

## Cultural Contextualization Of Indonesian Values In The Tafsir Al-Iklīl Fī Ma’ānī Al-Tanzīl By Misbah Musthofa (A Study Of Wilhelm Dilthey's Hermeneutics)

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### Abstract

This study argues that the integration of Indonesian cultural values into Qur’anic exegesis can be achieved without compromising the sacredness of the text, as demonstrated in Misbah Musthofa’s Al-Iklīl fī Ma’ānī al-Tanzil, interpreted through Wilhelm Dilthey’s hermeneutics. The research investigates how Dilthey’s focus on historical understanding, empathy, and cultural context enables Musthofa to interpret Qur’anic verses in a way that incorporates Indonesia’s ethnic diversity, traditions, and customs. The research employs a qualitative method with hermeneutical analysis, covering textual description of the exegesis, interpretation of Indonesian cultural contexts, and evaluation of Dilthey’s principles (Erleben, Verstehen, and Auslegen). Primary data are obtained from Tafsir Al-Iklīl, while secondary data include literature on Indonesian culture and hermeneutic theory. The results show that Musthofa successfully contextualizes Indonesian culture through a holistic interpretation for instance, by connecting Qur’anic verses to social realities during the time of writing, such as his interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah verse 10 in relation to the Javanese ritual practice of offering sesajen (traditional offerings). This approach enriches Qur’anic interpretation with local dimensions, making it more relevant for Indonesian Muslims. However, a key challenge remains in maintaining a balance between cultural context and the authoritative nature of the Qur’anic text. The study concludes that Dilthey’s hermeneutics offers an effective framework for contextualizing Qur’anic interpretation in Indonesia. It supports inclusive, adaptive readings relevant to contemporary challenges. Future research should examine other regional exegeses.

**Keywords :** Cultural contextualization, Qur’anic exegesis, Dilthey’s hermeneutics, Misbah Musthofa, Indonesian culture.

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### Introduction

The Qur'an, as the holy book of Islam, serves not only as a source of religious teachings but also as a dynamic and adaptive guide for life in response to the development of time and changes in socio-cultural contexts. Since its revelation more than fourteen centuries ago, the

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interpretation of the Qur'an has undergone significant evolution from classical approaches that emphasized linguistic, historical, and juridical (fiqh) aspects to more contemporary forms of exegesis that are contextual and responsive to modern realities.

In the current era of globalization, as local cultures interact intensively with the universal values of Islam, there arises an urgent need for Qur'anic interpretation that can integrate divine teachings with local cultural contexts. This effort aims to ensure that the understanding of the Qur'an does not remain abstract or detached from social realities but becomes relevant and grounded for Muslim communities in various regions, including Indonesia the world's largest Muslim-majority country. Indonesia, with its rich diversity of ethnicities, languages, and traditions encompassing more than 1,300 ethnic groups, presents a unique cultural context for interpreting Islamic teachings. Noble values such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), *musyawarah* (deliberation), and interreligious tolerance have long characterized Indonesian society.

Islam entered the archipelago in the 13th century through trade and da'wah (proselytizing). The Islamization process in Indonesia occurred through acculturation rather than assimilation, giving rise to the inclusive and moderate character of *Islam*

*Nusantara*. However, most Qur'anic interpretations available in Indonesia remain oriented toward Middle Eastern paradigms, often neglecting the richness of local culture. Consequently, a gap frequently emerges between the sacred text and the lived realities of Indonesian society, where indigenous cultural values are marginalized or even perceived as contradictory to Islamic teachings.<sup>i</sup>

In this context, various efforts have emerged from Indonesian exegetes to present Qur'anic interpretations rooted in local culture. One prominent figure among them is Misbah Musthofa, a scholar and academic who authored *Al-Iklīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl*. Published gradually since the early 1990s, this work demonstrates a holistic and contextual interpretative approach, seeking to understand the Qur'anic message through the lens of Indonesian culture. Musthofa, who grew up in the *pesantren* environment of East Java, does not rely solely on traditional methods of exegesis such as *tahlīlī* (analytical) and *ijmālī* (summary) approaches, but also adopts the *adab al-ijtimā'ī* style, emphasizing the social and moral dimensions of Qur'anic interpretation.<sup>ii</sup>

By adopting the principles of modern hermeneutics developed by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), this study examines Misbah's understanding in his

interpretation. Dilthey's hermeneutics emphasizes three key aspects *Erleben* (lived experience), *Verstehen* (empathetic understanding), and *Auslegen* (interpretation) which are grounded in the view that comprehension of a text cannot be separated from the historical and cultural context of its reader. Thus, interpretation becomes the result of a dynamic dialogue between the text, the interpreter, and the surrounding socio-cultural environment.<sup>iii</sup>

The application of Dilthey's hermeneutics in Qur'anic exegesis studies remains relatively underexplored in Indonesia. Most hermeneutical research on the Qur'an in the country tends to refer to other Western thinkers such as Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer. In fact, Dilthey's approach, which emphasizes historical, empathetic, and psychological dimensions, offers great potential for contextualizing the teachings of the Qur'an within Indonesia's plural and culturally diverse society.

In *Tafsīr Al-Iklīl*, Musthofa frequently connects Qur'anic verses with local cultural values for instance, linking the principle of social justice to the traditions of the predominantly Javanese communities in his environment. This approach not only enriches Qur'anic interpretation with local nuances but also strengthens the identity of Indonesian Islam

as moderate, tolerant, and contributive to global civilization, in line with the spirit of *Islam Rahmatan lil 'Ālamīn*. However, academic studies that specifically examine the contextualization of Indonesian culture in contemporary tafsir through the lens of Dilthey's hermeneutics remain very limited.

Zidan Fikri, in his study titled "*The Discourse of Banking in Javanese Tafsir: A Psychoanalytic Review of K.H. Misbah Musthofa's Interpretation in the Book Tāj Al-Muslimīn Min Kalām Rabbi Al-'Ālamīn*", explains how the development of the banking system during K.H. Misbah Musthofa's lifetime influenced his views and gave rise to sharp critiques reflected in his interpretations.<sup>iv</sup> Meanwhile, Muhammad Rizal, in his work "*The Application of Wilhelm Dilthey's Hermeneutics in Qur'anic Interpretation*", asserts that tafsir works can be analyzed through a hermeneutical approach, allowing researchers to gain deeper insight into religious texts by considering the interpreter's historical context and lived experiences. However, most of these studies focus primarily on the methodological aspects of tafsir without examining how local cultural values in the tafsir are integrated within the hermeneutical interpretative framework.<sup>v</sup> However, amid global challenges such as

religious radicalism, environmental crises, and cultural homogenization driven by globalization, contextual interpretation of the Qur'an has become an urgent necessity to present a humanistic, adaptive, and grounded understanding of the Qur'an.<sup>vi</sup> Based on this background, this study seeks to analyze how Misbah Musthofa applies Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutical principles in his *Tafsir Al-Iklīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl* to contextualize Indonesian culture. This research is expected not only to contribute theoretically to the development of Qur'anic exegesis studies but also to provide practical implications for shaping an understanding of Islam that is harmonious with the cultural identity of the Indonesian nation. Thus, this study emphasizes the importance of developing a Qur'anic interpretation that is inclusive, adaptive, and deeply rooted in local wisdom values as part of the ongoing dynamics of Islamic civilization in the Indonesian archipelago.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research method employed in this study is qualitative descriptive, designed to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of how Misbah Musthofa contextualizes Indonesian culture within his Qur'anic exegesis *Al-Iklīl fī*

*Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl*. This approach is particularly suitable for examining interpretative texts, as it allows for an exploration of meanings, experiences, and contexts rather than focusing solely on numerical or statistical data. The study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources, each serving a complementary role in providing a holistic analytical framework. The primary data consist of the main text of *Al-Iklīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl*, which serves as the central object of study. The analysis focuses on Qur'anic verses that demonstrate connections with elements of Indonesian culture, values, and traditions. Among these, one of the focal points is *QS. Al-Baqarah* verse 10, which is examined through a purposive sampling technique. This sampling method allows the researcher to intentionally select verses that reflect local relevance, particularly those that resonate with communities still engaged in traditional practices such as *sesajen* (ritual offerings). By focusing on such verses, the study aims to reveal how Musthofa interprets the Qur'an in light of local traditions and moral values embedded within Indonesian society. His interpretative approach provides a unique lens to understand how religious texts interact dynamically with cultural settings, forming a living dialogue between revelation and tradition. The secondary data

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encompass an extensive range of scholarly sources, including literature on Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutical theory, studies on Indonesian cultural identity and religious practices, and biographical information about Misbah Musthofa, particularly his intellectual background and historical context. These secondary sources are essential for building a theoretical and historical foundation that supports the interpretation of *Al-Iklīl*. By integrating these materials, the research situates Musthofa's work within both an academic and cultural framework, illustrating how his thought bridges classical Islamic scholarship with the lived realities of Indonesian Muslims. Data collection in this study relies primarily on document analysis and literature review.

Document analysis is used to examine textual patterns, interpretative methods, and contextual clues within *Al-Iklīl*, while literature review supports theoretical grounding through engagement with previous studies, academic journals, and relevant books accessed from trusted databases. This methodological combination ensures that both textual depth and contextual accuracy are maintained throughout the analytical process. The data analysis follows Dilthey's hermeneutical model, which emphasizes that understanding a text involves more than

rational cognition it requires an empathetic and experiential engagement with the subject. Dilthey's concept of *The Other* underlines the importance of entering into the lived world of the author to grasp the authentic meaning behind their expressions. This process unfolds through three interconnected dimensions: *Erlebnis* (lived experience that shapes the interpreter's worldview), *Ausdruck* (expression of inner experience manifested through symbols, language, or actions), and *Verstehen* (empathetic understanding of meaning derived from those experiences).<sup>vii</sup>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the main findings from the qualitative analysis of *Al-Iklīl*, the Qur'anic exegesis written by Misbah Musthofa, focusing on the process of Indonesian cultural contextualization through the lens of Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutics. The analysis was conducted on selected Qur'anic verses that are closely related to themes of local culture, such as social harmony, acceptance of destiny (*takdir*), and holistic well-being or salvation. These verses were chosen to illustrate how Misbah Musthofa bridges divine revelation with the lived cultural realities of Indonesian society. The findings are organized thematically to reveal the patterns of reconstructed lived experience (*Erlebnis*) within Musthofa's *tafsir*.

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Through this framework, the study identifies how his interpretations not only reflect the intellectual engagement with Qur'anic meanings but also embody the lived spiritual and cultural consciousness of Javanese-Muslim society. Each theme represents a dialogical process between the sacred text, the interpreter, and the socio-cultural environment that shapes understanding.

### **Profile of Misbah Musthofa and the Characteristics of the Tafsir Al-Iklil**

K.H. Misbah bin Zainal Musthafa, better known as Misbah Musthofa, was born in 1916 CE in *Kampung Sawahan, Gang Palen, Rembang, Central Java*. His full name was Misbah bin Zainal Musthafa, the son of H. Zainal Musthafa and Khadijah. His father was known as a wealthy and generous merchant, who frequently used his wealth to support *kiai* (Islamic scholars) in managing Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*). Meanwhile, his mother was a dedicated homemaker who successfully raised her children to become respected and influential figures in their communities. Misbah Musthofa came from a large and blended family due to the previous marriages of both his parents. His father, H. Zainal Musthafa, was first married to Dakilah, from whom he had two children, Zuhdi and Maskanah. His mother,

Khadijah, had previously been married to Dalimin, and from that marriage, she had two children, Ahmad and Tasmin. Later, Zainal Musthafa and Khadijah married and were blessed with four children: Mashadi (later known as Bisri Musthafa), Salamah, Misbah, and Ma'sum.<sup>viii</sup>

In addition to studying under K.H. Khalil, K.H. Misbah Musthofa also pursued knowledge from Hadratussyaikh K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari at Pondok Pesantren Tebuireng, Jombang, in 1357 H. At the pesantren, he studied various disciplines through the study of classical texts (*kitab kuning*) taught by prominent scholars. It was here that his intelligence and diligence in the field of Arabic linguistics began to stand out. Due to his expertise in mastering *nahwu*, *sharaf*, and *balaghah*, K.H. Misbah Musthofa later became known as a leading figure in the field of language, respected by both senior and junior students in the pesantren environment.<sup>ix</sup> K.H. Misbah Musthofa was known as a scholar who was active in various religious discussions, raising themes relevant to the development of the times. He often provided thoughts and solutions to current issues, and his views often sparked debates among scholars because of his courage in expressing different opinions. In his preaching activities, K.H. Misbah often held discussions with friends and students,

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discussing various socio-religious issues developing in society. His thoughts were not limited to the field of religion but also extended to the fields of education, social, economic, and political matters, demonstrating his broad insight and concern for the dynamics of the people's lives.<sup>x</sup>

K.H. Misbah Mustafa wrote his monumental work titled *Tafsir Al-Iklil fi Ma 'āni al-Tanzīl* over a period of approximately eight years, from 1977 to 1985 CE. In this exegesis, he did not merely interpret the Qur'anic verses textually, but also connected them to the social realities occurring within society. Through this work, K.H. Misbah Mustafa sought to provide answers and enlightenment regarding various religious and social issues of his time, making this tafsir highly contextual and deeply relevant to the lives of Muslims.<sup>xi</sup>

According to Gus Mus (K.H. Mustofa Bisri), the title of *Al-Iklil*, the tafsir written by K.H. Misbah Mustafa, was inspired by the naming tradition of Qur'anic exegesis works in the Middle East. Tafsir books from that region often employ rhymed prose (*saj'*) in their titles, such as *At-Tafsir wa Al-Mufassirun* or *Bidayah Al-Mujtahid fi Nihayah Al-Muqtashid*. Following a similar stylistic approach, K.H. Misbah Mustafa chose the

name *Al-Iklil fi Ma 'āni al-Tanzīl*, which carries both a sense of linguistic beauty and a strong reflection of the classical Arabic scholarly tradition, as exemplified by great scholars like Imam As-Suyuthi.<sup>xii</sup>

The following is the systematic structure employed by K.H. Misbah Mustafa in composing *Tafsir Al-Iklil fi Ma 'āni al-Tanzīl*: First, for each surah being interpreted, he begins by stating the name of the surah, the number of verses, whether it is *Makkiyah* or *Madaniyah*, its *asbābun nuzūl* (circumstances of revelation), and the main issues to be discussed. Second, in translating the meanings, K.H. Misbah applied two methods. The first method is the *makna gandul* (interlinear translation), in which each Arabic word of a verse is translated into Javanese using the *pegon* script, written diagonally to the left beneath the Arabic text it translates. The second method is the verse-by-verse translation, written below the *makna gandul* translation, also in Javanese with *pegon* script. To assist readers, each verse and its interpretation are marked with corresponding Arabic alphabetic symbols, allowing for easier correlation between the text and its exegesis. Third, in providing explanations, K.H. Misbah Mustafa divides the interpretation of each verse into two sections: a general explanation and a detailed one, distinguished by bold lines

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that serve as visual markers for the structure of his commentary.<sup>xiii</sup>

### **Misbah's Interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah Verse 10 in the Perspective of Wilhelm Dilthey's Hermeneutics**

Wilhelm Dilthey was born on November 19, 1833, in Biebrich, a small town situated on the banks of the Rhine River near Mainz, Germany. He came from an educated and religious family; his father was a devout and influential Protestant pastor, while his mother was the daughter of a well-known conductor with a strong background in art and culture. This religious and intellectual family environment greatly influenced the development of Dilthey's personality and thought, particularly his views on the relationship between human experience, understanding, and the meaning of life.<sup>xiv</sup>

Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutics serves as a method of interpreting the thoughts of others with the aim of achieving an understanding consistent with the author's intent or purpose. Through this hermeneutical approach, the interpreter is expected to grasp the author's ideas, meanings, and inner context more deeply and objectively. Thus, the interpretive process goes beyond a mere literal reading of the text, uncovering instead the lived experiences and historical background that gave rise to a particular body of thought.<sup>xv</sup>

The hermeneutics of Wilhelm Dilthey is divided into several key aspects that form the foundation for understanding an interpretive text. According to him, interpretation is not merely the act of reading and grasping the literal meaning of a text, but also an effort to comprehend the entire context of the author's lived experiences, historical background, and inner expressions that gave birth to the text. Therefore, within Dilthey's hermeneutical framework, the process of understanding a text involves several main stages experience (Erlebnis), expression (Ausdruck), and understanding (Verstehen) which are interrelated and form an integral unity in the pursuit of deep and authentic meaning within the interpreted text.

#### **Dimension of Erlebnis**

*Erlebnis* is a term used by Wilhelm Dilthey to refer to direct and profound lived experiences. In Dilthey's view, such experiences are not merely events that occurred in the past and were then recorded as memories or treated as research objects. They are also not simply the result of rational reflection, but are genuinely lived and internalized by the individual through engagement with the realities of life. Through *Erlebnis*, a person does not merely observe the world from the outside but actively participates in it—feeling, understanding, and assigning meaning to

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each event experienced. These lived experiences serve as the primary source of human understanding of both the world and oneself. Moreover, in the process of transposition, one can find oneself within the experiences of others, because every human experience contains a universal dimension that allows for mutual understanding and empathy between subjects.<sup>xvi</sup>

In this context, the approach used involves tracing and understanding the historical background surrounding the life of the mufassir at the time he wrote his *tafsir*. This is important because every work of *tafsir* does not emerge in a vacuum; rather, it results from the interaction between the mufassir's thought and the social, political, cultural, and religious conditions of his era. By understanding this historical situation, contemporary interpreters can uncover the ideological background, spiritual experiences, and intellectual dynamics that influenced the way the mufassir interpreted the Qur'anic verses. Such a historical approach aligns with Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutical principle, which emphasizes the importance of relating the text to the life context of its author so that the meaning obtained is not only textual but also reflective of the life realities that produced it.

The process of Islam entering Java cannot be separated from the broader dynamics of Islamic spread throughout the Nusantara region. Key figures in the Islamization of Java are known as the *Wali Songo*, scholars and preachers who pioneered the grounding of Islamic teachings within society. The emergence and development of Islamic kingdoms in Java, led by these *wali*, were closely linked to the condition of the Pasai Sultanate, which at that time functioned as a transit and meeting center for Islamic missionaries from Arabia and surrounding regions. When the Pasai Kingdom began to decline and the Malacca Sultanate fell to the Portuguese, according to Vlekke, three new Islamic powers emerged to play important roles in maintaining the existence and glory of Islam in the Malay Archipelago: the Aceh Sultanate at the northern tip of Sumatra, the Ternate Sultanate in the Maluku region, and the Demak Sultanate on the island of Java.<sup>xvii</sup>

In carrying out Islamic *da'wah* in Java, the *wali* employed an accommodative and persuasive approach, adapting Islamic teachings to local culture without compromising the essence of *tauhid* (the oneness of God). This flexible and wise method of preaching enabled the Islamization process in Java to proceed peacefully and garnered broad public

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sympathy. According to A. Jones, the early stages of Islam's development in Indonesia—particularly on the island of Java—reflected a form of Islam that had already undergone assimilation with elements of Indian and Persian culture, resulting in religious practices that blended Islamic values with local traditions.<sup>xviii</sup>

As a result of the widespread influence of Sufi teachings, many communities from regions such as Java, Sunda, Madura, and surrounding areas embraced Islam and became followers of various Sufi orders (*tarekat*) that were flourishing at the time. The tradition of *tasawuf* first flourished in Aceh in the 17th century CE before spreading to other regions across the Nusantara. This dissemination occurred through Malay traders and scholars who carried Sufi teachings to Islamic centers in Java, such as Demak and Banten. In addition, local Sufi-inspired teachings emerged, exemplified by the thought of Syekh Siti Jenar, which were introduced to certain Muslim communities dedicated to religious studies. Nevertheless, the majority of the population in these regions continued to adhere to the Shafi'i school (*mazhab Syafi'iyah*) in matters of jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Moderate and rational Sufi teachings, as formulated by Imam al-Ghazali, became the main foundation that

has endured and continues to thrive in Indonesia's Islamic spiritual tradition.<sup>xx</sup>

One example of the intersection between Islam and Javanese culture is reflected in traditional house-building practices. The house (*rumah*) is an essential part of life for the Javanese, conceptualized as *Asta Brata*. *Asta Brata* encompasses components such as *garwa* (wife), *wisma* (residence), *turangga* (horses), *kukila* (birds), *curiga*, and *waranggana*, which collectively strengthen the family unit. The house serves as a crucial means of fostering domestic harmony, providing shelter from rain and sun, and acting as a place to plan and achieve the family's goals.<sup>xx</sup>

The tradition of *sesajen* (offerings) has its roots in animistic and dynamistic beliefs, which later blended with Hindu-Buddhist teachings and have continued to persist among the Javanese Muslim community. Although the majority of the population has embraced Islam, the adherence to Javanese cultural practices remains strong and is still observed in daily life. One example is the offering of *sesajen* during certain customary events or rituals, such as the *slametan* for a new house, which is believed to carry profound spiritual significance.<sup>xxi</sup> This belief is mystical and deeply rooted, based on the notion that *sesajen* can bring smoothness, safety, and blessings to the implementation of an

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activity. However, nowadays many people no longer fully understand the philosophical meaning behind this tradition, and they continue the practice primarily as a way to honor their ancestors and village customs.<sup>xxii</sup>

Specifically after the arrival of Islam, a very close relationship developed between Islamic teachings and Javanese culture. This interaction gave rise to a form of syncretism, a blending of religious and cultural elements that influenced one another. Islamic syncretism in Indonesia, particularly in Java, developed because the Islam that arrived in the Nusantara had already been significantly influenced by mystical elements from Persia and India, which resonated with the traditional worldview of the Javanese people at the time. Through dialogue and dialectics between Islamic values and local culture, a combined value system emerged, producing two models of religious practice in society: first, syncretic Javanese Islam, which blended Hindu-Buddhist elements with Islam; and second, puritan Islam, which adheres strictly and purely to Islamic teachings. However, in the socio-religious life of Javanese society, the syncretic model appears more dominant because it is considered more adaptive to local culture.<sup>xxiii</sup> Misbah was born in a small village in East Java in the early 19th

century, where tradition and religion were deeply intertwined. At that time, Indonesia was struggling under Dutch colonialism, and the villagers, including Misbah's community, still strongly upheld ancestral customs, particularly in Java. However, the religious education he received at pesantrens and during his studies in places such as the Middle East led him to question these traditions. "Why do people worship through offerings, when the Qur'an teaches to surrender only to Allah? Should we not, as Indonesians, abandon traditions inherited from the colonizers?" Misbah reflected on this in his *tafsir*.

### Dimension of Ausdruck

*Ausdruck* in Wilhelm Dilthey's thought can be translated as "expression," but its meaning is not limited to the notion of expression in the context of art or aesthetics alone. The use of this term does not automatically link Dilthey to artistic expression theories based on the subject-object dichotomy. For Dilthey, *Ausdruck* has a more fundamental and existential meaning, namely as an expression of life (*Lebensäußerung*)—any form of manifestation that reflects a person's inner life into the external world. In other words, expression is not merely the product of an individual's subjective feelings, but the embodiment of profound lived experiences, which, through actions, language, writing,

or creative works, can convey a person's inner life in a form understandable to others. Through *Ausdruck*, individual experiences transform into something communicative and socially meaningful, enabling mutual understanding between humans within Dilthey's hermeneutical framework.<sup>xxiv</sup>

فِي قُلُوبُهُمْ  
مَرْضٌ  
فَرَادُهُمُ اللَّهُ  
مَرَضًا  
وَلَهُمْ  
عَذَابٌ  
الَّذِينَ هُمْ بِمَا  
كَانُوا  
يَكْنُبُ  
فَنَ

*"In their hearts is a disease, and Allah has increased their disease; and for them is a painful punishment because they used to lie."*

Misbah provides a general explanation of the meaning of the verse, emphasizing the term "**Tanbih**" as follows in *Tafsir Al-Iklil*:

*"Kelakuane wong munafiq ono ing iki ayat yaiku tumindak salah nganggo alasan yen dheweke gawe becik, yoiku anut marang wong-wong tuwa-tuwa, nanging ora rumangsa keliru. Sebab mendalam olehe tumindak anut-anutan kang tanpa ono dhasare. Kang mengkene iki akeh*

*lumaku ono ing kalangane wong-wong Jowo kang ugo wong Islam kelawan sah. Kadang-kadang ono ing kalangane wong kang dadi pengarepe agama. Koyo ngedekake omah nganggo sajen, kondangan nganggo tumpeng lan liyaliyane kang iku kabeh lakune wong Budha zaman kuno."*<sup>xxv</sup>

As previously explained in his *tafsir*, Misbah Mustafa delivers a rather sharp critique of certain Javanese traditions that, in his view, contain elements of hypocrisy in religious practice. This critique arises from his concern over the persistent influence of customs and inherited practices carried out without a solid theological understanding, and in some cases even contradicting the fundamental principles of Islam. In this context, the term "hypocrisy" (*nifaq*) used by Misbah is not merely understood as feigning faith, but more broadly as the inconsistency between professed Islamic belief and behaviors that continue to uphold ancestral traditions solely for cultural or hereditary reasons, without considering their alignment with the principles of *tauhid* and the guidance of the Qur'an. Thus, his critique serves as a reflective call for Muslims to position tradition proportionally respecting it without compromising the purity of creed and Sharia teachings.

Accordingly, Misbah emphasizes the importance of filtering and evaluating each cultural practice so that it does not merely become a meaningless social routine but is grounded in genuine religious principles as outlined in Islam. In this context, he provides a concrete example through the practices he critiques, such as the Javanese custom when constructing a house. This tradition is usually manifested in the form of *sesajen* (offerings) or *kenduri* ceremonies, including the preparation of *tumpeng* and other ritual items as a means of warding off misfortune or expressing gratitude. According to Misbah, such practices historically have deep roots in pre-Islamic religious traditions, particularly those derived from past Hindu-Buddhist cultures, as explained in the context of *Ausdruck*. He emphasizes this by stating, “*kondangan nganggo tumpeng lan liyaliyane kang iku kabeh lakune wong Budha zaman kuno*” (“the ceremonies with *tumpeng* and others were all practices of the ancient Buddhists”). Therefore, he argues that these practices need to be reconsidered from the perspective of *tauhid* to prevent the emergence of religious expressions that potentially mix Islamic teachings with remnants of older beliefs, thereby ensuring that the purity of faith is maintained within the life of the community.<sup>xxvi</sup>

### Dimension of *Verstehen*

*Verstehen*, or understanding, in Wilhelm Dilthey's view is a distinctive approach that differentiates the human world from the physical world. This is because the human world is rich with meaning, whereas the physical world can only be explained through mechanical cause-and-effect relationships. For Dilthey, understanding humans means grasping the meaning behind their actions, experiences, and life expressions, which arise from consciousness and specific intentions. Human activity is never neutral, as it is always bound by value contexts, interpretations of situations, and the meaningful impulses that animate each action. Therefore, *Verstehen* becomes a process of uncovering the hidden meanings contained in human life expressions through empathy, tracing historical context, and the interpreter's inner engagement with the subject being understood. Through this process, one can discover the true “meaning” of human reality not merely to explain (*erklären*), but to genuinely understand (*verstehen*) the essence of life as experienced and lived by historical actors or the author.<sup>xxvii</sup>

In this context, the focus of the study is to observe the extent of Kiai Misbah Musthafa's influence on Javanese society, particularly in shaping their worldview, religious attitudes, and social

practices. This observation aims to trace how the interpretive ideas presented by Kiai Misbah, especially through *Tafsir al-Iklil*, were received, understood, and implemented in the religious life of the local community. Thus, this research not only examines the textual dimension of Kiai Misbah's thought but also studies its contextual impact on the socio-cultural dynamics of Javanese society, which is known for its strong and syncretic religious traditions. This approach aligns with Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutical spirit in the dimension of *Verstehen*, which emphasizes understanding the meaning and influence of an individual's thought within the socio-historical context that produced it.

In Indonesia, *sesajen* (offerings) are an inseparable part of daily life, symbolizing harmony between humans, nature, and spirits. From Java to Bali, *sesajen* appears in various forms, such as *tumpeng*, fruits, traditional cakes, or even incense burned as offerings in customary rituals, weddings, or commemorations of the dead. For many communities, *sesajen* is not merely a tradition; it is an expression of belief reflecting ancestral values such as gratitude, respect for nature, and hopes for blessings. However, behind the beauty of these rituals lies a long-standing debate regarding their authenticity and influence on major religions, such as Islam, which is

practiced by the majority of Indonesians. This debate forms the focus of Misbah's thought—he was a reformist Islamic thinker living in the post-independence transitional era who viewed *sesajen* as a symbol of cultural syncretism that needed reform, such as in the case of Javanese Islam (*Islam Kejawen*) or *Abangan* practices.<sup>xxviii</sup>

In his thought, Misbah adopted the concept of *Verstehen*, emphasizing empathetic understanding and a profound renewal of meaning behind a phenomenon. Misbah did not outright reject *sesajen* as entirely wrong; he understood it empathetically as a cultural expression of a society that had long struggled against oppression. *Sesajen* reflects the “collective spirit” of the Indonesian people, serving as a way to connect humans with nature and God, with meanings rooted in gratitude and togetherness. However, he criticized the practice because it often deviates from pure Islamic teachings, transforming into rituals filled with superstition and dependency, which could weaken values such as reason and social justice.<sup>xxix</sup>

Misbah's understanding brings a reformist perspective that remains relevant today. In the modern era, where globalization and urbanization increasingly influence Indonesian culture, his thought has shaped reformist movements such as

Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which encourage society to “filter” elements of *sesajen*. For example, *sesajen* is now often adapted in simpler forms that do not compromise Islamic creed by attributing power to anything other than Allah SWT. As a result, Muslims today perceive *sesajen* as a cultural heritage rather than an obligatory ritual for ancestors, reducing potential conflicts between religions and cultures in Indonesia, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and others. In this context, Misbah’s *Verstehen* teaches that reform does not mean erasing tradition; rather, it is about understanding it with conscience, allowing *sesajen* to become a symbol of unity rather than division.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *Tafsir Al-Iklīl fī Ma’ānī al-Tanzīl* by KH. Misbah Musthofa is a distinctive Nusantara-style tafsir that reflects a serious effort to contextualize the messages of the Qur'an within the cultural reality of Indonesian society. Through Wilhelm Dilthey’s hermeneutical approach, it is understood that this tafsir is not merely a textual interpretation of the Qur'an but also a reflection of the historical, social, and cultural experiences of the mufassir as part of the Javanese community in the post-colonial period. KH. Misbah Musthofa

interprets Qur’anic verses by taking into account the lived experiences of Indonesian Muslims, which are full of social and cultural dynamics. The use of the Javanese language as the primary medium of the tafsir symbolizes a strong attachment to the local context, while also serving as a means of grounded Islamic da’wah and education. Cultural values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), politeness, respect for scholars, and communal spirit are highlighted as manifestations of Islamic teachings that are relevant to societal life. From Dilthey’s hermeneutical perspective, KH. Misbah Musthofa’s interpretation can be seen as a process of “understanding life through life itself” (*Verstehen*), where the experiences and worldview of the mufassir play a crucial role in bringing the meaning of Qur’anic verses to life. Thus, *Tafsir Al-Iklīl* demonstrates that Qur’anic interpretation is always dynamic, historical, and contextual, bridging the sacred text with local culture without diminishing the universal values of Islam. Overall, Misbah Musthofa’s work shows that the contextualization of Indonesian culture in Qur’anic exegesis is not merely a linguistic adaptation but also a creative form of spiritual and intellectual engagement with divine revelation rooted in the life of the community. This tafsir affirms that Islam and local culture can harmoniously

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synergize to build a civilization in the Nusantara characterized by civility, morality, and strong cultural identity.

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