

THE HISTORY OF *JAMĀ'AH TABLĪGH* IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: The Role of Islamic Sufism in Islamic Revival^{*)}

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Abstract

The article examines the history of Jamā'ah Tablīgh in Southeast Asia, especially in Kuala Lumpur and Aceh. The author traces the historical background of this religious movement with particular reference to the birth place of Jamā'ah Tablīgh, India. The author investigates the major role of Indian in disseminating Islam in Southeast Asia, especially in Malaysia and Indonesia. Many scholars believe that Islam came to Southeast Asia from India (Gujarat), and this is the reason why many Islamic traditions in this region were influenced by Indian culture. However, to analyze Islamic movement in Southeast Asia one should take into consideration the Middle East context in which various Islamic movements flourished. Unlike many scholars who believe that the spirit of revivalism or Islamic modernism in Southeast Asia was more influenced by Islam in the Middle East than Indian, the author argues that the influence of Indian Muslim in Southeast Asia cannot be neglected, particularly in the case of Jamā'ah Tablīgh.

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A. Introduction

Most Islamic movements in Southeast Asia in 1920s employed socio-political power as means to revive Islam; it was very difficult to find out any Islamic movement that utilized missionary and mystical practice. Dekmejian,¹ for example, excludes the role of Sufist movement such as *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* in his list of Islamic fundamentalist movements in the Muslim world, especially in Middle East and South Asia. He prefers to focus on the emergence of radical Islamic movement by looking at internal problems in Middle Eastern countries. Dekmejian argues that there were many causes of Islamic revival among Muslim community, including identity crises, legitimacy crises, elite misrule and coercion, class conflict, and modernization.² In fact, he does not include the role of Indian-Muslim as a source of information to understand the emergence of Islamic movement. Some scholars have studied on South Asian Muslim pioneers such as Abu al-A'la al-Maududi, a founder of *Jamā'at-ī-Islāmī*, an Islamic party in Pakistan,³

¹ R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6.

³ On history of this Islamic thinker, see Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, *Relasi Islam dan Negara dalam Perspektif Modernisme dan Fundamentalisme*, (Magelang: Indonesia Tera, 2001); Abdul Rashid Moten, "Mawdūdī and the Transformation of Jamā'at-E-Islāmī," *The Muslim World*, Vol.93 (2003); Omar Khalidi, "Mawlana Mawdudi and the Future Political Order in British India," *The Muslim World*, Vol.93, No.3/4 (2003); M. Abdul Haq Ansari, "Mawdudi Contribution to Theology", *The Muslim World*, Vol.93, No.3/4 (2003); Fathi Osman, "Mawdudi's Contribution to the Development of Modern Islamic Thinking in the Arab World", *The Muslim World*, Vol.93, No.3/4 (2003); Malik B. Badri, "A Tribute to Mawlana Mawdudi from an Autobiographical Point of View", *The Muslim World*, Vol.93, No.3/4 (2003). For analysis of his party, see Anis Ahmad, "Mawdudi's Concept of Shariah", *The Muslim World*, Vol.94, No.3/4 (2003); Yusril Ihza Mahendra, *Modernisme dan Fundamentalisme dalam Politik Islam: Perbandingan Partai Masyumi (Indonesia) dan Partai Jamā'at-I-Islāmī (Pakistan)*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999).

and regarded as the most influential Islamic political thinker.⁴ Although some scholars recognize that Indian Muslim did play an important role in the region,⁵ the development of Islamic networks between South Asia and Southeast Asia is nevertheless still neglected.⁶ Most studies on Islamic networks focus on the links between Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian Islam.⁷ At this point, I would like to argue that Indian-Muslims have played an important role since the first coming of Islam to Southeast Asia. The development of intellectual network can be found in the links between 'ulamā' from India and Southeast Asia, especially through mystical teaching propagated by a Gujarati scholar Nurḍīn ar-Raniri, the great 'ulamā' of Aceh who had authored many books in Southeast Asia. Ar-Raniri's works are widely read⁸ and commented in many Islamic boarding schools in the region.

⁴ Osman, "Mawḍudī's Contribution to the Development of Modern Islamic Thinking in the Arab World", pp. 465-485.

⁵ Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, "Kontribusi Daerah Aceh Terhadap Perkembangan Awal Hukum Islam Di Indonesia", *Al-Jāmi'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies* 64 (1999); Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, *Islam Historis: Dinamika Studi Islam di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 2002).

⁶ Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern Ulama in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2004). The brief review on the work on Sufism in Indonesia to examine of the Indian-Muslim, see Martin van Bruinessen, "The Origins and Development of Sūfī Orders (*Tarekat*) in Southeast Asia," *Studia Islamika*, 1,1 (1994); Martin van Bruinessen, "Studies of Sufism and the Sufi Orders in Indonesia", *Die Welt des Islams* 38, no. 1 (1998).

⁷ Michael Franciss Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003); Michael Franciss Laffan, "An Indonesian Community in Cairo: Continuity and Change in a Cosmopolitan Islamic Milieu," *Indonesia* No.77 (2004); William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Have: Yale University Press, 1967); William Roff, "Indonesian and Malay Students in Cairo in the 1920's," *Indonesia* 9 (1970), Howard M. Federspiel, *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Modern Indonesian Project, 1970); Howard M. Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology in the Emerging Indonesian State: The Persatuan Islam (Persis), 1923-1957* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

⁸ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas writes about this book as follow: "This work in Malay was begun in 1643 and completed seven years. It deals with the science of practical judgments pertaining to religious practice (*al-fiqh*), but treats only those aspects concerned with devotional duties (*al-'ibadat*).The part of dealing with those aspects

Thus, Sufism contributed to the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia.⁹ It can also be argued that Sufism could be a method to convert people to Islam in early of the coming of Islam. Bruinessen¹⁰ writes: “Islam as taught to the first Southeast Asian converts was probably strongly colored by *sūfi* doctrines and practices.” Historically the issue of Islamic Sufism has become a hot debate within Muslim communities. In Aceh, for example, there was debate on Sufi teaching among Muslims when Nurđin Ar-Raniri acted as the jurist consult (*mufī*) during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Tsāni in the 16 Century. However, the case of Hamzah Fansūri who proposed the idea of *wahdatul wujud* (the Unity of Being) was seen as the decline of Sufism activities in Aceh,¹¹ even though some Acehnese still practicing mystical life what is called *sulūk* or *kalūt*.¹² Thus, Sufism played a major role in the early Islamic history of Southeast Asia.

B. The Emergence of *Jamā'ah Tabligh*

The *Jamā'ah Tabligh* movement was founded by Mawlana Muhammad Ilyās bin Muhammad Ismail al-Hanafī ad-Diyubandi al-

concerned with practical duties (*al-mua'āmalāt*) was treated by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkili (d. after 1693) in his *Mir'āt al-Tullāb*. The *Sirāt al-Mustaqīm* was printed in the margin of the *Sabīl al-Mubtadīn* of Muhammad Arshad in Makkah in 1892.' See Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *A Commentary of the Hujjat Al-Siddiq of Nur Al-Din Al-Raniri* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture Malaysia, 1986), p. 25. Martin van Bruinessen says that this book was printed many times in Egypt and Surabaya. This book is continuously been used in Sumatra and Kalimantan. Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, and Tarekat: Tradisi-tradisi Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1999).

⁹ Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism*.

¹⁰ Bruinessen, “The Origins and Development of *Sūfi* Orders”, p. 4.

¹¹ Amirul Hadi, “Exploring the Life of Hamzah Fansūri,” *Al-Jāmi'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies* 41, 2 (2003).

¹² Oman Fathurahman, *Tambih Al-Māsyī Menyoal Wahdatul Wujud: Kasus Abdurrauf Singkel Di Aceh Abad 17* (Bandung: Mizan, 1999); Misri A. Muchsin, “Salik Buta Aliran Tasawuf Aceh Abad XX,” *Al-Jāmi'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies* 42,1 (2004). On this spiritual journey, see Syaikh Najm al-Din Kubra, “Adab Al-Suluk: Sebuah Risalah tentang Perjalanan Spiritual,” *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Studi-studi Islam*, VI,15 (1995).

Jisti al-Kandahlawi (1885-1944); a Deoband-associated Sufi-scholar,¹³ in 1927 in Mewat, South of Delhi, India. Regarding the Deoband scholars, Reetz writes: “it was meant to rectify the perceived lack of religious education among the Muslim in British India as the religious scholars feared a loss or weakening of Islamic identity in the wake of the spread of English language education and Western values.”¹⁴ Historically, *Jamā'ab Tabligh* was variously known as the ‘*jamā'at*’ (party), ‘*tabrīk*’ (movement), ‘*nizām*’ (system), ‘*tanzīm*’ (organization), ‘*tabligh*’ (dakwah), and ‘*tabrik-i-imān*’ (faith movement). According to Haq, this movement “was known as *Bhopali Jamā'ab* because after the death of the founder its annual conventions were often held in Bhopal (now in Madhya Pradesh). Ilyās himself liked to refer to the movement as *Tabrik-i-Imān* or the Faith Movement.”¹⁵ He regards Muslims as a *Jamā'ab* which has already been formed, so Ilyās did not consider that he was establishing a new *jamā'ab* (Islamic community).

This movement is aimed at reforming individual’s behavior to develop an ideal Muslim society in line with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.¹⁶ Ali states that: “Its function is to encourage the Muslim masses in reverting the ways of Prophet Muhammad as an ideal life-form. The aim is to remove the stains of materialism from the hearts

¹³ Barbara D. Metcalf, “Living Hadith in the Tablighī Jama’at,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.52, No.3 (1993); Barbara D. Metcalf, *Traditionalist Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Barbara D. Metcalf, “Meandering Madrasas: Knowledge and Short-Term Itinerancy in the Tablighi Jama’at,” in Nigel Crook (ed.), *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia: Essays on Education, Religion, History, and Politics*, (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1996); Barbara D. Metcalf, “The Madrasa Deoband: A Model of Religious Education in India,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 12, 1 (1978); Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Contentions: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Barbara D. Metcalf, “Traditionalist” Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs,” in Craig Calhoun, Paul Price, and Ashley Timmer (eds.), *Understanding September 11*, (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2002).

¹⁴ Dietrich Reetz, “Living Like the Pious Ancestors: The Social Ideal of the Missionary of the Tablighi Jama’at,” in *DAVO Conference* (Hamburg: 2005), p. 209.

¹⁵ M. Anwarul Haq, *The Faith Movement of Mawlānā Mubammad Ilyās* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1972), p. 45.

¹⁶ Tahmina Rashid, “Radical Islam Movements: Gender Construction in Jamaat-I-Islami and Tabligh-Ijamaat in Pakistan,” *Strategic Analysis*, 30, 2 (2006), p. 56.

and mind of Muslim and inculcate in them a high moral order and guide them toward righteousness and Islamic spirituality.”¹⁷

Mawlana Muhammad Ilyās was affiliated with the *Tarīqah Naqshbandiyyah*, a Sufi order that considered the observance of *sharī‘ah* as an integral part of their Sufi practices. He was born in 1885 in the town of Kadhla, part of the Muzaffarnar district, and his family was particularly noted for its piety and commitment to Islamic reform spearheaded by the distinguished eighteenth century scholar Delhi, Shah Waliullah (1703-62).¹⁸ Mawlana was also one of the most influential scholars who graduated from the Deoband school, located in a small country town north-east of Delhi, where the original *madrāsah* or seminary of the movement was founded in 1867. This school played an important role in developing Islamic education in India, since it produced many famous Muslim scholars such as Abu A’la al-Maududi, the founder of Jamat-i-Islami in Pakistan. It is also believed that most of the Taliban¹⁹ who pursuing *jihād* in Afghanistan are Deobandi. However, the teachers at this school are likely to have been influenced by Shah Waliullah, an Islamic reformist who influenced Mawlana’s family. Metcalf writes that “*Jamā‘ah Tabligh* was an offshoot of the *Deoband* movement ... it represented an intensification of the original Deobandi commitment to individual regeneration apart from any explicit political program.”²⁰ Mawlana joined Deoband in 1908 and later became an instructor at one of Deoband’s sister institutions – Mazahir al-‘Ulūm in Saharanpur.²¹

There were several reasons for the emergence of the *Jamā‘ah Tabligh* movement in India. First, Mawlana’s intention to return the *umma* to the tradition of the Prophet through the *Jamā‘ah Tabligh* was a

¹⁷ Jan Ali, “Islamic Revivalism: The Case of the Tablighi Jama’at,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 23, 1 (2003), p. 175.

¹⁸ Yoginder Sikand, “The Tablighi Jama’at and Politics: A Critical Re-Appraisal,” *The Muslim World* 96 (2006), p. 178.

¹⁹ On Taliban, see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (London: Yale University, 2000).

²⁰ Metcalf, *Islamic Contentions: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan*, p. 265,

²¹ R. Upadhyay, “Islamic Revivalism: The Curious of Tabligh Jama’at,” <http://www.saag.org/papers6/paper569.html>.

response to militant Hindu efforts of *suddhi* (purification) and *sangatan* (consolidation) among Indians taking place at that time.²³ In 1922, this Hindu revivalist movement called *Arya Samaj* promoted a well-organized campaign to return to the fold a large number of Muslim groups that still retained many Hindu customs.²³ Mawlana intended to purify Muslim practices in Mewat, South India, the place where the *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* emerged, not only because some Muslims were being converted to Hinduism by militants, but also because of their maintenance of Hindu cultural traditions.

Second, the establishment of the *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* was as a result of a reaction to the decline of *khilāfab* movement in the Muslim world. It is believed that in 1920s, Islamic resurgences that emerged in the Muslim world were related to the failure of the *Khilāfab Islāmiyyah* (Islamic caliphate). Many Islamic movements promoted the concept of the return to the Qur'an and Sunnah as the pathway to the establishment of a new Islamic society which called as *khilāfab Islāmiyyah*. In this context, the *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* desired to bring the *ummah* (Islamic community) together through the education and reform of individuals.²⁴ Mawlana Muhammad Ilyās, according to one author, “felt disappointed with the failure of the *khilāfab* movement and the assertive role of Hindu leaders in the freedom movement” in India.²⁵ It is often claimed that the *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* is an apolitical Islamic movement that is not concerned with the establishment of Islamic state. However, this movement does have a certain political agenda, one to be pursued by means in the area of the reform of the individual.²⁶

²² Mumtaz Ahmad, “The Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-I-Islami and the Tablighi of South Asia,” in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalism Observed*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 511.

²³ Sikand, “The Tablighi Jama’at and Politics: A Critical Re-Appraisal”, p. 180.

²⁴ Ahmad, “The Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-I-Islami and the Tablighi of South Asia”, p. 516.

²⁵ Upadhyay, “Islamic Revivalism: The Curious of Tabligh Jama’at”.

²⁶ See also Yoginder Sikand, “The Tablighi Jama’at and Politics,” *ISIM Newsletter*, 13 (2003), pp. 42-43.

From this historical background it is interesting to note that the *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* was originally a response to local issue and agenda in South Asia. During the emergence of this movement there were also some other Islamic movements that have the same agenda, i.e., calling the *ummah* to return to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. However, the *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* was also likely influenced by broader social political and religious developments, such as the decline of the *Islamic caliphate* in the Muslim world. Thus, even though the movement was originally not a political, it could not escape from political influence. Masud maintains that:

The *Khilāfat* movement utilized the techniques of missionaries and shaped the methodology of *Da'wa* in India along modern lines. Muslim leaders learned the skills of modern organisation, publicity techniques, mass contact and the use of the printing press from *Khilāfat*... *Mawlana Muhammad Iyās, the founder of the Tablīghī Jama'at, benefited from this movement greatly.*²⁷

Third, there is a tendency to view the establishment of the *Jama'at Tablīgh* as the result of the dissemination of Sufism among *tariqah* (mysticism sect) groups in South Asia.²⁸ It is argued that the *Jamā'at Tablīgh* is part of the Deoband school, a reformed Hanafi Sunnism which eschews the cult of saints but accepts a purified form of Sufism. Mawlana Ilyas was himself a member of the *Chistiyyah* Sufis in India.²⁹ This Sufi group did not focus on the conversion of non-Muslims to Islām, because their objective was to provide spiritual guidance to the people. It is thus not surprising that the *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* focused more on spiritual matters than social and political issues, which were so important for other Islamic movements. The other Sufi movement that influenced Mawlana in his teaching was the *Qadiriyyah*, which disassociated themselves from rulers and political affairs.³⁰

However, Mawlana did not adopt the Sufi way of life, in which one lives at home and waits for people to come to learn from him. He

²⁷ Muhammad Khalid Masud (ed.), *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablīghī Jama'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. ii.

²⁸ Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, and Tarekat: Tradisi-Tradisi Islam Di Indonesia*, Haq, *The Faith Movement of Mawlānā Muhammad Iyās*.

²⁹ Haq, *The Faith Movement of Mawlānā Muhammad Iyās*.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

went out to visit people, dispensing spiritual guidance on how to live as a Muslim. Mawlana developed seven principles which are taken from Sufi practices: the article of faith, prayer, knowledge (of the principle of Islam) and remembrance (of God), respect for Muslims, sincerity of purpose, donation of time, and absence from useless and worldly talk.³¹ These principles become the pillar for all members of the *Jamā'ah Tablīgh*. In 1934, according to Masud (2000) Mawlana announced the guiding principles for the movement as follows:

- Correct memorization of the formulated faith
- Regularity in the performance of prayers.
- Education and promotion of knowledge.
- Formal appearance in accordance with Islam.
- Adherence to Islamic customs and elimination of idolatrous practices.
- Purdab* (veiling) for women.
- Strict observance of Islamic practices in marriage ceremonies.
- Promotion of Islamic dress for women.
- Abiding by the Islamic faith and rejection of other religions.
- Regard for each other's rights.
- Necessity of the participation of responsible persons of the community in all meetings.
- Teaching children about religion prior to formal education.
- Efforts for the propagation of religion.
- Observing cleanliness.
- Protecting each other's honor.³²

In fact, these principles were similar to those of many other Islamic movements in the 1900s. However, the *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* programs seem to be mixed between Pan-Islam and Islamic Sufism. Pan-Islam, which was originally promoted by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1837-1897), aims to unify Muslim around the world under an Islamic world community, due to the abolition of Islamic caliphate by Republican

³¹ Haq, *The Faith Movement of Mawlānā Muhammad Iyās*, p. 66.

³² Masud, *Travellers in Faith*.

Turkey in 1924.³³ In Southeast Asia, for example, many Islamic organizations inspired by this movement, such as *Paderi*, Persatuan Islam, Muhammadiyah, Sarekat Islam, and the *Kaum Muda* movement, promoted purification through the practice of similar principles implemented by the *Jamā'ah Tabligh*. In addition, the program of the “purification” of Muslim practices was heavily influenced by Islamic pioneers in the Middle East, such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad ‘Abduh, and Rashid Ridha. The main objective of their movement was calling the *ummah* to return to the Qur’an and the Sunnah. The *Jamā'ah Tabligh*, however, did not intend to ‘bring back *ummah* to the Qur’an and the Sunnah’ through political action or involvement in the government; rather “to bring about a reawakening of faith and a reaffirmation of the religio-cultural identity of Muslims.”³⁴ The *Jamā'ah Tabligh* took their example from the *al-Khulafā' al-Rāsyidūn* in the early Islamic world and justified that their ideology by reference to the Qur’an and *Hadīth*.³⁵

Regarding *Jamā'ah Tabligh* utilizing the Sufi methods, Haq says that:

Ilyās adopted *sufi* terms and practices such as *ziker*, *murāqabahi*, and *chillab* with certain changes, to popularize Sufism and create a better understanding of it among the masses; at the same time he sought to eliminate abuses which had crept into *sufi* orders contributing to their unpopularity among certain section of the community.³⁶

Many scholars believe that the activities of the *Jamā'ah Tabligh* movement began when Mawlana made his pilgrimage in 1926.³⁷

³³ Avraham Sela (ed.), *The Continuum Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East*, revised and updated ed., (New York: Continuum, 2002).

³⁴ Ahmad, “The Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-I-Islami and the Tablighi of South Asia”, p. 511.

³⁵ Muhammad Khalid Masud, “Ideology and Legitimacy” in Masud, *Travellers in Faith*, p. 105.

³⁶ Haq, *The Faith Movement of Mawlānā Muhammad Ilyās*, p. 173.

³⁷ Muhammad Khalid Masud, “The Growth and Development of the Tablighi in India,” in Masud, *Travellers in Faith*, p. 9.

However, it is unlikely that the *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* movement started in 1926 due to that fact that during this period Mawlana Ilyās made many journeys to perform the *Hajj*. His first *hajj* was in 1914, while in 1916 he returned to his teaching at the *madrasah*.³⁸ In 1926, he made his second *hajj* after he lived for five months in Medina, before returning to India with the conviction that the task of preaching should be undertaken among the masses. During his stay in Medina in his second *hajj*, Mawlana Ilyās did preach Islam and even unwilling to leave Medina. This method was then be adopted as *da'wa* method by *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* members when they preach Islam. Thus, the *Jama'ab Tablīgh* movement began in 1930s, when Mawlana completed his fourth *hajj* and met the Sultan, King Ibn Sa'ūd, on March 1938. The objective of his meeting with the King was to obtain his permission to preach Islam. Mawlana Ilyās, accompanied by 'Abdullah al-Dihlawi, 'Abdur Rahman Mazhar, and Ihtishamul, met the Sultan on 14 March in the same. King Ibn Sa'ūd received them with great honor and talked to them for a while, after which the visitors presented their petition and took leave of him.³⁹ I suspect that Mawlana Ilyās requested permission to the King to preach Islam in Saudi Arabia for political reasons. Once the King gave permission he would have the authority to preach Islam in his country and in the Middle East. During this era, King Saud had a close relationship with the Wahabi movement which was influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah as one of the *ulama* who inspired the fundamentalist movement in the Muslim world.

It is unlikely that we will find sources on the trans-nationalization of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* during Mawlana Ilyas life time. Nevertheless, soon after his death in 1944, his son, Mawlana Muhammad Yusuf Kandahlawi (1917-1965) became the new *amir* (head) of the movement⁴⁰ and had agenda to promote the movement around the world. It is reported that under the leadership of Mawlana Yusuf the *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* spread to all part of India, Pakistan, and beyond, to

³⁸ Haq, *The Faith Movement of Mawlānā Muhammad Ilyās*, p. 87.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴⁰ Masud, "The Growth and Development of the Tablighi in India", pp. 13-17.

countries like Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Turkey, England, Japan, and the USA.⁴¹

Thus, the internationalization of *Jamā'ah Tabligh* began under Mawlana Yusuf leadership, who widened the scope of *da'wa*, not only to Muslims but also to non-Muslims.⁴² Troll asserts that “from his time onwards *Jama'ahs* began moving out over the whole world, on foot, by bus, train or airplane or any other suitable means.”⁴³ In sum, by 1962, after eighteen years Mawlana Yusuf as *amir* of the *Jamā'ah Tabligh*, a worldwide network had been established stretching from Tokyo to Chicago.⁴⁴

1. The Coming of Jamā'ah Tabligh to Malaysia

In Kuala Lumpur, *Jamā'ah Tabligh* was introduced by Maulana Abdul Malik Madani, who came to Singapore and Selangor in 1952, as a representative of his *markaz* (headquarter) at Nizamuddin.⁴⁵ Initially the *Jamā'ah Tabligh* received support in towns, such as Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore where there were a large Indian Muslim communities. More recently, with the resurgence of Islamic missionary activities, the *Jamā'ah Tabligh* has succeeded in penetrating the Malay

⁴¹ Christian W. Troll, “Five Letters of Maulana Ilyas (1885-1944), the Founder of the Tablighi Jama'at Translated, Annotated and Introduced,” in Christian W. Troll (ed.), *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries*, (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1985), p. 142; Marc Gaborieau, “The Transformation of Tablighī Jamā'at into a Transnational Movement,” in Muhammad Khalid Masud (ed.), *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighī Jamā'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*, (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 122-123.

⁴² Yoginder Sikand, *The Origins and Development of the Tablighi Jama'at (1920-2000)* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2002); Yoginder Sikand, “The Origin and Growth of the Tablighi Jama'at in Britain,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 9, 2 (1998), pp. 171-193.

⁴³ Troll, “Five Letters of Maulana Ilyas (1885-1944), the Founder of the Tablighi Jama'at Translated, Annotated and Introduced”, p. 142.

⁴⁴ Gaborieau, “The Transformation of Tablighī Jamā'at into a Transnational Movement”, p. 230.

⁴⁵ Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Pemikiran Islam di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Aliran* (Bandung: Gema Insani Press, 1997), p. 78.

community, even at village.⁴⁶ In the 1970s, the *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* started to recruit Malay people to membership. The first group they approached was Darul Arqam leader, Ustaz Ashaari Haji Muhammad. He then made a journey (*kburūj*) with his followers as *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* members to Singapore for 10 days,⁴⁷ adopting the Tradition of Muhammad.⁴⁸ According to Nagata “like Darul Arqam, Tabligh is fundamentalist in orientation: through *da'wa*, it aims both revive and clarify the basic teachings of the Koran, and to show their relevance to modern society.”⁴⁹ In addition, Syed Serajul Islam maintains, that “they started going around the country by preaching the message of Islam. They held informal talks to the people asking them to return to the true path of Islām.”⁵⁰

Regarding the coming of Tablighists from India to Malaysia, one of senior *karkūn* in Kuala Lumpur, Tuan Haji Hassan, told me the story that the first target of the mission was to attract Indian-Muslims, not Malays. Tuan Haji Hassan worked for a company in Kuala Lumpur, but had been a member of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* in his home country, India. He was able to speak Tamil, Urdu, English, and Malay. His family came from Pakistan and settled in Kuala Lumpur in the early 1940s. During his period in India, he met some *Mawlana* in Nizamuddin. He may have even met *Mawlana* Yusuf while he was doing Tablighist activities at the international *markaz*. As indicated above, *Mawlana* Yusuf sent out many groups of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* abroad, including to Malaya. In this context, Tuan Haji Hassan became the representative of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* in Malaysia. Historically, during the coming of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* to Malaya, there was the increasing number of Indian community in Malaya such as in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, and Singapore.

⁴⁶ K.S. Jomo and Ahmad Shabery, “Malaysia’s Islamic Movement,” in Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Koh Wah (eds.), *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), p. 82.

⁴⁷ Abdullah, *Pemikiran Islam di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Aliran*, p. 79.

⁴⁸ Ann Wan Seng, *Al-Arqaam di Sebalik Tabir* (Selangor: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2005).

⁴⁹ Judith Nagata, “Religious Ideology and Social Change: The Islamic Revival in Malaysia,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.53, No.3 (1980), p. 422.

⁵⁰ Syed Serajul Islam, *The Politic of Islamic Identity in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Thomson, 2005), p. 119.

Regarding the migration of Indians to Malaya, Sandhu writes “the dominant factor in the increase of the Indian population in Malaya was the excess of immigrants over emigrants.”⁵¹ Thus, the main target of *karkūn* was to attract the Indian community rather than Malay. This is because the Malay community in that era was still considered as ‘second class’ and most of the businessmen were Chinese and Indian. They controlled and employed the Malay people in plantation. When I interviewed Nazaruddin, an Indian-Malay who was born in Malaysia before 1957 and a member of *karkūn*, about the reasons why Malay marginalized Indian community in Malaysia, he answered:

This is because our old generation treated Malays very badly. Many Indian businessmen employed Malays in their rubber plantation and ‘categorized’ Malays as ‘second class.’ Now, they have taken revenge on our second and third generations, where Malays have become the elite and controlled the government and categorized us as ‘second class.’

Muzaffar provides us another picture of the marginalization of Indians after independence:

It was this prosperity that brought some indirect benefits to the disadvantaged by way of schools, health clinics, piped water supply, electricity, and the like. The India poor gained from these developmental efforts, as did the poor in other communities. At the same time, it was an expanding economy and the concomitant prosperity which enabled groups of Indians, among others, to establish themselves in the middle and upper classes. Some of these Indian professional and business elite even managed to wield a little bit of influence over the government process.⁵²

Tuan Haji Hassan and Nazaruddin are Indian-businessmen, not the representative of ‘the poor community’ in Kuala Lumpur. In this context, it can be said that the target group of *Jamā‘ah Tablīgh* was the elite or the businessmen in the city. The first group, according to Tuan

⁵¹ Kernial Singh Sandhu, “The Coming of the Indians to Malaysia,” in K.S. Sandhu and A. Mani (eds.), *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2006), p. 158.

⁵² Chandra Muzaffar, “Political Marginalization in Malaysia,” in K.S. Sandhu and A. Mani (eds.), *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2006), p. 227.

Haji Ahmad, was received by Tan Sri Zainuddin in his house. Nazaruddin is the son of Tan Sri Zainuddin. They own a company of Zainuddin Corporation. When the group came to Kuala Lumpur, Tuan Haji Rahman arranged a meeting with Tan Sri Zainuddin who asked them to stay at *Masjid India*. Many lands around *Masjid Jamik* are owned by Indian-Muslim, especially Tan Sri Zainuddin. They built the mosque only for Indian-Muslims, while another mosque built by South Asians people in Kuala Lumpur is the *Masjid Pakistan*, located in the Chow Kit trade area.

I would like to argue that the *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* strategy in Kuala Lumpur was very successful, because they received a warm welcome from Indian-Muslim businessmen in Kuala Lumpur. At the same time, Malays still did not know much about the movement. Nazaruddin was used to *kburūj* with his father traveling around Malaysia from Kuala Lumpur to Ipoh, Penang, and Kedah. Tuan Haji Hassan, for example, traveled around the Malay Peninsula in 1960s on foot from one mosque to another as part of *kburūj*. To assist the arrival of Indian-*karkūn*, he was familiar with the immigration staff at the airport. Thus whoever Indian people came to Malaysia, the staff would call him for 'confirmation.' He was closed to some Indian-Muslim businessmen in Kuala Lumpur and was one of the administrative staff of *Masjid India*.

When a group of *karkūn* arrived at the airport, an immigration official called him to ask about the group. It seems that this was the first time Malays met of Muslims wearing *gamez*. It 1958 Malay dress was influenced by the fashion that they saw in P. Ramlee's movies,⁵³ where the real Malays wore *sarong* (traditional sheath dress for Muslim) and *kopiab* (headdress worn by Muslim man and also by Indonesian men in general as a symbol of national identity) and not Arabic or South Asian style Muslim fashion. The coming of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* was just five years before Malaysian independence, when the transition from Malay-British oriented to the Malayness happened, after which Malay people are defined as those who have three characteristics: Islam,

⁵³ Joel S. Kahn, "Islam, Modernity, and the Popular in Malaysia," in Virginia Hooker and Norani Othman (eds.), *Malaysia: Islam, Society and Politics*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2003).

Malay language, and born before 1957 in *Tanah Melayu* (The Land of Malay).⁵⁴

In this context, Indian-Muslims could be categorized as Malays in the sense that they were Muslims, spoke Malays, and were born before the independence. So, their style could be called Malay, including their Islamic style of life. However, India-Muslims also wear the *gamez* as a symbol of India or Persian clothing style. For example, according to an Indian-Muslim, the turban is not part of Malay custom, it comes from Turkey, called *Turbush*. Thus, it can be argued that this fashion originated from Indian and Pakistan. According to him Malays could not claim that this fashion belonged to them. It is interesting to emphasize the role of India-Muslims in Malaysia in disseminating *Jamā'ah Tabligh*. As Nagata points out "Tabligh could thus be seen as one means whereby the marginal Indian-Muslim can achieve recognition as a Malay or *bumiputra*, the most effective route through religion and culture."⁵⁵

Jamā'ah Tabligh paid little attention to the social-political situation in Malaysia. They traveled around the country from one mosque to another, from one state to another. Nazaruddin, for example, told me about his childhood following his father traveling on *keburuj* to many places. During this period most members did not tell people about the

⁵⁴ Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, "A Question of Identity: A Case Study of Malaysian Islamic Revivalism and the Non-Muslim Response," in Tsuneo Ayabe (ed.), *Nation-State, Identity and Religion in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: Singapore Society of Asian Studies, 1998); Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, "Identity Construction, Nation Formation, and Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia," in Robert W. Hefner and Patricia Horvath (eds.), *Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997); Azmi Aziz and Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, "The Religious, the Plural, the Secular and the Modern: A Brief Critical Survey on Islam in Malaysia," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol.5, No.3 (2004); Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, "Making Sense of the Plural-Religious Past and the Modern-Secular on the Islamic Malay World Ad Malaysia," *Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 33, 3 (2005); Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, *From British to Bumipatara Rule* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2004); Timothy P. Barnard (ed.), *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity across Boundaries* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006).

⁵⁵ Judith Nagata, "Religion and Ethnicity among the Indian Muslims of Malaysia," in K.S. Sandhu and A. Mani (eds.), *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2006), p. 534.

name of *Jamā'ab Tabligh*. They only slept in a mosque, then continued to another mosque, inviting local people to join them on their trip. The main targets were Indian-mosques, for example in Penang at *Masjid Kapitan Keling*. When I traveled to Penang to visit this mosque, a local man told me the history of Tablighist in the area. For him, whoever spread the message of the Prophet is a Tablighist. Thus, *da'wa* in Malaya, according to him, was started by Indian-Muslims, when Islam first arrived in Nusantara. He did not know about the coming of Tablighists to his area. However, the surrounding area was dominated by Indian. Along the road, Indian-Muslims sold jewelry and changed money. Nazaruddin said that most Indian businesses are in trade and rubber plantations. In Penang, Indian-Muslims employed Malays from Kedah as workers in their company. I would say that the coming of Tablighist to states in Malaysia could be seen as the Islamic missionary only for India Muslims. In this period Malays were struggling for their independence from the British. However, the migration of Chinese and Indian to Malaya and the role of British toward Malay had reached a 'cultural space' for members of *Jamā'ab Tabligh* to spread 'South Asian Islamic values.' Regarding the position of Malays and other ethnic group in Malaya in relation to Indians, Hwang writes "...for the Indians, the majority of them were estate workers. This meant that the majority of the Malays was generally found in the lower income economics activities while the non-Malay were found in the higher-level economic activities."⁵⁶ It can be said that the coming of *Jamā'ab Tabligh* in the early period was a part of the culturalizing of Malays in terms of Islamic fashion and lifestyle.

One of the focal reasons for this argument is the fashion of Muslim in 1960s that could show how the Muslim culture in term of fashion was, as exposed in P. Ramlee movies. In his movie *Kasim Selamat*, for example, Indian ethnic is represented as a 'big boss', while the Malay-Muslims wearing *sarong* and *kebaya* seen as the representative of Muslim culture in public space. In another movie, Malay are shown as the poor laborers for Indian-Muslim, as in *Labu and Labi* and

⁵⁶ In-Wong Hwang, *Personalized the Politics Malaysian State under Mahathir* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2003), p. 30.

sometimes Malay had internal problem such as seeking the beautiful girl or struggling with their families. In Ramlee's movies, we do not see Malay Muslims wearing *gamez* or other Middle Eastern dress. Instead, Malays are more likely to be influenced by British lifestyles. Kahn writes "Ramlee film ...provides a window on culture and society in British Malaya in the late colonial period."⁵⁷ Kahn also notes that "in Ramlee films about contemporary Malay life in Singapore or the Peninsula, villages are problematic spaces riddled with conflict between rich and poor, patriarchs and modern young women seeking to decide their own fates."⁵⁸ In other words, the portrait of Malay culture as 'real *bumiputera*' was not the case for Islamic culture in late colonial period. Thus, Malays who wore the *gamez* after 1970 were likely to be influenced by the presence of *Jamā'ah Tabligh* or other Islamic movements which promoted South Asian or Middle Eastern lifestyle. This is also deconstructed by Kahn when he compares the Malay fashion which appeared in the P. Ramlee movies and the portrayal of the contemporary Malay musicians Raihan in their performances:

It would be wrong to suggest ... that Islam was not a significant part of the Ramlee image. Here religious ideas seem to be inextricably bound up with symbols of Malayness, a good example being dress. There is no mistaking the fact that Ramlee is, in most of his films, a Malay, because he is wearing clothing that clearly signals this fact. Raihan ...performers ...wear clothes that would never have been seen in Malay villages in Ramless's time. Their clothing styles are, at least in contemporary Malaysia, Islamic or even Middle Eastern, not Malay.⁵⁹

I would say that most Muslims who wore the *gamez* dress in 'Middle Eastern style' were the great *ulama* in the *pondok* (Islamic boarding school), not ordinary Muslims. Many pictures of Malay pioneer of Islamic revival show that they adopted South Asian or Middle Eastern fashion such as *tarbush* and *gamez*.

⁵⁷ Joel S. Kahn, *Other Malays: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Malay World* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), p. 119.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Kahn, "Islam, Modernity, and the Popular in Malaysia", p. 156.

The meeting of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* and Malays began in 1969 when there was national riot⁶⁰ and the development of spirit of Islamic revivalism in Malaysia. Abdullah says that “the 1969 may be considered the launching pad for Malaysia’s *da’wa* phenomenon.”⁶¹ However, Shamsul says in his *From British to Bumiputera Rule* that “the 13 May 1969 incident was ironically a blessing in disguise for the Malay capitalist.”⁶² I would say that there is relation in arguments, because the spirit of Islamic revivalism then could be seen from the meeting of Young Malay with the *Jamā'ah Tablīgh*. One of the outcomes of this riot was NEP (National Economic Policy). However, Shamsul maintains that “it is not uncommon for scholars to assume that the NEP was formulated solely as a government response to the bloody incident.”⁶³ Regarding ‘the meeting’ of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* with Malays during the riot, Nazaruddin told me about Malay people who demonstrated in Chinese business areas (Chow Kit) in several parts of Kuala Lumpur. In *Kampung Baru*, a Malay dominated area, many *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* members were conducting *khurūj* in *Masjid Kampung Baru*, while other Malays were demonstrating against the Chinese. After the demonstration was over, Malays went to the mosque. The Tablighist who were Indian served meals. Nazaruddin noted that most young Malay become interested in *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* activity. In this era, it is widely recognized that many demonstrators, even the pioneers were students at the University of Malaya. At the same time *Masjid Abdurrahman* was established in the area of the university and became the centre for the young-Malay *karkūn* in Kuala Lumpur after the national riots. Nazaruddin therefore argued that the spirit of Islamic revivalism in Malaysia had been influenced by the spirit of Islamic mission (*da’wa*) which was promoted by the members of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh*. In this context, it can be argued, as Seng says, that in 1970s many

⁶⁰ Regarding National Riot in 1969 and its implications, see Kamarulnizam Abdullah, *The Politics of Islamic Identity in Southeast Asia* (Bangi: UKM Publisher, 2003), pp. 45-53).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁶² Baharuddin, *From British to Bumiputera Rule*, p. 191.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

Malays were attracted to *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* and became its members.⁶⁴

After the May 1969 national riot, many *da'wa* movements in Malaysia emerged. Some say that this was a sign of the influence of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 or the Islamic movement situation in Indonesia, especially among students. However, I would disagree with the argument, because the establishment of *da'wa* movements in Malaysia took place before the Iranian revolution.⁶⁵ ABIM (Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia), for example, was established in 1971 by several ex-student of the National Association of Malaysian Islamic Students (PKPIM). According to Jomo and Cheek “since its formation, ABIM has received its strongest support from Muslim youth in institutions of higher learning.”⁶⁶ This movement aimed at calling for the introduction of Islamic law, educational and economic system, and political reform.⁶⁷ Darul Arqam, an Islamic *da'wa* movement founded by Ashaari Muhammad who had traveled with *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* to Singapore, was formed in 1968. It was originally called *Rumah Putih* (White House). However, on 28 February 1981, the name of group

⁶⁴ Seng, *Al-Arqaam di Sebalik Tabir*.

⁶⁵ On Iranian Revolution, see generally Charles Kurzman, “Structural Opportunity and Perceived in Social Movement Theory: The Iranian Revolution of 1979,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol.61, No.1 (1996); Fred Halliday, “Iran’s Revolution: The First Years,” *MERIP Report* No.88 (1980); Gene Burns, “Ideology, Culture, and Ambiguity: The Revolutionary Process in Iran,” *Theory and Society*, Vol.25, No.3 (1996); Said Amir Arjomand, “Iran’s Islamic Revolution in Comparative Perspective,” *World Politics* Vol.38, No.3 (1986); Ludwig Paul, “Iranian Revolution” And Iranian-Islamic Revolutionary Ideology,” *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol.39, no. 2 (1999); Mansoor Moaddel, “Ideology as Episodic Discourse: The Case of the Iranian Revolution,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol.57, No.3 (1992); Karen Rasler, “Concessions, Repression, and Political Protest in the Iranian Revolution,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol.61, No.1 (1996); Shahrough Akhavi, “The Ideology and Praxis of Shi’ism in the Iranian Revolution,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.25, No. (1983); Ervand Abrahamian, “Ali Shari’ati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution,” in Ira M. Lapidus Edmund Burke (eds.), *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), Nikki R. Keddie, “Iranian Revolution in Comparative Perspective,” in Ira M. Lapidus Edmund Burke (eds.), *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*.

⁶⁶ Jomo and Shabery, “Malaysia’s Islamic Movement”, p. 85.

⁶⁷ Kamarulnizam Abdullah, *The Politics of Islamic Identity in Southeast Asia* (Bangi: UKM Publisher, 2003), p. 83.

was changed to *Darul Arqam*, in memory of a companion (*sahābah*) of the Prophet of Muhammad, al-Arqam ibn Abī al-Arqam, who allowed his house in Mecca to be used as early meeting place for Muslims.⁶⁸

In response to the emergence of *da'wa* movements in Malaysia, the government also made many *da'wa* foundations. These included YADIM (*Yayasan Dakwah Islam Malaysia*) which was established in 1974 and JAKIM (*Jawatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*) which formed by the Malay Sultans in 1968. There was also other important *da'wa* movement, namely PERKIM (Muslim Welfare Organization of Malaysia), funded by the government elites for special purpose to promote Islam to atheists or to train newly converted Muslims about Islam. It was founded by a group of prominent Malaysian Muslims, including Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, Tan Sri S.O.K. Obaidillah (an Indian Muslim), Haji Ibrahim Ma (a Chinese Muslim), and Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard.

It is important to note that Tan Sri S.O.K. Obaidillah was a pioneer of the *Jamā'ab Tabligh* movement in Malaysia. As an Indian-Muslim who had migrated to Malay in 1938, he played an important role in many aspects of social, religious, economic, and political affairs in the country. He was a founding father of MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress) and FIO (Federation of Indian Organization), two Indian political movements used as the vehicles to promote Indian interests in Malaysia. In 1950 he established AICC (Association Indian Chambers of Commerce), Indian business organization. Besides this, he was also a vice director of NCCI (National Chambers of Commerce and Industry). In social affairs, he established the MECA (Malayan Employer's Consultative) and PERKIM.⁶⁹ But, it is less often noted that he was also a Tablighist and chairman of the *Masjid India*. He is a successful Indian-Muslim businessman and owns many companies which are now run by his sons. I would like to argue that the reason why *Jamā'ab Tabligh* was well accepted by Indian Muslim traders was because of the influence of Obaidillah.

In the 1980s, the Malaysia witnessed the increasing influence of Islam in many aspects of life. Mahathir Mohammad who was a prime

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁶⁹ Rabiya Mohammad Sultan, "Tan Sri Dato S.O.K. Ubaidulla" (Malaysian Nation University, 1990).

minister launched his policy to 'Islamize' Malaysia under government policy *via* the vehicle of the UMNO (United Malays National Organization) and its alliance *Barisan Nasional*. At the same time, the *da'wa* movements also played an important role in Malaysian Islamization by adopting a socio-cultural approach.⁷⁰ PAS, as an opposition Islamic party in the country, utilized the charisma of '*ulamā*' in the socio-political arena and campaigned the Islamisation of Malaysia through political power by establishing an Islamic state and implementing Islamic law.⁷¹ Thus, this decade was an era of various attempts to promote Islam as the spirit of Malayness.

In fact, Islam was understood as an essential part of Malayness in the Malaysian nation state. *Jamā'ab Tabligh* was in the situation in which they were renegotiating Malayness. The Constitution states that a Malay is Muslim, but in fact not every Muslim in Malaysia is Malay. The process of defining Malay privilege in many aspects of social-political life leads to a homogenization of identity among Muslims in the country. An Indian Muslim told me that Indians must

⁷⁰ Nagata, "Religious Ideology and Social Change: The Islamic Revival in Malaysia"; Muhammad Syukri Salleh, "Recent Trends in Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia," *Studia Islamika*, Vol.6, No.2 (1999); Mohammad Abu Bakar, "Islamic Revivalism and the Political Process in Malaysia," *Asian Survey*, Vol.XXI, No.1 (1981); Judith Nagata, "Islamic Revival and the Problem of Legitimacy among Rural Religious Elites in Malaysia," *MAN* Vol.17, No.1 (1983); Zainah Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk 1987); Baharuddin, "A Question of Identity: A Case Study of Malaysian Islamic Revivalism and the Non-Muslim Response"; Baharuddin, "Identity Construction, Nation Formation, and Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia"; Iik Arifin Mansurnoor, "Recent Trends in the Study of Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Malaysia", *Asian Research Trends*, 7 (1997); Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, "From Islamic Revivalism to Islamic Radicalism in Southeast Asia: A Case of Malaysia", in Alistair D.B.Cook (ed.), *Culture, Identity, and Religion in Southeast Asia*, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007); Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, "A Revival in the Study of Islam in Malaysia," *Man*, 18,2 (1983); Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Sufi Undercurrents in Islamic Revivalism: Traditional, Post-Traditional and Modern Images of Islamic Activism in Malaysia", *Islamic Quarterly*, 65,3 (2001).

⁷¹ Farish A. Noor, "Blood, Sweat and *Jihad*: The Radicalization of the Political Discourse of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (Pas) from 1982 Onwards," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.25, No.2 (2003); Farish A Noor, *Pas Post-Fadzil Noor: Future Directions and Prospects* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2002).

think about a clear cut of their identity in Malaysia. Due to the fact that *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* was not part of the political elite, the movement was not seen as part of the 'process of Islamization of Malaysia.' However, the spirit of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* activities has revived the spirit of Islam among Malays since the 1980s. This is not to say that the government did not give attention to the movement, as Nagata says that "Government and party (UMNO) authorities too, far from viewing Tablīgh's non-political stance as praiseworthy, have somewhat paradoxically accused it of persuading Muslims to 'stay away from the ballot box', thus presumably weakening the Malay based on the electorate and vote, and have asserted that "Islam and politics do not go together."⁷²

Because of this accusation, *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* began to be accused as deviant teaching. An informant, a senior anthropologist in Malaysian National University (UKM), told me that the government warned the Malay people not to join this movement because it promoted 'laziness' among Malay-Muslims. According to her, the government filmed a drama at RTM (Malaysian Radio Television) on the impact of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* on a Malay family. This film, showed how the Malay family failed when a family member joined *Jamā'ah Tablīgh*. In 1992, because the *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* activities were accused as promoting 'laziness' and 'deviants' teaching, some states in Malaysia banned the movement. In the mid of March of the year, the Malacca state announced the banning of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* because its follower were engaging on mystical life or ascetic activities thereby neglecting their responsibility in the world.⁷³ The State Executive Council or Tan Sri Abdul Rahim said that many government employees followed the *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* and forgot the duties of their office. He said that "many *Tablīgh* followers are only interested in attending gathering in mosques and *saraws* to the point of neglecting their jobs and families."⁷⁴ Before the Malacca announcement, it is reported that Sabah state also notified the people that *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* was prohibited because of it promotion of laziness among Malay. Some

⁷² Nagata, "Religion and Ethnicity among the Indian Muslims of Malaysia", p. 534.

⁷³ "Melaka Haram Jemaah Tabligh", *Berita Harian*, 12 March 1992.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

say that this announcement was delivered four years before the ban of Malacca.⁷⁵ One reason for the banning of *Tablīgh* in Sabah was because of deviant teaching and which subsequently challenged the charisma and authority of the Sabah Islamic Council.⁷⁶

While Sabah and Malacca prohibited the activities of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh*, other states such as Kelantan, Terengganu, Negeri Sembilan Johor and Perak did not ban the movement. The Deputy State Executive Council for Kelantan, Abdul Halim Abdul Rahman, commenting the banning of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* in Malacca said “if the movement’s activities were questionable, the State Government would discuss the matter with the movement’s leaders and try to correct them if they were found to be wrong.”⁷⁷ Fadzil Noor, a PAS leader in Terengganu, said that “the ban is not good for the development of Islamic *dakwah* in the country.”⁷⁸ However, in some states like Johor and Perak, the Islamic Council only monitored the movement, waiting for formal ruling by the *mufti*. But, there were no formal decisions from State Department of Religious Affairs. The Central Government did not respond formally to the banning of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh*. *Pusat Islam*, a government institution for Islamic affairs, conducted a study of the movement and its impact on Malays. The government sent one of its staff members to be a *karkūn* to spy on the activities of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh*, but he concluded that there were ‘no problems’ with the teachings of the movement. Thus, the banning of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* was emphasized the outside image of *karkūn*, who were accused as *laziness Muslim*. It is interesting to note that during the 1990s, the government backed up to Malay to be involved in the development of Malaysia. The ex-Deputy of Prime Minister, Abdul Hamid Othman in national newspaper mentioned that *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* is not anti-Islam, but their approach and missionary activities could cause detrimental effects on Muslims in Malaysia.⁷⁹ A week after his interview, on behalf of *Pusat Islam*, he said that there was no evidence to support the banning of *Jamā'ah*

⁷⁵ “Muis Haram Tabligh,” *Berita Harian*, 14 March 1992.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ “No Plans by Perak, Kelantan to Ban Tabligh”, *New Strait Times*, 13 March 1992.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Tabligh in the country.⁸⁰ However, to control and monitor this movement, JAWI (The Islamic Religious Department of Federal Territory) would 'involve' itself in the administration of the mosque at Sri Petaling.

Regarding the ban and other issue in media about the negative image of *Jamā'ah Tabligh*, its followers did not comment or even challenged the government decision. This strategy was quite successful and, during this time, the number of people joining *Jamā'ah Tabligh* increased and even a mosque belongs to this movement was established in Sri Petaling. They also accepted the government decision to take over the Sri Petaling mosque. A *karkūn* said that they established mosque because of Allāh and they would finish it even if the government took over its administration.⁸¹ It would not be wrong to say that this strategy attracted more Malays to the movement, because the *markaz* was seen as under the 'control' of government. In other words, if the government did not see that *Jamā'ah Tabligh* practiced deviant teaching, it was safe for Malays to join the movement. Thus, there was still no attempt from the government to ban this movement, and this led to the establishment of the *Jamā'ah* throughout Malaysia, even in Malacca and Sabah.

I met a *karkūn* from Sabah who told me about the development of *Jamā'ah Tabligh* in Sabah. He said that there are more *karkūn* in Sabah, especially among newly converted Chinese Muslims. *Jamā'ah Tabligh* provides direct guidance for new-Muslims in worshipping Allah. Moreover, this assists the government program of encouraging *da'wa* among non-Muslims. Besides this, he added that the steady increase of Islam in Sabah was also due to the fact that most of Chinese Muslims in the state are influential businessmen. There had also been significant growth in *Jamā'ah Tabligh* activity in Malacca, especially among government and privates companies' employees. This is because the *markaz* always conducts *tafakkud* (interview) before a *karkūn* departs for *kburūj*. As the result, employees are able to arrange their leave to

⁷⁹ "5000 Pekerja Awam Ikuti Tabligh", *Berita Harian*, 14 March 1992.

⁸⁰ "Tiada Bukti Untuk Haram Tabligh", *Berita Harian*, 21 March 1992.

⁸¹ "Gerakan Tabligh Tak Halang Jawi Ambil Alih Pentabiran Masjidnya Nilai \$3 Juta", *Berita Harian*, 18 March 1992.

engage in *da'wa* activities. It is worthy of note that the Malacca state *markaz* is seen as the place for sending *karkūn* to Indonesia through Riau Province. When I attended an *ijtimā'* in Pekanbaru (the capital city of Riau Province), many *karkūns* from Malaysia had traveled through Malacca by ferry and some of them were businessmen and government employees or civil servants.

The development of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* in Malaysia had six phases. The first involved the trans-nationalization of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* among the Indian community in Malaysia, especially among Indian businessmen in Kuala Lumpur. The second phase was characterized by the influence of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* on the template of national history of Malaysians after the independence. This religious movement introduced a new representation of 'real Muslim' including the transformation of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* from an Indian fashion to Malay fashion. The third period is the involvement of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* in providing the spirit of Islam for young Malays in Kuala Lumpur. Centering its activities in the Masjid Abdurrahman, *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* attracted many Malay students, while the Masjid India turned into a centre for elder Malay and Indian Muslims. When the students completed their studies, they were involved and took part in spreading *Jamā'ab Tablīgh*. The fourth was marked by the penetration of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* to all of Malay Muslims in Malaysia. The penetration of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* was not only addressed to many well educated Malays, but also to Malay villagers in rural areas. The fifth phase is critical period of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* development, because its existence was questioned in several states, especially in Sabah and Malacca. I would like to argue that in this era, the banning of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* is parallel with the cessation of *Darul Arqam*. At this time the government began to directly control over Islamic movements which they felt might decrease the authority of the Malay elite. At the same time, both Islamic movements (*Jamā'ab Tablīgh* and *Darul Arqam*) were not registered, but they gained many new members from Malay Muslims who were likely working as government staff or members of UMNO and the *Barisan Nasional*. The final phase was marked by negotiation between *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* and the government, especially in the establishment of a mosque in Sri Petaling designed as the *markaz* of the movement in Malaysia and the Asia Pacific, after the banning of

this movement in Sabah and Malacca. By doing this, *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* attracted many more members, because it involved the government in the administration of the mosque. The public no longer saw *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* as deviant teachings. This dual strategy of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* has implications for its success in penetrating the Malay Muslim community in which this movement was able to establish more than 20 *markazs* in Malaysia and to connect to other countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore.

2. *The Coming of Jamā'ah Tablīgh to Aceh*

There are no written accounts on the coming of *karkūn* to Aceh. During my visits to several sub-districts in Aceh, I found that most people did not understand what *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* was. The first *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* in Aceh were members of a group of *kburiġ* from Malaysia in the late 1969. Because they were mainly South Asian and not able to speak Indonesian or Acehnese, some Malaysians translated their *bayān* into Indonesian language. However, there was no response from Muslims in Banda Aceh and the *karkūn* returned to Medan without any new members. My informant told me that the main reason for this was that the group had no understanding of the socio-cultural situation of Muslims in Aceh. They came to Aceh with a mission, without knowing about the daily lives of local Muslims. He also maintained that because they used Arabic words in *ceramah* or *bayan*, the audience was confused about this group.

The second group of *karkūn* traveled to Aceh in the early 1980s as one of their routes during their *kburiġ* in Indonesia. This group was sent *via* Medan by a Malaysian *markaz*. In this group there were Malay, African, Bangladeshi, Indian, and Egyptian *karkūns*. The target mosque was the *Masjid Bayturrabman* in Banda Aceh city, one of the most famous classic mosques in Indonesia. After they arrived by bus, they visited the mosque, asking permission to do *kburiġ* for three days. Unfortunately the *imam masjid* refused their request and asked them to leave the mosque. After that, they visited the mosque at Cot Krueng to formulate a strategy of *da'wa* called *fikir* (hesitation).

The *imām masjid* of Cot Krueng, Tgk. Far, received the *Jamā'ah* for three days only. He welcomed the group as guests without assuming

they were *Jamā'ah Tabligh*. During this trip, the *karkūn* did not inform the people in Banda Aceh that their mission was associated with the *Jamā'ah Tabligh* movement. Nevertheless, during the Jum'ah (Friday) prayer at the *Bayturrabman*, this group invited some young Muslims to hear about their mission without telling them about the *Jamā'ah Tabligh*. One senior *karkūn* told me that he was surprised to find some local Muslims wearing *gamez*, an Arabian style dress. He asked them to take a photograph in front of the mosque. There are usually many photographers in front of the *Bayturrabman* mosque, who take pictures of visitors. This is because the mosque is not only designed for prayer and studying, but also for tourism.

The coming of *Tabligh* in 1984 introduced a new model of Muslim fashion to Acehnese. It commonly recognized that in Aceh community, they tend not to dress in Arabian style, instead wearing *sarung* and *baju koko*. The students who were very interested in this group were two students from the Faculty of Dakwah of the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Ar-Raniry. They were interested in the fashion of *karkūn*. One of the students, works for the government of Brunei Darussalam, was graduated from this faculty, and the other student was an *imām masjid* in a mosque in Kuala Lumpur. Because neither of them were in Banda Aceh when I visited, it was hard to get the historical background of the coming of *Jamā'ah Tabligh* to Aceh from their perspective. However, I contacted one of them by e-mail regularly to get his experiences about his involvement in the early of *Jamā'ah Tabligh*. During my return from Pekan Baru to Banda Aceh, I also met Tengku Kandar at Polonia international airport when we were in transit. He told me that students who interested in *Jamā'ah Tabligh* were familiar with Islamic issues. For them, the group of *karkūn* has very different lifestyle and offered a model of real Islam which almost similar to that of Islam in Middle East. Kandar himself had never met a group of Muslims who had gone overseas to spread the message of Islam all round the world. In his words:

“I was impressed by the style of *Tablighist*. They tended to be low profile and never pushed us directly to do their mission. Firstly we joined their trip, then they asked to do as what they did. I did not know that they were from *Jamā'ah Tabligh*. Later on, after we spent

three days together, they said that we were a part of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* community. They asked us to revive the life of mosque in Aceh.”

The *karkūn* also conducted *khusūsi* to religious leaders in Banda Aceh city, such as the head of Ulama Council of Aceh. Through *ikrām al-muslim* (respect for Muslim), they explained the agenda of *Tablīgh*. It is said that most religious leaders in Aceh did not reject *Jamā'ab Tablīgh*, but neither gave them a green light. This indicates that *Tablīgh* could be spread in Aceh, even though most Acehnese were still not familiar with this movement. The five students then become the representatives of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* in Aceh and held many meetings to attract young Muslims to perform rituals of *Tablīgh*.

One of young students, Tengku Kandar, a *karkūn* who works as *imām masjid* in Kuala Lumpur City in Malaysia, graduated from the IAIN (State Institute of Islamic Studies), said that he was doing *kburūj* only for three days with students at a Senior High School. He did not tell the students that they were performed a *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* ritual. Most of it activities were controlled by small group at the mosque at Cot Krueng, a mosque subsequently demolished by the Tsunami in 26 December 2004. However, during the 1980s this mosque became the Markaz for *karkūn* in Aceh. The *Jama'abs* from Jakarta or outside Indonesia were sent to this mosque as part of *kburuj* in Aceh province. They sent their member even to remote areas to do *da'wa*. When I interviewed a *karkūn* who had been involved in the first generation of *karkūn* in Aceh, he said there were many challenges from the Acehnese. For example, they were not allowed to conduct activities such as *kburūj* and *bayan* in mosques. They invited the *shūra* from Jakarta to help the mission in Aceh. In December 1986, the *shūra* visited Aceh to assist their strategy of *da'wa* in the province, and most *karkūn* were happy for his help. They had a new spirit when they meet the *shura*, especially when *shūra* wanted to help them by joining the Acehnese *karkūn* to travel Aceh for forty days to promote the mission of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh*. They went on foot, by car or bus from one mosque to another. According to one *karkūn* it was pleasant trip when most of Acehnese join the mission. *Karkūn* called this trip across the entire province as *ta'arūf* (an introduction), which aims to promote *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* among ordinary

people as well as the elite in Banda Aceh. One *ustaz* from Jakarta, Ma'sum, visited local people on foot and Acehnese people received him sympathetically. Ma'sum delivered *bayān* on the issue of how to be a good Muslim by increasing submission to Allāh by doing *keburuj* and other *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* activities. He tried to avoid political issues while conducting *da'wa*.

The *shūra* also visited government offices to approach the elite and intellectuals in Banda Aceh. They met the rector of the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) Ar-Raniry and Syiah Kuala University to promote *Jamā'ah Tablīgh*. Many students in both campuses joined *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* and became the pioneers of *karkūn* in Banda Aceh. They also recruited many students to join their meetings in Cot Krueng. Informal meetings also took place in *masjid Bayturrabman* as part of general discussions about Islam among young Muslims in Banda Aceh. *Ustaz* Ridha, the *amīr* of Aceh, was interested in joining the meeting of young students in the mosque hall. He did not understand the agenda of the students to meet each other, but only saw there were students after noon and late prayer (*dhuhur* and *'ashar*) who always sitting together in circle. In fact, Ridho has a shop store near the mosque and always went there to perform *shalat Dhuhur* and *shalat I'ya* and even he attended one of the meetings and committed to do *da'wa* activity in Banda Aceh. He then being asked to become a member of the *karkūn* because he has family relation to the head of the Indonesian 'Ulama Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*). It is hoped if *ustaz* Ridha became a *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* member, it would be easier to approach the head of MUI of Aceh. However, the strategy was failed; the *Jamā'ah* could only persuaded *ustaz* Ridha, but not his family.

As I have noted most of members *Tablīgh* in Aceh at that time were students from universities in Banda Aceh. They attracted to *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* was because it represents a real Islam. As part of *Jamā'ah*, they were used to travel to Medan or abroad to do *keburuj*, although they realized what they did is part of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* program latter. In Medan, one of students learned the network of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* in Southeast Asia. The first group who went *keburuj* for forty days was a *Jamā'ah* of young *karkūn* from Banda Aceh who took trip from Medan to Yogyakarta by bus. According to my informant, the members of this

group included *ustaz* Ridha, *ustaz* Darwan, and *ustaz* Ibrahim, etc. They were the first *Jamā'ah* from Aceh who went on *keburuj* outside Aceh. Later on, one of this group served as a senior *karkūn* in Aceh.

From this generation I therefore understood about the promotion of the *Jamā'ah Tabligh* in Banda Aceh through *keburuj*. Senior and junior high school student conducted *keburuj* only on Sunday. They went to *markaz* wearing *gamez*. From the *markaz* they then coordinated by *Tengku* Kandar to take journey for one day only. It is reported that mostly their trip of *keburuj* take place around Banda Aceh city, because they must go to school on Monday. *Tengku* Kandar told me that he uses his bicycle to coordinate fellow Tablighist and many students joined him doing *da'wa* on Saturday. He asked them to tell his friends that their activity was only to fulfill the holiday.

From the above discussion, it is clear that students dominated in the first phase of *Jamā'ah Tabligh* in Aceh. They did not join the meeting on Thursday night, but on Saturday because they have to go to school in weekdays. The history of *Jamā'ah Tabligh* was not without challenge, since some Muslims in Aceh still opposed the movement. When they conducted *keburuj*, for example, local people accused them of offering new interpretation of Islam. I would like to say that this challenge was because the member of *Jamā'ah Tabligh* were very young. In Aceh, the only people can teach or ask people to do good things according to Islamic teaching was *tengku* which graduated from *dayah*. They may in a bad situation when they deliver the message of Islam to elder people in Aceh. One *karkūn* told me that when he was in North Aceh doing *keburuj*, local 'ulamā threw cow dong at them. However, this young *karkūn* was trained not to seek revenge or to respond negatively to local people. When the *tengku* threw the cow dong of them, this young *karkūn* only recited *astaghfirullāh*.

This hostility was a result of the lack of support of *Jamā'ah Tabligh* from MUI or well respected 'ulamā in Banda Aceh. *Karkūn* in Banda Aceh, with support from *shūra* of Jakarta attempted to overcome by visiting the 'ulamā and introducing *Jamā'ah Tabligh* to them. However, they did not receive a good response from the *ulama*. The *karkūn* approached 'ulama as a means of *ikrām al-muslim* (respect for Muslim) which was seen as an appropriate way to get more followers in Aceh.

As mentioned above, the first generation of *karkūn* in Aceh was students who did not have religious authority, even if they were studying at an Islamic university like IAIN (State Institute of Islamic Studies). They also faced the negative reaction from traditional ulama in *dayah* (an Islamic traditional institution that produce *'ulamā* in Aceh).

While there was no positive signal from the *'ulama*, the *karkūn* with strong support from *markaz* Kebon Jeruk Jakarta still played an important role in disseminating *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* in Aceh. After they had completed their studies, they went out for *kburiḥ* in IPB or *negeri jauh* (overseas). In this context, the *markaz* always send the *Jamā'ah* to Aceh to help *karkūn* in Aceh. During my field work, most of these young *karkūn* had become senior *karkūn* in Banda Aceh, although the pioneers of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* were no longer in Banda Aceh. This indicates that the process of recruitment had been successful since the total number of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* in Aceh by then exceeded 10000. Acehnese *karkūn* now play a major role in maintaining good relationship with *markaz* in Indonesia (Kebon Jeruk), Malaysia (Sri Petaling), and India (Nizamuddin).

C. Conclusion

The reason why *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* is well received in India, Southeast Asia, and other parts of the world is because this movement provides the Path by enhancing the spirit of mystical life over the *fiqh*. Insisting mystical spirit over *fiqh* in a community where *fiqh* is controlled by government or religious leaders is a serious challenge; and this is the situation when the Tablīghist was coming. *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* offers the guidelines to be in *haqīqa* position by doing the mystical life without neglecting the *shari'ah*.

Thus, when *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* is questioned or banned, they did not respond through the *shari'a* way that tends to be simplistic with the use of right or wrong perspective. The *Jamā'ah*, in contrast, employed a sympathetic way by increasing communication with those who opposed them. It would be understandable when the members of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* give their 'authority' to government in administering their mosque in Sri Petaling. I would argue that when a *da'wa* movement, including that of Christianity, uses the strategy of mystical life, they

would be in good position. It is proven that in the history of the coming of Islam to Nusantara, the Sufism play important role, but when '*shari'ah*' is formed or "politicized" by the sharing power between the King and the Ulama, Sufism was destroyed as happened in the case of Hamzah Fansuri in Aceh. However, *Jama'ah Tabligh* is not against the ruler or even challenges any suspicion of deviant teaching. In this context they had a strategy which is called the *baqiqa* or the illuminative.

From the above perspective, it is clear that there are many factors contributing to the emergence of *Jamā'ah Tabligh*. The sociopolitical situation in India had led Mawlana Ilyās to revive his society by returning them the mode of life of the Prophet. Here, Mawlana did not compromise with Hindu missionary and was convinced that *Jamā'ah Tabligh* was 'an answer' for the colonization and Hinduization. This situation was similar to the emergence of Muhammadiyah in Indonesia in response to the program of Christianization during the Dutch colonial era. In this sense, Islamic movement tended to organize the society to fight against colonialization. However, in the case of *Jamā'ah Tabligh*, there are two types of responses to Hinduization; one type was represented by Abu al-'Alā al-Mawdūdī and another was by Mawlana Ilyās.

To respond Hinduization in India, Abu al-'Alā al-Mawdūdī initiated the establishment of Islamic party. In 1926, there were many tensions in Indian sub-continent between Muslims and Hindus. This was because of the failure of Ahimsa movement promoted by Mahatma Gandhi, who accused Islam as 'the religion of swords'. At the same time, the *kbilāfat* movement under Mawlana Muhammad 'Ali utilized the concept of *jibād* toward Hinduization. Mawdudi was one of representatives of the anti-Hinduization group, and he wrote many issues on *jibād* in 1927.⁸² The result of his thought was his initiation to establish an Islamic party, *Jama'at-i-Islāmī*. Choueiri maintains that Mawdudi idea is similar to that of Sayyid Qutb. According to him, "in its revivalist version, the exclusive sovereignty of God served to combat Sufi orders, saint worship and the intercession of human being on

⁸² See the Mawdudi's understanding on *jibād* in Choueiri, Youssef M. Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, revised ed., (London and Washington: Pinter, 1997).

behalf of believers.”⁸³

The second type of Islamic fundamentalism is promoted by Mawlana Ilyās. To respond to the process of converting Muslim to Hindu by Hindu revivalist, Mawlana Ilyās called Muslims to follow sufi order. His experience with *tariqah* shows that his movement seems to mix three modes of Muslim life: sufism life, ‘islamic radicalism’, and the prophet life. Mawlana Ilyās’ links with *Naqshabandiyyah* is an indication that his teaching was totally under the umbrella of the sufi movement in India. Historically, this sect was named after its founder, Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshaband (d. 1389). They are called as *wali* (saints) or *awliyā’ allāh* (the friends of Allāh). However, they did not found the *tariqah*, instead they only systemized the teachings and methods with certain rituals and practices explicitly related to the founder of the *tariqah*.⁸⁴ In other word, the *Naqshabandiyyah* is one way to worship Allāh under a method of rituals conducted by the sufis. According to Van Bruinessen, this *tariqah* came to India in 1592. Nevertheless, the expansion of sufism in India was not began in 17 century. It was, according to Schimmel, ‘the full impact of Sufism began to be felt in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, after the consolidation of the main sufi orders in the central provinces of Islām.’⁸⁵ The sufi order at this time was Chistiyyah which also influenced Mawlana Ilyās. Regarding this situation, Schimmel writes:

The most outstanding representative of this movement is Mu‘īnuddīn Chisī... The Chisī order spread rapidly, and conversions in India during that period were due mainly to the untiring activity of the Chisī saints, who simple and unsophisticated preaching and practice of love of God and one’s neighbor impressed many Hindus, particularly those from the lower castes, and even members of the scheduled castes.⁸⁶

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁸⁴ Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Nasyabandiah Di Indonesia*, revised ed., (Bandung: Mizan, 1998), p. 48.

⁸⁵ Annemari Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1975), p. 345.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

What I would like to emphasize here is that Mawlana Ilyās adopted many sufi teachings in his missionary. As I mentioned above, he affiliated his name with the Chisū and some of his teachings tend to be similar to the Naqshabandi's. The teachings of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* are part of sufi teachings. For example, this movement utilizes the concept of *chilla*, which is *kburūj fi sabīlillāh*, outing from the community for forty days. The movement also adopts the concept of *tawajjub* as a close relationship between the master and *murīd* (disciple) in Naqshabandiyah.⁸⁷ In *Jamā'ab Tablīgh*, this word is mentioned during the *bayān*. There is also the concept of *jadbbab* which is seen as one of the ways of the spiritual master (*mursyid* or *murād*) in Sufi order to understand and control the spiritual situation and level among his *murīd*.⁸⁸ The real condition of *jadbbab* is *majdhūb*. About this concept, Schimmel says:

...the Muslim mystics knew that there is another way of reaching higher experiences: it is the *jadzba*, "attraction," by which a person can be exalted, in one spiritual experience, into a state of ecstasy and perfect union. However, it seems typical that the name of *majdzūb*, "the attracted one," was usually given to people who were mentally deranged and who were, in a sense, thrown out of the way of normal behavior by overwhelming shock of an 'unveiling'.⁸⁹

Thus, it can be said that this movement uses the Sufi concept. Even during my field work, there was no session to explain each concept to member and saying this is part of any *tariqah*. Besides this, the name of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* headquarter in India was named after the great sufi in this country, Nizamuddin, a *sufi* master from the Chisū order.

One of my argument that can be expanded in this study is that Sufi's aim to love God and 'meet' Him personally in *khayyālī* (imagination) is also found in the teaching of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh*. It make sense when Mawlana Ilyās did not claim that he had establish a new community. But, what makes him different from many Sufi orders, as I mentioned above, is that his group is used to go outside (*kburūj*) to

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 237; Pnina Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love: The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult* (Indianapolis & Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2003), p. 173.

⁸⁸ In'amuzzahidin Masyhudi, *Wali-Sufi Gila* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz, 2002), p. 37.

⁸⁹ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 105.

invite people to worship Allāh in a mosque. Thus, the Tablighist has own circle of the combination between mystical life and *da'wa*. When they relate these concepts, it can be argued that the Tablighist started to adopt the Prophet life in their daily life.

It is widely acknowledged that Sufi order always connect their genealogies to the Prophet of Muhammad. By doing this, in fact they want to see how the Prophet spread his teaching to his people in his life. Van Bruinessen argues that it is narrated that the Prophet of Muhammad taught his Companion about the mystical ethic according to their life style, and it is believed that this is a good foundation to ask why there are many spiritual paths among the *tariqahs* group.⁹⁰ Thus, many of Muslim pioneers has own interpretation and genealogies on their ascetic life. For example, the great '*ulamā'*', according to some author he tended to be called as founding father of Islamic radical, Imām ibn Hanbal was as sufist in his daily life.⁹¹ Ibn Taymiyyah, who always seen as the pioneer of Wahabbism and attacked the traditional practices of Sufi namely on *wahdatul wujud* (the unity of being), also has a well written Sufi book entitled *Al-Shūfiyyah wa al-Fuqara* (Sufist and the Poor).⁹² The founding father of Islamic modernism or Salafism, Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) wrote book on mystical life called *Risālat al-Warīdāt* (Treatise on Mystical Inspirations). He studied Sufi from Syaikh Darwis al-Khādir in Tanta. It is believed that he had been a student of the Sufi of Ibn 'Arabi, one of the Sufi, from one of his teacher. It is interesting to sum up by quoting Scharbordt that:

Many Muslim reformers and Orientalist scholars attribute to Sufism an inherent anti-modernism, blaming it for the intellectual stagnation of the Muslim world because of its mystical obscurantism and its contamination with non-Islamic innovations. The Sufism one encounters in figures such as Afghāni and 'Abduh is not anti-modern, backwards and obscurantist but was, on the contrary, the driving force in facilitating their intellectual engagement with the values of Western modernity.

⁹⁰ Bruinessen, *Tarekat Nasyabandiah Di Indonesia*, p. 48.

⁹¹ Ziaul Haque, "Ahmad Bin Hanbal: Profil Ulama-Sufi Baghdad", *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Studi-studi Islam*, 5 (1992).

⁹² Th. E. Homerin, "Tentang Kitab 'Al-Shūfiyyah Wa Al-Fuqara' Karya Ibn Taymiyyah", *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Studi-Studi Islam*, 12 (1994).

Future research on the Sufi background of Muslim reformers in modern Islam might correct the image of an anti-modern Sufism by looking at Sufi movements located on the margins, outside official Islam. Such Sufi movement ... might prove to have played a much greater role in the modernization of Muslim societies and efforts of Muslim thinkers to reconcile Islam with modernity...⁹³

Finally, I will highlight some important points of this article. First, the emergence of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* is a response to local Islām and international Islām. By local Islām, I mean this movement is a challenge to a process of Hinduization in India. Mawlana Ilyās as a founder tries to make Islam a contested religion in his society by combining two methods: *da'wa* and sufism. In international Islam, the founder goes by gaining support to revive Muslim society as part of the issue of the decline of Islamic caliphate. These efforts can be understood as keys of the process of transnationalization of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh*. In addition, this movement does not promote a new kind of re-interpretation of Islām, but only focuses on the implementation of the Prophet and *sahabat* spirits to Muslim society which blended into the mixing of *'aqīdah*, *sharī'ah*, and *ma'rifaḥ*. In this context, it is not a mistake to argue that this movement has gained success in promoting Islam from below.

Second, the process of expansion of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* in Southeast Asia tells us about the process of negotiating the identity and the reconstruction of Islam among Malays. This movement, colored by South Asian cultures, has influenced the mode of Muslim culture in Malaysia, a country with three major ethnic groups. As result, the process of the coming of *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* indicates how Islamic-Indian culture marries with Islam-Malaysian culture. After doing field work and traveling in some states of Malaysia, I would say that *Jamā'ab Tablīgh* has penetrated the new image of Muslim in the country. Having national and international (Asia Pacific) *markaz*, this movement has moved very smoothly from *da'wa* and sufism movement to a model of 'a new

⁹³ Oliver Scharbrodt, "The Salafiyya and Sufism: Muhammad 'Abduh and His *Risālat Al-Wārīdāt* (Treatise of Mystical Inspirations)", *Bulletion of SOAS*, 70,1 (2007), pp. 114-115.

government' in Malaysia. Their members come not only from low class, but also from middle class. It tells us about the success of *Jamā'ah Tabligh* in establishing an 'Islamic state' in the state.

Third, the process of the coming of *Jamā'ah Tabligh* in Aceh gives us a different picture of the conflict of authority and charisma among traditional Islām. *Jamā'ah Tabligh* as product of 'local' and 'international Islam' from South Asia does not succeed in meeting with Islam in Aceh which is produced by traditional 'ulama in *dayah* (Islamic boarding school). Thus, the early conflict between this movement and traditional 'ulama is the conflict of authority and charisma. When this movement penetrated the province, many of 'special jobs' for traditional 'ulama' lost,⁹⁴ because the member of *Jamā'ah Tabligh* do not pay attention on the hierarchy in their *da'wa* activity to society. That is why many of traditional 'ulama' did not receive this movement as 'Acehnese-local-Islam.' Until today in the area where it has been controlled by local 'ulama, it is not easy for the movement to do their *da'wa* activity. Their resistance against the movement is not a political issue as what happened in Sabah and Melacca of Malaysia. In Aceh, people tend to see this movement as deviant teaching. Thus, I could say that the process of recruiting of membership seems to focus among urban people and middle class. This study shows how the early history of *Jamā'ah Tabligh* is not a product of religion from 'ulama', but rather from young intellectual Islām who see that the Tablighist life style is a 'middle eastern Islam.'

Fourth, I would argue that in anthropological studies, there is a tension between a religion as local product and international product. Here, in the case of Islam, even they have the same teaching, there is still conflict among the religious followers in term of religious practices.

⁹⁴ In Acehnese society, traditional 'ulama play major role in many aspect of social life which sometimes relates to their income such as *slametan*, weekly *pengajian*, funeral activity, reading al-Qur'an in cemetery, as leader for many *kenduri* activities. Mostly from these activities, the traditional 'ulama would get pay. This is not including their job as special advisor from political parties, armies, *bupati*, and people who need their spiritual power. Thus, in Aceh traditional ulama can be called as the guardian of society. See M. Hasbi Amiruddin, *Ulama Dayah: Pengawal Agama Masyarakat Aceh*, trans. Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad (Lhokseumawe: Nadya Foundation, 2003).

In the case of Aceh, many argue that Islam in Aceh comes from Gujarat (India), but the coming of 'Islam as product' through *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* is not 'real Islam' as they understood from traditional 'ulamā. This contest has led to a conflict among the people who join this movement and the people who maintain their 'religious interpretation' from local 'ulama. The case of Malaysia indicates that Islam as South Asian product has been successful because there is a link between the history of Indian people in the country and the original aims of the coming of *Jamā'ah Tablīgh* to Malaysia which is to unify Indian-Muslims. However, Malay-Muslims view that this style as a different Muslim life style which can be seen in the early history of Malaysia.

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