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Izza Rohman

New Approaches in Interpreting the Qur'an in Contemporary Indonesia

Abstraksi: Adakah corak yang khas dalam khazanah karya-karya tafsir al-Qur'an di Indonesia? Pertanyaan ini menjadi penting sebab dalam perkembangan kajian tafsir di dunia Islam terdapat kecenderungan melihat sepintas lalu, untuk tidak mengatakan memarginalkan, karya-karya tafsir yang ditulis bukan hanya oleh para sarjana Indonesia tetapi juga karya yang dihasilkan para penulis Muslim di Asia Tenggara. Survei yang dilakukan dalam artikel ini jelas menunjukkan bahwa proses kreatif sarjana Muslim di belahan Asia Tenggara memberikan kontribusi yang sangat besar dalam perkembangan diskursus keagamaan bagi umat Islam secara keseluruhan.

Artikel ini mengeksplorasi secara baik warisan khazanah intelektualisme tafsir dengan menitikberatkan sejauhmana isu metodologi menjadi bagian penting yang mewarnai pertumbuhan tradisi penulisan tafsir dalam perspektif keindonesiaan. Pada konteks ini, pilihan untuk menganalisis karya-karya Muslim tanah air dalam kurun duapuluh tahun terakhir menjadi logis mengingat dalam kurun ini pula proses pengkayaan (enrichment) dan involusi simultan terjadi sebagai akibat dari pergumulan dengan ilmu-ilmu sosial dan humaniora. Karena itu, sebagaimana ditunjukkan dalam artikel ini, betapapun ini bukan khas Indonesia saja, namun peminat studi tafsir kontemporer tidak semata-mata dilakukan para mufasir konvensional yang akrab dengan khazanah keilmuan Islam tradisional tetapi juga oleh para sarjana dari berbagai macam bidang ilmu dari berbagai latar belakang.

Secara kategoris, menurut penulis, buku-buku tafsir yang ada di tanah air bisa dikelompokkan dalam lima kategori. Pertama, karya-karya yang menyangkut metodologi tafsir baik klasikal maupun modern; kedua karya-karya tafsir yang ditulis secara populer; ketiga, karya-karya yang berkenaan sejarah penulisan tafsir di tanah air dalam beberapa kurun; keempat, menyangkut diskursus tafsir yang merespon kebutuhan tertentu

dengan muatan yang lebih kultural dan antropologis; dan yang terakhir adalah model buku tafsir mengkompilasi tulisan-tulisan sarjana Muslim Indonesia dalam bidang tafsir untuk merespon beberapa isu yang berkembang dalam masyarakat.

Hanya saja kategorisasi di atas tidak cukup kuat menjawab pertanyaan kekhasan yang ada dalam tradisi tafsir di Indonesia. Karena itu pada bagian yang lain, artikel ini berusaha menyajikan secara teoritis pandangan bagi upaya tafsir al-Qur'an yang memang bercirikan Indonesia. Tidak bias Timur Tengah dan tidak pula bias Barat. Ini penting selain untuk mendapatkan kesejatian agar tafsir al-Qur'an memiliki akar kultural yang kuat di tanah air, ia juga diharapkan memberikan kontribusi bagi penyelesaian masalah-masalah yang dihadapi masyarakat Indonesia. Inilah yang disebut sebagai salah satu upaya kontekstualisasi Islam bagi dunia dewasa ini dalam artikel ini.

Dalam pada ini, ada premis yang menjadi jargon penting para mufassir kontemporer ketika mereka berusaha merevitalisasi makna Kitab Suci, yakni bahwa realitas memang telah berubah (dan karenanya menyandarkan pada buku tafsir yang ditulis oleh para ulama abad lalu memang harus ditinjau kembali) sebagaimana yang dilakukan Quraish Shihab, Dawam Rahardjo, Taufik Adnan Amal, Syamsu Rijal Panggabean, dan Kuntowijoyo, atau realitas itu sendiri yang harus diubah seperti kesadaran eksistensial terhadap kaum mustad'afin (dan karenanya posisi pengajaran agama menjadi sangat penting) seperti yang dilakukan Moeslim Abdurrahman dan Masdar F. Mas'udi dengan tafsir emansipatoris.

Inilah yang menurut artikel ini menjadi salah satu kekhasan yang ada dalam tradisi buku tafsir di Indonesia. Betatapun terlihat ada perbedaan dalam metode, namun pada dasarnya terlihat ada titik temu antara satu model dengan yang lain. Karena secara prinsipal, keduanya melihat pentingnya kontekstualisasi tafsir sebagai basis penting bagi penyelesaian hal-hal yang menyangkut kehidupan sosial masyarakat tadi.

Hanya saja, tentu upaya ini bukan tanpa hambatan. Sebab, dalam konteks dan tataran tertentu terdapat pula kecenderungan untuk tetap mempertahankan model tafsir klasik dengan metodologi dan tema yang sudah berkembang dan dianggap teruji selama berabad-abad. Bagi kelompok ini, apa yang dilakukan para mufassir modern yang menggunakan pendekatan baru dalam memahami Kitab Suci tersebut sebagai sesuatu yang kurang bisa diterima. Sebab, bagi mereka, warisan dari tradisi intelektualitas Islam klasik seperti ulum al-Qur'an diyakini menjadi sumber yang kaya dan pendekatan yang paling relevan dalam memahami kitab suci itu sendiri, tanpa harus meminjam dari khazanah dan metodologi dari tradisi lain.

Inilah hal penting dalam tradisi buku tafsir di Indonesia. Kedua pendekatan itu bisa berkembang simultan, karena pada dasarnya kedua cara pandang tersebut berusaha menemukan rumus keagamaan yang otentik bagi kaum Muslimin di Indonesia dewasa ini.

New Approaches in Interpreting the Qur'an in Contemporary Indonesia

الخلاصة: هل يوجد نوع مميز في كتب التفاسير للقرآن في إندونيسيا؟ يصبح هذا السؤال مهما لأن تطور دراسة التفسير في العالم الإسلامي قد يتسم بتهميش كتب التفاسير التي ألفها المفسرون في إندونيسيا، بل المفسرون في جنوب شرقي آسيا. هذا البحث يحاول أن يثبت أن مؤلفات المفسرين في جنوب شرقي آسيا ساهمت كثيرا في تطور الخطاب الديني للمسلمين ككل.

قد تناول البحث على دراسة كتب التفسير التي ألفها المسلمون بالتركيز على مدى أهمية قضية منهج البحث كجزء مسيطر على كتابة التفسير من نظرة إندونيسية. على ذلك، أن دراسة وتحليل المؤلفات للعلماء الإندونيسيين في عشرين سنة الماضية تصبح معقولة لأن في هذه الفترة حدثت إثراء فيها وتغيرا نتيجة من تعاملها مع العلوم الاجتماعية المختلفة. ما يشير إليه البحث أنه رغم هذا الأمر لم يقتصر على إندونيسيا فحسب، إلا أن المهتمين بدراسة التفسير المعاصر لم يقتصروا على المفسرين التقليديين الذين يتعاملون مع المصادر التراثية فقط، بل أيضا على العلماء من تخصصات مختلفة.

قد انقسمت كتب التفسير في إندونيسيا إلى خمسة أقسام: الأول المؤلفات المتعلقة بمنهج التفسير سواء كانت تقليدية أو معاصرة، والثاني المؤلفات التي كتبت شعيبا، والثالث المؤلفات المتعلقة بتاريخ كتابة التفسير في إندونيسيا في عدة قرون، والرابع المؤلفات المتعلقة برد على متطلبات معينة بمضمون أكثر ثقافة وأنتروبولوجيا. والخامس المؤلفات المكونة من كتب التفاسير المختلفة التي ألفها المسلمون لرد على قضايا مطروحة في المجتمع.

رغم من أهمية هذه الأقسام، إلا أنها لم تكف لتكوين تميز خاص بالتفسير الإندونيسي. لذلك في الجزء الآخر، يحاول البحث على تقديم آراء وفكر في محاولة تكوين التفسير على نمط إندونيسي لم يتجه إلى شرق الأوسط ولا إلى الغرب. ولهذا الأمر أهمية ليس فقط لتحقيق تميز وأصالة ثقافة إندونيسية للتفسير، بل أيضا ليساهم في معالجة المشاكل التي يواجهها المجتمع الإندونيسي. هذا ما يطلق على محاولة موضوعية للإسلام تجاه العالم المعاصر.

في هذا الصدد، هناك مقدمة منطقية هامة يجب على المفسرين المعاصرين أن يهتموا بها عند ما يحاولون على إحياء المعاني للكتاب المقدس، وهي واقع الحياة الذي تغير بالفعل. وعلى أساسه لا بد من إعادة النظر في الاعتماد على المؤلفات التي كتبها العلماء في القرن الماضي. هذا ما فعله قريش شهاب ودوام رهارجو وتوفيق عدنان أمل وشمس رجال بنجايان وكونتوويجايا أو أن الواقع يجب أن يتغير مثل توعية وجودية للمستضعفين وبها أصبح دور التعليم الديني مهما جدا كما فعله مسلم عبد الرحمن ومصدر مسعودي في تفسيرهما للمساواة. في رأى الباحث، يعتبر هذا الأمر من أحد التميزات الموجودة في كتب التفسير بإندونيسيا. رغم من وجود الفرق في المنهج، لكن توجد همزة الوصل في الأساس بين المنهج والآخر لأنهما ينظران في أهمية الموضوعية للتفسير في البحث عن الحلول للمشاكل الاجتماعية في المجتمع المذكور.

لكن هذه المحاولة لم تظهر بدون عقبات، لأن في بعض الأحوال يوجد اتجاه للدفاع عن منهج التفسير التقليدي وموضوعاته المتطورة وأثبت وجوده منذ القرون. وفي رأى من ينتمي إلى هذا الاتجاه أن ما فعله المفسرون المعاصرون بمنهجهم الحديث في فهم الكتاب المقدس يعتبر غير مقبول. هذا يرجع إلى اعتقادهم بأن ما ترك لنا تراث العلماء التقليديين مثل علوم القرآن يكفي أن يكون مصدرا غنيا ومنهجيا مناسباً لفهم الكتاب المقدس دون الحاجة إلى الاستعانة بكتب أخرى ومنهج آخر من الغير.

هذا في رأى الباحث من أهمية كتب التفسير في إندونيسيا. قد يكون المنهجان يتطوران جنبا إلى جنب، لأنهما يعتبران محاولة للعثور على رمز ديني أصيل للمسلمين بإندونيسيا في حياتهم المعاصرة.

The development of Islamic thought in Southeast Asia—in Indonesia is particular—has often been overlooked in the study of Islam.¹ In the field of Qur'anic studies, for example, while it is not uncommon to hear of world-renowned scholars as coming from Arab countries, it is certainly not the case in regards to Southeast Asia. For this reason, we often come across statements similar to this: "The majority of the new approaches to exegesis have so far been developed in the Arab countries and particularly in Egypt."² The author of the essay from which this quote was taken, Rotraud Wielandt, also makes references to some Moroccan, Algerian, Palestinian, Iraqi, Iranian, Pakistani and Indian intellectuals. Wielandt, however, makes no reference to Indonesian intellectuals at all. It is my contention that one of the main reasons for such neglect is that there are still very few Qur'an-related works that make use of Indonesian materials in the scholarship written in languages other than Indonesian (particularly English and Arabic).³ As Abdullah Saeed puts it, "[m]uch has been written and published in Indonesian ... on the Qur'an and other Islamic topics, but little made available or accessible to the non-Indonesian reader."⁴

This study wants to look at Indonesian Muslim thought in relation to the interpretation of the Qur'an, especially its methodological issues. This topic is well-worth exploring also because it has been an increasingly prominent theme in contemporary debates on Islamic reform. It is in attempts to define the purpose and methods of Islamic reform and its legitimate boundaries that the debate concerning the Qur'an (primarily its interpretive approaches) between many contemporary Muslim thinkers comes into play.⁵ This study might be regarded as an effort to show how Indonesian Muslims have sought to participate in the debate, or to be more precise to incorporate some Indonesian Muslims' views into that debate.⁶ In doing so, this study limits its scope to the discussions in the Indonesian context during the past 20 years. It is within this period that lively discussions on interpretive approaches to the Qur'an have taken place in Indonesia.⁷

It should be noted that the participants in these discussions are not only *mufasssīrūn* (Qur'an interpreters) or scholars specializing in Qur'anic studies, but also scholars from many other disciplines. This partly explains why not every idea proposed in the discussions has been applied; most of the ideas have not contributed to voluminous Qur'an commentaries. However, this is not exclusively apparent in Indonesian discourses. Many internationally-recognized

Muslim thinkers proposing 'new' hermeneutical conceptions have not written voluminous Qur'an commentaries. This should not necessarily be considered as something that puts an end to their potentially valuable contributions to illuminating the future development of Muslim culture and society.

This study also limits its scope to the published works (in books, journals and newspapers) which either formulate or offer arguments to recommend or reconsider or critique certain interpretive approaches to the Qur'an. These written discourses, would be referred to here as 'efforts to rethink interpretive approaches to the Qur'an' during the past 20 years.

Rethinking Qur'an Interpretation in the Indonesian Islamic Context

Previous studies on modern interpretations of the Qur'an as well as Muslim views of interpretive methodology have often linked the new ideas of reinterpretation and approaches to the Qur'an mainly to the influence of 'the West'. Many of these studies stress that Muslim encounters with the West (alternatively called Western scholarship, Western modernity, or Western civilization more generally), in one way or another, have had a marked impact on Muslims' redefined attitudes toward the Qur'an (and their religious traditions more broadly).⁸ Such an association is useful and valid to some degree. However, one should also remember that the reasons behind Muslims' changing understanding of the Qur'an are actually multiple and complex; therefore, one could not reduce it merely to Muslim encounters with the West.

This section of the article seeks to help the reader understand why Indonesian Muslim scholars have continuously rethought approaches to interpreting the Qur'an. This will be done by identifying some important intellectual and social settings that have arguably had an effect on their rethinking.

Contextualizing Islam in the Present World

Indonesian Muslims' endeavours to formulate favourable interpretive approaches to the Qur'an in the present day are largely motivated by their perceptions of the surrounding social reality. Their perceptions for the most part stress one of two premises: that the *reality has changed* and that the *reality has to be changed*.

Some Indonesian Muslim scholars notice that the reality has changed a lot and this changed reality has brought new challenges requiring appropriate responses. They are referring to the fact that the world has become increasingly modern or modernized, hence posing new problems. In line with such awareness, their rethinking of approaches to Qur'anic interpretation can be read as an attempt to find ways where Islam can be compatible with the current realities. In attempting to do so, the problem they are more conscious of is how to overcome the socio-historical distance between the era when the Qur'an was revealed and the modern era.

The consciousness of the changed reality is evident, for instance, in Quraish Shihab's⁹ saying while making arguments in favour of the method of thematic interpretation that "[a] variety of new problems and ideas have emerged and need to be seriously responded, [problems] which are, of course, different from those facing the society before us."¹⁰ Our society itself, argues Kuntowijoyo,¹¹ —is a 'neo-technique society' in which rationality urges us to rethink the relevance of religion in the society. Underlining the difference between the Arab and Indonesian society, Kuntowijoyo argues that what is needed in such a milieu is a reinterpretation that leads to a contextual understanding of Islam, so that "Islam becomes a religion which is more rooted in the present social changes."¹² Similarly, according to Dawam Rahardjo,¹³ Taufik Adnan Amal¹⁴ and Syamsu Rizal Panggabean,¹⁵ —if we are to make the Qur'an a guide for Muslims in the face of contemporary challenges, a new methodology of Qur'an interpretation is required.¹⁶

Some other scholars contend that the reality needs to be changed, and for this change to take place, the positive role of religious teachings is required. However, unlike Islamic orthodoxy,¹⁷ these scholars do not see that the reality has to be appropriate with the religious texts. They are more conscious of the fact that Muslims or Indonesians are dealing with the problems of backwardness, marginalization and injustice. Their rethinking of approaches to Qur'an interpretation can be seen as part of their pursuits of finding ways for Islam to transform the present conditions. In this pursuit, the problem that they are more aware of is how to close the huge gap that exists between the Qur'anic text and the social reality.

It is within this paradigm that Moeslim Abdurrahman¹⁸ —proposes his idea of *tafsir transformatif* (transformative Qur'an interpretation). For Abdurrahman, *tafsir transformatif* should be started from a 'social reading' to "understand how the exploitation which mar-

ginalizes the *mustad'afin* (oppressed social group) takes place." This social reading is important for the Qur'anic verses to become "the text which inspires social transformation," and "become 'actual' because it is read in the social process and is not treated as a chant that is separated from the real life."¹⁹

Also within this paradigm there is the idea of *tafsir emansipatoris* (emancipatory Qur'an interpretation) proposed by some young intellectuals who are affiliated with the Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat (P3M, or the Association of Islamic Boarding Schools and Society Development), Masdar F. Mas'udi.²⁰ They formulate *tafsir emansipatoris* in order to "shorten the gap which is so far too distant between the text and the reality."²¹ The existing gap must not, however, be regarded as a legitimate reason for ignoring the text. Mas'udi holds that the Holy Scripture should not be disregarded "when the Muslim community (*ummah*) has a problem of total powerlessness and backwardness."²² On the contrary, as Misrawi asserts, the Holy Scripture must address the real problems in the society, such as poverty and lack of education.²³

The need for having a transformative or 'liberal' interpretation is re-stressed by Abd Moqsih Ghazali.²⁴ According to him:

Certainly, the models [of Qur'an interpretation] which are urgently needed to be developed by the Indonesian Muslim community are ... a kind of Qur'an interpretation which focuses attention on works of advocacy for the people who are oppressed, either economically, politically, legally, or socially. In this regard, the Qur'an is not treated as an utterance which is separated from the reality, but as a text which endlessly gives inspirations to its readers for bringing about transformation within society.²⁵

Considering that they are driven by their perceptions of the present reality, it is not surprising that Indonesian Muslim scholars formulate some 'alternative' methods of Qur'an interpretation that put social reading and social aims as crucial parts of their interpretive frameworks. This is quite evident in the ideas of Kuntowijoyo, Amal and Panggabean, Abdurrahman, and P3M.

Kuntowijoyo is well-known for the idea of 'the Qur'an as a paradigm' and 'synthetic-analytic approach'.²⁶ He defines the Qur'anic paradigm as "a construction of knowledge that enables us to understand the reality as the Qur'an understands it."²⁷ To support the realization of such a paradigm, Kuntowijoyo proposes the 'synthetic-analytic approach' to understanding the Qur'an, that is, 1) to obtain moral lessons from the Qur'anic stories and metaphors for psycho-

logical transformation (this is the synthetic aspect); and 2) to render normative concepts of the Qur'an into objective and empirical realities for social transformation (the analytic aspect). The second aspect implies that analyses of Qur'anic statements have to bring about Qur'anic theoretical constructs. It is the elaboration of these constructs that would constitute the process of Qur'anic theories formulation which in turn generates 'the Qur'anic paradigm'.²⁸

Amal and Panggabean suggest two conceptual frameworks concerning understanding the Qur'an and implementing its tenets. The first basically encompasses four steps: 1) understanding the topically related Qur'anic verses within their historical and Qur'anic contexts; 2) deriving the goals of the Qur'an from this context-conscious understanding; 3) studying the present situations regarding the issue; and finally 4) projecting the understanding of the Qur'an into the present situations. The second framework largely resembles the first but with different directions, i.e. 1) analyzing a particular social phenomenon with the benefit of a range of disciplines and by involving pertinent groups of people; 2) understanding Qur'anic verses on the topic pertaining to this phenomenon by taking their contexts into account; 3) construing the goals of the Qur'an in relation to the problem; and 4) assessing and dealing with the social phenomenon under discussion in light of the construed goals of the Qur'an. The aim of these two frameworks is either to give Qur'anic justification to a particular social phenomenon, or to alter the phenomenon to the point where it fits the Qur'anic goals.²⁹

Similarly, Abdurrahman underscores the necessity of putting the Qur'an face to face with social reality in order to bring about social transformation and thereby make God's ideas living. He formulates what he calls 'three interpretative domains': 1) understanding social constructs; 2) meeting this understanding with Qur'an interpretation; and 3) based on this meeting, formulating and accomplishing 'new social actions'.³⁰ Abdurrahman actually advocates the tradition of 'critical hermeneutics', being concerned with the problems of injustice, social discrepancies, oppression, and the need to bring the Qur'an to its readers' interest in justice, equity, and liberation.

The enthusiasm for 'transformation-oriented' Qur'an interpretation in Indonesia is also evident in the attempts to introduce and systematize Hassan Hanafi's theories of interpretation. One notable attempt is Ilham Saenong's *Hermeneutika Pembebasan* (2002).³¹ In Saenong's view, Hanafi offers Qur'an hermeneutics that is 'social' (and 'existential') in nature, that pays attention to and starts with contemporary problems of Muslim society. Saenong asserts

that Hanafi is obsessed with what Saenong calls '*hermeneutika pembebasan*' ('hermeneutics for liberation') that is expected to produce Qur'an interpretations which address the needs of the present Muslim community which faces various forms of oppression and backwardness; and bridge the gap between the Qur'an and problems of humanity.³²

The above explanation tells us that the spirit of the contextualization of the Qur'an into the present situations has very much coloured Indonesian Muslim endeavours to rethink interpretive approaches to the Qur'an. This spirit of contextualization itself can be attributed to the pressure from modernization (in a general sense) that has brought about rapid changes in Indonesia, and the demand for overcoming various societal problems in the country.

Modernization, which was the main development project of the New Order regime (1969-1998), has led to a partial industrialization of the Indonesian society. This development project, of course, has not been without negative consequences, but it has largely succeeded. By virtue of modernization, Indonesian society adapts 'modern' values and becomes a 'channel' for the ongoing globalization. In this era when rapid changes take place, the world has been felt as far more complex and demanding mobility.³³ It is in such a situation that attitudes toward religious doctrines and authority have been significantly reformulated. In this sense, contextualization of Islam can be regarded as a 'welcome for changes'. In fact, it has often been argued that Islam in Indonesia has remarkably experienced a renewal and revival as a 'blessing' of modernization and globalization.³⁴

However, rapid changes are not the only aspect that is apparent in the midst of development. As the development started to 'bless' certain groups of people with conveniences more than the others, the problems of social gap, inequity, exploitation and backwardness, particularly in terms of economy and education, are increasingly felt. A greater role for religion in the attempts to overcome these problems has in turn been very much expected.

Objections against Traditional Interpretive Approaches

Proposals for interpretive approach renewal might be deemed unreasonable without delegitimizing the current—and especially dominant—approaches. This is why Indonesian Muslim scholars

tend to point at the insufficiency of the bulk of Qur'anic exegeses and the existing methodological choices before they propose their own ideas.

Amin Abdullah,³⁵ for instance, strongly objects to classical approaches. He says:

... in fact there is one thing that has hitherto been overlooked or consciously ignored by classical exegetes, namely the function of the audiences (the people for whom the interpretation is) in determining the interpretation. So far the methods of Qur'an interpretation always pay attention merely to the relationship between the interpreter and the Qur'anic text, without expressing clearly the audience's interests toward the text. This might be understandable because the classical exegetes view Qur'anic exegesis more as a result of works of piety that should consequently be free from the interests of its interpreters. Or perhaps that is also because of their traumas of theological interpretation which gave rise to severe political battles in the early periods of Islam.

Regardless of these reasons, classical Qur'anic exegeses no longer offer clear meanings and functions in the life of Muslim community. Even many Qur'an interpretations are often misused for political purposes, while the claims of objectivity and truth are always asserted. The question is what can be obtained from interpretive models which unconsciously give more benefits to those in power, rather than champion the oppressed?³⁶

Ilham Saenong similarly states that, "the majority of interpretations and interpretive sciences which are inherited by Muslims up to now, believe it or not, have in part preserved the status quo and prolonged deterioration of Muslim community morally, politically, and culturally."³⁷

Such an objection is quite common, but actually Indonesian Muslim scholars often do not have the same reasons for their objections to classical ways of interpretation, nor do they have the same presuppositions towards these approaches. Here are some examples which show that their reasons and presuppositions might be contradictory to each other.

Amal and Panggabean argue that traditional approaches "result in partial understanding of Qur'anic messages." They even contend that the imposition of preconceptions or 'alien' ideas into the Qur'an has frequently occurred until now.³⁸ In order to avoid imposing ideas alien to the Qur'an, and to comprehend the Qur'an thoroughly, they suggest that the historical context and the 'literary' context (*konteks kesusastraan*) of the Qur'an should not be over-

looked.³⁹ According to Amal and Panggabean, it is the allegiance to these contexts which is often absent in theological, philosophical, Sufi, 'scientific', and legal Qur'anic exegeses so that the Qur'an is approached partially and arbitrarily. Instead of paying attention to the historical background and 'literary' context of Qur'anic verses, theologians, philosophers, Sufis, jurists, as well as modern exegetes divert the meanings of the verses in support of their ideas.⁴⁰

Thus, Amal and Panggabean recognize the majority of exegeses as partial and tarnished by the imposition of alien ideas upon the meanings of the Qur'an. Quite the opposite, Abdurrahman thinks that what he calls 'common orthodox exegeses' strongly emphasize the importance of purifying the interpretation at the linguistic level from the influence of thoughts outside the Qur'an, such as philosophy and other systems of ideas. Abdurrahman disagrees with such a model of interpretation since what is more crucial to him is keeping in mind the aim to accomplish 'new historical actions' to fight for justice while interacting with the Qur'an, so that these orthodox exegeses, for him, are not very significant.⁴¹

On the other hand, Zuhairi Misrawi contends that classical exegeses can be classified as 'textual exegeses' and 'ideological exegeses'. Textual exegeses are those which "regard the text as everything", while ideological exegeses are those which conceive the text as the source of legitimacy for a particular ideology or thought.⁴² The first seems to be congruent with what Abdurrahman calls 'ordinary orthodox exegeses', whereas the second seems to be congruent with what Amal and Panggabean refer to as exegeses which impose foreign ideas upon the Qur'an. However, the intention of Misrawi (P3M) is relatively similar to that of Abdurrahman, namely to recommend a pro-emancipation model of Qur'an interpretation. For both, Qur'an interpretation should be started with a close look at social problems and end up with emancipative social actions. Both refuse traditionally theo-centric classical models of interpretation, and accept anthropo-centric liberal models of interpretation instead.

In Indonesia, objections against classical interpretive approaches, though recurrent in the contemporary writings, have elicited remarkable responses only quite recently from those arguing against the adoption of Western contemporary hermeneutical theories in the Qur'anic scholarship. This group shows their admiration for classical Islamic intellectual heritage, including the classical *tafsir* tradition. For them, *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* has provided rich and relevant approaches to understanding the Qur'an, so that one does not need

to adopt approaches of understanding from other traditions like Western theories of hermeneutics.⁴³

This brief explanation is to show that the spirit of 'critical interaction' with tradition has also inspired Indonesian Muslim endeavours to rethink interpretive approaches to the Qur'an. This is why some of them express their objections to classical approaches mainly to support interpretive approach renewal, while some others express their appreciations toward classical approaches mainly to reconsider this renewal.

Indonesian Islamic Reform

Indonesian Muslim rethinking of approaches to interpreting the Qur'an for the most part can be read as resulting from the spirit of reform in contemporary Indonesian Islam. Particularly since the 1980s, reformist thoughts have been largely advocated by Muslim intelligentsia who are involved in both 'Islamic' and 'secular' campuses of higher education and both 'Islamic' and 'secular' non-governmental organizations.⁴⁴ From the 1970s until the 1990s, this Muslim intelligentsia launched *gerakan pembaruan pemikiran Islam* (Islamic thought renewal movement) that was very much characterized by—to borrow Fazlur Rahman's paradigm—'Islamic neo-modernism'. This Islamic neo-modernism is marked by a general agreement on these following central principles: a commitment to rationality and reform, a belief in the importance of *ijtihad* contextualization, an acceptance of social and religious pluralism, the disassociation of religion from political parties, and non-sectarian stance of the state.⁴⁵

In relation to the Qur'an, this Islamic neo-modernist movement has often used rational and contextual approaches to it, relating Qur'anic logics to two historical and cultural contexts: one is of the time and circumstances of the Prophet when it was revealed, and the other is of the contemporary society who needs its guidance.⁴⁶ By relating Qur'anic logia to the first context, basically the neo-modernists seeks to find the enduring values or the general tendency and ethos of the Qur'an; and by relating Qur'anic logia to the second context, they basically seek to produce interpretations which are adaptive to social changes. This trend of neo-modernism has in turn introduced the historicity of the Qur'an as one of the main themes in the methodological discourse on the Qur'an in Indonesia.

In addition to the trend of Islamic neo-modernism which then has been adopted by liberal Islam (*Islam liberal*), the discourses of Islamic reformism in Indonesia in the past two decades has also been marked by strong concerns regarding ‘the problem of oppression’, partly as a response to the tendency of liberal Islam to be merely concerned with ‘the problem of diversity or plurality’ or with the ‘liberalization of thought’ (*liberalisasi pemikiran*) not with ‘liberation’. While liberal Islam continuously responds to every claim of monopoly of interpretation, and campaigns for inclusive theology, religious tolerance and pluralism, multiculturalism, egalitarianism, freedom, democracy, and dialogue of civilizations; this trend—which can be seen, for example, in those who identify their Islamic thought as *Islam transformatif* and *Islam emansipatoris*—shows sensitivity to any form of exploitation and injustice, campaign for a sort of theology of liberation, and often raise such themes as poverty, corruption, human rights violations, gender empowerment, and philanthropy. In relation to the Qur’an, those involved in this trend have often insisted that the Qur’an is not an ‘elitist’ divine revelation, and that it must encourage social transformation and deal with the actual reality of the community.

Another important trend is that of *Islamisasi* (Islamization). This trend is a response to the ideas of ‘secularization’—in its various meanings—that are promoted by neo-modernist or liberal Muslims. This trend is shaped by those who argue in favour of the Islamization of sciences (in its various definitions), Islamic political, economic, and educational institutions, *masyarakat Islami* (an ‘Islamic society’ that is ‘free’ from such things as pornography, gambling and other immoral deeds), the implementation of *shari’ah* (Islamic law), and the degeneration of the West.

Although the *Islam transformatif* camp has also significantly shaped the discourses of Islamic reform, it is between the supporters of *Islam liberal* and *Islamisasi* that the dispute repeatedly occurs.⁴⁷ In relation to Qur’anic studies, the debate generally relates to the issue of the application of Western theories of hermeneutics. While the former proposes these hermeneutical theories as a methodological tool to study the Qur’an, the latter rejects this idea. In point of fact, many of the writings under study herein can be said as generating from *Islam liberal* and *Islam transformatif* camps, except in the issue of the implementation of Western hermeneutics in which *Islamisasi* camp has given strong reactions.

The dynamics among these trends of Islamic thought is situated after the so-called 'Muslim intellectual boom', that is, the sharp increase in the number of Muslim intelligentsia with higher education qualifications, as well as the number of those who completed postgraduate degrees overseas.⁴⁸ This Muslim intellectual boom can be attributed to the growth of Indonesia's economy, primarily as a consequence of the development projects of the New Order. In this period – that is, since the 1980s – the number of Muslim students who pursue or have completed their graduate and postgraduate studies in Western countries—most importantly in Canada, the United States, Netherlands, and Australia—was far greater than in any former period of Indonesian history, mainly due to the availability of foreign scholarships. As for Islamic studies in the Middle East, there has been a significant stream from Indonesia to Iran in the last decade, even though Egypt remains the most important centre for Indonesian students. In the country itself, this period witnessed significant developments of the State Institutes for Islamic Studies (IAIN), particularly in Jakarta and Yogyakarta,⁴⁹ which have enlarged the horizons of Islamic thought as reformist ideas continually emerge from these higher education institutions.⁵⁰

These facts have in turn made Islamic reform in Indonesia more intensified. With regard to the discourses on the Qur'an discussed herein, the popularity of thematic method can be attributed mainly to the combination of the role that IAIN has played and the role that the graduates from Egypt (most importantly Quraish Shihab) have played; meanwhile, the emergence of energetic discourses on Western hermeneutical theories can be attributed mainly to the combination of the role that IAIN has played and the role that the graduates from Western centres of study have played.

The dynamics of Islamic thought in Indonesia since the 1980s has also been made more lively by the emergence of numerous 'Islamic' publishers—such as Pustaka, Mizan, Gema Insani Press, Pustaka Firdaus, Paramadina, LKiS, and Serambi—which not only facilitate Indonesian Muslims' ideas of reform to obtain wide readership, but also intensively translate the works of Muslim thinkers (as well as non-Muslim thinkers) into Bahasa Indonesia so that these works are widely circulated among educated-Indonesians. These thinkers, some of whose works have been translated into Bahasa Indonesia in the last two decades, are those who lived or are still living in various places of the Muslim world, such as: Egypt (e.g. asan al-Bannā, Sayyid Quṭb, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍawī,

Hassan Hanafi, and ‘Alī Harb), Iran (e.g. Ali Shariati and Murtada Mutahhari), Morocco (e.g. Fatima Mernissi and Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī), Pakistan (e.g. Riffat Hassan), and Syria (e.g. Muḥammad Syahrūr); as well as the non-Muslim world: such as the US (Fazlur Rahman, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Amina Wadud, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na‘im, Farid Esack, and Khaled Abou el-Fadl), Europe (e.g. Mohammed Arkoun, Ziauddin Sardar, and Naīr āmid Abū Zayd), and India (e.g. Asghar Ali-Engineer).

Thus, the publishers of the books of such authors—together with graduates of overseas universities—have a significant role in transmitting worldwide discourses of Islamic thought into Indonesia in the boom time of Muslim intelligentsia. Given the intensity of this transmission process, it is not surprising that the ideas of Islamic reform in Indonesia are basically (still) a continuation of the reformist ideas spread in the Muslim world. One can see that not only have the ideas of internationally-recognized Muslim thinkers widely spread in Indonesia, but also many ideas of reform promoted by Indonesian scholars echo, resemble, parallel, or modify the ideas of those thinkers. This is also true in the case of ideas related to approaches to Qur’an interpretation. For instance, one can notice how close are the ideas of Taufik Adnan Amal and Syamsu Rizal Panggabean with those of Fazlur Rahman, and the ideas of *tafsir transformatif* and *tafsir emansipatoris* with those of Hassan Hanafi, and how Amin Abdullah modifies Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī’s conceptions on the ‘Arab mind’ to construct his idea of ‘*al-ta’wīl al-‘ilmī*’.⁵¹

Conceptions on the Method of Thematic Interpretation

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 dissatisfaction with the classical ‘chained’ or sequential style of interpreting the Qur’an verse-by-verse mostly in accordance with the *mushaf* (corpus) arrangement, known as *tafsir musalsal* or *tafsir tahlili* or *tafsir tajzi’i*. 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 remain ‘uninterrupted’ until now, continuously attracting the writers and readers of *tafsirs*,⁵² many Indonesian

scholars would recommend thematic approach to interpreting the Qur'an, instead of the *musalsal* approach.

The classical approach is now considered to be "resulting in overlapping comprehension" and "unable to present balanced Qur'anic messages"⁵³ as well as "making the Qur'anic guides scattered and not delivered to its readers wholly."⁵⁴ The thematic method, on the other hand, is regarded as having some worthwhile qualities. It offers the unity of Qur'anic concepts.⁵⁵ Moreover, it can be expected to provide new perspectives and thereby to be a reliable way to attain new explanations about conventional understandings.⁵⁶ More importantly, this method is considered to be "able to bring us to Qur'anic views about various problems of life and the answers for them."⁵⁷ In the context of struggles for gender equity for instance, the thematic interpretation would arguably lead to more favourable results than *musalsal* interpretation.⁵⁸

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—as it has been argued for the case of the Muslim world more generally⁵⁹—a long time before the 1980's.⁶⁰ However, efforts to systematize thematic approaches to interpreting the Qur'an have been made more recently. It may be argued⁶¹ that the method of thematic interpretation was pioneered by Fazlur Rahman particularly through his *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (1980) in which he seeks to systematically present 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 1983⁶² would arguably be the first noteworthy introduction of thematic method in Indonesia.

Rahman, however, does not provide his readers with any ideas on how thematic interpretation should be applied. Therefore, one may agree with Quraish Shihab⁶³ who, referring to 'Abd al-Hayy 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 Ahmad Sayyid al-Kumī (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)⁶⁴ could be considered as the first notable introduction of thematic method in Indonesia. In this article, which was once presented in Makassar in 1983,⁶⁵ Shihab introduces *tafsīr*

mawḍūʿī based on al-Farmāwī's formulation.⁶⁶ Later, in line with the success of Shihab's "*Membumikan*" *Al-Quran* (1992) where a slightly revised version of the aforementioned article is included,⁶⁷ this article becomes a—perhaps the most—popular Indonesian language introduction to the concept of *tafsīr mawḍūʿī*,⁶⁸ 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."⁶⁹ Secondly, he recommends that the *mawḍūʿī* exegetes prioritize the themes closely related to the real problems faced by society; to do so, they of course 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 *mufasssīr* in contemporary Indonesia, has recurrently employed the method of thematic interpretation in his works. One of his most important works is *Wawasan Al-Quran* (1996) which was made up from his 33 papers presented in routine religious learning forum (*pengajian*) at Istiqlal Mosque, Jakarta, since 1993.⁷⁰ In line with his suggestion to deal with the problems faced by society, many of the themes discussed in this book have something to do with social life, such as justice, welfare, the 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 *Tafsīr Kontekstual Al-Quran* (1989), which argues for the need for a 'thematic-chronological' approach to contextually interpreting the Qur'an; Abdul Djalal's *Urgensi Tafsīr Mawḍūʿī pada Masa Kini* (1990), which initially was his professor's inaugural speech in Surabaya in 1986,⁷¹ 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 Tafsīr Al-Qur'an", that was published in a famous scholarly journal, *Ulumul Qur'an* (1990).⁷² 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’.⁷³ His series of thematic commentary continually pick key terms in the Qur’an, such as *hanif*, *din*, *taqwa*, *khalifah*, *jihad*, and *ulu al-albab*, 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.⁷⁴ 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.

At the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta where Shihab has spent a number of years teaching, 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.⁷⁵ My own survey shows that from 2001 to 2005, there are 50 (58,1%) master theses using the 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 the thematic approach out of 65 Qur’an-related doctoral dissertations submitted to the faculty. Many of these Masters and PhD theses that interpret the Qur’an thematically have been subsequently published as books.⁷⁶ This trend does not exclusively take place at UIN Jakarta.⁷⁷

Notions Concerning the Method of Thematic Interpretation

In Indonesian discourses on the thematic method of Qur’anic 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.⁷⁸ Consequently, comprehending the problems prevailing in the community is a requirement for *mawḍūʿī* exegetes. Shihab thus associates *tafsīr mawḍūʿī* with social purposes. Indeed, he stresses that themes which are too theoretical should be avoided.⁷⁹ Similarly, Taufik Adnan Amal and Syamsu Rizal Panggabean argue that what is important in interpreting the Qurʾan thematically is to provide practical Qurʾanic solutions toward social phenomena, and this necessarily requires a close look at social reality.⁸⁰

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 interpreting the Qurʾan in light of the Qurʾan itself. Hence, this is basically a re-accentuation of the classical concept that *al-Qurʾān yufassiru baʿḍuhu baʿḍa* (the parts of the Qurʾan explain each other), or as ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib once exclaimed, “*istantīq al-Qurʾān* (let the Qurʾan speak).”⁸¹ In fact, the thematic method is considered to be the best because it allows us to keep interpreting the Qurʾan with the Qurʾan—the best method according to such eminent scholars as Ibn Kathīr, al-Zarkashī, and Ibn Taymiyyah.⁸² In this case, the thematic interpretation of the Qurʾan differs from traditional commentaries of the *musalsal* kind, many of which have sometimes tried to interpret the Qurʾan with the Qurʾan. What distinguishes thematic interpretations from ‘chained’ or—in Hassan Hanafi’s term—‘longitudinal’ interpretations 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 interpretations pursue Qurʾan’s answers and thereby are more rigorous in presenting the Qurʾan as a unity on its own terms.

The second principle highlighted is to pay close attention to the chronology of the Qurʾan revelation—which is said to have been frequently neglected in the application of the concept of *al-Qurʾān yufassiru baʿḍuhu baʿḍan*.⁸³ A chronology-conscious interpretation is considered to be important because verses of the Qurʾan were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in response to certain socio-historical events; therefore by knowing the chronology of the Qurʾan, one can understand how the Qurʾan reacts to a certain phenomenon.⁸⁴ This chronological approach is also regarded as imperative to avoid any mistake in drawing a legal conclusion.⁸⁵ Moreover, the chronological approach is helpful in better understanding the

evolution of the meanings of a word or concept in the Qur'an.⁸⁶ 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.⁸⁷

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.⁸⁸ Two of his main proposals are to consider the Qur'an as an 'encyclopaedia' and al-Fātiḥah as the Qur'an in a nutshell. As an 'encyclopaedia', 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. The development of the meaning of the term '*rabb*'—an example used 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.⁸⁹

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 introduction and core of the Qur'an, is repeatedly explained in the Qur'an.⁹⁰ He justifies his argument by quoting al-ijr/15: 87 which states, "*And We have bestowed upon thee the Seven Oft-repeated (Verses) and the Grand Qur'an.*" The *mufasssīrūn* generally understand the Seven Oft-repeated Verses (*sab'an min al-mathānī*) as al-Fātiḥah. Al-Fātiḥah is sometimes also called 'the Grand Qur'an' (*al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*). Rahardjo, moreover, identifies al-Fātiḥah as *muḥkamāt* verses in relation to the other verses in the Qur'an which are *mutashābihāt*. In this respect he defines *muḥkamāt* verses as 'deciding' or 'determining' ones, and *mutashābihāt* verses as 'resembling' ones. In this case, he refers to āl 'Imrān/3: 7 which identifies *āyāt muḥkamāt* as *umm al-Kitāb* ('the mother of the Book')—the term

that Rahardjo underlines as one of the popular names of al-Fātiḥah. 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.⁹¹

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*,—*rahīmān*—*rahīm* and *ṣīrāṭ 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.⁹² However, Rahardjo himself has not yet realized this idea fully; he has merely hinted at preliminary incomplete examples.⁹³

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-paragraph 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.⁹⁴

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; and 7) Examining the verses thoroughly by identifying verses having similar meanings, harmonizing between the *āmm* and the *khāṣṣ*, between the *muṭlaq* and the *muqayyad*, and synchronizing the verses which are seemingly contradictive, and explaining the *nāsikh* 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.⁹⁵

The main differences between these two schemes can be summarized as follows. First, 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) 'culturalize' 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. One can see his motivation in this quotation:

I hope that the methodological approach to examining and discussing the Qur'an I have mentioned earlier could open up a new perspective in order to entrench the Qur'an within society more intensively. I expect that this method would enable us to open up new horizons in understanding the Qur'an. So far, there have been already many Qur'an commentaries that, although written by eminent religious scholars, are felt to be no longer relevant to the problems we face now. By using certain key themes, we would perhaps be able to get new explanations from the Qur'an itself on the meanings that we have so far accepted conventionally.⁹⁶

This paragraph implies that what he talks about (and carries out) is essentially an attempt to (contextually) grasp the Qur'an and then present it, 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, while al-Farmāwī regards '*ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Qur'anic sciences) to be critical in 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 *tafsir* 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.⁹⁷ On the other hand, this may be attributed to the fact that he was not formally trained in Islamic studies—he majored in economic development. However, Rahardjo himself claims that he continued studying Islamic disciplines himself even 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).⁹⁸ In addition, while Rahardjo admits that there is indeed benefit in the study of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, he argues that not everyone who majors in Islamic studies tends to accommodate concepts of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* in their interpretive frameworks

This is apparent, for instance, in the case of Taufik Adnan Amal and Syamsu Rizal 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 conclusions.⁹⁹

These steps also differ in some respect from those of al-Farmāwī. Firstly, unlike al-Farmāwī's, Amal and Panggabean—like Rahardjo—principally do not take many of the concepts of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*

as tools for comprehending the relationship among Qur'anic verses. In fact, Amal and Panggabean even argue that these concepts (e.g. *muḥkam-mutashābih*, *nāsikh-mansūkh*) for the most part result from the confusion about the gradual process of the stages of Qur'anic teachings and supposedly contradictive verses, and authoritarian attitude of classical scholars (mainly *fuqahā'*), and not 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.¹⁰⁰

Secondly, Amal and Panggabean place emphasis on the interpretation of the Qur'an in its socio-historical context. This goes beyond *asbāb al-nuzūl*. This historical context, in their Fazlur Rahman-influenced view, must include both the pre-Qur'an era and the Qur'an revelation era, which could be reconstructed by referring to literature from the times of *jāhiliyyah* (pre-Islam), historical accounts that exist in *tafsirs*, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *ḥadīth*, contemporary research findings, and, of course, the explanation given by the Qur'an itself.¹⁰¹

Thirdly, Amal and Panggabean highlight the need for revealing the 'aims' of the Qur'an. The complete understanding of these (moral) aims is important for them for two reasons. First, this understanding would shed light on the meaning of specific verses of the Qur'an. This would enable one to avoid partial and 'atomistic' interpretations of the Qur'anic verses.¹⁰² Second, this understanding is a must if one wants to suggest 'Qur'anic solutions' to social problems. 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 solutions. Meanwhile analogy (*qiyās*) would have only a limited scope and would in practice tend to be haphazard.¹⁰³ Again, here one can see noticeable influence of Fazlur Rahman on both scholars.

Thus, we have seen three important models of thematic interpretation that have been 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.¹⁰⁴

Reconsidering of The Historicity of the Qur'an

In the previous section, we saw that several scholars are of the opinion that taking a full account of the chronology of revelation is of crucial importance for thematically interpreting the Qur'an. We have also seen a suggestion for having a closer look at the dialectical relation between the revealed text and history (particularly the time of the revelation) in the scheme of the thematic method. This parallels the second main trend in the Indonesian Muslim endeavours to rethink interpretive approaches to the Qur'an during the last 20 years, namely the reconsideration of the historical and cultural context of the revelation.

This reconsideration by and large reflects an enthusiasm for discovering the meaning of the Qur'an for believers in today's world, and by so doing realizing the doctrine *al-Qur'an t̄alīh li kull zamān wa makān* (the Qur'an is appropriate for all times and places). Generally, it is the necessity for contextualizing the messages of the Qur'an in the present that stimulates Indonesian Muslim scholars to think of the relation between the meaning of the Qur'an and the historical and cultural backgrounds of its revelation, even though they embrace different positions as regards whether this background must be taken into account while interpreting the Qur'an.

One can identify two distinct positions pertaining to this issue. The first is that the Qur'an has to be understood through a historical contextualization of the text. The second is that the Qur'an has to be understood by detaching it from its 'historical burdens'. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that the first has attracted more attention in Indonesian Muslims' discourses.

Endeavours to (Re)consider Historical Approaches to Interpreting the Qur'an

The Indonesian discourses on historical approaches to interpreting the Qur'an seem to owe very much to the popularity of Fazlur Rahman in Indonesia, which can be attributed partly to the influence of two of his Indonesian disciples, Nurcholish Madjid and Ahmad Syafii Maarif.¹⁰⁵ Rahman's thought on the methodology of Qur'an interpretation has been introduced as early as the mid-1980s most importantly through a translation of his book, *Islam and Modernity* (1985),¹⁰⁶ and a translation of his article, "Interpreting the Qur'an", included in *Metode dan Alternatif Neomodernisme Islam* (1987).¹⁰⁷ What is relevant to our discussion herein is that in Rahman's view

(also mentioned in both books), contemporary exegesis must focus on the historical circumstances of revelation as the most valuable means of understanding the verses of the Qur'an.¹⁰⁸ His suggestion is mainly based on the premise that "the Qur'an is the divine response, through the Prophet's mind to the moral and social situation of the Prophet's Arabia, particularly the problems of the commercial Meccan society of his day."¹⁰⁹ In line with this suggestion, he advocates that the process of interpretation nowadays requires a double movement: from the present to the Qur'anic period and then back to the present.¹¹⁰

This idea of double movement has been adapted by Amal and Panggabean in formulating their idea of *tafsir kontekstual* (1989).¹¹¹ It is not surprising that understanding the Qur'an within its proper historical-chronological context is one of the key concepts in their approach to Qur'an interpretation. This concept means that the understanding of the Qur'an has to be 'interacted' with its 'micro historical background' which is *asbāb al-nuzūl*, and 'macro historical background' which is the historical conditions in Arabia before and during the era of revelation.

In the 1980s, the idea of understanding the Qur'an within the context of the struggle of the Prophet was also introduced by Dawam Rahardjo in some essays included in *Al-Fatihah Paradigma Al-Quran* (1988).¹¹² However, in this case Rahardjo gets inspiration mainly not from Rahman's idea of hermeneutics and interpretation, but from the method used by his ex-teacher, K.H. Abbas Dasuki, in the latter's *tafsir* learning circle, and from Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Ḥayāt Muḥammad* as well as Abū al-A'lā al-Mawdūdī's book translated into Bahasa Indonesia as *Prinsip-prinsip Utama dalam Memahami al-Qur'an* (1971).¹¹³ Rahardjo contends that the struggle of the Prophet, and the history of pre-Islamic Arabia and Islamic Arabia more broadly, are the 'wider occasions of revelation' in which we can contextualize the Qur'anic verses. His argument is mainly based on the premise that the Qur'an is 'a book of proselytization' (*kitab dakwah*) which was revealed in line with missionary considerations.

The idea of relying on the socio-historical background in order to understand the meaning of the Qur'anic text has received some criticism from Jalaluddin Rakhmat¹¹⁴ in his foreword to Taufik Adnan Amal's *Islam dan Tantangan Modernitas* (1989) in which he cautions that there are many problems to be resolved if one is going to realize this idea.¹¹⁵ This suggestion of paying serious attention to the socio-historical background of revelation is, moreover, deliberately

ignored by Kuntowijoyo in his *Paradigma Islam* (1991) in which he argues for the need for a methodology that can separate the Qur'an from the burdens of its past historical context.¹¹⁶

Views Reconsidering the Historical Context of the Qur'an

As mentioned earlier, there are two distinct positions on the significance of paying attention to the historical context of the Qur'an in interpreting its text. Both positions seek to answer the question of whether one should understand the Qur'an in or beyond its historical context.

Understanding the Qur'an in Its Historical Context

Some scholars are of the opinion that it is not feasible to contextualize the messages of the Qur'an in the present without properly understanding it in its historical context.¹¹⁷ It is their firm conviction that the Qur'anic text is related to history in a much more comprehensive way to the point that exegetical methods have to be fundamentally changed in light of this dialectical relation between the revealed text and its historical circumstances.

In the classical history of Qur'an interpretation, the recognition of the close relationship between the revealed text and history has actually been expressed mainly through the concept of *asbāb al-nuzūl* ('reasons for revelation'). However, in the Indonesian Muslim discourse, classical scholars are often considered as not recognizing the consequence that the Qur'an had to be understood as a historical text; this is why they regarded *asbāb al-nuzūl* as little more than footnotes to the revelation itself. Amal and Panggabean have asserted that, "the existence of *asbāb al-nuzūl* in the traditional Qur'anic exegeses, not only does not interact with the commentary, but also uncritical. The quotations of the materials of *asbāb al-nuzūl* are attached without being firstly examined in their historical context."¹¹⁸ Zuhairi Misrawi and Rumadi are also disappointed that "in conservative exegeses, *asbāb al-nuzūl* tends to be understood in an ad hoc way, being put in the framework of *bayānī*¹¹⁹ epistemology to support orthodox views."¹²⁰

Therefore, these scholars recommend the application of 'wider *asbāb al-nuzūl*' or the 'macro-historical background', most importantly the history of the Islamic Arabia at the Prophet's time and the pre-Islamic Arabia, in addition to the 'micro-historical background' which is equivalent to the traditional meaning of *asbāb al-nuzūl*.¹²¹

Moreover, they emphasize the need for interpreting the Qur'an in its broader historical context, in line with the historical development of Islam's emergence or the development of the Prophet's mission.

Why is such a historical approach considered to be important? The main reason is because, in Amal and Panggabean's view, the Qur'an was a response to the historical situations as well as religious beliefs and practices of the Arab society before and during the time of revelation. Given this fact, the import or meaning of a given Qur'anic statement has to be understood by studying the historical situation or problem to which it was the answer without which the significance of the Qur'anic teachings would not be well-understood.¹²² In addition, Amal and Panggabean argue that understanding the historical background of the revelation will prevent us from superimposing preconceptions on the Qur'an while interpreting it.

For Amal and Panggabean, who adapt Fazlur Rahman's interpretive methodology, studying this socio-historical background is a necessary step prior to 'distilling' the social-moral objectives from specific Qur'anic answers to the situation or the problem in this background. It is argued that without studying this socio-historical background, the objectives of the Qur'an could not be inferred.¹²³ Such a study will help us to identify the social-moral phenomena in the Arab society at that time, the Qur'an's treatment toward these phenomena, and the way in which the Qur'an modified or transformed these phenomena in order to make them consistent with the Qur'anic worldview. By doing so, we will have guidance for dealing with our present problems, particularly in order to appropriate them to the objectives of the Qur'an.¹²⁴

According to Amal and Panggabean, any theme in the Qur'an can and should be interpreted in the light of its chronological socio-historical background. It is primarily in this aspect that they disagree with Fazlur Rahman—and approve Alford T. Welch's critiques of Rahman. Rahman has suggested that in the case of understanding theological or metaphysical statements of the Qur'an, the specific background of the revelation is not required.¹²⁵ In fact, except for the treatment of a few themes, Rahman does not use the chronological procedure—he uses the logical procedure instead—for synthesizing themes in his *Major Themes of the Qur'an*.¹²⁶ Questioning Rahman's conclusion, Amal and Panggabean argue that even theological and metaphysical issues in the Qur'an have to be interpreted in the light of the historical and chronological approaches in order to attain a comprehensive understanding of these issues. Without historical

and chronological approaches, Qur'anic theological and metaphysical teachings will appear to be inconsistent and confusing. They show that even metaphysical concepts like *malā'ikah* and *Allāh* have developed in accordance with the development of Muhammad's mission.¹²⁷

While Amal and Panggabean criticize Rahman for not paying attention to the historical-chronological background of Qur'anic metaphysical teachings, Jalaluddin Rakhmat criticizes Rahman for not clarifying how the socio-historical background of revelation can be reconstructed. As Rakhmat states:

Everyone would like to agree that historical context is greatly needed to understand the Qur'an. Everyone would know also that *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *tārīkh* are very important. Both are really needed especially to determine the (ideal-moral) objectives or targets that the Qur'an seeks to achieve or the ratio legis. What people want to know is how Rahman elucidates the verses that have no *asbāb al-nuzūl*; also, how we can verify the social situations within *tārīkh* that we can access.¹²⁸

Rakhmat views that relying on a historical approach to understanding the Qur'anic is problematic. For one thing, he emphasizes the fact that it is quite difficult to obtain a complete and valid description of the socio-historical situations in which the Qur'an was revealed. In his view, the problem lies on the fact that we must rely on *tārīkh* and *asbāb al-nuzūl* literatures. *Tārīkh* sources are often not free from biases. Meanwhile *asbāb al-nuzūl* literatures, as Rahman himself admits, are often paradoxical. In fact, *ḥadīths* on *asbāb al-nuzūl* are not many, and the majority of these few *ḥadīths* are not highly reliable.¹²⁹ This does not mean that Rakhmat disapproves the principle of understanding the Qur'an in its historical context. As the above quotation implies, what needs approval or disapproval is the choice of methods and sources in grasping the historical context of the revelation, rather than the benefits of historical approach.

Understanding the Qur'an beyond Its Historical Context

Unlike previous scholars who emphasize the significance of the Qur'an's historical context in interpretation, Kuntowijoyo and Moeslim Abdurrahman to a lesser extent assert that what is more important in interpreting the Qur'an is to liberate it from its 'historical burdens' in order to avoid a distorted understanding of its eternal message. According to Abdurrahman, social reality of the historical episode in which the Qur'an was revealed has some limi-

tations which may distort our understanding of its true universal message, and the latter can therefore be understood if one is capable of deconstructing the 'historical obstacles' (*kendala-kendala sejarah*) of that episode.¹³⁰ This parallels his appreciation of Maḥmūd Muḥammad Thāhā's idea that in the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of Qur'anic interpretation, Muslims should look to the Meccan period, rather than to the Medinah period, which he believes was coloured by 'historical distortions'.¹³¹

Kuntowijoyo even talks about this historical 'burden' in its broader sense, indicating that it includes not only the history of the revelation but also the past history of Qur'anic interpretation. He argues:

Even though the Qur'an can also be regarded as a historical document since almost all of its statements refer to actual events in accordance with its historical context when it was revealed, its main message is actually transcendental, beyond the time. To understand this message, one needs methodology which is able to detach the Qur'anic text from its context, namely by releasing the textual meaning from contextual interpretation and its historical biases. Perhaps by doing so, one would be criticized for disregarding the Qur'an's historical context, or disregarding certain contextual interpretation of the Qur'an as apparent in many of classical intellectual heritages.

This critique is, in fact, correct to some extent. However, our purpose is to bring the Qur'anic text into an interpretive level which is free from historical burdens and biases. In other words, one wants to direct the meanings of the text—which often serves as a response to historical reality—to its universal messages and transcendental meanings. And next, [one] also wants to liberate [the existing] interpretations of the Qur'an from certain biases that flow from the limitations of historical situations ...¹³²

Although Kuntowijoyo does not explicitly state that the historical context of the Qur'an is unimportant, he does highlight the need for liberating the Qur'an from being interpreted solely in the historical context. This suggestion appears in the context of Kuntowijoyo's affirmation of the necessity of theory building—particularly social theory building—based on the Qur'an. For Kuntowijoyo, this means that the Qur'an should be seen as a 'paradigm' as a construction of knowledge that enables us to understand reality as the Qur'an understands it. This further means a recognition of the existence of a *struktur transendental* ('transcendental structure') that serves as a 'reference' for understanding reality. In line with this recognition, the Qur'an has to be understood as having a transcendental con-

struction of the pure idea, an autonomous and ideal order or system of idea, to which one can refer for understanding reality.¹³³ It is as this 'reference' that the Qur'an must be detached from any historical burden and bias, including that of the historical circumstances of Qur'an revelation.

Indeed, Kuntowijoyo has spoken about the importance of 'historical understanding' (*pemahaman historis*) of the Qur'an while proposing his idea of 'programs of reinterpretation' for 're-actualizing' Islam. However, what he means by this is a call for contextualizing our understanding of the Qur'an into our contemporary situations, rather than an appeal for taking a full account of the historical circumstances of the era of Qur'an revelation in interpretation. Drawing some examples, he states that:

So far our understanding of the narratives in the Qur'an tends to be ahistorical, whereas in fact the Qur'an tells us about these narratives in order for us to think historically. For instance, we often understand the story of the oppressed Israelis during the Pharaoh era only in the context of that time. We never think that the so-called oppressed actually exist at all times and in every social system. In the era of feudalism, in the system of capitalism, and in the system of socialism, there are always the oppressed (*mustad'afin*). For that reason, we have to explain who these oppressed people are in history, including at the present, namely in the system of social economy which makes possible the accumulation of capital in the hands of few elites. Another example is that in a Qur'anic verse, we are commanded to 'liberate the shackled'. By thinking historically, we will be able to identify who is meant by 'the shackled' in our socio-political system today.¹³⁴

Elsewhere Kuntowijoyo reasserts that, "in order to understand, someone has to know his or her historical context."¹³⁵ This implies that what is more important to bear in mind is one's current conditions in interpreting the Qur'an. In the context of his idea of *strukturalisme transendental* ('transcendental structuralism'), this notion is again stressed. In Kuntowijoyo's view, an understanding of history (*kesadaran sejarah*)—meaning that we have to realize 'the socio-historical distance' between Islam in seventh century Arabia and Islam in contemporary Indonesia for instance, as Muslim society has changed or transformed over time—is essential if we want to apply the social 'episteme' that emerged fifteen centuries ago in our present-day society.¹³⁶

Scholars such as Kuntowijoyo, however, who prefer to interpret the Qur'an in light of the socio-historical conditions in which it was revealed, do not view the present context to be irrelevant

altogether. Rather, the emphasis on contextualization of the Qur'an is followed-up differently; while some scholars understand this as a demand for taking into account the socio-historical background of the revelation, others see this as an liberating the Qur'an from its historical burdens.¹³⁷

Controversies Over Western Hermeneutics

In recent years, *hermeneutika* has been a serious bone of contention in Indonesian Muslim discourses. While this discussion of *hermeneutika* does not always relate to Qur'anic studies, it is on the utilization of *hermeneutika* in Qur'anic studies that the contention focuses. Some scholars argue for the application of *hermeneutika* to the Qur'an, while others argue against this idea.

It should be underlined that the term '*hermeneutika*' in the Indonesian context does not properly equate in meaning to the English word 'hermeneutics'. Therefore, to avoid any confusion, the Indonesian word '*hermeneutika*' will be more often used. '*Hermeneutika*' denotes most of the time the Western modern theories of hermeneutics, ranging from those of F.E.D. Schleiermacher, to those of Paul Ricoeur. Thus, it by and large refers to a Western product of thought, even though in the debate, the adjective 'Western' (Ind. *Barat*) is rarely combined with the word '*hermeneutika*'. Nonetheless, it should also be noted that what *hermeneutika* means to its proponents might sometimes be considerably different from what *hermeneutika* means to its opponents. The proponents might widen the meaning of the term so that it could stand for any theory of interpretation, whereas the opponents might narrow its meaning so that it exclusively signifies a Christian tradition of Biblical interpretation.

The Chronology of the Debate

Just as the method of thematic interpretation is often associated in Indonesia with the name of Quraish Shihab, *hermeneutika* is often associated with the name of Amin Abdullah, who is widely-known as '*Bapak Hermeneutika Indonesia*' ('the Indonesian Father of Hermeneutics')¹³⁸ because of his intensive promotion of *hermeneutika* in his forewords to a variety of books¹³⁹ and his frequent appearances at academic forums. He initially recommended Western hermeneutics to be employed in interpreting the Qur'an as early as 1991 through his article in the scholarly journal, *Al-Jami'ah*.¹⁴⁰ Reference

to *hermeneutika* later reappears in his *Studi Agama* (1996),¹⁴¹ where Abdullah makes a brief argument to recommend *hermeneutika*—but does not only explain the meaning of *hermeneutika*—in understanding the Qur'an.

A more serious attempt to introduce Western hermeneutics in Indonesian Islamic-discourse was initially made by Komaruddin Hidayat¹⁴² through his *Memahami Bahasa Agama* (1996).¹⁴³ In this book, Hidayat—who, like Abdullah, completed his doctoral degree in philosophy at Middle East Technical University, Ankara—repeatedly gives explanations about the hermeneutical problems one would encounter if one were to apply *hermeneutika* in studying the Qur'an. However, while he recommends *hermeneutika* and states that *hermeneutika* takes further steps in terms of methodology than the *tafsir* tradition in Islam, Hidayat notes that this does not mean *hermeneutika* is better than *tafsir* as a methodology of interpreting the Qur'an.¹⁴⁴

Since the mid-1990s, support for *hermeneutika* has been on the rise amongst Indonesian Muslim students, particularly in Yogyakarta and Jakarta.¹⁴⁵ Such a phenomenon serves as a background for the inclusion of *hermeneutika* as a subject in the curricula of the Department of *Tafsir* and *Hadith* at UIN Yogyakarta in 1997,¹⁴⁶ and at UIN Jakarta in 2001.

Debate surrounding the use of hermeneutics to interpret the Qur'an first appeared in Nashruddin Baidan's article in a scholarly journal, *Esensia* (2001).¹⁴⁷ Here Baidan identifies the similarities and differences between *hermeneutika* and *tafsir/ta'wil*, and argues for the inadequacy of *hermeneutika* to interpret the Qur'an. He recognizes, however, that *hermeneutika* might be useful to study Qur'anic exegeses.

It was the association of *hermeneutika* with 'liberal Islam' (*Islam liberal*) that, from my point of view, led *hermeneutika* to increasingly considerable controversy, as liberal Islam groups started to increasingly receive new vigour of strong opposition. The identification of the introduction of *hermeneutika* as an agenda of the liberal Islam groups was initiated by Fauzan Al-Anshari's¹⁴⁸ short article published in *Republika* (2002).¹⁴⁹ By making such an association, Al-Anshari wanted to assert that *hermeneutika*—which he identifies as an interpretive method that is mainly based on reason and 'passion' (*hawa nafsu*), and is not tied to the requirements and methods of the classical Muslim scholars (*salaf*)—would adversely affect fundamental Muslim beliefs. Such an association further underlies

continuing objections to *hermeneutika* in 'Islamic media', most importantly *Media Dakwah*¹⁵⁰ and *Hidayatullah*.¹⁵¹

The opposition to *hermeneutika*, however, did not receive a lot of ammunition until the publication of the first and—to a lesser extent—second editions of the journal *Islamia* (2004),¹⁵² which contains numerous serious articles arguing against the introduction of *hermeneutika* to Qur'anic studies. This journal makes every effort to, first, reveal the origins of *hermeneutika*, stressing the difference between Islam and the West, and second, set out strong arguments for the incompatibility of *hermeneutika* with the Qur'an, underlining the possible conceptual confusion that *hermeneutika* would create when applied to the Qur'an, and third, convince the reader of the supremacy of *tafsir* or '*ulūm al-Qur'ān*.

A serious argument against *hermeneutika* is made by Alireza Alathas¹⁵³ in a scholarly journal, *Al-Huda* (2005).¹⁵⁴ Alathas argues that if Heidegger's and Gadamer's theories of hermeneutics were applied to Islam, they would make the teachings and texts of religion no longer meaningful since they would lead to relativism, denial of the existence of a true or standard understanding of religious text, ignorance about this text, and absence of definite parameters for religious text understanding.

A number of books published in recent times are solid examples of the types of works which the anti-*hermeneutika* camp perceives as devastating to Islam in general and to Islamic law in particular. These include such titles as *Fiqih Lintas Agama* by the Paramadina team (2003),¹⁵⁵ and the draft *Pembaruan Hukum Islam: Counter Legal Draft Kompilasi Hukum Islam* by the Gender Mainstreaming Team and the Department of Religious Affairs (2004).¹⁵⁶ *Hermeneutika*, in fact, is often linked with liberal Islam, particularly Jaringan Islam Liberal (the Liberal Islam Network, or JIL)

Main Issues in the Debate

Three themes or issues that are most commonly debated with regards to *hermeneutika* include the position of *hermeneutika* with regard to Islam, the compatibility of *hermeneutika* with the Qur'an, and the significance of *hermeneutika* for studying the Qur'an. Those who are of the opinion that *hermeneutika* is not a suitable approach to interpreting the Qur'an feel this way because they see it as something new and alien to Islam, and incompatible with the interpretation of the Qur'an.

It is important to note that both the opponents and—to a lesser extent—the proponents have often made statements or arguments that do not have much relevance to the substance of the debate. For example, the opponents refer to the proponents as those who are not experts or authoritative in *tafsir*,¹⁵⁷ while the proponents consider the opponents as those claiming to possess the truth but not ready to ‘listen to the truth’.¹⁵⁸ In what follows, such arguments, with a few exceptions, are generally ignored.

The Position of Hermeneutika with regard to Islam

Many of the proponents of *hermeneutika* see the contents or principles of *hermeneutika* as something not really new in Islam. In fact, they argue that *hermeneutika* is equivalent to *tafsir*. The supporters could easily say that, in its generic meaning as a process of understanding, “*hermeneutika* has existed since religion emerged, even since human-beings appeared as a cultured creature.”¹⁵⁹ They assert that *hermeneutika*, in its general meaning as an effort to explain or understand the message and meaning of an utterance or writing, “is recognized in Islamic tradition by the term *tafsir* and *ta’wil* sciences,”¹⁶⁰ which emerged in “the early era of Islamic history,”¹⁶¹ if not when “the Qur’an was revealed.”¹⁶²

Keeping in mind the different connotations of *tafsir* and *ta’wil*, they subsequently prefer to see *hermeneutika* as comparable to *ta’wil*. Komaruddin Hidayat, for instance, maintains that,

... one of the main roles of *hermeneutika* is to preserve the spirit of a text, so that this text would not become ‘a dead body’ (corpse) as the spirit which gives life and dynamics to ‘the body of text’ disappears. That is why *hermeneutika* is more appropriately equated with *ta’wil*, rather than *tafsir*, in the tradition of Islamic sciences. *Ta’wil* means returning the meaning of a text to its initial form, which is living and dynamic, and this meaning has now been contained or perhaps enclosed in the body of the text.¹⁶³

That *hermeneutika* is synonymous with *ta’wil* is also asserted by Abdul Hadi WM. Using the term in the context of literary studies rather than Qur’anic studies, he argues that *ta’wil* is Islamic hermeneutics. He refers to *ta’wil* as ‘spiritual hermeneutics’ whose tradition was commenced by Ja’far al-Şādiq (699-756 AD), and in turn developed and practiced by Sufis, including the Malay Sufi Hamzah Fansuri (d. circa 1600 AD).¹⁶⁴ Hadi even shows the similarities be-

tween the principles of Sufistic *ta'wil* and those of modern hermeneutics.¹⁶⁵

In this regard, Hadi talks about *hermeneutika* in its meaning as a method, theory or art of understanding and interpreting. Nasaruddin Umar states that *hermeneutika* has existed in Islam in the form of *uṣul al-fiqh* science, primarily since al-Shāfi'ī (150-204 AH/767-820 AD) formulated 'the rules of discourse interpretation' (*fahm*).¹⁶⁶ In addition, he suggests that Ibn Khaldūn (732-784 AH/1332-1382 AD) also pioneered the approach of *hermeneutika* by advocating continuous reinterpretation in line with social dynamics.¹⁶⁷

Another classical scholar referred to in similar arguments is Ibn Taymiyyah (661-728 AH/1263-1328 AD). Defining *hermeneutika* as a process of interpretation that pays attention to three aspects: who talked, to whom the talk was (originally) addressed, and at whom the talk was aimed, Nashruddin Baidan and Dawam Rahardjo assert that *hermeneutika* is not something new in Islamic intellectual tradition, because the need for paying attention to these aspects has been recognized in the interpretive theories of Ibn Taymiyyah.¹⁶⁸

However, Baidan's assertion is not to support the proposal for using *hermeneutika* as a methodological tool in studying the Qur'an, rather merely to show that there are some similarities between *tafsir* and *hermeneutika*. The similarities themselves, for Baidan, do not necessarily justify the idea of adopting *hermeneutika*. In his view, one has also to consider the differences between *tafsir* and *hermeneutika* to assess the compatibility of *hermeneutika* with the Qur'an. Taking these differences into account, Baidan himself rejects *hermeneutika* as a method of interpreting the Qur'an.

In fact, many supporters of *hermeneutika* agree that although the commonalities between *hermeneutika* and *tafsir* science or '*ulum al-Qur'an*' have to be recognized, the novel aspects of the modern hermeneutics have to be underlined as well. Komaruddin Hidayat, for instance, suggests that *hermeneutika* seems to, in terms of methodology, take steps further so that it goes beyond the limit of *tafsir* science tradition that is so far developed in Islamic studies.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, Fahrudin Faiz contends that, even though the aspect of *hermeneutika* that hypothesizes the plurality of understanding has its roots in classical '*ulūm al-Qur'ān*',¹⁷⁰ *hermeneutika* offers new perspectives to *tafsir* science with theories and concepts of understanding from the contemporary tradition of philosophical and critical hermeneutics.¹⁷¹ Likewise, Ilham Saenong argues that "'traditional Qur'anic hermeneutics', either in the form of *tafsir* or *ta'wil*, basal-

ly does not fulfil sufficiently the criteria of modern hermeneutics," because "both do not fulfil the elements of dialectical relationship between the text, the interpreter, and the reality in interpretive activity, [elements] that—according to modern hermeneutics—cannot be neglected in defining the meaning."¹⁷²

Thus, the proponents consider *hermeneutika* as something not alien to Islam which in their view justifies the adoption of *hermeneutika*.¹⁷³ On the other hand, the opponents generally assume that *hermeneutika* is completely foreign to Islam and make a sharp distinction between *tafsir* or *ta'wil* and *hermeneutika*. They even reject any view that considers *hermeneutika* and *tafsir* or *ta'wil* to be synonymous. Adnin Armas¹⁷⁴ mentions that the main reason as to why *hermeneutika* cannot be regarded as synonymous with *tafsir* or *ta'wil* is because *hermeneutika*, being a part of the vocabulary of Western philosophy which is also closely related to Biblical interpretation, has a different background compared to *tafsir* in Islamic tradition. Ugi Suharto¹⁷⁵ gives the example that *hermeneutika* takes textual criticism toward the Bible as a point of departure, while textual criticism toward the Qur'an does not exist in Islamic tradition.¹⁷⁶

Armas provides further reasoning for his position, which includes: 1) from an epistemological standpoint, *hermeneutika* relies merely on reason, while *tafsir* relies on revelation;¹⁷⁷ 2) *hermeneutika* considers all interpretations as relative, whereas in fact there are many agreements among Qur'an exegetes which prove that their interpretations are not relative;¹⁷⁸ 3) *hermeneutika* does not require specific qualities for the interpreter, while *tafsir* suggests that the Qur'an interpreter must meet certain requirements;¹⁷⁹ and 4) the role of Hermes which serves as a background of *hermeneutika*, is not the same as the role of the Prophet Muhammad.¹⁸⁰ Some of these reasons, as seen below, are also the reasons why *hermeneutika* is not compatible with the Qur'an.

The Compatibility of Hermeneutika with the Qur'an

Those who recommend the *hermeneutika* approach to interpreting the Qur'an assume that *hermeneutika* can be used as a 'means' because it deals with the method or art of text understanding; therefore, the Qur'an *as a text* cannot avoid the applicability of *hermeneutika* for it. As Komaruddin Hidayat states, "... when a very complex discourse is written, the narrowing and draining of meaning and nuance is unavoidable. Hence is the relevance and urgency of

hermeneutika as a methodology of interpretation to approach the Qur'an."¹⁸¹

On the other hand, those who reject the idea of adapting *hermeneutika* to suit Islam highlight the fact that *hermeneutika* comes from the tradition of Christian text interpretation. This means that "the problem of understanding of a text of a particular religion cannot be resolved by a method of understanding of a text of another religion."¹⁸² They insist that, just as the contents or concepts of *'ulum al-Qur'an* cannot be applied to the Bible, *hermeneutika* cannot be applied to the Qur'an either.¹⁸³ From their point of view, *hermeneutika* has been used for dealing with the problems—mainly of authenticity or originality—which are typical of the Bible, not the Qur'an.¹⁸⁴

Additionally, they underline that *hermeneutika* has emerged and developed within the context of a particular civilization and its worldview, which has its own presuppositions regarding ethics, ontology, cosmology, and metaphysics. *Hermeneutika* has evolved in three milieus: the society influenced by the Greek philosophy, the Jewish and Christian communities, and the European society of the Enlightenment. Just as the worldviews of these communities are incompatible with Islam, so too is *hermeneutika* incompatible with Islam.¹⁸⁵

Arguing against this opinion, Fahrudin Faiz reminds the anti-*hermeneutika* camp of the fact that many a Western intellectual and cultural invention has been adopted by Muslims, and accordingly rejecting *hermeneutika* simply by virtue of its Western origin is an inconsistent attitude.¹⁸⁶ However, some of the opponents have stated that their rejection of *hermeneutika* has nothing to do with anti-Western attitude. What they call for is, rather, the avoidance of conceptual confusion by critically discerning the origin and nature of *hermeneutika* and not immediately assuming the compatibility of *hermeneutika* with the Qur'an.¹⁸⁷

First of all, they see that the truth perceived in *hermeneutika* is relative, subjective, and tends to be nihilistic, and this would be incongruent with the aim of interpreting the Qur'an which is not to obtain a relative, subjective or nihilistic truth.¹⁸⁸ In addition, they notice that *hermeneutika* requires the interpreter to be sceptical, full of prejudice, always doubtful about the truth no matter where it comes from, and trapped in a so-called 'hermeneutic circle'¹⁸⁹ in which the meaning always changes.¹⁹⁰

Faiz responds to this argument by stating that the 'relativity' within *hermeneutika* is something 'human' and is not an untenable

assumption. The inevitability of the involvement of the context in interpretation, as *hermeneutika* suggests, is basically a description of the reality of the interpretation process that one experiences. The plurality of understanding that *hermeneutika* advocates does not also necessarily imply nihilism. The insistence on plurality, for Faiz, is best perceived as an insistence on ‘diverse certainty’, rather than a call for being sceptical and nihilist.¹⁹¹

Secondly, the opponents consider that *hermeneutika* relies merely on reason, while reason alone is insufficient to understand the Qur’an since it has its limitations. They also argue that *hermeneutika* allows reason to be uncontrolled, so it can easily result in deviation.¹⁹² Parallel to this are Nashruddin Baidan’s arguments that *hermeneutika* assumes that the meaning of any text can be interpreted, while there are some parts of the Qur’an for which the meaning cannot be discerned by human intellect, and only God knows the true meaning.¹⁹³

Thirdly, the opponents see that *hermeneutika* treats Holy Scripture like other texts.¹⁹⁴ Responding to this argument, Fahrudin Faiz insists that *hermeneutika* does not equate the status of the Holy Scripture with the status of other texts, rather their ‘body’ (*wadag*). In terms of the ‘body’ of the text, the Qur’an does not differ from other texts.¹⁹⁵ Lastly, the anti-*hermeneutika* camp complains that *hermeneutika* does not recognize deviance of interpretation and allows anyone to be a text interpreter; for scholars of this view, not just anyone is qualified to interpret the Qur’an.¹⁹⁶

In addition to the arguments discussed above, the opponents also make arguments against *hermeneutika* regarding its application. Firstly, it is argued that *hermeneutika* does not give detailed guidelines and simply deals with hypotheses of interpretation.¹⁹⁷ Secondly, it is argued that *hermeneutika* does not “rank” interpretive procedures according to their reliability.¹⁹⁸ Faiz argues, however, that generally *hermeneutika* is also concerned with the reliability of procedures of interpretation—the procedure of interpreting the Qur’an with the Qur’an, for instance, can be generated from the principle of ‘intertextuality’.¹⁹⁹

The Significance of Hermeneutika in Qur’anic Studies

The proponents of *hermeneutika* argue that *hermeneutika* is of crucial importance to Qur’an interpretation since it helps maintain the spirit of the Qur’an in the context of modern times.²⁰⁰ In addition, they believe that *hermeneutika* will necessarily enrich and enhance

the tradition of Qur'an interpretation. This is because *hermeneutika* reminds us to be conscious of the factors that determine the process of understanding.²⁰¹ *Hermeneutika* also reminds us to always notice the triadic relationship between the realm of the author, the realm of the text, and the realm of the reader. Moreover, *hermeneutika* makes us aware of the need not only for taking the text and the context into account in interpretation, but also for 'contextualization'²⁰² which is said to have been ignored in classical approaches to the Qur'an.²⁰³ Above all, the proponents see *hermeneutika* as proposing an alternative interpretive model that could present "all possible faces of the truth",²⁰⁴ and help develop an "inclusive and tolerant tradition of interpretation."²⁰⁵

The opponents of *hermeneutika* warn of the possible negative impacts of using *hermeneutika* to study the Qur'an. They insist, for instance, that *hermeneutika* has become closely related to the spirit of liberalization from the Church's authority and tradition, and modern *hermeneutika* ultimately has created troubles for Christians by subordinating the method of Bible interpretation to the principles of general *hermeneutika*.²⁰⁶ In fact, the opponents repeatedly assert that *hermeneutika*, when applied to Qur'anic interpretation, would inevitably lead some people to repudiate the status of the Qur'an as *kalam Allah* (the words of God), question its authenticity, and challenge the validity of the Uthmānī *muṣḥaf*—the things that have become a part of Muslim belief.²⁰⁷ They note this as a part of the orientalist mission to make the Qur'an out to be regarded as the 'word of man' and not the 'authentic' word of God.²⁰⁸

As an example, the opponents show how some proponents of *hermeneutika* have affirmed that the Qur'an, just like any other text, is a cultural product (which for them implies that the Qur'an is not *kalam Allah* (the words of God); by seeing a text as a cultural product, in the opponents' view, *hermeneutika* has ignored the transcendental, divine and miraculous aspects of the Qur'an.²⁰⁹ The opponents see that the application of *hermeneutika* will not only adversely affect Muslim beliefs regarding the sacred status of the Qur'an in particular, but will also result in unfavourable interpretations of the Qur'an. Adian Husaini, for example, relates the declaration that the Qur'an is a cultural product to an ongoing effort to achieve interpretation that is favourable to the presently hegemonic culture. In his view, the deconstruction of the concept of the Qur'anic text as *kalam Allah* is actually meant to give way to the use of liberal *hermeneutika* which will produce interpretation that is biased and suited to the demands of the presently dominant Western cultural values.²¹⁰

Responding to this argument, the proponents maintain that *hermeneutika* is not meant to identify or confirm the weaknesses of the Qur'an. The result of the application of *hermeneutika*, moreover, will not necessarily put Muslim beliefs into disorder. From their point of view, *hermeneutika* as a methodological means is neutral, so the result will very much depend on who uses it or how it is used.²¹¹

As regards the impact of *hermeneutika* on interpretation, the opponents argue that *hermeneutika* will have far-reaching consequences that are more dangerous than simply biased interpretation. First, the Qur'an will not be understandable because *hermeneutika* affirms the problem that "if interpretation itself is based on interpretation, the circle of interpretation is unavoidable," so one's understanding about a text will never be final because even when one can understand its context, this context is actually also based on interpretation.²¹² Second, no Muslim will have the same or standard understanding of the Qur'an simply because *hermeneutika* affirms that all understanding depends on each person's own subjectivity. This means that Muslim perception of the Qur'an as a guide will be meaningless.²¹³ Third, the axioms around the Qur'an will be deconstructed simply because *hermeneutika* does not recognize them. Hence, for instance, it is argued that "the *muḥkamāt* will be altered to *mutashābihāt*."²¹⁴ Fourth, the revealed text itself will be disregarded mainly because contextualization that is pursued in *hermeneutika* is likely to rely on the context at the expense of the text.²¹⁵

Indeed, for the opponents, *hermeneutika* is "unnecessary" because Islam has its own tradition and theories of Qur'anic interpretation, such as *tafsir* or *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*.²¹⁶ Holding the assumption that *tafsir* science, and *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* more broadly, has been well-established and remains relevant, they assert that, "there are still many aspects that Muslims need to dig up and learn about Qur'an *tafsirs*, rather than inheriting, adopting or modifying *hermeneutika*."²¹⁷ *Hermeneutika*, on the other hand, has not been well-established and still leaves some problems manifest in the pervasive disputes within its tradition.²¹⁸ Even those who recognize the advantages of *hermeneutika* may share the above view. Nasaruddin Umar, for instance, makes the following argument: "*Hermeneutika* is not the only good method for the production of a contextual interpretation of the Qur'an ... Without having to use methodology alien to itself, the meaning of the Qur'an can still be understood clearly." He adds "when there are verses supposed to be unclear

or verses considered to be reasonably less relevant to the objective situation of the present day, the rich intellectual heritage of *ulama'* available in various standard books on methodology can resolve all existing problems."²¹⁹

On the other side, the proponents assert that just like any other product of thought, *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* cannot be labelled 'universal', something that can be used whenever and wherever.²²⁰ In addition, they argue for the insufficiency of the classical approaches to the Qur'an in *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* tradition. Amin Abdullah, for instance, insists that classical approaches have not resolved the problem of how we link the fundamental and categorical Qur'anic ethical values with the changing historical context of human life. *Hermeneutika* may give inputs in this regard.²²¹ Abdullah believes that the contemporary theories of hermeneutics can present the humanistic dimension of the Qur'an which has so far been overlooked by theology-oriented and rigid Qur'an *tafsirs*.²²² Of course, such a belief, just like the belief that *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* is still highly relevant, needs confirmation.

Concluding Remarks

Any proposal of Islamic reform seems to attempt to overcome the apparent conflict between past Islamic tradition and the challenges of modernity. Such a statement may be somewhat jaded, and can be legitimately critiqued. However, even many recent contemporary Muslim thinkers dwell on both terms, indicating the continuing validity of this challenge for contemporary Islamic thought.

Previous discussions demonstrate that through rethinking interpretive approaches to the Qur'an, Indonesian Muslim scholars have strongly participated in the process of Islamic reform. Indonesian Muslims' efforts to reconsider approaches to interpreting the Qur'an are motivated largely by certain perceptions of the present reality and particular suppositions regarding predominant or traditional approaches. In perceiving the present, however, they put emphasis on different facts. Some of them emphasize the fact that reality has changed, pointing to an increasingly modernizing world. Some others are more aware of the fact that the reality needs to be changed, indicating injustice and oppression within society. The former group tends to affirm the reality, while the latter group tends to disapprove it. These different views, nevertheless, result in the same recommendation: interpretive method renewal. For the

former, new methods are to make Qur'an interpretation suitable with the present situations, while for the latter, new methods are to utilize Qur'an interpretation for transforming the present situations. Both perspectives have therefore indicated a significant shift away from the tendency of Islamic orthodoxy to 'subordinate' the reality to the text, or to be concerned with the problem of how the reality must not deviate from the text.

Just as these perceptions of social reality encourage those renewal projects of the ways to interpret the Qur'an, so do certain suppositions of traditional approaches. To legitimize their projects, some Indonesian scholars explored here have sought to show the weaknesses or inadequacies of classical Islamic authorities' approaches to understanding the Qur'an, often by stigmatizing them as "text-centred", "ideological", "ahistorical", "atomistic", "partial", "theocentric", "irrelevant" and so forth—attributes that sometimes contradict each other. This reflects a tendency to create a rupture with the traditional intellectual modes of the Islamic past, a tendency which is also apparent in many reformists' projects.

Looking at above presumptions, one may immediately understand that many of these Indonesian Muslim scholars attempt to privilege the present over the past. Indeed, this is also apparent in the fact that, in their view, the activity of interpreting the Qur'an should be preceded by sufficient understanding of social realities and end up with social transformation. This illustrates an endeavour to contextualize the Qur'anic messages in the present-day, an endeavour which is largely a response to the rapid changes brought about by modernization and globalization, and to numerous social problems in Indonesia.

Bearing in mind the necessity of contextualization, many Indonesian Muslim scholars are stimulated to think of the relationship between the meaning of the Qur'an and the social and cultural conditions of the time in which it was revealed. For some of them, the meaning of the Qur'an is strongly connected to the historical and cultural context of revelation. Therefore, they recommend a historical approach for grasping the meaning of the Qur'an. They argue for the need to comprehend the history of Arab society before and during Muhammad's prophetic mission. Only through this comprehension, they believe, can one understand the universal Qur'anic messages and contextualize them in the present time.

For some others, what is more important to contextualization is to bring the Qur'anic text into an interpretive level which is free

from historical burdens and biases, rather than to be loyal to and rely on the historical context of the Qur'an. They highlight, in a different way, the significance of directing the meaning of the Qur'anic text to its universal messages and transcendental meanings.

Primarily also for the sake of contextualization, some Indonesian Muslim scholars have put forward the idea to adopt or adapt Western contemporary theories of hermeneutics for interpreting the Qur'an. Nonetheless, this idea has created a lot of controversy in recent years over its position to Islam, its compatibility with the Qur'an, and its significance in Qur'anic studies.

One of the main arguments made by supporters of Western hermeneutical theories is that classical approaches to the Qur'an do not lead to contextualization. Classical exegetes are said to have ignored the function of the audience of their period in determining the interpretation. Their approaches pay attention only to the relationship between the interpreter and the Qur'anic text, without expressing the interests of the audience of their period toward the text.

Such an argument is challenged by the opponents of the idea in favour of adopting or adapting those hermeneutical theories. In their point of view, Islamic intellectual heritages, in the form of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, are still relevant to understanding the Qur'an in contemporary situations, and can provide answers for problems of the present. They are of the opinion that the problem is not that classical approaches are meaningless in modern situations, but that Muslims today know very little about classical Islamic traditions. Here again one sees a sign that the treatment of 'tradition' and the response to 'modernity' capture a vital debate in Indonesian Muslim thinking.

While classical approaches are defended in pursuit of rejecting Western hermeneutical theories, in Indonesian Muslims' discourses on the methodology of Qur'an interpretation, one meets another objection against the classical model of interpretation in favour of the method of thematic interpretation. The traditional way of interpreting the Qur'an verse by verse from the beginning to the end of the *muṣḥaf* is said to be unable to present the Qur'an on its own terms as a unity and unable to offer Qur'anic answers for sundry problems in life. Thematic approach is considered being able to shed light on these problems and thereby serving the 'taste' of modern society.

The enthusiasm for contextualization and the tendency to create a break with the traditional intellectual modes of the Islamic

past, have therefore encouraged innovation pertaining to interpretive approaches to the Qur'an. Even though it would be incorrect to assume that in the exegesis of the Qur'an there is no longer a broad current of unbroken tradition continuing to this day, those innovative ideas—which by and large have not found wide acceptance—potentially affect the future development of Indonesian Muslim scholarship and society, for one thing because those ideas are continuously disseminated by influential Muslim scholars, in seminal Islamic higher education institutions, and through 'Islamic' publishers—all of which have a significant role in introducing the discourses of Islamic thought from various parts of the world in Indonesia.

Endnotes

1. In fact, many scholars have—in various expressions—repeatedly affirmed that Islam in Indonesia has not yet received the attention that it deserves or has not yet been recognized as an integral, active and contributing region of the Muslim world. Among them we can mention the following scholars with their relevant works: John Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Mark R. Woodward, "Talking Across Paradigms: Indonesia, Islam, and Orientalism," *Toward a New Paradigm: Recent Developments in Indonesian Islamic Thought*, ed. Mark R. Woodward (Tempe: Arizona State University Press, 1996) 3; Peter Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World* (London: Hurst & Company, 2001) 2; 8-9; Nakamura Mitsuo, "Introduction", *Islam and Civil Society in Southeast Asia*, eds. Nakamura Mitsuo et al. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001); Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulama' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New South Wales & Honolulu: ASAA, Allen & Unwin, and University of Hawai'i Press, 2004) 2; Fuad Jabali and Jamhari (eds.), *Islam in Indonesia: Islamic Studies and Social Transformation* (Montreal & Jakarta: Indonesia-Canada Islamic Higher Education Project, 2002) xi; Anthony H. Johns, "Preface", *Approaches to the Qur'an in Contemporary Indonesia*, ed. Abdullah Saeed (London: Oxford & the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2005), xv.
2. Rotraud Wielandt, "Exegesis of the Qur'an: Early Modern and Contemporary", *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane McAuliffe, vol. 2 (Leiden-Boston: E.J. Brill, 2002) 124.
3. Some people may argue that this phenomenon can be attributed to the peripheral position of Indonesian Islam in terms of Islamic studies. I assert here that this assumption (that Indonesian Islam is peripheral) should be questioned, because only after closely looking at the entire works—I mean the bulk of them—that have been produced by Indonesian scholars and comparing them to those produced in various parts of the Muslim world, one can draw a conclusion that Indonesian Islam is really peripheral.
4. Saeed, *Approaches to the Qur'an in Contemporary Indonesia*, 1.
5. Suha Taji-Farouki, "Introduction", *Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur'an* ed. Suha Taji-Farouki (London: Oxford & the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2004) 3.
6. Just as J.M.S. Baljon expects his *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968) to be a supplement to the last chapter of Ignaz Goldziher's *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1920) mainly through using Urdu materials, I expect my study to be a supplement in some respects to such studies as Roland Wielandt's article mentioned above, particularly through using Indonesian materials.
8. See, for instance, Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation*; J.J.G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980); Rotraud Wielandt, "Exegesis of the Qur'an: Early Modern and Contemporary", *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, vol. 2, (Leiden-Boston: E.J. Brill, 2002) 124; Bilal Gşkkir, "The Application of Western Comparative Religious and Linguistic Approach to the Qur'an in Turkey", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (2003); and Suha Taji-Farouki, "Introduction", *Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur'an*, ed. Suha Taji-Farouki (London: Oxford & the

- Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2004). There are only a few studies which link Muslim modern ideas and practices in approaching the Qur'an not with Western influences, such as Katajun Amirpur, "The Changing Approach to the Text: Iranian Scholars and the Quran", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2005): 337-50, which discusses Iranian Muslim discourses on the Qur'an in the context of the political developments in the country in the last two decades.
9. M. Quraish Shihab was born in Rappang, South Sulawesi, on February 16, 1944. He obtained his Bachelors, Masters, and PhD degrees in *'ulum al-Qur'an* or *tafsir* and *hadith* from al-Azhar University, Cairo (in 1967, 1969, and 1982 respectively). He is known for his high achievements in education as not only he graduated with *summa cum laude*, but also he is the first Southeast Asian student who obtained doctoral degree in *'ulum al-Qur'an* from al-Azhar. He was the rector of IAIN Jakarta, before he became the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia for Egypt (1998-2003). He is a well-known *mufassir* whose works are chiefly related to the Qur'an. He has published many books in which he often demonstrates his mastery of Arabic language and classical Islamic literature. Among his works are: *Lentera Hati* (1994), "*Membumikan*" *Al-Quran* (1992), *Wawasan Al-Quran* (1996), *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* (1997), *Yang Tersembunyi* (1999), and *Tafsir al-Mishbāh* (2000-2003).
 10. See M. Quraish Shihab, "*Membumikan*" *al-Quran: Fungsi dan Peran Wahyu dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992) 113.
 11. Kuntowijoyo was born in Bantul, Yogyakarta, on September 18, 1943. He obtained his master's degree in American history from the University of Connecticut (1974), and doctoral degree in history from Columbia University (1980) with a dissertation entitled *Social Change in an Agrarian Society: Madura 1850-1940*. Despite his not-so-active involvement in Muhammadiyah, he was a lecturer at Gajah Mada University (UGM), Yogyakarta. In addition to some books on history, Kuntowijoyo has published some literary works (novels, short stories, and poems), such as *Khotbah di atas Bukit* (1976) and *Mantra Penjinak Ular* (2001). On the other side, Kuntowijoyo was definitely a Muslim thinker who also published some books on Islam—all of which are collections of essays; such as *Paradigma Islam* (1991), *Identitas Politik Umat Islam* (1997), *Muslim Tanpa Masjid* (2001) and *Islam sebagai Ilmu* (2004). As a Muslim thinker, he was very much concerned with, among others, the topics of 'change' or 'transformation' and 'ilmuisasi Islam' ('scientification of Islam'); the topics which are also noticeably reflected in his discussions on the Qur'an and its verses. Kuntowijoyo died in Yogyakarta, on February 22, 2005.
 12. See Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi untuk Aksi* (Bandung: Mizan, 1991) 282-5. See also his book, *Muslim Tanpa Masjid: Esai-esai Agama, Budaya, dan Politik dalam Bingkai Strukturalisme Transendental* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001) 9.
 13. M. Dawam Rahardjo was born in Solo, Central Java, on April 20, 1942. Although he only undertook formal studies at the undergraduate level (Faculty of Economics, Gajah Mada University, graduated 1969), he is a professor of economics of development at Malang Muhammadiyah University (UMM) (1994). In addition to some educational and business activities, he has been active in various non-governmental organizations, such as Lembaga Studi Agama dan Filsafat (LSAF, the Institute for the Study

- of Religion and Philosophy; 1987-present), Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (ICMI, the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intelligentsia; 1995-present), and the International Institute of Islamic Thought Indonesia (IIIT-Indonesia). He was a vice-chairman of Muhammadiyah (2000-2005) and was the chief-editor of a famous scholarly journal, *Ulumul Qur'an* (1989-1997). He wrote numerous books in the field of economics, but his most recent publications mainly deal with Islam and politics. These include *Intelektual, Inteligensia dan Prilaku Politik Bangsa* (1993), *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an* (1996), *Masyarakat Madani* (1999), and *Paradigma al-Qur'an* (2005).
14. Taufik Adnan Amal was born in Bandung, West Java, on August 12, 1962. He wrote *Tafsir Kontekstual al-Qur'an* together with Syamsu Rizal Panggabean (see following footnote) not long after graduating from the Faculty of Shari'a of IAIN Yogyakarta. He is now a lecturer at the Faculty of Shari'a of IAIN Alauddin, Makassar. He has been actively involved in the discourse on the history and interpretation of the Qur'an. Other books he has published are *Islam dan Tantangan Modernitas* (1989) and *Rekonstruksi Sejarah al-Qur'an* (2001). The former is one of the results of his debate over Fazlur Rahman ideas, while the latter is evidence that he is quite familiar with orientalist's works (see the bibliography of that book). In fact, Amal often builds on Rahman's thought and orientalist's views in discussing the Qur'an. His proposal for critical edition of the Qur'an (2001)—that builds on Arthur Jeffery's idea—has elicited some reactions from 'anti-liberal Muslim' groups.
 15. Syamsu Rizal Panggabean was born in South Tapanuli, North Sumatera, on May 31, 1961. When he wrote *Tafsir Kontekstual al-Quran* together with Amal, he was still an undergraduate student majoring in *tafsir* and *hadith* at IAIN Yogyakarta and in international relations at Gajah Mada University (UGM). He is now a lecturer at UGM.
 16. See M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Quran: Metodologi Tafsir dan Kritik Sosial* (Jakarta: PSAP Muhammadiyah, 2005) 6; Taufik Adnan Amal and Syamsu Rizal Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Quran: Sebuah Kerangka Konseptual* (Bandung: Mizan, 1989), 10-1.
 17. For the association of (the paradigm of) Islamic orthodoxy with struggles for optimal appropriateness of the reality to the 'script' of the text, see Masdar F. Mas'udi, "Memahami Ajaran Suci dengan Pendekatan Transformasi", in Munawir Sjadzali et al., *Polemik Reaktualisasi Ajaran Islam* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1988), 175-8.
 18. Moeslim Abdurrahman was born in Lamongan, East Java, on August 8, 1947. He obtained his doctoral degree in anthropology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, US (2000) with a dissertation entitled, *On Hajj Tourism: In Search of Pity and Identity in the New Order Indonesia*. Before his study in the US, he was a researcher at the Research and Development Body of the Indonesian Department of Religious Affairs (Balitbang Depag) for a long time (1977-1989). In addition to his journalistic career for a few years, he has been active in various non-governmental organizations, including Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat (P3M, the Association of Islamic Boarding Schools and Society Development), Lembaga Pemberdayaan Buruh, Tani, dan Nelayan (LPBTN, the Institute for the Empowerment of Laborers, Farmers, and Fishermen), a body within the Central Board of Muhammadiyah (2000-2005), and the Ma'arif Institute for Culture and Humanity (2003-2004). He has published several books

- many of which are collections of essays; among them are: *Kang Thowil dan Siti Marginal* (1995); *Islam Transformatif* (1996), *Semarak Islam Semarak Demokrasi* (1996), and *Islam sebagai Kritik Sosial* (2003). His activities as well as his writings show great concern with social problems.
19. See Moeslim Abdurrahman, "Model Tafsir Alternatif atas Wahyu", *Islam sebagai Kritik Sosial* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2003), 121. This article can also be found in his book, *Semarak Islam Semarak Demokrasi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1996), 153-72.
 20. Masdar Farid Mas'udi was born in Purwokerto, Central Java, in 1954. He obtained his bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Shari'a of IAIN Yogyakarta (1979), and Masters degree in philosophy from the University of Indonesia (1997). He has been the director of P3M for years, and is still involved in the Central Board of Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU). He has published several books, such as *Agama Kendilan* (1991) and *Islam dan Hak-hak Reproduksi Perempuan* (1997). Well-known for his 'liberal-reformist' views on the concept of *qat' T-zanni*, and some religious institutions, such as the *zakāh* and the *hajj*. His discussions on the Qur'an in particular are also characterized by the spirit of emancipation.
 21. See Zuhairi Misrawi, "Islam Emansipatoris: Dari Tafsir menuju Pembebasan", a foreword in Very Verdiansyah, *Islam Emansipatoris: Menafsir Agama untuk Praksis Pembebasan* (Jakarta: P3M, 2004), xxv.
 22. See Masdar F. Mas'udi, "Paradigma dan Metodologi Islam Emansipatoris", a foreword in Verdiansyah, *Islam Emansipatoris*, xvi.
 23. See Misrawi, xxiii.
 24. Abd Moqsith Ghazali was born in Situbondo, June 7, 1971. He obtained his master's degree from IAIN Jakarta. He is an activist of the Liberal Islam Network (JIL), and is involved in the management of a *pesantren* in Situbondo.
 25. See Abd Moqsith Ghazali, "Menuju Tafsir al-Qur'an yang Membebaskan", *Tashwirul Afkar* (Jakarta: LAKPESDAM NU), No. 18 (2004): 58.
 26. Analyses of Kuntowijoyo's interpretative thought often fail to notice another of his ideas, that regarding the 'five programs of reinterpretation' stated in his article, "Sebuah Model Reaktualisasi: Lima Program Reinterpretasi", in *Paradigma Islam*, pages 279-85. His five programs of reinterpretation encompass: 1) developing 'structural-social interpretation' of Qur'anic tenets, 2) replacing the subjective way of thinking on Islamic teachings with the objective one 3) generating theoretical scientific frameworks (*kerangka-kerangka teori ilmu*) from Qur'anic norms, 4) replacing 'ahistorical' understandings with 'historical' ones, meaning especially that Qur'anic stories and instructions should be contextualized in the present, and 5) rendering the general and normative formulations of the Qur'an into the specific and empirical ones. Among the analyses failing to include this idea are: Arief Subhan, "Dr. Kuntowijoyo: Al-Qur'an sebagai Paradigma", *Ulumul Qur'an* (Jakarta: LSAF), No. 4, Vol. V (1994): 92-101; M. Syafii Anwar, "Pemikiran Politik dengan Paradigma al-Quran: Sebuah Pengantar", in Kuntowijoyo, *Identitas Politik Umat Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 1997), xvii-xxiv; Budhy Munawar-Rachman, "Dari Tahapan Moral ke Periode Sejarah: Pemikiran Neo-Modernisme Islam di Indonesia", *Dekonstruksi Islam: Mazhab Ciputat*, ed. Edy A. Effendy (Bandung: Zaman Wacana Mulia, 1999), 99-141; Saiful Mujani, "Islam dalam Hegemoni Teori Modernisasi", in the

- same book, 259-83; and M. Fahmi, *Islam Transendental: Menelusuri Jejak-jejak Pemikiran Islam Kuntowijoyo* (Yogyakarta: Pilar Media, 2005).
27. See Kuntowijoyo, "Paradigma Al-Quran untuk Perumusan Teori", in *Paradigma Islam*, 327.
 28. *Ibid.*, 327-30.
 29. See Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Quran*, 63-4.
 30. See Abdurrahman, *Islam sebagai Kritik Sosial*, 109; 116.
 31. Ilham Baharuddin Saenong was born in Makassar, South Sulawesi, on November 19, 1976. He obtained his Masters degree in anthropology from the University of Indonesia (UI), but the only book he has published (*Hermeneutika Pembebasan*) is a modification of his undergraduate thesis submitted to the Faculty of Uşūl al-Dīn IAIN Yogyakarta. He has been working at Mizan publishing house for several years.
 32. See Ilham B. Saenong, *Hermeneutika Pembebasan: Metodologi Tafsir Al-Quran Menurut Hassan Hanafi* (Jakarta: Teraju, 2002), 8; 10, 150. In one of his articles, Hanafi formulates eight rules of 'transformation-oriented' (thematic) interpretation as follows: 1) socio-political commitment; 2) looking for something; 3) synopsis of the verses concerning one theme; 4) classification of linguistic forms; 5) building the structure; 6) analyzing the factual situation; 7) comparison between the Ideal and the Real; and 8) description of modes of action. See Hassan Hanafi, "Method of Thematic Interpretation of the Qur'an", in Stefan Wild (ed.), *The Qur'an as Text* (Leiden, New York & Kşln: E.J. Brill, 1996), 195-211; or in Hassan Hanafi, *Islam in the Modern World: Religion, Ideology and Development*, vol. 1 (Heliopolis: Dar Kebab Bookshop, 2000), 497-500; also Saenong, *Hermeneutika Pembebasan*, 151-3.
 33. This is, for example, apparent in Quraish Shihab's explanation that what urges *tafsir mawdū'i* to appear is the fact that 1) the development of knowledge has been increasingly wider and deeper, 2) the problems that require Qur'an's guidance are increasingly more complex, and 3) people of this day are required to quickly obtain information and guidance in their limited time. See M. Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Quran: Tafsir Maudhu'i atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), xiii.
 34. See, for example, Greg Barton, *Gagasan Islam Liberal di Indonesia: Pemikiran Neo-Modernisme Nurcholish Madjid, Djohan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib, dan Abdurrahman Wahid*, trans. Nanang Tahqiq (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999), xv; xxi; 3.
 35. M. Amin Abdullah was born in Pati, Central Java, on July 28, 1953. He obtained his doctoral degree from the Department of Philosophy of the Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara (1990). He was actively involved in the Central Board of Muhammadiyah (1995-2005), and is now the rector of UIN Yogyakarta. This professor of philosophy has published numerous books; among them are: *The Idea of Universality of Ethical Norms in Ghazali and Kant* (published in Turkey, 1992); *Falsafah Kalam di Era Posmodernisme* (1995); *Studi Agama* (1996); and *Dinamika Islam Kultural* (2000). He has often proposed 'new' ideas in relation to the development of Islamic studies. With regard to Qur'anic studies, he intensively recommends the use of hermeneutics.
 36. See M. Amin Abdullah, a foreword in Saenong, *Hermeneutika Pembebasan*, xxv-xxvi.
 37. *Ibid.*, 10.

38. This opinion is approved by Shihab. See his book, *"Membumikan" al-Quran*, 111. Such a critique tends to assume that preconceptions are undesirable or even dangerous.
39. See, for example, Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Quran*, 16. What is meant by the 'literary' context of the Qur'an is the context in which a theme or a term appears in the Qur'an, including verses before and after this theme or term, and its cross-reference to the relevant context in other *sūrah*s (chapters).
40. Amal and Panggabean give numerous examples of preconception imposition practices: 1) the Ash'arites arbitrarily interpret Yāsīn/36: 82 and al-Rūm/30: 25 to the point where these verses could support the idea that the Qur'an was not created, as a response to the Mu'tazilites' viewpoint; 2) philosophers interpret allegorically Qur'anic statements on the human's resurrection in the hereafter, so that the interpretation is in agreement with their view that it is only the soul which would be resurrected; 3) Sayyid Aḥmad Khan understands Qur'anic statements on the things that majority Muslims regard as miracles in light of modern science explanation of natural laws; 4) Muḥammad 'Abduh suggests that the *jinn* (intelligent imperceptible spirits referred to in the Qur'an) are to be understood as microbes; 5) Muḥammad Iqbāl understands some Qur'anic verses as well-matched with his thought on God's immanency in the universe; 6) the Sufis regard al-Raḥmān/55: 26-7 as an explanation of the *fanā'* concept; 7) al-Ḥallāj holds that Iblis' refusal to bow down to Adam—mentioned in al-Baqarah/2: 30-9, al-A'rāf/7: 11-25, and al-Ḥijr/15: 28-44—is an indication of the purity of Iblis' *tawḥīd*; 8) the scholars of *usūl fiqh* justify the canon *al-umūr bi maqāshidihā* with al-Bayyinah/98: 5 and al-Zumar/38: 2, and the canon *al-'ādah muḥakkamah* with al-A'rāf/7: 199. See Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Quran*, chapter 2.
41. Also in view of the imperative of promoting justice (and championing the oppressed), Abdurrahman rejects the alternative of 'liberal interpretation' which he sees tends to construe the Qur'an in the spirit of diversity, so it "stops at opening up the space for public discourse as if the diversity of opinions is the real final truth." See Abdurrahman, *Islam sebagai Kritik Sosial*, h. 119.
42. See Misrawi, "Islam Emansipatoris", xxii. Cf. Mas'udi, "Paradigma dan Metodologi Islam Emansipatoris", xi-xv.
43. See the last part of Chapter Five.
44. However, the 'patterns' of Islamic reform in Indonesia often do not correspond to these places where those who advocate Islamic reform are very much involved. For example, a Muslim intellectual involved in an 'Islamic' campus might share the same tendency in thought with another intellectual involved in a 'secular' campus, but might not share the same tendency in thought with another intellectual involved in an 'Islamic' campus.
45. Greg Barton, *Gagasan Islam Liberal di Indonesia*, xxi. Barton considers the thoughts of Nurcholish Madjid, Djohan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib, and Abdurrahman Wahid as the most important representatives of this Islamic neo-modernism.
46. *Ibid.*, 14-5. See also Abdullah Saeed (ed.), *Approaches to the Qur'an in Contemporary Indonesia* (London: Oxford & the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2005), 9.

47. However, it should be noted that these categories cannot be strictly employed to map Indonesian Muslim intellectuals as a sharp distinction among them does not exist.
48. For more details, see Yudi Latif, *The Muslim Intelligentsia of Indonesia: A Genealogy of Its Emergence in the 20th Century*, a doctoral thesis, Vol. I (Canberra: Australian National University, 2004), 404-6.
49. In these two cities, as well as in Malang, the IAINs have been transformed into State Islamic Universities (UIN)—in 2002 for Jakarta and 2004 for Yogyakarta and Malang.
50. For significant developments in IAINs, importantly in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, see Fuad Jabali and Jamhari (eds.), *IAIN dan Modernisasi Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Logos, 2002).
51. See M. Amin Abdullah, "Al-Ta'wil al-'Ilmi: Ke Arah Perubahan Paradigma Penafsiran Kitab Suci", *Al-Jāmi'ah* (Yogyakarta: IAIN Sunan Kalijaga), Vol. 39, No. 2 (2001): 359-89.
52. On the one hand, some contemporary *musalsal* commentaries were still produced recently, for example: Moh. E. Hasim's *Ayat Suci dalam Renungan*, 8 vols. (Bandung: Pustaka, 1998-2002); Tim Badan Wakaf UII's *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya* (Yogyakarta: PT Dana Bhakti Wakaf Universitas Islam Indonesia, 1995); M. Quraish Shihab's *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim: Tafsir atas Surat-surat Pendek Berdasarkan Urutan Turunnya Wahyu* (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 1997); and *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasan Al-Qur'an*, 15 vols. (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2000-2003). On the other hand, *musalsal* commentaries are continuously used in various *majelis taklims* (Islamic learning circles) in Indonesia. Among the most popular ones are *Tafsir al-Jalālayn* (a classical one) and Sayyid Qutb's *Tafsir Fi Zhilāl al-Qur'ān* (a relatively modern one).
53. Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Quran*, 44.
54. See M. Quraish Shihab, "Membumikan" *Al-Quran: Fungsi dan Peran Wahyu dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992), 112.
55. See, for example, Ali Yafie, "Memahami Al-Qur'an secara Integral", *Ulumul Qur'an* (Jakarta: LSAF), Vol. II, No. 5 (1990): 5; Harifuddin Cawidu, *Konsep Kufr dalam Al-Qur'an: Suatu Kajian Teologis dengan Pendekatan Tafsir Tematik* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1991) 22; Nashruddin Baidan, *Metodologi Penafsiran al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1998), 67; Abdul Mustaqim, *Madzahibut Tafsir: Peta Metodologi Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Periode Klasik Hingga Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Nun Pustaka, 2003) 98; and Umar Shihab, *Kontekstualitas Al-Qur'an: Kajian Tematik atas Ayat-ayat Hukum dalam Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Penamadani, 2003) 13.
56. See M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Quran: Metodologi Tafsir dan Kritik Sosial* (Jakarta: PSAP Muhammadiyah, 2005), 77.
57. See Shihab, "Membumikan" *Al-Quran*, 117.
58. See Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender: Perspektif al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999), 281-5.
59. See, for instance, 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmāwī, *Al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī: Dirāsah Manhajīyah Mawḍū'īyah* (Cairo: al-Ḥaḍārah al-'Arabīyah, 1977) 55-6; Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Mabāḥiṭh fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1989), 20-1.
60. Some examples of the Indonesian topical Qur'an interpretations before the 1980's are: Hamzah Fansuri's *Al-Muntahi*, *Asrār al-'Arifin*, and *Sharāb al-'Ashiqīn* (the early 17th century), Ahmad Soerkati's *Zedeeler uit den Qur'an* (1932), Moenawar Chalil's *Kembali kepada Al-Qur'an dan Sunnah* (1956),

- Bey Arifin's *Rangkaian Tjerita dalam Al-Qur'an* (1963), M. Said's *Al-Qur'an tentang Wanita* (1969), Abdullah Sani's *Mahkamah Yaumul Akhirat (Digali dari Al-Qur'an)* (1973), A. Hasjmy's *Dustur Dakwah Menurut Al-Qur'an* (1974), Q.A. Dahlan Shaleh and M.D. Dahlan's *Ayat-Ayat Hukum: Tafsir dan Uraian Perintah-perintah dalam Al-Qur'an* (1976), and Bahrum Rangkulit's *Al-Qur'an, Sejarah, dan Kebudayaan* (1977). See Islah Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Hermeneutika hingga Ideologi* (Jakarta: Teraju, 2003), 268.
61. R. Michael Feener, "Notes", *Studia Islamika* (Jakarta: IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah), Vol. 5, No. 3 (1998)
 62. See Fazlur Rahman, *Tema Pokok Al-Qur'an*, trans. Anas Mahyuddin (Bandung: Pustaka, 1983).
 63. See Shihab, "Membumikan" *Al-Quran*, 114.
 64. See M. Quraish Shihab, "Tafsir Qur'an dengan Metode Maudhu'i", *Beberapa Aspek Ilmiah tentang Al-Qur'an*, eds. Bustami A. Gani and Chatibul Umam (Jakarta: Institut PTIQ, 1986) 22-33.
 65. "Membumikan" *Al-Quran* mentions that one of its articles 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 completed in Makassar (formerly Ujung Pandang) on February 10, 1983, and once presented in front of al-Aqsha Study Club. (See Shihab, "Membumikan" *Al-Quran*, 402).
 66. Al-Farmāwī's book itself was not translated into Bahasa Indonesia until 1994. See 'Abd al-ayy al-Farmāwī, *Metode Tafsir Mawdu'iy: Suatu Pengantar*, trans. Suryan A. Jamrah (Jakarta: PT RajaGrafindo Persada, 1994).
 67. See Shihab, "Membumikan" *Al-Quran*, 111-20.
 68. Feener, "Notes toward the History of Quranic Exegesis in Southeast Asia", 66.
 69. Compare with the definition of *tafsir mawdu'i* in al-Farmāwī, *al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsir al-Mawdu'i*, 52.
 70. See M. Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Quran: Tafsir Maudhu'i atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996).
 71. See Abdul Djalal H.A., *Urgensi Tafsir Mawdu'i pada Masa Kini* (Jakarta: Kalam Mulia, 1990).
 72. See Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, "Pendekatan Tematik terhadap Tafsir Al-Qur'an", *Ulumul Qur'an* (Jakarta: LSAF), Vol. 2, No. 4 (1990) 28-36.
 73. This series was then compiled in his *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Sosial Berdasarkan Konsep-konsep Kunci* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1996).
 74. Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia*, 268-9.
 75. See Suwito and Muhibb, "Peta Studi Islam pada Program Pascasarjana IAIN Jakarta", *Jauhar*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2001): 246-74.
 76. Among them are: Harifuddin Cawidu, *Konsep Kufr dalam Al-Qur'an*; Jalaluddin Rahman, *Konsep Perbutatan 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 Abdullah, *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).

77. Some books modified from theses 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, *Menjelami 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-Quran* (Surabaya: Bina Ilmu, 1984); [Makassar] Hadi Mutamam, *Hikmah dalam Al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Madani Pustaka Hikmah, 2001).
78. See Shihab, "Membumikan" *Al-Quran*, 115.
79. See *ibid.*
80. See Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Quran*, 62 - 64.
81. See, for instance, Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Quran*, xiv.
82. See Djalal, *Urgensi Tafsir Mawdu'i pada Masa Kini*, 93.
83. See Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Quran*, 59.
84. See *ibid.*, 44; 63.
85. See Shihab, "Membumikan" *Al-Quran*, 120.
86. See Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Quran*, 26.
87. This issue is well addressed by Taufik Adnan Amal in his *Rekonstruksi Sejarah al-Quran* (Yogyakarta: FkBA, 2001), mainly chapter 3.
88. See, for instance, Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Quran*, 11; 28-9; 56.
89. See Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, 19-22; *Paradigma al-Qur'an*, 55-60.
90. 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 exegetical methods explained below.
91. For further details see Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, 22-8; *Paradigma al-Quran*, 29-30, 60-8, 187-94.
92. See Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, 29-30; *Paradigma al-Quran*, 69-71.
93. See Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, 29-30, 211-26; *Paradigma al-Quran*, 69-71; 188-94.
94. *Ibid.*, 32-3. It should be noted, however, that in practice Rahardjo often inserts into his explanation *hadiths*, pertinent historical accounts, the 'culturalized' meanings of a term within the context of Indonesian society, and perspectives of social science theories.
95. See al-Farmāwī, *Al-Bidāyah fi al-Tafsir al-Mawḍū'i*, 61-2.
96. See Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, 35; see also pages 10-1.
97. *Ibid.*, xix; 11-3; 34.
98. See *Ibid.*, xxii-xxiii; Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Quran*, 1-3, 23-4.
99. See Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Quran*, 63-4.
100. *Ibid.*, 28-30, 35-41.
101. *Ibid.*, 42-51.
102. *Ibid.*, 30-1, 60.
103. *Ibid.*, 62.
104. In the case of Quraish Shihab's works, either *musalsal* or thematic, the *munasabah* is quite noticeably pursued, mainly due to the influence of al-Biqā'ī's *Nazm al-Durar* which Shihab discusses in his doctoral dissertation.
105. It should be noted, however, that it is Taufik Adnan Amal who has more often introduced and sometimes modified Rahman's ideas related to the Qur'an's interpretation, rather than Madjid and Maarif.

106. See Fazlur Rahman, *Islam dan Modernitas: Tentang Transformasi Intelektual*, trans. Ahsin Mohammad (Bandung: Pustaka, 1985).
107. See Fazlur Rahman, "Menafsirkan al-Quran", in Fazlur Rahman, *Metode dan Alternatif Neomodernisme Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 1987), 54-67. This book consists of five of Rahman's essays translated and edited by Taufik Adnan Amal.
108. See Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 1-11; and Fazlur Rahman, "Interpreting the Qur'an", *Inquiry*, May 1986: 45-9.
109. *Ibid*, 5.
110. This approach consists of three steps: 1) "one has to understand the import or meaning of a given statement or problem to which it was the answer"; 2) one has "to generalize those specific answers and enunciate them as statements of general moral-social objectives that can be 'distilled' from specific texts in the light of the socio-historical background and the ... *ratio legis*"; and 3) "the general has to be embodied in the present concrete socio-historical context." *Ibid*, 5-7.
111. See Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual al-Quran*.
112. See M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Al-Fatihah Paradigma Al-Quran: Pendekatan Baru dalam Metodologi Tafsir Al-Quran* (Bandung: Pesantren al-Quran Babussalam, 1988), unpublished script. Recently, most of the essays in this compilation have been included in his book *Paradigma al-Quran: Metodologi Tafsir dan Kritik Sosial*.
113. See Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Quran*, 11; 24-5; 156-7.
114. Jalaluddin Rakhmat was born in Bandung, West Java, on August 29, 1949. He obtained his Masters degree in Communications from the Iowa University (1982). In 1988, together with his colleagues, he established Yayasan Muthahhari whose main activities lie in the realm of education. He has been often involved in *da'wah* activities, mainly in campuses, and is a well-known public speaker. Rakhmat, who has declared himself to be a Sunni-Shi'ite, has published many books on Islam; among them are: *Islam Alternatif* (1986), *Khotbah-khotbah di Amerika* (1988), *Rintihan Suci Ahlul Bait* (1988), *Islam Aktual* (1991), and *Tafsir Bil-Ma'tsur* (1993), *Membuka Tirai Kegaiban* (1994), *Catatan Kang Jalal* (1997), and *Tafsir Sufi Surat al-Fatihah* (1999).
115. See Jalaluddin Rakhmat, "Kata Pengantar", *Islam dan Tantangan Modernitas: Studi atas Pemikiran Hukumi Fazlur Rahman*, Taufik Adnan Amal (Bandung: Mizan, 1989).
116. See Kuntowijoyo, "Paradigma Al-Quran untuk Perumusan Teori", in *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi untuk Aksi* (Bandung: Mizan, 1991).
117. See, for instance, Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual al-Quran*, 59.
118. *Ibid*.
119. This is a term borrowed from the Moroccan intellectual Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī. Al-Jābirī states that there are three epistemological foundations that have shaped and dominated the 'Arab mind' (*al-'aql al-'arabī*) since its formation, namely: *al-bayān* ('indication'), *al-'irfān* ('illumination') *al-burhān* ('demonstration'). In the epistemological order of *al-bayān*, the relation between the expression (*lafz*) and meaning (*ma'nā*) occupies a central role. It relies on the text, consensus, and *ijtihād* as the fundamental sources of references. It has been manifested mainly in *fiqh* and *kalām* traditions. In the epistemological order of *al-'irfān*, the relation

- between *zāhir* and *bātin* occupies a central role. It considers the process of 'unconcealment' or 'uncovering' (*kashf*) as the road to knowledge and understanding, a knowledge which leads to a form of unity with God. It has been manifested particularly in Sufism. In the epistemological order of *al-burhān*, premise of logic occupies a central role. It relies on reason, experience and senses as a way to understand the world as a unified logical structure. It has been manifested primarily in philosophy tradition in its Aristotelian dimension. See al-Jābirī, *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabī* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1990).
120. See Misrawi, "Kerangka Metodologis Tafsir Emansipatoris", 7; Rumadi, "Menepis Hegemoni Teks Agama".
 121. See, for example, Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual al-Quran*, 50; and Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Quran*, 24-5.
 122. See Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual al-Quran*, 42-4. See also Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender*, 105.
 123. *Ibid.*, 60, 63-4.
 124. *Ibid.*, 51.
 125. See Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, 154.
 126. See Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), xi.
 127. See Amal, *Islam dan Tantangan Modernitas*, 204-5; Amal and Panggabean, *Tafsir Kontekstual al-Quran*, 10, 44-8, 52-8.
 128. Rakhmat, "Kata Pengantar", 29.
 129. *Ibid.*, 28.
 130. See Abdurrahman, *Islam sebagai Kritik Sosial*, 108, 110.
 131. *Ibid.*, 114. For Thāhā's idea, see his book, *The Second Message of Islam*, trans. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987), especially chapters 5 and 6.
 132. Kuntowijoyo, "Paradigma Al-Quran untuk Perumusan Teori", 331-2.
 133. *Ibid.*, 327-35.
 134. Kuntowijoyo, "Sebuah Model Reaktualisasi: Lima Program Reinterpretasi", in *Paradigma Islam*, 285.
 135. Kuntowijoyo, "Tafsir Kontekstual: Al-Qur'an sebagai Kritik Sosial", a foreword in Syu'bah Asa, *Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Ayat-ayat Sosial Politik* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2000), x.
 136. See Kuntowijoyo, "Strukturalisme Transendental", in *Muslim Tanpa Masjid: Esai-esai Agama, Budaya, dan Politik dalam Bingkai Strukturalisme Transendental* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001), especially 9-10, 17-9.
 137. Up to a point, these two positions appear to be another version of the classical debate on whether the meaning of the Qur'an should refer to its specific occasions (*khusūṣ al-sabab*) or its general formulation (*'umūm al-lafẓh*), namely between those which hold the principle of *al-'ibrah bi khusūṣ al-sabab lā bi 'umūm al-lafẓh* and those which hold the principle of *al-'ibrah bi 'umūm al-lafẓh lā bi khusūṣ al-sabab*. The scholars who prefer to interpret the Qur'an in its historical context perhaps would appreciate more the first principle, whereas those who argue for freeing the text from its historical burdens and biases perhaps would appreciate more the second principle.
 138. Adian Husaini, *Hegemoni Kristen-Barat dalam Studi Islam di Perguruan Tinggi* (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2006) 141.
 139. See, for example, his forewords in Ilham B. Saenong, *Hermeneutika Pembebasan: Metodologi Tafsir al-Quran Menurut Hassan Hanafi* (Jakarta:

- Teraju, 2002) xv-xxvii; and Fahrudin Faiz, *Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an: Tema-tema Kontroversial* (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ, 2005) xv-xxi.
140. See M. Amin Abdullah, "Bentuk Ideal Jurusan TH (Tafsir Hadist) Fakultas Ushuluddin IAIN Sunan Kalijaga", *Al-Jāmi'ah*, No. 47 (1991): 90-9.
 141. See M. Amin Abdullah, "Bentuk Ideal Jurusan TH (Tafsir Hadis) Fakultas Ushuluddin IAIN", *Studi Agama: Normativitas atau Historisitas?* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1996) 138-47.
 142. Komaruddin Hidayat was born in Magelang, Central Java, on October 18, 1953. He obtained his doctoral degree from the Department of Philosophy of the Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara. He is a professor of Islamic philosophy at UIN Jakarta. He has been a lecturer in UIN Jakarta and Yayasan Paramadina since 1990. He was the chairman of Panwaslu, the monitoring committee for the general elections (2003-2004) and is now the Rector of UIN Jakarta. He has published several books; among them are: *Agama Masa Depan* (1995); *Memahami Bahasa Agama* (1996); *Tragedi Raja Midas* (1998); *Wahyu di Langit Wahyu di Bumi* (2003); *Menafsirkan Kehendak Tuhan* (2003); and *Psikologi Kematian* (2005).
 143. See Komaruddin Hidayat, *Memahami Bahasa Agama: Sebuah Kajian Hermeneutik* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1996).
 144. See Hidayat, *Menafsirkan Kehendak Tuhan*, 149.
 145. The following are some works which initially claim to apply *hermeneutika* for the study of Islam: Moch. Nur Ichwan, *Hermeneutika Tafsir Al-Qur'an: Analisis Peta Perkembangan Metodologi Tafsir Al-Qur'an Kontemporer*, unpublished undergraduate paper (Yogyakarta: IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, 1995); Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Qurban: Bingkai Tradisi dan Elan Transformatif Profetis", *Kompas*, April 17, 1997; Yusuf Rahman, "Unsur Hermeneutika dalam Tafsir al-Baydhawi", *Ulumul Qur'an* (Jakarta: LSAF), Vol. VII, No. 3 (1997): 36-42; and Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender: Perspektif Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999).
 146. See Moch. Nur Ichwan, *Meretas Keserjanaan Kritis al-Quran: Teori Hermeneutika Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd* (Jakarta: Teraju, 2002) xi.
 147. See Nashruddin Baidan, "Tinjauan Kritis terhadap Konsep Hermeneutiks", *Esensia*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2001) 165-80.
 148. Fauzan al-Anshari is a senior official of Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI, the Indonesian Mujāhids Council), an organization that is led by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, a cleric who became famous after he was accused of being involved in terrorism, not long after the Bali bombing in 2002.
 149. See Fauzan Al-Anshari, "Kritik Hermeneutika Al-Quran", *Republika*, March 19, 2002, 2. This article itself appeared not long after Ahmad Fuad Fanani's article which recommends *hermeneutika*, "Metode Hermeneutika untuk Al-Qur'an", appeared in Jaringan Islam Liberal's website on February 17, 2002 (see <http://islamlib.com/id/index.php?page=article&id=124>).
 150. The first objection in *Media Dakwah* itself appeared not long after al-Anshari's article was published, i.e. Syamsul Bahri Isma'iel, "Islam Liberal: Menafsirkan Agama dengan Hermeneutika Barat," *Media Dakwah*, No. 334 (April 2002): 25.
 151. The most important criticisms of *hermeneutika* in *Hidayatullah* are: Hafidz Abdurrahman, "Membedah Kebobrokan Tafsir Hermeneutika", *Hidayatullah*, in two editions of March and April 2005: 74-5; and Fahmi Salim, "Al-Qur'an, Manusia, dan Takwil: Tafsir Hermeneutis, Berkah

- atau Bencana", *Hidayatullah*, in two editions of August and September 2005: 74-5.
152. See *Islamia* (Jakarta: INSISTS and Khairul Bayan) Vol. I, No. 1, March 2004; and Vol. I, No. 2, August 2004. The editorial staff of this journal is led by Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, who is also the director of the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilization (INSISTS). Zarkasyi, like many contributors to the journal, obtained his doctoral degree from the International Institute of Islamic Thought-International Islamic University, Malaysia.
 153. Alireza Alathas is a student at Hawzah Ilmiah, Qum.
 154. See Alireza Alathas, "Menimbang Pandangan Hermeneutika", *Al-Huda* (Jakarta: Al-Huda), Vol. III, No. 11, 2005: 19-37.
 155. See Tim Penulis Paramadina, *Fiqh Lintas Agama: Membangun Masyarakat Inklusif-Pluralis* (Jakarta: Paramadina & TAF, 2003). This team consists of nine scholars: Nurcholish Madjid, Kautsar Azhari Noer, Komaruddin Hidayat, Masdar F. Mas'udi, Zainun Kamal, Zuhairi Misrawi, Budhy Munawar-Rachman, Ahmad Gaus AF, and Mun'im A. Sirry (editor). This book basically represents liberal Muslims' views on Islamic teachings regarding Muslim-non-Muslim relations. However, it does recommend *hermeneutika* for developing an 'inclusive and tolerant *tafsir* tradition'. It suggests *hermeneutika* to be used as a "mechanism for revealing 'the deferred meaning' in order to restore the universal and pluralist commitment of the revelation." The authors recommend a kind of *hermeneutika* which "can make a considerable change in classical *fiqh* tradition" in order to "sharpen the commitment of *fiqh* to tolerance and pluralism;" that is, *hermeneutika* which takes the text as a cultural product and as a progressive revelation, and believes in emancipatory paradigms.
 156. This draft is basically meant to reform Islamic family law in Indonesia by offering an alternative to the existing compilation of Islamic law. Officially made public in November 2004 by the team that was led by Siti Musda Mulia, it elicited considerable controversy mainly as it prohibits polygamy, permits inter-religious marriage, stipulates 'iddah for the husband in addition to the wife, and stipulates the equality of son and daughter in inheritance law.
 157. See "Di Balik Hermeneutika", foreword, *Islamia*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2004): 4.
 158. See Abdullah, "Kata Pengantar", in Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an*, xviii.
 159. Umar, "Menimbang Hermeneutika sebagai Manhaj Tafsir", 51.
 160. Hidayat, *Menafsirkan Kehendak Tuhan*, 138.
 161. Nurcholish Madjid, "Kata Pengantar", *Menafsirkan Kehendak Tuhan*, x.
 162. Hidayat, *Menafsirkan Kehendak Tuhan*, 149.
 163. See Hidayat, *Memahami Bahasa Agama*, 215.
 164. See Abdul Hadi WM, *Tasawuf yang Tertindas: Kajian Hermeneutik terhadap Karya-karya Hamzah Fansuri* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001) 96. In equating *ta'wil* and hermeneutics, he often refers to Md. Salleh Yaapar, "Ziarah ke Timur: Ta'wil sebagai Bentuk Hermeneutika Islam", *Ulumul Qur'an* (Jakarta: LSAF), Januari-Maret 1993, 4-10, a translated version of "A Pilgrimage into the Orient: Ta'wil as a Form of Islamic Hermeneutics", *Muslim Education Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1988) 44-9.
 165. Some of these similarities are as follows: 1) both hermeneutic theorists and Sufis are of the opinion that language, as a means of human expression and communication, is 'the locus of meaning'; 2) both *ta'wil* and (classical)

- hermeneutics emerged from the consciousness that every religious text has an inner meaning behind its outer utterance; 3) both *ta'wil* and hermeneutics do not place the text as the final end. See Abdul Hadi WM, *Tasawuf yang Tertindas*, 96, 98, 109; Abdul Hadi WM, *Hermeneutika, Estetika, dan Religiusitas: Esai-Esai Sastra Sufistik dan Seni Rupa* (Yogyakarta: Malahari, 2004), 72, 75, 90; and Abdul Hadi WM, "Ta'wil: Relevansi Hermeneutika dalam Kajian Sastra Melayu di Indonesia", *Mimbar* (Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah), Vol. 22, No. 3 (2005) 241; 244; 246.
166. See Umar, "Menimbang Hermeneutika sebagai Manhaj Tafsir", 50. He seems to borrow this opinion from Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī's *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabī* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wahdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1990), see for instance pages 21-2.
167. See Umar, "Menimbang Hermeneutika sebagai Manhaj Tafsir", 51.
168. See Baidan, *Wawasan Baru Ilmu Tafsir*, 75-6; M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Paradigma al-Quran: Metodologi Tafsir dan Kritik Sosial* (Jakarta: PSAP Muhammadiyah, 2005), 14. Unfortunately, Rahardjo does not clarify Ibn Taymiyyah's interpretive theories that he refers to. Meanwhile, Baidan draws a conclusion from Ibn Taymiyyah's suggestion in his book, *al-Muqaddimah fi Uṣūl al-Tafsir*, that the best ways to interpret the Qur'an are interpreting it (in decreasing order) with the Qur'an, then with the Prophetic traditions (*sunnah*), and then with the sayings of the Companions (*aqwāl al-ṣaḥābah*). See Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Muqaddimah fi Uṣūl al-Tafsir* (Kuwait: Dār al-Qur'an al-Karīm, 1971), 81-2. For Baidan, this means that Ibn Taymiyyah has recognized the need for paying attention to 'who talked' (Allah, the 'author' of the Qur'an), 'to whom the talk was (initially) addressed' (the Prophet), and 'at whom the talk was aimed' (the Companions) in interpreting the Qur'an.
169. See Hidayat, *Menaafsirkan Kehendak Tuhan*, 149.
170. See Faiz, *Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an*, 14.
171. *Ibid.*, 21.
172. See Saenong, *Hermeneutika Pembebasan*, 63-6.
173. Their view on the position of *hermeneutika* with regard to Islam is therefore quite similar to Abū Zayd's saying that "hermeneutics is old and new at the same time" (*qadīyyah qadīmah wa jadīdah fi nafs al-waqt*). See Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, *Ishkālīyyāt al-Qirā'ah wa Āliyyāt al-Ta'wil* (Beirut: Markaz al-Thaqāfi al-'Arabī, 1994), 14.
174. Adnīn Armas was born in Medan, North Sumatera, on September 2, 1972. He obtained his Masters degree from the International Institute of Islamic Thought-International Islamic University Malaysia (ISTAC-IIUM), and is now a Ph.D. candidate in the same university. He is the executive director of the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilization (INSISTS). He has published two books: *Pengaruh Kristen dan Orientalis terhadap Islam Liberal* (2003) and *Metodologi Bibel dalam Studi Al-Qur'an* (2005).
175. Ugi Suharto is a lecturer at the Faculty of Economics at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM).
176. See Ugi Suharto, "Apakah Al-Qur'an Memerlukan Hermeneutika?," *Islamia*, Vol. I, No. 1, 2004, 49.
177. See Armas, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an atau 'Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an'", 39.
178. See *ibid.*, 38.
179. See *ibid.*, 44.
180. See *ibid.*, 39.

181. See Hidayat, *Menafsirkan Kehendak Tuhan*, 28. See also HM Suyudi, "Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an (Studi tentang Pendekatan Hermeneutika dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur'an)", *Al-Tahrir* (Ponorogo: STAIN Ponorogo), Vol. 2, No. 2 (2002) 119.
182. See, for instance, Adian Husaini, "Problem Teks Bible dan Hermeneutika", *Islamia*, Vol. I, No. 1 (2004) 7.
183. See "Di Balik Hermeneutika", *Islamia*, 6.
184. See Suharto, "Apakah Al-Qur'an Memerlukan Hermeneutika?", 47-8; Adian Husaini, *Wajah Peradaban Barat: Dari Hegemoni Kristen Ke Dominasi Sekular-Liberal*, (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2005), 290.
185. See Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, "Menguak Nilai di Balik Hermeneutika", *Islamia*, Vol. I, No. 1 (2004): 16-29.
186. See Faiz, *Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an*, 26-7.
187. See "Salam", preamble, and "Di Balik Hermeneutika", foreword, *Islamia*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2004); Suharto, "Apakah Al-Qur'an Memerlukan Hermeneutika?", 53; Husaini, *Wajah Peradaban Barat*, 289; Husaini, *Hegemoni Kristen-Barat*, 250.
188. See, for instance, Husaini, *Hegemoni Kristen-Barat*, 194-215; Armas, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an atau 'Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an'", 42; Alathas, "Menimbang Pandangan Hermeneutika", 31.
189. The opponents often understand this term as having a negative connotation and sometimes call it 'satanic circle' (*lingkaran setan*) to give convey just how bad it is. See Suharto, "Apakah Al-Qur'an Memerlukan Hermeneutika?", 51). The proponents, on the other hand, understand the term in a positive light. See, for instance, Hidayat, *Memahami Bahasa Agama*, 215.
190. Such an attitude is said to be appropriate only for the Bible whose language has often changed (from Aramaic and Syriac to Greek and then to Latin) and which contains a lot of changes and errors in wording. This is not the case for the Qur'an. The opponents also assert that it is such a sceptical attitude that has led *hermeneutika* supporters to be prejudiced over the standardization of the Qur'an during the Caliphate of 'Uthmān as an attempt at Quraysh cultural hegemony. See, for instance, Husaini, *Hegemoni Kristen-Barat*, 194-215; Adian Husaini, "Hermeneutika dan Infiltrasi Kristen", <http://www.hidayatullah.com>, April 3, 2004; and M. Zainal Abidin, "Ketika Hermeneutika Menggantikan Tafsir Al-Qur'an", *Republika*, June 24, 2005: 2.
191. See Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an*, 42-3. Similarly, Ahmad Fuad Fanani suggests that the relativity of interpretation in *hermeneutika* does not mean that there is no truth in textual interpretation, rather it means that a product of interpretation can still be adjusted to the changing contexts. See Ahmad Fuad Fanani, "Hermeneutika dan Alternatif Kontekstualisasi al-Quran", *Tanwir* (Jakarta: PSAP Muhammadiyah), Vol. 1, No. 2 (2003): 182.
192. See Armas, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an atau 'Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an'", 39; Al-Anshari, "Kritik Hermeneutika Al-Quran".
193. See Baidan, *Wawasan Baru Ilmu Tafsir*, 87, 89; Abidin, "Ketika Hermeneutika Menggantikan Tafsir Al-Qur'an".
194. See Zarkasyi, "Menguak Nilai di Balik Hermeneutika", 25, 28; Nasir, "Hermeneutika Kritis", 36; Fahmi Salim, "Al-Qur'an, Manusia, dan Takwil", *Hidayatullah*, September 2005: 75.

195. Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an*, 38.
196. See Armas, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an atau 'Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an'", 44.
197. See Baidan, *Wawasan Baru Ilmu Tafsir*, 83. Faiz responds to this criticism by countering that *hermeneutika* is itself a way of interpretation, which in the opinion of Faiz, also deals with details. See Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an*, 40.
198. *Ibid.*, 81.
199. See Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an*, 41.
200. See, for instance, Hidayat, *Memahami Bahasa Agama*, 215.
201. See Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an*, 21.
202. It should be noted that the word *kontekstualisasi* in Bahasa Indonesia most often implies or relates (merely) to contemporary or current context, so that it seems to have a narrower sense than the English word 'contextualization'.
203. See, for example, Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an*, 23-4; Fanani, "Hermeneutika dan Alternatif Kontekstualisasi al-Quran", 182; and M. Hilaly Basya, "Mendialogkan Teks Agama dengan Makna Zaman: Menuju Transformasi Sosial", *Al-Huda* (Jakarta: Al-Huda), Vol. III, No. 11 (2005): 10.
204. See Hidayat, *Memahami Bahasa Agama*, 215.
205. See Tim Penulis Paramadina, *Fiqih Lintas Agama*, 173.
206. See Husaini, "Problem Teks Bible dan Hermeneutika", 14; Husaini, *Wajah Peradaban Barat*, 302.
207. See Husaini, "Hermeneutika dan Infiltrasi Kristen".
208. See Husaini, *Wajah Peradaban Barat*, 307.
209. See Husaini, "Hermeneutika dan Infiltrasi Kristen". See also Abidin, "Ketika Hermeneutika Menggantikan Tafsir Al-Qur'an".
210. See Husaini, *Wajah Peradaban Barat*, 314.
211. See Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an*, 40; Hidayat, *Menafsirkan Kehendak Tuhan*, 28.
212. See Suharto, "Apakah Al-Qur'an Memerlukan Hermeneutika?", 51.
213. See *ibid.*, 52; Alathas, "Menimbang Pandangan Hermeneutika", 30-1, 33, 35.
214. See Suharto, "Apakah Al-Qur'an Memerlukan Hermeneutika?", 51-2.
215. See Husaini, *Hegemoni Kristen-Barat*, 270-1. In this regard, Husaini illustrates Musdah Mulia's understanding of al-Mumtahanah/60: 10 as an example.
216. See, for instance, Nasir, "Hermeneutika Kritis", 32.
217. See Armas, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an atau 'Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an'", 38, 45.
218. See *ibid.*, 42.
219. See Umar, "Menimbang Hermeneutika sebagai Manhaj Tafsir", 54-5.
220. See Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an*, 39.
221. See Abdullah, *Studi Agama*, 146.
222. See Abdullah, "Kata Pengantar", in Saenong, *Hermeneutika Pembebasan*, xxv.

Izza Rohman recently completed his Masters in Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University. This article constitutes sections of his Masters thesis.