

Five Levels of Teaching and Learning the Holy Qur'an

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ABSTRACT

Mosques as centers of non-formal Islamic education are needed by all Muslim communities. Muslims are expected to learn continuously about their religion until the end of their lives. Though, the ideal condition is not easy to create. Many mosques still conduct limited religious activities. This paper is intended to explain the activities of teaching and learning the Holy Qur'an in different levels in Sebatik Island and the supporting factors. The research used a qualitative approach and applied three methods to collect data. They are observation, interview, and documentation study. The research activity was mainly done at a village called Sungai Nyamuk. The research findings show that there are five levels of teaching and learning the Qur'an in the mosque at Sungai Nyamuk Village. Qualified and sincere teachers of Islamic subjects at schools and madrasas and their students become the main pillars of the activities. The activities follow Islamic educational patterns implemented in South Sulawesi. They are also supported by persons from the area. The activities are still limited in certain mosques. Therefore, it is good to disseminate the patterns in other mosques.

Keywords: *Mosque, Non-Formal, Education, Teaching and Learning, and the Holy Qur'an*

1. INTRODUCTION

Religion Education is one of the mandatory subjects for students at all levels of formal education in Indonesia. The subject is taught at elementary schools, high schools, and universities. The subject usually takes two lesson hours each week for school students. It lasts around ninety minutes for each session. So, each school student has a chance to have adequate knowledge about his or her religion.

Many Muslim experts in this country notice that the allocated time for Islamic Religion Subject is not enough. It is said that the subject contains limited teaching materials [1]. The condition causes many students to have poor mastery in reading the Qur'an written in Arabic and low mastery of the main teachings of Islam.

Poor mastery is shown by some research. For example, the ability to read the Qur'an for the Department of Islamic Studies of State University of Padang students in 2017 is as follows. As many as 37.7% or around 49 people out of 139 were categorized

as very poor, 20.8% were very good, 16.24% were not good, 13.8% were adequate, and 11.5% were good [2].

Many people try to overcome the problem. They try to give extra lessons on Islamic religion for students after school hours. They conduct special courses on the Qur'an. The courses usually take place in mosques.

A mosque functions mainly as a place of worship. Besides, it may also have a function as an educational institution that is not only concerned on religious education but also scientific discussion activity, entrepreneurial studies, literary studies, and the study of art [3].

Courses on the Qur'an in mosques belong to non-formal Islamic education. Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia supported adherents of Islam and five other religions to develop non-formal religious education. The Minister's Decision Letter, No. 13/2014, directs Muslims to develop non-formal Islamic education.

A large number of Muslim communities conduct the following non-formal educational activities or institutions. They are: (1) TPA or Taman Pendidikan

Al-Qur'an (Course on Reading the Qur'an for Children), (2) Madrasah Diniyah (Madrasah for Islamic Subjects), (3) Pesantren Salafi (Boarding School for Islamic Subjects), (4) Majelis Taklim (Learning Group), (5) Tahfiz Al-Qur'an (Course on Memorizing the Qur'an), (6) Bimbingan Seni Baca Al-Qur'an (Course on Beautiful Recitation of the Qur'an), (7), and Kajian Kitab (Studying Islamic Books), etc. The teaching and learning activities take place in mosques, school classrooms, and houses.

Those types of non-formal institutions are needed by Muslim communities. Muslims in Tengger, as an example, conduct a number of Learning Groups. Some of the members of the Learning Groups have minimal religious knowledge. The Islamic teaching materials presented in the groups are like an oasis for them [4].

The condition of non-formal Islamic education throughout Indonesia is not the same. The condition depends on the efforts of Muslims in each area. Bandung city in West Java Province, as an example, has a very popular group for studying religion. It is called Majelis Taklim Daarut Tauhiid. It has a lot of members. It manages various economic and educational activities to upgrade Muslim societies. The top leader of the group has become a popular preacher among Indonesian Muslims. The group sometimes cooperates with other institutions to do spiritual training [5]. The group leader's name is Abdullah Gymnastiar. He is mentioned by Kahn as a religious figure [6].

Nunukan Regency in North Kalimantan Province has also an attractive learning group called Majelis Zikir al-Inabah. The group holds its activities twice a month. It starts its religious activities with the recitation of some Islamic texts by all participants. Then, an Islamic teacher delivers a speech. The activities are attended by a large number of participants including local government officials. Though, almost all mosques in Nunukan City have very minimum religious activities. Most of the mosques do not conduct routine religious lectures for adult Muslims. Religious lectures usually take place in the month of Ramadan only. It must be admitted also that this condition can be seen in many other areas in Indonesia.

Based on the above description, it is important to know the condition of non-formal Islamic education in Sebatik – Indonesia Island. The area has some characteristics. Among others are: (1) It lies in a remote area in the borderline between Indonesia and Malaysia; and (2) Most of the inhabitants came from other parts of Indonesia and their descendants. Their settlements were newly established. Most of them migrated from South Sulawesi. Due to these conditions, non-formal educational activities may face various challenges or grow better than other neighbouring areas.

Nowadays, Sebatik is a part of Nunukan Regency area in North Kalimantan Province. The capital city of the regency is also called Nunukan that is located in Nunukan Island. It lies in the western direction of Sebatik Island.

There are a great number of migrants and their descendants in Nunukan Island. Most of them came from Sulawesi Island. They mostly consist of Buginese, Makassar, and Toraja ethnic groups. Many settlements in this island are dominated by Buginese inhabitants. They are identified as followers of Islam. A similar condition can be found in Sebatik. Buginese people have become the main inhabitants of Sebatik.

Waterson mentioned some ethnic groups in Indonesia that have tradition of migration. They are the Minangkabau people, the Baweanse, the Acehnese, the Banjarese, and the Buginese. He wrote that the group which has spread itself the most widely, however, is probably the Buginese, who over the centuries established themselves not only among eastern Indonesian islands, but in Riau, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, as well as sailing regularly with the monsoon winds as far south the north coast of Australia, where they went in search of *trepang* or sea slugs [7].

Christian Pelras made a statement relating to the religiosity of the Buginese. The statement is as follows. Having become Muslims since the beginning of the seventeenth century, they are reckoned, together with the Acehnese and Minangkabau of Sumatra; the Malays of Sumatra, Malaya, and Borneo; the Moro of Mindanao, the Banjar of Borneo; the Sundanese of West Java; and the Madurese of Madura and East Java; as among those Insulindian peoples whose Islamic identity is the strongest, and Islam indeed an integral and essential part of the Bugis' culture and way of life [8]. This religious identity has been proved by the Buginese migrants in Sebatik, too.

Buginese is one of the fifteen largest ethnicities in Indonesia. The number of Buginese people is 2.49 percent of the total population of Indonesia [9]. The homeland of the Buginese people is in the southern peninsula of Sulawesi Island.

Buginese migrants went to Nunukan Island on their intensions. Most of them migrated for economic reasons. Yet, we found that there were few persons among them who had good mastery on Islamic teachings. One of them was Haji Muhammadiyah who can speak Arabic well. He came from Pare-pare. He intended to share his knowledge about Islam to others. He worked as a teacher of Islam in mosques and madrasahs. He was attracted by a large number of Buginese migrants in this island [10]. It means that Buginese migrants were accompanied by teachers of Islam when they started living in their new settlements.

Buginese migrants built mosques when they started living at new neighbourhoods. The following are two examples. Firstly, Buginese migrants at Tarailu, North Mamuju, West Sulawesi erected a prayer building (mushalla). Eventually, the small building has changed into a large mosque [11]. Segara wrote about an old mosque at Serangan, Bali. The Bugis people in the village are obedient worshipers. The sound of the call to prayer as a sign to the five prayers never stops audibly, breaking the business of the Serangan people. When dusk comes, and it is time to perform Maghrib prayer, the only old mosque in Kampung Bugis is always full [12]. The information shows that the existence of a mosque is always based on a real need of the related Muslim community.

Studying Islamic books is usually held in mosques and other places. The activity is also called halaqah. The literal meaning of *halaqah* (Arabic) is a circle. It is a kind of teaching and learning activities. A teacher explains an Islamic book and students sit in front of him or her in a circle. Van Bruinessen said that many Indonesian ulama attended halaqah in Mekkah in the 19th and 20th centuries. Some others used to be teachers there [13].

The founder of Madrasah As'adiyah, AGH Muhammad As'ad (d. 1952), started his teaching activities in Sengkang Town, South Sulawesi, with a halaqah system. He began the activity at his home, then he moved it to Sengkang Grand Mosque in 1929. Then in 1930 he founded a madrasah named Madrasah Arabiyah Islamiyah [14]. Several years after his death, the name was changed into As'adiyah.

Based on the above description also, some research questions need to be answered. They are: (1) How is the religious life in Sebatik in general and Sungai Nyamuk Village in particular? (2) What are the main religious activities in mosques? and (3) Who are the main actors of the teaching and learning process of the non-formal education?

2. METHOD

This is qualitative descriptive research. It uses three methods to collect and verify data. The first method is observation. In this case the researcher visited some institutions and groups, such as related government offices, mosques, madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and groups for learning religion. For example, the researcher attended a gathering held by an-Nur Learning Group. He listened to their voices, had a look at their beautiful uniforms, and enjoyed snacks. The second method is the interview. A deep interview was done with a number of resource persons. Among them are principals, teachers, students, formal leaders, government officials, members of learning groups, first inhabitants, and preachers. The third one is the

documentation study. In this connection, the writer studied the contents of written documents and books, such as references used by related teachers.

All data and information collected through the three methods are put into certain categories. For example, daily activities in mosques, background of local inhabitants, background of teachers, background of pupils of madrasas, and activities of learning groups. Based on the facts, the researcher made a comprehensive description of certain topics.

The researcher tried to see that Muslim people in the research site was influenced by Islamic educational patterns in South Sulawesi and much supported by resource persons from the area. Besides, their learning activities have a strong connection with Muslims' traditions, like the use of textbooks.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Muslims in Sebatik-Indonesia Island

Sebatik Island comprises 299.07 km squares. Nowadays there are five districts in this area. Most of the inhabitants follow Islamic religion. In 2018 the number of Muslims is 61.400 persons or 96.43% of the total population (63.673 persons). The data were published by the Regency Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Most of the Muslims belong to Buginese ethnic group. Other ethnic groups are Makassar, Java, and Tidung. Few persons of Timor ethnic group are Muslims. Most of the Timor people are followers of Catholicism. The followers of Catholicism are 1.683 persons (2.64%). The adherents of Christianity are 590 persons (0.93%). Most of them are of Toraja ethnic group.

In 2019 data of Sebatik Timur District show that the number of Muslims in this area is 12.970 persons (99.68%). The followers of other religions are as follow: Christianity: 40 persons (0.31%) and Hinduism: 2 persons (0.01%). There are two villages in this district that have a Muslim population only. They are Tanjung Harapan and Tanjung Aru. The data were prepared by the District Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (KUA).

The Tidung people became the first inhabitants of the island. Sani and Isbon said that the Tidung People came from Sembakung. They went to Sebatik to take wood and swallow's nests. They built their temporary homes for rest. Their settlement is located at Desa Liang Bunyu at this time [15]. Their settlement lies in the west shore of the southern part of the island.

The Tidung people embraced Islam. Though, the Buginese people became the first inhabitants who built a mosque. It was said that Haji Beddu Rahim (real name:

Haji Abdur Rahim) arrived at Sebatik in the second part of 1960 decade. He was from Bone, South Sulawesi. He had lived at Tawi-Tawi (the Philippines) for many years before he and his family members moved to Sebatik.

Haji Beddu Rahim tied up his wooden ship in the east shore of the northern part of Sebatik area. He called the place 'Pancang'. The word in the Buginese language means 'to plant something firmly'. He and his family and his group members had a strong commitment to making the area as the last destination of their travel as migrants. Nowadays the area belongs to Pancang Village.

Besides a group leader, Haji Beddu Rahim acted also as a religious leader. He sometimes delivered a Friday sermon at the Baburrahim Mosque of Pancang. He taught young Muslims to read the Qur'an. He was also appointed by the local government to handle the marriage ceremony.

Haji Beddu Rahim pioneered valuable efforts in developing Islamic education. At present, his descendants manage an MI (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah: Islamic Elementary School) and an MTs (Madrasah Tsanawiyah: Islamic Junior High School). The two institutions are located at Pancang Village.

The neighbourhood of Pancang grew rapidly. The number of the inhabitants increased in a short time. The settlement became a definitive village in 1973. The increase was influenced by its position in the border area. In the past the people of Sebatik Island were permitted to go to Tawau City in Sabah, Malaysia without using a passport. Instead, they could use a temporary permit issued by the local village government.

Due to the rapid increase of the population, other villages were formed. One of them was Sungai Nyamuk Village. It was a part of Pancang Village. In 1995 Sungai Nyamuk was prepared as a new village. Then, it became a definitive one in 1997.

In their first years, Buginese migrants at Sungai Nyamuk Village work as gardeners and fishermen. Many gardeners, mainly from Soppeng Regency, have hectares of palm trees. Nowadays, there are a lot of merchants. Some rich gardeners turn to manage shops. There are also many kiosks, shops, and a supermarket.

Palm trees and swallow's nests become the main sources of income for some rich men. Compared to all villages in Sebatik Island, Sungai Nyamuk plays its position as a business centre. High economic development is also marked by banking services. Three national banks, i.e. BRI, BNI, and Bank Mandiri; and one local bank i.e. Bank Kaltimara; give services to their clients in this village.

It was said that many Buginese people left South Sulawesi due to political reasons. Besides, migration

among Buginese people was based on their cultural values. One of them is to create a better life [16]. The two main forcing factors are also found among Buginese migrants in Sebatik. Though, their economic success increases their spiritual lives. Many Muslims here have performed the fifth pillar of Islam and support religious activities.

3.2. Mosques at Sungai Nyamuk

There are three mosques (masjid) and two prayer buildings (mushalla) at Sungai Nyamuk Village. The first one is the An-Nur Mosque. It is located on Jalan Bhayangkara. The area was the main settlement in the past. The mosque was built in the decade of 1970.

Like other Buginese communities, an imam is an honourable job at this village. They give high respect to an imam. Relatives of an imam are proud of him. Many people here still remember Haji Makkarennu Daeng Mappunna (the Late) as the first Imam of the mosque. He had studied at Madrasah As'adiyah Sengkang, Wajo Regency, before he became an imam. His first successor was H. Abd. Thalib. The present imam is H. Ali, S. Ag. Besides an imam, he is also a teacher of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Iman at a neighbouring village.

The first Learning Group at Sungai Nyamuk was formed at an-Nur Mosque. The group runs a gathering at the mosque every Thursday night. Participants read together Surah (Chapter) Yasin and some other religious texts. The group also holds a weekly meeting at the homes of its members. A religious lecture becomes the main agenda. A gathering is always full of joy. The participants read religious texts happily and enjoy nice and different cookies.

The second mosque is Nurul Huda. The two-story mosque is the biggest one in the island. It is located in the centre of the village. It lies on a new main road leading to neighbouring villages. There are some shops, kiosks and small hotels nearby. Hundreds of persons perform congregational prayers five times a day. Most of them are students of madrasahs and villagers. The second floor of the mosque is used for the teaching and learning activities of the students of MA (Madrasah Aliyah) As'adiyah (Islamic Senior High School). The building of MTs As'adiyah is located nearby.

Al-Kautsar Mosque is the third one. It occupies a temporary wooden building. The location is around nine kilometres from the centre of the village. It is in the middle of the palm gardens. So far, there has not been an electricity connection. Some of the villagers live at a neighbouring village. About seventy households usually pay their alms-giving in this mosque in the month of Ramadan.

One of the gardeners is in charge of the mosque. He controls the construction process of a new permanent

mosque lying in the same yard. He sometimes acts as an imam and a speaker on Friday if the appointed person is absent. The man has an elementary school educational background. He and his group members tried to learn much. He could read the Qur'an fluently when he became a member of Jamaah Tablig ten years ago. The man has a strong commitment to improving his life quality through migration.

3.3. Five Levels of Teaching and Learning

3.3.1. First Level: Studying Arabic Alphabets through Words

As in other Muslim communities, all children aged six to twelve years in this village learn to read the Qur'an. Most of them study at TPA (Course for Children). In this level the children try to identify Arabic alphabets through words. They study a textbook entitled *Iqra'*. It consists of six volumes. The last volume introduces some verses of the Qur'an. So, teaching and learning activity in this level gives very basic knowledge to read the Qur'an.

Students of TPA Nurul Huda gather in the front floor of the mosque, because the other part is used for other learning activities. They study in groups, boys and girls. Each group is guided by a tutor. Around seven to eight boys face the same table. Beside learning together, their teacher sometimes does tutorial for each student. Their activities last after Maghrib prayer until the time of Isha prayer comes. There are eight teachers in this TPA. They do the work as an extra task. They are actually teachers of formal educational institutions.

3.3.2. Second Level: Reading the Entire Holy Qur'an Correctly

Each Muslim student needs experience to finish reading the whole Qur'an. It starts from the Opening Chapter to the Last One (Chapter 114). Recitation should run smoothly without any mistakes in pronouncing a single letter or word. The quality of reading is not easy to achieve. Even many students who finish studying at TPA lose their skills due to their low reading habits.

The above process requires a rather long time. In this context, students usually read some verses of the Qur'an in front of their tutor. The students usually reread the verses many times until the tutor permits them to move to the next verses.

Many students read the Qur'an alone at Nurul Huda Mosque. We may also see tutorial process here. Some tutors guide their pupils to read certain verses of the Holy Scripture correctly. On the contrary, the tutors listen to their students' recitation one by one. The

activity usually takes place after the performance of congregational prayers.

3.3.3. Third Level: Memorizing the Holy Qur'an

We can say that reciting the Qur'an is a continuous activity at Nurul Huda Mosque. Many students of MTs and MA stay in this holy place to memorize the verses of the Qur'an step by step. Many of them stay for a moment in the mosque after performing congregational prayers for that purpose. Several students go to mosque at two a.m. They perform *Tahajjud* prayer and improve the number of verses in their memories.

Some of the students live in a near dormitory. They go to school in the morning and return home in the afternoon. Students of MA who live in the dormitory should memorize all the thirty parts (*juz*) of the Scripture, if they studied at an Islamic Junior School before. But, if they studied at a General Junior High School (SMP) before, they are targeted to memorize fifteen parts only. The target for SMP graduates is lower because many of them have poor skills in reading the Qur'an.

One of the students is in the last class of MTs. So far, he has learned by heart seven parts. Although his parents live at Sungai Nyamuk, he chooses to live in the dormitory. He is interested in making a change to a better life condition. He was involved in many conflicts with others when he was studying at an Elementary School.

One of the influencing teachers is Ustaz Jefri Sakka. He is a *hafiz* (a person who memorizes the entire verses of the Qur'an). He graduated from Ma'had Aly As'adiyah (Islamic College) at Sengkang. He is sent by As'adiyah Organization to respond to the need of the Muslim community at Sungai Nyamuk. He shows a sincere dedication as a young ulama.

His main task is to teach at MA As'adiyah. His additional tasks, among others, are: to do a tutorial for memorizing the Qur'an, to teach an Islamic book entitled *Tafsir Jalalain* once a week, to teach children at TPA, and to lead prayers. His nice recitation makes a deep impression on many participants of the prayers.

The number of new students at this madrasah has shown a high increase since last year. It is likely due to the role of Ustaz Jefri Sakka. Memorizing the Qur'an program was started by the founder of As'adiyah in 1928. At present, memorizing the Qur'an becomes a favorite program. Some students come from neighboring towns, like Nunukan, Tarakan, and Tanjung Selor. Most of them are of Buginese ethnic group.

3.3.4. Fourth Level: Temporary Course on Beautiful Recitation of the Holy Qur'an

Annual Competition on Beautiful Recitation of the Holy Qur'an (MTQ) forces each district throughout Indonesia to prepare its participants. Sungai Nyamuk as the capital of East Sebatik District prepares its delegate. A temporary short course is usually done at Nurul Huda Mosque. It is usually carried out shortly before the time for competition comes. One of the instructors is Ustaz Syair, S.Ag. His occupation is a teacher of Religion Education at SMP. He thinks that there must be continuous regeneration of the *qari* (man reader) and *qariah* (woman reader) in this area. He used to represent this district as a *qari* for the adult level.

3.3.5. Fifth Level: Teaching Islamic Books

A new visitor to Nurul Huda Mosque will see that a learning society is growing well here. Teaching Islamic books becomes a program at Nurul Huda Mosque every evening, except Thursday. The time is used to read Surah Yasin. Teachers and students become two main pillars of the society. None of the students have cellular phones in their hands. They may use them once in a week.

One of the teachers is Ustaz Asmayadi, S.Ag. He is the head of KUA. He learns by heart the entire Qur'an. He teaches a book entitled *al-Mabadi' al-Fiqhiyyah*. The contents are about Islamic law. He used to study it when he was a student of Pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) Darud Dakwah wal Irsyad, Mangkoso, Barru Regency, South Sulawesi. The institution was founded by AG Haji Abdurrahman Ambo Dalle in 1938.

Around 200 students participate in the activity. Besides, several local inhabitants follow the activity. Those who live in the surrounding area may listen to the material through loudspeakers.

Ustaz Asmayadi usually reads a certain part of the mentioned book. He then translates the text into the Indonesian language. The next step is to explain the messages of the text. He sometimes presents a grammatical analysis of the text if necessary. Questions and answers are usually at the end of the session.

4. CONCLUSION

Religious life grows well in Sebatik Island. Buginese people play their dominant roles to build mosques and conduct religious activities among Muslims.

Mosques in Sebatik generally function as places of worship and limited religious educational activities.

Nurul Huda Mosque at Sungai Nyamuk Village manages five different levels of non-formal religious education. The activities are much supported by students and teachers of madrasas, teachers of religious education at school, and the officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

It is good to increase the functions of mosques in many other villages on the island. It is also good to disseminate the patterns of religious educational activities of the Nurul Huda mosque.

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