The Intersection of Two Exegetical Types of The Quran

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ABSTRACT

The research affirmed the intersection of two exegetical types of The Quran. This study also confirmed the existence of the pure Al-tafsîr bi al-maʾthur and the pure Al-tafsîr bi al-raʾyi. The researchers also presented the character of each type to clarify the difference between these exegetical types. The subject of this research was the exegesis, while the object of study is Al-tafsîr bi al-maʾthur (tradition-based exegesis), Al-tafsîr bi al-raʾyi (reason-based exegesis) and the intersection between the two exegetical types. In the first step, the researchers explained Al-tafsîr bi al-maʾthur and Al-tafsîr bi al-raʾyi, then analyzed the scope critically. The researchers compared two exegetical types of the Quran to find the differences and the intersections. The researchers also presented examples of each type of exegesis to sharpen the analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The exegesis tradition of the Quran has historically developed as a science, which is imperative for Muslims to understand the Quran. The difference of era and sources of knowledge, expansion of Islamic territories, and the increasing number of Muslims with different backgrounds have influenced the development of Quranic exegesis. Qur’anic exegesis has become a broad science that has resulted in a lot of works in response to problems throughout history.

In the Prophet Muhammad era, Muslims – the Companions of the prophet – did not difficulties understanding the Quran. When the companions faced the problems in understanding the Quran, they could resolve it by asking the explanation of the Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet was the sole authority of the Islamic religion. Therefore, there was no any crucial problem regarding Qur’anic exegesis at the time.

After the Prophet Muhammad died, Muslims – the Companions and successors - no longer had the sole authority in the field of Qur’anic exegesis. However, some professionals companions become a place to ask about exegesis problems. Among them were Abu Bakr, Umar bin Khattab, Usman bin Affan, Ali bin Abi Talib, Ibn Masʿud, Ibn Abbas, Ubay bin Kaab, Zaid bin Thabit, Abu Musa Al-Asyʿari, Abdullah bin Zubair, Anas bin Malik, Abu Hurairah, Jabir, and Abdullah bin Amr bin Ash (Qattan, 2000, p. 354). Moreover, Prophet Muhammad highly recognized Ibn Abbas with his saying, “Allahumma faqqihhu fid din wa ’allimhu taʾwil” (Hanbal, 2001, vol. 5, p. 215) which means, “O God, understand him in the religion and teach him the exegesis.” Abdullah ibn Masʿud gave him the nickname “العَلِيمُ سَبَبُ القُرآن” (the best spokesman of the Quran) (Tabari, 2000, vol. 1, p. 90). Dhahabi merges this companions period with the prophet period and gives it the name “The exegesis in prophet and companions period”. (Dzahabi, n.d., p. 27).

In the Successor’s era, there were famous Quranic experts. Some of them are from Mecca, Kufa, and Madinah. The Quranic experts from Mecca are Ibn Abbas’s students, such as Mujahid, Atha bin Abi Rabah, Ikrimah mawla Ibn Abbas, Thawus, Abu Sya’tsa’ and Saʿid bin Jubair. The Quranic experts from Kufa are Ibn Masʿud’s students, such as ‘Alqamah, Al-Aswad bin Zaid, Ibrahim Al-Nakha’, and Al-Syaʾbi. The Quranic experts from Madina such

In this era, the disputes in Qur’anic exegesis were likely to occur. However, Ibn Taimiyah said that disputes in Qur’anic exegesis – *Al-tafsir bi al-ma’thür* – were a few. Usually, those disputes include a form of multi-interpretation (tanawwâ) not a contradictory (tuddad) (Taimiyah, 1980, p. 11). This multi-interpretation is like the interpretation of the word al-shirâth al-musta‘qim (الشَّرَاطُ الْمُسْتَقِيمُ) which means “straight path”. Ibn Taimiyah mentioned two meanings of the word, namely: the Quran (Tirmidzi, 1998, vol. 5, p. 22) and Islam (Tirmidzi, 1998, vol. 4, p. 441). These two interpretations do not contradict each other because the adherents of Islam follow the Quran. Both have a different character marked by different words (al-ibarah), but both of them still have the same intention (al-musamma) (Taimiyah, 1980, pp. 11, 13 & 14). In Ibn Taimiyah’s opinion, this dispute represents tanawwâ’ (multi-interpretation) category, not tuddad (contradictory).

Ibn Taimiyah argued that the Companions and successors had different privileges. The exegetical opinion of the Companion’s was categorized as hujjah, while that of the successors was not, except for the majority of the successors who were experts in the Quran to have one voice opinion (ijma’) (Taimiyah, 1980, p. 46). In this case, they still had the authority to interpret the Quran, although they had different levels of authority. In sum, the development stages (الخُطْوَةُ) of Al-tafsir bi al-ma’thûr can be four. Then, at the fifth stage, Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’îyi began to develop.

The first stage was the oral period. In this period, the Companions obtained Quranic exegesis from the Prophet Muhammad or other Companions, while the successors obtained Quranic exegesis from the Companions (Dzahabi, n.d., p. 104). As we have explained above, both the interpretation of Companions and successors are categorized as Al-tafsir bi al-ma’thûr. Accordingly, this period was the time when the sources of Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr developed.

In the second stage, the codification began. However, it was the codification of hadith, not the codification of Qur’anic exegesis specifically. Hadith scholars - such as Syu’bah ibn al-Hajjaj (160 AH), Waki ibn al-Jarah (197 AH), Sufyan ibn Uyainah (198 AH), and others – made Qur’anic exegesis as one of the chapters of hadith (Dzahabi, n.d., p. 104). Therefore, Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr constitutes one of the hadith studies. In this regard, the Prophet, companions, and successors were the people who had the authority to interpret the Quran.

The third stage was the climax of Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr’s development. The Quranic exegesis codification began to develop independently apart from the books of hadith. It no longer became one of the chapters in the hadith book. However, it was still based on the tradition narrated from the Prophet Muhammad, Companions, successors, or followers of successors. Some Quranic exegesis scholars of this period were Ibn Majah (273 H), Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (310 H), Abu Bakr ibn Mundhir al-Naisaburi (318), Ibn Abi Hatim (327 H), Ibn Hibban (369 AH), and al-Hakim (405) (Dzahabi, n.d., pp. 104–105).

The fourth stage had a similar pattern with the previous Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr’s development. However, the chain of transmission (sanad) completely written in the previous stage had been summarized in this era. The exegetes only took opinions from the tradition (matn) without including the sanad. The pattern of this codification eventually raised new problems because there was a mixture between sahih (valid tradition), da’if (unvalid), isra’i’iyyat, and mawdu’i (hoax) (Dzahabi, n.d., p. 107).

The fifth stage is the last era of the development of Quranic exegesis. This era is an extension from the Abbasid period to the present. The beginning of this era was marked by the appearance of Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’îyi (reason-based exegesis). Reason began to be used to understand the Quran. Then, various approaches were applied in Quranic exegeses, such as linguistics, theology, Islamic jurisprudence, and so forth. Ts’labi and Khazin used historical approach in quranic exegesis. Wahidi wrote his exegesis book (Al-Asbat) using a linguistic approach. Fakhruzai wrote Maf‘ûl al-Ghaib using a philosophical approach. Ibn ‘Arabi used mystical approach in his exegesis work. Bashash and Qurthubi used the Islamic legal approach in their exegesis works (Dzahabi, n.d., pp. 108 & 109).

The explanation above affirms that Quranic exegesis can be categorized based on type, method, and style. In terms of the type, it can be divided into two categories, namely Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr and Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’îyi. In terms of the method, it can be divided into four categories, namely the global (ijmali), the analytical (tahliîli), the comparative (muqarîn), and the thematic (mawdu’i). In terms of the style, it can be divided into several clusters, such as literature, language, jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, science, and culture (Ilyas, 2014, pp. 270 & 271).

This paper focuses on explaining the discourse of two Qur’anic exegesis types: Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr and Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’îyi. The researcher will describe and analyze them with examples. Furthermore, we also compare them to know the difference and similarity of these types.
DESCRIPTION

In this part, we elaborate on the description of Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr and Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yî. It should be noted that Yunahar Ilyas calls Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr and Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yî as types, while Nashruddin Baidan and Quraish Shihab call it as method (Ilyas, 2014, p. 270). Salman Harun has different terminology. He calls it the framework of exegesis (manhaj) (Harun et al., 2017, p. 125).

We also elaborate further on the meaning and understanding of these types of exegesis. This study is enriched by discussing a variety of issues related to them. Therefore, this study can be understood comprehensively.

Al-Tafsîr bi Al-Ma’thûr

Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr is an interpretation based on the narrations of the Quran, the Prophet’s traditions, the words of the companions, or the words of the successors. Manna Khalil Al-Qattan in defining Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr states that this exegesis was called bi al-ma’thûr because its source is based on the valid narrations of the Quran, hadith, opinion of the companions, and senior successors. It is limited to senior successors because they usually learned Qur’anic interpretations from the companions directly (Qattan, 2007, p. 337). Meanwhile, Muhammad Abdul Azim Al-Zurqani did not include the successors as the source of Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr in his definition (Zurqani, 2001, vol. 2, p. 14). Conversely, he highlights three criticisms regarding the successor’s opinion in the chapter al-миfassirün min al-tabî‘în of his work. First, they did not witness the Prophet’s era; second, the validity of their opinions must be validated; and third, their opinions contained israiliyat and khuraﬁat (Zurqani, 2001, vol. 2, p. 22).

Ibn Taimiyah stated that the best method to interpret the Quran (ahsan thuraqq al-tafsîr) is the interpretation of the Quran by the Quran. If this is inadequate, then one should refer to the sunna. If the interpretation of the Quran by the sunna is inadequate, then one should refer to the companions’ opinions. If all of these remain inadequate, the successors’ opinions could be an alternative to interpret the Qur’an. (Taimiyah, 1980, pp. 39–44).

Ibn Taimiyah notes about the hujjiah of the successors’ words. They can be used as reference (hujjiah) in Qur’anic exegesis if there is a consensus (ijma’) among them. If they disagree, then one’s opinion is unable to be a reference for others. Therefore, Qur’anic interpretation should rely on the language of the Quran (lugha Al-Qur’an), the sunna, common-used Arabic (âm lughaî al-arab), or the words of the companions (Taimiyah, 1980, p. 46).

The word ma’thûr is derived from the basic word al-atrsu (الاترس) which means “to quote a report and narrate” (Fairuzbadi, 2005, p. 341). Therefore, this kind of Qur’anic interpretation is also called tafsîr bi al-riwayat or Al-tafsîr bi al-naqal. As has been mentioned, the source of tafsîr al-riwayat is the Quran, the Prophet’s traditions, the words of the companions, and successors. Ibn Taimiyah confirmed when an exegete does not find Qur’anic interpretations from the companions, then they should take the successor’s opinion (Taimiyah, 1980, p. 44). This method affirmed by the hadith:

لاَّ إِلَيْهِ نَشْرَةٌ وَلَا نُخْطَأٌ

The best of my people is those living in my time, then people after them, and then people after them (Bukhari, 1422, vol. 5, p. 2).

Based on al-Muhtith dictionary, Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr was mentioned as Al-tafsîr bi al-naqal. Naqal (transmission) is the opposite of aql (reason). However, Al-Munawir dictionary mentioned that al-naqal means “to narrate” and used in the context of speaking (kalâm) (Munawir, Ma’shum, & Munawir, 1997, p. 1458). The word naqal is well-known among Indonesian people because it had become an absorbed language, which means “menukil”. In Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, “menukil” means to quote or write what has been written or spoken by another person (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, 2008, p. 1009).

The name Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr can be found in the title of Al-Suyuthi’s Qur’anic commentary (911 H), Al-Dur Al-Manthûr fi Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr. Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr is the first developed interpretation since the Prophet era. However, the words of the Prophet Muhammad, the companions, and the successor are categorized as Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr, although they used reason in their interpretation.

Ibn Abbas interprets the verse Al-Nasr with his reason. He said that it means “the end of the Prophet is near” (Tabari, 2000, vol. 24, p. 669). This interpretation is called Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yi, but when an exegete relies on the words of Ibn Abbas, his interpretation falls into the category of interpreting the Quran by referring to the words of companions, namely Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr. Accordingly, the first compiled Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr is the interpretation of Ibn Abbas. His works are Tafsîr Ibn Abbas al-Musammâ Shahîfah ‘Ali ibn Abi Thalhah ‘An Tafsîr ibn Abbas compiled by Ali ibn Abi Thalhah, Tanwîr al-Miqâbh min Tafsîr Ibn Abbas compiled by Abu Thahir Muhammad ibn Ya’qub al-Fairuzbadi al-Syafî’i (d. 817), and Tafsîr ibn Abbas wa Marwiyâtuhu fi Al-Tafsîr min Kutub al-Sunnah compiled by Dr. Abdul’Aziz ibn Abdullah al-Hamidi in his dissertation.

In addition, there are many exegetical works that use Al-tafsîr bi al-ma’thûr type. They are such the commentary work by Ibn Majah (273 AH), Ibn Jarir Al-Tabari (310 H), Abu Bakr ibn Mundzir Al-Naisaburi (318), Ibn Abi Hatim.
(327 H), Ibn Hibban (369 H), al-Hakim (405) and others (Dzahabi, n.d., pp. 104–107). Yet, the most famous exegetical work is Tafsir al-Thabarani entitled Jami’ ‘Al-Bayân fi Ta’wil Ay Al-Qur’ân.

Al-Tabari’s exegesis contains various narrations in interpreting the Quran. Even Isra’iliyat – the information entry of ahl kitab (people of the book) into Islam because of the relationship between the Muslim community and them since the beginning of Islam (Qattan, 2000, p. 365) – is included in this book.

An explicit example of the isra’iliyat in Tabari’s interpretation is the information of the creation of heaven and earth in the verse Al-Fusilat verse 9 which is exactly the same as the information at the beginning of Genesis in the Old Testament (Rabi’i, 2000, p. 128). Tabari took a narration,

 حدثنا تميم بن المنتصر، قال: أخبرنا إسحاق، عن شريك، عن غالب بن غالب، عن عطاء بن أبي رباح، عن ابن عباس، قال: إن الله خلق يوماً واحداً فسماه الأحد، ثم خلق ثانياً فسماه الاثنين، ثم خلق رابعاً فسماه الأربعاء، ثم خلق خامساً فسماه الخميس، ثم خلق الجنس يوم الاربعاء، وذلك قول الناس: هو يوم النبأ، وخلق مواضع الأنهار والأشجار يوم الأربعاء، وخلق الطير والوحش والنبات والسماء يوم الخميس، وخلق الإنسان يوم الجمعة، ففرغ من خلق كل شيء يوم الجمعة.

Tamim bin Al-Muntashir told us (Tabari), that Ishaq told us, from Sharik, from Ghalib bin Ghilab, from Atha ‘bin Abi Rabah, from Ibn Abbas, he said, “Verily Allah created on the first day and named it with Ahad ‘الإِثْنَيْن’ (Sunday), then created it on the second day and named it Isinain ‘الإِثْنَيْن’ (Monday), then created it on the third day and named it Tsulatsa ‘الاثْنَيْن’ (Tuesday), then created it on the fourth day and named it Rabi’ ‘الاثْنَيْن’ (Wednesday), then created it on the fifth day and named it Khamsa ‘الاثْنَيْن’ (Thursday). He said, “Allah created the earth in two days: Sunday and Monday, created the mountain on Tuesday. People commented, “It was a hard day”. Then, Allah created rivers and trees on Wednesday, create birds, legged animals, insects/ reptiles, and fanged animals (beasts) on Thursday, created humans on Friday and completed the creation of everything also on Friday” (Tabari, 2000, vol. 21, p. 433).

The story above is an example of isra’iliyat found in Tafsir al-Tabari. The story cannot be used as a source in interpreting the Quran without also referring to the tradition of the Prophet, the companions or the successor’s consensus (jima’). This is based on the statement of the Prophet Muhammad that a Muslim should not justify isra’iliyat but also should not deny it. Then, the attitude of Muslims towards isra’iliyat should be fairly based on the validity of its information. Ahmad bin Hanbal narrates in his Musnad,

إذا حدثكم أهل الكتاب فلا تصدقوهم ولا تكذبوهم، فإن كان حقاً لم تكذبوهم، وإن كان باطلة لم تصدقوهم.

If people of the book tell you information, you may not justify it and do not deny it. Say, “We believe in Allah, His book and His Messengers”. If the information is correct, then do not lie, and if the information is wrong, then do not correct it (Hanbal, 2001, vol. 28, 460).

Al-Tafsir bi Al-Ra’yi

Al-tafsir bi al-ra’yi means “to interpret the Quran by using reason”. So, this kind of interpretation is often called Al-tafsir bi al-aql. It also has another name, Al-tafsir bi al-dirayah. The word dirayah is derived from fi’il dara yadrī (ديراي (تاري) which means “to know”. Therefore, “dirayah” (ديراي (تاري)) can be interpreted as “knowledge”.

If this type is juxtaposed with the types of previous interpretations, then it can be concluded: Al-tafsir bi alma’thãr is the opposite of Al-tafsir bi al-ra’yi; Al-tafsir bi al-naqi is the opposite of Al-tafsir bi al-aql; Al-tafsir bi al-râhiyâ is the opposite of Al-tafsir bi al-dirayah. All of these have the same meaning. The problem is just the name, while the intention is the same.

The term Al-tafsir bi al-ra’yi can be found in the book Muqaddimah fi Usul Al-tafsir by Ibn Taimiyah (728 AH). However, he opposes this type of interpretation. The reason is stated in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad:

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Whoever interprets the Quran with reason, if he is right, then he is still wrong (Taimiyah, 1980, p. 46).

Tirmidzi says that the hadith was gharîb, and some hadith experts dispute the quality of one narrator, namely Suhail Ibn Abi Hazm. But, the hadith is affirmed by another hadith:

Whoever interprets the Quran without knowledge (in traditions), his place has been prepared in hell (Taimiyah, 1980, p. 46).

Based on the two hadith, Ibn Taimiyah prohibits Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yi – he termed Al-tafsîr bi mujarrad al-ra’yi (pure interpretation based on reason) (Taimiyah, 1980, p. 46). Other scholars also take this reasons to prohibit Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yi.

Manna Al-Qattan states that the definition of Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yi is an interpretation in which the commentator explains the Quran based on his understanding and his exploration of the Quran only with his mind (الرأي المجرّد). This type of interpretation is usually carried out by ahl bid’ah (heretics). They take advantage of Quranic exegesis for the interest of their school, namely to strengthen the opinion of the school. The examples of scholars who undertake this pattern are Abdurrahman bin Kaisan Al-Asham, Ibn Jubbai, Abdul Jabbar, Al-Rumani, Al-Zamakhshari, and others (Qattan, 2007, p. 342).

Qattan’s opinion above is different from Yunahar Iylas’. He argues that Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yi is interpreting the verses of the Quran using ijtihad or reason. This type of exegesis is not deny Quranic interpretation by Quran, hadith, companions and successors. He states that it is named as Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yi because the reasoning or ijtihad of the exegete is more dominant in the process of interpretation (Iylas, 2014, pp. 278–279).

Looking at the two definitions above, it seems that there are differences in attitude towards Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yi. One gives a negative response, while another gives a positive response. Qattan states that this type of interpretation is often used by people who are not trained in the science of Islam, while Yunahar Iylas does not think so. Yunahar also quotes Al-Dzhahabi’s statement that those who would interpret the Quran bi al-ra’yi require to master 13 sciences, namely: (1) Arabic Language; (2) Nahwu; (3) Sharf; (4) Isytiqa’a; (5) Balaghah; (6) Qira’at; (7) Ushuluddin; (8) Ushul Fiqh; (9) Ashab Al-Nuzul; (10) Science of Stories; (11) Nasikh and Mansukh; (12) Knowledge of the traditions that explain the verses of mujmal and muhabban; (13) IIm Mauhibah (knowledge given by Allah for those who practice their knowledge) (Iylas, 2014, pp. 279–280). These requirements indicate that Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yi can be accepted if these conditions are fulfilled.

Qur’anic interpretation continues to develop naturally. As we mentioned in the introduction of this article, the fifth stage of exegesis development is the stage where Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yi starts to grow and continue to develop. This growing is certainly influenced by cultural factors that exist at the time when scientific cultures also develop, such as linguistics, kalâm or theology, philosophy, mathematics, and physics, etc.

The development of cultural society has an impact on the way humans interact with the Quran. At first, the scholars consider Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yi as something that was not accepted. This statement can be seen in the Muqaddimah fi Usul Al-tafsîr as described above. Ibn Taimiyah (728 H) states the prohibition of Al-tafsîr bi mujarrad al-ra’yi (pure interpretation based on reason) in the book (Taimiyah, 1980, p. 46).

Al-Zarkasyi (794 H), in his book Al-Burhan fi Ulum Al-Quran, also explains Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yi. Zarkasyi’s statement does not appear in the big chapter about Al-tafsîr bi al-ra’yi but only appears in a statement on the part of his work with the chapter Ma’rifatu Tafsirih wa Ta’wilih. He states, 

وَهُوَ الْاصْطِلَاحُ: هُوَ عَلَمُ نُزُولِ الآيَاتِ وَسُوُّهَا وَأَقْصَيْصُهَا وَالإِشْرَابُ النَّازِلَةِ فِيهَا فَمَا تَرْتَبُّ مَكْيَةً وَمَدِينَةً وَمَجْمَعَهَا وَمَتَشَابِهَةً وَنَاسِخَهَا وَمَنْسَوْخَهَا وَخَاصَصَهَا وَعَامِتَهَا وَمُقَلِّدَهَا وَمَغْلُوبَهَا وَمُنْفَسُهَا. وَزَادَ فِيهَا قَوْمٌ فَقَالُوا: عَلَمُ حِلاَلَهَا وَحَرَامَهَا وَوَعُدُّهَا وَوَعُيَّدُهَا وَأَمْرُهَا وَقِيْمَتِهَا وَعَمَّاهَا وَأَمْثِلَهَا وَهَذِهِ الْحَيْثُ مَنْ يُقَدَّمُ فِيهَا عَلَى الْقُوْلِ الْبَرَّى.

Tafsîr by definition is the knowledge of the revelation of verses, the stories in verse, the cues that talk about the verse, then Makkiah and Madaniyah, Muhkam and Mutasyabih, Nasikh and Mansukh, Khas and Am, Muthlaq and muqayyad, mujnal and mufassar. Then people added: halal and haram, promises and threats, commands and prohibitions, and so on. In this case, the opinions based on ra’yi (reason) are forbidden (Zarkasyi, 1957, vol. 2, p. 148).
Al-Suyuthi (911 H), in his work Al-Iṣbāḥ fi Uṣūl Al-Qurān, also explains about Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y. On the preamble sheet, he states that he has written a book about ilm tafsīr by Muhiyiuddin Al-Kāfiyyā. There are two chapters contained in the book. One of them explains the terms of interpretation with al-ra‘y. However, Suyuthi does not elaborate further in his work (Suyuthi, 1974, p. 17).

On another page, Suyuthi quotes Al-Maturudi’s words that tafsīr is the confirmation of the meaning of the word. He even says that an exegete needs to testify in the name of Allah that Allah interprets the word like this. If the exegesis is based on the precise argumentation, then it is authentic. In addition, it is called Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y, which is prohibited (Suyuthi, 1974, vol. 4, p. 192).

In another part, Suyuthi takes the words of Ibn Abī Dunyā that interpreting the Quran without mastering the knowledge of the Quran is tantamount to understand the Quran with the reason which is not allowed (Suyuthi, 1974, vol. 4, p. 216). Suyuthi also quotes Ibn Naqīb’s opinion on Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y. According to him, Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y has to be one of these five parts: First, interpretation without mastering the sciences that have to be possessed in interpreting the Quran. Second, the interpretation of Mutasyābih whose meaning is not known to anybody except Allāh. Third, the interpretation to justify the corrupted schools of thought. Fourth, the interpretation states confidently that the purpose of God is it – without including argumentation or tradition. Fifth, interpretation based on istiḥṣān and lust (Suyuthi, 1974, vol. 4, p. 220).

Zurqāni (1367 H) divides Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y into two categories, namely Jaiz (allowed) and Ghairu Jaiz (not allowed). According to him, what is meant by Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y is the interpretation by using ijīthad. If this reasoning is in accordance (Muwaffiq) with what it should be, then it is a proper interpretation (mahmūm). If it is not, then it becomes a desppicable interpretation (madhmūm).

Zurqani also explains four conditions needed to be fulfilled by Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y al-mahmūd based on the opinion of Zarkasī and Suyuthi. First, take a tradition from the Prophet Muhammad, and avoid traditions that are da‘ef and wool (Mawdu‘). Second, take a tradition of the words of companion, especially related to the problem of Asbāh Al-Nuzūl. Third, take the meaning based on the generality (Muthlaq) of the language, and avoid distorting the meaning of the verse unless many Arabic words are argued for that. Fourth, take the proper meaning of the verse based on Shariah (qanūn) rules (Zurqani, 2001, vol. 2, p. 45).

Zurqani’s explanation signifies that both Suyuthi and Zarkasī already have dichotomous views on Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y. On the one hand, they both tend to reject this type of interpretation, but on the other hand, providing conditions for acceptance. However, both of them have not divided Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y into two categories, Jaiz (allowed) and Ghairu Jaiz (not allowed), as Zurqani does.

Likewise, Ibn Taimiyah only focuses on the forbidden of Al-tafsīr bi mujarrad al-ra‘y (interpretation only based on reason). On the other hand, he does not discuss how if Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y is not pure, but that interpretation is based on tradition too and does not conflict with Al-tafsīr bi al-ma‘thūr. The conclusion is Ibn Taimiyah’s hesitancy to study Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y that is not mujarrad (pure) influenced the views of Zarkasī and Suyuthi. This hesitancy is solved by Zurqani by dividing Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y in two, allowed (جائز) and not-allowed (غير جائز) or praised (محمود) and reprehensible (مذموم).

SCOPES AND EXAMPLES

This part describes the scope of Al-tafsīr bi al-ma‘thūr and Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y by dividing them into several forms. Each form shows two examples of interpretation. The first example is an example of pure bi al-ma‘thūr or pure bi al-ra‘y interpretation, while the second example is an example of interpretation mixed among ma‘thūr and ra‘y. This kind of interpretation is what we call the intersection of Al-tafsīr bi al-ma‘thūr and Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y.

Furthermore, there are five forms of two types of interpretation, al-tafsīr bi al-ma‘thūr and al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y. They are: (1) interpreting the Quran by the Quran, (2) interpreting the Quran by the Sunna, (3) interpreting the Quran by the opinion of the companions, (4) interpreting the Quran by the successor’s opinion, (5) interpreting the Quran by ra‘y (reason) (Taimiyah, 1980, pp. 39–46).

The five forms of interpretation above are mentioned by Ibn Taimiyah. In the part of interpreting the Quran with ra‘y, he adds the word mujarrad, which means pure. This is not done by most commentators. They just call it “interpreting the Quran with ra‘y”. Yunahar asserts that it is called ra‘y because the interpretation of reason is more dominant (Ilyas, 2014, p. 279). Salman Harun separates interpreting the Quran with Arabic from interpreting the Quran with ra‘y (Harun et al., 2017, p. 91). This separation will raise the problem in differentiating between ma‘thūr and ra‘y. Accordingly, to avoid this problem, scholars still include the interpretation of the Quran with Arabic (linguistic approach) in Al-tafsīr bi al-ra‘y.

The following are a few examples of the five forms of interpretation. First (e.g. 1.1), interpreting the Quran by the Quran. An example of this can be found at the beginning of the book Mabāḥīts fi Uṣūl Al-Qurān written by Manna Al-Qattān. In his work, Qattān exemplifies the interpretation of bi‘l ma‘thūr.
The Companions regarded it heavy with the contents of the verse and complained to the Prophet Muhammad, “איה לאלים نفسه?” which means “Which of us is not wrong against himself”. Therefore, the Prophet answered graciously to calm their hearts that the purpose of the verse was not like that. However, what is meant by wrongdoing “أين الشرك أظلم عظيم” which means “the real shirk is the highest wrongdoing” (Qattan, 2007, p. 5).

Other interpretations (e.g. 1.2) in this classification is in Surah Al-Takwir verse 17.

And the Night as it dissipates.

The word “عَصْعَسَ” has double meanings, namely the beginning of the night or the end of the night. The Companions and successors who argue that “عَصْعَسَ” means the beginning of the night are Hasan and Athiyyah (Tahari, 2000, vol. 24, p. 256). This interpretation is also confirmed by the verse Al-Dhuha verse 2, “For the night when it’s quieter”. The verse states that his muqasam alaith (intended oath) is the beginning of the night. While those who argue that “عَصْعَسَ” means the end of the night were Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah and others. This interpretation is also confirmed by the verse Al-Mudaisir verse 33, “For the sake of the night when it has passed” (Harun et al., 2017, p. 99).

This second interpretation opens the space of ijtihad for the commentator. An exegete must choose among four options. First, he accept all interpretations by compromising them (Al-Jam’u Wa Al-Tauqif). Second, he chooses the strongest one (Taryih). Third, he chooses the last tradition (Al-Naskh). Fourth, he does not address all of these narrations (Tawauqaf). The space of ijtihad will never be separated from the paradigm of the exegete itself. So, the difference of this interpretation is caused by differences in the interpreter’s paradigm.

The second example interprets the Quran by the Sunna. The Prophet interpreted the word prostration in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 58 (e.g. 2.1). The full interpretation is,

فَإِنَّ النَّبِيَّ إِسْرَائِيلَ \{ الأذخُولَ الْيَدَ سُجُدًا وَقُولُوا حِيْتَةٌ \} [البقرة: 58]. فَدَخَلُوا يُحَيَّنُونَ عَلَى أَسْتَاجِهِمْ، فَمَدَّوْنَ، وَقَالُوا: حِيْتَةٌ، حَيْتَةٌ فِي شَعْرَةٍ.

“It was said to the Children of Israel, “Enter the door while prostrating and saying, ‘hithah (forgive sins)’ they enter by crawling on their hands, then replacing, then they say: ‘hithah’, that is a seed in a flour” (Bukhari, 1422, vol. 6, p. 19).

The above is an example of how the Prophet Muhammad interprets the Quronic verses by the hadith he said. Below, another example (e.g. 2.2) that is different because it involves the exegete’s reasoning, namely the interpretation of al-kautsar “الْكَوْثَرَ” in Surat Al-Kautsar first verse.

Ibn Kathir cites two interpretations of “الْكَوْثَرَ” which originate from the hadith. First, al-kautsar “الْكَوْثَرَ” is a river in heaven prepared by Allah for the Prophet Muhammad. This opinion is based on Ahmad’s hadith from Anas bin Malik (Hanbal, 2001, vol. 19, p. 54). Second, al-kautsar “الْكَوْثَرَ” is a lake for the people of the Prophet Muhammad. This opinion is taken from the hadith of Muslim from Anas bin Malik too (Naisaburi, n.d., vol. 1, p. 300).

A commentator must choose an attitude towards these two interpretations. He may do Al-Jam’u Wa Al-Tauqif (take all those opinions by compromising), choose one by doing Taryih (take the strongest one by showing the reason), take the longest tradition (naskh) or Tawauqaf. This kind of election is sourced from ra’ya mufasir.

Then, the third example is interpreting the Quran with the opinion of Companions (eg 3.1). Ibn Abbas was asked by someone who felt that Surah Al-Mukminun verse 101 was contrary to Surah Al-Shaffat verse 27. Ibn Abbas replied that the interpretation of Al-Mukminun verse 101 was that human being can not help his fellow family when the first doomsday trumpet. On the other hand, Surah Al-Shaffat verse 27 shows the human being phenomenon who asks for help from others after the second doomsday trumpet. (Harun et al., 2017, p. 145).

Another example is still in the form of interpretation of the Quran with the opinion of Companions, which is the interpretation of the word “قُرُوء” (quru’) in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 228 (e.g. 3.2). The Companions are divided into two groups in interpreting the word. First, the Companions who interpret “قُرُوء” (quru’) with “الْحَيضُ” (haids). They were Umar bin Khattab (23 AH), Ubay bin Kaab (30 AH), Abdullah bin Mas’ud (32 AH), Ali ibn Abi Talib (40 AH), Abu Musa Al-Ash’ari (43 AH) and Ibn Abbas (68 AH). Second, the Companions who interpreted “قُرُوء” (quru’) with “الْكَوْثَرَ” (thahru) which means holy. They were Zaid bin Thabit (55 AH), Ayesha (58 AH), Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan (60 AH), and Abdullah bin Umar (74 AH) (Thayyar, 1428, p. 44).
Both the interpretation of “الْفَجْرِ” (haidh) or “الْقُوَّة” (holy) derives from the interpretation of Companions. However, an exegete must choose an attitude towards this phenomenon by using his ra’yu.

Next is an example of interpreting the Quran with the successor’s opinions. First (e.g. 4.1), Ibn Zaid (tabiin) interpreted that the word “تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَََلِ” (dhikr) in Surah Al-Thalaq verse 10 is “Al-Quran”, which was the spirit of God. He reasoned it with verse 52 in Surah Al-Syura (Harun et al., 2017, p. 156).

The second example (e.g. 4.2) is the successor’s interpretation of the word “الْفَجْرِ” (dawn) in Surah Al-Fajr verse 1. Ikrimah from the successor circles interpreted it “early afternoon”. Other successor interpreted it “dawn of Muzdalifah”. Mujahid interpreted it “the dawn of the day of slaughtering”. The three exegetes are successors. So, an exegete must use his ra’yu to react to it.

Next, the fifth example is interpreting the Quran with ra’yi (reason). First (e.g 5.1), Muhammad Abduh’s interpretation of the word “angel” in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 248. Some exegetes interpret that “الْمَلَََل” (ark) was carried by angels on a carriage pulled by animals, while others argued that “الْمَلَََل” (ark) was carried by angels from heaven to earth and then placed in the house of Thalut who was standing in front of the Children of Israel. Salman Harun quoted Tabari’s statement that the right opinion was the second opinion, namely the opinion that the angels shouldered “الْمَلَََل” (ark). This is based on the description “تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَََلِ” (carried by angels) in the same verse and letter. If we take the first option, then the verse should read “تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَََلِ” (carried by angels) (Harun et al., 2017, p. 177). This type of exegete can also be found in the book Major Themes of the Qur’an.

Fazlurrahman exegetes the eight themes in the Qur’an based on the Qur’an itself and the sunna by synthesizing them logically (ra’yi). (Rahman, 1980, pp. ix & xi). Sa’dullah Assaidi comments that Fazlurrahman’s work is not tafsir bi al-ma’tthur, but tends to be tafsir bi al-ra’yi even though using the Qur’an and sunna as a basis of exegesis. (Assaidi, 2013, p. 252).

**Comparation**

The previous chapter outlines ten examples of five forms of interpretation. The examples of the pure interpretation of bi al-ma’tthur are seen in examples with codes 1.1, 2.1, 3.1 and 4.1; the pure interpretation of bi al-ra’yi appears in the example with code 5.1; and the mixed interpretation of tafsir bi al-ma’tthur and al-ra’yi is shown in the examples with codes 1.2, 2.2, 3.2, 4.2 and 5.2. The categorization of examples of interpretation can be seen in the following set of diagram,

1. Al-tafsir bi Al-ma’tthur (pure)
2. The Intersection of Two Exegetical Types of The Quran
3. Al-tafsir bi Al-Ra’yi (pure)

Some characters distinguish each category of interpretation above. Pure Al-tafsir bi al-ma’tthur does not be affected by the exegete’s thoughts. Interpretation is in accordance with what is conveyed by the tradition. The interpreter understands the tradition directly that his understanding is as it is. So, various approaches such as linguistics, sociology, philosophy, theology, and Islamic jurisprudence are absent in this type of interpretation. This category also does not accommodate various interpretation styles such as scientific style, literary style, legal style, and so forth.

In the pure Al-tafsir bi al-ra’yi, the exegete uses his mind without relying on the tradition. This interpretation is influenced by the paradigm that the exegete already had. Those are like social paradigm, philosophy, class, or school
that will give a striking color to the interpretation. The reader could see that influence from the interpretation patterns that appear in exegete’s work.

On the other hand, interpretations that fall into the intersection category of the two interpretations have two characters. The first character is addressed to the type of Al-tafsīr bi al-ma’thūr which influenced by the interpreter’s reason (ra’yi). The interpreter’s reason (ra’yi) is needed because there are two or more different narratives in interpreting the verse. Therefore, it requires reasons to choose one of these narrations. Exegete may accept and compromise all of these traditions (al-jam’u wa al-taufig), choose one or some of the most trusted traditions (tarjih), or choose the last traditions (al-naskh) or do not address the information of these traditions (tawaqquf). This choice of attitude certainly requires argumentation; therefore ra’yi is needed. Although using ra’yi, the interpretation of this category is equivalent to the pure Al-tafsīr bi al-ma’thūr, which does not accommodate various approaches.

The second character applies to the type of Al-tafsīr bi al-ra’yi which is based on tradition. The interpretation of this category is similar to the pure Al-tafsīr bi al-ra’yi. The interpreter’s paradigm, both the social perspective, the adopted philosophy, the class, or the school will give nuance to the exegete. However, this exegesis is still based on traditions that support it. The interpretation of this category is closer to the principle of the integrity of the verses of the Quran. This category can be seen from the interpreter’s efforts to correlate verses that are interpreted with narrations or other verses, as shown in the theory of munasabah (interrelation ayah or surah of Quran).

CONCLUSION

This study confirms the intersection of al-tafsīr bi al-ma’thūr and al-tafsīr bi al ra’yi. Therefore, the type of interpretation can be divided into three clusters based on the explanation. The first is the pure Al-tafsīr bi al-ma’thūr. The second is the intersection of al-tafsīr bi al-ma’thūr and al-tafsīr bi al-ra’yi. The third is the pure al-tafsīr bi al ra’yi (see in the table diagram above). The pure al-tafsīr bi al-ma’thūr does not accommodate various approaches and interpretations. The pure al-tafsīr bi al-ra’yi is very open to various approaches and interpretations, while the intersection of the two types of interpretation has two characters. The first character belongs to the type of al-tafsīr bi al-ma’thūr, which influenced by the interpreter’s reasoning (ra’y). This interpretation is tantamount as the pure al-tafsīr bi al-ma’thūr that does not accommodate various approaches in interpretation. Meanwhile, the second character refers to the type of al-tafsīr bi al-ra’yi which is based on tradition. The interpretation of this category is similar to the pure al-tafsīr bi al ra’yi that accommodates various approaches and interpretations but still attached to the traditions.

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