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MANHAJ AT-TA'ALUM: A METHOD OF UNDERSTANDING THE YELLOW BOOKS AT MA'HAD ALY AN-NUR II AL-MURTADLO

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Abstract

The first step in addressing religious issues is to consult the Quran and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. However, interpreting these texts isn't easily accessible to everyone due to specific qualifications that are often hard to meet today. Therefore, the recommended approach is to follow the mujtahids by studying classical texts, commonly known as the "yellow books." This study explores a systematic method for learning these classical works at Ma'had Aly An-Nur II, employing a phenomenological approach and descriptive qualitative methods. Data sources include literature (secondary data) and primary data from interviews, observations, and seminars. The findings reveal that: (1) Learning yellow classical books involves a "*Manhaj At-Ta'alum*" with four key components: clear reasoning, professional teachers, authoritative references, and consistent effort. (2) Learning objectives are structured in "*Marahil At-Tadris*", divided into four levels: *Ta'sis* (Understanding reading and translation principles), *Naql* (Recognizing similar phrases and applying interpretations), *Tahrir* (Understanding and applying related issues) and *Tahqiq* (Developing solutions to new cases with innovative and critical thinking).

Keywords: *Manhaj At-Ta'alum*; Yellow Books; Ma'had Aly An-Nur II

INTRODUCTION

The Quran and hadith are the main foundations of Islam. This has been agreed upon by the four Imams of the madhhab. In the Quran, Allah says which means: "*If you differ in opinion about anything, then refer it back to Allah (the Qur'an) and the Rassul (his Sunnah), if you truly believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is better for you and better for the outcome*". (**QS. An-Nisa: 59**) This verse shows the urgency of the Qur'an and hadith in Islamic law *istinbat*. In addition, the verse also explains the stages of reference that can be used as a guide in solving religious problems. The first stage is to refer to the Qur'an, followed by asking directly to the

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Prophet Muhammad (in the context of the Prophet being alive) or referring to the hadith (after the death of the Prophet). (الطبری, t.t., hlm. 504)

However, it is important to emphasize that not everyone can directly refer to the Quran and hadith. This requires complex expertise, as explained in the book *Al-Waraqat* by Imam Al-Juwaini, also known as Imam Al-Haramain. (Aljuwaini, t.t., hlm. 29) Therefore, for someone who does not meet these conditions, it is forbidden to directly refer to the Qur'an without following the opinion of a mujtahid (taqlid). Muhammad said: "*Whoever speaks about the Qur'an without knowledge should be prepared for a place in hell*". (HR. At-Tirmidzi) The same applies to the interpretation of the Hadith because haphazard interpretation without the knowledge of a mujtahid will lead to fatal errors and destroy the essence of the Hadith's meaning. Thus, those who haphazardly interpret hadith are among those who lie in the name of the Prophet, while the Prophet once said: "*Verily lying in my name is not the same as lying in any other. Whoever lies in my name intentionally, let him take his seat in hell*". (HR. Bukhari no. 1291 and Muslim no. 4)

After the period of mujtahids *mutlaq* -those who had the ability to refer directly to the Qur'an and hadith, such as Imam Ash-Shafi'i, Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal- there were no more scholars who directly resolved religious issues by referring directly to these two sources. In the Shafi'i *mazhab*, after the death of Imam Ash-Shafi'i, at most a generation of scholars emerged who did *tarjih* or *tahqiq* on the opinions of him and the *ashab* (students of Imam Ash-Shafi'i). The famous scholars of the Shafi'i *mazhab* in this regard are Imam An-Nawawi and Imam Ar-Rafi'i (*tanqih awwal*), as well as Ibn Hajar Al-Haitami and Imam Ar-Ramli (*tanqih tsani*). Some scholars even argue that the door to ijtihad has been closed. However, this opinion is considered too extreme. More precisely, the door of ijtihad has never been closed, but there are no more individuals who are able to enter it. This situation creates its own problems in determining sharia law. This is because the problems continue to grow, while the texts of the Qur'an and hadith are limited, and there is no one who can understand them directly as the mujtahids *mutlaq*.

In facing these challenges, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) as an Islamic organization founded by Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari, holds fast to the books of the *turats* (yellow books), especially in the Shafi'i *mazhab*. NU's basis for adhering to the books of the Turats is contained in the following statement: "*Whoever does not follow one of them (the imams of the madhab) and says, 'I do my deeds based on the Qur'an and hadith,' and claims to have been able to understand the rulings of both, then that person cannot be accepted. Rather, he is wrong, misguided and misleading, especially in these times when wickedness is rampant and false preaching is widespread. This is because he is trying to compete with the religious Imams, even though he is far below them in knowledge, charity, justice and analysis*". (Tanwiir Al-Quluub 74-75)

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The yellow book has three models: *matan*, *syarah* and *hasiyah*. Each of these three models has a different level of difficulty, both in terms of language and the logical sequence presented. Therefore, it is very important to formulate the right learning method in studying the yellow book. Various learning methods have been the subject of much research. In this regard, there are several studies that are quite authoritative. First, the research conducted by Mahfud Efendi which focuses on finding and formulating yellow book learning methods at *Pesantren* Sunan Drajad Lamongan. The results showed that in the *pesantren*, several methods of learning the yellow classical books were applied, including the *bandongan* method, *sorogan*, memorization, deliberation, and collaboration. (**Ifendi, 2021, hlm. 85, 95**) Second, research conducted by Ali Akbar and Hidayatullah Ismail who studied yellow Islamic classic book learning methods at Daarun Nahdhah Thawalib Bangkinang Islamic Boarding School. The results of their research show that the learning of the yellow classical books in the *pesantren* is carried out in two forms: independently and in groups. The method applied in transferring knowledge is a mixed method, which combines *bandongan* and *sorogan*. (**Akbar & Ismail, 2018, hlm. 25-31**) Third, research conducted by Nurul Hanani which focuses on examining the management of the development of yellow book learning. The results showed that the yellow classical book learning method in *salafiyah pesantren* would not be separated from the use of conventional traditional methods. Some of the learning methods in question are: *wetonan* or *bandongan*, *sorogan* and memorization, and *munazharah* (deliberation/muzkarah). There is also a learning evaluation in this yellow book learning method. (**Hanani, 2017, hlm. 23-24**)

This research examines the formulation of a structured yellow Islamic classic book learning method, both technical and non-technical, as well as clear learning target management. The focus of the research is Ma'had Aly An-Nur II in Bululawang, Malang, East Java, with the reasons: (1) The researcher is an active student at the institution, (2) Ma'had Aly An-Nur II is still thickly implementing yellow book learning, (3) Some students and lecturers have won domestic and foreign scholarships. This research uses a phenomenological approach with descriptive qualitative methods to obtain accurate empirical data. Data sources consist of primary data (interviews, observations, seminars, and related documents) and secondary data (literature materials). Interviews were conducted with relevant informants to obtain direct information.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Ma'had Aly Pondok Pesantren An-Nur II

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Ma'had Aly Pondok Pesantren An-Nur II is an Islamic religious higher education institution in Bululawang, Malang, which organizes yellow book-based education. Established in August 2019 by Kiai Ahmad Zainuddin, M.M., the institution offers Bachelor's degree programs under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Ma'had Aly An-Nur II focuses on deepening religious knowledge, especially *fiqh*, with a specialization in Industrial *fiqh*, and has received a recommendation from the Directorate General of Ma'had Aly. (Syarifuddin, 2024, hlm. 25)

Ma'had Aly An-Nur II not only teaches religious knowledge in depth, but also becomes the center of scientific development at the An-Nur II Al-Murtadlo Tourist Boarding School. As a relatively new institution, Ma'had Aly has succeeded in creating an educational environment conducive for students to explore religious knowledge. The main curriculum prioritizes the teaching of yellow books, such as *Fathul Mu'in* and *Minhajut Thalibin* (Shafi'i *fiqh*), *Waraqat* and *Lubbul Usul* (ushul *fiqh*), *Asbah wan Nadhair* (*fiqh* rules), *Ibn Aqil* (nahwu), *Ahkamu Tasni'* (industrial *fiqh*), and *Alfiyah Al-Iraqi* (sirah nabawi). Logic, *balaghah*, *tafsir* and *tasawwuf* are also taught.

Through comprehensive education at Ma'had Aly for four years, *mahantri* are expected to master religious knowledge, especially industrial *fiqh*, and be able to determine *fiqh* law in society. They are also trained to express their opinions clearly through group deliberations and *Lajnah Bahtsul Masail*, which discusses contemporary *fiqh* issues. Ma'had Aly An-Nur II not only focuses on mastering religious knowledge, but also on developing critical thinking, discussion, and organizational skills, making it an educational center that integrates religious knowledge and social skills.

***Manhaju Ta'alum* Ma'had Aly An-Nur II Al-Murtadlo**

Definition of *Manhaju Ta'alum*

Manhaju Ta'alum consists of two words; *manhaj* and *ta'alum*. Etymologically, *manhaj* means a systematic path or method to achieve a certain goal. In Arabic, *manhaj* comes from the root word *an-nahju* which means "path" or "way". (Alharuwi, t.t., hlm. 6: 1898) While *ta'alum* is a word derived from Arabic which follows the pattern of *tafa'ul* (meaning to indicate an effort made by someone to achieve a goal). So, the word *ta'alum* can be understood as a person's effort to acquire new skills and knowledge, by practicing and honing himself. (Laili Al'Ajib, t.t.)

Manhaju Ta'alum is a structured learning methodology to help deep understanding and applicability, especially in understanding the yellow classical books. *Manhaju Ta'lim* Ma'had Aly An-Nur II Al-Murtadlo was explained by KH. Nidhom Subkhi during the 2024/2025 new student orientation. This *manhaj* is formulated based on authoritative yellow books from

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salaf scholars who are experienced in teaching, aiming to be a systematic guide for students in understanding yellow books at Ma'had Aly An-Nur II Al-Murtadlo.

Tools for Seeking Knowledge

A tool, in a general sense, is a means or medium used to achieve a particular goal. For example, pencils and paper are tools used for drawing. (تعريف و معنى آلة في معجم المعاني الجامع - ”*معجم عربي عربي*”, t.t.) Similarly, in the context of science, the tools for seeking knowledge are the means used to achieve deeper knowledge or understanding. KH. Nidhom Subki, explained that there are four main tools used in the process of seeking knowledge. The following is a more in-depth explanation of each of these tools.

Clear Mind

Intellect is a gift from God that distinguishes humans from other creatures. It functions as a tool for thinking and a means to seek knowledge. The intellect is divided into two:

1. **Aqlu Gharizi** – innate instinct from birth. This is the basic potential upon which a person is subjected to Shari'ah law.
2. **Aqlu Kasbi** – the mind that develops through learning, experience and practice.

Aqlu gharizi is the foundation, while *Aqlu kasbi* is the result of effort. The mind can continue to develop if it is trained by learning, reasoning, and memorizing consistently. In conclusion, intellect is not fixed. It grows over time, depending on education and experience.

How to Develop *Aqlu Kasbi*

Developing *aqlu kasbi* in order to produce deep understanding requires a systematic process. This process can be divided into two stages, namely: reasoning and memorization. Both have an important role in deepening understanding. Here is the detailed explanation:

1. Train Reasoning

The initial stage in learning is to exercise reasoning. There are four important steps:

a. **Read**

To familiarize yourself with the basic concepts and definitions you want to learn.

b. **Discussion**

Discuss with friends or teachers to deepen understanding, exercise the ability to express opinions, listen, and formulate arguments clearly.

c. **Talaqqi (interaction with the lecture)**

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Can be done through: **Bandongan** (listening to the teacher's explanation) **Sorogan** (asking questions or direct consultation) **Suhbah** (learning from the teacher's behavior while serving).

d. **Muraja'ah**

Repeating lessons so as not to forget easily and strengthen the memory.

These four steps complement each other. A full understanding can only be achieved if done regularly and continuously.

2. **Memorization**

Memorization is an important part of Islamic education. A scholar said, "Knowledge is memorization and understanding." This means that one can argue well if one memorizes and understands the material. This means that a person can argue well if they memorize and understand the content of the material. Memorization also trains concentration, discipline, and perseverance. Two main methods of memorization: **Tikrār** - repetition to strengthen memory. **Qirā'ah** - reading to embed the material in memory. The combination of the two makes memorization stronger and longer lasting.

3. **Expert Lecture**

In the context of Islamic education, the role of teachers is central. They serve as a guide to truth and experience for students. Teachers in Islamic literature are popularly referred to as *Shhaikh*. Teachers are basically divided into two, namely *Shaikh al-Futuh* and *Shaikh at-Tarbiyah*.

a. ***Shaikh al-Futuh***

Shaikh al-Futuh is a teacher who emphasizes the spiritual and inner aspects of a student. *Shaikh al-Futuh*'s role is to open one's heart and mind to more easily accept the truth. This process involves deep spiritual guidance so that the student is able to get closer to Allah with full awareness.

b. ***Shaikh at-Tarbiyah***

The *Shaikh al-Tarbiyah* is a teacher who focuses more on the intellectual and practical aspects. This role emphasizes the transfer of knowledge as well as to students. With directed learning, the *Shaikh al-Tarbiyah* helps to produce an easy generation that is knowledgeable and has noble charactera.

Based on the above information, efforts to improve the quality of education one of them is improving the quality of teachers. Teachers are the spearhead of education.

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By improving the competence and professionalism of teachers, the quality of learning will improve.

4. Authoritative Reference

In the tradition of Islamic education, books have a central role as the main source of knowledge. Seen from the primary and secondary point of view, the books that become references are divided into two categories, namely *Kitab at-Tadris* (teaching books) and *Kitab al-Muthala'ah* (independent reading books).

a. *Kitab at-Tadris*

Kitab at-Tadris is a book that is studied with the teacher in direct teaching. The teacher's role is crucial in explaining and guiding the student's understanding. There are three main methods used: ***tikrār*** - repetition to strengthen understanding. ***Hifzh*** - memorization so that important content is stored in the memory. ***Awalan wa Akhiran*** - reading the book from beginning to end to fully understand the content. This method helps students understand the content of the book in depth and thoroughly

b. *Kitab al-Muthala'ah*

Kitab al-Muthala'ah is a book used for self-study. There are two main ways to use it: ***muqabalah*** - comparing the contents of several books to see similarities, differences, and other points of view. ***Tarqiyah*** - improving the quality of knowledge by reading more in-depth books according to the field of study. This method trains students to be independent, critical, and able to analyze the contents of the book more broadly.

5. Consistency and Hard Work

Consistency and hard work are two important things in achieving success, including in Islamic education. Consistency is called *mudawamah*, which means diligently studying and repeating lessons every day. While hard work is called *ilkhah*, which is to increase learning to increase knowledge. In the learning process, one must be ready to get out of the comfort zone and face challenges with enthusiasm. *Mudawamah* and *ilkhah* must go together. Without hard work, consistency is not enough. Conversely, effort without consistency will only produce results that are not durable. With both, *mahanstri* will form intuition or instinct in solving problems. These instincts will grow with regular and earnest study habits.

Marahilu Tadris Ma'had Aly An-Nur II

Marahilu Tadris is a staged curriculum system with clear achievement targets at each stage. At *Ma'had Aly An-Nur II*, this system is divided into four stages:

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1. ***Marhalah Ta'sis* (Semester 1-2)**

This stage focuses on the basics of reading and translating the book. Students learn to read the text fluently, look for explanations in the *syarah* or *hasiyah*, and memorize and understand definitions. They also begin to recognize basic theory and are trained to answer "What?" questions and practice deliberation.

2. ***Marhalah Naql* (Semester 3-4)**

At this stage, *mahantri* learn to distinguish similar sentence, understand the explicit and implicit content of the text, and begin to answer the question "How?". They also learn to assess opinions in the book and present arguments based on the text through deliberation.

3. ***Marhalah Tahrir* (Semester 5-6)**

Students begin to think critically. They learn to relate problems to the laws in the book (*ilhaq*), compare concepts, and analyze texts. Deliberation at this stage focuses on the question "Why?" with logical and in-depth arguments.

4. ***Marhalah Tahqiq* (Semester 7-8)**

This final stage trains students to face new problems and find solutions with a critical and innovative approach. They are also required to write scientific works such as books, *ta'liq*, or *syarah* through a process of in-depth research and analysis.

CONCLUSION

Ma'had Aly An-Nur II has a vision to produce scholars who are competent, have integrity, and are able to contribute to the development of knowledge, especially industrial *fiqh*. To realize this, the *manhaj ta'lum* system is used as a directed and systematic learning guide in studying the yellow book. The main goal is for students to gain in-depth and applicable knowledge. In the learning process, there are five main tools that are key: clear mind, expert teachers, reliable references, consistency and hard work. Learning is also directed through clear targets, namely through *Marahilu Tadris*, which consists of four stages: ***ta'sis***: basic understanding, ***naql***: text analysis, ***tahrir***: critical thinking and ***tahqiq***: research and development of knowledge. Each stage has different targets that help *mahantri* develop gradually. The advantage of this system is that the curriculum is neat, relevant and has a clear direction of achievement at each level.

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