

The Silent Tarekat in Islamic Law: Legal Consciousness and the Chishti Sufi Legacy of the Tablighi Jamaat

doi 10.15408/ajis.v25i1.44979

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Abstract

This article explores the silent legal and spiritual framework of the Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) in Indonesia, drawing on fieldwork, interviews, and textual analysis. While TJ does not claim to be a Sufi order (*ṭarīqah*), its practices suggest a reconfiguration of the Chishti-Ḥanafī legacy within a non-institutional framework. The study argues that TJ operates as a "silent *tarekat*", where *fiqh* is embodied through routines of *ta'lim*, *khurūj*, and *adab*, rather than articulated through *fatwā* or formal legal discourse. The article traces how collective reasoning (*mushāwarah*), ethical discipline, and ritual repetition form an alternative legal consciousness that resists codification but remains deeply normative. Drawing from Talal Asad's theory of discursive tradition and Ibn 'Arabi's notion of *'ilm al-aḥwāl*, the paper shows how authority, legality, and spirituality are distributed through embodied discipline rather than textual claims. Contrasting with mainstream Islamic institutions in Indonesia like NU, Muhammadiyah, and MUI, which rely on *fatwā* issuance and formal jurisprudence, TJ emphasizes humility, action, and affective cohesion. The article concludes that TJ represents a post-*ṭarīqah* legal formation, silent, affective, and decentralized, redefining Islamic normativity through practice rather than proclamation.

Abstrak

Artikel ini menelusuri kerangka hukum dan spiritual Jamaah Tabligh (JT) di Indonesia yang bersifat diam-diam namun terstruktur, berdasarkan observasi lapangan, wawancara, dan kajian teks. Meskipun Jamaah Tabligh tidak mengklaim diri sebagai tarekat, namun praktiknya menunjukkan konfigurasi ulang warisan Chishti-Ḥanafī dalam bentuk non-institusional. Artikel membawa argumentasi bahwa JT berfungsi sebagai "*silent tarekat*," yang mana hukum Islam (*fiqh*) diwujudkan melalui rutinitas *ta'lim*, *khurūj*, dan *adab*, bukan melalui fatwa atau diskursus hukum formal. Artikel ini mencoba melacak bagaimana musawarah, disiplin etis, dan pengulangan ritual membentuk kesadaran hukum alternatif yang tidak tersusun secara kodifikasi, namun tetap normatif. Mengacu pada teori tradisi diskursif Talal Asad dan konsep *'ilm al-aḥwāl* dari Ibn 'Arabi, tulisan ini menunjukkan bahwa otoritas, legalitas, dan spiritualitas dalam JT tersebar melalui disiplin tubuh, bukan klaim tekstual. Berbeda dengan arus utama lembaga Islam di Indonesia seperti NU, Muhammadiyah, dan MUI yang bergantung pada fatwa dan fikih formal, Jamaah Tabligh menekankan kerendahan hati, amal, dan kohesi afektif. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa Jamaah Tabligh merepresentasikan formasi hukum pasca-tarekat—diam, afektif, dan terdesentralisasi—yang menata ulang normativitas Islam melalui praktik, bukan pernyataan.

Keywords:

Tablighi Jamaat; Islamic law; legal consciousness; discursive tradition.

How to Cite:

Anshori, A. Y et al., (2025). The Silent Tarekat in Islamic Law: Legal Consciousness and the Chishti Sufi Legacy of the Tablighi Jamaat. AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v25i1.44979>

Introduction

The Tablighi Jamaat, as the world's largest transnational Islamic revivalist movement (Pieri, 2021), operates through structured leadership and grassroots *da'wah* involving small group mobilization, *khurūj*, and a focus on personal piety (Jha, 2022). Despite its global spread, its practices remain marginalized in Islamic legal discourse, especially in Indonesia, due to its distance from political activism, institutional Sufism, and formal legal affiliations. Although some scholars connect the movement to puritanical reformism or traditional Sufi ethics—especially the Chishti order (Gaborieau, 2006)—these views often neglect analysis within frameworks like *fiqh* or *al-siyāṣah al-shar'īyyah*, thus overlooking its potential legal significance. In Indonesia, this disconnect is notable: although the Tablighi Jamaat holds strong grassroots influence since its 20th-century emergence from the Indian subcontinent (Horstmann, 2007; Noor, 2012; Pieri, 2021), it remains peripheral in legal scholarship and regulatory recognition. Its marginalization stems not from irrelevance but from how Islamic law is institutionally defined within Indonesia's legal pluralism. Unlike Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama—recognized for their *fatwā* and legal interpretations (Awass, 2023; Pradana, 2017)—the Jamaat influences religious life without being framed as a juridical authority.

This article argues that the Tablighi Jamaat represents what may be called a "Silent Tarekat", a spiritual-legal formation grounded in Sufi lineage and *Ḥanafī Madhhab* but operating outside conventional *ṭarīqah* institutions. The founder of the movement, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandahlawi, was not only affiliated with the Chishti Sufi order but was also trained within the *Ḥanafī* legal tradition of the Deobandi school (Bustamam, 2008; Ingram, 2018). This dual affiliation, spiritual and legal, is fundamental to understanding how the Tablighi Jamaat constructs its religious authority.

The synthesis between the Chishti order and the *Ḥanafī Madhhab* is not incidental, but reflects a historical pattern in South Asian Islam wherein spiritual practice (*taṣawwuf*) and legal reasoning coexist in mutually reinforcing ways. Several recent studies have demonstrated that the Chishti order did not separate legal obligations from spiritual discipline; instead, it embedded practices such as *dhikr* (devotional recitation), *bay'ah* (spiritual allegiance), and communal worship within a framework that carried both ethical and legal weight (Dajani, 2023; Kamran & Shahid, 2014; Quddus, 2020). The *Ḥanafī* tradition, known for its rational-analogical reasoning and its adaptability to diverse social contexts, provided a framework through which Sufi ethics were translated into jurisprudential norms (Abdulhalik et al., 2020; Jum'ah, 200; Karim & Arif, 2023). In South Asia, this synthesis supported a form of *fiqh*-oriented Sufism that prioritized *maṣlaḥah* (public welfare), *ḥikmah* (wisdom), and *'urf* (custom) in shaping religious practice (Bustamam, 2008; Horstmann, 2007; Singh, 2012).

In Indonesia, the entry of the Tablighi Jamaat in the early 1950s initially met resistance due to its non-traditional structure, foreign aesthetic, and seemingly apolitical orientation (Ali, 2021; Noor, 2012; Pieri, 2021). However, by the 1980s and 2000s, the movement had gained traction among pesantren-based scholars, particularly within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), due to shared commitments to *dhikr*, communal prayer, and spiritual refinement. Figures such as Kiai Uzairon Thoifur of Al-Fatah pesantren in Temboro and Kiai Mukhlisun of Payaman, Magelang, played crucial roles in localizing Tablighi practices through the lens of Javanese Islamic spirituality (Arifin, 2017b; Musaffa & Abdurrahman, 2023). The involvement of such scholars, who themselves were affiliated with Sufi orders like the *Shāziliyyah*, demonstrates that the Tablighi Jamaat was not seen as alien to Indonesian Islamic traditions. Rather, its practices resonated with elements of the Chishti-*Ḥanafī* synthesis already familiar in the archipelago, albeit in a more understated form. Practices such as *khurūj* (temporary religious migration), *dhikr*, and *bay'ah* were thus recontextualized as acts of *'ibādah* (worship) and *fard kifāyah* (communal obligation), legitimizing the movement not just spiritually but also juridically. The support of these NU figures marked a turning point in the public reception of

the Tablighi Jamaat, allowing it to expand its influence while maintaining fidelity to classical Islamic legal and spiritual norms.

This misalignment of legal recognition emerges more clearly when viewed through Indonesia's distinctive formulation of Islamic legal authority. Unlike in South Asia, where *Ḥanafī* fiqh dominated legal institutions and personal status law, the Indonesian Islamic legal landscape is shaped by an eclectic mix of *Shāfiʿī* jurisprudence, customary law, and modern legal codification (Pradana, 2017; Ansori, 2022; Anshori & Abdurahman, 2025). Even with the growth of Islamic law in Indonesia's national legislation, such as in family law, *zakat* management, and Islamic banking, the doctrinal sources that inform these laws have rarely included the discursive traditions that shaped Tablighi Jamaat thought.

As recent research notes, Indonesian Islamic law often adapts to *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* paradigms and responds to the state's pluralist governance frameworks rather than doctrinal fidelity to specific *Madhhab* (Rohayana & Muhtarom, 2021). This environment favors Islamic organizations that produce formal *fatwā* or institutional interpretations, while pushing aside movements whose influence comes from emotional connection, lived religious practice, and informal teaching (Hasyim, 2020; Laffan, 2005). Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tablighi Jamaat faced social stigma due to its mass gatherings, contributing to their marginalization in public discourse and reinforcing the perception that their practices were "extra-legal" or "non-juridical" (Hamdi, 2022). These factors compound the invisibility of Tablighi jurisprudence in legal studies, despite its roots in normative traditions.

In the Indonesian context, the practices of the Tablighi Jamaat are not merely individual expressions of religiosity but constitute a structured moral discipline with legal resonance. Among these, *khurūj*, periodic travel in the path of God, is central. While not codified in classical legal manuals as an obligatory act, *khurūj* is treated by the movement as a form of *fard al-kifāyah* (communal obligation), aimed at maintaining the spiritual health of the Muslim community through peer-led reform and devotional solidarity. The spiritual effort of *khurūj* is also embedded in a framework of accountability, time management, regional delegation, and leadership selection through the *amīr* system, all of which mirror a practical application of *al-siyāsah al-sharʿiyyah*. These structures reflect an internal juridical logic, though informal, that sustains religious continuity and community ethics, much like the ethos of Sufi communities that combine personal discipline with communal guidance (Ali, 2003; Masud, 2000).

Another practice that reveals the Jamaat's embedded legal consciousness is *bay'ah*, the pledge of allegiance often given to key figures within the movement. While devoid of formal political implications, *bay'ah* in the Tablighi context revives an Islamic legal tradition historically practiced both in Sufi circles and early Islamic political culture (Aquil, 2008; Wagemakers, 2015). In Tablighi settings, *bay'ah* functions as a reaffirmation of moral commitment and a gesture of submission to spiritual guidance. This aligns closely with the Chishti model of *bay'at al-taṣawwuf*, where the act symbolizes moral apprenticeship rather than political subordination (Al-Kandahlawi, n.d.; Iqbal & Farid, 2017). The Chishti understanding of *bay'ah* bridges ethical piety and *fiqh*-based responsibility, emphasizing not charismatic control, but the maintenance of religious integrity through ethical transmission. The Tablighi Jamaat, drawing on this heritage, has translated *bay'ah* into a communal code of loyalty that grounds its moral authority even without issuing legal rulings.

Regular *mushāwarah* (consultative meetings), conducted both in local mosques and during *khurūj*, also serve as a juridical mechanism of collective reasoning. While not resulting in formal *fatwā* or written rulings, these deliberations reflect an internal mode of *ijtihād jamāʿī* (collective reasoning), where decisions emerge through consensus based on lived experience. These meetings, coupled with *halaqah* and *iʿtikāf*, construct a religious space where legal reasoning, spiritual reflection, and communal ethics are continuously negotiated (Hamdi et al., 2022). This model represents an operative *fiqh*, not one based on textual codification or court

rulings, but embodied in shared practices and moral routines. In this sense, the Tablighi Jamaat operates as a community of embodied *fiqh*. Though lacking institutionalized legal authority, its members enact juridical sensibilities through routine acts of worship, collective discipline, and voluntary organization. The authority it generates emerges not from formalized institutions but from adherence to an ethical-legal framework rooted in both Sufi and juristic traditions. This situates the Jamaat as a “silent” bearer of Islamic law, quiet in legal pronouncement but active in juridical practice.

Method

To analyze how the Tablighi Jamaat constructs legal and spiritual authority without issuing formal rulings, we are using Talal Asad’s concept of Islam as a discursive tradition. Rather than a set of static doctrines, Asad presents Islam as a historically formed tradition, shaped by embodied practices, disciplinary institutions, and authoritative transmission (Asad, 2009). This perspective allows the examination of *da’wah*, *khurūj*, *bay’ah*, and *mushāwarah* as normative mechanisms, even in the absence of codified legal sanction. For instance, *khurūj* reflects the logic of *fard al-kifāyah*, upholding communal piety without explicit legal codification, while *mushāwarah* functions as a mode of *al-siyāsah al-shar’iyyah*, facilitating leadership and behavior through consultative authority, despite lacking centralized *fatwā* production. These practices sustain a legal consciousness not articulated through textual rulings, but lived through discipline and deep commitment to the *sunnah*. This aligns with Asad’s argument that Islamic normativity is maintained as much through embodied practice as through textual prescription.

Frank Peter expands this framework by emphasizing how Islamic normativity also emerges from everyday embodiment and affective engagement, allowing movements like the Tablighi Jamaat to enact legal meaning through lived religiosity rather than legal institutions (Peter, 2025). In this sense, the Tablighi Jamaat becomes a discursive formation that combines *fiqh*-oriented logic with Sufi ethics, without the need for formal institutions. The analysis also draws on Ibn ‘Arabi’s concept of *‘ilm al-aḥwāl*—knowledge rooted in spiritual states and lived experience—which further supports the idea that legal authority in the Tablighi Jamaat is not only discursive but also experiential (Surūr, 2015). Practices such as *khurūj*, *mushāwarah*, and *bay’ah* are more than ethical symbols; they are situated within a historical synthesis of Chishti spirituality and *Ḥanafī* jurisprudence. These practices collectively express a legal consciousness that functions outside the realm of codified *fiqh*, which this study terms a Silent Tarekat—an ethical-juridical tradition grounded in embodied lineage and transmitted authority.

Legal Consciousness beyond Text: The Jamaat as Discursive Practices

To understand the Tablighi Jamaat within Islamic law, one must move beyond textualist frameworks to recognize how legal consciousness is shaped through practice. Reiterating Asad’s approach, the movement’s normative authority is enacted through habitual discipline, bodily comportment, and oral transmission rather than through formal rulings or *fiqh* codification (Asad, 2009). Frank Peter further underscores that everyday rituals and affective engagement are central to sustaining Islamic legal norms (Peter, 2025). The Jamaat’s *da’wah* strategy—centered around *khurūj*, *bay’ah*, and *mushāwarah*—exemplifies a form of ethical reasoning performed without recourse to legal texts or judicial decree.

This is clearly reflected in interviews with key figures in Central Java, such as KH. Adrian Juanan Raden and KH. Rohani, both associated with the Tablighi Jamaat’s *Shūrā* Council (Raden, 2023; Rohani, 2024). Respondents describe *khurūj* as a deeply internalized obligation, coordinated through family dialogue and group consensus. Though not legally

required in classical *fiqh*, the act is performed with the gravity of prescribed worship, including attention to punctual prayers, missionary engagement, and disciplined conduct. These commitments are experienced as normative, forming an internalized legal ethic rooted in habitual practice rather than explicit textual command.

Discipline also manifests in *mushāwarah* sessions observed at the Purworejo Markaz (Masjid Birrul Walidain) and in surrounding mosques. Elders consistently framed obedience to the *amīr* not as a bureaucratic necessity, but as a spiritual imperative modeled after the Prophet's example. Decisions about leadership, destinations, and timing are resolved collectively, functioning as a form of *ijtihād jamā'ī*—a communal legal reasoning process carried out without textual citation. As one interlocutor stated, "*we consult so we don't deviate from our intention... this is a trust*". This ethos resembles Asad's argument that Islamic norms are historically sustained through embodied dispositions rather than formal rules.

In this framework, the Tablighi Jamaat does not stand outside Islamic law, but enacts an alternative rationality that privileges ethical discipline, communal consensus, and spiritual embodiment. As Peter suggests, legal subjectivity may emerge in contexts lacking formal legal institutions, provided that ritual regularity and moral coherence are preserved (Peter, 2025). Thus, the Tablighi Jamaat's *da'wah* model constitutes a lived form of *fiqh*—a jurisprudence silently enacted through practice, yet no less rooted in Islamic legal tradition.

Legal Status of Core Practices

The practice of *khurūj*, voluntary religious travel aimed at preaching and moral reform, is the central praxis of the Tablighi Jamaat. It serves as a principal mechanism for cultivating moral discipline and legal consciousness. While classical *fiqh* literature does not codify *khurūj* as an obligation, within the Tablighi framework, it is normatively framed as a *fard al-kifāyah*. This communal duty must be upheld to sustain the spiritual well-being of the Muslim ummah. Furthermore, this rearticulation of obligation illustrates how Islamic law may manifest beyond textual codification, through embodied communal acts that bear juridical weight in their repetition and ethical intention.

The structure of *khurūj* is not arbitrary but meticulously organized. As observed during fieldwork in Purworejo and Sragen, each group is led by an *amīr*, a temporary spiritual leader appointed through *mushāwarah* (consultation), who coordinates daily activities, supervises time management, and ensures the group's discipline and conformity to *adab* (etiquette) during their mission. This system is not merely managerial but functions as an ethical and quasi-judicial apparatus. The *amīr* embodies what may be termed an informal juridical authority; his decisions are respected, yet always accountable to group consensus. In interviews with senior figures such as H. Abdurrahman Sudarman and KH. Adrian Juanan Raden, the *amīr*, is described as not just a logistical guide but a moral mirror who ensures the *jama'ah* remains focused on their devotional goals. His responsibility extends from scheduling lessons and collective meals to resolving interpersonal tensions based on principles of patience, humility, and mutual forgiveness.

In interviews conducted in Sragen, the role of *ta'lim* (learning circles) and *tashkīl* (group formation) within the *khurūj* program was repeatedly emphasized. These forums are not merely venues for the transmission of knowledge but perform a vital function in shaping moral authority (Raden, 2023; Rohani, 2024). The act of selecting who goes on *khurūj*, leads, and teaches is governed not by clerical certification but by one's *sulūk* (conduct), *ikhlaṣ* (sincerity), and consistency in *khidmah* (service). This selection process reflects what Frank Peter calls "normativity in performance", wherein legitimacy is not derived from textual mastery but from public recognition of one's ethical comportment (Peter, 2025). Through this mechanism, the

Tablighi Jamaat enacts an internal jurisprudence in which credibility is built through participation, humility, and repetition, not argumentation.

The *khurūj* experience trains its participants in a regime of practical discipline: waking before dawn for *taḥajjud*, participating in congregational prayer, engaging in continuous *dhikr* and Qur'an recitation, and performing *jawlah* (local door-to-door preaching) after *Asr* prayer. Each activity follows a strict temporal rhythm, instilling habits of punctuality, self-restraint, and simplicity. These are not superficial routines; rather, they generate a habitus of legal consciousness, where submission to a higher moral order is enacted through embodied practices. Islam as a discursive tradition is not merely sustained by texts but by practices that cultivate disciplined moral selves (Asad, 2009). In this context, *khurūj* operates as a religious training institution that socializes participants into Islamic norms through repeated physical practice and emotional connection to the Sunnah.

Repetition during *khurūj* is essential. Members do not merely preach externally; they rehearse ethical selfhood internally. KH. Rohani and others noted that even seasoned members are expected to participate in regular *khurūj*, for three days a month, forty days a year, or four months in a lifetime. This graduated pattern reflects a logic of cumulative moral training. Like in Sufi lodges, repetition is not mechanical but transformational; it cultivates *ḥāl*, a state of spiritual readiness that prepares the subject to embody divine values in mundane situations. This aligns with Ibn 'Arabi's epistemology of *'ilm al-aḥwāl*, which privileges the experiential over the conceptual (Surūr, 2015). From this lens, the *khurūj* experience becomes a vehicle of epistemic and juridical formation, through which inner states are not only cultivated but shared and transmitted across generations of Tablighi Jamaat members.

The ethical content of *khurūj* is reinforced by constraints on personal behavior. Participants are expected to abstain from business dealings, idle conversation, and worldly distractions during their mission. They sleep communally, cook together, and live with minimal possessions, emulating the simplicity of the Prophet's companions. These conditions, as observed in field notes from *Markaz Purworejo*, foster a temporary rupture from capitalist and individualist routines. Instead, they insert the subject into a counter-rhythm defined by mutual responsibility and collective prayer. Such ascetic withdrawal from the world is not an end in itself but a means of reorienting moral priorities, an act of internal jihad against the *nafs* (ego). The Tablighi Jamaat members thus produce an ethics of discipline that, while not framed in legalistic terms, functions as a normative system grounded in lived piety.

Moreover, the entire structure of *khurūj*, from planning and departure to return and reintegration into the home community, serves as a ritual of purification and re-legitimation. It is not uncommon, as noted in the transcript from the *ḥalaqah mushāwarah* conducted in Musholla At-Taqlwa, Purworejo, for returning participants to be invited to share reflections with their local mosque congregation (Fieldnote, Musholla At-Taqlwa, 2024). This testimonial exchange reaffirms their transformed state and implicitly communicates the normative ideals of the Tablighi Jamaat to the broader community. The social recognition of transformation serves both a spiritual and a juridical function: it certifies the subject's return as one who has fulfilled a communal obligation and internalized its moral law. *Khurūj* is not a neutral journey; it is a ritualized process of ethical formation through which Tablighi members cultivate a non-textual but deeply normative understanding of Islamic law. It merges the Sufi logic of inner refinement with the juridical logic of obligation, producing what may be seen as a parallel legal order, embodied rather than codified, practiced rather than preached.

The repetition of key practices also plays a formative role. For example, in the *targhīb* (motivational talks) observed after *'Asr* prayers in Purworejo, members were reminded to make *niyyah* (intention) clear, to manage time strictly, and to avoid personal benefit. These reminders were presented not as moral platitudes, but as specific behavioral codes for religious life. In this context, even non-binding actions like smiling, avoiding an argument, or controlling one's

speech are internalized as obligatory. This resembles what Asad calls the formation of the ethical self, a subject constituted through repeated bodily acts and exposure to disciplinary environments, where Sharia may not be directly mentioned but still guides behavior as the underlying moral framework. These field findings are reinforced by theoretical perspectives from Ibn' Arabi, especially his concept of *'ilm al-aḥwāl*, or knowledge derived from states of being and spiritual experience.

According to Ibn' Arabi, spiritual certainty arises not only from rational argument (*'ilm al-ʿaql*) but also from embodied experience, what one tastes (*ẓawq*) and experiences (*ḥāl*) (Surūr, 2015). This view justifies taking the emotional and experiential registers of *khurūj* and *bay'ah* as meaningful legal experiences. When members report feeling "light-heartedness" or "goosebumps during *khurūj*", these are not just feelings; they are seen as signs of moral alignment and spiritual understanding. In Tablighi epistemology, these experiences can be shared and passed on, creating a shared emotional memory that helps shape the group's religious direction.

At the heart of the Tablighi Jamaat's ritual discipline lies the practice of *ta'lim wa ta'allum*, the daily learning circle based on reading texts like *Fadā'il al-A'māl*. Participants are instructed to sit in the posture of *iftirāsh*, in a tightly knit circle, often facing the qibla, having performed *wuḍū'* and applied perfume. The *adab* of *ta'lim* stresses clear, audible reading without personal commentary, respectful silence, attentiveness, and repetition when needed. The atmosphere is solemn but tender, accompanied by frequent recitations of *ṣalawāt*, *tasbīḥ*, and *tahmīd* in response to hadiths about divine mercy and punishment. These bodily gestures and oral responses are not merely symbolic; they function as semiotic acts of submission and spiritual receptivity. They reflect an internalization of decorum (*ta'ẓīm*), belief (*taṣdīq*), emotional engagement (*ta'aththur*), and intention to practice and transmit knowledge (*niyyat al-ʿamal wa al-tablīgh*) (Musaffa & Abdurrahman, 2023; Noor, 2012; Sakdiah, 2017).

Within the Tablighi Jamaat, the triad of *khurūj*, daily *dhikr* circles, and the moral pledge of *bay'ah* forms an integrated discipline: *khurūj* imposes a strict timetable of collective prayer and service; repeated *dhikr* sessions cultivate attentiveness, ritual purity, and humility; and *bai'at* functions as an enduring covenant of obedience that reinforces communal responsibility even after the movement's formal allegiance to individual shaykhs was discontinued. Although the practice of *bay'ah* remains central to the Tablighi Jamaat's moral-legal discipline, its historical transformation and spiritual genealogy are elaborated in the following section.

Spiritual Lineage as Legal Authority: The Chishti–*Ḥanafī* Sanad

The Tablighi Jamaat's foundations are deeply rooted in the intertwined legacies of the Chishti Sufi order and the *Ḥanafī* legal school, both of which shaped its early spiritual and juridical ethos. Maulana Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandahlawi, the movement's founder, was trained within the Deobandi seminary tradition—an intellectual current steeped in *Ḥanafī* jurisprudence and in the spiritual discipline of the Chishti and Naqshbandi orders (Al-Kandahlawi, n.d.; Kamran & Shahid, 2014; Nadwi, 1978). This dual heritage—legal and mystical—forms the bedrock of the movement's moral structure. In its formative decades, the Tablighi Jamaat preserved several features from this Sufi-juristic lineage, including ritual *dhikr*, personal spiritual mentorship, and, in some cases, *bay'ah* (the oath of allegiance to a spiritual guide). However, as the movement expanded globally and adapted to new sociopolitical terrains, some of these elements were rearticulated, displaced, or informally retained under different forms.

In its South Asian context, the practice of *bay'ah* was not only common but emblematic of one's entry into a Sufi path. This oath symbolized ethical commitment and spiritual obedience, traditionally to a Shaykh who served as a living transmitter of divine knowledge

and discipline. The Chishti order in particular emphasized humility, silence, and companionship (*ṣuḥbah*) as conditions for this transmission (Aquil, 2008; Ernst & Lawrence, 2002). Maulana Ilyas's own teachers, such as Maulana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri and *Shaykh* Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, were heirs to this model (Nadwi, 1978). Stories of their spiritual charisma and ethical authority circulate in hagiographical works like *Taẓkirat al-Khalīl*, where miraculous encounters underscore their sanctity. For instance, *Shaykh* Muhibbuddin of Makkah is reported to have recognized Maulana Khalil's spiritual radiance upon his entrance to the Haram, saying, "The whole *masjid al-ḥarām* has been illuminated by light" (Al-Kandahlawi, 2006). Such anecdotes do not merely serve devotional sentiment but testify to a mode of authority centered on spiritual states (*aḥwāl*), a key concept in the Chishti epistemology of ethical leadership.

This spiritual transmission is further illustrated in the following figure, which visualizes the Chishti silsila leading to Maulana Ilyas al-Kandahlawi, underscoring the ethical and genealogical framework upon which the early Tablighi Jamaat was built.



Figure 1.
Silsilah of the Chishti Order Culminating in Maulana Ilyas al-Kandahlawi (Al-Kandahlawi, n.d.).

This chart outlines the spiritual genealogy through which the Chishti ethos of discipline, humility, and ethical leadership was transmitted, later influencing the formation of the Tablighi Jamaat.

However, this framework underwent significant transformation within the Tablighi Jamaat, particularly in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Following the death of the third global *amīr*, Maulana In‘amul Hasan in 1995, the movement's leadership was placed into the hands of a collective *shūrā* (consultative council) rather than a singular *amīr*. This shift was guided by a theological and organizational commitment to decentralization and consensus, in

line with the principle of *shūrā* in classical Islamic governance. Among the key outcomes of this transition was a collective decision to discontinue the practice of *bay'ah* to a single leader (Achmad, 2021). Abdurrahman Sudarman, a current member of the Indonesian *shūrā* council, explained in an interview that three principle were agreed upon at the international level post-1995: first, there would be no single *amīr*; second, no *bay'ah*; and third, no change would occur without consultative consensus among the *shūrā* (Sudarman, 2023). These decisions were aimed at preserving the Jamaat's ethos of humility, anonymity, and collective spirituality.

Nonetheless, a return to the practice of *bay'ah* emerged in the mid-2010s under the leadership of Maulana Saad al-Kandahlawi, great-grandson of Maulana Ilyas. During gatherings at the global *markaz* in Nizamuddin, India, Indonesian participants such as H. Zainuddin and Sutrisno (alias Habib) witnessed mass *bay'ah* ceremonies. Attendees were asked to hold a long rope whose end was grasped by Maulana Saad, while he led them in a pledge of loyalty, an act reminiscent of classical Sufi initiation rituals. This marked a re-centering of charismatic authority, and while some Jamaat members viewed it as a legitimate spiritual renewal, others, particularly in Indonesia, saw it as a violation of the *shūrā* consensus and a dangerous departure from the decentralized ethos established after 1995.

The implications of this controversy became particularly visible at the local level. In field observations in Purworejo and Sragen, Tablighi members, referred to internally as *aḥbāb*, expressed strong opposition to the revival of *bay'ah*. In a discussion at Musholla At-Taqwa, a *khurūj*-returnee mentioned the practice to the group, prompting one participant to respond firmly: "*No bay'ah in this Jamaat. That path was closed long ago by the shūrā.*" This was not merely a procedural objection, but a theological statement grounded in the movement's post-*ṭarīqa* identity. Rather than pledging to a living *Shaykh*, members now affirm their ethical commitment through collective action, shared discipline, and internalized sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*). Such decentralization is seen as preserving *tawāḍu'* (humility) and protecting the movement from personality cults.

From a theoretical standpoint, this evolution illustrates Asad's insight that Islamic traditions are maintained not merely through doctrinal repetition but through reconfigured practices that reflect moral grammars. The Tablighi Jamaat's shift away from formal *bay'ah* does not signify a rupture with the Sufi tradition but a reinterpretation of its ethical core. Peter expands this view by highlighting the role of affective authority in Islamic normativity, where sincerity, repetition, and embodied presence supersede textual mandates (Asad, 2009; Peter, 2025). The Tablighi Jamaat's position aligns with this affective model, sustaining spiritual authority through habits, gatherings, and rituals rather than charismatic hierarchy.

The concept of *ilm al-aḥwāl* also helps illuminate this transformation. The *ḥāl* experienced during *khurūj*, in *mushāwarah*, or silent companionship, becomes the basis for ethical insight and group cohesion. Rather than being mediated through a single *Shaykh*, spiritual knowledge is distributed across the group, emerging through shared rhythms of devotion and affective labor. In this sense, the movement becomes a *ṭarīqah* without *bay'ah*, a diffuse, embodied order grounded in anonymity and mutual discipline. Thus, the Tablighi Jamaat emerges as a "post-*ṭarīqah*" formation: it preserves the Chishti-*Ḥanafī* legacy in ethics, *adab*, and devotional routines, while discarding centralized authority and formal allegiance. Its silence on *bay'ah* is not an absence, but a statement, a rearticulation of Sufi moral structure in the idiom of collective piety. In this reconfiguration, legal and spiritual authority converge not in charismatic leaders, but in everyday acts of discipline, restraint, and sincerity enacted by *aḥbāb* in mosques, homes, and journeys across the globe.

Governance Structure and Legal Obedience: *Mushāwarah* and *al-Siyāsah al-Syar'īyyah*

Within the Tablighi Jamaat, *mushāwarah* (consultative deliberation) is a central practice through which collective reasoning is enacted, especially in organizing *da'wah* activities, *khurūj* routes, task delegation, and personal responsibilities. While not issuing formal *fatwās*, these sessions function as informal spaces for normative reasoning, governed by moral commitment and experiential authority rather than codified jurisprudence. In the context of Islamic legal thought, *mushāwarah* within the Jamaat can be read as a form of *ijtihād jamā'ī*, a collective effort to arrive at legal jurisprudence decisions, inflected decisions rooted in spiritual experience, communal consensus, and adaptive ethical judgment.

This mechanism of moral deliberation is observable in the rhythm of local operations. At both the Purworejo and Sragen field sites, *mushāwarah* meetings were conducted daily after Ṣubḥ Prayer in *muṣalla* or mosques with active Tablighi members. Weekly meetings were also scheduled at the *halaqah* level, a regional unit above the *Markaz*, typically consisting of several subdistricts (kecamatan) that serve as the Tablighi work area. At the Musholla At-Taqwa, for instance, participants discussed who should be encouraged to join the next *khurūj*. This was not based solely on logistics but on the perceived spiritual readiness and family circumstances of each individual (Fieldnote, Musholla At-Taqwa, 2024). Such evaluation reveals a moral way of thinking resembling juridical reasoning, wherein *maṣlaḥa* (communal benefit) and *ta'addī al-mafṣadah* (avoiding harm) are weighed dynamically. While classical *uṣūl al-fiqh* texts may not explicitly authorize these forms of localized deliberation (Anshori & Abdurahman, 2025), the logic of *shar'ī* consultation is alive in these discussions, shaped through lived religious experience rather than institutionalized doctrine.

Interview data further confirm that *mushāwarah* does not function as open debate but as a consensus-seeking activity led by senior members or appointed *amīrs*. H. Sudarman explained: "There's no voting, no long debates. But we wait until the elders give their opinions, then usually everyone joins in. That's the blessing of *mushāwarah*" (Sudarman, 2023). This practice reinforces that Islamic discursive traditions are sustained through authoritative transmission and embodied discipline rather than legalistic formalism (Asad, 2009). The structure of *mushāwarah*, where younger members rarely speak unless prompted, reflects a hierarchy of moral authority that privileges *'ilm al-aḥwāl* (experiential knowledge) over formal credentialism.

The *mushāwarah* format in the Tablighi Jamaat, while lacking formal juridical structure, represents a robust mode of moral-legal reasoning deeply embedded in daily religious practice. From field observations and interviews in Purworejo and Sragen, it becomes evident that *mushāwarah* is not merely logistical coordination, but a space where lived knowledge (*'ilm al-aḥwāl*) is filtered through communal deliberation. For example, in after *Maghrib* sessions observed in Purworejo *Markaz*, decisions about *khurūj* group formation, leadership delegation, and message delivery were all settled through extended discussions led by the *amīr*, with other members contributing based on their personal experience and religious understanding. These are not abstract debates but are grounded in affective sincerity and immediate moral consequences, often including stories of past travels, emotional reflections, and theological reminders. In such settings, *'ilm al-aḥwāl* does not conflict with *'ilm al-aql* (rational-legal discourse); rather, it enriches the interpretive process through embodied experience (Surūr, 2015).

The authority structure within these *mushāwarah* also resists strict hierarchy while maintaining epistemic deference. The *amīr* does not issue legal rulings but moderates collective consensus. When decisions about travel itineraries, participant eligibility, or approaches to *da'wah* delivery are made, they often rely on shared memories of past efforts, consensus around spiritual benefit (*manfa'ah*), and perceived *barakah* of certain times or places (Ali, 2003; Noor, 2012; Qurashi, 1989). This relational mode of reasoning reflects what Peter Frank terms affective religious authority, where trust and charisma, rooted in past ethical behavior, allow

certain voices to shape decisions without invoking *fatwā* authority. In this way, the gatherings reflect *ijtihād jamā'ī*, not as formal legal deduction but as a lived hermeneutics of everyday action.

Importantly, this informal legal discourse also reflects an operational logic akin to *al-siyāsah al-shar'iyyah*, in that decisions are made for the good of the collective, not just the individual. Asad's emphasis on tradition as a discipline embodied through practices, rather than merely texts, is evident in how *mushāwarah* teaches deference, patience, turn-taking, and humility. It is not only the content of what is said that matters, but also the way speech is embodied, timed, and received. As observed in multiple observations, especially in the Musholla At-Taqwa and Ruqun Sragen sessions, participants learn to restrain ego, consult collaboratively, and defer when necessary. This participatory ethic subtly produces *adab* (moral comportment) and legal consciousness in ways that formal institutions often fail to inculcate.

In interviews with KH. Rohani and KH. Adrian Juanan, *mushāwarah* was repeatedly described as a space where sincerity (*ikhhlās*), mutual respect, and ethical comportment (*adab*) take precedence over debate or technical authority. KH. Adrian emphasized that decisions made in *mushāwarah* are not merely functional but represent a shared commitment to maintaining harmony and honoring the moral weight of the *amīr's* perspective, especially when younger or less experienced members are involved (Raden, 2023). Similarly, KH. Rohani explained that "even seemingly minor decisions are approached with a sense of spiritual responsibility, where group members defer not only to seniority but to what they perceive as signs of divine guidance through consultation" (Rohani, 2024). This reveals how *mushāwarah*, though unofficial and unsanctioned by formal ulama councils, functions as a site of communal legal consciousness shaped by sincerity, repetition, embodied participation, and the ethical imperative to consult in the path of Allah. These are precisely the conditions Talal Asad and Peter Frank identify as the constitutive features of Islamic normativity.

Doctrinal Texts and Embodied Ethics: *Fadhā'il A'māl, Manzil, and Ritual Habitus*

While the Tablighi Jamaat formally distances itself from the institutional structures of Sufi orders, its lived religious practices consistently exhibit the embodied discipline of a "silent tarekat". This is particularly evident in the internal logic of its rituals—daily routines, *majlis ta'lim*, *dhikr*, *khurūj*, and collective etiquette—that form a distinct spiritual habitus. These practices do not merely express individual piety; they cultivate shared ethical comportments that are central to the Jamaat's identity and communal cohesion. This section examines how Tablighi Jamaat rituals serve as mechanisms of moral formation, functioning as tacit frameworks of legal consciousness even in the absence of formal *fiqh* reasoning or organizational allegiance.

Through such repeated performance, Tablighi Jamaat members cultivate what Bourdieu would describe as a habitus—a set of embodied dispositions that shape action without formal instruction (Peter, 2025). While the movement avoids explicit theorization of law, these *adab*-based routines encode ethical constraints and moral disciplines with far-reaching effects. Members often remark that although "Tablighi Jamaat is not a *tariqah*", their daily conduct among the members feels like being part of one. The rituals instill discipline over speech, movement, attention, and affect—qualities that Sufi orders have long associated with the path of spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). Without requiring allegiance to a *shaykh* or a textual *Madhhab*, the Tablighi Jamaat has constructed an immersive system of ethical behavior through repetition and bodily attunement.

This becomes even more pronounced during *khurūj*, the temporary missionary journey. In many ways, *khurūj* functions like a spiritual retreat (*riyadah nafsaniyyah*). Its structure—set

days away from home, limited possessions, strict itineraries, shared sleeping quarters, designated amīrs, and a regimented schedule of worship, *da'wah*, and collective meals—mirrors many practices of Sufi *khalwat*. Members voluntarily enter a space where worldly distractions are suspended, and routine becomes a form of sanctification. The logic of *khurūj* emphasizes *ṣabr* (patience), *tawāḍu'* (humility), *khidmah* (service), and *ṣuḥbah* (companionship), all of which align with core Sufi virtues (Gaborieau, 2006; Masud, 2000). While there is no formal *mu'āhadah* (covenant) with a *murshid*, the rhythmic structure of *khurūj* generates its own binding affective contracts between participants.

The *pesantren* Al-Fatah Temboro and its affiliated institutions offer a vivid example of how these practices translate into communal ethical norms. Although Tablighi Jamaat activities at Temboro avoid the language of *ṭarīqah*, their routines are saturated with Chishti sensibilities: a silent discipline in *dhikr*, restraint in speech, a preference for collective anonymity over individual recognition, and high reverence for *ta'lim* circles. Many residents also continue to practice elements of the Naqshbandi or Chishti orders in private, further blending affective piety with structured pedagogy (Arifin, 2017a). Here, the absence of formal *bay'ah* does not mark a break from Sufi tradition, but rather an evolution, where the essence of *ṭarīqa* continues through tacit action rather than declarative allegiance.

This process constitutes what we have termed the "silent *tarekat*": a non-institutional formation that reconfigures Sufi ethics through ritual habitus. The silence here is not only rhetorical, marked by the absence of legal polemics and theological declarations, but structural. The Tablighi Jamaat's avoidance of formal legal rulings, public *fatwā*, or political statements does not indicate passivity or apoliticism, but reflects a strategic form of legal quietism. By prioritizing embodied norms over legal articulation, Tablighi Jamaat embodies a type of *fiqh* that is not written, but lived. This has important implications for Islamic legal consciousness. It challenges the notion that legal subjectivity must be formed through formal education or codified texts. Instead, the Tablighi experience suggests that spiritual legality can arise from sustained ritual performance, affective discipline, and a social environment of mutual reinforcement. It reflects a *Ḥanafī*–Chishti synthesis: deference to community practice (*urf*), avoidance of *ikhtilāf*, and the pursuit of *ḥāl* as a legal–ethical sensibility (Khalfoui, 2011; Karimullah & Arif, 2023).

The structured routines of *ta'lim*, *khurūj*, and *ḥalaqāt* are not isolated rituals but operate as an immersive moral ecosystem. Through these repeated actions, members learn a way of behaving that shapes how they interact, speak, stay silent, and move together as a group. Every gesture, whether it is sitting attentively in a learning circle, holding back personal opinions, or enduring the challenges of travel, becomes part of a quiet, lived form of learning about Islamic law. Rather than deriving authority from codified sources or individual charisma, these practices embed the ethical sensibilities of the group into bodily performance and shared atmosphere. It is through the repeated intensity of lived experience, emotion, and submission that a new sense of legal consciousness emerges, one that moves beyond formal institutional labels like *tarekat* and instead aligns with the rhythms of a transformed spiritual discipline.

The Tablighi Jamaat's approach to Islamic legal authority is distinguished by its consistent avoidance of issuing *fatwā* or engaging in formal legal debates. This strategic restraint, particularly when contrasted with the prominence of institutions such as the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah, does not represent a vacuum of legal reasoning (Prasetyo & Ayu, 2022; Muhammad, Burhani, Hamdi, 2025). Rather, it embodies an alternative mode of engaging with Islamic normativity through a lived ethic grounded in silence, deference, and disciplined presence.

In Indonesia, the dominant modes of Islamic legal production revolve around *fatwā* councils and institutional authority. NU and Muhammadiyah maintain structured mechanisms of legal deliberation. NU's *Lembaga Bahtsul Masail* and Muhammadiyah's *Majelis Tarjih* offer

responses to contemporary issues using the tools of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, most often within the framework of *Shāfiʿī* Madhhab. The MUI, with its close alignment with state authority, serves as both a moral guide and a semi-official body, issuing *fatwā* on matters ranging from halal certification to electoral politics (Pradana, 2017). In this legal and institutional landscape, the Tablighi Jamaat stands apart, not because it lacks an orientation toward Islamic law, but because it expresses that orientation through a different modality. Field data from Purworejo and Sragen indicate that the Jamaat avoids direct engagement with controversial legal questions. Members refrain from commenting on issues such as political reform, gender legislation, or sectarian critique. Phrases such as "*not our concern*" or "*we focus only on action and preaching*" are commonly used to delineate the boundaries of their involvement. This avoidance is not simply a cultural reflex, but an internalized ethic cultivated during *khurūj*, *taʿlīm*, and *bayān*. The absence of *fatwā*, in this context, functions as a conscious form of ethical orientation.

The movement privileges *ʿamal* (practice) over *qawl* (*fatwā* – legal opinion). Preaching is not about polemics, but about demonstrating sincerity (*ikhhlās*), intention (*niyyah*), and behavior (*akhlāq*). As emphasized in *Fadhāʾil al-Aʿmāl*, moral transformation is expected to occur through regular, repetitive acts that shape the self and the community (Al-Kandahlawi, 2006; Noor, 2012). Accordingly, members are trained not to argue or debate but to embody religious ideals through punctual prayer, ritual cleanliness, and mutual service. Law is enacted through example, not through legal reasoning.

In group settings, including *mushāwarah* and daily routines during *khurūj*, younger members are discouraged from engaging with polemical literature or issuing judgments. Ethical behavior is shaped not by formal juridical instruction but by mutual observation and shared rhythm. This internal dynamic reflects what may be called a discipline of presence, a mode of normativity transmitted through repetition, silence, and affective alignment. This discipline generates a legal consciousness that resists codification. The refusal to issue *fatwā* or to articulate formal doctrinal positions does not stem from ignorance but from a deliberate spiritual posture. Elders in local Jamaat communities repeatedly emphasize that they are not *muftis*, but seekers who aim to revive prophetic practice. The stress lies in *adab* (etiquette), humility, and collective sincerity. In this environment, silence becomes a marker of maturity: the less one speaks in juridical terms, the more one is perceived as spiritually grounded.

This posture also serves to insulate the Tablighi Jamaat from ideological and institutional entanglements. Unlike NU and Muhammadiyah, whose *fatwā* are often linked to national debates or policy interventions (Ansori, 2022; Laffan, 2005), the Tablighi Jamaat maintains a posture of withdrawal. This is not a rejection of the state per se, but a refusal to instrumentalize religious authority. The community thus avoids both politicization and fragmentation, maintaining cohesion through shared routines and decentralized structures. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this stance drew public scrutiny. Some questioned the group's silence regarding health protocols or mosque closures (Hamdi, 2022; Khafsoh et al., 2022). In response, elders in *pesantren* such as Temboro expressed compliance with local health directives but refrained from public pronouncements. This behavior was consistent with the group's ethos: law is followed quietly, through practice, not through formal endorsement (Mustautina, 2020). The internal teaching of the Jamaat reinforces this ethic. In the constrained and communal life of *khurūj*, every detail, from toilet cleaning to sleeping arrangements, is part of an affective discipline that fosters humility and order (Musaffa & Abdurrahman, 2023). These practices serve as forms of practical instruction in what is permitted, prioritized, or discouraged. Although not framed in the language of *fiqh*, they cultivate the same sensibilities: punctuality in daily prayers, prioritization of communal obligation, ritual purity, and attentiveness to *adab*.

What emerges from this constellation of practices is not an absence of Islamic law, but a particular style of legal consciousness—subtle, embodied, and affectively transmitted. It operates below the threshold of legal speech but saturates the space of daily life. This is the discipline of presence: a form of legal normativity that is sustained through bodily comportment, ritual regularity, and ethical restraint. In doing so, the Tablighi Jamaat offers a distinct model of Islamic legal engagement, one that bypasses formalism and instead cultivates lived jurisprudence. This approach does not undermine the Sharia; rather, it expresses it through a different grammar. In silence, the law is not diminished but redirected. In action, it is not codified but preserved. In the presence, it is not declared but lived.

Discursive Adaptation and Indonesian Reception of the Jamaat

In Indonesia's Islamic landscape, the Tablighi Jamaat occupies a paradoxical position: active yet silent, visible yet marginal. It sustains spiritual influence without issuing *fatwā*, engaging in polemics, or participating in formal religious institutions. This peripheral legal stance signals more than doctrinal divergence—it reflects a structural dislocation within the national configuration of Islamic law.

Major Islamic organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) function as recognized legal producers under the framework of the Shāfi'ī madhhab. Their *fatwā* bodies—NU's Bahtsul Masail and Muhammadiyah's Majelis Tarjih—regularly respond to public questions regarding politics, economics, medicine, and gender ethics. The MUI, with its semi-official status, extends this authority into state policy (Ansori, 2022; Hasyim, 2020; Kaptein & Laffan, 2005; Pradana, 2017). Within this ecosystem, Islamic law is codified, publicized, and sometimes institutionally binding.

In contrast, the Tablighi Jamaat's disengagement from public legal discourse is deliberate. Its absence from institutional deliberation is not due to ignorance or theological deficiency, but reflects a distinct epistemology of normativity. As previous sections have shown, the Jamaat cultivates legal consciousness through embodied discipline, repetition, and adab, rather than through textual rulings or public statements. Its legal life emerges through what may be termed “embodied legal quietude”—a non-verbal, performative mode of norm articulation. This positions the Jamaat outside Indonesia's dominant *fiqh* infrastructures. While NU and Muhammadiyah feature prominently in academic, state, and legal arenas, the Tablighi Jamaat remains largely invisible. This invisibility does not stem from a lack of legal substance, but from methodological divergence. Its *Hanafī* roots—via Deobandi scholarship and Chishti Sufism—do not align with Indonesia's Shāfi'ī-dominated legal discourse (Gaborieau, 2006; Metcalf, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates this disjuncture. Unlike NU or Muhammadiyah, which issued public religious guidance and supported health policies, the Tablighi Jamaat responded through local *mushāwarah* and private adjustment. In Temboro, members complied with safety protocols, but without formal declarations. Field notes indicate that internal leadership prioritized communal discipline over public instruction (Mustautina, 2020). This silence was misread by some as noncompliance or resistance, when in fact it reflected an ethical refusal to engage in public legal spectacle—a stance consistent with its ethos of discretion and anti-institutionalism.

Yet, this posture has consequences. In a public sphere that prioritizes institutional clarity and legal visibility, movements like the Tablighi Jamaat risk marginalization (Kustiawan et al., 2023; Pieri, 2019; Saepuloh et al., 2022). Their quiet form of Islamicity—based on lived norms rather than declared doctrine—often remains illegible to state mechanisms of religious governance. Nevertheless, this marginality may serve as a shield, preserving the Jamaat's internal autonomy from co-optation and political contestation.

Furthermore, the Jamaat's marginal position reveals a deeper tension between the discursive and institutional life of Islamic law in Indonesia. The conceptualization of *fiqh* as a body of texts, rulings, and clerical authority has dominated state-religious structures, but it does not exhaust the range of Islamic normativity practiced across the archipelago (Peter, 2025; Hasyim, 2020; Lohlker, 2023). The Tablighi Jamaat represents a model in which Islamic law is developed through ethical behavior and personal conduct, rather than through formal legal reasoning or detailed juristic discussion. Its members may not issue *fatwā*, but they live by norms with legal weight—timeliness, cleanliness, modesty, silence, and respect for the Muslim. These are not merely ethical practices; they are operationalized forms of law enacted without proclamation. In this sense, the Tablighi Jamaat illustrates a form of legal subjectivity that sits at the margins yet sustains deep continuities with the Islamic tradition. Its embodied practice echoes the structure of classical Sufi disciplines while adopting a collective, post-charismatic ethos. Its legal consciousness draws from *Ḥanafī* deference, Chishti humility, and Deobandi pedagogical rigor, yet these sources are rarely cited, textualized, or systematized. What remains is a quiet transmission of law through life—enacted, remembered, and shared without codification.

This discontinuity between institutional recognition and embodied legal life reveals a broader problem in the study of Islamic law: the tendency to equate legal relevance with legal proclamation. By occupying the silent margins of this field, the Tablighi Jamaat forces a reconsideration of what counts as legal agency. It shows that *fiqh* can be practiced without being declared, that legal life can persist without entering the circuits of *fatwā*, and that religious authority can be sustained without juridical infrastructure. In this silence, the movement holds continuity—legal, ethical, and spiritual—even as it remains displaced from the national architecture of Islamic law.

Conclusion

This article has explored how the Tablighi Jamaat in Indonesia sustains an Islamic legal consciousness outside the conventional domains of textual authority and institutional *fatwā*. Rather than positioning itself in direct engagement with the legal bodies of NU, Muhammadiyah, or the Majelis Ulama Indonesia, the Jamaat cultivates a form of normativity grounded in disciplined routines, embodied piety, and shared ethical comportment. Its practices, such as *khurūj*, *mushāwarah*, and the structured *adab al-ta'lim*, point to a tradition that does not abandon Islamic law but lives it differently: not as a set of declarative rulings, but as a sustained performance of ethical form.

At the heart of this mode lies a tension between visibility and silence. The absence of juridical proclamations does not signal a lack of legal reasoning. Instead, what is right or expected is shaped through repeated actions, emotional experiences, and being together in shared space. This is where the language of *fiqh* is not spoken, but enacted. Drawing from a legacy that blends the Chishti Sufi orientation with *Ḥanafī* legal sensibilities, the Jamaat does not sever its ties with its intellectual inheritance but reframes it through collective presence and restraint. The avoidance of *bay'ah*, the emphasis on *ikhhlās* and *tawādu'*, and the refusal to partake in polemics or legal confrontation reflect a particular calibration of authority, grounded in practice rather than pronouncement.

This article has approached the Jamaat's legal consciousness through theoretical frameworks that attend to normativity as discursive, embodied, and affective. The contribution lies in showing how a movement may carry the weight of a legal tradition while refusing the signs most often associated with legal authority—text, verdict, or institution. This is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where Islamic law is often understood through

institutionalized expressions. The Tablighi Jamaat offers a contrasting case: a community of discipline, rather than declaration.

At the same time, the scope of this study is necessarily limited. While fieldwork in Java, particularly in Purworejo, Sragen, and Temboro, has provided important insight, this research does not speak for the full spectrum of Tablighi experience across Indonesia. Nor does it explore in detail the participation of women or how younger generations navigate the tensions between inherited practice and contemporary expectation. These are significant areas for further inquiry. Future research might expand this conversation by considering other Islamic groups whose engagement with law is similarly quiet, understated, or embodied. Comparative work with post-*tarīqah* formations or non-fatwa-oriented communities may offer a broader picture of how Islamic normativity is lived in the absence of centralized instruction. Closer attention to how *Hanafi* fiqh is remembered, reshaped, or lived outside the seminary context could deepen our understanding of legal life beyond the textual archive.

What emerges, then, is not a community without law, but a different way of carrying it. The Jamaat does not write its legal commitments into public rulings; it performs them in prayer rows, sleeping mats, and daily rotations of duty. In these movements, in this silence, a structure endures.

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