgment about *how* the journey is undertaken. To be a haji sandal jepit is to pursue pilgrimage with minimal resources, outside formal infrastructures, and often beyond the boundaries of legality. Just as sandal jepit is footwear that allows one to move without guarantees, haji sandal jepit names those who move through the hajj system without secure documentation, official quotas, or long-term financial backing.

In Indonesia, access to the official hajj system is shaped by structural constraints: long waiting lists, escalating costs, limited provincial quotas, and bureaucratic opacity. For many prospective pilgrims, the promise of fulfilling a religious obligation collides with the reality of deferred access, sometimes projected decades into the future. Within this context, informal and semi-legal pathways emerge not merely as acts of rule-breaking but as moral responses to exclusion. The haji sandal jepit is thus not an anomalous figure but a product of systemic bottlenecks and policy-induced scarcity.

Here, the metaphor of sandal jepit does important analytical work. It signals a mode of religious striving characterized by improvisation and risk. Much like the sandal itself, these pilgrimage routes are inexpensive, fragile, and easily broken. Overstayed visas, unauthorized work in Saudi Arabia, dependence on brokers, and exposure to arrest or deportation form part of the journey. Yet, as with sandal jepit, fragility does not negate function. These routes *work*—not flawlessly, not safely, but sufficiently to carry bodies toward Mecca. The moral calculus involved is less about compliance than about endurance.

Importantly, the term haji sandal jepit also reflects social ambivalence. It carries a faintly mocking tone, suggesting inadequacy or lack of preparation, while simultaneously acknowledging determination and piety. This ambiguity mirrors broader Indonesian attitudes toward illegality in everyday life, where rule-bending is often normalized as a survival strategy rather than condemned as deviance. Just as wearing sandal jepit to a mall might elicit

mild disapproval rather than outright sanction, performing hajj through informal means occupies an ethically gray zone, that is disapproved in principle, tolerated in practice.

By foregrounding sandal jepit, this chapter argues that illegality in the hajj cannot be understood solely through legal or theological frameworks. Instead, it must be situated within material cultures of mobility familiar to millions of Indonesians. Sandal jepit teaches us that moving lightly, cheaply, and precariously is not an exception but a dominant mode of engaging with institutions that are distant, expensive, and over-regulated. The haji sandal jepit, then, is not simply a pilgrim who breaks the rules, but a social figure who reveals how moral aspiration persists under structural constraint.

In this sense, sandal jepit is not a trivial object but a diagnostic one. It allows us to read pilgrimage not as a singular, regulated ritual but as a lived process shaped by inequality, improvisation, and ethical reasoning. To begin a chapter on illegal or informal hajj with the biography of a flip-flop is therefore not a digression. It is a methodological choice: an insistence that big religious journeys are made, quite literally and figuratively, through the smallest, most overlooked things.

The Saudi state's campaign *La ḥajja bidūni taṣrīḥ*, "there is no hajj without a permit," launched formally in 2009, epitomizes the fusion of legal enforcement and religious authority. By soliciting fatwas from senior religious institutions to support permit requirements, the Saudi government redefined compliance with state regulation as a condition of religious validity. Classical fiqh, which traditionally enumerates five or seven conditions for the obligation to perform hajj, is effectively expanded to include an additional requirement: possession of an official permit (*taṣrīḥ*).

This transformation reframes citizenship and legal status as theological criteria. Pilgrims are no longer assessed solely through ritual competence or moral intent, but through their documentation, mobility history, and biometric traceability. Failure to comply can result in detention, deportation, heavy fines, and religious stigma. Yet this juridical expansion sits uneasily with lived realities. For many Indonesians, especially migrant workers, informal laborers, and the rural poor, the permit regime appears less as moral order than as a regime of exclusion.

The phenomenon of *haji sandal jepit* unfolds through multiple pathways. One such pathway is *umrohan*: pilgrims who enter Saudi Arabia on umrah visas, overstay, take up

informal work, and wait for the hajj season. Another involves *kaburan,* runaway domestic workers who flee employer abuse and repurpose their migration trajectories toward pilgrimage. Others purchase individual or so-called "independent" hajj visas outside the national quota system, often at exorbitant prices and through opaque brokerage networks.

The story of Ibu Asiah, a domestic worker from Banjarmasin who entered Saudi Arabia on an umrah visa and remained for years, working while waiting to perform hajj, captures the moral ambiguity of these strategies. From the perspective of the state, Ibu Asiah is an overstayer and an illegal worker. From her own perspective, she is a woman patiently fulfilling both economic duty and religious aspiration. That she has performed *wuquf* in Arafat, twice, while remaining indefinitely in Saudi Arabia unsettles simple distinctions between success and failure, legality and sin.

The metaphor of *sandal jepit* or flip-flops condenses these tensions. In Indonesian everyday life, sandals signal informality, flexibility, humility, and mobility. They are cheap, accessible, and adaptable, worn in kitchens, markets, mosques, and streets. By likening precarious pilgrims to flip-flops, Indonesians invoke a moral economy of simplicity and resilience.

Haji sandal jepit thus stands in contrast to images of the hajj as a pilgrimage of the wealthy and bureaucratically certified. It recalls older pathways, when pilgrims traveled slowly, relied on communal networks, and accepted hardship as part of religious striving. While states frame these practices as dangerous and disorderly, many pilgrims interpret them as ethically justified responses to unjust constraints.

These practices raise difficult questions about the meaning of *haji mabrur*, the accepted or exemplary pilgrimage, in an era of bureaucratic saturation. Can a pilgrimage performed without a permit be morally valid? Can legality substitute for sincerity? How do pilgrims reconcile experiences of arrest, exploitation, and invisibility with aspirations for spiritual perfection?

For many, the answer lies not in legal compliance but in perseverance. The pursuit of hajj under conditions of exclusion becomes proof of sincerity rather than its negation. In this sense, *haji sandal jepit* reveals an alternative moral logic that challenges state-centered definitions of order. Some pilgrims, blocked from Mecca altogether, turn instead to local

sacred geographies: *ziyarat* to saints' tombs, ritual journeys within Indonesia, or the cultivation of piety through patience and waiting. These practices do not negate the hajj; they reframe it.

Encounter near Pasar Seng

I first met Ibu Asiah in the mid-summer of 2004, during my second visit to Mecca for preliminary research on Islam, pilgrimage, and Indonesian migration in Saudi Arabia. The encounter took place just outside my hotel, near Pasar Seng, a dense, informal market known among Indonesian pilgrims as a place to purchase *oleh-oleh*, gifts to be brought home after completing the hajj or umrah.

In 2004, Pasar Seng emerged as one of my most consistent points of engagement during fieldwork in Mecca. I returned there repeatedly, usually in the late afternoon after prayer, when the narrow alleys were crowded but still navigable. For Indonesian pilgrims and tour guides, Pasar Seng was a site of routine consumption. For me, it functioned as a stable social arena within an otherwise fragmented pilgrimage landscape, a place where encounters did not require prior arrangement and relationships were sustained through repetition.

Pasar Seng drew Indonesians not only because of low prices, but because it accommodated the material rhythms of pilgrimage travel. Pilgrims arrived with lists compiled by relatives at home, transforming shopping into an obligation that extended the pilgrimage beyond Mecca itself. Tour guides mediated these transactions, translating, bargaining, and directing pilgrims through the market. In this way, Pasar Seng was embedded in an informal economy that depended on trust, familiarity, and long-term circulation rather than formal regulation. Commerce was inseparable from movement, pilgrims, guides, goods, and money flowed together through the same constrained space.

By 2007, during my third visit to Saudi Arabia, Pasar Seng had become an informal meeting point within my fieldwork routine in Mecca. Guides routinely suggested we meet there, without specifying details beyond the name of the market. This imprecision worked precisely because Pasar Seng was dense with recognizability. People expected to be seen and found. Sitting on plastic stools or standing at the edge of a stall, we talked while shoppers

passed close enough to interrupt conversations. The spatial compression of the market was not incidental; it structured social interaction by reducing distance and encouraging unplanned encounter.

What distinguished Pasar Seng from other commercial spaces in Mecca was the way economic exchange shaded into social relations. Transactions often stretched beyond purchase into conversation, gestures of familiarity, and joking in improvised Indonesian. Vendors learned fragments of Indonesian through repeated exposure, while pilgrims lingered even after shopping was complete. The market thus functioned as a temporary social enclave, shaped by shared habits and references, especially frequent comparisons to Tanah Abang in Jakarta. These comparisons did more than describe price or scale; they anchored Pasar Seng within a transnational moral economy familiar to Indonesian pilgrims.

Pasar Seng can be understood as a key meeting point within the everyday life of Indonesian pilgrims in Mecca. It supported pilgrimage not only by providing affordable goods, but by sustaining social interaction amid the intense movement and crowding of the holy city. In a city increasingly reshaped by large construction projects, surveillance, and formal institutions, Pasar Seng offered pilgrims and guides a rare sense of autonomy. Its informality allowed for flexibility, e.g., in time, movement, and conversation, that was difficult to find elsewhere in Mecca.

By late 2007, during the hajj season, I was still able to meet many Indonesian hajj pilgrims. However, conversations about the market's demolition became more frequent. Guides spoke of planned expansions around Masjid al-Haram and described Pasar Seng's disappearance as inevitable. Their tone was often matter-of-fact, reflecting long familiarity with the shifting urban landscape of Mecca. Yet the anticipated loss was deeply felt. Pasar Seng was more than a place to shop; it was a rare space where Indonesian pilgrimage life could take recognizable form inside the sacred city.

Its removal marked more than the end of a market. It signaled a broader change in Mecca's urban politics, as informal and socially dense spaces that had long accommodated transnational pilgrims were replaced by developments designed for scale, efficiency, and centralized control. In retrospect, Pasar Seng stands out as a place where repeated encounters, close proximity, and everyday informality made ethnographic relationships possible. Its disappearance highlights how changes in urban space reshape not only movement and

commerce, but also how pilgrims encounter one another, and how such encounters can be observed, remembered, and studied.

At the edge of the market, beneath the shade cast by rows of shop awnings, Ibu Asiah was sitting beside a plastic mat laid directly on the pavement. In front of her were neatly arranged packets of *nasi bungkus,* rice wrapped in paper or banana leaves, and an assortment of *kue-kue*, traditional Indonesian snacks such as sweet cakes and fried pastries. Each item was sold for one Saudi riyal. It was remarkably cheap, even by the standards of Pasar Seng, and that was precisely why she sold so many.

Throughout the day, Indonesian pilgrims stopped by her stall, drawn not only by the price but by something harder to quantify. Many spoke of feeling *rindu* and *kangen*, a deep, aching longing, for the tastes of home while performing the pilgrimage. Eating Ibu Asiah's food was not simply a matter of convenience or economy; it was an act of emotional return. In between prayers, rituals, and crowded movements through the holy sites, her *nasi bungkus* offered pilgrims a fleeting sensory bridge back to Indonesia.

Ibu Asiah cooked at dawn, transported the food through informal networks, and sold it quietly outside the formal economy of the city. Her stall did not bear a permit, a sign, or a fixed address. It existed in the gaps, between hotels, markets, and pilgrimage routes, much like her own legal status. Yet this precarious position also placed her at the heart of Indonesian pilgrim life in Mecca. She was known, sought out, and remembered.

Only later did I learn that this small pavement stall was part of a longer waiting. Selling food sustained her materially and morally. It allowed her to remain in Mecca, close to the sacred, while extending the time necessary to realize a hope deferred by cost, quota, and bureaucracy. In this way, Ibu Asiah's labor was not a detour from pilgrimage but one of its enabling conditions.

When Ibu Asiah first arrived in Saudi Arabia, she carried little more than an umrah visa, a small bag of clothes, and an intention that extended far beyond the documents in her passport. She was twenty-eight years old, a mother of one, from South Kalimantan. According to the terms of her visa, she was permitted to remain in the Kingdom for no more than a month. Yet, as with many Indonesian pilgrims and migrant workers, the calendar of the state did not align neatly with the calendar of her aspirations.

Ibu Asiah came to perform umrah during Ramadan. Like tho of others, she entered Mecca through a pathway officially designated as temporary and devotional. But for her, umrah was less an endpoint than a threshold. After completing the rituals, she chose not to return home. Instead, she stayed on in Jeddah, quietly extending her presence beyond the legal limits of her visa. This decision marked her entry into a different moral and temporal order, one structured not by permits and deadlines, but by waiting, endurance, and hope.

The reason for her decision was neither obscure nor unusual. Ibu Asiah wanted to perform the hajj. The cost of an official hajj journey, then estimated at around Rp 24 million, placed it firmly beyond her reach. With limited savings and no access to Indonesia's quota-based system, she could not imagine waiting decades for her turn. When the opportunity arose to travel on an umrah visa for a fraction of the cost, she took it, aware that the route would be uncertain and fraught with risk.

This pathway, sometimes referred to as "haji kecil" or "little hajj," relied on a sequence of strategic delays rather than formal permissions. After umrah, pilgrims like Ibu Asiah remained in Saudi Arabia, often in Jeddah or Mecca, blending into the informal economies that sustain the city. During this period of waiting, Ibu Asiah worked as a domestic helper. The wages, approximately 1,500 riyal per month, were several times higher than what she could earn in Indonesia. Employment not only sustained her daily needs; it extended the temporal horizon of her stay, making continued waiting possible.

For Ibu Asiah, work and worship were not opposing pursuits but mutually reinforcing ones. Earning money enabled her to remain close to Mecca. Remaining close to Mecca kept alive the possibility of hajj. Over time, the distinction between economic migration and religious devotion blurred. Her everyday life consisted of cleaning homes, sending remittances, observing prayers, and waiting; waiting for the hajj season, waiting for opportunity, waiting for God's permission.

Against the logic of the state, Ibu Asiah's presence was a violation. She was an overstayer, an undocumented worker, a figure of illegal mobility. Yet from her own perspective, and from the standpoint of many around her, her actions were intelligible and morally justified. She had not come to Saudi Arabia to deceive or exploit; she had come to fulfill a religious obligation that had been structurally deferred.

Over the course of two years, Ibu Asiah successfully performed the central rite of hajj: *wuquf* at Arafah. Not once, but twice. Each performance marked a moment of profound spiritual attainment, even as her legal status remained unresolved. In this sense, her story unsettles neat distinctions between success and failure. Ritually, she had succeeded. Administratively, she had not.

Returning home was always an option, but it was one she postponed. The earnings she accumulated in Saudi Arabia promised a different future, one in which she could return not only as a pilgrim, but as a provider, bringing home enough savings to materially improve her family's life. In this way, pilgrimage expanded into a longer project of moral personhood, encompassing economic responsibility alongside religious fulfillment.

Ibu Asiah's story exemplifies what Indonesians colloquially call *haji sandal jepit*. Like the "flip-flop sandals" from which the term derives, her journey was improvised, flexible, and grounded in everyday pragmatism. Sandal jepit are worn in kitchens, markets, and mosques; they are simple, durable, and accessible. To describe pilgrims like Ibu Asiah in these terms is not merely to mark their poverty or informality, but to recognize a moral style—one that values humility, endurance, and adaptability.

From the perspective of the Saudi state, and increasingly that of the Indonesian government, such journeys are framed as dangerous, illegal, and disruptive. High-profile campaigns emphasize order, permits, and compliance. But in the lived worlds of pilgrims like Ibu Asiah, legality does not exhaust morality. The absence of formal authorization does not negate spiritual intent. Instead, the long wait, the precarious labor, and the constant risk of detection become part of the ethical substance of pilgrimage itself.

Ibu Asiah's continued presence in Saudi Arabia does not signal failure to return home, but success in staying close to the sacred, success measured not in documents issued or stamps received, but in perseverance. Her story reveals how, under conditions of restricted mobility and bureaucratic scarcity, the hajj becomes less a single journey than a prolonged mode of life.

In this sense, *haji sandal jepit* is not an exception to the modern hajj, but one of its constitutive forms. Through figures like Ibu Asiah, we see how piety is practiced not only

within mosques and rituals, but within kitchens, waiting rooms, and undocumented lives, where devotion unfolds in the shadow of the state, yet refuses to be defined by it.

Preventing Haji Sandal Jepit at Soekarno–Hatta

In the months leading up to the 2015 hajj season, the waiting did not only take place in homes, prayer groups, and cramped rooms in Jeddah. It also accumulated at airports, most visibly at Soekarno–Hatta International Airport, Indonesia's primary gateway for international travel, where pilgrimage aspirations increasingly collided with immigration scrutiny, document checks, and last-minute refusals to depart.

In September 2015, I went to Soekarno–Hatta International Airport to observe these conditions firsthand. My decision was informed by earlier conversations and contacts with Indonesian hajj pilgrims and organizers, including Haji Ipep, a hajj guide affiliated with the Al-Mufassir KBIH (Kelompok Bimbingan Ibadah Haji) in Majalaya, West Java. When I encountered him that year, Haji Ipep was waiting in the departure area with several fellow pilgrims, preparing for boarding amid an atmosphere of vigilance and uncertainty.

Unlike the intimate spaces of homes, prayer gatherings, or temporary lodging in Saudi Arabia, the airport presented pilgrimage as a tightly regulated passage. Documents were checked repeatedly; conversations were hushed and cautious. Pilgrims waited not only for flight announcements but for confirmation that their journeys would be permitted at all. Through Haji Ipep, I gained access to this moment of suspension, where aspirations for pilgrimage were gathered, yet fragile, at the edge of departure.

What struck me was not only the presence of pilgrims, guides, and families, but the density of surveillance surrounding them, e.g., immigration officers, police, and airline staff, each tasked with verifying legality. The airport emerged as a threshold where religious intent encountered administrative judgment, and where the long temporalities of waiting, for years, even decades, were suddenly condensed into the immediacy of inspection. It was here that the category of *haji sandal jepit* became tangible, not as an abstract label, but as a constantly anticipated risk shaping how pilgrims moved, spoke, and waited.

Indonesia entered the 2015 season with a reduced hajj quota of 221,000 pilgrims, down from 223,000 the previous year. Despite this reduction, the country retained its status as the world's largest sender of pilgrims. Yet numerical abundance did not translate into accessibility. For many prospective pilgrims, especially older adults and those without stable income, this stretched waiting rendered the promise of hajj increasingly abstract, something spoken about, saved for, but perhaps never reached. It was within this temporal gap that alternative pathways emerged.

Throughout April 2015, immigration officers, airport police, and officials from the Ministry of Religious Affairs intensified joint operations aimed at preventing what authorities termed "*hajj non-prosedural*." Over a period of several weeks, hundreds of would-be pilgrims were intercepted before boarding flights. They were not stopped at Mecca's gates, nor along desert highways, but at check-in counters, passport control booths, and waiting lounges, spaces usually associated with anticipation rather than refusal.

Many of those intercepted held valid passports and visas. What they lacked, however, was the one document that mattered most, that is a hajj visa linked to Indonesia's official quota system. Some carried work visas, others tourist or visit visas. A number had itineraries routing them not directly to Saudi Arabia, but through third countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, even the Philippines, designed to disguise the ultimate purpose of their journey. These layered routes reflected both ingenuity and vulnerability, an attempt to move through the cracks of overlapping regimes of surveillance, outsourcing risk to transit points rather than confronting prohibition directly.

The figures intercepted at the airport came from across the archipelago, e.g., Java, Kalimantan, Banten, Yogyakarta. Some traveled in small coordinated groups, guided by brokers or travel agents who promised a faster route to Mecca. Others moved independently, piecing together information from acquaintances, neighborhood networks, or social media. Several had paid between one hundred and two hundred and fifty million rupiah, sums that far exceeded the official cost of hajj travel, demonstrating that *haji sandal jepit* was not always a story of cheap mobility, but often one of expensive risk.

From the standpoint of state authorities, these practices represented both legal violation and moral danger. Officials framed prevention as protection, that is safeguarding Indonesian citizens from arrest, deportation, or exploitation abroad. Yet for the prospective

pilgrims who were turned away, sometimes only hours before departure, the moment was experienced less as protection than as rupture. Years of saving, planning, praying, and hope dissolved at the threshold of departure, replaced by instruction to return home.

The airport thus emerged as a decisive moral site. It was here that the state reasserted its authority to determine not only who could travel, but whose pilgrimage aspirations were legitimate. Legality was rendered visible and enforceable through documents, databases, and biometric checks. Without an official hajj registration number (*nomor porsi*), mobility itself became suspect, regardless of intention.

What this scene reveals is not simply the existence of illegal pilgrimage routes, but the production of illegality through administrative time. The long queue, twenty-five years or more of waiting, did not eliminate desire for hajj; it displaced it into informal circuits. Brokers thrived not because pilgrims rejected regulation, but because regulation postponed fulfillment beyond the horizon of many lives. Prevention at airports addressed the symptom rather than the cause.

In this sense, the spectacle of interdiction at Soekarno–Hatta stands in sharp contrast to the quiet, prolonged waiting of pilgrims like Ibu Asiah in Saudi Arabia. One unfolds under fluorescent lights and official statements; the other in kitchens, dormitories, and shared rooms. One is framed as disruption to order; the other as persistence in devotion. Yet both are structured by the same condition: the gap between religious obligation and bureaucratic accessibility.

The figure of *haji sandal jepit* moves between these spaces. Sometimes visible, sometimes hidden; sometimes framed as victim, sometimes as violator; sometimes waiting, sometimes intercepted. At the airport gate, the journey ends before it begins. Elsewhere, it stretches on indefinitely. Together, these ethnographic moments reveal a pilgrimage landscape defined not only by rituals in Mecca, but by borders, queues, refusals, and the everyday labor of trying again.

As reported by Voice Indonesia (2025) below, the persistence of *haji sandal jepit* is closely tied to Indonesia’s extended hajj waiting period and the emergence of brokerage networks that convert bureaucratic delay into commercial opportunity.



Table 8.1 Illegalities and Social Responses

Indonesian hajj officials frequently encourage pilgrims to wear sandal jepit. Despite their association with cheapness, these sandals are considered hygienic, comfortable, and appropriate for use in mosque courtyards. Simultaneously, sandal jepit has become metaphorically linked to pilgrims who pursue the hajj through informal or illegal pathways—most notably those who overstay their umrah visas and remain in specific areas of Mecca until the hajj period begins (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia).

Illegality as a Structurally Produced Condition

Approximately ten years after my first-hand observation of *haji sandal jepit* in Jakarta, this phenomenon continues to prevail in Indonesia. A 2025 investigative report by *Voice Indonesia* illustrates how practices popularly labeled as *haji sandal jepit* emerge not primarily from individual intent to violate the law, but from structural conditions governing access to the hajj (VOICEIndonesia.co 2025).

In that year, Indonesia received a reduced hajj quota of 221,000 pilgrims from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, down from 241,000 in 2024, while remaining the largest sender of pilgrims globally. At the same time, Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs reported that the waiting time for regular hajj departure had reached approximately twenty-five years. This prolonged bureaucratic queue effectively displaced the fulfillment of a religious obligation beyond the temporal horizon of many prospective pilgrims.

Within this context of scarcity and delay, non-procedural hajj pathways became normalized alternatives rather than marginal deviance. The report documents how

intermediaries, e.g., travel agents, brokers, and informal networks, translated waiting time into commercial opportunity by offering accelerated routes to Mecca using non-hajj visas, such as work or visit visas. These arrangements frequently involved transiting through third countries, including Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines, in order to evade detection. Such practices, described as recurring every hajj season, indicate not exceptional breakdowns but routinized responses to exclusion embedded within the quota system itself.

State enforcement at departure points further demonstrates how illegality is administratively produced. Between 15 April and 18 May 2025, immigration authorities at Soekarno–Hatta International Airport, in coordination with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and airport police, prevented the departure of 222 prospective pilgrims traveling outside the official hajj framework. Additional police operations throughout April intercepted multiple groups originating from West Java, South Kalimantan, Jakarta and Banten, many of whom had paid between Rp100 million and Rp250 million, far exceeding the official cost of hajj travel. These cases underscore that *haji sandal jepit* is not necessarily a cheaper or more reckless option, but often a costly attempt to overcome bureaucratic deferral.

Crucially, state officials defined illegality not in relation to ritual competence or religious intent, but through the absence of administrative markers, particularly the official hajj registration number (*nomor porsi*). Under this framework, prospective pilgrims without quota authorization were rendered illegal irrespective of their documentation, resources, or preparation. The Voice Indonesia report thus reveals how prolonged waiting, quota scarcity, and uneven regulation collectively generate the very forms of illegality that state authorities seek to prevent.

Rather than viewing *haji sandal jepit* as a problem of moral failure or criminal deception, the report points to a structural contradiction at the heart of the contemporary hajj: a religious obligation framed as universal, governed through bureaucratic systems that ration access across decades. Illegality, in this sense, is not an aberration but a predictable outcome of a pilgrimage regime organized around scarcity, delay, and unequal mobility.

Why *Haji Sandal Jepit?*

Sandal jepit, or flip-flops, are among the most common forms of footwear in Indonesia and carry a distinctive cultural resonance. Typically made of rubber, an elastic and durable material, this open-toed sandal is commonly defined as consisting of two straps forming a Y-shape between the big toe and the adjacent toe. Yet beyond its physical form, *sandal jepit* functions as a moral and social symbol. It evokes informality, flexibility, humility, and everyday pragmatism. Inside the home, it is worn in bathrooms, kitchens, and verandas; outside, it accompanies short walks, trips to local grocery stores, traditional markets, or neighborhood visits. In these settings, *sandal jepit* signals ease, accessibility, and readiness for movement rather than formality or display.

The metaphor of *sandal jepit* becomes especially salient when attached to the hajj. The term *haji sandal jepit* refers to Indonesian pilgrims who undertake the hajj through informal, precarious, or illegal pathways, often without complying with state regulations, whether those of Saudi Arabia or Indonesia. These pilgrims frequently follow alternative routes reminiscent of older patterns of pilgrimage mobility, recalling a period before the hajj was tightly regulated by modern nation-states, visa regimes, and quota systems. In this sense, *haji sandal jepit* gestures toward a form of mobility grounded in improvisation and endurance rather than bureaucratic authorization.

Framing the hajj as *sandal jepit* challenges dominant representations of pilgrimage as an activity reserved for the affluent and institutionally compliant. While the contemporary hajj is often portrayed as a costly, bureaucratically managed journey, not all prospective pilgrims are able to meet these requirements. Between 2007 and 2015, the official cost of the Indonesian hajj hovered around USD 3,500, an amount beyond the reach of many Indonesians, particularly from regions such as Banten, Madura, Lombok, Banjarmasin, and Sambas. For these pilgrims, access to Mecca depended less on formal eligibility than on courage, persistence, and willingness to accept risk. Government records indicate that between 2010 and 2013 alone, approximately 3,000 Indonesian pilgrims performed the hajj without proper documentation.

In this context, *haji sandal jepit* can be understood through the lens of the moral economy of mobility. Rather than viewing legality as a fixed boundary between right and wrong, pilgrims often evaluate their actions according to ethical logics shaped by religious

obligation, economic inequality, and temporal scarcity. When waiting periods stretch across decades and access is unevenly distributed, informal or illegal routes do not necessarily appear immoral. Instead, they emerge as ethically reasoned responses to exclusion, allowing pilgrims to reconcile their desire for piety with the structural limits imposed by the state.

At least three distinct pathways constitute the social space of *haji sandal jepit*. The first is known as *umrohan*: pilgrims who enter Saudi Arabia on umrah visas, overstay their permitted duration, work as informal laborers or street vendors during their waiting period, and perform the hajj once the season arrives. This pathway blurs the boundary between pilgrimage and labor migration, demonstrating how economic work becomes a means of sustaining devotional aspiration.

The second pathway involves *kaburan*, or runaway domestic workers. Some Indonesian migrants arrive in Saudi Arabia as contract workers, often domestic helpers, and later flee abusive or restrictive employment conditions. In the process, their migration trajectories are redirected toward Mecca. These pilgrims inhabit particularly vulnerable legal positions, yet their journeys are frequently reinterpreted as spiritually meaningful acts of endurance and faith. In such cases, mobility is not planned pilgrimage but emerges through crisis, escape, and moral recalibration.

The third pathway involves pilgrims who travel using individual or independent hajj visas sold outside the national quota system, often at premium prices. In Jakarta, such visas have reportedly been sold for as much as USD 5,000, reflecting the monetization of bureaucratic scarcity. In the past, these visas, sometimes referred to as *Haji Paspor Hijau* (Green Passport), in contrast to the older *Paspor Coklat* (Brown Passport) designated specifically for hajj, operate at the edges of legality, revealing how access to pilgrimage can be transformed into a market commodity. Although formally outside the quota agreements established by Indonesia and Saudi Arabia following the 1987 OIC rulings, these routes persist as practical solutions for those excluded from official channels.

Overall, these pathways reveal *haji sandal jepit* not as an aberration but as a structurally produced social form. The figure of the pilgrim in flip-flops embodies an alternative moral logic of pilgrimage, one that prioritizes intention, perseverance, and proximity to the sacred over formal compliance. Like the sandals themselves, *haji sandal jepit* is flexible, inexpensive, informal, and durable. It carries pilgrims across thresholds that

are increasingly closed by bureaucratic regimes, reminding us that religious life does not unfold only within formal institutions, but also through everyday improvisation in the shadow of state power.

8.2. Migration and Visa Overstay Phenomena

In March 2008, Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs Maftuh Bayuni reaffirmed its decision to retain the use of the special brown Hajj passport for Indonesian pilgrims. The policy was defended on the grounds that it had long facilitated smoother administrative processing and services for pilgrims in Saudi Arabia, particularly during immigration checks at King Abdul Aziz International Airport in Jeddah. According to the Ministry, the Hajj passport clearly distinguishes official pilgrims from other travelers and has even served as a model for several other Muslim-majority countries (NU Online 2009a).

This reaffirmation came amid heightened concern over violations committed by several private Hajj organizers who sent pilgrims using regular green passports rather than the officially required Hajj passport. Such practices led to serious difficulties on arrival in Saudi Arabia, including prolonged detention at airport immigration, sometimes lasting up to ten hours, and the payment of unofficial fees in order to proceed. These incidents, often described by officials as pilgrims being "left stranded," highlighted the concrete risks faced by those traveling outside the official Hajj framework.

Historically, the Hajj passport system dates back to the Dutch colonial period and was later strengthened under Indonesia's post-independence immigration laws. Within this framework, the Hajj passport functions not merely as a travel document, but as a regulatory tool through which the state manages religious mobility, ensures administrative order, and protects pilgrims abroad. The Ministry emphasized that misuse of regular passports blurred boundaries between pilgrims and migrant workers, potentially damaging Indonesia's national image in Saudi Arabia.

In early 2009, I visited Muhammad Maftuh Basyuni at his house in Jakarta during my fieldwork, arriving as part of a small group of individuals some of whom had been selected that year to serve as members of the *Amirul Hajj* at a moment when public debate over the

use of the Hajj passport had intensified.[39] Sitting in his living room, he spoke deliberately, returning repeatedly to what he described as "order" and "experience" rather than reform for its own sake.

He was firm in his view that there was no reason to alter the existing policy on the brown Hajj passport. From his perspective, the system had proven itself over time. He emphasized that Indonesian pilgrims had not encountered serious problems in the Holy Land when traveling with the Hajj passport; on the contrary, the document had eased administrative processes, especially during immigration checks in Jeddah (antaranews.com 2009a). For him, this was not a theoretical matter but a practical one, grounded in years of accumulated experience. Changing a working system, he suggested, would only introduce unnecessary risk.

When our conversation turned to cases involving pilgrims traveling with regular green passports, Maftuh's tone shifted. He noted that such practices were not merely technical violations but sources of real hardship for pilgrims. Drawing on reports from recent Hajj seasons, he described how pilgrims using green passports were frequently delayed for hours at Saudi immigration checkpoints and, in some cases, forced to pay unofficial fees in order to proceed. These incidents, he said, were not isolated. In his view, they illustrated why the distinction between ordinary travel documents and the Hajj passport mattered in practice.

Maftuh framed the Hajj passport as part of a longer historical trajectory. He reminded me that the document was not a recent invention, but one that dated back to the colonial period and was later reinforced through national immigration law. Over time, he argued, it had become an instrument through which the state could extend protection to pilgrims abroad. The passport was not only a marker of religious travel, but a way to signal to Saudi authorities that Indonesian pilgrims arrived under official arrangements and deserved corresponding treatment.

He was especially critical of private Hajj organizers who sent pilgrims using green passports. Such actions, he said, undermined public trust and blurred important distinctions—particularly between pilgrims and Indonesian migrant workers in Saudi Arabia. Drawing on

[39] Interview, Jakarta, 6 March, 2009. I am grateful to Dr. Arief Subhan, M.Ag, himself a member of the *Amirul Hajj*, who facilitated my inclusion in the visit and helped arrange the meeting with Minister Maftuh.

his own earlier experience as Indonesia's ambassador in Saudi Arabia, Maftuh reflected on how Indonesia was often perceived primarily through the presence of its labor migrants. The Hajj, in his view, represented a different face of Indonesia: one associated with orderly religious devotion rather than economic necessity. Allowing passport misuse threatened that distinction.

Although he expressed appreciation for the role of private organizers in expanding access to the Hajj, he insisted that this participation had to remain within clear regulatory boundaries. Growth, he told me, was not a problem in itself; disorder was. The state's responsibility, as he saw it, was to maintain standards, discipline violations, and prevent pilgrims from becoming vulnerable once they crossed national borders.

As the interview drew to a close, it was clear that Maftuh understood the Hajj passport not simply as an administrative tool, but as a symbol of state oversight in transnational religious mobility. For him, maintaining the brown passport was less about resisting change than about asserting continuity, authority, and responsibility in the governance of pilgrimage.

Read against the ethnographic scenes of Pasar Seng, the interview with Minister Maftuh highlights a striking contrast between sites of mobility governance and sites of mobility practice. In Mecca, Indonesian pilgrimage life unfolded through informal infrastructures, e.g., markets, tour guides, habitual meeting points, that enabled pilgrims to navigate the city through proximity, familiarity, and improvisation. Pasar Seng exemplified this mode of regulation from below: commerce, sociality, and movement merged in ways that allowed pilgrims a degree of autonomy within the dense and often overwhelming landscape of the Holy City. By contrast, Maftuh's insistence on documentary discipline reflects a regulatory logic operating from afar, one concerned with legibility, differentiation, and protection through formal categorization. The brown Hajj passport emerged in his account as a corrective to the vulnerabilities produced when Indonesian pilgrims moved through Saudi space without official recognition.

At the same time, the meeting in Jakarta with Minister Maftuh Basyuni underscores that informality and regulation are not opposing domains but mutually constitutive. The informal economies and social spaces that sustained Indonesian pilgrims in Mecca depended, in Maftuh's view, on a framework of state-managed mobility that could secure pilgrims' legal standing across borders. His critique of green-passport travel was less about moral failure

than about exposure to risk, moments in which pilgrims became vulnerable to delay, extortion, or classification as undocumented workers.

Seen this way, the regulation of pilgrimage through documents such as the Hajj passport is not simply bureaucratic control, but an attempt to stabilize mobility under conditions of intense circulation. The disappearance of sites like Pasar Seng and the tightening of documentation regimes together signal a broader shift in Mecca's spatial politics, in which informal, socially dense forms of pilgrimage life are increasingly displaced by centralized management, surveillance, and standardized forms of movement.

Illegal Hajj Travel and the Misuse of Green Passports

The phenomenon of illegal Hajj travel using green (regular international) passports illustrates a persistent gap between formal regulatory frameworks and the lived realities of pilgrimage mobility. Indonesian authorities have repeatedly warned prospective pilgrims against offers to perform the Hajj outside official channels (through the Ministry of Religious Affairs), particularly as Saudi Arabia has tightened surveillance and enforcement in recent years, following the significant changes in immigration policies worldwide after the September 11 tragedy in 2001 in the US. Despite these warnings, cases continue to emerge in which pilgrims are recruited through informal networks or unlicensed travel operators, often under the promise of lower costs or shorter waiting times (Kemenag RI and Khoeron 2025).

A recurrent feature of such cases is the use of the green passport, which is legally designated for general international travel such as tourism or family visits. In the context of the Hajj, however, the green passport lacks juridical validity unless accompanied by an officially issued Hajj visa and inclusion in the annual quota system jointly regulated by Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Its misuse therefore places pilgrims in a legal gray zone from the moment they depart. The distinction between passport categories, green versus brown Hajj passport, thus operates not merely as an administrative technicality, but as a decisive marker of legal recognition and protection.

Reports from the Ministry of Religious Affairs document concrete risks associated with this form of mobility. In one widely cited case, several pilgrims from Banten were

stranded for days at King Abdul Aziz International Airport in Jeddah after arriving with green passports. Having paid substantial sums to intermediaries and promised logistical support upon arrival, they instead encountered uncertainty, exposure to sanctions, and the absence of official assistance. Such episodes reveal how illegality is often experienced not as a deliberate act, but as a condition imposed on pilgrims through incomplete information and asymmetrical power relations with travel brokers.

The defining characteristics of illegal Hajj travel highlight the central role of documentation in producing mobility as either legitimate or precarious. Pilgrims traveling with green passports are typically not registered within the official Hajj quota, do not possess the mandatory Hajj administrative documents (*Dokumen Administrasi Perjalanan Ibadah Haji* / Dapih), and frequently rely on inappropriate visas, such as umrah or temporary visit visas. These documentary gaps render them immediately identifiable to Saudi immigration authorities, particularly at airports and at checkpoints surrounding Mecca during the Hajj season.

Lacking formal recognition, some illegal pilgrims attempt to pass as members of official Hajj groups by adopting material signs associated with registered pilgrims, such as bracelets, bags, or uniforms. These items are often improvised or borrowed and are used to signal belonging in spaces where documentation is routinely checked. In practice, however, such efforts offer little protection. Inconsistencies between names, visas, travel arrangements, and group coordination are quickly exposed during inspections, revealing the limited effectiveness of informal tactics in an environment shaped by intensive monitoring and control.

Modes of travel further distinguish illegal pilgrims from their registered counterparts. Whereas official pilgrims move through designated channels and receive coordinated reception, transportation, and accommodation support, illegal pilgrims typically enter through general routes and are not met by authorized personnel. This absence of institutional backing significantly increases the risk of abandonment, detention, or deportation. It also places pilgrims beyond the reach of Indonesian consular protection, effectively removing the state as an intermediary at moments of crisis.

Saudi enforcement practices amplify these vulnerabilities. Routine sweeps are conducted not only at airports but also along the Mecca–Medina corridor and in the vicinity

of the Grand Mosque. Pilgrims found without proper authorization are subject to questioning, fines, deportation, and potential blacklisting. Travel agents involved in facilitating such journeys face severe sanctions from both Saudi and Indonesian authorities, reflecting the bilateral framing of Hajj regulation as a matter of shared responsibility and control.

Seen within the broader argument of the chapter, illegal Hajj travel via green passports exposes how pilgrimage mobility becomes dangerous precisely when it falls outside recognized regulatory infrastructures. The emphasis placed by Indonesian officials on documentation, quotas, and passports is therefore not simply bureaucratic conservatism, but an attempt to mitigate exposure to risk under conditions of intensified surveillance and centralized control. In this sense, "illegal Hajj" is not merely a moral or legal category, but a form of mobility produced through the interaction of informal aspiration, market intermediaries, and rigid transnational governance regimes.

Practices of documentation, however, did not always divide pilgrims neatly into legal and illegal categories. During fieldwork, I interviewed Ibu Haji Iyoh, a woman in her late fifties from Bandung, West Java, who performed the Hajj in 2015 under a different registered name.[40] As she recounted the process, she was told shortly before departure, *"You are no longer Ibu Iyoh, ok? Your hajj name is Ibu Imas."* Ibu Imas was the name officially recorded at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the one that appeared on her Hajj documents. Formally, she was a registered pilgrim and traveled within Indonesia's official quota. Yet this recognition came at a cost. In addition to the standard Hajj down payment of twenty-five million rupiahs, she paid an extra ten million rupiahs to secure a seat for that year, advancing her departure by many years ahead of her original position on the waiting list.

Her experience complicates common portrayals of illegality as something that occurs only outside the official system. Ibu Iyoh travelled legally and with complete documentation, but her case depended on an informal financial arrangement and the administrative substitution of identity within an overburdened system. Being asked to respond to a different name was not presented to her as deception, but as a technical adjustment that made movement possible under conditions of scarcity. Rather than an exception, her story reflects how regulated pilgrimage often accommodates informality through discretion and quiet

[40] Interview, Bandung 4 February, 2015.

modification, practices that remain largely invisible in official narratives of orderly pilgrimage management.

Interviews with Haji Aep, a KBIH tour organizer based in Bandung, reveal how such arrangements could become far more precarious. Haji Aep described the practice of "accelerating" the Hajj waiting list as difficult to access but widespread during certain periods.[41] After successfully arranging such an acceleration in 2014, he attempted again to assist around twenty pilgrims by collecting additional payments. This time, the arrangement collapsed. He had already transferred approximately two hundred million rupiahs to an intermediary who claimed to have access to extra Hajj visas through political connections, reportedly involving a close relative of a powerful cabinet minister and the use of unused quotas from countries such as the Philippines and Jordan. The promised departures never materialized. Three years later, none of the pilgrims had performed the Hajj, and the money was gone.

By 2018, when Haji Aep recounted this episode, his own KBIH office had survived, though badly shaken. Others were less fortunate. One of his colleagues from Banten, who had borrowed more aggressively to cover similar promises, owed around four hundred million rupiahs to forty pilgrims who never departed as planned. According to Haji Aep, the stress and financial pressure were overwhelming; his friend did not survive the aftermath and later died. These accounts show how mobility arrangements that appear to function smoothly at one moment can unravel suddenly, redistributing risk downward onto tour organizers and pilgrims alike.

Overall, these cases show that vulnerability does not arise only through overtly illegal practices such as traveling with green passports. It also emerges within the formal system, where long waiting lists, quota limits, and uneven access to authority create incentives for informal acceleration. The line between authorized mobility and breakdown is thin, dependent on trust networks that can fail without warning. Rather than a clear boundary between legal and illegal pilgrimage, these ethnographic accounts point to a layered field of mobility in which formality and informality are deeply entangled, and where the costs of

[41] This practice was commonly referred to as *mempercepat berangkat haji*, or "accelerating departure for the Hajj." Interview conducted in Bandung, 2 March 2015.

failure, e.g., financial, social, and sometimes fatal, are borne far from the centers of regulatory power.

At the same time, Ibu Iyoh's experience complicates dominant narratives that equate documentary irregularity with illegality. Her pilgrimage was authorized, her papers complete, and her movement fully recognized by Saudi and Indonesian authorities. At the same time, her case depended on informal financial arrangements and the administrative substitution of identity within an overburdened system. Being asked to respond to a different name was not framed to her as falsification, but as a procedural adjustment that enabled her to move when the opportunity arose. Her story points to a form of regulated informality embedded within official structures, where scarcity, long waiting times, and discretionary practices intersect.

Seen alongside cases of illegal Hajj travel using green passports, Ibu Iyoh's story shows that vulnerability and flexibility do not exist only outside the regulatory system. They also emerge within it, at points where access to mobility depends on quiet negotiations, additional payments, and the reworking of personal identity to fit available administrative slots. Rather than a clear boundary between legal and illegal pilgrimage, her experience reveals a layered field of mobility in which formality and informality coexist, and where recognition by the state may still require forms of adaptation that remain largely absent from official accounts.

The 2009 Transition from the Brown Hajj Passport to the Green Passport

On 7 February 2009, the Indonesian government formally announced a major policy shift in the administration of Hajj travel, that beginning that Hajj season, Indonesian pilgrims would no longer use the special brown Hajj passport but instead travel on the standard green international passport (Detik.com 2009). This decision marked a significant departure from a long-standing documentary regime that had differentiated Hajj mobility from other forms of cross-border travel.

The shift was not initiated by Indonesia alone. According to officials at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the change was made in response to a new requirement imposed by the Saudi government mandating the use of international passports for all Hajj pilgrims

worldwide. Indonesia initially sought a postponement, requesting that the existing arrangement be maintained for at least one additional year. This request was denied, not only to Indonesia but also to other countries that had previously issued special Hajj passports. Saudi authorities justified the decision broadly in terms of "*ketertiban*" or orderliness, without offering a detailed rationale, emphasizing uniformity across sending countries rather than differential arrangements.

The decision placed the Indonesian government in a complex legal position. Domestically, both the Immigration Law and the Hajj Law still required Indonesian pilgrims to use a distinct Hajj passport, with criminal sanctions attached to violations. To resolve this contradiction between national law and international obligation, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in consultation with the Indonesian parliament (DPR, Commission VIII), agreed to issue an emergency regulation (*Peraturan Pemerintah Pengganti Undang-Undang* / Perppu) (antaranews.com 2009b). This move underscores how Hajj administration operates at the intersection of domestic legal frameworks and external sovereign demands, requiring legal flexibility to maintain compliance on both fronts.

The transition to green passports also raised practical and financial concerns. The cost difference between the two documents was substantial: while the brown Hajj passport had cost pilgrims only a nominal fee, the green international passport was significantly more expensive. To prevent this shift from imposing an additional financial burden on pilgrims, the Ministry committed to covering the full cost of passport issuance. Special accommodations were also promised to simplify the application process, particularly for elderly pilgrims, through coordination between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Technically, the change removed a distinctive feature of the earlier Hajj passport regime. The brown passport had functioned not only as a travel document but as a bundled administrative instrument, incorporating entry and exit permits and enabling pilgrims to move through Saudi immigration without additional payments. To compensate for this loss, the Ministry proposed issuing a supplementary booklet, designed to accompany the green passport, that would consolidate Hajj-related documentation and services within a single format. This solution reveals an attempt to preserve aspects of the older regime's protective infrastructure under new documentary constraints.

In this context, the 7 February 2009 decision to abandon the brown Hajj passport appears less as a planned reform than as a moment of abrupt reversal. Only months earlier, Maftuh had articulated a strong defense of the Hajj passport as an instrument of protection, differentiation, and state responsibility, that is one grounded in historical continuity and administrative experience. His insistence that the system "worked" rested on a vision of pilgrimage mobility that required national distinction and documentary clarity. The transition to the green international passport thus unsettled this logic. It forced the Ministry to relinquish a regulatory device that had long embodied Indonesia's claim to manage religious mobility on its own terms, replacing it with a standardized document dictated by Saudi requirements rather than domestic preference.

This reversal can be understood as an episode of legal exception produced by competing sovereignties. Faced with Saudi Arabia's refusal to grant exemptions and the uniform application of the international passport requirement to all sending countries, the Indonesian state found itself unable to enforce its own laws without violating external obligations. The resulting contradiction, between statutory requirements mandating the Hajj passport and an international mandate rendering it unusable, necessitated the use of emergency legal instruments. The issuance of a *Perppu* (Government Regulation in Lieu of Law) did not resolve the contradiction so much as suspend it, introducing a temporary legal solution that allowed pilgrimage to proceed under conditions of regulatory uncertainty. In this sense, the Hajj became a site where emergency governance was normalized rather than exceptional.

This episode illuminates how state authority over mobility is maintained not through stability, but through improvisation in moments of disruption. While Maftuh's account emphasized order, experience, and protection, the 2009 transition revealed the limits of those principles when confronted with supranational control over pilgrimage infrastructure. What emerged was not deregulation, but a reworked form of regulation, that is the state absorbed new costs, simplified bureaucratic procedures, and devised supplementary documents to preserve aspects of the older regime. This moment parallels the disappearance of informal spaces such as Pasar Seng in Mecca. These shifts point to a broader transformation in the governance of pilgrimage, one marked by the contraction of informal, nationally distinctive arrangements and the expansion of standardized, centralized systems of movement, within which both pilgrims and states must increasingly navigate conditions of exception.

Analytically, the 2009 decision marks a shift in how Hajj mobility was governed and represented. The abandonment of the brown passport weakened the symbolic distinction between pilgrimage travel and other forms of international mobility, a distinction that Indonesian officials such as Minister Maftuh Basyuni had previously defended as essential to protecting pilgrims and maintaining Indonesia's standing in Saudi Arabia. At the same time, the policy change illustrates the increasing power of Saudi regulatory standards to reshape national systems of religious governance (NU Online 2009b), even when those systems are deeply embedded in domestic law and historical practice.

Rather than signaling deregulation, the move to green passports demonstrates a reconfiguration of control. The Indonesian state reasserted its role by absorbing costs, issuing emergency legislation, and designing new documentation mechanisms. In this sense, the 2009 transition reflects a broader transformation in the governance of pilgrimage: from nationally distinctive regimes toward standardized, internationally harmonized systems, accompanied by new forms of administrative improvisation at the sending-country level.

8.3. Failure and Pilgrim Responses

This section examines *Haji Filipina* as a distinctive and ultimately failed expression of *haji sandal jepit*, emerging under conditions of prolonged waiting, bureaucratic scarcity, and restricted access to the hajj. While earlier forms of *haji sandal jepit* relied on overstaying visas, informal labor, or quiet endurance in Saudi Arabia, *Haji Filipina* marked a more precarious attempt to bypass the quota system altogether by rerouting pilgrimage through another national passport regime.

The case illustrates how escalating regulation and extended waiting periods did not extinguish pilgrimage desire, but redirected it into riskier transnational pathways. By focusing on moments of breakdown, e.g., detention, exposure, and forced return, this section shows how the moral logic of perseverance and urgency that underpins *haji sandal jepit* could, under intensified bureaucratic pressure, culminate in spectacular failure rather than quiet accommodation. Rather than treating *Haji Filipina* simply as fraud or deception, this section approaches it as an ethnographic window into how pilgrims respond when the promise of the hajj collides with the limits of state-regulated mobility.

Haji Filipina: Indonesian Pilgrims with Philippine Passports

Agusnadi still remembers the moment he was told that the road to Mecca did not have to take decades. In his hometown in Wajo, South Sulawesi, the news felt like an opening, an unexpected way forward. Like many Indonesians, he had long carried the desire to perform the hajj, a religious obligation that often feels deferred by the reality of waiting lists stretching up to thirty years. When a travel agent offered him a faster route, through the Philippines, he did not ask too many questions. He paid around 9,500 U.S. dollars, nearly all his savings. "I knew we were going through the Philippines," he later said, "but I didn't know it was illegal" (Kompas 2016a; Kompas 2016c).



Figure 8.1 Illegalities and Social Responses

In 2016, 177 Indonesian Hajj pilgrims were detained at Manila International Airport in the Philippines after allegedly becoming involved in an illegal Hajj syndicate that used forged documents to access the Philippine Hajj quota. Philippine authorities stated that the case would be brought to court in order to dismantle the syndicate operating within the Philippines. Source: *CNN Indonesia*.

The journey took Agusnadi and hundreds of others not to Mecca, but to Manila. On August 19, 2016, their departure was halted at Ninoy Aquino International Airport. Some had already boarded the plane, ready for takeoff, when airport officials grew suspicious. These pilgrims did not resemble typical Filipino travelers. They wore *peci* caps,[42] carried sarongs, and spoke no Tagalog. When questioned, some instinctively answered in Indonesian. One voice reportedly broke through the confusion, "I am Indonesian!" (Majalah Tempo 2016).

Suspicion quickly turned into detention. A total of 177 Indonesians were held, many of them transferred to the Bagong Diwa detention camp in Taguig City (Kompas 2016c). The cramped rooms and uncertain waiting replaced their imagined visions of the Kaaba. Among them were elderly pilgrims, people who felt that time was no longer on their side, and that waiting decades for an official quota was no longer an option. In this context, the "shortcut" was not merely a calculated risk; it was a negotiation with age, faith, and urgency.

One of them was Sumiati, a 72-year-old woman from Pasuruan, East Java. Her son, Saiful Anam, first learned of her detention through a television broadcast. He had previously accompanied her to Juanda Airport, believing that her journey was legitimate. Yet he had sensed something unusual, the cost was extraordinarily high, around 150 million rupiah, and the departure process seemed too quick. Sumiati herself had followed the instructions of a local hajj guidance group, even agreeing to travel to the Philippines under the pretense of a "tour," without fully informing her family (Jawa Pos 2017).

For many of these pilgrims, the experience was not only a financial loss but also a profound emotional and moral shock. They did not see themselves as breaking the law; rather, they understood their actions as part of fulfilling a religious calling. Their limited awareness of legal procedures was intertwined with trust, in travel agents, religious guides, and transnational networks that promised access to "unused hajj quotas" in the Philippines.

Stories of past success reinforced this belief. Sumarjo, for example, had successfully completed the hajj in 2015 using a similar route. With the help of intermediaries, he obtained temporary Filipino documents and even adopted a new name, "Muhammad Rio" (Jawa Pos

[42] *Peci, songkok* or *kopiah* is a traditional fez-style cap widely worn by Muslim men across the Indonesia and the Malay World, including Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, and parts of the southern Philippines and Thailand. It is typically black, shaped like a truncated cone, and made from felt, cotton, or velvet, sometimes embroidered.

2017). Experiences like his circulated widely through informal networks, forming a kind of alternative knowledge at the grassroots level, that official systems could be bypassed, and that the path to Mecca was not always bound by the state.

Yet these successes also set the stage for *failure*. Behind the scenes was a complex web linking Indonesian travel agents, Philippine intermediaries, and local actors with access to documents and quotas. The pilgrims themselves occupied the most vulnerable position within this network, bearing the greatest legal and emotional risks.

When they were eventually repatriated to Indonesia, without ever reaching Mecca, their return carried a sense of ambiguity. They came back as victims, accompanied by embassy officials and received by local authorities, yet also as participants in an illicit system. Many expressed hope that the government would prioritize them for official departure in the following year.

This episode reveals how the hajj, in the Indonesian context, is more than a religious ritual. It is a social field where state regulation, market forces, and individual aspirations intersect. The state manages quotas and procedures; the market offers shortcuts; and individuals navigate between them, negotiating faith, time, and opportunity.

For Agusnadi and others, the failed journey did not mark the end. “I still want to go on hajj,” he said quietly (Kompas 2016a). In that simple statement lies not only a personal hope, but also a broader reflection on how devotion, bureaucracy, and uncertainty continue to shape the lived religious experiences of Indonesian Muslims today.

Routes, Intermediaries, and the Law

Siti Aminah and Karomisah rarely spoke of legality; what mattered to them was certainty. In Jepara, Central Java, they had been told that everything was already “taken care of.” Through a local hajj guidance group, KBIH Fadlu Robbi, they paid around 120 million rupiah, an amount that signified both sacrifice and assurance. During Ramadan 2015, they began processing what they were told were necessary documents in Pati, visas, passports, and administrative papers that would eventually link them not to Indonesia, but to the Philippines (Kompas 2016a).

The process unfolded with an air of normalcy. They attended *manasik haji* (hajj preparatory rituals) alongside regular pilgrims registered through the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. Their departure, too, followed familiar social patterns. On the evening of August 17, 2016, Karomisah was escorted by family members and neighbors to Ahmad Yani Airport in Semarang, a communal send-off that mirrored thousands of other pilgrim departures across Indonesia. Yet there was one striking difference: she carried no hajj garments. The ihram, she had been told, would be waiting for her in the Philippines.

Upon arrival in Manila, the abstraction of "arrangement" became tangible. The group met handlers who instructed them to exchange their tourist visas and Indonesian passports for Philippine ones (Kompas 2016b). Identity, in this moment, became transactional, something to be handed over, altered, and returned. But before this transformation could be completed, before boarding passes were issued, they were detained by Philippine authorities. The journey halted not at the threshold of Mecca, but at the border of legality.

What followed was not only a humanitarian response but also the unfolding of a legal apparatus across two states. By early September 2016, Indonesian police had begun to expand their investigation into what was increasingly understood as a large-scale fraud (CNN Indonesia 2016). While many of the 177 pilgrims were repatriated, some were held back, not as suspects, but as witnesses, particularly those who could speak English and help reconstruct the network that had moved them across borders.

Back in Indonesia, the narrative shifted from pilgrimage to *criminality*. Investigators identified multiple travel agencies and their leaders as key actors in the scheme. Financial flows were mapped, that is billions of rupiah collected from prospective pilgrims, each payment representing both trust and vulnerability. Testimonies revealed a structured system, recruiters, coordinators, document handlers, and overseas intermediaries, operating across regions from Jakarta to Makassar, and extending into Philippine territory.

Yet, from the perspective of the pilgrims, the boundary between *legality* and *illegality* remained blurred. Indonesian immigration officials later noted that the pilgrims had departed the country using valid documents. Their passports were legitimate; their administrative requirements fulfilled. The deception lay elsewhere, in the concealed intention, in the promise that from the Philippines they would continue onward to Saudi Arabia using falsified

identities. The rupture, therefore, did not occur at departure, but in transit, when state systems collided.

As investigations progressed, police began to identify what they described as a "mastermind" behind the scheme. This individual was believed to be the central coordinator, overseeing everything from recruitment in Indonesian villages to logistical arrangements in Manila, and ultimately planning onward travel to Saudi Arabia. Surrounding him was a network of travel agencies that operated as interconnected nodes within a larger operation. In response, authorities filed multiple charges, including violations of consumer protection laws, hajj administration regulations, and criminal fraud statutes, each addressing a different aspect of the wrongdoing.

At the same time, another layer of complexity surfaced, that is the question of citizenship. Indonesian law stipulates that holding a foreign passport can result in the automatic loss of Indonesian nationality. For a moment, the pilgrims' status seemed precarious, not only had they *failed* to reach Mecca, but they also risked losing their belonging to the nation itself. Yet both the Indonesian and Philippine governments ultimately refrained from criminalizing them. Officials framed them as victims of deception rather than perpetrators of fraud. Their Indonesian citizenship was preserved, a decision that underscored the state's recognition of their vulnerability.

As the investigation continued, officials realized the problem was much larger than first thought. They began looking into hundreds of other cases involving Indonesian pilgrims who had already traveled, or were about to travel, using similar routes. Some were later detained in Saudi Arabia for overstaying their visas or lacking proper hajj permits. This showed that the Philippine route was not unique, but just one of several unofficial paths used by pilgrims outside the formal system.

In this wider context, the hajj was not just a religious duty regulated by the state. It became a space where personal hopes met official limits, and faith came into tension with bureaucracy. Long waiting lists in Indonesia, often lasting decades, formed the background against which these alternative routes began to make sense. For many pilgrims, the decision to take such risks was not simply due to a lack of knowledge, but to a deeply human question: would they still be alive when their Hajj turn finally came?

This case also raises important questions about religious guidance and responsibility. Islamic teachings emphasize that the obligation to perform the hajj depends on *istitha'ah*, or one's ability. But what does "ability" mean today, when access is shaped by long delays, limited quotas, and unequal opportunities?

The experiences of Siti Aminah, Karomisah, and others suggest that ability is not only about having enough money. It also depends on access to accurate information and reliable institutions. Without clear guidance and protection, the journey to Mecca can take unexpected turns, leading instead to detention centers, legal trouble, and uncertain returns.

And yet, despite these setbacks, the intention remains strong. The desire to stand in Arafat, to circle the Kaaba, and to complete what is felt as a lifelong obligation continues to endure, even when the journey itself is cut short.

Illegality in the Philippine Passport Hajj Case

The story of the Indonesian pilgrims who attempted to reach Mecca using Philippine passports in 2016 above is not, at its core, a tale of criminal intent. It is a story about longing, religious longing, social longing, existential longing, and the ways in which that longing becomes entangled with bureaucratic structures, transnational networks, and the moral worlds of ordinary believers. When approached ethnographically, the phenomenon reveals itself not as a deviation from order but as a deeply human response to conditions that shape, constrain, and sometimes distort the pursuit of a sacred obligation.

For many Indonesian Muslims, as previously explained, the hajj is not simply a ritual performed once in a lifetime; it is the culmination of a moral journey, a marker of respectability, and even a preparation for death. Yet the institutional reality of hajj registration in Indonesia has transformed this spiritual aspiration into a temporal struggle. In regions where waiting lists stretch twenty to thirty years, or even longer, the state's system produces a form of temporal inequality in which access to sacred space becomes stratified. Time itself becomes a scarce resource, unequally distributed across age, class, and geography. For elderly pilgrims, the question that underlies their decision-making is painfully simple, if they must wait decades, as Muslims, will they still live to fulfill this obligation?

It is within this structure of waiting that alternative pathways, no matter how irregular, take on ethical and emotional significance. These routes are not perceived merely as shortcuts or acts of rule-breaking, but as responses to an urgency that is moral rather than logistical. The longing to perform the hajj creates what may be described as a “market of hope,” where the desire for spiritual completion becomes intertwined with transactions of trust and money (Darmadi, 2004). In this context, the illegal networks operating between Indonesia, the Philippines, and Saudi Arabia do not appear, at first glance, as criminal enterprises. Instead, to many believers they appear as facilitators, bridges over the chasms created by bureaucratic scarcity.

The role of travel agents, such as those KBIH groups, and local religious brokers is central to this dynamic. These intermediaries operate within a moral economy structured not only by financial exchange but by trust, authority, and religious legitimacy. Pilgrims do not primarily see themselves as clients in a marketplace; they see themselves as seekers guided by figures who possess spiritual knowledge, administrative expertise, or social authority. The decision to follow a travel agent or KBIH leader into an unconventional route is rooted in long-standing cultural dispositions, respect for local religious figures such as kyais, the belief that elders and ustadz possess moral integrity, and the assumption that the complexities of bureaucracy can be safely delegated to those who appear more knowledgeable.

This system of trust is deepened by the presence of success stories, accounts of earlier pilgrims who quietly succeeded in performing hajj through the Philippine route. Such narratives do more than circulate information; they shape imaginaries. They create a sense that the process, while unusual, is legitimate in a moral sense. Thus, when travel agents instruct pilgrims to prepare documents, attend manasik sessions, or travel through Manila before receiving their hajj garments, these instructions do not trigger suspicion. Instead, they are interpreted as part of an opaque but legitimate religious process managed by experts. Identity becomes a negotiable resource, a passport can be exchanged, a name can be adapted, because the ultimate goal, reaching Mecca, imbues the journey with spiritual purpose (Darmadi, 2004).

For the pilgrims themselves, legality is not the central frame through which they interpret their actions. They leave Indonesia with valid passports and follow agents who speak with an aura of confidence and authority. The idea that the process might involve unlawful acts often does not register, not because the pilgrims are naïve, but because legality

occupies a different moral position in their world. In anthropological terms, this reflects a condition of legal pluralism. State law represents only one framework of legitimacy; religious duty and trusted social networks represent others. When these frameworks overlap or conflict, it is not always the state's definition of legality that prevails in everyday reasoning.

The events in Manila, when the group was detained, questioned, and eventually deported, constitute a moment of rupture, a sudden collapse of the moral world that had guided their choices. For many, it was the first time they understood that the documents they carried were illegal (CNN Indonesia 2016). The experience of being interrogated in a foreign language, detained alongside strangers, and unable to communicate their intentions produced a sense of profound vulnerability. In Victor Turner's terms, they entered a liminal space, neither tourists nor pilgrims, neither criminals nor victims (Turner, Victor W. 1969). Their identities hung in suspension, waiting for the state to define what they had become.

Behind these individual experiences lies a transnational infrastructure that had operated since at least 2012 (Majalah Tempo 2016). This network was not amateurish; it was structured, coordinated, and embedded in the social fabric of both Indonesia and the Philippines. Recruiters in Makassar and Java, intermediaries in Manila, document forgers, informants, and handlers formed a cross-border economy of religious mobility. Its persistence depended not merely on profit, but on the social embeddedness of its operators. They knew how to speak the language of piety, how to invoke urgency, how to frame illegality as divine opportunity. In this sense, the network operated in what might be called "zones of regulatory ambiguity," spaces where state oversight was weak, communication between governments limited, and moral worlds densely layered (CNN Indonesia 2016).

The Indonesian state's response reveals another anthropological insight, the state itself is not a solid, unified actor but a site of negotiation and tension. On one hand, authorities pursued and criminalized the organizers. On the other, the state protected the pilgrims, refusing to revoke their citizenship and consistently framing them as victims of exploitation.

This dual stance illustrates the state's attempt to balance its regulatory function with its moral responsibility toward its citizens. It also reflects political sensitivity, punishing elderly pilgrims would contradict public sentiment and the Islamic ethical framework that shapes national discourse.

Ultimately, the Philippine passport hajj case exposes the intersection of religious aspiration, structural limitation, and transnational possibility. It shows how the moral worlds of ordinary Muslims intersect with bureaucratic systems that are often unable to accommodate the depth of their longing. It demonstrates how scarcity, of time, of opportunity, of official quota, creates social environments in which illegality becomes thinkable, sometimes even justifiable. And it reminds us that solutions cannot be technical alone. They must address the cultural logics of trust, the emotional weight of religious duty, and the lived realities of those for whom waiting is not merely an administrative inconvenience, but a confrontation with mortality.

Passports, Pilgrimage, and State Control

In his book, *The Invention of the Passport,* John Torpey argues that modern states have gradually monopolized the authority to regulate human mobility by inventing and institutionalizing identification documents such as passports, internal passes, and related bureaucratic systems. These documents have become essential mechanisms through which states distinguish citizens from non-citizens, allocate rights and privileges, and impose penalties related to property, liberty, taxation, and welfare (Torpey 1999).

Drawing on historical cases from revolutionary France, Napoleonic Europe, the American Civil War, industrializing Britain, pre–World War I Italy, and the Third Reich, Torpey demonstrates that passports did not simply emerge as neutral tools of travel, but as "political technologies" deeply tied to state formation, surveillance, and the management of populations. Using a theoretical frame inspired by Marx and Weber, Torpey makes a distinctive argument that, just as capitalists expropriated the "means of production" from workers and modern states expropriated the "means of violence" from individuals, modern states have also expropriated the "legitimate means of movement." Where people once moved freely, or relied on locally issued documents, modern states now control mobility by requiring standardized state-issued papers (Torpey 1999). This shift made individuals dependent on states for permission to cross borders or even move internally, reversing earlier periods when movement could be authorized by a variety of local actors.

Torpey shows how, over two centuries, identification systems expanded from small municipal jurisdictions in dynastic states to national-scale surveillance regimes and, more recently, to supranational structures like the European Union. Passports and passes are central

to this process, external passports regulate movement across international borders, while internal passports govern mobility within a state's territory. Both serve as instruments through which states "embrace" their populations, tracking, categorizing, and managing individuals while defining who belongs and who may legitimately claim rights.

In this case, Torpey argues that the passport is not merely a travel document but a cornerstone of the modern state's power. It functions as a technology of citizenship, a tool of surveillance, and a mechanism through which states enforce their exclusive authority over individuals' movement and membership.

Drawing on John Torpey's argument that modern states have expropriated the "legitimate means of movement," the case of Indonesian pilgrims can be understood as a moment in which ordinary religious aspiration collided with the state's expanding control over human mobility. The Indonesian pilgrims who sought a faster route to Mecca were not simply attempting to evade bureaucratic procedures; they were navigating a world in which access to sacred space had become tightly regulated through passports, quotas, and international border regimes.

In Torpey's terms, the Indonesian state, and the global system of states more broadly, had monopolized the authority to authorize who may cross borders and on what terms, leaving those outside the official queue dependent on intermediaries who promised to circumvent these constraints. The forged Philippine passports, the clandestine brokers, and the carefully managed transit through Manila all emerged in the shadow of this state "embrace," reflecting the informal infrastructures that grow when formal mobility channels are rationed or delayed. Seen this way, the pilgrims' actions were not only responses to deceit or desperation, but attempts to reclaim agency within a system that had rendered movement, particularly movement toward a deeply meaningful religious goal, both scarce and state-dependent.

Therefore, the 2016 "Haji Filipina" case above illustrates what John Torpey describes as the modern states claim the exclusive authority to authorize mobility by monopolizing identification systems such as passports, visas, and residency documents. The Indonesian pilgrims who attempted to perform the hajj using forged Philippine passports found themselves navigating precisely this monopolized terrain of state-regulated mobility.

Their desire to fulfill a religious obligation collided with a bureaucratic system in which movement to sacred space, that is Mecca, was made possible only through state-sanctioned documents tied to national quotas, citizenship classification, and international border regimes. When pilgrims turned to intermediaries who promised accelerated access by altering their national identity, they were not simply committing document fraud; they were attempting to circumvent a regime in which the state determines who may move, how, and at what temporal pace.

The elaborate networks of brokers and forged identities can thus be understood as informal infrastructures that arise when formal mobility channels are restricted, revealing the social worlds that emerge in the shadow of the state's regulatory "embrace." In this sense, the Haji Filipina case is not an anomaly but a lived manifestation of Torpey's central claim, that modern states, by monopolizing the means of legitimate movement, shape not only the legality of mobility but the moral, religious, and existential choices of those who must navigate its constraints.

Here, Engseng Ho's work in *The Graves of Tarim* provides an essential counterpoint to Torpey's account of the modern state's monopolization of movement by reminding us that long before passports and national bureaucracies existed, the Indian Ocean was a space of fluid, religiously grounded mobility. Ho shows how Hadrami diasporic networks created forms of movement anchored not in state authorization but in genealogical, scholarly, and spiritual ties that bound Arabia, India, and Southeast Asia into a single moral and social world (Ho 2006).

When viewed through this lens, the Haji Filipina case represents not only an encounter with contemporary restrictions on mobility but also a residual yearning for older forms of circulation in which Islamic authority, not state documentation, governed the legitimacy of travel. The Indonesian pilgrims' reliance on religious intermediaries, transnational brokers, and alternative routes echoes the historical patterns Ho describes, where mobility was enabled through kinship, trust, and shared religious imaginaries rather than passports and border regimes. Their attempt to reach Mecca outside the state's sanctioned pathways can thus be read as a clash between two historical orders of movement, that is one deeply rooted in the Indian Ocean's cosmopolitan Islamic networks, the other defined by the modern state's attempt to contain and regulate human mobility.

In this sense, Ho's insights help illuminate why these pilgrims viewed their journey not as a violation of law but as participation in a longstanding "moral geography" in which pilgrimage, trust, and transregional movement naturally intertwined.

Bringing these perspectives together helps explain why the *Haji Filipina* case made moral sense to the pilgrims involved, even though it was illegal under state law. From the government's point of view, the hajj system, e.g., its quotas, long waiting lists, and passport and visa rules, reflects the state's control over who can travel, when, and under what conditions. By turning to forged Philippine passports, the pilgrims exposed how this system creates shortages and long delays, where even time itself becomes something regulated by bureaucracy.

In effect, the state's tight control over travel turns religious longing into a matter of official permission. From another perspective, however, the pilgrims' actions resemble older patterns of travel that still survive at the edges of the modern system. These include relying on brokers who act as guides, trusting religious figures and informal networks, and following transnational routes to the holy cities. Even though these paths were distorted by illegality, they reflect a continuing belief that religious journeys can be organized through trust and guidance, not only through state documents.

In this way, the *Haji Filipina* case highlights the tension between two different systems. On the one hand is the modern state, which requires official documents and strict compliance with travel rules. On the other is a long-standing religious understanding of pilgrimage, in which sacred journeys have traditionally been guided by trusted individuals and networks of faith, rather than by government offices. In practice, the pilgrims moved between these two worlds at the same time. They left Indonesia using valid passports, but then placed their trust in intermediaries who promised to handle the rest of the journey and paperwork. By doing so, they relied on older ideas about who could legitimately guide a journey to Mecca, even as they remained formally embedded in the modern state's travel system.

This final chapter has shown that the hajj cannot be understood as a single, orderly ritual governed solely by religious doctrine or state regulation. Rather, it is a dynamic and contested field in which piety, mobility, bureaucracy, and legality intersect under conditions of inequality and constraint. What appear, from an administrative perspective, as failures of

compliance, e.g., overstaying visas, traveling without permits, or relying on informal routes, are better understood ethnographically as responses to exclusion produced by escalating costs, long waiting times, and intensified regulation.

The figure of *haji sandal jepit* brings these tensions into sharp relief. Positioned between devotion and illegality, humility and surveillance, aspiration and restriction, this figure reveals how religious obligation is lived and negotiated at the margins of the modern pilgrimage regime. Far from representing moral failure or deviance, *haji sandal jepit* reflects an ethical logic grounded in perseverance, trust, and proximity to the sacred under conditions where formal access is delayed or denied.

By foregrounding the experiences of precarious pilgrims such as those who wait, overstay, fail, or are intercepted, this chapter argues that illegality is not an exception to the contemporary hajj but one of its constitutive outcomes. Bureaucratic systems designed to regulate and rationalize pilgrimage simultaneously generate the very informal practices they seek to prevent. Taking these practices seriously allows us to move beyond legalistic judgments and toward an anthropology of Islam that recognizes bureaucracy as a moral force, one that reshapes religious life, redistributes vulnerability, and redefines what it means to fulfill sacred obligations in the modern world.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine how the Hajj has been reorganized in the contemporary period through expanding systems of mobility governance and inter-state coordination, focusing on the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. It began with an ethnographic observation that appears paradoxical at first glance, within one of the most standardized and highly regulated pilgrimage systems in the Muslim world, Indonesian pilgrims continue to rely heavily on religious intermediaries such as kyais and their networks. Rather than treating this reliance as a sign of bureaucratic insufficiency or cultural lag, this study has shown that religious mediation is integral to the functioning of modern pilgrimage governance itself.

1. The Hajj, Reinvented

Across its chapters, this thesis has approached the Hajj not as a singular ritual event but as a prolonged and distributed process, stretching from village-level registration offices and preparatory courses in Indonesia to accommodations, transportation corridors, and ritual sites in Saudi Arabia. Seen from this perspective, pilgrimage emerges as a dense field of movement, regulation, and interpretation. Administrative procedures organize bodies in motion, while religious actors provide the moral and ritual frameworks through which those movements are experienced as meaningful and legitimate.

2. Mobility and Governance Beyond the Nation-State

One of the central findings of this study is that the contemporary Hajj cannot be understood solely through national institutions. It is produced through inter-state arrangements, bilateral negotiations, international quotas, and transnational infrastructures linking Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Ministries, consulates, airlines, databases, and regulatory agreements form the backbone of this system, enabling the movement of millions of pilgrims each year.

Yet the expansion of inter-state organization has not translated into a singular, centralized form of authority. Instead, governance operates through layered and overlapping forms of power. Indonesian state institutions like the Ministry of Religious Affairs manage registration, education, and logistical coordination, while Saudi authorities oversee access to

ritual space, spatial discipline, and security. Between these institutional frameworks, a wide range of actors, e.g., official guides, private travel organizers, and religious scholars, mediate the lived experience of pilgrimage.

This thesis argues that the Hajj has been "reinvented" not through the replacement of older forms of authority, but through their reorganization within an expanded field of mobility governance. Inter-state coordination has amplified the scale and complexity of pilgrimage administration, but it has also generated new forms of uncertainty, prompting continued reliance on religious expertise and personal trust.

3. Religious Mediation in a Bureaucratic Landscape

Ethnographically, pilgrims' engagement with kyais and their networks illustrates how bureaucratic systems coexist with, and depend upon, "moral" intermediaries. Registration procedures, quotas, waiting periods, and standardized training programs do not eliminate questions about ritual validity, intention, and spiritual preparedness. On the contrary, they often intensify them. Pilgrims turn to kyais not to bypass the system, but to navigate its religious implications.

The Kyais and their networks, including the ustadz and guide groups, function as interpreters of regulation, translating administrative requirements into religiously intelligible terms. Their authority is grounded not in formal institutional power, but in pedagogical lineage, moral reputation, and long-standing relationships with local communities. In practice, this authority complements rather than undermines bureaucratic governance. State systems organize mobility; religious intermediaries sustain confidence in the spiritual value of that movement.

Rather than framing tradition and bureaucracy as opposing forces, this study demonstrates that mediation is one of the conditions through which modern governance becomes workable. The persistence of kyai authority reflects not a failure of rationalization, but its limits.

4. Historical Depth and Institutional Continuity

The historical chapters of this thesis locate these dynamics within a longer trajectory. The 1928 Komite Hijaz mission reveals that Indonesian ulama were engaged in the protection of

pilgrims well before the emergence of modern state institutions. Acting as representatives of a transregional religious community, they articulated concerns about safety, cost, ritual practice, and legal clarity, issues that remain central to contemporary pilgrimage governance.

Following independence, these responsibilities were institutionalized within the Ministry of Religious Affairs, marking a shift in form rather than function. What had once been pursued through informal religious diplomacy became embedded in bureaucratic structures. Yet this transformation did not diminish the role of kyai. Instead, religious authority was incorporated into the machinery of the state as a source of legitimacy and trust.

Recent institutional developments, including the establishment of the Ministry of Hajj and the appointment of leaders with pesantren backgrounds, illustrate the endurance of this model. Across different political periods, the governance of the Hajj in Indonesia has consistently relied on a partnership between administrative capacity and religious authority.

5. Rethinking Reinvention

The concept of reinvention, as developed in this thesis, does not imply a rupture with the past or the simple triumph of bureaucratic rationality. Instead, reinvention is understood as a process of reconfiguration, in which older forms of authority are repositioned within new institutional and spatial arrangements. The modern Hajj is not a secularized pilgrimage, nor is it a purely bureaucratic project. It is a “hybrid” formation shaped by inter-state organization, technological systems, and enduring moral relationships.

This perspective contributes to broader discussions on religion and governance by showing how large-scale regulatory systems depend on actors who operate outside formal hierarchies. Authority in the Hajj is improvised, relational, and distributed, produced through interactions between states, institutions, and religious communities rather than imposed from a single center.

6. Concluding Reflections

By tracing pilgrimage across administrative offices, training halls, diplomatic agreements, and ritual spaces, this thesis has shown that mobility is not simply a technical matter of transport and coordination. It is also a “moral” process that requires interpretation,

reassurance, and trust. The Hajj, as experienced by Indonesian pilgrims, is shaped as much by regulation as by guidance, as much by inter-state arrangements as by personal relationships.

In this sense, the Hajj has been reinvented, not as a departure from religious tradition, but as an ongoing negotiation between faith and governance across national and institutional boundaries. What emerges is neither a fully bureaucratized pilgrimage nor a nostalgic persistence of tradition, but a contemporary form of religious mobility in which modern states and religious intermediaries remain mutually dependent.

EPILOGUE

When I began this dissertation project, I thought I was studying a logistical machine, the careful choreography that moves millions of pilgrims through the Hajj each year. What I found instead was something far more intricate. The modern pilgrimage is not only administered; it is continually made and remade through people, through interpretation, negotiation, and the quiet work of those who help others understand what they are doing and why. What looks like a smooth bureaucratic system from afar is, up close, a dense field of relationships and inherited expectations. The Hajj in Indonesia today, and perhaps elsewhere, is less a clash between administration and tradition than a space where the two become inseparable.

Throughout this research, the pilgrimage revealed itself as a striking example of how religious life is governed in the contemporary world. Quotas, visas, surveillance networks, transport caravans, medical checks, and tiered accommodations all transform what was once an uncertain journey into a coordinated inter-state operation. The ritual is timed, streamlined, and regulated in ways that would have been unimaginable a century ago. In that sense, the Hajj demonstrates the modern state's ability to turn mass movement into something legible, predictable, and repeatable.

But bureaucratic order, however efficient, does not by itself make a ritual meaningful. Again and again, I saw pilgrims turn to guides, scholars, and seasoned mediators who could translate instructions into intention and procedure into worship. Their presence helped explain something that puzzled me early on, that is, why traditional authority such as the Kyais and their networks in Indonesia had not faded away under the weight of modern administration. Instead, they had adapted, attaching themselves to new infrastructures and making them religiously intelligible. These figures were not marginal; they were essential.

This interplay revealed a dual structure at the heart of the pilgrimage. One layer is material and organizational, e.g., the regulations, schedules, and systems that move bodies through space. The other is interpretive such as the people who give those movements meaning. Remove the first, and chaos would follow. Remove the second, and all that remains

is a sequence of technical steps. The Hajj survives, indeed, it thrives, because both layers hold each other in place.

Seeing this required letting go of older theories that predicted the decline of local religious authority in a globalized, bureaucratized world. What I observed was not decline but "reinvention." Administrative systems absorbed moral brokers, and those brokers, in turn, made administrative authority feel religiously legitimate. Authority did not disappear; it shifted, bent, and perhaps settled into new forms.

These shifts also shape the pilgrim's moral experience. The Hajj is no longer a break from worldly order so much as an immersion in a managed one. Devotion shows itself through patience in long lines, endurance in crowded spaces, care in timing one's movements, and calm within a controlled environment. Piety today is not found outside organization but inside it, created in the act of navigating structure with intention. The virtuous pilgrim, the *haji mabrur,* is no longer simply the one who survives the journey but the one who bears its ordered intensity with grace.

For this reason, the modern Hajj feels like a "renewed tradition," held steady by bureaucratic repetition yet animated by familiar bonds of trust and guidance. Its continuity depends not on resisting change, but on allowing older forms of authority to inhabit new institutional settings. The result is neither fully traditional nor fully administrative, but a "hybrid space" where governance and devotion continually reshape each other.

This hybrid world reaches beyond the borders of the pilgrimage itself. Today's international coordination sits atop older transregional pathways of learning and affiliation. The journey may be organized through diplomatic or bilateral agreements, but it is experienced with the help of interpretive networks, such as the Kyais and their networks, that long predate modern states. Official structures formalize movement, yet deeper histories of connection give that movement meaning.

Put simply, the argument of this study is that modern pilgrimage is not only about "bureaucratizing" religion. It is about producing religious legitimacy within bureaucratic settings. The mediating figures who move between these worlds explain how large-scale governance becomes spiritually persuasive and how rituals endure through institutional change.

The Hajj, then, is not merely a journey that ends in a sacred city, such as Mecca, Medina or elsewhere. It is a recurring process in which believers, institutions, and interpreters reshape their relationships to one another. The ritual happens annually, but its social meaning is constantly being worked out anew.

In that sense, the pilgrimage never really ends. The administrative phase concludes when pilgrims return home, but its interpretive life begins there, retold in conversations, folded into family histories, and woven into communal memory. Its staying power comes from its ability to be both an organized event and a lived, personal experience.

To study the Hajj is thus, in my view, to witness how modern institutions and inherited authority coexist, not as rivals, but as partners in creating a shared religious world. In tracing how Indonesian pilgrims move through a system jointly shaped by Jakarta and Mecca, this thesis has shown that the Hajj is continually "reinvented," not by abandoning tradition, but by "reworking" it through new forms of coordination, expertise, and statecraft. The inter-state order that governs the pilgrimage today does more than move bodies of pilgrims; it reshapes expectations, responsibilities, and the moral textures of travel itself.

What emerges is a ritual that belongs simultaneously to ministries and governmental bodies, travel operators, religious guides, and the pilgrims who inhabit these structures with their own intentions and uncertainties. The Hajj reveals itself as a shared project, if you may, one in which mobility, governance, and devotion are entangled rather than oppositional. In observing these entanglements, I came to see that the pilgrimage is not simply administered from above; it is continually interpreted and sustained from below, from within.

Ultimately, the "reinvention" of the Hajj is not a story of modernity overtaking tradition, nor of tradition resisting the state. It is the story of how millions of ordinary travelers, like those Indonesian pilgrims studied here, navigate an increasingly organized world while carrying with them inherited ways of knowing, trusting, and believing. Their journeys show that rituals endure not because they remain unchanged, but because they adapt in ways that remain recognizable and meaningful.

If this study demonstrates anything, it is that the Hajj's durability lies in this ongoing negotiation, between states and Muslim clerics such as the Kyais, between rules and interpretations, between the demands of large-scale governance and the intimate worlds of

faith. The pilgrimage, like the communities that sustain it, continues to move. And in that movement, it is *reinvented* again and again. []

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Appendix



An Indonesian Hajj official provides directions to a male pilgrim lost outside the entrance to the Grand Mosque in Mecca during the 2024 Hajj season. Photo: Courtesy, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.



In 2019, the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs and Amirul Hajj Lukman Hakim Saifuddin stated that the Indonesian Hajj pilgrims' bus journey to Arafat went smoothly and arrived on time without any significant problems (August 10, 2019). Source: Liputan6.com



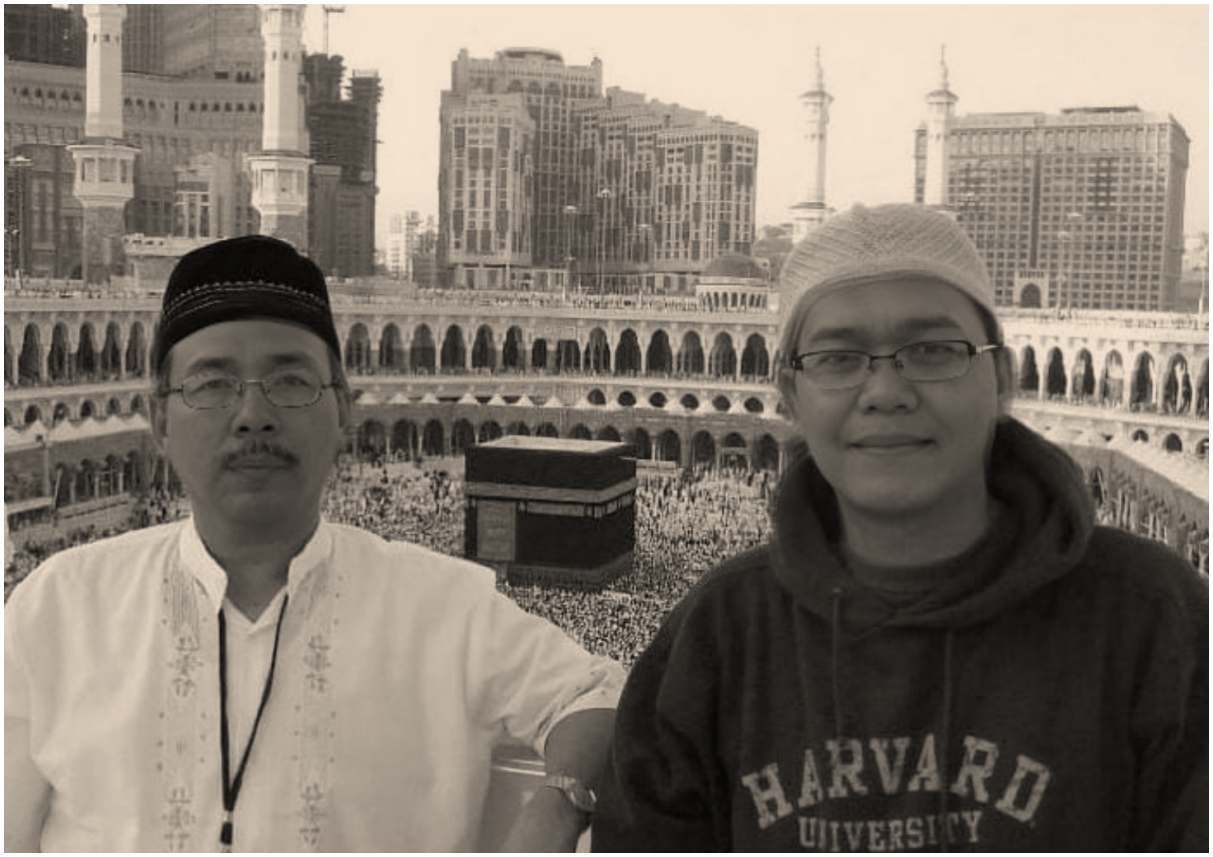
The Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs, Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, met with the Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah, Tawfiq bin Fauzan Al-Rabiah, to discuss preparations for the 2024 Hajj. Source: Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.



Government-appointed PPIH Hajj officers and guides, men and women, pose for a commemorative photo in front of the Kaaba with the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs, Prof. Dr. Nasaruddin Umar, during the 2025 Hajj season. Photo: Courtesy of Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.



Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Arifah Fauzi urged Hajj organizers to increase the number of female Hajj officers for the 2026 pilgrimage, noting that Indonesian pilgrims are largely women. Source: Tempo, 2025.



The author was photographed at the Sa'i area on the third level of the Grand Mosque (Masjid al-Haram), Mecca, together with Dr. Hamid Nasuhi, a member of the Royal Guest of Hajj delegation from Indonesia, during the 2007 Hajj season. Photo: Hamid Nasuhi



The author spoke at a workshop on Green Hajj (environmentally sustainable pilgrimage) in Jakarta, alongside Dr. Fachruddin Mangunjaya and environmental activists affiliated with Ummah for Earth–Greenpeace Indonesia, June 2023. Photo: Greenpeace-Indonesia.



With Dr. Arfi Hatim at the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah, KSA during research on Indonesian Hajj archives, August 2025. Photo: Dadi Darmadi