

## Reconstruction of *Itjāh al-Adabī al-Ijtīmā'ī*: Interpreting the Qur'an from an Inclusive Perspective

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**Abstract.** This article examines the social literary approach to interpreting the Qur'an. The social literary approach is perceived as a portrayal of the social and cultural milieu surrounding the commentator. Although this approach appears more attuned to society, it transpires that the social literary approach employed by commentators exhibits less affinity towards contemporary culture, traditions, and politics in Indonesia. This is because commentators place greater emphasis on imparting advice and reminders for adhering to Islamic principles. Present-day developments are constrained to conform to classical interpretations, with dissenting interpretations being deemed erroneous. The lack of flexibility, accommodation, and adaptability to local traditions and culture is evident in the interpretation of the Qur'an. The current phenomenon in Indonesia entails endeavors to realize religious moderation to uphold the unity, harmony, and peace of all Indonesian citizens. This pursuit of religious moderation necessitates new interpretations that are adaptable and not rigidly bound to culture and differences. Reconstructing the social literary approach is a necessary measure to achieve this goal. The methodology employed in this article is qualitative-interpretive and draws upon acculturation theory, which underscores cultural diversity. The reconstructed approach outlined in this article advocates for an interpretation of the Qur'an that integrates with culture and tradition, rather than imposing itself upon them. Three key considerations are delineated for actualizing the social literary approach in interpreting the Qur'an: observing phenomena, accounting for spatial and temporal contexts, and prioritizing the public good.

**Keywords:** *Itjāh al-Tafsir*, *al-Adabi al-Ijtimai*, Inclusive Perspectives, Religious moderation

### Introduction

Reconstruction in the concept of interpretation (*al-Tajdid fī Itjāh al-Tafsīr*) has become something urgent today, especially in Indonesia. This is needed to respond to the development of the times and realize the ideals of religious moderation. It is undeniable that the study of the Qur'an, especially tafsir, experiences a vacuum. The last development in the discipline of interpretation that later formed a concept of interpretation was in the 14th century Hijri.<sup>1</sup> With the growing times and the concept of vacuum, it is not wrong for Western scientists to claim that Islam is not adaptive.<sup>2</sup>

This vacuum then emerged the claim that the Qur'an is the main source of the backwardness of Muslims, even though it is clear that the fault does not lie in the Qur'an, the fault lies in the way

<sup>1</sup> Ali Daigham Taher, "The Contemporary Reality," *Journal of Basra Researches for Human Sciences* 44, no. 4 (2019): 153–68, <https://www.iasj.net/iasj/article/173019>.

<sup>2</sup> Abdulaziz Sachedina, "Advancing Religious Pluralism in Islam," *Religion Compass* 4, no. 4 (2010): 221–33, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2010.00207.x>.

Muslims view the Qur'an. Thus, what needs to be followed up is the way Muslims view the Qur'an. Changing the perspective of the Qur'an requires a new concept of view that is different from the previous concept of *mufasir's* view.

Husain al-Dhahabī in his work *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn* provides information that there is a concept of interpretation in modern times in the form of *al-Adabī al-Ijtima'ī*.<sup>3</sup> This concept was first initiated by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, followed<sup>4</sup> by Muḥammad 'Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā, and Muṣṭafā al-Maraghī.<sup>5</sup> This interpretation concept was then applied by Indonesian *mufasir* to respond to the phenomenon that occurred in Indonesia as done by Abdur Rauf Singkil, Nawāwī al-Bantanī, Mahmud Yunus, Karim Amrullah/Hamka and Quraish Shihab whose interpretation is based on the concept of *al-Adabī al-Ijtima'ī*.<sup>6</sup> Although this modern interpretation concept is applied in Indonesia, it is not very relevant to respond to the existing conditions in Indonesia, and it can even be said to be very contrary to the Government's medium-term program in the form of religious moderation.

It is said that it is contrary to religious moderation, looking at the concept applied by Indonesian *mufasir* is more directed to the process of interpretation. Indonesian *mufasir* in applying the concept of *al-Adabī al-Ijtima'ī* is more likely to express verses as a guide for humans, improve life, or provide rules to humans. Thus, human life must adjust to the Qur'an, not the Qur'an which is elastic so that it can adapt to the development of the times.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in the interpretations that apply this concept, they are more likely to blame the traditions and culture of a region and even often claim *kufir*, *shirk*, *bid'ah*, and ignorance against the local culture of the archipelago. With such a concept of interpretation, it is clear that it does not heed the religious moderation program in Indonesia, eventually leading to an interpretation of the Qur'an that is very rigid and not flexible to culture. If the concept of interpretation does not develop, then it can be ensured that rigidity in interpretation remains the main guideline in interpreting the Qur'an.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, which has the task of realizing the Government's program in religious moderation, formulated four indicators to measure the extent to which a person can be said to be moderate. The four indicators are 1) national commitment, 2) tolerance, 3) non-violence, and 4) accommodating to local culture.<sup>7</sup> From these four indicators, it was then developed into nine keywords, namely: 1) *Raḥamatiyyah*, 2) *Insāniyyah*, 3) 'Adliyyah, 4) *Mubādalah*, 5) *Maslahah*, 6) *Mu'ābahah Waṭaniyyah*, 7) *Dustūriyyah*, 8) *Tasāmuhiyyah*, 9) 'Urfiyyah.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad Ḥusain al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr Wa Al-Mufasssīrūn* (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Daigham Taher, "The Contemporary Reality."

<sup>5</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr Wa Al-Mufasssīrūn*.

<sup>6</sup> Syaripah Aini, "A Study of the Adābi Ijtima'ī Pattern in Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Al-Kauniyyah: Journal of Qur'an Science and Tafsir* 1, no. 1 (2020): 83. See more, Hafid Nur Muhammad and Dewi Purwaningrum, "The Pattern of Adabi Ijtima'ī in the Study of Indonesian Tafsir (Literature Study of Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Azhar)," *Al Muhafidz: Journal of Qur'an Science and Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (2022): 15–27, doi:doi.org/10.57163/al Muhafidz.v2i1.38. See more, Muhammad Muhammad, "Jews in Indonesia: An Analysis of Nawawi Al-Bantani's Interpretation in the Book of Marāḥ Labīd," *AL QUDS : Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 6, no. 2 (September 28, 2022): 887–904, doi:10.29240/alquds.v6i2.4298.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, *Religious Moderation* (Jakarta: Agency for Research and Development and Training of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Directorate General of Islamic Guidance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, *Religious Moderation from the Perspective of Islamic Guidance*, ed. Dedi Slamet Riyadi (Jakarta: Secretariat of the Directorate General of Islamic Guidance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2022).

The principle of benefit, both general and special, in extracting information from the Qur'an is an emergency, especially in Indonesia where the population is multicultural and multicultural. An elastic understanding of the Qur'an is the hope for living in a multi-faceted area. This can be realized by the presence of reconstruction in interpreting the Qur'an. However, if no new interpretation concept is found, then the understanding of the Qur'an has not changed from the classical period to the present which ultimately led to a change in the discipline of the Qur'an.

This surprise is highly unexpected in Islam and the world's intellectual outlook because thus wild claims against un-updated Islamic sources are increasingly emerging and the argument that Islam does not accept change cannot be blamed. Therefore, this paper presents a new construction offer in the interpretation of the Qur'an that is more adaptive and accommodating to the conditions in Indonesia which is multifaceted.

### **Religious Moderation Aspired to by Indonesia**

Conflicts caused by exclusivity often color the living conditions of Indonesian citizens. Such a case is commonplace, seeing Indonesia as one of the multi-faceted countries. This is a problem that must be solved by the government to maintain peace, comfort, and tranquility in Indonesia. One of the exclusive beliefs that causes conflicts that is the main highlight is exclusivity in the religious field. Seeing these conditions, the President of the Republic of Indonesia made the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJM) in the form of religious moderation. This RPJM is then entrusted to the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. From this RPJM, the Ministry of Religious Affairs is trying to compile a guidebook for religious moderation. There are three core components in the book *Religious Moderation*, namely: 1) the conceptual explanation of religious moderation, 2) the background and socio-cultural context of the importance of religious moderation, and 3) the steps that must be taken in strengthening and implementing religious moderation.<sup>9</sup>

In the roadmap of religious moderation, it is explained that the ideals to be achieved from this program are to maintain religious harmony in a concept called religious moderation. This religious moderation is then used as an effort to harmonize religious and state relations. The relationship between religion and the state is carried out to present the state as a fair and friendly common home for Indonesian citizens to live a harmonious, peaceful, and prosperous religious life. From this, the expected formulation of religious moderation in Indonesia is "the way of view, attitude, and practice of religion in common life, by embodying the essence of religious teachings that protect human dignity and build the common good, based on the principles of fairness, balance, and obedience to the constitution as a mutual agreement."<sup>10</sup>

Basically, before the emergence of the RPJM, in the 2000s Indonesia received praise from scholars and activists for its success in the transition to democracy.<sup>11</sup> This reputation has not

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<sup>9</sup> RE *Religious Moderation*. Basri Basri and Muhammad Muhammad, "Rethinking Religious Moderation Through The Study Of Indonesian Exegesis : A Study Of Tafsir Al-Azhar By Hamka," *Khazanah: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 21, no. 1 (2023): 41–58, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.18592/khazanah.v21i1.8737>.

<sup>10</sup> TEAM of the Religious Moderation Working Group of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, *Roadmap for Strengthening Religious Moderation 2020-2024, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia*, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Jeremy Menchik, "Moderate Muslims and Democratic Breakdown in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 43, no. 3 (2019): 415–33, doi:[10.1080/10357823.2019.1627286](https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2019.1627286).

changed in the slightest despite the recent emergence of terrorist attacks or Muslim extremism. This is because mainstream Muslims (Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah) remain principled in moderate Islam.<sup>12</sup> Because it still has the reputation of a moderate and democratic country, it is not surprising that conspiracies have emerged that claim that religious moderation in Indonesia carried out by the Ministry of Religious Affairs is limited to unimportant projects or infiltrated by other interests.

Religious moderation in Indonesia has the goal of preventing the growth and proliferation of radicalism, extremism, and terrorism.<sup>13</sup> From this, it can be understood that prevention is the core goal of religious moderation. Without prevention, there will be more conflicts that ultimately lead to the loss of democracy in Indonesia. Noor Huda Ismail revealed in one of his studies that one of the terrorist movements (Jemaah Islamiyah) is centered in Indonesia and Jamaah Islamiyah is a branch of Al Qaeda.<sup>14</sup> With the understanding of religious moderation, religious people in general and Islam in particular can filter extremist knowledge in religion.

Because Indonesia is dominated by followers of Islam, it is not surprising that religious moderation seems to only highlight Muslims. This is very unjustified because religious moderation leads to all existing religions and has carried out thorough socialization at every level of society. Why are Muslims who seem to be cornered by the religious moderation agenda? The answer is because of the majority of followers of Islam in Indonesia. According to the theory, the majority must dominate which is ultimately vulnerable to discrimination against minorities.

It is not Islam or the main source of Islam that is wrong, but the point of view/interpretation of this religious source needs to be considered. History has proven that Islam is one of the world's major religions that is most tolerant of followers of other religions as explained by Webman Esther.<sup>15</sup> This is because the main source of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad provided an example of mercy. However, the understanding of tolerant Islam changed often with the shift in time precisely after Israel's independence in 1948. Some religious leaders began to have suspicions and negative views of followers of other religions.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, this understanding was adopted by some religious leaders in Indonesia.

From this, in the book *Religious Moderation*, it is emphasized that the purpose of religious moderation is to filter extreme interpretations, "fanaticism towards the truth of religious interpretation often causes hostility and quarrels between them. Usually, the beginning of conflicts with a religious background is ignited by the attitude of blaming each other for religious interpretations and understandings, feeling righteous for oneself, and not opening oneself to the religious interpretations and views of others."<sup>17</sup>

Still in the *Religious Moderation Roadmap Book* of the Ministry of Religion, it is explained that the purpose of religious moderation in Indonesia is not to moderate religion but to moderate

<sup>12</sup> Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Appraising the Moderation Indonesian Muslims with Special Reference to Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama," *Addin* 12, no. 1 (2019): 1, doi:10.21043/addin.v12i1.4179.

<sup>13</sup> Choiriyah et al., "Religious Moderation in the Framework of Life," *International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism (IJIERM)* 4, no. 2 (2022): 135–49, doi:10.47006/ijierm.v4i2.142.

<sup>14</sup> Noor Huda Ismail, "Al Qaeda 's Southeast Asia , Jamaah Islamiyah and Regional Terrorism : Kinship and Family Links," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 5, no. 1 (2007): 1–10.

<sup>15</sup> Webman Esther, "Rethinking the Role of Religion in Arab Antisemitic Discourses," *Religions* 415, no. 10 (2019): 2–16, doi:10.3390/rel10070415.

<sup>16</sup> Kiki Santing, "Conspiracy Theories and Muslim Brotherhood Antisemitism under Sadat," *Religions* 13, no. 143 (2022): 3–16, doi:10.3390/rel13020143.

<sup>17</sup> RE *Religious Moderation*.

understanding and practice of religion.<sup>18</sup> The existence of a concept like this is different from the concept of religious pluralism as it has received a lot of rejection from Muslims and the Indonesian Ulema Council.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, what is expected from religious moderation is the development of religious interpretation from a cultural perspective.<sup>20</sup>

In the world of Qur'anic interpretation, *ittijāh tafsir al-Adabī al-Ijtima'ī* has been found. According to the results of the analysis, previous researchers claimed that *Ittijāh* was often used by the *mufasir* of the archipelago as a portrait of the traditions in the archipelago. However, after making in-depth observations, *this ittijāh* leads more to the straightening of the archipelago's traditions which are contrary to Islamic law. Thus, it can be ascertained that the application of *ittijāh* in the interpretation of the archipelago has not been adaptive and accommodating to local culture. Therefore, it is not wrong if, in the book *Religious Moderation* by Bimas Islam, it is considered necessary to have a religious interpretation from a local cultural perspective. When analyzed in depth, *ittijāh* is the closest *ittijāh* in responding to local culture in the space and time that surrounds a *mufasir*. The reconstruction of *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Ijtima'ī* in interpreting the Qur'an is the most appropriate step in realizing the ideals of religious moderation in Indonesia.

Without any reconstruction in applying this *ittijāh*, the direction of the interpretation of the Qur'an remains on the alignment of culture that is contrary to Islamic law, instead of leading to the adaptivity and accommodating of the text of the Qur'an there is local culture as expected in the book *Religious Moderation*. More than that, the Qur'an, which is used as a guideline for Muslims' lives, will still seem rigid and inelastic. Thus, it is not wrong for Western scholars to claim that the Qur'an is a holy book that is a strong element of the decline of Muslims and cannot accept the change of the times.<sup>21</sup>

All existing religions are protectors for mankind. Religion teaches peace, tranquility, and kindness. No religion teaches violence or destruction on earth.<sup>22</sup> If nowadays violence or terror is often heard in the name of religion, then there is a mistake in understanding and implementing the basic religious teachings. Ahmad Faqihuddin emphasized, "Terrorism and religious radicalism are not limited to the problems of perpetrators and people who are victims of these actions. Rather, terrorism and radicalism that must be considered are the issues of theological belief. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss a paradigm of understanding Islam that is friendly, tolerant, and calm."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> RE *Roadmap for Strengthening Religious Moderation 2020-2024*.

<sup>19</sup> Muhammad Muhammad, Syarifatul Marwiyah, and Ainur Rohmadani, "Pluralism in the Qur'an: Critical Analysis of Surah Al-Baqarah 2: 62 Interpretation in Indonesia," in *4th Annual International Conference on Language, Literature and Media (AICOLLIM 2022)*, ed. Rohmani Nur Indah et al., vol. 725, *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* (Paris: Atlantis Press SARL, 2023), 609–17, doi:10.2991/978-2-38476-002-2\_57.

<sup>20</sup> Directorate General of Islamic Guidance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, *Religious Moderation from the Perspective of Islamic Guidance*.

<sup>21</sup> Muhammad Muhammad, *Polemik Argumen Atas Autentisitas Teks Al-Qur'an Perspektif Abl Al-Sunnah*, ed. Lutfi Fatahillah, I (Bandung: Bitread Publishing PT. Lontar Digital Asia, 2020), <http://repository.uin-malang.ac.id/6423/>.

<sup>22</sup> Sukhmani Pal and Joseph D. Wellman, "Threat, Fundamentalism, and Islamophobia: Assessing the Factors Associated with Negative Attitudes toward Muslims," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 14, no. 4 (November 2022): 635–38, doi:10.1037/rel0000347. See more, Erwin Jusuf Thaib and Andries Kango, "Da'wah and Debate on Pluralism," *Communiqués* 12, no. 1 (2020): 41–65, doi:10.20414/jurkom.v12i1.2237.

<sup>23</sup> Ahmad Faqihuddin, "Islam Moderate in Indonesia," *Al-Risalah* 12, no. 1 (2021): 107–18, doi:10.34005/alrisalah.v12i1.1238.

One question arises from the existence of a religious moderation program from the Ministry of Religion and added to Faqihuddin's presentation above. Have the *mufasirs* of the Qur'an of the archipelago not applied the concept of religious moderation and radical theological doctrines? To answer this question, it is necessary to return to the basic principles of understanding the verses of the Qur'an. In the Qur'an, many verses explain religious moderation, but many verses explain wars or non-Muslim battles. It is also found in the Qur'an that discusses the recognition of local culture, but some verses lead to cultural changes towards Islamic culture and traditions. Some discussions lead to love for the homeland and the obligation to obey the government, but the recommendation to leave the country based on infidels and the government is *ṭaghūt*. Not to mention the addition of the concept of *da'wah* which in the end claims that other than Islam brought by the Prophet Muhammad is a wrong religion.

From the themes of verses in the Qur'an which are sometimes gentle, harsh, tolerant, intolerant, inclusive, and exclusive, when a *mufasir* interprets the Qur'an in its entirety / *tahliḥ*,<sup>24</sup> then all these themes will be interpreted according to the *mufasir's* understanding without filters. It is not uncommon for Nusantara *mufasir* to bring the phenomenon that occurs in the archipelago into the Qur'an, not the Qur'an which is brought to the phenomenon. With such an interpretation model, it is termed *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī* which boils down to exclusive, non-accommodating, and non-adaptive interpretation. Such a model interpretation of the Qur'an is a concern and an obstacle to the growth of religious moderation in Indonesia. This problem is not limited to erroneous conservative beliefs because some themes from the Qur'an do explain this. This must be found when interpreting the Qur'an in its entirety, not on a thematic basis. To prove the author's argument, below is an excerpt of the interpretation of some of the Nusantara *mufasirs* who interpret the Qur'an in its entirety.

### ***Ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī* and Applicative in Indonesian Tafsir**

The results of the study of the works of Nusantara tafsir that interpret the complete Qur'an of 30 juz are more dominated by *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī*. This scrutiny can be strengthened from the potpourri written by Faijul Akhyar and his team who researched the treasures of Indonesian interpretation from six tafsir figures (Nawawi al-Bantani 1813-1897 A.D., Ahmad Hasan 1887-1956 A.D., Mahmud Yunus 1899-1982 A.D., Oemar Bakry 1916-Hamka 1908-1981 A.D., and Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy 1904-1975 A.D.) as well as the tafsir al-Misbah by Quraish Shihab which is classified as thick with *al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī*.<sup>25</sup> Of the six figures, all are claimed to be *al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī* / social society except for the tafsir *Marāḥ Labīd* by Nawawi al-Bantani.<sup>26</sup> In the book of potpourri, there is still confusion in determining the pattern of Nawawi's interpretation. Ali Ayazi's Al-Mufassirun does not claim that this interpretation is in the style of *al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī*. According to him, the interpretation of the archipelago is limited to explaining the text of the Qur'an and does

<sup>24</sup> Muhammad Muhammad, "Af'al Al-'Ibad in the Quran: A Comparative Study of Tafsir Al-Kashshaf by Al-Zamakhshari and Anwar Al-Tanzil Wa Asrar Al-Tawil by Al-Baidawi" (UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2015), <http://digilib.uinsby.ac.id/4279/>.

<sup>25</sup> Ali Hamdan, Zaenul Mahmudi, and Muhammad Muhammad, "Anti-Semitism in the Interpretation of M. Quraish Shihab on verses about Jews in tafsir al-Misbah," *AL QUDS : Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 7, no. 1 (2023): 121–36, doi:10.29240/alquds.v7i1.5331.

<sup>26</sup> Faijul Akhyar et al., *Discourse on the Methodology and Works of Early Generation Tafsir of the Qur'an in Indonesia*, ed. Wardani (Yogyakarta: Zahir Publishing, 2021).

not extend to the meaning signals.<sup>27</sup> However, there are also researchers such as Didin Hafiduddin and Abdul Rouf who claim that Nawawi's interpretation is in the style of *al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī*.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from the differences in arguments regarding the style used by Nawawi, one conclusion that can be found is that the works of Nusantara tafsir that interpret the Qur'an in its entirety of 30 juz are more dominated by *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī*. It is not surprising that the *mufasir* of the archipelago uses *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī*, because the majority of the sources of interpretation adopt a lot from the thoughts of Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā from his commentary entitled *al-Manār*. As explained earlier from the explanation of al-Dhahabī in his work, Muḥammad 'Abduh was the first figure to initiate the interpretation of the Qur'an. From here, it is necessary to get to know more deeply the historicity, definition, and characteristics of *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī* before studying more deeply the interpretation of *mufasir* Nusantara. Furthermore, by knowing its historicity, definition, and characteristics, it can be a medium for consideration between relevant or irrelevant interpretations of the concept of religious moderation that is aspired to in Indonesia.

In principle, *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī* in an interpretation is not just an interpretation that captures the phenomenon of society, culture, or tradition that exists in the time and location of the *mufasir* without a definite purpose. Rather, *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī* has the core purpose of the photograph which leads to *the manhaj al-Qur'ānī* or *al-Tasbīrī*. Looking at it from a historical point of view, *al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī* in interpretation can be categorized as a new *ittijāh*. The model of interpretation of *al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī* only appeared in the 14th century Hijri/19 AD and the Tafsir *al-Manār* by Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā is claimed to be the first bearer of this model of interpretation.<sup>29</sup> From this historical point of view, it needs to be doubted when there are researchers who claim works of tafsir born before the 19th century AD as tafsir *ber-ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī* as is the case with the book *Marāb Labīd* or *Turjuman al-Mustafid* by Abdur Rauf Singkil. The error in this categorization lies in the researcher's lack of understanding of the background and characteristics of *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī*.

Experts define *al-Adabī al-Itjimā'ī* in the interpretation of the Qur'an with an interpretation presented to improve life both in the realm of development, regulation, and society in the hope that civilization and ethics remain consistent based on the norms, guidance, and miracles of the Qur'an<sup>30</sup> as explained by Umar Abd al-Aziz, a professor at Tayyaba University in Saudi Arabia. Afifudin Dimyathi defined it, as "an interpretation that seeks to preserve the relevance of the Qur'an as a guide for humanity as a whole in the new generation by the process of revealing the meanings and understanding of the Qur'an in all problems surrounding human life. Furthermore,

<sup>27</sup> Muhammad Adley Ayāzī, *Al-Mufasssirūn Ḥayātuhum Wa Manhajuhum* (Tīhrān: Mu'assast al-Ūibā'ah wa-al-Nashar, 2007), 3/1080.

<sup>28</sup> Ida Mufidah and Muhammad Fathoni Hasyim, "Examining the Typical Patterns of Interpretation of the Archipelago (Case Study of Tafsir *Marah Labid* by Shaykh Nawawi Al-Bantani)," *Nun : Journal of Qur'an Studies and Tafsir in the Archipelago* 7, no. 1 (2021): 141–62, <http://ejournal.ariat.or.id/index.php/nun/article/view/232>.

<sup>29</sup> Umar Abd Al-Aziz Borini, *Al-Atjah Al-Sama'I fi al-Tafsir fi Al-Asr Al-Hadi*, *Journal of the Service Center for Research Consulting and Language* 16, no. 49 (January 1, 2014): 1–47, doi:10.21608/jocr.2014.128393.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

creating a solution in solving social problems based on instructions and understanding of the verses of the Qur'an."<sup>31</sup>

Ayāzī defines *mufasir* who tries to explain the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an after the observation of social life is related to needs, changes, and causes of differences in life in terms of strength and weakness, good and ugly, knowledge and ignorance, faith and disbelief. Then *mufasir* reveals verses as a guide for humans, improving life, or giving rules to humans.<sup>32</sup> Muhammad Ridlwan Nasir defines *ittijāh*, as "An interpretation that involves the social reality that develops in society."<sup>33</sup>

Al-Dhahabī in his work *al-Tafsir wa al-Mufasssirūn* explains the steps that are usually taken by *mufasir* with *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjmā'ī* with three steps: 1) *mufasir* who begins his interpretation by reviewing in detail and carefully something that is stated in the redaction of the verse, 2) interpreting it in easy-to-understand language, 3) applying the redaction The Qur'an to a new phenomenon related to social life and for the sake of compiling prosperity. This is done so that humanity still adheres to the principles of the Qur'an.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, al-Dhahabī said that this model of interpretation emerged motivated by the phenomenon that occurred at that time in the form of a deterioration of human ethics that had turned many away from the Qur'an. *This Ittijāh* is intended to remind humans to stick to the Qur'an which is believed to be a source of happiness both in this world and in the hereafter.<sup>35</sup> An interpretation that reminds Muslims of the teachings of the Qur'an is the main goal in applying *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjmā'ī*. Therefore, it is not surprising that among the interpretations that use *ittijāh*, it seems more rigid, the use of straightforward and firm language. Sometimes harsh terms such as ignorance, infidelity, heresy, and others are found.

From this, it can be understood that the more works of tafsir in a location that uses *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjmā'ī*, the more vulnerable it is to the exclusive understanding of the sacred texts of religion. The reality that exists and is enhanced by the results of the researchers states that the Nusantara tafsir book is more dominated by *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjmā'ī*. Thus, it can be ascertained that the Nusantara tafsir book is very rigid and less adaptive to the socio-culture in Indonesia. In the end, it leads to an exclusive understanding of religion. This is what is not expected from the existence of a religious moderation program in the 2020-2024 RPJM. To prove *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjmā'ī* used by the *mufasir* of the archipelago which leads to exclusivism, the following interpretation is expressed as a sample.

This sampling is devoted to the interpretation of *mufasir* who has interpreted the verses of the Qur'an in its entirety/interpretation of 30 juz. In addition, this sampling is also devoted to *mufasir* which has been claimed by observers of the study of the Qur'an *ittijāh* interpretation using *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjmā'ī*. This specialization is important to ensure that *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjmā'ī* applied by the Nusantara *mufasir* is not under the principles of religious moderation in Indonesia. This is because the principle of *ittijāh* leads to the bringing of tradition and culture in the archipelago to the Qur'an, not the Qur'an to the traditions and culture of the archipelago. Thus, it ultimately leads to

<sup>31</sup> Muhammad Afifudin Dimiyati, *Ilm al-Tafsir: Uṣūlub Wa Manābijuh* (Sidoarjo: Lisan Arabi, 2016), .

<sup>32</sup> Ayāzī, *Al-Mufasssirūn Ḥayātuhum Wa Manābijuhum*.

<sup>33</sup> Ridlwan Nasir, *Understanding the Qur'an: A New Perspective on the Methodology of Muqarir's Tafsir* (Surabaya: Indra Media, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsir Wa Al-Mufasssirūn*, 2/401.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsir Wa Al-Mufasssirūn*, 2/401.



rigid and non-adaptive interpretation. Coupled with an interpretation model that leads to antipathy towards religion. Thus, it greatly eliminates the element of tolerance between religions.

Among the *mufasir* of the archipelago who is most strongly opposed to falsehood and misleading traditions that are not under the principles of Islamic sharia is Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah. In his tafsir work entitled *al-Azhar*, there are many sharp criticisms of the traditions in the archipelago. *Tahlil, tawassul*, birth or death celebrations, coastal community traditions such as Syekh Puja, and so on are claimed to be the remnants of misleading ignorance traditions. Actions that are carried out without a basis other than simply following the legacy of ancestors who do not understand Islamic law.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, the claims of Islamic absolutism brought by the Prophet Muhammad and other claims of errors in the teachings of the Abrahamic religion. Abrahamic religions other than Islam brought by the Prophet Muhammad are heretical and impure religions. This is because their religious leaders deliberately change religion for the benefit of the world. Even worse than that, the book *Tafsir al-Azhar* lists many conspiracies that lead to anti-Semitism.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy claimed by researchers that his tafsir work is *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Ijmā'ī*. This work of tafsir is not too harsh in criticizing the customs that are the heritage of ancestors. It can be seen how accommodating Ash-Shiddieqy is to the culture in Indonesia. In surah (al-Araf 7:158) he stated, "It is not included in the field that we are obliged to follow something that is not related to the rights of Allah and is also not related to the rights of creatures that bring benefits and reject the right, such as problems related to farming and customary problems. The injunction on these matters is purely a guideline."<sup>38</sup> Even in the matter of the verses of *Qital* interpreted with a soft meaning as when interpreting surah (al-Nisā' 4:74), "In peacetime such as in Indonesia today, the order to fight can be interpreted meaningfully, namely to fight social (social) diseases to help the people who are still left behind, marginalized, oppressed, deprived of their rights, and so on."<sup>39</sup>

However, behind the slack of interpretation that has been explained above, there is a harsh interpretation when discussing the problem of helping followers of other religions and false claims against followers of other Abrahamic religions. Ash-Shiddieqy when interpreting surah (al-Nisā' 4:144) explained, "Believers should not give help to the disbelievers, either by word or deed, which in turn brings harm to the Muslims, both individuals and institutions, especially those who are detrimental to religion. Yes, like the Indonesian proverb, giving milk in return for tubal water. Good is rewarded with evil."<sup>40</sup> In addition to this problem, ash-Shiddieqy also views non-Muslims as a wrong religion, lost, and changed due to religious leaders. In this case, ash-Shiddieqy has alignment with Hamka's interpretation.

The negative response to the followers of Abrahamic religions other than Islam brought by the Prophet Muhammad also emerged from the *mufasir* of the archipelago Quraish Shihab. Anti-Semitism and anti-Christianity can be categorized as very thick in his commentary entitled *al-*

<sup>36</sup> Abdul Malik Abdul Karim Amrullah, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* (Singapore: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD, 1982), 3/1900.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 1/125, 287, 288.

<sup>38</sup> Mohammed Hasbi al-Shiddieqy, *Tafsir al-Qur'an Majid in-Noor* (Semarang: Pustaka Rizki Putra, 2000), 2/1493.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 1/898.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 1/983.

Misbah.<sup>41</sup> It is not necessary to follow the religion believed by the two religions, just following their way of life both in the economic, socio-cultural, and other fields is enough to make Muslims believers in their religion. More than that, it is very clear that their efforts in influencing Muslims to follow their lifestyle.<sup>42</sup>

In terms of the point of tolerance between religious people, it can be understood from the snippet of the interpretation of the Nusantara *mufasir* that suspicions against followers of other religions are found. This suspicion is contrary to the concept of religious moderation as carried out by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. From the perspective of the book Religious Moderation, suspicion, worry, fear and threat to followers of other religions are exclusive signs and lead to intolerance.<sup>43</sup> Coupled with the element of less accommodating interpretation of the culture or heritage traditions of the archipelago which is claimed to be a heretical culture and tradition or the remains of ignorance. This claim is contrary to the indicators of measuring a person's religious moderation in the book Religious Moderation because what is expected from the interpretation of religious texts is flexible and not rigid. Thus, it can accommodate the culture that already exists in the archipelago.

The above description is real evidence of the interpretation of the archipelago using *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjmā'ī*. There is not the slightest mistake in applying *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjmā'ī* as has been done by the *mufasir* of the archipelago, because *ittijāh* leads to the improvement of social life that deviates from the teachings of Islam. The position of *mufasir* in this case is to direct the reader to the right path from the perspective of Islam. Thus, so far *al-Adabī al-Itjmā'ī* has led to exclusivism and rigidity which ultimately leads to the loss of religious moderation as aspired by the Indonesian State. The way out of this problem is the need for reconstruction in applying *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjmā'ī*, especially in Indonesia where there are multi-religious and multi-cultural. The selection of the reconstruction of *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Itjmā'ī* is not *another ittijāh*, because *ittijāh* is closer to the portrait of socio-cultural life.

### **Reconstruction of *Itjihāh al-Adabī al-Ijtimā'ī* as a Solution for Religious Moderation in Indonesia**

The idea of the importance of a new interpretation that is more adaptive and accommodating so that it can lead to the aspect of justice as explained in the book Religious Moderation is not just imaginative, but a step that must be realized. In the book Religious Moderation, it is explained that there are three ways to campaign for religious moderation in Indonesia: 1) the development of new ethics and spirituality that are more supportive of nonviolent peace. This can be realized if religious people reinterpret religious texts that prioritize a tolerant and inclusive attitude based on human values. 2) interfaith mechanisms. This is achieved by fostering peace through dialogue and building harmonious associations through cooperation in community activities, visiting in the celebration of religious days, and getting along without the burden of differences. 3) an extra-religious approach. This third point is more about systemic mechanisms on an international scale.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Hamdan, Mahmudi, and Muhammad, "Anti-Semitism in the Interpretation of M. Quraish Shihab on verses about Jews in tafsir al-Misbah."

<sup>42</sup> M Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah Message, Impression and Compatibility of the Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2005), 1/335.

<sup>43</sup> RE *Religious Moderation*, 73.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 87-88.

These three ways of campaigning for religious moderation are clearly in stark contrast to the interpretation of Islamic religious texts by the *mufasir* of the archipelago as previously explained. This is because *the ittijāh* used by the *mufasir* of the archipelago is *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Ijtima'ī* which prioritizes the improvement of the ethics of Muslims who have deviated a lot from the principles of Islam. From here, the main purpose of his interpretation is to prioritize Islamic principles rather than human values. The socio-cultural portrait raised by *mufasir* is more oriented towards improvement rather than accommodating and adaptive to the phenomena that occur. What is expected from religious moderation is the interpretation of religious sacred texts that can accommodate and adapt to the phenomena that occur. This model is meant by the interpretation of religious sacred texts that are flexible and not rigid. Reinterpretation of religious sacred texts cannot be realized without the existence of new theories, *manhaj*, *ittijāh*, or reconstructions of existing theories as a tool for interpreting sacred texts. The reconstruction of *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Ijtima'ī* which is different from the concept that has been used by the *mufasirs* of the archipelago is an offer from the author.

If all this time *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Ijtima'ī* is directed to photograph the symptoms of the social life of the *mufasir* who is the driver gives a response based on the guidance of the Qur'an, then this understanding is based on the carrying of social and community life towards the Qur'an. The social life of the community must remain principled based on the Qur'an. This kind of design leads to exclusivity and it is easy to blame a phenomenon that according to *mufasir* is not under the guidance of the Qur'an. In addition, with a design like this, it is clear that there will be many phenomena that occur in Indonesia that are not under the Qur'an, because the text of the Qur'an does not photograph the life of the archipelago, but captures the life and culture of the people of the previous prophets, Quraish infidels, and Arab society. It is not that the Qur'an is irrelevant in Indonesia, but *the usefulness* of the Qur'an is an opportunity so that it can always be relevant in time and space.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that some verses of the Qur'an cannot be interpreted today. This is because there are no phenomena that are in the background, the time has passed, or are in a waiting period and can apply in the future. In this case, a *mufasir* does not have to force himself to interpret or be imaginative to reinterpret. There is an interpretation of the archipelago that according to the author is very wise in interpreting. The tafsir written by Mahmud Yunus is an example who prefers to be silent about verses that did not work at that time. Mahmud Yunus when faced with the *Qital* verse and slavery preferred to remain silent and not comment.<sup>45</sup>

Returning to the discussion of the reconstruction of *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Ijtima'ī*, Muḥammad 'Alī Ayāzī defines with two definitions and *mufasir* can use one of them, namely: 1) *mufasir* who tries to explain the meaning of the Qur'an after going through a long process of observing human social life both related to needs, changes, and causes of differences in life in terms of strength and weakness, good and ugliness, knowledge and ignorance, faith and disbelief. Then *mufasir* reveals verses as a guide for humans, improving life, or giving rules to humans. This method is more inclined to sociology and history. 2) an interpretation that follows the needs of social life and the

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<sup>45</sup> Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* (Selangor: P.N. Klang, Selangor, Malaysia, 2003).

needs of the times. This method is more about acculturating the religious goals in the Qur'an to the goals of social life.<sup>46</sup>

If what is desired is the view of the flexibility of the Qur'an, then what can be realized in responding to the phenomenon in Indonesia is *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Ijtimā'ī* with the concept of the second definition as explained by Ayāzī. Steps that can be taken in this case are: 1) look at the phenomenon that occurs. The interpretation of *mufasir* cannot be separated from the phenomenon that surrounds it. Since the phenomena surrounding *mufasir* are not the same, it is not surprising that there are often differences in interpreting the Qur'an. The phenomenon that occurs in the Asian region, more specifically in Indonesia, is not the same as the phenomenon that occurs in the Arab region. This difference requires a difference in interpreting the Qur'an and does not have to force it to adjust to the interpretation in the Arab region. The forced adjustment of interpretation in Indonesia with the Arab region often occurs when looking at the works of the archipelago's *mufasir*. For example, Mufasir Nusantara quotes a lot from the interpretation of Muḥammad 'Abduh. The interpretation of 'Abduh is a portrait of the phenomenon that existed in Egypt at that time.

2) pay attention to the development of space and adjust to the time. This step is very important to be practiced in Indonesia when interpreting the verses of the Qur'an. Since the beginning, Indonesia has been colored by a variety of cultures, traditions, and religious diversity. The uniqueness of this diversity is not a problem to remain united and become one within the framework of the Republic of Indonesia. The presence of religious doctrines that offer the only way to safety has negative side effects, especially until they are published to the public, especially in the era of freedom in social media. Mutual claims to walk on this path of safety resulted in the loss of plurality that has existed in Indonesia. The claim of the way of salvation in religious doctrine is indeed inevitable and this is a field of promotion. However, a *mufasir* who prioritizes the development of space and time can filter the interpretation of violent verses and continue with merciful verses without having to be added with conspiracies whose source is not clear. Furthermore, at this stage, *mufasir* can interpret verses of the Qur'an that cannot be practiced in Indonesia with a casual interpretation without having to look for suitability.

This is common in the interpretation of the Qur'an. *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī* can be one example when he interprets surah (al-Mu'minūn 23:6) right at the sentence *aw mā malakat aymānūhum*, "*milk al-Yamīn*/halal slave, this discussion is not found and does not exist today. Slavery has been abolished by the constitution of the world. Therefore, the law of slavery in the Qur'an does not function today. It does not mean that the Qur'an is expired and the law is invalid, the law is still valid, but at the moment this discussion is not found."<sup>47</sup> The fruit that can be learned from this interpretation is to interpret it casually and dare to state that the interpretation of the verse is limited to a story about a phenomenon that occurred in the past. As for its enforcement, it may be possible in the future, but not now. The period of invalidity of the rules in the Qur'an also occurred during the time of 'Umar bin Khaṭṭāb when he was the caliph. Due to the impossibility of space, 'Umar did not enforce the law of cutting off the hand as stipulated in the Qur'an.

The reality in Indonesia today is that plurality is going well if there are no provocateurs. Differences become an inevitable natural and are protected by the constitution of the Republic of

<sup>46</sup> Ayāzī, *Al-Mufassirūn Ḥayātūhum Wa Manhajūhum*, 87-88.

<sup>47</sup> Muḥammad Mutawallī Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr Al-Sha'rāwī* (Egypt: Akhbār al-Yawum, 1997), 16/9965.

Indonesia. Therefore, space and time demand that the verses of the Qur'an that lead to hatred between religious people or even call for war for the time being are not functional. It does not mean that the war has been abolished, but this discussion has not been found in Indonesia. A mistake that often occurs in Indonesian *mufasir* is to force to interpret and even result in misunderstandings. These verses do not need to be takwil, because the verse is clear, but it is still not valid in Indonesia. Mufasir's foresight in seeing space and time is a determinant of *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Ijtīmā'ī* is more accommodating and adaptive to the conditions of mufasir and can make the Qur'an a source of peace and not a source of division.

3) prioritizing the public good. The point of focusing on common problems here is common to all mankind. Although it cannot be achieved for all mankind, it is not for Muslims alone. Furthermore, by paying attention to the public benefit, a *mufasir* is more tolerant in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an. In addition, by paying attention to this step, *mufasir* can make efforts to acculturate culture and heritage traditions without any claims of infidelity, heresy, or even remnants of ignorant traditions. The principle of prioritizing the public good is very much under the basic principle of the Prophet Muhammad's sending as explained in surah (al-Anbiya' 21:107). As it is known that currently an Islamic state has not been found, the right way to carry out da'wah without a frontal is to acculturate the existing culture and traditions with the general principles of the Qur'an. Thus, the teachings of Islam as explained in the generality of the Qur'an can be adaptive and not rigid. The Qur'an is more social and the Qur'an can follow the culture and not the other way around. The reconstruction in *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Ijtīmā'ī* can be one of the solutions for new interpretations in Indonesia. Thus, religious moderation as described in the book Religious Moderation can be achieved.

## Conclusion

The Republic of Indonesia is a country with a majority of Muslim citizens. Nevertheless, Indonesia is a democratic country. Various ethnicities, religions, cultures, and traditions are its uniqueness and wealth. The diversity that exists in it makes Indonesia an example of other countries in terms of moderation and even gets the title of the most tolerant country. This predicate was questioned when acts of terror emerged and boomed in the 2000s. More than that, Indonesia was once claimed to be one of the centers of radical Islamic organizations such as Jamaah Islamiyah. From this phenomenon, in 2020 the President of Indonesia made an RPJM, one of the contents of which is a religious moderation program. In realizing this program, the Ministry of Religion was appointed as the *leading sector* and began to compile a book as a guideline for religious moderation in Indonesia. One of the points that is a strategic step to realize religious moderation in Indonesia is the need for a concept of interpretation of religious sacred texts that is more accommodating and adaptive to local culture. Tracing from *ittijāh*, the interpretation used by the *mufasirs* of the archipelago is more inclined to *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Ijtīmā'ī*. The reality that exists is that *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Ijtīmā'ī* applied by the *mufasir* of the archipelago has not been adaptive to the culture and traditions in Indonesia. This is because the concept is more focused on making humanity aware to remain based on the principles of the Qur'an. With such a model, what is built is that culture must adapt to the sharia, not the sharia that must accept the culture. Therefore, it is not surprising that Islam is claimed to be a rigid, inflexible, and unfriendly religion in every space and time. For such a claim not to occur, it is necessary to have a reconstruction in *ittijāh al-Adabī al-Ijtīmā'ī*. Three steps

in realizing a more flexible interpretation of the Qur'an to the culture and traditions that exist in an area, namely: seeing the surrounding phenomena, paying attention to space and time, and prioritizing the public good. With such a construction, the Qur'an can be understood more adaptively and accommodatingly. The interpretation of the Qur'an is more according to the times, not the other way around.

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