Tafsir Ilmi in Indonesia: History, Paradigm and Dynamics of Interpretation

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ABSTRACT

Interpretation writing in Indonesia has been going on long enough. First appeared in the sixteenth century. A quiver of Indonesian interpretations after that grows more and more. The motifs of interpretation varied. Scientific interpretation is the one who took a role in this and it is said to have emerged in the 1980s to date. During that time, many of ilmi's interpretations have appeared in Indonesia. The study attempts to unravel the history of ilmi's interpretation, its composition and dynamic, so the method used is a descriptive method with a qualitative approach by restricting the focus of the work to ilmi's interpretation in Indonesia. The results of this study suggest that ilmi's interpretation is dynamic and varied and is experiencing promising developments.

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Keywords: Tafsir ilmi, Indonesia, history

Introduction

The Writing of Koran interpretation in Indonesia as stated by Gusmian is so diverse and unique not only written in Indonesia language but also in Javanese and Sundanese as a regional languages. This Koranic interpretation in Ahmad Supriadi's view went from the 1970s to the 2000s. Further, according to Rafa Rosifa and Rosihan Anwar in his studies, the interpretation of the Koran in Indonesia has been going on since the 17th century, beginning with Abd Raouf as-Shingkily, the century that followed the writing of the Koran in Indonesia became much more and

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more creative\(^3\). The creativity as Nurdin said on his book is divided into several types: the traditional quasi-objective tipology\(^4\), the subjectivism, and the modern tipology\(^5\).

Among the many facts of interpretation in Indonesia, with the type mentioned by Nurdin above, is that the scientific method is one of kind of Interpretation book in Indonesia. ‘ilm interpretation means is uses scientific terms in describing the Qur’an and is trying hard to bring out a variety of scientific and philosophical visions from it\(^6\). Az-zahabi asserted that the interpretation of ilmi was the scientific interpretation of the Quran and sought earnestly to delve into the various sciences and philosophies of the texts intended\(^7\). Thus the texts that are interpreted in this feature are usually linked to biology, physics, astronomy and chemistry, such as used by ar-Razi, Thantawi Jauhari, Zaghlul an-Najjar, Ahmad al-Iskandari, etc\(^8\). One of the reasons for the emergence of scientific interpretation may be as part of answering current problems and it cannot be done with fiqh, nahwu, sharaf or balaghah, but also must use other tools, science is one of them\(^9\).

In this contemporary era, the scientific interpretation style is increasingly developing and in demand because besides having pragmatic characteristics it is also part of ideological interests\(^10\). The writing of ilmi interpretation in Indonesia seems gradual, from being more like a tahlily to a maudhui or focusing thematic on the kauniyah text’s interpretation. Let us say some Indonesian scholar who has scientific in their interpretation: Hamka, M.Quraish Shihab, Nazwar Syamsu, Sahrul Alim, Ahmad Baiquni, Agus Purwanto, Tafsir Ilmi Depag, Tafsir Salman ITB, etc.


\(^4\) What is meant by the Traditionalist Objective Quasi is that interpretation must be understood in the context of the present, as in the past, the Koran was interpreted according to its time. Meanwhile, the traditionalist objective meaning means that the understanding of the Koran must be in accordance with and the same as the text. Finally, the Revivalist objective type means a pure understanding of the Koran. Namely the understanding of the Koran which returns to its ideological character which is static, ahistorical, very exclusive, textual and has a petriarchic bias. Lihat M. Nurdin Zuhdi, Pasaraya Tafsir Indonesia..., 34-37


But among these interpretation books above many of the scholars of scientific interpretation in Indonesia have not yet focused on the history of the emergence of scientific interpretations and the paradigm of their formation. Most of them research from the thematic side. For example, Egi Sukma Baihaqi in his research on State Leadership in Tafsir Tanwir Muhammadiyah, Quhas Journal 2020. Or Wildan Immoduddin Muhammad, who discusses the thematic issue of the State in Tafsir of the Ministry of Religion's, written in the same journal as Egi in 2018. Another thematic study is shown by Khabibatur Rahmah with his thesis in 2019 at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, entitled Doomsday in the Perspective of Interpretation of the Ministry of Religion. A thesis with a similar title was also written by Humayra Nafishah Mar’atu Latif, Fingerprints in the Perspective of Religious Interpretation of the Ministry of Religion, in 2021 at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Also research stated by Ummu Hani, M. Nurdin Zuhdi and Indal Abror on the title Science Style in Tafsir Tanwir Muhammadiyah at UNISA (Aisyiyah University of Jogjakarta) which focused on how science perspective formulater in the tafsir Tanwir, etc.

Therefore, on the basic of data above, there is quite a bit of interpretation with scientific themes written by those from different backgrounds in Indonesia. And due to that this research will focus on the history of ilmi’s interpretation of its existence in Indonesia, how the paradigm and dynamic of it in writing and existence. The study also focuses on some multiple interpretations of ilmi represented by different backgrounds, such as scientists, pure interpreters, and institutions.

This study is intended to reveal the origin of scientific interpretation in Indonesia and who wrote, the background of craftsmanship, the development paradigm and dynamic that developed over it, regarding the methods, sources, and interpretation status. So to find out how this is done is to refer to their works in writing the interpretation also supported by similar research. And because the purpose of this study to get an overview of the phenomenon there for this research using a descriptive method of qualitative approach.

The study of Indonesian scientific interpretations in this research is only limited to a few interpretations that are implied in the scientific perspective, which is represented by pure interpreters and interpreters from scientists in Indonesia, or from government institutions and organizations.

Discussion and Result

History and Paradigm of Indonesian Ilmi Interpretation Formation

Every interpretation that appears usually carries the author's tendency, the situation and social political conditions that take place can have an impact on the writing paradigm. All of these things can have a big influence on the writing of the commentary book. It can be said that if each
interpreter has different views, philosophies, bases, and tendencies, this is evident from the large number of exegetical books that have developed in Indonesia or outside Indonesia\textsuperscript{11}. The more interpreters with different backgrounds, the wider the view of the interpretation\textsuperscript{12}.

Ilmi interpretation in Indonesia itself began to develop and became popular around the 20th century, many interpreters tried to interpret the verses of the Quran with a modern approach, the aim of course was to prove the miracles of the Koran\textsuperscript{13}. In the 1980s, the interpretation of the Koran was more likely to speak on certain topics or maudhu'\textsuperscript{14}. Nasirudin Baidan in his book Tafsir al-Quran in Southeast Asia stated that the model of interpretation in Southeast Asia only uses two methods, tahlili and maudhui\textsuperscript{15}. Although he did not mention which scientific interpretation falls into which category in his book, we do know that the scientific style is a form of maudhui.

One of the famous interpreters who started the scientific concept in his interpretation was Hamka with his al-Azhar interpretation. The interpretation, which began to be printed in 1982, is indeed not a scientific interpretation, but if there are verses that speak about kauniyah, then Hamka will explain it with a scientific approach\textsuperscript{16}. The value of science becomes clearer when Hamka in al-Azhar’s interpretation is influenced his writing by several reformer figures who also write interpretations in a scientific perspective, for example, Rashid Ridha, Muhammad Abduh, Razi and Thantawi Jauhari\textsuperscript{17}.

Hamka as described by Mohd. Anwar Syarifudin is someone who has broad views and knowledge. In his interpretation he tries to reveal scientific matters from the kauniyah verses and he explains it in a simple way with the technological analogy he understands\textsuperscript{18}.

The concept of I’jaz al-Quran which is the background for writing a scientific perspective in its interpretation, related to this Hamka wrote: "I’jaz which is more amazing than the Koran is that there are several high scientific points in the Koran regarding nature. Like the stars, sky, moon and


\textsuperscript{13} Putri Maydi Arafatun Anhari, Imran Sadewo, M. Khoirul Hadi Al-Asyi, “Tafsir ilmi: Studi Metode Penafsiran Berbasis Ilmu Pengetahuan…, 112

\textsuperscript{14} Imam Mushikin, "Mutia al-Quran: Khazanah Ilmu Tafsir dan al-Quran", Jaya Star Nine, Cet. 1, 2014, Madiun: 189

\textsuperscript{15} Nashirudin Baidan dan Erwati Aziz, “Perkembangan Tafsir al-Quran Di Asia Tenggara”, Pustaka Pelajar, Cet.1, Yogyakarta 2019: 65

\textsuperscript{16} Rizki Firmansyah, Nurdin Zuhdi, “Science Footprint Hamka…, 42-53

\textsuperscript{17} Rizki Firmansyah, Nurdin Zuhdi, “Science Footprint Hamka…, 42-53

sun. From the matter of rain falling and its relationship with fertility and life, several times it is
talked about in terms of the sea, shipping and shipping.\footnote{Prof. Dr. Hamka, “Tafsir al-Azhar”, Juz 1, PT Pustaka Panjimas, Cet 3, Jakarta 2005: 24-25}

What Hamka did was then continued by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Quraish Shihab with the
interpretation of al-Misbah. This commentary, which was printed in 2002, does not reveal much
scientific theory in it, but he does not deny that scientific values exist in the Koran, this can be
seen in his other work, Membumikan al-Quran, in this book he mentions the relationship between
the Koran and science is not judged by the number of branches of knowledge that are
encapsulated in it, nor by showing the correctness of existing scientific theories, but the
discussion should be placed in a more precise proportion according to the purity and holiness of
the Koran and also corresponds to the purity of science itself.\footnote{M. Qurais Shihab, “Membumikan al-Quran: Fungsi dan peran Wahyu Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat”, Mizan, Cet. 13 Bandung 2002: 41}

Shihab seems reluctant to reveal what theory is contained in al-Quan regarding science
directly, but he tries to reveal whether the Quran supports knowledge or not, in his term he says
that what must be revealed is the socio-psychological side of the Quran, not in its scientific
progress history.\footnote{Ibid.} This idea seems to depart from a common belief about a scientific theory that is impermanent. If the Quranic verse is used only to justify a scientific theory and then it is found out later that the scientific theory is invalid, then automatically this can downgrade the zero error
Quran verse. It was this nightmare that Shihab didn’t seem to want.

Agreeing with Shihab’s conclusion, Islah Gusmian suggested that the interpretation of science
in the Koran is only used as a support to strengthen interpretation, not to justify existing scientific
theories because if the scientific paradigm changes, the Quranic verses will lose their relevance.\footnote{Islah Gusmian, “Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia Dari Hermeneutik Hingga Ideologi, LKIS, Cet. 1, Yogyakarta 2013: 274-275}

In contrast to Islah and Shihab, Ahmad Baiquni in his work of the Koran and Natural Sciences
which was published in 1997, believes that the Koran can lead humans to the creation of science.
He wrote that the Koran can direct humans to develop science in order to know the nature and
behavior of the surrounding nature under certain conditions. Because literally the Koran asks
people to “nadzor” the sunatullah that applies in nature, this can lead to the production of
science.\footnote{Ahmad Baiquni, “al-Quran dan Ilmu Pengetahuan Kealaman”, PT. Dana Bhakti Prima Yasa, Cet.1, Jakarta 1997: 19-20}

When viewed from the paradigm in creating a scientific connection and the verses of the
Quran, Baiquni does not want to stop at the scientific affirmation of the verses of science. Instead,
his wants to make the kauniyah verses of the Quran as inspiration to analyze the natural
surroundings into a new scientific theory. This desire seems to be influenced by his expertise as a physicist who always pays attention to every phenomenon around him.

One expertise with Baiquni who is a scientist, in 2008 another physicist named Agus Purwanto, wrote a book entitled The Verses of the Universe: The Forgotten Side of the Koran (Ayat-ayat Semesta). This book was written because of the decline experienced by Muslims in various fields and only focused on the issue of fiqh, than examining the verses of science contained in the Koran. Which can be the source of the progress of civilization by promoting empirical thinking and logic. 

Agus gave an example that many western countries developed because of developing science and technology while many Muslim countries were left behind and even destroyed. The real product of science proves to be powerful and powerful. Countries like Afghanistan and Iraq were destroyed because of the science of western countries, especially America and Britain. They become the center of civilization because they master science and technology.

On the basic of the spirit of progress that is dreamed of, the way that can be achieved for Muslims is to shift our eyes towards the Koran with a different approach, namely by using a scientific perspective, because according to Agus, people still ignore that Allah through his verse reminds us how urgent it is to understand phenomena physical realm and building science. The presence of this work is a solution to this.

In his second book, Agus further reiterates his goal in examining the verses of science in the Koran, his main mission is to build science with a new, non-positive paradigm, namely Islamic science, science based on revelation.

The simple reason for the formation of scientific interpretations can be seen in other scientific interpretations, it is Tafsir Ilmi Salman: Scientific Interpretation of Juz Amma (Tafsir Ilmi Juz Amma), the emergence of this interpretation is based on suggestions that emerged from the head of the management of the Salman Mosque Development Foundation (YPM) ITB, Dr. Syarif Hidayat, who asked the team to make a commentary book with a review from the point of view of both modern science and classical exegesis. The interpretations that were collected based on the discussions they carried out were finally translated into one Juz Amma interpretation and printed in 2014, what is unique about this interpretation is that it not only writes scientific data in it but

25 Ibid., 24-25
26 Ibid., 26
also does not leave classical interpretations. The scientific data contained in Salman’s interpretation seems to be used as a support for the classical interpretation they wrote in that interpretation.

The movement of this interpretation did not stop in 2014, a year later the Indonesian Ministry of Religion issued an interpretation that was in line with the interpretation of the science theme that had been written previously, and made science the basis of its interpretation. The scientific interpretation of the Ministry of Religion was written by scholars who have been selected by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia and scientists from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) to try to interpret the verses of the Kauniah Al-Quran using a science and technology approach. In the preparation of scientific interpretations, the ministry of religion has its own views on the text of the Qur’an, especially the relation between science and technology texts, the tendency to use scientific interpretation as a basic for the preparation of this work begins with positioning the Qur’an as a dialogue partner with the era that continues and changed. With this condition the drafting team actually wanted to say that the interpretation of the Al-Qur’an has its own phases in development as pointed out by previous scholars with its various characteristics.

From this point of view, the Indonesian Ministry of Religion does not seem to care much about the many negative and positive views surrounding the emergence of scientific interpretations. If an interpretation does depart from the mindset of the interpreter where he is and is then influenced by the time and age, then the scientific interpretation is part of the dynamics of the views in that interpretation, it actually enriches the values of the Koran.

Finally, in 2016, a new interpretation was written on behalf of the major organization in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah. The name of this interpretation is the Tanwir Interpretation, just like the Islamic interpretation of the Ministry of Religion and Salman, this interpretation was written by the Team which did not come from one element, the concepts of naqli and aqli were integrated in this interpretation. This interpretation, which has just completed one chapter, which consists of the explanation of surah al-Fatihah and al-Bakarah verses 1-141, has attracted the attention of some researchers and scholars of the Quran.

As the name implies, Tanwir, this interpretation is here to enlighten the reader because this interpretation not only explains the verse from the linguistic side but is also supported by the explanation of the science in it. The emergence of the tanwir interpretation was influenced by

30 Putri Maydi Arafatun Anhari, Imran Sadewo, M. Khoirul Hadi Al-Asyi, “Tafsir ilmi: Studi Metode Penafsiran Berbasis Ilmu Pengetahuan…, 112
Muhammadiyah’s three approaches of ijtihad: *Bayani*, *Burhani*, and *Irfani*\(^{31}\) and tried to integrate them so that they produced different characteristics from previous interpretations. In addition, this interpretation is structured to generate the ethos of science\(^{32}\).

From the scientific interpretations that have been mentioned there are other thematic scientific interpretations that have also enlivened the repertoire of scientific interpretations in Indonesia, for example, Nazwar Syamsu with *al-Quran Basic Scientific Question and Answer* then Sahirul Alim with the *Koran, Science and Technology*, Muh Ma’rufin with the *Encyclopedia of Natural Phenomena in al-Quran: Revealing the Secret of Kauniyah Al-Quran Verses*, Then Ismail with his *Thematic Al-Quran: New Facts of Al-Quran Mathematics*, etc. All of them are written with different backgrounds but have the same spirit, presenting the Koran with a scientific approach.

**Writing Dynamics: Source, Method, Validity, and Status**

If we look at the Indonesian scientific interpretations that have been mentioned above, we find that all of them are written with a similar view but with different backgrounds and expertise. Among them there are those who are pure interpreters to produce a complete interpretation of the Quran and use the basic of science as a support for interpretation, among them are known as pure scientists and try to recognize the Quran on the basic of their observations on the universe. The writer also came from different experties dan different culture of institution, these fact could make tafsir ilmi Indonesia has some rich view in it.

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<td>The Koran is traced to the end of the day so.</td>
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\(^{31}\) Bayani, Burhani and Irfani, all of them are the ijtihad approach made by Muhammadiyah in concluding a law, whether it is related to religion or related to social life. Bayani itself means concluding the law based on the text written in the Koran or Hadith. Meanwhile, Burhani concluded law with logical inference, whether based on text or not. Burhani is usually supported by other scholars in his conclusions. Irfani is a person’s intuitive ability to produce laws and this can only be done by someone who has trained his soul to get closer to the creator.

\(^{32}\) M. Nurdin Zuhdi, *Tafsir Ilmi Dalam Tafsir at-Tanwir*, [https://ibtimes.id/?s=Tafsir+ilmi+dalam+tafsir+at-tanwir](https://ibtimes.id/?s=Tafsir+ilmi+dalam+tafsir+at-tanwir) tgl 17 maret 2021, Pukul: 21.18
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**Conclusion**

From the above explanation, we can conclude that Indonesia has many interpretations that are studied from a scientific perspective and of course this adds to the treasures of writing interpretations in the archipelago. This indicates that Indonesia is quite open to interpreting this scientific style. The variations of scientific interpretation that appear are also varied, not only represented by pure scientists and ulama, but also followed by government institutions and large organizations, even at the level of the mosque council who are involved in composing them.
Compared to the scientific interpretation in the Middle East which tries to correlate Quranic verses with science, the Indonesian scientific interpretation seems one step further by trying to make the Quranic verse the basis of new knowledge, although not all scientific interpreters in Indonesia do that. The methods used by tahlili and maudhui with a similar paradigm return to the awareness of the importance of building a civilization with science based on revelation.

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