

# The lauh method in memorizing the Qur'an at the *Kuttab* educational institution in Morocco

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## Abstract

Morocco is known as the land of Qur'an memorizers. UNESCO has recognized the Kingdom of Morocco as the world's leading country in terms of the number of Qur'an memorizers. The Qur'an is studied and memorized in Morocco through an educational institution called *Kuttab*. Most mosques across Morocco either have or establish a *Kuttab* integrated within the mosque or housed in a separate building. *Kuttab* serves as the first educational institution attended by the majority of Moroccan children in their early education, focusing specifically on teaching the Qur'an and providing religious studies as supplementary material. The Lauh Method is the approach used by this institution for teaching and memorizing the Qur'an, passed down through generations and still preserved to this day. The aim of this research is to understand how this method is implemented in *Kuttab* Morocco for Qur'an memorization. This research uses a qualitative descriptive research method, with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation study. The results of this study state that there are 10 steps in memorizing the Qur'an using the Lauh method. The advantage of the Lauh method lies in the memorization process, which involves multiple steps, resulting in strong and solid memorization. On the other hand, the drawback of this method, as a traditional approach, is that it is considered less effective and efficient compared to modern methods.

## Keywords

Lauh method, Memorizing the Qur'an, *Kuttab* Morocco

## Introduction

The Qur'an is the primary source of Islamic teachings. According to *Manna' Khalil Al-Qattan* [1], linguistically, the Qur'an is a verbal noun (*masdar*) derived from *qara'a*, which means "to read" or "to compile". In terminology, the Qur'an is the word of Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), written in the *mushaf*, and transmitted through a *mutawatir* (continuous) chain of narration without any doubt.

Memorizing the Qur'an is a process of recalling in which all aspects of the verses (such as phonetics, waqf, and other details) must be remembered perfectly. Thus, the entire

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process of memorizing the verses and their components, from the initial stages to recalling them, must be precise. Mistakes in memorization will lead to errors in recalling or may even make it difficult to retrieve from memory [2].

In the book *Al-Ijma'*, Ibn Hazm [3] states that scholars unanimously agree that memorizing the Qur'an, even a small portion of it, is obligatory. They do not agree on which verses or how many verses should be memorized. In addition, they also agree that memorizing the entire Qur'an is a Sunnah. And its status is *wajib kifayah* (an obligation for the community as a whole) rather than *wajib 'ain* (an individual obligation). This means that the number of Qur'an memorizers must not be fewer than those in the *mutawatir* chain, ensuring that there is no possibility of alteration to the sanctity of the Qur'an. If this obligation is fulfilled by some, then the obligation is lifted from others. On the other hand, if this obligation is not fulfilled, then the entire Muslim community will bear the sin.

The word "metode" in Indonesian comes from the English word "method" and the Arabic word "*at-thariqah*," which means path or way. In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, the word "metode" means a systematic way used to carry out a task in order to achieve a desired result [4]. So, a method is a way used to achieve a specific goal.

Morocco is known as the land of Qur'an memorizers. UNESCO has recognized the Kingdom of Morocco as the world's leading country in terms of the number of Qur'an memorizers. In discussions among communities in the Middle East and North Africa, the term has become widely known: *Al-Qur'anul Karim nuzzila fil Hijaz wa thubi'a fil 'Iraq wa ruttila fil Misr wa hussina fil Maghrib*. Which means: "The Qur'an was revealed in the land of Hijaz, printed and reproduced in Iraq, recited in Egypt, and preserved and memorized in Morocco".

The Qur'an is studied and memorized in Morocco through an educational institution called *Kuttab*. Most mosques across Morocco either have or establish a *Kuttab* integrated within the mosque or housed in a separate building. *Kuttab* serves as the first educational institution attended by the majority of Moroccan children in their early education, focusing specifically on teaching the Qur'an and providing religious studies as supplementary material.

The Lauh Method is the approach used by this institution for teaching and memorizing the Qur'an, passed down through generations and still preserved to this day. The Moroccan community maintains this method because they consider it the most effective way to memorize the Qur'an. In addition, this method is a heritage passed down from their ancestors that they wish to preserve and maintain. And this method has proven successful from generation to generation up to the present in producing memorizers of the Qur'an. The purpose of this research is to understand and analyze how this method is applied in the *Kuttab* of Morocco in memorizing the Qur'an.

## Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive research method. Qualitative method is a social research approach aimed at obtaining descriptive data in the form of words and images. Lexy J. Moleong states that the data collected in qualitative research consists of words, images, and not numbers [5]. Qualitative research is an umbrella term used to refer to various theoretical perspective designs, such as narrative research, phenomenology, action research, case studies, ethnography, historical research, and content analysis.

Meanwhile, qualitative descriptive research falls under basic qualitative research, but this does not mean that this type of research is considered inferior. Descriptive research is a study aimed at discovering facts with accurate interpretation. Researchers can combine data from observations, interviews, and documentation to make an analysis [6].

Qualitative descriptive research is focused on answering research questions related to who, what, where, and how an event or experience occurred, and then analyzing it in depth to identify patterns that emerge from the event.

In brief, it can be explained that qualitative descriptive research is a research method that follows a simple qualitative approach with an inductive flow. The inductive flow here means that qualitative descriptive research begins with the explanation of a process or event, which ultimately leads to a generalization that forms a conclusion from that process or event.

The data collection techniques for this research are observation, interviews, and documentation study. Observation is the direct examination of the research subject, used to collect data about behaviors, interactions, or phenomena being observed. Observation is the act of focusing attention on an object, using all sensory faculties to examine it. According to Lexy J. Moleong [5], researchers are able to feel what the subjects feel, allowing for the formation of shared knowledge, both from the researcher and the subject's perspective. In this research, observation was conducted by the researcher at several *Kuttabs* in the cities of Rabat and Kenitra, Morocco, through direct fieldwork. The purpose of this observation is to gain a detailed understanding of the learning process in the *Kuttab* for memorizing the Qur'an using the Lauh method. The researcher conducted observations at the *Kuttab* of Al-Ijtihad Mosque in Rabat and the *Kuttab* of Ar-Rayyan Mosque in Kenitra.

According to Kartini Kartono in Nazir [6], an interview is a conversation directed toward a specific issue, which is a process of verbal questioning and answering, where two or more people face each other physically. The interview method involves direct interaction between the researcher and the respondents to obtain data in the form of their views, experiences, and perceptions. The purpose of conducting an interview is to construct an understanding about individuals, events, organizations, feelings, motivations, guidance, concerns, and so on. The interview was conducted by the

researcher with the imam and khatib of the mosque, who also serves as a shaykh at the *Kuttab* of Al-Ijtihad Mosque in Rabat, Shaykh Ahmad At-Thajji.

Documentation study is the process of searching for written data sources in the field that are related to the research problem. This method can be used to test, interpret, and even predict [5]. Several documents related to the Lauh method and *Kuttab*, whether found in books, scientific journals, or other reference materials, are collected by the researcher for analysis and then summarized to gain knowledge.

## Results and Discussion

Morocco has long been known as a country that produces memorizers of the Qur'an. Even in this modern era, often referred to as the age of disruption, marked by rapid technological advancements and the simultaneous erosion of spiritual values, young children in Morocco continue to diligently memorize the Qur'an and are able to memorize all 30 Juz with strength and commitment.

Allah SWT Himself has promised that when He revealed the Qur'an, He would protect it. The preservation of the Qur'an can be in the form of direct protection from Allah SWT Himself or through the preservation by the Ummah of the Prophet Muhammad, specifically by its memorizers who commit the Qur'an to memory.

This is conveyed by Allah SWT in His verse, QS. Al-Hijr, verse 9:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

It means: "Indeed, We have sent down the Qur'an, and indeed, We will be its guardian." (Al-Hijr 15:9)

This verse provides a guarantee of the purity and sanctity of the Qur'an for all time. Many efforts have been made by the enemies of Islam to alter the Qur'an. These efforts were even carried out by the Quraysh when the Qur'an was still being revealed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW. The efforts are still ongoing to this day, both by non-Muslims and Muslims themselves, either by removing verses they find undesirable or by interpreting the verses according to their own desires. However, with the Quran memorizers, any attempts to remove verses, add verses, or interpret them arbitrarily can be easily detected by Muslims. Thus, their efforts to alter the Quran have always failed.

Based on an interview conducted by the researcher with the mosque imam and *Kuttab* teacher at the Ijtihad Mosque in Rabat, Sheikh Ahmad explained that Moroccan children memorize the Quran in the *Kuttabs* located in their neighborhoods. These *Kuttabs* were established and developed with the support of the local community or the contributions of the benefactors (*muhsinin*). They donate their wealth or whatever they have; in fact, there is a woman who bakes bread and donates it daily for the students of the *Kuttab*. Thus, the *Kuttab* becomes a means of charitable deeds for the surrounding community.

### *Definition of the Lauh Method*

Lauh or lauhah in Arabic means a wooden board. This board is rectangular and flat, measuring approximately 50 cm, with two sides: a front side and a back side. Both sides can be written on. Generally, the lauh used by the Moroccan community for memorizing the Quran is made from olive trees. These trees are quite easy to find in every region of Morocco, as olives themselves are a staple food in their daily diet.

This method is called lauh because Quran memorizers, before memorizing new verses, write the verses they are going to memorize on the lauh first. The verses are read repeatedly until they are memorized according to the writing. Once memorized, the written verses on the lauh are erased to make room for the next set of verses to be written.

This lauh method has actually been used by several Islamic countries in Africa, especially in North African Arab countries such as Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania, and also Morocco. However, due to the changing times, this method has gradually been abandoned in favor of more modern methods. Nevertheless, Morocco remains one of the countries steadfast in preserving this method as an ancestral heritage that must be protected and maintained.

### *Kuttab Educational Institution*

In the history of Islamic education, the *Kuttab* is the first Islamic educational institution to exist. The name *Kuttab* as an educational institution was already known among the Arab people before Islam. As in the past, the *Kuttab* served the same function in Islam, namely as a basic educational institution [8].

The purpose of *Kuttab* education as a basic education is to provide equal teaching for Muslim children in reading, writing, and memorizing the Qur'an. The *Kuttab* continued to develop over time and produced many Muslim scholars and scientists.

The name *Kuttab* comes from the Arabic word *kataba*, which means "to write." While *Kuttab* or *katib* refers to a "writer." In modern Arabic usage, *Kuttab* is closely related to the word *maktab*, which means "office". Meanwhile, *maktabah* means a library or a place of learning. On the other hand, *Kuttab* is a plural word that means books. Initially, this institution was simply a place for teaching reading and writing to children. Over time, the name *Kuttab* came to be used to refer to a place for teaching the Qur'an to children.

Morocco is one of the countries that preserves and maintains the *Kuttab* education model. The educational institution for studying the Qur'an in Morocco is called *Kuttab*, which means "the writers," because in this institution, the students not only learn to read and memorize the Qur'an but also learn to write.

The *Kuttab* is the first school for children in Morocco to learn to read, write, and memorize the Qur'an. Almost every mosque in Morocco has a *Kuttab*. Meanwhile, the imam of the mosque typically becomes the teacher for memorizing the Qur'an.

The *Kuttab* in Morocco, in terms of function, is similar to a pesantren in Indonesia. In this educational institution, students are taught Islamic subjects, with a particular emphasis on the Qur'an as the primary source of Islam [9]. The *Kuttab* in Morocco, in its development, has several models: *Kuttabs* integrated with mosques, *Kuttabs* separate from mosques, and *Kuttabs* integrated with formal education.

Similar to pesantren in Indonesia, the *Kuttab* in Morocco equips its students with various Islamic sciences, such as tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis), hadith, *aqidah* (Islamic creed), *tsaqafah* (Islamic culture), and Arabic language. In some *Kuttabs*, Arabic is taught in depth, covering subjects such as nahwu (syntax), sorof (morphology), balaghah (rhetoric), and *qawafi* (rhyme and meter) [10]. One of the essential textbooks studied is *Al-Ajrumiyah*, a book on Arabic syntax written by Muhammad bin Dawud as-Shanhaji, one of the scholars from Morocco who was an expert in the field of Nahwu (Arabic grammar).

Indonesia, although not an Arab country, teaches Arabic extensively in every pesantren. Arabic is not only taught in classroom lessons but is also introduced outside the classroom through various extracurricular activities [11]. The *Kuttab* in Morocco also plays a significant role in preserving the existence of the Arabic language in the country. Although Arabic is the official language of the Kingdom, the influence of the French language is deeply rooted in the daily communication of the Moroccan people.

### *Steps to Memorize the Qur'an Using the Lauh Method*

Memorizing the Qur'an using the Lauh method is practiced by the Moroccan community with the following steps:

First, the student or memorizer prepares the *lauh*, ensuring it is clean, along with a pen. The pen used is usually made from bamboo or wood, sharpened at the tip like a regular pen, so it can be dipped into black ink.

Second, the student reads the page they will memorize by *bin nadzor* (reading while looking at the Mushaf) in front of the *faqih* (sheikh or Qur'an teacher) to have their recitation corrected before writing it on the *lauh*.

Third, the *faqih* recites several verses of the Qur'an, and then the student repeats the recitation, which is listened to by the *faqih* for correction and guidance. The verses that are read and will be memorized by the student are at least *tsumun* (one-eighth) of a *hizb* or *rubu'* (one-quarter) of a *hizb*, or according to the *faqih's* recommendation, adjusted to the student's ability. One *hizb* is equivalent to half a *juz*.

Fourth, the student writes the verses on the *lauh*, continuing to recite the verses as they write. The writing must follow the *Utsmani* script in the *Al-Maghribi* calligraphic style, which is the official script of the Kingdom of Morocco's Mushaf.

Fifth, the student checks the writing they have just completed on the *lauh*, then presents it to the *faqih*. The *faqih* corrects any mistakes, if present, and also indicates the *waqaf* (stopping points) where the recitation should pause.

Sixth, the student reads the corrected writing aloud in front of or beside the *faqih* until the accuracy of both the recitation and the writing is verified.

Seventh, the student begins to memorize the verses of the Qur'an written on the *lauh*, repeating them continuously until they are fully memorized. The verses written on the *lauh* should not be erased until the student has memorized them correctly, without any mistakes.

Eighth, the student recites their new memorization at a designated time, which is after the Dhuhr prayer, where the student has written and memorized the verses in the morning.

Ninth, the student performs *murojaah* (revision of the memorized verses) at designated times, specifically in the evening.

Tenth, the following morning, the student recites their previous day's memorization again. Once the *faqih* confirms that the memorization is correct, the student is allowed to erase the writing from the *lauh*.

The cleaning of the *lauh* is done by washing it with water, then scrubbing it with *shinshol* (a type of white stone), and drying it under the sun or heating it beside a lit stove. Once dry, the *lauh* can be written on again. The water used to erase the Qur'anic verses on the *lauh* should not be discarded carelessly. Typically, the water is collected and used to water the plants around the *Kuttab* premises.

There is a unique habit commonly practiced by the Moroccan community: the routine of *murojaah* (reviewing memorized verses), reciting one *hizb* after the Maghrib prayer and another *hizb* after the Fajr prayer. This *murojaah* is conducted in nearly all mosques in Morocco, done collectively and led by the mosque imam, who is usually a Qur'an *hafiz*. This *murojaah* habit is also practiced in all *Kuttab*s, ensuring that the students' memorization remains well-maintained and becomes stronger.

### *Advantages of the Lauh Method in Memorizing the Qur'an*

#### 1. Enhanced Focus and Concentration.

Students can concentrate solely on the board in front of them, as there are no other sheets or writings to distract them. This singular focus helps minimize distractions and improves memorization efficiency. This is different when using a Mushaf, where there is a significant possibility that the student might flip through other pages not being memorized, which can disrupt their concentration.

#### 2. Strong Memorization.

This method strengthens memorization by engaging four senses simultaneously: sight (writing and reading), hearing (listening to recitation), speech (repeating verses), and touch (writing on the *lauh*). This is achieved because the verses are first written by hand, the eyes see the verses on the board, the ears hear the verses from the *faqih's* recitation,

the mouth repeats or mimics the verses heard, and the brain processes and memorizes them.

### 3. Trains Precision and Attention to Detail.

By writing the verses before memorizing them, students become more meticulous in identifying each letter of the verses. This attention to detail allows them to easily spot any errors in the text.

### 4. Cultivates Patience in Learning and Memorization.

Students are required to write each letter and verse meticulously before memorizing, even though they could technically start memorizing directly from the *Mushaf*. This process instills patience and discipline in their learning journey. Memorization that is done gradually and deeply tends to be stronger and more enduring compared to memorizing large amounts in a short period.

### 5. Acquiring Multiple Skills in One Learning Process.

This method helps students develop various skills simultaneously: listening, reading, memorizing, pronunciation, and writing. In contrast, with other methods, students may be able to memorize verses but cannot write them, or read correctly but struggle with writing.

## *Weaknesses of the Lauh Method in Memorizing the Qur'an*

### 1. The Time Required for Memorization Is Longer.

This is because there are many activities that the student must complete before memorizing. In contrast, a student who memorizes directly from the *Mushaf* generally requires a relatively shorter time.

### 2. The Learning Tools Used Are Less Effective and Efficient.

Students need to exert more effort in using and maintaining the learning tools. For example, the board to be used must first be washed with water, then scrubbed with a white stone, and dried in the sun before it can be written on again. Meanwhile, modern learning tools are very practical, efficient, and easy to use, such as projectors, LCD (liquid crystal display) screens, or application-based tools.

## Conclusion

Morocco is known worldwide as the land of Qur'an memorizers. The people of Morocco memorize the Qur'an using the lauh method. This method has been passed down through generations and has become a heritage method from their ancestors. It is called lauh because the Qur'an memorizers, before memorizing new ayat, first write it on the lauh. Then, they repeatedly read it until they have completely memorized it. Once memorized, the written verses on the lauh are erased to make room for writing the next verses.

There are 10 steps in memorizing the Qur'an using the Lauh method: First, the student prepares a clean lauh and a pen. Second, the student reads the page to be memorized *bin nadzor* (with reference) in front of the faqih. Third, the faqih recites several verses of the Qur'an, and the student repeats the recitation, which is then listened to by the faqih. Fourth, the student writes the selected verses on the lauh. Fifth, the student checks the writing they have just made on the lauh, and then presents it to the faqih for review. Sixth, the student reads their corrected writing in front of the faqih. Seventh, the student begins memorizing the Qur'anic verses written on the lauh. Eighth, the student recites their new memorization at the designated time. Ninth, the student performs *murojaah* (review). Tenth, the following morning, the student recites their previous memorization, and then erases the writing on the lauh to write new verses.

Every method has its strengths and weaknesses, including the Lauh method. The advantage of the Lauh method lies in the memorization process, which involves multiple steps, resulting in a strong (*mutqin*) memorization. However, as a traditional method, it is considered less effective and efficient when compared to modern methods.

This lauh method has clearly and evidently proven effective in producing strong memorizers of the Qur'an in most regions of Morocco. However, *Kuttab* educational institutions that uphold the lauh method have struggled to gain prominence in major cities such as Casablanca and Rabat. Therefore, the researcher suggests that the relevant ministry, in this case, the Ministry of Awqaf of the Kingdom of Morocco, provide material support or policy backing for the *Kuttabs* in these major cities, so that they can compete with and stand on par with modern educational institutions that are a continuation of the French system.

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