

ARAB COMMUNITY ENCOUNTERS KAILI CULTURE IN EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT

Syakir Mahid, Andriansyah,¹ and Ismail Suardi Wekke²

¹Universitas Tadulako, Palu, Sulawesi Tengah

²Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Sorong, Papua Barat

Email: syakirmahmid@gmail.com

Abstract

This article identifies the Islamic education movement and da'wah (Islamic missionary endeavor) of the Arab community in Palu incorporated in the Alkhairat organization. The formation of this organization arose from a madrasah (madrassa) named "Madrasah Alkhairat Al-Islamiyah" found by Sayyid Idrus bin Salim Aljufri, an ulama (Islamic scholar) from Hadramaut, in 1930 in Palu. The formation of the madrasah was the response of the Arab community in Palu Valley to the Christianization of Dutch Christian missionaries under the auspices of the Leger Dois Heist (Salvation Army). This study uses non-participant observation methods and purposive in-depth interviews with ten subjects consisted of leaders, teachers and staffs in Alkhairat to obtain data related to the topic. Furthermore, the authors verify the data. Finally, this article shows that the Islamic education and da'wah movement undertaken by the Arab community in Palu Valley reflects the process of integration and harmonization of Arabs with local people, and has supported the construction progress in Palu.

Artikel ini mengidentifikasi gerakan pendidikan dan dakwah Islam komunitas Arab di Palu yang tergabung dalam organisasi Alkhairat. Terbentuknya organisasi ini berawal dari sebuah madrasah bernama "Madrasah Alkhairat Al-Islamiyah" yang didirikan oleh Sayyid Idrus bin Salim Aljufri, seorang Ulama asal Hadramaut, pada tahun 1930 di Palu. Pembentukan madrasah tersebut merupakan respon komunitas Arab di Lembah Palu terhadap kristenisasi yang

dilakukan oleh para misionaris kristen Belanda di bawah naungan Leger Dois Heist (Bala Keselamatan) terhadap masyarakat Palu dan sekitarnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode observasi non-partisipan dan wawancara mendalam terhadap sepuluh orang yang terdiri pimpinan, guru maupun staff dalam jaringan Alkhairat guna mendapatkan data terkait topik yang dikaji. Selanjutnya, penulis melakukan verifikasi data yang dijadikan bahan dalam penulisan. Akhirnya, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa gerakan pendidikan dan dakwah Islam yang dilakukan oleh komunitas Arab di Lembah Palu mencerminkan proses integrasi dan upaya harmonisasi orang-orang Arab dengan masyarakat lokal setempat serta telah mendukung perkembangan pembangunan di Kota Palu.

Keywords: Dakwah; Education; Harmonization; Migration

Introduction

The arrival of Arabs in Nusantara archipelago is still a debate among historians. Their arrival is often associated with Islamization in this region (Algadri, 1996: 45; Berg, 2010: 95). Some scholars have argued that Arabs had arrived in the archipelago since the Middle Ages (Ricklefs, 2008: 27) and others assume that the arrival of Arabs in the archipelago occurred in the sixteenth century along with the influx of Islamic mysticism that developed in Sumatra (Kroef 1954: 268). Nevertheless, they agree that the presence of Arabs has an important role to the change and development of society in this region. In addition to trading, the spread and teaching of Islam is one of the most prominent aspects of the role of Arabs in the archipelago. One of the impacts of the spread of Islam activities is the emergence of social organizations engaged in education and *da'wah* which became a forum for Islamic reform movement in the archipelago (Noer, 1996: 68-69; Wekke, 2016).

In the colonial period, the Arabs occupied a strategic position in society. The Dutch East Indies government categorized them, Chinese and other Asian minorities as "*vreemde oosterlingen*" (Volksteling, 1930: 48). The economic excellence and superiority of the Arabs towards the natives (influenced by the indigenous aspect of understanding that Arabia is the birthplace of Islam) makes them significantly influence the local Muslim population. Thus, they could play an important role, especially in the early days of the Islamic reform movement in the early 20th century in Indonesia (Steenbrink, 1986: 58-62). The high populations run with the education quality because education is one of the most important aspects in human development (Hashim, 2008: 1;

Mokodenseho & Wekke, 2017). Therefore, the investigation of their activities, especially in the field of education and *da'wah*, could contribute to explore the harmonization of Arab relations with local society.

Research on Arabs mostly focused on their activities in Java. In this area, the Arabs had established an Islamic reformist movement by establishing *Jamiat Khair* and also *Al Irshad* operating in the field of education by opening and managing the first modern Islamic school in Indonesia (Yamaguchi, 2016: 437). This phenomenon was the Muslims' approach to 'modern' knowledge (Tan, 2014: 48; Pohl, 2015: 159). Meanwhile, research on the activities of Arabs outside of Java is still untouched. At the local level, for example in Palu, Central Sulawesi, Arabs had established educational and *da'wah* organizations that were constantly bringing changes to the people in the region.

Research on the Arab community in Palu Valley has been done by several scholars. The research is divided into two main focuses, namely the personality of Sayyid Idrus bin Salim Aljufrie, the most influential Arabic figure in Palu Valley (Pettalongi, 2017); and the development of the Alkhairat organization which became the venue of the Arab education movement in Central Sulawesi (Kambay, 1992; Pettalongi, 2017). A recent study of Arabs in Palu Valley sees the interaction of Arab communities with local people (Nursiah, 2009). There are three possible conclusions in the study: *First*, there was still a strong sense of suspicion towards the growing Arab community among Palu Valley people: Arabs had a closed attitude, not being able to mingle and communicate widely with local people; *second*, during the Old Order or even in earlier periods, Arabs tended to be close to rulers or influential people, thus making their interaction with local people limited. *Third*, there was an economic gap between Arabs and local people, so the local population was less sympathetic to the Arab community that had always disregarded the existence of indigenous peoples.

The views failed to see the movement of the Arab community in Palu in building networks and relationships with local communities through *da'wah* and education efforts. By doing so, this research seeks to provide an overview of the Arab community in its effort to spread Islamic knowledge in Palu Valley through the Alkhairat organization as an effort to build harmonization between the Arab community and the people of Palu Valley.

Palu Society Situation before the Birth of *Madrasah* Alkhairat

In the second half of the early twentieth century, the people of Palu Valley were still considered as primitive societies by Albert C. Kruyt, especially

inhabitants living in mountainous areas (Baal, 1987: 130). Kruyt mentioned that the leader's position in the community was still in a small community held by the one who was considered the most powerful, resulting in the practice of headhunting. The more a person did the headhunting, the stronger the position in the community. Social unity was still within the scope of the family and generally chooses mountainous areas as a place to live. This was later changed by the Dutch colonial government by relocating residents who settled separately in mountainous areas to new villages built on the side of the highway to facilitate monitoring and mobilization of labor and tax collection (Andriansyah, 2015: 43- 44).

Living on a modest level did not mean that the people of Palu Valley were not familiar with education. Prior to the influx of Islam, in this area, a traditional education system had been undertaken. In traditional societies, education was meant to know and practice the values or norms prevailing in society. In the beginning, the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next was only applied in the family environment. Father, mother and all the oldest family members who lived in the house become teachers for the children in the family. The lesson material given to the children took precedence over ethics (customs courtesy) in association in the family environment and work skills to defend themselves from the natural environment for their survival (Kutoyo, 1987: 9).

The customs of manners were not only related to social interaction among human beings, but also related to the unseen supernatural things, such as ancestral spirits, trees, mountains and so on which in everyday life, manifested in the form of offering and certain ceremonies (Farid, 2013). The rituals were performed to avoid the disturbances of the spirits dwelling in places that were considered sacred (Hellman, 2017).

The next education introduced to the people of Palu Valley was Islamic education. In contrast to the areas of Sumatra and Java that showed a more advanced tradition of Islamic education (Fauzi, 2012), Islamic education in Palu did not show a significant progress. It happened because there was no record showing any of the Palu natives intensively studying Islam, as had been done by the people of Sumatra (especially Minangkabau) and Java who had *nyantri* tradition to Mecca.

Islamic education in Palu Valley was introduced by Bugis and Makassar people who came to this area to trade and spread the teachings of Islam (Mahid, et al., 2009: 64). Learning methods were still simple. Where there was

a religious teacher, there were people gather to learn the knowledge of Islam. This activity also took place at the local community leader's house where the teacher was asked to come to teach at the venue. At this time, the teaching and learning activities were not familiar with the class system as applied in *madrrasah* schools (Ja'far, 2015: 332). The material taught was how to read the Qur'an by imitating and memorizing methods. The Muslim individual must follow specific rules to ensure his memorization is really stick preservation of the Quran (Ariffin et al., 2013; Wekke, 2017). The teacher sat facing the students while reading the Qur'an and followed by students who imitated what was said by the teacher. In this recitation, the students were only taught to read, but were not taught to write (Nainggolang, 1997: 28-29). One thing that can be seen about the influence of Bugis in Islamic education in Palu was the way of reading by using Bugis spelling, *alefu ri asena A*, *alefu ri asena I*, and so on (Mahid et al., 2009: 69). Although Islam had entered Palu in the early 17th century, until the early 20th century, there were still many Kaili communities who had not been religious or were still practicing their ancestral belief practices. This can be seen from the report in 1905 which stated that the inhabitants of Palu Valley were still largely unbelievers. As it is said by Pettalongi (2017), although the religion of Islam had undergone many advances, but the Kaili people were mostly still more strictly practicing their ancestral beliefs than the rules of Islamic teachings, such as: giving offerings of sacred places when opening up arable land, smearing people who had just healed with goat blood or buffalo that was cut in a cruel way to strengthen their soul.

The Formation of *Madrrasah* Alkhairat Al-Islamiyah

The formation of the Alkhairat *Madrrasah* in Palu Valley was inseparable from the role of Arabs residing in the region. The activities of the Arabs in Palu Valley before the 20th century were not widely known. Only, since the beginning of their arrival, they had been active in trading activities. The arrival of the Arabs in Palu Valley was estimated to have occurred since the 18th century. The first location where they lived was Wani who had a port facility that supported their trading activities (Nursiah, 2009: 39). The first Arabs who came to Wani were the Sayyids of the al-Mahdali family and they lived there with the approval of the king of Banawa. This indicates that there has been a good relationship between Arabs and the rulers of Banawa.

The next wave of Arab arrivals occurred in the nineteenth century. They were Al-Haddad's family, also of the Sayyids. After that, Arabs appeared from

Al-Habsyi, Assegaf, Al-Athas, Al-Idrus, Al-Amri and Al-Jufri families. Of the Arabs who came, only the Al-Amri family did not belong to the Sayyids, so it could be said that most of the Arabs living in Palu Valley were the Sayyids (Berg, 2010: 51-52). It implicated the activities of those who did not only run the activities of trade, but also included activities of Islamic *da'wah*.

Arabs living in Palu Valley tended to occupy the locations that became the center of trafficking. After Wani, they entered through Donggala, because in the nineteenth century, in Donggala, the busiest port of activity had developed among other ports, such as the ports of Wani, Mamboro, and Talise (Nursiah, 2009: 45).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Arabs in Palu Valley had a strong position. It can be seen from the colonial report which stated that the power of kings was weakened by a number of foreigners, mainly Arabs and Makassar. The position was largely determined by the wealth they had through trade (Andriansyah, 2015: 51) driven by economic spirit of Muslim society (Zubair, 2016).

Almost all of the import-export trades in Palu Valley were controlled by Arabs who also controlled most of the small trades in the markets (Hirschman, 1935: 39). In addition, they also controlled the coconut plantation sector that became the most wanted area at the time. The way they used to control this plant was to let the inhabitants (who owned the coconut plantation) take some of the staple goods in their stores (allowed to indebted) but with the provision that after their coconut crops were harvested, the proceeds must be paid in lieu of the payment of the essential goods they had taken. Almost all coconut owners were indebted to Arabs or Chinese and routinely had to hand over copra to deposit interest at market prices.

Since the twentieth century, it had been reported that every year, the number of Arabs who came to Palu Valley was increasing (Hirschman, 1935: 39). One of the most influential Arab figures who came during this period was Sayyid Idrus bin Salim Aljufri, a scholar from Hadramaut, who later founded the Islamic *Madrasah* Alkhairat in Palu (Azra, 2002: 165). Sayyid Idrus first came to Palu Valley (precisely in Wani) in 1929 at the invitation of Arabs residing in the region (Kambay, 1992: 24). Wani Arab community expected Sayyid Idrus to open *madrasah*, because at that time there was no single educational institutions that accommodate the interests of Islam in Palu Valley. There seems to be anxiety they felt in seeing the development of

education dominated by schools established by the Dutch colonial government and the *zending* organization of the *Leger Des Heils* (Salvation Army).

In the 1925 report, it was mentioned that in Palu *onderafdeeling* area there were three types of schools, namely: *First*, the local schools run by the autonomous rulers of Lasoani, Biromaru, Dolo, Sidondo, Kaleke and Ngatapapu; *Second*, the People's School run by the Salvation Army in Padende, Bomba, Bora, Kapiroe, Manusi, Sibalaya, Kalawara, Rarampadende, Lemo, Lindu, Winatu, Gimpu and Kantewu; *Third*, School of Salvation Army in Wayu, Porame, Karere and Towoelu. The schools run by the Salvation Army organization were even subsidized in the form of tuition (a kind of scholarship) that averaged 7 cents per student per month (Voorn, 1925).

Based on the type of schools that existed in Palu *onderafdeeling* in 1925, the authors see that schools run by the Salvation Army had more numbers than the schools run by the Dutch government. If carefully observed, there were about 17 locations that became the operating area of the Salvation Army school. These areas were located in rural or inland *onderafdeeling* Palu area which in fact the inhabitants had not been religious or were still practicing the old habits of their ancestors, so the opening of the school was accompanied by the mission of Christianization in these areas.

The mission of Christianization of the population was the anxiety of the Arabs, so the desire to establish a *madrasah* emerged, in order to stem the rate of Christianization and simultaneously to Islamize the still-non-believers. These developments showed a kind of competition between Christians and Muslims in Palu Valley in terms of gaining new followers, which of course also affected the mastery of other resources. Because of cooperation with *madika malolo* (local ruler of Palu), Tjatjo Ijazah; the Arab community in Palu Valley finally succeeded in establishing the first Islamic *madrasah* in this region on 30 June 1930 under the name *Madrasah Alkhairat Al-Islamiyah*.

Madrasah Alkhairat Al-Islamiyah: Arab Community Response against Christianization in Palu Valley

It is necessary to know that Sayyid Idrus was the only teacher who taught when the Alkhairat Al-Islamiyah *madrasah* was newly formed. Alkhairat activities were prioritized in education and *da'wah*. There were two learning methods used, namely *halaqah* system and classical system (Dhofier, 1985: 28). Moreover, Sayyid Idrus's teaching methods to his students included: *Ta'lim* (giving knowledge), *Tarbiyah* (changing behavior), and *Tahema* (changing

mental). Unlike the schools founded by Dutch people whose students came from nobles, rich people, and certain circles; the *madrasah* Alkhairat Al-Islamiyah was open to the general public and did not discriminate the status of its students, thus reaching out wider circles. It means that *madrasah* is a response among Indonesian Muslims to the introduction and spread of Dutch schooling (Azra, 2015: 89).

In the field of *da'wah*, although at that time the people of Palu Valley still practiced the habit of their ancestors who contradicted to the teachings of Islam, Sayyid Idrus conveyed religious messages in a persuasive and dialogical way. His approach to enforcing Shari'a rules among the Muslim communities of Palu Valley was far from radical. Therefore, although Sayyid Idrus explicitly saw the practice of worship of Palu society which was not in line with the teachings of Islam (even contradictory), he did not frontally make a reform, because the deep-rooted tradition could not be changed directly, must be slowly and without giving difficulties to the people. Sayyid Idrus sought to implement the Islamic Shariah in accordance with the understanding of the Palu Muslim community gradually.

Method of *dakwah* used by Sayyid Idrus in the formation of Islamic *aqidah* (creed) of Palu society was *da'wah qauliyah* (*dakwah* with oral) (Hikmat, 2011) and *da'wah fi'liyah* (*da'wah* with deed). He continued to do Islamic guidance in stages, ranging from easier problems to more complex problems. Sayyid Idrus also sought to provide an understanding of Islamic teachings in accordance with the level of ability of the understanding of the people he faced, so that the explanation was easily understood and accepted by the local community. With such a guidance framework, Palu communities and their surrounding were willing to accept Islam and develop the Alkhairat *Madrasah*. In addition to *aqeedah*, Sayyid Idrus also conducted moral character in every teaching and *dakwah* that he ran, because morality was the substance of education and *da'wah* itself. Therefore, moral coaching became the main priority considering morality would affect behavior, and good behavior was a manifestation of good faith (Suleymanova, 2015).

The significance of the use of such system could not be underestimated, because through that method, Sayyid Idrus managed to build strong personal relationships and became the bond that connected them to one another. Sayyid Idrus then gave his authority to his students to teach and open *madrasahs* to the inland of Central Sulawesi. Furthermore, these students were acting as the

chain of development of the network of *madrasah* Alkhairat spread to various regions of Central Sulawesi and surrounding areas.

Students studying in *madrasah* Alkhairat Al-Islamiyah came from various circles, because the *madrasah* was not intended for one particular circle. The people of Palu and its surrounding areas tended to prefer to send their children to the *madrasah* of Alkhairat. Since the schools that existed were few and fully managed by the Dutch government, the *Leger Dois Heist* (LDH) organization - now better known as the Salvation Army (BK) - is one of it. This school carried out a Christianization mission. The reluctance of the community (especially Muslims) to send their children to school established by the Dutch was caused by the fear that their children would be Christianized. In addition, Dutch-built schools were mostly for the noble or officials' children, and still had to be burdened with school fees, so that ordinary people did not have access to the facilities. During those periods, *madrasah* Alkhairat Al-Islamiyah emerged as an alternative for people who want to send their children to school.

In 1934 the Islamic school of Alkhairat Al-Islamiyah had accommodated 125 students. There was one unique method (according to the author) used by Sayyid Idrus to obtain students who would study at the *madrasah* Alkhairat Palu. They were accustomed to travel to different areas to review the locations where the *madrasah* of Alkhairat might be found. A few years after the founding of the *madrasah* Alkhairat, the development of Islam in Palu Valley had shown increasing progress. In this Valley, Islam slowly but surely continued to spread, especially the younger generation who was fanatic Islam. This could also be seen among the nobles, where the younger *madika* (nobility) had severed ties with the old custom and became a devout Muslim. This trend was very different from the previous conditions in which in the Dutch controllers reported that the majority of the inhabitants of Palu Valley were still unbeliever. Thus it could be said that besides doing *da'wah*, the activities of Sayyid Idrus and the students had an impact on the Islamization of the people of Palu Valley (Wigman, 1921, Voorn, 1925).

The expansion of the Alkhairat network built by Sayyid Idrus and his disciples also led to a kind of purification of Islam from the remnants of the animism and dynamism of previous animisms and dynamisms previously undertaken by the people of Palu Valley. This movement is the obligation from Qur'an to reach Tauhid (Sutiyono, 2015). In the areas around Palu, Pewunu and Kaleke, Kalukubula and Dolo and Biromaru areas, most of the inhabitants had been meticulously obeyed religious obligations. They had known Islam

better than before and started building mosques in their respective areas. In various places, the old customary law was even replaced by Islamic religious law (Hirschman, 1935: 31). One of the areas, in the Paluyang Valley which implemented Islamic law was Biromaru, where Biromaru *magau* in 1933 gave the mandate to Sayyid Idrus as a *mufti* who determines and decides the law according to Islamic teachings in his kingdom.

Conclusion

This article shows that the formation of the *Madrasah Alkhairat Al-Islamiyah* cannot be separated from the interaction and harmonization between the Arab community with local rulers and community leaders in Palu Valley. Because of its relation, the *Madrasah Alkhairat Al-Islamiyah* was able to grow rapidly not only in Palu and other areas of Central Sulawesi, but it also covered other parts of Eastern Indonesia.

Palu people's belief in Sayyid Idrus to establish *madrasahs* in order to provide moral and material assistance and their decision to send their children to the *madrasah Alkhairat* cannot only be seen at the level of theology and religious knowledge, but more importantly was the effort to teach Islam in a persuasive way. It can also be seen from how he built harmonious relationships with local rulers and the in turn pupils from different regions; they engaged in social networks in Palu as representatives of *Alkhairat*.

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