

ENRICHMENT OF METHODS AND APPROACHES IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE QUR'AN

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Abstrak

Dalam tradisi disiplin tafsir, metode tafsir bir-riwayah (naqli) dan bi ad-dirayah (aqli) dan pendekatan tekstual cukup dominan dan tersebar dipakai oleh mufassir masa klasik maupun masa pertengahan. Konsekuensi penggunaan metode ini lazim dijadikan sebagai wahana pemetaan atas penulisan atau pemahaman atas tafsir al-Qur'an dalam waktu yang panjang. Namun seiring waktu dan perkembangan zaman, kebutuhan akan metode dan pendekatan lama dirasa tidak memadai lagi. Maka dari itu, perlu ada pertimbangan tawaran secara metodik dan pendekatan dalam tafsir dan penafsiran. Rumusan metode ijmal, tahlili, muqaran, dan maudhu'i cukup antusias disambut oleh para pengkaji tafsir pada era tahun 80 an dan sesudahnya hingga saat ini. Banyak karya dan analisis kajian tafsir memakai konstruksi atas empat metode ini. Tidak sampai berhenti di sini, terdapat juga usaha terobosan tawaran pendekatan-pendekatan tafsir yang dikonstruksi dari rahim ilmu-ilmu sosial humaniora kontemporer melalui pemikir-pemikir muslim kontemporer. Dalam praktiknya analisis-analisis tafsir kemudian diperkaya dengan pendekatan; sastra, sejarah, sosiologi, antropologi, gender, hak asasi, keadilan, hermeneutika, dan lain sebagainya. Asumsi yang hendak dibangun dari tawaran ini adalah agar penafsiran terhadap al-Qur'an

semakin komprehensif dan berperspektif lebih aktual dan kontekstual untuk pembedaan pesan al-Qur'an dalam kehidupan.

Kata Kunci: *Pengayaan, Metode, Pendekatan, Penafsiran, Al-Qur'an*

A. Introduction

The Qur'an, in the tradition of Islamic thought, has given birth to a series of derivative texts that are so broad and amazing.¹ Derivative texts are of course secondary, if the Qur'anic text is placed as the primary text. It is said to be a secondary text, because the text is produced from the production process of the 'raw material' of the Qur'anic text, to produce understanding. This secondary text became known after being codified into literature on the interpretation of the Qur'an written by its 'producers', who are commonly referred to as mufasir, according to the inclinations and characteristics inherent in themselves, their skills and their respective ideologies. as contained in the volumes and stacks of works of exegesis.

Observing the quantity of commentary works by scholars, it can be assumed that the emergence of such works of interpretation certainly does not occur by chance or without the dialectical process of the interpreter with the components that surround him both internally and externally.² In a more specific sense, it can be said that the interpreter,

¹ Amin Abdullah, "Arah Baru Metode Penelitian Tafsir di Indonesia", in the Foreword to Islah Gusmian's book, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Hermeneutika Hingga Ideologi*, (Bandung: Teraju, 2003), p. 23.

² See further about the internal and external components in the interpretation of the Koran as well as the historical description of Tafsir Science which is both abstract and concrete since its appearance, in Nashruddin Baidan's book, which was

consciously or not, in the course of interpreting work must follow certain rules, approaches, and interpretive techniques. It's just that sometimes the commentators do not explicitly mention the method or approach used in the works of exegesis they compose. In this context, the mufasir does not actually formulate a methodology as a methodical basis for exegesis, but the exegesis goes far beyond by carrying out an exegesis practice.³

This paper is basically intended to look at the extent of the trend and how the formulation of interpretation methodology is contained in several books of interpretation, and the possibility of presenting a new methodological offer, in order to be able to produce a product of interpretation through these methods in a systematic-comprehensive-practical manner.

B. The Urgency of the Method of Interpretation

Talking about the interpretation methodology, it seems that not much has been done yet. However, precisely around the late 70s and early 80s, the importance of a methodological interpretation of interpretation began to emerge. This is indicated by the formulation carried out by Abd al-Hayy al-Farmawi⁴ with his work *al-Bidayah fi*

originally the inaugural speech of the Professor in Tafsir Science at STAIN Surakarta, with the title *Rekonstruksi Ilmu Tafsir*, (Yogyakarta: Dana Bhakti Prima Yasa, 2000).

³ Islah Gusmian, "Menjadi Juru Bicara Al-Qur'an: Menelusuri Peran M. Quraish Shihab di Bidang Tafsir Al-Qur'an", *Journal of Al-A'raf*, Vol. II, No.1, 2005. p. 112.

⁴ Abd al-Hayy al-Farmawi, *Al-Bidayah fi Tafsir al-Maudhu'i*, (T.tp: t.p., 1976), p. 17. Many Islamic scholars and intellectuals, especially in Indonesia who are concerned with the study of interpretation, are influenced by the mapping method of al-Farmawi. Regarding the advantages and disadvantages of mapping these four

Tafsir al-Maudu'i which maps out the methods of interpreting the Koran into four parts.

First, the *ijmali method*, namely interpreting verses by expressing their meaning globally. The systematics follows the order of the surahs of the Qur'an in a tauqifi manner, so that the meanings are correlated with each other. The presentation uses expressions that are abstracted from the Qur'an itself by adding connecting words or sentences, making it easier for readers to understand it. In this method, the mufasir also examines, studies, and presents *asbab an-nuzul* verses by researching hadiths and history that have to do with *atsar* companions and the early generations of Islam. Examples of interpretations using this method are *Tafsir Jalalain* by Jalaluddin al-Mahalli and Jalaluddin as-Suyuti, and *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* by Farid Wajdi.

Second, the *tahlili⁵ method*, namely explaining the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an according to the order of the verses in the *Mushaf*. Explanations can be in the form of word meanings or general explanations, sentence structure, *asbab an-nuzul*, as well as statements

methods, it's good to read Nashruddin Baidan's book, *Metodologi Penafsiran Al-Qur'an*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1998).

⁵ This *tahlili* method by Muhammad Baqir as-Sadr is also named the *tajzi'i method*, as in his book, *Sejarah dalam perspektif Al-Qur'an*, trans. M.S. Nasrullah, Jakarta : Pustaka Hidayah, 1993, p. See also Islah Gusmian's article, "Menjadi Juru Bicara Al-Qur'an", p. 108. *The tahlili method*, according to Hassan Hanafi, although it is acknowledged that it can provide various information on text, history, linguistics, and social conditions, this method breaks many of the previous themes, such as justice, power, human beings, reason, and others. In addition, this theme often repeats the same theme without any macro unity. In eliminating weaknesses, he is more interested in and agrees with the *maudu'i* method. Read further in the article which has been Indonesianized, "Dari Teks Ke Aksi: Merekomendasi Tafsir Tematik", in the Journal of *Studi Al-Qur'an*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2005, p. 57.

from the Prophet, companions and *tabi'in*. In this method consists of seven kinds:

1. *At-tafsir bi al-mat'sur*, namely interpretations originating from the verses of the Qur'an itself, or those quoted from the Prophet, companions or *tabi'in*⁶, such as *Tafsir Jami' al-Bayan* by at-Tabari and *Tafsir Ibn Kasir* by Ibn Katsir.
2. *At-tafsir bir-ra'yi*, namely interpretation which orients the building of interpretation through *ijtihad* after mastering various relevant scientific disciplines, such as *Tafsir al-Kasysyaf* by az-Zamakhsyari.
3. *At-tafsir as-Sufi*, namely interpretation that uses Sufistic analysis or interprets verses of the Qur'an from an esoteric (inner) aspect or based on cues from the results of the spiritual practice of the Sufi in mysticism which reaches the *maqamat* phase and certain *ahwal*, such as the *at-Tafsir 'an Haqa'iq al-Qur'an* by as-Sulami and the *Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani* by al-Alusi.
4. *At-tafsir al-fiqhi*, namely interpretation related to legal verses, such as the *Tafsir Ahkam al-Qur'an* by al-Jassas.

⁶ This type of interpretation is the oldest in the tradition of writing interpretations in Islam. Az-Zarqani objected to including *tabi'in*'s opinion in *bi al-ma'sur*'s interpretation, because it has been mixed with the influence of *israiliyat* which is useless to discuss let alone interpret. See az-Zarqani, *Manahil al-Irfan*, vol 1, Kairo : Mustafa Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, t.tp. p. 12. In contrast to az-Zahabi who did not object to the opinion of *tabi'in* being included in the interpretation of *bi al-ma'sur*. The proof, according to az-Zahabi, is that there are many opinions among the *tabi'in* in the commentary at-Tabari and Ibn Kasir, even though the book of commentary is called the interpretation *bi al-ma'sur*. See Mustafa Husein az-Zahabi, *At-Tafsir wa al-Mufasssirun*, vol. 1, (Kairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadisah, t.t), p. 152.

5. *At-tafsir al-falsafi*, namely interpretation that uses the analysis of philosophical sciences, such as the *Tafsir Mafatih al-Ghaib* by ar-Razi.
6. *At-tafsir al-'ilmi*, namely interpretation that explores the contents of the Qur'an based on scientific theories, such as the *Tafsir Al-Quran wa al-'Ilm al-Hadis* by Abd ar-Razaq Nawfal.
7. *At-tafsir al-adab al-ijtima'i*, namely interpretation that focuses on explaining the verses of the Qur'an from the accuracy of the editorial then compiling the contents of the verses of the Qur'an with the aim of explaining the purpose of the Qur'an, such as *Tafsir al-Manar* by Rashid Rida.

Third, the *muqaran method*, namely interpreting verses by way of comparison. There are three aspects to be compared: comparisons between verses, comparisons of verses of the Qur'an with hadiths, and comparisons of interpretations between commentators. An example of a comparison model between verses is the *Tafsir Durrah at-Tanzil wa Ghurrah at-Ta'wil* by al-Iskafi, while the comparison between interpretations is the *Tafsir al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an* by al-Qurtubi.

Fourth, the *maudhu'i method*⁷, namely interpreting verses systematically. This method has two forms. *First*, discussing one surah of the Qur'an by connecting the meanings between verses and their overall understanding. With this method the verse appears in its

⁷ Al-Farmawi, *Al-Bidayah*, p. 49. According to Quraish Shihab, the application of this maudu'i interpretation method was first developed by Sayyid al-Kumiy in Egypt in the late 60's, which is actually a continuation of the *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim* method by Mahmud Shaltut which was written in the month January 1960. See M. Quraish Shihab's book, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1994), p. 74.

entirety. An example is *at-Tafsir al-Wadih* by Mahmud Hija'i'. *Second*, compiling verses of the Koran that have the same direction and theme, then analyzing them and drawing conclusions from there. For example *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* and *al-Insan fi al-Qur'an* by Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad.

In the context of methodology, al-Farmawi's mapping above is sufficient to provide a new picture when compared to the traditional-conventional mapping constructed by scholars in the 9th-13th centuries H. which mapped the interpretation methodology in three simple methodological forms, namely; *at-Tafsir bi al-Ma'sur*, *at-Tafsir bir-Ra'yi*, and *at-Tafsir as-Sufi*. However, later al-Farmawi was criticized, that in his book he did not provide clear boundaries between the area of the method, and the approaches and techniques of writing exegesis.⁸

But it must be remembered and noted that this Farmawi's classification is more of a general trend, not at all characteristic of a complete classification. Like the classification of thematic interpretations, it does not mean that *maudu'i* interpretations do not have aspects of *tahlili* or analysis and *ijmali* or global-practical aspects, and vice versa. So this Farmawi's classification will also cause debate later.

Of the four methods that are mapped out as well as offered, it seems that the last interpretation method, namely the *maudu'i* method,

⁸Although al-Farmawi's method has received criticism, his method has inspired many scholars and scholars in Indonesia to write research in the discipline of exegesis. See more fully in the latest mapping in the analysis of the book of interpretations conducted by Islah Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Hermeneutika Hingga Ideologi*, (Bandung: Teraju, 2003).

has quite a place in interpretation 'market' activities. This is because this method has a high 'praxis' value functionally in solving problems that are explored from the heart of the Qur'an, in accordance with the selected themes, compared to the three methods above.⁹ For this context also the interpreter must have a set of knowledge related to the sense of problem solving in realizing the mission of this method.

C. Considering Interpretation Approaches

Many people have been waiting for new breakthroughs in interpreting the Qur'an. In today's world where people always think simple and practical. Without exception, of course, the need for the Koran as a 'hudan' with all forms of understanding as described in the books of interpretation. It is conceivable that with little time available, people have to leaf through thick and volumes of commentaries, plus the discussions are repetitive and convoluted.¹⁰ Of course this is far from the value of efficiency and effectiveness.

After knowing the various mapping methods in the field of interpretation of the Qur'an, of the four methods offered, the maudu'i method is a suitable method to be chosen in interpreting. In this case the author does not intend to be rigidly trapped in the mapping style of

⁹ M. Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan*, p. 115.

¹⁰ Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama: Normatifitas atau Historisitas?*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1999) , p. 144. The authors think that the reluctance of contemporary commentators to use several methods of interpretation through the representation of classical interpretations is due to the level of actuality and relevance which is different from the conditions in which the interpretation was written for use in the contemporary context. At that time, the results of the interpretation, although using a fairly simple method, may have been deemed to be sufficient for the needs of users and users, both at the scientific level and as a guide to practical life.

al-Farmawi or 'Farmawians'. But placing this method as a model of presentation, how an act of interpretation is carried out. Meanwhile, the act of 'reading' the interpretation method lies in analyzing language and discourse, observing living social realities that form a term in language, and critically analyzing historical knowledge of *asbab an-nuzul*, and relating it to contemporary problems as a vehicle for contextualization.¹¹

The way in which the action of 'reading' the text is often nowadays loved by those who are interested in Islamic studies is known as hermeneutics. This hermeneutic theory is assisted by linguistic supporting disciplines such as philology, semantics and semiotics, which in practice want to understand a text, which notes that there is a 'distance' either in the dimension of time or history or in the transcendent dimension, between the creator of the text (author) and the text reader (reader).

So, interpretation with this hermeneutic approach is a bridge to triadically dialogue the components of the maker, the reader, and the text itself in a process of 'direct reading' of any text, even the sacred ones such as the texts of the scriptures, especially the profane ones such as the texts in outside the scriptures.¹²

¹¹Islah, "Menjadi Juru Bicara", p. 112.

¹²The reason the authors call hermeneutics as an approach is not an interpretation itself (*exegesis/tafsir*), because interpretation is the activity of providing actual understanding and comments on a text, while hermeneutics are rules, methods and theories that serve to guide commentators in interpreting. See the writings of Nasaruddin Umar, "Menimbang Hermeneutika Sebagai Manhaj Tafsir", *The Journal of Studi Al-Qur'an*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2005.

It is in this context that the interpretation method synergizes with an interpretation approach. However, according to the author, the more important thing is that the collaboration between the method of interpretation and the hermeneutical approach opens up a wide space for human creation or interpreters within the horizon of their thinking in uncovering autonomously placed texts, so that what is said by Abu Zayd with 'unspeakable' (*al-maskut 'anhu*) or Ali Harb with (*al-qira'ah ma lam yuqra'*), becomes 'unspeakable' or becomes 'readable'.¹³

D. Dialogue with Hermeneutic theory

In the thoughts of Muslim hermeneutical figures, several figures can be cited as samples, such as Amin al-Khuli who, when dealing with the text of the Qur'an, developed the hermeneutical area of the text from

¹³ In Islamic disciplines, it may be appropriate to call hermeneutics in Islam the Science of Interpretation. In fact, this discipline is very rich in method content. However, it is felt that classical 'Science of Interpretation' is not as critical as modern hermeneutics, in uncovering meaning, because it originates from the study of the Bible, by questioning its truths which are monopolized by the church. In this position the text of the scriptures must leave its sacredness. This is what is rejected by those who completely reject the hermeneutical method in the approach to the interpretation of religious texts, because history alone is already biased, let alone criticizing the Koran which clearly came from Allah in the 'la raiba fih' way. Another opinion is Khaled Abou el-Fadl, according to whom substantially hermeneutics is part of the classical interpretation tradition. Hermeneutics is not 'imported' goods, but 'exported' goods. According to him, we need to read and use contemporary methodologies such as hermeneutics to improve contextual understanding of the scriptures. With hermeneutics in reading the Koran, we can place the text of the Koran as a dynamic and 'open' text, which for the reader has a great opportunity to uncover a very possible field of meaning and has a plurality of interpretations. The act of interpretation, according to him, cannot be done singly, let alone admit that his interpretation is the correct interpretation. That claim is what he calls interpretive authoritarianism which is a 'deprivation of God's "rights"'. Read Zuhairi Misrawi's interview with Khaled Abou el-Fadl in the Journal of *Perspektif Progresif*, Ed I, 2005. See also his book, *Atas Nama Tuhan: Dari Fikih Otoriter Ke Fikih Otoritatif*, trans. R. Cecep Lukman Yasin, (Jakarta: Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2003).

'unthinkable' to 'thinkable'. He lowered the sacredness of the Qur'anic text into the profane realm as the largest literary book. This is so that interpreters are not 'afraid' and 'reluctant', let alone 'qualified' towards the Qur'an, so that linguistic-philological analysis becomes necessary. Al-Khuli has no intention of aligning the text of the Qur'an with books of human literature, but he aims to find the socio-cultural 'dreams' of the Qur'an and its guidance, as captured in the message of prophetic life with his literary criticism.¹⁴

As for Riffat Hassan in building his feminist hermeneutics, he categorizes three steps of interpretation; *first*, the criterion of linguistic accuracy, by tracing the classical Arabic lexicon/lughawi according to the meaning intended and desired by the word in the Qur'an. *Second*, the criteria for philosophical consistency, taking into account the direction of the meaning of the verse so that it does not conflict with Islamic philosophy such as justice, balance, equality and others. Third, ethical criteria, namely the extent to which verses or texts of the Qur'an can become a real ethical praxis attachment.¹⁵

Another is Hassan Hanafi, who constructs a hermeneutic structure characterized by specific, temporal and realistic things. According to him, hermeneutics must be built on life experience and through historical awareness in which interpreters live and begins with human and humanitarian problems. Interpretation must start from

¹⁴ Further and further read the book J.J.G. Jansen, *Diskursus Tafsir Al-Qur'an Moderen*, trans. Hairussalim and Syarif Hidayatullah, (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1997).

¹⁵ Riffat Hassan, "Women's Interpretation of Islam", in Hans Thijsen (ed.), *Women and Islam in Muslim Society*, (The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1994), p. 116.

reality and humans, then return to the text of the Qur'an as confirmation to get a theoretical answer. He built this theory from the concept of *asbab an-nuzul*, which gives the meaning that reality always precedes 'revelation'.¹⁶

Likewise with Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's hermeneutical theory, which was identified as a continuation of Amin al-Khuli's theory, in which Abu Zayd, had made a shift from the old paradigm of the textuality of the Koran which was based on theological speculation to a new paradigm based on modern literary criticism theory, and the shift from 'closed' manuscripts to open texts. The use of literary criticism theory has led to consequences in treating the Qur'anic text as a 'cultural product' and a 'linguistic-historical-humane text. However, it also limits an interpretation, what must be emphasized is an interpretation that is free from all subjective and ideological interests.¹⁷

Abu Zayd also distinguishes the terms interpretation and *ta'wil*, although there are scholars who equate the two terms. There are those who translate interpretations and *ta'wil* with comments or explanations (commentary and exegesis, as well as interpretation). However, for Abu Zayd, interpretation is an explanation or clarification that aims to provide knowledge or understanding of aspects of the Qur'an. *Tafsir* explains the outer meaning of the Qur'an, while *ta'wil* refers to the deepest meanings in the Qur'an.

¹⁶ Hassan Hanafi, *Dirasah Islamiyyah*, (Kairo: Maktabah al-Anjilu al-Misriyyah, 1981), p. 69.

¹⁷ Moch. Nur Ichwan, *Meretas Kesarjanaan Kritis Al-Qur'an: Teori Hermeneutika Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd*, (Bandung: Teraju, 2003), p. 106.

In the work process of interpretation, the term interpretation uses a linguistic framework in the traditional sense, and uses sources of transmission (riwayah). In contrast to *ta'wil*, which applies both components, while at the same time using the tools of the relevant social and humanities sciences. It is from this distinction that the author is more in agreement with the term *maudhu'i* method in al-Farmawi's formula to become the term *ta'wil maudu'i* or thematic interpretation (tafsir maudhu'i), which actually combines interpretation methods as well as an approach in the act of 'reading' the method of interpretation.¹⁸

E. Closing

The above offers and methods of interpretation used by contemporary Muslim intellectuals show that the classical interpretation methodology needs to be enriched with contemporary scientific approaches and methodologies. On that basis, what is needed at this time is that there must be some kind of effort to explore methods of interpretation with continuous new offers that must always be carried out. It is urgent that efforts be made so that the interpretation carried out can be more responsive in the midst of the challenges of modernity in today's contemporary life.

¹⁸ Amin Abdullah also tends to interpret hermeneutics, which is more accurately translated by the term *ta'wil* rather than interpretation. He developed this in his philosophical elaboration of the epistemology of Abid al-Jabiri, with the epistemology of bayani, burhani, and 'irfani by having a dialogue with the three of them through circular methods. Check out the article "*At-Ta'wil al'Ilmi : Ke Arah Perubahan Paradigma Penafsiran Kitab Suci*", Journal of *Al-Jamiah*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2001.

Interpretation activities should, in addition to using classical methodology, be enriched by utilizing the disciplines and approaches of the social sciences-humanities and added to the spirit of interpretation with the paradigms of liberation, benefit, plurality and emancipatory gender, as trends and needs for contemporary interpretation.

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