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“Merambah Jalan Spiritual”

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Abdul Muis Naharong

New Age: Spiritualitas Orang Perkotaan

M. Sidi Ritaudin

**Fenomena Etika Agama dan Spiritualisasi
Politik Perspektif Islam**

Aktobi Gozali

**Berdialog dengan Al-Qur'an: Perspektif
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BOOK REVIEW

Mujiburrahman

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MERAMBAH JALAN SPIRITUAL

Mengawali tahun 2009, **Refleksi** mengusung tema “Merambah Jalan Spiritual”. Dalam dua dasawarsa terakhir masyarakat di berbagai belahan dunia yang dilanda oleh demam spiritualitas. Fenomena ini begitu luasnya di Barat sehingga melahirkan slogan “Spirituality, yes, Organized religion, no.” Abdul Muis Naharong mencoba mendeskripsikan New Age, salah satu aliran spiritual, yang menyebar ke negara-negara Timur, termasuk Indonesia, akibat proses globalisasi.

Fenomena gerakan New Age sebagaimana dipaparkan pada tulisan pertama juga diamini oleh M. Sidi Ritaudin pada pengantar tulisannya. Menurutnya, gerakan New Age muncul sebagai suatu reaksi kritis terhadap kemodernan yang rasional. Gerakan ini meyakini adanya perubahan yang mendasar terhadap dominasi rasio dan ilmu pengetahuan di atas Tuhan (baca: iman). Gerakan ini mencari suatu keseimbangan baru antara rasio dan iman yang memusatkan jalan batin menuju sumber kehidupan ilahiah.

Selaras dengan artikel kedua, Aktobi Gozali melihat kenyataan bahwa al-Qur’an kadang dianggap tidak mampu menjawab berbagai persoalan kehidupan. Menurutnya, salah satu faktor penyebabnya adalah kesalahan dalam cara membaca al-Qur’an, sehingga dalam konteks ini penting reposisi al-Qur’an berhadapan dengan subyek yang memahaminya, agar makna al-Qur’an menjadi lebih kontekstual dan aplikatif dalam merespons berbagai persoalan kehidupan. Sebuah pendekatan rasional-filosofis yang melahirkan pemahaman kontekstual, menjadi keniscayaan saat pendekatan tekstual/harfiah tidak dapat memberikan solusi baik pada tataran pemuasan rasio, maupun tuntutan praktis. Sebuah upaya reposisi yang berimplikasi pada konsekuensi ontologis, epistemologis dan aksiologis.

Persoalan makna al-Qur’an yang kontekstual dan aplikatif setidaknya dapat dibaca pada sejumlah buku tafsir karya sarjana Muslim di Indonesia, sebagaimana yang diungkapkan oleh Izza Rohman. Menurutnya, wacana tafsir tematik di Indonesia berputar pada tiga isu: tema apa yang sepatutnya dikembangkan, prinsip-prinsip apa yang perlu digarisbawahi, dan

bagaimana metode tafsir tematik semestinya diterapkan. Beberapa sarjana memandang bahwa tema-tema mengenai masalah sosial yang dihadapi masyarakat, seperti kemiskinan dan keterbelakangan, lebih sepatutnya dipilih dalam kajian tafsir tematik. Sedangkan para sarjana yang lain tidak mengistimewakan tema tertentu di atas tema yang lain. Terlepas dari tema (atau term) apa yang dibincangkan dalam tafsir tematik, setidaknya ada dua prinsip yang umumnya disepakati. Yang pertama adalah pentingnya memperlakukan al-Qur'an sebagai suatu kesatuan yang utuh, dan yang kedua adalah pentingnya memerhatikan kronologi pewahyuan al-Qur'an.

Salah satu mufasir Indonesia yang karyanya sangat dikenal adalah Hamka. Shobahussurur menganalisis tokoh ini dengan mengukur produktivitasnya. Seseorang yang secara formal tidak mengenyam pendidikan sekolah, tetapi mampu menulis banyak hal. Hamka menulis tentang sejarah, tafsir, hadis, tasawuf, bahasa, dan sastra. Karyanya menghadirkan respons yang aktif dari kondisi yang terjadi di masyarakat. ketika masyarakat urban menghadapi pemahaman tasawuf yang ekstrem berhadapan dengan pola hidup sekuler yang hedonis, ia menulis *Tasawuf Modern*. Saat terjadi fenomena perseteruan akut antara adat dan agama, dia menulis *Tenggelamnya Kapal van Der Wijck*. Saat masyarakat modern lari dari agama mengikuti kehidupan materialistis, dia menulis *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah*. Respons terhadap kondisi masyarakat juga diungkapkan ketika sedang merenung di dalam penjara, hingga lahir karya monumentalnya: *Tafsir Al-Azhar*.

Sebagai penutup pada **Refleksi** kali ini, Redaksi menyajikan *book review* komprehensif yang ditulis oleh Mujiburrahman atas sebuah buku yang berjudul Ensiklopedi Nurcholish Madjid. *Book review* ini membuka pintu kemudahan bagi pembaca buku ini dengan melakukan klasifikasi terhadap orang-orang besar dalam ensiklopedi ini. Klasifikasi tersebut mencakup kelompok Nabi dan Rasul, sahabat-sahabat Nabi, para pemikir muslim klasik, tokoh-tokoh agama dan politik di Indonesia, dan pemikir muslim modern, ilmuwan, serta politisi Barat.

Selamat membaca.!

Redaksi

INDONESIAN MUSLIM SCHOLARS' CONCEPTIONS ON THE METHOD OF THEMATIC INTERPRETATION OF THE QUR'AN

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Abstract: *This study deals with Indonesian Muslim scholars' discussions on the method of thematic interpretation of the Qur'an during the period of 20 years, from the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s. It shows that, in Indonesian discourses on thematic method of Qur'an interpretation, three issues are recurrently dealt with: what kind of themes is most desirable, what principles should be underlined, and in what way the method of thematic interpretation should be applied. While some scholars argue that it would be better if the theme selected is closely related to the real problems facing the society like poverty and backwardness, some others do not privilege a certain kind of theme over the others. Regardless of the theme or the term to be discussed, however, two principles are commonly and recurrently highlighted with regard to the application of thematic method. The first is the importance of treating the Qur'an is on its own terms as a unity. The second is the importance of paying close attention to the chronology of the Qur'an revelation. As for the issue of how the method of thematic interpretation should be applied, this study shows that there are free important models of thematic interpretation introduced in Indonesia: the one that was popularized by Quraish Shihab, the one that is introduced by Dawam Rahardjo, and the one that was named thematic-chronological method by Taufik Adan Amal and Syamsu Rizal Panggabean while discussing a contextual approach to the Qur'an.*

Keywords: *Mawḍūʿī, al-Farmāwī, Key Terms, Contextual Approach.*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini membahas perdebatan ulama Muslim Indonesia mengenai metode interpretasi tematis al-Qur'an selama periode 20 tahun, dari pertengahan 1980-an hingga pertengahan 2000-an. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa, dalam wacana Indonesia mengenai metode tematis interpretasi al-Qur'an, tiga isu secara berulang kali dibahas: jenis tema yang paling diinginkan, prinsip-prinsip yang seharusnya ditekankan, dan bagaimana metode interpretasi tematis seharusnya diterapkan. Sementara beberapa ulama berpendapat bahwa lebih baik jika tema yang dipilih erat terkait dengan masalah nyata yang dihadapi masyarakat seperti kemiskinan dan ketertinggalan, beberapa lainnya tidak memberikan keistimewaan tertentu tema atas yang lain. Namun, terlepas dari tema atau istilah yang akan dibahas, dua prinsip umum dan berulang kali ditekankan terkait dengan penerapan metode tematis. Pertama adalah pentingnya memperlakukan al-Qur'an sebagai kesatuan dengan karakteristiknya sendiri. Kedua adalah pentingnya memperhatikan kronologi wahyu al-Qur'an. Mengenai masalah bagaimana metode interpretasi tematis seharusnya diterapkan, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada tiga model interpretasi tematis yang diperkenalkan di Indonesia: yang dipopulerkan oleh Quraish Shihab, yang diperkenalkan oleh Dawam Rahardjo, dan yang dinamai metode tematis-kronologis oleh Taufik Adan Amal dan Syamsu Rizal Panggabean saat membahas pendekatan kontekstual terhadap al-Qur'an.

Kata Kunci: *Mawḍūʿī, al-Farmāwī, Istilah Kunci, Pendekatan Kontekstual.*

Introduction

Since about the mid-1980s, the method of thematic interpretation has been frequently discussed and even widely practiced in Indonesian academia. This represents to a large extent a different faction with the classical 'chained' or sequential style of interpreting the Qur'an verse by verse mostly in accordance with the *muṣḥaf* (corpus) arrangement, known as *tafsīr musalsal* or *tafsīr taḥlīlī* or *tafsīr tajzīʿī*. Many Indonesian Muslim scholars seem no longer optimistic about the potential of such an interpretive style to explore and deliver the meanings and messages of the Qur'an in order to face the changed reality or to change the reality itself. Even though *musalsal* commentaries still attract the writers and readers of *tafsīrs* (as demonstrated, for instance, by Quraish Shihab's *Tafsīr Al-Mishbah* and Achmad Chodjim's commentaries on popular *sūrah*s), many Indonesian scholars would recommend thematic approach to interpreting the Qur'an, instead of *musalsal* approach.

The latter is now often considered to be "resulting in overlapping comprehension" and "unable to present balanced Qur'anic messages"¹ as well

as “making the Qur’anic guides scattered and not delivered to its readers wholly.”² The thematic method, on the other hand, is regarded as having some worthwhile qualities. It offers the unity of Qur’anic concepts.³ Moreover, it can be expected to provide new perspectives and thereby to be a reliable way to attain new explanations about conventional understandings.⁴ More importantly, this method is considered to be “able to lead us to Qur’anic views about various problems of life and the answers for them.”⁵ In the context of struggles for gender equity for instance, thematic interpretation would arguably lead to more favorable results than *musalsal* interpretation.⁶ Therefore, thematic interpretation is not only characterized as mere rearrangement of textual material, but also as a distinct method of exegesis with new results.

While the method of thematic interpretation has been often practiced, there is still no serious attention paid to how this method has been introduced and conceived by Indonesian Muslim scholars. For that reason, this essay seeks to scrutinize their works dealing with the thematic method published during the mid-1980s till the mid-2000s. A close look at these works suggests that there are, in fact, some models of thematic interpretation that have been proposed or popularized in Indonesia.

The Introduction of the Method of Thematic Interpretation

It would obviously be reasonable to argue that interpreting the Qur’an topically had been frequently practiced in Indonesia a long time before the 1980’s—even though this fact is often unnoticed.⁷ However, efforts to systematize thematic approaches to interpreting the Qur’an have been made more recently. It may be argued⁸ that the method of thematic interpretation is pioneered by Fazlur Rahman particularly through his *Major Themes of the Qur’an* (1980) in which he seeks to provide a thematic interpretation of its kind by systematically presenting the Qur’an on its own terms as a unity. If one agrees with this opinion, the translation of this book into Bahasa Indonesia in 1983⁹ would arguably be the first noteworthy introduction of thematic method in Indonesia.

Nevertheless, Rahman does not provide his readers with some conceptions on how thematic interpretation should be applied. Therefore, one may agree with Quraish Shihab¹⁰ who, referring to ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmāwī’s *al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū‘ī* (1977), argues that the method of thematic interpretation (*tafsīr mawḍū‘ī*) was firstly introduced

in Egypt by Aḥmad Sayyid al-Kūmī (until 1981 chairman of the Department of Tafsīr of al-Azhar University) together with his colleagues. Accordingly, Shihab's article in *Beberapa Aspek Ilmiah tentang Al-Qur'an* (1986)¹¹ could be considered as the first notable introduction of thematic method in Indonesia. In this article, which was said to be once presented in Makassar in 1983,¹² Shihab introduces *tafsīr mawḍū'ī* based on al-Farmāwī's formulation.¹³ Later, in line with the success of Shihab's "*Membumikan*" *Al-Qur'an* (1992) where a slightly revised version of the aforementioned article is included,¹⁴ this article becomes a very popular Indonesian language introduction to the concept of *tafsīr mawḍū'ī*, and the one that has been frequently referred to in later works. Even though this article is principally an introduction of al-Farmāwī's version of thematic interpretation, Shihab does make some contributions on his own by suggesting some modifications and offering other comments. Firstly, he defines thematic interpretation differently as "the *tafsīr* that picks a certain topic, by way of collecting from various chapters all or some verses related to this topic, to be connected to each other to draw a comprehensive conclusion about the topic in accordance with the view of the Qur'an."¹⁵ Secondly, he recommends that the *mawḍū'ī* exegetes prioritize the themes closely related to the real problems facing society and consequently they need to learn about these problems. Thirdly, he emphasizes the necessity to grasp the meaning of a particular word by examining how the Qur'an uses that word.

Shihab himself, as a leading *mufassir* in contemporary Indonesia, has recurrently employed the method of thematic interpretation in his works. One of his most important works is *Wawasan Al-Qur'an* (1996) which was made up from his 33 papers presented in a routine religious learning forum (*pengajian*) at Istiqlal Mosque, Jakarta, since 1993.¹⁶ In line with his suggestion to deal with the problems facing society, many of the themes discussed in this book have something to do with social life, such as justice, welfare, economy, disease, women, and poverty—even though social science insights could hardly be found there.

Some other early noteworthy conceptual introductions to the thematic method are included in Taufik Adnan Amal and Syamsu Rizal Panggabean's *Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Qur'an* (1989), which argues for the need for "thematic-chronological" approach to contextually interpreting the Qur'an; Abdul Djalal's *Urgensi Tafsir Mawḍu'ī pada Masa Kini*

(1990), which initially was his professor's inaugural speech in Surabaya in 1986,¹⁷ relies on al-Farmāwī's conception as well; and an article by the Iraqi scholar Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr translated into Bahasa Indonesia as, "*Pendekatan Tematik terhadap Tafsir Al-Qur'an*", that was published in a famous scholarly journal, *Ulumul Qur'an* (1990).¹⁸ In the same journal, in a series of articles published during the early and mid-1990's, Dawam Rahardjo—who basically is an economist and social researcher—elaborated his own model of thematic interpretation which he more often called 'interpreting the Qur'an with the Qur'an itself'.¹⁹ His series of thematic commentary continually pick key terms in the Qur'an, such as *ḥanif*, *dīn*, *taqwā*, *khalīfah*, *jihād*, and *ūlū al-albāb*, but social science insights noticeably shape his analyses.

The introduction of the method of thematic interpretation has been followed by the continuously increasing number of published books making use of this method in the last two decades, many of which were originally completed for academic purposes.²⁰ This development could be attributed partly to Quraish Shihab's influence, especially in the Islamic higher education institutions in which the method of thematic interpretation attracted a lot of students finishing their theses—although they do not necessarily follow al-Farmāwī's framework or heed Shihab's suggestion to prioritize real problems within society. In Syarif Hidayatullah State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN, now State Islamic University or UIN) Jakarta where Shihab once spent a part of his intellectual life for an extended period of time, Suwito and Muhibb demonstrate that, of 48 Qur'an-related master theses submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies during the period of 1991-2000, 24 (50%) are thematic Qur'an interpretations.²¹ My own survey shows that from 2001 to 2005, there are 50 (58,1%) master theses using thematic approach out of 86 Qur'an-related master theses submitted to the faculty, and up to 2005, there have been 30 (46,1%) doctoral dissertations using thematic approach out of 65 Qur'an-related doctoral dissertations submitted to the faculty. Many of these master and doctoral theses that interpret the Qur'an thematically have been subsequently published as books.²² It is fully correct to say that this trend does not exclusively take place at UIN Jakarta.²³

In more recent discourses, one could also find some endeavors to introduce the conception of the method of thematic interpretation advocated by the Egyptian thinker Hassan Hanafi since the 1990s. Among the

most important ones are a chapter in Ilham Saenong's *Hermeneutika Pembebasan* (2002)²⁴ and an article by Hanafi translated into Bahasa Indonesia as "Dari Teks ke Aksi: Merekomendasi Tafsir Tematik" in *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* (2006).²⁵

Notions Concerning the Method of Thematic Interpretation

In Indonesian discourses on thematic method of Qur'an interpretation, three issues are recurrently dealt with: what kind of themes is most desirable: what principles should be underlined, and in what way the method of thematic interpretation should be applied.

According to Quraish Shihab, even though this method could be utilized to discuss any theme, it would be better if the theme is closely related to the real problems facing the society like poverty and backwardness, as in such a way one could provide Qur'anic answers for these problems.²⁶ Consequently, comprehending the problems prevailing in the community is a requirement for *mawḍū'ī* exegetes. Shihab thus associates *tafsīr mawḍū'ī* with pragmatic (social) purposes. Indeed, he stresses that themes which are too theoretical should be avoided.²⁷ Similarly, Taufik Adnan Amal and Syamsu Rizal Panggabean argue that what is important in interpreting the Qur'an thematically is to provide practical Qur'anic solutions toward social phenomena, and this necessarily requires a close look at social reality.²⁸

Rather differently, for Dawam Rahardjo, what is more important for grasping the Qur'an through thematic approach is the 'key terms' (*istilah-istilah kunci*).²⁹ As to what kind of key terms should be discussed, he does not really privilege a certain kind over the others. He views that the key terms could be derived from the concepts of social sciences or humanities (e.g. 'democracy'), the terms stated in the Qur'an (e.g. 'taqwā'), and the concepts of Islamic traditional sciences (e.g. 'tawḥīd').³⁰ However, in practice, he always chooses major terms frequently mentioned in the Qur'an – most often the words that have been already 'culturalized' within the context of Indonesian society, such as *fiṭrah* (*fiṭrah*), 'abd (*abdi*), *amānah* (*amanah*), *rahmah* (*rahmat*), *rūḥ* (*roh*), *nafs* (*nafsu*), *syayṭān* (*setan*), 'adl (*adil*), *ummah* (*umat*), 'ilm (*ilmu*), *rizq* (*rezeki*), and *ribā* (*riba*).³¹

Regardless of the theme or the term to be discussed, however, two principles are commonly and recurrently highlighted with regard to the application of thematic method. The first is the importance of treating the

Qur'an on its own terms as a unity. This by and large means that it is imperative to interpret the Qur'an in light of the Qur'an itself. Hence, this is basically a re-accentuation of the classical concept that *al-Qur'an yufassiru ba'duhu ba'da* (the parts of the Qur'an explain each other), or 'Ali ibn Abi Talib's saying: *istantiq al-Qur'an* (let the Qur'an speak).³² In fact, thematic method is considered to be the best because it allows us to keep interpreting the Qur'an with the Qur'an—the best method according to such eminent scholars as Ibn Kathir, al-Zarkashi, and Ibn Taymiyyah.³³ In this case, the thematic interpretation of the Qur'an differs hardly at all from traditional commentaries of the *musalsal* kind many of which have sometimes tried to interpret the Qur'an with the Qur'an. What distinguishes thematic interpretation from 'chained' or—in Hassan Hanafi's term—'longitudinal' interpretation is that in the latter the interpreter merely reacts to what is said in the text as it occurs, whereas in the former he or she can start from the application of his or her own questions to the text. Thematic interpretation pursues Qur'an's answers and thereby is more rigorous in presenting the Qur'an as a unity on its own terms.

The second principle highlighted is to pay close attention to the chronology of the Qur'an revelation—which is said to have been frequently neglected in the application of the concept of *al-Qur'an yufassiru ba'duhu ba'dan*.³⁴ A chronology-conscious interpretation is considered to be important because the Qur'anic responses to the socio-historical situations before and during the era of revelation, took place gradually in line with the development of Muhammad's prophetic mission, therefore by knowing the chronology of these responses, one would understand how the Qur'an reacts to a certain phenomenon.³⁵ This chronological approach is also regarded as imperative to avoid any mistake in drawing a legal conclusion or detailing a particular historical event.³⁶ Moreover, chronological approach is helpful for grasping the evolution of the meanings of a word or concept in the Qur'an.³⁷ Underscoring this principle, Indonesian scholars in a sense do not feel bothered by the absence of complete agreement among both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars on the chronological arrangement of the whole Qur'an.

In the case of Dawam Rahardjo, it seems that it is these two principles, rather than the idea of thematic interpretation itself, that more conspicuously attract his attention. Rahardjo often implies as his primary idea a certain distinct model of interpreting the Qur'an with the Qur'an.³⁸ Two

of his main proposals are to consider the Qur'an as an 'encyclopedia' and al-Fātiḥah as the Qur'an in a nutshell. As an 'encyclopedia', the Qur'an itself certainly explains the terms and the concepts that it mentions. It is therefore possible to obtain the meaning of these terms and concepts from Qur'anic verses as such. As the meaning of a particular term might have changed over time during the period of revelation, the Qur'an should be read in accordance with the chronology of revelation. Hence, one could derive the meaning or sense of a term introduced in an earlier verse from the later verses which mention it or its derivations.³⁹

Another hypothesis of Rahardjo is that the opening *sūrah* al-Fātiḥah is the Qur'an in a nutshell. What he means is that al-Fātiḥah, which functions as the core of the Qur'an, is repeatedly explained in the Qur'an.⁴⁰ According to Rahardjo, this implies that al-Fātiḥah puts the Qur'an in a nutshell. This further means that al-Fātiḥah is repeatedly clarified by the rest of the Qur'an. Rahardjo, moreover, identifies al-Fātiḥah as *muḥkamāt* verses in relation to the other verses in the Qur'an which are *mutashābihāt*.⁴¹ For that reason, in Rahardjo's view, al-Fātiḥah could be used as an 'opener' or 'key', or as a 'microscope' or a 'paradigm'—the words he himself uses to understand the verses in the remainder of the Qur'an. In this regard, two methodological directions are possible: explaining al-Fātiḥah with other Qur'anic verses, as well as referring Qur'anic verses back to al-Fātiḥah.⁴²

In line with his assumptions about the chronological development of the meanings of Qur'anic terms and the relationship between al-Fātiḥah and the remainder of the Qur'an, Rahardjo puts forward the idea of interpreting the Qur'an by taking major terms of al-Fātiḥah, e.g. *rabb al-'ālamīn*, *rahīmān*, *rahīm* and *ṣīrāt al-mustaqīm*, as the primary point of departure, and subsequently examining these terms through looking at the chronology of their verses, and finally using the meanings obtained to shed light on certain verses at issue.⁴³ However, Rahardjo himself has not yet realized this idea fully: he has merely hinted at preliminary incomplete examples.⁴⁴

Basically, what Rahardjo has realized in his masterpiece, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, is thematic Qur'an interpretation that picks for the most part key terms outside al-Fātiḥah. He does not inform his readers as to how he mapped out his strategy to interpret these terms, but he gives a two-para-

graph clue regarding some main steps he has consistently taken in his thematic interpretation of the Qur'an. These steps seem to include in sequential order:

- 1) Choosing a key term,
- 2) Collecting all verses containing this term,
- 3) Arranging the verses in chronological order,
- 4) Examining these verses in connection with their surrounding verses,
- 5) Noticing the possible evolution of the meaning-and-context of this term,
- 6) Constructing the view of the Qur'an in regard to this term, and
- 7) Connecting this conceptual view with other pertinent terms or concepts of the Qur'an.⁴⁵

These steps are different in some respects from those formulated by al-Farmāwī, which have become quite popular in Indonesia mainly after Quraish Shihab introduced it. Al-Farmāwī formulates seven steps of *tafsīr mawḍū'ī* as follows:

- 1) Choosing a topic that would be discussed,
- 2) Collecting Qur'anic verses related to the topic, either *Makkiyyah* or *Madaniyyah* verses,
- 3) Organizing these verses based on the chronology of revelation, while taking note of their *asbāb al-nuzūl*,
- 4) Recognizing the correlations (*munāsabāt*) between these verses and surrounding verses in their respective *sūrah*,
- 5) Organizing the topic in a systematic outline,
- 6) Adding relevant *ḥadīths* to the explanation, when necessary,
- 7) Examining the verses thoroughly by identifying verses having similar meanings, harmonizing between the *mm* and the *khiss*, between the *muṭlaq* and the *muqayyad*, and synchronizing the verses which are seemingly contradictive, and explaining the *nasikh* and the *mansūkh* one, so all verses can meet in one end without having discrepancies and contradictions, or certain imposition toward some verses into inappropriate meanings.⁴⁶

The main differences between these two schemes can be summarized as follows. First of all, while al-Farmāwī starts with a 'topic', Rahardjo starts with a 'key term', which gives a different impression. 'Key term' (*kata*

kunci or *istilah kunci*) hints at an emphasis on something important—primarily for attempting at something else—that is, a specific word that has a deep and a wide meaning. This choice is understandable because what Rahardjo suggests (and intends to do) is principally to (take part in the efforts to) ‘culturalized’ Qur’anic values within society, and to open up new horizons of Qur’an understanding, particularly through obtaining new Qur’anic explanations on traditional understanding. What he talks about (and carries out) is essentially an attempt to (contextually) grasp the Holy Book and then present it,⁴⁷ rather than an attempt to find a Qur’anic answer for a certain problem— what the thematic interpretation is for in the opinions of al-Farmāwī, Shihab and others—even though it may be argued that there is really a negligible distinction between two attempts.

Second of all, while al-Farmāwī takes the contents of *‘ulūm al-Qur’ān* (Qur’anic sciences) seriously, and accordingly puts them as the significant part of his proposal for thematic interpretation, Rahardjo does not show in his proposal any interest in (traditional) *‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*. On the one hand, this corresponds to Rahardjo’s criticism of the claim that *tafsīr* is an exclusive domain for those mastering *‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, even though he does not reject that *‘ulūm al-Qur’ān* is of importance to interpreting the Qur’an.⁴⁸ On the other hand, this may be attributed to the fact that he was not formally trained in Islamic studies—he was majoring in economic development. However, Rahardjo himself asserts that he still continues self-studying Islamic disciplines after dropping out from Madrasah Diniyah al-Islam, Solo, where he learned Islamic traditional sciences for about six years (till he was 14 years old) besides attending state-run ‘secular’ schools.⁴⁹ In addition, while Rahardjo still admits the benefit of the concepts of *‘ulūm al-Qur’ān* even as he enunciates ‘the postulate of the Reformation’ that everybody is allowed to reflect on the purports of the Holy Book, not each of those who major in Islamic studies would necessarily like to accommodate these concepts in their interpretive frameworks, they could even be very critical to such *‘ulūm al-Qur’ān* concepts of *muḥkam-mutashābbih*, *nāsikh-mansūkh*, *āmm-khāṣṣ*, *qat’-ī-ẓannī*, *mutlaq-muqayyad*, and *mujmal-mubayyan*. This is apparent for instance in the case of Taufik Adnan Amal and Syamsu Rizal Panggabean’s proposal for exegetical method.

Amal and Panggabean, whose exegetical notions are actually concerned not only with how to understand the Qur’an in context but also how to

contextualize its message, devise a six-step approach to understanding the Qur'an in context, to which they sometimes refer as 'thematic-chronological' interpretation. These steps encompass:

- 1) Selecting a theme or a term, and collecting verses related to this theme or term,
- 2) Studying this theme or term in connection with the historical contexts of the periods before the revelation of the Qur'an as well as during the revelation,
- 3) Observing the Qur'anic responses regarding this theme or term chronologically, by involving the *asbāb al-nuzūl*, and at the same time noticing the "literary" contexts (*siyāq*) of the observed verses in the Qur'an—this would help to draw conclusions on how the Qur'an treated this theme or term in history and how this theme or term develops in the Qur'an,
- 4) Connecting this theme or term with other relevant themes or terms,
- 5) Concluding the goals of the Qur'an pertaining to this theme or term, and
- 6) Understanding specific verses related to this theme or term in light of the achieved conclusions.⁵⁰

These steps also differ in some respect from those of al-Farmāwī. Firstly, unlike al-Farmāwī's scheme, Amal and Panggabean's scheme—like that of Rahardjo—principally does not take many of the concepts of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* as tools for comprehending the relationship among Qur'anic verses. In point of fact, Amal and Panggabean even argue that these concepts (e.g. *muhkam-mutashābbih*, *nāsikh-mansūkh*, and so forth) for the most part result from the confusion about gradual process of the stages of Qur'anic teachings and supposedly contradictory verses, and authoritarian attitude of classical scholars (mainly *fuqahā*), rather than generate from the Qur'an itself: these concepts have even contradicted the self-referential claims of the Qur'an, and in practice are often applied subjectively and arbitrarily.⁵¹

Secondly, Amal and Panggabean recommends an emphasis on the 'interaction' between the Qur'an and its socio-historical context that is wider than *asbāb al-nuzūl*. This historical context, in their Fazlur Rahman-influenced view, must include both the pre-Qur'an era and the Qur'an revela-

tion era, which could be reconstructed by using jahiliyyah literatures, historical accounts that exist in *tafsirs*, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *ḥadīth*, contemporary research findings, and, of course, the explanation given by the Qur'an itself.⁵²

Thirdly, Amal and Panggabean highlight the need for revealing the 'wills' or "aims" of the Qur'an. The complete understanding of these (moral) aims is important for them—if I may conclude for two reasons. First, this understanding would shed light on Qur'an's specific verses. By this complete understanding, one could avoid partial and 'atomistic' interpretation of the Qur'anic verses.⁵³ Second, this understanding is a must if one wants to suggest 'Qur'anic solutions' to social problems.⁵⁴

Thus, we have seen three important models of thematic interpretation introduced in Indonesia. Despite some remarkable differences, these models have two points in common, First, they bring to the fore the importance of considering the chronology of revelation in grasping the 'intention' of the Qur'an. Second, they also emphasize the significance of considering the context of a verse or term in the Qur'an (*munāsabah*) in understanding how a theme develops among other themes in the Qur'an. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that in practice these methodological commonalities do not help reduce considerable variances among the thematic Qur'an interpretations because of the fact that interpreters might have different versions of chronological arrangement of Qur'anic verses, and they might also determine differently the range of surrounding verses that form the context of a verse or term they deal with.

Endnotes

1. See Taufik Adnan Amal and Syamsu Rizal Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Qur'an: Sebuah Kerangka Konseptual* (Bandung: Mizan, 1989), p. 44.
2. See M. Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an: Fungsi dan Peran Wahyu dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992), p. 112.
3. See, for example, Ali Yafie, "Memahami Al-Qur'an secara Integral", *Ulumul Qur'an* (Jakarta: LSAF), Vol. II, No. 5, 1990, p. 5; Harifuddin Cawidu, *Konsep Kufur dalam Al-Qur'an: Suatu Kajian Teologis dengan Pendekatan Tafsir Tematik* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1991), p. 22; Nashruddin Baidan, *Metodologi Penafsiran al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1998), p. 67; Abdul Mustaqim, *Madzhabiibut Tafsir: Peta Metodologi Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Periode Klasik Hingga Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Nun Pustaka, 2003), p. 98; and Umar Shihab, *Kontekstualitas Al-Qur'an: Kajian Tematik atas Ayat-ayat Hukum dalam Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Penamadani, 2003), p. 13.
4. See M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Qur'an: Metodologi Tafsir dan Kritik Sosial* (Jakarta: PSAP Muhammadiyah, 2005), p. 77.

5. See Shihab, “Membumikan” Al-Qur’an, p. 117.
6. See Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender: Perspektif al-Qur’an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999), p. 281-5.
7. For some examples of the Indonesian topical Qur’an interpretations before the 1980’s see Islah Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Hermeneutika hingga Ideologi* (Jakarta: Teraju, 2003), p. 268; Izza Rohman Nahrowi, “Karakteristik Kajian al-Qur’an di Indonesia”, *Refleksi* (Jakarta: Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Filsafat IAIN Jakarta), Vol. V, No. 2, 2003, p. 92; and Izza Rohman Nahrowi, “Profil Kajian al-Qur’an di Nusantara sebelum Abad Kedua Puluh”, *Al-Huda* (Jakarta: Islamic Center Jakarta), Vol. II, No. 6, 2002, p. 10-1. Cf. R. Michael Feener, “Notes toward the History of Qur’anic Exegesis in Southeast Asia”, *Studia Islamika* (Jakarta: IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah), Vol. 5, No. 3, 1998, p. 64; and Nashruddin Baidan, *Perkembangan Tafsir Al-Qur’an di Indonesia* (Solo: Tiga Serangkai, 2003), p. 110.
8. See, for instance, the end of the abstract of Feener’s article, “Notes toward the History of Qur’anic Exegesis in Southeast Asia”, p. 48, 50.
9. See Fazlur Rahman, *Tema Pokok Al-Qur’an*, trans. Anas Mahyuddin (Bandung: Pustaka, 1983).
10. See Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur’an*, p. 114.
11. See M. Quraish Shihab, “Tafsir Qur’an dengan Metode Maudhu’i”, in Bustami A. Gani and Chatibul Umam (eds.), *Beberapa Aspek Ilmiah tentang Al-Qur’an* (Jakarta: Institut PTIO, 1986), p. 22-33.
12. *Membumikan Al-Qur’an* mentions that one of its article is derived from a paper entitled “Tafsir Al-Qur’an Masa Kini: Suatu Uraian tentang Metode Baru dalam Tafsir al-Qur’an, yakni Metode Mawdu’iy” which was already finished in Makassar (formerly Ujung Pandang) on February 10, 1983, and once presented in front of al-Aqsha Study Club. (See Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur’an*, p. 402). The article in *Membumikan Al-Qur’an* referred to is virtually similar to Shihab’s article in *Beberapa Aspek Ilmiah tentang Al-Qur’an*.
13. Al-Farmāwī’s book itself was not translated into Bahasa Indonesia until 1994. See ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmāwī, *Metode Tafsir Mawdu’iy: Suatu Pengantar*, trans. Suryan A. Jamrah (Jakarta: PT RajaGrafindo Persada, 1994).
14. See Shihab, “Metode Tafsir Tematik”, *Membumikan Al-Qur’an*, p. 11-20.
15. Compare with the definition of *tafsir mawdu’i* in ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmāwī, *al-Bidāyah fi al-Tafsir al-Mawdu’i: Dirāsah Manhajīyyah Mawdu’īyyah* (Cairo: al-Hadarah al-‘Arabīyyah, 1977), p. 52.
16. See M. Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur’an: Tafsir Maudhu’i atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996).
17. See Abdul Djalal H.A., *Urgensi Tafsir Mawdu’i pada Masa Kini* (Jakarta: Kalam Mulia, 1990).
18. See Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, “Pendekatan Tematik terhadap Tafsir Al-Qur’an”, *Ulumul Qur’an* (Jakarta: LSAF), Vol. 2, No. 4, 1990, p. 28-36.
19. This series was then compiled in his *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur’an: Tafsir Sosial Berdasarkan Konsep-konsep Kunci* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1996).
20. Cf. Islah Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia*, p. 268-9.
21. See Suwito and Muhbib, “Peta Studi Islam pada Program Pascasarjana IAIN Jakarta”, *Jauhar* (Jakarta: Program Pascasarjana IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah), Vol. 2, No. 2, 2001, p. 246-74.

22. Among them are: Harifuddin Cawidu, *Konsep Kufr dalam Al-Qur'an*: Jalaluddin Rahman, *Konsep Perbuatan Manusia Menurut Al-Qur'an: Suatu Kajian Tafsir Tematik* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1992); M. Galib, *Ahl al-Kitab: Makna dan Cakupannya* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1998), Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender*, Zaitunah Subhan, *Tafsir Kebencian: Studi Bias Gender dalam Al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: LKIS, 1999); Ahmad Mubarak, *Jiwa dalam Al-Qur'an: Menuju Psikologi Islami* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2000); Muljiyono Abdillah, *Agama Ramah Lingkungan: Perspektif Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001); and Aflatun Mukhtar, *Tunduk kepada Allah: Peran dan Fungsi Agama dalam Kehidupan* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001).
23. Some books modified from these thematically interpreting the Qur'an submitted to other UINs or IAINs are: (Yogyakarta) Musa Asy'arie, *Manusia Pembentuk Kebudayaan dalam Al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: LESFI, 1992); Machasin, *Menyelami Kebebasan Manusia: Telaah Kritis terhadap Konsepsi Al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1996); Abdurrasyid Ridha, *Memasuki Makna Cinta* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2000); [Surabaya] Syahid Mu'ammam Pulungan, *Manusia dalam Al-Qur'an* (Surabaya: Bina Ilmu, 1984); [Makassar] Hadi Mutamam, *Hikmah dalam Al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Madani Pustaka Hikmah, 2001).
24. See Ilham B. Saenong, *Hermeneutika Pembebasan: Metodologi Tafsir Al-Qur'an Menurut Hassan Hanafi* (Jakarta Teraju, 2002) chapter 6.
25. See Hassan Hanafi, "Dari Teks ke Aksi: Merekomendasi Tafsir Tematik" *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Pusat Studi Al-Qur'an and Ikhlas Digital Library of Al-Qur'an), Vol I, No. 1, 2006, p 57-78. This article is translated by Eva F. Amrullah presumably from Hassan Hanafi's article, "Method of Thematic Interpretation of the Qur'an", included in Hassan Hanafi, *Islam in the Modern World* (1995) or in Stefan Wild (ed.), *The Qur'an as Text* (1996). *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* gives the wrong information that it is translated from Hassan Hanafi, "Hal Ladaynā Nazariyyat al-Tafsir?", in Hassan Hanafi, *Qadāyā Mu'āṣarah fī Fikrinā al-Mu'āṣir*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1976), p. 175-8.
26. See Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an*, p. 115,
27. See *ibid.*
28. See Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Qur'an*, p. 62, 64.
29. See Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Qur'an*, p. 26-9.
30. See Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, p. 5-7; *Paradigma al-Qur'an*, p. 38-40.
31. See Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*.
32. See, for instance, Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an*, p. xiv.
33. See Djalal, Urgensi Tafsir Mawdu'i pada Masa Kini, p. 93.
34. See Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Qur'an*, p. 59.
35. See *ibid.*, p. 44, 63.
36. See Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an*, p. 120.
37. See Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Qur'an*, p. 26.
38. See, for instance, Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Qur'an*, p. 11, 28-9, 56.
39. The development of the meaning of the term '*rabb*'—an example given by Rahardjo—could be explored by making a chronological list of the verses containing this term, i.e. al-Alaḥ/96: 1, 3; al-Muzammil/73: 8, 9, 19, 20, al-Muddaththir/74: 3, 7; al-Inshirāḥ/94: 8; al-Qalam/68: 2; and so forth. To make the accomplishment of such a task easier, Rahardjo proposes the idea of tabulating key terms and their locus in Qur'anic verses and chapters according to the chronology of revelation. See Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, p. 19-22, *Paradigma al-Qur'an*, p. 55-60.

40. This understanding is, however, relatively common among Muslims. What is uncommon with regard to Rahardjo's idea is that this premise serves as a basis for his proposal for certain exegetical methods. He justifies his argument by quoting al-Ĥijr/15: 87 which states, "And We have bestowed upon thee the Seven Oft-repeated (Verses) and the Grand Qur'an." The *mufasssirūn* generally understand the Seven Oft-repeated Verses (*sab'an min al-mathānī*) as al-Fātiḥah. On the other hand, al-Fātiḥah is sometimes also called 'the Grand Qur'an' (*al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*).
41. In this case, Rahardjo refers to Āl 'Imrān/3: 7 which identifies *āyāt muḥkamāt* as *umm al-Kitāb* (the mother of the Book)—the term that he underlines as one of the popular names of al-Fātiḥah, (He defines *muḥkamāt* verses as 'deciding or 'determining' ones, and *mutashābihāt* verses as 'resembling' ones).
42. For details and examples see Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, p. 2-8; *Paradigma al-Qur'an*, p. 29-30, 60-8, 187-94.
43. See Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, p. 29-30; *Paradigma al-Qur'an*, p. 69-71.
44. See Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, p. 29-30, 211-26; *Paradigma al-Qur'an*, p. 69-71, 188-94.
45. See Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, p. 32-3. It should be noted, however, that in practice Rahardjo often inserts into his explanation *ḥadīths*, pertinent historical account (including that of *asbāb al-nuzūl* and the tradition of other religions or civilizations), the 'culturalized' meanings of a term within the context of Indonesian society, and perspectives of social science theories.
46. See al-Farmāwī, *Al-Bidāyah fi al-Tafsīr al-Mawdū'ī*, p. 61-2.
47. See Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, p. 35; see also p. 10-1.
48. See Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, p. xix, 11-3, 34.
49. See *ibid.*, p. xxii-xxiii Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Qur'an*, p. 1-3, 23-4.
50. See Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsīr Kontekstual Al-Qur'an*, p. 63-4.
51. See *ibid.*, p. 28-30, 35-41.
52. See *ibid.*, p. 42-51.
53. See *ibid.*, p. 30-1, 60.
54. According to Amal and Panggabean, Qur'anic solutions to social problems could not be obtained by referring to Qur'anic specific verses through analogy. Reference to specific verses is an arbitrary action—because it would be subjective, partial and unable to provide comprehensive solution. Meanwhile analogy (*qiyās*) would have only a limited scope and would in practice tend to be haphazard. See *ibid.*, p. 62.

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