



## RELIGIOUS INCLUSIVISM IN AL-QUR'AN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NURCHOLISH MADJID

### INKLUSIVISME AGAMA DALAM AL-QUR'AN PERSPEKTIF NURCHOLISH MADJID

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#### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the concept of inclusivism in the Quran from the perspective of Nurcholish Madjid, a figure of Islamic renewal in Indonesia. By analyzing Quranic verses and Nurcholish Madjid's thoughts, this study reveals how the view of inclusivism, which recognizes the truth and value in other religions, can be applied in the context of interfaith relations. Nurcholish Madjid emphasizes the importance of an open, tolerant, and dialogical attitude towards followers of other religions. He argues that the Quran is not only addressed to Muslims but also contains universal messages that are relevant to all humanity, such as the concept of "rahmatan lil 'alamin" (mercy for the universe). This study concludes that religious inclusivism in the Quran, as interpreted by Nurcholish Madjid, can be the basis for building interfaith dialogue and cooperation, as well as creating a more harmonious, inclusive, and just society.

**Keywords:** Inclusivism, al-Qur'an, Nurcholish Madjid

#### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi konsep inklusivisme dalam al-Quran dari perspektif Nurcholish Madjid, seorang tokoh pembaruan Islam di Indonesia. Dengan menganalisis ayat-ayat al-Quran dan pemikiran Nurcholish Madjid, penelitian ini mengungkap bagaimana pandangan inklusivisme, yang mengakui kebenaran dan nilai dalam agama-agama lain, dapat diterapkan dalam konteks hubungan antaragama. Nurcholish Madjid menekankan pentingnya sikap terbuka, toleran, dan dialogis terhadap pemeluk agama lain. Beliau berpendapat bahwa al-Quran tidak hanya ditujukan kepada umat Islam, tetapi juga mengandung pesan universal yang relevan bagi seluruh umat manusia, seperti konsep "rahmatan lil 'alamin" (rahmat bagi semesta alam). Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa inklusivisme agama dalam al-Quran, sebagaimana diinterpretasikan oleh Nurcholish

*Madjid, dapat menjadi landasan untuk membangun dialog dan kerjasama antarumat beragama, serta menciptakan masyarakat yang lebih harmonis, inklusif, dan berkeadilan.*

**Kata-kata kunci:** Inklusivisme, al-Qur'an, Nurcholish Madjid

## A. INTRODUCTION

Religious inclusivism is a concept that recognizes the nobleness and truth of some aspects of other religions without ignoring the basic beliefs of the adhered religion (Madjid, 2019). In the current context of global religious pluralism, inclusivism has become an important point in interfaith dialogue to promote harmony and tolerance among followers of various faiths. The Quran, as the holy book of Muslims, provides a foundation for billions of Muslims and is often considered the source of teachings that guide their attitudes towards people of other faiths.

Research on religious inclusivism in the Quran requires special attention to understand how these ancient texts are relevant to modern multicultural social contexts. The thought of Nurcholish Madjid, a figure of Islamic renewal in Indonesia, provides a unique perspective on the reading of inclusivism in the Quran. As an intellectual who emphasizes the importance of understanding religion that is relevant to the times, he advocates a dynamic and contextual reading of the Quran in accordance with changing social realities (Rohman & Fathoni, 2022).

Madjid's views on Quranic inclusivism not only support peaceful coexistence between religious communities but also enrich the discourse on adaptive religious interpretation. Madjid's inclusivist interpretation challenges exclusivist views that may limit the understanding of diversity as a value. He shows that the concepts of *ta'aruf* (knowing) and *ummatan wasatan* (people in the middle), which are stated in the Quran, are the basis for religious inclusivism in Islam.

Through the lens of inclusivism, the Quran is not only understood as a guide for Muslims but also as a text that recognizes the legitimacy and existence of other religions. Verses that call for dialogue and tolerance with adherents of other religions become the foundation for the establishment of religiously diverse communities in a peaceful and respectful manner. For example, verses that explain the need to respect other religions and people, such as in Surah al-Hujurat verse 13, which states, "O mankind, indeed, We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another," This verse demonstrates the value of inclusiveness and respect for diversity, which are intrinsic parts of the Quranic message.

Nurcholish Madjid, an Indonesian Muslim thinker, expanded this understanding of inclusivism through his work on the Quran. Madjid interpreted that the Quran does not aim to dominate or eliminate diversity but instead appreciates and celebrates it (Madjid, 1999). Concepts related to inclusivism in the Quran, like "rahmatan lil 'alamin" (mercy for the universe), clarify that Islam's message aims for universal relevance through compassion, not just for Muslims.

Research on religious inclusivism in the Quran, particularly from the perspective of Nurcholish Madjid, is valuable for understanding how Islamic values can be a bridge builder between communities. This carries the vision of progressive Islam that offers harmony and peace while contributing to the global discourse on plurality and contemporary readings of the Qur'anic texts.

The purpose of this study is to explore and explain in depth the concept of inclusivism in Nurcholish Majid's works, with the goal of clarifying how he reads and interprets the verses of the Qur'an relating to religious diversity and plurality of beliefs. This research rests on the question, "How is Nurcholish Madjid's Understanding of Religious Inclusiveness in the Qur'an?".

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Inclusivism is a view that recognizes the truth in various religions, not limited to one religious community. It encourages the understanding that there are common values and substance among various religions, implying that no one religion has a monopoly on truth or salvation. Instead, inclusivism suggests that these concepts are accessible through many religious traditions (Misrawi, 2007).

Another definition of inclusivism is a view or attitude that accepts the possibility that truth or salvation can be found in different religions or beliefs. It differs from exclusivism, which emphasizes that only one particular religion or belief system has a monopoly on truth or salvation. Inclusivism recognizes the value and truth in other faith traditions while still maintaining the core beliefs of one's religion or faith. This approach is often found in interfaith dialog and efforts to build understanding and cooperation between different faith groups (Zamakhsari, 2020).

Inclusivism in the context of religion is the view that truth can be found in other religions even though one remains firm in one's own religious beliefs. It is an attitude that recognizes that other religions also have values and truths in their teachings, despite doctrinal differences or worship practices. Inclusivism is often understood as an

alternative to exclusivism, which claims that only one religion has the truth, and pluralism, which emphasizes full recognition and acceptance of religious differences without placing a particular religion at the center (Ulfa, 2013).

### C. METHOD

This research is a library research by collecting data from the literature. This research is descriptive qualitative. While the data collection technique uses documentation, observation and reference. Data analysis by presenting descriptively begins with explaining direct observation. Then collected and analyzed qualitatively with deductive and inductive methods.

### D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Biography of Nurcholish Madjid

Nurcholish Madjid was born in Jombang, East Java, on March 17, 1939 (Wikipedia, 2024). He is the son of a pesantren family, born as the eldest of four children. His father was a kyai from the Tebuireng pesantren, the birthplace of the Nahdatul Ulama organization. It was in this environment that Cak Nur received a strong and deep foundation of religious education, nurtured by the classical books that his father collected.

Nurcholish's thinking began in childhood. He was educated in two educational institutions: Madrasah al-Wathaniyah in the afternoon, run by his parents, and Sekolah Rakyat in the morning. This gave him a strong foundation in both the classical Islamic tradition and modern education (Nadroh, 1999). Cak Nur continued his studies at the modern Islamic boarding school, Gontor, known for its contemporary Islamic learning. In 1960, he graduated from Kulliyat al-Mu'allim al-Islamiyyah at this pesantren and then pursued higher education at Al-Azhar University in Egypt. His academic work and experiences in Egypt and later at the University of Chicago, where he earned his doctorate, placed him at the forefront of modern Islamic thought (Hamidah, 2011).

As a student, Cak Nur played a significant role in the Islamic Student Association, where he rose to become chairman. His involvement in this organization marked the beginning of his journey as a leader of progressive Islamic thought and movement in Indonesia (Hamidah, 2011). Cak Nur's ideas on religious inclusivism, secularization, and pluralism attracted much attention and often caused controversy among the public. He always prioritizes dialogue as a way to promote understanding and cooperation among

religious populations. His ideas, recorded in a number of written works, show a strong desire to find a middle way where Islamic values can be integrated with universal values in the context of modernity (Madjid, 1995).

Apart from being a thinker, Nurcholish Madjid is also involved in higher education. He founded Paramadina University in Jakarta and led it as rector (Wikipedia, 2024). At this university, Cak Nur implemented a vision of education that not only improved understanding of Islam but also encouraged critical thinking skills and social awareness among students. As a public intellectual, Cak Nur was constantly involved in discussions on social, cultural, and political issues. His work in the Association of Muslim Scholars throughout Indonesia and his active participation in various forums illustrate his commitment to community empowerment and the development of Islamic scholarship that is adaptive to changing times.

Nurcholish Madjid passed away on August 29, 2005, leaving behind a significant intellectual legacy. His contributions to religious dialogue, inclusivism, and the role of Islam in the modern world continue to inspire current and future generations. His legacy as a thinker and educator has enriched contemporary Islamic discourse and made an immeasurable contribution to Indonesian society, as indicated by his many awards and achievements (Nadroh, 1999).

### **Nurcholish Madjid's Inclusive Theology**

Nurcholish Madjid is an Indonesian Muslim scholar known for his ideas about the renewal of Islamic thought. His thoughts are intertwined between three major themes: Islamicity, Indonesianness, and modernity. He dared to deconstruct Islamic thought, which he considered to have experienced fossilization, stagnation, and dullness that made Muslims lose their adaptability to the increasingly complex pace of real-life problems. One of his most polemical and controversial thoughts is when he deconstructs exclusivism and offers inclusivism instead. This is clearly considered against the flow of mainstream understanding (Abidin, 2014).

Cak Nur argued that Islam is modern and inclusive of other religions and cultures, as well as the state. He disagreed with the notion that modernization is westernization. For him, modernization is rationalization the use of reason and science to solve life's problems. He also argues that secularization, which is the separation of religion and state affairs, is not against Islam and is even necessary to create a just and democratic society (Madjid, 1992).

Cak Nur defines Islam as an attitude of surrender to God. All true religions, according to him, teach this attitude. He also empha-

sized the importance of tolerance and pluralism in Islam, which recognizes the right of other religions to live and develop. He argued that Muslims must be able to dialogue and cooperate with followers of other religions based on the principles of equality (Madjid, 1995).

Cak Nur also strongly criticized religious fundamentalism, which is often the cause of conflict and violence. He called on Muslims to return to the true teachings of Islam, which emphasize human values, justice, and tolerance. He also invited Muslims to be more open to modern science and technology and to play an active role in community development (Madjid, 1999). Cak Nur's thoughts on inclusive Islam are very relevant to the pluralistic Indonesian context. His ideas can be a bridge between various religious and cultural groups in Indonesia and encourage the creation of a more harmonious and just society (Madjid, 1997).

### **Nurcholish Madjid's Influence on Contemporary Islam in Indonesia**

Nurcholish Madjid's direct contribution to Islam in Indonesia is vast, but one of the most obvious is his role in fostering dialogue between Islamic tradition and local Indonesian culture. Through this approach, Cak Nur promoted respect for cultural diversity as a cohesive value that does not contradict the teachings of Islam. One of the practical manifestations of Cak Nur's contribution is in his works that combine Islamic values with Indonesia's local cultural context. Books like "Islam: Doctrine and Civilization" and "Islam Ke-modernan dan Keindonesiaan" present the perspective of interpreting Islam within the Indonesian context. In his books, he emphasizes the importance of maintaining local values and cultural diversity in Islamic practice in Indonesia.

In addition, as the founder and leader of Paramadina University, Nurcholish established a higher education institution that not only prioritizes academic quality but also makes room for cultural and Islamic integration. This university encourages students and facilitators to explore and celebrate Indonesia's diverse local cultural heritage within the framework of Islamic values. Cak Nur is also often involved in discussion forums and seminars that emphasize the need to recognize and respond to the dynamics of socio-cultural change in Indonesia from an Islamic perspective. Public figures and intellectuals often invite him to discuss topics related to the renewal of Islamic thought, applying the principles of inclusivity and diversity.

Apart from his academic and literary activities, Nurcholish also clearly voiced the importance of culture in religious life. He argues that culture can be a forum for manifesting Islamic values as well as

realizing Indonesian identity. Cak Nur emphasized through lectures, writing, and intercultural dialog that maintaining and developing culture in line with universal Islamic values is more important than resisting it (Madjid, 1995).

Nurcholish Madjid specifically contributed to giving space for art and culture in Islam. In various lectures and writings, he often links the richness of local culture with Islam, explaining that Islam did not merely come to erase local culture but to empower it. Cak Nur's support for arts like wayang and traditional music, perceived as expressions of inclusive and tolerant Islamic values, clearly demonstrates this. The concept of 'Islam yes, Islamic party no' holds sway. This enlightening effort explores the separation of Islam as a religion and its religious values from narrow political interests. In this perspective, Nurcholish cultivates an understanding of the significance of national identity and diversity in Indonesia, positioning Islam as a bolstering force for national identity, rather than a replacement or confirmation of sectarianism. In the context of culture and Islam, Cak Nur's legacy continues among Muslim intellectuals and activists committed to renewal and progress. Various cultural and educational initiatives inspired by his thought continue to move towards integrating local Indonesian values with Islamic principles, promoting a form of Islamic practice that is a synthesis of tradition, reason, and revelation (Madjid, 1997).

Nurcholish Madjid is also concerned about education, which is an immeasurable blessing of culture, is also a major concern of Nurcholish Madjid. Cak Nur not only elaborated on the need to transform Islamic education to meet modern challenges, but also explored how education itself could serve as a tool to appreciate and express Indonesia's diverse culture. He founded Paramadina University, the epitome of this endeavor, where he developed interdisciplinary studies on culture and Islam. Nurcholish Madjid's influence on contemporary Islamic thought closely aligns with the importance of culture and the arts in religious life. Culture is not just a complement or decoration, but an integral part of a rich and dynamic religious life. Cak Nur's thoughts on culture and Islam remain a valuable guide for many Indonesians seeking to explore and interpret Islam within the context of Indonesia's diverse and rich cultural heritage.

### **Religious Inclusivism in al-Qur'an Perspective of Nurcholish Madjid**

The Qur'an presents a number of verses that are often interpreted as supporting inclusivism in interfaith relations. The verses that discuss inclusivism include the following:

QS. al-Baqarah (2:256):

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قُدُّسِيَّةُ الرُّسُلُ مِنَ الْغَيْرِ

Translation:

There is no compulsion to embrace the religion of Islam. Indeed, the right way is clearly different from the wrong way (QS. Al-Baqarah/2: 256).

QS. Ali Imran (3:64):

فَلَمْ يَأْهُلُ الْكِتَبُ تَعَالَوْا إِلَيْهِ سَوَاءٌ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنُكُمْ إِلَّا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَلَا شُرُكَاءَ لِهِ شَيْءٌ وَلَا يَتَّخِذُ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَلَمْ تَوَلُّوا فَقُولُوا اشْهُدُوا بِإِنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ٦٤

Translation:

Say (Prophet Muhammad), "O People of the Book, let us come to the one sentence that is common between us and you, i.e., we worship none but Allah; we associate nothing with Him; nor do some of us make others gods besides Allah." If they turn away, tell them, "Behold, we are Muslims (QS. Ali Imran/3:64).

These and similar verses offer an inclusive perspective on pluralism within the community of faith and human relations. The emphasis on commonality in belief in one God and the importance of charitable deeds suggests that while teachings and practices may differ, there are fundamental principles that unite humans before their creator. Nurcholis Madjid understands this verse to mean that each group has its own right to exist and live its daily life based on its own beliefs (Madjid, 2019).

Religious inclusivism is a view that recognizes and respects the truth about religious diversity. Cak Nur, in his thoughts, emphasized the importance of this inclusive attitude. He argues that the essence of all religions is surrender to God (in the generic sense of Islam). Thus, all religions basically teach the same values of goodness and truth (Madjid, 2019). The verses, interpreted in a broader context, call for respecting the diversity of religions and beliefs and fostering harmonious and peaceful interfaith dialogue. The emphasis is on wise dialogue with the People of the Book (people from religions that have holy books, such as Judaism and Christianity).

The history of Islamic civilization, which demonstrates openness and tolerance towards religious and cultural diversity, also supports Cak Nur's inclusive view. He gave examples of how Muslims in the past were able to coexist peacefully with people of other

religions, even creating a glorious civilization together. One example mentioned was how Muslims in Andalusia (Spain) coexisted peacefully with followers of other religions, such as Jews and Christians, for approximately five centuries. Ibn Taimiyah, a great Islamic scholar, even praised this harmonious life as an ideal form of Islamic society that upholds the values of justice and equality (Madjid, 2019).

According to Cak Nur, the success of Islamic civilization in Spain demonstrates that Islam is capable of not only creating a glorious civilization but also respecting and protecting followers of other religions. This is different from the general view that often considers Islam an intolerant religion. Cak Nur emphasized that this inclusive and pluralist attitude is actually part of the authentic teachings of Islam. Cak Nur also highlighted how the Jews, who were often victims of discrimination and persecution in Europe, actually received protection and freedom under Islamic rule in Spain. Under the auspices of this Islamic civilization, the Jews even experienced a golden age in intellectual and cultural fields. However, this harmony and tolerance in Spain eventually collapsed due to internal conflicts among the Muslims themselves. We must continue to fight for and maintain an inclusive and pluralist attitude to realize peace and progress (Madjid, 2019).

QS. al-Kafirun (109:6):

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

Translation:

For you is your religion and for me is my religion (QS. Al-Kafirun/109:6).

This verse, according to Nurcholish Madjid, is an affirmation of tolerance and mutual respect between religious communities because each individual has the right to choose their own beliefs (Zamakhsari, 2020). Cak Nur interprets this verse, often misunderstood as exclusive to followers of other religions, as an affirmation of religious freedom. Cak Nur emphasizes that the polytheists of Mecca, who forced the Prophet Muhammad to follow their religion, are the target of this verse, not the People of the Book. Therefore, we cannot use this verse as a basis for intolerance towards followers of other religions, especially the People of the Book (Madjid, 2019).

This verse emphasizes the principle of religious freedom, where every individual has the right to choose their own beliefs without coercion. This is in line with the view of religious inclusivism, which recognizes and respects religious diversity. Thus, Q.S. Al-

Kafirun becomes the foundation for an open and tolerant attitude towards followers of other religions, which is one of the important characteristics of Nurcholish Madjid's thought.

Nurcholish Madjid also quotes the opinion of a renowned Indonesian scholar, Abdul Hamid Hakim, who argues that the Magi, Sabians, Hindus, Chinese (Confucianists), and other groups that have holy books, such as the Japanese, are people of the book containing the teachings of monotheism. This is based on the Qur'anic verse, which states that Allah swt has sent a messenger to every person (Abidin, 2014). Nurcholish Madjid emphasized the importance of an inclusive and pluralist attitude in Islam that recognizes and appreciates the diversity of beliefs. He argues that Islam does not claim the truth exclusively but recognizes the truth in other religions that teach divine and human values (Madjid, 1997).

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Religious inclusivism is a view that recognizes and respects the truth about religious diversity. Nurcholish Madjid emphasizes the importance of this inclusive attitude by arguing that the core of all religions is surrender to God (Islam in the generic sense). He also emphasized that pluralism is a necessity, even a divine decree, so that religious people should accept it and develop an attitude of mutual respect and tolerance. Positive attitudes towards followers of other religions, particularly the People of the Book, also reflect this inclusive view. Islam recognizes the Jewish and Christian groups' right to life and gives them the freedom to practice their respective teachings. This is based on the principle that all religions come from God and essentially teach goodness.

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