

EVOLUTION OF QUR'ANIC EXEGETICAL METHODS IN ACEH THROUGH HERMENEUTIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL LENSES

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ABSTRACT

Qur'anic interpretation in Aceh has developed in tandem with shifting social, political, and cultural conditions, producing distinct exegetical profiles across historical periods. This study traces the evolution of interpretive methods in Aceh through hermeneutic and sociological lenses in order to show how the sacred text is understood, interpreted, and enacted in communal life. Using a qualitative design, the analysis applies a hermeneutic sociological approach to primary sources that include Abdurrauf as Singkili's *Tarjuman al Mustafid* and contemporary Acehnese tafsir and sermon materials, supported by academic secondary literature. Findings indicate a trajectory from a Sufi and fiqh oriented profile that foregrounds spiritual and normative dimensions, to a rational modern turn disseminated through sermons and print media, and finally to a hermeneutic sociological approach that places the text in active dialogue with post conflict realities and the formalization of Sharia through qanun. The results show that methodological change is not linear but context responsive and that tafsir functions as a social practice that mediates norms, education, and public policy.

Keywords: Tafsir methodology, hermeneutics, sociology of tafsir, Acehnese scholars, Qur'anic contextualization

ABSTRAK

Penafsiran Al-Quran di Aceh berkembang seiring dinamika sosial, politik, dan budaya pada tiap periode sejarah sehingga melahirkan corak tafsir yang khas. Penelitian ini menelusuri evolusi metodologi penafsiran di Aceh dengan menekankan lensa hermeneutik dan sosiologis untuk melihat bagaimana teks suci dipahami, ditafsirkan, dan diaktualisasikan dalam realitas masyarakat. Penelitian menggunakan desain kualitatif dengan analisis hermeneutik sosiologis terhadap sumber primer berupa *Tarjuman al Mustafid* karya Abdurrauf as Singkili serta naskah dan materi tafsir Aceh kontemporer, yang dilengkapi kajian pustaka akademik. Hasil menunjukkan tipologi yang bergerak dari corak sufistik fiqh yang menekankan dimensi spiritual dan normatif, menuju corak rasional modern yang meluas melalui khutbah dan media cetak, lalu bertransformasi menjadi pendekatan hermeneutik sosiologis yang menempatkan teks dalam dialog aktif dengan konteks pascakonflik dan penerapan qanun syariat. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa perubahan metodologi tidak bersifat linear, melainkan reflektif terhadap konteks zamannya, dan bahwa tafsir berfungsi sebagai praktik sosial yang memediasi norma, pendidikan, dan kebijakan publik.

Kata Kunci: Metodologi tafsir, hermeneutik, sosiologi tafsir, ulama Aceh, kontekstualisasi Al-Quran

A. Introduction

The tradition of Qur'anic exegesis in Aceh has deep historical roots that are intertwined with social, cultural, and religious life. Aceh is known for a strong Islamic identity and for scholars whose work has shaped tafsir across the Malay Indonesian world. Methods of interpretation have never been static. They shift in response to changing historical conditions and new intellectual currents.¹ In a fast-moving modern context the Qur'an needs to be reread through approaches that remain sensitive to lived realities so that it can speak to contemporary concerns. This study is urgent because it seeks to trace how interpretive methods in Aceh developed from the classical period to the present and to show how Acehnese scholars read the Qur'an while engaging hermeneutical and sociological dimensions that operate within Aceh's social world.

The variety of exegetical approaches in Aceh can be followed from the earliest phases of Islamization to the modern era. In the classical period Abdurrauf as Singkili exemplified a verse by verse method with strong attention to law, ethics, and Sufism as seen in *Tafsir Tarjuman al Mustafid*.² At that stage interpretation drew heavily on Middle Eastern traditions and centered on language and jurisprudence.³ Over time the field expanded beyond these anchors toward thematic, contextual, and hermeneutical readings that probe deeper layers of meaning in line with communal needs.⁴ Globalization and modernization increased the demand for adaptive interpretive frameworks. Modern Acehnese scholars therefore advanced sociologically oriented readings that connect the Qur'an to public issues such as justice, education, and human dignity.⁵

The evolution of Acehnese tafsir has always moved together with political, cultural, and social change. During the colonial era, interpretations of verses related to jihad helped inspire resistance to Dutch rule.⁶ After independence and into the modern period exegetical discourse grew more complex and began to address democracy, human rights, and social development.⁷ These shifts show that interpretation in Aceh is dynamic and that scholars

¹ Hamnah Hamnah, Achmad Abu Bakar, and Firdaus Firdaus, 'Unveiling the Method of Interpretation by Abdurrahman Bin Nasir As-Sa'di in the Book 'Taisir Al-Karim Al-Rahman Fi Tafsir Kalam Al-Mannan'', *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis*, 7.3 (2023), pp. 489–506, doi:10.29240/alquds.v7i3.5739.

² Syukri Rizki and Yusrizal, 'Farādīs Al-Jinān: A Compact Acehnese Translation for Learning Jurjānī's Rudimentary Arabic Grammar in Aceh', *Studies in English Language and Education*, 12.1 (2025), pp. 442–56, doi:10.24815/siele.v12i1.36602.

³ Ahmad Izzan and Mohammad Irfan Farraz Haecal, 'Local Wisdom in Malay Natural Interpretation "Turjuman Al-Mustafid": Analysis of Surah Al-Baqarah with a Historical Approach', *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 22.2 (2024), pp. 216–38, doi:10.1163/22321969-20240151.

⁴ Moh. Nor Ichwan and Auwal Salisu, 'Reevaluating Qur'anic Hermeneutics: A Comparative Analysis Between Classical Tafsir and Modern Hermeneutical Approaches', *Kalam*, 18.2 (2024), pp. 107–26, doi:10.24042/kalam.v18i2.24213.

⁵ Munawir Umar and Yusuf Rahman, 'Respons Ulama Aceh Terhadap Al-Quran Al-Karim Dan Terjemahan Bebas Bersajak Dalam Bahasa Aceh', *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 9.2 (2020), 83–102 <<https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v9i2.18239>>.

⁶ Cut Maya Aprita Sari, Kartini Aboo Talib @ Khalid, and Shazlin A Hamzah, 'From "Song of War" to "Song of Peace": The Role of Hikayat Prang Sabi for Acehnese Ethnonationalism', *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 9.1 (2022), p. 2062894, doi:10.1080/23311983.2022.2062894.

⁷ Nazar Fadli, 'Contribution Of Acehnese Scholars To The Development Of Quranic Exegesis In Indonesia: A Study Of Tengku Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy And His Work "Tafsir An-Nuur"', *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies*, 3.1 (2023), pp. 1–22, doi:10.23917/qist.v3i1.3381.

work to keep the Qur'an relevant as circumstances change. A core problem remains. The hermeneutical dimension that examines the interplay among text, interpreter, and context is still rarely explored in a systematic way. Many studies describe genres and content without unpacking how knowledge is produced or how textual meaning engages social reality.

Prior research shows growing attention to methodology in Acehese tafsir but it seldom integrates hermeneutic and sociological perspectives in a single frame. Parwanto, Akbar, and Olawale Fahm in 2022 highlight classical exegesis by figures such as Abdurrauf as Singkili as Sufi normative with limited social engagement.⁸ Fadli in 2023 notes a shift toward rational and contextual approaches in modern Aceh yet does not explain their hermeneutic construction in detail.⁹ Maula in 2024 documents the influence of the post reform sociopolitical setting on interpretation yet leaves open how hermeneutics structures the method.¹⁰ Talebe in 2012 discusses connections between tafsir and Acehese culture in a descriptive manner without methodological analysis.¹¹ Zulkhairi and colleagues in 2024 examine Islamic education in Aceh from a sociological angle without linking it fully to tafsir.¹² These works reveal a conceptual gap because there is still no integrative account of methodological evolution that synthesizes hermeneutic and sociological approaches.

This study addresses that gap through three guiding questions. How can the evolution of interpretive methods in Aceh be understood through hermeneutic and sociological lenses. To what extent does a hermeneutic approach clarify the methodological transformations adopted by Acehese exegetes from the classical period to the contemporary period. How do social conditions influence the interpretive orientations that emerge. The aims are threefold. First, to explain the historical dynamics of Qur'anic interpretive methods in Aceh. Second, to analyze how hermeneutics helps read the exegetical patterns of Acehese scholars. Third, to examine the role of social context in shaping those patterns. The core premise is that hermeneutics illuminates the textual dimension and also the horizons of meaning that arise through interaction among the text, the interpreter, and Aceh's social reality. The expected contribution is a more holistic understanding of Acehese Qur'anic methodology that enriches the study of Nusantara tafsir through a hermeneutic sociological lens and that opens paths for integrative work in other regions.

This research uses a qualitative design with a hermeneutic sociological approach that combines close reading with attention to the surrounding sociocultural context. The corpus includes *Turjuman al Mustafid* by Abdurrauf as Singkili and other Acehese tafsir manuscripts preserved at the Tanoh Abee Library. The analysis focuses on interpretive methodology and on the representation of Islamic social values within Acehese society.

⁸ Wendi Parwanto, Taufik Akbar, and AbdulGafar Olawale Fahm, 'The Method of Interpretation on Qs. Al-Fatihah in Tarjuman Al-Mustafid By Abdul Rauf As-Singkili', *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies*, 1.3 (2022), pp. 264–76, doi:10.23917/qist.v1i3.2388.

⁹ Fadli.

¹⁰ Minnatul Maula, 'Wajah Budaya Dalam Tafsir Nusantara (Studi Analisis Pada Tafsir Pase)', *Journal on Education*, 6.4 (2024), pp. 19480–92, doi:10.31004/joe.v6i4.5967.

¹¹ Tamrin Talebe, 'Paradigma Penafsiran Al-Quran Nusantara (Analisis Tafsir Aceh (Tafsir Pase)', *HUNafa Jurnal Studia Islamika*, 9.1 (2012), pp. 131–48, doi:10.24239/jsi.v9i1.47.

¹² Teuku Zulkhairi and others, 'Bahtsul Masail at a Traditional Islamic Educational Institution in Aceh: Teungku Dayah's Contribution to the Development of Islamic Law', *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam*, 8.1 (2024), pp. 579–601, doi:10.22373/sjkh.v8i1.17408.

The procedure proceeds in three stages. First, textual explication that identifies semantic structure and key terms. Second, hermeneutic interpretation that traces horizons of meaning between the authorial voice and the social setting. Third, thematic categorization that organizes findings under socio religious themes such as education, *adat*, and *da'wah*. Triangulation and validation are maintained through cross textual comparison among Acehese tafsir, verification with secondary literature on Nusantara exegesis and academic studies, and consultation with local experts in philology and tafsir to secure historical accuracy and contextual fidelity. This approach supports a comprehensive reading of hermeneutic dynamics and sociological contours in Acehese Qur'anic exegesis.

B. Results and Discussion

1. Early trajectories of tafsir in Aceh and its classical profile

The earliest traces of tafsir in Aceh display a creative synthesis between the transmission of Middle Eastern scholarship and the pedagogical needs of the Malay Nusantara public. Intellectual centers in the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam fostered works with normative, Sufi, and practical legal orientations. These works balanced the authority of transmitted reports with disciplined reasoning.¹³ Within this ecosystem Abdurrauf al Singkili, a Shafi'i jurist and a Sufi of the *Shattariyah* order, composed *Tafsir Tarjuman al Mustafid*. The work stands as a classical landmark of Qur'anic interpretation in Malay. It is not a mere translation. It is a concise and systematic tafsir that grounds meaning in *bi al ma'thur*, then ties it to a measured use of *bi al ra'y*. The result is a comprehensive, communicative, and functional style that meets the needs of local readers.¹⁴

The context of production reveals a strategic linguistic vision. The choice of Malay in *Jawi* script created broad access for students, local scholars, and the royal court. Simple diction, a gradual expository flow, and clear delivery signal a strong pedagogical intent. This formulation domesticates the Arabic tafsir heritage within the Aceh Malay horizon while preserving authoritative references. In the tafsir of Surah al Fatihah verse 5, *Iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'in*, Abdurrauf renders the meaning as We worship You alone and we seek help only from You, then adds an explanation on sincerity in worship and absolute reliance on God.¹⁵ The passage is more than a linguistic gloss. It operates as a hermeneutic move that reads *na'budu* within the lived experience of a Muslim society under an Islamic polity. It underscores total devotion within an active theology of divine unity.

The method of *bi al ma'thur* appears in the use of sound reports, the sayings of Companions, and citations from authoritative *mufasssirun* as the base for literal meaning. The argument often begins with the outward sense of the verse, is reinforced with relevant

¹³ Muhammad Habibi Azimi, Abd Mukti, and Sapri Sapri, 'Islamic Education in the Aceh Sultanate Period', *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 8.1 (2024), pp. 2358–67, doi:10.33487/edumaspul.v8i1.8214.

¹⁴ Ghairi Lakmana, Muhammad Roihan Nasution, and Fitriani Fitriani, 'Analisis Rujukan Dan Keunikan Dalam Kitab Tafsir Tarjuman Mustafid', *Al-Wasathiyah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2.2 (2023), pp. 251–66.

¹⁵ Abdurrauf As-Singkili, *Tarjuman Al-Mustafid* (Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1951).

reports, and is anchored in circumstances of revelation when available.¹⁶ This footing supplies epistemic legitimacy and keeps tafsir within the inherited web of meaning. In the reading of Surah al Baqarah verse 183, *Kutiba 'alaykum al siyam*, Abdurrauf explains that fasting continues the law of earlier communities, following reports from Ibn 'Abbas and al Tabari. He clarifies *kutiba* as made obligatory and adds that fasting is not only abstention from food but also restraint of the limbs from sin.¹⁷ A hermeneutic reading of this move shows that he does more than transmit reports. He frames fasting as social and spiritual purification that resonates with a Malay readership shaped by Sufi practice and a feudal courtly order.¹⁸ This structure also guards against unfettered speculation since transmitted material functions as an anchor that guides interpretation. The careful selection and condensation of reports display practical discipline in *isnad* and *matn* even within a concise handbook format.¹⁹

The strength of *bi al ra'y* operates as a mode of elaboration that binds transmitted meaning to linguistic insight, rational judgment, and Shafi'i legal principles. Lexical analysis of key terms, attention to sentence structure, and formulation of ethical and legal consequences reveal an active interpretive intelligence.²⁰ Reasoning remains within bounds since it conforms to rules of tafsir and to *usul al fiqh* in the Shafi'i school.²¹ The rational strand is proportionate. It clarifies semantic ambiguity, weighs possible senses, prefers the stronger view, and concludes with practical implications. The synergy of *bi al ma'thur* and *bi al ra'y* yields an interpretation that is anchored and agile. It holds to transmitted authority while connecting meaning to the reader's horizon.²²

The Sufi face of *Tarjuman al Mustafid* appears in an ethic of inner purification, moral education, and an active commitment to divine unity in daily life.²³ Abdurrauf's *Shattariyah* formation inspires emphasis on purification of the soul, watchfulness, gratitude, patience, and sincerity without entering speculative metaphysics. Spiritual depth is aligned with exegetical orthodoxy. Symbolic Sufi pointers, when present, are regulated so that they do not violate the apparent sense of the verse or legal norms. The orientation is ethical and practical. Interpretation is directed toward the formation of piety, awareness of divine

¹⁶ Asyiq Billah Ali and Amir Faruqi, 'Tinjauan Polemik Identitas Dan Karakteristik Tafsir Tarjuman Al-Mustafid Karya Abd Al-Rauf Al-Singkili', *Javano Islamicus*, 3.1 (2025), pp. 386–401, doi:10.15642/Javano.2025.3.1.386-401.

¹⁷ As-Singkili.

¹⁸ Ahmad Daudy, *Allah Dan Manusia Dalam Konsepsi Syaikh Abdurrauf As-Singkili* (Rajawali Pers, 1983).

¹⁹ Mia Fitriah Elkarimah and Sa'dullah Sa'dullah, 'Kitab Tafsir Karya Ulama Aceh; Al-Quran Al-Karim Wa Bihamisihi Turjuman Al-Mustafid', *ZAD Al-Mufasssir*, 5.2 (2023), pp. 246–66, doi:10.55759/zam.v5i2.114.

²⁰ Abid Syahni, 'Mufasssir Dan Kitab Tafsir Nusantara (TafsirTurjumun Al-Mustafid Karya Abd. Rauf As-Singkilli)', *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Tafsir Di Nusantara*, 5.1 (2019), pp. 33–51.

²¹ Bayram Demircigil, 'The Conceptualization of Jurisprudential Exegesis as the Intersection of Tafsir and Fiqh: A Critical Approach', *Religions*, 16.2 (2025), p. 254, doi:10.3390/rel16020254.

²² Moh. Abdul Kholiq Hasan, 'The Tafsir Bi Al-Ma'sur and Bi Al-Ra'yī in The Commentary of Abū Ja'far Al-Ṭahāwī: (Study in Ahkām Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm)', *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an*, 17.2 (2021), pp. 179–206, doi:10.21009/JSQ.017.2.02.

²³ Zaimul Asror, 'Tarjumān Al-Mustafid: Tafsir Lengkap Pertama Di Nusantara', *Ushuluna: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 4.1 (2020), pp. 94–110, doi:10.15408/ushuluna.v1i1.15291.

presence, and guidance for social righteousness.²⁴ This tone prevents tafsir from stopping at linguistic and legal information and moves it toward spiritual transformation that works through religious practice.

Shafi'i legal reasoning is evident in the treatment of legal verses. Rules of worship, transactions, family, and criminal matters are presented in line with school preferences with brief justifications that refer to *ushul* and legal maxims. When multiple views exist the tafsir presents a choice that matches Shafi'i practice in the region. Readers thus receive operational guidance that fits the local religious ecosystem. The impression of adherence to a school does not narrow the horizon. Abdurrauf displays ordered argument, consistent inference, and breadth under discipline.²⁵ The balance reveals a project that mediates scripture, legal tradition, and social need.

The blend of ethical Sufism and Shafi'i law gives the Acehese tradition a normatively spiritual character. Legal norms are infused with ethical purpose. Calls to worship are coupled with inner awareness. Legal prohibitions are framed as protection of human dignity. *Tarjuman al Mustafid* offers a methodological model. It refuses to separate outward and inward meaning, and it avoids mixing them without control. Instead, it orchestrates both so that each reinforces the other.²⁶ Tafsir becomes an integral pedagogy that builds formal obedience, deepens spiritual understanding, and strengthens social cohesion grounded in Qur'anic values. The local Aceh Malay color appears in practical examples, a plain communicative tone, and attention to the etiquette of learning that marks the *pesantren* world.

The epistemic contribution of *Tarjuman al Mustafid* confirms an integrative pattern that later shapes the DNA of Nusantara tafsir. The pattern combines transmitted authority, philological care, school based legal argument, and an ethic of Sufi formation. The classical Acehese profile is not a simple repetition of Middle Eastern models. It is a creative adaptation that keeps orthodoxy while speaking to cultural needs. The methodological lessons include discipline in relying on sound evidence, skill in analyzing language and discourse structure, consistency in drawing legal conclusions, and sensitivity to cultivate spiritual values. Through this ensemble the work functions not only as an intellectual artifact but also as a device for forming a durable religious habitus.

2. Modern Dynamics of Tafsir and Responses to Social Change

The development of tafsir in Aceh during the twentieth century shows a marked methodological shift that mirrors social and political change. A tradition once dominated by classical Malay texts with Sufi accents and school-based jurisprudence moved toward more popular and communicative formats. This change did not arise only from new intellectual

²⁴ Moh. Jamalul Lail, M Riyan Hidayat, and Roma Wijaya, 'Epistemology of Nusantara Exegesis in the 17th Century: A Study of Tarjumān Al-Mustafid by Abdurrauf Al-Singkili', *QOF*, 8.2 (2024), pp. 201–20, doi:10.30762/qof.v8i2.2491.

²⁵ Mohd Sholeh Sheh Yusuff, Yusuf Othman, and Muhammad Nasri Md Hussain, 'An Exploration in Identifying the Sabab Nuzul Āyah on the Fourth Juz of the Al-Quran in the Tafsir Tarjuman Al-Mustafid According to a Genetic Perspective', *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal*, 10.SI24 (2025), pp. 73–77, doi:10.21834/e-bpj.v10iSI24.6370.

²⁶ Parwanto, Akbar, and Fahm.

tastes. It also reflected the urgent need to respond to colonial rule, the push of modernization, and the rise of Islamic reformism. Tafsir was no longer treated as a static text confined to *pesantren* circles. It appeared in Friday sermons, public study circles, print media, and accessible reading materials that widened public reach.²⁷ This transformation produced a new model of interpretation that is contextual, critical, and deeply engaged with social and political questions.

The spread of tafsir through Friday sermons and large public gatherings shows a deliberate effort by scholars to accelerate the circulation of Quranic meaning. A communicative oral format eased reception among broader audiences and allowed preachers to align themes with current conditions. Sermons often addressed colonial domination, social injustice, and the safeguarding of Islamic identity.²⁸ An oft cited example concerns Teungku Chik di Tiro at the end of the nineteenth century whose influence continued into the early twentieth century. The verse “*Wa qatilu fi sabilillah aladhin yuqatilunakum wa la ta tadū*” in Surah al Baqarah 190 was read as a call to reject colonial oppression with measured justice and as a reminder that resistance to foreign rule belongs to the struggle to defend religion.²⁹ During the Japanese occupation printed versions of such sermons urged the public to strive with knowledge and with deeds in order to grow in spiritual and social strength.³⁰ Oral tafsir then found reinforcement in newspapers and magazines in Malay such as *Penyebar Semangat* and *Pelita Atjeh* that circulated in major towns.³¹ Print opened space for more systematic exposition, enabled wider dissemination, and placed tafsir within modern public discourse.³²

Acehnese responses to colonialism shaped a style of interpretation that emphasized steadfastness, collective unity, and a principled refusal to submit to unjust power. Verses related to struggle and endurance received special attention. Many readings framed colonialism as more than politics since it also threatened Islamic belief and culture.³³ Quranic narratives fueled cultural and physical resistance and supplied a theological frame for social movements. The authority of scholars as interpreters and as leaders of the struggle gave tafsir a strategic position as a tool for social mobilization and moral formation.³⁴

²⁷ Oman Fathurahman, ‘Malay Court Religion, Culture and Language: Interpreting the Qur’ān in 17th Century Aceh By Peter G. Riddell’, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 30.2 (2019), pp. 280–82, doi:10.1093/jis/etz005.

²⁸ Wali Ramadhani, Mohd Faizulamri bin Mohd Saad, and Dara Humaira, ‘Exegeting The Qur’an in Friday Sermons: Characteristics of Oral Interpretation by Preachers at Taqwa Mosque, Langsa, Aceh’, *Mutawatir : Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith*, 14.1 (2024), pp. 84–108, doi:10.15642/mutawatir.2024.14.1.84-108.

²⁹ H.Mohammad Said, *Aceh Sepanjang Abad* (Pustaka Iskandar Muda, 1981).

³⁰ Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang Di Jalan Allah: Perang Aceh 1873–1912* (Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1987).

³¹ Peter G Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses* (University of Hawaii Press, 2001).

³² Niko Andeska, Indra Setiawan, and Rika Wirandi, ‘Inventarisasi Ragam Hias Aceh Pada Iluminasi Mushaf Al-Quran Kuno Koleksi Pedir Museum Di Banda Aceh’, *Gorga : Jurnal Seni Rupa*, 8.2 (2019), pp. 351–57, doi:10.24114/gr.v8i2.15134.

³³ Febri Setiawan, Hanafiah Hanfiah, and Reni Nuryanti, ‘Peranan Ulama Dalam Perang Aceh Tahun 1873-1912’, *SEUNEUBOK LADA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sejarah, Sosial, Budaya Dan Pendidikan*, 10.2 (2023), pp. 68–80, doi:10.33059/jsnbl.v11i2.8705.

³⁴ Fadli.

Modernization brought by Western style education, colonial administration, and new media demanded a more responsive exegetical method. Acehnese scholars began to adopt a rational style that used linguistic and historical analysis to show the relevance of verses for a society in transition. Passages on knowledge, hard work, and social justice were presented as a basis for renewal. Tafsir was no longer only a means to reproduce tradition. It became a medium that could integrate Islamic values with modern demands.³⁵ This effort did not set aside the long standing legal and spiritual identity of Aceh. The result was a conciliatory profile that joined modern rationality with loyalty to the Islamic scholarly tradition.

Reformist currents from the Middle East also left their mark. The thought of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida inspired Acehnese networks to promote *ijtihad*, doctrinal clarity, and the critique of practices viewed as unwarranted innovations. Tafsir became a site of public education that invited a return to primary sources. It also served as an arena where local Sufi legacies met the call for purification. The dialogue between reformist and traditional orientations often created tension yet it expanded the interpretive horizon.³⁶ The Qur'an continued to be reread in line with changing social realities.

Tafsir functioned as a medium of cultural resistance when colonial policies sought to dilute Islamic identity. It did more than explain doctrine. It articulated a consciousness that defending language, custom, and Islamic law formed part of obedience to God. Attempts to marginalize Sharia and Islamic traditions met with a stronger public presence of Quranic discourse. Tafsir served as an ideological bulwark against cultural assimilation and as a means to build collective solidarity.³⁷ Scholars affirmed that Islamic identity is not a mere attribute. It is a foundation of existence that cannot be traded away.³⁸ In this way tafsir stood not only as a religious text but also as a symbol of resistance to colonial cultural dominance.

Acehnese Islamic identity gained further clarity through interpretive work that joined spiritual, social, and political concerns. Tafsir created space for reflection on the suffering of war while nurturing hope in divine promise for the faithful. Verses on brotherhood, justice, and leadership were used to criticize colonial structures and to motivate society to resist fragmentation.³⁹ Tafsir thus carried a double function as *da'wah* and as a political instrument. It became central to the preservation of social cohesion in Aceh. Identity was maintained not only through ritual practice but also through Quranic narratives that were renewed in the face of new challenges. These dynamics show that tafsir holds

³⁵ Erawadi Erawadi, 'Vernacularisation of Acehnese Literature and Religious Works in the 19th Century AD: A Philological Approach', *Journal of Al-Tamaddun*, 19.2 (2024), pp. 115–26, doi:10.22452/JAT.vol19no2.8.

³⁶ Muhammad Ruhiyat Haririe, 'Resonance Of Reformist-Modernist Islamic Thought in Interpretation and Its Influence on The Development of Interpretation in Indonesia', *Madinah: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 11.2 (2024), pp. 313–36, doi:10.58518/madinah.v11i2.3079.

³⁷ Majid Daneshgar, 'Peter G. Riddell, Malay Court Religion, Culture and Language: Interpreting the Qur'an in 17th Century Aceh', *Der Islam*, 98.1 (2021), pp. 293–96, doi:10.1515/islam-2021-0018.

³⁸ Muji Mulia and others, 'Conflict And Consensus in Fiqh Siyasah: The Practice of Islamic Law Across Various Cultures', *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 12.3 (2024), pp. 1263–88, doi:10.26811/peuradeun.v12i3.1363.

³⁹ Usman and others, 'Islamic Identity in Aceh Shaped by the Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Perlak Sultanate', *IBDA': Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Budaya*, 22.1 (2024), pp. 57–72, doi:10.24090/ibda.v22i1.9568.

methodological flexibility and symbolic power when responding to rapid social transformation.

The durability of Acehnese tafsir in the twentieth century rests on its ability to bridge sacred text and concrete social experience under the pressures of colonialism and modernization. The shift from classical handbooks to sermons, popular tafsir, and print media demonstrates the flexibility of scholars in transmitting Quranic messages. The response reached beyond the academic realm and shaped collective awareness and the direction of struggle. Tafsir became integral to cultural resistance, the formation of Islamic identity, and the strengthening of social solidarity. This historical record shows that tafsir in Aceh is not only a theological discourse. It is a social practice that moves with the times while holding firm to its normative foundations.

3. Hermeneutics of Contemporary Acehnese Tafsir, Text, Context, and the Interpreting Subject

The hermeneutics of contemporary Acehnese tafsir shows a distinctive dynamism that draws from classical learning while responding to the social and political realities that followed a long period of conflict. The peace settlement created new space for scholars, academics, and lay communities to read the Qur'an within a public life shaped by the formal application of Sharia. This condition requires interpretation that goes beyond normative explanation and engages the practical concerns of modern Acehnese society. The interpretive work is inseparable from efforts at reconciliation, the building of a renewed collective identity, and the search for legitimacy for faith-based regulations enacted through qanun. Tafsir becomes a discursive arena that connects the sacred text with social aspirations, so that Islamic commitment can coexist with a stable and peaceful public order.

The social and political setting after conflict strongly shapes the interpretive horizon. Years of violence produced collective trauma and also a shared awareness of the need for unity. Many Acehnese interpreters highlight messages of peace, justice, and brotherhood as foundations for rebuilding social life.⁴⁰ The formalization of Sharia through qanun increases the need for tafsir that can provide religious legitimacy for local law while guiding its implementation in a way that avoids rigid formalism. Interpretation works as a tool to balance the ideals of the text with the realities of a plural society that still requires spaces of tolerance.⁴¹ A setting marked by reconciliation compels Acehnese hermeneutics to be attentive to social and political dimensions, which leads to readings that are not simple repetitions of tradition and that present a new contextual face.

The horizon of the text, that is the Qur'an, remains an inexhaustible normative source. Contemporary Acehnese *mufasssir* often pursue thematic interpretation in which relevant verses are gathered under a single issue and then analyzed intertextually. Textual integrity is approached not only through language but also through ethical values that can ground public conduct.⁴² The horizon of the interpreter includes scholars and intellectuals

⁴⁰ Khairil Akbar, Nyak Fadhlullah, and Zahlul Pasha Karim, 'Challenging The Principle of Equality Before the Law in Qanun Jinayat Aceh', *Media Syari'ah : Wahana Kajian Hukum Islam Dan Pranata Sosial*, 24.1 (2022), pp. 156–71, doi:10.22373/jms.v24i1.9236.

⁴¹ Umar and Rahman.

⁴² Umar and Rahman.

with diverse training. Some come from traditional *pesantren*, others from universities in the Middle East or the West.⁴³ This variety enriches hermeneutic method because educational background shapes distinct emphases in meaning making. The horizon of the reader includes Acehese communities living under formal Sharia. They are no longer passive recipients. They actively expect interpretation to address daily questions in law, social life, and culture.⁴⁴ The interaction of these three horizons produces a dynamic hermeneutic field in which Qur'anic meaning is renewed in light of current needs.

Thematic readings on Sharia constitute a dominant arena. Acehese scholars interpret verses on hudud, *jinayat*, and social etiquette with constant reference to the principles of *maqasid al Sharia*. The intent is to ensure that implementation does not rest on punishment alone but secures justice and public welfare. These thematic efforts often strengthen the legitimacy of qanun yet they remain framed by ethical discourse so that Sharia is understood as a path to divine mercy rather than a mere instrument of social control.⁴⁵ Attention to *maqasid* makes interpretation more flexible before contemporary complexity while preserving Islamic values as the basis of Acehese identity.

Gender has become a growing field of hermeneutic concern. Contemporary tafsir in Aceh engages verses on equality, justice, and the social roles of women with a response to modern needs. Passages on family leadership, inheritance, and public participation are reread with attention to history and to the realities of a society that has relied on women in the work of peace building. Thematic interpretation that situates equality within *maqasid* provides a theological justification that respect for women's dignity accords with Sharia and expresses the Qur'anic principle of justice.⁴⁶ In this way contemporary Acehese tafsir seeks to harmonize Islamic identity with commitments to gender justice.

These developments show that the Qur'an continues to speak through frameworks shaped by historical experience, formal regulation, and global challenges. Tafsir functions not only as an inheritance of tradition but also as a dynamic instrument for organizing life after conflict, consolidating identity, and affirming the role of Islam in public space. Its strength lies in a balanced posture that remains faithful to the sacred text while remaining open to social and political reality. Such hermeneutics confirms that tafsir in Aceh is a living process. It joins the horizon of revelation, the horizon of the interpreter, and the horizon of the community in a productive and continuous dialogue.

4. Sociological Perspectives on the Evolution of Interpretation and Tafsir as Social Practice

Qur'anic interpretation in Aceh can be understood not only as academic discourse tied to written commentaries but also as a social practice that shapes collective thinking,

⁴³ Rizki and Yusrizal.

⁴⁴ Muhammad Ridha, 'Khazanah Living Quran Dalam Masyarakat Aceh', *Tafse: Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 6.2 (2021), pp. 268–82, doi:10.22373/tafse.v6i2.11372.

⁴⁵ M Nabih Z A Nabih, Leni Nur Azizah Leni, and Nor Ichwan Ichwan, 'Contextualization of the Hudud Verse in Tafsir An-Nur: The Maqasid Asy-Syari'ah Approach in Indonesia', *Ulumul Qur'an: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 5.1 (2025), pp. 69–83, doi:10.58404/uq.v5i1.419.

⁴⁶ Angraini Ramli and Radwan Jamal Yousef Elatrash, 'The Science Feature in Acehese Tafseer: A Comparative Study between As-Sinkilyâ€™s and As-Shiddiqiâ€™s Works', *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis*, 7.3 SE-Articles (2023), pp. 577–92, doi:10.29240/alquds.v7i3.5336.

behavior, and identity. Tafsir works as a medium that connects revealed teaching with everyday life. It appears as a living tradition embedded in social structures. Its social function is visible in the way it guides norms, legitimizes cultural practices, and affirms a distinct Acehese Islamic identity. A sociological perspective therefore treats tafsir not only as the product of scholarly reflection but also as a social institution that influences the wider order of society.

Pesantren and *dayah* are primary hubs for the circulation of tafsir, with ulama as authoritative agents who transmit Qur'anic understanding to younger generations. Study in these institutions takes place through classical commentaries and also through public recitation, communal reading, and learning circles that involve the broader community. Transmission from scholars to students and congregants builds social networks that strengthen religious cohesion.⁴⁷ The authority of ulama carries significant weight because tafsir is received not merely as textual explanation but as practical guidance for daily conduct.⁴⁸ In this way *pesantren* and *dayah* function as spaces for the production and reproduction of tafsir that shape Acehese religious life in sociological terms.

The role of ulama extends beyond formal education into the public sphere through sermons, legal opinions, and direct engagement in social and political processes. Ulama position tafsir as a frame for judging social developments in law, economics, and culture. Their influence rests on a blend of scholarly authority and emotional proximity to the community.⁴⁹ As a result, interpretation is accepted as sound moral guidance rather than information alone. Ulama thus act as key mediators between text and society and help to keep revelation relevant amid rapid change.

Interaction between tafsir and social reality becomes even more visible when Sharia gains formal expression in regional regulation. The presence of qanun creates space for tafsir to function as legal legitimation and as a tool of moral oversight. Interpretations that circulate in official forums and in public education provide an ideological basis for implementation and help people see that local rules are grounded in revelation.⁵⁰ The relationship is not one way. Tafsir is also shaped by public debate and political dynamics. Disagreement over the meaning of particular verses can inform regulatory design, while the enforcement of qanun can invite new interpretations that emphasize justice, moderation, and social relevance.

Acehese local culture develops in close interaction with tafsir. Many customary practices are reinforced or adjusted through reference to Qur'anic interpretation. Ideas about justice, leadership, and social relations are often justified by citing the explanations of local

⁴⁷ Ismail Anshari and others, 'Understanding "Service Learning" in a Traditional Islamic Boarding Schools in Aceh, Indonesia', *Qualitative Report*, 28.7 (2023), pp. 1855–68, doi:10.46743/2160-3715/2023.5808.

⁴⁸ Saifuddin Duhri and Syamsul Rijal, 'Ruling on Theology through the Shari'a: Modern Approaches of Qur'an Interpretation and the Classical Universal Law of God's Transcendence', *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam*, 14.1 (2024), pp. 123–44, doi:10.15642/teosofi.2024.14.1.123-144.

⁴⁹ Rasyidin, 'The Social Political Role of Muslim Scholars (Ulamas) in the Acehese Society', *Journal of Global Responsibility*, 12.1 (2020), pp. 1–21, doi:10.1108/JGR-10-2018-0040.

⁵⁰ Akbar, Fadhlullah, and Karim.

ulama.⁵¹ Tafsir therefore operates as a source of cultural legitimacy and as a means of social control that protects norms seen as consistent with Islamic values. This interaction produces an ongoing dialectic between *adat* and Sharia, with tafsir as the bridge that sustains harmony between them. Through this process interpretation guides how communities understand custom within an Islamic frame.

Contemporary transformation is marked by new media that widen access to tafsir. Recorded lessons circulate through digital platforms. Popular books reach broad audiences. Online discussions bring scholars and lay readers into shared conversation. Tafsir now occupies a participatory public space rather than remaining limited to *pesantren* or mosques. The social dimension of interpretation grows stronger because the public does not only receive meaning. They respond, ask questions, and seek applicability to daily problems.

Social life in Aceh shows that tafsir functions as a symbolic device that consolidates collective identity and as a social mechanism that regulates conduct. In times of change interpretation operates as an adaptive tool. It legitimizes new actions that accord with Islamic values and challenges practices that do not. Tafsir provides a normative language that binds communities to shared commitments and becomes a key instrument for building solidarity and social stability. Interpretation therefore moves beyond academic rooms and takes an active role in shaping the face of Acehnese society.

A sociological lens reveals that the evolution of tafsir in Aceh reflects a dynamic interaction among sacred text, scholarly authority, and social reality. What began in scholarly settings now forms part of the social structure that orders norms, guides education, and undergirds regulation. The strength of tafsir lies in its flexibility to adjust to context while remaining rooted in revelation. In this sense interpretation in Aceh is not only discourse. It is a living practice that directs the development of identity, sustains Islamic values, and keeps a careful balance between tradition and modernity.

C. Conclusion

This study maps the evolution of Acehnese Qur'anic interpretation from a classical Sufi and fiqh profile toward rational modernist readings and then toward a hermeneutic sociological approach that places the text in dialogue with social reality and local history. The analysis answers the three aims by outlining the historical trajectory of methods, showing how hermeneutics clarifies patterns of interpretation among Acehnese scholars, and identifying the influence of social conditions on exegetical choices in both past and contemporary settings.

Evidence from the corpus indicates the need for curated archives of tafsir and local sermons that protect authenticity while allowing contextual critique. The findings also support policy assessment parameters grounded in *maqasid al Sharia* and in hermeneutic reasoning so that public regulation in Aceh aligns with the Qur'anic spirit of justice and public welfare. These implications follow directly from the historical and sociological patterns documented in the results and discussion.

⁵¹ Hamdiah Latif, 'Dinamika Terjemahan Al-Qur'an Bebas Bersajak Dalam Bahasa Aceh: Apresiasi Karya Tgk. H. Mahjiddin Jusuf', *Jurnal Ilmiah Al Mu'ashirah*, 18.2 (2021), pp. 30–43, doi:10.22373/JIM.V18I1.10453.

This study is limited by the availability of verified texts and by the focus on mainline traditions. Future work can expand to a digital audit of Acehese tafsir and sermons, a comparative inquiry with Minangkabau to examine cultural and structural effects on method, and the development of participatory community-based models that enable readers to engage the Qur'an in contextual and transformative ways.

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