

Woman Empowerment Through Mosque-Piety Activities

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ABSTRACT

This paper intends to explore religious activities in Taqwa Mosque, Menggala, Tulang Bawang Regency, the province of Lampung, and how do these activities help to empower women members of the mosque. In fact, the religious activities in Taqwa mosque are dominated by male worshipers, while women almost never involve or being involved even in congregational prayer in the mosque. Although there is no emphasis or argument that requires a woman to pray at the mosque, this does not mean there was no space for women to conduct other religious activity, such Islamic studies, teaching in TPA (Al-Quran learning center) and the other religious matters. Because of this reason, this article will analyze the issues of woman empowerment in this mosque, by using Foucault's theory of power relation. To do so, this study will pay ample attention to the discourse that exist in the community of this mosque, and provides an understanding which could be used as a knowledge. This research concludes that it the role and function of the mosque are not understood properly by members of the mosque, so that there is refraction in understanding the function of the mosque.

Keywords: Women's empowerment, mosque, religious activities, power relations

1. INTRODUCTION

Humans are a very special resource, even Allah has created man as a caliph on earth. One of the privileges that humans have is the mind. Because by their mind, human can make civilization. This human reason also will be asked for its responsibility. The human's intellectuality, which is made perfectly, will make knowledge. The knowledge that produced by the reason makes human different from other living things. The manifestation of human creativity is the creation of legal products. Based on that fact, humans are also called law-loving beings [1]. In the history of science, philosophers are men. Few women appeared in the knowledge field. However, in Islam itself the instructions are clear. there is no difference between men and women in terms of studying. Seeking knowledge couldn't be understood slightly, but it must be understood comprehensibly. That is why studying does not only happen in school. Women were originally created to accept the noble task of maintaining *chain of life*. Women are not only tasked with taking care of the household, but women also are able to play a role in every aspect of social and religious. However, in reality, it is still found that the status of women and their role in society are still subordinate and not as equal as men.

The birth of Emancipation provides a more open life for women. Considering the large role of women like being the first madrasa in the family, It is important for a woman to gain knowledge, especially in religion field. Many challenges seem requiring us to update every development. Women must be able to combine well domestic and public work and consider the spiritual values. Therefore, women must be able to see the potential that exists and the opportunities that can be developed. In addition, the development of knowledge makes women more educated. However, often women override the real role or nature as women. For example, women who have been married and career, more time is used for a career. Therefore, the education for families was ruled out.

In another portrait frame, women spend more time as housewives, such as those women in Kampung Ujung Gunung U dik (UGU, Tulang Bawang, the province of Lampung. Their daily life is spent on domestic matters and embroidery. Likewise, in religious activities, women are rarely involved or allowed to get involved. In terms of daily activities, only: praying in congregation in the mosque, although it is not required for women. However, the statement was not taken comprehensibly. Therefore there was not a woman attendant. This is what happened to the Taqwa Mosque of the UGU community. So the mosque was dominated by male worshipers. The Mosque is almost never devoid of its worshipers either to carry out the five

daily prayers or other studies. Unfortunately, these religious activities were not reachable by women.

As you know, the existence of mosques cannot be separated from Muslims, both men and women because the mosque is a place of worship and central to the activities of Muslims, including da'wah activities. In detail, the research's problem in this study are what makes the mosque devoid of female worshipers? How is the role of the mosque in empowering women in UGU Village? What religious activities are declared? Based on the problem above, the purpose of this study was to describe the condition of religious activities in the mosque and reveal the role of the mosque in empowering women.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In general, this research focuses on the role of the Taqwa Mosque in empowering women through religious activities. In more detail, the focus of the research includes: the participation of the mosque manager and the community especially women in realizing religious activities and the realization of the prosperity of the mosque in particular. This research is a field research, namely "Research conducted in the field or in life" [2]. The location of this research is in UGU village, Tulang Bawang. In collecting the data, the researcher used interview, observation, and documentation. Interview is a conversation that is directed at a particular problem. An oral question and answer process that occurs between two or more people deemed necessary [3]. Then, in selecting respondents and determining the number of respondents, researchers used random sampling techniques; the number of respondents is considered sufficient if the data gathered is enough. For the interview, the researcher only interviewed the mosque manager and the head of the women's study group and some additional female worshipers. In addition, researchers also used social media or cellular communication media to facilitate the long-distance communication.

The documentation is an attempt to collect data in reality with the core issues examined. This process is carried out in order to complete the previous data. The data referred to in the documentation in the form of notes, documents or photographs relating to research as well as supporting the completeness of research data [4]. In analyzing the data, researchers used descriptive-qualitative analysis. As Irawan Soeharto explained, descriptive analysis was used to describe the characteristics of individuals closely, situations or groups and to determine the frequency with which something happened or the relationship of something to something else [5].

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. General Description of the Mosque

According to historical records, the arrival of Islam to a region or to a place is usually known by the establishment of a mosque in the area. Through the mosque, the Prophet taught mankind to reverence to Allah the God, as well as taught various religious knowledge and fostered worshipers so that Muslims were able to appear as the best people (*khaira ummah*) in Islamic history. The function of the mosque at the time was not only as a place as a place of prostration in terms of worship but also as a place of prostration in a cultural sense. The realization of these two functions have been manifested the mosque as central to the activities of Muslims in various aspects of life.

In other words, the mosque not only as a tool to establish a human relationship with the God through worship, but it is also a central to the fabric of social life of Muslims. The mosque comes from the Arabic words *sajada* which means a place of prostration or a place of worship of Allah. The earth that we live in is a mosque for Muslims. Every Muslim may pray in any area of the earth, except on graves, in places that are unclean and in places according to Islamic sharia size are not suitable for prayer.

The Prophet said, "Every part of Allah's earth is a place of prostration (mosque)" (Muslim). In another hadith, the Messenger of Allah also said: "It has been made for us on this earth as a place of prostration and cleansing" (Muslim). The mosque is not merely used as a means of worship of *mahdhah* (core ritual), but it is a means and at the same time a strength in building and instilling the values of goodness and renewal of the lives of the people. So it will be changes in the context of national politics broadly, not only changes in the meaning of political structures and systems, but far from it is a change in political values and culture that is built through the mosque base.

The number of mosque at this time develops rapidly. It can be seen in the middle of the city to the remote village, the mosque is increasingly easy to find. In fact, in recreational areas, entertainment, shopping centers, terminals, food stalls, shelter places, a mosque can be found easily even though in a mini size. Of course, it brings hope, in order to facilitate someone in the process of worship. On the streets, we also meet a number of mosque volunteers who are willing to take to the streets to expect sadaqah from road users to assist in the mosque's material construction process. However, chronologically, the increase in mosque growth is not in line with efforts to prosper it, the mosque is experiencing mutilation of functions.

The mosque seems to lose its function as at times, the mosque is more like the place of prayer or resting place for those who are traveling. Sometimes, we also meet only in a prestigious event when the Islamic holidays takes place. All of that can be caused in the current era, many are competing to build mosques, some even spend a significant amount of money, equipped with facilities in

the hope that they will be able to provide comfort while in a particular mosque, but neglect planning in the formation of the people. The phenomenon of rampant construction of mosques seems only as a complement to Islam in an environment only.

3.1.1. Mosque Function

The main function of the mosque is a place of prostration to Allah, the place for prayers, and places to worship Him. The mosque is also the place most widely echoed by the name of Allah through the call to prayer, the *qamat*, prayer beads, *tahmid*, *tahlil*, *istigfar*, and other words that are recommended to be read in the mosque as part of the breath associated with the asthma of Allah, besides that the function of the mosque is :

- The mosque is a place where Muslims worship and get closer to Allah,
- The mosque is a place for Muslims to do itikaf, clean themselves, galvanize the mind to foster awareness and gain inner / religious experience so that the balance of mind and body is always maintained as well as the integrity of personality,
- Mosque is a place of discussion for Muslims to solve problems that arise in society.
- Mosque is a place where Muslims consult, raise difficulties, ask for help and help,
- The mosque is a place to foster the integrity of the ties of worshipers and cooperation in realizing shared prosperity
- The mosque with its study assemblies is a tool to improve Muslim intelligence and knowledge.
- A mosque is a place for fostering and developing the next leaders,
- Mosque where to collect funds, save and distribute it, and
- Mosque where carrying out social arrangements and supervision [6].

Those functions have been actualized by operational which is in line with the developing programs. This shows an increase in the economic life of the people, an increase in passion, and the liveliness of religious life. The phenomenon that arises, especially in big cities, is that many mosques have demonstrated their function as places of worship, places of education, and other social activities. Therefore, the existence of the mosque provides benefits for the congregation and for the community.

3.1.2. The Role of the Mosque

Many things can be done in the context of efforts to manage and preserve the mosque. In example, the formation of the management structure of the mosque or a term known as takmir. Then, the mosque manager should arrange a small strategy in an effort in order to make people recognize more deeply the nature of the mosque. It could be started by regular prayers in congregation. In the next stage, it can develop into a place for association or what is called routine recitation. The routine habits will form someone's consistency to continue in implementing it and grow a person's mindset to have a new desire to hold other activities in the mosque. So that, the mosque is not only as place to worship but it is also a place for guidance or empowering women through their religious activities as an effort to provide non-formal Islamic education.

3.2. Description of the Taqwa Mosque

Regarding the general description of the mosque above, the situation in the Taqwa Mosque is slightly different. Taqwa Mosque is a mosque with two floors and built in the middle of UGU residential area, and this mosque is very strategic as it could be accessed easily. While the UGU is located at Menggala district Tulang Bawang, which is inhabited by 158 residents, it consisted of 65 men and 93 women. The majority of the UGU village community are Muslim and the native Lampung tribe. Taqwa Mosque is dominated by male worshipers rather than female worshipers, as it is reflected from the picture below.



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Religious activities that are proceed in the mosque are dominated by male worshipers, while female worshipers almost never exist, or they are not involved in religious activities. The congregational prayers and religious studies are always dominated by male worshipers. Therefore, this research wants to trace why such thing happened. To answer these questions, the researcher will use Michel Foucault's Theory: power and knowledge relations.

3.2.1. Foucault and His Relation of Power

Michel Foucault is a philosophical figure who introduce the theory of power and knowledge. Michel Foucault's popularity is inseparable from the era that formed Him, as well as the influence of previous philosophers who had influenced his thinking like Nietzsche and Marxism. Although Foucault was influenced by Marxism in the beginning of his journey, like most scholars of the 1950s, finally he freed himself from the shackles of that understanding. The works that he made showed that the issue of power had been the subject of his attention. His thinking also has influenced broadly on other social sciences including anthropology and sociology. The theory used in this research is Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) power relations theory. To understand the meaning of the power that he intended, it cannot be released from the other two terms that form the main part of the building of knowledge (read; epistemology) in Foucault's view, namely archeology and also genealogy of knowledge.

In studying history, Foucault studied history of the present. In the other words, it is not to find out the life history of the great men or those in power at a certain time but it was intended to understand present history to find out what is happening now and how power operates. An investigation of past history is carried out for *discontinuity* as an attempt to discover what knowledge regimes were in power at a certain time and how the operation of those powers was [7].

Power is not an institution, a structure, or a power which is owned, but a name given to a complex strategic situation in society. Power is everywhere; power doesn't encompass

everything, but power comes from everywhere [8]. Foucault's original understanding of power is his work's evident, one of them was the *Surveillerir* which at the end of the book explained that normalizing power was not only exercised in prison, but also operated through social mechanisms built to ensure health, knowledge and welfare. Thus, power does not only lie in institutions but also in any scope. Foucault also does not separate knowledge and power.

Power does not come from outside, but it determines the structure, rules, and relationships from within and makes it possible. Power is always linked to knowledge. Knowledge does not come from one familiar subject, but from the power relations that mark the subject. Judging in this study, the rules made by the mosque administrator that became a pipe in an effort to channel the power. Like knowledge, according to Francis Bacon, *science is power*. There is no knowledge without power and there is no power without knowledge [9]. In addition, knowledge is a power that function in human life. Through this knowledge, humans obtain answers from misunderstanding. Like the worshipers of the Taqwa mosque, to know about the role of the mosque, discourses on religion are transferred to religious activities that occur at the Taqwa Mosque.

3.2.2. Religious Activities

Muslims or Islamic society is a group of Muslims who live in one congregation in a certain area. they worship and practice Islamic law in daily life as optimal as possible. All community activities are focused at the mosque with the imam as the effective leader of each mosque. The mosque has a certain area of guidance. The coach is given to the worshipers around the mosque maximally.

The relation between the mosque with the people was like the relation between fish with water. But, if you see the reality in daily life, the relationship between Muslims and the mosque varies in situations and conditions. As we see a good pond with many fish, there are also ponds that are not maintained but there are many fish. It varies in conditions and situations. There is a magnificent mosque but it is quiet, no activity etc. There should be a mediocre mosque, even a very simple building, but it has solid activity, especially driven by the younger generation.

The mosque is one of the non-formal Islamic educational institutions. One of many activities which formed and held a *study group* is recitation. The Taqwa mosque in UGU is also not only used as a means of worship (prayer) but also other religious activities. The Taqwa mosque is never devoid of worshipers almost every day for other religious activities such as conducting scientific studies on religion after fard prayer. The activity like study is conducted every Friday night. They are conducting activities to a gamaan around housing residents to preach sometimes.

However, what is unfortunate is that religious activity cannot be felt by women. The Taqwa mosque is dominated by male worshipers, rather than women. Almost every

religious activity is devoid of female worshipers and even women are not involved, especially in matters of worship (prayer). Based on the results of the interviews, it was found that most of their husbands forbid them praying in mosques, women just need to be at home [10]. This was in line with the understanding they knew that there is no obedience for women to pray at the mosque. Because their understanding, the husbands ask their wives to pray at home.

As the Prophet said: "Do not forbid women (from) servants of Allah to go to Allah's mosques, but their houses are better for them".

From the information above, it is clear that no one requires a woman to pray at the mosque, but there is also no prohibition that states that women are not permitted to go to the mosque. In this case, the previous discourse has formed reduced knowledge. In hope, through the study, not only the atmosphere of hospitality is created but also the religious knowledge is obtained. To realize this, all of course requires seriousness in doing so and the mosque's takmir becomes the main mediator in the realization of these religious activities.

Taqwa mosque is more dominated by religious activities of the congregation of the men. Whereas for women there is almost no. Plus understanding is spread and understood by them, that women are not required to pray at the mosque. This contributed to the lack of religious activity among women at the mosque. So, it is important, the need to establish women's empowerment. Given this problem, the effort made is to provide an understanding of the function of the mosque in general. Furthermore, because discourse (discourse) becomes the main locus of Foucault's thought, then, what is meant by the genealogy of knowledge are the relations that are side by side between a series of statements found [10].

Because knowledge is formed from interconnected revelation relations, the distribution of discourses on understanding through mosque takmir is packaged in religious studies (male worshipers). In addition, these discourses spread through individuals, so the discourse continues to establish relationships for the reduction of knowledge. Beside the scattered discourse, the ruling authority also runs the discourse. this is called power relations. The discourse closely related to power shows that Foucault thinks about power that is spread everywhere.

Furthermore, the reduced knowledge is the understanding about the functions of the mosque broadly and empowering women in religious activities. This understanding provides space for women to carry out religious activities. In line with that, a study or recitation which was devoted to the congregation of mothers was formed. Accurate data when was the study was established is still unknown [11]. According to the results of an interview with the mosque administrator, the study has been formed for a year and was degraded, until finally it has been active again in the past four months. The participants of this study are 15 people and the study was divided into 2 times in one week (Thursday and Friday) [12].

During the recitation, the study is still at the stage of learning to read the Qur'an and prayer. It seems like the elder woman are more enthusiastic than the young woman. In the future, there will be another religious and social study by inviting presenters from both inside and outside the village and forming a TPA (the Qur'anic education park). With the expansion of religious activities at the mosque and empowering women, the Taqwa mosque is crowded by worshipers and religious activity.

Based on the explanation above, it seems that the administration of the *majelis ta'lim* is different from the administration of other Islamic education like *pesantren* and *madarasah*. The difference includes the system, material and its purpose. It can be seen that the difference between the *majelis ta'lim* and the others is as follows:

- Majelis ta'lim is Islamic non-formal educational institutions.
- Study's time is periodic but regular. It is not held every day as schools or madrasah.
- Followers or participants are called pilgrims (crowds), not students or students. The participants are not obligated to come just like students of school or madrasah.
- The goal is to promote Islamic teachings [13].

Creating a prosperous mosque and optimizing its function is certainly an obligation for all Muslims because the condition of the mosque reflects the condition of Muslims. if they are diligent in worshiping the mosque the place of worship is prosperous, and vice versa. The presence of Muslims around him, the mosque needs to actualize its role, accommodate for matters of worship. This is in line with Elposito's opinion which states that the rise of Islam in essence starts from the efforts of individuals to continue to develop the rise of Islam in various aspects of his personal life, then because it is carried out by many people, its existence extends into a social movement. These movements are diverse in nature and this movements can be seen from their enthusiasm to participate in various activities in the mosque. Besides prayer becomes more systematic effort to develop, Islamic values and teachings through various other religious activities with massive publications also arise [14].

4. DISCUSSION

UGU village is in the area of Tulang Bawang Regency. It is a village with 168 population, consisting of 65 men and 93 women. It is located in Ujung Gunung Udik or abbreviated as UGU. It has facilities and infrastructure such as places of worship and education. The majority of the people are Muslim and native Lampung. This condition makes it easier for researchers to do interviews. The discourse (discourse) is the main point in Foucault's thinking. Discourse and power come from

people who have power. Those who have power and knowledge between the groups of people who appoint themselves and manage it, in this case the takmir of the Taqwa mosque. The discourse that closely related to power shows that Foucault thinks about power that is spread everywhere. These discourses reduced the knowledge.

It is concluded that administrators of the Taqwa mosque provided space for women to be involved in religious activities. As for female worshipers in particular, they can carry out religious activities such as recitation. Through this study, the discourses are scattered by the reduction of knowledge. Through religious activities, knowledge of both religion and other knowledge can be conveyed. One more step and strategy that can be taken is to re-empower the mosque's administrators' capacity. So, in this case, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of the mosque management or takmir institutions. Takmir institution could be managed by other social institutions today such as the development of *amil zakat* (Islamic tithe) institutions whose estuary is for social welfare. In the other words, I think the mosque institution can be done in the same way by making the mosque as a means of building stronger civil society [15].

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the absence of religious activities involving women in the Taqwa mosque is caused by a lack of understanding of the function of the mosque as well as the weak role of the mosque. As we all knew, mosques have very diverse roles and functions. The mosque is not only a place of worship but also a place of cultural formation of the society and so on. Through the scattered discourse, Women find the knowledge of the actual function of the mosque. So, the women group seeks to find a space in the Taqwa mosque for carrying out their religious activities, namely recitation.

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