

Cultural Integration in Tafsir al-Iklil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil by Misbah Mustafa within the Context of Javanese Islam

Integrasi Budaya dalam Tafsir al-Iklil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil karya Misbah Mustafa dalam Konteks Islam Jawa

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Abstract

This study examines *Tafsir al-Iklil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil* by Misbah Mustafa in the context of shaping Javanese Islamic identity. Previous research has often overlooked the specific relationship between Qur'anic interpretation and the local socio-cultural dynamics of Javanese society. To address this gap, this study analyzes how *Tafsir al-Iklil* serves as a bridge, integrating Islamic teachings with Javanese cultural traditions. Using a qualitative approach through literature review, the primary data is sourced from *Tafsir al-Iklil*, supported by secondary literature. The analysis involves data selection, reduction, and interpretation, employing historical and hermeneutical approaches. The findings reveal that Misbah Mustafa's exegesis provides a unique perspective on the development of Javanese Islam, emphasizing its integrative nature, where religious teachings harmonize with Javanese cultural practices. Misbah highlights responsive spiritual leadership and social responsibility in religious rituals, suggesting that Javanese traditions hold spiritual values that align with Islamic teachings. This study contributes to the academic discourse by demonstrating how Qur'anic exegesis plays a pivotal role in merging religious doctrines with cultural traditions, broadening the understanding of Javanese Islamic identity through a textual lens. The integrative typology that emerges from this exegesis portrays Islam in Java as more than a formal religion—it is a comprehensive way of life, encompassing social, economic, and cultural dimensions.

Keywords: *Qur'anic Exegesis, Misbah Mustafa, Tafsir Al-Iklil, Javanese Islam, Cultural Integration.*

Abstrak

Studi ini meneliti *Tafsir al-Iklil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil* karya Misbah Mustafa dalam konteks pembentukan identitas Islam Jawa. Penelitian sebelumnya sering kali mengabaikan hubungan spesifik antara interpretasi Al-Qur'an dan dinamika sosial-budaya lokal masyarakat Jawa. Untuk mengisi kesenjangan tersebut, penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana *Tafsir al-Iklil* berfungsi sebagai jembatan yang mengintegrasikan ajaran Islam dengan tradisi budaya Jawa. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui tinjauan pustaka, data utama diambil dari *Tafsir al-Iklil*, didukung oleh literatur sekunder. Proses analisis melibatkan seleksi data, reduksi, dan interpretasi, dengan pendekatan historis dan hermeneutik. Temuan menunjukkan



bahwa tafsir Misbah Mustafa menawarkan perspektif unik tentang perkembangan Islam di Jawa, yang menekankan sifat integratifnya, di mana ajaran agama selaras dengan praktik budaya Jawa. Misbah menyoroti kepemimpinan spiritual yang responsif dan tanggung jawab sosial dalam ritual keagamaan, serta menyatakan bahwa tradisi Jawa memiliki nilai spiritual yang dapat diselaraskan dengan ajaran Islam. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi pada wacana akademis dengan menunjukkan bagaimana tafsir Al-Qur'an memainkan peran penting dalam menggabungkan doktrin agama dengan tradisi budaya, sehingga memperluas pemahaman tentang identitas Islam Jawa melalui pendekatan tekstual. Tipe integratif yang muncul dari tafsir ini menggambarkan Islam di Jawa bukan hanya sebagai agama formal, tetapi juga sebagai cara hidup yang mencakup aspek sosial, ekonomi, dan budaya

Kata Kunci: *Tafsir al-Qur'an, Misbah Mustafa, Tafsir Al-Iklil, Islam Jawa, Integrasi Budaya.*

Introduction

A study of Islam in Java involves a deep understanding of the nature of religious spirituality and how the Javanese people interpret it.¹ Therefore, to comprehend it, one must consider the interpretation of religious experiences by those who practice the religion. One of the main challenges in studying Javanese Islam is the differing approaches used by scholars to examine this religious phenomenon. Various scholars may employ different methods, such as ethnographic, anthropological, or sociological approaches, to understand and explain how Islam is practiced and experienced in Java. This diversity of approaches enriches the perspectives in this study but can also lead to differing interpretations and understandings.

Clifford Geertz,² for example, described Islam in Java as “syncretic,”³ having merged with the local Javanese culture. Robert Hefner also noted that in the Hindu tradition of Tengger, elements of Islam are present.⁴ Meanwhile, Andrew Beatty reinforced this argument through his research on the tradition of *slametan*, a Javanese

1 Muhammad Basri, Eka Riski Pitriana, and Yuli Anisah Hasibuan. “Growth and Development of Islamic Kingdoms in Java.” *EDUCTUM: Journal Research* 3, no. 1 (2024): 18-20; Nazurah, Adlyn, Aulia Maharani Sulaiman, Bebi Annisa M. Siregar, Dina Rahmita, and Muhammad Naufal Rahadi. “Perkembangan Peradaban Islam Pada Masa Kerajaan Islam di Indonesia: Kerajaan Mataram Islam dan Samudra Pasai.” *Tabayyun: Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 02 (2023).

2 According to Geertz, in line with the characteristics of Javanese society, which is structured with nobility and priyayi (nobles), Islam in Java is also influenced by this reality. Thus, Islam in Java, according to him, manifests in a multi-voiced form. Within this framework, Geertz's view of Santri, Abangan, and Priyayi represents the “colorful” nature of Islam in Java. *The Religion of Java*, University of Chicago Press, 1976.

3 This syncretism is a blend of two or more cultures, such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Animism, which then forms Javanese religion.

4 Hefner, Robert W. *Hindu Javanese: tengger tradition and Islam*. Princeton University Press, 2021; Smith-Hefner, Nancy J. “The Litany of “The World's Beginning”: A Hindu-Javanese Purification Text.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 21, no. 2 (1990): 287-328.

religious ritual that shows a blend of Islamic and local elements.⁵ However, this concept of syncretism has also been criticized for its ambiguity in determining which element, Islamic or local, is more dominant. Therefore, Niels Mulder chose to use the term “locality” to indicate the dominance of Javanese mysticism that influences the form of Islam in the region.⁶ According to Mulder, Islam in Java is merely an outer layer of the Javanese soul, which remains strong with mystical values.

Conversely, Mark Woodward rejects the view of syncretism and introduces a new term, “acculturative.”⁷ Woodward’s opinion is also supported by several other scholars, including Masdar Hilmy,⁸ Stephen Headly,⁹ Hendro Prasetyo,¹⁰ and Taufik Abdullah.¹¹ From this perspective, Islam and local culture influence each other and adapt according to their respective developmental processes. The acculturation view emphasizes that these two elements can coexist without losing their individual identities.

Although these two typologies are often referenced in the study of Javanese Islam, there is still room for enhancement. The syncretism typology, for instance, is considered by some scholars to overlook the dialogue between Islam and local culture.¹² Meanwhile, Woodward’s acculturative perspective still leaves questions about how Islam can be understood and constructed within the process of mutual acceptance with local culture, and how Islam contributes to local ritual practices. To address these shortcomings, Nur Syam, by researching coastal Islam, proposes a third typology, namely “collaborative” Islam.¹³ This typology describes the relationship between Islam and local culture as acculturative-syncretic. Syam emphasizes that this relationship is a joint construction between local elites and society in forming a continuously evolving

5 Beatty, Andrew. “Adam and Eve and Vishnu: Syncretism in the Javanese slametan.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (1996): 271-288.

6 Mulder, Niels. “Abangan Javanese religious thought and practice.” *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-en volkenkunde* 2/3de Afl (1983): 260-267.

7 Woodward argues that Islam and local culture are not two opposing entities; rather, they are compatible and mutually continuous. Mark Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam*. Vol. 3. Springer Science & Business Media, 2010.

8 Hilmy, Masdar. “Akulturasi Islam ke dalam budaya Jawa: Analisis tekstual-kontekstual ritual slametan.” *Jurnal Paramedia* 3, no. 1 (2001): 34-83.

9 Headly, Stephen. “The Islamization of Central Java: the Role of Muslim Lineages in Kalioso.” *Studia Islamika* 4, no. 2 (1997).

10 Prasetyo, Hendro. “Mengislamkan Orang Jawa: Antropologi Baru Islam Indonesia.” *Jurnal Islamika* 5, no. 3 (1993): 74-84.

11 Abdullah, Taufik. “Islam dan Pembentukan Tradisi di Asia Tenggara: Sebuah Perspektif Perbandingan.” *Tradisi dan Kebangkitan Islam di Asia Tenggara*. Jakarta: LP3ES (1988).

12 Nur Syam, *Islam pesisir*. LKiS Pelangi Aksara, 2005.

13 This term describes the relationship between Islam and local culture as acculturative-syncretic. This relationship is the result of a joint construction between agents (local elites) and the community in forming a continuously occurring dialectic.

dialectic.¹⁴

From this perspective, we can see how scholars have argued that there is a connection between Islamic teachings and Javanese culture. Although these arguments have enriched our understanding of Javanese Islam, much of the research has focused more on ritual practices and social life as evidence of the blend between Islam and Javanese culture. There has been little exploration of how this interaction is manifested in the context of religious texts and interpretation. Therefore, the study of Qur'anic exegesis in Java opens new avenues to explore how this interaction takes shape within religious texts and interpretations, which has rarely been discussed so far. This study thus aims to fill this gap in the academic literature by examining how Islamic texts, such as Qur'anic exegesis, are constructed within the context of Javanese culture.

In this regard, the author will explore one of the Qur'anic exegeses that emerged from this tradition, namely *Tafsir al-Iklil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil*, written by Misbah Mustafa, a religious figure who grew up and developed in Tuban, East Java.¹⁵ This exegesis was written in the *pegon* script,¹⁶ which is Javanese written using Arabic characters. Furthermore, this tafsir is widely circulated and often used as a reference for understanding Islamic teachings among the community and several Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Java. Therefore, studying *Tafsir al-Iklil* can serve as a concrete example of how the interpretation of religious texts can function as a tool for transforming Islam within the complex cultural context of Java,¹⁷ while also reflecting an effort to integrate religious teachings with the social and cultural dynamics of Javanese society.

To achieve this understanding, this article will refer to the texts in this exegesis. Descriptive analysis will be employed to explain how tafsir interacts with the social and cultural space of Javanese Islam. Then, to illustrate the process of thought that gives rise to various discourses and ideologies related to social and cultural contexts, a causal analysis technique will be used. By using these two approaches, this article aims to provide a comprehensive picture of how Qur'anic exegesis, specifically *Tafsir al-Iklil*, integrates Islamic teachings with the traditions and culture of Javanese Islamic society. Thus, it is hoped that this study will expand knowledge about the role of exegesis in shaping religious identity in Javanese Islamic society.

14 Nur Syam, *Islam pesisir*. LKiS Pelangi Aksara, 2005.

15 This tafsir is named *al-Iklil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil*, which means "the crown." According to Misbah, a crown is something valuable that everyone possesses. Thus, this tafsir is intended to be something valuable for everyone and to serve as a guide in leading their lives. Misbah Mustafa, *al-Iklil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil*, Surabaya: Al-Ihsan. t.th.

16 Hidayani, Fika. "Paleografi Aksara Pegon." *Jurnal Tamaddun: Jurnal Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2020): 302-320.

17 Supriyanto, "Kajian al-Qur'an dalam Tradisi Pesantren: Telaah atas *Tafsir al-Iklil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil*." *TSAQAFAH* 12, no. 2 (2016): 281-298.

So far, research on Javanese Islam has been extensively studied by scholars, highlighting various important aspects of the relationship between Islam and local culture. These aspects include mysticism,¹⁸ syncretism,¹⁹ customs,²⁰ the process of Islamization,²¹ cultural acculturation,²² and architecture.²³ Each of these aspects provides diverse insights into how Islam has developed in Java, interacting with local traditions and shaping a distinct religious identity. However, despite the abundance of research in these areas, studies on Javanese Islam from a textual perspective, particularly related to Qur'anic exegesis, are still rarely encountered.

Therefore, the study of Qur'anic exegesis in the context of Javanese Islam is expected to open new avenues for exploring how the interaction between Islam and local culture manifests not only as a cultural phenomenon but also as an intellectual process within the context of religious texts and their interpretations. This is because some scholars in Java have developed Qur'anic exegesis that takes into account local traditions and cultural values, providing a perspective on how Islam is interpreted and practiced in Java. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the academic literature by demonstrating how Qur'anic exegesis integrates religious teachings with Javanese traditions, thereby expanding perspectives on Javanese Islamic identity through a textual approach.

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- 18 Rubaidi, Rubaidi. "Java Islam: Relationship of Javanese culture and Islamic mysticism in the post-colonial study perspective." *El Harakah* 21.1 (2019): 19; Kholil, Akhmad. *Islam Jawa: sufisme dalam etika dan tradisi Jawa*. UIN-Maliki Press, 2008; Isnaini, Heri. "Ideologi islam-jawa pada kumpulan puisi mantra orang jawa karya Sapardi Djoko Damono." *Madab: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra* 9, no. 1 (2018): 1-18. Woodward, Mark. "Islam in Java: Normative piety and mysticism in the sultanate of Yogyakarta." In *Islam in Java: normative piety and mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson; Association for Asian Studies Monograph, 45, 1989.
- 19 Newland, Lynda. "Syncretism and the Politics of the Tingkeban in West Java." *The Australian journal of anthropology* 12, no. 3 (2001): 312-326. Rofiqoh, Yusnia Fanatur, Ach Tofan Alvino, Asmi Chusae, and Yasyva Agfa Nizar. "Islam and Syncretism in Java: Reflections on the Thought of Geertz and Woodward." *MUHARRIK: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial* 4, no. 01 (2021): 47-61. Indralak, Lana. "Sufi Islam and syncretism in Java: and its implications for local secularism." *Prajña Vihāra: Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 22, no. 2 (2021): 55-55. Indralak, Lana. "Sufi Islam and syncretism in Java: and its implications for local secularism." *Prajña Vihāra: Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 22, no. 2 (2021): 55-55.
- 20 Van Dijk, Kees. "The study of Islam and adat in Java." *The Java that Never Was: Academic Theories and Political Practices*. (Münster: LIT Verlag) (2005): 133-155; Ridho, Ali. "Tradisi megengan dalam menyambut Ramadhan: Living Qur'an sebagai kearifan lokal menyemai Islam di Jawa." *Jurnal Literasiologi* 1, no. 2 (2018): 27-27; Aryanti, Risma, and Ashif Az Zafi. "Tradisi Satu Suro Di Tanah Jawa Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam." *AL IMAN: Jurnal Keislaman Dan Kemasyarakatan* 4, no. 2 (2020): 342-361; Hendrajaya, Jerry, and Amru Almuâ. "Tradisi selamatan kematian nyatus nyewu: Implikasi nilai pluralisme Islam Jawa." *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 17, no. 2 (2019): 431-460.
- 21 Berg, Cornelis Christiaan. "The Islamisation of Java." *Studia Islamica* 4 (1955): 111-142.
- 22 Pranowo, M. Bambang. *Memahami Islam Jawa*. Pustaka Alvabet, 2009; Maftukhin, Maftukhin. "Islam Jawa in diaspora and questions on locality." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 10, no. 2 (2016): 375-394.
- 23 Siswoyo, Suhandy, and Riskha Mardiana. "Arsitektur Masjid Sunan Gunung Jati Cirebon sebagai Akulturasi Budaya Islam, Jawa, dan Cina." *Jurnal Lingkungan Binaan Indonesia* 8, no. 1 (2019): 7-14.

Misbah Mustafa and Tafsir al-Iklil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil

Misbah Mustafa was born in 1916 in Sawahan Gg. Palen, Rembang, Central Java.²⁴ His full name was Misbah bin Zainul Mustafa.²⁵ He was the child of H. Zainal Mustafa, a wealthy merchant who generously supported religious scholars (Kiai) in managing Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), and Chadijah, a successful homemaker who raised their children and contributed to the community. Among their children were Mashadi (Bisri Mustafa), Salamah (Aminah), Misbah, and Ma'shum. Additionally, both parents had children from previous marriages: H. Zainal Mustafa had H. Zuhdi and H. Maskanah with Dakilah,²⁶ while Chadijah had Ahmad and Tasmin with Dalimin.²⁷

In 1923, Misbah and his family performed the fifth pillar of Islam, the Hajj pilgrimage. The family included H. Zainal Mustafa, Chadijah, Mashadi (8 years old), Salamah (5.5 years old), Misbah (3.5 years old), and Ma'shum (1 year old). During the pilgrimage, H. Zainal Mustafa fell ill and had to be carried during the rituals of wukuf and sa'i. After completing the pilgrimage, his condition worsened, and he passed away before the ship departed for Indonesia, at the age of 63. His body was entrusted to an Arab sheikh for burial, with an amount of Rp 60 provided for the expenses, and his grave location remains unknown to his family.²⁸ Following his father's death, Misbah was cared for by his stepbrother, H. Zuhdi. He grew up in the pesantren tradition alongside his brother Bisri Mustafa.²⁹ After marriage, Bisri and Misbah separated: Bisri became the son-in-law of KH. Khalil and managed a pesantren in Rembang,³⁰ while Misbah was married to Masrurah, the granddaughter

24 For more, Misbah in naming. Achmad Zainal Huda, *Mutiara Pesantren Perjalanan KH. Bisri Mustafa*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2005), 8.

25 His full name is found in several of his scholarly works, see for example, Misbah bin Zainul Mustafa, *Khizb al-Nasr*, (Tuban: Majlis al-Muallifin wa al-Khathat. t. th), Misbah bin Zainul Mustafa, *Tafsir Taj al-Mislamin*, (Tuban: al-Misbah, t. th).

26 Dalimin and Dakilah are siblings. Both are children of Suro Doble, who had seven children: Dalipah, Dakilah, Darjo, Dalimin, Darmi, and Tasmi. So, before marrying, H. Zainal Mustafa and Chadijah were the son-in-law and daughter-in-law of Suro Doble, respectively. Achmad Zainal Huda, 9.

27 *Ibid.*, 20

28 *Ibid.*, 10.

29 Bisri Mustafa was the father of a renowned Indonesian writer and cultural figure, Mustafa Bisri (Gus Mus). He also authored a tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis) titled *al-Ibris Li Ma'rifah Al-Qur'an al-Aziz*. Gus Mus's affectionate term for KH Misbah was "Pak Bah." This information is from a personal interview with Mustafa Bisri (Gus Mus) in Rembang.

30 KH. Khalil was the caretaker at Kasinan Islamic boarding school in Rembang. According to Mustafa Bisri (Gus Mus), he took Bisri Mustafa as his son-in-law and also educated Misbah as his student, as a gesture of gratitude for their parents' kindness. During his pilgrimage to Mecca, KH. Khalil ran out of provisions, and he met Zainal Mustafa's group (the father of Bisri and Misbah). They provided him with food and money to continue his pilgrimage. Upon hearing of Zainal Mustafa's passing, KH. Khalil intended to repay his kindness

of KH. Ahmad bin Su'ib,³¹ and was entrusted to manage a pesantren in Bangilan, Tuban.³²

From this marriage, Misbah had five children: Syamsiyah, Hamnah, Abdul Malik, Muhammad Nafis, and Ahmad Rafiq. Among the community and his students, Misbah was known as a firm and decisive Islamic scholar. During the New Order regime, he attracted attention for opposing government policies, particularly regarding family planning (KB). While the government promoted the KB program, Misbah issued a fatwa declaring it religiously forbidden. Misbah passed away at the age of 78 on Monday, 07 Dzulqha'dah 1414 H, corresponding to April 18, 1994, leaving behind two wives and five children. He also left behind an unfinished commentary (tafsir) entitled *Tâj al-Muslimîn*, completed up to four volumes, and six unnamed Arabic books.³³

The tafsir book was named *al-Iklil fi Maani al-Tanzil*, which translates to "the crown." According to Misbah, a crown symbolizes something precious that every person possesses. Therefore, this tafsir is intended to be something valuable for everyone and can serve as guidance in life. Additionally, Mustafa Bisri (Gus Mus) added that naming the tafsir *al-Iklil fi Maâni al-Tanzil* was influenced by the literary style of Middle Eastern books prevalent at that time. Middle Eastern books often employed a rhyming style in their titles (beginning and ending with similar sounds), such as *al-Tafsîr wa al-Mufasirûn* and *Bidâyah al-Mujtahid fi Nihâyah al-Muqtasid*. Similarly, the tafsir book from the same period, *Tafsir al-Ibrîs Li Ma'rifah al-Qur'an al-Azîz*, authored by Mustafa Bisri, follows this pattern with its title components, *al-Ibrîs* and *al-Tanzil*.³⁴

In its presentation, this tafsir book is written in *Pégon*,³⁵ script and organized sequentially according to the order of the surahs in the Uthmani mushaf, starting with surah al-Fatihah and ending with surah al-Nas. Misbah begins his interpretation by providing the meaning of vocabulary (italicized below the verse) as found in traditional Islamic books. Below that is the translation of the verse and at the bottom is the tafsir. Each surah starts with an explanation of the number of verses, the place of

by caring for his children. This personal interview with Mustafa Bisri (Gus Mus) is the second child of Bisri Mustafa, from Rembang.

31 Masrurah is the daughter of KH. Ridwan, who is the caretaker of Al-Balagh Islamic boarding school in Bangilan, Tuban, East Java.

32 Interview with Muhammad Nafis, at Al-Balagh Islamic Boarding School, Bangilan, Tuban.

33 interview with Muhammad Nafis

34 interview with Gus Mus

35 Ahmad Baidowi, "Pégon Script Phenomena In The Tradition Of Pesantren's Qur'anic Commentaries Writing." *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 21, no. 2 (2020): 469-490.

revelation, the reason for revelation, and issues related to the content of the surah. The verses and their interpretations are marked with Arabic letter numbers to facilitate understanding for the reader.

Qur'anic Exegesis in Javanese Islamic Religious Traditions

Understanding the interpretation of the Qur'an cannot be separated from the social and religious context in which the interpreter lives.³⁶ The traditions that develop in the Javanese Muslim community are part of a complex dialectical space related to the writing of Qur'anic interpretation.³⁷ The emergence of Islamic traditions in Java itself is a result of the long-standing interaction between the local community's religion and Islam.³⁸ Thanks to the wisdom of the early Islamic propagators in managing the blend of Islamic teachings with Javanese local culture, this has resulted in a synthetic cultural product.³⁹ This synthesis has given rise to various ritual expressions where the instrumental value is derived from local culture, while the material content is imbued with Islamic religiosity. This can be seen in ritual expressions in Javanese traditions that have been transformed into terms derived from Arabic, such as *syukuran*, *tahlilan*, *khaul*, *ziarah*, and others.⁴⁰

Therefore, this Javanese Islamic dialectical space is highly useful for examining how Qur'anic interpretation reflects the integration of Islamic teachings with the complex Javanese culture. Several aspects will be highlighted to illustrate how this exegesis reflects the integration of religion and Javanese cultural values. These aspects include communal harmony, spiritual leadership, and social obligations—all of which are intertwined with Islamic teachings. Thus, this exegesis not only serves as a medium for conveying Qur'anic interpretation but also as a product of the interaction between the two elements. .

36 Harrison, Victoria S. "Hermeneutics, religious language and the Qur'an." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 21, no. 3 (2010): 207-220.

37 The position of Islam for the Indonesian people, especially in Java, appears more appreciative in its adaptation to Islamic teachings. Therefore, the practice of Islam in Java is very different from that in other regions, particularly the Arabian Peninsula. In the process of Islamization in Java, there are two fundamental processes: through *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) that refer to the holy verses of the Qur'an and through the *kraton* (royal palace) which emphasizes mysticism (Sufism). Muh. Sungaidi Ardan, "*Islam dan Jawa; Pergumulan Agama dan Budaya Jawa*", dalam *Dinika*, V. 7, No. 1, 2009, 102.

38 The process of Islamization in Java reached its peak after the fall of the Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit kingdom and the establishment of the Islamic Demak kingdom. This period was marked by the emergence of prominent Islamic preachers known as *Wali* and the establishment of Islamic educational centers that became the precursors to *pesantren* in the northern coastal areas of Java. For more details, see Djoko Suryo, *Tradisi Santri Dalam Historiografi Jawa: Pengaruh Islam Di Jawa*, 31 Nopember 2000, 5.

39 Ridwan, *Ibda'; Jurnal Studi Islam dan Budaya*, Vol. IV, No.I, (Purwokerto: P3M STAIN Purwokerto, 2008),10.

40 Nur Syam, *Islam Pesisir*, (Jogyakarta: LKIS, 2005).

Integration of Religious Traditions in the Formation of Communal Harmony

Communal harmony is an important concept in Javanese society that emphasizes the integrity and unity of the community. This concept stresses the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships among community members.⁴¹ One of the traditions that is an important part of Javanese culture, carrying both religious and social value, is visiting graves. In Javanese tradition, *ziarah kubur* (grave pilgrimage) is not only seen as a form of respect for those who have passed away but also as a spiritual means to pray for ancestors, parents, or relatives who have died.⁴² Moreover, this tradition is believed to strengthen the bond between the living and the deceased, while also reminding the living of death and the afterlife. *Ziarah kubur* in Java is often performed on certain occasions, such as before the month of Ramadan, during Idul Fitri, or when commemorating the death of a family member. During the pilgrimage, in addition to offering prayers, Javanese people usually clean the graves, sprinkle flowers, and bring charity to be distributed. This tradition emphasizes the values of togetherness, respect for ancestors, and awareness of the connection between the living world and the deceased.⁴³

In a religious context, the tradition of *ziarah kubur* is often associated with Islamic teachings, particularly the encouragement to remember death and strengthen faith. Although there are some debates regarding the forms and procedures of *ziarah kubur* in Islam, scholars like Misbah Mustafa in his *Tafsir al-Iklil* attempt to bridge this tradition by providing a theological framework in line with the teachings of the Qur'an. Misbah emphasizes that as long as *ziarah kubur* is performed with the intention of remembering death and praying for the deceased, this tradition does not conflict with Islamic teachings. In fact, *ziarah kubur* can be part of the process of acculturation, where local traditions and Islamic values harmonize.

When interpreting Surah Al-Maidah, verse 35, in *Tafsir Al-Iklil*, Misbah Mustafa explains that it is wrong to accuse Muslims of disbelief for practicing *ziarah kubur*. According to him, the essence of visiting graves is a form of love for Allah. However, there are errors that must be corrected, especially in terms of intention. He emphasizes whether those who perform *ziarah kubur* do so out of love for Allah and with the intention to seek intercession (*tawasul*) with Him, or if there are other motives, such as a desire to become pious or even a saint (*waliyullah*). If people visit

41 Adiansyah Ryko, "Persimpangan antara agama dan budaya (Proses akulturasi Islam dengan slametan dalam budaya Jawa)." *Jurnal Intelektualita: Keislaman, Sosial Dan Sains* 6, no. 2 (2017): 295-310.

42 Latifah, Eni. "Tradisi Ziarah dalam Masyarakat Jawa Perspektif Filsafat Nilai Max Scheler." *AN NUR: Jurnal Studi Islam* 15, no. 1 (2023): 153-175.

43 Mujib, M. Misbahul. "Fenomena tradisi ziarah lokal dalam masyarakat Jawa: Kontestasi kesalehan, identitas keagamaan dan komersial." *IBDA: Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Budaya* 14, no. 2 (2016): 204-224.

graves with the aim of drawing closer to Allah, it is considered a good act. The key, according to Misbah, is that if someone wishes to visit graves, their intention must be properly aligned to avoid misguidance.

In this context, Misbah stresses that *ziarah kubur*, as commonly practiced by the Javanese people, can be seen as a form of respect for ancestors, but it must remain rooted in religious teachings. He argues that as long as *ziarah kubur* is performed by offering prayers or reading the Qur'an for the deceased, it is a good and permissible practice. However, he cautions against mixing *ziarah* with practices that are not aligned with Islamic teachings, such as placing offerings at the graves or worshipping the graves of saints. Nonetheless, he does not prohibit visiting the graves of saints (*wali*) with the intention of seeking intercession (*wasilah*), as explained further in his interpretation:

“Some forms of *wasilah* include love for the Prophet of Allah, love for the *waliyullah* (friends of Allah), charity (*shadaqah*), visiting graves (*ziarah kubur*), increasing supplications (*doa*), maintaining family ties (*silaturrahim*), and increasing the remembrance of Allah (*dzikr*) among others. Thus, the meaning of this verse is that any action that brings you closer to Allah should be pursued, and anything that distances you from Allah should be avoided. So, we can understand from the above statement that if there are people who accuse Muslims of disbelief for visiting the graves of the deceased with the assumption that *ziarah* is a form of worship to someone other than Allah, that is not true. Visiting the graves of saints (*wali*) is a practice of those who love Allah. Loving because of obedience to Allah and performing the deeds recommended by the Prophet Muhammad SAW is an expression of *mahabbah* (love). Remember that a person who lacks love does not have faith, and through faith, you can develop love for the Messenger of Allah, and for the servants of Allah who are obedient to Him. Loving the *wali* because of their obedience to Allah is also considered *wasilah*, as mentioned at the end of Surah Al-Maidah, verse 35: “Seek a means of nearness to Him” (*Wabtaghu ilayhil wasilah*).⁴⁴

From this, we can see how Misbah strives to provide practical guidance for the Javanese community who wish to preserve the tradition of *ziarah kubur* while maintaining the purity of Islamic teachings. Misbah emphasizes that *ziarah kubur* is not merely a social ritual but also a means of drawing closer to Allah (*wasilah*). In this view, *wasilah* encompasses all deeds or actions that can bring a person closer to Allah, including love for the Prophet, love for the *wali*, charity, *ziarah kubur*, maintaining family ties, prayer, and remembrance of Allah. Therefore, in this context, Misbah

44 Misbah Mustafa, *Al-Iklil Fi Ma'ani Al-Tanzil VII*, ...63-5.

asserts that if this practice is understood as an effort to pray for the deceased and remind oneself of death, it is perfectly aligned with Islamic teachings. Thus, ziarah kubur is not seen as a syncretic practice but as an act of worship rooted in Islamic teachings about remembering death and honoring one's parents and ancestors. It becomes clear how Misbah seeks to integrate the strong Javanese local traditions with Islamic teachings while providing a clear framework to distinguish between permissible practices and those that deviate from the teachings.

Thus, this interpretation highlights the importance of maintaining communal harmony by respecting the depth of Islamic scholarly tradition and being cautious in accepting innovations or criticisms that might disrupt that harmony. By linking these principles with Javanese social practices, Misbah Mustafa demonstrates how Islam can be a religion that supports not only individual spirituality but also broader social cohesion and unity, in line with Javanese societal values. Misbah Mustafa's interpretation reflects an effort to balance the heritage of Islamic scholarship with local cultural values, in this case, Javanese culture, which emphasizes harmony, unity, and mutual respect in communal life.

Spiritual Leadership Responsive to Social and Cultural Realities

Kondangan is a tradition that has developed and become deeply rooted in Javanese society. This tradition is often carried out on various occasions, such as weddings, births, circumcisions, and even funerals.⁴⁵ In practice, *kondangan* is a form of communal meal involving neighbors, family, and friends. It is not only a display of togetherness but also a means to strengthen social ties and provide social support to the host organizing the event. In this context, *kondangan* is more than just a meal, but a reflection of solidarity and unity among members of the community.⁴⁶ *Kondangan* is often held during important moments like weddings, circumcisions, or births, and is usually accompanied by communal prayers and shared meals.

In his exegesis, Misbah Mustafa strives to provide a more accommodative view of this *kondangan* tradition. Misbah emphasizes that as long as *kondangan* is carried out with the right intention and remains in line with Islamic teachings, this practice can be considered part of charity and gratitude to Allah. He seeks to integrate this tradition into a theological framework compatible with Islam, without neglecting the local elements that are strongly ingrained in Javanese culture. In his

45 Ruslan, N. I. M. "Akulturasi Islam Dan Budaya A Lokal (Studi Tentang Tradisi Kondangan di Desa Sugihan Kecamatan Jatiroto Kabupaten Wonogiri)." PhD diss., Uin Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2003.

46 Muharrom, Mumuh, Eka Eka, Firman Firman, and Ridwan Qomar Sonjaya. "Tinjauan Hukum Islam Terhadap Akad Pemberian Uang Kondangan Kepada Pengantin Baru." *El'Aailab: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Keluarga* 1, no. 1 (2022): 61-61.

tafsir, Misbah interprets this tradition of *kondangan* as a natural part of Javanese customs. However, the ideological emphasis Misbah presents is how to understand *kondangan* as a form of sharing (charity), where sincerity becomes the key element in the execution of this tradition. The following is his full interpretation:

“Because it is common for a person to follow customs and traditions without considering how charity (*sedekah*) can be accepted by Allah SWT, which is through sincere charity, meaning the earnest fulfillment of what Allah SWT has commanded, not just because of tradition. As is common with practices like *kondangan* or providing food. Such practices are fine, but the correctness, whether they are truly sincere or not, needs to be tested. If they are truly sincere, try using the money intended for *kondangan*, which is around 25,000 rupiahs, for continuous charity (*sedekah jariyah*).”⁴⁷

In the interpretation above, Misbah Mustafa does not view *kondangan* as a form of syncretism but rather as a way to express Islamic teachings in a manner that is relevant and accepted by the Javanese community. However, in the *kondangan* process, Misbah firmly sets guidelines against using offerings with various types of *tumpengan*. According to him, this is a form of syncretism from Hindu and Buddhist teachings, which should be avoided in its practice. The full explanation can be found in his interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah: 10, as follows:

“Several societal issues that are considered religious problems but are not found in religious principles, such as the issue of *tumpang* with pointed rice, the *nogo dino* ritual, and others, are remnants of Buddhist teachings. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said: “There are three types of people who are most despised by Allah SWT: First, an old person who commits adultery. Second, a person who still desires to revive the traditions of ignorance (the practices of Buddhists). Third, a person who seeks the blood of another unjustly, demanding the shedding of that person’s blood.”⁴⁸

The interpretation given by Misbah Mustafa regarding *kondangan* in the context of Javanese society reflects his unique perspective on the acculturation of culture and religion. Misbah does not view *kondangan* as a practice of syncretism—a blending or mixing of Islamic teachings with the traditions of other religions, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism—but as a way for the Javanese community to express Islamic teachings in a local and relevant manner. In this sense, *kondangan* is seen as an adaptation of Islamic teachings that can be accepted by the local

47 Misbah Mustafa, *Al-Iklil Fi Ma’ani Al-Tanzil*, I.... 412.

48 Misbah Mustafa, *Al-Iklil Fi Ma’ani Al-Tanzil* I,13-15.

community without conflicting with the fundamental principles of the religion. However, although Misbah accepts some aspects of *kondangan*, he also emphasizes the importance of limiting elements that explicitly originate from other religious traditions. One example is the use of *sesajen* and *tumpengan* in the *kondangan* process, which he asserts are remnants of Hindu and Buddhist teachings.

Emphasis on Social Responsibility in Religious Practices

One of the traditions that has developed in Javanese Islamic society is that when someone passes away, family, relatives, and neighbors gather at the deceased's home, mosque, or nearby mushola to pray together. These prayers usually include verses from the Qur'an, dhikr, salawat, and others. They pray asking for forgiveness, hoping that the deceased will receive mercy and a proper place in the hereafter. After the prayers, the host usually serves food and drinks. This communal prayer gathering in Javanese Islamic tradition is known as "tahlilan".⁴⁹

Misbah also comments on the tradition of *tahlilan*. However, his comments do not claim that the entire ritual falls into the category of heresy or is forbidden. Instead, he focuses on the procedural aspects of its implementation. Misbah does not prohibit the practice of this tradition or classify it as forbidden. He suggests several conditions to ensure that the practice of *tahlilan* is not prohibited.

Among these, he advises that *tahlilan* should be carried out simply, without extravagance, and without giving the impression of being contrived. He also emphasizes the need to consider the benefits and drawbacks from both religious and economic perspectives. According to him, the main purpose of *tahlilan* is to send rewards (*pahala*) to the deceased through the recitation of *tahlil* and the Qur'an, or Surah Yasin. Therefore, its implementation does not require holding a lavish and grand "kenduren" event but can also be done through other good deeds.

With this perspective, Misbah Mustafa emphasizes that the practice of *tahlilan* should be carried out with two main principles in mind: simplicity and broader benefit. According to Misbah, simplicity in *tahlilan* not only involves avoiding excessive material elements but also how the event is organized. The *tahlilan* ritual should be conducted simply, focusing on the main essence, which is prayer, rather than material aspects like extravagant food or a large event. He reminds us that religious activities should not sacrifice other important aspects of the community's life.

49 Tahlilan is a ceremony or ritual performed by the Muslim community with the intention of praying for someone who has passed away by reciting dhikr or supplications taken from several verses of the Qur'an, and it includes the recitation of *tahlil*, which is the phrase '*la ilaha illallah*'. Muhammad Nor Ichwan, *Bid'ah Membawa Berkah*, (Semarang: Syiar Media Publishing, 2011), h. 101.

“According to the author’s (Misbah) opinion, if one wishes to hold a *tahlilan* feast (*kenduren* in Javanese), it should be done in the following manner: 1) It should be conducted simply, not extravagantly, and without the impression of being overdone. 2) It should be carefully considered in terms of both religious and economic benefits and drawbacks. The main objective is to send the reward of good deeds to the deceased through acts of charity, tahlil recitation, and the reading of the Qur’an or Surah Yasin. The reward does not necessarily have to come from holding an elaborate *kenduren* event; it can also come from other pious deeds. For example, one can send the reward by reciting Surah Al-Fatihah after each obligatory prayer, followed by seeking forgiveness for the deceased, or by giving one or ten rupiahs in charity to those who are truly in need. Furthermore, a better approach, if one is willing, is to use the funds that would have been spent on *kenduren* for the 40-day, 100-day, or 1000-day memorials of the deceased, for *sadaqah jariyah* in their name”.⁵⁰

In his interpretation, Misbah emphasizes that every religious activity, including *tahlilan*, should not be viewed merely as a ritual that must be performed, but also with consideration for the individual’s capacity to carry it out. In the context of *tahlilan*, which often involves community gatherings and providing food, Misbah reminds that its execution should be adjusted to the host’s abilities. This tradition should not be forced into an extravagant or excessive event that could become a burden, whether economically or emotionally. Instead, a simple and sincere *tahlilan* practice is more in line with the principles of simplicity and sincerity in Islam, where the primary focus is on the intention to pray and strengthen social bonds.

From another perspective, Misbah’s interpretation also reflects the cultural principles of Javanese society regarding social care and equality. In Javanese culture, the concepts of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and togetherness are paramount. Misbah illustrates that the practice of *tahlilan*, which is a moment to pray for and send rewards to the deceased, should also reflect these values of care. He suggests that prayers for the deceased do not need to be sent through lavish events but can also be through other good deeds that are more sustainable and beneficial.

Through his emphasis on simplicity in the practice of *tahlilan*, Misbah demonstrates how Islamic teachings can be applied to enhance social welfare. He encourages Muslims to rethink how religious activities can contribute positively in a spiritual context and improve the quality of life. This aligns with Islamic teachings that regulate not only aspects of worship but also social welfare and justice. Thus, this interpretive approach highlights the principles of social justice and local cultural values of care, showing how Islamic teachings can be integrated with local culture

50 Misbah Mustafa, j. VII, h. 3178.

to achieve social well-being.

The Role of Qur'anic Exegesis in Shaping Javanese Islamic Identity

The development of Islam in Java today is often viewed through two main concepts: syncretism and acculturation. The concept of syncretism refers to the blending of different religious and cultural elements, with Geertz seeing this as a mixture between local elements and Islamic teachings, where local culture holds a dominant influence.⁵¹ On the other hand, the concept of acculturation describes a process of adaptation in which one culture absorbs elements of another without sacrificing its original identity. In this context, Woodward argues that Islam and local culture influence each other without losing their distinct identities.⁵² However, if we refer to the historical development of Islam in Java, religious texts, particularly Qur'anic exegesis, have played a significant role in shaping the religious views and social practices of Javanese society.⁵³ During this period, exegesis not only served as a tool for scholars to explain Islamic teachings but also functioned as a means to integrate these teachings into the local cultural context.⁵⁴

The development of Qur'anic exegesis traditions in Java began to receive greater attention in the 19th and 20th centuries, when Islamization in Java had become more established and started entering a reflective phase in the form of written exegesis. One significant form of written exegesis that developed was the use of *pegon* script, which is Javanese written using Arabic letters. *Pegon* script was used as a means to teach the Qur'an in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), and it represents a form of local adaptation that allowed Javanese people to access the sacred Islamic texts in a language and script more familiar to them. The exegesis written in *pegon* demonstrates how Islam in Java gradually crystallized in the form of more formal religious texts, while still retaining strong local cultural elements.

The Tafsir al-Iklil by Misbah Mustafa is one example in the history of the development of Javanese Islam that can help clarify the distinction between these two concepts, especially in the context of Islam's growth in Java. In his various interpretations, Misbah does not impose Islamic teachings in a rigid or strict manner. Instead, he accommodates deeply rooted local traditions, such as

51 Geertz, Clifford. *The Religion of Java*. University of Chicago Press, 1960.

52 Woodward, Mark. *Java, Indonesia and Islam*. Vol. 3. Springer Science & Business Media, 2010.

53 Ariyadi, Samsul. *Resepsi Al-Qur'an dan Bentuk Spiritualitas Jawa Modern: Kajian Praktik Mujahadah dan Semaan al-Qur'an Mantab Purbojati Keraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat*. Penerbit A-Empat, 2021.

54 Umar, M.T., 2020. Islam dalam Budaya Jawa Perspektif Al-Qur'an. *IBDA: Jurnal Kajian Islam dan Budaya*, 18(1), pp.68-86. Mufidah, Vina Hidayatul. "Al-Qur'an Dan Budaya Jawa (Tata Cara Bermasyarakat dalam Kitab Tafsir Al-Ibriz Karya KH. Bisri Musthafa)." PhD diss., IAIN Ponorogo, 2022.

kondangan (communal feasts), praying for ancestors, and visiting graves, by providing a theological framework that aligns with Islamic teachings. Misbah Mustafa strives to explain that these practices, often considered by some as forms of syncretism, can actually be understood as part of a process of integration, where local elements are harmonized with Islamic teachings. For instance, *kondangan*, which is a part of Javanese tradition, is interpreted in this exegesis as an expression of gratitude through charity, thus aligning with Islamic teachings on solidarity and generosity.

Misbah Mustafa's approach shows that Qur'anic interpretation in Java leans more toward an acculturated Islamic identity rather than syncretism. Therefore, in *Tafsir al-Iklil*, Islamic teachings can integrate without eliminating their distinct identities. Within this acculturation context, tafsir functions as a tool to clarify Islam's role in guiding and purifying local cultural practices that might conflict with Qur'anic teachings. The religious thought in *Tafsir al-Iklil* by Misbah Mustafa aligns with scholars such as Mark Woodward, as well as others like Nur Syam, Masdar Hilmy, Stephen Headley, Hendro Prasetyo, and Taufik Abdullah, who highlight the relationship between Islam and Javanese culture as a dynamic and mutually influencing process.

Furthermore, the integrative Islamic typology presented in this exegesis emphasizes that Javanese Islam is not only limited to ritualistic and theological aspects but also includes social and cultural dimensions. Islam is viewed as a comprehensive way of life, where local traditions and religious teachings are not separated but complement each other. This shows that Javanese Islam organically adapts to local culture without compromising the fundamental principles of Islamic teachings. This approach offers a dynamic model of religiosity, where Javanese society can maintain their traditions while staying steadfast in their Islamic identity. This creates a pattern of religiosity that is not only unique but also continuously evolving through an ongoing process of transformation.

Thus, the *Tafsir al-Iklil* demonstrates that Javanese Islam is not only influenced by local traditions but also plays an active role in shaping the cultural identity of society. This exegesis contributes to previous literature on Islamic identity, particularly syncretism and acculturation, by emphasizing that Islam and local culture do not merely coexist but also collaborate to create an integrative religious identity. The integrative Islam reflected in this exegesis strengthens Javanese Islamic identity as dynamic while preserving the essence of Islamic teachings.

Conclusion

This study has uncovered significant findings regarding the interaction between Islam and Javanese culture, specifically through the examination of Misbah Mustafa's *Tafsir al-Iklil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil*. Data indicates that local practices such as *tahlilan*, *khaul*, and *ziarah kubur* (grave pilgrimages) have been harmonized with Islamic teachings, allowing Javanese traditions to persist while upholding Islamic doctrinal integrity. These rituals, deeply embedded in local customs, are interpreted in Mustafa's exegesis as valid expressions of Islamic values, such as charity, community responsibility, and spiritual reflection. Mustafa's use of the *pegon* script, a combination of Javanese and Arabic characters, highlights the effective integration of religious texts with the local cultural landscape, thereby making Islamic teachings more accessible to the Javanese Muslim community.

The findings align with theoretical frameworks discussed in the research, particularly the acculturation model put forward by scholars like Mark Woodward. Contrary to syncretism, which implies the merging of elements from different traditions into a hybrid form, the acculturation process in Javanese Islam allows both Islamic and Javanese components to maintain their distinct identities. Mustafa's exegesis exemplifies this approach by showing how Islamic rituals can be adapted to fit a specific socio-cultural context without compromising their theological purity. This adaptability illustrates how Islamic teachings can be integrated with cultural practices, demonstrating the preservation of cultural identity within the confines of Islamic law.

There are several areas that remain open for further investigation. While this study concentrated on the textual interpretations of Javanese Islamic practices, future research could explore how these interpretations are applied in modern-day Java, particularly within an increasingly globalized and digitally interconnected world. Additionally, comparisons with Islamic practices in other regions of Indonesia could offer broader insights into Islam's capacity for cultural adaptation. This study contributes to academic discourse by showing how Qur'anic exegesis serves not only a theological purpose but also as a tool for cultural preservation and integration, highlighting the evolving nature of Islamic practice in diverse socio-cultural settings.

Supplementary Materials

The data presented in this article can be found in the whole data references, no additional or supplementary material.

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Authors' contributions

This article made by three collaboration authors. The first author contributed in initiating the idea of the research, collecting data and verifying the data. The second author contributed in translating the text from Bahasa into English and working on comprehensive review of the article. The third author ensured the coherence, narrative flow and revising the article to enhance its overall quality. Further, the three-author collaborated in several focused group discussion to finalised the manuscript prior to be submitted into a journal.

Data availability statement

All data underlying the results are available as part of the article and no additional source data are required.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors affirm that there are no conflicts of interest that could potentially influence the research outcomes or compromise its integrity.

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