



**Ritual Contestation in Contemporary Acehese Islam:  
An Ethnography of Fasting and Pilgrimage Practices in Blang Pu’uk,  
Nagan Raya, Aceh, Indonesia**

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**Abstract**

Islamic ritual practices such as fasting and pilgrimage (ḥajj) are normatively codified within Islamic jurisprudence. Nevertheless, these normative frameworks are not uniformly enacted across Muslim societies. This article examines localized and contested religious practices within the Muslim community of Blang Pu’uk Kulu Village, Nagan Raya Regency, Aceh, Indonesia, where fasting is observed without ifṭār and pilgrimage rituals are performed locally within a dayah during the ḥajj season. Employing a qualitative approach grounded in ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews, this study examines the modalities of ritual performance, the sociohistorical conditions that sustain these practices, and their implications for communal religious life. The findings demonstrate that these rituals are embedded within a hereditary religious tradition and are construed by adherents as ascetic disciplines aimed at cultivating spiritual proximity to God, sustaining perpetual repentance, achieving inner serenity, and preparing for death (sakhārāt al-mawt). From a normative Islamic legal perspective, these practices provoke substantial doctrinal debate, particularly regarding the absence of ifṭār during fasting and the permissibility of chewing betel leaves during daylight hours to facilitate continuous dhikr. Likewise, the localized enactment of pilgrimage rituals—such as circumambulation around a Ka’bah-like structure and the conferment of the designation “minor ḥajj” constitutes a departure from orthodox Islamic requirements. However, practitioners categorically reject interpretations framing these practices as deviant. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, this article argues that these ritual practices function as embodied religious dispositions reproduced through collective memory and socialization. Despite external accusations of doctrinal deviation, the community’s religious authority and symbolic capital remain intact, enabling the sustained reproduction of these practices across generations.

**Keyword:** Ritual Contestation, Fasting, Pilgrimage, Religious Habitus, Aceh

### **Abstrak**

*Praktik-praktik ritual Islam seperti puasa dan ibadah haji secara normatif dikodifikasikan dalam fikih Islam. Namun demikian, kerangka normatif tersebut tidak selalu dipraktikkan secara seragam di seluruh masyarakat Muslim. Artikel ini mengkaji praktik-praktik keagamaan yang bersifat lokal dan diperdebatkan di kalangan komunitas Muslim Desa Blang Pu'uk Kulu, Kabupaten Nagan Raya, Aceh, Indonesia, di mana puasa dijalankan tanpa iftār dan ritual haji dilaksanakan secara lokal di dalam sebuah dayah pada waktu pelaksanaan ibadah haji. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif yang berbasis pada observasi etnografis dan wawancara mendalam, penelitian ini menelaah bentuk-bentuk pelaksanaan ritual, kondisi sosial-historis yang menopang keberlangsungan praktik-praktik tersebut, serta implikasinya terhadap kehidupan keagamaan komunitas. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ritual-ritual ini berakar pada tradisi keagamaan turun-temurun dan dipahami oleh para penganutnya sebagai laku asketik yang bertujuan untuk menumbuhkan kedekatan spiritual dengan Tuhan, menjaga pertobatan yang berkelanjutan, mencapai ketenangan batin, serta mempersiapkan diri menghadapi kematian (sakarāt al-mawt). Dari perspektif normatif hukum Islam, praktik-praktik ini memunculkan perdebatan doktrinal yang signifikan, khususnya terkait ketiadaan iftār dalam puasa dan kebolehan mengunyah daun sirih pada siang hari sebagai sarana untuk memfasilitasi dzikir secara terus-menerus. Demikian pula, pelaksanaan ritual haji secara lokal seperti thawaf mengelilingi bangunan yang menyerupai Ka'bah dan pemberian sebutan "haji kecil" merupakan penyimpangan dari ketentuan ortodoks Islam. Namun demikian, para pelaku praktik tersebut secara tegas menolak penafsiran yang memandang praktik-praktik ini sebagai bentuk penyimpangan. Merujuk pada konsep habitus Pierre Bourdieu, artikel ini berargumen bahwa praktik-praktik ritual tersebut berfungsi sebagai disposisi keagamaan yang terwujud secara embodied dan direproduksi melalui memori kolektif serta proses sosialisasi. Meskipun menghadapi tuduhan penyimpangan doktrinal dari pihak luar, otoritas keagamaan dan modal simbolik komunitas ini tetap terjaga, sehingga memungkinkan reproduksi praktik-praktik tersebut secara berkelanjutan lintas generasi.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Kontestasi Ritual, Puasa, Haji, Habitus Keagamaan, Nagan Raya, Aceh*

### **Introduction**

Nagan Raya Regency is one of the regencies in Aceh Province, Indonesia, with its capital in Suka Makmue, located approximately 287 km or a 6-hour drive from Banda Aceh. This regency was established based on Law No. 4 of 2002, dated July 2, 2002, as a result of the division of West Aceh Regency. As of mid-2024, Nagan Raya's population was 179,108.

Nagan Raya, Aceh, is one of the regencies in Aceh Province, located in the southwestern part of the province, with Suka Makmue as its capital. The regency is

approximately 287 kilometers, or about six hours of travel, from Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh Province. Within this regency lies a small village known as Blang Pu'uk Kulu. This regency was established based on Law No. 4 of 2002, dated July 2, 2002, as a result of the division of West Aceh Regency. As of mid-2024, Nagan Raya's population was 179,108. One of the subdistricts is Seunagan, with 35 villages, including Blang Pu'uk Kulu. The main livelihoods of the people in Nagan Raya are in the agricultural sector, particularly rice, and other potential livelihoods include livestock and palm oil plantations. There is one interesting thing about the village of Blang Pu'uk Kulu: the practice of fasting and Hajj, which is not common among the Acehnese people in general.<sup>1</sup>

This controversy concerns the methods and procedures for fasting and performing pilgrimage (hajj) among the community of Blang Pu'uk Kulu, which, over time, has become a subject of intense debate among local residents and within the broader public sphere. Amid strong religious traditions and deeply rooted local values, differing opinions have emerged regarding how women should properly practice these acts of worship.<sup>2</sup>

This issue is not merely a matter of differing religious interpretations; rather, it reflects the complexity of local traditions and deeply entrenched social values surrounding what is considered controversial in religious practice. As part of a society that profoundly respects tradition and religious belief, questions arise about how women ought to perform religious observances within Blang Pu'uk Kulu's strong cultural framework.<sup>3</sup> As part of a community that respects traditions

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<sup>1</sup>Marion Holmes Katz, "The Hajj and the Study of Islamic Ritual," *Studia Islamica (Paris)* 98, no. 98 (2004); Mustaqim Pabbajah et al., "Pilgrimage to Bawakaraeng Mountain among the Bugis-Makassar in Indonesia: A Contestation between Islamic Identity and Local Tradition," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, 2021. Misbahuddin Misbahuddin et al., "Normativism of Islamic Law in the Akkattere Hajj Ritual of South Sulawesi's Ammatoa Community," *Samarah* 7, no. 1 (2023); Nasruddin Yusuf et al., "Islamic Legal Status on Hajj for Transgender People According to Muslim Scholars in North Sulawesi," *Mazahib Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum Islam* 21, no. 1 (2022); Raihani, Irfan Noor, and Supriansyah, "Commodification of Hajj Rituals amongst Banjarese Pilgrims," *Studia Islamika* 30, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>2</sup>John R. Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Arskal Salim, *Challenging the Secular State: The Islamisation of Law in Modern Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008); Muslim Zainuddin et al., "Protection of Women and Children in the Perspective of Legal Pluralism: A Study in Aceh and West Nusa Tenggara," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 3 (2024), p. 1948–73.

<sup>3</sup>Daniel Andrew Birchok, "Sojourning on Mecca's Verandah: Place, Temporality, and Islam in an Indonesian Province" (University of Michigan, 2013); James T Siegel, *The Rope of God* (University of California Press, 1969). Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Michael Buehler, "Shari'a and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia by R. Michael Feener," *Indonesia*, 2014; Mursyid Djawas et al., "Harmonization of State, Custom, and Islamic Law in Aceh: Perspective of Legal Pluralism," *Hasanuddin Law Review* 1, no. 2024 (10AD); Dedy Sumardi, Ratno Lukito, and Moch Nur Ichwan, "Legal Pluralism within the Space of Sharia: Interlegality of Criminal Law Traditions in Aceh, Indonesia," *Samarah* 5, no. 1 (2021), p. 426–49.

and beliefs that have been practiced from generation to generation in Blang Pu'uk Kulu.

In the middle of Blang Puuk village, there is a place of worship that is often filled with worshippers from various backgrounds. It is held during the month of Hajj for 14 days. The majority of the worshippers come from the local community, while some come from outside the region, such as Abdya, South Aceh, and even from outside Aceh, such as Medan, West Sumatra.<sup>4</sup> The habit practiced by most of the Blang Pu'uk community is to fast and perform the hajj for 14 days at the dayah. However, what is unique is that their worship practices are very different from Islamic teachings. All of these phenomena are considered habits rather than deviations, and the various procedures involved in these customs will be described in this article.

With regard to these foundational norms and practices, Muslims across the major Sunni schools of jurisprudence—namely Hanafī, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali as well as Islamic-based religious organizations, universally acknowledge and adhere to these fundamental obligations. In Islamic doctrine, these practices are institutionally articulated as the *Five Pillars of Islam*, which function as the core framework of religious obligations for individuals who identify themselves as Muslims. The Five Pillars represent essential normative acts that define Muslim religious identity and practice. Among these foundational obligations, the pronouncement of the *shahādah* occupies a unique and non-negotiable position, as it constitutes a compulsory (*wājib*) act that cannot be circumvented. The *shahādah* serves as a formal testimony affirming the oneness of Allah (SWT) and the prophethood of Muhammad as His final Messenger.

Every Muslim should understand the pillars of Islam correctly as the main foundation of practicing Islam. Of the two pillars, fasting and Hajj have very clear definitions and rules. Fasting involves refraining from eating, drinking, and other activities that invalidate fasting from sunrise to sunset, accompanied by the intention to please Allah and to control oneself from sin. (Q.S Al-Baqarah: 183). Similarly, *Hajj* is a form of worship performed by visiting the House of Allah (Ka'bah) in Mecca at a specific time, in accordance with the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, for Muslims who are able to do so. (Q.S. Ali-Imran: 97).

However, regarding the two matters related to fasting and Hajj, a group suddenly emerged at a *dayah* in the village of Blang Pu'uk and made a statement that *sahur* before fasting was carried out until *sahur* time again, there was no *ifthar*, but it was permissible to consume betel leaf to keep the throat moist for *dikr*. Similarly, for the pilgrimage, if one does not have sufficient funds to make the pilgrimage to the holy land of Mecca, it is permissible to make the pilgrimage to

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<sup>4</sup>Interview with Mak Tek (one of the daughters of the leader of a *Dayah*, an Islamic boarding school) in Blang Pu'uk Village, January 9, 2024.

the village of Blang Pu'uk. This pilgrimage can be performed by all people regardless of gender, but it is not recommended for children.<sup>5</sup>

This article aims to investigate how these controversial practices of fasting and pilgrimage are carried out and how they impact the local community's social and religious life. By considering various perspectives, we can gain a deeper understanding of how religion and local traditions shape collective understandings of religious practices in the village of Blang Pu'uk Kulu.

There are several studies that discuss controversial religious practices in communities across Indonesia, including Nurfadil's research, which states that practitioners of *marapas* prayer, or fast prayer, exist in Sulawesi. However, some people in Sulawesi consider the practice of *marapas* prayer to be heretical.<sup>6</sup>

Deviations in worship also occur at Ma'had Al-Zaytun. The phenomenon is contrary to Islamic law. The worship practices they carry out, such as very loose rows in congregational prayers, mixing between male and female congregants, and the fact that the Hajj pilgrimage can be performed in Indramayu, have sparked much controversy among the public. However, this *ma'had* has existed since the time of President Soekarno's administration.<sup>7</sup>

Another deviation also occurs in the worship practices of the *Millah Ibrahim* group in Johor, where they argue that prayer is not an obligation in Islamic teachings, even though they believe in the Day of Judgment, and they want to unite the teachings of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. These teachings have a significant impact on the general public. Their views are based on a deviant interpretation of the Quranic verses.<sup>8</sup>

The tradition of *mandi* (bathing) of *balimau kasai* is performed before the month of Ramadan, using lime juice and a mixture of yellow rice and turmeric to purify oneself. This tradition is performed only once a year, before Ramadan, and is considered sacred by the local community, eagerly awaited. The *balimau kasai* bathing tradition involves a series of events that must be carried out before bathing begins, such as donating to orphans, providing religious materials, and finally, a *bajambau* meal. However, over time, the *kalimau kasai* bath, once intended for purification, has become a venue for finding a soulmate. Whereas in the past the *balimau* bath was separated by gender, today it is mixed.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Interview with TR. Yourdan Idrus, a Resident and Follower of the Congregation in Blang Pu'uk Village, January 12, 2024.

<sup>6</sup>Nurfadil, "Nilai-Nilai Tasawuf Dalam Sembahyang Marapas Di Sulawesi Barat" (Universitas Islam Negeri Yogyakarta, 2022).

<sup>7</sup>Muhammad ikhil musyafa, "Penyimpangan Ajaran Ma'had Al-Zaytun terhadap Hukum Islam", *Jurnal Riset Rumpun Agama dan Filsafat*, Vol.2 No.1(2023)

<sup>8</sup>Mohd Farhan bin Md Amin, "Penyimpangan Dalam Penafsiran Al-Quran: Analisis Penafsiran Kelompok Millah Ibrahim," *Tafse: Journal of Quranic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2020).

<sup>9</sup>*Journal of Education and Culture*, 1(02), p. 108–114.

After reviewing several studies above, there are no writings similar to this study. This study highlights the controversial worship practices of fasting and Hajj among Muslims in general, and the study's location in the village of Blang Pu'uk, Nagan Raya, Aceh.

This research uses qualitative methods with descriptive analysis. The types of data used are field research as primary data and library research as secondary data. Primary data was collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The research location was in Blang Pu'uk Kulu, Nagan Raya, Aceh Province. Interviews were conducted with people involved in the implementation of fasting and Hajj, as well as the surrounding community, including Mak Tek (a follower of the Mak Rayeuk / Abu Tuha sect, who is the leader of the *dayah*), Nur'aini (a resident of Padang village), Ita (a resident of Blang Puuk village), Yanti (a resident of Latong village), T.R Yourdan (congregation and community), T.R Murthala Idrus, Aja Susianti (congregation and community ) and Cut Aja Puspita Idrus (congregation and community).

The research was conducted in Blang Pu'uk Kulu, Nagan Raya, Aceh Province, Indonesia. Basically, this research focuses on in-depth observation to produce a more comprehensive study of a phenomenon. This research attempts to solve the problems investigated by describing the state of the research subject or object based on valid facts.

## **Legal Basis for Fasting and Hajj**

### ***The Fasting***

Fasting is one of the most important acts of worship in Islam. It is practiced by Muslims around the world as part of their obedience to Allah SWT. Fasting is not merely abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations; it also has deep spiritual and social significance. In Arabic, fasting comes from the Arabic word *saum*, which means to refrain from anything that invalidates fasting from dawn until sunset.<sup>10</sup>

There are several types and kinds of fasting, from *sunnah* to obligatory fasting. The types of fasting that are considered obligatory are Ramadan fasting, *kifarat*, and *Nazar*. Meanwhile, the types of fasting considered *sunnah* are fasting for 6 days in the month of Syawwal, fasting on the Day of Arafah, fasting on 10 (ten) *Muharram*, fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, *ayyamul bidh*, and fasting Daud.

Fasting is not easy because it is not only about enduring hunger and thirst, but also about anger, negative emotions, and even actions that invalidate fasting and reduce its rewards. Under normal circumstances, it is very difficult to endure thirst during the day, especially when the sun is hot. Some people can endure

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<sup>10</sup>Al-Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh Al-Sunnah*, II (Kairo: Dar al-Fath Li I'lam al-'Arabi, 1996); Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Rusyd Al-Qurtubi, *Bidayat Al-Mujtahid*, II (Maktabah wa Matba'ah Taha, n.d.).

hunger for several days, but it is very difficult to endure thirst. Although at sunset it is permissible to break the fast or eat and drink as usual, and before dawn it is also permissible to have *sahur*, in fact, many people are unable to perform this worship.<sup>11</sup>

Fasting in Islam has several conditions that must be met for this act of worship to be valid and accepted. These conditions encompass several important aspects that every Muslim who wishes to fast must consider. First, intention is the primary requirement. The intention to fast must be made before dawn each day of fasting. This intention is not merely a verbal declaration, but more importantly, it involves a conscious and firm determination to fast. Without the correct intention, a fast is invalid.

Furthermore, health status also plays a significant role in determining whether or not a person is obligated to fast. Healthy, able Muslims are obligated to fast. However, there are exceptions for those who are ill, traveling long distances, or have certain health conditions that make fasting difficult or dangerous. In these cases, they may skip the fast and make it up later when their condition improves.

Age and mental capacity are also important requirements. Fasting is only obligatory for those who have reached *baligh* and are of sound mind. Children who have not yet reached puberty are not required to fast, although they can begin practicing fasting in preparation for the future. Similarly, those with mental disorders or conditions that impair their ability to understand and implement fasting are also not required to fast. Citizenship and Islamic status are also important requirements for fasting. Only Muslims are required to fast, and those who have recently converted to Islam or do not yet fully understand the requirements of fasting may require further guidance to fulfill this obligation properly. By observing these requirements, fasting can be performed validly and in accordance with religious guidance. It is important for every Muslim to understand and comply with these requirements so that their fasting is accepted and rewarded by Allah SWT.<sup>12</sup>

Fasting in controversial contexts often has interpretations that differ greatly from Islamic teachings. In some cases, followers of controversial teachings may practice fasting for purposes that are uncommon or even contrary to Islamic values, as in the village of Blang Pu'uk Kulu. This is the focus of this article.

## *Hajj*

Hajj is one of the pillars of worship for Muslims, along with the *shahada*, *salat*, fasting, and *zakat*. Hajj is defined as visiting the House of God to perform worship at a specific time and in a specific manner for Muslims who are physically

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<sup>11</sup>Wahbah al-Zuhaili, *Al-Fiqh Al-Islami Wa Adillatuhu*, IV, vol. VIII (Damaskus: Dar al-Fikr, 2014).

<sup>12</sup>Wahbah al-Zuhaili.

and financially capable. The law of Hajj worship is written in the Quran, Surah Al-Imran, verse 97, which states that performing Hajj to the House of Allah is one of the obligations of humans to Allah SWT. The verse in the *surah* also mentions who is obliged to perform Hajj, namely those who are able to make the journey there.

The understanding and belief that Hajj can be performed without having to go to the holy land (Mecca) is a view that contradicts the authentic teachings of Islam. In Islamic teachings, Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam that must be performed once in a lifetime by Muslims who are physically, financially, and security capable of doing so. Hajj is performed by carrying out a series of rituals in Mecca and its surroundings, such as *tawaf, sa'i*, and *wukuf* in Arafah.<sup>13</sup>

The teaching that Hajj can be performed in places other than Mecca contradicts the clear texts (*nash*) of the Quran and hadith, as well as the consensus (*ijma'*) of scholars. Such beliefs can be categorized as misguided teachings because they deviate from the established principles of Islam.

*First*, the main requirement for performing the hajj is financial capability. This means a person must have sufficient funds to cover travel, accommodation, and other needs while in Mecca without compromising their other living expenses. This is based on the principle that *hajj* is a journey that requires significant expenditure, and every Muslim who wishes to perform it must ensure that they have sufficient economic means to do so without causing financial hardship for themselves or their families.<sup>14</sup>

*Second*, physical and health requirements are also very important. Prospective pilgrims must be in good health and physically capable of undertaking the journey and the series of *hajj* rituals, which can be very tiring. Good health is necessary to perform the rituals of hajj, such as *tawaf, sa'i*, and standing at Arafah, properly. Those with certain health conditions that could be dangerous during the hajj are advised to postpone the pilgrimage until their health improves.

*Third*, the requirements of puberty and sanity must also be met. Hajj is only obligatory for those who have reached puberty and are of sound mind. Children and people with mental disorders are not required to perform *hajj*, although they may participate in the hajj journey as part of a family or group.

*Fourth*, Islamic status is another important requirement. *Hajj* is an obligation for Muslims, so only those who embrace Islam are required to perform this act of worship. Non-Muslims are not required and are not permitted to enter the holy city of Mecca for the purpose of hajj.<sup>15</sup>

*Fifth*, independence is also an important requirement. Pilgrims must be independent, not slaves or in bondage. This relates to the principle that a person must have the freedom to perform the pilgrimage without restrictions or coercion.

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<sup>13</sup>Sabiq, *Fiqh Al-Sunnah*.

<sup>14</sup>Sabiq.

<sup>15</sup>Sabiq.

Fulfilling these requirements is an important step in ensuring that the Hajj pilgrimage is valid and accepted. Every Muslim who meets these criteria has the right to perform the *hajj*, and performing the *hajj* pilgrimage in accordance with these requirements will bring great benefits and rewards.

The *hajj* pilgrimage, as one of the pillars of Islam, has a broad and significant impact on various aspects of society. From a social, cultural, economic, and spiritual perspective, the *hajj* enriches and strengthens the bonds of the Muslim community around the world. Through the performance of the *hajj*, Muslims not only fulfill their religious obligations, but also make a positive contribution to the development of society as a whole. Understanding these various perspectives helps us to better appreciate the value and impact of the *hajj* in the context of global society.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Ritual of Fasting in the Perspective of the Followers of the Tarekat in Blang Pu'uk Village**

When this research was conducted, the researcher first met a woman who was a native resident of the village of Blang Pu'uk, Kulu, Nagan Raya. She was commonly called Mak Tek. At that time, she was about to perform the midday prayer, but she was willing to spare some time for the researcher to interview her. Mak Tek briefly described a group that is part of a well-known Sufi order in Aceh, namely the *Syatariyah* order. There is one ritual of worship that is often performed by most of the people of Blang Pu'uk Village, namely fasting and the *hajj*. Interestingly, it is not only the local community that performs these rituals, but also people from outside the area, such as South Aceh, Southwest Aceh (Abdya), and Subulussalam. The followers vary and are mostly from the middle to upper classes.<sup>17</sup> What is interesting here? Both practices are highly controversial among the Acehnese community, especially in the midst of the implementation of Islamic law in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Nursyirwan Bustanul Arifin et al., "The Shifting Meaning of Istiṭā'ah in Performing Hajj for the Bone People in the Perspective of Islamic Law," *Samarah* 7, no. 3 (2023); Erkan Toguslu, "The Meaning of Pilgrimage (Hajj): Re-Shaping the Pious Identity of Belgian Turkish Muslims," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 28, no. 1 (2017); Graeme Lang and F. E. Peters, "The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places," *Sociology of Religion* 56, no. 2 (1995).

<sup>17</sup>Data obtained from observations and interviews conducted with Mak Tek (one of the daughters of the leader of a *Dayah*, an Islamic boarding school) in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 9, 2024.

<sup>18</sup>Tarmizi M. Jakfar, Muji Mulia, and Yusrizal Yusrizal, "Kewajiban Penyelenggaraan Pendaftaran Haji: Kajian Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia Nomor 5 Tahun 2020," *Legitimasi: Jurnal Hukum Pidana Dan Politik Hukum* 11, no. 2 (2022); Jan Michiel Otto, "Sharia and National Law in Indonesia," *Sharia Incorporated: A Comparative Overview of the Legal Systems of Twelve Muslim Countries in Past and Present*, 2010, 436–87; Yusuf et al., "Islamic Legal Status on Hajj for Transgender People According to Muslim Scholars in North Sulawesi."; Mursyid Djawas and Sri Astuti Abdul Samad, "Conflict, Traditional, and Family Resistance: The Pattern of Dispute

The fasting practices for the people of Blang Pu'uk village who are members of this order include several options, such as fasting for 3 days, 7 days, 14 days, and 40 days. Among these options, most followers choose to fast for 14 days. In this order's fasting procedures, there are several alternatives for implementation. It can be done from dawn to dawn, from afternoon to afternoon, and from dawn to dawn, with only one dawn meal and no breaking of the fast (*ifthar*). For food that can be eaten during the 14 days of fasting, in this order, only rice, salt, and one glass of water are allowed, while seafood is prohibited. During the day, it is permissible to eat betel nut, which is placed in the mouth, chewed, and swallowed slowly so that the throat does not dry out during *dikr*. Eating betel nut in this context helps reduce hunger and maintain energy stability during fasting. Thus, followers of the tarekat can continue their fasting more comfortably without feeling too hungry or tired.<sup>19</sup>

Activities carried out during fasting in this order include various forms of worship and remembrance, including performing the five daily prayers with devotion, reciting prayers regularly, and reading Al-Fatiha 40,000 times and Al-Ikhlâs 40,000 times. These activities are designed to deepen the spiritual relationship with Allah, increase religious awareness, and strengthen worship discipline. By carrying out these practices, followers of the order not only fulfill their religious obligations but also pursue a higher spiritual goal, namely to achieve closeness to Allah and inner enlightenment. The purpose of this order's fast is for repentance, as it is hoped that by observing this fast, one can achieve inner peace and closeness to Allah. By observing the fast and various other practices, it is hoped that one can achieve peace and improve their spiritual relationship. They refer to this fast as the "*puasa tarekat*".<sup>20</sup>

Pilgrims are also not allowed to violate the rules that have been given. If any of them dare to violate the rules, such as secretly eating at night, then they will face risks such as illness, usually diarrhea and vomiting. They are required to repent before they can continue fasting again.<sup>21</sup>

T.R. Yourdan Idrus, a 21-year-old follower of the order, said:

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Resolution in Acehnese Community According to Islamic Law," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 4, no. 1 (2020), p. 65–84.

<sup>19</sup>Data obtained from observations and interviews conducted with Mak Tek (one of the daughters of the leader of a *Dayah*, an Islamic boarding school) in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 9, 2024.

<sup>20</sup>Interview with Mak Tek (one of the daughters of the leader of a *Dayah*, an Islamic boarding school) in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 9, 2024.

<sup>21</sup>Data obtained from observations and interviews conducted with Mak Tek (one of the daughters of the leader of a *Dayah*, an Islamic boarding school) in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 9, 2024.

"My purpose in joining this order is to receive blessings from the teacher. This fast has been practiced for over 100 years, and I feel calmer and more emotionally stable."<sup>22</sup>

However, there is a statement that differs from Mak Tek's: Yourdan says that chewing betel nut is not recommended, even though some congregants practice it. Yourdan adds that some policymakers and community leaders do not follow this practice, but they do not oppose it or even categorize it as heretical.

The next member of the order, TR. Murthala Idrus, 29 years old, explained his purpose for fasting:

"I fast for three days before Eid al-Adha as a symbol of preparing myself to face Allah SWT. We follow the order brought by our ancestor, Sheikh Habib Kutubul Wujud, who instituted this fast, which has been practiced by our family from generation to generation. The fasting practice we perform is similar to other optional fasts, except that on the final day, breaking the fast is done earlier, after Asr prayer. I feel more at peace, moved, enthusiastic, and motivated to perform this act of worship."<sup>23</sup>

In addition to male congregants, there are also female followers who observe this fast, such as 45-year-old Aja Susianti. She said that she had to obtain her husband's permission before she could stay at the dayah.

"I observe this fast to receive blessings from my teacher, because after observing this fast, I feel calm, my body is healthier, and I can even feel emotionally closer to my teacher."<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, there was a female congregant who was very young and had been following this order for a long time. She saw her grandmother and mother practicing this fast for a long time. The congregant's name was Cut Aja Puspita Idrus, aged 15:

"The fast that I practice has been practiced by our grandmothers from the past until now. The fast is almost the same as other optional fasts, but I do not eat betel nut because I believe that this fast is no different from the fast practiced by Muslims in general"<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Interview with TR. Yourdan Idrus, a Resident and Follower of the Congregation in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 12, 2024.

<sup>23</sup>Interview with TR. Murthala Idrus, a Congregation Member, in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 12, 2024.

<sup>24</sup>Interview with Aja Susianti, a Congregation Member, in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 12, 2024.

<sup>25</sup>Interview with Cut Aja Puspita Idrus, a Congregation Member, in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 12, 2024.

### **The Hajj Ritual from the Perspective of Sufi Followers in Blang Pu'uk Village**

The practice of *hajj* in Indonesia has been carried out for a long time. In fact, some sources mention that Indonesians began performing Hajj as early as the 16th century. Every year, more and more Indonesian Muslims perform Hajj. In line with Lestari's view, Putuhena also examines how Hajj influenced changes in Indonesian society in the mid-20th century, particularly Indonesians' motivation to perform Hajj.<sup>26</sup>

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When considering the arrangements for the Hajj pilgrimage and everything that must be prepared, it seems complicated and costly. Especially lately, in order to perform the Hajj, one must have a considerable amount of money. Given the high cost of the Hajj, the saying “*menyo hana peng, jak eik haji u Blang Pu'uk*” has emerged. It means that if you don't have money, just go on the Hajj to Blang Pu'uk.

One interesting phenomenon of the Hajj pilgrimage performed by the people of Blang Pu'uk village is their belief that the Hajj can be performed locally by erecting a building resembling the Ka'bah in the middle of the place of worship. When researchers observed this, they found that the building contained the tombs of the founding scholars of the order. Even within the Kaaba building in Blang Pu'uk village, there is the tomb of a cleric named Habib Syaikhi Kutuban Wujud, which was built to resemble the tomb of the Prophet. The researcher also inquired about the reference book of this order. Maktek replied that they had studied the book above the book, meaning that the knowledge taught to them was of a high level. Although in the data collection process, the researcher had not yet obtained valid information regarding the name of the order and the book they used as a guide, Mak Tek admitted that they had learned from the books of previous teachers who already had a high level of knowledge.<sup>27</sup>

What is interesting here is that in performing the Hajj pilgrimage, all the pillars and requirements are the same as those performed by Muslims in general, but what distinguishes followers of this order is that it is performed at 3 a.m., without wearing *ihram* clothing and *mukena*. And for women, they must have their husband's consent.<sup>28</sup> Several pilgrims interviewed by researchers said that their pilgrimage was not the same as the pilgrimage to the House of God. In terms of

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<sup>26</sup>Putuhena, *Historiografi Haji Indonesia*, 28.

<sup>27</sup>Interview with Mak Tek (one of the daughters of the leader of a *Dayah*, an Islamic boarding school) in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 9, 2024

<sup>28</sup>Interview with Mak Tek (one of the daughters of the leader of a *Dayah*, an Islamic boarding school) in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 9, 2024

clothing, procedure, and tawaf, they performed in the opposite direction to the clockwise direction.

When researchers conducted observations and interviews with the congregation and the surrounding community, they found that there was indeed a building that they believed to be a substitute for the Ka'ba. Inside this building were the tombs of the scholars who were the founders and also the *mursyids* (spiritual guides) of the order they called the Syatariyah order. Regarding their pilgrimage, they refer to it as the "small pilgrimage," meaning that if they are able, they may perform the pilgrimage to the House of God, but if not, the pilgrimage to this *dayah* alone is sufficient, though they do not receive the title of *hajj* or *hajjah*.<sup>29</sup>

There are several requirements to become a member/congregation of this order:

1. Almsgiving to the best of one's ability;
2. White cloth (*ija puteh*) the size of a shroud;
3. Bringing provisions such as 1 bamboo of rice for 14 days;
4. Full intention with complete conviction once we are in Mecca.<sup>30</sup>

Several informants gave the same statement that the *hajj* pilgrimage is performed only on the night of *takbiran*. Regarding the procedures for the *hajj* pilgrimage, only the *tawaf* and *tasbih* recitation are performed, while the other pillars are not the same as the *hajj* pilgrimage in the holy land of Mecca.<sup>31</sup> Although the presence of this order is not viewed positively by all parties, including scholars and community leaders, it does not prohibit it. In fact, those who come here to participate in fasting and *hajj* rituals are mostly from the upper-middle class, as evidenced by the vehicles of the followers parked in rows, ranging from four-wheelers to two-wheelers. They come from various parts of Aceh and even outside Aceh. During the *hajj* season, traffic jams occur in that area.<sup>32</sup>

When this research was conducted, the researcher was accompanied by a local resident named Ita. Ita knew about the existence of this sect, but she and her family chose not to participate in the rituals. However, she fully supported them. The reason she did not join the group was because she and her husband were the breadwinners of the family, working as farmers and beauticians.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Interview with Mak Tek (one of the daughters of the leader of a *Dayah*, an Islamic boarding school) in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 9, 2024

<sup>30</sup>Interview with Mak Tek (one of the daughters of the leader of a *Dayah*, an Islamic boarding school) in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 9, 2024

<sup>31</sup>Interview with TR. Murthala Idrus, a follower of a Sufi order (*ṭarīqa*), in Blang Pu'uk Village, January 12, 2024

<sup>32</sup>Interview with Mak Tek (one of the daughters of the leader of a *Dayah*, an Islamic boarding school) in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 9, 2024.

<sup>33</sup>Interview with Ita, a Community Member, in Blang Pu'uk Village, January 9, 2024.

Nuraini, who is a member of another village community, also revealed that this practice has been carried out for decades. Many people have joined and they claim to feel very calm in their souls. They even believe that if they sincerely follow these teachings, they will find it easier when facing death (*sakhratul maut*).<sup>34</sup>

### **Habitus and Practice Theory**

The theory of habitus, proposed by Bourdieu, focuses on how habits, values, and practices in society are influenced by social structures that have been formed over time. Habitus refers to the culturally embedded habits that guide a society's actions, including its religious practices. Application of the theory: This theory can be used to analyze how the practices of fasting and *hajj* in Blang Pu'uk Village are influenced by inherited social and cultural norms, and how the community reproduces these practices despite changes or controversies. The controversy surrounding fasting and the *hajj* can be described through the clash between the established habitus and the emergence of new ideas or interpretations from outside

Habitus can be acquired through a long process, and the speed of this process depends on the environment. If someone acquires a new habit in a short period of time, it cannot be considered habituation, because habits acquired in a short time are not yet fully ingrained. Therefore, the essence of habituation is that the acquired environment must be present for a long period of time.<sup>35</sup>

Habitus is applied by individuals when facing social life. Habitus can also be described as a form of unconsciousness of a culture, or as a culture formed by historical processes and habits in a person, so that this unconsciousness becomes scientific. Habitus occurs because of a cultural environment or social relations that are lived in the surrounding environment. One example of habitus, according to Pierre Felix Bourdieu, is habitus through language. Language is a very important component in the process of habituation, through which an individual participates in or discovers a new environment in their life. One of the language accents instilled by Bourdieu is the style of articulation that will determine which class an individual belongs to in their social sphere. A habitus must be acquired over a long period of time. If the habitus within an individual develops over a short period of time, it cannot yet be considered a process of habituation.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Interview with Nuraini, a Community Member, in Latong Village, January 8, 2024

<sup>35</sup>George Ritzer dan Douglas J. Goodman, *Teori Sosiologi* (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana, 2011), 258.

<sup>36</sup>Goodman, *Teori Sosiologi*.; Lillian Farrell, "Pierre Bourdieu on European Identity: Theories of Habitus & Cultural Capital," *Social and Political Review* 20 (2010).

## The Relationship Religion and Custom in Blang Pu'uk Kulu Village, Nagan Raya

In Blang Pu'uk Kulu Village, Nagan Raya, the relationship between religion and customs in the practices of *hajj* and fasting is often a controversial topic that illustrates the complexity of integrating Islamic teachings and local traditions. This village, with its unique cultural and religious wealth, faces challenges in harmonizing religious practices with long-standing tradition.

The practice of *hajj* in Blang Pu'uk Kulu Village can create tension between local customs and Islamic law. However, so far, no one has opposed the existence of places and congregations that practice worship in accordance with their beliefs. Although *hajj* is a pillar of Islam that must be performed in accordance with religious requirements, local customs often influence how people prepare for and perform this worship. This can lead to debates between those who strictly follow religious practices and those who prioritize traditional customs. Additionally, the cost of the *hajj* is often a source of controversy, especially for families facing financial difficulties. Differences in economic capacity and how communities support prospective pilgrims can exacerbate tensions between those who can afford it and those who cannot.

The controversy surrounding fasting in this village also reflects the interaction between religion and custom. Local customs that restrict the types of food and drink during fasting, such as consuming only rice, salt, and one glass of water, may conflict with Islamic fasting practices, which are more flexible regarding food. Strict interpretations of customs can be a source of debate, especially if they are considered incompatible with religious teachings. In addition, traditional rituals performed during fasting may be considered contrary to religious principles, creating tension between those who are more devoutly religious and those who are loyal to traditional customs.

However, this practice is often controversial. Authentic Islamic teachings require that the *hajj* pilgrimage be performed in Mecca and follow the procedures established by the Prophet Muhammad, including *tawaf*, *sa'i*, throwing *jumrah*, and *wukuf* in Arafah. The local practice in Blang Pu'uk Kulu, often referred to as the "small *hajj*" by the local community, involves *tawaf* at night, which does not comply with these procedures and is often debated in terms of its compatibility with broader Islamic teachings.<sup>37</sup>

When analyzing Bourdieu's theoretical framework, researchers examine the habituation of religious values among followers of the *tarekat* in the village of

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<sup>37</sup>Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, *Abu Habib Muda Seunagan Republikan Sejati Dari Aceh* (Jakarta: Cendekia, 2021); Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, "Di Bawah Payung Habib: Sejarah, Ritual, Dan Politik Tarekat Syattariyah Di Pantai Barat Aceh," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 19, no. 1 (2017); Husaini Husda, "Ziarah Tourism At The Site Of Habib Muda Seunagan's Decendants' Tomb," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic History and Culture* 2, no. 1 (2021); Abdul Manan., "The Influence Of Tarekat Syattariyah Toward Political And Social Aspects In The Regency Of Nagan Raya, Aceh-Indonesia.," *International Journal of Advanced Research* 5, no. 7 (2017).

Blang Pu'uk. The researcher was intrigued by a unique phenomenon. One interesting aspect was the construction of a building they claimed was for *tawaf*. Inside the building, which they considered the Ka'ba, there was a tomb that, according to Mak Tek, belonged to a cleric named Habib Syaikhi Kutuban Wujud, who came from Arabia and was one of the founders of this order.<sup>38</sup>

Faced with this controversy, the community of Blang Pu'uk Kulu Village needs to hold an open dialogue between traditional leaders and religious leaders. The purpose of this discussion is to resolve differences of opinion and find harmonious solutions, ensuring that traditional practices can be integrated with religious teachings without violating Islamic principles. Adjustments to traditional practices may be necessary to maintain harmony, and increasing understanding of religious teachings and adapting traditions are key to achieving balance. With an inclusive, mutually respectful approach, the community can find ways to perform the Hajj and fast in accordance with religious guidance while maintaining their local cultural identity.

## Conclusion

The practice of Hajj and fasting in Blang Pu'uk Kulu, Aceh, illustrates a unique integration between Islamic teachings and local customs. In the village of Blang Pu'uk Kulu, the community believes that Hajj can be performed locally by building a structure resembling the Kaaba in the middle of their religious gathering, complete with the tombs of the founding scholars of the order inside. Although some consider this teaching to be an alternative to going to Mecca, the practice is often contested by broader Islamic teachings that stipulate the requirements for performing the *hajj* in Mecca, including *tawaf*, *sa'i*, throwing *jumrah*, *wukuf* in Arafah, and sacrificing animals. However, followers of this order may continue their pilgrimage to the holy land if they have the means to do so. All the pillars and requirements of the *hajj* are similar, except that the *hajj* at this *dayah* is performed at 3 a.m., and after completing this worship, the followers are given the title "small hajj (*haji kecil*).” In terms of fasting, followers of this order also practice fasting in a manner that is controversial with general Islamic teachings. They fast according to specific rules, such as consuming only rice, salt, and water for a certain period, and engaging in intensive *zikr* practices, such as reciting Al-Fatiha and Al-Ikhlâs in large numbers. The purpose of this fasting is to repent and draw closer to Allah. Although its implementation is outside the norm for Muslims in Aceh in general, such as being carried out for 14 days, there is only *suhoor*; it is permissible to chew betel nut during the day to keep the throat moist while reciting *zikr*, and it is not permissible to consume seafood, while others are allowed to do so.

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<sup>38</sup>Interview with Mak Tek (one of the daughters of the leader of a *Dayah*, an Islamic boarding school) in Blang Pu'uk Village, Nagan Raya, January 9, 2024.

These practices reflect the efforts of the Blang Pu'uk Kulu community to adapt religious rituals to their local context, although this often leads to debates about their compatibility with Islamic teachings. According to them, the fasting and hajj they perform do not contradict Islamic teachings and have been practiced for generations. They believe that followers find peace and ease in facing death (*sakhratul maut*). The practice of fasting and pilgrimage aligns with Bourdieu's theory of habitus, in which such patterns are acquired over a long process and supported by the existing environment. Thus, the essence of habituation that occurs in the village of Blang Pu'uk is the result of customs that have been practiced for generations. Even though some claim that these practices are misguided, it does not shake their faith in preserving these rituals so that they will not fade away for future generations.

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## Interviews

- Interview with Aja Susianti, the community and followers of a Sufi order of Blang Pu'uk Kulu, Nagan Raya, January 12, 2024
- Interview with Cut Aja Puspita Idrus, the community and followers of a Sufi order of Blang Pu'uk Kulu, Nagan Raya, January 12, 2024
- Interview with Ita, a Community Member, in Blang Pu'uk Village, January 9, 2024.
- Interview with Mak Tek (one of the daughters of the leader of a *Dayah*, an Islamic boarding school) in Blang Pu'uk Village, January 9, 2024.
- Interview with Muhib, the community of Latong Village, Nagan Raya, January 25, 2024
- Interview with Nuraini, a Community Member, in Latong Village, January 8, 2024
- Interview with T.R. Murthala Idrus, the community and followers of a Sufi order of Blang Pu'uk Kulu, Nagan Raya, January 12, 2024
- Interview with T.R. Yourdan Idrus, the community and followers of a Sufi order of Blang Pu'uk Kulu, Nagan Raya, January 12, 2024
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