

Indonesian tafsir: Development of definitions and shifting functions of tafsir

Afzico Muhammad Chandra

UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
afzicomc@gmail.com

Muhammad Roflee Waehama

Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani, Thailand
muhammadrofllee.w@psu.ac.th

Suggested Citation:

Chandra, Afzico Muhammad; Waehama, Muhammad Roflee. (2025). Indonesian tafsir: Development of definitions and shifting functions of tafsir. *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas*, Volume 5, Number 3: 403–414. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v5i3.37474>

Article's History:

Received November 2024; Revised May 2025; Accepted October 2025.
2025. journal.uinsgd.ac.id ©. All rights reserved.

Abstract:

Tafsir, in its dynamics, does not only function as a medium for studying Allah's verses. There has been a shift in the function of interpretation to become a field for cultivating the interests of individuals, groups and even state governments. This shift in function occurs because tafsir has experienced a development in meaning; previously, tafsir had to be written by someone who met the requirements of a mufassir, but this was not strictly adhered to by tafsir writers from Indonesia. Through this article, various interests in various Indonesian interpretations are discussed, starting from the strengthening of ideology, politics by the government, highlighting communities, even interpretations being used as a means to criticize government policies, and so on. There are various forms of tafsir studied, ranging from the Al-Qur'an Encyclopedia, local language tafsir, to government-published translations of the Qur'an. Thus, interpretations that emerge from the Indonesian context are not only viewed as normative interpretations, but also as interpretations of interests or ideological interpretations.

Keywords: Indonesian tafsir; ideology; interpretation function; normative interpretation; published translation.

INTRODUCTION

Tafsir has experienced a shift in function as a medium for the interests of writers from what was previously intended for readers to understand the content of the verses of the Qur'an (Mubarak & Barkia, 2021). It cannot be denied that any text will never be free from the interests of the author, but in the treasures of Al-Qur'an interpretation, these interests must be minimized or even completely eroded. The reason is that this interest will give birth to deviations in interpretation (Syafe'i, 2016). 'Interest in interpretation' cannot be ignored without being linked to the term 'tafsir' itself, which has experienced developments in definition (Ainun & Yunus, 2023). Tafsir is no longer limited to having to be written in Arabic. Such as books resulting from reading/translating the Qur'an, initiated by Indonesian scholars, some of which are referred to as 'tafsir', leading to the phrase 'tafsir Nusantara' or 'Indonesian interpretation'. The development of the definition of tafsir not only has an impact on expanding its scope but also has the potential for 'something that is not tafsir' to be considered as tafsir (Risfani, 2023).

Additionally, the development of interpretation is not only evident in its increasingly wider scope (Aji et al., 2021). Tafsir of the Al-Qur'an has changed form written works to recitations broadcast via radio/television, audiovisual, or online via websites (Miftahuddin, 2020). The study and dissemination of

interpretations of the holy book are certainly appreciated because they provide spiritual benefits to readers. However, this study needs to be examined more deeply because it lacks a clear purpose. Tafsir, which holds certain interests, becomes an important discussion, whether this is actually a normal phenomenon in every text, or is a mistake because speaking of tafsir means speaking on behalf of the Qur'an. This article aims to explain the problem by examining the development of the definition of tafsir, the various interests in it, and the opinions/comments of Quran reviewers regarding this matter. This description, of course, builds upon existing research.

So far, several scholars have written articles that contain and explore the interests of interpretation. Like Islah Gusmian in the book *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia*. The discussions raised include interpretations that respond to gender campaigns, interpretations in the era of authoritarian government, and interpretations in the midst of conversations about religious diversity. Next, there is Jajang Rohmana, through his book entitled "History of Al-Qur'an Interpretation in Tatar Sundanese," which focuses on local interpretations from West Java. Among the various interpretations from West Java reviewed, several ideologies stand out, including those of Sufis, writers who adhere to traditionalist Islam in the Islamic boarding school style, modernist (puritan) Islam, and interpretations with a New Order government motif embedded in them. Next, there is Abd. Rahman specifically studied ideology in the interpretation of An-Nur, written by Hasbi Ash-shiddieqy (Shiddieqy, 2000), in a book entitled *Ideology in Indonesian Tafsir*.

Thus, this article is a continuation of the research results presented above, focusing on the interests/motivations of the authors as expressed in their interpretation of the Al-Qur'an in Indonesia, and citing criticisms made by Al-Qur'an reviewers regarding these interests. The benefit of this article is to promote self-awareness and the importance of being cautious when presenting arguments related to the word of God. Also, this article is limited to discussing only 'tafsir' literature circulating in Indonesia and which the author managed to collect.

METHOD

This article uses a library research method combined with a qualitative approach. Library research is a form of qualitative research in which the researcher directly engages with data that is already available, rather than collecting new data from the field or through direct observation (Silverman, 2015). Data sources in this method are "ready-to-use" and typically include books, journals, articles, reports, encyclopedias, and other documentary materials, available in both physical and digital formats. In qualitative library research, data is collected from a variety of documentary sources. Data collection strategies in qualitative research are designed to obtain relevant information from scientific literature, research reports, and other credible publications (Creswell, 2013).

The reliability of these sources is essential to ensure that the research questions are adequately addressed. The process includes: identifying and selecting relevant literature from libraries and online databases; reviewing and synthesizing information from books, peer-reviewed journals, and reports; and ensuring the credibility and reliability of each source to support the research findings (Hammersley, 2012). Qualitative research is characterized by the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, such as text, discourse, or images. The analysis process in this context involves synthesizing and interpreting findings from the existing literature, rather than relying on statistical or quantitative techniques. Researchers may use coding, thematic analysis, or narrative synthesis to identify patterns and draw conclusions from the data collected (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

The results of the study are usually summarised and discussed based on the synthesis of existing studies, combined with the author's own analysis and interpretation. To improve clarity and accessibility, tables may be used to organise and present key findings, themes or comparisons drawn from the literature. This approach allows for the presentation of complex qualitative data in a structured and comprehensive manner. Qualitative literature research emphasises depth and richness of description rather than generalisation. Sampling in qualitative studies is often purposeful, selecting sources based on their relevance and potential to provide rich insights. The validity of the study is assessed by the completeness of the literature review and the extent to which the research questions are answered using evidence from the selected sources (Suarez, 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Development of the definition of interpretation

If we discuss who can understand the Qur'an, then this matter is divided into several categories: verses that there is no reason not to know, there are verses that can only be understood generally by the Arab community, there are verses whose meaning cannot be understood apart from the ulama, and finally, no one is allowed to understand/know its contents except Allah alone (Shihab, 2011). However, when discussing who can interpret the Qur'an, there is disagreement. There is an opinion that immediately relaxes that anyone can interpret the Qur'an. Some allow it, but with the rules, specifically meeting the standards formulated by the ulama in the form of mufasssīr requirements.

Even though the ulama have formulated provisions (requirements for mufasssīr) in such a way as to prevent all those who wish to speak in the name of the Qur'an, in practice in the field, these provisions are not always adhered to. There are even commentators who study religion autodidactically, without attending a formal religious school. Violations of such rules result in the expansion of the meaning of interpretation so that interpretive work does not always have to comply with orthodoxy, and interpretations may even come from the thoughts of people who are not Muslim (Darmawan et al., 2020).

The expansion of the definition of tafsir referred to in this paper is also understood from the definition of tafsir, which is no longer fully understood as a human effort to understand the messages, rules and wisdom contained in the Al-Quran in accordance with the level of ability (Shihab, 2011). But tafsir is also understood as behavior, as a tradition preserved by a certain society, and as the effort of someone who has studied the Qur'an and then put it into writing without being limited by a particular language when writing it. This expansion of the definition will later lead to a shift in the function of interpretation.

The understanding of tafsir as behavior can be seen from how Kiai Ahmad Dahlan (founder of Muhammadiyah) directly practised Surah Al-Ma'un, which is often termed theological movement. It is said that in the early days of the Muhammadiyah organization, Kiai Dahlan fed Al-ma'un's teachings for days, weeks, up to 5 months. Suddenly, the teaching, which was considered saturated, received a response from Dahlan's students: "Why are we only taught the Al-Ma'un letter?" Kiai Dahlan answered by inviting his students to go directly to see orphanages and nursing homes and then teach them (the students) about empathy, caring and providing social services to other people (Sopaat et al., 2023).

Through the recitation of Surah Al-Ma'un, Kiai Dahlan wants to teach that the Al-Qur'an is not only to be read or memorized. Or, even more broadly, Kiai Dahlan instilled the understanding that worship is good, but it has no meaning if it is not balanced with social/community work. Al-Ma'un Kiai Dahlan's doctrine was transformed into Muhammadiyah's charity business, which comprises educational programs, health programs, and social service programs. This doctrine is also claimed to have enabled Muhammadiyah to survive for more than a century by having hundreds of hospitals, thousands of schools and other social welfare agencies (Gunawan, 2018).

The definition of tafsir is a tradition preserved by certain communities, such as the Al-Qur'an which is accepted as a tradition by reading certain verses or letters at ceremonies or religious events (Mansyur, 2007). This tradition originates from individual understanding and deepening, which is communicated verbally or through actions that are able to influence other individuals so that shared understanding is built and, at a certain level, gives birth to joint and structured (organized) actions. Discussions related to this tradition are often called the living Qur'an.

Meanwhile, the meaning of tafsir, which is realized in written works in any language, is very clear when we refer to books that collect tafsir in the archipelago/Indonesia. How the translation of an interpretation of the Al-Qur'an, which was originally in Arabic, was transferred to a regional or national language form, is considered a '*tafsir*,' a book containing a description of one letter of the Al-Qur'an is also considered a '*tafsir*.' It is as if 'every written text containing a description of the meaning of a verse of the Qur'an' is '*tafsir*'.

The broadening of the definition of tafsir is a consequence of the term 'Indonesian tafsir' which has been used in recent times. It is as if there has been a softening (if you don't want to call it coercion) of the word 'tafsir' which ultimately has the impact that 'Indonesian tafsir' has been considered as part of 'tafsir' or the local version of tafsir (the area of qur'anic exegesis). The widening of the definition of tafsir is also a consequence of the laxity of 'Indonesian tafsir' researchers in classifying literature as tafsir.

Indonesian Tafsir is defined as a book of interpretations that has local Indonesian characteristics. Local characteristics in the sense of Indonesian people writing it or using Indonesian or regional languages as the language of instruction. However, there are also other parties who say that Indonesian tafsir is merely an extension of Indonesian Islam (like archipelago fiqh, archipelago ulama, archipelago mushaf, and so on) and is not part of tafsir (Lukman, 2021).

Regardless of the debate about whether Indonesian tafsir is part of a long history of tafsir tradition or merely a branch of Indonesian Islam, it is agreed that Indonesian tafsir is the result of Indonesians reading the Al-Qur'an with various interests hidden within it. These interests result in a shift in the function of interpretation; for example, interpretations are written to strengthen the ideology of the interpretation writer, strengthen group narratives, criticize certain parties, etc.

Various interests in Indonesian tafsir

1. Confirmation of the Author's Ideology

Tafsir has been used as a medium to cultivate identity, such as the Ahmadiyah group, Wahhabi, Puritan Islam, or even by Islamic boarding school circles with their traditionalist Islamic understanding. This has been implied by Husein Adz-dzahabi (Al-Dzahabi, n.d.) that tafsir is a fertile place for developing the opinions of various sects and groups/groups. According to him, ideology is included in interpretation because experts in certain disciplines or adherents of certain schools and schools seem to be called upon to write them in harmony with that field or school of thought.

For example, we can find Ahmadiyah understanding in Ahmadiyah's "Translated Al-Quran and Short Tafsir" in Indonesian, when interpreting Al-Baqaraḥ. It is clear that this interpretation confirms the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad:

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۖ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ

And those who believe in what was revealed to you, also in what was revealed before you and in the hereafter, they are confident.

Al-Ākhirah (afterlife) means (1) the *ukhrawi* residence, namely the life in the future; (2) future revelation. This second meaning is further detailed in Surah Al-Jumu'ah verses 3 to 4, where the verses touch on the two resurrections of the Prophet. The beginning of its emergence occurred among the Arab population in the 7th century AD, when the Qur'an was revealed to him. The next event occurred at the end of time in the form of someone from among the followers of the Prophet. This prophecy became perfect in the form of the founder of the Ahmadiyah Community. The Ahmadiyya ideology was very clearly shown to the surface. The word afterlife is interpreted to have an alternative meaning, namely, revelation, which ultimately functions as justification for Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's prophethood. Such an interpretation is, of course, very subjective, and quite a few people consider it a deviation in interpretation.

We can find Wahabi ideology in the interpretation written by Firanda (Fanani, 2019). He used various verses to match the Wahhabi trilogy of monotheism doctrine.

One of them is in Surah Al-Infithar: 6

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ

O man, what has deceived you (disobeyed) against your Lord the Most High.

In this verse, God does not use *bi ilāhika al-karīm* (with the word god), but with *bi rabbika al-karīm* (with the word Rabb). The word Rabb is used because the polytheistic Arab community believes in the *rububiyyah* of God, who created everything in the universe, including the polytheists. Then, what is *Rububiyah tauhid*? That is, believing in the oneness of God in organizing, creating, enjoying, and His power.

As for traditionalist Islamic ideology, it is evident in Sanusi's Sundanese interpretation. Sanusi showed his defense against the practice of *tawasul*, which is commonly done by *pesantren* Muslims when interpreting Al-Fatihah: 5. So it is very obvious the error and clear deviation of the group that calls *mushrik* to anyone who *ta'zim* (respect) and taking *tabaruk* (take blessings) through the graves of *nabiyin*

(the prophets) and *salihin*. (The group argued) he said it was similar (to the practice) of the worshipers of idols paying respect to their idols. (That is disputed, because) First, the idol is called God by its worshippers. Second is the confession of the idol worshipers that they are not willing to worship God and are only willing to worship idols. Third, the idol worshipers were happy to bow down to idols. Fourth, when they are going to perform a slaughter, they are happy to name the slaughter in the name of their idol. This kind of practice is not found among Muslims who ask for blessings and seek *tawassul* through the Prophets and righteous people.

Iyyāka nasta'in means "I do not ask for help except from You (O Allah), because no one other than You can share help except with Your help in that help. So *iyāka nasta'in* means *isti'ānah 'ala sabīlil-haqīqah* (asking for help in the true sense)." As for *isti'ānah* in the *sabīlil-i styleḍāfah* (asking for help in the sense of relying on another party) is normal, even from parties other than Allah. Like the people who asked King Zulqarnain for help from the Gog and Magog people, Zulqarnain said, "fa a'iyūnūnī," which means you have to help me with strength. Also, the verse "fastaghātsahul-ladzī min syī'atihi 'in alkali-ice min 'aduwwih" means that the men of the Bani Israel (people from the group of the Prophet Musa) asked the Prophet Musa for help in order to overthrow people from the opposing side. Also, "wata 'āwanū 'alā al-birr wat-taqwa" translates as you must help each other in good affairs and in piety. If you are told to help each other, of course asking for help is also allowed. Therefore, it is clear the defect of the group accusing the practice of *tawassul*, *istighathah*, asking for intercession with the Prophets, pious people as *kuf*r based on this verse.

Sanusi wants to counter the accusations made by Islamic groups who do not agree with traditionalist Islam. This group is usually called Puritan Islam. Puritan Muslims too, some of whom also often attack traditionalist groups through their interpretation of the Qur'an. For example, Romli, in his interpretation written in Sundanese, is entitled *Nurul Bajan*. Interestingly, Romli uses *Al-Fatihah*: 5 also to attack traditionalist Islam, saying:

Therefore, those who are happy to ask for help from the cemetery, who are thought to have sacred things, whether it is to facilitate their needs, ease their difficulties, cure their diseases, overthrow their opponents and so on, it is very clear that they are far from God's rules, and such people have committed similar acts of idolatry that are commonly done during the foolish people of the Prophet's time. That is, asking for help that is directed to other than God, as well as with those who are comfortable using amulets, which are believed to help his safety, will benefit his company, will make it easier to get wealth or other goals. There is no difference with worshiping statues/idols, as a result of admitting to something that does not have the same power as God, even though it is limited to dead things.

Moh. E. Hasim, who wrote *Holy Verses in Reflection* (Hasim, 1998), he revealed:

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Do not mix the truth with falsehood and (also do not) hide the truth, even though you know it. (*Al-baqara*h: 42)

They (the Children of Israel) changed their creed of monotheism or monotheism. Prophet Uzair was called the son of Allah, and they worshipped him in addition to worshipping Allah. Christian dogma today has also undergone changes. Prophet Isa was transformed into Jesus, the Son of God. The theology of monotheism was changed to the Trinity. The original contents of the Bible are mixed with human engineering. The verse that states that a messenger from God will come after the Prophet 'Isa, as stated in the Gospel of John (16:7), is hidden. What about among the Muslim community itself? It's no longer a secret that *haq* is mixed up with *bid'Ah*, for example, namely establishing the law of circumcision to perform prayers or reading the Yasin letter on the graves of the saints, establishing the law of circumcision to reading the Yasin letter and the *Al-Ikhlās* letter several times on Friday nights or Tuesdays.

The examples above show that interpretation has been used as an opportunity to confront opposing groups, or to reject certain parties. Such interpretations are usually written by people who, in Islam, are considered too fanatical about the viewpoint they hold. An interpretation that is more concerned with identity struggles certainly has the potential to forget the substance of the verse, which should be given more prominence.

2. *Highlighting Community*

Like the interpretation of Muhammadiyah's At-tanwir, which was created jointly by a team. This interpretation was written based on considerations of words that reflect the characteristics, philosophy and identity of Muhammadiyah, namely enlightening (*tanwir*). This interpretation effort is very meaningful for Muhammadiyah, both in the form of carrying out the spread of Islam comprehensively, in order to provide religious guidance to its citizens, and so on. Even though At-tanwir's interpretation is claimed to be written with several characteristics such as responsiveness, evoking dynamics and ethos, the puritanical ideology that characterizes Muhammadiyah remains pervasive and mobilized. For example, this commentary contains criticism of shamanic practices, in the interpretation of Al-baqarah: 169-170,

Verse 169 of Al-Baqarah states "Indeed, Satan only orders you to do evil and vile things." This contains a message about anyone who consumes something that is dirty, haram, despicable and has no quality, including falling prey to Satan's steps. After that, we are warned that Satan will continue to persuade people to carry out vile and evil deeds. It seems that the procedure for obtaining income by following the devil's footsteps is necessary, as mentioned in the verse above, it is associated with humans who seek pleasure and wealth through shamanism.

People who are used to earning income based on the shaman's instructions cannot separate what is allowed and what is not/haram. They fully support the shaman even though his instructions deviate far from the values of the Quran. In fact, they say that the shaman found inspiration (guidance) from God to preach how to get a steady income. Even though the shaman likes to meditate and in his ID with Muslim status he has never carried out religious obligations. He did not pray and worship in his own way. Also, when he was ordered to recite Al-Fatihah, he was found unable to do so because he did not memorize it. But it's unfortunate for his congregation, who continue to be trapped by the devil, explaining that the shaman is a devout Muslim, and among Muslims, there is no point in prolonging the argument. It could be that this is what is meant by the expression '*wa an taqulū alallahi mà là talamūn*' which means and you are talking about Allah about what you do not know.

Tahlilan, Yasinan, Javanese Islam (syncretism), tawasul to the grave, including shamanism are issues that are always raised by Puritan Islam to attack traditionalist Islamic groups. Not infrequently we will find sentences about 'identity Islam' such as KTP Islam above, 'deviant teachings', and so on. Also the use of the word 'bid'ah', 'taqlid', 'acculturation' as a stigma of dividing Islamic categories by the Puritans to clearly differentiate who we are and who they are. Not only in collective interpretations such as Muhammadiyah, individual interpretations also often encounter refutations of Traditional Islam (such as Romli and Hasim above).

3. **Social Criticism and Government Policy**

The life of the interpreter who was in a situation of intense political turmoil, such as Hamka who lived during the colonial era, entered the era of independence, continued with the PKI which carried out a rebellion, and the authoritarian regime during the New Order era encouraged him to relate several verses to existing problems as a reflection of political turmoil. When interpreting the third verse of Al-Balad's letter, Hamka wrote about the phenomenon that befell Muhammad Natsir when he was Prime Minister, taking a position in the intense political arena. And after a long description of the interpretation of the Al-Balad letter, at the end Hamka said that the values contained in the Al-Balad letter were a milestone in the struggle of the Masyumi party (Indonesian Muslim Syuro Council) which was proclaimed by Darwis Taib in West Sumatra (Aspandra, 2023).

Next Syu'Asa, a writer who wrote the book "In the Light of the Al-Qur'an: Tafsir of Socio-Political Verses" which is focused on the nuances of Indonesian politics during the New Order era. This commentary book comes with criticism of the Soeharto government's policies which are considered not in line with the principles of the Qur'an (Zulaiha et al., 2022). Among the examples is the interpretation of the Al-Qur'an surah An-Nahl: 90, Syu'He even criticized the New Order regime's political practices, which he said had undermined justice. Clearly in the Light of the Qur'an Syu'bah revealed:

How is justice maintained amidst the possibility of hatred in various incidents? For example, is it true that Suharto had some hand, at least in previous knowledge, in the eruption of the G30S PKI? Was the coup the responsibility of the PKI as a party, carried out by only one of its wings, or in the name of an individual? This question was also previously asked in connection with Masyumi's role in the PRRI rebellion. Do we have to give space to anti-democratic forces for the sake of democracy? What was the true nature of

Supersemar, whose manuscript was declared lost, and under what circumstances did Soekarno sign it? What was Suharto's role in the 1990 kidnapping of activists? What about the Trisakti student shooting? (Gusmian, 2016).

The same criticism was also made by Kiai Haji Misbah Mustafa (Mukminin & Irbathy, 2024) who discussed the Planned Family Program (KB) when interpreting Surat Al-Qashash: 4 which tells about Fir'aun that takes the life of every baby boy born. He explained that in the time of Fir'aun when he came to power, the development of the Egyptian population from the Bani Israel generation was very fast. This is different from the development of the population of the Qibthi group (the Pharaoh group) who were the original inhabitants at that time, which was very slow. This condition makes the political elite in Egypt worried, because in the future it is not impossible that the Egyptian people from the descendants of the Bani Israel will take over the power of the Pharaoh (Gusmian, 2016). After providing an explanation of the historical background of the verse, K.H. Misbah linked it to the family planning program promoted by the Indonesian government, with the following description:

"This is happening again at the present time where the kings of the world, namely America and Russia, are trying to reduce the rapid population growth among Muslims through the United Nations, which then applies to countries all over the world, including Indonesia. The reason is that food is (not always) available to meet the needs of the population, also considering/worried about the increase in the number of unemployed, and so on."

From the explanation above, it appears that the family planning program launched by the New Order government, according to Syu'bah, implicitly has a political interest in the regime, namely inhibiting population growth among Muslims, as happened in America and Russia. The description above is a signal that tafsir is not only related to reading the text of the Qur'an, but is used as a forum for criticizing the socio-political dynamics that occur/are experienced by the interpreter's writer. The interpretation of the Al-Qur'an is used as a dialectical space for interpreters with such power, making the 'context of interpretation' not only limited to the meaning of 'context' such as the contextual verse/siyāq Al-kalām, the context of the revelation of the verse/siyāq at-tanzīl, but also on the side of the socio-political space where the interpreter is located (siyāq at-tārīkhī).

4. Demonstrate certain knowledge

Such as economics by Dawam Raharjo (Adhya, n.d.), who wrote the book Encyclopedia of the Al-Qur'an: Social Interpretation based on Key Concepts. The book Encyclopedia of the Qur'an comes from several articles he wrote in the Ulumul Qur'an Journal, in the 1990s. The article is based on certain keywords related to themes in the Al-Qur'an, such as amānah, taqwa, hanif and so on. The method desired by Dawam is unique and interesting. Although several people were found to object to labeling Dawam's article as a commentary.

A demonstration of economics was seen when Rahardjo explained Surah Al-Fajr: 15-20:

فَإِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَأَكْرَمَهُ وَنَعَّمَهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَكْرَمَنِ وَإِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ ۖ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَهَانَنِ كَلَّا بَلْ لَا تُكْرِمُونَ الْيَتِيمَ وَلَا تَحْضُونَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمُسْكِينِ وَتَأْكُلُونَ الثَّرَاثَ أَكْلًا لَّمًّا وَتُحِبُّونَ الْمَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا

As for man, when God tests him and glorifies him and gives him pleasure, he says, "My God has glorified me." Meanwhile, when He tested him and limited his sustenance, he said, "My Lord has insulted me." Never! On the other hand, you do not honor orphans, do not invite each other to feed the poor, eat inheritance by mixing (the lawful and the unlawful), and love wealth with excessive love.

According to Al-Razi's interpretation, as quoted by Muhammad Asad in The Message of the Qur'an, verse 15 of Surah Al-Fajr describes a person's attitude in managing his sustenance. If he gets profit or wealth, then he says it is as if it were God's gift to him. He thought that luck was his right. However, if the opposite happens, if his sustenance is narrowing, then he accuses God of being "unfair." In fact, all of this is just an excuse to avoid social responsibility. God is indeed the origin of sustenance. However, this fortune is impossible to obtain without work.

"And that a person does not obtain (sustenance), except what he has worked for" (Al-Najm: 39). Sometimes this work comes (in principle) from each individual, but it can also start from other people, and can even be the result of very strong cooperation within a system. For example, in the slavery system, those who carry out the work are slaves who are forced and controlled. While in a feudal system, it was the farmers who did the work for the landowners. In a capitalist system, those who do the work are free workers who earn wages by selling the labor power they own. In the Marxist concept, a commodity is built by community work or social labor. Islam itself believes that "in a person's wealth there are some rights for the poor and needy" (Al-Dzariyat: 19)

The approach to economic theories is very strong in Rahardjo's interpretation. If you examine the book further, you will find many economic terms that are present in color, such as 'surplus value', 'scarcity of resources', 'supply-demand' and so on. There are those who consider Rahardjo's interpretation to be positive because he has succeeded in discussing a monotheism-based economic system which is an alternative solution for economic development in Indonesia.

5. Showing Local Wisdom

Cultural elements, for example the link between Javanese culture and the teachings of the Qur'an, are found in the book *Al-Huda Tafsir Qur'an Basa Jawi* by Bakri Syahid (Mohammad, 2006). When interpreting Surah Al-Qiyamah verse 2:

"The degree of ammarah (encouraging to act badly), is the lowest degree of his position, meaning that he is still under the shadow of animality and cruelty. Having the temperament of a goat, a barong lion and possessing the characteristics of the Devil and Dajjal, such as julig, jail, wrath, shameless gluttony, shameless, greedy, arrogant, kemalungkung, pembegan, adigang-adigung-adiguna, ngedir-ediraken!"

Adigang-adigung-adiguna is a concept of Javanese politeness regarding reprehensible characters that must be removed by a virtuous Javanese knight. Because in the Javanese perspective, such a character should only be possessed by stupid people (pengung) who are easy to act according to their own will and have no tolerance, speak harshly and ramble on without thinking of the end, as well as their demeanor is arrogant and crazy about respect.

Based on the Javanese philosophy of life, the character of the adigang, symbolized by the deer, shows the character of a person who in his behavior relies on the advantages he has in terms of agility, intelligence and ingenuity. The great character symbolized by the elephant shows the nature of a person who in his behavior relies on muscle strength and a large body. Meanwhile, the superior nature symbolized by the snake shows the nature of a person who in his behavior relies on courage and the prowess of the weapons he has.

6. Tafsir and Translation of the Al-Qur'an as a Government Interest Project

The government's interests are distinguished from the first point (confirmation of the author's ideology) because the government is the most visible in maintaining political stability, perpetuating the interests of power in various ways. These methods are used both through translation and interpretation projects of the Al-Qur'an. This project is very difficult to escape from the government's attempt at hegemony (domination) over Muslims, and also aims to realize the 'Muslim nationalist' view in the translated text (Rohmana, 2012). The government's attempt at hegemony through the Al-Qur'an project can be understood considering that Muslims are the majority in Indonesia. The government will certainly be in trouble if Muslims become emotional because their holy book is deemed to have been insulted. For example, the case of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama/Ahok in 2016 who insulted Islam during a speech quoting Surah Al-Maidah: 51 which invited a huge reaction among Muslims. There was a massive demonstration attended by millions of Muslims to demand Ahok.

Three years later (2019) a revision of the translation of the Al-Qur'an was carried out by the Department of Religion. It is not stated that it was the previous large-scale demonstration that inspired the revision, but it is very clear that there was a change in the translation of the word *awliya* in the translation of Al-maidah: 51. What was previously translated as leader was then translated as loyal friend. See the following table for comparison:

	Al-Quran and its Translation 1993	Al-Quran and its translation in 2019
Surah Al-Maidah: 51	O believers, do not take Jews and Christians as your leaders; some of them are leaders for others. Whoever among you takes them as a leader, then indeed that person belongs to their group. Verily, Allah does not give guidance to those who are unjust.	O you who believe, do not make Jews and Christians your loyal friends.*) Some of them become loyal friends for others. Whoever among you makes them a loyal friend, then indeed he is one of them. Indeed, Allah does not guide the unjust people (Al-Quran, 2019a).
Al-maidah Translation Footnote: 51	-	*) See footnotes of Surah Āli Imran: 28.
Ali Imran's Letter: 28	The believers should not take infidels as guardians*) by abandoning the believers. Whoever does that, he will be freed from God's help unless it is (investigation) to protect himself from something that is feared from them. And Allah warns you against His (torment). And only to Allah do you return.	The believers should not make the infidels as guardians*) by setting aside the believers. Whoever does that, it is not at all from the (teachings) of God, except to protect yourself from something that you fear from them. Allah warns you about Himself (His punishment). Only to God the place of return.
Ali Imran Translation Footnote: 28	*) Wali plural <i>auliya</i> , meaning intimate friend, also means leader, protector or helper.(Al-Quran, 2019b)	*) The word <i>auliya</i> is the plural form of the word <i>waliy</i> . Literally this word means 'close' so it shows the meaning of 'close friend', 'close friend', 'loyal friend', 'lover', 'helper', 'ally', 'protector', 'defender', and 'leader' . The words <i>waliy</i> and <i>auliya</i> in the Qur'an are repeated 41 times. The meaning varies according to the context of the verse. (Al-Quran, 2019a)

The 1993 translation clearly mentions 'leader' both in Al-maidah verse 51 and Ali-Imran verse 28. The word 'friend' only appears once in a footnote which is an explanatory note for the word *wali*. This is different from the 2019 translation, which seems allergic to mentioning the word leader, so it emphasizes the word friend and even repeats it several times. Such a shift in the translation of words makes it possible that in the future there will be no more use of verses from the Qur'an to convince Muslims, especially in the issue of choosing leaders who share their religion and avoiding choosing leaders who are infidels. Also to prevent the emergence of large-scale demonstrations such as those mentioned previously which could disrupt political stability. The government's interest in this matter cannot be avoided, it can be smelled because it is very strong. The translation of the 2019 version of the Al-Quran, which is taboo about saying leader as the meaning of *awliya*, is clearly different if we refer to the Al-Qur'an and its Tafsir which was published in 2011 which is still clear, firm and concrete without the slightest hypersensitivity to the meaning of leader. Both in the interpretation of Ali Imran: 28 and Al-Maidah: 51.

a. Tafsir Ali Imran verse 28:

Auliya is the plural form of the word *waliyy* which means the person who takes care of our affairs. From this definition, *wali* means friends, close people, lovers, leaders or helpers, all indicating a close

relationship. In surah An-nisa: 76, for example, believers are told to fight against Satan's friends, while in surah Yunus: 62, auliya means people who are close. But in many verses, auliya means leader or helper, as in verse 28, surah An-nisa: 144, Al-ma'idah: 51, Al-a'raf: 27, and others. In this verse, Allah forbids Muslims from appointing unbelievers as guardians who will take care of their affairs, whether as close friends, leaders and so on, unless it is a strategy to protect their own safety. Whoever violates this commandment, Allah will remove his hands from them.

b. Tafsir Al-maidah verse 51:

This verse forbids believers not to make Jews and Christians close friends who will provide help and protection, let alone to be trusted as leaders. Apart from this verse, there are many other verses in the Qur'an that state prohibitions like this against Jews and Christians. The repetition of this prohibition many times in several verses in the Qur'an, shows that the issue is very important and if it is violated, it will bring great danger.

Through the description above, it can be seen that the Indonesian government (in this case the Ministry of Religion/Ministry of Religion) was still consistent in interpreting awliya as leaders until 2011. However, this change began to be felt in the brief interpretation of the Ministry of Religion (Ministry of Religion) which was published in November 2016, the year in which the Ahok case and the massive action occurred²¹². The word awliya in Al-maidah: 51 has been interpreted as loyal friends (as translated 2019 edition above). This means that since 2016 the Ministry of Religion/Religious Affairs has started their agenda to hegemonize Muslims through the holy book project. Historically, government hegemony through the ideology of interpretation or translation in Indonesia is nothing new. Since the Dutch colonial era, Sayyid Utsman (1822-1913), a Betawi cleric of Hadhrami descent, once criticized the translation of the Qur'an into other languages and issued a haram fatwa. There have been allegations that, as a Dutch colonial advisor on Islamic and Arab affairs, Uthman had a hidden agenda to limit the efforts of Indonesian Muslims to understand the Qur'an directly.

Criticism of Al-Qur'an Scholars on the 'Importance of Authors' in Interpretation

For example, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid denies and even refuses that the takwil process is carried out arbitrarily, directly and vulgarly. He strongly rejects (anyone who) reads the text and interprets the Qur'an on an opportunistic-pragmatic basis, because such reading and interpretation will ignore the movement of the text in its historical context on the one hand, and will reject the evidence and data that become a means for revealing the meaning of the text, on the other hand. A reckless attitude in reading texts and in interpreting them is common in situations when the reviewer is not aware that his ideology has played its role in a hidden way without supervision, without rules or control. In conditions like this, it is very easy to jump from ta'wil to talwīn/ideologization.

In several of his writings, Nasr Abu Zaid gives examples of ideological elements in the interpretation of the Al-Quran, such as the ideology of Arabism which tends to prioritize elements of Arabism, and presents exclusivity of understanding for reasons that are 'ethnocentric', especially in the area of language, simply because the Al-Quran uses Arabic and derived in Arabic. Even though he does not deny the Arabic element in the texts of the Qur'an, his theories which discuss meaning and significance, pragmatic and political manipulation, then reading the text in the frame of semiotics and sign systems, inevitably reveal several problems in his study. According to him, this ideology still needs to be discussed again.

CONCLUSION

Indonesian interpretation is not always interpreted in the same way as normative interpretation/interpretation which emphasizes explaining the substance of verses and God's intentions. Studying Indonesian tafsir means studying the history of Islam in Indonesia, the traditions of previous people, and how Indonesian ulama responded to the situation and society at that time. Read the tafsir with context: when did they live, what challenges they faced, their educational background, what the audience was like, and the purpose of writing the tafsir. So, some Indonesian interpretations can be said to be interesting interpretations (as well as normative interpretations). Interpretations with various interests, such as those described above, are commonplace. However, it is feared that interpretations that clearly have a specific purpose in the future will lead to advantages and disadvantages for certain parties, right or wrong, based on

the ideological perspective of each author. Instead of returning to the function of interpretation as a guide who directs you to the straight path (Al-Fatihah: 6), assessing the good and bad of actions carried out by the community.

REFERENCES

- Adhya, D. (n.d.). *Pemikiran dawam raharjo tentang peranan manajemen zakat terhadap pemberdayaan ekonomi umat*.
- Ainun, I. N., & Yunus, B. M. (2023). Metode Tafsir Tahlili dalam Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an: Analisis pada Tafsir Al-Munir. *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas*, 3(1), 33–42.
- Aji, M. H., Hilmi, M. Z., & Rahman, M. T. (2021). The Living Qur'an as a Research Object and Methodology in the Qur'anic Studies. *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas*, 1(1), 78–84.
- Aspandra, A. D. R. (2023). *Pengaruh Kondisi Sosial Politik dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur'an (Analisis Ayat-ayat tentang Kenegaraan Dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar)*. UIN Suska Riau.
- Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2019). What is qualitative in qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology*, 42, 139–160.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Darmawan, D., Riyani, I., & Husaini, Y. M. (2020). Desain Analisis Semantik Alquran Model Ensiklopedik: Kritik atas Model Semantik Toshihiko Izutsu. *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis*, 4(2), 181.
- Fanani, F. (2019). Potret Tafsir Wahabi di Indonesia. *SKRIPSI UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya*.
- Gunawan, A. (2018). Teologi Surat al-Maun dan Praksis Sosial Dalam Kehidupan Warga Muhammadiyah. *SALAM: Jurnal Sosial Dan Budaya Syar-I*, 5(2), 161–178.
- Gusmian, I. (2016). Tafsir Al-Quran dan Kritik Sosial: Syubah Asa Dalam Dinamika Tafsir al-Quran Di Indonesia. *MAGHZA: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 1(2), 67–80.
- Hammersley, M. (2012). *What is qualitative research?* Bloomsbury Academic.
- Hasim, M. (1998). *E. Ayat Suci dalam Renungan*. Bandung: Pustaka.
- Lukman, F. (2021). Telaah Historiografi Tafsir Indonesia. *Suhuf*, 14(1), 49–77.
- Mansyur, M. (2007). *Metodologi penelitian living Qur'an dan hadis*. Yogyakarta: Teras.
- Miftahuddin, M. (2020). Sejarah Media Penafsiran di Indonesia. *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Tafsir Di Nusantara*, 6(2), 117–143.
- Mohammad, H. (2006). *Tokoh-tokoh Islam yang berpengaruh abad 20*. Gema Insani.
- Mubarak, M. F., & Barkia, Z. R. (2021). Metode Tafsir Maudhu'i (Tawhidi) dan Langkah-Langkah Menurut Pandangan Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir Shadr. In E. Zulaiha & M. T. Rahman (Eds.), *Makna dan Manfaat Tafsir Maudhu'i* (pp. 72–92). Prodi S2 Studi Agama-Agama UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.
- Mukminin, M. A., & Irbathy, S. A. (2024). Ideologi Islam Tradisionalis Pada Tafsir Al-Ibriz dan Al-Iklil. *Javano-Islamicus*, 1(2), 105–120.
- Risfani, A. (2023). *Kritik Tafsir Ilmiah Salman ITB*. UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim.
- Rohmana, J. A. (2012). Ideologisasi Tafsir Lokal Berbahasa Sunda: Kepentingan Islam-Modernis dalam Tafsir Nurul-Bajan dan Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun. *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 2(1), 125–154.
- Shiddieqy, M. H. A. (2000). *Tafsir al-Qur'anul Majid an-Nuur: Surat 1-4* (Vol. 1). Pustaka Rizki Putra.
- Shihab, M. Q. (2011). *Membumikan Al-Qur'an Jilid 2* (Vol. 2). Lentera Hati Group.
- Silverman, D. (2015). *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. Sage Publications.
- Sopaat, S., Supriadi, D., & Supendi, U. (2023). Doktrin Teologi al-Ma'un dan Perkembangan Muhammadiyah: Studi Naskah. *Historia Madania: Jurnal Ilmu Sejarah*, 7(2), 228–249.

- Suarez, D. (2010). Evaluating qualitative research studies for evidence based library and information practice. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 5(2), 75–85.
- Syafe'i, R. (2016). Ilmu Tafsir Edisi Revisi. Bandung: CV. Pustaka Setia.
- Zulaiha, E., Agustin, K. F., & Al Rahman, N. (2022). Pengaruh Sosial Politik Pada Metodologi Penafsiran di Indonesia (Orde Lama, Orde Baru dan Reformasi). *Hanifiya: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 5(1), 25–34.



© 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).