

The Evolution of 'Kafir' in the Qur'an: A Diachronic Study on the Socio-Political Influences Shaping Its Meaning

Evolusi Makna 'Kafir' dalam Al-Qur'an: Studi Diakronik tentang Pengaruh Sosio-Politik yang Membentuk Maknanya

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Abstract

The term 'kafir' in the Qur'an possesses a complex meaning, which is one of the most pivotal elements of the Qur'an, influenced by the context from the time of revelation to the practice of the interpretive community. Considering the element of time, the meaning of 'kafir' has changed over the years; it is dynamic and dependent on temporal, spatial, and socio-political contexts. This paper explores the historical-critical changes in the meaning of 'kafir' over time, known as a diachronic study, by considering the socio-political backgrounds accompanying these emerging meanings. The objective of this paper is to foster a more comprehensive understanding of 'kafir' as a dynamic and discursive term throughout history. The findings indicate that with the continuous evolution of context, different understandings and meanings have surfaced, rendering the meaning of 'kafir' fluid. The term dates back to pre-Islamic times and was later used in the Qur'an within a new conceptual framework. Within the interpretive community, political divisions in the first centuries of Islam contributed to diverse meanings of 'kafir.' In the modern era, the predominance of the nation-state concept has brought the term 'kafir' into debates concerning the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims and their status within the nation-state. This type of historically grounded diachronic study helps to avoid essentialism in the study of historically significant terms and concepts related to Muslim societies, which are still often examined in popular academic discourse.

Keywords: *Kafir; Diachronic Study; Qur'an Interpretation; Socio-Political Context; Historical-Critical Analysis*

Abstrak

Konsep Makna 'kafir' dalam Al-Qur'an memiliki sifat yang kompleks. Istilah ini merupakan salah satu elemen penting dalam Al-Qur'an, dengan pemaknaannya dipengaruhi oleh konteks yang mengitarinya sejak masa pewahyuan hingga praktik komunitas interpretatif. Dengan mempertimbangkan unsur waktu, terdapat perubahan makna 'kafir' dari masa ke masa; makna ini bersifat dinamis dan bergantung pada waktu, tempat, dan konteks sosial-politik. Tulisan ini mengkaji perubahan makna 'kafir' secara historis-kritis dari masa ke masa, yang dikenal dengan studi diakronik, dengan memperhatikan latar belakang sosial-politik yang menyertai kemunculan makna-makna tersebut. Tujuan dari tulisan ini



adalah untuk menciptakan pemahaman yang lebih menyeluruh tentang 'kafir' sebagai istilah yang dinamis dan diskursif sepanjang waktu. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dengan perubahan konteks yang terus menerus, berbagai pemahaman dan makna bermunculan, yang membuat makna 'kafir' tetap cair. Istilah 'kafir' telah ada sejak masa pra-Islam, dan kemudian digunakan dalam Al-Qur'an dengan cara yang dikombinasikan ke dalam suatu kerangka konseptual baru. Dalam komunitas interpretatif, perpecahan politik pada abad-abad pertama Islam turut mempengaruhi perbedaan pemaknaan 'kafir'. Sampai pada era modern, dominasi konsep negara bangsa menyebabkan istilah 'kafir' muncul dalam perdebatan hubungan antara Muslim dan non-Muslim, serta statusnya dalam negara bangsa. Kajian diakronik berlandaskan sejarah semacam ini berkontribusi untuk menghindari esensialisme dalam mempelajari istilah-istilah dan konsep-konsep historis penting yang terkait dengan masyarakat Muslim, yang masih sering dikaji dalam wacana akademik populer.

Kata Kunci: *Kafir, Makna Diakronik, Tafsir Al-Qur'an, Konteks Sosio-Politik, Analisa Historis-*

Introduction

The term 'kafir'¹ is one of the most significant words in the Qur'an, appearing 525 times in various forms and meanings.² Toshihiko Izutsu analyzes the development of the meaning of 'kafir' through a semantic framework, identifying it as a concept of religious ethics in the Qur'an and a central element of the Islamic ethical system.³ Izutsu's analysis highlights the diachronic changes in the meaning of 'kafir,' emphasizing the importance of understanding its pre-Islamic roots. To comprehend the structure of its meaning, Izutsu suggests starting from the pre-Islamic period, as many key Qur'anic terms, including 'kafir,' were already in use before Islam.⁴ These terms, contextualized by the revelations, were not new but were incorporated into a new conceptual framework in the Qur'an. Understanding the Arabic context from pre-Islamic times to the early Islamic period is crucial to grasp the evolution of word meanings in the Qur'an. Thus, pre-Islamic terms were redefined and integrated into the Qur'anic discourse, creating a

1 The 2019 National Conference of Alim Ulama of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Banjar resulted in a decision banning the use of the term 'kafir' to refer to non-Muslims. The use of the term kafir is considered incompatible with the principle of citizenship in a nation-state and is thought to create a negative stigma against non-Muslim citizens. This ruling sparked debate in Indonesian society. Some attributed it to the political dynamics in Indonesia, as the decision was made ahead of the 2019 Presidential General Election, while NU is considered a supporter of the incumbent. Others felt offended by the National Conference's decision, as it revised the meaning of the word kafir in the Qur'an.

2 Muḥammad Fū'ad Abdūl Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras Li Alfāz al-Qur'an al-Karīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 406.

3 Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico Religious in The Qur'an* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1996), 187.

4 Toshihiko Izutsu, *Konsep-Konsep Etika Religius Dalam al-Qur'an*, Agus Fahri Husain (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1993), 53.

novel conceptual structure.⁵

During the era of revelation, Qur'anic verses were revealed to address the challenges faced by the Prophet and his community, leading to complex interpretations. Abdullah Saeed attributes this complexity to the Qur'an functioning as a communicative act with a specific purpose. This communicative act is tied to the socio-historical context of its initial revelation and the relationship between the Giver of the Kalam (God) and the first recipient (the Prophet and his community),⁶ making the meaning dynamic. Nicolai Sinai notes that revelation evolves over time in chapter length, topics, and density.⁷ Karen Bauer and Faraz Hamza suggest that the development of topics in Qur'anic revelation is linked to the needs of the community.⁸ Thus, the socio-historical context at the time of revelation is a fundamental element in understanding the meaning of 'kafir' as it emerged.

The fundamental relationship of revelation persists beyond the Prophet's death, continuing through the practices of interpretive communities. Asma Afsaruddin suggests that diachronic tracing in these communities' practices can reveal how meanings change over time in response to specific socio-political contexts.⁹ Karen Bauer also asserts that context influences interpretation, making meanings time-bound and subject to change.¹⁰ Consequently, the meaning of 'kafir' remains fluid and shaped by various socio-political situations. Political divisions in early Islam contributed to differing interpretations of 'kafir.' In the modern era, with the rise of the nation-state concept, the term 'kafir' has been central to debates about the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims and their status within the nation-state.

This paper is a historical-critical study that examines the evolving meaning of 'kafir' over time, considering the socio-political contexts that have influenced these changes. The analysis begins with the pre-Islamic period to highlight various shifts in the meaning of 'kafir' in the Qur'an.

5 Toshihiko Izutsu, *Relasi Tuhan Dan Manusia* (Yogyakarta: PT. Tiara Wacana, 2003), 11.

6 Abdullah Saeed, *Reading the Qur'an in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 83.

7 Nicolai Sinai, *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 113–124.

8 Karen Bauer and Faraz Hamza, *Women, Households, and the Hereafter in the Qur'an: A Patronage of Piety* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2024), 39–40.

9 Asma Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God: Jihād and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

10 Karen Bauer, *Gender Hierarchy in the Qur'an: Medieval Interpretations, Modern Responses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 19.

The author then revisits all Qur'anic verses containing the term 'kafir' in the chronological order in which they were revealed to the Prophet. This chronological rearrangement allows for a detailed narration of the historical development of the term's meaning during the era of revelation. The study also examines contexts following the revelation, including early post-revelation periods and political divisions in the first century of Islam, extending to modern times within the framework of the nation-state. By considering historical and political contexts, this study aims to unravel the complexity of 'kafir' and provide a comprehensive understanding of it as a dynamic and discursive term over time.

The Term 'Kafir' in Pre-Islamic Times

The Dual Meaning of 'Kafir' in Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry

Arabic poems serve as vital records of Arab civilization's history and reflect the social structure of Arab society. These poems are not only mediums for expressing emotions and thoughts but also portray the historical and societal realities of their time.¹¹ Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, in particular, holds historical significance as a primary resource for studying social development in the pre-Islamic era.¹² Understanding pre-Islamic Arabic poetry involves referring to its codification in the second century Hijri through *muallaqat* and *diwan*.¹³

The term 'kafir' is derived from the Arabic root *kafara-yakfuru-kufr*. Linguistically, *kufr* means *as-satr* or *at-tagṭiyah*, which translates to 'covering.'¹⁴ According to Lisān al-'Arāb, the origin of *kufr* is *tagṭiyah al-syai*, meaning 'covering something.' Several derivations of *kufr* maintain this linguistic connection, such as *kaffara* meaning 'to abolish or eliminate,' *kaffārat* meaning 'a fine to atone for a sin or mistake,' and *kafūr* meaning 'the petals that cover the fruit.'¹⁵ The meaning of *kufr*, which aligns with its linguistic sense, is prevalent in many pre-Islamic Arabic poems. This can be seen in the poetof

11 Ṭāhā Ḥusain, *Fī Al-Adābi al-Jāhiliy* (Mesir: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1969), 16–18.

12 Philip K Hitti, *History of the Arab*, Cecep Lukman Yasin dan Dedi Slamet Riyadli (Jakarta: Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2008), 118.

13 Mochammad Achwan Baharuddin, Moh Erfan Soebahar, and Siti Mujibatun, "Validity of Pre-Islamic Arabic Literature as a Source of Authentication of Hadis," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 21, no. 2 (July 29, 2020): 449–68, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2020.2102-11>.

14 Ragīb Al Asfahanī, *Mu'jam Mufradāt Li Garīb Al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 452.

15 Jamāluddīn Muḥammad bin Mansur Al Misri, *Lisān Al-'Arāb* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2009), 170.

Labīd b. Rabī'ah, where the term *kufir* is used in its original context.¹⁶

يعلو طريقة متنها متواتر # في ليلة كفر النجور غمامها

In the poem mentioned above, the word *kafara* means *satara*, which translates to 'to cover.' This usage refers to a star being covered by clouds (ستر غمامها نجومها) In another poem, Labīd uses the word 'kafir' to describe *al-lail*, or 'night.'¹⁷

حتى إذا ألفت يدا في كافر # وأجن عورات الثغور ظلامها

In the poem mentioned above, *kufir* refers to *al-lail* (night) because of its nature of covering everything, serving as a hidden place, and obscuring the sun.¹⁸ A similar usage is found in al-Nabīgah al-Žubaynī's poetry, where *kufir* describes clouds, emphasizing their covering aspect.¹⁹

Beyond its basic meaning of 'to cover up,' the term 'kafir' in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry also pertains to human moral behavior. In several poems from this period, 'kafir' is interpreted as 'one with an ungrateful attitude.' Its opposite is *shākir*, meaning 'one who is grateful.' For pre-Islamic Arabs, *kufir* represented bad manners, while *shukr*, the opposite of *kufir*, signified good manners. This moral interpretation of *kufir* as disbelief can be found in the poetry of Antarah b. Shaddād.²⁰

نبئت عمرا غير شاكر نعمتي # والكفر مخبئة لنفس لمنعم

In the poem mentioned, *kufir* is used as the opposite of *shukr*, meaning 'ingratitude.' The commentary explains that the verse means "I know that 'Umar was not grateful for what I gave him. An attitude of ingratitude towards favors will only distance the recipient from receiving further favors." The specific context of this verse concerns the spoils of war, which are the right of the victor.²¹

The meaning of *kufir* as ungrateful behavior is also present in the

16 Abū 'Abdullāh al-Ḥusain al-Zauzanī, *Al-Mu'allaqat: Syair-Syair Arab Pra-Islam*, Bachrum Bunyamin dan Hamdy Salad (Yogyakarta: Gending Pustaka, 2018), 109.

17 Zauzanī, *Al-Mu'allaqat: Syair-Syair Arab Pra-Islam*, 110.

18 Muṣṭawī, *Syarḥu Al-Mu'allaqat al-Sab'i*, 160.

19 *Al-'Aqdu al-Tsamin Fī Dawāwini Asy-Syu'arā as-Sittah al-Jāhiliyīn* (Madīnah: al-Madrasah al-Kuliyyah al-Mālikiyyah, 1869), 12.

20 Zauzanī, *Al-Mu'allaqat: Syair-Syair Arab Pra-Islam*, 107.

21 Muṣṭawī, *Syarḥu Al-Mu'allaqat al-Sab'i*, 247.

poetry of Ibn as-Sakīt.²²

فكفرت نعمته التي أولكها # زيد بن عوف فارسا معلوما

In the poem mentioned, 'kafir' is interpreted as displaying ungrateful behavior, specifically referring to someone who does not appreciate the gift given by Zaid b. Auf.

The term 'kafir' in pre-Islamic times extended beyond its fundamental meaning of 'covering'. In the context of pre-Islamic Arab society, it also referred to someone who was ungrateful, contrasting with *shākir*, which means 'one who is grateful'. This behavior, termed *kufir*, involves forgetting the favors received from others and concealing their kindness.

The Socio-Cultural Context of Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry

Much of the pre-Islamic poetry originates from the Bedouin communities in Northern and Central Arabia, the regions where Islam later emerged. The most notable characteristic of the population in these areas before Islam was Bedouin tribalism, organized into various groups. In the Hijaz, the heartland of Islam, five-sixths of the population were nomadic, embodying typical Bedouin tribalism, with their livelihood based on herding, grazing, and raiding neighboring territories.²³ Makkah, the birthplace of Islam, was populated by diverse tribes, with the Quraysh tribe being dominant. Initially from North Arabia or the Bedouin community, the Quraysh quickly evolved into a significant merchant community.²⁴

One of the defining traits of pre-Islamic societies, particularly the Bedouin, was their focus on worldly life. This was influenced by the arid, desert-like climate and geography of Arabia.²⁵ They concentrated solely on worldly happiness, neglecting the eternal aspects of life. For them, there was no existence beyond this world. The Bedouins even used the word "khulūd" - associated with the afterlife in Islam - to describe life in this world. To pre-Islamic Arabs, wealth in this world was the most valuable asset and represented perpetuation.²⁶ This perspective fostered a mindset of fully enjoying worldly life. Consequently, hedonism became a dominant

22 Zauzanī, *Al-Mu'allaqat: Syair-Syair Arab Pra-Islam*, 75.

23 Muhammad Barir, "Kesetaraan Dan Kelas Sosial Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 15, no. 1 (January 13, 2014): 61–92, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2014.1501-04>.

24 Hitti, *History of the Arab*, 25–37.

25 Hitti, 30–32.

26 Izutsu, *Konsep-Konsep Etika Religius Dalam al-Qur'an*, 58.

trait, with pre-Islamic societies prioritizing worldly matters.

In addition to their inclination towards worldly life, the spirit of tribal solidarity, or *aṣābiyah*, was a significant feature of pre-Islamic Arab society. The social structure of pre-Islamic Arabia was based on tribalism, with ethics rooted in solidarity among tribe members. Honoring kinship ties based on blood relations was considered a sacred duty for every individual in their group. High solidarity was essential for survival under the harsh desert conditions.²⁷ The principle of tribal solidarity was largely founded on pride in noble descent. The pre-Islamic social system asserted that the weak, oppressed, or enslaved had no claim to the honor passed down through generations, fostering attitudes of oppression and greed towards the vulnerable. Individualism, contrary to the spirit of *aṣābiyah*, was spurred by the commercial environment in Makkah. The focus on financial and material interests led to the rise of individualism, affecting social life at the time.²⁸

In certain societies, the behaviors of hedonism and individualism within the *aṣābiyah* tradition contradict the principle of 'generosity' or *karīm*. First, the principle of generosity stems from the recognition of the futility, emptiness, and transience of worldly life. However, pre-Islamic Arabs were indifferent to anything beyond this world's existence, leaving the concept of eternity or *khulud* unresolved.²⁹ Secondly, although the Bedouins were known to be harsh towards enemies, they were loyal and generous to friends. The harsh natural conditions fostered mutual support and common interests, including a welcoming attitude towards guests. Failing to show hospitality to guests was considered a violation of social norms and an insult to God.³⁰ In the desert, hospitality and helpfulness were essential for sustaining life.³¹

In the context of enthusiasm for worldly life, kafirs are characterized by arrogance, pride in their wealth and lineage, and hedonistic behavior. In the context of the tribal spirit, kafirs are characterized by individualistic behavior and pride in their nobility, which leads to oppression and miserliness towards the weak. The term 'kafir' describes those whose behavior contradicts the noble traits that pre-Islamic people valued, such as generosity and humility.

27 Hitti, *History of the Arab*, 25.

28 Hitti, 30–32.

29 M. Quraish Shihab, *Membaca Sang Nabi Muhammad: Dalam Sorotan al-Qur'an Dan Hadis-Hadis Shahih* (Tangerang: Lintera Hati, 2018), 117.

30 Hitti, *History of the Arab*, 30–32.

31 Shihab, *Membaca Sang Nabi Muhammad: Dalam Sorotan al-Qur'an Dan Hadis-Hadis Shahih*, 110.

In this context, a 'kafir' is defined as someone who is not grateful or thankful for the humility and generosity of others.

The Term 'Kafir' at the Time of Revelation

The word 'kafir,' derived from the root *k-f-r*, appears 525 times in the Qur'an: 191 times in Makkiyah verses and the remainder in Madaniyah verses.³² The meaning of 'kafir' during the era of revelation, shaped by the challenges faced by the Prophet and his community, is complex and dynamic. To trace the evolution of the term 'kafir' in the Qur'an during the revelation era, texts are arranged chronologically based on their classification as Makkiyyah or Madaniyyah.

'Kafir' in the Makkiyah Verses

Kufr in the Makkiyah verses carries several meanings. First meaning, the early Makkiyah verses describe *kufr* as human behavior that is ungrateful to God, the opposite of *shukr*. During this era, *kufr* referred to those who received God's blessings but did not show gratitude, deliberately denying His goodness. These individuals knew in their hearts the significance of God's blessings but arrogantly defied them. The verses on *kufr* from this period emphasize this interpretation. For instance, QS. 16:113 places *kufr* alongside *ni'mah* (*fakafarat bi an'um Allah*), highlighting the attitude of the Quraysh who were ungrateful for God's bounty. This verse implies that, despite God's continuous unseen will to provide abundant blessings, the Quraysh remained unthankful.

The verses describing disbelief as 'not being grateful for God's blessings' are clearer when *kufr* is juxtaposed with *shukr*, as in QS. 27:40. In this verse, *kufr* is paired with *shukr* (*aasykuru am akfur*) and relates to the virtues (*fadl*) given by God and His omnipotence (*ghaniyun*). Similarly, in QS. 80:17-42, *kufr* is depicted as an attitude of ingratitude towards God's goodness and bounty. Other verses refer directly to God's goodness by mentioning signs, as seen in QS. 19:77. This ingratitude is radically expressed through denial of God, the Messenger, and the revelation. In this context, *kufr* is often paired with words like *fajarah* (disobedience) and *takzīb* (lying), as in QS. 80:42 and QS. 85:25.³³

³² Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras Li Alfāz al-Qur'an al-Karīm*, 406.

³³ Kata *kafir* dengan makna yang demikian dapat dilihat dalam QS. 50:2 dan 24, QS. 90:19, QS. 74:10 dan 31.

In the early Makkah period, the Prophet's mission was to make the people of Makkah aware of God's goodness manifested in the natural world where humans live. The early verses revealed during this time focused on teaching about God's *rubūbiyyah*, emphasizing that God created, guided, and provided for humanity.³⁴ By contemplating His signs, the Quraysh of Makkah, as the initial audience of the Qur'an, were expected to recognize His favor and express gratitude. The Qur'an at this stage urged the people of Makkah to acknowledge their indebtedness to God. However, many denied God's goodness, believing their strength came from their own efforts.³⁵

In addition, the Prophet's teachings during this period addressed the Day of Reckoning and the Day of Judgment, emphasizing a message of justice. These teachings aimed to change the Arab honor ethic by promoting fair treatment of the weak.³⁶ The early Qur'anic messages emphasized that accumulating wealth for personal enjoyment was unjustified, and goodness was achieved by sharing wealth equally.³⁷ This concept aligned with the *karim* principle prevalent in pre-Islamic Arab traditions. The Qur'an warned the Quraysh that their reliance on wealth and clan power would not aid them.³⁸ In this context, those who were ungrateful to God and denied the Day of Judgment were termed disbelievers. Due to this teaching, the Prophet attracted many followers from the weaker segments of Makkah, such as slaves.

The second meaning, in the later period, the verses of *kufr* described the behavior of associating partners with God (*shirk*). While earlier revelations did not emphasize monotheism or the *rubūbiyyah* of God, later revelations focused on the oneness of God. In the ancient Arab tradition, polytheism or *shirk* involved idol worship and minor deities sometimes referred to as the children of God or *banātullah*.³⁹ QS. 6:1 clearly addresses the concept of associating partners with God. The Qur'an describes *kufr* in the form of *shirk* as 'one who stretches out his hands in vain imagining that there is water

34 Muhammad Abid Al Jabiri, *Fahm Al-Qur'an al-Hakim: At-Tafsir al-Wadih Hasba Tartib an-Nuzul* (Beirut: Markaz al-Dirasah al-Wahdat al-'Arabiyyah, 2008), 23.

35 Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad Sang Nabi: Sebuah Biografi Kritis*, Sirikit Syah (Surabaya: Risalah Gusti, 2001), 111–13.

36 John Obert Voll, *Politik Islam: Kelangsungan Dan Perubahan Di Dunia Modern*, Ajat Sudrajat (Yogyakarta: Titian Ilahi Press, 1997), 29.

37 Armstrong, *Muhammad Sang Nabi: Sebuah Biografi Kritis*, 113.

38 Shihab, *Membaca Sang Nabi Muhammad: Dalam Sorotan al-Qur'an Dan Hadis-Hadis Shahih*, 322.

39 W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: At The Clarendon Press, 1953).

in the desert,' indicating that the gods worshipped would not provide any benefit (QS. 13:14). Verses of *kufur* with this meaning were revealed alongside references to the gods worshipped by the Quraysh of Makkah, where the Prophet was accused of insulting their gods or the gods of their ancestors (QS. 27:19-22). This interpretation is supported by the Quraysh's astonishment at the concept of One God, as depicted in QS. 38:2-3. According to the *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the Quraysh approached Abu Talib, who was ill, and complained about Muhammad's preaching of *lā ilāha illa Allāh*, expressing their disbelief with the statement, "One God only? What Muhammad preached is astonishing."⁴⁰

When the Prophet openly presented the teachings of God's goodness and justice, the Quraysh did not initially react strongly, neither accepting nor rejecting Muhammad's message. However, their view changed when the Prophet preached the oneness of God,⁴¹ marking the phase of monotheism. According to al-Jabiri, at this stage, revelation began to emphasize the prohibition of *shirk*. The concept of one God was a groundbreaking discovery, whereas for the Quraysh, worshipping *banātullah* was a sacred duty for all Arabs. Revelation began to explicitly forbid the worship of gods or idols, focusing the mission of *da'wah* on purifying the beliefs of the Prophet's followers by prohibiting them from worshipping their ancestors' gods.⁴² During this era, the term 'kafir' became synonymous with associating partners with God (*shirk*).

The third meaning of *kufur* in some verses from the late Makkah period is as the opposite of faith. After the Prophet spread the teachings of monotheism, the Quraysh began to antagonize him and his followers. This hostility manifested as verbal abuse and boycotts. In response, the Prophet, through Qur'anic revelation, reminded his followers of the risks of abandoning faith.⁴³ During this period, the word *kufur* is often mentioned alongside faith and the consequences of abandoning it. In QS. 16:106 and QS. 35:7, *kufur* is paired with faith, with the reward for *kufur* being punishment from Allah. Additionally, *kufur* appears in verses discussing the faith of the followers of previous prophets, intended to show the trials of faith experienced by both the earlier prophets and the Prophet Muhammad and his followers (QS.

40 Abu al-Husain Ali bin Ahmad Wahidi, *Asbab Nuzul Al-Qur'an* (Riyadh: Dar al-Mainan, n.d.).

41 Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik bin Hisyam, *Al-Sīrah an-Nabawīyyah Li Ibnī Hisyām* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2009), 230.

42 Jabiri, *Fahm Al-Qur'an al-Hakīm: At-Tafsīr al-Waḍiḥ Ḥasba Tartīb an-Nuzūl*, 209.

43 Bernard Lewis, *Bangsa Arab Dalam Lintasan Sejarah: Dari Segi Geografis Sosial, Budaya, Dan Peranan Islam* (Jakarta: Pedomani Ilmu Jaya, 1989), 23–24.

11:42 and QS. 71:26).

Not many Quraysh were willing to make a radical break with the past. Even the Prophet's uncle Abu Talib could not abandon the beliefs of his Makkah Quraysh ancestors.⁴⁴ During this phase, many of the Prophet's followers defected, and some powerful Quraysh leaders began a campaign to eliminate the Prophet. The Quraysh were disturbed by the monotheism introduced by the Prophet, viewing it as a disregard for their ancestral religion.⁴⁵ The Quraysh leaders realized that the presence of the new religion posed a threat to their traditional beliefs.⁴⁶

During this era, the Prophet's followers began to face persecution and oppression from the Quraysh of Makkah. The relationship between the Prophet and the Quraysh deteriorated after he preached the concept of monotheism. The Quraysh resorted to violence and incited the people against the Prophet's companions who had embraced Islam.⁴⁷ Each tribe pressured, attacked, and tempted every Muslim among them to abandon the Prophet's teachings. During this period, the Hashim and Muthalib clans were boycotted by other clans, which united against the Prophet and his followers. The agreement prohibited marriage and trade with the ostracized clans, lasting for two years.⁴⁸ In this context, the word *kufr* is associated with faith. During this period, the Prophet and his followers endured both verbal and physical torture. To strengthen the faith of his followers, revelations frequently emphasized the consequences of abandoning faith.

'Kafir' in the Madaniyah Verses

The growing opposition from the Quraysh of Makkah, including boycotts, prompted the Prophet Muhammad and his followers to leave the city. For those without a protective tribe, such as slaves, migrating (*hijrah*) was the best option.⁴⁹ After failing in Thaif, the Prophet received an invitation from the people of Yastrib (Medina), who were embroiled in conflicts between the Arab tribes of Aus and Khazraj and the Jewish tribes of Yastrib. They

44 Hisyam, *Al-Sīrah an-Nabawiyah Li Ibni Hisyām*, 198.

45 Armstrong, *Muhammad Sang Nabi: Sebuah Biografi Kritis*, 140.

46 Lewis, *Bangsa Arab Dalam Lintasan Sejarah: Dari Segi Geografis Sosial, Budaya, Dan Peranan Islam*, 23–24.

47 Hitti, *History of the Arab*, 142.

48 Armstrong, *Muhammad Sang Nabi: Sebuah Biografi Kritis*, 182.

49 Abdul Aziz, *Chieftdom Madinah: Kerucut Kekuasaan Pasa Zaman Awal Islam*, Ahmad Baedowi (Jakarta: Pustaka Alfabet, 2016), 216.

requested the Prophet to mediate.⁵⁰ Muhammad also needed a safe place for his community from Quraysh attacks.⁵¹ In the Medina phase, the term 'kafir' gained new nuances. This shift seems related to the polemical atmosphere the Prophet faced with his critics.⁵² Early Medina revelations began to criticize Jewish and Christian behaviors as *kufir*. Additionally, the term also applied to Muslims, especially the Ansar who betrayed the Prophet.⁵³

First, the word *kufir* is associated with the behavior of the Jews of Medina who betrayed the Prophet. In several verses from the early Medinan period, the Qur'an uses the term *kufir* to criticize the actions of the Jews of Medina, particularly those who betrayed the Prophet. This criticism was especially aimed at the Jews of the Banu Qainuqā', who antagonized the Prophet earlier than any other Jewish group. The Qur'an explicitly mentions the Banu Qainuqā' as having committed *kufir* (QS. 3:12-13). A few years later, the Banu Naḍir also became hostile to the Prophet. These two groups are referred to by the Qur'an as the *kufir* among the Ahl Kitāb (QS. 59:11).

Under the guidance of revelation, the Prophet came to understand the significant differences between Jews and Christians, who were initially perceived as belonging to a single religion. The Prophet's debates with the Jews did not impact his relations with Christians. At times, the Qur'an sided with Christians in their disputes with Jews, such as refuting the Jewish claim that Christians crucified Jesus. The Prophet responded that Jesus did not truly die on the cross and condemned the Jews for their accusations against Christians (QS. 4:156-157). In this context, the Qur'an's criticism of the Jews is more pronounced than its criticism of the Christians. The Qur'an declares that the polytheists and Jews are most hostile to Muslims, while Christians are the closest (QS. 5:82). Nevertheless, the Qur'an rejects the Christian belief that God has children, a notion the Prophet, who endured much for opposing the idea of God's daughters, could not support (QS. 6:101).

When the Prophet arrived in Yastrib, a treaty was established between him and the people of Yastrib. All tribes in Yastrib were to set aside their

50 Voll, *Politik Islam: Kelangsungan Dan Perubahan Di Dunia Modern*, 30.

51 Ajid Thahir, *Sirah Nabawiyah: Nabi Muhammad Dalam Kajian Ilmu Sosial-Humaniora* (Bandung: Marja, 2014), 242.

52 Nafisatul Mu'awwanah, "The Quran's Perspective on Followers of Other Religions Through the Interpretation of Tartīb al-Nuzūl by Abid al-Jabiri," *QOF* 7, no. 2 (December 29, 2023): 163–82, <https://doi.org/10.30762/qof.v7i2.1285>.

53 Nafisatul Mu'awwanah, "The Concept of Justice In the System of the Confliction Through Contextualization of Surah Al-Mā'ida 44-47 (Application of Abdullah Saeed's Contextual Approach)," *Ulumuna* 22, no. 1 (May 28, 2018): 172–203, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujs.v22i1.302>.

animosities and form a unified, better community. Muslims and Jews were to live peacefully with the pagans of Medina, provided they did not form alliances with Makkah to expel the Prophet.⁵⁴ Initially, the Jews acknowledged the Prophet, but they eventually aligned with Abdullāh b. Ubay, a native of Medina who aspired to rule the city. As the Jews' influence in Medina waned following the Prophet's arrival, they, along with Abdullāh b. Ubay, sought to betray him. This rejection and betrayal by the Jews likely caused significant disappointment to the Prophet.⁵⁵

There are several incidents that highlight the polemics between the Prophet and the Jews. Initially, the Jews of Banu Qainuqā' violated their treaty with Muhammad and rekindled old alliances to oppose him.⁵⁶ This conflict escalated after the Prophet's defeat at the battle of Uhud.⁵⁷ Jews outside of Qainuqā', particularly from the Banu Naḍir, began to claim that Muhammad was merely an ambitious man without a divine mandate.⁵⁸ The Banu Naḍir's betrayal was followed by that of the Banu Quraizah in the fifth year after the hijrah. The Banu Naḍir attempted to persuade their kin, the Banu Quraizah, to join them. Initially, the leader of the Banu Quraizah rejected this invitation and remained loyal to the treaty of Medina, but eventually, the Banu Quraizah adopted a hostile stance towards the Prophet and his followers.⁵⁹

Secondly, the verses on *kufir* during the Medina era are also connected to Muslims who behaved hypocritically. This was due to the betrayal of the Prophet by the Ansar. The Qur'an contains several verses that describe hypocrites, characterizing them as individuals who profess belief with their words but deny it in their hearts. In the Qur'an, hypocrisy often involves displaying faith while concealing disbelief, which is considered an act of *kufir* (QS. 5:41). Beyond faith, hypocrisy is linked to behavior that deviates from Qur'anic commands. A hypocrite is described as one who promotes evil and discourages good, thus being classified as *fāsiq* (QS. 9:67). This hypocrite is portrayed as being closer to disbelief than faith (QS. 3:167). In addition to being described as *fāsiq* and disbelievers, hypocrites are also labeled as liars (QS. 63:1). Hypocrites are those who betray or fail to keep their promises, particularly the agreements made by the Prophet to unite the community in Medina and during the hijra (QS. 59:11).

In addition to being associated with the behavior of the Jews of Medina, Qur'anic verses using the term *kufir* are also linked to acts of

54 Amstrong, *Muhammad Sang Nabi: Sebuah Biografi Kritis*, 214.

55 Amstrong, 218.

56 W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Madina* (Oxford: At The Clarendon Press, 1956).

57 QS. 6:152, QS. 6:25

58 Amstrong, *Muhammad Sang Nabi: Sebuah Biografi Kritis*, 269.

59 Shihab, *Membaca Sang Nabi Muhammad: Dalam Sorotan al-Qur'an Dan Hadis-Hadis Shahih*, 599.

betrayal by individuals who previously declared their faith in Islam. At the beginning of the covenant with the people of Medina, the Prophet recognized a significant issue among the Ansar. Not all those in Medina who converted to Islam were genuinely devout; many embraced Islam for convenience rather than conviction. For them, conversion was a means to avoid being left out. These individuals are referred to as hypocrites in the Qur'an. The leader of the hypocrites was Abdullāh b. Ubay, a chieftain who would have become the king of Yastrib if the Prophet had not arrived. Ibn Ubay was highly enthusiastic and always poised to exploit any new problem that arose in Medina.⁶⁰

The first incident that revealed their hypocrisy occurred after the battle of Badr. Ibn Ubay, with support from the Jewish tribes, began to fear Muhammad's influence in Medina and saw Makkah as an ally. Before the hijra, Ibn Ubay was an ally of the Jews, but after the battle of Badr, they broke their agreement with Muhammad and revived the old alliance to eliminate him.⁶¹ Additionally, after the battle of Uhud, the hypocrites withdrew from the conflict. On the way to battle, Abdullāh b. Ubay managed to sway 300 people. In the 9th year AH, during the battle of Tabuk, the number of hypocrites increased significantly. They were present not only in Medina but also in the surrounding areas.⁶² In this context, the term 'kafir' is used for individuals who previously professed Islam but displayed low morality. This behavior is referred to as hypocrisy or treacherous conduct. Besides hypocrite, other terms used to describe such individuals include *fasiq* (wicked), *dzalim* (tyrant), *mufsid* (destroyer), *sufahā'* (ignorant), *mu'tad* (transgressor), and liar.

The Term 'Kafir' in The Context of Early Political Divisions

The political divisions that emerged in the early centuries of Islam contributed to variations in the interpretation of the term 'kafir'. Among Ahl al-Sunnah, the official government party, the meaning of 'kafir' differed from that held by the Khawarij political elite, who opposed the government, and the Shi'ah elite, who were sometimes silent and sometimes opposed to the government.

'Kafir' in Ahl al-Sunnah

Ahl al-Sunnah's political thought did not emerge until the early days of political divisions in Islam's development. However, its origins can be traced through the presence of hadith scholars and fiqh scholars who were not initially part of political parties.⁶³ Among these scholars, the term 'kafir'

60 Armstrong, *Muhammad Sang Nabi: Sebuah Biografi Kritis*, 218.

61 Armstrong, 261.

62 Shihab, *Membaca Sang Nabi Muhammad: Dalam Sorotan al-Qur'an Dan Hadis-Hadis Shahih*, 598.

63 M Arkound and Louis Gardet, *Islam Kemaren Dan Hari Esok*, Ahsin Mohammad (Bandung: Penerbit Pustaka, 1997), 71.

is interpreted differently by each tradition due to their varied responses to the government and early political conflicts. Since Ahl al-Sunnah was rarely in opposition to the government, they were considered more experienced in being the ruling elite.

First, the Hadith scholars' views on the meaning of disbelief in the Qur'an can be traced through the books of interpretation that emerged among the early hadith scholars with their narrative styles. Among the commentaries representative of the early hadith scholars' tradition are those by Ibn 'Abbās (10 AH/619 AD-78 AH/687 AD), Mujāhid (21 AH/642 AD-104 AH/722 AD), Muqātil b. Sulaimān (109 AH/702 AD-150 AH/767 AD), and aṭ-Ṭabarī (224 AH/839 AD-310 AH/923 AD).

Several verses in the Qur'an describe 'kafir' as denying God's goodness or being ungrateful, such as QS. 16:112, QS. 27:40, and QS. 19:77. Mujahid and Muqatil explained that QS. 16:112 pertains to the favors and bounties received by the people of Makkah, indicated by the phrase *qaryatan kānat āminatan muṭmainnah*, but these were denied by the people of Makkah.⁶⁴ Al-Ṭabarī states that Makkah was inhabited by idolaters who lived peacefully without war, and *kufr* here includes ingratitude for denying the signs of God's power and His Messenger.⁶⁵ QS. 27:40 and QS. 19:77 are also interpreted as ingratitude by early mufassirs. According to Al-Ṭabarī, QS. 27:40 relates to God's gift to Prophet Solomon, who received the throne instantly, and *kufr* is seen as self-persecution that does not affect God's power.⁶⁶ QS. 19:77, according to Mujahid⁶⁷ and Muqatil⁶⁸, refers to al-'Aṣ b. al-Wā'il, who had wealth and children as gifts from God that would return to Him in the hereafter. Al-Ṭabarī explains that *kufr* here includes the denial of God's verses and promises in the hereafter.⁶⁹

Verses describing disbelief as associating partners with God include QS. 6:1 and QS. 13:33. Mujāhid explains that QS. 6:1 refers to the people

64 Abū al-Hajjaj Mujāhid bin Jabr al-Qarshiy Makhzumīy, *Tafsīr Mujāhid*, Abū Muhammad al-Asbuṭī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2005), 135–52. Muqātil bin Sulaimān, *Tafsīr Muqātil Bin Sulaimān* (Beirut: Mu'assasah at-Tārikh al-'Arabiy, 2002), 490.

65 Abū Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarīr Ṭabari, *Jamī' al-Bayān 'an Ta'Wīl al-Qur'an* (Kairo: Dār al-Ḥadīs, 2010), 275–77.

66 Ṭabari, 290–97.

67 Makhzumīy, *Tafsīr Mujāhid*, 152.

68 Sulaimān, *Tafsīr Muqātil Bin Sulaimān*, 174.

69 Ṭabari, *Jamī' al-Bayān 'an Ta'Wīl al-Qur'an*, 797.

of Makkah who associate partners with God.⁷⁰ According to Al-Ṭabarī, the *kufir* behavior in this verse starts with the denial of God's blessings, which then evolves into associating partners with God in worship.⁷¹ Similarly, QS. 13:33 addresses the behavior of associating partners with God. Ibn 'Abbās⁷² and Muqātil⁷³ stated that this verse pertains to the polytheists of Makkah who created partners for God. Al-Ṭabarī explains that disbelief in this verse refers to those who worship gods other than Allah, emphasizing that it is inappropriate to associate partners with God, who provides sustenance to all His creatures.⁷⁴

Some verses indicate 'kafir' as opposed to faith, such as QS. 16:106 and QS. 13:30-31. Ibn 'Abbās explained that QS. 16:106 pertains to the threat against those who abandon their faith.⁷⁵ Mujāhid narrated that some believers from Makkah were ordered to migrate to Madinah but were tortured by the Quraysh and forced to renounce their faith.⁷⁶ According to Al-Ṭabarī, this verse specifically concerns those who revert to disbelief after believing, including 'Ammār b. Yasīr, who was coerced by the Quraysh of Makkah.⁷⁷ QS. 13:30-31, according to Muqātil, addresses the unbelieving polytheists of Makkah, such as Aswad b. Abd Yagūs and Šu'āb. This interpretation is supported by Al-Ṭabarī's explanation that the term 'kafir' in this verse refers to the unbelieving polytheists.⁷⁸

The verses about 'kafir' that relate to the hypocrisy of the Jews who were previously in covenant with Muhammad include QS. 59:1-11 and QS. 5:44. According to Muqātil, the term 'kafir' in QS. 59:1 refers to the Jews of Banu Nadhir, who were expelled from Medina after the battle of Uhud due to their hypocritical behavior towards the Prophet. Muqātil specifically mentions that the disbelievers in QS. 59:11 are Hayyu b. Akhṭāb, Abū Yāsir, and Mālik b. Ḍayyif from Banu Quraizah.⁷⁹ Unlike Muqātil, al-Ṭabarī

70 Makhzumīy, *Tafsīr Mujāhid*, 73.

71 Ṭabarī, *Jamī' al-Bayān 'an Ta'Wīl al-Qur'an*, 805.

72 Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad bin Ya'qūb Fairuzabadiy, *Tanwīr Al-Miqbās Min Tafsīr Ibnu 'Abbās* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikri, 1951), 450.

73 Sulaimān, *Tafsīr Muqātil Bin Sulaimān*, 381.

74 Ṭabarī, *Jamī' al-Bayān 'an Ta'Wīl al-Qur'an*, 839.

75 Fairuzabadiy, *Tanwīr Al-Miqbās Min Tafsīr Ibnu 'Abbās*, 476.

76 Makhzumīy, *Tafsīr Mujāhid*, 13.

77 Ṭabarī, *Jamī' al-Bayān 'an Ta'Wīl al-Qur'an*, 270.

78 Ṭabarī, *Jamī' al-Bayān 'an Ta'Wīl al-Qur'an*, 343.

79 Sulaimān, *Tafsīr Muqātil Bin Sulaimān*, 276–80.

attributes QS. 59:11 to the cooperation between the Jews of Banu Nadhir and the hypocrites of the Ansar to betray the Prophet.⁸⁰ QS. 5:44, according to al-Ṭabarī, addresses the Jews of Medina's question about the punishment for *mukhṣan* adultery and the equality of murder diyat between Banu Nadhir and Banu Quraizah. They were labeled disbelievers for concealing the truth in the Torah regarding *mukhṣan* adultery and the diyat of murder.⁸¹

The term 'kafir' also relates to the hypocrisy of Muslims from among the Anshar, as found in QS. 5:41. According to Muqātil, this verse refers to those who outwardly affirm Islam but deny it in their hearts. Muqātil specifically mentions that this verse was revealed in connection with Abū Lubābah (Marwan b. Abd al-Munẓir al-Anṣārī) from Banu 'Amr b. 'Auf, who tried to create conflict between the Prophet Muhammad and the Jews of Banu Quraizah.⁸² Al-Ṭabarī mentions another narration related to Abdullāh b. Suriyah, who apostatized after declaring his Islam.⁸³ A similar interpretation is found in QS. 3:166-167. According to al-Ṭabarī, this verse addresses the hypocrites of Medina, such as Abdullāh b. Ubay and his followers, who defected from the Prophet and the Companions during the battle of Uhud.⁸⁴ Muqātil⁸⁵ and Mujāhid⁸⁶ also interpret that the term *kufr* in this verse refers to the hypocrites. The hypocrisy described by the word 'kafir' is also evident in QS. 2:19. According to Muqātil, this verse describes the nature and consequences of their unfaithful behavior.⁸⁷

Secondly, in contrast to the interpretation in the Ahl al-Hadis tradition, which gives meaning according to the context of revelation, the meaning of 'kafir' in the Ahl al-Fiqih tradition appears to have evolved. Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH), with his *fiqh* style of interpretation, associates *kufr*, especially those that emerged in the Medina era, with *ahl zimmah* and *ahl millah*. In QS. 5:40, Al-Qurṭubī mentions several narrations for the revelation of this verse. One relates to a murder case between Banu Quraizah and Banu Naḍir, where the Prophet acted as a just mediator, involving Abū Lubābah, whom the

80 Ṭabarī, *Jamī' al-Bayān 'an Ta'Wīl al-Qur'an*, 747.

81 Ṭabarī, 588.

82 Sulaimān, *Tafsīr Muqātil Bin Sulaimān*, 483.

83 Ṭabarī, *Jamī' al-Bayān 'an Ta'Wīl al-Qur'an*, 527.

84 Ṭabarī, 525.

85 Sulaimān, *Tafsīr Muqātil Bin Sulaimān*, 92.

86 Makhzumīy, *Tafsīr Mujāhid*, 43.

87 Sulaimān, *Tafsīr Muqātil Bin Sulaimān*, 92.

Prophet sent to Banu Quraizah, and a case of adultery among the Jews. After elaborating on the narration, Qurṭubi extends the understanding outside the specific context of the verse, referring to Jews and Christians as *ahl zimmah* in a statehood context. Qurṭubi cites the opinions of Imam Maliki and Imam Shāfi'ī, stating that if a case does not involve injustice, the imam may choose to act or not, and if acting, it must follow Islamic law as referenced in this verse. Imam Abū Hanīfah holds that this applies to all cases. Al-Qurṭubi also notes the narration of Ibn Suriyah as a Jewish witness, concluding that men can mediate, but for *hudūd* matters based on this verse, it must be submitted to the imam, as pagan testimony in *hudūd* matters is not accepted.⁸⁸

In QS. 2:120, Qurṭubi associates disbelief with Jews and Christians and quotes scholars such as Abū Ḥanīfah, Shāfi'ī, Dāwud, and Ahmad b. Hanbal as stating that all disbelievers are one *millah*. Qurṭubi also references QS. 109 and interprets it with a hadith that states there is no inheritance between two *ahl millah*, meaning between a disbeliever and a Muslim. This hadith confirms that a Muslim cannot inherit from a disbeliever. Qurṭubi further quotes a narration from Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad, which asserts that within the community of disbelievers, there are many millahs, so Jews cannot inherit from Christians, and neither can the Magi. As with al-Qurṭubi's interpretation in QS. 5:40 regarding the status of *ahl zimmah*, in these last two verses, he relates it to the status of *ahl millah*.⁸⁹

Imam al-Syāfi'ī's *al-Umm* reflects the views of fiqh scholars on the term 'kafir' in the early to middle period of Islam. Although there is no specific chapter on disbelief, al-Syāfi'ī alludes to verses containing the term disbelief in the discussion of *Kitāb al-Jihād wa al-Jizyah*, which addresses war and relations with non-Muslims.⁹⁰ Al-Syāfi'ī explains the verses on 'kafir' in relation to the polytheists of Mecca as *dār ash-shirk* due to their significant hostility towards Muslims.⁹¹ The term 'kafir' is used by al-Syāfi'ī to describe the fundamental difference between Muslims and non-Muslims in various contexts of Islamic law. In *al-Umm*, al-Syāfi'ī also discusses *jizyah*, a tax imposed on Ahl Kitāb (Jews and Christians) living in an Islamic country and bound by a peace treaty (*zimmah*). This *jizyah* provides protection for their lives and property in exchange for paying the tax. The Ahl Kitāb follow their own religious

88 Abū Abdullah Muhammad bin Ahmad Al Qurṭubi, *Al-Jamī' Li Ahkām al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2014), 114–19.

89 Qurṭubi, 65.

90 Muhammad bin Idris Syāfi'ī, *Al-Umm* (Riyad: Dar al-Wafa', 2008), 365.

91 Syāfi'ī, 365.

rules and have freedom in some aspects of the law. Nonetheless, there are strict rules imposed, such as the use of wooden symbols in their homes and certain prohibitions in social interactions with Muslims.⁹²

During the Abbasid caliphate, the position of *ahl zimmah*, particularly Jews and Christians, received special treatment distinct from that of Muslims. They were considered second-class citizens with higher taxes, but they enjoyed freedom of religion and were permitted to hold important government positions.⁹³ Discriminatory policies were sometimes applied but not always consistently. During this period, Jews were often treated more favorably than Christians because they were fewer in number and did not pose a threat to the caliphate.⁹⁴ This situation reflects the complex dynamics of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in early Islamic history, which differed from the context of revelation.

'Kafir' in Khawarij

Khawarij thought is generally recognized for its strict adherence to the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah.⁹⁵ They built their view of faith and disbelief on two main principles: judgment of the previous ruler and the obligation to rebel (*al-khurūj*) against the ruler they faced. They acknowledged the validity of allegiance to Abu Bakr and Umar, and supported 'Uthman during the first six years of his caliphate, but rejected his leadership in the last six years. Regarding 'Ali, they considered his allegiance valid until just before the *tahkim*, after which they ostracized him and declared him a disbeliever, similar to their stance on 'Uthman in his later years. The Khawarij were notorious for their opposition to the Umayyad government.⁹⁶ According to Abdullah Saeed, the Khawarij's elaboration of these ideas was based on a literal reading of the text, without considering its deeper meaning.⁹⁷

The Khawarij principle on the issue of disbelief is based on QS. 5:44, which became known as the slogan *lā ḥukma illā lillāh* (there is no law but the law of Allah).⁹⁸ According to the Khawarij, Ali was considered a disbeliever based on QS. 2:204, which was the reason for his assassination. Besides

92 Syāfi'ī, 379–82.

93 Joseph Schacht, *Pengantar Hukum Islam*, Joko Supomo (Bandung: Penerbit Nuansa, 2010), 191–95.

94 Lewis, *Bangsa Arab Dalam Lintasan Sejarah: Dari Segi Geografis Sosial, Budaya, Dan Peranan Islam*, 20.

95 Naveen Abdul Khalik Musthafa, *Oposisi Islam*, Khatimatul Husna (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2012), 256.

96 Musthafa, 258.

97 Abdullah Saeed, *The Qur'an: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008), 202.

98 Musthafa, *Oposisi Islam*, 262.

'Ali, the Khawarij also claimed that 'Uthman, Ṭalhah, Zubayr, 'Aishah, and Ibn 'Abbas were disbelievers based on QS. 2:207. This interpretation was famously put forward by the Khawarij Al-Azariqah sect, which argued that these individuals had exchanged the life of the Hereafter for the life of the world.⁹⁹ Based on QS. 49:9, the Khawarij considered disbelievers those who were involved in the Battle of Jamal, the Battle of Siffin, and *tahkīm*, as well as Muawiyah and his followers. These people were seen as having violated Islamic law, which is one of the foundations of the religion.¹⁰⁰

In addition to considering their opposition groups as in a state of disbelief, the Khawarij movement, especially Al-Azariqah, also regarded children born to polytheist families as disbelievers. This view is based on QS. 71:26-27, which states that these individuals will enter hell and their blood is lawful due to their inherent disbelief. The Khawarij Al-Azariqah used this verse to justify the disbelief of children from families who differed with them or lived outside their territory.¹⁰¹ This view is further supported by QS. 5:5, which states that those who do not share the Khawarij's religious beliefs and practices are considered disbelievers, and their land is considered a disbelieving land, except for those who openly display their faith.¹⁰² Based on QS. 54:43, they were likened to Arab polytheists who were not eligible to pay the *jizyah*. Between the Khawarij and these individuals, there were only two options: Islam or the sword.¹⁰³ According to the Khawarij, the Prophet could experience disbelief before his prophethood. This opinion is based on QS. 35:1, which indicates that a Prophet can commit minor and major sins before repenting.¹⁰⁴ Another Khawarij sect, Al-Shufriyyah, led by Zuyad b. Al-Ashfar, almost agreed with Al-Azariqah but did not go as far in the issue of killing children and women, refraining from killing or declaring the children of polytheists as disbelievers.¹⁰⁵

In the Khawarij view, there is no difference between sin and disbelief.¹⁰⁶ They consider all forms of sin to be the same. One of the sins, according to

99 Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God*, 5.

100 Montgomery Watt, *Politik Islam Dalam Lintasan Sejarah*, Helmi Ali dan Muntaha Azhari (Jakarta: P3M, 1988), 88–89.

101 'Amir Najjar, *Al-Khawarij Aqidah Fikiran Wa Falsafah* (Kairo: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1988), 155.

102 Najjar, 192.

103 Najjar, 156.

104 Najjar, 157.

105 Najjar, 164.

106 Musthafa, *Oposisi Islam*, 258.

the Khawarij, is an error in giving an opinion, including an error in *ijtihad*. This view is based on QS. 3:106, which explains that a *fāsiq* (perpetrator of a major sin) cannot be white-faced and radiant and is therefore considered a disbeliever.¹⁰⁷ This Khawarij perspective is also rooted in QS. 2:81, which states that those who commit major sins and do not repent are considered disbelievers and will be punished in hell for their disbelief. For the Khawarij, unrepentant perpetrators of major sins will be in hell forever. They also believed that salvation and forgiveness could only be obtained through faith and good deeds. For the Khawarij, charity is a reflection of faith and is even considered part of faith itself.¹⁰⁸

'Kafir' in Shi'a

There are two main approaches to Qur'anic interpretation among the Shi'a: *ẓahīr* (literal) and *baṭīn* (hidden). The majority of Shi'a commentaries tend to use the *baṭīn* approach. This *baṭīn* approach includes secondary meanings hidden behind the literal meaning (*ẓahīr*) of the Qur'an. These meanings are often symbolic and are considered to be understood only by those with deep knowledge (*rāsikhūn fil 'ilmi*), and are frequently related to the veneration of Ahl al-Bait and the Imams.¹⁰⁹ The development of these characteristics in Shi'a tafsir is closely related to the political history of the time. According to Imam al-Ḍahabī, the emphasis on the *baṭīn* meaning of the Qur'an first appeared in the context of their rejection of the contemporary leadership, by criticizing the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties.¹¹⁰

To understand the meaning of 'kafir' in the Qur'an according to the Shi'ah, it is necessary to refer to some tafsir books written by their scholars. One such work is *at-Tibyān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'an* by Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Hussein aṭ-Ṭusi, representing the *ẓahīr* or moderate school of tafsir. This tafsir developed in the 5th century AH, during the dominance of Sunni thought in Baghdad. Additionally, *Ta'wīlu al-Āyāti az-Ẓāhirah fi Faḍāili al-'Itrāti aṭ-Ṭāhirah* by al-Sayyīd Sharafu al-Dīn 'Alī al-Husaini al-Istirābādiy represents the *baṭīn* school of interpretation. This tafsir emerged in the 10th century AH, alongside the development of akhbāri thought among the Shi'ah, who

107 Musthafa, 261.

108 Musthafa, 261.

109 Ma'rifat, *Ahl Bait Dan Al-Qur'an Warisan Abadi Nabi Yang Suci*, Rizal Fahrizal (Jakarta: Nur al-Huda, 2013), 60.

110 Muhammad Husein Al Dzahabi, *At-Tafsir Wa al-Mufasssirun* (Kairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2000).

contributed many books containing narrations from the Ahl Bait.¹¹¹

Aṭ-Ṭusi, a Shi'ah scholar who developed a moderate approach to Qur'anic interpretation, interpreted the word 'kafir' in the same way as Sunni scholars from Ahl Hadith. For example, when he explains QS. 2:24, which refers to the *fāsiq* people who reject Muhammad's prophethood except after being given clear evidence. According to aṭ-Ṭusi, this verse describes polytheists, hypocrites, and disbelievers from Ahl al-Kitāb.¹¹² This interpretation is further clarified when aṭ-Ṭusi interprets QS. 2:85. This verse tells the story of the Aus and Khazraj tribes in Medina, who were previously idolaters and engaged in wars among themselves. They later allied themselves with Jewish tribes: the Khazraj with the Banu Qunaiqā', and the Aus with the Banu Naḍir and Quraizah. This conflict led to them killing each other and expelling each other from their homes. Because of this behavior, the Jews of Medina were considered believers in the Torah but also disbelievers for violating the Torah by killing each other and expelling their brothers. Thus, in this context, disbelief denotes behavior that violates the commandments in the Torah.¹¹³

However, amid his hostility towards the Khawarij, aṭ-Ṭusi also recorded a narration countering the Khawarij opinion, specifically when interpreting QS. 5:40-47. In particular, QS. 5:44 specifically addresses the hypocrites who were hostile towards the Prophet Muhammad. They profess faith with their words, but their hearts do not confirm it. Therefore, in this context, 'kafir' refers to both the hypocrites and the Jews who betrayed the Prophet. Aṭ-Ṭusi quotes Ibn 'Abbās, Jabir, and Sā'id b. Musayab as saying that the Jews in question were from Banu Naḍir and Banu Quraizah, who removed the punishment of stoning from the Torah and replaced it with 40 lashes, along with blackening their faces and parading them with donkeys. Aṭ-Ṭusi notes the difference of opinion as to whether this verse is general or specific. According to al-Jubā'i, this verse is specific to the Jewish people. Al-Jubā'i argues that this verse cannot be used as proof by the Khawarij to declare Muslims outside their group as disbelievers, due to the specificity of this verse related to the Jews.¹¹⁴

111 Ulya Fikriyati, *Corak Akhbari Dalam Tafsir Syi'ah Kajian Atas al-Burhan Fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* (Sumenep: Instik an-Nuqayyah, 2012), 191.

112 Abū Ja'far Muhammad bin Husein Ṭusi, *At-Tibyan Fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dār Ihya' at-Turats al-'Arabī, n.d.), 107.

113 Ṭusi, 336.

114 Ṭusi, 523–32.

The tafsir *baṭīn* that developed among the Shi'ah includes the interpretation proposed by al-Istirābādī. In al-Istirābādī's interpretation, almost every verse in the Qur'an is interpreted to praise the virtues of 'Ali. This interpretation is evident in his explanation of disbelief in QS. 2:6. According to al-Istirābādī, in this verse, 'kafir' is the opposite of mu'min. He defines mu'min as those who believe in the oneness of Allah, the prophethood of Muhammad, Muhammad's will regarding the leadership of Ali, and the sanctity of the Imams.¹¹⁵ In interpreting other verses, such as QS. 2:37, al-Istirābādī states that the primary address in this verse is to the Jews or the Children of Israel. However, he also extends this interpretation to those who denied Muhammad and the virtues of Ali and his holy family, who he considers the best successors after Muhammad. According to al-Istirābādī, the disbelievers in this verse are those who reject the truth of Muhammad's prophethood and deny the leadership of his holy descendants.¹¹⁶

In QS. 2:41, although al-Istirābādī relates this verse to the Jews of Medina who opposed prophethood and betrayed Muhammad, the term 'kafir' also pertains to those who rejected the righteousness of Ali as his successor.¹¹⁷ Al-Istirābādī's *baṭīn* interpretation further intensifies in QS. 2:90, where disbelievers are those who reject what Allah has revealed to 'Ali.¹¹⁸ Additionally, in QS. 2:253, there is a more political interpretation where believers are identified as the Shi'ah, while those differing in theological and political contexts are considered disbelievers.¹¹⁹ This interpretation is reinforced by QS. 2:254-255, which describe the transition from the light of Islam to the darkness of disbelief due to the rejection of Allah's just Imam, Ali.¹²⁰ In QS. 16:43, it is mentioned that disbelievers are those hostile to Shi'ism.¹²¹ Furthermore, in QS. 4:170, disbelievers are those who do not pledge allegiance to 'Ali as the leader after Muhammad. Al-Istirābādī explains that this verse was revealed for those who initially believed in the Prophet but later neglected to pledge allegiance to 'Ali, leading them to *kufr*.¹²²

115 Istirābādī, *As-Sayyid Syarafu Ad-Dīn 'Ali al-Ḥusaini. Ta'Wīlu al-Āyāti Adz-Dzāhirah Fī Fadlāili al-Ītrati Ath-Thāhirah* (Madrasah al-Imām al-Mahdī, n.d.), 34.

116 Istirābādī, 49.

117 Istirābādī, 56.

118 Istirābādī, 76.

119 Istirābādī, 95.

120 Istirābādī, 96.

121 Istirābādī, 255.

122 Istirābādī, 148.

This is further elaborated in QS. 18:89, where disbelievers are those who do not recognize Ali's leadership.¹²³ In QS. 24:39, it is explicitly mentioned that the disbelievers are Banu Umayyah due to their hostility towards Ali's descendants. This verse is illustrated in QS. 24:40 with a parable depicting Banu Umayyah's enmity towards Ali's lineage. Al-Istirābādī's interpretation reflects the theological and political views within the Shi'ah circles of his time.¹²⁴

The Term 'Kafir' in The Nation-State Context

The biggest challenge of the 19th and 20th centuries was modernization, particularly in the political sphere, with the emergence and dominance of the nation-state concept.¹²⁵ The meaning of the word 'kafir' in the Qur'an underwent significant development during this era. The meaning of the word 'kafir' in the Qur'an during this time appears in the context of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims on one hand, and the relationship between non-Muslims and the state on the other.¹²⁶ This evolution in the meaning of 'kafir' can be observed through the interpretations of modern mufassirs or thinkers who attempt to provide new perspectives within modern and contemporary social, political, and cultural contexts.

One of these modern interpreters was Muhammad Abduh, an Egyptian mufassir and reformer. Abduh's thoughts as an Egyptian reformer can be traced in his tafsir book, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, written by his student, Rasyīd Riḍā. In *Tafsīr al-Manār*, the verse most relevant to power in the evolving political system is QS. 5:44-47. Abduh also explains the definition of 'kafir', both in terms of language and terminology, found at the beginning of QS. 2. According to Abduh, 'kafir' in QS. 5:44-47 has a different meaning from *zālim* and *fāsiq*, although they are mentioned consecutively in this verse. He notes that in terms of terminology, the scholars of *ūṣul* and *fūrū'* define *kufr* as leaving the religion, which is different from the meanings of *ẓulm* and *fiṣq*. However, there is a term *kufr* that does not imply disbelief in the full sense, referred to as *kufr dūna kufrin*. Abduh argues that abandoning Allah's law for another does not lead to disbelief in the sense of leaving Islam, but implies

123 Istirābādī, 290.

124 Istirābādī, 363.

125 Saifuddin, *Khilafah Vis a Vis Nation State* (Yogyakarta: Maha Meru, 2012), 3.

126 Paola Pizzo, "The 'Coptic Question' in Post-Revolutionary Egypt: Citizenship, Democracy, Religion," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 3, no. 14 (September 28, 2015): 2598–2613.

committing a major sin.¹²⁷

Abduh also discussed the application of laws formulated by the British or the West in the interpretation of this verse. He asks whether it is permissible for a Muslim to apply laws formulated by the British, even if they contain laws other than the laws of Allah. Abduh argued that law enforcement in a state of war (*dār al-ḥarbi*), when it relates to worldly matters (*qāḍiyah*) such as *ḥudūd*, is allowed to use *ta'zīr* punishment based on the judge's *ijtihād*. When there is a law that is left to reason and *ijtihād*, but considers justice and *maslahah*, then it is permissible to use the law to obtain benefits and *maslahah* for Muslims. However, if the law causes harm to Muslims, then it should not be used as a law. In relation to the laws in *dār al-ḥarbi*, which do not enforce Islamic law, it is obligatory for Muslims to migrate unless there is an excuse and benefit for Muslims. Abduh concluded that the Muslims' acceptance of British laws is referred to as *rukḥṣah*. *Dār al-ḥarbi* here is defined as a country ruled by non-Muslims, even if they are not fighting Muslims.¹²⁸

When Abduh alludes to *dār al-ḥarbi* in this verse, he uses the term non-Muslim (*ghair al-muslim*), and not the term 'kafir'. Abduh's use of this term appears to be in the context of his status as a citizen. This can be seen in Abduh's book, *Risālah al-Tauḥīd*, where he also discusses the status of non-Muslims in the nation-state. In the book, Abduh does not use the term 'kafir', but *ghair al-muslim*.¹²⁹ Abduh had abandoned the concept of *ahl zimmah* in favor of constitutionalism and in the context of citizenship. According to Abduh, *al-waṭan* is a place of physical safety because of a sense of common ownership. Unity is necessary in political life, and the strongest kind of unity is among those who live in the same state, not only as a place of residence, but also in the possession of equal rights and obligations. Non-Muslims are as much a part of the nation as Muslims. As such, there should be good relations between those of different religions within the same country.¹³⁰

However, in the context of theology, Abduh still uses the word 'kafir' and provides explanations that align with other scholars of tafsir. For example, in QS. 2:9, Abduh explains that in linguistic terms, *kufr* means to cover or obstruct something. Abduh also discusses several interpretations

127 Muhammad Rasyīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr Al-Manār* (Kairo: Huqūq at-Ṭab'ī Mahfūzah li Warasatihi, 1947), 399–403.

128 Riḍā, 407–9.

129 Syekh Muhammad Abduh, *Risalah Tauhid* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1976), 72.

130 Abduh, 72.

of *kufr*, such as *kufr* of blessings, which is caused by a lack of gratitude for Allah's blessings. Additionally, *kufr* can mean rejection of Allah, His attributes, His books, His messengers, and everything that comes from Him. The meaning of *kufr* is to oppose everything that has been clearly explained. Another meaning includes those who know the truth but deny it, such as the polytheists and Jews at the time of the Prophet.¹³¹

In contrast to Muhammad Abduh's views, Sayyid Quṭb (1906-1966 CE) belonged to the generation of scholars who supported al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn. The movement emerged at a time when political Islam was at its lowest ebb, due to the abolition of the caliphate in 1924 and Western colonialism in many Islamic countries. Unlike Abduh, Quṭb rejected the Western system and advocated a return to the Islamic system. For Quṭb, the West was seen as hypocritical. His experiences, including living in the United States from 1948 to 1950, further strengthened his resistance to the West. Quṭb was active in the Egyptian nationalist movement through al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn, opposing the presence of the British army. He also witnessed rising unemployment, poverty, and corruption in Egypt, which led to political instability. Quṭb criticized Western traditions, which he considered to have led to the decline of Islam.¹³²

Sayyid Quṭb's thoughts on disbelief and its relationship with non-Muslims are reflected in his tafsir, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'an*. Among these are his interpretations of QS. 5:40-50. Quṭb emphasizes two important principles regarding this verse: first, that every religion revealed by God obliges its followers to adhere to God's law; second, the primacy of God's shari'a over man-made laws. Quṭb states that a government that does not implement Islamic law is considered to be in a state of *jāhiliyyah* (ignorance).¹³³ He provides further explanation in the following verses, QS. 5:48-50, which discuss the shari'a and the final treatise. For him, the Islamic treatise is a shari'a that applies to all humanity, including non-Muslims. Thus, according to Quṭb, it is important for all human beings to implement Islamic shari'a. Nonetheless, Quṭb and his movement expressed openness to cooperating with non-Muslims in Egypt, with guarantees of freedom of worship and protection, in line with Islamic principles. Quṭb considered that although non-Muslims in an Islamic state have these rights, there remains a separation

131 Riḍā, *Tafsīr Al-Manār*, 105–6.

132 Yudian Wahyudi, *Dinamika Politik: Kembali Kepada al-Qur'an Dan Sunnah Di Mesir, Maroko, Dan Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Nawaseha Press, 2007), 85–89.

133 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya', 1971), 724–30.

of religious identity between Muslims and non-Muslims.¹³⁴

This view is a development of the concept of Ahl al-Kitab and *kafir zimmah* in Islam. Quṭb interprets this concept by referring to verses in the Qur'an, such as QS. 9:5, 29, and 36, which regulate the relationship between Muslims and Ahl al-Kitab (Jews and Christians) and the *kafir zimmah* (non-Muslims living under Islamic protection). In Quṭb's view, protection and freedom of worship for non-Muslims must be guaranteed in the context of an Islamic state, but there is still an affirmation that their religious identity and status are different from those of Muslims.¹³⁵ During the heyday of nationalism, non-Muslims, especially Christians, actively participated in nationalist movements in many decolonized countries. They sought to establish their political identity based on the concept of equal citizenship with Muslim citizens, emphasizing equal rights and duties in the advancement of their country. This idea was the result of a changing view of citizenship in the context of nationalism, which also influenced the understanding of the term 'kafir' in the Qur'an.

One of the thinkers who reviewed the use of the term 'kafir' is Yūsuf Qarḍawī. In his work, Qarḍawī suggests that the term should be replaced with more neutral terms, such as 'non-Muslim' or *ghair al-muslim*. This view is based on two main reasons. First, linguistically, Qarḍawī argues that variations in meaning in Arabic often lead to misunderstandings in the use of this term. Secondly, in terms of substance, Qarḍawī highlights that the Qur'an does not direct Muslims to refer to non-Muslims with the term 'kafir', but instead uses terms such as Ahl Kitāb. Qarḍawī's approach aims to adopt a more tolerant use of terminology in social and civic contexts. For him, non-Muslims living in *dār al-Islām* are guaranteed the same legal protection and justice as Muslims, in line with the principles of equality taught in the Qur'an, as explained in QS. 60: 8-9. However, the concept of *zimmah* is still maintained by Qarḍawī because it remains relevant in the context of Islamic law. This concept grants non-Muslims a special status of protection under Islamic rule, ensuring that they can practice their religion in peace while complying with certain civil obligations, such as the payment of *jizyah* as compensation for the protection provided by the Muslim state. Qarḍawī emphasizes that *zimmah* is evidence of Islam's commitment to tolerance

134 Quṭb, 741–46.

135 Quṭb, 741–46.

towards religious minorities in its society.¹

On the other hand, Fahmi Huwaydi offers a different view of the concept of *zimmah* and its application in the context of modern nationalism. Huwaydi rejects the concept of *zimmah* because it is no longer relevant in the framework of a modern nation-state that emphasizes the equality of all citizens, regardless of religion. For Huwaydi, the use of the term 'kafir' should be revisited historically and contextually, by adjusting the understanding of one's Islamicness to the principles of humanity and citizenship. Huwaydi's approach reflects a change in outlook towards Islamic law, which he believes should be revamped in accordance with universal values such as justice and equality. He criticizes the traditional division between *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarbi* as well as the application of the *jizyah*, considering it a historical legacy that is irrelevant in a more pluralistic and equal modern political context.²

Conclusion

In pre-Islamic times, the term 'kafir' held various meanings, often associated with ingratitude or concealment of truth and goodness, particularly towards human kindness or divine gifts. Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry depicted 'kafir' as someone who covers or hides the truth or blessings received. During the revelation period, the Qur'an expanded the term's theological context. In the Makkiyah verses, 'kafir' primarily referred to those who were ungrateful for Allah's blessings and rejected the truth of His teachings. In the Madaniyah verses, the meaning of 'kafir' evolved to include rejecting monotheism and breaking covenants made with Prophet Muhammad, indicating a deeper theological and ethical dimension.

In the modern context of nation-states, the term 'kafir' has undergone significant reinterpretation. Modern scholars like Muhammad Abduh emphasized the need to understand 'kafir' within the framework of contemporary social and political relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. Abduh advocated for replacing 'kafir' with more neutral terms like 'non-Muslim' to reflect principles of justice and equality in modern states. Conversely, Sayyid Qutb stressed the importance of implementing Sharia law, viewing governments that do not do so as being in a state of jahiliyah (ignorance). These perspectives highlight the dynamic nature of the term 'kafir' as it adapts to modern political and social realities, striving to balance

1 Yusuf Qarḍawī, *Ghairul Muslimin Fil Mujtama' Al-Islami*, Muhammad Baqir (Mesir: Maktabah Wahbah, 1977), 12–19.

2 Fahmi Huwaydi, *Muwāṭinūn Lā Žimmiyun* (Beirut: Dār as-Surūq, 1998), 128–40.

tradition with contemporary values of pluralism.

This research contributes significantly to understanding the evolution of the term 'kafir' from pre-Islamic times to the modern era, illustrating how socio-political contexts shape its interpretation. However, the article does not extensively address the role of modern media in shaping perceptions of 'kafir' and its implications for interfaith relations in the digital age. Future research could focus on media analysis and comparative studies of contemporary Muslim cultures' perceptions of 'kafir.' Additionally, further investigation into how religious education in different countries teaches the concept of 'kafir' could provide new insights into the educational influences on theological and social understanding.

Supplementary Materials

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Authors' contributions

I did this research by myself, from Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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