

The Epistemology of Nusantara Qur'anic Exegesis: A Study of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* by Abdul Rauf al-Singkili

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Abstract

Local Qur'anic exegesis in the Malay Archipelago plays a vital role in shaping the intellectual tradition of Islam in Southeast Asia. One of the most prominent works in this genre is *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* by Shaykh Abdul Rauf al-Singkili, widely recognized as the earliest and most comprehensive Qur'anic commentary written in Jawi-Malay. This study aims to examine the epistemological construction of this tafsir, focusing on its sources of interpretation, employed methods, and the validity of its knowledge claims. The research adopts a qualitative approach through library research using descriptive-analytical methods and a historical-philosophical perspective. The primary data source is the *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* manuscript, supported by relevant secondary literature. The analysis employs three theories of truth: coherence, correspondence, and pragmatism. The findings reveal that al-Singkili prioritizes the *bi al-ra'y* method, drawing from classical tafsir works such as *Tafsīr al-Jalālain*, al-Bayḍāwī, and al-Khāzin, while integrating elements of *bi al-ma'tsūr* and *qirā'āt* analysis. His exegetical style is primarily *ijmā'ī* (general/holistic), with occasional *taḥlīlī* (analytical) components. This study concludes that *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* demonstrates a consistent epistemological system, contextually relevant, and pragmatically valuable. Its contribution is significant in affirming the intellectual heritage of Nusantara scholars and in providing a foundation for dialogical engagement with contemporary locally grounded Qur'anic studies.

Keywords: Epistemology, Islam Nusantara, Malay Archipelago Culture, Tafsir, Qur'an.

Abstrak

Tafsir lokal di wilayah Nusantara memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk tradisi intelektual Islam di Asia Tenggara. Salah satu karya paling menonjol dalam genre ini adalah *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* karya Syekh Abdul Rauf al-Singkili, yang dikenal sebagai tafsir Al-Qur'an pertama dan terlengkap dalam bahasa Jawi-Melayu. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konstruksi epistemologis dalam tafsir tersebut, dengan fokus pada sumber penafsiran, metode yang digunakan, serta validitas pengetahuannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan metode deskriptif-analitis serta pendekatan historis-filosofis. Data primer berupa manuskrip *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*, didukung oleh literatur sekunder yang relevan. Analisis dilakukan dengan menggunakan tiga teori kebenaran, yaitu: koherensi, korespondensi, dan pragmatisme. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa al-Singkili mengutamakan metode *bi al-ra'y* dengan merujuk pada tafsir-tafsir klasik seperti *Tafsīr al-Jalālain*, al-Baidāwī, dan al-Khāzin, yang dipadukan dengan unsur *bi al-ma'tsūr* dan analisis *qirā'āt*. Corak penafsirannya cenderung *ijmā'ī* (global), namun pada beberapa bagian disertai pendekatan *taḥlīlī* (analitis). Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* memiliki sistem epistemologi yang konsisten, relevan secara kontekstual, dan bernilai pragmatis. Kontribusinya penting dalam menegaskan warisan

intelektual ulama Nusantara serta membuka ruang dialog dengan kajian tafsir kontemporer berbasis lokalitas.

Keywords: Tafsir, Epistemologi, Budaya Nusantara, Islam Nusantara, Al-Quran.

Introduction

The manuscripts of Islam Nusantara hold a crucial role as cultural assets that facilitate the translation and contextualization of global ideas into a local framework (Basri et al., 2023, p. 410). Scholars, Sufi masters, kyai, and literary figures in the archipelago have made significant contributions in localizing Islamic teachings to align with local cultures (Noviani et al., 2021, p. 229). In this regard, regionally nuanced interpretations of the Qur'an represent one of the tangible manifestations of such efforts, enabling a more accessible understanding of Islamic teachings for the broader society.

One of the monumental works in the tradition of Nusantara Qur'anic exegesis is *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* by Shaykh Abdur Rauf al-Singkili. As a major milestone in Malay Islamic literature, it stands as the first complete 30-juz Qur'anic commentary written in the Malay language using the Jawi (Pegon) script (Nissa & Ruaedah, 2025, p. 607). For nearly three centuries, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* served as a primary reference for Muslims across Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, and even extended its influence as far as South Africa (Maftuhin, 2023, p. 283; Ibrahim & Nadhiroh, 2023, p. 42). Al-Singkili crafted this tafsir using simple language and a clear structure to ensure it was easily understood by the Malay community of his time, deliberately avoiding convoluted explanations (Huda & Amnar, 2022, p. 322). The work received widespread acclaim, including praise from Sultanah Safiyat al-Dīn of the Aceh Sultanate, who later appointed al-Singkili as *Qadhi Malik al-A'dl* (Lail, Hidayat & Wijaya, 2024, p. 208). Despite incorporating elements from other tafsir works, the originality of al-Singkili's thought remains evident, particularly in his application of *qirā'āt* sciences in his linguistic analysis (Amin, 2022, p. 115; Parwanto, Akbar & Fahm, 2022, p. 267).

Previous research on the magnum opus *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* by the esteemed scholar Abdur Rauf al-Singkili reveals several predominant trends. Some studies focus on the interpretation of specific verses (Amin, 2022, p. 241; El-Feyza & Hidayat, 2022, p. 153; Amnan, 2022, p. 229). Other research highlights the historical context and biography of Shaykh Abdur Rauf al-Singkili as a prominent religious figure (Igisani, 2018; Syahni, 2019). Additionally, some works explore the methodology and interpretive style employed by al-Singkili (Network, Yusuff & Jaafar, 2024, p. 818; Yusuff, Othman & Hussain, 2015, p. 75).

However, among these studies, there appears to be a lack of in-depth research specifically examining the epistemological aspects of *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*. This gap serves as the main rationale for the present study, which seeks to offer a new perspective on this monumental work.

Given the identified research gap, this study places particular emphasis on the epistemological inquiry of the tafsir *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*. To achieve this aim, the study applies an epistemological framework constructed by Abdul Mustaqim as an analytical tool. The central focus is divided into three key aspects. First, the *sources of knowledge* employed by al-Singkili in interpreting the Qur'an. Second, the *method of knowledge*, including the principles, structure, methodology, interpretive style, and approach used. Third, the *validity of knowledge* found in this tafsir, which will be assessed using the correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories of truth.

Based on the background described above, this study formulates the main research problem as follows: What are the sources of knowledge, epistemological methodology (including principles, structure, methods, style, and approach), and validity of knowledge underlying Abdur Rauf al-Singkili's compilation of *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*? Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the sources of knowledge, to describe and analyze the methodology of knowledge comprising its principles, structure, method, interpretive style, and approach, as well as to examine and evaluate the validity of knowledge. The study will employ the theories of correspondence, coherence, and pragmatism to analyze the epistemological foundations of this work.

Through this research, it is expected that a significant contribution will be made to the intellectual heritage of Islam Nusantara studies, with a primary focus on appreciating and gaining a deeper understanding of the work of a great scholar like Shaykh Abdur Rauf al-Singkili from an epistemological perspective—an aspect that has thus far remained largely unexplored.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative library research design with a reflective character, where the researcher functioned as the primary instrument for interpreting the data (Milasari et al., 2021, p. 220). A descriptive-analytical method was used to systematically describe and critically analyze the epistemological construction of *Tafsir Tarjumān al-Mustafid*. A historical-philosophical approach guided this process. The historical perspective explored Abdur Rauf al-Singkili's intellectual context—his educational background, transregional

scholarly networks, and the socio-cultural milieu that shaped his translation and interpretive decisions (Halim & Masykuri, 2024). Meanwhile, the philosophical perspective allowed for an in-depth study of the foundational assumptions and logical structures in his epistemological thought (Alfiyah & Azizah, 2024, p. 426).

The primary data source was *Tafsir Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* itself, supported by other works by al-Singkili relevant to Qur'anic interpretation (Winarti & Khusnah, 2021, p. 42). Secondary data included books, journal articles, previous studies, tafsir texts, methodology treatises, biographies, and literature on Islamic epistemology. Data collection employed documentation techniques in three stages: inventory, selection, and note-taking (Jailani, 2023, p. 3). The data were analyzed through a descriptive-analytical technique focused on three aspects: sources of knowledge, methods of knowledge, and validity of knowledge (Alkhadafi, 2024, p. 37). Validity was assessed using Abdul Mustaqim's framework of truth theories: correspondence (harmony with text and reality), coherence (internal consistency and alignment with Islamic knowledge systems), and pragmatism (usefulness in context). This method's strength lies in its contextual depth and critical reflection, while its limitation—textual dependence and interpretive subjectivity—was minimized through theoretical triangulation.

Results and Discussion

A. Sources of Exegesis

The sources of Qur'anic exegesis are generally categorized into three types: *bi al-ra'yi* (rational interpretation), *bi al-ma'tsur* (transmitted interpretation), and *bi al-isyarah* (esoteric interpretation) (Maisyarah & Amalih, 2023, p. 248; Hamid, 2023, p. 4254; Fitriawan, 2023, p. 165). The exegetical approach in *Tafsir Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* leans predominantly toward *tafsīr bi al-ra'yi*, as it extensively features al-Singkili's personal interpretive insights and references to later classical tafsir works, especially those composed after the generation of the Companions. However, elements of *tafsīr bi al-ma'tsur* are also present, as indicated by the inclusion of prophetic traditions (hadith). For instance, in his commentary on Surah al-Nās, al-Singkili discusses the virtues of reciting Surah al-Ikhlāṣ by citing hadiths, many of which are drawn from the tafsir of al-Bayḍāwī. He writes:

این سورة الناس ترنث دمکه اتو دمدينه دان ايئت امن ايه مک ترسبت ددامل بيضاوي حديث حاصلث
ابرغسياف مغاج دوا سره قل اعوذ برب الفلق دان قل اعوذ برب الناس مک اداله اي سوئله - اوله مغاج
سکل کتاب يغ ديتورنکان

“*This Surah al-Nās was revealed in Mecca or Medina and consists of six verses. According to al-Bayḍāwī, the hadith says: whoever recites both surahs—Qul a‘ūdhu bi-Rabbi al-Falaq and Qul a‘ūdhu bi-Rabbi al-Nās—it is as if he has recited all the revealed scriptures*” (Amin, 2022).

Regarding the origin of al-Singkili’s exegetical sources, two major scholarly opinions have emerged. The first, proposed by Snouck Hurgronje and supported by Rinkes and Voorhoeve as cited in Nurkholilah, Kurniawan & Rosa, asserts that *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* is a direct translation of al-Bayḍāwī’s *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta’wīl* (Nurkholilah, Kurniawan & Rosa, 2024, p. 7965). This assumption is based on the cover page of the manuscript, which states: “*Tarjumān al-Mustafīd wa huwa al-Tarjamat al-Jāwīyyah li al-Tafsīr al-Musammā Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta’wīl li al-Imām al-Qāḍī Naṣr al-Dīn Abī Sa‘īd ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī al-Bayḍāwī.*” Initially, this suggested that *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* was merely a Jawi-language translation of al-Bayḍāwī’s tafsir. However, after conducting a more detailed investigation, Voorhoeve revised his opinion, concluding that *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* draws from a variety of Arabic tafsir works (Labibah, 2024, p. 65).

The second opinion, supported by Nurkholilah, Kurniawan & Rosa as well as other studies in the same thematic field, argues that *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* is more accurately described as a translation and elaboration of the tafsir *al-Jalālayn*, with additional references drawn from al-Bayḍāwī, al-Khāzin, and other classical sources (Amin & Rahman, 2025, p. 167; Muhyi et al., 2023, p. 45). Azyumardi Azra reinforces this view by pointing out that Abdur Rauf al-Singkili possessed a scholarly lineage (*sanad*) that linked him to Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, co-author of *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, through scholars such as al-Quṣāṣī and al-Qurānī. This lineage strongly suggests that al-Singkili relied heavily on *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* as his principal reference (Nurkholilah, Kurniawan & Rosa, 2025, p. 7971). The most recent research by Nurkholilah, Kurniawan & Rosa—aligned with Voorhoeve’s updated stance—indicates that al-Singkili’s tafsir incorporates materials from multiple classical Arabic commentaries, including al-Bayḍāwī, *Manāfi‘ al-Qur’ān*, al-Khāzin, al-Tha‘labī, and *al-Jalālayn* (Nurkholilah, Kurniawan & Rosa, 2025, p. 7971).

In addition to these classical sources, al-Singkili also incorporates elements of *qirā’āt* (variant Qur’anic readings), focusing on three specific transmission lines: the reading of Abū ‘Amr as transmitted by al-Dūrī, the reading of Nāfi‘ as transmitted by Qālūn, and the reading of ‘Āṣim as transmitted by Ḥafṣ. This choice of selected *qirā’āt* demonstrates a degree of interpretive independence, showing that while al-Singkili heavily relied on classical sources,

he did not adopt their interpretations wholesale. Compared to modern tafsir approaches, his use of multiple classical sources reflects an effort to synthesize various traditions—a characteristic also found in some contemporary exegetical models. Today's Qur'anic commentaries often integrate various disciplines such as the social sciences, humanities, and even modern science to address the complexities of contemporary challenges. However, the distinction lies in the nature of sources: whereas contemporary tafsir frequently references interdisciplinary and empirical fields, al-Singkili remains rooted in the classical tafsir corpus and *qirā'āt* traditions. His steadfast commitment to authoritative Islamic sources demonstrates scholarly prudence—an ethic that is also emphasized in modern interpretive methodologies to guard against arbitrary interpretation. What makes al-Singkili's approach particularly unique is his courage to present this synthesis in the Malay language, making him a pioneer in the indigenization (*pribumisasi*) of authoritative Islamic sources for the Malay-Muslim world.

B. Method of Interpretation

In principle, there are four primary methods of Qur'anic interpretation: the *ijmā'ī* (global or general), *tahīlī* (analytical), *muqārin* (comparative), and *mawḍū'ī* (thematic) approaches (Ikhsan, 2022, p. 225). At first glance, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* appears concise—comprising only two volumes—and more substance-focused, avoiding lengthy or overly intricate expositions. To determine the interpretive method employed in this tafsir, it is crucial to first examine the perspectives regarding the origin of its authorship. As previously discussed, the sources of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* remain debated: while some consider it a translation of al-Bayḍāwī's work, others believe it to be based on *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. Therefore, tracing the way Abdur Rauf interpreted the Qur'anic verses is essential in identifying the method used.

When explaining the meanings of the sacred verses, Abdur Rauf consistently began with an introductory section that contextualized each surah. This is evident in his commentary on Surahs al-Fātiḥah and al-Ikhlāṣ (see: Al-Singkili, 1951).



Figure 1. Tafsir Tarjuman Al-Mustafid surah Al-Fatihah 1-7

Source: Al-Singkili, 1951.

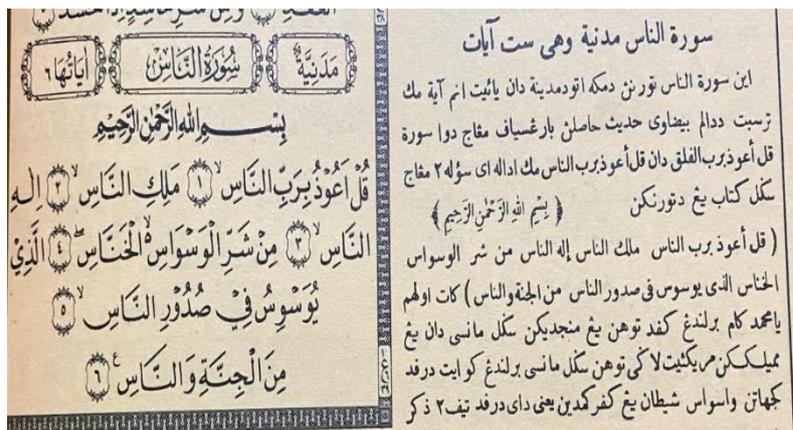


Figure 2. Interpretation of Tarjuman Al-Mustafid on Surah An-Nas 1-6

Source: Al-Singkili, 1951.

From these examples, it becomes apparent that Abdur Rauf consistently introduced each surah by noting key features such as the number of verses, *asbāb al-nuzūl* (circumstances of revelation), and the merits (*faḍā'il*) of the surah. He often cited hadith and commentaries from works like al-Bayḍāwī and *Manāfi' al-Qur'ān*. His interpretation typically begins with the *basmalah*, followed by a general explanation of the verse's meaning. This process reflects his dominant use of the *ijmā'ī* method, as he tended to explain the meanings in a broad, literal manner without frequent use of supporting verses or hadith (Yahya, Yusuf & Alwizar, 2022, p. 9).

The exegetical style (*corak*) is shaped by the interpretive approaches employed by a *mufassir* in explaining the Qur'an. Abdur Rauf's approach was not confined to a single discipline; instead, he used multiple perspectives based on the thematic content of each

verse—demonstrating that *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* adopts a general style (*corak 'āmm*) (Sinaga et al., 2024, p. 31). When addressing verses related to Islamic law (*fiqh*), he used a jurisprudential approach; in theological verses, he employed doctrinal reasoning; and when encountering narratives of past communities, he marked them as *qīṣaṣ* and discussed them accordingly. This methodological flexibility reflects his extensive knowledge in diverse fields, including *fiqh*, logic, philosophy, theology, astronomy, history, and politics. Although Abdur Rauf is well known as a transmitter and teacher of the Shattariyah Sufi order, his interpretive style was not narrowly mystical or philosophical; rather, he employed a comprehensive general approach, in line with his broad intellectual mastery. For instance, his explanation of *mutashābihāt* verses—such as “the hand of Allah is above their hands” (Q.S. al-Fatḥ: 10) and “the hand of Allah is shackled...” (Q.S. al-Mā'idah: 64)—demonstrates careful linguistic and theological engagement.

Regarding interpretive orientation, one notable characteristic of his work is its *ijtima'ī* (social) dimension. An example can be found in his interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 173, where he states that consuming forbidden items under duress does not expel a person from Islam or count as a sin if done within reasonable limits:

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالْدَّمَ وَالْخَنِزِيرَ وَمَا أُهْلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ ۖ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Indeed, it is forbidden for you to consume carrion, blood, pork, and anything sacrificed for other than Allah. However, if compelled by necessity, without willful disobedience or transgression, there is no sin upon him. Verily, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”

This interpretation highlights Al-Singkili's commitment to presenting the Qur'an as a source of legal and moral ease in emergency situations. His sensitivity to real-life societal conditions, expressed in a brief yet meaningful commentary, adds depth to his exegetical contribution and enhances the transmission of core Islamic principles to the broader public. The use of the *ijmā'ī* method in *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* was deliberately aimed at accessibility, much like some contemporary tafsir works designed for general audiences or introductory Qur'anic studies. However, contemporary tafsir often further develops the *tahfīfī* method through advanced linguistic and contextual analysis or applies the *mawḍū'ī* method to address specific modern themes.

Al-Singkili's adoption of a general style that integrates jurisprudential, theological, and social dimensions reflects an effort to present a holistic yet practical Qur'anic

understanding. While modern tafsir often similarly embraces general styles, it tends to emphasize the Qur'an's relevance to contemporary issues such as gender, the environment, human rights, and pluralism. Al-Singkili's *ijtima'i* orientation—exemplified in his interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 173—demonstrates a social awareness that resonates with modern exegetical concerns. However, whereas many contemporary *mufassirūn* utilize modern social theories as interpretive tools, Al-Singkili relied more on normative Islamic principles and practical religious guidance. His contribution lies in his ability to weave various interpretive approaches into a concise and accessible format in the local Malay language—an achievement that remains challenging even for many contemporary exegetes seeking to engage a broad audience.

C. Validity of Interpretation

Validity serves as a benchmark for determining the truth of knowledge. In this context, a tafsir (Qur'anic interpretation) is considered valid if it aligns with or does not deviate from the established epistemological frameworks (Elkarimah & Sa'dullah, 2023, p. 248). Referring to the theories of validity formulated by epistemological scholars, knowledge validity is typically classified into three major theories: the theory of coherence, the theory of correspondence, and the theory of pragmatism. These three theories remain prominent and are widely employed as epistemic criteria within the structure of scientific knowledge systems. This triadic theoretical framework serves as the basis for assessing the validity of *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* by Abdul Rauf al-Singkili, and is adopted in this study as the analytical foundation.

1. Coherence Theory

The coherence theory posits that the truth of an interpretation lies in its consistency with established propositions and the structured, systematic application of methodology. An interpretation can be considered valid if it demonstrates consistency through the application of coherent philosophical reasoning (Robiansyah, 2023, p. 47). More simply, coherence theory accepts a proposition as true if it aligns logically and structurally with previous assertions.

Evaluated from the coherence perspective—both in terms of interpretive models and sources—Abdurrauf al-Singkili's tafsir demonstrates alignment with previous interpretive traditions. He adopts a concise and simplified exegetical approach while applying linguistic analysis through *'ilm al-qirā'āt* and referencing *asbāb al-nuzūl*, albeit not in great detail. The concise nature of his tafsir likely accounts for the absence of elaborate narration regarding

asbāb al-nuzūl. Al-Singkili also applies the concept of *munāsabah al-āyāt* (inter-verse thematic correlation), especially in his interpretation of Q.S. al-Ṭalāq [65]: 2–3, focusing on general principles (*mabda'*) rather than exhaustive detail (*tafsīl*), marking a significant development in the discourse of Qur'anic sciences.

In terms of coherence validation, al-Singkili's effort to preserve internal consistency—through the integration of linguistic tools like *qirā'āt* and thematic connections (*munāsabah*)—demonstrates a commitment to the textual integrity of the Qur'an and to the established methodology of tafsir. Contemporary exegetical works also place great emphasis on coherence, not only within internal argumentation but also in relation to interdisciplinary knowledge. While modern tafsir expands the scope of coherence to include compatibility with contemporary scientific findings and ethical systems, al-Singkili's principled use of *munāsabah* reveals a level of analytical depth that transcends literal explanation—an approach increasingly valued in modern Qur'anic studies that pursue thematic unity.

2. Correspondence Theory

The correspondence theory asserts that a proposition is true if it corresponds with empirical reality. In this view, truth is understood as congruence between statement and external facts or environmental reality (Efendi et al., 2025, p. 215). Applied to the analysis of tafsir, an interpretation is valid if it corresponds to observable and empirical facts. This theory is frequently employed in evaluating *tafsīr 'ilmī* (scientific exegesis), where the accuracy of interpretation is assessed through empirical verification, including laboratory testing or statistical data.

Within the framework of the correspondence theory, al-Singkili's interpretations are contextually aligned with the socio-religious realities of his time. Notably, several of his works were composed in response to recommendations from Queen Safiatuddin Syah of the Aceh Sultanate, reflecting the need for religious texts that addressed the community's practical and spiritual concerns.

The alignment of al-Singkili's tafsir with the practical needs of seventeenth-century Aceh society affirms its validity through correspondence. Modern tafsir also emphasizes the importance of interpreting Qur'anic messages in relation to present-day socio-political and cultural realities. However, contemporary exegetes often face more complex societal dynamics, such as globalization, pluralism, and modern crises. Despite these differences, al-Singkili's effort to render his tafsir relevant and responsive to communal needs embodies the essential aim of correspondence validity—a goal shared by *mufassirūn* across generations.

3. Pragmatism Theory

The pragmatism theory, introduced by Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914), maintains that a proposition is true if it proves useful in resolving human and social problems (Robiansyah, 2022, p. 13). When applied to tafsir, this theory evaluates truth based on the extent to which the interpretation contributes to solving real-world issues faced by the community.

The success and truth of tafsir from a pragmatic perspective are measured by its practical utility in addressing societal needs. Based on this criterion, *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* possesses strong pragmatic value in both theoretical and practical dimensions. Theoretically, the tafsir functioned as a significant epistemic agent in its historical context. Commissioned by royal authority, it served as an authoritative religious reference for the court and its surrounding community (Robiansyah, 2022, p. 13). This illustrates its dual role in addressing religious-social challenges and facilitating the production and transmission of Islamic knowledge. Moreover, its continued relevance in academic and religious discourses—both nationally and internationally—testifies to its sustained pragmatic value.

Practically, the tafsir's emergence within a specific cultural and political context—at the directive of a ruler—underscores its designed function as a problem-solving, accommodating, and transformative text. It effectively addressed micro-level issues within the Sultanate, thereby fulfilling its practical purpose. Overall, *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* represents a highly pragmatic tafsir, retaining theoretical and applied relevance in contemporary religious studies.

In the validation of pragmatism theory, the functional value of *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* as a knowledge agent, religious reference, and social problem-solver is highly significant. Contemporary tafsir also highlights pragmatic aspects, aiming to ensure that the Qur'an is not merely a theoretical text but a dynamic source for actionable guidance and social transformation. Many contemporary interpretations arise in response to moral, social, and intellectual crises, and seek to offer Qur'anic solutions. Al-Singkili's effort to provide accessible tafsir in the Malay language had a remarkable pragmatic impact on the spread of Islamic understanding in the Malay-Indonesian world. This is consistent with the efforts of many modern mufassirūn to localize the Qur'an in various languages and cultural contexts for broader engagement. The success of *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* in being “solution-oriented, accommodative, and transformative” within its environment offers valuable lessons for contemporary interpretations striving for similar impact.

Conclusion

This study has explored the epistemological foundations of *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* by Shaykh Abdur Rauf al-Singkili, revealing that the tafsir primarily employs the *bi al-ra'y* method while maintaining strong connections to *bi al-ma'tsūr* traditions. Through a creative synthesis of classical Arabic tafsirs such as *al-Jalālain*, *al-Baiḍāwī*, *al-Khāzin*, and *Manāfi' al-Qur'ān*, combined with insights from *'ilm al-qirā'ah*, Al-Singkili presents an interpretive model rooted in tradition yet contextually grounded in the Malay-Nusantara world. The dominant use of the *ijmāh* (global) method—delivering concise and accessible explanations—further reflects his intention to make the Qur'anic message understandable to a broad audience, while the general exegetical style (*al-nahj al-āmm*) integrates legal, theological, and social aspects.

Theoretically, this research underscores the relevance of classical Nusantara tafsir within contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics, particularly through the lens of coherence, correspondence, and pragmatism. The findings show that Al-Singkili's tafsir demonstrates internal consistency, contextual relevance to 17th-century Acehese society, and enduring practical value as a source of religious guidance and knowledge transmission. Practically, the study highlights how *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* contributed significantly to the indigenization of Islamic scholarship in the region, serving as a model for contextual yet authoritative Qur'anic interpretation.

Future research may further investigate comparative epistemological analyses between Nusantara tafsir traditions and other regional approaches in the Islamic world or explore how the pragmatic aspects of pre-modern tafsirs could inform contemporary socio-religious discourse. Overall, this study contributes to the growing recognition of the intellectual richness of the Nusantara ulama and affirms *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* as a critical milestone in the localization and continuity of Qur'anic interpretation in Southeast Asia.

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