



Vol 21, No. 2 (2022)

Research Article

Literary Discourse on Quranic Studies: A Historical Study on The Model of Literary Interpretation to The Quran

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Abstract: The aspect of the beauty of language (*'ijaz lughawi*) is one of the first miracles that emerged from the Qur'an. This aligns with the audience to whom the Qur'an was revealed around 14 centuries ago: people who are very close to the literary tradition. Interestingly, scholars of the Qur'an, from classical to contemporary, see this as an opportunity for studies and still developing and producing various monumental works. Through this paper, the author tries to trace chronologically how the Al-Qur'an and literature meet to become an approach in interpreting the Al-Qur'an. The research in this paper is carried out through essential matters by looking at how the Qur'an was revealed in Arab society, the interpretation practices carried out by the Prophet and his companions, to the contact of the Qur'an with modern literature. This study uses a socio-historical approach by looking at the macro-cultural context of early Arab society and the process of interpretation of the earlier era carried out by the Prophet, companions and *tabi'in*. This study argues that the emergence of a model of literary interpretation of the Qur'an is closely related to the traditions and culture of Arab society, which are close to literary traditions. Furthermore, this research contributes to the history of interpretation, especially in tracking the various approaches that appear in the study of the Quran.

Keywords: literary approach; *i'jāz lughawī*; historical studies

Abstrak: Aspek keindahan bahasa (*'ijaz lughawi*) merupakan salah satu keajaiban pertama yang muncul dari al-Qur'an. Hal ini sejalan dengan khalayak yang diwahyukan Al-Qur'an sekitar 14 abad yang lalu: orang-orang yang sangat dekat dengan tradisi sastra. Menariknya, para sarjana Al-Qur'an, dari klasik hingga kontemporer, melihat hal ini sebagai peluang untuk mengkaji dan tetap mengembangkan serta menghasilkan berbagai karya monumental. Melalui tulisan ini, penulis mencoba menelusuri secara kronologis bagaimana Al-Qur'an dan sastra bertemu untuk menjadi sebuah pendekatan dalam menafsirkan Al-Qur'an. Kajian dalam tulisan ini dilakukan melalui

hal-hal esensial dengan melihat bagaimana Alquran diturunkan di masyarakat Arab, praktik tafsir yang dilakukan Nabi dan para sahabat, hingga kontak Alquran dengan sastra modern. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan sosio-historis dengan melihat konteks makro-budaya masyarakat Arab awal dan proses interpretasi era awal yang dilakukan oleh Nabi, sahabat dan tabi'in. Kajian ini berargumen bahwa munculnya model tafsir sastra al-Qur'an sangat erat kaitannya dengan tradisi dan budaya masyarakat Arab yang dekat dengan tradisi sastra. Lebih jauh lagi, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap sejarah tafsir, khususnya dalam menelusuri berbagai pendekatan yang muncul dalam kajian al-Qur'an.

Kata kunci: pendekatan sastra; 'ijaz lughawi; studi sejarah

Introduction

Before discussing further literary discourse in the study of the Qur'an, the critical thing to understand is the awareness that the Qur'an is an Arabic holy book. It is important to emphasise as a beginning discourse of the meeting point between the Qur'an and literature. So far, there is no significant debate about the definition that the Qur'an is the word of God (*kalāmullāh*), especially in the theological realm. Even it has become a consensus (*ijma'*) among Quranic scholars. However, in the study of philology-linguistics, there are various responses related to the definition of the Qur'an, especially from modern Quranic scholars.¹ These responses at least lead to an idea that tries to place the Qur'an as one of several texts revealed by God addressed to humans long after other books such as Zabur, Torah, and Bible.²

Simply to say, with that view, they try to build awareness that the Qur'an is a text with a dialectic with humans. The consequence of that view is when the Qur'an, which is the language of God, was revealed to humans, of course, it requires a medium in order to be understood by its audience. Simply, the word of God needs to be formulated in human language in order for God's message to reach humans, which in this case is the Arabic language.³

There are several arguments why Arabic is the main choice as the language of the Qur'an. The first argument is in terms of complexity. According to Quraish Shihab, the Arabic language has its own uniqueness. It is also very rich in vocabulary, on the other hand, the Arabic language has an extraordinary ability to birth new meanings from its root words.⁴ The Second argument is when we realise, politically, language is one way the Qur'an affects its audience (Arabic society) emotionally, which is very close to literary and poetic traditions. As stated by Hitti that there is no nation in this world other than the Arabs who have an appreciation of language and literature even more emotionally than the

¹ W. M. Watt and R. Bell, *Introduction to The Qur'an* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 83.

² The emergence of this response is influenced by the one of the Quran's names that the Qur'an attaches to itself as " al-Kitab ". It can be found in several chapters of the Qur'an such as QS. Sad: 29, QS. Al-A'raf: 7, Al-Baqarah: 2 and in several places at the beginning of another surah. The consequence of this name indirectly the Qur'an is confident enough to call itself a book as it was called to previous books such as the Torah and the Bible. Further explanation of this can be read in the writings of Fadhli Lukman, *Menyingkap Jati Diri Al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Bening Pustaka, 2018), 98; Abd Moqsih Ghazali, *Metodologi Studi Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2009), 46.

³ Aksin Wijaya, *Arah Baru Studi Ulum Al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2009), 85.

⁴ M. Quraish Shihab, *Kaidah Tafsir* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2013), 38.

Arabs.⁵ In other words, what the Qur'an did at that time was a political strategy to control discourse growth through language. Because if there was someone who wanted to make radical changes in Arab lands at that time, then the most powerful medium to use was language. The mindset and psychology of the Arabs, which can be controlled by language, are the main entrances for the Qur'an to enter their space of reasoning and psychology.⁶

The choice of Arabic as the language of the Qur'an is also a very accurate strategy because the position of Arabic language and literature was central among pre-Qur'an Arab society at that time. Then the most powerful thing to introduce a new holy book identity was language and literature, which were very close to pre-Qur'an Arab society. This strategy has proven to be effective, if we look at that in just a short time, only about 23 years, Prophet Muhammad succeeded in spreading his influence throughout Arabic Society. In history, the prophet Muhammad was chosen as the first of the hundred most influential figures in the world.⁷ This achievement cannot be separated from the power of the Qur'an historically accompanied the prophet's da'wah at that time.

In addition, as an emotional approach strategy, the Arabic language also has a special function as a power mechanism. Seeing the condition of pre-Qur'anic Arab society at that time was very close to language and literature, the Arabic language used by the Qur'an became a powerful force to influence Arab society at that time. We can further see in historical records how the Qur'an reproduces new meanings that gradually change the culture and habits of Arab society at that time. The Qur'an, as an Arabic text, also has a very high literary value. It can be seen from the interest of Arab poets at that time who tried to imitate the text of the Qur'an. However, their efforts ended in vain. It is because even though the poems made by the poets use Arab language as used by the Qur'an. However, the moral aspects and messages of the poet's words do not contain the value of the benefit for humans as contained in the Qur'an.

This is also inseparable from the miraculous aspects of the Qur'an (*I'jaz Al-Qur'an*). The role of *i'jaz Al-Qur'an* is very important in order to support the charisma and appeal of a claim to divine authority. Suppose every prophet always had miracles (*mu'jizat*) to support their prophetic claims. In that case, the Qur'an also claims to have miracles to support its claims of divinity and its authenticity as a divine revelation. Unlike the miracles of the previous prophets, who were separated from the revelation (text) itself, the miracles of the Qur'an show the truth of himself and the truth of his bearer (Muhammad) as manifested textually in the structure of the Qur'an in the form of language and literature.⁸

The linguistic and literary aspects of the Qur'an are also the main miraculous aspects and were first shown by the Qur'an to the Arab community. It can be seen from the historical facts that linguists gathered at that time to challenge the Qur'an literature. However, no one of them managed to compete with the literary heights of the Qur'an. In

⁵ Philip K. Hitti, *History of Arabs* (Jakarta: Serambi Ilmu, 2002), 112.

⁶ Fadhli Lukman, *Menyingkap Jati Diri Al-Qur'an*, 149.

⁷ Michael H. Hart, *Seratus Tokoh Yang Paling Berpengaruh Di Dunia*, trans. Mahbub Djunaidi (Jakarta: Dunia Pustaka Jaya, 1986), 27.

⁸ Amin Al-Khulli and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, *Metode Tafsir Sastra*, trans. Khairon Nahdliyyin (Yogyakarta: Adab Press, n.d.), 101–102.

fact, according to historical accounts, the period when the Qur'an was revealed was an era when Arabic literary language institutions were at their golden peak.⁹ Mecca, at that time, was the most appropriate place to hear the poetry of the best Arab poets. In this city, at the Ukaz market, the best poets gather every year to present their epic works in a competition. Poems that are considered unique are hanging (*Mu'allaqat*) on the Ka'bah as an appreciation.¹⁰ However, facing such conditions in society, the Qur'an gently challenged the poets and linguists who tried to make an imitation of the Qur'an. However, none succeeded in presenting literary works such as the Qur'an.¹¹

We have found many references or studies on the Qur'an that emphasise its literary side. Among these references is *majāz dan Pluralitas Makna dalam al-Qur'an* by Sukamta. The book describes the intricacies of the Qur'an's majas, including their meaning, function, use and the views of several figures or commentators on them¹². Furthermore, *Stilistika al-Qur'an Kajian Pragmatik*, written by Mardjoko Idris, explains the language style of the Qur'an, which emphasizes the aspects of speech acts (pragmatics) and rhetoric of the Qur'an with the consequences of its meaning.¹³

Meanwhile, among the references that talk about the literary interpretation of the Qur'an is the book *Metode Tafsir Sastra* written by Amin al-Khuli and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid. The book describes the gradual development of interpretations and methods of interpretation of the Qur'an, various interpretations of the Qur'an, literary methods of study of the Qur'an, interpretations of psychology and sociology, Muhammad Abduh and the modern context, Thaha Husain and interpretations narrative, and Amin al-Khuli and the foundational method.¹⁴

Some of the literature reviews above, the two books mentioned earlier, represent studies that emphasise the application of a literary approach to the Qur'an with a stylistic and *majāz* approach. While the third book emphasises the literary approach as a method of interpreting the Qur'an. In contrast to these previous studies, this paper analyses historical factors or the historical side of the emergence of a literary approach in the study of the Qur'an so that it contributes and is novel to the study of the Koran. The emphasis on the historical side is carried out by tracing the practice of this literary approach in the classical Islamic period, namely from the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the period of the Companions, the *tabi'in* period to the modern era.

⁹ Manna' Khalil Qaththan, *Mabahis Fi 'Ulum al-Quran*, trans. Mudzakir AS (Jakarta: Litera Antar Nusa, 2009), 380.

¹⁰ Ingrid Mattson, *Ulumul Qur'an Zaman Kita* (Jakarta: Zaman, 2013), 30.

¹¹ The Qur'an challenges its challengers gradually over time. This is recorded in several fragments of his surah, where at first the Al-Qur'an gave a challenge to anyone who was able to make a Qur'an with a rival to QS. At-Tur: 34, and after seeing the incompetence of his challengers at that time, the Qur'an began to lower its challenges which originally required linguists and poets to bring such as the Qur'an into 10 surahs. This is as described in QS. Hud: 13. Even the Qur'an lowered its challenge to the poets at that time to present only one surah such as the Qur'an as recorded in the QS. Al-Baqarah: 23. However, they are also still unable to present such as the Qur'an even though one verse. Finally, the Qur'an issues an ultimatum that no one is able to present a single verse for example. Even if humans cooperate with the jinn, it will never happen, QS. Al-Isra: 88.

¹² Sukamta, *majāz & Pluralitas Makna Dalam Al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Adab Press, 2009).

¹³ Mardjoko Idris, *Stilistika Al-Qur'an Kajian Pragmatik* (Yogyakarta: Karya Media, 2013).

¹⁴ Amin Al-Khullli and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, *Metode Tafsir Sastra*.

The arguments above at least show how the relationship between the Qur'an and literature. The relationship described by the history of the Qur'an and literature is like two sides of a coin that cannot be separated from one another because it cannot be denied that literature is one of the sharp weapons that accompany the Qur'an when facing Arab society. at the time. Awareness of the literary side attached to the Qur'an is also what will later raise the interest of the commentators to study the Qur'an in depth, not even a few of them make this literary side a separate study in their discussion. However, before discussing further how *the mufassirs* are interesting in the linguistic side of the Qur'an, it would be better if we know in advance how the literary interpretation is attached to the history of the interpretation of the Qur'an. This will be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

The Classical Era as the “Embryonical Stage” of the Birth of Literary Interpretation

The classical term that I use borrows the classification made by Abdul Mustaqim in his work entitled *Dinamika Sejarah Tafsir Al-Qur'an*. In this work, he divides the period of the classical interpretation of the Qur'an into four periods. *First*, the understanding of the Qur'an during the prophet's time, *Second*, the interpretation of the Qur'an during the companion period, *Third*, the interpretation of the Qur'an during the time of the *tabi'in* period, and fourth, the interpretation of the Qur'an during the *tabi' tabi'in* period.¹⁵ The selection of this classical era is one of the historical efforts to find epistemological links regarding the literary interpretation of the Qur'an. It is essential in order to find legitimacy so that the literary approach to the Qur'an is in line with what the Prophet and those after him did.

The seeds of literary interpretation of the Qur'an have actually started since the time of the prophet, although the interpretation of the prophet is not highlighted as an early-era interpretation by commentators. However, the Prophet on several occasions, actually made interpretations of the Qur'an which were closely related to the later emerging disciplines of Arabic literature. Interpretations from the Prophet on several occasions are very close to the meaning of the term *majāz* in the study of Arabic literature. *majāz* means expansion of meaning in Arabic terminology.¹⁶ As evidence, after this we will look at some examples of the Prophet's interpretation of literature. The first example, the interpretation of the Prophet that smells of *majāz* is when one of his companions its name is Ubay bin Hatim asked about what is meant by surah al-Baqarah: 187 regarding two threads, namely the white thread and the black thread.

وَكُلُّوا وَأَشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ط

"Is the thread in the ayat the thread that is known in general?". Then, the Prophet replied: "What is meant by the black thread is the darkness of the night and the white thread is the light of the day."¹⁷ The transition of meaning from the black thread and the white thread to the meaning of day and night when viewed is a transition of meaning from

¹⁵ Abdul Mustaqim, *Dinamika Sejarah Tafsir* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2016), 39.

¹⁶ M. Nur Kholis Setiawan, *Al-Qur'an Kitab Sastra Terbesar* (Yogyakarta: Elsaq Press, 2005), 129.

¹⁷ Abdurrahim Muhammad, *Tafsir Nabawi Khasaisuhu Wa Masadiruhu* (Kairo: Maktabah al-Zahra, 1992), 8.

the meaning of *haqiqi* to the meaning of *majāzi*.¹⁸ If we look conscientiously, Ubay bin Hatim's question above leads to the textual meaning of what is mentioned in surah al-Baqarah: 187 related to the meaning of thread.

The second example, when the Prophet interpreted the word *al-muhl* contained in surah al-Ma'arij: 8

يَوْمَ تَكُونُ السَّمَاءُ كَالْمُهْلِ

The word *al-muhl* in Arabic has the basic meaning of boiling iron. But in this case the Prophet interprets the word *al-muhl* in that verse with the meaning "Like oil dirt, when Allah brings closer to the face of the person being punished, then the skin of his face falls."¹⁹ This interpretation also shows how the Prophet created a meaning that was initially difficult for the companions to understand into a meaning that was very close to the understanding of the companions.

Another example, when the prophet interprets the word *quwwah* in surah al-Anfal: 60

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ

The word *quwwah* is a form of *masdar* in Arabic which means strength or ability. The Prophet when interpreting the word *quwwah* expands the meaning so that the resulting meaning is contextual. The Prophet interpreted the word *quwwah* with the meaning of archery. This is done by the Prophet in order the meaning of *quwwah* which is the power to fight the enemy will develop according to conditions and situations.²⁰

The fourth example is when interpreting the word *zulmun* in surah al-An'am: 82

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ

Asbabun nuzul of this ayat is when the one of companion question to the Prophet. He assumed that it was very difficult for a person to avoid doing wrong, no matter how small the act. The Prophet then replied that what is meant by *zulmun* in the context of this verse is *syirik*. It is as in Surah Luqman: 13 *inna al-syirka la zulmun azim* (*syirik* is a great injustice).²¹ If we see from this third example, the words *zulmun* and *syirkun* semantically actually have no relationship, both in basic and relational meanings. However, in the case of this verse, the Prophet's interpretation actually does not consider the basic or relational meaning at all, especially the textual meaning of the verse. In interpreting this verse the Prophet considers

¹⁸ The definition of *haqiqat* in the study of *balaghah* is *الحقيقة اسم لكل لفظ اريد ا له* (Haqiqah is an isim for every word that is desired for its true meaning). While the *majāz* is *المجاز استعمل اللفظ المعني الموضوع له* (*majāz* is a word used for other meanings that are not the real meaning). Khalid Abdurrahman, *Ushul At-Tafsir Wa Qawaiduhu* (Damaskus: Dar al-Nukhais, 1986), 280.

¹⁹ Abdurrahim Muhammad, *Tafsir Nabawi Khasaisuhu Wa Masadiruhu*, 73.

²⁰ Abdul Mustaqim, *Dinamika Sejarah Tafsir*, 52.

²¹ Abdurrahim Muhammad, *Tafsir Nabawi Khasaisuhu Wa Masadiruhu*, 63.

other factors such *al-siyāq al-kalām* or the context of the conversation, by looking at the context or sentence before or after which the verse is talking about.

Although there is nothing many interpretations of the Prophet show a model of literary interpretation, in the sense of interpretations that cross lexical boundaries. At least, the interpretations of the Prophet that smelled like literature as described above become historical legitimacy. In order the Prophet can be appointed as the embryonic stage of the literary interpretation to the Qur'an. In other words, what the Prophet did became the basis for later commentators to be more flexible when developing the meanings of the verses of the Qur'an, especially for verses that are difficult to understand, because the purpose of literature is not only to beautify but also to make it easier when it is read by the reader.

After the Prophet died, the process of developing the meaning of the Qur'an was continued by the companions of the Prophet. Due to the demands of reality continued to grow and questions about the law and verses of the Qur'an also continue to be questioned by *the ummat*, Meanwhile, there was no one of authoritative person for the interpretation of the Qur'an after the death of the Prophet. Even though the Companions had a time with the Prophet and saw firsthand how the Prophet interpreted the Qur'an. However, in fact they have different abilities in understanding the Qur'an.²²

One of the companions of the Prophet who had a major role in developing the interpretation was Abdullah bin Abbas (d. 68/687). Ibnu Abbas is known as one of the friends who are experts in the field of interpretation of the Qur'an. Due to the depth of his knowledge, he was given the title *Tarjuman Al-Qur'an*. This title was given because he was the one who received a pray from the Prophet so that he would be given the opportunity to dive into the ocean meaning of the Qur'an.²³ In addition, he is also one of the figures who laid the foundation for the science of interpretation (*ulum al-tafsir*). Therefore, the works of commentary that emerged afterwards could not be separated from the innovation and creativity of Ibnu Abbas.

As an expert in tafsir, Ibnu Abbas took an active role in developing the meaning of the Qur'an. This can be seen from the many narrations of interpretation that are attributed to Ibnu Abbas and not a few of these narrations that show a model of literary interpretation of the Qur'an. These literary interpretations arise due to Ibnu Abbas is also a person who has a very broad knowledge of the intricacies of the Arabic language and ancient Arabic literature. This can be seen in some of his interpretations which use ignorant Arabic poems as a source of searching for meaning. One example of Ibn Abbas using ignorant Arabic poetry in interpreting the Qur'an is when he interprets surah al-A'raf: 33

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ

²² Muhammad Husain Dzahabi, *Tafsir Wa Al-Mufasssirun*, vol. 2 (Kairo: Maktabah Wahbah, n.d.), 29.

²³ In the book *al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* mentioned several narrations of the Prophet's prayer addressed to Ibn Abbas. The first narration of the prayer reads اللهم الدين لمة التأويل, the second narration says that when praying for Ibn Abbas, the Prophet prayed with the prayer اللهم الحكمة, and another narration is اللهم لمة الحكمة. Jalaluddin al-Suyuthi, *Al-Itqan Di 'Ulum al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1971), 588.

Ibn Abbas interprets the word *al-ism* in the verse with the meaning of *khamr*, that is something intoxicating. It is based on a syair jahili which reads:

(و الأثم) الخمر كما قال الشاعر:
شربت الأثم ثم حتى ضل عقلي ... كذا الأثم تذهب بالعقول

"I drank wine until I lost my mind. Thus *khamr* causes the loss of one's mind."²⁴

Another example of Ibn Abbas interpretation which has a literary dimension is when Ibn Abbas interprets the word *rafath* contained in surah al-Baqarah: 187

أَجَلٌ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةٌ الصَّبَّامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ

The word *rafath* in this verse lexically means to touch. However, if we look at the context of the verse discussion, the word *rafath* in the verse is more accurately interpreted as *mubāsarah* which means having sex.²⁵ If we look at the interpretation made by Ibnu Abbas of the word *rafath* in the verse, it is an example of *kinayah*.²⁶

In addition to Ibnu Abbas, there are actually many other figures of interpretation that emerged among the companions. However, not all of his commentaries are easy to find. In addition, the interpretations that the author presents are interpretations that have literary elements in order to find the epistemology of the literary approach in the history of the interpretation of the Qur'an. By taking a sample of Ibn Abbas, it is actually quite enough to achieve this because Ibn Abbas is one of the central commentators among the companions, not only getting legitimacy from the Prophet, Ibnu Abbas's expertise in the field of interpretation is also recognized by the companions.

The further away from the era of the Prophet, the level of difficulty in understanding the Qur'an is increasingly difficult. Moreover, the interpretation of the Prophet and his companions did not cover all the verses of the Qur'an and only interpreted parts that were difficult to understand by those who were with them. It makes the next generation, which is the *tabi'in* generation feel the need to continue the process of interpretation the Qur'an based on their knowledge of the Arabic language and what they have learned from their teachers. In addition, the verses of the Qur'an at this time are also often monopolized by certain groups in the context of political interests that have theological smell. Therefore, the activities of the Qur'anic scholar at these times are rather difficult to separate from theological debates. The linkage of interpretation with theological interests requires efforts to understand the Qur'an from language perspective.

One of the disciples of Ibnu Abbas from among the *tabi'in* who continued this model of literary interpretation was Mujahid ibn Jabbar (d. 104/722). This can be seen when he interprets several verses of the Qur'an, for example when interpreting surah al-Baqarah: 65

²⁴ Abdul Mustaqim, *Dinamika Sejarah Tafsir*, 76.

²⁵ M. Nur Kholis Setiawan, *Al-Qur'an Kitab Sastra Terbesar*, 134.

²⁶ *Kinayah* (كناية) is to determine one meaning, without mentioning the lafadh used for that meaning, but mentioning another word/sentence while giving an indicator of its meaning. M. Quraish Shihab, *Kaidah Tafsir*, 151.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ

When reading this verse Mujahid paid attention to the phrase “*kunu qiradatan khāsyi’in*”. According to him the phrase “Be ye despicable ape!” in the verse it does not mean that they are physically changed into monkeys, but what has changed is their character and nature. The argument used by Mujahid is that the verse is a form of *tams’il* used by the Qur'an to describe something. Things like this are very common and are used several times by the Qur'an when they want to describe something.²⁷

Another example is Mujahid's interpretation of surah al-Kahf: 34

وَكَانَ لَهُ ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَأَعَزُّ نَفَرًا

The word “*thamar*” which means the basis of fruit, in this verse is interpreted differently by Mujahid. He interpreted *thamar* with gold and silver. If we look conscientiously between gold and fruit are have not a semantic relation. Due to these two words have their own meaning, both denotatively and connotatively. In the context of this verse, Mujahid performs the transition of meaning from the basic meaning to the relational meaning based on the context of the verse as a whole. The change in meaning made by Mujahid on the vocabulary in the verse shows the importance of context and consideration of the locality of a text.²⁸

Besides Mujahid, a figure who also emerged from the *tabi'in* circles was Qatadah (d.117/735). Qatadah was also one of those who helped develop the literary interpretation of the Qur'an. He was also a disciple of Ibnu Abbas who lived in the same generation as Mujahid. Its popularity in *tafsir* also cannot be doubted. His ideas are far beyond those of previous people, it can be said that he was one of the early figures who recognized *al-wahdah al-maudu'iyah fi al-Qur'an*, namely the principle of the unity of the theme of the Quran.²⁹ One of the indicators is when he interprets surah al-Qasas: 46

وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ

This verse according to Qatadah is in line with the desired meaning in the context of the discussion of verse 44 in the same surah which reads:

وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الْعُرْبِ

The various models of interpretation above show that the activities of the experts and Qur'anic scholars in the period of the first and second Hijri centuries indicates a significant development in the interpretation of the Qur'anic literature. If sorted further, there are still a lot of figures who develop the interpretation of the Qur'an. However, the

²⁷ Mujahid, *Tafsir Mujahid*, vol. 1 (Mesir: Dar al-Fikr al-Islami, 1989), 205.

²⁸ M. Nur Kholis Setiawan, *Al-Qur'an Kitab Sastra Terbesar*, 138.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 140.

thing that needs to be realized is the development of literary interpretation of the Qur'an has developed since the time of the Prophet even to this day. However, of course there are significant differences when compared from time to time. What is very striking about the classical era is that the use of the literary method itself has not been fully realized because there is no literary discipline. Therefore, this era is referred to as the embryonic stage because the later literary interpretation methods were inspired by what the interpreters were doing in this era.

The Modern Era: A New Direction of Literary Interpretation

In several important works that examine the development of literature in the study of the Qur'an in the modern era, Amin al-Khulli's position can be ascertained as a key figure who seriously drives this approach. The seriousness of al-Khulli is evidenced by his offer to face the Qur'an with a literary and linguistic approach. The goal is to get the message of the Qur'an as a whole and avoid the ideological-individual pulls.

Basically, al-Khulli's ideas are closely related to the reforms carried out by Muhammad Abduh. In fact, it can be said that Abduh was a great figure who started a new direction of literary studies in the study of the Qur'an. This started with Abduh's anxiety about the products of previous interpretations which were very fixated on grammatical debates. Moreover the products of interpretation which were closely related to political interests, ideology, scientific evidence, and so on. Thus, ignoring that the Qur'an is actually a book of guidance.³⁰

Abduh views that the most important function of interpretation is to realize the predicate of the Qur'an as a book of guidance (*hidāyah*) and to explain its wisdom in the fields of creed, morals and law in an attractive and motivating pattern for charity.³¹ This is the basis for the emergence of the *adabi-ijtimā'i* approach to the Qur'an, which is oriented towards cultural and social literature or socio-cultural interpretation.³² The emergence of an interpretation model like this implies that the spirit of the Qur'an must also reach the wider community in a practical and easy to understand manner, not only for certain circles.

This is what builds Amin al-Khulli's awareness to go further. He commented on Abduh by stating that realizing the predicate of the Qur'an as a book of guidance is indeed very important, due to it is the main function of the Qur'an. However, before go to it step, according to al-Khulli, the important thing that needs to be realized is that the Qur'an is the largest Arabic holy book. Therefore, someone who want to interpreting the Qur'an firstly must have a great understanding of the tools of Arabic language science in order to be able to explore guidance (*hidāyah*), as Abduh said. Therefore, placing guidance as a top priority without paying attention to the right tools (Arabic language) to get guidance is a naivety.³³

According to al-Khulli there is a big goal that must be achieved first, this goal is an upstream which will later open the way to realize the other goals of the Qur'an. The aim is

³⁰ Muhammad Husain Dzahabi, *Tafsir Wa Al-Mufasssirun*, 2:401.

³¹ Wali Ramdhani, *Menelusuri Makna Puasa Dalam Al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 2011), 27.

³² Abdurrahman Rusli Tanjung, "Analisis Terhadap Corak Tafsir Adabi Ijtima'i," *Analytica Islamica* 3, no. 1 (2014): 162.

³³ Wali Ramdhani, "Amin Al-Khulli Dan Metode Tafsir Sastrawi," *Jurnal IAIN Langsa* 2, no. 1 (2017): 6.

viewing the Qur'an as the greatest book of Arabic literature that has a very strong literary influence. A book that preserves the Arabic language, protects its existence so that it becomes the pride and adornment of the turas/heritage.³⁴ The implication of al-Khulli's offer of the Qur'an as the greatest book of Arabic literature (*kitab al-arabiyyah al-akbar*) is that the Qur'an must first be considered a sacred Arabic text. Therefore, in order to understand the Qur'an proportionally, one must really take and understand the literary approach method (*al-manhaj al-adabi*).³⁵

Al-Khulli's statement regarding the status of the Qur'an as the largest book of Arabic literature rests on the historical fact that in reality the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic packaging. Therefore, the Arabic side of the Qur'an itself is something that must be considered before other things, especially for those who want to study the Qur'an. To achieve this, al-Khulli not only stopped at the discourse stage of *kitab al-'arabiyyah al-akbar*, he also offered a new methodology in studying the Qur'an through a literary approach to get the message of the Qur'an as a whole (objective) and avoid subjective meanings due to of certain interests, whether ideological, political, etc. In this case, he offers two major agendas in interpreting the Qur'an: a study that talks about what surrounds the Qur'an (*dirāsah mā ḥawla Al-Qur'ān*) and a study of the existing content in the Qur'an itself (*dirāsah mā fi Al-Qur'ān*).³⁶

At the aspect of *dirāsah mā ḥawla Al-Qur'ān*, an exegete (*mufassir*) must first track the things that are special. This is related to the process of the revelation of the Qur'an, its collection, and its circulation in Arab society as the object of revelation. This study is quite crucial in the interpretation process due to this study is the first step to understanding the Qur'an with a literary understanding and by not ignoring the conditions surrounding the Qur'an as a navigator in the process of understanding the Qur'an.³⁷ After that, the exegete can move to general things that are broader in nature than before, but at this stage, the variables that will be seen are broader, including the intellectual, cultural, and geographical situation of Arab society in the century when the Qur'an was revealed. Depending on what al-Khulli's method, it seems that he emphasized that to produce an objective meaning, the Qur'an should be understood by the way the listener first understood it.³⁸

During the study of the aspects of the *dirāsah mā fi Al-Qur'an* itself, as the name implies, the step of this aspect is more related to the internal elements contained in the content of the Qur'an. In this case, an exegete must trace the development of the meaning and significance of certain words of the Qur'an in their singular form. Then, trace indications of the meaning of the word in each generation to get the shift in meaning in various generations as well as the impact on social psychology and civilization of the people on the shift in meaning.³⁹

³⁴ Wali Ramdhani, *Menelusuri Makna Puasa Dalam Al-Qur'an*, 28.

³⁵ M. Nur Kholis Setiawan, *Al-Qur'an Kitab Sastra Terbesar*, 11.

³⁶ Amin Al-Khulli, *Manahij Al-Tajdid* (Kairo: Dar al-Mar'rifah, 1961), 307.

³⁷ Ibid., 308.

³⁸ J.J.G. Jansen, *Diskursus Tafsir Modern* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1997), 108.

³⁹ Muhammad Yusron dkk., *Studi Kitab Tafsir Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: TH Press, 2006), 18.

To understand the meaning of the Qur'an, it is not enough to look at the etymological meaning but also the functional meaning of the word. Therefore, after finding the etymological meaning we must continue for paying attention to the functional meaning of the word by looking at the location and how the word is used in the Qur'an. Then, the next step is to examine the wording (*murākabat*). As a tool, the exeget can use the tools of the sciences of language and literature such as nahwu, balaghah and the like.⁴⁰

In addition to considering these two things, Amin al-Khulli also emphasized that the Qur'an through its language influences the human soul. He also states for accepting the psychological model of interpretation. According to him, this psychological interpretation model will help readers to explore the secrets of the movement of the human soul, because the foundation of this psychological interpretation is art, which is nothing but explosions of expression of the human soul.⁴¹

A little description of the framework of Amin al-Khulli's literary method is summarized in the following table.

<i>Dirāsah ma haula Al-Qur’ān</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Understanding of asababun nuzul both micro and macro. b. Knowledge of the codification of the Qur'an, its writing, and the diversity of qiraat c. Understanding of ulum al-Qur’an d. Sensitivity to the spirit of the Arabic society that accompanied the revelation of the Qur'an
<i>Dirāsah ma fī Al-Qur’ān</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Study of the vocabulary of the Qur'an included etymological, semantical, and inductive b. Accuracy in the vocabulary of the Qur'an, starting from insight into word derivation, chronological word changes from the beginning of the word used until now, and explanations according to the context of the arrangement. c. Focus on the universal meanings and values contained in the Qur'an
Unity of literary values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The absence of thematic units in the composition of the Qur'an b. Using thematic methods in interpreting the Qur'an
The view to other methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Criticizing the orientation of an ungrounded interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an, such as the debate on the structure of language and scientific aspects. b. Incorporating elements of psychological studies in the process of understanding discourse.

⁴⁰ Wali Ramdhani, *Menelusuri Makna Puasa Dalam Al-Qur’an*, 18.

⁴¹ Amin Al-Khulli, *Manahij Al-Tajdid*, 240.

The selection of this sub with the title "the modern era as a new direction for the study of Al-Qur'an literature" because there has been a hermeneutical awareness of the textuality of the Qur'an as a holy book that descended in a certain space and time. Therefore, the literary discourse of the Qur'an in this era does not only stop at how the commentators understand and interpret the language features used by the Qur'an. However, more than that, the things that are aimed at are how to produce meaning by allowing the Qur'an to speak about itself by paying attention to two aspects, which are *dirāsah mā fi Al-Qur'ān* and *dirāsah mā haula Al-Qur'ān* as offered by al-Khulli.

Another striking thing is in this era, the Qur'an was positioned as a text or what al-Khulli called *the kitāb al-arabiyyah al-akbar*. The determination of the Qur'an as a text is also a certainty of the implications of al-Khulli's literary method which demands a study of the *dirāsah mā haula Al-Qur'ān* based on the awareness that the Qur'an was not revealed in a vacuum, but to the Arabic society for a certain period and using the medium of the local language. Therefore, it is very possible that the Qur'an was more or less influenced and even influenced the culture, social, and social system in which it was revealed.

Conclusion

This paper provides information related to how the literary approach can be an alternative used to reap the breadth of the meaning of the Qur'an. At least language is the main entry point for a commentator when trying to interpret the Qur'an. As the author has alluded to in the first sub-chapter of this paper.

The discussion in the first sub-chapter tries to raise awareness of the readers of the Qur'an related to the problems faced by the Qur'an in the process of its decline, one of which is the aspect of language and literature that was thick in Arab society at that time became the door of the emergence of the Qur'an. the linguistic miracle (*'ijaz lughawi*) which is the first miracle shown by the Qur'an. The writer also shows this as an epistemological hook on why the language approach is used in the interpretation process.

The discussion above also shows how the interpretive practices by the prophet and his companions tried to elaborate the words in the Qur'an to a broader and contextual meaning through language and literature in order to provide contextual meaning and be easily understood by people. the audience. Because basically the main principle of literature in addition to beautifying is making it easier for readers to understand the contents of the reading. These practices later became epistemological hooks for later interpreters in interpreting the Qur'an with a literary approach, including Amin al-Khulli with his offer regarding *dirāsah mā haula Al-Qur'ān* and *dirāsah mā fi Al-Qur'ān*.

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