

CHALLENGES OF PRACTICING QUR'ANIC VALUES IN MUSLIM MAJORITY COUNTRY

Suaidi Asyari
State Islamic University (UIN) STS Jambi
sudi531@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

It starts from direct observations of the life of the community where the writer lives, Jambi province, and other regions where the writer has visited in Indonesia as well as a number of Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East and non-Muslims in Asia, Australia, America and Europe and is enriched with literature research, this paper attempts to respond to the question why Qur'anic values are often not reflected in the behavior of people in Muslim-dominated areas that should be more Islamic than others? This study concludes that the theological view of Muslims who view that sanctions against violations of religious values will be punished in the Hereafter contributes to their disobedience to a regulation or Qur'anic values that is deemed to be erroneous merely earthly. In addition, the weakness of direct sanctions by certain regulatory authorities or the actual law regulating no one's religious background is the second largest factor. It is just that general public is more concerned about religious background factor of any violators rather than the lack of legal sanctions that actually do not see it from the religious background factor. These are then responsible and hidden factors that hamper the implementation of Qur'anic values in Muslim-majority countries.

Keywords: Muslim behaviors, living Qur'an, Islamic-qur'anic values

Introduction

Currently, or precisely in this era of globalization with high-tech information innovation, there is hardly an isolated socio-cultural life that does not affect each other, either in open public spaces or even in closed-door workplaces. The socio-cultural life of a country, even a remote village or region, will influence or be influenced by other countries or regions through information technology products and the mobility of people traveling on tours or other businesses. Behaviors of certain group of people are not also isolated from the rest since they can influence or be influenced either from religious or non-religious associated people. When there are groups of people that do not fully practice their religious teachings, they might contribute to the behaviors of other people of a particular country. This paper will look at behaviors of Muslims who might have been regarded responsible for many irregularities in a number of countries.

Based on a number of observations, the writer found that there is a sharp discrepancy between what is claimed to be normative values (sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad saw) by Muslim preachers as a good religious' value to be applied in their daily social-cultural life, both in relationships between human beings, human beings with socio-cultural behavior of Muslims with the natural surroundings and humans with their daily behaviors in general. Among the most important examples is the claim and belief of Muslims that see Islam has the highest among other religions and nothing comparable to it. But in the reality of everyday life in a

relatively long time and in a number of regions almost anywhere occupied by the majority of Muslims, this claim seems to be naive and cannot be proven in the field in almost every aspect of human life.

On hygiene, for example, Muslims believe that cleanliness is part of their faith. But in fact from the ten cleanest countries in the world none of the Muslim-majority countries. These countries are Iceland, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Mauritania, Kostarika, France, Austria, Cuba and Singapore in the tenth place of the 10 most cleanest countries in the world (<http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOC-1202168>, accessed on September 1, 2017).

To be more specific, the top ten cleanest cities in the world are Calgary (Canada), Adelaide (Australia), Honolulu (United States), Minneapolis (America), Kobe (Japan), Copenhagen (Denmark), Helsinki (Finland), Wellington New, Oslo (Norway) and Freiburg (Germany). Of the top ten cleanest cities, none of them is of the Muslim majority (<https://www.citi.io/2016/11/21/the-top-10-most-cleanest-cities-of-the-world-2016/>).

What has been shown by these examples that no country exists in the top ten list in the various areas of socio-cultural life and the above environment of a predominantly Muslim country, not even Indonesia and Malaysia. This paper seeks to answer the question why the socio-cultural life of Muslims in various countries is inversely proportionate to the suggestions contained in the holy book, including from the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. It will also address problems and challenges of why many Muslims in mostly populated countries do not practice qur'anic values or teachings while they might do so in mostly non-Muslim populated countries? In this case are there factors other than Muslim that have their roles could also be blamed?

Methods

In order to answer the question being addressed above, the author has compared between what many Muslims believe and claim and what they do or practice empirically in their daily life. What Muslims believe does not only refer to what they frequently state but also what the Qur'an and hadiths have stated about respective matters. In addition, the author also has used his own observations while he was traveling both in some number regions in Indonesia and cities abroad. It has to be acknowledged that the notes of the empirical observations were not initially prepared for this writing. However, after reading it again and again, the author believe that they are very useful to be shared academically.

Discussion and Result

To discuss the problems or challenges of implementing qur'anic values above, the author tries to assemble them by using the theory of social change promoted by Malek Bennabi (Bennabi, 1991:189-194) and link it to theological *Weltanschauung* and the perception Muslims about the sanction of religious teachings in the hereafter.

Knowing Malek Bennabi

Malek Bennabi was one of the foremost reformers of the 20th century, originally from Algeria. Indeed, he has some brilliant ideas to revive the spirit of rebuilding a drowned Islamic civilization. But among a number of Islamic universities in Indonesia, his thoughts are not so visible. His thoughts are expressed in a number of his works including: *Al-*

Zahiriyyat al-Qur'aniyah: 1946, (*Phenomenology of the Qur'an*), *Musykilat al-Afkar al-'Alam al-Islami*: 1970 (*Problem Thought of the Islamic World*), *Syuruth al -Nahdah*: 1976 (*Terms of Awakening*), and *Fikrat al-Afriqiyat al-Asiawiyat fi Dau'i al- Mu'tamar Bandung*: 1977 (*Asian African Mind in the Context of Asian- African Conference Bandung*), *Labbaika*, *Hadith al-Bana 'al-Jahid*, *Musykilat al-Hadarah*, *Musykilat al-Mafhumiyyah*: 1986, and *Wijhat al- 'Alam al-Islami*: 1981.

In his various works, unlike most of the thinkers of the twentieth century, Bennabi does not use *taraqqi*, *taqaddum* or *nahdah* which seem to be more narrow or micro for him, but very often uses broader terms, elitist and far-sighted philosophical views forward. He did this in order to place his thinking within the broader spectrum of creating the foundation of Islamic civilization as part of a world civilization that extends far into the almost endless future and across the various ethnic and tribal peoples of the world.

For Bennabi, humanity that can be influenced by psychological- temporal factors is a major factor in social change. It is therefore possible to modify the style of the life of a society and make plans for future change. This can be done by means of behavioral change in the person's self which is the main prerequisite for change at the community level. Relating this important cultural and social change, Bennabi wrote *Mushkilat al-Thaqafah* (Cultural Problems) and in connection with the problem of ideas he wrote *Mushkilat al-Afkar fi al-'Alam al-Islami* (Problems of Idea in the Islamic World).

Therefore, social change, for Bennabi, must begin from within a person's soul (*fard*) in order to transform himself into a person (*shakhs*) in the physical sense. The transformation of the soul into a person is essential because it allows him to modify the basic elements into a human race and encourage social tendencies that connect him to the surrounding community (Bennabi, 1981: 55 ;1991: 193). For him, a person is not only an individual who gives birth to a descendant, but he is a complex creature producing a civilization and at the same time he is also the product of civilization itself. Man, in Bennabi thought, has a central position, especially in his view of social change, because humanity is the main social tool. If humanity moves then society and history will move, but if humanity ceases then society and history will also stop. What he means by human movement is not only in the physical sense, as described below.

According to Bennabi, social behaviors and historical journey are the result of three elements of man, namely the hand (*yad*) (probably including the feet?), The heart (*qalb*) and reason (*aql*). Therefore, every social activity begins with the motivation of the heart, direction and justification of the mind and the physical movements (hands and feet) (Bennabi, 1985: 7). The events and movements of history derive from the interaction of three essential realms: the world's leaders, the world of ideas and nature. Although the world's leading figures occupy a more prominent position than the other two, according to Bennabi the world of ideas plays a very vital role in social change. He argues that in building a civilization, the wealth of a society is not measured from the possessions they possess, but from the wealth of ideas they convey and talk about which results in the view that it is the civilization that produces its products.

Bennabi believes that the most serious problem faced by Muslims is the result of the fact that Islam has lost its social function among Muslims, losing its function in public spaces. Islam is more vertically functioned in relation to God alone. Furthermore, he argues, civilization is the summation and composite of morals and material that enable

the society to provide each of its members with all the social services necessary for them for the sake of progress. Hence he sees civilization as not only a matter of economic progress but rather as a dynamic product and the first of which is the element of social morality (Bennabi, 1971: 50).

Contextualization of Theory of Malek Bennabi

It is therefore also necessary to have more active role of other "intermediary" groups, such as students, culturalists and professional mass media workers, who can often create symbolic work products for change through their social criticism (O'Connor, 1995). However, the first group is often regarded as an entertainer rather than understanding the significance of his thinking. While media work through reportage and columns in particular are more often seen as enemies or business workers the same as other business workers, because both are more focused on seeking for profit rather than the idealism of the creation of social change in order to improve quality of life in the community.

One of the best ways to do so is to provide opportunities for ideas of change that appear to be digressive by the wider society without prior a priori against it. This a priori attitude, for Bennabi is the enemy of the restoration of Islamic civilization, which is until now, according to him, still buried.

Besides these two verses mentioned above, Bennabi also frequently quotes Surah Yusuf verse 87, which means; "And do not despair from the grace of God. There is no despair of the mercy of Allah but the disbelievers." It seems that this was done by Bennabi because it is often found in Islamic society that members of the community are so quick to give up seeing anti- change attitudes often win the competition because of the above argument, that is, the mainstream.

According to Bennabi the first step that must be taken to mobilize public energy in an effort to create change and make tomorrow better than today or in this context to rebuild the buried Islamic civilization is to conduct cultural regeneration. Improving culture for Bennabi is as important as creating social change because cultures can be shaped by nature through which humans can have influence in the society.

Another problem that can also prevent Muslims from ignoring the rules and ethics of life in the public sphere is the belief in the existence of sanctions or laws against the sinners after death, in the grave, in the fields of *mahsyar* and in hell after the doomsday. In a number of verses and hadith of the prophet are stated that a person who behave evil, will get the punishment or the quickest punishment after death, namely in the grave. After that they will be punished in the mahsyar fields, and lastly in the hell fire with various levels of depth and severity of sanctions or punishment.

In addition, in the teachings of Islam is also known for the pardon in the world. Although there is also a verse or hadith that states a person can also get punishment in the world, but the forgiveness through repentance can be more dominant than sanctions or doom given in the world.

The belief that natural events of disasters can be regarded as a reproof or punishment of God, but is often regarded as punishment for another person, not for himself, or also often regarded as a law of nature that has nothing to do with the human bad behaviors that live on it. In the case of Indonesia, for example, there are a number of great natural events that can be understood as reprimands from Allah toward the behaviors of Muslims,

namely the Tsunami in Aceh in December 2005 and Lapindo Mud in East Java Sidowarjo in 2006 and landslides that drowned houses and its contents in relatively large numbers in Indonesia. For the case in Jambi Province, the most examples are gold miners buried and trapped by the soil and sand they themselves dug as a place to look for the gold that has been destructive of nature so vast.

There are also Muslims who read the Qur'an in order to seek *Fadhilah* or *barakah* from God, regardless whether they practice what they read or not.

Conclusion

As to which question why Qur'anic values are often not reflected in the behavior of people dominated by Muslim areas that should be more Islamic than others? From what has been discussed above can be concluded that the religious community should be a model for the experience of their religious teachings in public spaces. However, the un-Islamic behaviors that people see cannot be entirely blamed on this religion where there are other religious or non-religious believers also exist. Environmental and other social and institutional factors in which Muslims live cannot be ignored that they also have social "sin" for the reality. As evidenced by the experiences of Muslim individuals who live or visit various cities of the world, they can also obey the prevailing provisions because they are aware that if they violate the rules and regulations in the public sphere, they are subject to sanctions regardless of what religion they profess, which countries they are coming from, what level of education they already have, including whatever religious social status they enjoy in the community environment from which they come from. Thus, it can be asserted that the behaviors of non-Islamic values in the public sphere by Muslims are strongly influenced by the application of the rules wherever they are. That is, the awareness that there is a factor that God sees what they do when and where they are is no more significant than the consistency of imposing sanctions on violations by the relevant agencies.

If this conclusion is acceptable then the worldview of Muslims about the application of Islamic values in the public sphere need to be accompanied by institutions consistently to apply it in everyday life, so that wrong behaviors in this world will also be sanctioned in this world. Violations and punitive sanctions imposed by the implementers of the rules of the world are as important as the punishments or sanctions they will receive in the future after dead.

References

- Backer, T.E. 2001. *Increasing Participation Means Changing Behavior: What can be learned from behavioral science?* Grant makers in the Arts Reader, 12 1), 18-22.
- Boussalah, Zahrah. "Malek Bennabi: An Analytical Study of His Theory of Civilization," presented at AMSS 34th Annual Conference "Muslim and Islam in the Chaotic Modern World: Relations of Muslims among Themselves and with Others", Temple University, Philadelphia, 30 September – 2 October 2005
- Ch. Taylor, 1985. —Interpretation and the sciences of man, in *Philosophical Papers 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 15-57
- Ch. Taylor, 1995. —Irreducibly social goods, in *Philosophical Arguments*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 127-145
- Ch. Taylor, 2004. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham and London: Duke University

- Press.
- Ch. Taylor, 1989. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Editor, "Social Change as Seen by Malik Bennabi, *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, vol. 8, No. 1, 1991. 189-194.
- Gomez, M.V. 1998. 'Reflective Images: The case of urban regeneration in Glasgow and Bilbao', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 22(1), pp. 106-121.
- Graeme Evans & Phyllida Shaw. "Literature Review: Culture and Regeneration," *Arts Research Digest*, issue 37. Summer 2006.
- Guiso, L. Sapienza, P. and Zingales, L. 2006. "Does Culture Affect Economic Outcomes?", Working Paper, NBER, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w11999>.
- H. Rosa, —Four levels of self-interpretation: a paradigm for interpretive social philosophy and political criticism, in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 30, 2004. 691-720.
- J. D. McCarthy and M. N. Zald, —Resource mobilization and social movements: a partial theory, in *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 82, 6, 1977. 1212-41.
- Keating, M. and De Frantz, M. 2004. 'Culture-led Strategies for Urban Regeneration: A comparative perspective on Bilbao', *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, 16(3), pp. 187-194.
- Leat, Diana, 2005. *Theories of Social Change*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Foundation.
- Mansyur, M. and others., 2007. *Metodologi Penelitian Living Qur'an dan Hadits*, (Yogyakarta: TH. Press).
- M. Walzer, 1987. *Interpretation and Social Criticism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Meyer, Erin. 2015. *The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business*, Public Affairs.
- Miles, S. 2005. "'Our Tyne": Iconic Regeneration and the Revitalisation of Identity in Newcastle Gateshead', *Urban Studies*, 42(5/6), pp. 913-916.
- Montero, Dario. *Some Elements of a Cultural Theory of Social Change*, <http://www.ijssh.org/papers/68-H084.pdf>, accessed on 19 July 2017.
- Nurhakim, Moh. "Malik Bennabi dan Strategi Pembangunan Peradaban Alternatif bagi Dunia Ketiga," unpublished
- O'Connor, J. & Wynne, D. 1995. *City Cultures and the New Cultural Intermediaries* (Manchester, Manchester Institute Popular Culture).
- Olson, Mancur. *The logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and The Theory of Groups*, Canbridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- P. Rabinow and W. M. Sullivan, Eds., *Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987.
- Smelser, N.J. *Theory of Collective Behavior*, New York: Free Press, 1996. Touraine, A. *The Self Production of Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Internet Sources

- <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/>
<http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOC-1202168>
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/the-most-honest-cities-in-the-world-8839046.html>.

<https://themysteriousworld.com/10-most-peaceful-countries-in-the-world/>

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2016-10-20/us-is-no-18-in-rule-of-law-ranking>. global-

<https://themysteriousworld.com/10-happiest-countries-in-the-world/>