

SEMANTIC RECONSTRUCTION OF QUR'ANIC VALUES FOR MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

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Abstract: This study aims to reconstruct the meaning of multicultural education in the *Qur'an* through Toshikiko Izutsu's semantic epistemology and to examine its implications for global ethical principles. Using a descriptive-analytical library research design, the study demonstrates that Izutsu's semantic framework, comprising the identification of key concepts, basic meanings, relational meanings, historical meanings, and the *Qur'anic Weltanschauung*, is highly relevant for uncovering the *Qur'an's* vision of multiculturalism. The analysis shows that key terms such as *syū'ūban*, *qabā'ilā*, *alsinatikum*, and *ahvānikum* are interconnected within a complex semantic network. This interconnection reveals a universal semantic transformation in which these terms shift from narrow pre-*Qur'anic* connotations to an inclusive worldview that regards ethnic, linguistic, and racial diversity as signs of divine greatness and as foundations for strengthening human relationships (*lī-ta'arafū*), rather than as sources of division. The reconstruction of the *Qur'an's* internal semantic network ultimately forms a worldview grounded in equality, dignity, and human brotherhood, where moral worth is determined by piety rather than physical or social identity. The findings further highlight that principles such as tolerance, justice, equality, and humanity emerge as inseparable components of the *Qur'anic Weltanschauung*, offering a strong philosophical basis for multicultural education rooted in sacred text and oriented toward collective well-being.

Keywords: Toshikiko Izutsu; Multicultural Education; Epistemology; Semantics, *Qur'anic* Values

Introduction

The *Qur'an*, as a divine revelation that guides Muslims, has a universal mission that brings mercy to all nature (rahmatan lil 'alamin).¹ As a source of teachings that is cross-age and cross-cultural, the *Qur'ān* does not only discuss religious issues but also emphasizes the importance of peace, justice, and equality among human beings. This principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin shows that the *Qur'an* is present for all humanity, regardless of ethnicity, nation, or religion. The values contained in the *Qur'an* become the foundation for the creation of a harmonious

¹ Zainun Wafiqatun Niam, "KONSEP ISLAM WASATHIYAH SEBAGAI WUJUD ISLAM RAHMATAN LIL'ALAMIN: PERAN NU DAN MUHAMMADIYAH DALAM MEWUJUDKAN ISLAM DAMAI DI INDONESIA," *Pelita*, 2019.

life order in the midst of a diverse society and become a strong foundation for building multicultural education that respects differences.²

One of the main strengths of the Qur'an is its ability to respect different local cultures.³ The Qur'an does not reject culture but accommodates it⁴ as long as it does not contradict the principles of Tawhid and Islamic teachings.⁵ In the context of multiculturalism, the Qur'an promotes intercultural dialogue and appreciates differences as part of God's creation for the purpose of knowing and understanding each other (lita'raf).⁶ Verses such as those in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13) teach that diversity in ethnicity and culture is not something to be contested but rather a means to enrich human relationships. Thus, Qur'anic values support the development of culturally-based education, where culture is understood as an integral part of human life that must be respected and managed properly.⁷

Multicultural education in the Qur'an teaches basic principles such as justice, tolerance, and respect for differences. Parekh mentions that there are three important things in multiculturalism, namely: It refers to diversity, it is about culture, and it is about specific actions in response to that diversity.⁸

The Qur'an encourages people to learn from history and different cultures in order to understand the wisdom hidden in the lives of diverse peoples. Multicultural education can be seen as part of a broader education that seeks to build social harmony and a sense of global brotherhood (ukhuwah insaniyah). In this context, multicultural education in the Qur'an is not just a theory but a practice that teaches humanity to coexist peacefully and respectfully in diversity.⁹

The variety of epistemologies in understanding the Qur'an is very diverse,¹⁰ depending on one's approach and scientific background. Most scholars use the traditional Tafsir approach, which prioritizes historical context and linguistic rules in understanding Qur'anic texts. However, in recent decades, new approaches have

² Tejo Waskito and Miftahur Rohman, "PENDIDIKAN MULTIKULTURAL PERSPEKTIF AL-QUR'AN," *Tarbiwi*, 2018.

³ Umar Faruq. Abd-Allah, "ISLAM AND THE CULTURAL IMPERATIVE," *CrossCurrents* 56, no. 3 (2006), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24461405>.

⁴ Michael Cook, *The Koran: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP Oxford, 2000).

⁵ Ajat Sudrajat, "AL-QURAN DALAM PERSPEKTIF BUDAYA," *HUMANIKA* 9, no. 1 (September 1, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.21831/hum.v9i1.3779>.

⁶ Onwardono Rit Riyanto et al., "Islamic Foundations of Multicultural Education: Insights from the Qur'an, Hadith, and Ibn Kathir's Tafsir," *Journal of General Education and Humanities* 4, no. 4 (September 1, 2025): 1479–94, <https://doi.org/10.58421/gehu.v4i4.558>.

⁷ Heru Suparman, "Multikultural Dalam Perspektif Alquran," *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* 1, no. 2 (December 1, 2017): 185, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v1i2.250>.

⁸ Saifuddin, Zainal Arifin, and M. Tohir, "Ayat Multikultural Dalam Alqur'an," *Al-Thiqab*, 2021.

⁹ Asep Muksin, "MENUJU HARMONI DALAM KERAGAMAN PERSPEKTIF AL-QUR'AN," *Rausyan Fikr: Jurnal Ilmu Studi Ushuluddin Dan Filsafat* 18, no. 2 (November 27, 2022): 245–69, <https://doi.org/10.24239/rsy.v18i2.1079>.

¹⁰ Agus Salim Lubis, "EPISTEMOLOGI ILMU DALAM AL-QUR'AN," *Logaritma*, 2013.

emerged that attempt to understand the Qur'an from a more philosophical and scientific perspective. These approaches offer a more dynamic understanding of this sacred text, looking at how the Qur'an interacts with human culture and civilization. One approach that stands out is the semantic-philosophical approach popularized by Toshihiko Izutsu.

Toshihiko Izutsu is a Japanese scholar and linguist known for his semantic analysis of the Qur'an. Izutsu explores key concepts in the Qur'an through a linguistic-philosophical approach that addresses how meanings in the Qur'an are formed and change according to the socio-cultural context. Multicultural education emphasizes the importance of cultural, ethnic, offers an in-depth perspective on how these concepts are understood and practiced in Islamic teachings, particularly in the context of multicultural education. and religious diversity, and one of the main foundations in developing this education can be found in religious texts, including the Qur'an. Izutsu offers an in-depth perspective on how these concepts are understood and practiced in Islamic teachings, particularly in the context of multicultural education.¹¹

Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic-philosophical approach to understanding the Qur'an offers a unique way of looking at the relationship between words and concepts in the sacred text. Izutsu not only analyzes words in isolation but also tries to understand the semantic relations between words within a broader value system. He believes that every word in the Qur'an has a meaning tied to a specific semantic network and that the meaning of the word changes depending on its cultural and historical context. Using this approach, Izutsu was able to explore the philosophical dimensions of the Qur'anic teachings, especially those related to the concepts of ethics, justice, and humanism.

The uniqueness of Toshihiko Izutsu's epistemology in understanding the Qur'an lies in its focus on contextual and intercultural analysis of meaning. Izutsu argues that the primary meaning of the Qur'an is objective and embedded within the text's internal semantic networks (semantic fields). His approach integrates semantic analysis with a descriptive-phenomenological stance rather than a theological-dogmatic one, enabling a deeper understanding of the Qur'an's moral and ethical messages. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of multicultural education, where Qur'anic concepts such as tolerance, justice, and equality can be understood more holistically through the process of identifying key concepts and articulating the overarching worldview (Weltanschauung).¹²

Izutsu's epistemology constructs key concepts through semantic field analysis, which encompasses basic, relational, and historical meanings. These

¹¹ Muzaqqi, "SEMANTIC APPROACHES IN ISLAMIC STUDIES; THE REVIEW OF TOSHIHIKO IZUTSU'S THOUGHT," *Pedagogik Jurnal Pendidikan*, 2016.

¹² Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu, "Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 26, no. 4 (October 1, 2009): 1-23, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v26i4.387>.

concepts are interconnected within an internal semantic network that minimizes contextual bias, allowing the resulting terms to emerge as objective values that converge to form a universal Qur'anic Weltanschauung and provide a foundation for multiculturalism.¹³

Multicultural education in the Qur'an focuses on acceptance of differences, intercultural dialogue, and recognition of universal human values. Through Toshihiko Izutsu's analysis, it can be understood that the Qur'an offers an epistemological framework that supports inclusive and tolerant education. Thus, Toshihiko Izutsu's epistemology makes an important contribution to understanding the concept of multicultural education in the Qur'an. His semantic-philosophical approach makes it possible to explore the deep meanings contained in this sacred text and how these meanings can be implemented in education that respects diversity and differences.

This study aims to analyze Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic epistemology to reconstruct the meaning of multicultural education in the Qur'an, and analyze its implications for the principles of global life.

Method

Research Design

This study uses a library research method¹⁴ with a descriptive-analytical approach to examine Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic epistemology and its relevance to the values of multicultural education in the Quran. The descriptive approach is used to detail Izutsu's semantic theoretical framework. The analytical approach is used to elaborate, critique, and interpret key Quranic concepts in accordance with Izutsu's methodology.

Data Collection and Literature Focus

The data collection phase involved a comprehensive literature review. The primary data for this study included Toshihiko Izutsu's key works, particularly those addressing semantic analysis of the Quran, such as *God and Man in the Quran* and *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Quran*, which served as the methodological foundation. Secondary data included studies on Izutsu's theory, literature on Multicultural Education, and relevant Quranic interpretations and studies. The researcher collected data related to Quranic key concept related to multiculturalism, which will be the object of semantic analysis.

Qualitative Data Analysis with the Izutsu Semantics Approach

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively by strictly implementing the steps in Izutsu Semantics. This process goes beyond simply searching for dictionary definitions, but involves three critical stages: 1) Basic Meaning Analysis, which examines the lexical meaning of key concept in the pre-Quranic period; 2) Relational

¹³ Solihu.

¹⁴ M. W. George, *The Elements of Library Research* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020).

Meaning Analysis, which examines how these keywords relate to, oppose, or support each other with other keywords in the same semantic field; and 3) Historical Meaning Analysis, which examines how the Quran reloads meaning, transforming the words into distinctive concepts within the Islamic worldview.

Interpretation and Formulation of Weltanschauung

The final stage is interpretation, in which the results of the semantic analysis are linked to the main research theme. The researcher interprets the entire conceptual network formed to reconstruct the concept of Quranic multiculturalism. The results of this reconstruction are then linked to the values of inclusive multicultural education (tolerance, justice, and equality). This interpretation aims to formulate an objective and coherent Qur'anic World View (Weltanschauung) regarding diversity, affirming that these multicultural values have a strong ethical and metaphysical foundation in the sacred text.

Results And Discussion

Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic epistemology to reconstruct the meaning of multicultural education

Toshihiko Izutsu was born on May 4, 1914, in Tokyo, Japan, and is known as one of the leading intellectuals in the study of philosophy, semantics, religious studies, and linguistics. He has an extraordinary ability to master many languages, such as Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Pali, Greek, Latin, German, French, Russian, and English, which enabled him to study original texts from various religious and philosophical traditions. Izutsu studied at Keio University, Tokyo, and became a professor at the university. He then continued his academic career at various international institutions, such as the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University, Canada, and the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton University, USA.¹⁵

Izutsu is best known for his semantic approach to understanding the Qur'an, particularly through his monumental work *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (1966), in which he analyzes key Qur'anic concepts with linguistic and philosophical approaches. He also conducted a comparative study between Sufism and Taoism in *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (1984), which showed the deep similarities between these two spiritual traditions. His interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approach makes him an important figure in connecting Western and Eastern thought, as well as the major world religions.

His command of many classical and modern languages enables Izutsu to understand and compare philosophy and religion from a unique perspective without having to rely on translations. His works covering Islamic philosophy, the study of religions, and Eastern philosophy, especially Sufism and Taoism, have had a great

¹⁵ Muzaqqi, "SEMANTIC APPROACHES IN ISLAMIC STUDIES; THE REVIEW OF TOSHIHIKO IZUTSU'S THOUGHT."

influence in the academic world. In addition, Izutsu also wrote many other works focusing on the power of language in the formation of religious reality and metaphysics, such as in the book *Language and Magic: Studies in the Magical Function of Speech* (1956).

Izutsu died on July 1, 1993, in Kamakura, Japan, but his legacy in interfaith studies, philosophy, and linguistics lives on through his profound works. As a thinker who bridged various cultural and religious traditions, his contributions remain an important reference for many scholars today.

Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic approach to understanding texts, especially the *Qur'ān*, is a methodology that emphasizes analyzing the meaning of words in the context of a broader system of meaning. It seeks to understand how key concepts in a sacred text intertwine and interact with each other in a semantic network. Izutsu not only analyzes the meaning of individual words but also how they are interrelated within the overall system of thought or particular ideology contained in the text.

The semantic analysis of Toshihiko Izutsu, who takes the *Qur'an* as his object of study but stays away from dogmatic influences.¹⁶ Izutsu's semantic analysis includes basic meaning, relational meaning, historical meaning, and worldview (*weltanschauung*), but begins with the determination of key concepts.¹⁷

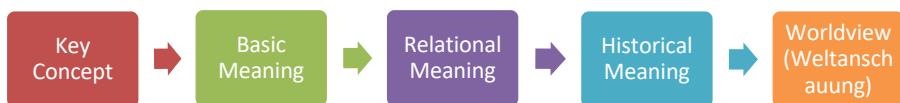


Figure 1. Toshihiko Izutsu's Semantic Epistemology

First, the Key Concept

Izutsu argues that the meaning of a sacred text, such as the *Qur'an*, can be understood by analyzing the key concepts it contains and how they are interrelated to each other in a complex semantic network.¹⁸ He calls this approach semantic field analysis, which aims to understand the system of meanings constructed by key words in the *Qur'ān*. For example, the concept of monotheism in the *Qur'an* must be understood not only independently but also in relation to the concepts of justice, faith, and charity.¹⁹

Second, Basic Meaning

¹⁶ Muzaqqi.

¹⁷ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (London: McGill Quen's University Press, 2002).

¹⁸ Muhammad Syafirin, "THE MEANING OF SALĀT IN AL-QUR'ĀN," *Jurnal AlifLam: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (December 23, 2020): 10–20, <https://doi.org/10.51700/aliflam.v1i1.94>.

¹⁹ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*.

Basic meaning in Izutsu's semantic approach refers to the lexical or literal meaning of a word before it enters a more complex context. This meaning is the most basic meaning, which is often found in dictionaries, and is not influenced by the word's relationship or context with other words.²⁰ Izutsu emphasizes the importance of understanding the basic meaning as the first step in semantic analysis before exploring the relationship between words in the Qur'anic semantic system.

Third, Relational Meaning

Relational meaning in Izutsu's semantic analysis includes two main aspects, namely syntagmatic relations and paradigmatic relations. Syntagmatic relation is the relationship between words in a sentence or text that interact with each other and form a shared meaning.²¹ For example, in the Qur'an, the meaning of a word such as faith will be different when it appears together with the word charity compared to the word disbelief. Paradigmatic relation refers to the relationship between words that can replace each other in a given context. It describes how a word can have a semantic relationship with other words that have similar or conflicting meanings. For example, in the Qur'an, the word faith can be contrasted with the word disbelief, indicating an opposition in meaning.

Fourth, Historical meaning

Izutsu also divides historical meaning into pre-Qur'anic, Qur'anic, and post-Qur'anic: Pre-Qur'anic meaning is the meaning of words that existed before the Qur'an was revealed, which relates to the use of words in Arabic tradition and language before Islam, such as poets and shamans; Qur'anic meaning is the meaning of words as used in the Qur'an in terms of language structure; and Post-Qur'anic meaning is the meaning of words after the revelation of the Qur'an, especially how the word is understood and interpreted by the community and scholars after the revelation.²²

Fifth, Weltanschauung (Worldview)

Weltanschauung or worldview, is an important concept in Izutsu's approach that refers to how a system of thought, in this case the Qur'an, creates an outline of reality, life, and human relationships with God and the univers.²³ Izutsu sought to discover the worldview contained in the Qur'an through a semantic analysis of its key words. This worldview is an overall picture of the values and norms espoused by the Qur'an, which can be seen in how concepts such as justice, monotheism, and faith are articulated and positioned in its semantic structure.

²⁰ Nasarudin, "Komponen Bahasa Arab," in *Semantik Arab Komponen Bahasa* (Jakarta: Gita Lentera, 2023).

²¹ Moh. Ainin and Imam Asrori, *Semantik Bahasa Arab* (Malang: UIN Malang Press, 2006).

²² Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an. Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung* (Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 2008).

²³ Solihu, "Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung."

By focusing on all these elements, Izutsu is able to reveal how words and concepts in the Qur'an not only have individual meanings but are also intertwined in a broader and more comprehensive system of thought.

To complete the concept, Izutsu includes other things, namely: *First*, semantic structure. One of Izutsu's main ideas is that the Qur'anic text is seen as a linguistic cosmos, where each word or concept occupies a position within a larger structure and does not stand alone. This structure reflects the Qur'anic worldview (weltanschauung). This analysis aims to understand how concepts in the Qur'an, such as *takwâ*, *rahmat*, and *kufr*, form a coherent and mutually supportive system.

Second, the intercultural approach. Izutsu often compares concepts in the Qur'an with other traditions, such as Greek philosophy or Eastern religions. This is done to show that meanings in the Qur'an can be seen in a broader context and are not limited to one particular culture or religion. This is part of Izutsu's attempt to develop an interdisciplinary approach in the study of religion and semantics.²⁴

Third, openness to culture. Izutsu understands that every text, including the Qur'an, is influenced by the cultural and historical context in which it appears. Therefore, his approach seeks to explore how Qur'anic concepts were connected to the values and culture of the Arab society of the time and how changes in meaning occurred when these concepts were adopted in the Islamic context. It is an analysis that focuses on the history of ideas and language without looking at theological issues of revelation or religious authority.

Fourth, text as a system of meaning. Izutsu treats the Qur'an as an independent linguistic text, so that each word is seen as part of a wider system of meaning. He rejects interpretive approaches that focus too much on dogma, preferring instead to analyze how words are interconnected in semantic networks. Izutsu regards the Qur'an as a linguistic system of meaning that can be analyzed without being tied to religious or theological interpretations. In his view, each word in the Qur'an forms a semantic network related to other words. The main task of this semantic analysis is to understand the relationship between the words and how they form ethical, social, and philosophical concepts, not theological concepts.²⁵

Fifth, rejection of dogmatic interpretation. Izutsu rejects dogmatic Qur'anic interpretation, which seeks to impose a particular theological understanding on the text. He argues that a semantic approach can offer a more objective view of the meaning of words in the Qur'an. He does not limit himself to one particular theological school but rather emphasizes linguistic analysis of words.

²⁴ T. Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Pakistan: Suhail Academy Lahore, 1984), <https://www.traditionalhikma.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Sufism-and-Taoism-by-Toshihiko-Izutsu.pdf>.

²⁵ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*.

Multicultural Education in the Qur'an

Multicultural education, based on the principles of tolerance, justice, equality, and humanity, will help create a more inclusive society where differences are seen as wealth, not obstacles. The verses provide moral direction to build a peaceful, just, and respectful social order in the midst of diversity.

First. The principle of tolerance, by respecting religious freedom and differences in beliefs. The concept of tolerance is alluded to in the Qur'an surah Al-Baqarah/2:256, that there is no compulsion in religion, and surah Al-Kafirun, the last verse, that for you religion, for me religion. This verse emphasizes that there is no compulsion in religion, giving freedom for each individual to choose his or her beliefs.²⁶ This reflects the basic principle in multicultural education that requires respect for different beliefs, values, and cultural identities.

Tolerance is an important foundation in multicultural education because it teaches us to respect the religious beliefs and practices of others without imposing our views. In this context, multicultural education helps to create an environment that values diversity, enabling harmonious cooperation between individuals from different backgrounds.

Second. Justice, by providing fair treatment for all groups. In Surah An-Nisa'/4:58 it is stated, When you make a ruling among men, you shall make it justly. This verse emphasizes the importance of justice as a basic principle in every social relationship, both among individuals and groups. In the context of multicultural education, this verse teaches that social justice must be applied in every opportunity, including in access to education.²⁷

This justice includes respecting the rights of all groups, regardless of religious, racial, or ethnic background. Multicultural education should ensure that no group is discriminated against and that everyone has equal opportunities to access education and other resources.

Third. Equality, with the recognition that all humans are basically equal. In Surah Al-Baqarah/2:213 it is stated, Man was (formerly) one people (in monotheism). (After disputes arose, then Allah sent prophets to convey good news and warnings.) Allah sent down with them the book. This verse teaches that in the beginning humans were one united people, but then they divided, and Allah sent prophets to give guidance. This concept teaches that equality is the right of every human being. In multicultural education, this is translated as recognition of human equality, both in terms of rights and obligations.

²⁶ Muhammad Yasir, "Makna Toleransi Dalam Al-Qur'an," *Ushuluddin*, 2014.

²⁷ Idris, Armai Arief, and Made Saihu, "Keadilan Sosial Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *JCSR*, 2023, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55606/jcsrpolitama.v1i3.2214>.

Equality means that everyone, regardless of origin, race, or ethnicity, has equal rights to education, fair treatment, and respect. It also includes rejecting all forms of discrimination and promoting social inclusion within educational institutions.²⁸

Fourth. Humanity, by respecting the value of life and human rights. In Surah Al-Ma'idah/5:32 it is mentioned, We established (a law) for the Children of Israel that whoever kills someone, not because (the person killed) has killed another person or because he has done damage on earth, then it is as if he has killed all human beings. This verse gives a strong message about the importance of human values by emphasizing that killing one soul unjustly is the same as killing all of humanity. It reflects the preciousness of human life and emphasizes that any act that undermines human values is considered a grave sin.²⁹

In the context of multicultural education, this human value teaches that every human being is valuable, regardless of cultural, religious, or ethnic differences. Education should encourage mutual respect, empathy, and social responsibility towards fellow humans and avoid all forms of violence and discrimination.

Implications Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic epistemology to reconstruct the meaning of multicultural education

Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic epistemology in understanding Qur'anic multiculturalism begins with the identification of key concepts that constitute the overall semantic universe of the Qur'an.³⁰ Within this framework, concepts related to human diversity, such as *ṣu'ūban* (شَعُوبًا) and *qaba'ilah* (قبائل) in Surah al-Ḥujurat verse 13, as well as *alsinatikum* (السُّنْتَكَمْ) and *alwānikum* (الْوَانِكَمْ) in Surah al-Rām verse 22, may be understood as interconnected semantic units that function as foundational elements of multicultural values in the Qur'an.

As Izutsu explains in *God and Man in the Qur'an*,³¹ each Qur'anic concept possesses both a basic meaning and a relational meaning, which can only be understood within the internal network of interrelated concepts. Through this principle, an analysis of Qur'anic multiculturalism becomes possible, since these concepts do not stand independently but interact to construct an inter-cultural value structure. Nevertheless, Izutsu's strong emphasis on internal textual relations leaves room for broadening the reading by considering the socio-historical context of the verses, allowing the shift in meaning from pre-Qur'anic to Qur'anic usage to be

²⁸ Muhammad Barir, "KESETARAAN DAN KELAS SOSIAL DALAM PERSPEKTIF AL-QUR'AN," *Studi Ilmu Qur'an Dan Hadis*, 2014.

²⁹ Imam Hanafie and Iskandar Iskandar, "NILAI-NILAI HAK ASASI MANUSIA DALAM PERSPEKTIF AL-QUR'AN DAN HADITS DAN AKTUALISASINYA DALAM PENDIDIKAN ISLAM," *JIEF*, 2022, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.30984/jiep.v7i2.2145>.

³⁰ Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran* ([Tokyo,]: Keio Institute of Philological Studies, 1959).

³¹ Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an. Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung*.

interpreted not merely as a linguistic transformation but also as an ethical one, as suggested by Izutsu.³²

From a broader semantic perspective, the four terms constitute value-laden expressions that carry normative implications regarding human diversity. The semantic field formed by the interrelations among *syu'uban*, *qaba'ilā*, *alsinatikum*, and *ahwānikum* demonstrates that the Qur'an does not simply describe human diversity but frames it within an ethical structure. This relational network culminates in the values of *ta'aruf* and *taqwa*, which, within the Qur'anic conceptual system, supersede the pre-Qur'anic social hierarchy based on tribal lineage. Thus, semantic analysis serves not only to uncover lexical meaning but also to reveal the epistemological transformation introduced by the Qur'an in constructing principles of human equality and solidarity.

Izutsu's semantic approach opens a space for constructive reinterpretation of multicultural verses. When the concepts of linguistic, racial, tribal, and national diversity are read holistically within a unified semantic field, a Qur'anic worldview emerges that perceives diversity as part of an ethical-divine design aimed at guiding human beings toward encounter, dialogue, and cooperation. Within this structure, diversity is not assigned a passive meaning but becomes a pedagogical instrument for cultivating an inclusive society.

Accordingly, the application of Izutsu's semantic method to these concepts not only enriches textual understanding but also provides strong theoretical direction for developing multicultural values in contemporary contexts. This analysis affirms that the Qur'anic semantic universe constructs a universal and transformative ethic of multiculturalism that extends far beyond pre-Qur'anic social categories.

First, Syu'uban

In Izutsu's semantic approach, every word in the Qur'an has a basic literal meaning as well as a relational meaning related to other concepts. In this analysis, we can understand the word *syu'uban* (شعوب) in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13 through Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic perspective.

The basic meaning of the word *syu'uban* (شعوب) the plural form of the word *syā'bun* (شعب) refers to a nation or large ethnic group.³³ This is the lexical meaning of the word in Arabic. In general, the word is used to refer to the division of humans into larger groups or communities based on lineage or geographical area.

In Izutsu's analysis of semantic relational meaning, the syntagmatic relation of the word *syu'uban* is linked to the word *qaba'ilā* (tribes) in one sentence structure. This syntagmatic relation shows that *syu'uban* is part of a broader concept in which humans are divided into nations and tribes. However, the purpose of this division is

³² Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*.

³³ Almaaniy.com, "Mu'jam Almaaniy," Almaaniy.com, 2023.

not to trigger division but rather to get to know each other (*lita'arafu*), which emphasizes the importance of harmony and understanding between nations.³⁴

While in the analysis of the meaning of paradigmatic relations, the word *syu'aban* has a semantic opposition with words that show uniformity or unity, for example, the one people in Surah Al-Baqarah: 213, which states that humans were originally one people (*ummatan wahidah*). However, the division that occurs is not a negative thing, because this verse emphasizes that the diversity of nations and tribes has a positive social function, namely to create *ta'aruf*, or getting to know each other.

In Izutsu's historical meaning analysis, the meaning of words must be understood from three dimensions, namely pre-Qur'anic, Qur'anic, and post-Qur'anic. Pre-Qur'anic meaning, before the Qur'an was revealed, the word *syu'aban* was used in the context of Arab society to describe large groups of people, especially in the context of genealogy or tribalism. At that time, tribalism had a strong social and political function in maintaining group identity and solidarity. Qur'anic meaning: in the Qur'an, the word *shu'aban* takes on a deeper meaning. The Qur'an uses this word to describe the fact of human creation in diverse groups. However, this Qur'anic meaning also shifts the perspective from a narrow pre-Islamic tribal view to a more universal view, that differences are not to be contested but to get to know each other in the spirit of *ta'aruf* and strengthen unity through *taqwa* (piety). Post-Qur'anic meaning, after the period of revelation, the concept of *shu'aban* in Islam was developed by scholars and communities to accommodate the idea of human plurality in the wider society. This concept became the foundation for Islamic thinking on universal brotherhood, where nations and tribes are not seen as a reason for discrimination but as part of God's greater plan to create diversity.

According to Izutsu's approach, the Qur'an has a *weltanschauung* (worldview) that is reflected in key concepts. In this verse, we see the Qur'anic worldview of human diversity. The Qur'an teaches that the diversity of nations and tribes is part of the divine will. This suggests that differences are natural and should be respected. At the same time, the value of piety becomes the main criterion in judging the nobility of a person, regardless of his ethnic or national origin.

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The word *syu'aban* does not stand alone but is connected to other concepts in the Qur'anic meaning system, such as *qaba'ilah* (tribes), *ta'aruf* (knowing each

³⁴ Firmansyah Firman, Achmad Abubakar, and Muhammad Yusuf, "Membangun Kehidupan Beragam: Kajian Tahlili Qs. AL Hujurat Ayat 13," *Jurnal Al-Mubarak: Jurnal Kajian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 8, no. 2 (January 6, 2024): 47-60, <https://doi.org/10.47435/al-mubarak.v8i2.2418>.

other), and taqwa (piety). This shows that the Qur'an builds a coherent semantic structure in which human diversity (syu'uban wa qaba'ila) is directed towards the higher goal of knowing each other in the spirit of brotherhood and piety.

So, through Izutsu's semantic approach, it can be understood that the word shu'uban in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13 has a meaning that goes beyond a literal description of a nation or group. It is connected to other concepts in the Qur'an that create a larger framework of diversity, equality, and piety. As such, the concept of shu'uban becomes part of a Qur'anic worldview that emphasizes the importance of respecting differences and building unity through the values of piety and humanity.

Second, Qaba'ila

The word *qaba'ila* (قبائل) In Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 13 also has an important meaning in Izutsu's semantic analysis. Like the word syu'uban, *qaba'ila* not only has a literal meaning but is also connected to other concepts in the Qur'anic semantic network that reflect the Qur'anic worldview of diversity, equality, and human unity.

The basic meaning of the word *qaba'ila* is tribes or small groups in society. Linguistically, *qaba'ila* is the plural form of *qaba'ilah* (قبيلة) which means a tribe or group smaller than a nation (syu'uban). In pre-Islamic Arab society, *qaba'ila* was used to refer to smaller social units, often serving as the basis of social and political identity.

The meaning of *qaba'ila* must be understood in relation to other words in the verse and the context of the Qur'an. Syntagmatic Relation, the word *qaba'ila* syntagmatically co-occurs with the word syu'uban in the same sentence. Here, the word syu'uban refers to the larger nation, while *qaba'ila* refers to the smaller groups or tribes within the nation. This relationship suggests a more complex social hierarchy, but the verse emphasizes that all groups, large and small, have an important role in knowing each other (lita'rafu).³⁵

In a paradigmatic relationship, *qaba'ila* can be contrasted with other concepts that refer to a broader collective unity or identity, such as ummah (Muslim community) in a religious context. On the one hand, *qaba'ila* represents difference and diverse cultural identities, but in the Qur'anic network of meanings, this diversity is accommodated within a larger framework to achieve unity and.³⁶ In Izutsu's semantic analysis, the word *qaba'ila* also has three levels of historical meaning, namely pre-Qur'anic, Qur'anic, and post-Qur'anic. Pre-Qur'anic meaning: in pre-Islamic Arab society, *qaba'ila* refers to social groups or tribes that are the main social units. Tribal identity was an important element in maintaining group solidarity and

³⁵ Firman, Abubakar, and Yusuf.

³⁶ Fitrah Sugiarto, Sumarlin, and Muhammad Subki, "Penafsiran QS. Al-Hujurat [49] Ayat 13 Tentang Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Al-Qur'an Menurut Quraish Shihab Dan Sayyid Quthb," *Al-Furqan: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Quran Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 12-28, <https://doi.org/10.58518/alfurqon.v4i1.634>.

determining one's social status. Inter-tribal rivalries were also an integral part of the social structure back then, often triggering conflicts and disputes.

The Qur'anic meaning of *qaba'ilah* undergoes a transformation. The word no longer simply refers to a narrow tribal identity but is placed in a larger context, namely the divine creation that regulates human diversity. In this context, tribal differences are explained as part of the divine purpose to encourage humans to know each other, interact, and cooperate. Diversity within these tribes is seen as a positive potential, not as a basis for division or hostility.

Post-Qur'anic meaning: after the revelation of the Qur'an, the concept of *qaba'ilah* began to be interpreted in terms of broader Islamic values. Tribal and ethnic diversity is understood as part of the beauty of God's creation, and Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of human equality before God, where piety (*taqwa*) becomes the main measure of a person's nobility, not his tribal identity.

The Qur'anic worldview emphasizes diversity within unity. The existence of *qaba'ilah* (tribes) is not to create division but rather to encourage *lita'arafu* (knowing each other). This Qur'anic worldview teaches that cultural and ethnic differences are part of God's will that must be respected. At the same time, however, the Qur'an emphasizes that piety is the ultimate standard for judging people, not tribal or cultural identity.

This worldview also reflects the teaching of universal brotherhood, in which human beings, though different in ethnicity and nation, remain one under the values of faith and piety. The *qaba'ilah* thus symbolizes harmonious diversity within a broader framework of unity.

The word *qaba'ilah* in the Qur'anic semantic structure does not stand alone. It connects with other words such as *syu'aban* (nations) and *lita'arafu* (know each other) to form a more complete picture of the divine purpose in creating human diversity. In this semantic network, national and ethnic diversity is not seen as a threat to unity but as a tool to enrich human relationships through intercultural recognition and understanding.

So, through Izutsu's semantic approach, we can see that the word *qaba'ilah* (tribes) in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13 has a deeper meaning than just tribal identity. It is connected to other concepts in the Qur'anic semantic network, such as *syu'aban* (nation), *lita'arafu* (know each other), and *taqwa* (piety). This semantic structure illustrates the Qur'anic worldview that emphasizes diversity, equality, and brotherhood.

In the context of cultural values, *qaba'ilah* shows that although humans are created different in nation and tribe, this diversity is part of the divine plan to build relationships of mutual knowledge and respect. Islam teaches that the measure of a person's glory before Allah is not his ethnic or cultural identity but his piety.

Third, Alsinatikum

The word *alsinatikum* (الْسِنَّةُكُمْ) found in Surah Ar-Rum verse 22 is an important part of the verse that emphasizes the diversity of human language. To understand its

meaning more deeply, it can use Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic approach, as explained earlier, with a focus on basic meaning, relational meaning, historical meaning, and how this word is connected to a wider semantic network in the Qur'an.

The word *alsinatikum* (السِنَّةِكُمْ) idhofiah phrase from the words *alsinati* and *kum* (*antum*), *alsinati* is the plural of *lisân* (لسان) which literally means tongue (Almaani, 2023). However, in the context of this verse, *alsinatikum* refers to the different languages spoken by humans. So, literally, it means your languages or your tongues, which is understood to mean the diversity of languages that humans have around the world.

The syntagmatic relational meaning of *alsinatikum* is in relationship with another word, namely *alwânikum* (أَلْوَنَكُمْ), which means the colors of your skin. This relation illustrates two important aspects of human diversity, namely the diversity of language and skin color. Semantically, this verse conveys the message that differences in language and skin color are part of the signs of Allah's greatness that should be pondered.

The Paradigmatic Relational Meaning of the word *alsinatikum* relates to other concepts related to human communication and expression, such as the words *qaul* (speech) and *kalam* (speech). The meaning of *alsinatikum* here also indicates that language is the main tool for communication between humans, and any differences in language are part of the diversity created by Allah. On the other hand, this linguistic diversity can be contrasted with the concept of *fahm* (understanding), which emphasizes the importance of human efforts to understand each other even though they speak different languages.

Historical Meaning, Pre-Qur'anic Meaning. In the pre-Islamic context, *lisân*, or tongue, was used generically in Arabic to refer to a person's means of speech or language. Language was a very important identity in the lives of Arab tribes at that time, where language was also one of the elements determining the honor, literature, and culture of a tribe.

Historical Meaning, Qur'anic Meaning. In the Qur'an, the meaning of *alsinatikum* is elevated to a broader theological framework. Language differences are no longer just seen as a cultural factor or tribal pride, but rather as a sign of God's greatness. God created various languages as part of the signs of His greatness in the universe, to emphasize His power and the diversity of His creation. Thus, the Qur'an places linguistic diversity in a greater divine context, eliminating the narrow view that limits language to the identity of a particular tribe or nation.³⁷

Historical Meaning, Post-Qur'anic Meaning. After the revelation of the Qur'an, the concept of *alsinatikum* was understood in a broader Islamic context, where linguistic and cultural differences are not a barrier to unity but rather

³⁷ A. Nurtamim Amin and M. Erihadiana, "Pendidikan Multikultural Dalam Perspektif QS. Ar Rum Ayat 22," *JIIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 5, no. 3 (March 15, 2022): 895-900, <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v5i3.511>.

something to be respected and celebrated. Islam teaches that all languages and ethnicities are creations of God that serve as tools for mutual knowledge and understanding. In Islamic history, linguistic developments and the translation of religious teachings into different languages also reinforced the understanding that linguistic diversity is part of the divine plan.

A very broad worldview (weltanschauung) regarding human diversity. Linguistic diversity (*alsinatikum*) in the Qur'anic view is not something that should be viewed as negative or divisive, but rather a sign (*ayah*) of God's power and wisdom. The Qur'anic worldview emphasizes that diversity is part of a greater harmony in God's creation, and language is one means of knowing and understanding one another. In the semantic structure of the Qur'an, *alsinatikum* (languages) is part of a broader system that includes concepts such as *alwânikum* (skin colors) and *lita'arafu* (knowing each other).

This structure illustrates that language is one aspect of human diversity that God created for the purpose of recognition between people, not to create conflict or discrimination.

The word *alsinatikum* is also closely related to other concepts in the Qur'an that touch on communication between people, such as *qawl* (speech) and *bayâن* (explanation). This shows that language is not only a tool for speaking but also a means to understand and build harmonious social relationships in accordance with God's will.

So, in Izutsu's semantic analysis, the word *alsinatikum* in Surah Ar-Rum verse 22 has a broad and deep meaning. This word does not simply refer to literal language differences but is part of a sign of Allah's greatness that reflects the diversity of His creation. Language diversity is part of a larger semantic structure in the Qur'an that emphasizes the importance of knowing each other (*lita'arafu*) and unity in diversity.

Fourth, *Alwanikum*

The word *alwânikum* (الْوَنْكُمْ) In Surah Ar-Rum, verse 22 is part of a verse that describes the diversity of human skin color. To understand this word more deeply, we can use Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic approach, which emphasizes basic meaning, relational meaning, and historical meaning, as well as how this word is connected to the semantic network in the Qur'an.

The word *alwânikum* (الْوَنْكُمْ) comes from the word *laun* (لون) which literally means color. The plural of this word is *alwâن*, which means colors, and in the context of this verse, *alwânikum* refers to the different colors of human skin. So, literally, this word means your colors, which can be understood as the physical variations that exist among humans, especially in terms of differences in skin color.

Relational Meaning, Syntagmatic Relationship. The word *alwânikum* in the context of this verse is in relation to the word *alsinatikum* (your languages). This verse connects two aspects of human diversity: language and skin color. *Alsinatikum* indicates linguistic diversity, while *alwânikum* refers to physical diversity. Both of these confirm that variations in terms of language and skin color are part of the signs

of Allah's greatness, which show His power in creating humans with all the diversity that exists.³⁸

Relational meaning: paradigmic relationship. Paradigmatically, the word *alwânikum* can be connected to other concepts related to the human physique in the Qur'an, such as *khalq* (creation) and *bashar* (human). The meaning of *alwânikum* is also related to other concepts of the diversity of God's creation, such as *taqwâ* (piety), which confirms that in Islam, physical diversity is not a measure of virtue, but rather a person's piety is the measure of human value. This verse clearly states that skin color is not the basis for differences in value between people but rather an aspect of the beauty of Allah's creation.

Historical Meaning, Pre-Qur'anic Meaning. Before the Qur'an was revealed, the word *lawn* was used in Arabic to refer to the color of objects or creatures, including the color of human skin. In Arab society, differences in human skin color may have been viewed in terms of tribe or race, but it was not yet a universal concept explained in terms of divinity.

Historical Meaning, Qur'anic Meaning. In the Qur'an, the meaning of *alwânikum* is given a broader theological dimension. The difference in human skin color is no longer seen as a mere biological or physical fact, but rather as a *ayah* (sign) of God's greatness. The Qur'an introduces the concept that all differences, including skin color, are part of God's plan and power. The diversity of skin color is used as a means to get to know and appreciate each other, not to be a basis for discrimination or division.

Historical Meaning, Post-Qur'anic Meaning. After the revelation, the concept of differences in skin color developed in Islamic understanding as one of the forms of Allah's creation that shows His majesty. Muslim scholars and scholars explain that differences in human skin color have no influence on a person's position before God, as confirmed in Islamic teachings that what distinguishes humans is their piety, not the color of their skin. This verse is also the basis for the Islamic teaching on the equality of human beings regardless of physical differences.

In the context of Weltanschauung or worldview, the Qur'an, through the word *alwânikum*, teaches that God created humans with various skin colors as a sign of the beauty and diversity of His creation. The worldview conveyed by the Qur'an is that these physical differences are not intended to divide but instead to strengthen relationships between humans through recognition (*ta'aruf*). Allah asserts that this diversity is one aspect that must be recognized and respected as part of the signs of His power. This Qur'anic worldview also rejects any form of discrimination based on race, color, or ethnicity.

In the Qur'anic semantic structure, *alwânikum* is part of a larger system of meanings that includes concepts such as *khalq* (creation) and *ikhtilaf* (difference). This structure illustrates how differences in human skin color are part of the harmony and order of Allah's creation. In addition, the concept of *alwânikum* is also related

³⁸ Amin and Erihadiana.

to *ta'aruf* (knowing each other), as explained in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, where Allah created humans in various tribes and nations so that they know each other, not to degrade each other.

The word *alwânikum* is also closely related to the Qur'ân's universal themes of justice, equality, and humanity. The diversity of skin color is one of the tangible signs of God's greatness and should be appreciated as part of the perfect creation.

Through Izutsu's semantic analysis, the word *alwânikum* in Surah Ar-Rum verse 22 not only refers to literal differences in skin color but also conveys a deep theological and social message. The Qur'an teaches that differences in human skin color are Allah's verses that show His diversity and power. The main message of this concept is that physical differences such as skin color should not be a basis for division or discrimination, but rather should be a means to get to know and respect each other.

Thus, in the semantic structure of the Qur'an, the word *alwânikum* plays an important role in introducing the Islamic view of unity in diversity and how God created humans with various physical differences to teach the values of tolerance and respect for others.

In Izutsu's analysis of the concepts of nation, tribe, skin, and language differences, it implies that human diversity is an integral part of social and cultural identity. In this context, tolerance becomes very important because diversity requires respect and acceptance of existing differences. Tolerance teaches that these differences are not obstacles but rather a source of wealth in social life.

Justice plays an important role in dealing with these differences. Every individual, regardless of ethnic background, skin color, or language, deserves equal treatment in all aspects of life. Justice involves recognizing basic human rights and demanding that everyone be treated according to their rights.

Equality emphasizes that all people, regardless of identity differences, have equal rights. This principle encourages the creation of an inclusive society, where everyone is valued based on their human worth, not ethnic or cultural attributes. In the context of multicultural education, equality needs to be taught to ensure that every individual is treated fairly and given equal opportunities.

Humanity, as a universal value, underlines that despite differences, every individual has equal dignity. This value serves as the foundation for building respectful social relationships as well as supporting the creation of shared prosperity. Integrating the concepts of nation, ethnicity, skin color, and language differences within the framework of tolerance, justice, equality, and humanity will create a harmonious society where diversity is considered a strength, not a divider.³⁹

³⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2002).

Conclusion

This study finds that Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic epistemology, which consists of the identification of key concepts, basic meaning, relational meaning, historical meaning, and worldview (Weltanschauung), is relevant for reconstructing the meaning of multiculturalism in the Qur'an. The analysis demonstrates that key terms such as *syu'ban*, *qabila*, *alsinatikum*, and *alwlinikum* do not stand independently but are interconnected within a complex semantic network. This interrelation affirms the presence of a universal transformation of meaning, whereby these terms shift from their narrow pre-Qur'anic contexts toward an inclusive understanding in which ethnic, linguistic, and skin-color differences are viewed as signs of God's greatness and serve as a basis for strengthening human relations (*litraraf*), rather than as triggers of division.

Furthermore, the reconstruction of the Qur'an's internal semantic network forms a distinct Weltanschauung that emphasizes equality and brotherhood. The interpretation of these multicultural values—specifically that human dignity is determined by piety rather than physical identity—emerges from tracing the relational dynamics of Qur'anic key concepts using Izutsu's framework. This study provides a deeper understanding of how Izutsu's methodology successfully uncovers the Qur'an's message on human diversity and the importance of cultivating an inclusive and harmonious society in which diversity is regarded as a strength rather than a source of fragmentation.

The scholarly contribution of this research lies in objectively demonstrating that tolerance, justice, equality, and human dignity constitute inseparable principles within the Qur'anic Weltanschauung. These principles emerge from the convergence of semantic fields that uphold the worth of every individual regardless of background. The study thus offers a strong philosophical foundation for Multicultural Education grounded in sacred scripture and promotes the advancement of collective well-being.

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