

A Refutation of a Mosque Serving as a Zakat and Economic Centre During Prophethood

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Abstract

A mosque is a sacred place designated for the exclusive use of the Muslim community. In accordance with Indonesian and Malaysian scholars, mosques during the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) functioned as economic and zakat hubs. This appears to defy the prophetic teaching that prohibits any commercial activity from taking place in a mosque. Therefore, this research will investigate these claims. This study using genetic methodology and assess them based on historical methodology utilising hadith literature. The study's findings contradict the belief that the mosque served as an economic and zakat distribution (charitable donations) hub during the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). No evidence from hadith or Islamic historical perspective substantiates either of the arguments. The scholars have not found any indication of a report or hadith associating the mosque as a hub for zakat. As for the economy centre, a genetic method revealed that experts had cited a statement indicating that the mosque served as a hub for developing Islamic economic concepts and systems instead of a trading centre. According to several evidence from the hadith, a mosque is more correctly described as a social welfare centre.

Keywords: Mosque, Zakat, Economy, Centre, Welfare, Prophethood

INTRODUCTION

Muslims are required to pray five times a day as part of their faith. It is encouraged to pray in congregation in the *masjid* (mosque). The word *masjid* is derived from the Arabic word *sujud* (سجود), which means to bow down and place one's forehead on the ground (Al-Razi al-Lughawi, 1999), and the word *masjid* (مسجد) refers to a place of worship (Al-Raghib, 1412H). While *masjad* refers to the seven parts of the body that are touched on the earth's surface when prostrating, they are the forehead, both ends of the soles of the feet, both knees, and both palms. (Al-Razi al-Lughawi, 1999).

According to Fauwaz Fadzil Noor (t.thn.), the word mosque has three meanings: place, time, and action. Place refers to the place of prayer, time refers to the arrival of prayer time, whereas act refers to the act of prostration. As a result, even without a building, the original notion of a mosque is a site of prostration. Nonetheless, the general people, particularly Malaysians, associate the term “mosque” with the picture of a structure or building. This is based on the definition of *Kamus Dewan*, a Malay monodictionary, which states that a mosque is a built-up area where Muslims practise Friday prayer and other religious practises (Noresah Baharom et al., 2005).

The Quran mentions the word *masjid* 28 times (Arthur Jeffery, 2007). Mosques have several connotations in the Quran, which refer to *Masjid al-Haram*, *Masjid al-Aqsa* and general mosques as places of worship. The Quran

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also uses other words to refer to mosques such as *al-saf*, *al-bait* and its plural, *al-buyut* (Zawawi Ismail, 2007). Among the advantages of Muslims under the prophecy of Prophet Muhammad PBUH is that it is permissible to pray anywhere on the face of this earth. He said, “*This earth was made into a mosque and a clean (for purification) for me*” (Ibn Abi Shaibah, 1409H, no. 7752).

Originally, a mosque was used as a location for Muslims to worship as instructed in the Quran, “*And that the mosques are Allah’s, therefore call not upon anyone with Allah*” (Chapter al-Jinn 72:18). Allah also decreed that those who consistently frequent the mosque possess commendable attributes, “*Only those who believe in God, the Day of Judgment, perform their prayers, pay the zakat, and have a fear of God alone have the right to establish and patronize the mosque of God so that perhaps they will have the right guidance* (chapter al-Taubah 9:18).

The mosque primarily functions as a place where Muslims gather to engage in communal prayer, notably for the five obligatory daily prayers, and to listen to sermons on Fridays before performing the congregational noon prayer. The previous prophets were only required to pray in special places such as monasteries and churches (Iyad, 1998, 2/436), while the people of Prophet Muhammad PBUH were required to pray all over the earth except places that were believed to be impure (Abdullah Walad Ibrahim, 2008). There are some places on this earth where prayer is prohibited, Prophet Muhammad PBUH said, “*The whole earth is a mosque except toilets and graves*” (Abu Dawud, no. 492).

Contemporary historians asserted that mosques throughout the era of Prophet Muhammad PBUH functioned as both economic and zakat hubs (Asep Suryanto & Asep Saepulloh, 2016; Fadzil Mohd Ikhmal et al., 2020; Azman Ab Rahman, 2019). The author also observed that this notion is embedded in Malaysians’ understanding. However, this contradicts what the Prophet Muhammad said, “*When you see someone selling or buying in the mosque then say, “May Allah not profit your business.” And when you see someone announcing about something lost then say, “May Allah not return it to you.”*” (Al-Tirmidhi, 1975, no. 1321). This prophetic phrase implies that the mosque should be a tranquil and serene environment, devoid of noise and commotion.

In addition, Aminah and Ulumuddin conducted interviews with Islamic scholars and a financial technology (fintech) experts about the implementation of a peer-to-peer lending model and an *infaq* bank model in the mosque. The academics and fintech professionals expressed dissent towards these two models due to the fact that mosques are not commercial establishments and the concept of *infaq* banks remains relatively unknown to the general public (Aminah Nuriyah & Ulumuddin Nurul Fakhri, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

According to Merriam-Webster online dictionary, “centre” or “center” in this context means a point, area, person, or thing that is most important or pivotal in relation to an indicated activity, interest, or condition.

Thus, a mosque as a *zakat* and economic centre would mean an area that is most important in relation to the economy and zakat activities, interests, and conditions. Therefore, this paper will investigate these claims using genetic methodology and evaluate it according to historical methodology using hadith literature. Abdul Ahmad (2006) asserted that the genetic method can be explained as follows:

Through the approach to studying the source and origin of a work, the researcher must grasp a wide and deep scope, and in it, there are various problems and complexities that do not just hover in the current or national context but even across a longer space of time and a wider geographical space.

According to this, there are five aspects that need to be focused on when searching the source of literature. Those five aspects are influence, adaptation, plagiarism, imitation, and translation. But in academic writing such as articles’ journals, sometimes the origin of a statement is stated clearly in the references. Therefore, it would be much easier to use genetic methodology in academic writing.

RESULTS

The results divided into two section; mosque as zakat centre, and mosque as economy centre.

MOSQUE AS ZAKAT CENTRE

Azman Ab Rahman et al. (2019) stated in their article that at that time every property acquired, especially by means of *zakat*, was collected by the mosque thus making it the first institution of *baitulmal* in the history of Islam. Their source for this quote is an article by Hairunnizam et al. (2012):

Jika dilihat daripada sejarah zaman Rasulullah s.a.w., kutipan dan pengagihan zakat secara prinsipnya dilaksanakan di lokaliti yang sama, iaitu melalui masjid kerana pada ketika itu harta, terutamanya zakat, dikumpulkan di masjid, dan ini menjadikan masjid sebagai institusi baitulmal pertama dalam sejarah Islam.

Translation:

Judging from the history of the time of Messenger of Allah (Muhammad), the collection and distribution of *zakat* was in principle carried out in the same locality, i.e., through the mosque because at that time, property, especially *zakat*, was collected in the mosque, and this made the mosque the first *baitulmal* (house of treasury) institution in Islamic history.

Nevertheless, as far as we can tell, no reference was given to support this claim. Following this allegation, the writers quote Monzer Kahf, stating that during the time of Prophet Muhammad, there were no known incidents of *zakat* leftovers being sent to other areas. We evaluated Monzer Kahf's articles cited by the authors, assuming that they were quoting the claim made by Monzer Kahf even though it was not mentioned explicitly. The first article is "Zakat: Unsolved Issues in Contemporary Fiqh" a chapter in a book titled *Development and Finance in Islam*. The second article is a conference paper titled "The Performance of the Institution of Zakat in Theory and Practice."

Neither of the papers mentioned the mosque's affiliation with the collection of *zakat*. Monzer Kahf only addressed the involvement of the state in relation to *zakat*, as well as the responsibilities of individual *zakat* payers during the reign of the third successor of Prophet Muhammad.

From an administrative point of view, there are several considerations that may limit the degree of state involvement in the collection and distribution of *zakat*. It seems that since the time of the third successor of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, there were good reasons for leaving part of obligatory *zakat* for individual payers to distribute at their own discretion to deserving relatives and neighbours. (Monzer Kahf, 1991)

Based on hadith, there were no reports about a mosque being assigned as a place for collecting and distributing *zakat*. Ibn 'Abbas narrated:

The Prophet PBUH sent Mu'adh to Yemen and said, "Invite the people to testify that none has the right to be worshipped, but Allah and I am Allah's Messenger PBUH, and if they obey you to do so, then teach them that Allah has enjoined on them five prayers in every day and night, and if they obey you to do so, then teach them that Allah has made it obligatory for them to pay the *zakat* from their property and it is to be taken from the wealthy among them and given to the poor." (Al-Bukhariy, 1422H, no. 1395)

This hadith indicates that Prophet Muhammad PBUH designated Mu'adh as the collector of *zakat* without mentioning any specific instructions about the mosque. During the reign of Caliph' Umar, the practice of locally distributing *zakat* was maintained in several locations. According to a narrative by Sa'id al-Musayyib, Mu'adh was appointed as the collector in either Banu Sa'd or Banu Dhubyan. He gathered their *zakat*, dispersed it among the local community, and came back without any remaining funds (Hasanuz Zaman, 1981). This historical evidence illustrates that *zakat* collectors promptly distribute *zakat* upon receiving it without prioritising the mosque as the focal point.

MOSQUE AS ECONOMY CENTRE

Islam has its own economic structure since we can see conventional and shariah banks coexisting today. According to various academicians, the mosque was designated as a place of economic function during the time of Prophet Muhammad. According to Asep Suryanto & Asep Saepulloh (2016):

Pada kenyataannya fungsi masjid yang ada dewasa ini sebagian besarnya hanya terbatas sebagai tempat ibadah ritual saja. Hal ini berbeda dengan fungsi masjid pada zaman Rasulullah SAW. Pada masa Rasulullah SAW fungsi masjid di samping sebagai tempat ibadah ritual juga memiliki fungsi penunjang seperti fungsi pendidikan, informasi, kesehatan, ekonomi, bahkan juga digunakan untuk mengatur negara dan strategi perang.

Translation:

In fact, the function of the mosque today is mostly limited to a place of worship only. This is different from the function of the mosque in the time of the Prophet PBUH. In the time of the Prophet PBUH, the function of the mosque, in addition to being a place of worship, also supported the function of education, information, health, economy, and was even used to manage the country and plan war strategies.

Also, Fadzil Mohd Ikhmal et al. (2020) claimed that a mosque was the centre for economic activity:

In the time of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH the mosque functioned as a place for worshipping Allah, centre for consultation and communication, centre of education, centre of social activity, centre for peace and centre of economic activity.

As we examine, neither claim had any supporting evidence or justification. Nidaul Hasanati et al. (2014) stated that:

At the time of the Messenger Muhammad, the Prophet's Mosque served as a place of worship, an education centre, an information centre, a place for settling disputes, economic centre, and also a social and political centre.

This assertion comes from Aziz Muslim (2004), who wrote an article nearly two decades ago:

Fungsi selanjutnya (5) masjid sebagai pusat kegiatan ekonomi. Yang dimaksud kegiatan ekonomi, tidak berarti sebagai pusat perdagangan atau industri, tetapi sebagai pusat untuk melahirkan ide-ide dan sistem ekonomi yang islami, yang melahirkan kemakmuran dan pemerataan pendapatan bagi umat manusia secara adil dan berimbang.

Translation:

The next function (5) is the mosque as a centre of economic activity. What is meant by economic activity does not mean a centre of trade or industry but as a centre for the birth of Islamic economic ideas and systems, which gave birth to prosperity and income distribution for mankind in a fair and balanced manner.

The term "economic centre", according to Aziz Muslim, does not refer to any physical activities involving monetary transactions, such as trading and charity. However, it only refers to economic ideas, which can be conducted during Friday's sermon or during prayers by reciting a Quranic verse on economics. There were some occasions where transactions happened in the mosque, but they were seldom. As narrated by Ka'b:

"In the mosque I asked Ibn Abi Hadrad to pay the debts which he owed me and our voices grew louder. Allah's Messenger PBUH heard that while he was in his house. So, he came to us, raising the curtain of his room, and said, "O Ka'b!" I replied, "Labaik, O Allah's Messenger PBUH!" He said, "O Ka'b! Reduce your debt to one half," gesturing with his hand. I said, "O Allah's Messenger PBUH! I have done so." Then Allah's Apostle said (to Ibn Abi Hadrad), "Get up and pay the debt to him." (Al-Bukhariy, 1422H, no. 457)

In this example, the Prophet's companions settled their debt in the mosque. But this rarely happened and cannot be considered as a "centre" of activity. As for trading in the mosque, the majority of scholars prohibit or dislike it (Al-Shaukaniy, 1933), based on the hadith that had been mentioned in the introduction.

DISCUSSION

Based on the preceding discussion, there is a lack of accounts or narratives indicating that the mosque functions as a central location for the gathering and dissemination of zakat goods. Similarly, the economic centre issue seldom arises involving companions settling their bills in the mosque. According to several researchers, the idea that the mosque serves as the “central hub of economic activity” is attributed to Aziz Muslim (2004). However, if we only quote this partially, it may be misunderstood as referring to the “centre of trade.” Nevertheless, he already expressed his intention for it to serve as the focal point for the emergence of Islamic economic ideas and systems.

This does not, however, rule out any economic events that occurred in the mosque during the Prophet Muhammad’s lifetime. There are three examples for this events. First example, the spoils of war were the goods handed to the Prophet SAW, then he divided the property at the mosque and some requested for alms from it. Anas narrated:

Money from Bahrain was brought to the Prophet PBUH. He said, “Spread it in the Mosque.” It was the biggest amount that had ever been brought to Allah’s Messenger PBUH. In the meantime al-‘Abbas came to him and said, “O Allah's Messenger PBUH! Give me, for I gave the ransom of myself and ‘Aqil.” The Prophet said (to him), “Take.”(Al-Bukhari, no. 3048)

Second example, the Prophet PBUH order to hang the dates on every wall of the mosque. Ibn ‘Umar narrated, “The Prophet PBUH directed that dates be hung on every wall in the mosque” (Ibn Hibban, 2012, no. 1189). This instruction of the Prophet PBUH is intended to help the poor, especially to the al-Suffah group. Regarding on verse *And do not aim at that which is bad to spend from it* (Quran 2:267), al-Barra’ narrated:

It was revealed about us, the people of the Ansar who were date-palm owners. A man would bring the amount of dates that he would from his date-palms, either a lot or a little. A man would bring a cluster or two and hang it in the mosque. The people of al-Suffah did not have food, so one of them would go up to the cluster and hit it with his stick, and unripe and ripe dates would fall, and he would eat. Some people did not hope for good, so a man would bring a cluster with pitless and hard dates, and a cluster with damaged dates, and hang it. So Allah, Blessed and Most High, revealed: *O you who believe! Spend of the good things which you have earned, and of that which We have produced from the earth for you, and do not aim at that which is bad to spend from it* (Quran 2:267). They said, “If one of you were given similar to what he gave, he would take it except bashfully with your eyes closed.” So after that, one of us would bring the best that we had. (Al-Tirmidhi, no. 2987)

Third example, a place for economic problem solving. In addition to property management and almsgiving, the Prophet PBUH settled debts problem at the mosque. Abdullah bin Ka’b bin Malik narrated:

In the mosque I asked Ibn Abi Hadrad to pay the debts which he owed to me and our voices grew louder. Allah’s Messenger PBUH heard that while he was in his house. So he came to us raising the curtain of his room and said, “O Ka’b!” I replied, “Labbaik (I am responding to you), O Allah's Messenger!” He said, “O Ka’b! Reduce your debt to one half,” gesturing with his hand. I said, “O Allah's Messenger! I have done so.” Then the Prophet PBUH said (to Ibn Abi Hadrad), “Get up and pay the debt to him.” (Al-Bukhari, no. 457)

These three examples demonstrate that some economic issues, particularly social welfare, take place in the mosque. However, this does not always occur except the activity of donating dates on the mosque’s walls. As a result, it is more accurate to say that the mosque served as a social welfare centre during the Prophet PBUH period.

CONCLUSION

Mosques as a social welfare centre during the Prophet Muhammad’s time are more appropriate to mention than economic centres. This research does not dismiss the importance of mosques as economic centres today, as long as it does not occur within the prayer space. According to Abdullah Walad Ibrahim (2008), the mosque’s four main roles are to strengthen the Islamic faith in the hearts of all Muslims, to strengthen spiritual values in

the lives of Muslims, to unite the unity of Muslims, and to spread the spirit of cooperation and helping each other in the lives of Muslims. The fourth role as mention here, can be manifest through welfare and financial assistance to the needy. A future study on the need for modern mosques to be upgraded into economic centres should be conducted.

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