

“Ratib and Zikir” in Traditional and Modern Dayahs: A Living Qur'an Study in the Southwestern Region of Aceh

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Abstract: This study explores the implementation and significance of “living Qur'an” practices in traditional and modern dayahs in the Southwestern region of Aceh, aiming to identify these practices, understand their implementation, and investigate the reasons behind their persistence. The research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing case studies and ethnographic observations. The study showed that “living Qur'an” practices, such as Ratib al-Haddad, Ratib al-Attas, Ratib Syahir, and Ratib Lathif in traditional dayahs, and Al-Ma’surat in modern dayahs, are deeply embedded in the dayah culture. These practices are systematically managed and carried out according to set schedules, with reasons including seeking Allah's pleasure, gaining rewards, and preserving scholarly traditions. Both traditional and modern dayahs in southwestern region of Aceh effectively integrate “living Qur'an” practices into their daily routines, contributing to the spiritual and moral development of their students. These practices, while varied, reflect a commitment to maintaining a strong Islamic identity and adapting to contemporary educational needs.

Keywords: *living Qur'an, dayah, traditional education, modern education, Aceh*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi implementasi dan signifikansi praktik “living Qur'an” di dayah tradisional dan modern di wilayah barat selatan Aceh, bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi praktik-praktik tersebut, memahami implementasinya, dan menyelidiki alasan di balik keberlangsungannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan studi kasus dan observasi etnografis. Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik “living Qur'an”, seperti Ratib al-Haddad, Ratib al-Attas, Ratib Syahir, dan Ratib Lathif di dayah tradisional, serta Al-Ma’surat di dayah modern, sangat melekat dalam budaya dayah. Praktik ini dikelola secara sistematis dan dilakukan sesuai jadwal yang ditetapkan, dengan alasan antara lain mencari ridha Allah, mendapatkan pahala, dan melestarikan tradisi keilmuan. Baik dayah tradisional maupun modern di barat selatan Aceh mengintegrasikan praktik “living Qur'an” ke dalam rutinitas harian mereka, yang berkontribusi pada pengembangan spiritual dan moral siswa. Praktik-praktik ini mencerminkan komitmen untuk mempertahankan identitas Islam yang kuat dan beradaptasi dengan kebutuhan pendidikan kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *living Qur'an, dayah, pendidikan tradisional, pendidikan modern, Aceh*

Introduction

Dayah is one of the oldest educational institutions in Aceh, deeply rooted in the region since the arrival of Islam. It serves as a pivotal center for Islamic teaching, employing both traditional and contemporary methods. At dayahs, students delve into understanding and applying Islamic principles in daily life, adhering closely to the Qur'an and As-Sunnah.¹ These institutions play a crucial role in knowledge transmission and the spread of faith, integrating closely with community life.² Dayahs feature facilities such as dormitories and mosques and are led by respected figures known as abu, abi, or abon, with a curriculum that emphasizes monotheism, etiquette, and ethics.

Dayahs are widespread across Aceh, particularly in the southwestern region of Aceh, and exist in both traditional and modern forms. They offer residential facilities where students live and study round-the-clock, fostering a distinctive Muslim community characterized by values and norms that diverge from the broader society, thus creating a unique dayah culture. Traditional dayahs, such as Dayah Darussalam Labuhan Haji, continue age-old educational practices, while modern dayahs adopt structured learning methods and more advanced facilities. Both forms are renowned for their effectiveness in cultivating strong Islamic personalities through the teachings of the Qur'an, Hadith, and proper conduct, practices that embody the "living Qur'an" culture in daily student life.

The "living Qur'an" practice, deeply embedded in the community life at dayahs, involves activities such as the regular recitation and memorization of Qur'anic verses—a tradition that has persisted since the introduction of Islam to Aceh. Modern dayahs often blend tradition with innovation, creating adaptive and contemporary "living Qur'an" practices. The differences in implementation between traditional and modern dayahs underscore their shared commitment to this cultural identity, forming the basis for a deeper investigation into "living Qur'an" practices in both types of dayahs in Aceh's Southwestern region.

The study of the "living Qur'an" represents a novel approach in Qur'anic studies that explores how the text is actualized in community life.³ It aims to describe practices

¹ Rahayu Subakat, "Peranan Dayah Dan Meunasah Di Aceh Dalam Membentuk Masyarakat Religius," *AsSalam* 1, no. 3 (2017): 68–79.

² Fakhrurrazi Fakhrurrazi, "Dinamika Pendidikan Dayah Antara Tradisional Dan Modern," *At Tafkir*, no. 2 (2017): 100–111.

³ Junaedi D, *Living Qur'an: Sebuah Pendekatan Baru dalam Kajian Qur'an (Studi Kasus di Pondok Pesantren As-Siroj Al-Hasan Desa Kalimukti Kec. Pabedilan Kab. Cirebon)*, (2015) 4(2) 169-190

where the Qur'an acts not only as a passive object but also as an active subject guiding daily life. This study also focuses on the transformation of traditional customs into local wisdom that aligns with religious demands.⁴ For instance, the research "Living Qur'an: How the Qur'an Guides Human Life Salvation" by Asep Rahmat highlights how the Qur'an serves as a source of values and inspiration for human salvation in daily interactions.⁵ Moreover, a study by Ahmad Basith Salafudin examines the tradition of reciting Surat Al-Waqi'ah at Pondok Pesantren Darul Falah Tulungagung, which is believed to aid students in becoming more devout and in navigating life's challenges more effectively.

In the context of both traditional and modern dayahs in southwestern region of Aceh, this research integrates findings to offer a more holistic view of how these institutions adapt to and respond to social, educational, and temporal demands. It demonstrates how "living Qur'an" practices can underpin the maintenance of spiritual heritage and adapt Qur'anic values within different community contexts. This study focuses on three main issues: identifying "living Qur'an" cultural practices in traditional and modern dayahs, exploring their implementation, and understanding the reasons behind these practices. The aim is to provide a broader understanding of this phenomenon and its potential benefits to community life. This article employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing case studies and ethnographic observations to explore the diverse practices of the "living Qur'an" in both traditional and modern dayahs across southwestern region of Aceh.

Living Qur'an in Traditional and Modern Dayah

This study reveals several findings related to the culture of living Qur'an, particularly in traditional and modern pesantren (dayah) in the Southwestern region of Aceh. It was found that there are numerous practices of living Qur'an culture in both traditional and modern pesantren. Specifically, the living Qur'an practices related to ratib and zikir. The term "ratib" is derived from the Arabic root "rataba-yartubu-ratban" or "tarattaba-yatarattaba-tarattuban," meaning steady or unmoving. Linguistically, ratib means firm. In Islamic terminology, it refers to a regular guard to protect something or someone. In a

⁴ Basid A, Romziana L, Sholeha, Konstruksi Budaya Akikah Dan Sêlapan: Studi Living Qur'an Di Kabupaten Probolinggo, *Jurnal Islam Nusantara* (2021) 5(2) 672021)

⁵ Heddy Shri Ahimsa, The Living Qur'an: Beberapa Perspektif Antropologi Heddy Shri Ahimsa-Putra," *Walisono* 20, no. 1 (2012): 235–60.

place where soldiers guard the community, they are called rutbah; if only one person guards, they are called ratib. The term "zikir" is also from Arabic, being a verbal noun (masdar) of the past verb (fi'il madzi) "zakara," with the present tense form "yazkuru." Zikir means mention or remembrance. The practices of ratib and zikir observed can be summarized as follows:

Ratib al-Haddad. Ratib al-Haddad is a spiritual routine that has been part of the tradition of living Qur'an culture for years in one traditional dayah in Southwest Aceh. This tradition continues to be a vital aspect of the local pesantren culture. The Ratib al-Haddad contains Qur'anic verses believed to be a means of zikir to Allah and seeking His blessings and guidance. Leaders, teachers, and students are required to recite it according to a set schedule, usually every day after Maghrib prayer in congregation. The recitation includes Al-Fatihah, Ayat al-Kursi, Al-Baqarah 256-286, La ilaha illallah, An-Nas, Al-Falaq, Al-Ikhlas, Al-Isra 45-46, At-Tawbah 129, Yasin 9, salawat, and Ratib Haddad.

Ratib al-Attas. Ratib al-Attas is a spiritual practice part of the living Qur'an culture in one traditional dayah in Southwest Aceh for several years. This tradition continues to be a significant aspect of the local pesantren culture. The Ratib al-Attas contains Qur'anic verses like Basmala, Al-Fatihah, Istighfar, Tasbih, and other Qur'anic verses. It is recited to remember Allah and seek His blessings and guidance. Leaders, teachers, and students must recite it according to a set schedule, usually every day before Maghrib prayer in congregation. The recitation includes zikir and prayers.

Ratib Syahir: Ratib Syahir is a spiritual practice that has been part of the tradition of living Qur'an culture for years in one traditional dayah in Southwest Aceh. This tradition continues to be a vital aspect of the local pesantren culture. The Ratib Syahir contains Qur'anic verses believed to bring one closer to Allah. Leaders, teachers, and students must recite it according to a set schedule, usually every day after Dhuhr prayer in congregation. The recitation includes Al-Fatihah, Al-Baqarah 285-286, Ayat al-Kursi, zikir, and prayers.

Ratib Lathif: Ratib Lathif is a spiritual practice that has been part of the tradition of living Qur'an culture for years in one traditional dayah in Southwest Aceh. This tradition continues to be a significant aspect of the local pesantren culture. The Ratib Lathif contains Qur'anic verses believed to be a means of seeking rewards from Allah and His blessings and guidance. Leaders, teachers, and students must recite it according to a

set schedule, usually every day after Fajr prayer in congregation. The recitation includes Qur'anic verses, salawat, and zikir.

According to the leadership of Sulthan Iskandar Muda Ash Syafi'iyah Dayah, the four types of ratib mentioned above have been practiced in this traditional dayah located in the Southwestern region of Aceh, specifically in the village of Ie Mirah, Babahrot sub-district, Southwest Aceh Regency.

In modern dayah, there are routine cultural practices commonly performed by students, such as Al-Ma'surat in the morning and evening: Al-Ma'surat is a collection of zikir compiled by Imam Hasan al-Banna. According to the leadership of Al Munjiya pesantren, this zikir is practiced every morning and evening. It has been part of the living Qur'an culture in one modern dayah in Southwest Aceh for several years. The tradition serves as a means of remembering Allah and seeking His blessings and guidance. Leaders, teachers, and students are required to recite it according to a set schedule, usually every morning and evening. The recitation includes zikir and prayers from Al-Qur'an and Hadith, such as Al-Fatihah, Al-Baqarah 1-5, Al-Baqarah 255-257, Al-Baqarah 284-286, Al-Ikhlash 1-3, Al-Falaq 1-5, Al-Nas 1-6, and salawat upon the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Both traditional and modern dayah reflect adaptations and responses to social changes, educational needs, and contemporary demands through their Qur'anic practices. Each institution plays a unique role in preserving the living Qur'an heritage, interacting with the Qur'an regularly, and providing education that meets the surrounding community's needs. This practice, known as "Living Qur'an," means believing in and regularly practicing Qur'anic teachings in daily life.

Traditional dayah often focus on repetition and memorization using methods passed down through generations, showing a strong commitment to preserving the heritage and authenticity of Islamic teachings. In contrast, modern dayah tend to be more flexible, integrating contemporary educational methods and various sciences to meet current demands. They may use technology and interactive methods in Qur'anic teaching, allowing more dynamic adaptation to social and educational needs.

Despite significant differences in approaches, both traditional and modern dayah aim to live by the Qur'an and instill its values in their students' daily lives. Their commonality lies in the commitment to regularly and comprehensively practice Qur'anic

teachings, ensuring that every aspect of life in the dayah aligns with Islamic principles. Both types of dayah strive to shape individuals who understand the Qur'an text and can apply it in contexts relevant to modern society.

Implementation of Living Qur'an Practices in Traditional and Modern Dayah

The implementation of living Qur'an practices in traditional and modern dayah in the Southwestern region of Aceh has been carried out by students, teachers, and leaders. Based on observations, interviews, and surveys conducted with dayah leaders, teachers, students, and even the surrounding community, it is evident that the living Qur'an culture initially faced many challenges and obstacles. However, over time, with consistent and continuous practice, it has become more manageable and effective. This practice has had a significantly positive impact on both the dayah environment and the general community in the area.

From the interview data with dayah leaders, it was found that the living Qur'an culture is systematically managed directly by the dayah under the leadership's guidance. The schedule for practicing living Qur'an varies, with some activities conducted daily, others on specific days, every night, or at certain special times. Activities can be done individually, in groups, or collectively. Currently, students have a strong commitment to practicing the living Qur'an. They are allowed to wear clothing that covers their aurat and complies with Islamic principles.

The phenomenon of living Qur'an practices such as ratib and zikir in these dayah takes three main forms: recitation, memorization, and application. These practices can be carried out individually as a Muslim, in groups, or collectively within the dayah. These cultural practices continue to be performed, including reading ratib and zikir from texts, memorizing them, and using Qur'anic verses to seek Allah's blessings, rewards, or protection from evil spirits. The living Qur'an culture has positively influenced both the internal and external environments of traditional and modern dayah communities, reducing negative influences. The tradition of living Qur'an is expected to continue developing and growing in the Southwestern region of Aceh.

This research has revealed several underlying reasons behind the implementation of the living Qur'an culture in traditional and modern dayah in the Southwestern region of Aceh. It is not merely about following regulations set by the pesantren. According to surveys conducted among students in dayah in the Southwestern region of Aceh, the

living Qur'an culture is practiced for several reasons: to seek Allah's pleasure, to gain rewards, to inherit the scholarly lineage of past and present ulama, to protect oneself from the disturbances of jinn and shayateen, to live in harmony with the Qur'an, to cultivate good morals and abandon bad ones, to propagate religious teachings, and to attain peace of heart and mind.

The diverse traditions of the living Qur'an culture have become a necessary routine for the environment surrounding the dayah. The tradition of the living Qur'an is continuously growing, with an increasing number of practices being observed. It is hoped that the living Qur'an culture in dayah will continue to have a positive impact and reduce negative influences, thereby supporting the implementation of Sharia law in Aceh. As part of the Aceh province, where Sharia law is enforced, the living Qur'an culture should be fully supported by the Aceh government and its institutions. This would make Aceh a model for the implementation of the living Qur'an in dayah and all sectors of government, serving as an example and benchmark for other provinces in developing cities and villages that live in accordance with the Qur'an based on Islamic law. Consequently, people worldwide can implement the living Qur'an in their daily lives. This aligns with the Qur'anic verse in Surah Sad, verse 29:

كُنْتُ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكًا لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

"[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded."

It also aligns with the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as narrated by Ibn Mas'ud (RA):

وَعَنِ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَنْ قَرَأَ حَرْفًا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ فَلَهُ حَسَنَةٌ وَالْحَسَنَةُ بِعَشْرِ أَمْثَالِهَا، لَا أَقُولُ أَلِفٌ لَامٌ مِيمٌ حَرْفٌ، وَلَكِنْ أَلِفٌ حَرْفٌ، وَلَا مٌ حَرْفٌ، وَمِيمٌ حَرْفٌ

Ibn Mas'ud (RA) said: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "If anyone recites a letter of God's Book he will be credited with a good deed, and a good deed gets a tenfold reward (Al-Qur'an, 6:160). I do not say that A.L.M are one letter, but alif is a letter, lam is a letter and mim is a letter." (Tirmidhi: 2910)

The above evidence illustrates that Allah has sent down the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a blessed book, filled with guidance for humanity. Through

reciting, studying, reflecting upon, memorizing, and preaching it, people can live with the Qur'an. The blessings of the living Qur'an culture are evident in the dayah communities, establishing it as a practice and tradition. It is hoped that even outside these communities, the living Qur'an practice will continue to thrive among individuals.

Conclusion

The living Qur'an practices in traditional and modern dayah includes several cultural elements. In traditional dayah, the practices include Ratib Haddad, Ratib Al-Attas, Ratib Syahir, and Ratib Lathif. Meanwhile, in modern dayah, the practices include Al-Ma'surat in the morning and evening. The implementation of living Qur'an practices in these dayah is systematically managed directly by the pesantren under the leadership's guidance. The schedules for these practices vary, with some activities conducted daily, others on specific days, every night, or at certain special times. Activities can be performed individually, in groups, or collectively.

Several reasons for implementing the living Qur'an practices in traditional and modern dayah in the Southwestern region of Aceh have been identified. These include seeking Allah's pleasure, gaining rewards, inheriting the scholarly lineage of past and present ulama, protecting oneself from the disturbances of jinn and shayateen, living in harmony with the Qur'an, cultivating good morals and abandoning bad ones, propagating religious teachings, and attaining peace of heart and mind. The cultural practices in both types of dayah also reflect differences in spiritual depth and openness to variations in zikir practices. Traditional dayah may emphasize spiritual depth through ratib practices passed down through generations. Meanwhile, modern dayah, with practices like Al-Ma'surat in the morning and evening, may be more open to variations in zikir practices that can be adjusted to the needs of the students and the demands of the times. This highlights the importance of balancing the preservation of tradition with responding to contemporary dynamics to sustain the culture of "living Qur'an."

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