

Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an: A Religious Scientific Contestation and Ceremonial Symbol

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Abstract: This article aims to explain the experience of participants who took part in *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an* (competition of Qur'anic interpretation; MTiQ) related to motivation, competencies, and benefits. The theory used is the living of the Qur'an, while the method employed is qualitative. The result of this study shows that MTiQ is one of the branches of *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an* (MTQ) whose assessment includes the good quality of memorisation, interpretation skills, the extent of understanding of the science of the Qur'an, the good translation, and the conclusion derived from the explanation. Aside from being a competition, this MTiQ served as educating the public to further deepen the science of the Qur'an in reading, memorising, and understanding its meaning. In addition, it also has implications for the better quality of memorisation of the Qur'an and the scientific interpretation of the participants, after they participated in this event. On the other hand, mentoring by the Kiai who fostered the participants also played a role in adding their scientific knowledge of the Qur'an. This competition is not just a scientific contestation of the Qur'an and ceremonial symbols, more than that, it is an arena of friendship among the participants, the judges who are religious leaders, and the community. This event also facilitates several persons such as IT assessment operators and even the traders of micro to medium businesses who are involved in the event to be affected. Besides, this event also gives an impact on the government policy and district prestige.

Keywords: contestation, memorisation, *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an*, recitation, the Qur'an

Abstrak: Artikel ini menjelaskan tentang pengalaman para peserta *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an* (MTiQ) terutama yang berkaitan dengan motivasi, kompetensi dan manfaat mengikuti ajang kompetisi ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori living Qur'an dengan metode kualitatif. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa MTiQ merupakan salah satu cabang yang dilombakan pada ajang *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an* (MTQ) di mana penilaianannya menekankan pada hafalan, penafsiran, pemahaman, terjemahan dan kesimpulan dari seluruh penjelasan tentang isi Al-Qur'an. Ajang kompetisi MTiQ ini menunjukkan bahwa selain berupa kompetisi, ajang ini juga dipandang sebagai sarana untuk mendalami ilmu-ilmu yang berkaitan dengan Al-Qur'an kepada khalayak umum terutama pada aspek bacaan, hafalan dan pemahaman Al-Qur'an. Bagi para peserta, ajang ini tentu saja mengasah kemampuan mereka untuk terus mempelajari isi kandungan Al-Qur'an di bawah bimbingan para mentor yang kebanyakan adalah para Kiai yang ahli dalam bidangnya. Selain datang untuk berkompetisi, ajang ini juga menjadi sarana untuk berteman dengan sesama peserta, dengan para juri dan masyarakat tempat kompetisi berlangsung. Selain itu, kegiatan ini juga memberikan dampak bagi beberapa orang misalnya petugas teknisi dan para pedagang yang mendapatkan imbas dari pelaksanaan ajang kompetisi ini. Kegiatan MTiQ ini memberikan dampak tidak saja sebagai event dua tahunan bagi Muslim tetapi juga bagi pemerintah di mana pada tataran kebijakan dan prestise kedaerahan.

Kata Kunci: Al-Qur'an, kontestasi, *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an*, pengalaman.

1. Introduction

As part of theological anatomy, the values of the Qur'an that are conveyed through the festival of *syiar* (propagation) (Rohmad, 2019), have implications for the birth of social change (Kuntowijoyo, 1991, p. 345). This social transformation affects each individual, which led to collective change (Kuntowijoyo, 1998, p. 3). Including the existence of joint awareness to participate in a certain activity such as participating in religious activities.

In today's context, religious proliferation in the form of ceremonies or festivities such as *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an* (MTQ) is one of the religious activities that attract collective awareness. Apart from being a normative-educative medium of preaching the Qur'an, it is also a part of transformative-competitive preaching (*fastabiq al-khairat*) which ultimately ends in the internalisation of the values of the Qur'an (Khasanah, 2019). Its strongest influence is in the lively and active community in making the Qur'an absorbed, studying it, and making it a good tradition in the future.

This religious activity is a celebration for the community in a contestation. The ceremonial proliferation of the Qur'an which includes reading, memorising, preaching, and writing of the values of the Qur'an is a practical form of the Nusantara tradition (Rasmussen, 2010a, p. 127), and is preserved until now. At present, this biennial Qur'anic competition is part of the government's routine agenda starting from the sub-district, district or city, provincial, to national level.

The internalisation of the values of the Qur'an cannot be separated from the activity of interpreting the verses of the Qur'an. One of the branches offered in MTQ competition is *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an* (MTiQ hereinafter) competition. It is one of the many competitions in the *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an* (Azwar, 2018). This competition branch accommodates not only memorising the Qur'an (*tahfidz*) but also understanding the interpretation of the Qur'an. The goal is that the participants have the quality in both memorisation and understanding its meaning. Thus, the assessments of MTiQ are both good in *tahfidz* the Qur'an and interpret it.

Based on the above-mentioned background, this paper discusses scientific contestation in the *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an* competition. Particular attention is given to the participants' experiences in attending and participating in MTiQ related to their motivations, their basic skills needed and scientific understanding of the Qur'an, as well as the advantages they felt after participating in the competition at both the provincial or national levels. In the context of the study, MTiQ activities can be positioned as community efforts in animating the Qur'an in daily life in various ways and forms, often referred to as "The Living Qur'an" (Ali, 2015, p. 166; (Ahimsa-Putra, 2012; Syamsuddin, 2007). According to Amin al-Khulli, studies that affirm the object of the study around the Qur'an are classified as *dirâsat mâ hawla al-Qur'ân* (Syamsuddin, 2007, p. xiii). Therefore, the scholars of the Qur'an also formulated several perspectives to examine it. There are at least three points of view in this study: hermeneutics' reception, cultural reception, and aesthetic reception.

This study uses several sources of qualitative data. The main data is obtained from the results of the author's interview with some of the MTiQ competition participants. They are involved in several MTiQ events at the regional level in West Java (2018-2020), as well as West Java caravans for the National MTiQ in 2018. In addition, it is also supported by several journals and books that the author has summarised and written, which are categorised as descriptive-analytical presentations. The data is collected through a virtual interview from June until September 2020. They had various motivations for their participation. For example, the data was gathered through an interview with Dede Ahmad Muslim. He is one of the participants who is still actively participating in the *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an* for the English category. In addition, information was added from other informants, namely Ulfiyaturohmah al-Hâfizah (Arabic category; participant at the national level), Istigfari Rabbani (Arabic category; participant at the national level), Ro'yu Nahriyah al-Hâfzah (Indonesia category; participant at the provincial level), Ulfa Nurlathifah (English category; participant at district level). To round out the data, researchers spoke with one of the judges as well as an official from the West Java caravan, whose initials is EAS.

2. The History of Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an (MTiQ)

Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an (MTiQ) is one of the many competitions in the Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ) event (Syukur, 2015). Musabaqah Tilawah al-Qur'an contests several aspects of proficiency in the field of the Qur'an which has become a positive tradition and institutionalised (Shihab, 2008, p. 26). Historically, this article has no trace of where and when the MTiQ began to be held in Indonesia. However, Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ) was established at the same time as the establishment of Jam'iyyah al-Qurra 'wa al-Huffadh Nahdhatul' Ulama (JQHNU) in 1940. It was first held in Makassar in 1968 and officially inaugurated by the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia KH. Muhammad Dahlan, at that time, with only one competition, namely recitation of the Qur'an (Bahrudin & Kumaidi, 2014; Jannah, 2017).

Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an was re-organised in the following year with great fanfare. For example, from 1962 to 1968, it was held in Jakarta with a parade from each district's representatives and officially inaugurated through an engaging opening ceremony. Until now, this religious event has been held 27 times and attended by 1550 representatives from 34 provinces (Teguh, 2018). Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an consists of three words; musâbaqah (contest), tilâwah (recitations), and the Qur'an. Musabaqah is a masdar form of saabaqa- yusaabiqu- musabaqatan, which means competition, race, or contestation (A. R. Hasan, 2019). Tilawah is a masdar form of talâ- yatlû- tilâwatan, tuluwwun or tilwun, which means reading and deepening its meaning. Recitation activities (reading) especially for the books of Allah that have been revealed. Sometimes it is in the form of reading or writing, as long as there is no prohibition or command in it. Meanwhile, the Qur'an is derived from fi'l madhi- qara'a which means reading. It is the holy book of Muslims that all Muslims must believe in.

Referring to the meaning of the derivation, Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an is a contestation of the reading of the holy book of the Qur'an which in general the focus is on the aesthetic tone of the reading of the Qur'an. Meanwhile, Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an (MTiQ) is one of its branches. The MTiQ competition focuses on a good quality of memorisation, skill in interpretation, breadth of knowledge of the Qur'an, good translation, and precise inference. Thus, this competition is the tightest in the category of competition which includes the memorisation of the Qur'an in its assessment.

Technical Qualification of Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an

The MTiQ competition is a type of competition whose assessment includes two main elements; memorisation of the Qur'an (*tahfîz*) and Qur'anic exegesis/interpretation (*tafsîr*). Three groups of competitions in MTiQ are offered namely Arabic interpretation (using Arabic in communication as well as when delivering interpretations on certain verses), Indonesian interpretation (using Indonesia), and English interpretation (using English). Technically, this competition has two stages in one appearance, namely memorising the Qur'an and *tafsir* (interpretation). *First*, the question material includes connecting 30 juz of memorisation for the Indonesian and Arabic categories, while for the English category only 14 juz of the Qur'an is required. Participants are asked to recite verses of the Qur'an requested by the panel of judges, both by *murattal* and *mujawwad* (EAS, 2020; Masrurin, 2019; Rabbani, 2020). *Mujawwad* is a melodic style of Qur'anic recitation by paying attention to vocal response while *murattal* is an informal style of reciting the Qur'an but is pleasantly articulated with devotion (Nelson, 1985; Risser, 2018, pp. 309–3018) *Second*, the interpretation stage, which includes the meaning and explanation of particular verses in question. This is generally true for any category of language contested (Muslim, 2020).

The history of *qirâat* used in this competition is the reading history of Imam Hafs from the narration of Imam 'Asim. Understanding *qira'at* is the next stage after memorising the Qur'an of 30 juz. This is because the *qira'at* will provide perfection to the process of memorise the Qur'an and become easier to manage it (Urwah, 2012). This applies to anyone, including *hafidz* who participates in this competition.

In practice, each participant is required to answer and continue or connect the verse first to the question of memorisation of the Qur'an. After that, each of them continued by answering questions of interpretation on the verse material that had been determined by the panel of judges. The interpretation of the assessment includes several aspects. Among them are good interpretation, the breadth of knowledge of the Qur'an, translation, and conclusions that contain lessons that can be drawn from the question material. This process was observed in the implementation of MTiQ (in Arabic or English) at MTQ in West Java Province in 2020.

3. Participant's Motivation to take part in *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an*

As mentioned earlier, this study will present the experiences of attending and participating in the MTiQ by participants of this study. Special attention is given to their motivations and basic skill needed to be prepared by all participants as well as advantages in participating in this event. This experience as explained by Dede Ahmad Muslim, as a *hafidz*, said that his biggest motivation in participating in this competition was want to improve his memorisation of the Qur'an as perfectly as possible. By participating in the competition, he was also encouraged to reiterate his memorisation with an additional portion of time. *Muraja'ah* (reiteration) is one of the keys in the process of maintaining memorisation for perfection (Personal communication, June 2, 2020). This is also said by Ulfi Ulfiyaturrohmah al-Hâfidzah and Ro'yu Nahriyah al-Hâfidzah. They attempted to prepare for the event by *murâja'ah* recitation of the Qur'an and by reading numerous famous commentary texts (Personal communication with Nahriyah, June 23, 2020, & Ulfiyaturrohmah, September 3, 2020).

There are three important keys in memorising the Qur'an, namely memorising, *muraja'ah* (repeating/reiterating), and depositing memorisation. As well as being motivated to revise memorisation, the participant was also active in studying and deepening the meaning of the Qur'an through studies of several classical and contemporary interpretations. For example, *Tafsîr Ibn Kathîr*, *Tafsîr Shâfi'i*, *Shâfîyat al-Tâfâsîr*, and *Tafsîr Al-Misbah*. Apart from that, another purpose of participating in the discussion is as a form of endeavor in upholding the Words of God (*lî ilâ'i kalimatillâh*). The informants conveyed that the doctrine of sincerity and *lillâhi ta'ala* is the basic principle held by them, including when participating in a series of exercises and competitions (EAS, 2020; Muslim, 2020; Rabbani, 2020). This is shown by the growing culture of memorising the Qur'an in the community, which is again part of the effort to enforce the Words of Allah (Anwar & Hafiyana, 2018; Mukaromah & Rahmawati, 2015).

Dede Ahmad Muslim, a *hafidz*, also stated that by participating in *musabaqah* he could distinguish or even measure the quality of his memorisation and scientific interpretation. According to him, the memorisation quality of someone who participated in the competition was much better in quality than the memorisation quality of someone who had never participated in a competition (Personal communication, June 2, 2020). Not only from the side of memorisation but also its interpretation. This is natural because the participants will be fostered first by kiai who are far rich in knowledge before they take part in the competition. On this line, the participants' motivation is often linked to loyalty to the kiai or his mentor, as well as being inspired to achieve goals. This is one of the factors that cause the memorisation quality of someone active in deliberation to be much better than those who do not.

Kang Dede, his nickname, further said that another goal of his participation was to increase friendship. According to him, *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an* is one of the media for gathering with other participants from diverse areas as well as a media for scientific contestation of the Qur'an. This was also said by Istigfari. Familiarity in the arena seems to make the participants unaware that they are rivals with each other. Participants in this MTiQ will make a lot of new contacts, connections, and networks (*silaturahim*). This is extremely beneficial for gaining expertise, experience, and planning for the future (EAS, 2020; Muslim, 2020; Nulatifah, 2020).

4. Participant's Basic Qualities in Competition

To take part in the *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an* competition, participants are required to have memorised 14 to 30 juz of the Qur'an, master the basic knowledge of the Qur'an, and have studied the interpretation of certain juz material that has been determined by the panel of judges. The basis for the assessment is on the fluency of memorisation and the perfection of the quality of interpretation (Personal communication with Rabbani, 2020; & Ulfiyaturohmah, 2020).

Dede Ahmad Muslim revealed, in anticipating bad performances during the competition, he needed to prepare scientific ammunition to improve his abilities. The goal is that when he takes part, it can run optimally. For example, he tried to keep his memorisation stable and deepen the commentary book that had been studied by teaching it to students in his Islamic boarding school. The commentary books that he reviewed as increasing knowledge in preparing the competitions, among them were *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, *Tafsir Showi*, *Shafwat al-Tafasir*, and *Tafsir Al-Misbah* (personal communication, June 2, 2020).

According to Dede, he honestly admitted that he did not fully master all the supporting disciplines of interpretation. Referring to the terms of the requirements as a commentator, one must master more than 16 branches of science that support interpretation. Some of the disciplines that support the interpretation that must be mastered by a *mufassir* (exegete) include *nahwu* (syntax), *sharaf* (morphology), *bayan* (*majaz*), *ma'ani*, *badi'* (aesthetics), *mantiq* (logic), and *isytiqâq* (derivation).

5. The Benefits of Taking Part in the Competition

The presence of a ceremonial of the Qur'anic competition such as *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an* (MTiQ), implies maintaining the quality of memorisation and increasing the scientific interpretation of the contestants. In addition, another benefit of participating in this competition is being more active in *murajaah* (repeating), the memorisation of the Qur'an, and learning the interpretation. At least, this is what Dede Muslim and Istigfari Rabbani said regarding the benefits they got from their participation (Muslim, 2020; Rabbani, 2020). In addition, the good impact that was obtained from holding this competition was the establishment of friendship (*silaturahim*) between one participant and another, getting to know and greeting each other. Not only between participants but also between participants and the board of judges who are predominantly kiai or their teachers (Personal communication with Nahriyah, June 23, 2020; & Nulatifah, November 10, 2020).

In essence, the most important benefit of participating in this competition is the internalisation of the values of the Qur'an in each participant in their social life. For example, how to communicate positively and the increasing awareness of good deeds, know how to act and when to restrain and avoid doing wrong or astray. The participants considered themselves as the bearer of the Qur'anic mission and they felt the messages of the Qur'an are entrusted to be implemented (Personal communication with Nahriyah, June 23, 2020; & Nulatifah, November 10, 2020).

6. *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an*: A Ceremonial Scientific Contestation and Cultural Commodification

Phenomenologically, the Qur'an has a variety of roles in the lives of Indonesian Muslims, such as a book of lessons (instructions), rituals, and religious identification texts. The Qur'an serves as a *hudâ* (guidance) in terms of religion, *shari'ah*, and morality for humankind. Related to this, Muslims recite the Qur'an as part of their rituals (worship), as al-Fâtiha and specific letters (or verses) are used in prayers, *dzikr*, and other religious practices (Graham & Kermani, 2004, p. 120). The Qur'an is also used as a source of mystical power, like a mantra, *azimah*, and *wafq* (a spell that has a magical power), also practiced among Muslims. On the other hand, the Qur'an is a part of Muslims' religious identity. It can be seen in the form of rituals, *murattal* (melodic recitation), calligraphy, and also the Qur'an festival.

Religious festivalisation — in this case, the festivalisation of the Qur'an — is a traditional and high-value religious production that incorporates dogma, knowledge, rituals, and performance.

Religious festivalisation has been a widespread practice in recent years. Though the Qur'an festival in the MTiQ case has become the government's regular agenda in an attempt to rekindle da'wa and passion for the Qur'an. In Indonesia, the implementation of this operation often receives moral as well as financial support from the government and sponsors. The biennial event is still vibrant (Jannah, 2017, p. 87).

Musâbaqah Tafsîril Qur'an (MTiQ) is a cultural commodity (*mumtaj al-tsaqafi*) produced by Muslims, including Indonesian Muslims. The MTiQ phenomenon is more than just reading and learning the Qur'an at a festival; it has also become a regular agenda (Gade, 2004). It has also piqued the attention of the government, both local and national. This MTiQ is part of a state initiative in the policy sense, so an operation and funding account exists in the RAPBN or RAPBD (The Nasional and District budget plan). In reality, the region that hosts the event will benefit greatly from large sums of money as well as the opportunity to become the "overall champion." Other regions, on the other hand, would pump money into obtaining a decent place in the MTiQ. This demonstrates that the government is very interested in domesticating religious policies, from anonymity to "public-policy-culture" (Rohmana & Zuldin, 2018, p. 152).

Syahrullah Iskandar disclosed two critical points in light of the government's implementation of MTQ. For first, the introduction of MTQ represents the government's accommodation of Muslims. This is advantageous to both sides. For the government, MTQ is a way to support the interests of the majority of the people in this region, making it easier to understand the national stabilisation agenda (Iskandar, 2008). This is not shocking given that there had just been a regime change from the Old Order to the New Order at the moment. As a result, the momentum of the MTQ's adoption is seen as a token of unity between the government and Muslims. Islamic practices of that scale were carried out with the full support of the government, which not only licensed them but also facilitated them (Suyitno, 2009, p. 204). Second, the MTQ introduction is an example of an Islamic cultural revolution. When the New Order came to power, Islamic cultural movements gained traction in this region, while systemic movements were stifled. The New Order (Orde Baru) devised this revolutionary agenda to gain and preserve the prestige of its influence (Mudzhar, 1993, p. 192).

On the other hand, there are several parties interested in this MTQ, allowing it to provide a variety of social structures, including coaching to train for this activity. In reality, several institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools, were established specifically to train cadres in this area (Mahbire, 2012), LPTQ (Mausuli, 2012), or MTQ Training Center (Pertiwi, 2018) are established to specially trained the official team who work on MTQ events. This MTQ event is seen as a meeting spot for "muhibbin" (the Qur'an lovers) as well as a way of gluing an intra and inter-religious harmony and unity.

MTQ is often used as a means of unity among participants and officials in one caravan, between participants in one caravan and another, or between participants as visitors and residents of the hosts. In reality, since it is a national project, not just a Muslim project, MTQ should familiarise citizens of various faiths to ensure its progress. MTQ should also be served as interreligious media (N. Hasan et al., 2019) in the frame of Islam as a blessing for the universe (Azwar, 2018). Since the MTQ arena is based on the desire to master the Qur'an, the sense of togetherness rises and eroding social boundaries in society. People eventually provided uniformity in reading the Qur'an, which previously emphasised their respective regional colours, through the existence of the MTQ.

In the end, MTiQ competition is not just a scientific contestation of the Qur'an and ceremonial messages, more than that, it is an arena for the gathering of all human beings without any boundaries; the participants, the board of judges who are religious leaders, the community, assessment IT operators and traders of micro to medium enterprises who are also affected by the implementation of scientific contestations in the frame of this ceremonial broadcast.

The feature of the Qur'anic text is static (*tsâbit*), but the facets of meaning and interpretation of the Qur'anic text are complex (*taghayyur*). As a result, there is a dialectic between the *tsawbit* and the *taghayyur*. If there is a polarisation between *qirâ'at* types in the aspect of *tilwah*, including the Makki, Misri, and local schools of thought, then in the *Musabaqah Tafsir al-Qur'an* becomes a kind of display

of "books of interpretation that are used as sources," in addition to demonstrating the skill of participants in the mastery of the text of Qur'anic exegesis. In general, the more exegesis sources, both classical and contemporary, that are used as sources, the better the participant's performance is regarded as "nice and good." As a result, there is a kind of "tafsir series show" in this MTiQ, especially the Arabic commentary books from the Middle East. In general, the participants did not use adequate access to Indonesian, Malay, and local meanings for a variety of reasons, including insufficient access or evaluation requirements. Local interpretations are placed as intermediates under Arabic exegesis in this situation, according to the diglossia paradigm.

The aesthetic value of the Qur'an, in Anna Gade's view, stimulates mood and motivation (Gade, 2004; Rohman, 2016) or, in Rasmussen's opinion, the Qur'an contains an element of orality (Rasmussen, 2010a). The *qâri'*s recitation of the Qur'an has a significant impact on the psyche of Muslims or its aesthetic reception (Graham & Kermani, 2004, p. 124). As a result, even when it came to *tafsîr* of the Qur'an, the presenters could present themes that moved the listeners, especially the judges. They attempt to systematise fascinating themes and substances, as well as provide a variety of references to reputable commentaries, and then express them by jargon and argumentation. The primary goal in all is to get high marks from the judges. Most likely, only a small number of people listened to the material for the benefit of "ta'lîm li fahm al-Qur'an." It is possible that what inspires the audience's comprehension comes not from the scriptures of the Qur'an or the meanings that are cited, but from the presenters' "arts of words." Hermeneutical reception happens on this line, not on the side of the source material, but the side of the presenter's particular interpretive words.

The idealistic and realistic elements of such festivals are mixed like two sides of a coin. The perfect feature is the inspiration of worship or honesty in an attempt to "interpret the text of the Qur'an." About the fact that the meaning is "art of perception," it is assumed that the learning (exercise) is an individual obligation (*fardh 'ain*). Furthermore, it is assumed that these efforts are not just part of the people's duty, including the need for a community of people to research the meaning of the Qur'an so that the people's responsibilities will collapse. This is referred to as *fard kifâyah* (recommended). This conviction formulation is collected in the sense of *da'wa* or *syi'ar*, so MTiQ is a tool for *syi'ar* or media for preaching (*da'wa*) in Islam.

However, because the MTiQ is designed in the form of "competition" (*musâbaqah*), the motivation for "winning" appears. This is the MTiQ's pragmatism demand. The audience of *syi'ar* or Islamic *da'wa*, the person who is the object of *da'wa*; *mad'u* of this MTiQ include judges, attendees, and administrators who attend the MTQ events. Even though, they came to the event, not as a means of learning but to be supporters of the participants. Another thing is when the competition uses Arabic or English, is there any form of preaching activities to the audience who are mostly Indonesia who do not familiar with both languages (Jamaluddin, Saragih, & Pulungan, 2019). In this process, the event I directed more to the educational or training facilities for the participants in conveying the material of the *da'wa* before the experts.

The judges as the experts were well-versed in the content provided by the presenters. As a result, the MTiQ participants' activities are not aimed at *li fahm al-Qur'ân*, but rather at "the triumph of reason and rhetoric" to be the highest. On this front, MTiQ can be used as a tool or platform to effectively train competing characters (*fastabiq al-khairah*; fair play). Many scholars believe that *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an* indirectly has an educational value, namely competitive character education (Hasan, 2019)

The relationship between facets of accomplishment and reputation, on the other hand, is an essential component of this MTiQ operation. This is referred to as commodification, as "the action of turning something into or treating something as, a (mere) commodity; commercialisation an activity, and so on, that is not by nature commercial" (Kitarsa, 2008; Wilkins, 2012). The deployment of MTiQ would be planned in such a way that it is appealing, has a high image, and is economically beneficial (Rustandi, 2019; Nugraha, 2014)). As well as in the other competition, someone who receives the achievement as a champion in this MTiQ, on the other hand, would have a social prestige. The champion will receive several compliments, prizes, and benefits. In addition, he would be given an

employment contract for a set period, either by the state or central government or by a specific agency (company). A winner of MTiQ, most of whom are *qâri al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic reciter), has social status or a reasonably prestigious role in the Indonesian Muslim society in daily life.

MTiQ as a competition event is also distinguished by some MTiQ member leasing activities. Official MTiQ from one region, for example, aims to find good prospective participants, sometimes even book or hire the participants from other regions. It is possible if a delegate from a specific area chooses to represent another region due to the offer of services and incentives more beneficial. As a result, there are often administrative restrictions in deciding the origin of the participant's region, namely a distinction between domicile and caravan origin (Fadillah, 2019). Ulfi Ulfiyaturrohmah, Ro'yu Nahriyah, and Istigfar Rabbanii, who had served various regions many times in the MTiQ event, both at the sub-district and district levels, had firsthand knowledge of this experiencing of this practice (personal communication, June and September, 2020). However, according to one of the judges, this practice is considered normal, as happens in festivals and other competitions (Personal communication with EAS, July 15, 2020). Furthermore, officials should only render such "contracts" so that entrants in these MTiQ divisions can qualify and even win certain categories. In general, the overall champion is determined by the host (or organiser) or the number of "rich" provinces. About the fact that, in the light of Islamic jurisprudence, such contracts are still problematic and are "avoided" (Fadillah, 2019, p. 99).

The rest, according to Bahrudin and Kumaidi (2014, p. 166), is that the MTiQ appraisal method (in this case, the recitation branch) is still unreliable (Bahrudin & Kumaidi, 2014, p. 166). A closed and ineffective scoring system is often a source of contention between officials and participants. About the fact that scoring is the special right of the board of judges, officials frequently express disappointment with the scores given by the judges or commission (Personal communication with EAS, July 15, 2020). As a result, multiple parties have suggested this MTiQ appraisal scheme focused on specific approaches (Lubis, Efendi, & Syafnur, 2021) or using websites/Android measures (Sadchalis, 2017) to ensure that the MTiQ evaluation is impartial and accessible. Several IT professionals gave suggestions for exercise and score estimation tools (Heriyanto & Manahan, 2020; Lubis et al., 2021; Sadchalis, 2017).

The preaching of Islam does not only take place formally and normatively in the mosque. It can take place in other forms like *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an* (MTiQ). It is part of the spread of religious values that are packaged ceremonially through the way of contestation which has implications for the birth of social transformation. This competition successfully motivated the public to learn more and actualise the values of the Qur'an.

Festivalisation of spreading the Qur'anic message through the *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an* (MTiQ) is part of the effort to convey the values of the Qur'an. Religious festivals or religious performances are a mix of dogma and knowledge, ritual and appearance, piety and politics, and a religious practice framed as a public spectacle (Rasmussen, 2010b, p. 125). The existence of this scientific contestation of the Qur'an plays a role in influencing the increasing interest in reading, memorising, and understanding the Qur'an in the community. In practice, this event is packaged entertainingly, so that apart from being a spectacle it is also indirectly a guide.

Not only as a competition, MQiT also an event is considered a medium and a forum for friendship among participants. Even between the participants and the panel of judges, who are the kiai or teachers who foster the participants. So that the presence of a family atmosphere in the arena seems to dispel the atmosphere of rivalry between the participants. Even though in the context of competition they are against each other.

7. Conclusions

According to the preceding explanation, the reasons and advantages of engaging in MTiQ are extremely varied, both idealistic-religious and pragmatic-social prestige. Therefore, even though this is related to the sacredness of the Qur'an, MTiQ is a cultural product related to various "worldly" human problems. In practice, this is largely determined by their understanding, awareness, and *Yayan Rahtikawati & Lu'lul' Abdullah Afifi' Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an: A Religious Scientific Contestation and Ceremonial Symbol*

experience. However, in terms of their ability to face MTiQ, they largely outperformed the organisers' expectations. Ceremonial religious event such as *Musabaqah Tafsiril Qur'an*, is part of an effort to convey the values of the Qur'an to the community. This kind of scientific contestation of the Qur'an plays a role in influencing the increasing interest in reading, memorising, and understanding the Qur'an in the community. In addition, this event also implies polishing the quality of the memorisation of the Qur'an and the knowledge of the interpretations of the participants before and after they participate in this event.

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