From Oral to Written Da'wah: A Study on the Development of Preaching Methods in Indonesia

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Abstract-- Musabaqah Tilawatil Qurân (MTQ) is derived from Arabic by Indonesian society to refer to the literary Qurânic Recitation Competition. This is a large and fundamental development in the preaching and teaching of Islam in Indonesia. It started in the 1940s and was nationalized in the 1960s to help promote the power way of reading and reciting the Qurân. Since its nationalization in 1968, MTQ has become a tradition for Indonesians, although Qurânic recitation itself is a common practice and a universal activity within the Muslim world. During Qurânic recital competitions, participants compete in a number of different elements, which include Tilawah (the art of reciting the Quran), Fahm Al-Qurân (comprehension of Qurânic content), and tahfiz Qurân (memorization of the Qurân). In 2003, a new field was added to the MTQ competition, i.e., Musabaqah Makalah Ilmiah Al-Qurân (M2IQ), which is translated as Al-Qurânic Academic Writing Competition. Since its first appearance during the 2003 Regional MTQ in the West Java Province, and later during the 2008 National MTQ, M2IQ, which is basically written da wah material, has been considered an innovation within the preaching field in Indonesia. In the past, Islamic preaching (da wah) in Indonesia has always been in the oral form. This development calls for comprehensive study to understand the underlying principles within the emerging M2IQ approach in the teaching of Islam or the Qurân within Indonesia, and its contribution to the shaping of modern Islamic preaching or teaching in Indonesia.

Keywords: development; methods; oral preaching; written preaching; da'wah innovation

I. Introduction

Musabaqah Tilawatil Qurân (MTQ/Al-Qurân Reciting Competition) is a method of spreading Islam to a broader society. It is conducted in levels, from the local village to the national level, once every two years. The spirit of competition (musabaqah) generated by MTQ is expected to stimulate the public to read, understand, and practice Al-Qurân's contents in their own surrounding..

Since the first National MTQ in 1968, until today, the fields and categories contested in this competition are developed continuously. Moreover, since the founding of Lembaga Pengembangan Tilawatil Qurân (LPTQ/Al-Qurân

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Reciting Development Body) in 1977, MTQ has been noted to be one of the methods to realize the implementation of the Qurân in public daily life.

Historically, since 1968, MTQ has been institutionalized at the national level. The first MTQ was held in Makassar in 1968. It only involved adults as participants of the competition. The winners of the first MTQ were Qari Ahmad Syahid from West Java and Muhammad from South Sulawesi.

Based on the Pedoman Musabaqah Ilmiah Al-Qurân (Muhtadi, 2014), there are seven fields (or categories) contested in the MTQ: Tilawah Al-Qurân (reciting Al-Qurân), Hifzh Al-Qurân (memorization of Al-Qurân verses), Tafsir Al-Qurân (interpretation of Al-Qurân), Fahm Al-Qurân (Al-Qurân comprehension), Syarh Al-Qurân (explanation of Al-Qurân), Khat Al-Qurân (calligraphy), and Musabaqah Makalah Ilmiah Al-Qurân (M2IQ/Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition).

From the perspective of (slamic preaching, MTQ is a large and important movement for the processes of diffusion, transmission, transformation, and internalization of Islamic teachings. All the fields contested in the competition are regarded as way to spread Islam and as a stimulus that are expected to affect people into furthering the spread of Islam.

MTQ is also considered a part of the process of developing skills, comprehension, and methods needed for da'wah. One of the methods for da'wah that has been a weakness for the Islamic community, particularly in Indonesia, is the written method. Writing tradition, in the Islamic community, is far from developed; the development of written media happens rapidly and is dynamic.

In the last few MTQs, Al-Qurân was introduced, not only through, and on, aspects of recitation, interpretation, and explanation, but also in terms of writing. All these aspects are developed in the hope that they can improve positive public attitudes toward Al-Qurân, which, in turn, will result in greater and deeper psychological impacts in every Moslem (Bensaid, Machouche, & Grine, 2014).

One of the fields in which participants have competed in the MTQ since 2003, particularly in the regional level of West Java Province, is Al-Qurân Contents Writing Competition). When it was officially introduced to the national level in 2010, its name was changed to Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition). This field integrated two skills or abilities into one competition: The technical skill of writing and academic intelligence. Therefore, the quality, capacity, and perception of the participants of M2IQ are intensely challenged. This field is expected to produce the next generation of Moslem writers, whose works may become sources of enlightenment for people in the future.

M2IQ brings new way and nuance to the history of MTQ in Indonesia. It revitalizes MTQ, which has always represented the oral tradition of Islamic teaching. M2IQ reminds us of the importance of rejuvenating the tradition of writing, which was abandoned by Islamic communities in Indonesia for centuries (Noor, 2015).

Da'wah, or the spreading of Islamic teaching, has always been associated with preaching, lecturing, and so on. It is seldom that people call the activities of columnists, reporters, or other writers, da'wah. People call Kyai Arifin Ilham, who is able to make his audience cry during his preaching, a da'i (a person who performs da'wah). However, the same people are unlikely to call a writer a da'i, although writers have always been involved in activities to spread Islamic teachings. Spreading Islamic teachings through writing has actually been around longer than the oral tradition of da'wah. This kind of da'wah is, in fact, a more lasting method to serve the religion.

Not only has it been around longer, written media also has an edge over oral media, including electronic media. Several studies on mass communication reveal an interesting fact concerning the effects of printed media; written media has had great influence over public behavior. Its psychological effects are more permanent than other forms of mass media.

Thus, the messages in written or printed media generally have greater effects relative to those of oral media. A communication survey indicated that the messages contained in a book (novels, comic books, etc.) or in magazines hold a greater psychological effect than those delivered through movies or radio, which are only received through listening. One of the reason is because printed media has a greater level of proximity to audiences than electronic media.

Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition shows the importance of alternative media in delivering Islamic da'wah that does not require people to physically go to a certain venue or attend an event. One of the most effective media to do that is written or printed media. Da'wah delivered through written media can always be received by the public, even when most of their time is spent doing daily acitivities. Da'wah in written media is easily accessible to people in their own homes. People are still able to enjoy Islamic da'wah without having to leave their after-dinner family meeting.

The Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition) was first initiated by Asep Saepul Muhtadi, a professor of communication at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication of the State Islamic University Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. The field was first included in a regional MTQ in 2003, held in Tasikmalaya Region, West Java Province. Five years later, in 2008, M2IQ was tested as one of the fields being contested in the national MTQ Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition has been an official part of the National MTQ since 2010, when a National MTQ was held in Bengkulu Province.

II. Methodology

This study attempts to describe the facts related to the emergence of Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition) in the Musabaqah Tilawatil Qurân (MTQ/Al-Qurân Reciting Competition) event in Indonesia. This study aims to provide an overview of the aspects and reasons in creating M2IQ, which is considered a new innovation of da'wah method in Indonesia. The sources and respondents in this study are people who were directly and actively involved in the implementation of M2IQ. Interviews were conducted with the initiator of M2IQ, contestants from many regions, and Islamic figures in West Java and other regions in Indonesia. This study also utilized field observations of M2IQ implementation, at the local (region and city), regional (province), and national levels. The data were also collected using documents analyses. Data that were collected were categorized based on the problems being studied, and was continuously analyzed, from the beginning to the end of Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition.

III. Literature Review

More than 200 million Moslems in Indonesia express their faiths in various and complex ways. For them, Islam is identity (Green, 2014). Fealy and White (Greg & White, 2008) mentioned several examples of such

expression: Celebrity television preachers, online fatwa services, mass religious rallies in soccer stadiums, glossy jihadist magazines, Islamic medical treatments, alms giving via mobile phone, and electronic sharia banking services, are just some of the manifestations of a more consumer-oriented approach to Islam, which interacts with, and sometimes replaces, other, more-traditional expressions of the faith (Asrori, 2016).

In addition to what has been mentioned above, the expression of Indonesian Moslems is also represented in the Musabaqah Tilawatil Qurân (MTQ/Al-Qurân Reciting Competition) event (Nur Rohman, 2016). Thus far, there have not been many studies on MTQ. This presents great challenges, as well as great opportunities, to conduct studies on the various aspects of MTQ. One of the few studies on MTQ, conducted by Bahrudin (2014), examined the assessment of Tilawah (reciting) in MTQ. There have been no studies on the Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition) as a new phenomenon in the world of MTQ ((Millie, 2017).

Rasmusen (Rasmussen, 2010) conducted an interesting study concerning MTQ, particularly in the field of Tilawah. Rasmusenfound that the MTQ is fun, lovely, and enjoyable for many people. The event is prepared and held seriously in a spiritual atmosphere. MTQ is also viewed as an exercise of nationalism, because in MTQ, representatives from every province in Indonesia parade to celebrate their own culture and ethnic traditions.

In addition, Rasmusen (Rasmussen, 2010) also found that the principles of gender equality were applied well in the field of Tilawah(the art of reciting Al-Qurân) in MTQ. In Indonesia, women have great opportunities to be a famous soloist in the field of Al-Qurân recitation.MTQ at local and national levels provides a space for women to demonstrate their skills in front of the public. There is some degree of affirmative action to accommodate the involvement of women in reciting Al-Qurân and MTQ is an important medium to develop and socialize Islamic arts and culture.

In addition to Indonesia, Egypt is another Islamic country that holds MTQs. Egypt is the center of the International MTQ, where Frishkopf studies Al-Qurân recitation. He notes that, nowadays, Al-Qurân recitation is one of the mediums of spreading Islam in Egypt. He further discussed Al-Qurân recitation and explained, in detail, the difference between mujawwad recitation and murattal recitation from various points of view, including timbre, expression, modulation, melody, accent, pause, etc. (Frishkopf, 2009). M2IQ indicates a new era of MTQ. This domain is expected to accentuate the intellectual aspects of MTQ so that the event will have greater academic weight.

The mainstream model of da'wah in Indonesia refers to the oral method. The practices of oral da'wah are easily found everywhere in the country. The domains contested in MTQ, prior to M2IQ, represent methods of oral da'wah. Outside of the MTQ, the practices of oral da'wah can be easily found in society. Concerning this, Millie (Millie, 2017) studied oral da'wah practices in West Java, as performed by a popular mubalighin the area. Millie founds that the tradition of oral d'wah has deep roots in Moslem societies in Indonesia (Millie, 2017).

Amids this situation, M2IQ that is based on written da'wah seems to be so contrast. On the other hand, M2IQ is expected to be a flexible and challenging medium—with a wider and deeper spectrum—for young Moslems in Indonesia to produce written works. Through M2IQ, their creativity is expected to grow and develop. Growth and development of creative culture is very valuable, which makes media that allow such growth and development even more valuable.

M2IQ is also seen as an effort to transform da'wah through writing. In addition, Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition was originally intended to revive the tradition of previous ulama, who explored and poured their ideas into monumental writing. The tradition of writing throughout the history of Islam has produced many masterpieces.

IV. Findings and Discussion

At the National level MTQ, up to 2014, Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competitions have been held four times: In Banten Province, in 2008, in Bengkulu Province, in 2010, in Maluku Province, in 2012, and in Riau Province, in 2014. In West Java Province, the place where M2IQ was first held, it has been held nine times as of 2014; the first was in Tasikmalaya Regency, in 2003, and the latest was in Kuningan Region, in 2014.

As a new driving force in the movement of da'wah in Indonesia, M2IQ is the most unique field of MTQ. One of its unique features is that the participants use typewriters to write their papers in a competition room. The initiator of M2IQ, Asep Saepul Muhtadi (Muhtadi, 2014), explained that the typewriter was chosen because it is a less-expensive, less-complicated, and safest tool to write a paper. Using typewriters allows participants and judges to maintain the originality of the papers. In addition, using typewriters adds a unique element to the competition.

During the competition, 50 participants simultaneously write papers in a room, using their typewriters, references, tenacity, intelligence, and endurance.

Using the typewriters that they bring, each participant is given ten hours in the preliminary round, from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and eight hours in the semifinal round, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., to write a 10–15-page paper. One consolation for them is that they are free to regulate their own pace, to use the allocated time as they wish: When to eat, when to take a break, when to perform salat, and when to resume working on their papers.

The competition itself is divided into three rounds: The first round is a qualification or preliminary round, the second is the semifinal round, and the third is the final round. In the first two rounds, participants write their papers, and in the final round, they present what they have written. This presentation session is intended to be an opportunity for participants to justify for their writing, as well as a time to put whatever argumentation, validation, and confirmation they have written to the test.

In the first round representatives from all regencies/provinces take part in the competition. They are gathered in a room and are required to write a popular -academic paper on one major theme, selected by a panel of judges. Each participant is free to formulate their own title, as long as the paper refers to the theme. The themes prepared for M2IQ are relevant to current issues in society, including the environment, education, social welfare, and work ethic issues.

After the qualification round, the panel of judges select 12 participants, six males and six females, with the highest scores, to participate in the semifinal round. In the semifinal round, they are, once more, required to write a paper using the same theme, but on a different topic.

Six participants, three males and three females with the highest scores from the semifinal round, compete in the final round. All participants in the final round have to present their paper in front of the panel of judges. Since M2IQ is essentially a writing competition, and not a speech competition, this presentation only accounts for 15% of the total score a participants will get. The final score of this round is the accumulation of the score from semifinal writing and 15% for the presentation.

How does the panel of judges determine the winner of M2IQ? Essentially, M2IQ combines two important skills: Academic sophistication and technical writing skills. These two skills are formulated into variables of assessment that include: Firstly, the weight of the material/content is represented by several indicators; including how relevant the title of the paper is relative to the main theme; how much worth and how current the ideas are; the extent to which participants explore the content of Al-Qurân and how broad the participants' perspectives are. Secondly, grammar and style, indicated by correct grammar, accuracy of punctuation, appropriateness of language, and diction and expressions are examined. Thirdly, the logic and organization of the work is indicated by coherence and consistency, quality of ideas, systematic organization of ideas, and flow of the writing are measured. The final variable is the resourcefulness of the references, indicated by the use of sufficient and relevant sources, the use of main sources (not ad hoc sources), and the range of references (including those in other languages).

The 'sound' of Al-Qurân in M2IQ cannot be measured from the perspective of other MTQ domains. Al-Qurân should not only be recited beautifully, it also has to be able to solve the problems of humanity. It is a source of knowledge that still needs thousands and thousands attempts to interpret properly. However, these interpretations are of no use if Al-Qurân is only viewed as pages and pages of verse to satisfy the ear; not as teachings and principles that need to be brought to life by people.

M2IQ tests participant intelligence by seeing how they position Al-Qurân as a tool to dissect social reality to find solutions to social problems at the local, national, and global levels. To see and relate how a statement in Al-Qurân can be relevant to social facts, participants need to have sharp observational skills. Participants need to be careful and thorough in choosing appropriate verses from Al-Qurân to suit social problems. They need to be smart and be true in interpreting verses in transformative ways so that Al-Qurân can be a source of enlightenment for the whole world.

Technically, M2IQ offers a creative activity that can improve the skills and abilities of participants. This creative activity results in very valuable works; not only do they have a physical form; they also can be sources of reference for people to see how Al-Qurân is still relevant to today's problems. Thus far, M2IQ has put together dozens of books, all of which are available to the public. The books contain compilations of M2IQ participant writings. Some of the books produced by M2IQ, among others, are: 1. Al-Qurân Kitab Kehidupan (Al-Qurân, the Book of Life); 2. Al-Qurân Kitab Kesalehan Sosial (Al-Qurân, the Book of Social Piousness); 3. Pengembangan Pendidikan Berbasis Umat (The Development of People-Based Education); 4. Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Berbasis Umat (The Empowerment of People-Based Economy); 5. Transformasi Sosial Berbasis Kearifan Lokal(Social Transformation Based on Local Wisdom); 6. Samudera Al-Qurân: Bersama Al-Qurân Menyelami Kehidupan(The Sea of Al-Qurân: Swimming in Life with Al-Qurân); 7. Kesalehan Multikultural: Menelusuri Nilai-nilai Al-Qurân dalam Praksis Budaya Lokal (Multicultural Piousness: Exploring the Values of Al-Qurân and the Practices of Local Culture); 8. Al-Qurân Kitab Ramah Lingkungan (Al-Qurân, an Environment-Friendly Scriptures); and 9. Al-Qurân Inspirasi Kehidupan (Al-Qurân, Life Inspiration).

When the implementation of MTQ diverts from mainstream oral tradition, M2IQ succeeds in providing real evidence of the usefulness of this competition. Although every activity has the potential to be imperfect, M2IQ, in general, can respond to people's yearning for real works that people can enjoy and that leave their mark on history.

M2IQ is relatively unpopular among the participants of MTQ. It is difficult to find cadres or participants for this field of competition. Until now, there have not been many Islamic schools that can satisfy the need of M2IQ. This is another difference between M2IQ and other fields of MTQ. In other domains, such as tilawah, tafsir, tahfizh, khat, and syarhil, the majority of the participants come from Islamic schools, while the participants of M2IQ generally come from Islamic universities.

M2IQ, like any other domain of MTQ, is intended to give voice to Al-Qurân, so that it can be understood and practiced by Moslem society. To put it simply, a lot of people have difficulties in translating the objective 'to give a voice to Al-Qurân' in the context of M2IQ. This is what makes it so difficult to find cadres or participants for this competition. Even the elites of MTQ have difficulties in formulating a working definition and parameters for this. How, and to what extent, can we determine that Al-Qurân has a voice when it is put in writing?

The emergence of the Al-Qurân Content Writing Competition was not a simple matter. It was born amidst the intellectual poverty of Moslems in Indonesia. It was intended to accelerate the development of Moslems in West Java Province and Indonesia. As a foundation of Moslem intellectuality, M2IQ has become an alternative driving force, as well as a motivator, to help young Moslems to produce real works in the academic world with a religious touch.

Since M2IQ is initiated in the MTQ, there is some empowerment of local potential in society. The empowerment of young intellectuals, who mostly come from Islamic schools or universities, has been a unique and special thing for intellectual and academic fields in Indonesia. Amidst the empowerment of young Moslems, the paradigm of public development is put into effect through these young agents of change and progress, born from the local potential in the society.

Considering this, it is time to publish and socialize other local potentials as a solution for the intellectual crisis in Indonesia. It means that a transformative effort is needed to drive society to move faster in filling the intellectual void with religious writings.

The axiological base of contemporary Islamic thinking makes M2IQ a place to be creative, as well as a medium for creating and developing young Moslem intellectuals, who are fully capable of transforming Islamic teaching, both orally and in writing. From an epistemological perspective, there is a strong will and hope to intellectually meet previous Moslem scholars through the compilation and publication of the best writings of M2IQ participants. This will carry on the intellectual movement of Islam.

The applicative—contributive value of M2IQ is the realization of the spirit of Al-Qur'ân in local and national contexts. This is evident in the themes chosen for the competitions and in the publication of written works. In M2IQ, participants' creativity in thinking, reconstructing, and deconstructing interpretations of Al-Qur'ân teachings, related with the local and national contexts of culture, economy, social, and politics, has produced dozens of books.

The larger goal of M2IQ is to instill and adjust the paths of Islamic diversity with the culture and tradition of Indonesia (Hasan, 2017). This is in line with John L. Esposito (Esposito, 2015), Kevin W Fogg (Fogg, 2015), Nazrul Islam and Saidul Islam (Islam & Islam, 2017) who quotes that the existence of Islam in Indonesia is very specific, and in which its intellectual, cultural, social, and political expressions may be, and indeed are, different from the

expressions of Islam in other countries. Furthermore, Bulliet notes that "it is the time to view Islam from the perspectives of Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, or Teheran, not from Baghdad, Damascus, or Cairo".

Through M2IQ, young Moslems are prepared and equipped to be strong actors of civilization. As has been stated, written thoughts are more everlasting than their oral forms.

This competition is only the start; young Moslems will be ready to think and analyze reality in their societies. They will be ready to refer to Al-Qurân verses to solve problems in society, and put their thoughts into a written form. They can spread Islam through writing, providing solutions that will be useful for the public in general. Considering the great impacts and contributions of M2IQ, it can be considered as a Qurânic framework for spiritual intelligence (Bensaid et al., 2014)

M2IQ indicates the birth of new tradition in the world of da'wah in Indonesia. M2IQ revive the tradition that was initiated by ulama centuries ago, which faded away in the last couple of centuries. Through M2IQ, the tradition is being reborn.

In Islam, we know Al-Gazali, Ibnu Rusyd, Ibnu Sina, Syaikh 'Id, Imam Syafii and others from their magna opera. We know how they show the beauty and greatness of Islam through their writings. We also know that Islamic culture is built by those who have deep passion for books.

Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition is born from the realization that Islamic civilization is inseparable from the culture of writing. Considering that it is hard to find the new generation of thinker—writers to continue the culture of writing and Islamic civilization, M2IQ becomes a great effort to further the spirit and culture of Islamic literacy. Books are written and compiled because Islamic civilization is a civilization built from books and writings.

Attempting da'wah through writing is an effort to make da'wah everlasting. Writing is recording and recording is immortalizing. It is undeniable that written da'wah is a visionary method of da'wah. Therefore, the idea of writing the meaning, interpretation, and content of Al-Qurân, as shown by M2IQ, is a great transformation of da'wah. M2IQ is a concrete attempt to spread the beauty and greatness of Al-Qurân through books.

V. Conclusions

The emergence of Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition) at the MTQ event is a cultural transformation of da'wah in Indonesia. It is a cultural response to the tradition of oral preaching, which has been the major form of da'wah in Islamic communities. The method of da'wah in M2IQ is da'wah through writing. In this field of competition, the participants or contestants are required to explore the verses of Al-Qurân so that those verses 'exist and live' among Moslem society. Therefore, the existence of M2IQ is an improvement of the methods of da'wah, as well as an enrichment of the fields being contested at MTQ events. In other words, the Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition has widened the spectrum of Al-Qurân through written da'wah. The Al-Qurân Academic Writing Competition has revived the tradition of previous ulama (Islamic scholars) who explored and poured their Qurânic thoughts and ideas into monumental writings. M2IQ also contributes in facilitating the development and growth of a more qualitative, creative, motivating, and energetic culture among Moslem societies, i.e., the tradition of writing. Dozens, even hundreds, of books, which are widely and publicly distributed, are created through M2IQ. Thus, M2IQ

has accentuated intellectual aspects and has added academic weight to the entire implementation of Musabaqah Tilawatil Qurân in Indonesia.

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