COVID 19 PANDEMIC IN INDONESIA: SOME REFLECTIONS FROM BAŻL AL-MĀʿŪN BY IBN ḤĀJR AL-ʿASQALĀNĪ

Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy*, Mustaqim Pabbajah**, Hasse Jubba***, Muhammad Zain**#, Arkan Syafera**#


Email: *saifuddin.zuhri@uin-suka.ac.id

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.sp2022no1.3

Abstract

History and pandemics are two inseparable entities, yet often forgotten. The occurrence of a pandemic in a certain time and place has always become a critical object of study and documentation, thus generating innumerable research literature. This research attempts to re-state the urgency of historical literature as a source of knowledge on dealing with the Covid-19 crisis through the religious scholars’ approach. The data were compiled through observation and literature review with content analysis method on Bażl al-Māʿūn of Ibn Ḥajr al-ʿAsqalānī, a classic
book containing pandemic studies sourced from ḥadīth and the history of the early Muslim community. The result of this study reveals that classical religious literature as historical knowledge could provide contextual solutions for society. The study of the historical works not only gives clues on the past events but also provides material to contextualise the attempt to build newly-induced awareness in the community. Learning from past events teaches society that pandemics are recurring events. Some similarities and differences are seen in every part of the pandemic. Thus, religious scholars serve as agents who disseminate the lesson learned from the past to prevent the recurrence of similar events in the future. This way, people of today should refer to the past to set some appropriate strategies for coping with the pandemic. Likewise, a historical account mentions the relevance of some terminologies that are currently used around Covid-19.

**Keywords:** Covid-19; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī; religious scholars; Ḥadīth; Baẓl al-Māʿūn.

**Khulasah**
Introduction
There have been innumerable studies to address the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia from the medical perspective, whereas the relevant historical literature has arguably been ignored despite its potential to be one of the sources of knowledge. Thus, the academic community needs to take into account the history of pandemics from the religious perspective despite the constant focus on the medical aspect.¹ The ongoing pandemic crisis has given rise to social anxiety and information dependency on medical authorities.

disseminated through media, including for a large number of Muslims. This condition pinpoints that Indonesian Muslims do not have adequate knowledge regarding the pandemic of the past.

Historical knowledge about past events is crucial as a lesson to learn and to reflect the need for future steps to take as a wise decision making in dealing with a particular problem, including the pandemic situation. This poor understanding of the current situation is proven by the number of violations of the health protocols that bring about the escalating rate of Covid-19 infection in Indonesia.²

There has been a daily constant rise of Covid-19 cases as the Covid-19 Handling Task Force (Gugus Tugas Penanganan Covid-19) pointed out that 15 June 2021 saw the highest case increase, amounting to almost 2 million cases; the highest recorded cases since the announcement on the first confirmed cases on March 2, 2020. On this basis, a review of historical works is needed as the alternative source of information in addition to the widely accessible information from the medical authorities.

Thus far, there has been little research on history books and their connection to the pandemic, especially in terms of classical Islamic history books. Hence, the current study aims to cover three perspectives of knowledge about past pandemics and how it was handled. First, Telaumbanua, Maulana, and Wardiana showed that the pandemic is an epidemic of an infectious disease that has spread across a large region and requires special

treatment. This fact further stimulates some medical research on this topic.

The second perspective is related to responses and management of the pandemic. Azwar et al. and Yuliana showed that someone who is detected early experiencing symptoms of Gastrointestinal and chest pain can prevent patients from unnecessary services. As well as the predictable impact on all walks of life during and after the pandemic, such as economic impact.

The third perspective concerns the accommodation of societal approaches and local wisdom in responding to the pandemic, as shown by Putra and Anis. Thus far, it has

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been revealed that local wisdom plays a great role in the outbreak of every pandemic situation.\(^8\)

Indonesians mostly share a lack of awareness of the relevant literature on the history of pandemics, especially for works written in foreign languages, such as Arabic, since only a handful of Indonesians have a prolific competence in the Arabic language. *Bazl al-Māʿūn* of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī is a work written in the XV century. It is one of the essential works about the history of pandemics that Muslims may have overlooked.\(^9\)

The history of the past pandemic and the way it was handled as written in classical Islamic literature have been relatively understudied. Some Arabic treatises have accounted for some major plague pandemics throughout the VII to the XV centuries of Islamic civilization. These treatises have attempted to provide religious and theologically oriented explanations in dealing with the pandemic, and thus it was deemed to provide an insufficient contribution to medical aspects. *Bazl al-Māʿūn* of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī is however rather unique since it narrated the mitigation strategies to fight the plague. This article elaborates on the book and its ideas on addressing the pandemic crisis, and how it becomes one of

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the references to be widely read by Indonesian Muslims in their attempt to understand the unending Covid-19 pandemic that they are currently facing.

This article is based on three arguments. First, Bażl al-Māʿūn provides ideas on how to encounter the pandemic at its time. The currently commonplace terminologies of plague mitigation strategies, such as physical distancing, quarantine, isolation, and so on were practised in the fifteenth century. Second, the book also covers several medical treatments in addressing the disease, meaning that there is much more than theological polemic that Muslims were concerned about at the time of the pandemic. Third, the ideas offered by Bażl al-Māʿūn have started to gain popularity these days in Indonesia, both through online and offline learning sets. Also, there has been a discursive discussion on the attempt to refer to the hadīths mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī in his book as the dynamics of Indonesian Muslims in dealing with Covid-19.

The Pandemic in the Islamic World

A pandemic is a medical terminology that refers to the outburst of disease that affects a significant proportion of people over a very large area. The pandemic has gone beyond provincial, radical, conceptual, spiritual, social, and pedagogical boundaries. The Islamic perspective offers at least two concepts to understand pandemics. First, the pandemic is a natural calamity, or an absolute truth of divine planning (sunnatullāh), which happens

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only for the will of Allah.\textsuperscript{12} Second, the pandemic shall also be considered as \textit{marad} (an illness). In this context, Al Eid & Arnout\textsuperscript{13} conducted a qualitative analysis of the Qur’\text’\text{\'}anic verses and the prophetic traditions on the issue and suggested four key management concepts in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, namely the strategy, stages, leaders’ characteristics, and leaders’ role during the management of the crisis. One of the preventive measures of the global pandemic is the implementation of physical distancing as a new global norm.\textsuperscript{14} During this time of crisis, it is proven that the most significant \textit{da\textquotesingle wah} (Islamic proselytizing) method is by calling for people to combine religious and scientific-based mitigation strategies.\textsuperscript{15}

Islamic tenets on epidemics are aimed to protect people from death and sickness, as Ashraf et al.\textsuperscript{16} conveyed, that the Prophet Muhammad once advised the companions to maintain their healthy lifestyle to save their lives from a plague by walking away from regions with an outbreak of a plague. In addition to that, Islam also gives children, pregnant women, and individuals suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes mellitus, kidney failure,

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heart disease, lung, and cancer the relief of fasting; those individuals are also highly vulnerable to the Covid-19 infection. In other words, Islamic tenets are highly concerned with maintaining a healthy lifestyle for individual and community well-being. According to Faraz et al., dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic requires a holistic approach, including preventive, remedial, social, and emotional measures. Likewise, High et al. suggested that the pandemic is a health crisis that requires continuous treatment and recovery measures.

Methodology
This article applied library research on Bażl al-Māʿūn as the primary source of data. In particular, it interpretatively analyses the description of the book about the ways to treat the people infected with ṭāʾūn. The last section of this article focuses on the data about the use of Bażl al-Māʿūn in Indonesia as a mitigation reference during the pandemic crisis to see how knowledge about pandemics in the book could be useful in addressing the current issues of Covid-19.

The data referred to in the research analysis was obtained from a literature review, particularly referring to Kitab Bażl al-Māʿūn written by Ibn ajar al-ʿAsqalānī. The particular reference derived from this book was mainly on the explanation of the pandemic, including the coping strategy for the dangerous conditions generated by the

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18 Faraz et al., ”Fighting pandemics,” S-155.
pandemic. Once the data related to the pandemic were collected from the book, they were analysed through the perspective of content analysis to figure out the appropriate meaning in each excerpt of the book regarding the pandemic.

This article begins with a brief overview of Bażl al-Māʿūn to describe the research object understudy as the primary data. The following section of this article presents a review of the handling of the pandemic in Indonesia by elaborating on the strategies chosen by various parties, including the government.

A Brief Overview of Bażl al-Māʿūn and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī had a full name of Shihāb-al-Dīn Ibn Faḍl Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar. He was born in the riverside of Nile, around Dār-al-Nuhas, near al-Jadīd Mosque, Egypt in Shaʿbān 773 AH or February 1372 AD, and passed away on 18 Dhū-al-ḥijja 852 AH or 2 February 1449 AD. He was an orphan since his childhood. His father was a muftī and his mother was a wealthy woman; both passed away when he was a child. Al-ʿAsqalānī could memorize the entire Qurʾān when he was only nine years old. When he was eleven, he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and further stayed in the holy city to learn fiqh and the Qurʾān, even though eventually what interested him the most was hadīth. He moved from one city to another,

including Yemen, Sham, and Cairo, to learn hadīth from some renowned scholars in Yemen, Sham, and Cairo.23

He then compiled the names of his teachers in *al-Majma‘ al-Mu‘assas bi al-Mu‘jam al-Mufahras*. Some of the names he mentioned in this book are al-Zin al-‘Iraqī (ḥadīth teacher), al-Nūr al-Ḥaithamī (a *mutūn* memoriser), and so on. After he got married, he became a supreme judge in Egypt for 21 years. During this time, he developed quite a reputation before the Mamlūk II dynasty. He had five daughters. Al-ʿAsqalānī was a prolific writer who produced a lot of works, two of which were *Bulugh al-Marām* and *Fatḥ al-Bārī*; two of his greatest work in *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* and *Sharḥ al-Ḥadīth*.24

Based on the information provided in *Bażl al-Mā‘ūn*, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī wrote the book based on a request from his colleagues who needed information about the pandemic and how to handle it. This urgent demand motivated him to write a book following the death of three of his daughters for an outbreak of the rampant pandemic on that day.25 The book, however, was published quite recently, in 1991 in Dār al-ʿĀṣima, Riyadh, covering a volume of 440 pages, edited by Aḥmad Iṣām ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Kātib. The book was written with the following structure: Chapter 1 on the attitude towards Ṭāʿūn, Chapter 2 on the definition of Ṭāʿūn, Chapter 3 on Ṭāʿūn as shahīd and mercy for Muslims, Chapter 4 on the legal status of entering and leaving from a region with the outbreak of a pandemic, and the last chapter discusses the recommendations during the Ṭāʿūn crisis.26

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25 Ibid., 4.
26 Ibid., 5.
Table 1. The Relevance of *Bażl al-Māʿūn fi Fadhl al-Ṭāʿūn* with COVID-19

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Source: Derived from *Bażl al-Māʿūn*
This section discusses some keywords around the pandemic management, especially Covid-19. Based on the explanation of al-ʿAsqalānī’s book, this study highlights the similarities between terminologies in pandemic management in the past from the XV century when Bażl al-Māʿūn was written and those of the present. Each term will be discussed in sequential order.

1. Ṭāʿūn, Plague and Pandemic

Ṭāʿūn is a kind of disease that affects a large number of people, with distinctive and different ways of transmission from other common diseases and with different from the others.²⁷ Citing from al-Nawāwī, al-ʿAsqalānī stated that Ṭāʿūn was a widely recognized disease. It is a small boil yet very painful. It could be taken out with the heat of the fire that, however, makes the surrounding skin turn black, green, or purplish red. When people contract the disease, their heartbeat heightens, and they will vomit. They will suffer from some boils that usually grow around the groin, armpits, hand, fingers, or across the whole body.²⁸ Ṭāʿūn not only occurred in Islamic regions but also spread around the world. Ṭaʿūn is different from wabaʾ since the former is more specific than the latter. In this context, it equals the pandemic, in the same way, that the virus affects a very large area, and even spread all around the world with rapid transmission from one region to another. It is noteworthy to take heed of the differentiation between ṭāʿūn and wabāʾ since al-ʿAsqalānī specifically devoted a part of his book to the dispute around this issue. He objected to a view considering wabaʾ as ṭāʿūn, referring to a ḥadīth about the city of Medina that was transmitted by Anas from Rasūlullāh, who said: “Dajjāl would get into Medina, but the angel knows of it, so they

²⁷ Al-ʿAsqalānī, Bażl al-Māʿūn, 95.
²⁸ Ibid., 97.
could not enter the city, as the ṭāʾūn could not inshāʾ’Allāh.⁹⁹

Al-ʿʿAsqalānī cited several aḥādīth on the characteristic of ṭāʾūn which greatly reduced the number of the Muslim population. Ibn al-Athīr, in al-Nihāyah, mentioned a ḥadīth that goes: “My people are annihilated by war (ṭaʿni) and ṭāʾūn. Furthermore, citing from ʿAbd al-Bār, al-ʿʿAsqalānī.⁳⁰ wrote a ḥadīth: “Ṭāʾūn is like ghuddah (the gland) of a camel that grows in the armpit or the groin.” Al-ʿʿAsqalānī mentions the general characteristics of ṭāʾūn, as follows: a) the swollen gland on the body, such as the armpit, sometimes in the hand, or the whole body; b) it could grow in every part of the body, such as festering sores, the boil, or the acne, but more often on the armpit; c) having sore throat; it is not ṭāʾūn unless happening during the ṭāʾūn time.⁴¹

In the next section, al-ʿʿAsqalānī shows that the occurrence and the increasing cases of the plague were caused by the defective air, which resulted from two factors: arḍiyya and samāʾiyya. Arḍiyya is a condition where the water was contaminated by corpses - such as the unmanaged corps from war, the submersion of the graveyard, or water sources resided by insects or frogs. Samāʾiyya, on the other hand, refers to the increasing number of falling meteors at the end of the summer, which led to the rise of the volume of the south or east wind in two seasons, and the widespread of pre-rain signs during the summer but without the actual rain. This knowledge is based on experiences, as al-Jāḥiẓ stated, “if a crow feels such kind of wind, it would leave the area right away, as so the mouse, it would hide underneath the soil.”

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29 Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad bin Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, (Karachi: al-Bushra, 2016), 936
30 Al-ʿʿAsqalānī, Bazl al-Māʾūn, 96.
31 Ibid., 99-100.
2. Physical Distancing

The definition of this word is to physically keep a safe distance between one person to another, typically between 1.5 to 2 m, in the public sphere. Concerning this issue, Bażł al-Māʿūn gives some lines of explanation. The first explanation is about the attitude of ʿAmr ibn ʿĀṣ during his administration in Sham, that he asked the people to go to the mountain and avoid the crowds. He said: “Verily, Ṭāʿūn is vile; you should walk away from it.”

Secondly, al-ʿAsqalānī once refused to attend a kingdom-commissioned event of prayer for protection from a pandemic. He argued that such a kind of prayer is heresy and syllogistically inconsistent with the prayer begging for rain. The idea behind the protection prayer was an ijāzah from a pious who had met the Prophet Muhammad in his dream. In the dream, he stated, the Prophet taught him the prayer and how to perform it. Al-ʿAsqalānī denied and rejected this dream as the legal basis of the prayer. For him, a ḥadīth could not be transmitted through a dream. Before him, Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī and Ibn Abī Halaja had the same view as al-ʿAsqalānī on this issue.

Al-ʿAsqalānī further reported that, when a pandemic affected Damascus, the residents organised a communal prayer in an open field. They cried and begged God for the disease to be uplifted. Nevertheless, according to al-ʿAsqalānī, the prayer did not reduce the contagion but rather boosted it because a large number of people had gathered in one place. Nevertheless, concerning the issue of visiting the sick, referring to a ḥadīth al-ʿAsqalānī justified that; one can visit and pray for his sick fellow; something we should not do during this Covid-19 crisis.

33 Ibid., 332-334.
3. Isolation
The term isolation refers to a situation in which a sick person secludes him/herself from others to prevent contagion. There is a ḥadīth that concerns this idea, transmitted by Abū Hurayrah: “A sick person should not be taken to one who is healthy” (Sahih Bukhari dan Muslim).34 Besides, the Prophet had also said that: “It is forbidden to do harm and cause harm” (transmitted by Ibn Mājjah, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal from ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās). In Bażl al-Māʿūn, al-ʿAsqalānī wrote: “Whoever resides in a country which is affected by Ṭāʿūn, shall stay patiently in there and shall not walk away, and shall contemplate, and deserves the rewards equal to shahīd”.35

An individual should isolate himself from others when contracting a disease. Those suffering from a less chronic disease shall conduct self-isolation and keep away from interacting with other people. The current support of advanced technology allows early detection of disease even for the asymptomatic. Self-isolation, either for symptomatic or asymptomatic patients during a pandemic crisis is a must to constrain the contagion. Technological developments have enabled early detection of disease, especially for Covid-19 cases as a way to prevent the spread of the virus to larger masses.

4. Lockdown and Quarantine
The term ‘lockdown’ refers to a state of restricted access instituted as anticipation against the spread of the disease. Likewise, quarantine refers to a situation where people must stay at home or a particular designated place for a certain period to avoid contagion from and to other people. Both measures are conducted to cut off the chain of contagion. A fragment of a ḥadīth says: “So if you hear of the spread of Ṭāʿūn (plague) in a land, don't approach

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34 Al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīh al-Bukhārī, 177
35 Al-ʿAsqalānī, Bażl al-Māʿūn, 255.
it, and if a plague should appear in a land where you are present, then don't leave that land to run away from it.”\textsuperscript{36} 

Al-ʿAsqalānī devoted one particular chapter on this issue, namely \textit{Fī ḥukm (al-khurūj min) al-balad al-ladhī yaqaʿ u bihā al-tāʿūn wa al-dukhūl ilayhā}. In the Qurʾān, Allah says:

“Have you [Prophet] considered those people who abandoned their homeland in fear of death, even though there were thousands of them? God said to them, ‘Die!’ and then brought them back to life again; God shows real favour to people, but most of them are ungrateful.”\textsuperscript{37}

\textit{Tafsīr al-Jalālayn} mentions that they are the Israelites people, upon whom the pestilence occurred so they ran away from their land. (Allāh said to them: ‘Die’), so that they die, (He further brought them back to life).\textsuperscript{38} Quraish Shihab explains as follows\textsuperscript{39}:

“You, the prophet, should know a unique story. It is a story of the people who left their land and ran away from the battlefield in fear of death. There were thousands of them. Then, Allah decided to make most of them perish by a defeat in the battle. Eventually, when the rest of them fought with great patriotism, Allah brought them back to life. Verily, living a noble life after having humiliation is the mercy of Allah that deserves thankfulness, but many people are not grateful.”

\textsuperscript{36} Al-Bukhārī, \textit{Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī}, Juz 5, 163.
\textsuperscript{37} The Qurʾān, al-Baqarah: 243.
\textsuperscript{38} Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, \textit{Tafsīr al-Jalālayn} (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, nd), 334.
\textsuperscript{39} Quraish Shihab, \textit{Tafsir al-Misbah}, Vol. 1 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2025), 525-527.
In addition to that, Ibn Kathīr transmitted a report from Ibn ʿAbbās about the revelation of Allāh: “alam tarā ilā al-ladhīna kharajū min diyārihim wa hum ulūfūn hadhar al-mawt (Have you [Prophet] considered those people who abandoned their homeland in fear of death, even though there were thousands of them?). Ibn ʿAbbās said: “They were four thousand people. They left away from ṭāʿūn. They said: ‘We would go to a place where there is no death’. When they arrived, they all died. Further, a prophet passed by them. He prayed to God for Him to bring them back alive. Eventually, Allāh brought them back to life.’”

This issue is supported by a ḥadīth from Šaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim as well as Musnad Ahmad, which says: “This pandemic is vile, a punishment, or part of the punishment—Hum, one of the transmitters, was not sure about the precise wordings of the ḥadīth—by which Allah had destroyed people before you. So, if you hear of the spread of ṭāʿūn (plague) in a land, don’t approach it, and if a plague should appear in a land where you are present, then don’t leave that land to run away from it.” In another ḥadīth, the Prophet Muhammad said: “ṭāʿūn (a contagious disease) is a warning from Allah to examine His servants from among the human beings. So, if you hear of the spread of ṭāʿūn (plague) in a land, don’t approach it.” (transmitted by Muslim).

A comprehensive ḥadīth source about the pandemic issue is a lengthy ḥadīth reporting the discussion between the Caliph of ʿUmar ibn al-Khāṭṭāb when he was about to come into an area affected by a pandemic:

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41 Al-Bukhārī, Šaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Vol. 5, 163.
Having told us ‘Abdullāh ibn Yūsuf, that he had told Mālik from Ibn Shihāb from ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn ‘Abd al-Rāḥmān ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Nawfal from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās, that ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb once went to Sham; when he arrived in Sarqha, he met the commander-in-chief, namely Abū ‘Ubaydah with his companions. They told ‘Umar that Sham was being affected by a pandemic. Ibn ‘Abbās said: “Then ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said: ‘Call for me the first muhājirīn’—then they were called and invited into a discussion, that Sham was being affected by a pandemic. They were in disagreement. Some of them said: ‘You have departed for an affair, and we suggest that you should not refrain from it.’ Some others said: ‘You are accompanied by the people, among which were the companions of the Prophet; we suggest that you should not make them face the pandemic.’ ‘Umar then said: ‘Leave, and call for me Anṣār’. They were called and invited into a discussion. Like muhājirūn, they were in disagreement. ‘Umar said: ‘Leave, and call for me whoever was a Quraysh figure and had gone for hijrah before the Fatḥ al-Makkah.’ They were called, and no disagreement between them, except from two people—they said: ‘We suggest that you should follow those who had suggested that you should not make them face the pandemic.’ They then announced: ‘I would rise in the morning on the saddle of my horse (meaning that he would be ready to come back home the next morning); so you should rise early!’ Abū ‘Ubaydah ibn Jarrah asked him: ‘Are you running from the destiny of Allāh?’ ‘Umar answered: ‘I wished it was not you who asked that, O Abū ‘Ubaydah! Yes, indeed we are running from a destiny of Allâh into another destiny of Allâh. What do you think (about this): if you have a camel, and you arrive in a valley near two areas: the first is fertile, while the other is dry; do not you think that if you bring it into the fertile
land, you would bring it with the destiny of Allah, and if you bring it into the dry one, you would also bring it with the destiny of Allah?’” Ibn ʿAbbās said: “And then ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf came - he had not attended the discussion for an affair - and said: ‘I have a khabar on this issue from the Prophet Muhammad, as he had said: ‘If you hear of the spread of Ṭāʿūn (plague) in a land, don't approach it and if a plague should appear in a land where you are present, then don't leave that land to run away from it; .’” Ibn ʿAbbās said: “Then ʿUmar praised God and left.”

The Doctor’s (al-Ṭibbāʾ) Suggestion for Individuals Suffering from Ṭāʿūn in Bażl al-Māʿūn
Baharuddin suggests that Islamic medicine is one of the healing methods that have been developed by Muslims from different ethnicities since the early age of Islam. Roland on the other hand defines Islamic medication as part of efforts developed by Muslim scholars to tackle the health problem, which works under the assumption that God, human beings, nature, and society are interconnected in harmony. Traditional medication and Islam, according to Rawi and Fetters, are practiced based on the Qurʾān and ḥadīth, as the primary sources of Islamic theology and Muslim practices.

Al-ʿAsqalānī, with his Bażl al-Māʿūn, compiles the data from the Qurʾān and ḥadīth as one of the methods of medical therapy. He shows that during the ṭāʿūn period, complying with the doctor’s suggestion is compulsory. In this book, he provides at least three measures that were

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43 Al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Vol. 5, 163.
45 Ibid.
suggested by the doctors: medication, providing guidance, and preventing infection. From the medication point of view, the doctor at that time treated the patients with sponges dipped in vinegar and water, rose oil, apple oil, or unsalted oil. The medication method practised at that time was phlebotomy (al-faṣd); ejecting the blood of the patient very slowly until he vomits. Furthermore, the doctor would touch the patient’s chest in the position of the heart, and press it with cold or fragrance material to cool down the heartbeat.46

In Islam, this practice is known as ṭibb al-nabawī, referring to the medical practices that are attributed to the Prophet Muhammad and have been transmitted through generations from his companions and further ahead into the next generations.47 Tibb al-nabawī covers a lot of materials, such as honey, black caraway, rose oil, vinegar, Zamzam water, dates, and some other healthy food and beverages. Cupping treatment is considered an Islamic medical treatment, even though such a practice had been recognised long before the era of the Prophet Muhammad. This method attempts to pull out dirty blood from the body through incisions or inserting needles. Another method is also known to belong to ṭibb al-nabawī, namely ruqyah;48 a therapy using the recitation of the Qurʾān. In addition to that, ṭibb al-nabawi also recognises compressing, quarantine, and many other practices.

In Bażl al-Māʿūn, al-ʿAsqalānī wrote down some necessary treatments suggested by the doctors, such as taking out humid items, eating a little, avoiding physical exercises, staying in the bathroom, avoiding going out

46 Al-ʿAsqalānī, Bażl al-Māʿūn, 340-341.
48 Ibid., 176-177.
from home or going for leisure activities, and not breathing in the infected air. In addition to that, concerning the infection-preventing measures, the scholars advised people to avoid physical contact with patients suffering from the virus and to refrain from visiting the infected patients. Nevertheless, al-ʿAsqalānī delivered his disagreement about this issue. For him, in this context, we should refer to a ḥadīth that reveals the nobleness of visiting the sick. According to him, infection is the destiny of God.

Furthermore, he also mentioned several actions to help relieve the pain of the infected patients: praying for him, motivating patience, positive thinking, and paying a visit. In the context of Covid-19, paying a visit for an infected patient is unacceptable, following closely a ḥadīth transmitted by al-Bukhārī that goes: “A sick person should not be taken to one who is healthy.” Accordingly, in the context of Covid-19, the ḥadīth would mean those healthy people should not have physical contact with infected people, and the former should not visit the latter. In exchange for paying a visit, they should pray for each other via phone or other technologies.

The Ideas of Bażl al-Māʿūn: Constructing Indonesian Perspective through Online Preaching

Bażl al-Māʿūn of al-ʿAsqalānī is less widely known in Indonesia. Covid-19, however, increases its popularity among many Indonesians. Some Indonesian scholars, including Oman Fathurrahman, a professor from UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, held an open online discussion of the book through his regular online study platform Ngariksa. In addition, Ali Imron, a Doctor from UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta also held an online

49 Al-ʿAsqalānī, Bażl al-Māʿūn, 343-344.
session to discuss the book organized by LSQH. The following table list some online platforms to discuss the book.

Table 2. Several online platforms on the discussion of *Bażl al-Māʿūn*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>The channel</th>
<th>The links and the title</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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</table>
| 1  | NGARIKS A Channel | “Thaʿūn dan Waba' dalam Manuskrip Arab dan Nusantara | Kang Oman”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOUgcPVVxD0&fbclid=IwAR2BzrVAb21vYNTsROXjXsGDunKLLWkbkYi6cSS7yhSe2oAGiU8QwQtPqI | Ẓāʿūn in Islamic literature |
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUmxPiDHlfk | Ẓāʿūn in Islamic literature |
| 3  | Joel Buloh Channel | “Cara Ibnu Hajar Asqalani Memutuskan Mata Rantai Penularan Wabah Virus Menular (Thaʿun/Corona)”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=–Y-DtZ2jDxo | Breaking the Chain of Plague Transmission |

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<th>No.</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Aql Islamic center</td>
<td>“Social Distancing Zaman Ibnu Hajar Al-Asqalani”</td>
<td>Social distancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rizha Hafiz</td>
<td>“Kajian atas kitab Bażl al-Māʿūn”</td>
<td>Studies on Bażl al-Māʿūn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Madina center ID</td>
<td>“Ayo di rumah saja”</td>
<td>Stay at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Catatan Syamsuatir</td>
<td>“Thoun Amwas”</td>
<td>Ṭāʿūn in Islamic literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Muhibbin Gus Qoyyum</td>
<td>“Gus Qoyyum: Kisah Pandemi di zaman ibnu Hajar al Asqolani”</td>
<td>Ṭāʿūn in Islamic literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Besides social media, the ideas of Bażl al-Māʿūn have also started to gain popularity in the articles published by both print and online media. The following is a list of articles in print and online media platforms.

Table 3: Some articles in Indonesian media that cite Bażl al-Māʿūn of al-ʿAsqalānī

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Media Platforms</th>
<th>Links</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Republika</td>
<td><a href="https://republika.co.id/.../dua-wabah-penyakit-yang-diabadikan-ibnu-hajar-al%E2%80%93asqalani">https://republika.co.id/.../dua-wabah-penyakit-yang-diabadikan-ibnu-hajar-al–asqalani</a></td>
<td>Ṭāʿūn in Islamic literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Republika</td>
<td><a href="https://www.republika.co.id/./syahidnya-orang-yang-meninggal-saat-wabah-menurut-ibnu-hajar">https://www.republika.co.id/./syahidnya-orang-yang-meninggal-saat-wabah-menurut-ibnu-hajar</a></td>
<td>Syahid in Ṭāʿūn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Republika</td>
<td><a href="https://www.republika.id/posts/5760/thaun-dan-wabadalam-turos-ulama">https://www.republika.id/posts/5760/thaun-dan-wabadalam-turos-ulama</a></td>
<td>Ṭāʿūn in Islamic literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Harian Aceh</td>
<td><a href="https://www.harianaceh.co.id/./.pesan-social-distancing-ibnu-hajar-al-asqalani-saat-wabah/">https://www.harianaceh.co.id/./.pesan-social-distancing-ibnu-hajar-al-asqalani-saat-wabah/</a></td>
<td>Social distancing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Tables 2 and 3 present the use of *Bażl al-Māʿūn* as a reference to explain the pandemic. This trend denotes the

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Web Muhammadiyah</td>
<td>mpi.muhammadiyah.or.id/artikel-wabah-penyakit-dalam-lintasan-sejarah-islam-detail-1205.html</td>
<td>Pandemic/plague in Islamic history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Web NU</td>
<td><a href="https://islam.nu.or.id/.../salah-kaprah-pengertian-thaun-dan-wabah-dalam-hadits-rasulullah-saw">https://islam.nu.or.id/.../salah-kaprah-pengertian-thaun-dan-wabah-dalam-hadits-rasulullah-saw</a></td>
<td>The definition of Ṭāʿūn in Ḥadith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Republika</td>
<td><a href="https://republika.co.id/.../durasi-wabah-thaun-yang-dicatat-ibnu-hajar-al-asqalani">https://republika.co.id/.../durasi-wabah-thaun-yang-dicatat-ibnu-hajar-al-asqalani</a></td>
<td>Plague duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Islami.co</td>
<td><a href="https://islami.co/hadis-rasulullah-yang-menganjurkan-di-rumah-saja-saat-wabah/">https://islami.co/hadis-rasulullah-yang-menganjurkan-di-rumah-saja-saat-wabah/</a></td>
<td>Stay at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Asianmuslim.com</td>
<td><a href="https://www.asianmuslim.com/.../benarkah-kemunculan-virus-corona-di.html">https://www.asianmuslim.com/.../benarkah-kemunculan-virus-corona-di.html</a></td>
<td>Ṭāʿūn in Islamic literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
soaring popularity of the book among Indonesian Muslim communities to be referred in understanding the plague. Some intellectuals become religious scholars or scholars who explain the book in their series of articles or sessions, especially the parts that concern the current pandemic crisis. They disseminate the ideas of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī derived from the Qurʾān, aḥadīth, and the history of Muslims concerning the pandemic.

The need for the explanation of religious transmitters/scholars is underpinned by the fact that the book was written in Arabic, and most Indonesian Muslims do not speak the language. The encounter of some Muslims in this book is commonly brought about by the ease of internet access that allows people to gain insight into the book during the pandemic crisis. Unrestricted internet access and technological advancement have opened up more room for the wide distribution of religious ideas. 51 The widely changing knowledge transmission has led to the degradation of traditional institutions and scholarships, which, according to Ibrahim & Ainul,52 play an important role as religious scholars.

**Discussions: Religious Scholars as a Mustamlīʾ of Religious Message through New Technology**

The new technology enhances the position of religious preachers and the teachings of religion as two irreplaceable dimensions within the process of spreading

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religious knowledge; as so suggested by Umam. 53 However, the simplification of the dissemination of religious messages has downgraded the qualification of the teachers/preachers and the teaching method. In the past, teachers are traditionally trained scholars/ulamā’, but today anyone with the good rhetorical ability and minimum understanding of religious tenets can disseminate their ideas.

In this context, a plain contrast between this new trend and the conventional system lies in the fact that the new trend of religious learning does not have to take place in the madrasah. Despite being apart from the madrasah, Hasaruddin 54 suggested, that the transmission process employs the conventional method of al-imlā’ (dictation). These videos, which are not live broadcasts, and the writings presented in the media comply with a one-direction approach of the al-imlā’ practices. In this context, the intellectuals and the scholars become the mustamli’. 55

Unlike offline learning methods, online platforms give rise to new actors who do not have to necessarily pass a conventional training process to be teachers. Nevertheless, they still play a crucial role as the religious scholars who introduce Bażl al-Mā’ūn as a relevant work during the pandemic context for the Indonesian Muslim community. Besides less qualification requirement for religious scholars as the main actors of religious knowledge dissemination, the online learning platforms that discuss Bażl al-Mā’ūn also promote inclusivity in that

55 Ibid., 133.
it allows anyone to join and distribute the materials delivered during the sessions. The listeners/users are also treated equally since there is no particular filter on the internet to differentiate the users’ level of religious understanding.

The fast pace of online media brings about the escalating distribution of Bażl al-Māʿūn materials, especially given the popularity of the author, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī in Indonesia. The online learning platform through technological devices has enabled the rapid distribution of the book. This is in line with the notion asserted by Campbell and Louise that the new media that is based on the internet has strongly influenced many aspects of contemporary life, including the religious aspect through digital channels, such as social media, online religious forums, and religious mobile applications. The abovementioned tables indicate that online media has become the new basis of information, which allows ease of interaction between people to gain new ideas and insight about religious teachings.

According to Horner et al., accessibility is an unavoidable benefit of the computer and the internet. In his notion, accessibility supported by a good system will lead to a more efficient mobilization of people and enable them to access more activities. In an online learning set, accessibility that is supported by the personal function and religious experience of the viewers—which Sauer, Sonderegger, & Schmutz termed as usability and user

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experience - allows a greater benefit and continuous encounter with the viewers. In this line, accessibility does not fully comply with the conventional triangle pattern introduced by Watanabe, 58 because the content and the users do not come from the authors but rather from the uploader of the content. This is generated from the fact that Bażl al-Mā‘ūn is a classical book that is not been recently produced; the actors—the intellectuals—merely cite and discuss it.

Previously, Bażl al-Mā‘ūn was not widely known among Muslims, but the outbreak of Covid-19 has led to the popularity of the book since many people start to learn about it. The learning process is mainly derived from social media contents created by intellectuals who reintroduce the work of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī. This kind of platforms, Arafat 59 suggests, become the provider of an alternative public sphere, which opens up an ever wider public sphere. According to Campbell and Louise, 60 the new media has directly involved people in religious activities every day. Nevertheless, the religious practices in the new media will certainly influence traditional religious practices, attitudes, and behaviour.

_Bażl al-Mā‘ūn, Redundancy in Ḥadīth Riwāyah Study and the Importance of scholars of Ibn Ḥajar’s Ideas_  
In principle, _Bażl al-Mā‘ūn_ is pretty easy to learn for individuals with Arabic proficiency but is a daunting task for individuals without Arabic proficiency. The only challenge in the book reading for those having Arabic proficiency allows a greater benefit and continuous encounter with the viewers. In this line, accessibility does not fully comply with the conventional triangle pattern introduced by Watanabe, because the content and the users do not come from the authors but rather from the uploader of the content. This is generated from the fact that _Bażl al-Mā‘ūn_ is a classical book that is not been recently produced; the actors—the intellectuals—merely cite and discuss it.

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60 Campbell and Connelly, “Religion and New Media”, 273.
competency is the repetitive materials which may lead to tedium. The repetitive materials include the text of the hadith and the analysis of chains of transmitters and their qualities. Nevertheless, repetitiveness is a typical book structure in the fourteenth century; since scholars at that time were concerned with preserving the chains of transmitters. A large number of books had been written using this method, such as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī’s Faṭḥ al-Bārī or Sīrah Nabawīyyah of Ibn Hishām. Accordingly, we are not in a position to downgrade this style of writing a book.

It is exactly at this point that lies the importance of, to use Azra’s terminology, the religious scholars, or the cultural broker - that is how Geertz calls it. These scholars have worked hard to make the ideas of Ibn Ḥajar accessible to us now. The scholars with an adequate Arabic competence, either those who graduate from the Middle East madrasah or the local pesantren, play role as the important actors who deliver the ideas of Baẓl al-Māʿūn to the Muslims community in general as guidelines during the pandemic by learning from the history of the pandemic in Islamic civilization. In addition, their presentation of the book using easy and accessible rhetoric ensures the delivery of the main message of the book to the public, because, direct reading of the book will be tedium given the lengthy chains of material and the repetitive contents. These scholars are the interpreters of the aḥadīth and the explanations written by Ibn Ḥajar in his book to the wider society since they use the relevant idea organization in their presentation to meet the current context and technological development.

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Conclusion
Some history books, which more often than not are forgotten, may record some important information about past events that may help an attempt to address the current social problems, including the pandemic Covid-19 crisis. This article shows that *Bażl al-Māʿūn* plays an important role in introducing the history of the pandemic in the Islamic world to Indonesian Muslims. *Bażl al-Māʿūn* discusses some terminologies and concepts related to the strategies in handling the plague implemented in the fifteenth century, which correspond to the current strategies in curbing the prevalent Covid-19.

In addition, al-ʿAsqalānī's book also covers the aspect of medical treatment in the context of the pandemic that was practised by Muslims at that time. Nevertheless, it would not have been possible for Indonesian Muslims to easily access all of the information in *Bażl al-Māʿūn* without the help of religious scholars and cultural brokers as the main actors to disseminate the ideas in the book to the broader scope of audience. The use of popular platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook, and other periodicals has enabled a larger number of Muslim communities to access the ideas of the book. This also indicates that Indonesian Muslims have paid better recognition of al-ʿAsqalānī’s work in addressing the pandemic although previously the book had relatively been unnoticed.

All in all, this study only discusses one particular work of history about the past plague and pandemic which was relatively still understudied. Accordingly, it is necessary to do further and more comprehensive research that takes into account the other works on history as a source of knowledge to address the current problem. In addition, the scope of this study is limited to the analysis of the works of religious scholars on *Bażl al-Māʿūn*, which leaves a wide opportunity to conduct further
research on the same issue by addressing other aspects as a way to better understand the growing crisis of the Covid-19. This point calls for all parties to take more heed of the current issue to provide a better understanding of Covid-19 and how to face it. Therefore, we must learn more from the classical works on history about the past pandemic as a lesson to learn for possible adoption of the same strategy in pandemic management and to generate better understanding in the community.

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