

COMPILATIVE-VERNACULAR TAFSIR TARJUMAN AL-MUSTAFID
“Analysis of Sources, Methods, and Contextualization in Khazanah
Islam Nusantara”

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ABSTRACT

*Tarjumān al-Mustafīd, a monumental work by Abdur al-Rauf al-Sinkili, is the first complete Qur'anic exegesis in the Malay language and a milestone in the intellectual history of Southeast Asian Islam. This qualitative research comprehensively analyzes the book's sources, methods, and style through library research and content analysis. The results show that Tarjumān al-Mustafīd is not a translation but an original compilation-synthesis of various sources, including Tafsīr al-Khāzin, al-Bayḍawī, and al-Jalālayn. Its method combines *ijmālī* (global) and *tahlīlī* (analytical) approaches, making it accessible yet substantial. Its style is general, covering Ash'arī theology, Shafi'ī jurisprudence, and ethical Sufism. Its genius lies in the process of vernacularization that made the Qur'an relevant to the Malay community. In conclusion, this work is best described as a compilative-vernacular exegesis whose originality lies in its creative synthesis and brilliant contextualization for its local audience.*

Keywords: *Abdur al-Rauf al-Sinkili, Compilative-Vernacular Tafsīr, Exegetical Method, Nusantara Tafsīr, Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*

ABSTRAK

Tarjumān al-Mustafīd, karya monumental Abdur al-Rauf al-Sinkili, adalah tafsir al-Qur'an lengkap pertama dalam bahasa Melayu dan tonggak sejarah intelektual Islam Asia Tenggara. Penelitian kualitatif ini menganalisis secara komprehensif sumber, metode, dan corak kitab tersebut melalui studi pustaka dan analisis konten. Hasilnya menunjukkan Tarjumān al-Mustafid bukan terjemahan, melainkan karya kompilasi-sintesis orisinal dari berbagai sumber seperti *Tafsir al-Khāzin*, *al-Bayḍawī*, dan *al-Jalālayn*. Metodenya menggabungkan *ijmālī* (global) dan *tahlīlī* (analitis), membuatnya mudah diakses namun tetap berisi. Coraknya bersifat umum, mencakup akidah *Asy'arī*, fikih *Syāfi'ī*, dan tasawuf *akhlakī* (praktis). Kejeniusannya terletak pada proses vernakularisasi yang membuat Al-Qur'an relevan bagi masyarakat Melayu. Kesimpulannya, karya ini paling tepat dideskripsikan sebagai tafsir kompilatif-vernakular yang orisinalitasnya ada pada sintesis kreatif dan kontekstualisasi brilian untuk audiens lokalnya.

Kata Kunci: *Abdur al-Rauf al-Sinkili, Metode Tafsir, Tafsir Kompilatif Vernakular, Tafsir Nusantara, Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*

INTRODUCTION

The examination of classical Islamic literature, particularly Qur'anic exegesis (tafsīr), continues to serve as the core of Islamic scholarly inquiry. Such works provide profound insights into historical interpretations and their lasting significance. In the archipelago, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* by Abdur al-Rauf al-Sinkili stands out as a landmark achievement, acknowledged as the first full Malay translation of the

*Al Fahrizal, Khofawati Khoiriyyah, Compilative-Vernacular *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* "Analysis of Sources, Methods, and Contextualization in the Islamic Khazanah of the Archipelago."*

Qur'an and a significant milestone in the intellectual history of Islam in Southeast Asia.¹

Despite its widely acknowledged importance, the precise nature and origins of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* remain a topic of ongoing scholarly debate. This discussion generates a form of intellectual ambiguity within the field of interpretive studies, due to the difficulty of categorizing a work that resists reduction to a single classification. Such continuous debate has led to renewed examination and deeper analysis of the text. This ambiguity is not merely rhetorical; it reflects a genuine intellectual tension in Islamic studies concerning the categorization of foundational works. The tension stems from the inherent complexity of historical texts, which often integrate multiple influences and methodologies, challenging contemporary analytical approaches that demand clear definitions. The persistence of this debate highlights the necessity for a more refined and nuanced model of interpretation.

The significance and immediacy of research on *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* are closely tied to the socio-political and theological context of 17th-century Aceh, where Abdur al-Rauf al-Sinkili lived and contributed his work. At that time, Aceh experienced numerous challenges, including a period of political instability and, more importantly, pervasive theological unrest within the society.² The main cause of this confusion lies in the debate between the interpretation of *wahdat al-wujūd* advocated by figures like Hamzah al-Fanshuri and Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani, and the more sharia-centered perspective of Nuruddin al-Raniri. This intellectual and spiritual rift generated a pressing demand for

¹ Sahlan Muhammad Faqih dkk., "Orientasi *Tafsir Turjuman Al-Mustafid* Karya Abdur Rauf Al-Singkili," *At-Turas: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 9, no. 1 (2022): 60–78, <https://doi.org/10.33650/at-turas.v9i1.3205>.

² Dzulkifli Hadi Imanwan, "Contribution of Shaikh Abdurrauf As-Singkili to the Establishment of Islamic Law in the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam in the 17th Century AD," *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, Universitas Islam Indonesia (Islamic University of Indonesia), 13 Oktober 2022, 797–820, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol21.iss3.art7>.

theological clarification and societal cohesion, which became a central concern in al-Sinkili's reinterpretation of the concept of *wujūdiyyah*.³

Having completed extensive studies in the Middle East, al-Sinkili was uniquely equipped to tackle these challenges. His appointment as Mufti of the Aceh Sultanate by Sultana Taj al-Alam Safiatuddin Shah highlighted both the state's acknowledgment of his scholarly authority and the pressing need for his guidance in resolving the ongoing theological dispute.⁴ The composition of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* went beyond a purely scholarly endeavor; it served as a practical response to the urgent social and theological challenges facing 17th-century Aceh. Al-Sinkili's dual role as mufti and author of this work underscores the essential role of religious scholarship in promoting social unity and offering practical guidance during times of upheaval. This illustrates a direct link between the needs of the community and the production of scholarly work.

Beyond theological debates, there existed a basic societal demand for accessible religious guidance. Although Islam had been established in Aceh for some time, the general population had not fully grasped its teachings. Consequently, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* was composed as a practical manual for everyday life and to assist in the da'wah and education of Muslims throughout the archipelago.⁵ The title of the work, "*Translators for the Benefit Seeker*" (a translation of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*), clearly reflects its purpose of bridging the linguistic and conceptual divide between the Arabic Qur'an and a Malay-speaking audience. The vernacularization efforts embedded in *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* represent a deliberate intellectual strategy to democratize

³ Nauval Satria Pratama dkk., "Pemikiran Tasawuf Syekh Abdur Rauf as-Singkili dan Relevansinya Dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Modern," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Sosial* 3, no. 4 (2024): 219–31, <https://doi.org/10.58540/jipsi.v3i4.663..>

⁴ Imawan, "Contribution of Shaikh Abdurrauf As-Singkili to the Establishment of Islamic Law in the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam in the 17th Century AD."

⁵ Zahrotul Kamilah, "Mengenal Tafsir Tarjumān al-Mustafīd," *Tafsir Al Quran / Referensi Tafsir di Indonesia*, 15 Maret 2025, <https://tafsiralquran.id/mengenal-tafsir-tarjuman-al-mustafid/>.

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religious knowledge. By rendering the Qur'an in the region's lingua franca, al-Singkili ensured that understanding of Islam was not confined to the Arab scholarly elite, thereby empowering local communities and reinforcing the foundations of Islam in the archipelago.⁶ This visionary approach of contextualizing universal teachings for local settings carries enduring significance for modern religious education and interfaith engagement.

Numerous studies have examined *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* by Abdur Rauf As-Singkili. For instance, a qualitative study by Syifa et al. (2024) revealed that *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* has distinct characteristics, contrary to claims that it is a translation of Baidhawi's or Jalālayn's works. This conclusion is supported by a qualitative study by Lail et al. (2024), which affirms that the book is not merely a translation; while al-Singkili's interpretive approach bears similarities to Baidhawi's, it is not identical, as he also incorporates methods from archipelagic *turath* texts, such as *tanbīh*, *Faidah*, and other local commentaries. Similarly, Wahyudi and Khusnia (2022) concluded that *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* is not simply a translation of a classical commentary, but rather a work grounded in classical Arabic sources, making it inaccurate to consider it a direct translation into Malay.

However, these studies have not explicitly addressed an internal analysis of the work, including the author's background, sources, interpretive methods, intellectual frameworks, and their respective strengths and weaknesses. Building on recent scholarly developments, this study makes a unique contribution by proposing that *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* should be understood not as a straightforward translation or a purely original modern-style interpretation, but as an exegetical translation—or more precisely, a compilative-vernacular interpretation.

⁶ Moh. Jamalul Lail et al., "Epistemology of Nusantara Exegesis in the 17th Century: A Study of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* by Abdurrauf al-Singkili," *Qof* 8, no. 2 (2024): 201–20, <https://doi.org/10.30762/qof.v8i2.2491>.

This categorization is crucial, as it reflects the dynamic intellectual processes that al-Sinkili undertakes in producing the work.

The distinctiveness of this research lies in highlighting al-Sinkili's active role as an intellectual agent. He was far from a passive translator; rather, he functioned as a skillful curator, editor, and compiler. His intellectual prowess is evident in several ways. First, he made strategic choices by selecting relevant material from diverse classical commentaries. Second, he adeptly summarized and condensed lengthy, complex explanations, intentionally omitting technical details such as *i'rāb* (Arabic grammatical analysis) that were unnecessary for his intended audience. Third, he provided contextual additions, incorporating new elements such as explanations of *qirā'āt* (Qur'anic reading variations) and narrations deemed essential for enriching the understanding of Malay-Nusantara readers.⁷ All of these components are carefully integrated to create a cohesive, logically structured work, purposefully crafted to address the pressing needs of its community.

Thus, the originality of *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* is not found in uncovering entirely new interpretations, but in al-Sinkili's remarkable skill in creatively synthesizing and contextualizing universal Islamic knowledge for a local audience.⁸ This study highlights the work's practical significance as an effective educational resource, a vital instrument for socio-religious cohesion, and a pragmatic guide to Islam for countless individuals throughout the centuries.⁹ The idea of compilative-vernacular interpretation both challenges and broadens conventional notions of intellectual originality, especially in non-Western contexts. It demonstrates that significant scholarly contributions can emerge from the careful adaptation, synthesis, and restructuring of existing knowledge to address particular local needs, rather than solely from generating

⁷ Lail et al., "Epistemology of Nusantara Exegesis in the 17th Century."

⁸ Lail et al., "Epistemology of Nusantara Exegesis in the 17th Century."

⁹ Kamilah, "Mengenal Tafsir Tarjumān al-Mustafid."

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completely new ideas. This reassessment is essential for fostering a more inclusive perspective on global intellectual history.

RESEARCH METHODS

To comprehensively examine the complex nature of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* and reinforce the study's arguments, a qualitative methodology is employed. The primary approach consists of an extensive literature review and a detailed content analysis of both the interpretive text and relevant academic sources. This methodological framework facilitates an in-depth investigation of al-Sinkili's biography, the historical context of the work, the sources utilized, the interpretive techniques applied, predominant patterns of interpretation, and a balanced evaluation of its strengths and limitations. By integrating literature review with content analysis, the qualitative approach is particularly well-suited to this study, offering a nuanced, contextualized understanding of historical religious texts and enabling insightful interpretations of their intellectual significance and social impact, rather than relying solely on quantitative measures.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Biography of al-Singkili

Abd al-Rauf bin Ali al-Jawi al-Fansuri al-Sinkili, more commonly known as al-Sinkili, was a Malay scholar who played a pivotal role in the advancement of Qur'anic interpretation in Indonesia.¹⁰ The title "al-Sinkili" was attributed to him because he originated from Singkil (Sinkel), a region on Aceh's northwest coast. There is some debate regarding his

¹⁰ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII: Akar Pembaharuan Islam Indonesia* (Kencana Prenada Media Grup, 2013).

year of birth; according to Harun Nasution, he was born around 1001 H / 1593 AD.¹¹

The views mentioned above differ from those of Western scholars, as discussed by Nurkholilah et al. in their journal. D. A. Rinkes suggests that al-Sinkili was born in 1615 AD. Similarly, A. H. Johns concurs with Rinkes and adds that al-Sinkili passed away in 1693 AD. Peter G. Riddel, who aligns with the two, also states that al-Sinkili was born in 1615 AD. These Western scholars base their conclusions on calculations regarding the time of al-Sinkili's return from the Middle East to Aceh. Notably, al-Sinkili studied in Makkah for approximately 19 years before returning to Aceh to impart his knowledge to the community. His scholarly journey likely took place between the 1640s and 1650s, with his return occurring around 1661 AD.¹²

Abd al-Rauf hailed from a family deeply devoted to religion. His father, Ali al-Fansuri, was a prominent religious scholar who even ran a *dayah* (a religious institution similar to an Islamic boarding school) in his region. The question of al-Sinkili's lineage, or *nasab*, is also intriguing. One view suggests that al-Sinkili descended from Persians who had settled in the major Islamic kingdom of Samudera Pasai during the 13th century AD. Another perspective claims that his father, Ali al-Fansuri, was an Arab who married a woman from Fansur City, Aceh, and eventually settled in Singkil.¹³

Al-Sinkili's scholarly inclination toward religion was clearly shaped by his father, who is reported to have directly overseen his early education.¹⁴ Following his foundational education from his father, al-

¹¹ Mia Fitriah Elkarmiah and Sa'dullah Sa'dullah, "Kitab Tafsir Karya Ulama Aceh; Al-Quran Al-Karim Wa Bihamisihi Turjuman Al-Mustafid," *Zad Al-Mufassirin* 5, no. 2 (2023): 246–66, <https://doi.org/10.55759/zam.v5i2.114>.

¹² Syifa Nurkholilah dkk., "Syaikh Abdur Rauf Singkel: Kitab Tafsir Tarjumān al-Mustafid," *JIIC: Jurnal Intelek Insan Cendikia* 1, no. 10 (2024): 7961–73.

¹³ A. Rouf, *Mozaik Tafsīr Indonesia Kajian Ensiklopedis* (Sahifa, 2020).

¹⁴ Faqih dkk., "Orientasi Tafsir Turjuman Al-Mustafid Karya Abdur Rauf Al-Singkili."

Al Fahrizal, Khofawati Khoiriyyah, *Compilative-Vernacular Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd "Analysis of Sources, Methods, and Contextualization in the Islamic Khazanah of the Archipelago."*

Sinkili pursued further studies in Banda Aceh, the capital of the Aceh Kingdom. According to Drakard, as cited by Azra, al-Sinkili studied under a leading Acehnese scholar of the period, Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani.¹⁵

As mentioned earlier, al-Singkili pursued his education in the Arabian Peninsula during the 1640s. According to Riddel, as cited by Wahyudi and Anggraini, he studied under at least 19 scholars across several regions, including Makkah, Jeddah, Bayt al-Faqih, Zabid, and Medina.¹⁶ Azra provides a more detailed account, noting that al-Singkili began his *rihlah* from Doha, Qatar, under the guidance of Abd al-Qadir al-Mawrir, before traveling to several cities in Yemen. In Bayt al-Faqih, he received instruction from Ja'man, a prominent Sufi scholar. In Zabid, Yemen, he studied with Abd al-Rahīm ibn al-Siddiq al-Khas, Amin ibn al-Siddiq al-Mizjāji, and Abd Allah ibn Muhammad al-'Adani. After leaving Yemen, al-Singkili continued his education in Jeddah under Abd al-Qadir al-Barkhali. His scholarly journey reached its pinnacle in Makkah and concluded in Medina, where he studied directly under prominent figures of the Syattariyah Sufi order, including Ahmad al-Qushashi and Ibrahim al-Kurani, the *mursyīd* of the Syattariyah.¹⁷

Al-Singkili's dedication to studying the Sufism of these renowned scholars ultimately enabled him to become a *mursyīd* (spiritual leader) of the Syattariyah Sufi order.¹⁸ It is noted that al-Singkili was the first to introduce the Syattariyah order to Indonesia. His engagement with Sufism, however, was not confined to a single order; he also studied the Qadiriyyah, Kubrawiyah, Suhrawardiyyah, and Naqshabandiyah traditions. In

¹⁵ Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII: Akar Pembaharuan Islam Indonesia*.

¹⁶ Chafid Wahyudi dan Ika Khusnia Anggraini, "Tarjumān Al-Mustafīd: Answering the Need for Accessible Qur'anic Interpretation for The Masses," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 24, no. 1 (2023): 39–58, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v24i1.3892>.

¹⁷ Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII: Akar Pembaharuan Islam Indonesia*.

¹⁸ A. Rouf, *Mozaik Tafsir Indonesia Kajian Ensiklopedis*.

fact, besides serving as a *murshid* of the Syattariyah order, al-Singkili also held the role of *murshid* in the Qadiriyyah order.¹⁹

After spending roughly 19 years pursuing knowledge, al-Singkili returned to Aceh in 1661 AD. At that time, Aceh was ruled under a sultanate. Taj al-Alam Safiatuddin Shah (1641–1675 AD), daughter of the 12th Sultan Iskandar Muda (1583–1636 AD) and wife of Sultan Iskandar Tsani (1636–1641 AD), was the 14th Sultana to govern the Islamic kingdom of Aceh. During her reign, the sultanate faced multiple challenges: several Acehnese territories on the Malay Peninsula had seceded, and, importantly, there was widespread religious and theological unrest within society.²⁰ The disagreement centered on differing interpretations of Sufism, specifically between the *wahdat al-wujūd* perspective advocated by Hamzah al-Fanshuri and Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani, and the Sharia-oriented approach of Nuruddin al-Raniri. The *wahdat al-wujūd* school holds that God is inherently united in nature (*imanen*). In contrast, Nuruddin al-Raniri, a scholar emphasizing Sharia-compliant Sufism, firmly considered this school to be heretical.

The polemic required reconciling the understanding of Sharia with the Sufi tradition. Upon receiving news of al-Singkili's return to Aceh, the Sultana promptly tasked him with resolving the theological dispute by authoring a book titled *Mi'rāt al-Thullāb* in 1663 AD.²¹ Al-Singkili's scholarly expertise and balanced approach to religious disputes resulted in his appointment as a mufti of the Aceh Sultanate during the reign of Sultana Safiatuddin.²²

¹⁹ Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII: Akar Pembaharuan Islam Indonesia*.

²⁰ Miftahuddin Miftahuddin, “*Tarjumān al-Mustafid*: Khazanah Tafsir Berbahasa Melayu Pertama di Nusantara,” *Madania: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 11, no. 2 (2021): 97–104, <http://dx.doi.org/10.24014/jiik.v11i2.16830>.

²¹ Wahyudi dan Anggraini, “*Tarjumān Al-Mustafid*.”

²² Elkarimah dan Sa'dullah, “Kitab Tafsir Karya Ulama Aceh; Al-Quran Al-Karim Wa Bihamisihi Turjuman Al-Mustafid.”

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The Reason for the Writing and Naming of the Book of Tarjumān al-Mustafīd

During his lifetime, al-Singkili lived through six reigns, beginning with Sultan Iskandar Muda in 1607 AD and extending to the conclusion of Sultanah Kalamat Shah's rule in 1699 AD. His tenure as mufti and advisor to the sultanate began during the reign of Taj al-Alam Safiatuddin (1641–1675 AD).²³ The writing of the *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* took place during his tenure as mufti and advisor to the sultanate.

Although the exact date and motivation for writing *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* are not clearly documented, Riddel, as cited by Faqih, estimates that it was composed around 1675 AD.²⁴ During that year, Aceh faced numerous social and political challenges, exemplified by the transition of power from Sultana Taj al-Alam to Sri Sultan Nur Alam (1675–1678 AD).²⁵ Several factions sought to overthrow the Aceh dynasty and, during Sultana Nur Alam's reign, even exploited the *wujūdiyah* teachings in their attempts. Their actions escalated to the point of setting fire to the Baiturrahman Mosque and the Dar al-Dunya Palace. However, these plots were ultimately thwarted thanks to al-Singkili's influence.²⁶

The social dynamics and his influential standing among the Acehnese people motivated al-Singkili to create a work that was closely connected to the community. Miftahuddin notes that, although Islam had long been present in Aceh, its teachings were not yet fully comprehended. Consequently, this book was written to support da'wah and the religious

²³ Islah Gusmian, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an di Indonesia: Sejarah dan Dinamika," *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Tafsir di Nusantara* 1, no. 1 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.32495/nun.v1i1.8>.

²⁴ Faqih dkk., "Orientasi Tafsir Turjuman Al-Mustafid Karya Abdur Rauf Al-Singkili."

²⁵ Gusmian, "TAFSIR AL-QUR'AN DI INDONESIA."

²⁶ Miftahuddin, "Tarjumān al-Mustafīd: Khazanah Tafsīr Berbahasa Melayu Pertama di Nusantara."

education of the *ummah*.²⁷ This view corresponds with Azra's assertion that *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* was designed as a practical guide for the everyday lives of the Acehnese people.²⁸

Moreover, regarding the title of al-Sinkili's *tafsīr*, no explicit explanation for its selection has been found. Nonetheless, the choice of a work's title often reflects the author's philosophy and objectives. This applies to *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* as well. Literally translated, the title means "Translator for the Person Who Takes Benefits," which, the author contends, clearly signals the book's purpose as a *tafsīr*. The term *tarjumān*, or "translator," emphasizes its function as both a linguistic and conceptual bridge, connecting the Arabic Qur'anic text with the understanding of Malay readers.

Meanwhile, the term *al-Mustafid*, meaning "a person who seeks benefits," clearly identifies the intended audience. This work was not meant for elite theological debate or specialists, but for the general public seeking to comprehend and apply the teachings of the Qur'an in daily life. In this way, the title *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* powerfully conveys its vision: to make God's word accessible, understandable, and—most importantly—beneficial to all segments of society.

Sources, Methods, and Interpretation Patterns

Scholars of Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic sciences, including Quraish Shihab, classify the sources of Qur'anic interpretation into three main categories.²⁹ There are three main types of sources for Qur'anic interpretation: first, *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*; second, *tafsīr bi al-ra'yī*; and third, *tafsīr bi al-ishārī*. In addition, previous researchers have examined the sources, methods, and interpretive patterns of *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*. One

²⁷ Miftahuddin, "Tarjumān al-Mustafid: Khazanah Tafsīr Berbahasa Melayu Pertama di Nusantara."

²⁸ Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII: Akar Pembaharuan Islam Indonesia*.

²⁹ M. Quraish Shihab, *Metodologi Tafsir Al-Quran Dari Tematik Hingga Maqashidi* (Lentera Hati, 2025).

perspective on the sources of this *tafsīr* comes from Chafidzoh, who argues that the work leans more toward *tafsīr bi al-ra'yī*, as its interpretations primarily reflect reasoned opinions developed after those of the Prophet's companions.³⁰ The *tafsīr bi al-ra'yī* method involves interpreting the Qur'an through independent reasoning. This approach requires the interpreter to have a strong command of the Arabic language, its stylistic features, vocabulary, and the subtle nuances of meaning. Additionally, the interpreter must be familiar with pre-Islamic poetry, understand the context of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), recognize abrogating and abrogated verses (*nāsikh-mansūkh*), and possess mastery of various other tools essential for a competent *mufassir*³¹

However, al-Singkili did not depend solely on his own reasoning. His *tafsīr* also incorporates *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*, drawing on hadith and reports from other Qur'anic commentators.³² Among the interpretations frequently cited by al-Singkili are Bayḍawī's *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl*, *Manāfi' al-Qur'ān*, *Tafsīr al-Khāzin*, *Tafsīr Tha'lāb*, and *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*.³³

Chafidzoh's opinion above needs to be re-verified. So in this case, the author quotes one of the interpretations in the book *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* on the interpretation of Surah al-Ikhlas, as follows:

³⁰ Rumi Chafidzoh dkk., "Impressions of the First Most Complete Author and *Tafsīr* in the Nusantara (Analysis Study of the Book of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*)," *Proceedings International Conference on Islamic Law and Society* 3, no. 1 (2024): 1, <https://incoils.or.id/index.php/INCOILS/article/view/163>.

³¹ Muhammad al-Sayyid Husain al-Dhahabi, *Al-Tafsir wa al-Mufassirun*, vol. 3 (Maktabah Wahbah, 2010).

³² Chafidzoh et al., "Impressions of the First Most Complete Author and *Tafsīr* in the Nusantara (Analysis Study of the Book of *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*)."

³³ Nurkholidah et al., "Shaykh Abdur Rauf Singkel: Kitab Tafsir Tarjumān al-Mustafid."

*"You say that Muhammad is the only God who is Allah Ta'ala, which means more than all wishes. He was not begotten and was not begotten. Moreover, there is no ally for Him with anyone. The Tafsīr said in the Khāzin that all the polytheists said they were for the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). So came the word of Allah Ta'ala "Qul huwa Allahu Ahad to the end. (Town) Ikhtilaf between all the three reciters on reciting "kufuwan" then Nafi' and Abu 'Amr recite him "kufu'an" with hamzah. And Hafs reads him "kufuwan" with waw. Wallahu'alam."*³⁴

From the commentary on Surah al-Ikhlas, it is evident that in interpreting Qur'anic verses, al-Singkili does not directly cite *ma'thūr* opinions (transmitted from the Companions or the Prophet, peace be upon him). Instead, he presents his own interpretations based on various works of earlier scholars, such as *Tafsīr al-Khāzin*. *Al-Khāzin*'s work, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl*, along with *Tafsīr al-Baydawī*, which al-Singkili frequently references, are examples of the *tafsīr bi al-ra'yī* genre.³⁵ Thus, the author concurs with previous researchers in asserting that *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* primarily draws on the *tafsīr bi al-ra'yī* style of interpretation.

This then leads to the discussion of the interpretive method. An interpretation method is a systematic approach used to determine the meanings of Qur'anic verses.³⁶ Scholars categorize Qur'anic interpretation methods into four types: first, *ijmālī* (global); second, *tahlīlī*; third, *maudlu'i*; and fourth, *muqōran*. According to al-Farmawi, this

³⁴ 'Abd al-Rauf bin Ali al-Fanshuri al-Jawi, *al-Qur'an al-Karim wa bi Hamisyihī Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*, 4th ed. (Mushthafa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1951).

³⁵ Al-Dhahabi, *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, vol. 3.

³⁶ Reza Adeputra Tohis dan Mustahidin Malula, "Metodologi Tafsir Al-Qur'an," *Al-Mustafid: Journal of Quran and Hadith Studies* 2, no. 1 (2023): 12–22, <https://doi.org/10.30984/mustafid.v2i1.570>.

Al Fahrizal, Khofawati Khoiriyyah, *Compilative-Vernacular Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd "Analysis of Sources, Methods, and Contextualization in the Islamic Khazanah of the Archipelago."*

classification represents interpretive methods that have been used from ancient times to the present.³⁷

In his research, Chafidzoh also examined al-Singkili's interpretive methods in his *tafsīr* work. He divides the approach in *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* into two aspects: interpretation and explanation of meaning. For interpretation, al-Singkili applies the *tahlīlī* method, while for explaining meanings, he utilizes the *ijmālī* method.³⁸

To verify the above statement, it is possible to note the interpretation of al-Singkili at the beginning of Surah al-Baqarah, as follows:

"Surah al-Baqarah Madaniah, wa hiya miatani wa sittun wa thamanuna ayah. This is Surah al-Baqarah, which is two hundred and eighty-six verses. Nationalized to Medina..."

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْمَ

"Allah ta'ala is the one who knows best what He wants with such a thing."

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَبُ لَا رِبَّ لَهُ فِيهِ هُدَىٰ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ۚ

"This is the Qur'an recited by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which does not doubt that he is from Allah ta'ala. (qishah) In a qaul in the Khāzin, Allah Ta'ala has promised the children of Israel by the tongue of the Prophet Allah Moses that He will send down

³⁷ Abdul Hay al-Farmawi, *Al-Bidayah fi al-Tafsir al-Maudhu'i*, 2nd ed. (al-Hadharah al-'Arabiyyah, 1977).

³⁸ Chafidzoh et al., "Impressions of the First Most Complete Author and Tafsīr in the Nusantara (Analysis Study of the Book of Tarjumān al-Mustafīd)."

*messengers for Him from the descendants of the Prophet Allah Ishmael. So when the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) moved to Medina, even though there were many creatures in it, Allah ta'ala revealed this surah to fulfill the promise. Wallahu'alam..."*³⁹

From the passage above, it is clear that al-Singkili, in his interpretation of two verses from Surah al-Baqarah, begins with a brief overview of the number of verses and the classification of the Surahs (*Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah*). He then provides a general explanation of the Qur'anic verses (*ijmālī*). Following this, al-Singkili offers a more detailed interpretation (*tahlīlī*), incorporating narratives or explanations of variations in recitation (*qirā'āt*), as seen in Surah al-Ikhlas, citing relevant scholars. Consequently, the author concurs with Chafidzoh's analysis of al-Singkili's method, which combines *ijmālī* for meaning and *tahlīlī* for interpretation.

Furthermore, regarding interpretive patterns, these refer to the distinctive characteristics or "colors" that shape an interpretation. A *mufassir*, in explaining the content of the Qur'an, draws upon their own knowledge and intellectual perspective. Consequently, the variety of interpretation patterns reflects the diversity of scholarly disciplines that form the *mufassir*'s intellectual foundation.⁴⁰

There are numerous approaches to interpreting the Qur'an, including linguistic (*lughawi*), jurisprudential, Sufi, theological (*kalam*), social, and others. According to Chafidzoh, although al-Singkili has a prominent scholarly background in Sufism, his *tafsīr* is not confined to a single discipline. This is because al-Singkili was a polymath, well-versed

³⁹ al-Jawi, al-Qur'an *al-Karim wa bi Hamisyihi Tarjumān al-Mustafid*.

⁴⁰ Danial Danial, "Corak Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Periode Klasik Hingga Modern," *Hikmah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 2 (2020): 250, <https://doi.org/10.47466/hikmah.v15i2.136>.

and highly skilled in multiple fields, ranging from *fiqh* to metaphysics, theology, astronomy (*falak*), history, and politics.⁴¹

Meanwhile, Faqih suggests that *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* exhibits a social (*ijtimā'i*) style. This perspective is based on his study of Surah al-Baqarah, verse 173, which, according to Faqih, emphasizes the practical benefits of the Qur'an's teachings during times of emergency and hardship.⁴² Additionally, Faqih's analysis highlights al-Singkili's interpretation of Surah al-Nisa, verse 86, in which he explains the term "respect" (*tahiyah*) in the verse through the word *salam*.⁴³

The author contends that al-Singkili's *tafsīr* exhibits a typical interpretive pattern because it incorporates multiple approaches, with no single pattern prevailing. According to Nasruddin Baidan, interpretive patterns can be classified into three types: general, special, and combination patterns. Baidan explains that when a *tafsīr* presents a variety of patterns without any one being particularly dominant, it is considered to have a general pattern. If one pattern clearly predominates, the *tafsīr* is categorized as having a special pattern. Meanwhile, when two patterns are equally prominent and balanced in proportion, the *tafsīr* is regarded as having a combination pattern.⁴⁴

The Treasures of Islam in Tafsīr

1. Aqidah

As a follower of the Ash'arī school, al-Singkili sought to maintain a balance between the authority of revealed texts (*naql*) and the use of

⁴¹ Chafidzoh et al., "Impressions of the First Most Complete Author and Tafsīr in the Nusantara (Analysis Study of the Book of Tarjumān al-Mustafīd)."

⁴² Faqih dkk., "Orientasi Tafsir Turjuman Al-Mustafid Karya Abdur Rauf Al-Singkili."

⁴³ Faqih dkk., "Orientasi Tafsir Turjuman Al-Mustafid Karya Abdur Rauf Al-Singkili."

⁴⁴ Nasruddin Baidan, *Wawasan Baru Ilmu Tafsir* (Pustaka Pelajar, 2005).

reason (*'aql*). This approach is particularly evident in his interpretation of *mutashābihāt* verses whose meanings are ambiguous especially those describing the nature of Allah in ways that might appear anthropomorphic. Rather than taking such verses literally, which could imply a likeness between Allah and His creation (*tashbih*), al-Singkili applies *ta'wīl*, a metaphorical interpretation consistent with the Ash'arī principle of *tanzīh*, affirming Allah's transcendence and dissimilarity from creation. In Ash'arī theology, *ta'wīl* is used as a last resort when a literal reading presents theological difficulties.⁴⁵

As a concrete example, when interpreting the phrase *wajhu rabbika* (the face of your Lord) in QS. In the Quran, verse 27, he refers to it as "the dzat of your Lord."⁴⁶

وَيَقْبَلُ وَجْهَ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَلِ وَالْأَكْرَامِ

"... And the dzeur of your Lord who has greatness and glorifies all believers will remain..."⁴⁷

The *ta'wīl* approach is the standard method within the Ash'arī school to safeguard the sanctity of God from being likened to created beings, while simultaneously upholding the profound meaning of the verse. The explanation of this method in the Ash'arī tradition is drawn from the foundational principles outlined in classical texts of the faith and the writings of the school's leading scholars.

Imam al-Ash'arī firmly rejected the notion that Allah is a corporeal being or a substance that occupies space. This principle forms the foundation for his followers to employ *ta'wīl* when interpreting seemingly literal verses. In his seminal work, *al-Lumā'*, he emphasizes that Allah

⁴⁵ Syawal Kurnia Putra dkk., "Aspek-Aspek Ketuhanan dalam Teologi Islam: Analisis Tiga Mazhab: Mu'tazilah, Asyariyah, Al-Maturidiyah," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora* 1, no. 3 (2023): 180–86, <https://doi.org/10.58540/isihumor.v1i3.239>.

⁴⁶ Faqih dkk., "Orientasi Tafsir Turjuman Al-Mustafid Karya Abdur Rauf Al-Singkili."

⁴⁷ al-Jawi, al-Qur'an *al-Karim wa bi Hamisyihī Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*.

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cannot be considered a body, is not confined to any place, and is not subject to the laws of time and space.⁴⁸

For al-Singkili, Ash'arī theology was more than a dogmatically inherited school of thought; it served as an epistemological framework for reconciliation. He applied the Ash'arī *ta'wīl* methodology not only to address theological issues concerning divine attributes but also as a means to resolve broader social conflicts. The Ash'arī framework offered a balanced approach, accommodating the symbolic language of Sufis (such as *tajallī*) while upholding orthodoxy through the affirmation of God's transcendence (*tanzīh*). In al-Singkili's hands, the Ash'arī school became a versatile intellectual tool for fostering theological peace and social harmony, aligning with his primary responsibilities as Mufti and Qadhi of the state.

2. Jurisprudence

Al-Singkili's fiqh thought in *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* reflects his role as Qadhi Malik al-'Ādil, responsible for implementing Islamic law in the Aceh Sultanate. His interpretation of the legal verses (*āyāt al-ahkām*) is practical, aligned with the Shafi'i School, and demonstrates applied jurisprudence in addressing contextual issues. This consistency is evident throughout his commentary; when explaining fiqh-related verses, he presents them concisely yet comprehensively, offering clear guidance for the community. For instance, consider his interpretation of the verse on ablution in al-Maidah, verse 6 :

يَأَيُّهَا النَّذِينَ أَمْنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيْكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ
وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ ...

⁴⁸ Abu al-Hasan Al-Ash'arī, *Al-Luma' fi al-Radd "ala Ahl al-Zaygh wa al-Bida,"* ed. Richard J. McCarthy (Dar al-Mashriq, 1953).

“... And wash by you all your faces, and all your hands, and all your elbows, and sweep you all over yourselves, and wash all your feet, and all your feet...”⁴⁹

The above interpretation shows al-Singkili's approach, which is very practical and direct. He translated the ablution commands literally and clearly into Malay, without getting into the complicated fiqh debate over the detailed limitations of each part of wudu. The focus is to provide instructions that are easy to understand and can be directly practiced by the general public, in line with the book's purpose as a practical guide.

Furthermore, the proof that the Shafi'i School is the school that is the foundation of thought in this book of *tafsir* can be directly observed. In his statement, he explicitly cites Shafi'i in his interpretation of the verse. For example, in Surah al-Nisa verse 16, as follows:

وَالَّذِينَ يَأْتِينَهَا مِنْكُمْ فَأَذُورُهُمَا فَإِنْ تَابَا وَأَصْلَحَا فَأَغْرِضُهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ تَوَّاباً
رَحِيمًا

“(Benefit) begins with the words of half of the commentators that this law is mansukh (removed) with a limit, if he wishes, with fahisyah it is adultery. [and so] if desired with liwath in the madhhab of Shafi'i Ra. Still, those who come to him are not stoned on Shafi'i. Moreover, if there is a Muhshan, he is only beaten and kept away. Wallahu'alam.”⁵⁰

Thus, al-Singkili's fiqh thought in its commentary can be concluded as a fiqh that is practice-oriented, pragmatic, and faithful to the Shafi'i School. He did not aim to present a complex jurisprudence discourse, but rather to translate the laws of Allah into clear, authoritative, and implementable guidance in the daily life of the Muslim community in the archipelago, in line with his role as a royal mufti.

⁴⁹ al-Jawi, al-Qur'an *al-Karim wa bi Hamisyihi Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*.

⁵⁰ al-Jawi, al-Qur'an *al-Karim wa bi Hamisyihi Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*.

Al Fahrizal, Khofawati Khoiriyyah, *Compilative-Vernacular Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd "Analysis of Sources, Methods, and Contextualization in the Islamic Khazanah of the Archipelago."*

3. Sufism

Although Abdurrauf al-Singkili was a distinguished *murshīd* (spiritual guide) of the Shattariyah Order, the Sufi approach in *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* is intentionally straightforward, practical, and focused on moral and ethical development. He avoided the intricate and often contentious debates of philosophical Sufism (*theosophy*), instead presenting Sufism in a manner that was accessible and applicable to the broader community.

The nuances of this practical Sufism can be seen in its interpretation of verses on *maqamat* (spiritual levels). For example, in interpreting QS. al-Furqan: 71 on repentance, as follows:

وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا

*"Whoever repents of all his sins other than that and does righteous deeds, then he repents to Allah Almighty a repentance that he returns to Allah Almighty, and he will be rewarded with virtue."*⁵¹

Tarjumān al-Mustafīd explains it simply as "*returning to Allah Ta'ala*. However, if this interpretation is compared with his more detailed explanation in his book on Sufism, *Tanbīh al-Mashi*, it becomes clear that this concept of repentance has depth of meaning. There, he explained that true repentance requires a full awareness of sin and a transformation from defying God's law to being completely obedient to Him.⁵² The fact that he chose to present a simpler version in his commentary shows his deliberate decision to keep the work accessible.

⁵¹ al-Jawi, al-Qur'an *al-Karim wa bi Hamisyihī Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*.

⁵² Mayang Sari, "Karakteristik Corak Tasawuf dalam Tafsir Tarjumān al-Mustafīd Karya Abdur Rauf al-Singkili" (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim, 2022), <https://repository.uin-suska.ac.id/63264/2/SKRIPSI%20MAYANG%20SARI.pdf>.

Nuances of Locality

The local nuances in *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* go beyond superficial elements, such as the use of certain local terms, and are embedded in the very foundation, purpose, and structure of the work. This sense of locality is expressed in three main ways: the vernacularization of language, the contextualization of content, and the adaptation of interpretive practices to local culture.

The most fundamental and significant act of localization is the translation of the Qur'an and its interpretation into the Malay language.⁵³ This vernacularization process greatly enhances the accessibility of sacred texts, enabling the people of the archipelago to engage with and understand Islamic teachings directly, without relying on Arabic as a medium.⁵⁴

The use of the Jawi script Arabic characters adapted to represent Malay sounds is a tangible expression of this cultural synthesis. It is more than a technical decision; it asserts a distinct Islamic-Malay identity, differentiating the work both from the pure Arabic tradition and from pre-Islamic local customs. Furthermore, the linguistic structure of the *tafsīr* demonstrates deep adaptation to Malay grammar. The employment of words like "begin" to start sentences, "yaki" or "ya'ni" for emphasis and clarification, and the naturally flowing sentence patterns indicate that this is not a rigid translation but a fluent rendering in the local idiom.⁵⁵ Finally, this *tafsīr* also demonstrates a clear orientation toward local audiences. Its primary target is the Malay-Indonesian community, who possess

⁵³ Afriadi Putra, *Tafsir Al-Quran di Nusantara* (Lembaga Ladang Kata, 2020).

⁵⁴ Mursalim, "Vernakulisasi Al-Qur'an di Indonesia (Suatu Kajian Sejarah Tafsir al-Qur'an)," *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Sosial Keagamaan* 16, no. 1 (2014): 53–66, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.21093/lj.v16i1%20JUNI.192..>

⁵⁵ Arivaie Rahman, "Tafsir Tarjumān al-Mustafīd Karya 'Abd Al-Rauf Al-Fansuri: Diskursus Biografi, Kontestasi Politis-Teologis dan Metodologi Tafsir," *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman* 42, no. 1 (2018): 1, <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v42i1.419>.

Al Fahrizal, Khofawati Khoiriyyah, *Compilative-Vernacular Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd "Analysis of Sources, Methods, and Contextualization in the Islamic Khazanah of the Archipelago."*

limited proficiency in Arabic and require religious guidance in their native language.

Ultimately, the sense of locality in *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* represents a sophisticated dialogue between the global and the local. Al-Singkili embraced the broader Islamic intellectual tradition centered in the Middle East and mastered it through his studies in the Haramayn. However, upon returning to his homeland, he did not merely replicate this tradition passively. Instead, he acted as an active intellectual agent, consciously translating, filtering, and reshaping global knowledge to align with local needs and contexts. *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* demonstrates that scholars in the archipelago were not passive recipients but active participants in intellectual glocalization, giving universal teachings a particular form that is both relevant and functional.

Criticism of Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd

The assessment of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* should consider the purpose behind its writing and its intended audience in the 17th century. What might seem like a limitation from a modern viewpoint often reflects a deliberate design choice and a notable strength for its time. Below is a summary of some of the advantages and disadvantages identified by the author in this work.

1. Excess

From the standpoint of its strengths, the author concludes that the work is both pioneering and monumental. As the first comprehensive Malay interpretation covering the initial 30 *juz* of the Qur'an, it represents a significant milestone in the Islamic intellectual tradition of Southeast Asia.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Chafidzoh et al., "Impressions of the First Most Complete Author and Tafsīr in the Nusantara (Analysis Study of the Book of Tarjumān al-Mustafīd)."

Second, the *tafsīr* excels in language accessibility and conciseness. Written in Malay using the Jawi script the region's lingua franca it effectively removes the language barrier between the community and the Qur'an. Al-Singkili's interpretive approach is generally *ijmālī* (global), concise, and clear resembling *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* making it approachable for novice readers and the general public. Third, the work demonstrates a clear and consistent organizational system. Al-Singkili structures each surah with a brief introduction, including the surah's name, period of revelation, and number of verses. He also consistently employs specific keywords or markers, such as *faidah*, to provide supplementary information, often about *qirā'āt* or related narratives explaining the reasons for revelation, facilitating easier navigation and comprehension for the reader.⁵⁷

2. Deficiency

From the standpoint of this work's limitations, the author summarizes them as follows. First, its conciseness restricts depth. While brevity benefits beginners, it poses a drawback for advanced readers seeking more detailed analysis, richer comparisons of opinions, or deeper theoretical insights. Second, the limited use of critical hadith references. The commentary rarely presents the full *sanad* (chain of narrators) or *matn* (text) of hadiths, whether in verse interpretation or in recounting *asbāb al-nuzūl*. Although common in pre-modern works, this is a notable point from the perspective of later-developed hadith criticism methodologies. Third, the omission of Arabic linguistic analysis. To ensure simplicity and accessibility, al-Singkili deliberately excludes the complex technical discussions of Arabic grammar (*i'rāb*) and rhetoric (*balāghah*) found abundantly in his primary sources, such as *Tafsīr al-Baydawī*.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Rahman, "TAFSĪR TARJUMĀN AL-MUSTAFĪD BY 'ABD AL-RAUF AL-FANSHURI."

⁵⁸ Rahman, "TAFSĪR TARJUMĀN AL-MUSTAFĪD BY 'ABD AL-RAUF AL-FANSHURI."

*Al Fahrizal, Khofawati Khoiriyyah, Compilative-Vernacular *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* "Analysis of Sources, Methods, and Contextualization in the Islamic Khazanah of the Archipelago."*

These strengths and weaknesses are two sides of the same coin. The work's brevity and the omission of technical details are not flaws but intentional features aimed at achieving its primary goal: offering a functional and practical guide to the Qur'an for 17th-century Malay society. The strength of this *tafsīr* lies as much in what it leaves out linguistic complexities and scholarly debates as in what it provides: clear core meanings and practical guidance.

3. Expert Opinion on *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*

Since its creation, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* has spread widely across the Malay world and beyond. Its popularity is evident from the numerous reprints produced at various Islamic publishing centers, including Istanbul (first edition in 1884), Cairo, Mecca, Singapore, Penang, and Jakarta. Additionally, the discovery of manuscripts and printed editions among the Malay diaspora in South Africa further confirms its international influence.⁵⁹ For centuries, it has served as the primary reference for Qur'anic interpretation in Southeast Asia, a status supported by the Malay language's role as a lingua franca and the work's concise, easily comprehensible content. The most prominent scholarly debate surrounding this *tafsīr* concerns its primary sources. This discussion has evolved alongside advances in philological research methods and the study of intellectual history. The following section examines the primary sources used in the composition of this work.

The first perspective maintains that this work is derived from *Tafsīr al-Baidhawi*. Championed by the Dutch orientalist C. Snouck Hurgronje and his followers, this view asserts that *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* is essentially a translation of al-Baidhawi's *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-*

⁵⁹ Chafidzoh et al., "Impressions of the First Most Complete Author and *Tafsīr* in the Nusantara (Analysis Study of the Book of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*)."

Ta'wīl.⁶⁰ This argument appears to be strongly influenced by the cover title of a widely circulated print edition, which explicitly references it.⁶¹

The second perspective holds that this work is derived from *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. This view was strongly advocated by Peter G. Riddell in his dissertation and has been supported by other scholars, including Salman Harun.⁶² Based on internal textual analysis, they contend that the interpretation methods and style concise, direct, and straightforward bear strong resemblance to *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. While acknowledging that al-Singkili occasionally consults al-Baidhawi and al-Khāzin for supplementary information, the primary framework of his work is drawn from *al-Jalālayn*.⁶³ This perspective is further supported by Azyumardi Azra, who emphasizes the scholarly lineage (*sanad*) linking al-Singkili to Jalaluddin al-Suyuthi, one of the authors of *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*.

The third perspective views *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* as an original compilation-synthesis. Recent and more detailed research, which carefully traced its citations, has shown that considering it a translation of a single book is an oversimplification. Analysis reveals that al-Singkili actively draws from multiple sources. In the interpretation of *Surah al-Fātiḥa* and *Surah al-Baqarah* alone, he references *Tafsīr al-Khāzin* (the most frequently cited in this section), *Tafsīr al-Baydawī*, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, *Tafsīr al-Tha'labī*, *Tafsīr al-Baghāwī*, and *Manāfi' al-Qur'ān*. This demonstrates that *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* is not a mere translation but a work of compilation and synthesis, displaying originality in how it integrates its sources.

⁶⁰ Rahman, "TAFSIR TARJUMĀN AL-MUSTAFĪD BY 'ABD AL-RAUF AL-FANSURI."

⁶¹ Musthafa Helmy, "Kitab Turjuman Al-Mustafid, First Malay Tafsir of the Quran," 2023, <https://mui.or.id/baca/bimbingan/kitab-turjuman-al-mustafid-tafsir-alquran-berbahasa-melayu-pertama>.

⁶² Nurkholidah et al., "Shaykh Abdur Rauf Singkel: Kitab Tafsir Tarjumān al-Mustafīd."

⁶³ Rahman, "TAFSIR TARJUMĀN AL-MUSTAFĪD BY 'ABD AL-RAUF AL-FANSURI."

Al Fahrizal, Khofawati Khoiriyyah, *Compilative-Vernacular Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* "Analysis of Sources, Methods, and Contextualization in the Islamic Khazanah of the Archipelago."

This debate also illustrates the evolution of Islamic studies methodology in Southeast Asia from early philological approaches that sometimes relied on external evidence (like cover notes) to more critical, in-depth textual analyses. *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* has become a key platform for testing and refining research methodologies across generations.

According to the author, a comprehensive analysis of the structure, methods, purpose, and reception of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* shows that it holds a unique place in the corpus of Qur'anic interpretation. Labeling it strictly as either a translated work or an original modern-style interpretation fails to capture its true essence and intellectual brilliance.

The most fitting way to describe this work is as an exegetical translation or more precisely, a compilative-vernacular interpretation. In this genre, the act of translation itself becomes an active process of interpretation. Abdurrauf al-Singkili did not simply render the text word for word; he engaged in a complex intellectual process, carefully selecting material from various *tafsīr* works he deemed most relevant. He also condensed lengthy, intricate explanations and deliberately omitted technical details, such as *i'rāb* analysis, that were unnecessary for his intended audience. Moreover, al-Singkili frequently incorporated new elements, including explanations of *qirā'āt* and narrations he considered valuable, to enhance the reader's understanding.⁶⁴ All of this is done to create a new work that is coherent, has a logical flow, and is precisely designed to meet the specific needs of the community.

Thus, the originality and brilliance of al-Singkili do not stem from uncovering entirely new meanings. Rather, his genius lies in his intellectual capacity to perform creative synthesis and contextualize knowledge effectively. While he builds upon the legacy of classical interpreters, he does not remain in their shadow. He functions as an

⁶⁴ Rahman, "TAFSĪR TARJUMĀN AL-MUSTAFĪD BY 'ABD AL-RAUF AL-FANSHURI."

exceptional curator, editor, and compiler, navigating the vast expanse of classical Islamic scholarship and presenting it in a form that is accessible and meaningful to the Malay-Nusantara community.

Ultimately, the value of a work is determined by its function. *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* proves highly functional: it serves as an effective pedagogical tool, a vital instrument for socio-religious stabilization, and a practical guide to Islam for millions over the centuries. Its remarkable success, evidenced by widespread dissemination and enduring relevance, underscores its significance. The work exemplifies an intellectual process in which universal Islamic teachings are thoughtfully adapted and indigenized, producing a form of Islam that is alive, relevant, and deeply rooted in the local context.

CONCLUSION

Abdur al-Rauf al-Sinkili was a prominent 17th-century Acehnese scholar who lived during a period of dynamic socio-political and religious change. Serving as the Mufti of the Sultanate of Aceh, he authored *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* to meet the pressing need for a widely accessible Qur'anic guide for the Malay-Nusantara community.

Analysis of this work leads to several key conclusions. First, regarding sources, an examination of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* and its references to earlier scholars indicates a primary reliance on the *tafsīr bi al-ra'yī* method, though it also incorporates elements of *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*. Second, methodologically, al-Sinkili masterfully combines the *ijmālī* approach for general explanation with the *tahlīlī* method for detailed interpretation, achieving a balance between conciseness and depth. Third, the interpretive pattern is general, integrating diverse disciplines such as Ash'arī theology, Shafi'i jurisprudence, and ethical Sufism (*akhlāqī*), without allowing any single discipline to dominate, making the work accessible to a broad audience.

*Al Fahrizal, Khofawati Khoiriyyah, Compilative-Vernacular *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* "Analysis of Sources, Methods, and Contextualization in the Islamic Khazanah of the Archipelago."*

Al-Sinkili's primary genius lies in his ability to vernacularize the Qur'an, rooting its teachings in the Malay language and local context. Therefore, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* is most accurately described as a compilative-vernacular commentary. Its originality does not consist in generating entirely new meanings but in the skillful curation, synthesis, and contextualization of global Islamic intellectual heritage for local audiences. The work has proven to be an exceptionally effective pedagogical tool and instrument of social stabilization, and its extensive and enduring influence underscores its significance as a cornerstone of the intellectual history of Islam in Southeast Asia.

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