

ONLINE AL-QUR'AN RECITATION "ONE DAY ONE JUZ" ON WHATSAPP AND BLACKBERRY MESSENGER : CYBER RELIGION PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

The Internet is playing a powerful role in human life. Various aspects of human life can be transformed in line with the growing of internet technology, for example the religious practice, *One Day One Juz (ODOJ)*. *ODOJ* is an online program which uses WhatsApp and Blackberry Messenger as media for interaction among group members. Then, *ODOJ* not only has a function as a program, but also has transformed into institution and community both online and offline. Using internet, *ODOJ* phenomenon can be seen as a religious practice that has experienced an expansion, extension, even a change. Moreover, the presence of *ODOJ* also shows how media and internet have changed our daily life, especially in religious practice. In the past, religious practice especially recitation is a very sacred practice, but through media and internet, religious practice is transformed into efficient, effective, and modern way.

This paper also shows *ODOJ* in mediatization aspect that is when society become more submissive and dependent on media in their daily life, as apparatus or institutional. Mediatization increasingly shows that human life is setting hard with media. In this case, media can change communication and interaction between people, as *ODOJ* that has changed religious practice from face to face into virtual way. Finally, *ODOJ* phenomenon on smart phone, especially in WhatsApp and Blackberry Messenger becomes a focus in this paper and because of that, this paper will analyze how religious practice like recitation that previously exists with face to face interaction has transformed into virtual interaction through media, especially internet.

Keywords : Cyber religion, One Day One Juz, internet, religious practice, mediatization

INTRODUCTION



Source : onedayonejuz.org

It is believed that media has a very important role in society and human life is strongly influenced by the advance technology of media. For instance, the presence of smart phones that attract Indonesians because its design. These phones also offer many features that can make our daily activities easier. The most interesting feature is the ability to browse the internet quickly, thus it can be used for accessing social media. Through phone which uses operation system like android, Symbian, windows phone or Ios, we can download a variety of applications which are suitable with our needs. The presence of a smart phone with its advantages will affect our lives indirectly, such as our social interaction and religious life

One of popular applications on smart phones is Whatsapp (WA) and Blackberry Messenger (BBM). WA is an application for smart phone that has function to send messages to other users who also use WA¹. Besides to deliver text messages, Whatsapp is also be used to send pictures, video, and audio messages to individuals or groups. WA, created by Brian Acton and Jan Koum in 2009, can be used on Android, Blackberry, Ios, Symbian (S60) and Windows phone². WA continues to grow, even in 2010, WA is the best-selling app that is downloaded via Nokia Ovi Store³. While, BBM is an application that was initially created for BBM users, but over time BBM can also be downloaded on other smart phones. BBM has the same function as Whatsapp, which is to send text messages, chat groups etc. In addition, the number of group members in BBM is only 30 person, but it has recently increased to 50 people and the maximum limit of the groups member in WA is 100 person.

As popular applications, WA and BBM are commonly used as media to convey messages to many people. This situation is also happened to One Day One Juz, an online program conducted by a group of people who have a shared vision for completing 30 chapters of Al-Quran in one month. ODOJ utilizes WA and BBM group for interaction purposes among its members, online Al-Qur'an recitation and to remind one another, and control among its members.

One Day One Juz community utilizes WA and BBM, in particular to check reading Qur'an carried out by members of the group that usually consists of 30 person. Every person will send his or her reading report to person in charge. Although the distance and time apart, but the members of ODOJ or so-called ODOJer is reciting the Qur'an at the same time because it must be completed on the same day and time. The phenomenon of online Qur'an recitation on smart phone especially in BBM and WA is then becoming in this essay. I will describe how religious practice of the Qur'an is changed from face

¹ Martin Terpstra, WhatsApp & privacy, (2013), h. 4

² Mr.Subhan Sahu, An Analysis of WhatsApp Forencis in Android Smartphones, Volume No 3, Issue No.5 pp:349-350, (May, 2014), h. 349

³ Rekor Tiga Juta 'Download Per hari.

<http://tekno.kompas.com/read/2010/11/24/19145961/Rekor.Tiga.Juta..Download..Per.Hari>.
Diakses 25-06-2015

to face to online by using smart phone. In this case, internet has transformed the communication among its members to become virtual interaction.

Defining ODOJ and Its Development

One Day One Juz (ODOJ) is a program initiated by Rumah Qur'an Alumni that facilitates a new way for Indonesian people to read Qur'an using one juz a day platform⁴. ODOJ program utilizes an application that is only available on smartphones, namely instant messenger, that mostly used in BBM and WhatsApp.

Reported from ODOJ website that the requirement to be a member of ODOJ or called ODOJer is fairly easy. The requirements are Muslim, have mobile applications in the form WA or BBM, ready to commit to read the Qur'an one juz per day, and are willing to follow and obey the rules of the One Day One Juz community. With the ease of registration provided by ODOJ, until today, there is ten thousands people who enroll in ODOJ. From November 11, 2013, which marked the soft launching of ODOJ in Jakarta, until March 2014 when grand launching of ODOJ, the number of ODOJer has reached 87,000 scattered all around the world and consists of various groups such as clergies, students, and artists.

The presence of ODOJ indeed reap the different response, some people respond positively to ODOJ because it adds motivation in reading Qur'an, besides person in charge in ODOJ will give appreciation for the group which could finish Qur'an regularly. However, most people also consider that this program is only focus on the quantity like the number of pages regardless of the quality of reading, interpretation, and the meaning of reading the Qur'an. Because of that, then ODOJ program in 2014-2017 has many varied programs like ODALF (One Day Half Juz), ODOL (One Day One Lembar), socializing ODOJ program through social media with international targets, change ODOJ program from WA and BBM into ODOJ Mobile Apps and websystem, reproduce ODOJ group at school / college / office, ODOJ Care for Palestine (Cooperate with KNRP), SAN (Sebar Quran Nusantara) - cooperate with PKPU, publishing 100 Quran tahfidz (Al-qur'an memorizers), Qurban ODOJ (cooperate with ACT).

Now, ODOJ has broaden into an institution as well as community center learning. As an institution, ODOJ has a structure or staff and also vision and mission. ODOJ vision is to accustom recitation one juz a day throughout muslim society from various background. Meanwhile, its mission is to disseminate One Day One Juz by maximizing management program. As a community, ODOJ also build online communities such as fanspage on fb and twitter. In addition, further information ODOJ can be accessed through www.onedayonejuz.org.

ODOJ as an institution is also promoting messages via twitter by sending a mention on several well-known person as Aa Gym, Yusuf Mansur, state officials such as former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Barack Obama, lecturers, preachers and Quran Memorizers like KH. Sharif Rahmat. ODOJ also promotes its programs through online media like Islampos. Socialization through famous people and media has affected web visitors of ODOJ is increasing and booming automatically.

⁴ Diambil dari www.onedayonejuz.org, akses 25-06-2015

Religious Practices in Cyberspace

Religious practices are growing in line with expansion, extension, and even changes in its practices and also with the emergence of media which need internet access inside. In this case, internet has a remarkable influence in transforming religious practices. Kim points out that *the internet is playing a powerful role in religious communications as well*⁵. For instance, communications that exist within the religious context can change instantly because of the Internet. Furthermore, in cyber space, religious practices that exist in the real world could be the same, similar, or even totally different with the religion that exists in cyberspace, even there are many new religious practices that are very unique. In other words, cyberspace is defined as *a conceptual space of interaction where people using computer-mediated communication technology interact*⁶. The presence of religion could be mediated due to the interaction among people through the internet.

In addition, the practice of religion is widespread, and the Internet can be a religion itself. Someone who uses internet access often performs rituals that similar to someone who has religion in the real world. If Muslim perform the ritual before prayer, for example, ablutions, then someone who accesses the Internet is performing a ritual before access the internet and every person may be different from one another.

The definition of cyber religion is growing among intellectuals and some of them use the concept of cyber religion to depict any religion mediated through the internet⁷. Thus, any religion in real and online world which its ritual mediated via internet can be defined as cyber religion. Moreover, cyber religion is defined by Brasher cited by Hojsgaard as the presence of religious organizations and activities in *cyberspace*⁸. In a broader aspect, Brasher said two aspects to indicate that is classified in Cyber Religion : existence of organizations and religious activities. Even today, some of religious communities can exist in real world because of their previous existence in the online world like ODOJ.

One of communities that emerges in the cyber world is One Day One Juz. This community is growing in cyber world and interaction between its members is mediated through internet, such as via fanpage facebook, twitter, or mobile phone like Whats App and BBM.

ODOJ member interactions that take place in WA and BBM can be regarded as ritual-style ODOJ in cyber World, although that ritual can be said to be similar with Islamic rituals in the real world, especially which take place in mosque like recitation. This recitation is changed to be a virtual recitation in which there is also virtual teachers who can be asked or accessed anytime. Virtual teachers can be religious information that can be accessed anytime and

⁵ Kim, Mun-Cho. Online Buddhist Community : An Alternative Religious Organization in the information age dalam buku Religion and Cyberspace karya Morten T. Hojsgaard dan Margit Warbrug (2005), hal 141

⁶ Ibid, hal 140

⁷ Morten T.Hojsgaard dalam tulisannya Cyber-Religion : On the Cutting Edge Between the Virtual and The Real, dalam buku Religion and Cyberspace karya Morten T. Hojsgaard dan Margit Warbrug (2005), hal 50

⁸ Ibid, hal 50

anywhere through a website or someone who is appointed by ODOJ to always keep an eye on members who have or have not read the Qur'an on that day.

Then, interaction between ODOJ members who originally take place in cyberworld or online extend to the interaction that takes place in real world or offline with the meeting made by members of ODOJ. Thus, in the context of cyber religion, interaction that takes place in virtual communities like ODOJ has expanded into offline communities who interacts in real terms.

Transformation of Recitation Practice on ODOJ



Source : odojinfo.wordpress.com

One Day One Juz presence as a form of online recitation is one of examples how media and internet are increasingly influential in our daily lives, especially in religious practices. In the past, the practice of religion especially recitation is a practice that is very sacred and cult by most people because of its directly meeting with Qur'an's teacher, but the presence of media and internet are able to make the practice of religion is transformed into a new face that seems more efficient, effective, and modern.

One Day One Juz is presenting an 'innovation' in religion that facilitates community to finish Qur'an in one month via instant messenger applications. For most Muslims in Indonesia, completed 30 chapters in one month is a difficult, except during Ramadhan. The difficulties derive from laziness, activities, an atmosphere that does not support etc. With the presence of ODOJ, people who have same vision for completing 30 chapters of Al-Qur'an will be reminded by Qur'an teachers. The ODOJers who are members of this group have to start reading at 06:00 and report at 18:00. Besides reminding, teacher also has to advise ODOJ members who lack of discipline in reporting. Their reading teacher can give advice in the form of text, audio, image, and by phone. Besides the motivation that is formed specifically for the control system, ODOJers will have motivation to recite Qur'an because ODOJ teacher provide a reward to the most committed group member for reciting Qur'an.

ODOJ shows that the practice of religion is getting transformed in line with the advance technology of the Internet. In the past, Al-Qur'an recitation is exist in groups and face to face way. The students will come to the teacher at certain hours and will recite the Qur'an in turns to complete the target of recitation on that day. The teacher of the Qur'an provide advice to the student when they lack of discipline and commitment to recite Qur'an. Using direct

meetings, the students not only add their recitation in terms of quantity, but also in terms of quality as the teacher will teach the basic knowledge in reciting Qur'an like Tajwid. Then, this concept is adopted by ODOJ. ODOJ appoints virtual teacher of Qur'an. But in ODOJ, virtual teacher will only check the number of Quran recitation on that day, without an understanding of the basic knowledge of recitation like Tajwid. Besides, in ODOJ, the students are not attending the teacher, but as if the teacher who is attending the students to control them every time.

The process of communication that has changed from the previous face-to-face way to online medium abolishes direct communication process which defined Hjavard as mediation. According to Hjavard, mediation is *communication through the media, which would affect the messages and the relationship between sender and receiver*⁹. Involvement of the media as a means of transmitting messages such as WA and BBM in online recitation can be called as mediation because the communication is used through the media. Furthermore, the phenomenon of online recitation does not stop until the mediation, but also mediatization. Mediatization indeed cannot be separated from mediation, or it can be said that the mediation is a basis of mediatization. In contrast to mediation, mediatization has a broader definition. Hjavard defines mediatization as

"... .a More long-lasting process, whereby social and cultural institutions and modes of interaction are changed as a consequence of the growth of the media's influence."¹⁰

As technology has advanced, the type of media is broaden, varied and has a greater influence in the community. Society cannot avoide media. Thus, Hjavard as quoted above defines that mediatization is a process that takes place in a long time and result in changes to certain aspects such as social institutions (family, school, religious institutions, etc.), cultural, and modes of interaction due to the influence of media growth. Mediatization can be defined as the public or society become subject to and dependent on media in their daily lives both media as apparatus or institutional. Media as an apparatus, for example, BBM and WA group are strictly limited to 30 people, thus it 'forces' the interaction between ODOJ members limited only 30 people initially. Besides limited to 30 people, the limited number of characters in text message in WA and BBM makes things to be conveyed is very limited too. Thus, religious practices eventually have to be selected because of character limit provided by BBM and WA.

Beside as apparatus, media also plays a role as an independent institution. According to Giddens, in Hjavard, institutions can be characterized by the rule that is implicit or practical and resource allocation in the form of

⁹ Stig, Hjavard, *The Mediatization of Society (A Theory of the Media as Agents of Social and Cultural Change)*, Nordicom Review 29 (2008) 2, pp. 105-134, hal. 114

¹⁰ Ibid, hal 114

material and authority. The existence of rules and allocation of resources make an institution has a certain autonomy¹¹.

Based on the definition of institution from Giddens, ODOJ in this case can be categorized as an institution because it has several rules. One of ODOJ rules is subject to sanctions. Teacher appointed by admin will give sanctions on ODOJers who are not committed to recite Al-Quran daily. Initially, teacher will admonish ODOJers who do not provide reports on time, however, if ODOJers are disappeared, and always do not give the reading report, the teacher will call them or if there is no response, the ODOJers will be issued. Other member has responsibility to finish Qur'an although one of members quits. While, the allocation of the material 's can be obtained from the ODOJ secretariat in Jakarta, as well as other facilities. As an institution, ODOJ also has leaders and other structures who have responsibility to provide control and regulation on the staff and ODOJers. However, in the cyber world, the authority will be questioned because ODOJ members can directly leave without telling the teacher. If the virtual teacher can be interpreted as the sources of information that spread through the ODOJ web, ODOJ members can choose the information sources which they would take and which ones are not, so that the authority is not as tight as in the real world. Through cyber world, authorities in the virtual world becomes very fluid and weak.

ODOJ is not only change the way people communicate through cyber world, but also the existence of ODOJ gives effect to the religious life, like the discourse of efficiency. Finally, reciting Qur'an is very effective because ODOJers only need to register and provided a virtual teacher. Thus, we can see that the media and internet has a very significant influence on our daily lives, even religion is not able to avoid the touch of media and internet.

Mediatization of Religion and Media Logic

Mediation clearly shows that human's life cannot be separated from the media. People then become increasingly attached to the media. The media is able to change the type communication and interaction between people, as ODOJ which has changed religious practices from face to face to the mediated form. Interaction is limited to 30 people only in WA and BBM, and the communication that occurs between ODOJers in WA and BBM can transcend time and distance. The process when the media can change human communication and interaction, especially when communication can transcend distance and time is called Schulz in Hjarvard as an extension. ODOJ through chat group has reached greater number of people in different parts of the globes.

Beside extension, Winfried Schulz explains that mediatization occurs through a process when the media can change people communication and interaction which are also characterized in *substitution, amalgamation and accommodation*¹². Substitution occurs when the media changes personal interactions from face to face to be mediated. It also occurs in ODOJ which changes recitation from face to face and directly become mediated through WA

¹¹ Giddens dalam Stig, Hjarvard, *The Mediatization of Society (A Theory of the Media as Agents of Social and Cultural Change)*, Nordicom Review 29 (2008) 2, pp. 105-134, hal. 116

¹² Ibid, hal.109

and BBM. The next is amalgamation which can happen when there is a combination between mediated communication and non mediated communication, for example ODOJ which is conducting recitation online, combined with gathering between members as ODOJ Semarang which hold meeting between ODOJer¹³. The last, accommodation which exists when media logic accommodated by institutions outside of the media, for instance, ODOJ which is an online recitation group and religious practice is also adjusting to the media through WA and BBM.

Hjavarad said that mediatization is a process of social change that will deliver social and cultural aspects of the logic of the media¹⁴. Media Logic becomes the main feature of mediatization, which refers to the institutional operandi modus and technology of the media including the way how media distribute material and symbolic resources as well as the rules that applied to both formal and informal¹⁵. Media logic exists in media format character that is how styles are displayed, as well as how the material is organized. Furthermore, mediatization of religion which is listed on the media logic can be seen from the institutional rules, symbolic content, and individual practices of the media defined as both a channel, language, and environment¹⁶.

ODOJ as a religious practice that is affected by media and also an independent social institutions can also be defined as *environment*. According to Joshua Meyrowitz (1997), media which is defined as environment will see the media as a system, institutions, and structures that affect in people interaction and communication.

As an institution, ODOJ distributes material and symbolic resources and also the rules that applied to both formal and informal. For example, the media logic exists in ODOJ when ODOJ gives rewards to the best disciplined group in reciting the Qur'an.

Rules for giving reward to a particular group is a way from ODOJ staff as an institution to attract the masses to join ODOJ. Consequently, people join ODOJ, although the original intent merely as part of fulfilling curiosity or to get reward. As for ODOJer who have joined this program previously, the reward will motivate them to finish the Qur'an and to show their group's best effort that is always committed to the rules of ODOJ. This strategy could be effectively market the ODOJ as an institution in order to ODOJer extend their time to join ODOJ.

In addition, ODOJ forces their member to complete reading Qur'an in one month. This activity is burdensome for some ODOJers because ODOJ will spend their time and attention. Besides, ODOJer can do other things instead of reading Qur'an in a pinch like reading a book or helping others. Drees in his

¹³ Kopdar ODOJ Semarang : Temu Ramah dan Olahraga bersama ODOJERS Semarang. <http://onedayonejuz.org/post/detail/88/kopdar-odoj-semarang;-temu-ramah-dan-olahraga-bersama-odojers-semarang#.VHvUnMnlaSo>. Diakses 25-06-2015

¹⁴ Stig, Hjavarad, *The Mediatization of Religion (A Theory of the Media as an agent of Religious Change)*, (2006), hal.5

¹⁵ Altheide & Snow, 1979 pada Stig, Hjavarad *The Mediatization of Society (A Theory of the Media as Agents of Social and Cultural Change)*, Nordicom Review 29 (2008) 2, pp. 105-134, hal. 113

¹⁶ Stig, Hjavarad, *The Mediatization of Religion (A Theory of the Media as an agent of Religious Change)*, (2006), hal.3

book entitled *Technology, Trust, and Religion : Roles of Religions in Controversies on Ecology and the Modification of Life* points out that *[t]echnology may also be seen as a threat to authentic human lives. Technology promotes uniformity and efficiency, undermines social networks, and increases the possibilities for tracing and manipulating individual behavior* (2009 : 15). ODOJ promotes efficiency in reading Qur'an, but it also manipulates individual behavior with its concept using reward and punishment in order to ODOJers can read Qur'an quickly. Unconsciously, ODOJ makes a concept about how to read Qur'an in proper way and makes a dichotomy of good and bad person who reads Qur'an. It can be said as good if ODOJers can finish reading Qur'an in one month and bad if ODOJers cannot finish reading Qur'an in one month. Thus, Drees points out that *it can be seen as a threat to authentic human lives* because reading Qur'an shouldn't use reward and punishment or concept of quick reading.

In postmodern, it seems that speed has become the 'opium' of postmodern man. Speed makes time over space. ODOJ with its concept of quick reading Qur'an in one month shows that quantity and time are more important than space itself. Using smartphone, ODOJ allows people to communicate anytime and anywhere in real time and mediated way and distances become meaningless. Virilio points out that

Isn't this the crime that the technologies of telecommunications commit in isolating the present from its "here and now" and promoting a commutative elsewhere that is no longer the location of our presence in the world, but merely that of a discrete and intermittent telepresence? (2000 : 45)

Discourse of speed and instantaneous way have become ideology on people today and also influence religious life. The world become borderless and the way people interact with God is also borderless and mediated. Thus, postmodern influences the way people act with their religion to be quickly as ODOJ's concept.

Moreover, ODOJ staff also works with entertainer to promote ODOJ. Some of them are Dude Herlino, Dini Aminarti, Teuku Wisnu, Tomi Kurniawan, Dimas Seto, Baim Wong, Alisa Subandono, Oki Setiana Dewi, etc. While the ambassador of ODOJ is Oki Setiana Dewi and Teuku Wisnu.

The use of entertainer or public figure as a means to promote ODOJ is part of how ODOJ is delivering the messages or symbolic resources. By using the public figure, ODOJ hopes that many people will join ODOJ. The selection of ODOJ ambassador making ODOJ is no longer a program, an institution or a media format but as lifestyle that is conveyed through the image of the artist. Commercialization happens when ODOJ as a religious practice increasingly promoted through such agencies as the ambassador of ODOJ, and also in the form of cooperation with other institutions. It is similar when ODOJ is choosing WA and BBM as a means of communication. For example, WA is chosen because WA is the third downloaded application by Indonesian people via Ovisstore and BBM that is not devoted to the Blackberry users only.

Mediated religious practice makes media logic as the basis of religious practice via that medium. In the practice of individual and institutional, for example is the existence of the reward, which makes a person could join ODOJ

just want to get the reward, not merely wants to finish the Qur'an. In addition, the use of artists as ambassadors shows ODOJ commercialization to attract the masses as much as possible, including the contents symbolic which is delivered through the artist. Drees points out that *the Internet was credited with extraordinary powers to change and improve many aspects of life and it was granted a special, even sacred, status* (2009:56). Media logic which influence ODOJ shows that media has extraordinary power to influence the religious practice and consider some aspects to gain material profit.

CONCLUSION

ODOJ community which exists in cyber world like facebook, twitter, WA and BBM is one of examples of a virtual Islamic community as the process of interaction and religious rituals mediated by the internet. Through the internet, religious rituals adjust the apparatus that they use like WA and BBM as the limit of people number, the number of words character, etc. However, the interaction that occurs in the cyber world experienced an extension in the real world. Not only through the mediation process, but also ODOJ existence in the cyber world happen through mediatization process. Mediatization process begins from mediation processes that occur in ODOJ especially displacement from communication in face to face way, then mediated through media such as chat group. The amendment indicates that the media has affected the religious institutions that reflected in religious practices such as online recitation. Religious practice via medium makes ODOJ not only has function as a community and program, but also as independent institutions with its rules and allocation of resources both materially and authority. Furthermore, it can be defined as an environment because ODOJ is also categorized as a system, institution, and structures that affect people interaction and communication. As an independent institution, ODOJ is also inescapable from media logic when giving rewards to ODOJer, using artists as a means of promotion, and also working with various levels of society and institutions.

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