

The Development of Waqf Properties in Thailand Context: Challenges and Opportunities

Received: March 10, 2023 ■ Revised: May 31, 2023 ■ Accepted: June 11, 2023

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Abstract

Objective The research objective is to investigate challenges of waqf management among Islamic committees of mosques in Thailand. Hence, this study focuses on waqf properties management in the Thai Muslim context about perceptions and obstacles that occurred in administrating waqf properties.

Methodology This study is used a qualitative method. A purposive sampling is used with the specific characteristics comprises 8 Waqf officers in this case the researcher wants to know their perspective and obstacle on waqf management. The data were gathered through in-depth interviews. Information derives from the data collection is proceed to the analysis in qualitative content in order to represent the finding in a descriptive pattern.

Research Finding The results showed that the key challenges of Waqf management in Thailand are the limitation of Thai laws, the traditional methods of Waqf investment and the lack of understanding of Waqf properties investment.

Application The results of this study contribute to Waqf manager perceptions and the Islamic authorities especially in terms of the development of Waqf properties in Muslim minority countries. Furthermore, this study provides information in terms of the significance of Waqf institution towards the socioeconomic development of the Muslim societies.

Keywords: Waqf properties, Thai Muslim, Waqf challenges, Islamic Economics

Introduction

Waqf property is one of the important instruments of economic development in Muslim societies. The study of the Islamic civilization paid attention to the role of Islamic waqf properties in contributing towards the evolution of the nation, and the history of waqf that covers various aspects of life, including Islamic academic institutions, and hospitals.

In Muslim countries, many public institutions projects present are operated through the waqf principle such as accommodations for the poor people, springs development for providing water for public consumption, supporting the handicapped and the needy, financing orphanages and accommodation for the elderly, and financing the marriage of young people in need (Dafterdar, 2011). History of waqf properties is prosperous with distinctive achievements in enhancing welfare in general and serving the poor in particular (Khan, 2015).

Kuran (2001) states that the principle of waqf delivered public benefits in a decentralized manner in Muslim economies for a long time. Even in contemporary periods, waqf properties could affect the rights of people by supporting educational institutions and health care services for the poor. Therefore, the principle of waqf could support in capacity building and wealth distribution through building human, physical, and financial capital. In Islamic history, waqf properties played an important role in fostering the Islamic nation's socio-economic welfare (Umar & Haron, 2021).

Obaidullah (2016) opines that the preservation of benefits for the intended beneficiaries requires careful management of the properties and efficiency in their development and investment. Sulaiman and Zakari (2013) reveal that the significance of the difference in revenue sources for waqf institutions. In making waqf properties investments, it is prefer to engage quality investment and management experts to protect and achieve growth in the pooled funds over time.

With the presence of 3,943 mosques in Thailand, a large amount of waqf properties is utilized in mosque facilities, Islamic schools, and others (Department of administrative affairs, 2018). There are some crucial challenges in waqf management in the Thailand context, the proficiency of waqf managers i.e., Islamic committees of mosques in terms of managing waqf properties so as to gain reasonable returns. The inefficient management of waqf is the reason for the lower profits of waqf management in Thailand.

Thai laws related to waqf management, The Administrative of Islamic Organization 1977, which is a non-comprehensive law and needs to be revised. The traditional methods of waqf management in Thailand have to improve into precise practical forms taking into consideration various aspects. Therefore, this study focuses on the challenges of waqf properties, i.e., linking waqf properties with the management, the perception of waqf managers, the traditional investment, and Thai laws related to waqf properties.

Literature Review

Waqf in Brief

The word waqf in the Arabic language means to preserve a thing or limitation (Ismail, 1997). The word waqf in the Islamic context: definite property possession and preserving it for the confined profit of definite benevolence and prohibition of any utilization or management outside that particular purpose (Ghoneima, 2002). For example, the building is reserved for the mosque, which connotes that the profit of the rental of the building is preserved for the mosque (Mastura, 2001). (Allah) says “by no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give freely of that which ye love; and whatever ye give, of a truth Allah knows it well” (Al-i-Imran, 92). This means Islamic waqf is preserving one's assets or properties, either in the shape of a building for trade or any other shape to help whoever requires assistance like orphans and students.

The select definition of waqf is the financial supportive establishment that is created by preserving one's assets to durably utilize its profit on achieving definite goal, depending on the option and stipulations founded by Islamic waqf donors or the person who possesses the property" (Ghoneima, 2002). Even though waqf was not recognized before Islam, after its appearance, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) professed it as a type of continuous donation that benefits the poor people and the needy in a continuous mode (Sabeq, 1999). Therefore, the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) denotations that promote

waqf is "If the offspring of Adam perishes, all his deeds are closed except for three works; continuous donation, helpful knowledge, and a good descendant who prays for him" (El Daly, 2001).

Waqf Management

This study focuses on the development of waqf properties in Thailand context: Challenges and Opportunities. Mohsin (2013) notes that waqf is one of the Islamic philanthropy instruments that could be utilized as a source of Islamic public financial funds. The role of waqf propertied from the beginning of the history of the development of Islam to present has a significant function in improving the welfare of society. Muslim societies try to improve waqf properties in financing various aspects such as education, health, economic and business activities by utilizing waqf financing (Kahf, 1998). Waqf management problems encounter by most waqf organizations in the Muslim countries around the world. In practical form, the management of waqf is not an easy responsibility to carry out. Its management subject to embezzlement by whoever entrusted to manage them (Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2020).

Rozalinda (2015) states that the management of waqf properties can be categorized into three types, namely: Traditional waqf management is characterized by the placement of waqf as ritual worship. Therefore, the main of the waqf properties is in the form of physical development, such as masjid, Islamic school, and graveyards. Semi-professional waqf management is characterized by the development of waqf properties. Professional waqf management is characterized by

productive improvement of waqf and professionalism in management which comprises management views, waqf manager human resources, business partnership patterns, and forms of movable waqf. Most Muslim countries encounter mismanagement of the waqf properties.

The efficiency in waqf management depends on the level of understanding of waqf managers. Sujono et al. (2022) suggested that waqf manager is one of the important factors in the success of waqf management institutions. Therefore, it is necessary for waqf managers to understand the effectiveness and efficiency of the modern waqf management.

Therefore, there is limited literature, especially on waqf management in Muslim minority countries in the specific context, although there is a significant number of literatures on waqf properties management. This article aims to examine the development of waqf properties in Thailand context in terms of challenges and opportunities.

Research Objectives

The research objective is to investigate challenges of waqf management among Islamic committees of mosques in Thailand. Hence, this study focuses on the situations of waqf properties management in Thai Muslim context about perceptions and obstacles that occurred in administrating waqf properties. Waqf properties have a major impact on public and private utilities, for instance, mosques and Islamic schools. It has an impact on facilitating the conditions of poor people.

Methodology

This study is used a qualitative method by verifying, and studying the information from documents relating about Islamic rulings on waqf, Thai law and waqf management method, and related studies. It reviews literature and provides descriptive data to present its main idea.

Informants

Sampling is the process of choosing the units of the target population which are to be included in the study (Sarantakos, 1998). Furthermore, qualitative research has a strong relation to contextual factors. Thus, the purpose of the sampling in this study is to collect the information as much as possible from any source and construction. The purpose of sampling is to obtain information that determines the basic planning and theory.

The purpose is to provide details to the specialization of the unique ingredient context. Therefore, this study uses a purposive sampling with the following characteristics: in this case, the researcher wants to know their perspective and obstacle on waqf management.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

| Islamic Committees of mosques (Codes) | Years of experience in waqf management | Graduation Background | Residential Area |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------|
| ICM-01 | 25 | Bachelor Degree | Pattani Province |

| | | | |
|--------|----|-----------------|------------------|
| ICM-02 | 12 | Bachelor Degree | Pattani Province |
| ICM-03 | 23 | Bachelor Degree | Pattani Province |
| ICM-04 | 18 | Bachelor Degree | Pattani Province |
| ICM-05 | 13 | Bachelor Degree | Bangkok |
| ICM-06 | 8 | Bachelor Degree | Bangkok |
| ICM-07 | 19 | Bachelor Degree | Bangkok |
| ICM-08 | 15 | Bachelor Degree | Bangkok |

Instrument and Data collection

The data were gathered through in-depth interviews. The interview was designed and developed by the researcher himself.

a. In-depth interview

An in-depth interview is one of the main methods of data collection used in qualitative research. According to Mertens (1998), an in-depth interview is one technique of data collecting that is mostly used in qualitative research, whereby the data are not changed numerically or quantitatively. The key features of in-depth interview are to combine the structures with flexibility. The interview is interactive in nature and the researcher used a range of probes and other techniques to achieve depth in terms of penetration, exploration and explanation. The interview is generative, in the sense that new knowledge or thoughts are likely, at some stage, to be created (Sarantakos, 1998).

The structured in-depth interview was designed and developed by the researcher himself for the interview to question the respondents regarding their vision and roles in all aspects of waqf management, such as their perception, and knowledge on waqf investment.

The interviews were prepared by using guided interview questions covering the objectives of this research. The guided interview comprises three sections:

1. **Section A:** Questions regarding the perceptions of waqf management in Thailand.
2. **Section B:** Questions regarding the situation of waqf management in Thailand.
3. **Section C:** Questions regarding the opinions and suggestions about waqf management in Thailand

Data analysis and Validation

Information derived from the data collection is proceed to the analyzing in qualitative content in order to represent the finding in a descriptive pattern. Since this study uses open-ended interviews as one of the data collection methods as the strategy, the literature on research methodology for the two areas are used in this section. There would be some overlap between qualitative interviews and case studies since they are closely related.

Denscombe (1998) suggested similar steps for the analysis of qualitative data. Step 1 is coding and categorizing the data. Step 2 is reflections on the early coding and categories. Step 3 is identification of themes and relationships. Step 4 is to return to the field to check out

emerging explanations. Step 5 is to develop a set of generalizations. Step 6 is to use the new generalizations to improve any relevant existing theories. Coding means the separation of the data into units for analysis and the categorization of units. This process is guided by things like existing theories and intuition.

Research Findings

The analysis and findings section presents the results of the data collected during the research study. In this section, we provide a detailed examination and interpretation of the data, aiming to answer the research questions and objectives.

First Challenge and Opportunity: Waqf Management in Thailand

The results of this study provided that in the Thai Muslim context, educational form, rental form and public benefits form were the forms of waqf management in Thailand. The mosques utilize these forms to earn more income and spend it for expenses of mosques. In light of the waqf, in reality investment, as the owner wants to endow in the way that reaps his production on the Day of Resurrection, there is no doubt that the waqf would be invested to preserve them and contribute to achieving the objectives of the waqf social, economic and educational development. Waqf is the same as investment; because the investment is intended to add profits to capital, leaving the capital intact, plus a profit and leads to the adequacy and wealth of humanity (Khan & Mirakhor, 2013). Besides Islamic waqf properties, there are special funds that can be utilized with the existence of capital as defined by ICM-01 (Committees of Mosque) that:

“Commonly, the mosques use the rental form of waqf management for earning the incomes. This is the only way of profitability of waqf management, for example, the rental lands for accommodation, and its incomes utilised for the maintenance of mosques and in this situation, sometimes the mosques unable to gain reasonable profits to maintain and spend theses waqf properties and mosque expenses.”

The aspect of waqf properties management in Thailand, it is needed to improve the method to bring waqf properties to be invested in Thailand as defined by ICM-02 (Committees of Mosque) that:

“In management aspect, I know well about waqf regulations. According to our mazhab Shafiee, there is limitation to apply the other methods of management. In my opinion waqf manager should improve their knowledge in term of management and land development such as the advancement of waqf management in Indonesia and Malaysia”

The modern waqf management should be introduced to central of Islamic committees council of Thailand. It also is a need to appoint a manager of the waqf properties who is able to manage and overseeing the utilization of the income from waqf properties according to the will of the waqf donors. Persons entitled to manage waqf assets are persons

appointed or assigned by the waqf donors. There may be one or more people to fulfill the conditions of waqf donors, and the appointed person can be appointed the others to take over this duty if he or she dies or is unable to continue administration.

According to the verse of Al Quran related to charity in Islam, Allah says “by no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give freely of that which ye love; and whatever ye give, of a truth Allah knows it well” (Al-i-Imran, 92). Islam encourages Muslims to provide of that which you love the most in this worldly life and the donors hopefully for its reward and compensation from Allah. In waqf management aspect, waqf managers were considered the group who plays the important role in waqf management. They have preserve and mange waqf properties in best manner.

Some conditions of waqf properties managers, integrity person adhere to Islamic principles and knowledgeable and able to manage waqf properties according to waqf's intention. If the waqf property manager manages do not meet the conditions, let the central of Islamic organization of Thailand in charge of the duties of waqf management and manage or appoint appropriate persons to be waqf manager until the previously appointed person returns to meet the conditions again.

The findings indicated that most of waqf lands in Thailand are not fully utilized. Many mosque committee members do not know what to do with waqf properties that were given for some specific purposes which could not be realized, waqf properties cannot be put to alternative uses without clear sanctions from the donors. The lack of competent

personnel and administrative facility of waqf managers are also the crucial problem of waqf management.

The traditional method of waqf investment cannot achieve the reasonable profit of waqf properties. The rental from of waqf management is mostly used in Thailand. There is a need to improve the use of the form of waqf management by enhancing the waqf understanding of mosque committee members in terms of how to get reasonable profits and avoid losses by initiating the modern method of waqf management to waqf managers in Thailand from many Muslim countries. The limitation of waqf investment method because Muslim in Thailand most of them are restricted to Shafiee school of thought that prohibited the other types of waqf properties investment. The waqf investment methods could be adopted conformity with Islamic law. At the same time waqf managers must have an open mind, not just restricting themselves to one specific Islamic school of thought.

Second Challenge and Opportunity: Perceptions of Waqf managers

The results of this study provided the understanding of waqf managers is very important for efficiently managing the waqf properties in productive way. In addition, the waqf is intended to be continuous, and its purpose cannot be achieved only through successful investments, therefore it should become the concern of the department of Islamic waqf properties manager as defined by ICM-03 that,

“Waqf properties should be the economic instrument in any Muslim societies. Some Muslim nowadays did not know what waqf is. I really feel

sorry for this situation, including my village. The lack of publicity in waqf knowledge is one of the problems. Therefore, we should promote the benefits of waqf to our brothers in Islam for their cooperation. Waqf institution could strengthen Muslim societies.”

Obligations of waqf managers, their management must carry out all activities related to waqf properties, including maintenance and distribution of income to waqf recipients. Careful management of costs and benefits, the waqf manager cannot proceed in the subject that was not assigned. If two or more persons are appointed to manage the waqf properties, any transaction in connection with the waqf properties cannot be carried out alone.

Waqf property manager's compensation, as specified by the waqf donors. In the case of unspecified compensation for waqf managers, if compensation is required, submit a request to the central of Islamic organization of Thailand to set compensation to waqf managers.

From the study of Islamic concepts and provisions about waqf, it was found that the purpose of the waqf is that the waqf donor hope for the merit that will be continued as long as the waqf properties are used even after the donor is deceased. The results revealed that the lack of understanding of waqf management resulted in loose practices in term of reasonable profits of waqf properties and also the lack of knowledge connection in order to find a balance linkage between Islamic regulations and feasibility study concerning real estate developing. Almost none of

waqf managers managing the waqf properties have any training or competency in investment analysis, project management, property evaluation, or any such experience relevant for the job as defined by ICM-04 that,

“The lack of understanding in waqf management is the main problem of mosque committee members. From my point of view, Mosque committees mainly graduated from Islamic studies field and these committees do not know the way to bring these waqf properties to be invested and gain reasonable profit. If there is related organizations come to help these waqf managers, it should be a solution for this problem.”

Therefore, it is very necessary to manage and develop waqf properties to maintain usable condition and must operate within the scope of the Islamic law, which satisfying the intentions of the waqf donors and make a contribution to the society as well.

Third Challenge and Opportunity: The Legal Framework of Waqf properties

The Administration of Islamic Organizations Act, B.E. 2540 (1997), did not mention about the instruction and methods to bring Islamic waqf properties to be invested, except the duties of Islamic committees of mosques. The decision making in the management of waqf properties depends on Islamic committees of mosques alone. Practical form of

waqf management in Thailand is needed to be revised. The rental method of waqf properties is the only productive waqf form in Thailand as defined by ICM-07 that,

“According to the Administration of Islamic Organizations act, there is nothing relate to the practical form of waqf management except the responsibilities of Islamic committees of mosques. In my opinion, this is the important problem. Central Islamic Committees and the Thai government have to be concerned with waqf management, especially waqf administrative law. Mosque committee members of each mosque have to participate in the improvement of waqf administrative law and to express their creative ideas.”

According to Act Promulgating The Land Code, B.E. 2497 (1954), stipulated about taxation in case of transferring the ownership of the lands, the condition of registration fees (Rate 0.01%) payment is for Religious place location which calculate from the appraisal price, if it not exceed from 50 Rai (1 Rai equal to 1,600 square meters). These waqf lands must be located in same location with Masjid or located in another places are allowed. Religious places of Islam in Thailand which stipulated in this act comprises of Masjid building, a Religious school, Islamic Ethics Center of Masjid, Balai (Space outside building) and Graveyard (Kubur).

Therefore, the transfer of ownership of lands fees will raises up to 2%, if the waqf lands are used exceptional from these 5 purposes

mentioned above. Some Masjid cannot bear the burden of this taxation fees. It results to lose of many waqf lands throughout Thailand. In some case, the waqf donors have to pay an equivalent of 2% of the value of the properties as defined by ICM-08 that,

“Actually, the mosque could not bear the burden of taxation 2 % for transferring the ownership of waqf lands exceptional from the five purposes which stipulated in the land code act. The waqf donors should be done the whole process of waqf documentation. It is also the protection of the problem in losing waqf lands in the future.”

Frequently these fees are paid by the waqf beneficiaries and the community on behalf of the waqf donor. Another result revealed that the lack of documentation of waqf record in the past is the important problem in losing the waqf lands. In this case, the relatives of waqf donors want to take the right of waqf land back to them. The related authorities must provide the solution for this waqf documentation.

Discussion

This section discusses the challenges of waqf management in Thailand and how Islamic rulings explain the regulation to managing waqf properties and the modern method of waqf management. The study found that the first challenge of waqf management provided that Thai Muslims utilize the traditional waqf management for profitability for waqf

properties. Educational form, rental form and public benefits form were the forms of waqf management in Thailand.

From the study of the modern methods of waqf management, Mohsin (2013) contends that waqf is one of the Islamic philanthropy instruments that could be utilized as a source of Islamic public financial funds. There are many suggestions from waqf practitioners and academics in Muslim countries to increase the utilities of waqf into financing activities. The modern waqf management should be introduced to Muslims in Thailand especially Thai Muslims authorities for establishing of sustainable waqf profitability. A practical form of sustainable waqf management is able to ensure that the charitable activities could produce revenues consistently.

Second challenge of waqf management in Thai Muslims context is the lack of understanding of waqf management. This result is consistent with Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2020 who agreed that the enormous amount of the waqf properties does not assist in generating income for these institutions because most of the waqf lands were not fully managed and developed. The methods to bring waqf properties to be invested in the view of Islamic committees of mosques should be improved. From the study of waqf knowledge management, Sulaiman & Zakari, (2013) observe that in the Muslim countries, most waqf management occur many problems that limit their success and prevent them from fulfilling their intended objectives, management, and liquidity are among the crucial concerns faced by waqf managers. Improvement of waqf manager skills is needed to be able to develop their potential and competence in the management of waqf properties from traditional methods to be

based on modern methods applications. Development of waqf manager skills can be done through related seminars and training programs. (Nurul et al, 2020).

Therefore, in Thailand a Muslim minority country, Islamic committees of mosques play important roles in waqf management. Waqf knowledge and land development issues as well are therefore very significant for waqf managers to efficiently and systematically manage waqf properties. There are many waqf properties are undeveloped and left idle because some mosques have a scarce resource that limit the improvement of waqf properties in Thailand.

The legal framework of waqf properties is the last challenge of waqf management in Thailand. The limitation of related Thai laws, waqf administrative law in Thailand is not a comprehensive law. The law restrictedly provides the form of waqf management in Thailand. The revision of waqf administrative law in terms of the profitability of waqf management should be established. Muslim authorities in Thailand must participate in this improvement.

From the studies of factors affecting the development of waqf properties, Abdul Majid & Said (2014) found that a bunch of underperformance factors such as the financial issue, management and administration, unqualified staffs, procedure, law, bureaucracy, procrastination and delay are also identified as significant impediments to the development. Nurul et al. (2020) suggest that from a management system perspective, there are those who have carried out management data collection using a computerized system but those who still use

manual systems by relying on recording in a notebook, which is very risky if damage is experience as this can cause the data to be lost.

Obviously, it is interesting to note that the enactment of laws in respective countries could be the important factor in managing waqf management. As for Thailand, The Administration of Islamic Organizations Act, B.E. 2540 (1997) and Act Promulgating the Land Code, B.E. 2497 (1954), these related Thai laws play crucial role among waqf managers perception and another factor affecting the development of waqf management in religious point of view is the restriction to the school of thought (mazhab), the religious regulations could prohibited the waqf managers from the new idea of management or the proper modern method of waqf management.

Recommendations

The findings of this study have made the researcher realize about the possibility of conducting more research in the future. It is advised that an in-depth study be conducted in other Muslim minority countries. Waqf principle could be a significant instrument in the socioeconomic development of the Muslim communities and societies if it is appropriate mobilized and managed. Among the crucial success factors for improving into practical form of waqf management are the continuation of a stable legal structure, good governance and management and an important increase in the awareness and cooperation from Muslim societies.

There is a necessity to revise the related Thai laws to waqf management by establishing central Islamic law committees for

enhancing waqf properties management. The Islamic Affairs Department must participate in Thai law enactment and provide more efficient waqf administrative law.

There is a need to improve the utilization of the form of waqf management by enhancing the waqf understanding of waqf managers in terms of how to get reasonable profits from waqf properties. There is room to initiate the development of modern waqf management. However, the Islamic scholars have allowed other forms of waqf management such as cash waqf, shares and corporate waqf. The Maqasid Sharia could be applied to avoid abandoned and unusable waqf properties and there is a necessity to establish the waqf management institution and waqf management specialists via cooperation between the government and central Islamic committees of Thailand.

The findings of this study are based entirely upon the study being conducted in the Thailand context and may not be applicable to other areas on account of contextual problems. This survey should be carried out nationwide so as to include the entire sample from other areas. In future works, the researcher encourages the replication of this study in other regional areas in which cross-regional similarities and differences could be studied.

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