



## Controversies of Javanese Style Murattal among Nahdlatul Ulama Figures

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### Abstract

This study aims to compare perspectives on Javanese-style murottal among Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) figures. NU, with its strong cultural roots, tends to adopt the Javanese style in its engagement with the Quran, viewing it as an infrastructure that can be integrated with local values. However, NU figures have differing perspectives on the phenomenon of combining the Javanese style with Quranic recitation. This study involves content analysis and literature review, as well as the examination of lectures on social media to understand their approach to the Quran in the Javanese cultural context. The results of this study can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of Islamic thought in Indonesia, particularly in addressing the Javanese-style murottal from the perspective of NU figures. Thus, this study aims to offer deeper insights into the diversity of Islamic understanding within the Javanese cultural context in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** langgam jawa; al-quran; murattal; Nahdlatul Ulama

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## Introduction

As the holy book of Muslims, the *al-Qur'an* was revealed by Allah *swt* through the Prophet Muhammad *saw* with remarkable uniqueness and advantages. Historically, the *al-Qur'an* was used by the Prophet to challenge and confront the Quraish people, who were experts in creating poetry and rhymes.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, besides having an unmatched beautiful structure, the recitation of the *al-Qur'an* also follows established standards, such as *tartil* or *tilawah*.

Muslims have innovated in beautifying the recitation of the *al-Qur'an* with melodic methods, as seen in *musabaqah* *al-Qur'an* competitions. The melodies of the *al-Qur'an* have been standardized in several agreed-upon recitations by *ulama* of the *Qur'an* and are traditionally used in *al-Qur'an* recitations: 1) *Langgam Bayyati*, 2) *Langgam Hijaz*, 3) *Langgam Shaba*, 4) *Langgam Rast*, 5) *Langgam Jibarkah*, 6) *Langgam Sika*, and 7) *Langgam Nabawand*.<sup>2</sup> However, in Indonesia, some recite it with the *murottal* Javanese *langgam* method.

The *murottal* *Qur'an* aligned with Javanese *langgam* represents a unique form of experiencing the *al-Qur'an*, where the recitation of holy verses is delivered with a strong Javanese musical style. In this context, the author will compare two different approaches to the *murottal* *Qur'an* using Javanese *langgam*, focusing on the perspectives of NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama*) figures who either prohibit or permit it.

NU is an ideological stream in Islam that adopts a traditional and moderately traditional approach to interpreting and practicing Islamic teachings.<sup>3</sup> In the context of *murottal* using Javanese *langgam*, both perspectives present unique and interesting ideologies. NU, often representing moderate and traditional Islam in Indonesia, tends to incorporate Javanese cultural elements into religious teachings.

The *murottal* *Qur'an* in the Javanese style according to NU often features the recitation of holy verses blended with the soft and melodious Javanese culture. This reflects the harmonious spirit between Islam and Javanese culture upheld by NU. On the other hand, some NU figures have different views regarding this Javanese *langgam* phenomenon. They emphasize the absolute nature of the *al-Qur'an* recitation without incorporating local cultural elements. Thus, there is controversy among NU figures regarding their perspectives on the recitation of the *al-Qur'an* with Javanese *langgam*.

Previous studies on the Javanese *langgam murottal* have been conducted by Yaser Arafat,<sup>4</sup> who introduced the Javanese *langgam murottal*, and by Hanum and Mursyid,<sup>5</sup> who reviewed the views of Indonesian *ulama* on this matter. These articles explain the controversies and pro-contra perspectives among Indonesian *ulama* regarding the recitation of the *al-Qur'an* using Javanese *langgam*. The difference in this study focuses on NU figures, an organization with a moderate-traditional ideology that often incorporates culture, yet some of its figures deny this alignment. Therefore, the author is interested in examining the controversy among NU figures regarding their views on the Javanese *langgam murottal*.

In this study, the author further investigates the differing perspectives among NU figures regarding *murottal*. How do these NU figures' pro-contra views address this issue? By

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<sup>1</sup> Manna'Khalil Al-Qattan and A S Mudzakir, *Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Qur'an* (Bogor: Litera AntarNusa, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Faiza Faiza, "Kompetensi Seni Baca Al-Qur'an Dalam Meningkatkan Kemampuan Tilawah Santri Di Pondok Pesantren an-Najah," *Journal of Educational Research* 2, no. 1 (2023): 171–88.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Mahmudi, "PERAN NAHDHATUL ULAMA DALAM PEMBENTUKAN IDEOLOGI NEGARA REPUBLIK INDONESIA" (UIN SUNAN KALIJAGA, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Yaser Arafat, "BERTAARUF DENGAN TILAWAH LANGGAM JAWA," *MAGHZA: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (2017): 75–84.

<sup>5</sup> Siti Latifah Hanum and Ali Mursyid, "Melagukan Al-Quran Dengan Langgam Jawa: Studi Terhadap Pandangan Ulama Indonesia," *MISYKAT Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Quran Hadist Syari Ah Dan Tarbiyah* 6, no. 1 (2021): 1–38.

understanding these differences, the author can appreciate the diversity in religious ideological expression among NU figures and see how Islam can adapt to local cultures while maintaining its fundamental values.

From the above elaboration, the core discussion of this research focuses on comparing the views of NU figures on the melodization of the *al-Qur'an* using Javanese *langgam*. Many *ulama* from the *Salaf* to the *Khalaf* have discussed the phenomenon of *al-Qur'an* recitation with *nagham* or Javanese *langgam*. This is due to the ongoing contradictions among figures regarding the use of contemporary *langgam* variations in the recitation of the *al-Qur'an*.<sup>6</sup>

The primary focus of this article is to discuss the history and development of *nagham* Qur'an, the views of NU figures on the Javanese *langgam murottal*, and the controversy of Javanese *langgam murottal* among NU figures.

The methodology in this study employs qualitative research utilizing content analysis and library research methods. Data collection methods involve examining speeches and lectures of *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) figures on social media platforms, such as YouTube and the NU Online website. Additionally, the researcher also uses secondary sources, including books, articles, and interviews.

The concept employed in this research is comparison. The concept of comparison is essential for this study to fundamentally describe and seek answers regarding causality by analyzing the phenomena causing its occurrence.<sup>7</sup> This concept is used to compare two or more different elements. In this study, it is used to compare the thoughts of NU figures on the *murottal* Javanese *langgam* as expressed on social media.

The theory utilized in this research is the theory of mass communication. This theory discusses how messages are conveyed through mass media, how these messages are received by the audience, and how they are studied and analyzed.<sup>8</sup> In this study, social media can be considered as mass media used to disseminate and introduce the *murottal* Javanese *langgam* as well as the opinions and views of NU figures regarding this matter.

## Result and Discussion

### *The History of Nagham al-Qur'an*

According to Ibn Mandzhur al-Anshari,<sup>9</sup> there are two opinions about how the *langgam* or melodies in the Qur'an, known as *nagham* (rhythm), were recited, as mentioned in his work, *Lisan al-'Arab*. The first opinion suggests that this rhythm originated from the lamentations of slaves captured by Muslims after battles against infidel armies. The second opinion posits that the rhythm originated from the ancestral songs of the Arab people, which were then adapted for reciting the Qur'an.

To this day, there is no definitive explanation of who modified this rhythm into the recitation style of the Qur'an, resulting in different perceptions of the history of Qur'anic melodies. The first perception concerns the origins of these melodies, while the second concerns who first promoted these rhythms within the Qur'an.<sup>10</sup>

Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) and his companions, the art of vocal performance has played a distinct role, even in religious practices. For instance, the Prophet Muhammad (saw) appointed Bilal bin Rabbah as the caller to prayer (*mu'adhin*) partly because

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<sup>6</sup> Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi, *Berinteraksi Dengan Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Moh Nazir, *Metode Penelitian* (Jakarta: Ghalia Indonesia, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Ido Prijana Hadi, Megawati Wahjudianata, and Inri Inggrit Indrayani, *Komunikasi Massa* (Pasuruan: CV. Penerbit Qiara Media, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Ibn al-Manzur al-Ansari, "Lisan Al-'Arab, Juz 19," *Kairo: Al-Dar Al-Misriyyah, t. Th*, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> M Husni Thamrin, "Telaah Atas Kemunculan Dan Perkembangan Nagham Di Indonesia," *Dalam Tesis, Prodi Studi Agama Dan Filsafat Konsentrasi Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Hadits UIN Sunan Kalijaga*, 2008.

of his strong, high, and melodious voice. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) and his companions, the recitation of the Qur'an with rhythm was already being encouraged, and the Prophet himself recommended it. In the era of the *tabi'in* (the generation following the companions), many *qari* (Qur'an reciters) possessed beautiful and captivating voices, although not many of their names are documented in history.<sup>11</sup>

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad (saw), society began to pay more attention to the vocal rhythm in Qur'anic recitation, particularly under the rule of Caliph Uthman bin Affan. At that time, the harmonious blending of voice and musical instruments started to be studied. This led to a shift in perspective among the people of Hijaz, who initially rejected music but eventually accepted it within the norms of aesthetics. The influence of Islam also required Muslims to align their perspectives and actions under the commands of Allah (swt), leading to a uniform practice in the vocal art of Qur'anic recitation across the Muslim world.

During that period, the use of *qira'at* (different readings of the Qur'an) had three versions. The people of Sham (Syria) used the *qira'at* of Ubay bin Ka'ab, the inhabitants of Kufah used the *qira'at* of Abdullah bin Mas'ud, and other communities followed the *qira'at* of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari.

Over time, the vocal rhythms that initially comprised poetry about life and love evolved to include poetry praising the Prophet (saw), eventually being incorporated into the melodious recitation of the Qur'an. This evolution created unique feelings and expressions corresponding to the aesthetic arising from the *qari* who recited it.

The vocal rhythm in Qur'anic recitation originated from the acculturation of pre-Islamic Arab customs, which continued to be used consistently through the ages. The coherent development of vocal art across Arab regions indicates a transformation and modification of the art while striving to maintain its authenticity.

The vocal rhythm of the Qur'an emerged from the Arab community's enthusiasm for art, which evolved rapidly with the incorporation of Islamic teachings. Poetry and songs that initially depicted life stories transformed into poetry of praise and blessings, ultimately placing the tradition of Qur'anic vocal rhythm at the top tier of cultural practices in early Islam. Egypt became the central hub for the development of this vocal art in Qur'anic recitation, known for its emotional depth, while also serving as a filter distinguishing between music and Qur'anic rhythm.

Initially, the rhythms suitable for Qur'anic recitation were standardized into several accepted modes. The rhythms approved by Qur'anic scholars and commonly used in recitation include seven main *langgam*: 1) *Langgam Bayyati*, 2) *Langgam Hijaz*, 3) *Langgam Shaba*, 4) *Langgam Rast*, 5) *Langgam Jibarkah*, 6) *Langgam Sika*, and 7) *Langgam Nahawand*.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, differing views among scholars, especially those within *Nabdlatul Ulama* (NU) in Indonesia, arise regarding the suitability of incorporating Javanese *langgam* into Qur'anic recitation, despite its intention to spread and introduce Javanese culture. The vocal rhythm of the Qur'an in Indonesia developed through two periods: Mecca and Egypt.<sup>13</sup>

Despite its evolution, the *nagham* rhythm in Qur'anic recitation has a distinct character compared to general recitation, such as the emergence of Javanese *langgam*, which is characteristic of the Javanese ethnic group. This has led to divergent views among NU scholars.

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<sup>11</sup> Hanum and Mursyid, "Melagukan Al-Quran Dengan Langgam Jawa: Studi Terhadap Pandangan Ulama Indonesia."

<sup>12</sup> Faiza, "Kompetensi Seni Baca Al-Qur'an Dalam Meningkatkan Kemampuan Tilawah Santri Di Pondok Pesantren an-Najah."

<sup>13</sup> Hanum and Mursyid, "Melagukan Al-Quran Dengan Langgam Jawa: Studi Terhadap Pandangan Ulama Indonesia."

Thus, the implementation of vocal rhythm as an aesthetic element in Qur'anic recitation has existed in the Arab world since the advent of Islam. However, there remains ambiguity in tracing its origins and the transformation process of *nagham* within the Qur'an, leading to various forms of *langgam* recitations practiced today.

#### *Qurro' Sab'ah*

*Qira'at* refers to the recitation of the Qur'an attributed to the seven *imams* of *qira'at*: 1) Nafi' al-Madany, 2) Ibn Kathir, 3) Abu Amr al-Basri, 4) Ibn 'Amir al-Yashuby, 5) Asim al-Kufi, 6) Hamzah al-Kufi, 7) Al-Kisa'iy al-Kufi.<sup>14</sup> The criteria for establishing these *imams* include: 1) strong memory, 2) trustworthiness, 3) piety, 4) extensive knowledge, 5) long tenure in teaching *qira'at*, 6) renowned leadership, 7) justice and reliability, and 8) conformity of their recitation with the *mushaf* sent by Uthman bin Affan to all Islamic regions.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Nafi' al-Madany*

Nafi' bin Abd al-Rahman bin Abu Nu'aim Abu Ruaim al-Laitsy al-Madany (689-785 AD) was a pious and trustworthy individual from Asfahan and a *qira'at* imam in Madinah. He studied *qira'at* from the *tabi'in* in Madinah, including Abu Ja'far al-Qari, Yazid bin Ruman, Muslim bin Jundub, among others. He taught *qira'at* for over 70 years and was appointed the head *qurra'* in Madinah. His students, such as Ismail bin Ja'far, Isa bin Wardan, and Sulaiman bin Muslim, were widespread in various Arab cities. In Egypt, his students included Musa bin Thariq, Abu Qurrah al-Yamany, Abdullah bin Wahab, among many others.

#### *Ibn Kathir*

Abdullah bin Kathir bin al-Muthalib al-Dary al-Makky (665-737 AD) was of Persian descent and a *tabi'in* who met several of the Prophet's companions. He learned *qira'at* from Abdullah bin as-Saib, a companion of the Prophet, and became a *qira'at* imam in Mecca. His students, such as 'Uyainah, Abdullah al-Qisth, and Ismail bin Muslim, were prominent across Arab regions.

#### *Abu Amr al-Basri*

Zaban bin al-A'la bin 'Ammar al-Maziny al-Tamimy al-Bashri (689-770 AD) was originally from Mecca. He studied *qira'at* in Mecca, Madinah, Kufah, and Basrah under scholars such as Anas bin Malik and Hasan bin Abi Hasan al-Basri. He had numerous students and his *qira'at* method was popular among the people of Sham after they transitioned from the *qira'at* of Ibn 'Amir.

#### *Ibn 'Amir al-Yashuby*

Abu 'Imran Abdullah bin Amir bin Yazid bin Tamim bin Rabiah bin Amir al-Yashuby (656-736 AD) was a *tabi'in*. He studied *qira'at* from Abu al-Darda', Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan, al-Mughirah bin Abi Shihab, and others. According to some reports, he recited the entire Qur'an in the presence of Caliph Uthman bin Affan. He was the *qira'at* imam for the people of Sham, whose method and implications were widely adopted there.

#### *Asim al-Kufi*

Asim bin Bahdalah Abu an-Najud al-Asady al-Kufi (700-745 AD) was a *tabi'in* who learned *qira'at* from Anas bin Malik, Zar bin Hubaisy, and others. His students included Aban bin Taghlib, Hasan bin Shalih, and Hafash bin Sulaiman, among others. Asim al-Kufi was a *qira'at* expert known for his eloquence and melodious voice.

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<sup>14</sup> Muhammad Umar Khamdan and Hanifuddin Mahadun, "Implementasi Metode Pembelajaran Qiro'ah Sab'ah Dalam Meningkatkan Pemahaman Terhadap Qiro'ah Masyhuroh Di Pesantren Madrasatul Qur'an Tebuireng Jombang," *Attaqwa: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Islam* 18, no. 1 (2022): 17–33.

<sup>15</sup> Muhammad Roihan Nasution, *QIRA'AT SAB'AH Khasanah Bacaan Al-Qur'an Teori Dan Praktik* (Medan: Perdana Publishing, 2019). 9.

### *Hamzah al-Kufi*

Hamzah bin Habib bin Ammarah (699-772 AD) was a *tabi'in* who learned *qira'at* from Sulaiman al-A'masy, Hamran bin A'yun, Ja'far bin Muhammad ash-Shadiq, and others. His students included Ibrahim bin Adham, Ibrahim bin Ishaq bin Rasyid, and Salim bin Manshur. He became the *qira'at* imam in Kufah after Imam Asim.

### *Al-Kisaiy al-Kufi*

Ali bin Hamzah bin Abdullah bin Bahman bin Fairuz Abu al-Hasan an-Nahwy al-Kasaiy (737-805 AD) was a student of Hamzah al-Kufi, Muhammad bin Abi Laila, and Isa bin Umar al-Hamdani. His students included Ibrahim bin Zadzan, Ibrahim bin al-Harrisy, and Ahmad bin Jubair. Al-Kisaiy al-Kufi became the *qira'at* imam in Kufah following his teacher, Hamzah al-Kufi.<sup>16</sup>

### *Javanese Langgam*

Langgam is the intonation or way of reading conveyed through the beauty of vocal melody, variation, and improvisation that aligns with the meaning contained in the verses being read. The Javanese *langgam* is one type of melody or intonation that specifically uses Javanese tones. The Javanese *langgam* was born as a result of the interaction of the Javanese people with their space and time. This is similar to the *Bayyati, Shaba, Hijaz, Nahawand, Sika, Rast, and Jibarka* melodies, which are the result of the interaction of the Arab people's tones with the desert environment and the poetic culture of the Arab nation.<sup>17</sup>

However, the emergence of the Javanese melody used as *langgam* in reciting the Qur'an has sparked polemics and controversy. Differences in perspective have arisen among the figures of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), who have their own views and reasons regarding whether it is permissible to chant the Qur'an with the Javanese *langgam* without compromising its sanctity.

### *Tembang Macapat*

One type of Javanese song is the *tembang sekar macapat*. This Javanese spiritual vocal melody is the source of the creation of the distinctive Javanese *langgam*. During the introduction of Islam in Java, Wali Songo used *tembang macapat* as a medium to mobilize the Javanese people to easily accept the da'wah they conveyed. The verses contained in *sekar macapat* often tell elements found in the Qur'an. *Macapat* itself consists of three syllables: *mata* (eye), *suca* (vision, seeing, or sight), and *makrifat* (complete surrender to God). The eye that has seen with *makrifat* is meant by "macapat".<sup>18</sup>

### *Metrum Sekar Macapat*

*Metrum* is the name for the eleven songs in *Sekar Macapat*, created by Wali Songo. Each *metrum* has a meaning related to the physical and spiritual life of humans. The literal meaning of each *metrum* is not the actual meaning; rather, it is an inner meaning.<sup>19</sup> These eleven songs are named:<sup>20</sup>

1. Sinom
2. Pangkur
3. Asmaradhana
4. Kinanthi

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<sup>16</sup> Ahmad bin Muhammad, *Wafiyat Al-A'yan Wa Anba 'Abna Az-Zaman* (Beirut: Dar Shadir, 1970). 474-478.

<sup>17</sup> Arafat, "BERTAARUF DENGAN TILAWAH LANGGAM JAWA."

<sup>18</sup> Haidar Zahra, *Macapat: Tembang Jawa Indah Dan Kaya Makna* (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2018). 6.

<sup>19</sup> Muhammad Yaser, "Memperkenalkan Tilawah Langgam Jawa," *ARICIS PROCEEDINGS* 1 (2017).

<sup>20</sup> Asmaun Sahlan and Mulyono Mulyono, "Pengaruh Islam Terhadap Perkembangan Budaya Jawa: Tembang Macapat," *El Harakah: Jurnal Budaya Islam* 14, no. 1 (2012): 101-114.

5. Mijil
6. Durma
7. Pucung
8. Maskumambang
9. Gambuh
10. Megatruh
11. Dhandhanggula

The Javanese *langgam* as a cultural inevitability for the Javanese people has become an integral part of their lives. As a tradition that has been ingrained in Javanese culture, the Javanese *langgam* reflects the identity and cultural richness that continues to be preserved and maintained.

### **Perspectives of NU Figures on Javanese Langgam Murottal**

#### *Perspectives of NU Figures Who Oppose*

In this discussion, figures from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) hold differing opinions regarding the recitation of the Qur'an with Javanese *langgam*. Gus Baha opines that the Javanese *langgam* is unsuitable for Qur'anic recitation. He feels that the Javanese *langgam* lacks the appropriateness and firmness compared to Middle Eastern *langgam*, such as that of Imam Abdurrahman as-Sudais, which is seen as well-suited to the meaning of the verses and the nature of the Qur'an itself. He compares this to a person communicating with Allah SWT with a rhythm that is not harmonious and lacks assertiveness.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, Gus Qoyum agrees with Gus Baha, asserting that the Qur'an is highly inappropriate when recited with Javanese *langgam*. He quotes Imam Suyuthi in his book *al-Itqan fi Ulum al-Qur'an*, "Read the Qur'an with the melodies of the Arabs and the voices of the Arabs. Beware of reading the Qur'an in the manner of the book of those in the church and do not follow their melodies." According to him, the *tajwid* comes from the Arabs, the voice is Arab, and the Qur'an is in Arabic. He also emphasizes that Javanese songs are often used by dissolute people, mainly by singers, making it unsuitable for Qur'anic recitation.<sup>22</sup>

Ustaz Abdus Shomad, in his sermon, explains that using Javanese *langgam* in reciting the Qur'an would disrupt the reading rules, *tajwid*, and the articulation of letters. He concurs with the *qiraat* experts to use the melodies agreed upon by *Qurra' Sab'ah*.<sup>23</sup>

Ustaz Tengku Zulkarnain also harshly criticizes the recitation of the Qur'an with Javanese *langgam*. He quotes from Q.S. Yusuf: 2, "Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand." In his sermon, the former Deputy Secretary-General of MUI equates the unsuitability of Javanese *langgam* in Qur'anic recitation to speaking English with a Madurese accent or Batak with a Javanese accent, which he sees as confusing and inappropriate.<sup>24</sup>

International *qari* Muammar Zainal Asyikin also voices his stance on the phenomenon of Javanese *langgam* murottal. He insists that in Qur'anic recitation, one should beautify their

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<sup>21</sup> Sekolah Akhirat, *Baca Qur'an Langgam Jawa Gus Baha Babasa Indonesia* (Youtube, n.d.), [https://youtu.be/EhVHX5OcnRY?si=OYsUgYzjzFzIW\\_AI](https://youtu.be/EhVHX5OcnRY?si=OYsUgYzjzFzIW_AI).

<sup>22</sup> Muhibbin Gus Qoyum, *Jangan Membaca Qur'an Dengan Langgam Jawa* (Youtube, n.d.), <https://youtu.be/wrtXIj1Hp8I?si=1GBd5PfZWqTIS85a>.

<sup>23</sup> Dakwah Satu Menit, *Hukum Membaca Al-Qur'an Dengan Langgam Jawa Ustaz Abdul Shomad*, n.d., <https://youtu.be/DPs42Ee5HwY?si=ebtIJJLpqs1NuxI0>.

<sup>24</sup> Media Islam, *Baca Al-Qur'an Dengan Langgam Jawa Dikritik Keras Ust. Tengku Zulkarnaen* (Youtube, n.d.), <https://youtu.be/JQqNB90UAzk?si=hSFdyb0q-LbyoYiU>.

reading using Arab melodies. While other *langgams* can be used, they are not harmonious in terms of *dzuq* and seem incoherent with the meaning of the Qur'an.<sup>25</sup>

Buya Yahya also asserts in his sermon that the Qur'an, being in Arabic, must adhere to Arabic rules. He prohibits the use of Javanese *langgam* in reciting the Qur'an because he feels it tends to be played with. He adds that Javanese *langgam* does not align with the *labns* agreed upon by Qur'anic experts.<sup>26</sup>

Gus Najih offers a firm response, citing from the book *Fayyidul Khobir* by Sayyid Alwi al-Maliki that it is impermissible to combine the Qur'an with Javanese rhythm. He believes that Javanese *langgam* is associated with gamelan, making it unsuitable for Qur'anic recitation and contrary to the consensus of scholars on agreed *labns*.<sup>27</sup>

In addressing the prohibition voiced by these NU figures, it is crucial to note that the Qur'an we read today is a cultural element because it has become *lafazh*, not just *kalam* anymore. It is apparent that these figures who prohibit the practice do so based on the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW: "افْرءُوا الْقُرْآنَ بِلُحُونِ الْعَرَبِ" "Read the Qur'an with the melodies of the Arabs." The continuation of this Hadith also contains a prohibition against imitating the melodies of Jews and Christians. They reinforce this by noting that Javanese *langgam* is often used in sinful activities. However, it is noteworthy that most of the *qiraah* imams are not from Arab regions but from Persia.

#### *Perspectives of NU Figures Who Permit*

KH. Ahmad Zahro, in his sermon, expresses that reciting the Qur'an with Javanese *langgam* is not prohibited in *fiqh*, but ethically it is inappropriate. He emphasizes that if ethics are exceeded, it is akin to trampling on the Qur'an. He issues a fatwa from IPIM Number 14, stating that there is no issue in reciting the Qur'an with local melodies as long as the sanctity of the Qur'an is maintained. He also notes that not all Qur'anic melodies originate from Arab traditions, and using Javanese *langgam* is permissible as long as it is not overused.<sup>28</sup>

KH. Hamidin Lumaris al-Hafiz mentions that ulama have differing views on using Javanese *langgam*. The Nurul Huda Islamic Boarding School caretaker explains that those who do not permit it argue that this vocal art is not part of the established types of *qiraat*. On the other hand, those who permit it argue that as long as it does not distort the meaning, it is acceptable. It is permissible as long as it does not damage the absolute laws within the Qur'an or reduce its interpretative rules.<sup>29</sup>

Jamil Fuady offers a neutral opinion, stating that, in principle, reciting the Qur'an with Javanese *langgam* is permissible, provided that the *tajwid* rules are followed and there is no element of insult. However, ulama are still divided, with some prohibiting and others allowing it. Both sides have valid arguments. However, if the use of Javanese *langgam* alters the letters or disregards *tajwid* rules, all ulama agree it is haram. The head of the Taman Pendidikan al-Qur'an (TPQ) in Surabaya and a member of the Lembaga Bahtsul Masail (LBM) PCNU Surabaya leans more towards prohibiting it because.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Hidayatullah TV, *Qari Internasional Muammar ZA: Kritik Al-Qur'an Langgam Jawa Dan Sunda* (Youtube, 2015), <https://youtu.be/uxdjOkIT1UM?si=wwKjNu72TImNazIU>.

<sup>26</sup> Buya Yahya, *Hukum Membaca Al-Qur'an Dengan Langgam Jawa Buya Yahya Menjawab* (Youtube, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> Ribath Darussshohihain, *Haram !! Membaca Al-Qur'an Dengan Musik Langgam Jawa Serta Bahayanya Mengucapkan Selamat Tahun Baru* (Youtube, 2021), <https://youtu.be/rso8hVwX79I?si=1yUYbBvnZWfyHUNa>.

<sup>28</sup> Official Azahro, *Membaca Al-Qur'an Dengan Langgam Jawa: KH. Prof. Dr. Ahmad Zahro, MA. Al-Hafidz* (Youtube, n.d.), <https://youtu.be/kujr5u0wPFg?si=v6WK0BtCARn-13Rm>.

<sup>29</sup> Wawancara Hamidin Lumaris oleh Moch. Wasil (14 Desember 2023). Bolehkah Membaca al-Qur'an Berlanggam Jawa?

<sup>30</sup> Wawancara Jamil Fuady oleh Moch. Wasil (12 Desember 2023). Bolehkah Membaca Murottal dengan Memakai Langgam Jawa?

1. The prohibiting view is more cautious.
2. The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic; thus, its recitation should follow Arabic rules, specifically *tajwid* and *qiraat* rules, and none of the *qurra'* use Javanese *langgam*.
3. Allowing Javanese *langgam* may lead to people assuming the Qur'an can be recited with any melody, potentially including dangdut, DJ, rock, etc., thus undermining its sacredness.
4. In *fiqh*, when faced with conflicting opinions, the Sunnah is to err on the side of caution.

During a *Maiyah* event with cultural figures Cak Nun and Sujiwo Tejo, KH. Ahmad Muzammil argued against Ustaz Tengku Zulkarnaen's statement about the absurdity of the Qur'an being recited with Javanese *langgam*, labeling the Hadith he used as weak. The former Chairman of Lembaga Bahtsul Masail NU Yogyakarta stresses that the Qur'an was revealed according to the tongue of its people, and the followers of Prophet Muhammad are not only Arabs. He quotes from *al-Hawi al-Kabir* by Imam Mawardi, "Reciting the Qur'an melodiously is permitted," and Imam Shafi'i also allows it as long as it does not distort the meaning of the Qur'an. He further adds from a theological perspective that the absolute speech of Allah is "bila harfin wa la shoutin," without letters and without sound. Cak Nun adds that Muzammil, being Madurese, should maintain his dialect.<sup>31</sup>

KH. Ihya' Ulumuddin also supports this view, stating that it is perfectly acceptable to recite the Qur'an with any *langgam*. The former Katib Syuriah PWNU Lampung emphasizes that it is permissible to recite the Qur'an with Javanese, Sundanese, or even Chinese *langgam* as long as it does not alter the beauty and majesty of the Qur'an. He adds that Islam is a *rahmatan lil alamin* religion, and if a Muslim cannot recite the Qur'an with an Arab melody, they may use their local melody.<sup>32</sup>

The perspectives of the NU figures who permit the use of Javanese *langgam* indirectly define the true essence of Indonesian Islam. They do not emphasize adopting Arab Islam as the standard. They believe in adapting to the cultural context of the Javanese people, who may not all be able to recite the Qur'an with an Arab dialect. This cultural aspect influences how they internalize the Qur'an with a Javanese dialect that is easier for them to grasp. This is the basis for the NU figures allowing the use of Javanese *langgam* in Qur'anic recitation.

Meanwhile, Prof. Dr. Quraish Shihab explains his reasoning for permitting the use of Javanese *langgam* in Qur'anic recitation. He analogizes whether it would be wrong for Iranian *qari* to present a different style from the Saudi style, even if it meets the criteria of correct Qur'anic recitation rules. The author of the *al-Misbah* interpretation also refers to the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW, which encourages his followers to recite the Qur'an melodiously according to its rules.<sup>33</sup> Thus, if Javanese *langgam* meets the criteria outlined by Quraish Shihab, it is permissible. Further, as long as it adheres to the Qur'anic rules and does not violate them, reciting the Qur'an with Javanese *langgam* is acceptable.

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<sup>31</sup> Mat Pekir, *Cak Nun Langgam Jawa* (Youtube, 2017), [https://youtu.be/1Ob7yyhFBI4?si=7Y5Qqrm4rq6piX\\_u](https://youtu.be/1Ob7yyhFBI4?si=7Y5Qqrm4rq6piX_u).

<sup>32</sup> Sunarto, "Baca Al-Qur'an Dengan Langgam Jawa Tak Masalah, Tapi..," NU Online, 2015, <https://lampung.nu.or.id/literasi/baca-alquran-dengan-langgam-jawa-tak-masalah-tapi-jlg7H>.

<sup>33</sup> Erik Permana Putra, "Ini Pendapat Quraish Shihab Soal Membaca Alquran Langgam Jawa," Republika, 2015, <https://news.republika.co.id/berita/noqon1/ini-pendapat-quraish-shihab-soal-membaca-alquran-langgam-jawa>.

## Comparative Views of Nahdlatul Ulama Figures on Javanese-style Qur'anic Recitation

Javanese-style murottal represents a unique art form in reciting Qur'anic verses using Javanese language styles. Within the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) tradition, Javanese-style murottal is often interpreted as an expression of love for local culture integrated with Islamic teachings. NU figures who frequently showcase Javanese-style murottal, such as KH. Ma'ruf Amin, view it as an effective means to communicate Islamic messages to the Javanese community. NU's version of Javanese-style murottal is often accompanied by narrations and explanations in Javanese, aimed at providing a profound understanding of the meanings of Qur'anic verses.

From the aforementioned discussion, the NU figures mentioned have their own perspectives and viewpoints regarding the phenomenon of Javanese-style murottal.

Thus, the controversy and differing views among NU figures regarding Javanese-style murottal arise due to several factors. NU figures who permit the use of Javanese-style murottal argue that any style is permissible as long as it does not detract from or distort the rules of *tajwid*, *makbroj*, and other concrete aspects contained within the Qur'an.

On the other hand, NU figures who oppose the recitation of Javanese-style murottal present their own arguments. They believe that the use of Javanese-style murottal can distort meanings, create incongruities when combined with Qur'anic recitation, and potentially undermine the Qur'an as a normative and sacred text for Muslims. It is noted that the majority of Javanese-style usage is often associated and combined with elements not in line with Islamic culture, such as traditional Javanese music (*sinden*), and modern genres like *dangdut*, among others.

However, upon deeper examination of the pros and cons, both sides present theological and cultural arguments deeply rooted in their perspectives. Viewed within a cultural context, Javanese-style murottal represents an integration of local cultural elements with religious teachings, aiming to facilitate widespread Islamic preaching through *qiraah* media. From a theological standpoint, the Qur'an as the holy book of Islam holds its own sanctity, and there may be a lack of harmony in using Javanese-style murottal compared to the established *qiroatus sab'ah* recitation styles. Therefore, NU as an organization with a moderate-traditional ideology should ideally permit the use of Javanese-style murottal in reciting Qur'anic verses, as long as it does not alter the established arbitraries of Qur'anic scholars. Considering that the Qur'an we currently read is a creation because it has been in the form of lafazh and is a human cultural modification that is created from ideas, creations, and creations.

## Conclusion

*Nagham* or rhythm found in Qur'anic recitation represents readings that have been agreed upon by the seven Qur'anic reciters with styles such as *Bayyati*, *Hijaz*, *Shaba*, *Rast*, *Jiharkah*, *Sika*, and *Nabawand*. Despite this, the integration of Javanese culture with religion has been extensive since the time of the *Walisono*, hence contemporary innovations in Islamic preaching through Javanese-style murottal methods. Various controversies arise with this phenomenon, particularly among the figures of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization known for their moderate-traditionalist stance. Those who permit or oppose it have diverse opinions. Therefore, the analysis of NU figures endorsing Javanese-style recitation in the Qur'an process is aimed at deeper integration of culture and religion regarding its compatibility with local cultural norms. Conversely, the opposing NU figures' fatwas on prohibiting these two elements represent their caution in harmonizing Javanese rhythmic culture with Qur'anic recitation. It is undeniable that this sacred scripture of Islam is very sensitive if it is combined with local cultures.

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