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Table of Contents

<i>Indonesian Muslims' Reception toward Wirid, Zikir and Shalawat during Covid-19 Outbreak; A Mediated Living Hadith</i>	
Subkhani Kusuma Dewi, M. Johan Nasrul Huda	135
<i>Responses to Pandemic Covid-19 by Mosque-Based Zakat Agency: Opportunities and Limitations in Zakat Management</i>	
Faizatul Ansoriyah, Y. Warella, Hartuti Purnaweni, Retno Sunu Hastuti	169
<i>Temboro Tablighi Jamaat's Reception to Hadith on COVID-19</i>	
Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, Muhammad Rosyid Awwabin, Ahmad Sholahuddin	191
<i>Dinamika Pesantren dalam Merespons Pandemi Covid-19 di Madura</i>	
Abd Hannan, Siti Azizah, Husna Atiya	213
<i>Nalar Fikih Sufistik Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) dalam Merespons Pandemi Covid-19</i>	
Arifah Millati Agustina	243
<i>Polemik Agamawan dan Saintis Seputar Covid-19: Menilik Gagasan Integrasi Agama dan Sains Perspektif Mehdi Golshani</i>	
Raha Bistara	263



Temboro Tablighi Jamaat's Reception to Hadith on Covid-19

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Abstract

Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) has recently been in a global spotlight as it is considered to cause a new cluster of Covid-19 cases to occur. According to some news reported by various media, Tablighi Jamaat remained in their ignorance of the pandemic. This may partly result from the way of interpreting religious texts. This article aims to discuss the views of the Temboro Tablighi Jamaat, Magetan, East Java about Covid-19, the factors that shape their understanding, and their religious activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. This article shows that the followers of Tablighi Jamaat in Temboro, Magetan, East Java, view diseases from the point of view of sharia (exoteric path) and haqiqah (mystical truth). From the point of view of haqiqah, they see the disease as something that naturally comes from Allah. Meanwhile, adopting the point of view of Sharia, they try to replicate the way the Prophet Muhammad when he dealt with illnesses, which is documented in the hadith about the plague (*tha'un*). This reflects two reception models, namely exegetical reception and functional reception. This understanding then changed the TJ followers' way of conducting their activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Their implementing health protocols and setting reasonable restrictions on the activities they usually perform in normal conditions. Therefore, this article also denies the statements of media about the ignorance of TJ followers in Temboro as to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Reception, hadith, Tablighi Jamaat, Covid-19, Temboro

Abstrak

Jamaah Tabligh (JT) menjadi sorotan dunia karena dianggap menjadi salah satu klaster penyebaran Covid-19. Berita-berita di berbagai media menunjukkan bahwa mereka abai terhadap pandemi. Hal ini bisa jadi di antaranya dipengaruhi oleh pemahaman atas teks-teks keagamaan. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendiskusikan pandangan Jamaah Tabligh Temboro, Magetan, Jawa Timur tentang Covid-19, faktor yang membentuk pemahamannya, dan aktifitas keagamaan mereka selama pandemic Covid-19. Artikel ini menunjukkan Jamaah Tabligh Temboro melihat penyakit dari sudut pandang syariat dan hakekat. Sudut pandang hakekat adalah melihat penyakit hanya dari Allah, sementara sudut pandang syariat adalah sikap untuk mengikuti Nabi Muhammad dalam menghadapi penyakit. Sikap tersebut diilhami oleh hadis tentang wabah (*tha'un*) yang mencerminkan model *exegetical reception* dan *funcional reception*. Pemahaman tersebut kemudian mempengaruhi aktifitas Jamaah Tabligh Temboro dalam menghadapi pandemi Covid-19. Hal ini tercermin dalam penerapan protocol kesehatan dan pembatasan kegiatan yang biasa dilakukan. Artikel ini sekaligus membantah pernyataan media tentang abainya JT Temboro terhadap pandemi Covid-19.

Kata Kunci: Resepsi, Hadis, Jamaah Tabligh, Covid-19, Temboro

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Introduction

The cluster of Covid-19 cases in Tablighi Jamaat (subsequently referred to as TJ) in India made up a third of all those confirmed to be inflicted by Covid-19, namely 1445 of the total 4067 cases, which is the largest cluster of the local transmission of the virus (Quadri, 2020; Sing & Sing, 2020; Kumar, 2020, 04 April 2020). Although the planning of Asian-scaled annual gathering (*ijtima'*) of TJ to be held in Gowa, South Sulawesi, on Wednesday, 18 March 2020, failed to take place with only seconds left (Mustautina, 2020, 152-153), 411 foreigners (WNA) and 8.283 Indonesian citizens (WNI) had gathered there. In a pandemic, public assemblies make it possible for viruses to spread. As far as is known, TJ is famous for being friendly and never unleashing terror, because according to its principles, the best method of *jihad* is to do *khuruj* (proselytising tour) to invent people to believe in Islam (Metcalf, 1993, 602). However, by highlighting the behaviors and attitudes of TJ followers who disregarded the official rule for the

handling of Covid-19, the aforementioned news coverage has discredited Tablighi Jamaat, which is actually a peaceful conservative, fundamentalist group. Furthermore, the mass media blamed TJ's conference in Gowa for contributing to the spread of Covid-19 over some other regions and causing the occurrence of a new cluster of Covid-19 transmission cases (<https://regional.kompas.com>; <https://tirto.id>).

Studies on Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) can be distinguished into at least three basic categories. The first category is the studies considering TJ to be a reformist spiritual movement which tends to be a peaceful fundamentalist, apolitical movement. The movement was established by a splinter group of the Naqshabandi order and has spread over countries in the world (Metcalf 1993, 1995; Metcalf 2014; Aziz 2004; Bustamam-Ahmad 2008; Hamdi, 2015). Bustamam-Ahmad (2008) stated that Indian Muslim through the movement of TJ has a strong influence on Muslims in Southeast Asia. The second category of the studies sees TJ as a revivalist-political Islamic movement (Noor 2007, 2009, 2012, 2014; Ali, 2003). The third category focuses on the way TJ interprets hadith and its *khuruj* practices (Zaki, 2015; Yusuf, 2017; Siyami & Musawwamah, 2015). Discussion on TJ and its attitude towards diseases, especially Covid-19, is one of the studies researchers rarely work on. Unlike the study by Mustautina (2020) discussing TJ and its view about Covid and health, this article focuses on the hadith reception of TJ in Temboro, Magetan, East Java, which is the largest chapter of TJ in Indonesia.

For this purpose, in elaborating TJ's view on the Covid-19 pandemic, this article tries to answer three fundamental questions: first, how TJ sees diseases; second, what shapes TJ's understanding and attitude about diseases; third, how TJ followers perform their activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Previous studies on TJ and Covid-19 only covered data showing TJ contributed to India's being the epicenter of Covid-19 transmission, and hardly did they examine TJ followers' view on pandemics. Herein lies the significance of this article.

This writing argues that TJ's understanding and attitude about diseases are substantially influenced by the way they comprehend hadith stating that there is no infectious disease. Disease transmission, if any, happens only with Allah's permission. Such understanding then instils a general attitude in TJ followers in performing their activism that they have no fear of any disease, and the only one they express their fear of is Allah. It was this attitude that in turns made them seem to ignore the health protocol and continue to conduct their regular activities even during the pandemic.

This article was written based on a field study held in Kampung Madinah, Temboro village, Magetan, East Java, which is the center of TJ in east Java. The data collected from this field study are essential to get a good grasp of TJ followers' attitude towards Covid-19 and other diseases. The main data were obtained from some sources, including interviews, printed and online news, online portals, and discussions on social media. The data were then analyzed in relation with TJ's reception, knowledge sources, and activisms related to Covid-19 which helped shape their understanding.

Tablighi Jamaat Movement

The 18th and 19th centuries marked the golden era of Islam in India and some other countries, partly because of the strong fight against the domination of Great Britain and non-Muslim people in those countries in the 1700s. Coinciding with the rise of Islam in India was the emergence of other movements in other countries, for example the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia, the movements of Pan-Islamism, Hizbut Tahrir, and Ikhwanul Muslimin in Egypt, and Deobandi movement, Ahl-e Hadith, the Balvis, Modernist, Jamaat-e-Islami, and Tablighi Jamaat in Indo-Pakistan. This reinforces the argument of the rise of Islam. Furthermore, this suggests that it is necessary for Islam to establish such movements to be a superior force (*revivalist*) and be free of the domination of Western countries.

Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) was founded in Mewat, India, in 1927 by Maulana Ilyas al-Kandahlawi (1885-1944 M) in response to his deep concern about Indian Muslim's being away from Islamic values. He saw Indian Muslims in Rajput have difficulty reciting shahada. In addition, many Indian Muslims then got involved in religious celebrations of Hindu people and they preferred to have consultation with Brahmins (Hindu priests) than with ulema (Harahap 2017, 33–34). Such conditions prompted him to establish an Islamic movement focusing on *da'wah* or *tabligh*. This movement subsequently made a new ritual called *kburuj* (proselytising tour), namely TJ followers' leaving their houses for the sake of *da'wah*. *Kburuj* usually takes TJ followers months in mosques to teach Islam to fellow Muslims, especially those lacking good religious education.

Actually, TJ is not such a completely independent movement that the discussion on it has to involve mentioning other schools of thought existing earlier in the Islamic world. In theological belief, TJ belongs to the Sunni-Ash'arite school, while following thoughts of the four schools of the Islamic law (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali). In the beginning, TJ followed the thought of the Hanafi school, but now this movement is dominated by those following the Shafi'i school. However, in the exegesis of Islamic religious texts (the Qur'an and Hadith), TJ favors the literal-textual interpretation (Junaedi 2013, 12-15). Besides, there are six principles TJ considers to be fundamental. The principles include kalimah (shahada), *namāz* (salah, or five-time daily prayers), knowledge and remembrance (*ilm* with *ziker*), honoring Muslims (*ikram al-Muslim*), sincerity of intention (*shahib niyyah* or *ikhlās*), and invitation and preaching (*da'wah* or *tabligh*) in the form of *kburuj*.

TJ was founded when Islam was in a horizontal religious conflict with Hindu. The politization of religions then gave rise to 'SARA' issues (ethnicity, religion, race and inter-group relations) (Hardi, 1972, 198-220). In such political arena, Maulana Ilyas had no interest in getting involved

in the political contest. Instead, he focused on providing people with religious education through the program of *keburuj* which he initiated. As a result, the movement of TJ received such a broad, warm welcome that it became a transnational movement and grew well in many countries, and spread from Tokyo to Chicago (Bustamam-Ahmad 2008, 364).

In 1952, TJ was first introduced to Indonesia by Miaji Isa in Aceh (Aziz, 2004, 477). However, it was in 1974 in Kebon jeruk, Jakarta, that TJ began to launch its movement intensively. Its first step was to choose 12 people to serve as what is called *abli syuro* in charge of the national headquarters of Indonesian TJ. Since then there has been a harmonious relationship between the Indonesian TJ headquarters in Kebun Jeruk and the TJ headquarters in Sri Petaling, Malaysia (Zaenuri, 2020). In Indonesia, the headquarters (*markas*) in Kebon Jeruk becomes the international assembly point of TJ followers and which guarantee their safety (Sila 2016). Additionally, the two headquarters also have harmonious relationship with the Nizamuddin headquarters in India (Bustamam-Ahmad 2008, 384). Many mosques in some regions are affiliated to TJ, but only few pesantren bear a strong relationship with JT. One of the pesantren is Pesantren al-Fatah, founded by KH. Mahmud in around the 1950-an in Temboro village, Magetan. The pesantren was subsequently under the leadership of KH. Uzairon Hayfur (d. 2014), who was succeeded by his younger brothers, KH. Ubaidillah Ahror and KH. Umar Fatahillah. The pesantren with tens of thousands of students (*santri*) is able to run the economy of the people in its surroundings, thereby receiving their enthusiastic welcome. The hamlet surrounding the pesantren is also known as Kampung Madinah because the daily life of its people reflects the practice of Islamic values with Arabic nuances: the wearing of robes (men) or abayas (women), jilbab or hijab, and chadors in addition to religious practices.

The View of the Followers of Tablighi Jamaat on Diseases

Needless to say, no one wants to suffer from any disease. Diseases can be caused by a large number of factors, one of which is viruses that can be detected through a medical check. In this term, one of the leaders (*amir* or *ustadz*) of TJ in Temboro village believed that diseases can be an ordeal for the sufferers with which Allah will exalt them, or instead it can be a punishment for sins they committed before (Ustadz Salim 2020).

As for administering medications by giving vaccine to prevent or cure virus-caused diseases, an TJ elder in Temboro said “Giving someone vaccine is permissible on the condition that the vaccine is made of permissible or lawful (*halal*) substances with no possible harmful effect in the future. In this regard, if vaccine for Covid-19 is successfully developed, then it is permissible for Muslim people to have a vaccination for the purpose of preventing and curing Covid-19” (Ustadz Abdullah 2020).

Ustadz Habibi (2020), one of the graduates of the pesantren Al-Fatah, suggested adopting the viewpoint of haqiqa and sharia in dealing with a pandemic (*tha'un*). From the viewpoint of haqiqa, one must believe that everything is at God's will and that nothing – not even Covid-19 – can pose any danger or bring benefit to humans but Allah. Meanwhile, from the viewpoint of sharia, one must follow the advice of the Prophet Muhammad in dealing with plague. He quoted the Prophet's hadith stating, ‘In the event of plague (*tha'un*) in a region you are living in, then do not leave the region; if the plague breaks out in other regions, then do not enter it.’ The following is his interpretation of the hadith.

“The hadith means that although everything is substantially in the divine decree and there is truly no infectious disease, sharia urges us to keep away from infectious diseases. No disease transmits by itself: it does so only if Allah has decreed. The Holy Prophet said “*la adwa*” (there is no infectious disease), which means that diseases cannot transmit by themselves. Disease transmission, if any, is only at the will of Allah (Ustadz Habibi 2020).

Furthermore, he said that uttering prayers of supplication (*du'ā'*) for sick people is necessary in addition to efforts (*iḥtiyār*) to fight their disease. For him, The best *du'ā'* is the one uttered sincerely by the heart full of faith in Allah. The Prophet Muhammad exemplified many prayers to be imitated by all His Muslim followers. TJ deeply holds a belief that in the event of a family member's getting sick, one must take actions, be it chanting prayers, extending zikr, consulting doctors, or taking medication. This is in line with what the Prophet practiced when someone was getting sick, i.e. reciting prayers and zikr. The Prophet also asked his followers to make a real effort by consulting experts in diseases and taking medication from them. Ustadz Muhammad Salim added, "Those sick people have to be patient with the disease they are suffering from and completely believe that anything happens at God's will (Ustadz Salim 2020).

This fact shows that the attitude of JT key figures toward Covid-19 reflects their understanding which is shaped by the narrative or textual description of hadith. Implementing teachings documented in the compilation of hadith in their daily life makes TJ a movement adopting hadith as a mechanism of presenting a critique of the social reality (Metcalf, 1993). Favoring textual interpretation of hadith and putting such interpretation into practice, TJ followers live a full life of cultural nuance of hadith. In terms of Covid-19, TJ sees that viruses cannot cause any disease nor replicate itself save that Allah has decreed. They have no ability to do anything without Allah's permission.

The Source of Tablighi Jamaat Knowledge of Diseases

TJ is best known as a group with the program of proselytising tours by visiting mosques. As a community focusing on preaching Islamic values, TJ bases all their activities on reference sources in the form of the collection of canonical books of hadith and other authoritative classical books. In respect of Covid-19, the hadith on which TJ bases its attitude is "*Wa idza*

waqa'a fi ardh, wa anta fiha fala takbruju minha, wa idza waqa'a fi ardh wa lastum fiha fala tabbisu 'alaiba" (If a plague strikes a land on which you are, then do not leave that land; if it breaks out on other lands, do not enter them) (Ustadz Habibi 2020).

Likewise, Ustadz Bani mentioned that students (*santri*) of the pesantren Al-Fatah, Temboro, are taught some canonical books, including Kutub al-Sittah (the Six Canonical Books of Hadith) or 4 Sunan Books: *Sunan Abu Dawud*, *Sunan Tirmidzi*, *Sunan Nasa'i*, *Sunan Ibnu Majah* and 2 Sahih Books (*Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*). Meanwhile, in the field of *fiqh* (Islamic law), students are taught such books as *Mabadi'*, *Fath al-Qarib*, *Fath al-Mu'in* and *al-Minhaj*. Those books along with valuable advice of *Kyai* help spearhead their effort to prevent Covid-19 (Ustadz Bani 2020).

KH. Ubaidillah Ahrar, one of the leaders of the pesantren Al-Fatah, Temboro, stated that of important things to do in dealing with deadly viruses like the corona virus is to believe that Allah is the one who can bring advantage and pose danger to humans. All other than Allah are creatures. The Prophet said as narrated by al-Bukhari, "No disease transmits by itself, *la adwa*". It is such spiritual value that is instilled in students of the pesantren and the *jamaat* in its surroundings. K.H. also stressed that people's belief in "*La ilaha Illallah*" will be less strong without the involvement of the belief in "*Muhammad Rasulallah*". This means that implementing *la ilaha Illallah* must be on the basis of the advice and practice exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (KH Ubaidillah Ahrar 2020).

According to Ustadz Bani, in facing a plague, the Prophet suggested that we be cautious and careful. The Prophet once said, '*Firra Min al-Majzum, Firaruka min al-Asad*, Run away from the leprosy just as you run away from lions'. Taking this hadith into consideration, we can say that the aforementioned hadith stating that "*la adwa*" reflects the implementation of "*la ilaha Illallah*"; while being cautious and staying away from places related to virus transmission is the advice of the Prophet. Furthermore, Ustadz

Bani suggested not visiting places that entertain crowd (Ustadz Bani 2020). In addition to agreeing with this suggestion, Ustadz Habibi added that such statement does not belong only to TJ, but it also the statement of *abl sunnah wa al-jamaah* which also contributes to the shaping of TJ's attitude, opinion, action, and aqeeda in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

In summary, TJ adheres to belief that there is no infectious disease. Such belief is based on the aforementioned hadith. However, another hadith, like the one related to leprosy, which they also deeply hold suggests them to be cautious as a way of prevention. In terms of Covid-19, they have a flexible attitude. On the one hand, they believe that there is no infectious disease. However, on the other hand, when doctors and other health practitioners say that the virus is infectious and can be transmitted, and when in fact the number of the Covid-19 transmission increases, they turns to the other hadith and stop their activities for on a temporary basis. The sources they set as their standard reference are canonical books which are practical guides for Muslim people.

Tablighi Jamaat Activities during the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Reflection of Knowledge

The spread of Covid-19 has attracted the attention of Indonesian Islamic leaders, including ulema, *kyai*, and *ustadz*, and invited them to offer their commentaries. In this term, the leader of the pesantren Al-Fatah, Temboro, KH. Ubaidillah Ahrar stated that Covid-19 is one of the creatures of Allah, The Almighty. He stressed that Muslim people have to believe that any disease, including Covid-19, will not strike one without His permission. Nevertheless, everyone has to make an effort to prevent, cure or eradicate this virus (Ustadz Bani 2020). As to ignorance of the virus, he quoted a well-known saying, '*kalimatu haqqin yuradu bibi al-bathil*' (the statement is positive, but it is put on the wrong context, in this case the Covid-19 pandemic). Essentially, Allah is the one we must express

our fear of, but applying cautious approaches to diseases or plague is also necessary. Ustadz Bani claimed that none of TJ followers in Temboro attended the congress in Gowa, nor did the congress-attending jemaat visit Temboro village (Ustadz Bani 2020).

In his commentary on the congress in Gowa, Ustadz Habibi mentioned that just as any other Islamic organization or group TJ includes a large variety of followers with various backgrounds, ranging from those with excellent religious education to ex-criminals with great spirit but lack of religious education. It is only natural then that the latter released misleading statements and suggested what is in fact contradicts sharia rules and the hadith of the Prophet (Ustadz Habibi 2020).

Before Covid-19 spread nationwide, Khoffiah Indar Parawansa, as regards the occurrence of the virus. Therefore, long before the corona virus was announced to be the national issue, TJ followers in Temboro under the authority and close supervision of KH. Ubaidillah Ahrar, had anticipated the virus transmission through some preventive actions such as temporarily stopping the tradition of the handshake and restricting the social interaction with those outside the pesantren. People outside the pesantren were forbidden to visit their children in the pesantren, and likewise students are banned to leave the pesantren except for emergency. Besides, vehicles and guests, be they males or females, have to be sprayed with disinfectants before entering the area of the pesantren. Additionally, KH. Ubaidillah Ahrar suggested people not to break their ablution (*wudlu'*, *daim al-wudlu'*) and to chant Qur'anic verses, namely al-Ikhlās (112), al-Falaq (113), dan al-Nas (114), *dzikir* and prayers (*du'ā'*). One of the prayers suggested is '*Bismillabilladzi la yadlurru ma'a-ismibi syaiun fi al-Ardhi wala fi al-Sama' wa huwa al-Sami al-Alim, A'ūdzu bi kalimatillabi al-Tamat min syarri ma kbalaq*' (Ustadz Habibi, Bani 2020).

Some preaching programs such as Islamic discussion forums, *keburuj*, and *tablilan* in mosques surrounding Temboro are stopped on the

temporary basis. Jamaat planning to do *keburuj* have to delay their planning until the condition gets better. Meanwhile, some of the jamaat who are undertaking the program of *keburuj* have been sent back to the pesantren, while some continue the program. Those coming back from *keburuj* has to be isolated for 14 days, to know whether or not they test positive for Covid-19. However, other daily activities like congregational prayers, Friday prayers, daily routines, and community forums in the pesantren and the headquarters in Trangkil continue to run as usual (Ustadz Abdullah 2020).

In the middle of March 2020, no one of the students (*santri*) of the pesantren Al-Fatah, Temboro, was confirmed to be infected with Covid-19. However, the data on 20 April 2020 showed that after undergoing rapid tests, around 75 students tested positive for Covid-19 (<https://surabaya.tribunnews.com/2020/04/23/75-santri-positif-rapid-test-ponpes-al-fatah-temboro-magetan-berpotensi-jadi-klaster-baru-covid-19>). This was certainly surprising given that the pesantren houses around 22,000 students from various regions. What was more surprising was that of students infected with the virus was the student from Malaysia (<https://www.cnnindonesia.com/.../43-santri-asal-malaysia-positif-covid-desa-temboro-diisolasi>). The occurrence of the new cluster of Covid-19 transmission in Temboro has prompted many regions to trace the transmission route in accordance with the cities from which students of the pesantren come. Seemingly, it is also this reason that encouraged the local government of Magetan to plan to establish the policy of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB).

Having received the news, the village apparatus of Temboro together with the authority in the pesantren Al-Fatah intensified their efforts to prevent the Covid-19 transmission, by increasing the number of checkpoints at the village's all over entrance gates. This effort worked. After more than 1 month of struggles (until June 2020), Temboro was said

to be free of Covid-19 (Ustadz Bani, Juni 2020). Ustadz Bani said that since then, guests from other villages have been allowed to enter Temboro again. In case that guests have a particular need of meeting *ustadz* or *kyai* of the pesantren, they will be asked to tell their need in checkpoints at Temboro's entrance gates. They can enter the area of the pesantren only if they are allowed to. If so, they will be ushered by the pesantren's representative to the house of the figure they need to meet (Ustadz Bani, Juni 2020). However, guests who want to send their children to study in the pesantren are allowed to enter the pesantren with still following the health protocol, that is, wearing masks.

The data presented above shows that TJ does indeed believe in the absence of infectious diseases, but this does not necessarily means their ignoring them. The preventive actions taken by TJ followers in Temboro is a forward step made by the followers of Shafi' and Ash'ari schools of thought. Such actions are also the form of their firm support to the government policy on preventing Covid-19.

The Reception of Tablighi Jamaat to Covid-19

A tradition existing in a particular society is never indigenous as such, but instead it is the result of the dynamic relationship of its members in its growing process. Likewise, the traditions Tablighi Jamaat keeps alive result from the effort to make Muslim people step out from the shadow of colonialism. Although TJ is not a political party, some hadith it usually refers to lead to achieving the aim. It is the social background of a society that determines how a religious teaching will be taught in a social movement. In this regard, by assessing TJ's response to Covid-19, it can be said that Metcalf (1993, 605) was true when saying that there was no novelty in TJ usually refers to. The hadith on which TJ bases its attitude towards Covid-19 will be certainly directed to fight against the disease, not the other way around.

Some hadith referred by TJ, as mentioned before, can be analyzed from the perspective of reception theory, commonly used in living hadith studies. In this term, Ahmad Rafiq distinguished the reception to religious texts into three models: *Exegetical Reception*, *Aesthetic Reception*, and *Functional Reception* (Rafiq 2014, 144–54). Through an effort of investigation were found two models of reception to hadith on Covid-19, exegetical reception and functional reception, and to special prayers (du'ā' or *wirid*) read as a way of spiritual yearning along with particular policies on the physical effort to handle the pandemic.

There are two reliable hadith to which TJ gives the reception as regards Covid-19. The first is the hadith quoted from *al-Matjar al-Rabih fi Shawabi al-Amal al-Shalih* by Imam al-Dimyati, that is, *Wa idza waqa'a fi ardh, wa anta fiha fala takbruju minha, wa idza waqa'a fi ardh wa lastum fiha fala tabbisu 'alaiha* (If you are in a region struck by a plague, then do not leave the region). This shows that in its way of interpreting hadith TJ has experienced the process of knowledge transmission (Rafi'i and Qudsy, 2020) from classical books. It is the interpretation which can be identified as *exegetical reception*.

There is no doubt about the credibility of the hadith as it is corroborated by hadith documented in the hadith books of Bukhari and Muslim. The corroborating hadith is the hadith 5293 in Shahih Bukhari:

Narrated 'Aisyah, the wife of the Prophet PbuH, that she once asked Allah's apostle about a plague. The Prophet then replied "A plague is a punishment Allah inflicts to those He wants, and it is His mercy on those who believe in Him. Those who are living in a plague-destroyed region, and they never leave the region, and they keep patient, and they know knows that the plague will never strike them save that Allah has decreed, then they will be rewarded as if they died a martyr."

Meanwhile, in Shahih Muslim, the corroborating hadith is the hadith 2218,

“Tha’un (plague) is a punishment for Israelites or people before them. If you hear a plague break out on a land, do not enter it; however, if you are on the land, do not leave that land.”

All the hadith mentioned above are of the quarantine policy suggested to pandemic-infected regions. TJ seems to interpret them literally and consider nothing but their linguistic aspects. TJ takes an action not because it complies with the government policy or doctors’ order, but because the texts tell them to do so.

Moreover, the hadith stating “*A plague is a punishment Allah inflicts to those He wants, and it is His mercy on those who believe in Him*” was taken for granted. The statement of Ustadz Salim that the pandemic can be seen as an ordeal for obedient people and as a punishment for disobedient people. Such statement illustrates the literal interpretation of the hadith. According to Ustaz Habibi, seeing the pandemic as a punishment or ordeal reflects human consciousness to see pandemic from the viewpoint of haqiqah, that the pandemic comes from Allah. However, the pandemic should be dealt with from the viewpoint of shari’ah by adopting the quarantine regulation and supporting the government policy. Another example of TJ’s literal interpretation of hadith was found when Ustadz Bani quoted the hadith *firra min al-majzum, firaruka min al-asad*, ‘Run away from the leprosy just as you run away from lions’.

The second hadith to which TJ gives the reception is *la adma wa thiyarata wa la hamata wa la Shafara* (there are no infectious diseases, prophecy, animals flying in the night, and worms in the stomach). (Bukhari, 5278, 5312, 5215, 5316, 5328, 5329, 5331; Muslim, 4120, 4121, 4123, 4124, 4126; Abu Daud, 3412, 3413, 3415, 3420; Al-Tirmidzi 1540). TJ quoted the hadiths in order to explain that in spite of taking the preventive actions, one must still realize that Allah is the one who determines whether or not a disease is infectious. People should never be overly confident that taking preventive actions will make it impossible for them to get infected with Covid-19.

Meanwhile, the model of functional reception, the implementation of the aforementioned hadith, can be seen in some actions taken: (1) some activities which are stopped during the Covid-19 pandemic; (2) some activities which must be continued like congregational prayers, Friday prayers, and community discussion forums; (3) the reception to *wirid* or special prayers read (as a spiritual yearning) during the Covid-19 pandemics. In this case, TJ arranged some special prayers by way of a preventive action, intensifies the performing of the ablution, dan reading particular prayers. This all indicates that TJ in Temboro practices their activities on the basis of *fadhail a'mal*. Such prayers are usually read to prevent someone from bad things. Additionally. Such readings also include Qur'anic verses quoted in some canonical hadith reference books like the ones written by Al-Tirmizi, An-Nasai, dan Abu Dawud.

Besides, there are physical efforts they made to slow down the spread of Covid-19 in the form of establishing the policy on restricting social interactions, like a ban on the handshake and people's visiting his children studying in the pesantren. Students in the pesantren are also banned from leaving the pesantren likewise. In the event of emergency, the pesantren will carry out a necessary safety procedures by establishing physical distancing, spraying vehicles from outside the pesantren with disinfectant. It is this policy which probably delayed the conducting of *keburuj* programs during the pandemic. Some valid points covered above challenge mistaken assumptios about TJ which has been considered to cause the emergence of a new cluster of the Covid-19 transmission. Such assumptions do not reflect the fact remaining in TJ in Temboro, which as mentioned above has taken some preventive actions although it sticks in its belief that there is no infectious disease, including Covid-19. Believing in the transmission of Covid-19 is considered to contradict the basic understanding of the hadith texts. TJ's common attitude towards Covid-19 is that a disease cannot be infectious except with the permission of Allah. However, such attitude

does not necessarily make TJ followers ignore the existence of Covid-19, and in fact, they take some preventive actions by employing physical and spiritual practices.

Conclusion

This written works shows that the assumptions made by many writers and mass media about Tablighi Jamaat's ignorance about Covid-19 are questionable and require reevaluation. This is based on some considerations. First, TJ in Temboro believes that diseases must be seen from the viewpoint of haqiqa and based on the textual evidence of the hadith. From the viewpoint of haqiqa, diseases come from Allah – subject to His will. Meanwhile, from the perspective of sharia, Muslim people are supposed to follow the advice of the Prophet Muhammad in dealing with diseases or plague. Besides, some TJ leaders see diseases as an ordeal for obedient people and a punishment for disobedient ones. Second, TJ members' attitude toward diseases are shaped by the information they digested from the hadith stating a disease can be infectious only at God's will. In this regard, when one is confirmed to be infected with Covid-19, it means that Allah has decreed that he/she should be infected with the virus. Third, activism of followers of TJ in Temboro reflect their attitude towards diseases. The attitude also indicates the negotiation with their reception to hadith. This works certainly contains many weaknesses in discussing this subject in such a way that it is still open to conduct other research on the same theme. Studies on internal coordination among TJ followers worldwide seem to be interesting to work on future research on the subject. In addition, little did researchers explore internal friction among TJ followers as to their political aspiration, which may affect their command system of TJ in other countries away from the center of TJ.

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