

## A Critique of KH. Misbah Mustofa's Social Construction of MTQ in *Tāj al-Muslimīn min Kalām Rabbi al-'Ālamīn*



**Idris**

Universitas KH. Abdul Chalim Mojokerto

Email: [idris@uac.ac.id](mailto:idris@uac.ac.id)

**Abstract:** This article examines KH. Misbah Mustofa's religious criticism of the Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ), as articulated in his Qur'anic commentary, *Tāj al-Muslimīn min Kalām Rabbi al-'Ālamīn*. He regarded the MTQ as a form of syirik khafī (subtle polytheism), at a time when Qur'anic recitation competitions were being widely normalized by the New Order government, many kiai, and Muslim intellectuals. This divergence in religious perspectives is examined through qualitative library research using content analysis and the sociology of knowledge framework developed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, particularly the three dialectical moments of internalization, externalization, and objectivation. The primary source is KH. Misbah's interpretation in *Tāj al-Muslimīn min Kalām Rabbi al-'Ālamīn*. The study finds that his rejection of the MTQ was closely related to his pesantren-based intellectual formation, his critical stance toward political authority, and his understanding of the essential purpose of Qur'anic recitation. His criticism was explicitly externalized through his interpretation of Qur'an 2:63 in *Tāj al-Muslimīn*. More broadly, the objectivation of his ideas through the commentary took place through regular teaching at Pesantren al-Balagh, the pesantren networks established by his students, and the publication of the work by his heirs. This study does not yet establish the extent to which his criticism of the MTQ, once objectivated, was subjectively internalized and subsequently externalized through the social practices of his family, students, and alumni.

**Keywords:** KH. Misbah Mustofa, Nusantara Exegesis, MTQ, Sociology of Qur'anic Exegesis, *Tāj al-Muslimīn*

**Abstrak:** Artikel ini mengkaji kritik keagamaan KH. Misbah Mustofa terhadap Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ) dalam kitab tafsirnya *Tāj al-Muslimīn min Kalām Rabbi al-'Ālamīn*. Kritik tersebut memandang MTQ sebagai bentuk syirik khofi (samar) di tengah masifnya normalisasi festival al-Qur'an ini oleh pemerintah Orde Baru, banyak kiai, dan intelektual muslim. Kesenjangan pandangan tersebut dikaji melalui studi kualitatif kepustakaan (library research) dengan metode analisis isi (content analysis) dan menggunakan kerangka sosiologi pengetahuan Peter L. Berger dan Thomas Luckmann melalui tiga momen dialektis: internalisasi, eksternalisasi, dan objektivasi. Sumber primer penelitian ini adalah penafsiran kitab tafsir *Tāj al-Muslimīn min Kalām Rabbi al-'Ālamīn*. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa penolakan KH. Misbah terhadap MTQ berkaitan erat dengan latar belakang keilmuan pesantrennya, sikap kritis terhadap otoritas kekuasaan, dan pemahamannya mengenai esensi membaca al-Qur'an. Kritik ini secara spesifik dieksternalisasikan melalui penafsiran QS. al-Baqarah ayat 63 dalam tafsir *Tāj al-Muslimīn*. Secara umum, proses objektivasi gagasan KH. Misbah dalam wujud teks tafsir ini berlangsung secara alamiah melalui pengajaran secara berkala di Pesantren al-Balagh, jaringan pesantren para muridnya, serta pencetakan oleh ahli waris. Studi ini memiliki keterbatasan karena belum mengonfirmasi sejauh mana proses objektivasi kritik terhadap MTQ ini diinternalisasi dan dieksternalisasi secara subjektif oleh keluarga, santri, dan alumni dalam tindakan sosial mereka. Oleh karena itu, untuk pengembangan penelitian berikutnya dianjurkan untuk mengkaji penetrasi sosiologis tafsir *Tāj al-Muslimīn*.

**Kata Kunci:** KH. Misbah Mustofa, Tafsir Nusantara, MTQ, Sosiologi pengetahuan, *Tāj al-Muslimīn*.

Article History: Submitted: 28-07-2026 Revised: 19-08-2026 Accepted: 26-08-2026



## Introduction

The festivalization of al-Qur'an in Indonesia through *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an* (MTQ) has become an established cultural phenomenon; by 2024, the event had reached its 30th edition.<sup>1</sup> *Lembaga Pengembangan Tilawatil Qur'an* (LPTQ) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs routinely organizes this event as a means of syiar Islam (Islamic propagation), developing the artistic talent of Qur'anic recitation,<sup>2</sup> and strengthening national stability through harmony between the government and Muslims.<sup>3</sup> Yet behind this normalization, MTQ has also generated sharp polemics among Nusantara ulama. While Buya Hamka and Syekh Umar Hubais regarded it as amal saleh (a pious deed) that did not conflict with syariat,<sup>4</sup> KH. Arwani Kudus and KH. Misbah Mustofa took the opposite position. KH. Misbah Mustofa even radically labeled MTQ as syirik khofi (subtle syirik).<sup>5</sup>

KH. Misbah's critical stance needs to be understood within the framework of the pesantren tradition in Indonesia. In the pesantren tradition, ulama are not merely interpreters of texts; they are central figures who shape society's moral authority and epistemological framework. In this context, works of tafsir function not only as textual commentaries but also as ideological instruments for reinforcing religious orthodoxy. Orthodoxy itself refers to efforts to maintain inherited religious understandings continuously through interconnected scholarly traditions.<sup>6</sup> For KH. Misbah, his criticism of MTQ can be understood as a manifestation of his responsibility as a guardian of truth (one who safeguards truth), acting as an active instrument to protect orthodox teachings from interpretations regarded as deviant or heterodox.<sup>7</sup>

KH. Misbah's rejection, as expressed in *Tafsīr Tāj al-Muslimīn*, particularly in his interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah: 63,<sup>8</sup> reveals a tension between efforts to preserve the pesantren tradition and the modern festivalization of religion. Using Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's sociology of knowledge, this article reconstructs KH. Misbah Mustofa's critical perspective through three dialectically and continuously interconnected moments: externalization, objectivation, and internalization.<sup>9</sup> These three moments are not understood as linear stages completed one after another, but as an ongoing process in which society and the intellectual products within it are both human products and objective realities that, in turn, shape human beings. This study traces the orthodox values internalized by KH. Misbah through pesantren education as they entered into a dialectical relation with the sociopolitical

<sup>1</sup> Moh Khoeron, "Digelar September, Kota Samarinda Kaltim Tuan Rumah MTQ Nasional 2024," Kemenag, 2024, <https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/digelar-september-kota-samarinda-kaltim-tuan-rumah-mtq-nasional-2024-FPUZp>.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad Munir and Sudarsono, *Ilmu Tajwid Dan Seni Baca Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Sri Handayana and Muhamad Rezi, "MTQ: Antara Seni Membaca Al-Qur'an Dan Politik Akomodasionis Pemerintah Terhadap Umat Islam," *ISLAM TRANSFORMATIF: Journal of Islamic Studies* 02, no. 02 (2018).

<sup>4</sup> Handayana and Rezi.

<sup>5</sup> Misbah Mustofa, *Tāj Al-Muslimīn Min Kalām Rabb Al-'Ālamīn*, 2nd ed. (Tuban: Majlis al-Ta'līf wa al-Khattāṭ, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Saifuddin Zuhri dalam Zulaikhah Fitri Nur Ngaisah, "Ortodoksi Pesantren dalam Tafsir Al- Bayān," *Diya Al-Afkar : Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Al-Hadist* 13, no. 2 (2025): 213–34.

<sup>7</sup> Saifuddin Zuhri dalam Zulaikhah Fitri Nur Ngaisah.

<sup>8</sup> Mustofa, *Tāj Al-Muslimīn Min Kalām Rabb Al-'Ālamīn*, 221.

<sup>9</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966).

reality of the New Order, thereby forming a construction of knowledge critical of the normalization of MTQ.

Previous publications have mapped KH. Misbah Mustofa's exegetical thought from various perspectives. Islah Gusmian, for example, examined his biographical profile as a thinker and writer with a pesantren background.<sup>10</sup> Other studies have addressed specific issues in his Tafsir *Tāj al-Muslimīn*, including the locality of Pegon script, studied by Siti Robikah and Kuni Muyassaroh.<sup>11</sup> Muhamad Takrib and Eko Zulfikar discussed the educational values of QS. Al-Inshirah,<sup>12</sup> while another study compared his interpretation with other pesantren-based works of tafsir.<sup>13</sup> The study most closely related to the theme of social criticism is Ilya Syafaatun Ni'mah's research, which critically analyzes several issues presented by KH. Misbah in his tafsir, including Family Planning (KB), Islamic education, feminism, and the role of ulama. Although Ilya discusses KH. Misbah's response as a mufassir to various social phenomena, the central issue is not the MTQ polemic. More importantly, and this constitutes a clear distinction, her study does not explain sociologically why he adopted critical views toward several social phenomena in his interpretation. By contrast, although the present article focuses on only one issue—his criticism of MTQ in his tafsir—it seeks to explain sociologically why he regarded it as *syirik khofi*, a position that placed him outside the mainstream because it ran against the dominant views of both the government and ulama of his time.

## Method

This study is qualitative in nature because its data sources consist of books and other written materials (library research). The primary source is the tafsir *Tāj al-Muslimīn min Kalām Rabbi al-‘Ālamī*. Secondary data consist of other books or articles related to KH. Misbah Mustofa. The documented library materials were then analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is a qualitative research method systematically used to reduce content, analyze content within a specific context, identify themes, and extract meaningful interpretations from the data. Here, content analysis is directed toward examining the data used by the author to identify the sociological factors that shaped KH. Misbah Mustofa's highly critical and steadfast intellectual framework, even when it required him to challenge the dominant currents of his time.

---

<sup>10</sup> Islah Gusmian, "K.H. Misbah Ibn Zainul Musthafa (1916-1994 M): Pemikir Dan Penulis Teks Keagamaan Dari Pesantren," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 14, no. 01 (2016): 115, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlk.v14i1.474>.

<sup>11</sup> Siti Robikah and Kuni Muyassaroh, "Lokalitas Tafsir Nusantara Dalam Kitab Taj Al-Muslimin Min Kalami Rabbi Al-Alamin," *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Tafsir Di Nusantara* 5, no. 2 (2020): 71–92, <https://doi.org/10.32495/nun.v5i2.91>.

<sup>12</sup> Muhamad Takrip and Eko Zulfikar, "Tafsir Tarbawi: Perspective KH. Mishbah Musthafa about Islamic Education Values in QS. Al-Inshirah," *Edisi Januari-Juni* 7, no. 1 (2023): 52–63, <https://doi.org/10.32332/tarbawiyah.v7i1.5872>.

<sup>13</sup> Bahruddin, "The Rights of Contemporary Women: A Comparative Study of Bisri Mustofa in Tafsir Al-Ibriz between Misbah Musthafa in Tafsir Taj Al-Muslimin," *Hermeneutik: Jurnal Ilmu Al Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 17 No. 02 (2023).

## Results and Discussion

### History of MTQ in Indonesia

The art of reciting al-Qur'an, commonly known as tilawah al-Qur'an, has long been part of Muslim culture in Indonesia. On certain occasions, event programs commonly include tilawah al-Qur'an performed by a *qāri'* (reciter of al-Qur'an). This is frequently found in activities such as *pengajian* (religious gatherings), *walimahan* (wedding celebrations), seminars, training sessions, workshops, and others.<sup>14</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that in many cities there are associations, managed either individually or institutionally, that specifically teach tilawah al-Qur'an.

In the early period of Islam's arrival and development in Indonesia (10th–18th centuries CE), instruction in al-Qur'an took a simple form and was integrated with dakwah activities. Qur'anic learning then developed rapidly toward the end of the nineteenth century, when many students who had studied in the Arabian Peninsula returned to Indonesia. This gave rise to ulama specializing in al-Qur'an, such as KH. Munawir in Krapyak, KH. Abbas in Buntet, KH. 'Isyam and KH. Hisyam in Salatiga, Syekh Abu Samah in Padang, KH. Mukhtar Lutfy in Makasar, and others. The Qur'anic learning methods developed at the time included the Baghdadiyah method and *juz 'Ammā*.<sup>15</sup>

Direct encounters between Indonesian students and ulama specializing in al-Qur'an in the Arabian Peninsula influenced the development of tilawah al-Qur'an. Whereas Qur'anic learning had initially taken a simple form, it subsequently began to encompass the aesthetic dimension of recitation. The Makkawi style was the earliest melodic style introduced into the world of tilawah al-Qur'an. Over time, Misri styles were also introduced, including *sikāh*, *nahawand*, *bayātī*, *hijāz*, *ṣabā*, *rast*, and *jiharkah*. The influence of the Misri style remains strong to this day and has become the official melodic style used in national *musabaqah tilawah al-Qur'an* competitions in Indonesia.<sup>16</sup>

In the early twentieth century, around the 1920s, the art of reciting al-Qur'an with melody and rhythm developed further. In several regions, *Laylatul Qiraah* gatherings were frequently held as occasions for *qāri'* and *qarī'ah* to recite verses of al-Qur'an in turn. These practices later developed into *Haflah Tilawah al-Qur'an*, as the activities were often held at night. Such gatherings were attended by ulama ahli qurra' who performed tilawah Al-Qur'an using various melodies and distinctive vocal styles. These haflah activities ultimately encouraged many members of the public to study and acquire knowledge of tilawah. Well-known ahli qurra' included KH. Dahlan Cipanas, KH. Muntaha Wonosobo, KH. Adlan Ali Jombang, KH. Basori Alwi Malang, and others.<sup>17</sup>

Public enthusiasm for learning the art of tilawah al-Qur'an in various regions gave rise to many jam'iyah (associations). For example, in South Kalimantan and West Kalimantan

<sup>14</sup> Miftahul Jannah, "Musabaqah Tilawah Al-Qur'an Di Indonesia: Festivalisasi Al-Qur'an Sebagai Bentuk Resepsi Estetis" 15, no. 2 (2016): 87–95.

<sup>15</sup> LPTQ, *25 Tahun Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an dan 17 tahun Lembaga Pengembangan Tilawatil Qur'an*, (Jakarta: Lembaga Pengembangan Tilawatil Qur'an Tingkat Nasional, 1415H/1994 M), hlm. 14-15.

<sup>16</sup> Handayana and Rezi, "MTQ: Antara Seni Membaca Al-Qur'an Dan Politik Akomodasionis Pemerintah Terhadap Umat Islam."

<sup>17</sup> Hamdani Ali Oemar Hamsah, *Apa Kata Qari'ah Hajjah Alfisyahr Arsyad Tentang MTQ* (Banjarmasin: Grafika Wangi Kalimantan, 2007). 48.

there was *the jam'iyah Persatuan Pelajar Ilmu Qira'atil Quran*; in Jombang, *Wahdat al-Qurra*; in Makassar, *Jamiyyatul Qurra wal Muawwanah* and *Muwafaqatul Qurra*; in Palembang, *Madrasatul Qur'an*; and there was also *Himpunan Pelajar Al-Qur'an in Palembang* (HIPA) in Jakarta. To accommodate these numerous jam'iyah, in 1951, at the initiative of the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs, KH. Wahid Hasyim, *Jam'iyat al-Qurra wa al-Huffaz* was established.<sup>18</sup>

As jam'iyah al-Qur'an proliferated across different regions, tilawah al-Qur'an competitions also emerged. The first recorded tilawah competition was held in Kampung Bunga, Asahan, North Sumatra, in 1946. It was initiated by Muhammad Ali Umar, leader of Persatuan Agama Islam. Although it initially faced opposition, the competition ultimately proceeded successfully with 300 participants. A tilawah competition involving participants from South Sulawesi and Kalimantan was also recorded in 1949. Then, on 22 June 1952, on the occasion of Jakarta's anniversary, a tilawah competition was held for adult participants and students from across DKI Jakarta and the surrounding area.<sup>19</sup> Different *jam'iyah* used various terms for these tilawah competitions, including *sayembara* or *haflah*. Following the advice and input of Prof. T. M. Hasby Ash-Shiddieqy, the term *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an* (MTQ) was introduced at a *tilawah* competition covering Yogyakarta and Central Java and came to be used for every *tilawah al-Qur'an* competition.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to community-organized events, Indonesia's need for delegates to international competitions became a major external factor in the organization of a national MTQ. Before 1968, Indonesia's delegates to international MTQ events were appointed directly by the Minister of Religious Affairs, such as H. Tb. Mansur Ma'mun, who was sent to the first International MTQ in Malaysia in 1960, followed by delegates in 1966 and 1967.<sup>21</sup> However, this direct appointment method generated dissatisfaction at the grassroots because it was considered to overlook the potential of qari from other regions. In response, in 1968 the government officially took over the organization of the first national-level MTQ in Makassar as an open selection event.<sup>22</sup> Sociopolitically, government intervention in the organization of MTQ has been interpreted as an accommodative policy of the New Order toward Indonesian Muslims. It was regarded as one strategy for consolidating the regime's existence and achieving national stability after the transition from the Old Order. One instrument of this policy was the cultural and structural accommodation of Muslims through the organization of MTQ and the establishment of *Lembaga Pengembangan Tilawatil Qur'an* (LPTQ) in 1977.<sup>23</sup>

Although its organization became a widespread tradition and grew increasingly elaborate from year to year, especially after receiving government accommodation, the history of MTQ in Indonesia has never been free from sharp polemics concerning the legitimacy and purposes of the practice. Handayana and Rezi note a polarization of views among religious

<sup>18</sup> Mukhyar Sani and Dkk., *Qari-Qariah Kalimantan Selatan Yang Berprestasi Di Tingkat Nasional-Intermasional* (Banjarmasin: Puslit IAIN Antasari, 2008). Hal. 50.

<sup>19</sup> Handayana and Rezi, "MTQ: Antara Seni Membaca Al-Qur'an Dan Politik Akomodasionis Pemerintah Terhadap Umat Islam."

<sup>20</sup> Handayana and Rezi. Hal. 135.

<sup>21</sup> Hamsah, *Apa Kata Qari'ah Hajjah Alfisyahr Arsyad Tentang MTQ*. Hal. 52

<sup>22</sup> Hamsah. Hal. 53.

<sup>23</sup> Handayana and Rezi, "MTQ: Antara Seni Membaca Al-Qur'an Dan Politik Akomodasionis Pemerintah Terhadap Umat Islam."

authorities. On one side, figures such as Hamka, KH. Ibrahim Hosen, and KH. Muhammad Dahlan supported MTQ as a form of amal saleh and a positive medium of syiar. On the other, Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy argued that turning Qur'anic recitation into a competition, with an emphasis on melodic aesthetics and worldly orientation, constituted *bid'ah idāfah*. Other opponents, such as Syekh Abdul Wahab, even regarded the practice as haram because of the absence of explicit dalil, while also expressing concern over the emergence of ujub, unhealthy competition, and wasteful use of state funds.<sup>24</sup>

Within pesantren circles, several Kiai explicitly prohibited their santri from competing in Qur'anic recitation at MTQ events. KH. Arwani Amin, leader of Pesantren Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus, left an injunction strictly forbidding his santri from participating in MTQ in order to protect the sacredness of al-Qur'an from contamination by worldly aims such as prizes and championship titles. Normatively, the prohibition at Yanbu'ul Qur'an can be traced to an interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah: 41, which calls on believers not to sell the verses of Allah (al-Qur'an) for a low price.<sup>25</sup> Another, comparatively radical view came from the leader of a pesantren in Bangilan, Tuban, KH. Misbah Mustofa. In his tafsir *Tāj al-Muslimīn min Kalām al-Rabb al-'Ālamīn*, he explicitly labeled the organization of MTQ as syirik khofi. For him, MTQ had shifted the function of al-Qur'an from a guide for life into mere stage entertainment laden with riya', and he categorized this as a functional distortion of the verses of Allah in the public sphere.<sup>26</sup>

### The Construction of KH. Misbah Mustofa's Knowledge and Social Reality

From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, religious thought is understood as a dialectical process of social construction. In other words, such thought results from the relationship between knowledge and social reality through three dialectical moments: externalization, objectivation, and internalization.<sup>27</sup> Externalization is an anthropological necessity through which human beings continuously pour themselves into the activities of the social world. Objectivation is the process by which the products of those activities (including tafsir texts) acquire an objective character and become realities that stand independently outside the individual.<sup>28</sup> Internalization, meanwhile, is the stage at which individuals absorb objective reality back into consciousness through socialization.<sup>29</sup>

The tafsir *Tāj al-Muslimīn min Kalām Rabb al-'Ālamīn*, composed by KH. Misbah Mustofa, is one form of religious thought born from this dialectical struggle. For example, when the aesthetic dimension of al-Qur'an began to be explored through *musabaqah* (MTQ) and institutionalized through LPTQ by the Indonesian government, KH. Misbah firmly voiced harsh criticism of the phenomenon. Notably, he grounded this criticism in his understanding

<sup>24</sup> Handayana and Rezi.

<sup>25</sup> Defri Nor Arif, "MTQ DAN PON-PES YANBU'UL QUR'AN (Studi Terhadap Larangan Mengikuti NTQ Bagi Santri Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus)" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> Mustofa, *Tāj Al-Muslimīn Min Kalām Rabb Al-'Ālamīn*. 221.

<sup>27</sup> Lathifah Lathifah Munawaroh, "Thomas Luckmann: Kontribusi Sosiologi Pengetahuan Dalam Studi Islam," *Al-Ulum Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Ke Islam* 9, no. 4 (2022): 417–32.

<sup>28</sup> Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 70–78.

<sup>29</sup> Berger and Luckmann, 149–50.

of QS. al-Baqarah verse 63, which he then elaborated in his tafsir.<sup>30</sup> This act constituted an externalization of his concerns, rooted in a long process of internalization extending from primary to secondary socialization. *Tāj al-Muslimīn* should therefore not be viewed merely as a static intellectual product, but as the result of a dynamic dialectical relationship between the knowledge acquired by KH. Misbah and the social reality he confronted.

It is important to understand that the three dialectical moments do not operate as rigid linear stages. Rather, all three operate simultaneously in characterizing society or the individual.<sup>31</sup> For analytical purposes, however, the discussion in this article is divided into two parts: The Construction of KH. Misbah Mustofa's Knowledge and Social Reality, which presents the reciprocal relationship between KH. Misbah's moments of internalization and externalization; and The Objectivation of KH. Misbah's Ideas and Critique of MTQ in *Tāj al-Muslimīn*, which examines how that criticism became crystallized as an objective reality.

### 1. The Moment of Internalization: Primary and Secondary Socialization Phases

The process of internalization in KH. Misbah Mustofa began with primary socialization within the family, particularly through the figure of his father, H. Zainal Mustofa. His father was a wealthy merchant who valued silaturahmi, was generous, and maintained close relationships with ulama.<sup>32</sup> In Berger and Luckmann's terms, this stage of internalization involves the individual absorbing meanings and ways of understanding the world from people who exert strong influence (significant others) into his consciousness. His father transmitted a fundamental value: recognition of the moral authority of ulama. This foundation later shaped KH. Misbah's role as a guardian of truth in relation to the normative authority of al-Qur'an. It became a primary foundation for KH. Misbah because, in the subsequent process of secondary socialization, he entered the orbit of the world of ulama as an heir to the scholarly authority he needed when engaging in tafsir al-Qur'an. Simultaneously, the values he absorbed were later manifested in his moment of externalization. From there, he devoted his physical and mental activity to constructing his world of consciousness within the same framework of orthodoxy.

This phase of primary socialization continued under the care of his stepbrother, H. Zuhdi, who assumed the role of the closest significant person after his father died. He was enrolled in the formal educational institution Sekolah Rakyat (SR) in Rembang. After completing SR, KH. Misbah entered secondary socialization by nyantri in Kasingan under KH. Khalil.<sup>33</sup> In Kasingan, KH. Misbah began to internalize the intellectual sub-world of pesantren, which placed strong emphasis on mastery of kitab kuning, ranging from Arabic grammar through works such as Alfiyah to the disciplines of fiqh, tasawuf, and tafsir.<sup>34</sup> At this pesantren, he and his brother (KH. Bisri) also became favored santri of KH. Khalil. This special treatment reflected not only their intelligence but also a gesture of gratitude

---

<sup>30</sup> Mustofa, *Tāj Al-Muslimīn Min Kalām Rabb Al-'Ālamīn*.

<sup>31</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), 149.

<sup>32</sup> Gusmian, "K.H. Misbah Ibn Zainul Musthafa (1916-1994 M): Pemikir Dan Penulis Teks Keagamaan Dari Pesantren."

<sup>33</sup> Supriyanto Supriyanto, "Kajian Al-Qur'an Dalam Tradisi Pesantren: Telaah Atas Tafsir Al-Iklil Fī Ma'ānī Al-Tanzīl," *Tsaqafah* 12, no. 2 (2016): 281–98.

<sup>34</sup> Gusmian, "K.H. Misbah Ibn Zainul Musthafa (1916-1994 M): Pemikir Dan Penulis Teks Keagamaan Dari Pesantren."

toward H. Zainal Mustofa.<sup>35</sup> This strengthened his identification with the religious and moral authority of his teacher. The process can be understood not merely as a transfer of knowledge, but as a moment in which he adopted his teacher's perspective on the sacredness of the text.

After studying in Kasingan, KH. Misbah went to Tebuireng, Jombang. Little data are available on his process of secondary internalization in Tebuireng, except that he was known as a santri highly proficient in Arabic grammar, especially in his mastery of *Alfiyah*.<sup>36</sup> One point that should be noted, however, is that KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, as the central role model for Tebuireng santri in both thought and conduct, must have influenced him. It is highly likely that KH. Misbah absorbed many of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's values of principled steadfastness, which later manifested in his uncompromising political stance. After Tebuireng, KH. Misbah further developed his intellectual internalization in Mekkah,<sup>37</sup> in the Hijaz, then a global center of Islamic worship and intellectual life. Mekkah was especially important for Indonesians because, by the early twentieth century, a Nusantara–Mekkah network of ulama had already taken shape. In the Hijaz, KH. Misbah had opportunities to encounter jamaah across ethnicities, countries, mazhab, and gender, as well as diverse currents of thought, issues, and discourses concerning Islam and the wider world.<sup>38</sup>

This cross-cultural and intellectual experience became valuable capital for KH. Misbah in constructing a critical subjective reality. For example, when criticizing the tendency of Muslims to practice religion merely by following others (*anut grobyok*), especially kiai or Muslim intellectuals, without a strong textual basis, he wrote in the introduction to *Tāj Al-Muslimīn: akibat sangking coro urip kang mengkene iki para muslimin akeh kang ono olehe nglakoni agamane Allag podo gandel anut grobyok marang wong kang disebut kiai utowo intelek muslim, senajen kang digandole lan kang dianut iku salah utowo durung waktune keno digandoli*. (“As a result of this way of life, many Muslims practice the religion of Allah merely by following those called kiai or Muslim intellectuals, even when those they follow are wrong or are not yet fit to be followed.”)<sup>39</sup> This criticism does not necessarily indicate the influence of the purification movement he encountered in the Hijaz. Rather, it more strongly reflects the internalization of the scholarly ethics he acquired from the pesantren tradition: that truth must rest on the normative authority of the texts of al-Qur'an and hadis, not on the popularity of figures or on cultural normalization such as MTQ. This solid intellectual foundation from Tebuireng and Mekkah later legitimized KH. Misbah's position as a guardian of the boundary between sincere worship and festivalized worship.

<sup>35</sup> Supriyanto, “Kajian Al-Qur'an Dalam Tradisi Pesantren: Telaah Atas Tafsir Al-Iklil Fî Ma'ânî Al-Tanzîl.”

<sup>36</sup> Ilya Syafa'atun Ni'mah, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Dan Kritik Sosial: Studi Terhadap Tafsir Taj Al-Muslimin Min Kalam Rabb Al-'Alamin* (Surabaya: UIN Sunan Ampel, 2018).

<sup>37</sup> Ni'mah.

<sup>38</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia, 2013).

<sup>39</sup> Mustofa, *Tāj Al-Muslimīn Min Kalām Rabb Al-'Ālamīn*.

At this point, the process of internalization within KH. Misbah can be said to have become deeply sedimented as a firm subjective consciousness. The value foundation established during primary socialization in the family, together with the intellectual maturity formed through secondary socialization in the pesantren world and the Hijaz, shaped his subjective consciousness. This sedimentation of values and knowledge later influenced how he underwent the moment of externalization within Indonesian social life. For example, when articulating his idea of the true Muslim in the introduction to *Tāj al-Muslimīn*, he stated:

*“dadi saben-saben wong kang ngaku Islam, opomaneh wes bolabale moco syahadat sedino sewengi kaping songo, kudu noto awak’e miturut dawuh Allah kang kasebut ana ing al-Qur’an. Nanging rhining wong Islam arang banget kang biso faham arti-artine dawuh al-Qur’an kang nagnggo lughat Arab.”*

(Thus, every person who claims to be Muslim, especially one who repeatedly recites the syahadat nine times in a day and night, must order himself according to the word of Allah stated in al-Qur’an. Yet very few Muslims are able to understand the meanings of the verses of al-Qur’an, which use lughat Arab.)<sup>40</sup>

The ideal Muslim character he conceptualized above represents the translation of KH. Misbah’s subjective consciousness into concrete action in the public sphere. This idea certainly did not emerge in a vacuum when he began writing *Tāj al-Muslimīn*. It was the outcome of a long dialectic between the foundational values of his childhood—especially devoted obedience to the moral authority of ulama and religious texts—and the principled steadfastness he absorbed while nyantri in Kasingan and Tebuireng and while traveling to the Hijaz. Equipped with this mature yet critical subjective consciousness, KH. Misbah moved to the next moment: externalizing himself by pouring his physical and inner energies back into society.

## **2. The Moment of Externalization: Mental and Intellectual Activity in the Social Sphere**

In the context of tafsir writing, the process of externalization is reflected in the author’s activities that underlay the emergence of the tafsir work. Here, a tafsir author actively invests mental and physical activity in constructing an intellectual identity as a tafsir author while simultaneously shaping the surrounding socio-religious landscape. Such concrete engagement is crucial, because without sustained activity in the public sphere, a religious idea would not crystallize into a tafsir text. Yet because this social construction is dialectical, the moment of externalization never stands alone. Every concrete action undertaken by the author throughout the writing of the tafsir is intertwined with and guided by values absorbed and sedimented in his subjective consciousness during the moment of internalization.<sup>41</sup>

Because it does not stand alone, KH. Misbah’s moment of externalization also includes the period in which he fully integrated himself into Indonesia’s sociopolitical sphere. During the struggle for independence, he joined the Hizbullah military ranks in Rembang led by KH. Muhaimin Senori. This choice was fully consistent with the fatwa of

---

<sup>40</sup> Mustofa.

<sup>41</sup> Ulvah Nur’aeni, *Sosiologi Tafsir; Kritik Fenomena Bid’ah Dalam Tafsir Tamshiyah Al-Muslimin Karya KH. Ahmad Sanusi* (Jakarta: UIN Jakarta, 2020).

his teacher, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, who opposed the return of the Dutch to Indonesia.<sup>42</sup> This provides concrete evidence that the values of principled steadfastness internalized from his teacher took form in his externalization through jihad to liberate the Indonesian nation.

In the sphere of social organizations, KH. Misbah was once active in the structural leadership of NU. In 1958, however, he left NU's organizational structure. Although no longer holding a structural position, he continued to pay attention to NU through constructive criticism. Beyond NU, he also joined several political parties, including Masyumi, PPP, and Golkar. Ultimately, he left them because of differences in principle. He was known as a kiai with a strong vision of dakwah and the dissemination of Islamic teachings. Consequently, his involvement in political parties was never long-lasting.<sup>43</sup>

During this process of socialization, KH. Misbah was frequently involved in major public polemics. He openly criticized the New Order government's Family Planning (KB) policy. He also dared to declare the implementation of *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an* (MTQ), then being vigorously promoted by the government, haram. This critical stance brought him into confrontation with the authorities; he was summoned for interrogation and was even nearly brought to trial. Within NU, he was also involved in a polemic over the establishment of BPR-NU. He did not hesitate to write a letter explicitly expressing his disagreement with the application of bank interest, which he regarded as contrary to the principles of syariat Islam.<sup>44</sup>

After his involvement in NU and various political parties, KH. Misbah ultimately devoted more of his time to the pesantren and to society. Initially, he was merely asked to assist in teaching santri at Pesantren al-Balagh in Bangilan, Tuban, which was led by his father-in-law. Observing his seriousness and proficiency across various fields of knowledge, including language sciences, *fiqh*, *tafsir*, *hadis*, and others, he was eventually entrusted with full responsibility for managing Pesantren al-Balagh. In educating his santri, he was known to be strict and firm. As a result, only around 20–30 santri enrolled in each period.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to devoting time to the pesantren he led, KH. Misbah also dedicated his life directly to the wider community. He often presented his religious views through lectures in many places. Over time, however, the lecture format was considered less effective, and its reach was limited by space and time. To overcome these limitations, he began setting aside time to write so that his intellectual concerns could reach a wider public beyond spatial and temporal constraints. Through writing, his subjective ideas underwent objectivation into durable textual symbols capable of being transmitted across space and time. His writings covered various fields, including *fiqh*, language, *akhlak* and *tasawuf*,

<sup>42</sup> Ni'mah, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Dan Kritik Sosial: Studi Terhadap Tafsir Taj Al-Muslimin Min Kalam Rabb Al-'Alamin*.

<sup>43</sup> Gusmian, "K.H. Misbah Ibn Zainul Musthafa (1916-1994 M): Pemikir Dan Penulis Teks Keagamaan Dari Pesantren."

<sup>44</sup> Ayu Annisa et al., "Reaktualisasi Kritik KH. Misbah Musthofa Dalam Tafsir Taj Al-Muslimin Min Kalam Rabbil 'Alamin Terhadap Kurikulum Pendidikan Di Era Orde Baru," *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, Dan Fenomena Agama* 24, no. 2 (2023): 155–68.

<sup>45</sup> Gusmian, "K.H. Misbah Ibn Zainul Musthafa (1916-1994 M): Pemikir Dan Penulis Teks Keagamaan Dari Pesantren."

hadis, and tafsir al-Qur'an. Among his works were both translations and books he authored himself. In the field of tafsir, he wrote three works: *Nibras al-Muslimīn*, a translation of *tafsīr al-Jalālayn*; and two tafsir works of his own, *al-Iklīl* and *Tāj al-Muslimīn*.<sup>46</sup>

### The Objectivation of KH. Misbah's Ideas and Critique of MTQ in *Tāj al-Muslimīn*

This section specifically explains the moment of objectivation of KH. Misbah's ideas, which theoretically constitutes both a continuation and a concrete crystallization of the processes of internalization and externalization. Within Berger and Luckmann's framework, objectivation occurs when the products of subjective human activity take form in a sign system, especially in language and text.<sup>47</sup> Discussing objectivation here therefore means examining how the Javanese Pegon text in *Tāj al-Muslimīn* came to stand on its own as an objective reality (reality sui generis)<sup>48</sup> separate from KH. Misbah himself. His criticism of MTQ was no longer merely a matter of subjective consciousness. More specifically, it was no longer merely the subjective consciousness of KH. Misbah as a mufassir, but had become objectivated as an objective reality possessing its own intellectual authority and influence in the public sphere.

Evidence of when KH. Misbah began to oppose Qur'anic recitation competitions or MTQ can be found in his earlier tafsir, *Al-Iklīl*, where he referred to the MTQ phenomenon in 1403 H/ 1983 M while interpreting surah Al-A'raf verse 2.<sup>49</sup> Long before that, the government first organized MTQ in 1968, and in 1977 the *Lembaga Pengembangan Tilawatil Qur'an* (LPTQ) was established as the permanent organizing body under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Even before the government became involved, communities had already organized MTQ, first recorded in 1946 M in North Sumatra. Although MTQ had become culturally established and was supported by the government and other ulama, KH. Misbah maintained an opposing view. This was influenced by his strong commitment to al-Qur'an: for him, truth is not measured by how many people practice something, but by whether it accords with al-Qur'an and hadis Nabi.<sup>50</sup>

His strong commitment to al-Qur'an shaped how he understood the issues and discourses developing within his social environment and ultimately also shaped the pattern of tafsir he authored. For example, when interpreting surah al-Baqarah verse 63, he wrote:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

(Remember) when We took your covenant and raised the mountain (Sinai) above you, saying, "Hold firmly to what We have given you and remember what is in it so that you may become God-fearing."<sup>51</sup>

He compared the condition of Indonesian Muslims at that time to the Jews (of Madinah), who were reminded through this verse to hold fast to the Torah revealed to Prophet Musa at Mount Tursina so that they might become pious. Through this verse, he likewise

<sup>46</sup> Gusmian.

<sup>47</sup> Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 85.

<sup>48</sup> Berger and Luckmann, 30.

<sup>49</sup> Misbah Mustofa, *Al-Iklīl Fī Ma'ān Al-Tanzīl* (Surabaya: Al-Ihsan, n.d.). 1028-1029.

<sup>50</sup> Mustofa. 119.

<sup>51</sup> Kemenag, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya* (Jakarta: LPMQ, 2019). 13.

reminded Muslims to remain *muttaqin* (people who are pious), to hold firmly to what Allah states in al-Qur'an. In his interpretation, he directly applied the meaning of the verse to Muslims. He stated:

*temtune yen Qur'an dawuh kang koyo ayat iki, iku kang dimaksud ora ono kejobo ummate Nabi Muhammad saw. yaiku kito kabbeh ummat Islam jellase, ayat iki ugo ngandung arti yen ummat Islam kudu cecekelan al-Qur'an lan ngamalake kanti metenteng lan kudu tansah ngilingi dawuh-dawuh kang ono ing Qur'an kanti ngamalake.*

(Certainly, when Qur'an speaks in this way, those intended are none other than the ummat of Prophet Muhammad saw., namely all of us Muslims. Clearly, this verse also means that Muslims must hold firmly to al-Qur'an, practice it earnestly, and always remember the commands contained in Qur'an by putting them into practice.)<sup>52</sup>

After elaborating the normative dimension of the verse, KH. Misbah proceeded to a fairly radical effort of de-reification regarding the organization of MTQ in Indonesia. In the sociology of knowledge, reification occurs when products of human activity (such as MTQ) are regarded as sacred, even though they are products of human creation and agreement.<sup>53</sup> During the New Order era, the culture of *tilawah* al-Qur'an underwent massive reification by the state and mainstream ulama, who constructed it as a form of *syiar* Islam.<sup>54</sup> KH. Misbah, however, dismantled this assumption by externalizing his subjective view in the form of communicative social criticism. He wrote in his tafsir:

*Ummat Islam akeh kang ora kenal karo al-Qur'an, ora biso moco Qur'an, lan kang biso moco ora ngerti karepe, utowo dianggo njoget ono ing podium (dengarkanlah suara saya, lihatlah gaya saya). Nule oleh hadiah kang lumayan. Akibate Qur'an di kaset kanggo hiburan podo karo kaset kroncong lan gambus, kanggo hiburan ye onok hajat mantu lan liya-liyane utowo kanggo hiburan waktu subuh utowo maghrib. Ikikabbeh bid'ah agama kang dirintis dining saweneh wong kang ngaku ulama utowo intelek muslim ono ing olehe ngenaaake musabaqah tilawatil Qur'an kang podo nganggep yen musabaqah tilawatil Qur'an iku syiar syiar Islam.*

(Many Muslims do not know al-Qur'an; they cannot read Qur'an, and those who can read it do not understand its meaning. Or it is used for dancing on the podium—"listen to my voice, look at my style"—in order to obtain a considerable prize. As a result, Qur'an is recorded on cassette for entertainment, just like kroncong and gambus cassettes, for entertainment at wedding celebrations and other occasions, or for entertainment at subuh or maghrib. All of this is *bid'ah* agama initiated by people who claim to be ulama or Muslim intellectuals, who permit musabaqah tilawatil Qur'an and regard musabaqah tilawatil Qur'an as *syiar* Islam.)<sup>55</sup>

His criticism of *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an* (MTQ) was notably harsh and unequivocal. He took a position opposite to that of others. If others described MTQ as *syiar* Islam, he regarded it as *syiar* kesyirikan because, in his view, *tilawah* in MTQ was not performed purely for Allah. His view formed part of his commitment to religious principles grounded in al-Qur'an and hadis Nabi. He was unconcerned with who stood on the other side—whether the government, mainstream ulama, or Muslim intellectuals. If he considered a view inconsistent with the religious principles he believed in, he would criticize it. It is therefore unsurprising that throughout his life he became involved in many polemics concerning social, political, and religious issues and discourses.

<sup>52</sup> Mustofa, *Tafsīr Tāju Al-Muslimīn Min Kalām Rabbi Al-Ālamīn*. 221.

<sup>53</sup> Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 106.

<sup>54</sup> Handayana and Rezi, "MTQ: Antara Seni Membaca Al-Qur'an Dan Politik Akomodasionis Pemerintah Terhadap Umat Islam."

<sup>55</sup> Mustofa, 221-222.

As an ulama, kiai, pesantren leader, and writer, he possessed the legitimacy to criticize matters he considered inconsistent with syariat. His criticism of MTQ was not merely rhetorical; he grounded it in the primary sources of Islam, al-Qur'an and hadis. His Qur'anic basis was al-Baqarah verse 63, as noted above. He presented the hadis basis for his view in the continuation of his tafsir, as follows:

*Yen penemune penulis MTQ iku syiar syirik -kerono pemuda lan pemudi kang podo njoget ono ing podium iku mesti riya' keron qori' lan qoriah iku olehe manggung ono ing podium mesti keron supoyo dialem-alem, keron supoyo oleh hadiah- saban wong temtu biso anggrayang kang mengkene iki- riya' iku syirik khofi (syirik kang samar), dadi MTQ iku syiar syirik khofi. Rasul saw. Dawuh:*

ان اخوف ما اخاف على امتي الاشرار بالله اما اني لست اقول يعبدون شمساً ولا قمراً ولا وثناً ولكن اعمالاً لغير الله وشهوة خفية. رواه ابن ماجه<sup>56</sup>

*Artine: kang paling inggun kuwatirake kanggo ummat inggun iku nyekutuake opo-opo marang Allah-iling-iling inggun ora dawuh: podo nyembah serngenge utowo rembulan utowo berhala- nanging podo ngelakone amal-amal ora keron Allah lan keron nuruti kesenengan nafsu kang samar.*

(However, in the author's (KH. Misbah's) view, it is syiar syirik, because the young men and women dancing on the podium are certainly doing so out of riya'; the qori'-qoriah perform on the podium in order to be praised and to receive prizes. Anyone can recognize this. Riya' is subtle syirik, so MTQ is syiar syirik khofi. Rasul saw. said, "What I fear most for my ummat is syirik—remember, I do not mean worshipping the sun, the moon, or idols—but rather deeds performed not for Allah and the pursuit of hidden desires.")<sup>57</sup>

Through this hadis evidence, KH. Misbah strengthened his act of de-reification by exposing the psychosocial motives of MTQ participants. Whereas the government and supporting ulama engaged in reification by constructing MTQ as sacred religious syiar deserving support, KH. Misbah instead revealed that the activities performed on the podium were driven by syahwat khofiyyah (hidden desire), in the form of a desire for praise (*riya'*) and the pursuit of material rewards. By labeling MTQ as syiar syirik khofi, he effectively returned the festival to what he regarded as its original status. In his view, MTQ was a human-made cultural stage that was profane, competitive, and laden with worldly interests. It was not part of syariat; indeed, it violated syariat.

On closer examination, KH. Misbah's labeling of MTQ as syirik khofi was not new. It demonstrates a strong sedimentation of knowledge (the sedimentation of experiential memory) within his consciousness. In his earlier tafsir *al-Iklīl fī Ma'ān al-Tanzīl*, this view appeared several times. For example, in his interpretation of surah al-Nisā' verse 36, he described MTQ as syirik or riya'; in his interpretation of surah al-An'ām verse 126, he said it was no different from entertainment music; and in his interpretation of surah al-A'rāf, he described it as a means of earning money.

*Nomer telu, nyekutoake siji perkoro marang Allah ono ing perkoro ibadah yaiku kang diarani riya', yaiku ngelakoni perintah Allah keron Allah lan keron liyane Allah, koyo moco Qur'an ing mimbar umum keron Allah lan keron supoyo oleh nomer siji, biso oleh macem-macem piala, kang lumaku ing MTQ.*

(Third, associating something with Allah in matters of worship is what is called riya': carrying out Allah's command for Allah and also for something other than Allah, such as reading Qur'an on a public platform for Allah while also seeking first place and various trophies, as occurs in MTQ.)<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Muhammad bin Yazād Al-Qazwinī, *Sunan Ibnu Mājah* (Riyad: Maktabah al-Ma'ārif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1406 H). 698.

<sup>57</sup> Muhammad bin Yazād Al-Qazwinī, 222.

<sup>58</sup> Misbah Mustofa, "Al-Iklīl Fī Ma'ān Al-Tanzīl" (Surabaya: Al-Ihsan, t.t.). 702-703.

*Al-Qur'an iku diturunake perlu diangen-angen artine nuli diamalake. Nanging al-Qur'an diwoco kanggo golek nama utowo duit utowo golek nomer siji, golek hadiah ono ing MTQ. Akhire, kedudukane al-Qur'an meh ora bedo karo orkes lan gambus. Iki kabeh sangking polahe wong kang ngaku pemimpin utowo ulama.*

(Al-Qur'an was revealed so that its meaning would be contemplated and then practiced. Yet al-Qur'an is recited to seek fame or money, to become number one, or to obtain prizes at MTQ. In the end, the status of al-Qur'an becomes almost no different from orchestral music and gambus. All of this results from the conduct of people who claim to be leaders or ulama.)<sup>59</sup>

*Luwih-luwih ing zaman saiki tahun 1403 H yaiku moco Qur'an kang ono ing musabaqah tilawatil Qur'an. Mandar ing zaman saiki MTQ kanggo golek duit nuli hasile kanggo bangun bangunan kanggo lapangan olahraga. Innalillahi. Poro wong kang ngaku ulama lan pemimpin akeh kang podo ora nganggep mungkar coro moco Qur'an kang mengkene, mandar podo bungah lan bangga semunu ugo qari' lan qariah.*

(Especially in the present age, in 1403 H, al-Qur'an is recited at musabaqah tilawatil Qur'an. Yet today MTQ is used to seek money, and the proceeds are then used to construct buildings and sports fields. Innalillahi. Many people who claim to be ulama and leaders do not regard this way of reciting al-Qur'an as mungkar; instead, they are pleased and proud of the *qārī'* and *qārī'ah*.)<sup>60</sup>

Sociologically, KH. Misbah identified an alliance of power among the government (through LPTQ since 1977), ulama, and pro-government Muslim intellectuals as the actors behind the massive normalization of MTQ. This confrontation reflects an intense struggle in the public sphere over the legitimacy to define reality. KH. Misbah consciously positioned himself against prominent figures who protected MTQ at the time, including Buya Hamka (who issued a fatwa stating that MTQ was not bidah), KH. Muhammad Dahlan (Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 1967–1971), KH. Ibrahim Hosen, and KH. Zaini Miftah. Even when he had to stand alone against the hegemony of state-backed religious elites, KH. Misbah's principles did not waver.

KH. Misbah's uncompromising stance remained consistent when he again externalized his view of MTQ in QS. Al-Baqarah [02]:63 in *Tāj al-Muslimīn*. Rather than softening his discourse or revising the criticism he had previously expressed in tafsir *al-Iklīl*, KH. Misbah remained firm in his oppositional stance toward the normalization of MTQ. At this point, the dialectical cycle of the sociology of knowledge can be seen operating fully: the author's orthodox consciousness, responding to New Order government policy (externalization), then crystallized in the tafsir text as an autonomous objective reality (objectivation).

Although *Tāj al-Muslimīn* was never fully completed (it extends only to the interpretation of QS. Al-Nisa' [04]:23), the process of objectivation continued naturally. This can be seen in the way the work was disseminated. It is taught periodically once a month at Pesantren al-Balagh. Likewise, KH. Misbah's students teach it within their respective pesantren networks. The work is also not reserved exclusively for the family of Pesantren al-Balagh; the wider public can access it because KH. Misbah's heirs print and distribute it to the general public.<sup>61</sup> Thus, KH. Misbah's thought, particularly his views on MTQ in *Tāj al-Muslimīn*, continues to inspire critical subjective consciousness among new generations across different spaces and times, while also opening room for new and dynamic meanings in responses to MTQ.

<sup>59</sup> Misbah Mustofa, 1115-1152.

<sup>60</sup> Misbah Mustofa, 1028-1029.

<sup>61</sup> Ni'mah, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Dan Kritik Sosial: Studi Terhadap Tafsir Taj Al-Muslimin Min Kalam Rabb Al-'Alamin*, 63.

## Conclusion

Based on a sociology of knowledge analysis of KH. Misbah Mustofa's thought on Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ) in his tafsir *Tāj al-Muslimīn min Kalām Rabbi al-‘Ālamīn*, this study formulates several findings, research limitations, and opportunities for future research as follows, *first*, KH. Misbah Mustofa's critical intellectual framework was dialectically shaped by several interrelated sociological factors. These include his immediate family environment (significant others) as agents of primary socialization; the pesantren intellectual traditions he encountered in Kasingan and Tebuireng and the cross-mazhab religious traditions of the Hijaz; his consistently critical stance toward the authority of state power; and a strong religious orientation toward continually understanding and properly practicing the contents of al-Qur'an. *Second*, KH. Misbah criticized MTQ because he believed it shifted the orientation of Qur'anic recitation (tilawah) from a dimension of worship into a mere means of performance, competition, prize-seeking, and the pursuit of social reputation (riya). This criticism identifies a functional shift in al-Qur'an: from what should be religious guidance oriented toward the hereafter (sacred) into an instrument of festivalization oriented toward worldly concerns (profane). *Third*, KH. Misbah consistently externalized this criticism through his works of tafsir. The consistency of his strong criticism of MTQ is recorded without any change in perspective, both in his earlier tafsir (*al-Iklīl fī Ma'ān al-Tanzīl*) and in his final tafsir (*Tāj al-Muslimīn min Kalām Rabbi al-‘Ālamīn*) when interpreting QS. al-Baqarah [02]:63. *Fourth*, this library research has limitations in demonstrating the social objectivation of KH. Misbah's criticism of MTQ. It is confirmed that the text of *Tāj al-Muslimīn* is internalized by the family, santri, and alumni of Pesantren al-Balagh, and that *Tāj al-Muslimīn* is openly accessible. However, confirming how they externalize KH. Misbah's thought in *Tāj al-Muslimīn*, particularly his criticism of MTQ, requires a separate research project. Future research is therefore encouraged to examine the sociological reception of *Tāj al-Muslimīn*.

## Bibliography

- Al-Qazwinī, Muhammad bin Yazīd. *Sunan Ibnu Mājah*. Riyad: Maktabah al-Ma'ārif li al-Nasr wa al-Tawzī', 1406.
- Annisa, Ayu, Ris'an Rusli, M. Khai Hanif Yuli Edi Z, and M. Hafizh. "Reaktualisasi Kritik KH. Misbah Musthofa Dalam Tafsir Taj Al-Muslimin Min Kalami Rabbil 'Alamin Terhadap Kurikulum Pendidikan Di Era Orde Baru." *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, Dan Fenomena Agama* 24, no. 2 (2023): 155–68.
- Arif, Defri Nor. "MTQ dan Pon-Pes Yanbu'ul Qur'an (Studi Terhadap Larangan Mengikuti NTQ Bagi Santri Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus)." UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2015.
- Azra, Azyumardi. *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII*. Jakarta: Prenadamedia, 2013.
- Bahrudin. "The Rights of Contemporary Women: A Comparative Study of Bisri Mustofa in Tafsir Al-Ibriz between Misbah Musthafa in Tafsir Taj Al-Muslimin." *Hermeneutik: Jurnal Ilmu Al Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 17 No. 02 (2023).
- Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Penguin Books, 1966.

- Gusmian, Islah. "K.H. Misbah Ibn Zainul Musthafa (1916-1994 M): Pemikir Dan Penulis Teks Keagamaan Dari Pesantren." *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 14, no. 01 (2016): 115. <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlk.v14i1.474>.
- Hamsah, Hamdani Ali Oemar. *Apa Kata Qari'ah Hajjah Alfisyahr Arsyad Tentang MTQ*. Banjarmasin: Grafika Wangi Kalimantan, 2007.
- Handayana, Sri, and Muhamad Rezi. "MTQ: Antara Seni Membaca Al-Qur'an Dan Politik Akomodasionis Pemerintah Terhadap Umat Islam." *ISLAM TRANSFORMATIF: Journal of Islamic Studies* 02, no. 02 (2018).
- Jannah, Miftahul. "Musabaqah Tilawah Al-Qur'an Di Indonesia: Festivalisasi Al-Qur'an Sebagai Bentuk Resepsi Estetis" 15, no. 2 (2016): 87–95.
- Kemenag. *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya*. Jakarta: LPMQ, 2019.
- Khoeron, Moh. "Digelar September, Kota Samarinda Kaltim Tuan Rumah MTQ Nasional 2024." Kemenag, 2024. <https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/digelar-september-kota-samarinda-kaltim-tuan-rumah-mtq-nasional-2024-FPUZp>.
- Munawaroh, Lathifah Lathifah. "Thomas Luckmann: Kontribusi Sosiologi Pengetahuan Dalam Studi Islam." *Al-Ulum Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Ke Islaman* 9, no. 4 (2022): 417–32.
- Munir, Ahmad, and Sudarsono. *Ilmu Tajwid Dan Seni Baca Al-Qur'an*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 1994.
- Mustofa, Misbah. *Al-Iklīl Fī Ma'ān Al-Tanzīl*. Surabaya: Al-Ihsan, n.d.
- . *Tāj Al-Muslimīn Min Kalām Rabb Al-'Ālamīn*. 2nd ed. Tuban: Majlis al-Ta'lif wa al-Khaṭṭāt, 1990.
- Ni'mah, Ilya Syafa'atun. *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Dan Kritik Sosial: Studi Terhadap Tafsir Taj Al-Muslimin Min Kalam Rabb Al-'Alamin*. Surabaya: UIN Sunan Ampel, 2018.
- Nur'aeni, Ulvah. *Sosiologi Tafsir; Kritik Fenomena Bid'ah Dalam Tafsir Tamshiyah Al-Muslimin Karya KH. Ahmad Sanusi*. Jakarta: UIN Jakarta, 2020.
- Robikah, Siti, and Kuni Muyassaroh. "Lokalitas Tafsir Nusantara Dalam Kitab Taj Al-Muslimin Min Kalami Rabbi Al-Alamin." *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Tafsir Di Nusantara* 5, no. 2 (2020): 71–92. <https://doi.org/10.32495/nun.v5i2.91>.
- Roller, Margaret R. "A Quality Approach to Qualitative Content Analysis: Similarities and Differences Compared to Other Qualitative Methods." *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung* 20, no. 3 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-20.3.3385>.
- Sani, Mukhyar, and Dkk. *Qari-Qariah Kalimantan Selatan Yang Berprestasi Di Tingkat Nasional-Intermasional*. Banjarmasin: Puslit IAIN Antasari, 2008.
- Supriyanto, Supriyanto. "Kajian Al-Qur'an Dalam Tradisi Pesantren: Telaah Atas Tafsir Al-Iklīl Fī Ma'ān Al-Tanzīl." *Tsaqafah* 12, no. 2 (2016): 281–98.
- Takrip, Muhamad, and Eko Zulfikar. "Tafsir Tarbawi: Perspective KH. Mishbah Musthafa about Islamic Education Values in QS. Al-Inshirah." *Edisi Januari-Juni* 7, no. 1 (2023): 52–63. <https://doi.org/10.32332/tarbawiyah.v7i1.5872>.
- Zulaikhah Fitri Nur Ngaisah. "Ortodoksi Pesantren dalam Tafsir Al- Bayān." *Diya Al-Afkar : Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Al-Hadist* 13, no. 2 (2025): 213–34.