

## Majaz in Mutasyabihat Verses from the Perspective of Salaf and Khalaf Scholars

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines majaz in mutasyabihat verses in the Qur'an. There are a difference between the salaf and khalaf scholars regarding the issue of majaz. According to the salaf scholars, they rejected majaz in the Qur'an and left the meaning of mutasyabih verse to Allah to avoid tasybih or similarity. Meanwhile, the later scholars accepted majaz in the Qur'an so that these verses were not understood literally through interpretation. The research method used in writing this article is a qualitative method with a library approach and uses descriptive analysis of the verses of the Qur'an that contain majaz. The mutasyabihat verses include verses about the attributes of Allah and the muqataa'ah letters. The salaf scholars believed and trusted the mutasyabihat verses and left their true meaning to Allah, so that their meaning would be tanzih (purification) and not cause tasybih (likening). Meanwhile, later scholars interpreted the mutasyabihat verses so that they could be easily understood by the mind and did not cause misunderstanding. The majority of scholars from the first to third centuries, namely the salaf, interpreted these letters as meaning that only Allah knows. Later, many scholars tried to interpret them as the names of surahs, or as a way for Allah to attract the attention of listeners.

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of figurative language (majaz) in the Quran has become a topic of debate among Islamic scholars due to differing views on whether the meaning is understood authentically or figuratively. Some scholars argue that majaz is part of the style of language, while others reject majaz because they are concerned that it opens up excessive room for interpretation (Iqbal Sur Azizi, Nurul Wulan, 2016). During the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the term "amtsal" (religious utterance) was used instead of "majaz," so majaz was considered a new term that had not yet been used in the time of the Prophet

Muhammad and his companions. The term "majaz" was first fundamentally introduced by Muqatil ibn Sulaiman (d. 150 H) in his work, *Asbab wa al-nazhair*. The concept of majaz was further refined and popularized by Abu Ubaidah Mu'ammara (d. 210 AH) in his work, *Majaz Al-Qur'an* (Syarifah, 2022).

The study of majaz (figures of speech) is a branch of rhetoric considered fascinating, even challenging. Discussions of majaz require in-depth analysis because the meanings studied are figurative. Arabs frequently use majaz in conversation because the Arabic language has many meanings (Fattah et al., 2023). The structure of the Quran is one of the reasons for understanding its meaning. Therefore, interpreting the Quran is a way for humans to understand the meaning of its verses (Syaripah & Permana, 2022). Thus, rhetoric is a science that has important elements that play a role in enhancing the meaning of the Qur'an. The three main elements of balagah are kinayah, majaz and tasybih (Fauzan halim et al., 2025).

The interpretation of figurative language (majaz) in the Qur'an and hadith is crucial. However, this has sparked much debate among scholars, with some accepting and others rejecting it. Those who reject it consider the use of figurative language excessive. Some scholars acknowledge that figurative language (majaz) is devoid of any element of falsehood. The Qur'an contains essential meanings and sometimes figurative language (majazi). Therefore, a correct understanding of the meaning of using figurative language is necessary (Muhid & sulaiman Hasyim, 2024).

During the Jahiliyyah period, Arabs always communicated using beautiful language, sophisticated literature, and profound meaning. This can be seen in their works, including poetry, verses, and other works. However, when the Quran was revealed, they felt challenged by its divine beauty, literary excellence, and profound meaning. Thus, poets and jinn alike were captivated by the Quran's magic (Yamani, 2023). The study of rhetoric arose from a desire to study the wonders of the Qur'an. One of the interests of theologians was the Qur'anic figures of speech (Mushodiq, 2018).

There are three groups that debate the existence of majaz in the Qur'an because of differences. First, the Mu'tazilah group uses majaz as a weapon to interpret texts that are not in line with their thoughts and beliefs. Second, the Dzahiriyyah is a group that rejects the existence of majaz in language and in the Qur'an. According to them, majaz is merely a lie, and the Qur'an is free from all forms of lies. Third, the Asy'ariyyah are a group that accepts the existence of majaz under certain conditions. This group positions itself moderately between the other two groups (Sutrisno, 2024).

Majaz is a branch of the science of parables (bayan), which explains the style of language used to convey meaning. Bayan, a branch of the science of parables (balaqah), plays a role in understanding the beauty and depth of language and helps reveal the style of the Quran, such as similes, symbols, and allusions. With

bayan, interpreters can easily learn the unique language of the Quran and reveal the meaning of its verses (Siti Maryam et al., 2025).

## **METHODS**

This article uses a qualitative research method with a literature review approach and descriptive analysis of the verses of the Qur'an containing majaz. This study uses two data sources: primary data in the form of mutasyabihat verses in the Qur'an. Meanwhile, secondary data sources used in this study are books, journal articles, and other sources related to the research topic. With this approach, the results of the study can provide clear knowledge about majaz in the Qur'an, especially in the mutasyabihat verses.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Understanding Majaz and Al-Mutasyabihat**

Majaz is a sentence taken from Arabic words *جاز* which means to walk or pass through. Terminologically, majaz is a change in meaning from the original to a figurative meaning. In terms of terminology, majaz refers to a word that does not indicate its original or actual meaning. Meanwhile, haqiqi refers to a word that indicates its original meaning (Nasir, 2024). Abu Ubaidah does not differentiate between haqiqi and majazi, according to him majaz is the Arab way of expressing or expressing meaning. According to Abu Ubaidah, majaz is part of the beauty of language (Nawafi, 2017).

In the concept of ushul fiqh, majaz (figures of speech) is crucial for understanding Islamic law. The use of majaz to convey Qur'anic expressions is not always to be interpreted literally (Masyhadi, 2023). Majaz is divided into two parts: rational majaz and linguistic majaz. The rational majaz refers to the interpretation of an action in a way that differs from its original meaning, and the meaning of this majaz can be understood using reason. Furthermore, there is linguistic majaz, which is reviewed from a linguistic perspective. Lughawi majaz has two types: mursal majaz and isti'arah majaz. Mursal majaz is not related to similarity, while isti'arah majaz is related to the form of similarity (Hamzah & Djuani, 2021).

However, if the meaning of figurative language is omitted and only the literal meaning is used, this makes it difficult for modern scholars to understand the verses of the Quran and Hadith. According to contemporary scholars, concealing the meaning of figurative language will raise doubts about the truth of Islam. Meanwhile, understanding verses in the Quran with the meaning of figurative language is closer to their thinking or rationality (Suryani, 2019).

In addition, the term mutashabihat refers to verses in the Koran that have a similar meaning. Mutasyabihat comes from the basic word tasyabuh which means equality and equality. In terms of terms, mutasyabihat verses are verses whose meaning cannot be understood rationally and only Allah knows their

meaning, such as the arrival of the Day of Judgment, the appearance of the Dajjal and the muqatta'ah letters. The mutasyabihat verse also includes the characteristics and actions of Allah (Drajat, 2017).

Mutasyabihat is generally divided into three categories. First, mutasyabihat verses that cannot be understood by all humans, such as knowledge related to essence. Second, mutasyabihat verses that can be understood through study or research. Third, mutasyabihat verses that can be understood by certain people, such as scholars who have deep knowledge. (Jesika Saputri et al., 2024)

### **The views of Salaf and Khalaf Scholars Regarding the mutasyabihat Verse**

Salaf scholars believe in and accept the mutasyabihat verse and submit its true meaning only to Allah, so that the meaning becomes tanzih (purification) and does not give rise to tasybih (similarity). Meanwhile, the Khalaf scholars interpreted the mutasyabihat verses to make them easier for the intellect to understand and to avoid misunderstandings (Turmuzi & Inast Tsuroya, 2023). Therefore, mutashabihat verses often give rise to misunderstandings or wrong interpretations. Therefore, mutasyabihat verses often cause misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Interpretations that are trapped in tajsim (equating Allah with creatures) and tasybih (likening Allah to creatures) (Cahyati & Paralihan, 2025).

The interpretation of the mutasyabihat verse by the Salaf is explained by two arguments: the rational argument and the naqli argument. The rational argument determines the mutasyabihat verse solely based on the rules and language usage among the Arabs. This can only lead to confusion because it lacks a definitive definition. Therefore, the meaning is left to Allah, the All-Knowing. The naqli argument refers to the hadith, which explains that those who seek the meaning of the mutasybih verse are misguided (Drajat, 2017)

#### **Ulama's interpretation of Majaz in Mutasyabihat Verses**

##### **a. Interpretation of the mutasyabihat verse on the Sifat of Allah**

In the Qur'an there are verses that discuss the word al-istiwa' which means to abide. However, some scholars interpret the word istiwa' using majaz. According to Al-Maraghi, the word istiwa' must be attributed to Allah, and he objects to interpreting it. This is because he does not want to be caught up in tasybih, which is the likening of Allah's attributes to those of His creatures (Sopian et al., 2021). Ahmad bin Hanbal was a scholar who adhered to the Salafi school of thought. Regarding certain matters, such as the attributes of Allah, he chose the approach used by the Salaf, which was to leave things as they are without interpretation or likening (Syaripah, 2022). Early generations of early

scholars did not comment on this meaning, stating that they did not know how Allah resides because His abode is not in a form like human imagination (Reski fitria et al., 2022).

Ibn Kathir interpreted the word *istiwa'* by determining its meaning externally without changing its meaning. He followed in the footsteps of previous Salaf scholars such as Malik, Asy-Shafi'i and others who determined the lafazd as it was without providing details or similarities. Thus, the meaning of *istiwa'* must not resemble creatures and return to its meaning in the Qur'an (Reski fitria et al., 2022).

In understanding the attributes of Allah, later scholars took a different approach from earlier scholars. The Mu'tazilah used the ta'thil method, which is to deny the attributes of Allah because if Allah has attributes such as speech, hearing, sight, and so on, then that means Allah is a servant. Therefore, the Mu'tazilah rejected the existence of attributes for Allah. Regarding the words *istiwa*, the hand of Allah, and the face of Allah, the Mu'tazilah also denied all of these attributes (Fahamsyah, 2021). As for the explanation regarding the meaning of *istiwa'* by Buya Yahya on the Al-Bahjah TV YouTube channel, according to Buya Yahya, the correct meaning of *istiwa'* refers to the concept of Allah who resides on His Throne in a way that is in accordance with His majesty without resembling any of His creatures. That Allah created the Throne, a place and Allah does not need a place and Throne. So when we read the verse about the Throne, don't let the thought come to mind that Allah is located above the Throne, but in fact Allah is located above the Throne. The meaning of *istiwa'* can be known when we know its essence. Some scholars submit the meaning of *istiwa'* to Allah and some other scholars use takwil by searching for meanings regarding *istiwa'* and then choosing the one that best suits the essence of Allah, the most noble and great. Thus, Buya Yahya emphasized that the meaning of *istiwa'* must be accepted with an understanding that does not contain elements of tasybih (similarity) or takwil that deviate from Islamic teachings (Buya Yahya, n.d.).

Furthermore, the word *al-wajh* (face) appears in several verses in the Qur'an. According to As-sa'di's interpretation, it establishes the nature of the face for Allah without questioning its form and affirms that this nature is in accordance with Allah's majesty (Robbani et al., 2025). In Surah al-Baqarah verse 115, the word *wajh* refers metonymically to the essence of Allah because, in essence, when a person performs prayer, he is directly facing Allah. As the Prophet Muhammad said, Allah turns His face toward His servants during prayer (Inayatushshalihah, 2018)

Scholars differ on the meaning of the word "*al-yad*" which appears to imply a resemblance between God and His creatures, like God's hand. Some choose to remain silent and not explain, arguing that only God knows its meaning. The meaning of the phrase *al-yad* becomes complicated because it relates to the attributes of Allah SWT, the essence of which cannot be grasped by

human reason. The phrase *al-yad* is included in the *mutasyabihat* verses, which are phrases whose true meaning is known only to Allah. Thus, some scholars choose to leave the meaning entirely to Allah, while others choose to interpret it figuratively (Assiddiq et al., 2025). The word *al-yad* in the Qur'an is attributed to Allah as the meaning of the verse "God's hand is upon their hands", if understood literally then Allah has hands just like humans and animals too. Therefore, we must interpret *majazi* to avoid likening Allah to creatures (Reza Hakim et al., 2024).

The meaning of the word *hand* in Qs. Shad verse 75 refers to power or gift because the hands are used to perform actions that show power and the hands are also used to give (Inayatushshalihah, 2018). In the interpretation of Wahbah Zuhaili, verse *يد الله فوق أيديهم* there is *istia'rah makniyyah* which describes the knowledge of Allah as an oath of allegiance that they take to the king who places his hands on the hands of the people. However, this word becomes *musyabbah bih* because it is not stated openly (Az-Zuhaili, 2016).

#### **b. Huruf-Huruf Muqatta'ah**

The beginning of a *surah* or *muqatta'ah* also includes *mutasyabihat* verses. According to Ibn Mundzhir in his interpretation of *al-Itqhan*, the opening of a *surah* is the secret of the Qur'an, and Ibn Abbas interprets the word *Al-Mathat* is, Allah knows better. Some scholars argue that the *muqatha'ah* letters are part of Allah's secrets. Meanwhile, other scholars state that the *muqatha'ah* letters have meanings that can be interpreted because the Qur'an was revealed as guidance for all of humanity (Ziaurrahman & Arif, 2025)

Said Nursi, a Turkish scholar, held a different view on the meaning of the *muqatta'ah* letters. Other scholars believed that only God knew the meaning of these letters. He, however, believed that the *muqatta'ah* letters were a secret code known only to His closest servant, the Prophet Muhammad. For Nursi, the *muqatta'ah* letters were also oath letters and contained miraculous elements (Umar Akbar et al., n.d.).

From ancient times to the present, Quranic scholars have differed in their opinions regarding the meaning of the *muqatha'ah* letters. Most scholars from the first to third centuries, namely the *Salaf*, interpreted these letters as signs that only Allah knows their meaning. Muhammad Maulana Ali's interpretation of the *muqatta'ah* letters is more varied. On the one hand, he explores other opinions, examines the letters by searching for them in poetry, and has his own views on the understanding of the *muqatta'ah* letters. In his interpretation of *Surah as-Syu'ara* verse 1, Maulana Muhammad Ali explains that *tha* and *sin* are abbreviations of the word *Thur Sina*, also known as *Sinai*, and *mim* is from the word *Musa*. This interpretation is based on the *surah* that tells the story of Prophet Musa on Mount Sinai (Wijaya, 2022).

Arab scholars differ on the meaning of the *muqatta'ah* letters. Some argue that these letters are the opening letters of the *surah* to open the ears of the

idolaters, who were pushing each other away from the Quran. Sheikh Abdul Rauf As-Singkel, in interpreting verses that use muqatha'ah letters, tends to follow the view of scholars who state that only Allah knows the meaning of these letters. He leaves the meaning of these verses entirely to Allah without providing further interpretation (Nugraha, 2024).

## CONCLUSIONS

Salaf scholars are scholars who lived during the first three centuries of Islam, namely the companions, the successors, and the successors from the first to the third centuries. Meanwhile, the successors lived after them until the contemporary era. The difference between the Salaf and the successors lies in their thinking. The thinking of the Salaf scholars is more textual and literal, prioritizing text over reason. Meanwhile, the thinking of the successors is more contextual, rational, and uses reason over text. Regarding the issue of majaz, there is a debate between the Salaf and the successors, where the Salaf scholars reject majaz in the Quran. Because according to them, majaz contains elements of lies and damages the perfection of the outer meaning of the Quran. The successors are very accepting of majaz in the Quran by using interpretation. The reason they accept majaz is because not all parts of the meaning of the Quranic verses can be understood literally.

As for the mutasyabihat verses, Salaf scholars and scholars after them agree that no one knows the meaning of the mutasyabihat verses except Allah. According to them, the mutashabihat verse is a place for the submission of reason to Allah. Then, Salaf scholars perform tafwidh, namely handing over the true meaning to Allah. Meanwhile, Khalaf scholars regarding the mutasyabihat verse interpret the lafaz from the haqiqi meaning to the majazi meaning. As for the interpretation of Allah's attributes such as Istiwa', Al-Wajh, al-yad, some early scholars did not interpret these verses and they only emphasized that Allah is not a creature and we do not know what He means. Meanwhile, Khalaf scholars carry out interpretations so that they are easy to understand and do not cause the identification of Allah with creatures. Including the issue regarding muqatta'ah letters, Salaf scholars do not interpret these letters because only Allah knows. Then the Khalaf scholars tried to interpret and explain it,

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