



MEANING AND IMPLICATIONS OF SHIRK IN LIFE EVERYDAY: A STUDY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF FI ZHILALIL QUR'AN IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF BINJAI CITY COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Shirk is the greatest sin in Islam because it contradicts the principle of monotheism as the main foundation of faith. This study aims to analyze the meaning and implications of shirk in everyday life through the framework of Sayyid Qutb's interpretation in Fi Zhilalil Qur'an, and examine its relevance to the social reality of the people of Binjai City. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a thematic and phenomenological interpretation approach, based on library data, semi-structured interviews, and social observation. The results show that shirk does not only refer to idol worship, but also a shift in obedience to authorities other than Allah in the political, economic, and cultural spheres. In Binjai, the practice of shirk appears in two main forms: (1) cultural shirk, in the form of the use of amulets, magical rituals, and the cult of figures, and (2) modern shirk, in the form of the commodification of religious symbols, expressions of superficial religiosity, and materialism legitimized by religious symbols. Both forms result in spiritual crisis, existential anxiety, demoralization, and social fragmentation. These findings confirm that shirk is a multidimensional issue that transcends individual theological aspects and has structural consequences that affect the social order. This study contributes to broadening the contextual understanding of the concept of shirk and offers a theoretical foundation for monotheistic education, da'wah strategies, and strengthening critical awareness in urban communities.
Keywords: Shirk; Tauhid; Fi Zhilalil Qur'an; Sayyid Qutb; Binjai; Islam and society

1. INTRODUCTION

Shirk, from an Islamic perspective, is the greatest sin, undermining the foundation of monotheism, the core teaching of religion. Allah affirms in the Quran:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٨﴾

Meaning: "Indeed, Allah does not forgive the sin of shirk, and He forgives sins other than shirk for whom He wills" (QS. An-Nisa: 48).

This verse places shirk as the most serious theological crime, as it directly denies the oneness of God and contradicts the very nature of human creation. Tawhid is the core of human existence, while shirk undermines this spiritual orientation. Therefore, discussing shirk is not only important from a religious perspective but also has significant implications for the social, political, and cultural dimensions of the ummah (Monggilo, 2020).

Within the modern exegetical tradition, Sayyid Qutb offered a progressive interpretation of shirk through his monumental work, *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an*. According to Qutb, shirk is not solely related to the practice of idol worship, as was the case in Jahiliyah societies, but also encompasses any form of transfer of obedience, submission, and control of human life to an authority other than God (Qurtubi, 1968). This includes adherence to political, cultural, or economic systems that contradict the principles of justice, equality, and humanity in Islam. Within this framework, shirk is positioned as a multidimensional problem, involving both personal deviation and structural injustice that impact the formation of a society's social character (Al-Qurtubi, 2000).

The contextualization of the concept of shirk becomes increasingly significant in modern society, where religious phenomena are influenced not only by spiritual traditions but also by the dynamics of capitalism, identity politics, and popular culture. Research shows that religious values are often reduced to symbols of political and economic commodities, so that religion is no longer understood as a normative entity but as a tool to legitimize worldly interests (Saujani et al., 2024). This practice gives rise to a modern form of shirk, in which power, material goods, and certain figures replace God in the hierarchy of human devotion. This case demonstrates that shirk is not a phenomenon solely related to traditional beliefs but can also exist in more subtle and difficult-to-detect forms within contemporary social structures.

In Binjai City, this reality can be observed through the persistence of cultural practices that have the potential to lead to shirk, such as the use of amulets, magical rituals, and the cult of certain figures, which are maintained in the name of tradition and locality (Malarangeng, 2023). Furthermore, modern influences are also evident in society's tendency to place wealth, social status, and economic power as the primary measures of success in life. This has led to the penetration of materialism and consumerism, often legitimized through religious narratives, making religion a symbolic instrument for practical gain (Arimbi Pramesty et al., 2024). The combination of syncretic traditions and modern hedonism makes the study of shirk in the Binjai context not only relevant but also urgent.

However, studies of shirk in the modern Indonesian social context tend to focus on normative theological aspects, resulting in few empirical connections to the social realities of urban society. Previous research has focused heavily on the analysis of religious texts, but rarely connects them to social phenomena, power dynamics, and structural implications in local community life (Taufiqurrahman, 2017). This research gap highlights

the need for studies that not only examine the concept of shirk dogmatically but also understand how it manifests in the social, political, and cultural relations of modern society. This approach is crucial for providing a more relevant and applicable understanding in the context of contemporary social change. Based on this gap, this study aims to describe the meaning of shirk according to Sayyid Qutb in *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an* and analyze its manifestations in the social life of the people of Binjai City. This study seeks to integrate analysis of religious texts with empirical observation, thereby producing a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between spiritual deviation and social pathology in the context of urban society. Furthermore, this study offers a practical contribution in formulating a more contextual approach to Islamic da'wah and education, by prioritizing critical awareness of the invisible forms of shirk, as well as the relevance of the values of monotheism in building a just, religious, and civilized society.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a thematic interpretation (*tafsir maudhū'i*) and phenomenological approach, where the researcher attempts to examine the verses of the Qur'an about shirk as interpreted by Sayyid Qutb in *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an* and relate them to empirical phenomena occurring in the society of Binjai City. The thematic interpretation approach was chosen because it is able to provide a deep understanding of the concept of shirk from various scattered verses of the Qur'an, then combined into a whole unit, while phenomenology is used to explore the meaning of people's experiences with shirk practices, both traditional and modern. Primary data for the study were obtained from the *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an* interpretation text, semi-structured interviews with religious leaders, traditional leaders, and the general public, as well as direct observation of socio-religious practices in the field, while secondary data came from academic literature, previous research results, and relevant local religious policy documents. Data collection techniques were conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis with the stages of data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and conceptual synthesis. To maintain validity, this study applies triangulation of sources and methods so that the results are not only normative but also contextual, while also providing theoretical and practical contributions to the understanding and handling of the phenomenon of shirk in urban society

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The meaning of Shirk in the Tafsir Fi Zhilalil Qur'an

Sayyid Qutb in *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an* gives a broad meaning to the concept of shirk. According to him, shirk is not just the worship of idols in physical form as practiced during the period of ignorance, but rather every form of transfer of obedience, obedience and servitude to other than Allah (Sayyid Al Qurthubi, 1968). In other words, shirk includes all actions that place something or someone in a position that should only belong to Allah, whether in the realm of belief, worship, or regulation of life.

This is in line with the word of Allah in QS. An-Nisa [4]: 48:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ افْتَرَىٰ
إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا

Meaning: "Indeed, Allah will not forgive the sin of shirk, and He forgives sins other than shirk for whom He wills. Whoever associates partners with Allah, then indeed he has committed a great sin."

According to Qutb, this verse confirms that polytheism is the most serious theological crime because it negates the unity of God as the center of life. Polytheism means shifting God's authority to something else, whether it be a human being, a power, or an oppressive social system. Therefore, polytheism is seen as a form of spiritual betrayal that destroys the servant's relationship with God. In addition, QS. Luqman [31]: 13 also confirms:

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَنُ لِبْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَبْنَىٰ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

Meaning: "And (remember) when Luqman said to his son, when he taught him a lesson: 'O my son, do not associate partners with Allah. Indeed, to associate partners with Allah is truly great injustice'."

In his commentary, Qutb explains that shirk is called zulmun 'azhim (great injustice) because it is a spiritual and social injustice: placing something that does not deserve it in a position that belongs only to God. Thus, shirk is not only a religious error, but also a form of universal injustice that has implications for the breakdown of social order (Al-Qurtubi, 2000).

Furthermore, Qutb highlights that shirk can arise in the form of submission to an authority other than God. For example, when humans submit absolutely to oppressive political power, follow a consumer culture that prioritizes hedonism, or become absorbed in an exploitative economic system that ignores justice. All of these fall into the category of structural shirk, because humans prioritize worldly rules, values, and interests over God's law. In Qutb's view, these modern forms of shirk are even more dangerous than traditional idol worship, because they undermine the collective spirituality of the people and undermine the foundations of social justice. Thus, according to Sayyid Qutb, the meaning of shirk encompasses two main dimensions. First, the personal dimension, namely the diversion of worship, dependence of the heart, and orientation of life from Allah to creatures, objects, or powers other than Him. Second, the socio-structural dimension, namely when society submits itself to a system, ideology, or authority that contradicts the principles of monotheism. These two dimensions are interrelated: a crisis of monotheism in individuals will weaken the spirituality of society, while structural shirk will give rise to social injustice that ultimately distances humanity from divine values. Therefore, Qutb's interpretation emphasizes that eradicating shirk is not only a religious duty, but also a socio-political mission aimed at upholding justice and the purity of monotheism in communal life.

Representation of Shirk in the Social Life of the Binjai City Community

Shirk in the context of contemporary society, as interpreted by Sayyid Qutb in Fi Zhilalil Qur'an, is not merely idolatry or the recognition of the existence of a god other than Allah.

Shirk, moreover, encompasses all forms of shifting human orientation, obedience, and dependence from Allah to something other than Him. In modern life, shirk often takes on more subtle, hidden forms, even internalized into culture, traditions, and daily habits. This reality can also be observed in the people of Binjai City, where shirk manifests itself in various social, economic, political, and cultural spheres. (Muhammad Agam Nalf Saujani et al., 2024)

First, shirk khafiy (hidden shirk). This form is still found in Binjai community practices, for example, belief in amulets, sacred objects, or heirlooms believed to ward off disaster, protect oneself, or bring good fortune (Malarangeng, 2023). A common example is the use of amulets in homes or vehicles believed to ward off harm. This belief is often passed down through generations, intermingled with local customs and traditions. According to Qutb's interpretation, this practice constitutes shirk (polytheism) because it positions inanimate objects as sources of salvation, when true salvation lies solely in the grasp of Allah.

Second, there is shirk in the socio-economic dimension. Some economic behaviors in the Binjai community demonstrate an excessive orientation toward wealth and material possessions. The phenomena of gambling, the pursuit of black magic, and a consumptive lifestyle are clear examples of modern forms of shirk. It is not uncommon for some people to believe that economic success is not solely determined by hard work and halal principles, but also by shortcuts through mystical practices or supernatural powers (Taufiqurrahman, 2017). From the perspective of *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an*, this attitude constitutes shirk because humans make material things their new "god," relying on others for their sustenance and destiny.

Third, there is shirk in the political and cultural spheres. This phenomenon is evident in excessive fanaticism toward certain figures or groups. Research shows a tendency among some Binjai people to idolize political leaders and local figures, even though their behavior and policies contradict the values of truth and justice (Satiri, 2021). According to Qutb, this constitutes a form of subordination of human will to someone other than God. The impact of this blind fanaticism is serious: it leads to social polarization, divisions between groups, and a loss of objectivity in assessing leadership.

Fourth, shirk (polytheism) in popular culture. This practice is evident in the habit of some people who still use the services of psychics or "clever people" to resolve life's problems, such as marriage, business, or luck. Although often carried out in secret, this practice remains part of the social reality of Binjai. From Qutb's perspective, this act clearly constitutes shirk, because prayers and supplications that should be directed solely to God are instead diverted to supernatural beings or powers believed to be able to change destiny.

These forms of shirk (polytheism) demonstrate that the Binjai community does not always view shirk as a serious deviation from faith, but rather often considers it normal because it is inherent in tradition and culture. Belief in sacred objects, traditional rituals, fanaticism of religious figures, and the practice of seeking shortcuts to economic success all demonstrate that shirk is multidimensional: theological, social, political, and economic. A contextual analysis through *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an* provides an understanding that shirk is not merely an individual sin but also a social problem that undermines the foundations of justice and societal spirituality. Therefore, eradicating shirk cannot be achieved simply by strengthening religious rituals; it must also engage the critical consciousness of the community. Only by internalizing the values of monotheism in all aspects of life—both

personal and collective, can society be freed from various forms of shirk, both traditional and modern.

Implications of Shirk on Community Life

Shirk, as emphasized in *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an*, is not merely a theological issue that undermines the purity of monotheism (*tawhid*), but also has a real impact on various aspects of daily life (Mulyono, 2022). Field research in Binjai City shows that the practice of shirk, both in traditional rituals and modern behavior, has a broad impact on the spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. This phenomenon confirms that shirk not only leads individuals into major sins that are not forgiven by Allah except through repentance, but also has a systemic effect that has the potential to undermine the overall social order (Arimbi Pramesty et al., 2024).

First, spiritually, shirk weakens the awareness of monotheism in individual and community life. Those who still rely on amulets, black magic, or psychics demonstrate a decline in the quality of faith, as salvation and success are dependent on something other than Allah. This phenomenon aligns with the warnings of the Qur'an in QS. An-Nisa' [4]: 48 states that Allah does not forgive the sin of shirk except through repentance, while other sins may still be forgiven. From a psychological perspective, being entangled in the practice of shirk gives rise to existential anxiety: individuals tend to lose inner peace due to fear, worry, and dependence on external forces. Rather than bringing peace, this deviant spirituality actually creates mental vulnerability and mental instability.

Second, from a moral perspective, shirk has implications for the emergence of permissive behavior toward deviant values. When material things, power, or certain figures become the center of life's orientation, the principles of *halal-haram*, justice-tyranny, and right-wrong lose their normative meaning. For example, the practice of usury, fraud in transactions, or abuse of authority are considered normal as long as they generate profit. Within the framework of *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an*, this is a further effect of shirk: deviation from faith gives rise to ethical deviation. As a result, society's moral standards weaken because they are no longer rooted in the values of monotheism, but are determined by worldly interests and pragmatic relativism.

Third, from a social perspective, polytheism causes disintegration and weakens solidarity among members of society. Belief in supernatural powers or supernatural practices to seek sustenance often fuels injustice and social jealousy. This weakens the collective work ethic because people rely more on shortcuts than on real effort and productive cooperation. On the other hand, blind fanaticism toward certain political figures or groups creates social polarization, erodes cohesion, and fosters horizontal divisions. Thus, polytheism not only undermines individual faith but also creates structural impacts in the form of a loss of justice, a weakening sense of brotherhood, and a breakdown in social trust.

These implications reinforce the relevance of Sayyid Qutb's view in *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an* that polytheism is the root of various forms of oppression, injustice, and moral degradation. When humans place something other than God as the center of obedience, it gives rise to a social system that is unequal, full of uncertainty, and devoid of orientation to truth. In the context of the Binjai City community, polytheism is not only a problem of individual faith but also a complex social challenge. Therefore, combating shirk must be

pursued through a comprehensive approach: da'wah that affirms monotheism, Islamic education that fosters critical awareness, and social strategies that instill the values of justice, work ethic, and brotherhood.

Therefore, eradicating shirk is not limited to religious rituals alone; it must also encompass cultural transformation and the collective consciousness of society. Only in this way can shirk be effectively eradicated, allowing society to return to the purity of monotheism, the foundation of a just, dignified, and prosperous Islamic life.

Shirk from the Perspective of Fi Zhilalil Qur'an and the Social Reality of Binjai City

Sayyid Qutb's interpretation in *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an* is highly relevant for understanding the social reality of Binjai City, particularly because Qutb views polytheism not only as a deviation from individual faith but also as a structural phenomenon rooted in the social, cultural, political, and economic systems. His perspective helps explain contemporary practices emerging in society, such as a hedonistic lifestyle that prioritizes solely material pleasure, the commercialization of religion that turns Islamic symbols into economic and political commodities, and the tendency to venerate religious and community figures to the point of near-worship. (Abdul Wahab, 1390).

Through Qutb's interpretation, these phenomena can be understood as new forms of servitude to other than Allah. Hedonism, for example, makes humans submit to their desires and makes material pleasure their primary goal, despite God's warning in Surah Al-Jatsiyah [45]: 23:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ بَصَرَهُ غِشْوَةً ۖ فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Meaning: "So have you ever seen a person who made his desires his god and Allah left them based on His knowledge and Allah has sealed his hearing and heart and put a cover over his sight? So who will give him guidance after Allah? So why don't you take a lesson?"

Qutb interpreted this verse as a stern warning that when humans make worldly desires or interests their highest authority, they have fallen into modern polytheism, which is as dangerous as idol worship. (Sayyid Al Qurthubi, 1968) Similarly, the phenomenon of the commodification of religion, in which Islamic symbols are used as tools for political and economic gain, is a form of structural polytheism, according to Qutb, because society is led to submit to worldly powers and forget that only Allah deserves complete obedience. This phenomenon aligns with the warning in Surah At-Taubah [9]: 31, which condemns those who treat religious leaders and charismatic figures as "gods besides Allah."

In the context of Binjai City, these practices are not only a theological issue but also a social one. Hedonism widens the socio-economic gap, the commodification of religion undermines the sanctity of teachings and creates political polarization, while the cult of figures breeds blind dependency that hinders public criticism. Referring to Sayyid Qutb's perspective, polytheism in Binjai can be understood as a phenomenon that transcends individual boundaries, as it is deeply rooted in the social relations and cultural structures of urban society.

Thus, Qutb's interpretation is relevant not only conceptually but also practically: it offers an analytical framework that connects the values of monotheism to contemporary

social challenges. Qutb's interpretation can be used as a critical instrument for understanding the realities of Binjai society, as well as providing a foundation for formulating more contextual strategies for da'wah and monotheism education to protect the community from hidden forms of polytheism in the modern era.

4. CONCLUSION

This research confirms that shirk, as defined in Sayyid Qutb's commentary on *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an*, is not merely a form of worship of a physical entity other than Allah, but rather a systematic act that shifts human authority, obedience, and life orientation to something other than God. This concept encompasses both a personal dimension, in the form of spiritual and emotional dependence, and a socio-structural dimension, in the form of obedience to worldly values, systems, and authorities that contradict the principle of monotheism. Thus, shirk cannot be understood solely as an individual theological error, but as a multidimensional problem that influences the social and moral structure of community life.

Empirical findings in the context of Binjai City society indicate that shirk manifests simultaneously in both traditional and modern forms. At the traditional level, the practice of using amulets, supernatural rituals, and the cult of figures demonstrate how tradition can maintain values that contradict the principle of monotheism. At the same time, modern forms of shirk emerge through the commodification of religious symbols, expressions of formalistic religiosity, and religiously legitimized materialism. These two forms contribute to the emergence of a spiritual crisis, a weakening of critical consciousness, and the formation of a dependence on symbolic authority that is not based on divine values.

The social implications of this phenomenon are far-reaching, ranging from the weakening of public ethics, the strengthening of consumer culture, to the emergence of unjust practices that lead to social fragmentation. Shirk, from Sayyid Qutb's perspective, not only undermines the fabric of faith but also produces structures of injustice that normalize exploitation and domination. Therefore, the purification of monotheism is not merely a matter of worship or spirituality, but an agenda for social transformation that demands critical awareness of the values, systems, and practices of contemporary life.

Theoretically, this research contributes by broadening the understanding of shirk as an epistemological and sociological phenomenon in modern society. Rather than viewing shirk as a ritual behavior, this research positions it as a social construct correlated with the dynamics of power, modernity, and cultural change. Practically, this research emphasizes the need for a contextual, transformative, and critical awareness-based da'wah and tauhid education strategy, so that society not only understands the dangers of shirk normatively, but is also able to identify hidden forms of shirk in modern life.

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