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ṬIBĀQ AND *SAJʿ* IN SŪRAT AL-MULK: A CONTEXTUALIST READING OF DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY OVER SUSTENANCE AND ITS CRITIQUE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

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ABSTRACT

Studies of *ʿilm al-badīʿ* in the Qurʾān have largely remained at the level of formal identification and seldom connect rhetorical devices with social concerns such as socio-economic inequality. This study analyses *ṭibāq* and *sajʿ* in Sūrat al-Mulk as representations of divine sovereignty over sustenance and formulates their relevance for a critique of inequality. Using library research within Abdullah Saeed's contextualist approach, it classifies the devices according to *Jawāhir al-balāghah* and reads them through *al-Kashshāf*, checked against al-Rāzī, al-Ṭabarī, and al-Qurṭubī. The *sūrah* contains nine instances of *ṭibāq al-ījāb*: three canonical oppositions build a cosmic-theological frame, while six contextual oppositions cluster around sustenance and resources. Its verse endings form a *rāʾ* block (verses 1–21) and a *mīm–nūn* block (verses 22–30) and contain no *sajʿ muraṣṣaʿ*, which corrects an earlier classification of verses 10–11. Both blocks close on sustenance and water, locating ownership of the means of life with God. Placed within Saeed's hierarchy of values, this pattern yields three values: equality before the divine test, trusteeship over resources, and accountability for what is hidden. The study shows that *ṭibāq* and *sajʿ* form a single architecture of meaning. It also grounds a social reading of a Meccan *sūrah* in a verse-by-verse linguistic inventory.

Keywords: ʿIlm al-Badīʿ; Ṭibāq; Sajʿ; Sūrat al-Mulk; Socio-Economic Inequality.

INTRODUCTION

Socio-economic inequality is one of the most pressing problems of contemporary life. In Indonesia, the Gini ratio stood at 0.375 in March 2025, urban inequality (0.395) far exceeded rural inequality (0.299), and the bottom 40 percent of the population accounted for only 18.65 percent of total expenditure.[1] Inequality is therefore not merely a matter of poverty but of how control over resources is distributed. Its roots are structural: growth under the New Order concealed systemic poverty among Indonesian Muslims and prompted *Islam Transformatif* as a theological response,[2]

[1]Badan Pusat Statistik, "Gini Ratio Maret 2025 Tercatat Sebesar 0,375," *Berita Resmi Statistik*, July 25, 2025, https://www.bps.go.id/id/pressrelease/2025/07/25/2519/gini-ratio-maret-2025-tercatat-sebesar-0-375.html.

[2]Wahyudi Akmaliah, "Islam Transformatif: Conceptualizing Liberation Theology for Indonesian Muslim Society," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 14, 1 (2024): 188–210, https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2024.14.1.188-210.

while the benefits of mining remain concentrated among a narrow elite, a pattern that has been read in light of the Qurʾānic critique of hoarding in Q. al-Tawbah [9]: 34.[3]

Turning to a seventh-century Meccan *sūrah* to address such a modern problem requires justification. Saeed's contextualist approach provides it: interpretation should take into account both the socio-historical context of revelation and the concerns of Muslims today,[4] so that values identified in the first context can be applied to analogous structures in the present. Contextualist approaches seek in this way to follow the Qurʾān's ethical teachings in contemporary circumstances without sacrificing its fundamental values.[5] The Meccan setting is, moreover, not remote from questions of wealth. The Qurʾān itself recalls the Qurashī winter and summer caravans (Q. Quraysh [106]: 1–2), and its vocabulary of trade and travel is interwoven with the concepts of guidance and error.[6]

Sūrat al-Mulk is chosen over *sūrah*s with an explicitly economic theme, such as al-Humazah, al-Takāthur, and al-Māʿūn, for two reasons. First, those *sūrah*s condemn the conduct of the wealthy directly, whereas al-Mulk grounds the question theologically: it opens by declaring that sovereignty (*al-mulk*) lies in God's hand and returns to the source of provision (Q. al-Mulk [67]: 15, 21) and of water (Q. al-Mulk [67]: 30). Sayyid Quṭb identifies this opening declaration as the key and axis of the whole *sūrah*, from which all its themes and images derive.[7] Second, because its economic import is implicit, it is a harder test of whether rhetorical form, rather than explicit content, can carry a social message.

Studies of Qurʾānic rhetoric have so far either classified devices or explained their function. Hassanein maps the sequencing rules that govern Qurʾānic antonymous pairs,[8] Al-Hawawsha et al. examine how antonyms are semantically arranged in clear and ambiguous vocabulary,[9] and Hussein shows that the Qurʾān reworks the negated antithesis of pre-Islamic poetry for theological

[3]Baeti Rohman, "Decolonization of Mining Based on Qur'ānic Worldview: A Study of QS 9:34 and Mining Law in Indonesia Using Maqāṣid Sharīʿah," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 16, 1 (2026): 234–49, https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.161.14.

[4]Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qurʾān: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (London: Routledge, 2006), 1.

[5]Abdullah Saeed and Ali Akbar, "Contextualist Approaches and the Interpretation of the Qurʾān," *Religions* 12, 7 (2021): 527, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070527.

[6]Faruk Tuncer, "The Terms Trade (Tijarah) and Road (Rihlah) in Qur'anic Context: With Special References to the Trade of Prophet Muhammad in Sirah," *Religions* 14, 8 (2023): 1055, pp. 12–14, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14081055.

[7]Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī ẓilāl al-Qurʾān*, 17th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1412 AH), vol. 6, 3630–31.

[8]Hamada Hassanein, "Antonym Sequence in Qur'anic Arabic: An Emically Etiological Approach," *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literatures* 15, 1 (2023): 199–220, https://doi.org/10.47012/jjmll.15.1.11.

[9]Sayel Hazza Al-Hawawsha, Saad Abdullah Meqdad, and Mohammed Omar Aburahme, "The Semantic Arrangement of Antonyms in Clear and Ambiguous Vocabulary in the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 24, 1 (2022): 140–76, https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2022.0497.

and didactic ends.[10] On the side of sound, Khoir and Zarkasyi inventory the *jinās* and *sajʿ* of Sūrat al-Mulk, classifying verses 10–11 as *sajʿ muraṣṣaʿ*.[11] Ismath and Aziz analyse the pragmatics of the *sūrah*'s interrogatives,[12] and Asnawi et al. warn that thematic readings often outrun the text for lack of an auditable method.[13] Social readings of the Qurʾān, in turn, whether built on *maqāṣid*[14] or on liberation theology,[15] rarely rest on an analysis of rhetorical form.

A search of Scopus conducted in October 2026, combining the terms *ṭibāq*/antithesis, *sajʿ*/rhyme/*fāṣilah*, and Sūrat al-Mulk with justice, power, and inequality for 2020–2026, and supplemented by a web search of Indonesian journal portals, identified no study that relates the *badīʿ* devices of Sūrat al-Mulk to power and sustenance. Three gaps follow: studies of *ṭibāq* and *fāṣilah* remain detached from social concerns; existing studies of Sūrat al-Mulk treat its devices descriptively or pragmatically; and social readings rarely rest on a verifiable analysis of form. This study therefore asks: (RQ1) how are *ṭibāq* and *sajʿ* formed and classified in Sūrat al-Mulk; (RQ2) how do they represent divine sovereignty and justice in the context of revelation; and (RQ3) how can that meaning be contextualised as a critique of socio-economic inequality? It argues that both devices form a rhetorical structure affirming God's ownership of power and sustenance, so that all human control over resources holds the status of a trust (*amānah*).

METHOD

This qualitative library research draws its data entirely from written sources rather than fieldwork.[16] It adopts Saeed's contextualist approach,[17] operationalised in three moves: a linguistic analysis of the text (RQ1), a reading of its meaning for the first recipients (RQ2), and a formulation of its meaning for the present (RQ3). *ʿIlm al-badīʿ* is the instrument of the first move. Aḥmad al-Hāshimī's *Jawāhir al-balāghah* is the primary reference for identifying and classifying *ṭibāq* and

[10]Ali Ahmad Hussein, "Negated Antithesis as Reflected in the Qurʾān and in Pre-Qurʾānic Arabic Poetry," *Religions* 17, 4 (2026): 490, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel17040490.

[11]Miftahul Khoir and Ahmad Hidayatullah Zarkasyi, "Al-Jinās wa al-sajʿ fī Sūrat al-Mulk (Dirāsah taḥlīliyyah badīʿiyyah)," *Al-Afkar: Journal for Islamic Studies* 8, 1 (2025): 224–40, https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v8i1.1276.

[12]Nurul Hanilah Mohd Ismath and Abdul Hadi Bin Abd Aziz, "A Relevance Theory Approach to the Pragmatic Interpretation of Surah al-Mulk," *Quranica* 17, 2 (2025): 216–36.

[13]Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi et al., "Rhetorical Coherence and Eco-Theological Meaning in Qur'anic Water Verses: A Disciplined Semitic Rhetorical Analysis," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 27, 1 (2026): 273–302, https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v27i1.6716.

[14]Rohman, "Decolonization of Mining Based on Qur'ānic Worldview," 234–49.

[15]Akmaliah, "Islam Transformatif," 188–210.

[16]Mestika Zed, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan*, 3rd ed. (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2014), 1–2.

[17]Saeed, *Interpreting the Qurʾān*, 1.

sajʿ;[18] Hassanein's distinction between canonical and non-canonical opposition serves as a secondary analytical tool for interpreting pairs already identified.[19] Following al-Hāshimī, whose examples of *sajʿ muṭarraf* contrast words of different morphological pattern (*waqāran*/*aṭwāran*; *mihādan*/*awtādan*), *wazn* is understood as the morphological pattern of the verse-final word.[20] Recent work on the *fawāṣil* of Sūrat al-Qamar likewise treats the morphological patterns of verse endings as carriers of meaning and parallelism.[21] *Ṭibāq* is identified within a single verse; cross-verse contrasts are noted separately as contextual readings and are not counted. Transliteration follows the journal's guideline (Library of Congress model), and Qurʾānic references are given as Q. *sūrah* [number]: verse.

The primary exegetical source is al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf*, which explains rhetorical choices verse by verse.[22] Because its author was Muʿtazilī in theology, its readings are triangulated with the Ashʿarī exegete Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī[23] and checked against the transmitted exegesis of al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, and Ibn al-Jawzī. Secondary data consist of journal articles from 2020–2026 and inequality data from Statistics Indonesia. To limit circularity, the *sūrah* is first divided into segments by thematic and addressee shifts alone (description of creation, the scene of Hell, renewed address to the audience, and the series of *qul* commands), and only then compared with the sound blocks. All opposed pairs and verse endings were inventoried by the first author. As an external check, the resulting *sajʿ* classification was compared with the independent inventory of Khoir and Zarkasyi; the two agree on 14 of the 15 consecutive pairs that both classify (93 percent), differing only on verses 10–11.[24] The verse-by-verse tables allow each classification to be re-examined.[25]

[18]Aḥmad al-Hāshimī, *Jawāhir al-balāghah fī al-maʿānī wa al-bayān wa al-badīʿ*, ed. Yūsuf al-Ṣumaylī (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-ʿAṣriyyah, 1999), 303, 330–31.

[19]Hamada Hassanein, "A Tale of Two Tool(kit)s: From Canonical Antonymy to Non-Canonical Opposition in the Qur'anic Discourse," *Poznan Studies in Contemporary Linguistics* 59, 3 (2023): 577–608, https://doi.org/10.1515/psicl-2022-1062.

[20]al-Hāshimī, *Jawāhir al-balāghah fī al-maʿānī wa al-bayān wa al-badīʿ*, 330.

[21]ʿAlī Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Shirābī, "Dalālat abniyat al-fāṣilah al-Qurʾāniyyah fī Sūrat al-Qamar," *Majallat Abḥāth Kulliyyat al-Tarbiyah al-Asāsiyyah* 20, 2 (2024): 156–79, https://doi.org/10.33899/berj.2024.183897.

[22]Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1407 AH/1987 CE), vol. 4, 574–83.

[23]Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb (al-Tafsīr al-kabīr)*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1420 AH/1999 CE), vol. 30, 48–49.

[24]Khoir and Zarkasyi, "Al-Jinās wa al-sajʿ fī Sūrat al-Mulk," 224–40.

[25]Asnawi et al., "Rhetorical Coherence and Eco-Theological Meaning in Qur'anic Water Verses," 273–302.

RESULTS

Forms and Classification of *Ṭibāq*

Applying al-Hāshimī's definition of *ṭibāq* as two words of opposed meaning within a single utterance[26] yields nine pairs (Table 1). All are *ṭibāq al-ījāb*; none is *ṭibāq al-salb*. Sūrat al-Mulk thus juxtaposes two realities that are equally affirmed and equally subject to one power. Noun–noun and verb–verb pairs are evenly balanced, while verse 19 contains the only mixed pair.

Table 1. Inventory of Ṭibāq in Sūrat al-Mulk

Verse	Pair	Transliteration	Word Class	Opposition	Semantic Domain
2	الْمَوْتَ — الْحَيَاةَ	*al-mawt – al-ḥayāh*	Noun–noun	Canonical	Existence
13	أَسِرُّوا — اجْهَرُوا	*asirrū – ijharū*	Verb–verb	Canonical	Knowledge
16	السَّمَاءِ — الْأَرْضَ	*al-samāʾ – al-arḍ*	Noun–noun	Canonical	Cosmic order
19	صَافَّاتٍ — يَقْبِضْنَ	*ṣāffāt – yaqbiḍna*	Noun–verb	Contextual	Sustaining of creatures
21	يَرْزُقُكُمْ — أَمْسَكَ	*yarzuqukum – amsaka*	Verb–verb	Contextual	Sustenance
22	مُكِبًّا — سَوِيًّا	*mukibban – sawiyyan* (with *muqābalah*)	Noun–noun	Contextual	Direction of life
24	ذَرَأَكُمْ — تُحْشَرُونَ	*dharaʾakum – tuḥsharūn*	Verb–verb	Contextual	Origin and end
28	أَهْلَكَنِيَ — رَحِمَنَا	*ahlakaniya – raḥimanā*	Verb–verb	Contextual	Fate
30	غَوْرًا — مَعِينٍ	*ghawran – maʿīnin*	Noun–noun	Contextual	Water as a resource

Note: All nine pairs are *ṭibāq al-ījāb*. Only pairs within a single verse are counted.

Two features stand out. Verse 2 places death before life, الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ (*alladhī khalaqa al-mawta wa al-ḥayāta*, "who created death and life"), departing from the more familiar order of *yuḥyī wa yumītu* (Q. al-Baqarah [2]: 258). Verse 22 extends *mukibban–sawiyyan* into a *muqābalah* between a person walking prone and one walking upright on a straight path.

Hassanein's distinction between canonical antonyms and non-canonical oppositions created by context[27] reveals a further pattern. The three canonical pairs (death–life, concealing–disclosing, heaven–earth) cluster in verses 2–16 and build a cosmic-theological frame. All six contextual pairs cluster in verses 19–30 and concern concrete life: sustaining creatures, providing and withholding sustenance, the direction of life, dispersal and gathering, destruction and mercy, and sinking versus flowing water. *Yarzuqu* and *amsaka*, for instance, become opposites only because both govern *rizq*. The *sūrah* thus moves from oppositions recognisable at once to oppositions the listener must construct, precisely as it turns to sustenance and resources.

[26]al-Hāshimī, *Jawāhir al-balāghah fī al-maʿānī wa al-bayān wa al-badīʿ*, 303.
[27]Hassanein, "A Tale of Two Tool(kit)s," 577–608.

Forms and Classification of *Sajʿ*

Following al-Hāshimī, *sajʿ muṭarraf* shares the final letter but not the *wazn*, *sajʿ mutawāzī* shares both, and *sajʿ muraṣṣaʿ* requires correspondence across most words of two segments.[28] Table 2 maps every verse ending.

Table 2. Map of Verse Endings (Fawāṣil) in Sūrat al-Mulk

Verse	*Fāṣilah*	*Wazn*	Final Letter	Relation to Preceding Verse
1	قَدِيرٌ	فَعِيل	ر	–
2	الْغَفُورُ	فَعُول	ر	*Muṭarraf*
3	فُطُورٍ	فُعُول	ر	*Muṭarraf*
4	حَسِيرٌ	فَعِيل	ر	*Muṭarraf*
5	السَّعِيرِ	فَعِيل	ر	*Mutawāzī*
6	الْمَصِيرُ	مَفْعِل	ر	*Muṭarraf*
7	تَفُورُ	تَفْعُلُ (فعل)	ر	*Muṭarraf*
8	نَذِيرٌ	فَعِيل	ر	*Muṭarraf*
9	كَبِيرٍ	فَعِيل	ر	*Mutawāzī*
10	السَّعِيرِ	فَعِيل	ر	*Mutawāzī*
11	السَّعِيرِ	فَعِيل	ر	*Mutawāzī*
12	كَبِيرٌ	فَعِيل	ر	*Mutawāzī*
13	الصُّدُورِ	فُعُول	ر	*Muṭarraf*
14	الْخَبِيرُ	فَعِيل	ر	*Muṭarraf*
15	النُّشُورُ	فُعُول	ر	*Muṭarraf*
16	تَمُورُ	تَفْعُلُ (فعل)	ر	*Muṭarraf*
17	نَذِيرِ	فَعِيل	ر	*Muṭarraf*
18	نَكِيرِ	فَعِيل	ر	*Mutawāzī*
19	بَصِيرٌ	فَعِيل	ر	*Mutawāzī*
20	غُرُورٍ	فُعُول	ر	*Muṭarraf*
21	نُفُورٍ	فُعُول	ر	*Mutawāzī*
22	مُسْتَقِيمٍ	مُسْتَفْعِل	م	Rhyme shift

[28]al-Hāshimī, *Jawāhir al-balāghah fī al-maʿānī wa al-bayān wa al-badīʿ*, 330–31.

Verse	*Fāṣilah*	*Wazn*	Final Letter	Relation to Preceding Verse
23	تَشْكُرُونَ	تَفْعُلُون	ن	Acoustic proximity (*mīm–nūn*)
24	تُحْشَرُونَ	تُفْعَلُون	ن	*Muṭarraf*
25	صَادِقِينَ	فَاعِلِين	ن	*Muṭarraf*
26	مُبِينٌ	مُفْعِل	ن	*Muṭarraf*
27	تَدَّعُونَ	تَفْتَعِلُون	ن	*Muṭarraf*
28	أَلِيمٍ	فَعِيل	م	Acoustic proximity (*nūn–mīm*)
29	مُبِينٍ	مُفْعِل	ن	Acoustic proximity (*mīm–nūn*)
30	مَعِينٍ	فَعِيل / مَفْعُول†	ن	*Muṭarraf*

Note: Totals: 17 *muṭarraf*, 8 *mutawāzī*, 0 *muraṣṣaʿ*, 3 *mīm–nūn* proximity, 1 rhyme shift (29 pairs). † The *wazn* of *maʿīn* is disputed (*faʿīl* or *mafʿūl*); either yields *muṭarraf*.

The *sūrah* falls into two sound blocks. Verses 1–21 all end in *rāʾ* after a long *ī* or *ū*; verses 22–30 shift to the nasals *mīm* and *nūn*, whose shared nasality keeps the block acoustically unified. Of the twenty-nine consecutive pairs, seventeen are *muṭarraf*, eight *mutawāzī*, three share only *mīm–nūn* proximity, and one marks the shift at verses 21–22. No *sajʿ muraṣṣaʿ* occurs. Verses 10–11 share only the identical ending *aṣḥāb al-saʿīr*, while the words that precede it do not correspond in *wazn*; verses 16–17 repeat most of their words; verses 20–21 diverge after *amman hādhā alladhī*; and *anshaʾakum* and *dharaʾakum* in verses 23–24 differ in *wazn*.

The choice of criterion matters, and a robustness check shows where. Read prosodically, every ending in verses 1–21 shares one syllabic shape, a short syllable followed by a long closed one (*qa-dīr*, *gha-fūr*), so all twenty pairs in that block would become *mutawāzī*, as would verses 23–24 and 29–30. Under that reading the two-block structure, the rhyme shift at verse 22, and the absence of *muraṣṣaʿ* remain unchanged, but the concentration of *mutawāzī* in two clusters of warning (verses 8–12 and 17–19), observed under the morphological criterion, disappears. That observation is therefore reported as criterion-dependent.

The Meaning of *Ṭibāq* in Exegesis and the Context of Revelation

The pairs acquire pointed meaning for a Meccan audience whose standing rested on trade, wealth, and lineage. The exegetes frame the whole *sūrah* in economic as well as cosmic terms. Al-Ṭabarī glosses *bi-yadihi al-mulk* as sovereignty over this world and the next, in both of which God's

command and decree prevail,[29] and al-Qurṭubī reports Ibn ʿAbbās's gloss that God honours and abases, enriches and impoverishes, gives and withholds.[30] Al-Zamakhsharī explains that death precedes life because those who keep death before their eyes are most driven to good deeds;[31] al-Rāzī lists the same reason among four.[32] The verse measures people by who is best in deeds (*aḥsanu ʿamalan*), not by wealth or lineage, negating the quantitative basis of Qurashī stratification.

Verse 13 responds, according to al-Zamakhsharī, to polytheists who told one another to keep their speech secret lest the God of Muḥammad hear it.[33] The verse neutralises the difference between *asirrū* and *ijharū* before God's knowledge, and verse 14 grounds this in the question of whether the Creator does not know His creation. Verse 15 makes the earth subservient (*dhalūl*) so that people may walk its tracts and eat of His provision, and al-Zamakhsharī reads its close, *wa ilayhi al-nushūr*, as a reminder that God will question them about their gratitude for these blessings.[34] Verse 16 then warns that the same earth may quake (*tamūr*). This cross-verse contrast is a contextual reading rather than a counted *ṭibāq*, but it shows that the foundation of economic activity never lies under human control.

Al-Zamakhsharī notes that spreading the wings in verse 19 is the default state of flight and is expressed by a noun of permanence (*ṣāffāt*), whereas folding them is occasional and expressed by a verb of renewal (*yaqbiḍna*).[35] The verse thus depicts a state continuously sustained rather than a balance of equals, and the exceptive restriction مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلَّا الرَّحْمَٰنُ (*mā yumsikuhunna illā al-Raḥmānu*, "none holds them up except the Most Merciful") confines that sustaining power to God. The same root *m-s-k* returns in verse 21, إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُ (*in amsaka rizqahu*, "if He withholds His provision"): the power that holds up the birds is the power that can withhold provision. The interrogative implies its answer,[36] namely that no one else can provide.

Al-Zamakhsharī reads verse 22 as a parable (*tamthīl*) of the unbeliever who stumbles and the believer who walks upright,[37] and Ibn al-Jawzī reports the same reading as that of the exegetes

[29]Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah, 1420 AH/2000 CE), vol. 23, 505.

[30]Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, ed. Aḥmad al-Bardūnī and Ibrāhīm Aṭfayyish, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1384 AH/1964 CE), vol. 18, 190.

[31]al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl*, vol. 4, 575.

[32]al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb (al-Tafsīr al-kabīr)*, vol. 30, 49.

[33]al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl*, vol. 4, 580.

[34]al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl*, vol. 4, 580.

[35]al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl*, vol. 4, 581.

[36]Ismath and Bin Abd Aziz, "A Relevance Theory Approach to the Pragmatic Interpretation of Surah al-Mulk," 216–36.

[37]al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl*, vol. 4, 582.

generally.[38] For caravan merchants, whose vocabulary linked roads with guidance and error,[39] the question of who is better guided (*ahdā*) was no abstract metaphor. Verse 24 sets dispersal across the earth (*dharaʾakum*) against regathering (*tuḥsharūn*), and verse 28 rebuts those who wished for the destruction of the Prophet and his followers.[40] Verse 30 ends with water that sinks away (*ghawran*) or flows (*maʿīnin*), the most basic resource for a people living in a valley without cultivation (Q. Ibrāhīm [14]: 37). At the level of the first recipients, all nine pairs shift the centre of power from the Meccan elite to God.

Sajʿ and the Architecture of Warning

Al-Rummānī held that in Qurʾānic verse endings sound follows meaning.[41] Read accordingly, the *rāʾ* block keeps listeners between two poles. Seven of its endings denote punishment, namely *al-saʿīr* (verses 5, 10, and 11), *al-maṣīr* (6), *tafūr* (7), *tamūr* (16), and *nakīr* (18), and four denote divine power and knowledge (*qadīr*, *ghafūr*, *khabīr*, *baṣīr*). The block closes not on Hell but on human disposition: *ghurūr* (verse 20) and *nufūr* (verse 21). Verse 21, which asks who could provide if God withheld provision, ends by diagnosing persistent arrogance (*ʿutuww*), the arrogance of those who enjoy sustenance yet deny its source.

The *mīm–nūn* block changes the grammar of the verse ending. Three endings are second-person plural verbs, *tashkurūn*, *tuḥsharūn*, and *taddaʿūn*, so the rhyme now names the listeners' own deeds, and the warning no longer speaks about the audience but to it. Verse 23 names hearing, sight, and hearts and closes with قَلِيلًا مَا تَشْكُرُونَ (*qalīlan mā tashkurūn*, "little do you give thanks"), recalling the confession in verse 10 of those who had neither listened nor reasoned. The *sūrah*'s final word, *maʿīnin*, leaves the answer to its last question with the listener. Table 3 compares the independently defined segments with the sound blocks.

Table 3. Independently Defined Segments Compared with Ṭibāq and Sound Blocks

Segment	Verses	Segmentation Criterion	*Ṭibāq*	Sound Block	Core Message
I	1–5	Creation described (third person)	Verse 2 (canonical)	*Rāʾ*	Power, creation, test
II	6–12	Scene of Hell and dialogue	None	*Rāʾ*	Hell, confession, reward

[38] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr fī ʿilm al-tafsīr*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1404 AH), vol. 8, 323.

[39] Tuncer, "The Terms Trade (Tijarah) and Road (Rihlah) in Qur'anic Context," 12–14.

[40] al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl*, vol. 4, 583.

[41] ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-Rummānī, "Al-Nukat fī iʿjāz al-Qurʾān," in *Thalāth rasāʾil fī iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad Khalafallāh and Muḥammad Zaghlūl Sallām, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1976), 97.

Segment	Verses	Segmentation Criterion	*Ṭibāq*	Sound Block	Core Message
III	13–22	Renewed address and rhetorical questions	Verses 13, 16 (canonical); 19, 21, 22 (contextual)	*Rāʾ* to verse 21; shift at 22	Knowledge, earth, sustenance
IV	23–30	Series of *qul* commands	Verses 24, 28, 30 (contextual)	*Mīm–nūn*	Reckoning, fate, water

Three patterns emerge. Canonical oppositions occur only in the segments that frame divine power, while the final segment holds contextual oppositions only. The rhyme shift at verse 22 precedes by a single verse the onset of the *qul* series at verse 23, so the change of sound and the change of address nearly coincide. Most importantly, both sound blocks close on sustenance: the *rāʾ* block with provision that can be withheld (verse 21), the *mīm–nūn* block with water that can vanish (verse 30).

DISCUSSION

Positioning the Findings and Their Novelty

These findings extend studies that classify or explain Qurʾānic oppositions[42] by showing that, within a single *sūrah*, the distribution of canonical and contextual oppositions follows thematic movement. They complement the pragmatic study of interrogatives in Sūrat al-Mulk,[43] since the questions it analyses prove to be the main vehicle of the argument about sustenance and water. They also correct the earlier inventory of the same *sūrah*, which classifies verses 10–11 as *muraṣṣaʿ*,[44] while confirming its other classifications. Against the literature identified in the search described above, the study offers three contributions: it shows that the shift from canonical to contextual oppositions tracks a move from the cosmic to the economic; it demonstrates that rhyme blocks, address, and type of opposition align, so that *ṭibāq* and *sajʿ* work as one architecture of meaning; and it derives its social claims from a verse-by-verse inventory that others can verify.[45]

[42]Hassanein, "Antonym Sequence in Qur'anic Arabic," 199–220; Hussein, "Negated Antithesis as Reflected in the Qurʾān and in Pre-Qurʾānic Arabic Poetry," 490.

[43]Ismath and Bin Abd Aziz, "A Relevance Theory Approach to the Pragmatic Interpretation of Surah al-Mulk," 216–36.

[44]Khoir and Zarkasyi, "Al-Jinās wa al-sajʿ fī Sūrat al-Mulk," 224–40.

[45]Asnawi et al., "Rhetorical Coherence and Eco-Theological Meaning in Qur'anic Water Verses," 273–302.

Contextualisation through Saeed's Hierarchy of Values

Saeed ranks Qurʾānic values as obligatory, fundamental, protectional, implementational, and instructional,[46] a hierarchy that synthesises earlier thinking on the objectives of the law[47] and has been applied to whole *sūrah*s, as in the reading of Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt.[48] This hierarchy supplies the intermediate premise between text and present. The values of Sūrat al-Mulk sit at the upper levels: they do not prescribe policy but supply criteria for judging it. Justice here is not stated as *ʿadl* but constructed by affirming who owns power, sustenance, and knowledge. Table 4 places each value in the hierarchy.

Table 4. Values of Sūrat al-Mulk in Saeed's Hierarchy of Values

Value	Textual Basis	Level in the Hierarchy	Contemporary Application
Equality before the divine test	Verse 2 (*al-mawt – al-ḥayāh*)	Fundamental	Wealth cannot measure human worth
Trusteeship over resources	Verses 19, 21, 30; verses 15–16 as a cross-verse reading	Fundamental	Control of land, minerals, and water is a trust
Accountability for what is hidden	Verses 13–14 (*asirrū – ijharū*)	Protectional (principle); implementational (rules)	Transparency in managing shared resources

Equality before the Divine Test

Verse 2 measures human beings by the quality of their deeds, not by wealth or status. This fundamental value confronts a society in which the bottom 40 percent hold less than a fifth of total expenditure.[49] Because the measure of deeds is open to all while the measure of wealth is attainable by few, the verse grounds an equality independent of economic position.

Sustenance and Resources as a Trust

Verses 15–16, 19–21, and 30 converge on one claim: true ownership of the means of life lies with God, so human control of land, minerals, and water is a trust. As a fundamental value, this

[46]Choirur Rois et al., "Islamic Hierarchy of Value: Abdullah Saeed's Progressive Interpretation of the Qur'an," *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 49, 1 (2025): 205–21, https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v49i1.1125.

[47]Barsihannor et al., "Abdullah Saeed's Construction of the Hierarchy of Values in the Qur'ān: A Philosophical Hermeneutic Perspective," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13, 1 (2023): 119–32, https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.131.09.

[48]Shinta Nurani, "Hierarchy of Values in Qur'anic Hermeneutic of Abdullah Saeed (A Study of Contextual Interpretation in Q.S. Al-Hujurat)," *Al Quds: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Hadis* 5, 1 (2021): 159–82, https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v5i1.1951.

[49]Badan Pusat Statistik, "Gini Ratio Maret 2025 Tercatat Sebesar 0,375," *Berita Resmi Statistik*, July 25, 2025, https://www.bps.go.id/id/pressrelease/2025/07/25/2519/gini-ratio-maret-2025-tercatat-sebesar-0-375.html.

premise lends Qurʾānic weight to critiques of resource concentration in Indonesian mining[50] and complements *Islam Transformatif* as a response to structural poverty.[51]

Accountability for What Is Hidden

Verses 13–14 state that what is concealed is known to God. Read alone, this concerns divine knowledge, not public policy. The step to transparency runs through the hierarchy: if trusteeship over shared resources is a fundamental value, the means that protect it from concealed misuse belong to the protectional level, and specific disclosure rules belong to the implementational level, which each society must design. The *sūrah* supplies the principle, not the regulation.

A Counter-Reading: Divine Provision and Fatalism

The premise that sustenance lies in God's hands has also been used to justify resignation to inequality. The *sūrah* itself resists that reading. Verse 15 commands people to walk the earth and eat of His provision, so divine ownership does not cancel human effort; and al-Zamakhsharī reads its close as a reminder that God will question people about their gratitude for what they were given.[52] Divine ownership thus intensifies accountability rather than excusing it, and verse 21 names the arrogance of those who enjoy provision yet deny its source.

Implications and Limitations

Theoretically, *ʿilm al-badīʿ* can serve as structural evidence for a social reading of the Qurʾān. Practically, the three values can inform Islamic teaching and public discourse on distributive justice in Indonesia. The study is limited to one *sūrah*, to classical exegesis read mainly through *al-Kashshāf*, and to a single coder whose classification was checked against one independent inventory; a second coder and wider exegetical sampling would strengthen the findings.

CONCLUSION

For RQ1, Sūrat al-Mulk contains nine *ṭibāq al-ījāb*, moving from canonical oppositions that frame the cosmos to contextual oppositions concerning sustenance, and its verse endings form a *rāʾ* block and a *mīm–nūn* block, dominated by *sajʿ muṭarraf* and *mutawāzī*, with no *sajʿ muraṣṣaʿ*. For RQ2, read through al-Zamakhsharī and checked against al-Rāzī, al-Ṭabarī, and al-Qurṭubī, these devices shift the centre of power from the Meccan elite to God, and both sound blocks close on sustenance and water. For RQ3, Saeed's hierarchy of values yields three values, namely equality

[50]Rohman, "Decolonization of Mining Based on Qur'ānic Worldview," 234–49.
[51]Akmaliah, "Islam Transformatif," 188–210.
[52]al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl*, vol. 4, 580.

before the divine test, trusteeship over resources, and accountability for what is hidden, which provide criteria for critiquing inequality without prescribing policy.

The novelty of the study is threefold. It shows that canonical and contextual oppositions are distributed along a move from the cosmic to the economic. It demonstrates that rhyme blocks, address, and type of opposition align, and in doing so it corrects the earlier classification of verses 10–11 as *muraṣṣaʿ*. It grounds a social reading of a Meccan *sūrah* in a verse-by-verse linguistic inventory. Practically, these values can inform Islamic teaching on wealth and public debate on resource governance. Future research should test the pattern in Meccan *sūrah*s concerned with wealth, such as al-Humazah, al-Takāthur, and al-Māʿūn.

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