

Research article

A Sociological Approach to the Quran: Contemporary Interactions Between Society and the Quran (Jam'iyah Qur'aniyyah) in Indonesia

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Abstract.

The Quran is a guide that covers all matters of human life. However, sociologically, the Quran as the word of God also influences Muslim culture and practices around the globe. Therefore, the Quran can be interpreted by distinguishing between what is essentially religious and what is part of the historical tradition which has always existed at different levels in the history of Muslims. This article aimed to analyze the interactions which have resulted in a good understanding of the messages of the Quran and the practice of these in daily life in Indonesia, using the concept of living Quran through *jam'iyah qur'aniyyah*.

Keywords: sociological approach, living Quran, contemporary Indonesia

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1. Introduction

Religion is a continuous effort to deal rationally with life. Religion does not arise from difficulties, ambiguity, and conflict, and instead provides the necessary spirit for life. This allows religious followers to determine ways of life that make living worthwhile.[1] Thus, religion is *'heavily concerned with the basic needs and routines of mundane existence while offering the opportunity of transcending them in the search for meaning and the good life.'*[2] In Islam, it can be seen from how the relations that exist between Muslims and the Quran in daily life.

The presence of the Quran in daily life has an integrated and comprehensive goal, which is to help find values that can be used as a guideline for solving various kinds of problems. In this perspective, the Quran is not just a formality that is ritualistic and mystical but can be lived and practiced to foster the reality of faith which in turn can improve the social sphere of human life.[3] One of the Quran principles is related to time and space changing. This concept declared that Quran can solve all problems of human from time to time, in many ways. Besides, applying the Quran in daily life can get the guide from God. From that reception, it can be extracted the great definition that


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Quran reception is how the Quran as a text being received or accepted by Muslims and how they give the reaction to the Quran. This is clearly explained in al-Hajj: 16 “*And so We revealed this Quran as clear verses. And Allah certainly guides whoever He wills.*”

With the existence of various forms of learning and related to the situation and condition of Muslims, understanding and practicing the contents of the Quran will certainly take respective portions in Muslim communities all over the globe. There are many forms of practice and interaction of Muslims as a manifestation of their devotion to the Quran according to their respective conditions. An interesting case that needs to be investigated further is how the interaction between society and the Quran in Indonesia.

It is the responsibility of a Muslim to always be active with the Quran, as a source of inspiration, and to make the Quran a basis for thinking and acting. Also, the recommendation to read Quran earnestly is a fundamental step for a Muslim to become acquainted with the meaning contained in the Quran widely. Then proceed with *tadabbur*, namely by contemplating and understanding its meaning, then practicing it in daily life.

The doctrines of Islam that are contained in the Quran are strong enough that they ultimately function as the core of a culture, contain morals and ethics that surround all aspects of life. In such a context, it is natural for the Indonesian people to make the Quran closely related, as well as a guide in daily life. It is so ingrained in the lives of Indonesian Muslims association with the Quran occurs so intensively, interactively, and in dialogue.

For Muslims, especially in Indonesia, the Quran is the holy book which is the basis and guidance in their lives. They generally have practiced receptions of the Quran, either in the form of reading, understanding, and practicing or in the form of socio-cultural receptions. It's all because they have the belief that interacting with the Quran will bring happiness to the afterlife. The phenomenon of interaction between Muslim society with the Quran in the social realm is very dynamic and varied. As a form of socio-cultural reception, the appreciation and response of Muslims to the Quran is very influenced by the way of thinking, social cognition, and the context that surrounds their lives. So, the various forms and models of reception practices and Muslim responses in treating and interacting with the Quran are what is called the ‘living quran’.[4]

2. Research Method

The research method is a scientific way of obtaining data for specific purposes and uses. Based on this, the method used in this study is a qualitative research method, because

the research is carried out in conditions of natural objects, and the researcher becomes the key instrument. Meanwhile, for data analysis used content analysis techniques.

Content analysis can be simply defined as a method for collecting and analyzing the contents of a 'text'.^[5] The text can be in the form of words, the meaning of pictures, symbols, and ideas, and various forms of messages that can be communicated. Content analysis is used in this study to determine the various forms of messages that can be communicated, then obtain the understanding that is presented from the message.^[6] In this case, it is the interaction between society and the Quran.

Besides, this study uses a sociological approach. The sociological approach is used to understand the perspective on the conception of the interaction with the Quran in daily life. This is done because reciting Quran as a reality and social element always presents a pluralistic meaning between experience and beliefs.

3. Result and Discussion

In Indonesia, the study of the Quran continues to experience development in the area of study, from text to socio-cultural studies. This study is called the living quran, and one of its forms is the *jam'iyyah qur'aniyyah*. *Jam'iyyah qur'aniyyah* is one of the many phenomena of the living quran from Muslims in Indonesia as an effort to revive or present Alquran in everyday life. With diverse social and religious backgrounds and cultures in Indonesia, *jam'iyyah qur'aniyyah* has become a cultural entity that exists and continues to develop with various meanings and understandings.

The term *jam'iyyah qur'aniyyah* here is meant for the general form of an association that is purposively held to read, study, and understand the Quran. Usually, people gather at a designated place, whether it be in a house, mosque, *langgar*, *pondok pesantren*, and others, at an agreed time, either daily, weekly, monthly, or at certain times. Therefore, the term *jam'iyyah qur'aniyyah* here does not refer to only one particular group who practice reading the Quran together.

Jam'iyyah qur'aniyyah, in general, is held with the orientation and motivation in reading the Quran apart from aiming at worship, guidance, and tools of justification. Quran also encourages every reader to find understanding in the form of certain theological systems that are then expressed in daily life.^[7]

3.1. Society and Living Quran

Interaction with the Quran is a kind of religious experience that is already rooted in Muslim society because the Quran can to give guidance and inspiration to those who read, understand, and apply it in life. So, it can be measures that the Quran influences daily activity, especially in moral transformation.

Interaction with the Quran has been carried out since the era of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Evidence of this can be found in the Hadith which says

“No people get together in a house of the houses of Allah (i.e mosque), reciting the Book of Allah, and learning it together among themselves, but calmness (sakinah) comes down to them, (Divine) mercy covers them (from above), and the angels surround them, and Allah makes a mention of them among those who are with Him.”[8]

According to Yusuf al-Qardhawi, the meaning of reciting the Quran is an attempt to know the pronunciation, understanding the meaning contained, as well as laws, and ethics. In the explanation, it also means that reciting the Quran is one or several people asking a question, then the others answer it. But the simple practice is that when one recites some verses from the Quran, the other listens to the recitation. Then the others also took turns continuing their reading.[9]

The practice of reciting the Quran as described by Qardhawi is also found in Indonesia. Based on the history of Islamization in Indonesia, Quran is the main book that is accepted as same as norms and traditions then arise reception varieties. Indonesian society thickly with Islamic values, using the Quran in daily activities. This phenomenon shows that the Quran already becomes part of social life in Indonesia.[10]

In Indonesia, the Quran is already becoming a sacred religious text. The tradition of reciting the Quran was always becoming the most important part of their variety of behaviour and because of that, the Quran becomes a tool for social activities.[11] For Muslims in Indonesia, the Quran is the main guidance used in many aspects of life with many behavioural expressions. Accordingly, the inspirations obtained from the Quran transform into local wisdom. From this, the study of the living quran emerged.

The meaning of the living quran comes from the phenomenon of the Quran in everyday life, which is the meaning and function of the Quran is understood and experienced by Muslims, such as the practice of using the Quran in practical life beyond its textual condition. This function of the Quran arises because of the practice of interpreting the Quran which does not refer to the understanding of the text of the Quran, but is based on the assumption that there is a *‘fadilah’* from certain units of the quranic text, because of the practical benefits of people’s daily lives. In contrast,

to the study of the Quran whose object of study is the textuality of Quran, the study of the living quran focuses on the object of study in the phenomena found in certain Muslim communities. Therefore, the study of living quran can be interpreted as a study of various social events related to the existence of the Quran in Muslim societies as an object of study.

The term living quran tries to reveal social phenomena that exist in society and are related to the Quran. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd called it '*the Quran as a living phenomenon*', then, Quran is like the music played by musicians, while the written text (*mushaf*) is like a musical note (it is silent).[12]

Living quran constitutes an alternative paradigm for Islamic studies and religious sociology since this study examines religious phenomena in social life. Living quran tries to see the relation between the Quran and Muslim society in a certain region and how the Quran is faced by attitude theoretically and practiced in daily life. So, we can conclude that living quran is the study about the Quran but not focus on textual existence, more to study about the social phenomenon which arises by Quran presence in a globe.

The study in living quran has made a significant contribution to the development of the area of the object of the study of the Quran. Then, with living quran, the meaning of interpretation can actually be expanded not just an impression that the interpretation is understood to be a graphic text written by someone. Interpretation can be in the form of responses or behavioral practices of a society that are inspired by the presence of the Quran. In the language of the Quran, this is called *tilawah*, which is reading that is oriented to practice (action) which is different from *qira'ah* (reading that is oriented to understanding or understanding).[13]

The importance of living quran is to provide a new paradigm for the development of contemporary quranic studies so that the study of the Quran is not only concerned with the area of text study. In the area of living quran, the study of interpretation will appreciate the response and actions of the community towards the presence of Quran, so that interpretation is no longer just elitist, but emancipatory, which invites public participation. At this level that Muslims are expected to be able to understand the messages of the Quran properly which they then practice in their daily lives.[14] Therefore, the sociological approach and the analysis of the social sciences and humanities are of course very important in this regard.

Various phenomenons arise because of the interaction of Muslims in Indonesia with the Quran. There are several variants of the interaction of Muslims with the Quran, some of which position the Quran as the guideline of life, some make Quran as a representation

of the desire for happiness in life, and so on. One of these phenomenons is *jam'iyah qur'aniyyah*.

3.2. Sociology and the Quran

When the Quran is studied, it is understood it will generate responses and reactions to readers that form certain impressions. Therefore, the role of the reader in the Koran has particular importance which needs to be done from various aspects of values. From this, the role of the reader is important in determining the meaning and value of the Quran itself. So that the Quran can have value because there is a role of readers who give different values and meanings. This means that the context of the role of the reader becomes the theory of the receptions of the Quran which is understood to serve various purposes and interests, because the reader factor will determine the meaning of the text, in this case by the historical situation of the reader. Because after all the text can have meaning after the text has been read and deeply absorbed.[15] This will lead to behavior that is formed in a glorious way because it is in accordance with the Quran.

Living quran is a study that focuses on society's response and interpretation of the text of the Quran. Society response means their reception of certain texts and results of certain interpretations. Social receptions of the Quran can be found in daily life, such as the reading of certain verses of the Quran at certain socio-religious events and ceremonies. Meanwhile, social reception of the results of interpretation implies the institutionalization of certain forms of interpretation in society, both on a large and small scale. The text of the Quran that lives in the society is called the living quran, while the institutionalization of the results of interpretation in society is called the living tafsir. This kind of study is a form of study that combines the branches of the Quran and social sciences such as sociology.

A study of the Quran receptions was then responded to provide value and meaning. This interpretation is the basis and guideline for who understands it. In simple understanding, it means the way of understanding, or interpret in the form of daily life is a form of interaction and dialogue between a society with the Quran.

Quran for Muslims in Indonesia is something that is appreciated positively. This appreciation can be seen when the Quran is received exegetically, the Quran is read and understood in *jam'iyah qur'aniyyah*. One of the concrete indications towards this exegetical reception is the existence of the various *jam'iyah qur'aniyyah*. *Jam'iyah qur'aniyyah* can be categorized in the exegetical reception of the Quran because in addition to the Quran it is read and understood, but there is also learning about the

contents of the Quran to explore the blessings and happiness of life. This, for example, refers to the meaning of *al-'Asr*: 1-3.

3.3. The Motives of Jam'iyah Qur'aniyyah as a Receptions of the Quran through Actions

Studying religious phenomena means studying human behavior in religious life. Meanwhile, the religious phenomenon itself is a manifestation of human attitudes and behavior related to things that are considered sacred. However, Islamic principles regarding socio-religious as well as the concept of Islamic culture have not been discussed in detail, either concerning the description of Islamic culture, understanding the form of its activities or matters related to these activities, for example, activities related to the response of the people against the presence of the Quran.

The study of the Quran has developed the study area from text to socio-cultural studies, which make religious communities the object. This study is called the living quran study. In simple terms, living quran can be understood as a visible symptom in society in the form of behavior patterns that originate from responding to the values of the Quran. The living quran study does not only rely on its textual existence but on the study of social phenomena that arise related to the presence of the Quran in certain geographic areas and times as well.

Jam'iyah qur'aniyyah is one of the many phenomena of Muslims in reviving or presenting the Quran in daily life by reading and listening, which can be found in religious institutions such as *pesantren*, *majelis taklim*, and so on. This tradition has been so entrenched by Muslims in Indonesia that it has even developed especially among certain communities so that this tradition has formed a local cultural entity. *Jam'iyah qur'aniyyah* is a study of the living quran due to the form of response or behavior of a society inspired by the presence of Alquran, in the language of the Quran it is called *tilawah*, which is an experience-oriented reading (action) that is different from *qira'ah* (reading oriented to understanding or understanding).

From this reality, it can be said that the practice of *jam'iyah qur'aniyyah* has a certain motivational element for the community which encourages them to follow the *jam'iyah qur'aniyyah* as well as providing understanding according to their individual, social, cultural and religious doctrine and religious experiences.

4. Conclusion

Analyzing interaction between society, as an object of study, and the Quran with living quran theory is offering the phenomenon of the meaning of the Quran comprehensively using a more varied perspective. Meanwhile, bringing the meaning of socio-cultural phenomena to sociological study means placing the assumptions of interpretive sociological paradigms as the basis of thought to examine and discuss these phenomena.

The results of this study concluded that the existence and development of the *jam'iyah qur'aniyyah* as a religious expression that aims to revive or present the Quran in daily life in Indonesian society was due to two main motives, religious motives and social motives.

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