

Spiritual Tourism to the Holy Land of Mecca: The Development of Hajj Services in the Dutch East Indies, 1869-1930s

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Abstract— The increase in demand for spiritual tourism in Indonesia has caused the number of hajj and pilgrimage travel companies. This was not something new, because the phenomenon was visible during the Dutch East Indies era, when many foreign ships transported pilgrims from this region. Therefore, this paper will also review the regional connectivity and transnational history in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, Singapore, and the Malay Peninsula, in providing spiritual tourism services in the 1869-1930s. The year 1869 marks the opening of the Suez Canal, which significantly increased the number of hajj pilgrims. Meanwhile, the 1930s were chosen as an endpoint due to the global financial crisis that decreased the number. This paper used the historical research method, which consists of heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. The sources used in this paper are from colonial archives, newspapers, books, articles, journals, and other supporting references. Several results from this research are: First, the entrance of foreign ships into the Dutch East Indies caused competition among hajj tourism agencies owned by the Dutch. Second, the existence of those ships influenced the policies issued by the colonial government regarding the hajj pilgrimage. Third, the existence of those ships also had a huge impact on Muslims in the Dutch East Indies.

Keywords— Hajj, Dutch East Indies, Southeast Asia, Spiritual Tourism, Transportation.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a Muslim majority. This religion is widespread across almost all provinces. In fact, according to population census data conducted by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of Muslims in Indonesia reached 87.18%, or approximately 207,176,172 people. [1]

This enormous number undoubtedly impacts Indonesia's Hajj quota. At the 1987 Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit, it was stated that the Saudi Arabian government allocated the Hajj quota on a 1:1,000 basis. This means that for every 1,000 Muslims in a country, one Hajj quota is allocated. Based on this provision, Indonesia can send approximately 200,000 prospective Hajj pilgrims annually. This number continues to increase annually, becoming the largest in the world. In 2019, Indonesia was able to send approximately 231,000 prospective Hajj pilgrims. [2]

The high Hajj quota has also been accompanied by a growing public desire to perform the Hajj. People are now competing to register to become guests of Allah SWT, creating long waiting lists that can last for decades. However, the current waiting list problem can be overcome by registering through the Special Hajj Program (ONH Plus). This method eliminates the need to pay hundreds of millions of rupiah to perform the Hajj without the long wait. Furthermore, those who perform the Hajj using ONH Plus also receive better service facilities than regular Hajj pilgrims.

This special Hajj program is usually managed by the private sector through Hajj service companies officially registered with the government. Currently, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has recorded approximately 175 companies affiliated with the Association of Hajj and Umrah Organizers (HIMPUH) offering special Hajj programs, and 292 companies offering Umrah programs. The Umrah program is also growing annually.[3] Each of these companies naturally competes to attract prospective Hajj pilgrims by offering various attractive promotions, ranging from affordable prices, good transportation, accommodations, and other supporting facilities.

This phenomenon is actually nothing new. At least during the Dutch East Indies colonial era, numerous companies competed to attract prospective Hajj pilgrims. Each company vied to offer the best deals to entice Muslims to use their services. Initially, their presence received little attention from the government. This situation led many companies to treat prospective Hajj pilgrims arbitrarily. Many pilgrims seeking spiritual pilgrimages to the Holy Land experienced poor service from these companies. They also faced various problems, including fraud, extortion, and even health issues.

This situation gradually changed after the government implemented the 1922 Hajj Ordinance. Through this new policy, various problems have begun to be addressed. Government control over Hajj service companies increased. This new policy also led to the dominance of a single government-owned company, De Kongsie Tiga.

I. MOTIVATION & OBJECTIVES

Based on the background above, a research problem can be formulated in this study, namely the history of Hajj pilgrims in the Dutch East Indies from 1869 to the 1930s.

Several objectives to be achieved in this research include:

- 1) Contributing to the historiography of the world of Hajj in Indonesia,
- 2) Reducing connectivity between Indonesia and the international world through Hajj travel businesses,
- 3) Explaining the development of Hajj travel services in the Dutch East Indies,
- 4) Serving as a historical reflection on current Hajj services in Indonesia to encourage continuous improvement in various aspects.

II. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study uses two research scopes: temporal and spatial. Temporal boundaries relate to the research period. Spatial boundaries relate to the scope of the research.

The temporal scope of this study spans the period from 1869 to the 1930s. The year 1869 was chosen to coincide with the opening of the Suez Canal, which significantly impacted shipping routes worldwide. This period also coincided with the journey of Muslims in the Dutch East Indies for the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Since the opening of the canal, there has been an increase in the number of ships and Hajj service companies. The 1930s were chosen as the research's final period due to the global economic crisis. This event reduced the number of Hajj pilgrims, including those departing from the Indonesian archipelago. The spatial scope used is the Dutch East Indies.

III. METHODS

The method used in this research is a historical research method, encompassing topic selection, heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography.[4] Furthermore, to examine this topic, a source collection is necessary through a heuristic stage. This research will utilize primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are obtained from contemporary newspapers, photographs, colonial reports, and even state gazettes (Staatsblad). Secondary sources will primarily utilize books, journals, articles, and other relevant references.

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

The History of Hajj Before the Colonial Era

The Hajj is one of the fifth pillars of Islam. This pilgrimage is obligatory for Muslims who are physically and financially able. Unlike prayer, fasting, and zakat, which can be performed in one day, the Hajj is a series of obligatory acts of worship that must be performed over several days. Furthermore, the Hajj can only be performed at a specific time and place. In Islamic belief, the Hajj is only permitted during the month of Dhul-Hijjah, and the holy city of Mecca is the site. Therefore, many people flock to the holy city of Mecca for the Hajj. They come from various countries, both individually and in groups, hoping to worship and become better human beings. The Hajj has become a spiritual journey undertaken by Muslims. This pilgrimage has a unique power and uniqueness. This includes Muslims throughout the Indonesian archipelago, who have flocked to the holy city of Mecca since ancient times to perform the entire Hajj ritual.

Historically, the Hajj has been performed by people in the Indonesian archipelago since the days of the Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms. In the Carita Parahiyang, the Sundanese king of Bratalegawa, known as Haji Purwa, converted to Islam and performed the Hajj. At that time, the king provided provisions for anyone wishing to perform the Hajj. He even established a number of regulations for those wishing to perform the Hajj, especially those within the royal court.[5]

At that time, the Muslim population in the archipelago was still very small. The Hajj was considered a long and difficult journey, requiring a significant amount of time. Even those who wanted to go on the Hajj had to undertake it all on their own. They were not managed by a special institution or organization. They had to face and navigate everything independently. Therefore, during the Hindu and Buddhist eras, the Hajj was still rarely performed by the community. Only certain individuals were willing to go. Those who returned from the Hajj would become scholars or religious leaders. They would spread the Islamic message throughout the archipelago, thus gaining prominence. They were also considered to have a class of their own in society. These Hajj pilgrims would typically establish religious schools in coastal areas. These schools would be attended by those who wanted to learn about Islam. They would study the Quran and Hadith. After completing their studies, they were responsible for spreading the message of Islam to the villages.[6]

Then the stories about the pilgrimage became more widely known to the public during the Islamic Kingdom in the archipelago. The story of the Malay people going on the Hajj is in a story from the Malacca Sultanate. At that time, a Malay hero named Hang Tuah was said to have stopped in Jeddah when he was going on a diplomatic visit to Rome. Hang Tuah and his entourage were advised by Shahbandar to go to Mecca to carry out the Hajj pilgrimage. They carry out all the pillars of the Hajj. They even visited Medina, one of the holy cities for Muslims. There, they visited the grave of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. This series of holy journeys has become an important story that the people of the archipelago have also carried out the Hajj.[7]

In Java, stories of the Hajj pilgrimage also exist in several traditional kingdoms. In Banten and Mataram, rulers competed to send special envoys to Mecca to perform the Hajj. The title "haji" would be used to legitimize the Sultan and thus provide spiritual support for their rule. In Mecca, they would meet with the Sharif, or ruler of the city. The Sharif would then give them a piece of the Kaaba's covering (Kiswah) as a souvenir to take back to the archipelago. This spiritual journey demonstrates that the Hajj was not only an act of worship but also held a high status among the people of the archipelago. In addition to the king, there was also a *wali*, Sunan Gunung Jati, who went on the Hajj with his family. All these stories represent a spiritual narrative deeply rooted in the Indonesian archipelago.[8]

The Opening of the Suez Canal 1869

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 transformed global shipping. This canal, connecting the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea, shortened the distance between Asia and Europe by approximately 7,700 kilometers. Since the canal's construction, ships from Asia no longer had to circumnavigate the African continent. They could instead pass through the Suez Canal, significantly reducing travel time.[9]

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Initially, the canal's existence benefited the British Empire solely by facilitating shipping from Europe to its colony, India. In 1875, British influence began when they acquired a 50% stake in the canal's management. Their shareholding subsequently grew until the canal was almost entirely under British control. This weakened Egypt's influence over the Suez Canal.[10]

The canal's presence has boosted global shipping traffic. Shipping routes from the Indian Ocean, Australia, and Asia to Europe have become increasingly congested. Export and import activities also increased significantly due to time and distance efficiency, thus increasing revenue.[11]

This situation opened up new opportunities for the Dutch East Indies colonial government. They capitalized on the increasing number of Hajj pilgrims to establish a Hajj travel company called "De Kongsie Tiga." As its name suggests, this company was actually a merger of three transportation companies: De Rotterdamsche Lloyd, Stoomvaartmaatschappij Nederland, and Stoomvaartmaatschappij Ocean.[12]

Previously, these three companies had a solid track record, particularly in providing transportation services in Southeast Asia. They had extensive experience transporting goods and passengers, connecting key cities in the Dutch East Indies, Singapore, Malaya, the Arabian Peninsula, and Europe. Uniquely, their ships were named after places, such as Madioen, Blitar, Medan, Billiton, Tambora, Rotti, Kertosono, Kambangan, Karimoen, Celebes, Tabanan, Kangean, Ternate, and so on.

The presence of these three companies further streamlined the flow of mobility in Southeast Asia. De Rotterdamsche Lloyd connected Batavia, Cirebon, Semarang, Surabaya, Padang, Manado, Makassar, and even Singapore. Stoomvaartmaatschappij Nederland connected Java and Singapore, while Stoomvaartmaatschappij Ocean connected the Malay Peninsula and the Dutch East Indies.[13]

Hajj Travel Facilities in the Colonial Era

Essentially, the availability of facilities is a supporting factor in a service. A potential customer will undoubtedly have their own considerations when deciding which product or service to purchase. This is where the term business competition emerged.

In economics, the emergence of business competition is a positive phenomenon. This is because competition can encourage businesses to innovate and produce a variety of goods and services, thus benefiting both producers and consumers. This phenomenon provides freedom for both parties. Producers can maximize their resources to produce the best product. Consumers also have the freedom to choose the best product for their needs. Thus, price and quality become important considerations for both parties.[14]

In the 19th century, the concept of business competition also existed among Hajj travel companies. Both government-owned and private Hajj travel companies improved their facilities to provide the best service to prospective pilgrims. This study will examine the prices and service facilities provided by Hajj travel companies in the Dutch East Indies from the late 19th to early 20th centuries. Generally, these Muslim spiritual journeys began with sea voyages. At that time, ships were a favorite among prospective Hajj pilgrims. Therefore, onboard facilities were of paramount importance to prospective pilgrims. The 1859 Hajj Ordinance stipulated that prospective pilgrims were required to have departure and return tickets. At the end of the 19th century, the price of a round-trip ticket set by the Herklots Company was around F150. This price provided several facilities, including:

- 1) Food rations, consisting of rice, drinks, salt, salted fish, coffee, tea, sugar, chilies, and meat.
- 2) Medical examinations by a medical officer.
- 3) Money deposit service for ship captains

At roughly the same price, the al-Seggof & Co. firm also didn't want to be left behind. This company sets the Hajj travel fee at around F100-150. This attracted prospective pilgrims at the time because of its lower price compared to the Herklots company. With this price, prospective pilgrims would receive several amenities, including better beds, a communal kitchen for cooking, and loans from the company.

This third facility actually worsened the conditions of the pilgrims. They would borrow money from the company to meet their living expenses. This borrowing process had fatal consequences. At that time, pilgrims were forced to sign illegal employment contracts with Omar Said bin Mohammad al-Seggaf.[15]

Therefore, after completing the Hajj, they could not immediately return to their hometowns. These pilgrims would be employed as plantation laborers in Singapore. This led to problems, forcing the government to close the company in 1898.[16]

Finally, there was Sluyters & Co., an advertisement in the daily Sin Po published on February 10, 1922, explaining that the company set three prices for prospective Hajj pilgrims.[17]

- 1) Price: f360 for adult pilgrims
- 2) Price: f180 for children under 12 years old
- 3) Free for infants under 1 year old

With a relatively higher price, this company offers a number of impressive facilities, including the following.[18]

- 1) Each prospective pilgrim is provided with a room on board.
- 2) Each ship has two prayer leaders (modin), consisting of one male and one female.
- 3) A prayer room with a 5-square-meter carpet is provided on board for prayer, separate from the sailors or crew.
- 4) A galley will provide food for prospective pilgrims, equipped with a skilled cook.
- 5) Adequate food rations.
- 6) On-board commerce (a small supermarket) provides mineral water, cigarettes, lemons, canned fish, and other necessities.

7) Funeral services for pilgrims who die during the journey.

These facilities were certainly better than those of the previous two companies. This demonstrates that the high prices were accompanied by improved facilities. Therefore, it's no surprise that Sluyters & Co. became a popular company. The Sinar Hindia newspaper, published on January 3, 1922, also stated that this company also provided a departure schedule.

New Ordinance Issued

Entering 1920, the Dutch East Indies colonial government began to pay attention to the proper management of Hajj pilgrims. Although the government had previously issued several ordinances in 1825 and 1859, both were deemed insufficient to provide optimal services for the Muslim community. Therefore, in 1922, the government again issued a Hajj travel ordinance.[19]

This ordinance essentially comprises 10 chapters:

- 1) Definitions of several terms used in the Hajj pilgrimage in the Dutch East Indies.
- 2) Regulations on facilities, health personnel, meals, and travel requirements to Jeddah.
- 3) Regulations on ship certifications, travel, and fines payable by pilgrims and ships for violations.
- 4) Regulations on proof of ownership for Hajj agents spread throughout the region.
- 5) Regulations on health certificates for Hajj pilgrims.
- 6) Regulations on ship departures.
- 7) Regulations on travel for prospective Hajj pilgrims.
- 8) Regulations to be followed by ship crews.
- 9) Fines for violations.
- 10) Confirmation of the ordinance.

With this regulation, Hajj travel companies would be discouraged from engaging in illegal activities, as they would face significant consequences for violating it. Even a small mistake could result in the government shutting down its companies. This regulation further strengthened the dominance of De Kongsie Tiga. This government-owned company underwent numerous overhauls and changes to comply with the 1922 Hajj Ordinance. These changes were reported in *Het Nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indie*, published on June 17, 1930. These changes included.[20]

- 1) The ship was equipped with adequate electrical facilities.
- 2) The ship was equipped with lifeboats.
- 3) The ship had sleeping facilities with adequate ventilation.
- 4) The ship had water facilities for both male and female Hajj pilgrims.
- 5) The ship offers first-class service for Hajj pilgrims who pay extra. They also receive additional amenities such as wardrobes, sofas, and so on.
- 6) The ship is also equipped with a modern navigation system.

In addition to improving the ship's facilities, the company has also made several improvements to the accommodations. An accommodation is a dwelling occupied by a group of people for a specific period of time. The function of these accommodations is usually determined by the wishes of each owner.[21]

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These sheikhs or clerics would serve as muthawifs, or persons tasked with guiding and assisting in the smooth running of all Hajj pilgrim activities.[22] These sheikhs typically resided near the ports. Their home was very welcoming to prospective Hajj pilgrims. In the newspaper *Soewara Moehammadijah* No. 5 of 1922, it was explained that the accommodation provided by the sheikhs included a number of facilities, including: a car that could accommodate four passengers, transportation for goods, rations or daily food allowances, a 10-square-meter room, soft drinks such as tea and water for ablution. All these facilities were not free, as pilgrims had to pay a fee to the sheikhs. For the car, they had to pay f3–f7.5.[23]

This demonstrates that in the 1920s, De Kongsie Tiga played a crucial role in Hajj services in the Dutch East Indies. This government-owned company seemed to monopolize the religious tourism business. Various improvements were made to provide maximum service to satisfy the masses.

However, this situation did not last long, as in the 1930s, the Dutch East Indies again declined. At that time, the global economic crisis resulted in economic collapse, ranging from falling international commodity prices, problems in sugar and rubber cultivation, a national financial crisis, declining government revenues, and a weakening of the community's economic capacity.[24] This situation was also automatically accompanied by a decline in the number of Hajj pilgrims in the Dutch East Indies. Since then, Hajj travel companies have experienced a significant decline. In fact, from 1930 to 1932, there was a decline of up to 9% compared to previous years.[25]

Current Reflection

Indonesia is the country with the largest number of Hajj pilgrims in the world. Every year, the Indonesian government sends around 200,000 pilgrims to perform the Hajj. They consist of three groups, namely ordinary, typical, and furoda pilgrims. Firstly, ordinary Hajj pilgrims are a group with a long waiting period of up to decades. With this waiting period, they only need to pay the hajj costs of around IDR 40,000,000 to IDR 50,000,000. Second, the typical Hajj pilgrim is a group that has a shorter waiting period, usually only 5 to 9 years. The costs borne by the Hajj pilgrims are certainly more than the normal group, namely around USD 8,000 or Rp. 119,000,000.00. So, it is not surprising

that the convenience and service they receive is better than ordinary Hajj pilgrims. Lastly, there are also the Furoda Hajj pilgrims. They are a group that received privileges or invitations to carry out the Hajj pilgrimage from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by registering through special Hajj travel companies. This group of pilgrims must pay USD 15,500 or around Rp. 231,000,000.00.[26]

In general, the management process of Indonesian Hajj pilgrims is under direct supervision by the Ministry of Religion. They exert special powers to supervise the process of departure, management, and return of Hajj pilgrims. The usual group of Hajj pilgrims will leave according to their respective cities and regions. They will be divided into two flying groups (kloter). The first group will visit Medina first, then move to Mecca to carry out the Hajj pilgrimage. The second wave will stop in Mecca first to complete the Hajj pilgrimage, after that, they will go to Medina to visit important places, one of which is the Nabawi Mosque and the Quba Mosque. In general, the stay of Indonesian Hajj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia is 40 days.

This regular Hajj management system has been implemented since the New Order era by President Soeharto. Control of the implementation of the Hajj pilgrimage may only be carried out by the Ministry of Religion. In 1966, the cost for the Hajj was around IDR 27,000 to IDR 110,000, depending on the type of transportation used from Indonesia to the Arabian Peninsula. At that time, there was also no waiting period. Everyone can go on Hajj immediately after paying the full cost. The government is responsible for the implementation of the Hajj pilgrimage, services for Hajj pilgrims while in Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, building a network that regulates the Hajj pilgrimage, improving the Hajj management function, as well as setting standards for all types of Hajj services.[27]

In fact, the New Order regime once gave private parties the opportunity to arrange Hajj trips in Indonesia. At that time, PT. Arafat was entrusted with transporting Hajj pilgrims by sea from Sumatra to Jeddah. However, negligence occurred due to debt. Therefore, the government took full control of the implementation of the Hajj trip in Indonesia. Initially, transportation of Hajj pilgrims was carried out by ship. Then there was a transition process using air transportation. In 1978, the Indonesian government officially decided that all Hajj transportation would use airplanes because they were considered faster than ships, which took a lot of time just for the journey alone. The New Order regime provided opportunities for four companies to carry out Hajj services, namely Garuda Indonesia Airlines, Merpati Nusantara Airlines, Mandala, and Bourag.[28]

In 1981, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia issued a regulation stating that organizing Hajj affairs was the state's duty. In this case, the government has complete control and responsibility for managing the Indonesian Hajj pilgrims. This full control includes determining the cost of the Hajj pilgrimage (ONH), accepting and registering prospective Hajj pilgrims, health checks, arranging ONH, issuing travel passes, providing guidance, ensuring safety, arranging accommodation and transportation, and safeguarding the peace and property of the Hajj pilgrims. This regulation was taken to review Presidential Decree Number 22 of 1969. However, this basis was withdrawn by the Indonesian government. In 1985, the New Order regime again allowed private parties to help organize Hajj trips in Indonesia.[29]

Entering the 1990s, the implementation of the Hajj pilgrimage in Indonesia began to stabilize because the government's policies were clear and structured. However, the community is again facing challenges. In 1997, the economic crisis hit Southeast and East Asia. One of the impacts of this crisis is large inflation. This event was the lowest point in the Indonesian economy. The currency exchange rate also plunged from IDR 3,000 to IDR 17,000 per United States Dollar. At that time, the Rupiah experienced high depreciation compared to other currencies from ASEAN countries. The decline in the value of the Rupiah has reached 58%, while the Malaysian Ringgit is 33%, the Philippine Peso is 34%, the Singapore Dollar is 11%, and the Thai Baht is 41%. This decline in values and economic crisis also resulted in a decline in Indonesia's economic growth rate. In 1997, economic growth only reached 6.15%. Then in 1998, it was only around 5%. This decline has an impact on the level of the private economy and people's purchasing power.[30]

Many people's concern about the high cost of Hajj travel arises from a lack of basic government competence. Therefore, the Indonesian government has once again harmonized the regulations for transporting pilgrims. Through the Ministry of Religion, the government is opening opportunities for foreign airlines to provide services to Indonesian Hajj pilgrims. The government chose Saudi Arabian Airlines to carry out this responsibility. Since 1999, the government has also provided new principles for the implementation of the Hajj pilgrimage. The Indonesian government has opened two groups of Hajj pilgrims, namely regular, special, and furodha, as well as organizing the Umrah pilgrimage. With this, the government provides guarantees and protection to Muslims who want to go to the holy land to perform the Hajj or Umrah.[31]

Indonesia currently hosts the largest number of Hajj pilgrims each year. Furthermore, numerous travel companies have emerged in Indonesia offering Umrah pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Airlines operate this sacred journey daily. Indonesians greatly benefit from these facilities, as the desire to undertake this spiritual journey is a sign of gratitude and pride in fulfilling their religious calling. Hajj and Umrah are sacred journeys dreamed of by many. In fact, many travel agencies now offer not only Umrah services but also religious tourism to renowned Muslim cities such as Cairo, Jerusalem, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, and more. This creates a unique connection for religious tourism in Indonesia, connecting Muslims to the international community.

V. CONCLUSION

The Hajj pilgrimage to the Holy Land is a thriving business in Indonesia, from ancient times to the present day. The large Muslim population in Indonesia has fueled this growing business. The presence of Hajj travel companies has become one way for Muslims to travel to the Holy Land. From the Dutch East Indies era to the present, they have been a source of income for both the government and the private sector. Furthermore, these travel businesses have

successfully served as a hub connecting the Dutch East Indies with the international community. The involvement of Singapore, the Malay Peninsula, and even the Hijaz region has become a crucial link in Indonesian historiography. Despite numerous challenges, these businesses have continued to thrive. Furthermore, the attention of the Dutch East Indies colonial government, through the issuance of the 1922 Ordinance, demonstrated government protection for the Muslim community at the time. Since the enactment of this regulation, significant improvements have been made in Hajj services in the Dutch East Indies. This policy should be emulated by the current Indonesian government, ensuring the best possible service for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. The development of this business during the colonial period has had an impact on society today. The Hajj and Umrah travel industry has flourished, making it much easier for people to undertake these spiritual tourism.

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