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## *Tafsīr Al-Jalālayn at the Crossroads* Interpreting the Qur'ān in Modern Indonesia

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## **TAFSĪR AL-JALĀLAYN AT THE CROSSROADS: INTERPRETING THE QUR'ĀN IN MODERN INDONESIA**

Ervan Nurtawab\*

**Abstract:** Scholarly studies of Southeast Asian commentaries of the Qur'ān produced prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century uncover the dominant position of *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* as the main reference among other popular classical and medieval Qur'ānic commentaries authored by al-Baghawī, al-Khāzin and al-Bayḍāwī. In this article, I question the *Jalālayn*'s position in modernist exegetical activities, given the translated text is usually presented so briefly that it prevents authors of *tafsir* from giving extra-explanations as glosses. Meanwhile, there is an increasing trend in modern *tafsir* literature to expand commentaries from various disciplines. For this study, I examine selected verses from *Tafsir Qurān Karim* by an Azhari-trained scholar, Mahmud Yunus (d. 1982), as among the first complete Malay/Indonesian commentaries in the modern period (1938). I argue the *Jalālayn* was at a crossroads for being marginalised from mainstream modernist Indonesian *tafsir* literature. While the absence of *Jalālayn*'s role in modern Indonesian commentaries is obvious, modernist commentators do not entirely neglect some legendary elements usually found in classical and medieval Qur'ānic commentaries and add them to their commentary works.

**Keywords:** *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qurān Karim*, *Isrā'īliyyāt*, *Dhū 'l-Qarnayn*, modern Qur'ānic interpretation

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## INTRODUCTION

Arabic commentaries produced from the classical and medieval Islamic periods, such as those authored by al-Baghawī,<sup>1</sup> al-Khāzin,<sup>2</sup> al-Bayḍāwī<sup>3</sup> and al-Jalālayn,<sup>4</sup> enjoy privileged positions in the list of main references for Qur’ānic exegetical activities in the Southeast Asia region from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> Special attention goes to *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (the *Jalālayn*). Following its sample role for the compilation of the *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* (the *Tarjumān*) in late 17<sup>th</sup> century Aceh, this Arabic commentary became dominant as the main reference in the local Qur’ānic *tafsir* (commentary) production of the region, especially in Banten and Mindanao.<sup>6</sup>

With the coming of modernisation to early 20<sup>th</sup> century Indonesia, the *Jalālayn* has been widely circulated and is still regularly reprinted to serve the purpose of Islamic pedagogy in the Indonesian *pesantrens* (Islamic boarding schools).<sup>7</sup> This work remains collectible in students’ bookshelves in modernist-reformist Islamic educational institutions, such as those affiliated with the Persatuan Islam organisation.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the ways in which this commentary was *suddenly* marginalised in Indonesian modernist *tafsir* literature has been

<sup>1</sup> His complete name is Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas‘ūd al-Baghawī (d. 1122). His work I refer to in this article is titled *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl* [The Places of Revelation].

<sup>2</sup> His complete name is ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm, known as al-Khāzin (d. 1340). His work being reviewed in this article is *Lubāb al-Ta’wīl fī Ma‘ānī al-Tanzīl* [The Core of Interpretation in the Meanings of Revelation].

<sup>3</sup> His complete name is ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar al-Bayḍāwī (d. 1286). His work being studied here is *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Ta’wīl* [The Lights of Revelation and the Secrets of Interpretation].

<sup>4</sup> The word *al-Jalālayn* here refers to the Qur’ānic commentary titled *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm* [The Interpretation of the Almighty Qur’ān]. It is known as *al-Jalālayn*, which means two Jalals, because this commentary was authored by two Islamic scholars who have the same name, that is Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī (d. 1459) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī (d. 1505).

<sup>5</sup> Peter G. Riddell, “‘Abd al-Ra’uf al-Sinkili’s *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*: A Critical Study of His Treatment of Juz’ 16” (Ph.D. diss., Australian National University, 1984); Peter G. Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses* (Singapore: Horizon Books, 2001); Peter G. Riddell, *Malay Court Religion, Culture and Language: Interpreting the Qur’an in 17th Century Aceh* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); R. Michael Feener, “Notes towards the History of Qur’anic Exegesis in Southeast Asia,” *Studia Islamika* 5, no. 3 (1998).

<sup>6</sup> Ervan Nurtawab, “The Malay *Tafsīr* in the Sheik Muhammad Said Collection in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, Philippines,” in *The Library of an Islamic Scholar of Mindanao: The Collection of Sheik Muhammad Said bin Imam sa Bayang at the al-Imam As-Sadiq (AS) Library, Marawi City, Philippines: An Annotated Catalogue with Essays*, ed. Oman Fathurahman, Midori Kawashima and Labi Sarip Riwarung (Tokyo: Institute of Asian, African, and Middle Eastern Studies, Sophia University, 2019); Ervan Nurtawab, “Qur’anic Readings and Malay Translations in 18th-Century Banten Qur’ans A.51 and W.277,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 48, no. 141 (2020).

<sup>7</sup> For the circulation of Arabic Islamic works, including the *Jalālayn*, in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Java and Madura, see L. W. C. van den Berg, “Het Mohammedaansche Godsdienstonderwijs op Java en Madoera en de Daarbij Gebruikte Arabische Boeken [The Mohammedan Religious Education in Java and Madura and the Arabic Books Used],” *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 31 (1886). For the wide circulation of the *Jalālayn* during 20<sup>th</sup> century Indonesia, see Martin van Bruinessen, “Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the Pesantren Milieu: Comments on a New Collection in the KITLV Library,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 146 (1990); Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World*, 49; Nashruddin Baidan, *Perkembangan Tafsir al-Qur’an di Indonesia* [The Development of Qur’anic Exegesis in Indonesia] (Yogyakarta: Tiga Serangkai, 2003), 96-98; Ervan Nurtawab, “*Jalālayn* Pedagogical Practice: Styles of Qur’an and *Tafsir* Learning in Contemporary Indonesia” (Ph.D. diss., Monash University, 2018), 30-50.

<sup>8</sup> Nurtawab, “*Jalālayn* Pedagogical Practice.”

overlooked. The fact is the *Jalālayn* has been for centuries playing a vital role in bridging the meaning of the Qur'ānic text to non-Arabic speaking communities in the Southeast Asian region.

Existing scholarship has confirmed how modern Muslim thinkers and societies have challenged many aspects typically discussed in the works of Islamic scholars produced from the classical and medieval Islamic periods. For example, it is useful to quote Jansen's statement in the Egyptian context on how modern Muslims have perceived classical Arabic commentaries in connection to their needs in having a direct approach to the Qur'ān. In this regard, Jansen states: "In the condensed form in which commentaries like those by *al-Bayḍāwī* and *al-Jalālayn* present such grammatical and syntactical explanations, they often appear unnecessary and beside the point."<sup>9</sup> Jansen bases this statement on thoughts sought by an Egyptian Islamic reformer, Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905), who encouraged Muslims not to let the works of interpretation hinder them from directly seeking guidance from the Qur'ān.

In the Southeast Asian context, Anthony Johns identifies a dynamic situation of the ways in which reformist-modernist groups encouraged Muslims not to just rely on the interpretation of texts from classical or medieval Islamic scholars.<sup>10</sup> Instead, Muslims should embark on the interpretation of their scripture by using more reason and should consider advances in scientific developments and technologies. Consequently, they raise an objection on the use of *Isrā'īliyyāt* (literally meaning: Judaica) narratives, especially from Judeo-Christian traditions, for interpreting the Qur'ān. However, Feener notes the genre of such narratives is not completely eliminated in modern Indonesian Islamic literature. It has shifted into an independent field of interest but separated from the genre of Qur'ānic commentary.<sup>11</sup>

In this article, I examine *Tafsir Qurān Karim*<sup>12</sup> by an Azhari-trained scholar, Mahmud Yunus (d. 1982), as among the first complete Indonesian commentaries in the modern period.<sup>13</sup> As Yunus mentions in his introduction to the work, he began writing the commentary in November 1922. The writing continues in that way until he completed the commentary of *juz*' (section) three. Then, he received assistance from his colleagues to continue the project. In 1935, he was able to finish the commentary to *juz*' 18. Yunus then decided to continue alone and the project was successfully completed in 1938.<sup>14</sup>

By taking Yunus' *Tafsir Qurān Karim* as the sample of this study, I question the positions of classical Arabic commentaries, especially the *Jalālayn*, in modern *tafsir* literature, given the

<sup>9</sup> J. J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 64.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay World: In Search of a Profile." In *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, ed. Andrew Rippin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 273-274.

<sup>11</sup> Feener, "Notes towards the History of Qur'anic Exegesis," 53-54.

<sup>12</sup> In this article, Indonesian publications in Roman script do not receive transliteration although the titles are in Arabic. Instead, they are spelled according to their title pages.

<sup>13</sup> Some complete Indonesian commentaries coming from the same period are [1] *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* by Abdul Halim Hasan, Zain al-Arifin Abbas and Abdurrahim; [2] *Tafsir al-Furqan* by A. Hassan; and [3] *Tafsir Quran* by Zainuddin Hamidy and Fachruddin HS.

<sup>14</sup> Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qurān Karim Bahasa Indonesia* [The Interpretation of the Holy Qur'ān], 31st ed. (Jakarta: Hidakarya Agung, 1993), iii-vii.

translated text is usually presented so briefly that it prevents authors of *tafsir* from giving extra-explanations as glosses. Meanwhile, there is an increasing trend in modern *tafsir* literature to expand commentaries from various disciplines and contemporary scientific developments. I have selected some commentaries of the verses from Yunus' *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* for the basis of my analysis, then study his treatment of *sūrat* (Qur'ānic chapter) al-Kahf 83-101 on the story of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn.

In this article, I argue the *Jalālayn* was at the crossroads for being marginalised from mainstream Indonesian modernist *tafsir* literature. In fact, the *Jalālayn* constitutes the most important source for many Southeast Asian commentaries from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Southeast Asian commentaries produced during these centuries that are proven to have used the *Jalālayn* as their sample role are the *Tarjumān* in Malay from late 17<sup>th</sup> century Aceh,<sup>15</sup> Banten Qur'āns A.51 and W.277 with interlinear translations in Malay from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>16</sup> Banten Qur'ān A.54 with interlinear translation in Javanese from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>17</sup> the *Sheikh Muhammad Sa'id (SMS) Malay Tafsir* probably from late 19<sup>th</sup> century Mindanao,<sup>18</sup> and the *Ahmad Bashier (AB) Malay Tafsir* probably from late 19<sup>th</sup> century Mindanao<sup>19</sup>.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the *Jalālayn*'s position shifting to the periphery where this work has been excluded from the list of Indonesian modern *tafsir* references. While the absence of the *Jalālayn*'s role in modern Indonesian commentaries is obvious, modernist commentators do not entirely neglect some legendary elements usually found in the classical and medieval Arabic commentaries. One example is the Qur'ānic episode of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn. Despite being placed in the category of modernist *tafsir*, Yunus' commentary cannot escape borrowing some elements of the *Isrā'īliyyāt* narratives, some being found in the commentary of al-Baghawī. As will be elaborated, Yunus quotes this narrative when he seemed to feel the necessity to provide certain details regarding the identity of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn. He also presents details on the origins of Gog and Magog (Arabic: Ya'jūj wa-Ma'jūj).

## MODERNIST QUR'ĀNIC INTERPRETATION: THE CASE OF *TAFSIR QURĀN KARIM*

Johns states the modernist-reformist movement in Egypt that spread throughout the Muslim world received wide-ranging responses. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, students from the Southeast Asian countries who studied in the Middle East, especially at the Egyptian al-Azhar University, had been influenced by the movement and they then initiated the Islamic reform

<sup>15</sup> Riddell, "Abd al-Ra'uf al-Sinkili's *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*."

<sup>16</sup> Nurtawab, "Qur'anic Readings and Malay Translations."

<sup>17</sup> Ervan Nurtawab and Fasjud Syukroni, "Qur'anic Arabic, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and Javanese: Javanese Translations in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Banten Qur'ān A.54," in *Translating the Qur'an in Indonesia: Politics, Exegesis, and Linguistic Diversity*, ed. Johanna Pink (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

<sup>18</sup> Nurtawab, "The Malay *Tafsīr* in the Sheik Muhammad Said Collection."

<sup>19</sup> Ervan Nurtawab, "Qur'anic Translations in Malay, Javanese and Sundanese: A Commentary or Substitution?" In *The Qur'an in the Malay-Indonesian World: Context and Interpretation*, ed. M. Daneshgar, P. G. Riddell and Andrew Rippin (London: Routledge, 2016), 42-45.

movements once they returned to their homeland.<sup>20</sup> They in some ways adopted some elements of Westernised-educational styles in the modernisation of Islamic schools. Indonesian Islamic education has experienced objectification where students' achievements are measured based on their academic performances.<sup>21</sup>

The modernist-reformist groups attempted at making the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions as the foundations for legal judgements. As Steenbrink<sup>22</sup> and Van Bruinessen<sup>23</sup> note, modernisation in some ways successfully made Muslims to be braver in approaching the Qur'ān more directly. In this connection, Johns also notes that reformist Muslims also attempted to isolate common parts in classical commentaries that in their opinion are considered unnecessary like grammatical explanations. It includes the ways in which they significantly reduced the presentation of variant Qur'ānic readings in their commentaries. This is in line with the fact that, since the late 1920s, Muslims have been accepting Ḥafṣ' reading following the worldwide distribution of the printed Qur'ān with the Egyptian official standard. The presentation of the *Isrā'īliyyāt* legendary tales to interpret the narrative elements found in the Qur'ān also received strong critiques. This coincides with their preferences to promote the use of reason and scientific proofs in their attempts at re-making Islam to be more rational in the modern Islamic public sphere.

The Southeast Asian commentaries produced prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century do not necessarily differentiate translation and *tafsir* genres. The development of the Western printing press significantly contributed to the shift in the presentation of Qur'ānic translations with their commentaries. Physically, the printed Qur'ānic translations then looked more like printed Bibles in respect to the aspects of setting and layout because both scriptures were printed using the same technologies. This constitutes a big change, especially where Qur'ānic translation then received state standardisation in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Indonesian government also produced the official commentary. The latter nevertheless remains flexible where more Indonesian commentators dedicate themselves in producing *tafsir* while seeming to be satisfied with the official Qur'ānic translation, which is *Alquran dan Terjemahannya* (The Qur'ān and its Translation).

It is worth responding to Johns' statements on the absence of grammatical and *qirā'āt* (Qur'ānic readings) aspects in the Southeast Asian modern commentaries. I argue the absence of both aspects is, *but* not always, related to modernisation. Southeast Asian commentaries produced prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century already exclude grammatical explanations. This is also the case with the *qirā'āt* although the *Tarjumān* by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf (d. 1693) is among the Malay

<sup>20</sup> Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay World," 274.

<sup>21</sup> Karel Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam dalam Kurun Modern [Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Islamic Education in the Modern Period]* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1986); Yudi Latif, *Indonesian Muslim Intelligentsia and Power* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008); Deliar Noer, *Administration of Islam in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2010); Ervan Nurtawab, "The Decline of Traditional Learning Methods in Changing Indonesia: Trends of *Bandongan-Kitab* Readings in *Pesantrens*." *Studia Islamika* 26, no. 3 (2019): 511-541.

<sup>22</sup> Karel Steenbrink, *Beberapa Aspek tentang Islam di Indonesia Abad ke-19 [Some Aspects on Islam in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Indonesia]* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1984), 157.

<sup>23</sup> Van Bruinessen, "*Kitab Kuning*," 229.

*tafsir* that intensively presents this explanation. However, Riddell notes this part was added by ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf’s main disciple, Dā’ūd Rūmī, under his direct supervision.<sup>24</sup>

I do not say that both aspects did not attract any attention from the Islamic scholars of Southeast Asia prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But both aspects seem to have grown outside the genre of Qur’ānic interpretation. The fact is the exposition of Qur’ānic readings is commonplace in the Qur’ān manuscripts. Meanwhile, grammatical explanations commonly appeared in Islamic manuscripts in Java. One clear example is found placed diagonally in the *Jalālayn* copies with the Javanese interlinear translations as part of the collection of the Royal Banten Sultanate before the collection was brought to the Bataviaasch Genootschap (now the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia or PNRI) in 1835.

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Indonesia witnessed a significant development of the ways in which Qur’ānic commentaries adopted Western printing styles in respect of formatting and layout processes. Yusuf notes that, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some Qur’ānic commentaries were produced, one of them being *Tafsir Qurān Karim* by Mahmud Yunus.<sup>25</sup> Federspiel has classified Yunus’ commentary among the seminal works of Qur’ānic commentaries in Southeast Asia, together with *al-Furqan* by Ahmad Hassan (d. 1958), *Tafsir Al-Qur’anul Karim* by A. Halim Hasan and *Tafsir Qur’an* by Zainuddin Hamidy. Their works are considered seminal because—for Federspiel—the authors became pioneers in the production of modern commentaries for Malay-Indonesian readers. Not only did they have difficulties in presenting modern translations for difficult Arabic words, they also faced the problems of providing acceptable and user-friendly formats. It includes the ways in which modern commentaries are Romanised, written from right-to-left compared to the pre-modern works that used modified Arabic-Persian scripts from left-to-right and were placed as interlinear or phrase-by-phrase translations.<sup>26</sup>

Yunan Yusuf notes that *Tafsir Qurān Karim* is among the first modern works of this kind in the sense that the author bravely worked on Qur’ānic translation while the traditional Muslim groups saw this attempt as forbidden.<sup>27</sup> Yusuf sees that Yunus’ original decision in providing Qur’ān translation in a modified Arabic script was to minimise the objections from those who argue against the production of Qur’ānic meanings in non-Arabic languages. I argue that Yusuf’s opinion is incorrect for two reasons. First, the Qur’ānic exegetical tradition in Southeast Asia in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century already witnessed conflicts among Islamic scholars around this issue although the Arabic-modified script was the main scripts for writing the Islamic works. Second, objections raised by a certain Islamic scholar in Jatinegara-Jakarta appeared in the years of the completion of Yunus’ commentary. By this, it means his objection had nothing to do with the script choice in which Yunus’ Qur’ānic commentary was written.

<sup>24</sup> Riddell, “‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Sinkili’s Tarjumān al-Mustafid,” 51-54.

<sup>25</sup> M. Yunan Yusuf, “Karakteristik Tafsir al-Qur’an di Indonesia Abad Keduapuluh” [The Characteristics of Qur’ānic Exegesis in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Indonesia], *Jurnal Ulumul Qur’an* 3, no. 4 (1992): 51.

<sup>26</sup> Howard M. Federspiel, “An Introduction to Qur’ānic Commentaries in Contemporary Southeast Asia,” *The Muslim World LXXXI*, no. 2 (1991): 157; cf. Johanna Pink, “Form Follows Function: Notes on the Arrangement of Texts in Printed Qur’an Translations,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 19, no. 1 (2017): 143.

<sup>27</sup> Yusuf, “Karakteristik Tafsir al-Qur’an di Indonesia,” 52-53.

In this regard, this objection looked like entering Islamic theological discourses where disputes over the possibility of the Qur'ān to be translated have their roots in the classical Islamic period.

The script choice is not Yunus' reason in the early phase to compose his Qur'ānic translation in his response to the objection. It is very likely his choice to originally use the Arabic-modified script has a close connection to the mainstream Islamic textual tradition of the region in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that still kept using the Arabic-modified scripts, either *Jawi* or *Pegon*, as the continuation of the long-established use of these scripts since the pre-modern period.

I argue that Yunus' decision to move from the use of Arabic-modified script to the Roman script corresponds to the emergence of nationalism among the Indonesian people following the declaration of the Youth Pledge (Indonesian: *Sumpah Pemuda*) in 1928. Since then, *Bahasa Indonesia* that is rooted in the Malay language has been officially taken as the national language and part of the national identity. In addition, modernisation inevitably gave rise to the wide use of Roman script among the population of the country as the medium of administration and instruction. It is certain that the target audience of Yunus' commentary is educated groups who support modernisation and are based in urban settlements.

Johns states the tendencies among the modern and rational readers who need instant, fast-track access to the Qur'ān and its meanings contributed to the reduction of some explanations commonly found in classical commentaries. These aspects are *qirā'āt*, grammar and narratives.<sup>28</sup> Here, I would like to focus on the latter aspect, that is narrative elements in the Qur'ān. The earliest evidence we have regarding this issue from exegetical activities in Southeast Asia is the *Cambridge Manuscript (MS) Or. II.6.45* that Erpenius bought from others who travelled to Southeast Asia in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Peter Riddell finds that this commentary greatly drew on *Tafsīr al-Baghawī* and other parts were taken from other Arabic commentaries such as *Tafsīr al-Khāzin* and *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*.<sup>29</sup>

Feener notes these three classical commentaries contain narrative elements from the Judeo-Christian traditions. Some scholars have rejected the use of such elements to interpret the Qur'ānic narratives. Nevertheless, narratives from the Judeo-Christian traditions seem to have spread easily among the Southeast Asian Muslim communities. This genre has been developed in the Malay and Javanese literature, and these works are classified separately outside the genre of Qur'ānic exegesis.<sup>30</sup> Feener gives one example of the published work in this genre that has been printed several times, that is *Rangkaian Tjerita dalam al-Qur'an* by Bey Arifin. This work explores narratives in the Qur'ān and combines such narrative elements with those rooted in the Judeo-Christian traditions and those during the Prophet's lifetime. In looking at the narrative elements in modern *tafsir* literature, Feener seems not to realise that some *Isrā'īlīyyāt* narratives have penetrated modern *tafsir* literature like Yunus' commentary, which will be elaborated later.

<sup>28</sup> Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay World."

<sup>29</sup> Peter G. Riddell, "Earliest Quranic Exegetical Activity in the Malay-Speaking States," *Archipel* 38 (1989); Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World*; Riddell, *Malay Court Religion, Culture and Language*.

<sup>30</sup> Feener, "Notes towards the History of Qur'anic Exegesis," 53.



Up to the edition I use for this study, Mahmud Yunus' *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* has been reprinted 31 times up to 1993. Riddell states this fact confirms strong evidence regarding its seminal role in modern Qur'ānic exegetical discourse in Southeast Asia.<sup>31</sup> Yunus' contribution, however, is more closely related to the aspect of modern Qur'ānic rendering on the grounds he did not go into details for some aspects in Qur'ānic interpretation that require expertise in specific fields of Qur'ānic studies. Regarding his presentation of Qur'ānic commentaries, it is worth mentioning that Yunus made a *tafsir* in footnotes, confirming in some ways that he took advantage of flexibilities in the formatting process provided by the modern printing technology.<sup>32</sup>

In this connection, Pink has stressed the significance of looking at typesetting and layout to identify a close connection between the Arabic Qur'ān and either translation or commentary text in the target language. Aspects of layout and typesetting in printing seem to be simply technical matters and has more to do with aspects of readability, cost production and aesthetics. In fact, the choices in layout and settings in the printing of the Qur'ānic translations and commentaries are closely related to the target group of the author and publisher, and this is also closely related to the context where those publications are used.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, significant changes have occurred following the development of printing technology, particularly in non-Arabic speaking communities who stopped using the Arabic-modified scripts and instead adopted the Roman script in which text is presented from left-to-right. This corresponds to the context when Mahmud Yunus worked on *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, which he spent almost two decades to complete.

When discussing discourses on the translation of the Qur'ān, this genre cannot always be clearly distinguished from commentary works in non-Arabic languages. This genre is wide-ranging – from the use of non-Arabic languages for the composition of the literal translation of the Qur'ān to the composition of voluminous Qur'ānic commentaries. Pink notes that modern Qur'ānic interpretation typically no longer plays the role of transmitting explanations that have existed in classical commentaries.<sup>34</sup> Instead, modern commentators take a braver position to embark on Qur'ānic interpretation more independently. By emphasising reason, Johns states that modern commentators reduced the portions of *Isrā'īliyyāt* narrative elements or even raised objections toward tales that contain irrationality.<sup>35</sup> Instead, as can be seen in *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* by Mahmud Yunus, modern commentators were more interested in giving responses to the contemporary social problems and to the advances of knowledge and technology in European societies.

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<sup>31</sup> Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World*, 267.

<sup>32</sup> Other Indonesian commentaries from the same period include their commentaries in footnotes. Two examples of the works are *Tafsir al-Furqan* by A. Hassan and *Tafsir Quran* by Zainuddin Hamidy and Fachruddin HS.

<sup>33</sup> Pink, "Form Follows Function," 143.

<sup>34</sup> Johanna Pink, "Tradition, Authority and Innovation in Contemporary Sunnī *tafsir*: Towards a Typology of Qur'an Commentaries from the Arab World, Indonesia and Turkey," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12 (2010): 72.

<sup>35</sup> Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay World."

In line with Johns' and Pink's arguments, it is useful to pay attention to Yunus' statements that were clearly inspired by 'Abduh's reform thoughts. In his forward to his *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, Yunus states:

Here I should emphasise that this commentary, together with the summary of the Qur'anic content as a whole, was not taken from Arabic commentaries, but was the result of the author's investigation since he was about twenty years old until now he is seventy-three years old.<sup>36</sup>

It is obvious that his statement "not taken from Arabic commentaries" was to confirm his effort to produce fresh perspectives on the Qur'an. He did not intend to work on Qur'anic commentaries that just render some Arabic commentaries that in the pre-modern period played a vital role in bridging the Arabic Qur'an to the production of commentaries in the major languages of Southeast Asia. His statement indicates the nature of Indonesian modern commentaries that function as guidance to the Muslim societies. With this consideration, Yunus then decided not to provide interpretations that—in his opinion—are irrelevant and complicated, such as grammatical aspects, as well as hard to understand in modern people's mind, such as legendary tales.

### COMMON QUOTABLE *JALĀLAYN* PARTS ABSENT IN YUNUS' *TAFSIR QURĀN KARIM*

I have highlighted that the pre-modern Southeast Asian commentators did not invest their time in providing grammatical explanations in their commentary works as commonly found in the *Jalālayn*. These works (minus the *Tarjumān*) also reduce the importance of *qirā'āt* explanations. Grammatical and *qirā'āt* explanations nevertheless find their ways to be explored as separate genres, and both genres in some ways appear as additional explanations placed diagonally in the margins or in the spaces between the Arabic Qur'an or other Arabic texts. One example of how grammatical explanations have occupied some spaces among the texts can be found in the copy of the *Jalālayn* manuscript with the Javanese interlinear translation from the Royal Banten Sultanate. Meanwhile, the additional explanations of *qirā'āt* are easily found in the Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts. These facts therefore in varying degrees disapprove claims by Johns and others that the reduction of grammatical and *qirā'āt* explanations was due to modernisation in the *tafsir* literature development.

While it is confirmed the *Jalālayn* enjoyed its privileged domination as a main reference for the pre-modern Southeast Asian exegetical activities (minus the Cambridge MS Or. II.6.45), the ways in which the *Jalālayn* texts were quoted in Southeast Asian commentaries have varied. By this, it means one Malay or Javanese commentary provided certain explanations taken from the *Jalālayn* as a way of explaining one Arabic phrase or word in the Qur'an, while such explanations are absent in others.

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<sup>36</sup> Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, v; my translation.

In this section, I would like to provide examples of interpretive additions found in the pre-modern commentaries that are clearly taken from the *Jalālayn*. These examples were randomly taken based on the consideration that they represent the reception of the *Jalālayn* in Southeast Asian commentaries. As far as this research is concerned, the manuscripts of Southeast Asian commentaries are not always complete and the authors or translators did not reproduce the same amount of information taken from the *Jalālayn* commentary. I owe the selection of verses from my previous study on the analysis of Malay translations found in the manuscript that I have identified as “the Sheik Muhammad Said (SMS) Malay Tafsir” as part of the collection in the Mindanao Islamic scholar’s private library in Marawi City, Southern Philippines.<sup>37</sup> The presentation of the selected verses with their translations and commentaries will be compared with those taken from Mahmud Yunus’ *Tafsir Qurān Karim*.

The first example is the translation of *sūrat* al-Fātiḥah verse 7 on the identification of “Those whose (portion) is not wrath (*ghayr al-maghḍūb ‘alayhim*)” and “who go not astray (*wa-lā al-ḍāllīn*).” It is obvious the *Jalālayn* identifies both groups as Jews and Christians, respectively, and the *Tarjumān* and *SMS Malay Tafsir* quote these additional explanations. Conversely, Yunus’ commentary no longer associates both groups mentioned in this chapter with Jews and Christians. Instead, he provides additional explanations by taking a broader view. According to Yunus, the former refers to people who received a divine gift of grace, but they wrongly used it by doing sins like rich people who gambled their hard-earned money, drank alcohol, did adultery and so on. Meanwhile, the latter refers to people who spent their money, wealth and property for nothing.

The second example is the explanation of the word “*al-kitāb* [the Book]” in *sūrat* al-Baqarah verse 2. The *Jalālayn* explains this word by giving additional information “*al-ladhī yaqra ‘uhu Muḥammad* (which Muhammad recites).”<sup>38</sup> The *Tarjumān* and *SMS Malay Tafsir* give similar explanations to the *Jalālayn*, but the latter work presents an addition: “*yang disandarkan kepada malaikat Jibrail* (which is received through the Angel Gabriel).”<sup>39</sup> This quoted *Jalālayn* commentary is also absent in *Tafsir Qurān Karim*. Here, Yunus keeps using the word “*kitāb*” and gives in-text explanation, confirming the book here means the Qur’ān.

The next example is the explanation of the word “*lil-muttaqīn* [for those who have fear],” still in *sūrat* al-Baqarah verse 2. The *Jalālayn* provides the explanation of this word as: “*al-ṣā’irīn ilá al-taqwá bi-imtithāl al-awāmīr wa-ijtināb al-nawāhī li-itqā’ihim bi-dhālika al-nār*<sup>40</sup>/those that tend towards piety by adhering to commands and avoiding things prohibited, thereby guarding themselves from the Fire.”<sup>41</sup> The *Tarjumān* and *SMS Malay Tafsir* differently

<sup>37</sup> This manuscript in the collection is coded B6-Ms1. See Nurtawab, “The Malay *Tafsir* in the Sheik Muhammad Said Collection,” 129.

<sup>38</sup> Transliterated by Nurtawab based on the Arabic text in *Tafsir al-Jalālayn* published by Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabīyah of Indonesia (n.d.). See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī, *Tafsir al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm* (Indonesia: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabīyah, n.d.), 2.

<sup>39</sup> Transliterations of selected verses from the manuscript B6-Ms1 for this study are quoted from Nurtawab, “The Malay *Tafsir* in the Sheik Muhammad Said Collection.” For this transliteration, see page 136.

<sup>40</sup> al-Suyūṭī and al-Maḥallī, *Tafsir al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, 2.

<sup>41</sup> The English translation was made by Feras Hamza. See al-Suyūṭī and al-Maḥallī. *Tafsir al-Jalālayn*, 3.

provide the relevant explanation. The *Tarjumān* simply explains that the word means “*segala orang yang takut*<sup>42</sup> [those who have fear].” The SMS Malay Tafsir, on the other hand, seems to give a modified explanation taken from the *Jalālayn*. The explanation is: “bagi segala yang takut akan Allah dan malu akan Muhammad rasul Allah dengan menjunjung segala titah-Nya dan menjauhi segala larangan-Nya (For those who fear God and are respectful to Muhammad, Messenger of God, by carrying out all His commands and avoiding all His prohibitions).”<sup>43</sup> Unlike the explanation provided in the *Jalālayn*, Yunus chose to explain this phrase by referring to other Qur’ānic verses (*tafsīr al-Qur’ān bi-’l-Qur’ān*). He seemed to realise the following two verses (3 and 4) of this chapter explain the characteristics of those who have fear.

The fourth example is the explanation of *sūrat al-Baqarah* verse 5. The following table presents the translations and commentaries from the *Jalālayn* and three Malay/Indonesian commentaries.

### Translations of *sūrat al-Baqarah* verse 5

<i>Jalālayn</i>	Those, as described in the way mentioned, are upon guidance from their Lord, those are the ones that will prosper, that is, who will succeed in entering Paradise and be saved from the Fire. <sup>44</sup>
<i>SMS Malay Tafsīr</i>	[They are the people who gained guidance from their God and they are the ones who gain victory of heaven and are free of the Fire]. <sup>45</sup>
<i>Tarjumān</i>	[They are on the path of the guidance from their God and they are the ones who gain the victory by entering heaven and being free from the Fire]. <sup>46</sup>
<i>Tafsīr Qurān Karīm</i>	[They are under the guidance of their God; and therefore they gain victory]. <sup>47</sup>

The above table shows the *Tarjumān* and *SMS Malay Tafsīr* provide similar explanations of the word *al-muflīhūn* (who gain victory) to that in the *Jalālayn*. This explanation cannot be found any longer in Mahmud Yunus’ commentary. In this regard, Yunus embarks on an explanation of this word by referring to other relevant Qur’ānic verses. Here, he goes back to verse 7 of *sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, stating that those who have fear are those who win and are successful in this earthly life and hereafter. Within this category, Yunus says we can understand verse 7 *sūrat al-Fātiḥah*.<sup>48</sup>

The fifth example connects to the ways in which the *Jalālayn* and the Southeast Asian commentaries explain the identity of those who reject faith (*al-ladhīna kafarū*) in verse 6 of *sūrat al-Baqarah*. Here, the phrase *al-ladhīna kafarū* receives the explanation in the *Jalālayn* as: “*ka Abī Jahal wa-Abī Lahab wa-naḥwihimā* (the likes of Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab and such).”<sup>49</sup>

<sup>42</sup> ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf ibn ‘Alī al-Fanṣūrī al-Jāwī. *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1990), 3.

<sup>43</sup> Nurtawab, “The Malay *Tafsīr* in the Sheik Muhammad Said Collection,” 137.

<sup>44</sup> al-Suyūṭī and al-Maḥallī. *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Nurtawab, “The Malay *Tafsīr* in the Sheik Muhammad Said Collection,” 138.

<sup>46</sup> ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf. *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*, 3; my translation.

<sup>47</sup> Yunus, *Tafsīr Qurān Karīm*, 3; my translation.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Nurtawab, “The Malay *Tafsīr* in the Sheik Muhammad Said Collection,” 138.

The *Tarjumān* does not give a specific information about it. The *SMS Malay Tafsir* nevertheless comes up with a similar explanation to that in the *Jalālayn*. I have collected the explanations from relevant commentaries to compare with that of Mahmud Yunus' *Tafsir Qurān Karim* in a table.

### Translation of *sūrat al-Baqarah* verse 6

<i>Jalālayn</i>	As for the disbelievers, the likes of Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab and such. <sup>50</sup>
<i>SMS Malay Tafsir</i>	As for those who disbelieve such as Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab. <sup>51</sup>
<i>Tafsir Qurān Karim</i>	[Verily, those who disbelieve (refuse)]. <sup>52</sup>

As presented in the table, Yunus just translates the word *al-ladhīna kafarū* (as for the disbelievers) as “those who disbelieve (refuse)” and there is no additional explanation for this translation in a footnote. He might feel confident that there is no need to give further description of “who disbelieve (refuse)” in the footnotes as commentary. How he chose to translate this phrase clearly shows that the genre of translation has grown more independently in the modern period separate from commentary. As a result, modern readers of printed Qur’ānic translations would certainly receive a broader meaning of the Qur’ānic text. Meanwhile, Southeast Asian commentaries produced prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century tend to provide readers with translations of the Qur’ānic words with further explications that in some ways limit the scope of the meanings to the 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabian contexts.

The sixth example is the explanation of the verse 30 of *sūrat al-Baqarah*. The *Jalālayn* provides some information on what—according to its authors—happened in connection with the conversation between God and the angels pertaining to God’s plan to create a human and make them a vicegerent on earth. The complete excerpt of this *Jalālayn* narration for the explanation of this verse is absent in the *Tarjumān* and *SMS Malay Tafsir*. Banten Qur’ān A.54 nevertheless provides a more complete narrative (minus grammatical explanation) as found in the *Jalālayn*.<sup>53</sup> The following is the commentary of *sūrat al-Baqarah* verse 30 provided by the *Jalālayn* and translation of the same verse found in *Tafsir Qurān Karim*.

### Translation of *sūrat al-Baqarah* verse 30

<i>Jalālayn</i>	And, mention, O Muhammad (s), when your Lord said to the angels, ‘I am appointing on earth a vicegerent,’ who shall act as My deputy, by implementing My rulings therein—and this [vicegerent] was Adam; They said, ‘What, will You appoint therein one who will do corruption therein, through disobedience, and shed blood, spilling it through killing, just as the progeny of the jinn did, for they used to inhabit it, but when they became corrupted God sent down the angels against them and they were driven away to islands and into the mountains; while we glorify, continuously, You with praise, that is, “We say Glory and Praise be to you”, and sanctify You?’, that is, ‘We exalt You as transcendent above what does not befit You?; the lām [of laka, ‘You’] is extra, and the sentence [wa-nuqaddisu laka, ‘We sanctify You’] is a circumstantial qualifier, the import being, ‘thus, we are
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<sup>50</sup> Al-Suyūfī and al-Maḥallī. *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Nurtawab, “The Malay *Tafsīr* in the Sheik Muhammad Said Collection,” 138-139.

<sup>52</sup> Yunus, *Tafsīr Qurān Karim*, 4; my translation.

<sup>53</sup> Nurtawab and Syukroni, “Qur’anic Arabic, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and Javanese.”

more entitled to be Your vicegerents'); He, exalted be He, said, 'Assuredly, I know what you know not', of the benefits of making Adam a vicegerent and of the fact that among his progeny will be the obedient and the transgressor, and justice will prevail between them. They said, 'God will never create anything more noble in His eyes than us nor more knowledgeable, since we have been created before it and have seen what it has not seen. God then created Adam from the surface of the earth (adīm al-arḍ [adīm literally means 'skin']), taking a handful of all its colours and mixing it with different waters, then made him upright and breathed into him the Spirit and he thus became a living being with sense, after having been inanimate"<sup>54</sup>

*Tafsir Qurān Karim* [(Remember) when Your Lord said to the angels: Verily I will make a caliph on the earth (Adam). They then respond: Is it proper for You to make on earth someone who will harm and shed blood, while we always praise You and purify You? God says: Verily, I know what you do not know].<sup>55</sup>

The table shows that Mahmud Yunus provides a brief translation of *sūrat* al-Baqarah verse 30 into Indonesian, showing the nature of modern Qur'ānic translation where the translated text is more concise and consequently broadens the scope of the meaning. In the modern exegetical tradition, it is the task of commentary to make the translation text more specific in contexts where the commentators typically bring these texts to responding contemporary social problems. If it is deemed necessary in addition to the explanation of the translated text, the modern translator will apply intra-text explanation in brackets. However, if they feel the need for longer commentary, they will elaborate in another section. In the context of Mahmud Yunus' *Tafsir Qurān Karim*, the commentary on certain clusters of verses is placed in footnotes and a verse does not always have its own commentary. As for the explanation of the above verse, it seems Yunus has considered the provided translation of verse 30 clear enough and that a detailed narrative as found in the *Jalālayn* is unnecessary.

The last example of the ways in which styles of the verse rendering as found in the *Jalālayn* no longer appear in modern translations of the Qur'ān as represented in Yunus' work is on translation that contains a vocative (*munādā*). For instance, the translation of *sūrat* al-Baqarah verse 21 as follows.

### Translation of *sūrat* al-Baqarah verse 21

*Jalālayn* O people, of Mecca, worship, profess the oneness of, Your Lord Who created you, made you when you were nothing, and created those that were before you; so that you may be fearful, of His punishment by worshipping Him (la'alla, 'so that,' is essentially an optative, but when spoken by God it denotes an affirmative).<sup>56</sup>

*Tafsir Qurān Karim* [O people! worship your Lord Who created You and people before you so that you have fear].<sup>57</sup>

Here, the *Jalālayn* clearly wants to bring the readers to understand the verse in the context of 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia where the Qur'ānic word *ayyuhā al-nās* receives specific identification (*ahl Makkah*/people of Mecca). Modern translators, on the other hand, no longer bring both

<sup>54</sup> Al-Suyūṭī and al-Maḥallī. *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, 7.

<sup>55</sup> Yunus, *Tafsir Qurān Karim*, 8; my translation.

<sup>56</sup> al-Suyūṭī and al-Maḥallī, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Yunus, *Tafsir Qurān Karim*, 6; my translation.

words to be understood in specific contexts. Instead, they prefer to render them in general understandings (*Hai manusia/O people*).

## THE STORY OF DHŪ 'L-QARNAYN

In the previous section, I explained there is a disconnection between pre-modern and modern Qur'ānic exegetical activities in terms of making the *Jalālayn* a bridge to understand the Arabic language of the Qur'ān in the major languages of Southeast Asia, especially Malay and Javanese. Moreover, modern printing technology has contributed to the ways in which the genres of Qur'ānic translation and interpretation have distinctively developed.

As Jansen notes, 'Abduh encouraged Muslims to embark on Qur'ānic interpretation more directly and be responsive to contemporary social problems, not simply relying on interpretations found in classical commentaries.<sup>58</sup> His thoughts on reasons to keep up with the changing societies have greatly influenced Muslim thinkers in many parts of the Muslim world. Their interpretations should be applicable to a particular situation. In this regard, the commentaries should be instantly easy to understand and address the contemporary realities of Muslim societies.

In Indonesian contexts, 'Abduh's thoughts have no doubt influenced modern Islamic scholars, including Mahmud Yunus. In this regard, Yunus states:

It is worthy for me to stress that this commentary together with the summary of the whole Qur'ān is not translated from Arabic sources. Instead, [this is] the result of the author's investigation since he was twenty years old until now he was seventy-three years old. For this reason, this commentary is unique compared to other commentaries. In this commentary, what is taken more important is that [this work] explains and explicates guidance mentioned in the Qur'ān make them practicable by Muslims, specifically, and all the people, generally, as a universal guidance.<sup>59</sup>

The names of some modern Egyptian Islamic scholars, such as Muḥammad 'Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) and Maḥmūd Shaltūt (d. 1963), appear as quotation sources in Yunus' commentary. He was also very interested in advances in modern Western sciences and technology where he frequently mentioned some findings in Western scientific observations in his attempt at digging up the meaning of Qur'ānic verses. As a modern thinker, Yunus clearly states that narratives of foreign import, known as *Isrā'īliyyāt*, cannot be used as references for interpreting the Qur'ān. However, it does not mean his commentary is completely clean from these narratives. In this section, I would like to show that some *Isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in the Arabic classical commentaries actually managed to slip into Mahmud Yunus' *Tafsir Qurān Karim*.

Here, my focus is on the examination of the story of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn mentioned in *sūrat al-Kahf* verses 83-101. This is the story that in classical *tafsir* literature was attributed to the tale

<sup>58</sup> Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran*, 64.

<sup>59</sup> Yunus, *Tafsir Qurān Karim*, v; my translation.

of Iskandar the Two-Horned.<sup>60</sup> He is Alexander the Great (365-323), son of King Phillip II from Macedonia.<sup>61</sup> What is in Yunus' commentary regarding the story of Alexander the Great is very important although it has been overlooked in Daneshgar's study. While the detailed presentation of this story is absent in the *Jalālayn* commentary, Yunus presents it with additional information placed as footnotes as his commentary of these verses. The detail of this story in Mahmud Yunus's *Tafsir Qurān Karim* is:

The explanation of the verses 83-97. Dhū 'l-Qarnayn is Alexander of Macedonia (Iskandar Makdunia) whose story is well-known in the books of world history. God blessed him with knowledge, skills and incredibly smart that he was able to conquer and to reign over the countries from the east to the west (Greece, Rome, Egypt and Persia), even he conquered India. It was his dream to unite the east and the west in order to prevent wars between these two superpowers, because wars frequently happened between Greek and Persian. Once Alexander reigned over the Persian country, he ordered his troops to marry the Persian women that they would have offspring from the east and the west. The hope is that this marriage practice can eliminate hostilities between the two warring nations and the beloved peace and unity can be realised. But, his dream could not be realised because he died. His vast kingdom was then inherited to his followers. In these verses, God narrates the story of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn to be a lesson to us, stressing that he only fights those who persecute against God on the one hand. On the other, Dhū 'l-Qarnayn rewarded the faithful people and believers with virtue, and to them he did not give a burden. He travelled to the West and the East that he reached a country located between two mountains (Armenia). The people of this country asked for help to him because they and their homelands were always destroyed and oppressed by two tribes named Gog and Magog. Both are the descendants of Yafith son of Noah. Then he help the people of the country for free by building a wall between these two mountains. This wall was made by some bars of iron that were burned as the blacksmiths did it. Once the iron became red, then he pour the melted copper to it that the wall became so solid and strong. Accordingly, Gog and Magog no longer entered the country anymore because they could not climb it, nor dig a hole.<sup>62</sup>

Daneshgar has listed the attempts from classical and modern commentaries at providing the identity of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn as mentioned in the Qur'ān. He states the *Tarjumān* clearly identifies Dhū 'l-Qarnayn as Alexander the Great. This is also the case with some classical commentaries that he has identified as stating the name Alexander the Great, Iskandar al-Maqdūnī or Rūmī.<sup>63</sup> After the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Daneshgar notes, some commentators proposed to reconsider the identification of this figure based on other evidence and scientific data.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Majid Daneshgar, "Dhū l-Qarnayn in Modern Malay Commentaries and Other Literature on Qur'anic Themes," in *The Qur'an in the Malay-Indonesian World: Context and Interpretation*, ed. M. Daneshgar, P. G. Riddell and Andrew Rippin (London: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>61</sup> Vladimir Braginsky, *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature: A Historical Survey of Genres, Writings and Literary Views* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004), 176-178; Liaw Yock Fang, *Sejarah Kesusastraan Melayu Klasik* [The History of Classical Malay Literature] (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2011), 303-312.

<sup>62</sup> Yunus, *Tafsir Qurān Karim*, 433; my translation.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Peter G. Riddell, "Classical *Tafsir* in the Malay World: Emerging Trends in Seventeenth-Century Malay Exegetical Writing." In *The Qur'an in the Malay-Indonesian World: Context and Interpretation*, ed. Majid Daneshgar, Peter G. Riddell and Andrew Rippin (London: Routledge, 2016), 32-38.

<sup>64</sup> Daneshgar, "Dhū l-Qarnayn in Modern Malay Commentaries," 214.



By stating the name of Alexander of Macedonia for this Qur'ānic story, it is confirmed that Yunus still holds the identity of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn as proposed by classical commentaries. In fact, he positions himself as a modern commentator. Unlike Mahmud Yunus, as Daneshgar notes, modern Islamic scholars like Hamka (d. 1981) state that Muslims basically believe in Dhū 'l-Qarnayn in the world history because his existence is mentioned in the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, the Qur'ān and authentic Prophetic traditions do not provide any clarifications regarding his exact identity. All information about the identity of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn in *tafsir* literature and other sources should be regarded as products of interpretation proposed by the commentators. For this reason, these explanations cannot be treated as the truth.<sup>65</sup>

Likewise, with the origin of Gog and Magog that accompanies the story of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn in the Qur'ān, Yunus' attention seems to have been attracted by the popularity of this tale with some additional information mentioned in classical commentaries. He then adds this information on the origin of Gog and Magog to his commentary. Meanwhile, this information and its detailed narrative are absent in the *Jalālayn* commentary.<sup>66</sup>

Mahmud Yunus mentions that Gog and Magog are two tribes who are descendants of Yafith, son of Prophet Noah. This explanation on the origin of Gog and Magog is also found in the commentary of *Sūrat al-Kahf* in the Cambridge MS Or. Ii.6.45. Below is the presentation on the origin of Gog and Magog in the Cambridge MS:

Some commentators report that Gog and Magog were descendants of Yafith son of Noah. Qatadah reports that they were Turkish, and they were twenty-two tribes. When Dhū 'l-Qarnayn established himself between the two mountains, twenty-one tribes were enclosed, leaving one outside, with that one being named "Turki" because it was left outside the enclosed area.

The historians report that the offspring of Noah were three in number: one was named Sam, the second Ham, the third Yafith. Sam was the ancestor of all the Arabs, the Persians and the Romans. Ham was the ancestor of the Habshih and the Zanji. [Yafith was the ancestor of the Turks, the Hazar...] and Gog and Magog.<sup>67</sup>

Riddell confirms the Cambridge MS Or. Ii.6.45 used *Tafsīr al-Baghawī* as its main source for the compilation of the commentary, plus some explanations taken from *Tafsīr al-Khāzin* and *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*.<sup>68</sup> At the outset, Yunus states elements of *Isrā'iliyyāt* narratives cannot be used as a source of Qur'ānic interpretation.<sup>69</sup> The existence of quoted narratives in Yunus' *Tafsir Qurān Karim* from classical commentaries nevertheless might show that Mahmud Yunus, to a certain extent, was less critical in terms of presenting additional narratives to explain the Qur'ānic stories.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>66</sup> For a detailed discussion on the identity of Gog and Magog in Malay-Indonesian Qur'ānic commentaries, see Majid Daneshgar, "Gog and Magog in Malay-Indonesian Islamic Exegetical Works." In *Gog and Magog: Contributions toward the World History of an Apocalyptic Motif*, ed. Georges Tamer, Lutz Greisiger and Andrew Mein (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, forthcoming).

<sup>67</sup> The English edition is by Peter Riddell. See Riddell, *Malay Court Religion, Culture and Language*, 241.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>69</sup> Yunus, *Tafsir Qurān Karim*, vi.

## CONCLUSION

In this article, I have highlighted the position of the *Jalālayn* in Indonesian modern *tafsir* literature, as represented in Mahmud Yunus' *Tafsir Qurān Karim* that emerged in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and became a pioneer for the development of modern interpretation in the country. In the early development of Indonesian modern Qur'ānic interpretation, works of Qur'ānic interpretation were not yet made to present detailed commentary. Aspects of translation and commentary nevertheless began to be separated in their respective sections. As can be seen in Mahmud Yunus' *Tafsir Qurān Karim*, modern commentaries in that period were looking for a form of presentation and form that could be accepted by the readers.

The authors of Qur'ānic commentaries in early modern Indonesia were generally Muslim scholars who were influenced by the Egyptian Islamic reform movement. This movement has influenced the way Muslims think about their religion and scripture. Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā, as leaders of the Islamic reform movement in Egypt, have encouraged Muslims to embark on Qur'ānic interpretation more independently, to put forward reason in understanding and make the results of understanding the Qur'ānic text a practical guide in the public sphere. This new way of thinking has undeniably changed styles of presenting the Qur'ānic interpretation that in many ways eliminated aspects that are considered unnecessary and irrelevant for modern readers, such as grammatical aspects, *qirā'āt* and narrative elements of foreign import (*Isrā'īliyyāt*).

The pre-modern Southeast Asian exegetical tradition has witnessed the domination of some classical Arabic commentaries as the main references. One example is *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, which became the core for the composition of the Cambridge MS Or. Ii.6.45 in early 17<sup>th</sup> century Aceh. Although Yunus emphasised the use of *Isrā'īliyyāt* narrative elements is not allowed in interpreting the Qur'ān, he cannot escape from the presentation of such narratives commonly found in those classical Arabic commentaries as seen in our discussion on the presentation of the story of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn.

Meanwhile, the *Jalālayn* enjoyed its privileged status as the main reference for the production of Malay and Javanese commentaries in the pre-modern period since the composition of the *Tarjumān* in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. This tradition has been preserved in the traditional environment until the modern period as reflected in the reprinting of this work with interlinear translations in the major languages of Southeast Asia, such as Javanese, Sundanese and Madurese. Modern development in Qur'ānic exegetical discourse has moved the *Jalālayn*'s position into the crossroads that in many ways marginalised the importance of this work as the vital source for Qur'ānic translation and commentary genres.

The examination of selected Qur'ānic verses with their translations and commentaries reveals that the *Tafsir Qurān Karim*, the first complete modern Indonesian commentary, no longer uses the *Jalālayn* as a guide for the author to translate and interpret the Qur'ān. This is in line with the emerging modern style where the translation of Qur'ānic verses is made briefer and, grammatically speaking, more user-friendly. As for the latter, modern translation has developed to adapt to the grammatical aspects and syntactic structures of the target language.

When necessary, modern commentators will provide detailed explanation in a separate section. In the case of Yunus' work, the explanation is placed as footnotes and he added a summary of whole Qur'ānic verses with indexed themes at the end of his commentary.

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