

Qur'anic Exegesis in a Pedagogical Milieu: A Gadamerian Reading of the *Tarbaṭī* Spectrum in Thaifur 'Ali Wafa's *Firdaws al-Na'im*

Tafsir Al-Qur'an dalam Milieu Pedagogis: Pembacaan Gadamerian atas Spektrum Tarbaṭī dalam Firdaws al-Na'im Karya Thaifur 'Ali Wafa

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Abstract

This article examines the *tarbaṭī* (pedagogical) dimension of *Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tawḍīḥ Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, a complete thirty-juz Arabic commentary by Kiai Thaifur 'Ali Wafa of Sumenep that is taught daily at Pesantren Assadad in Madura. It argues that the *tarbaṭī* character of *pesantren tafsir* is not inherent in the words on the page; rather, it emerges from the interpretive event in which the commentary is composed, taught, and received. Drawing on Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, the study reconstructs the commentary's pedagogical milieu, the *Vorurteil* that shapes its composition, the resulting exegetical form, and the *tarbaṭī* spectrum produced by the fusion of horizons. This spectrum comprises five registers: *al-tarbiyah al-lughawiyah*, *al-tarbiyah al-kalāmīyah*, *al-tarbiyah al-fiqhiyah*, *al-tarbiyah al-ijtimā'iyah*, and *al-tarbiyah al-ṣūfīyah*. The article contributes to scholarship on *tafsir tarbaṭī* by proposing a category not confined to textual content; to scholarship on *pesantren tafsir* by introducing a neglected analytical lens; and to the study of scriptural pedagogy by demonstrating that a commentary acquires its meaning in the setting in which it is taught.

Keywords: Firdaws al-Na'im; Tafsir Tarbaṭī; Tarbaṭī Spectrum; Pesantren Milieu; Gadamerian Hermeneutics

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji dimensi *tarbaṭī* (pedagogis) dalam *Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tawḍīḥ Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, tafsir lengkap tiga puluh juz berbahasa Arab karya Kiai Thaifur 'Ali Wafa dari Sumenep yang diajarkan setiap hari di Pesantren Assadad, Madura. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa karakter *tarbaṭī* tafsir pesantren tidak semata-mata melekat pada kata-kata di halaman, tetapi terbentuk dalam peristiwa interpretif ketika tafsir tersebut ditulis, diajarkan, dan diterima. Dengan bertumpu pada hermeneutika filosofis Hans-Georg Gadamer, penelitian ini merekonstruksi milieu pedagogis tempat tafsir tersebut berfungsi, *Vorurteil* yang membentuk proses penulisannya, bentuk tafsir yang dihasilkan, serta spektrum *tarbaṭī* yang lahir dari peleburan horizon. Spektrum ini mencakup lima register: *al-tarbiyah al-lughawiyah*, *al-tarbiyah al-kalāmīyah*, *al-tarbiyah al-fiqhiyah*, *al-tarbiyah al-ijtimā'iyah*, dan *al-tarbiyah al-ṣūfīyah*. Artikel ini berkontribusi pada studi *tafsir tarbaṭī* dengan mengajukan kategori yang tidak dibatasi oleh kandungan tekstual; pada studi tafsir pesantren dengan memperkenalkan lensa analitis yang selama ini terabaikan; serta pada kajian pedagogi kitab suci dengan menunjukkan bahwa sebuah tafsir memperoleh maknanya di ruang pengajarannya.

Kata Kunci: Firdaws al-Na'im; Tafsir Tarbaṭī; Spektrum Tarbaṭī; Milieu Pesantren; Hermeneutika Gadamer



Introduction

In recent decades, *pesantren* have increasingly attracted scholarly attention as dynamic sites for the production, transmission, and negotiation of Islamic knowledge, particularly in the field of Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*). Far from being merely institutions of traditional religious instruction, *pesantren* function as intellectual ecosystems where textual authority, pedagogical practices, and local socio-cultural contexts intersect. Within this setting, *tafsir* does not operate solely as a fixed body of canonical knowledge but as a living discourse shaped by modes of teaching, interpretive strategies, and the positionality of *pesantren* scholars. Consequently, the study of *tafsir* in *pesantren* demands an analytical framework that accounts for both pedagogical processes and exegetical production as interrelated yet distinct dimensions of Islamic intellectual life.

Scholarship on *pesantren tafsir* has organized itself broadly into two streams. The first examines the teaching of *tafsir* literature within the *pesantren* environment, asking how a *muṣḥaf* or a work of *tafsir* is taught and disseminated through *tafsir* recitation,¹ typically in the *bandongan* style.² The second concentrates on the exegetical works produced by *pesantren* figures, examining their methodological features, their interpretive characteristics, the local contextual elements that inform them, and their relationship to the socio-political circumstances in which they were composed.³

- 1 Rosihon Anwar, Dadang Darmawan, and Cucu Setiawan, "Kajian Kitab *Tafsir* Dalam Jaringan Pesantren Di Jawa Barat," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama Dan Sosial Budaya* 1, no. 1 (February 2016): 56–69, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jw.v1i1.578>; Hasan Bisri, "Pengembangan Metode Pengajaran *Tafsir* Di Pesantren," *TAJIDID* 26, no. 1 (May 2019): 59–74, <https://doi.org/10.36667/tajdid.v26i1.328>; Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, Dan Tarekat* (Yogyakarta: Gading Publishing, 2012), 98, 148, 178–80.
- 2 Muhammad Irfan Chalimy, "Pengajian *Tafsir* Al-Qur'an Di Pondok Pesantren Al Furqon Sanden Bantul Yogyakarta (Kajian Terhadap Metode Pembelajaran)" (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2008); Mutiara Santri, "Pengajian *Tafsir* Al-Qur'an Di Pondok Pesantren Al-Isyraq Kebon Jeruk" (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2023); Runna Maimanah, "Pembelajaran *Tafsir* Al-Qur'an Di Pesantren Persis Putri Bangil" (Undergraduate Thesis, IAIN Jember, 2021); Afifatul Munawiroh and M. Khoirul Hadi Al Asy Ari, "Fenomena Bu Nyai Pengajar *Tafsir* Berdimensi Gender Lokalitas Di Pondok Pesantren Roudhotul Qur'an Jember," *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif* 16, no. 1 (October 2021): 95–112, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jsr.v16i1.2127>; Muhammad Irsad, Abdul Mustaqim, and Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, "Paradigm Shifts in Gender Narratives of *Tafsir* Al-Ibriz through Oral Exegesis on YouTube," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 25, no. 1 (May 2024): 141–60, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i1.5416>.
- 3 Dadan Rusmana, Nida Amalia Kamal, and Maulana Yūsuf Alamsyah, "Karakteristik *Tafsir* Madrasi Karya H. Oemar Bakri Dan Penggunaannya Pada Kurikulum KMI Darussalam Gontor Putri," *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 6, no. 1 (September 2021): 49–65, <https://doi.org/10.15575/al-bayan.v6i1.13999>; Supriyanto Supriyanto, "Kajian Al-Qur'an Dalam Tradisi Pesantren: Telaah Atas *Tafsir* al-Iklil Fi Ma'anial-Tanzil," *TSAQAFAH: Jurnal Peradaban Islam* 12, no. 2 (November 2016): 281–98, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v12i2.757>; Zulaikhah Fitri Nur Ngaisah, "Karakteristik *Tafsir* Pesantren: Studi *Tafsir* Al-Bayan Fi Ma'rifati Ma'ani al-Qur'an Karya KH. Shodiq Hamzah," *Mozaic: Islam Nusantara* 9, no. 1 (April 2023): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.47776/mozaic.v9i1.646>; Ahmad Baidowi and Yuni Ma'rufah, "Dinamika Karya *Tafsir* Al-Qur'an Pesantren Jawa," *AL ITQAN: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 8, no. 2 (December 2022): 251–74, <https://doi.org/10.47454/alitqan.v8i2.814>; Muhammad Asif and Mochammad Arifin, "*Tafsir* Ayat Ahkām Dari Pesantren: Telaah Awal Atas *Tafsir* Ayāt al-Ahkām min al-Qur'an al-Karīm Karya Abil Fadhol as-Senory," *SUHUF* 10, no. 2 (January 2018): 327–48, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf>.

Between these two streams, however, a significant question remains unaddressed. The first examines the practice of teaching without engaging the interpretive substance of what is taught. The second analyzes interpretive substance while abstracting it from the teaching context. The *tafsir* considered precisely as an instrument of instruction, a commentary whose interpretive choices are themselves shaped by the demands of teaching, is rarely the direct object of either.⁴

The same pattern emerges with particular clarity in the scholarship on the work examined in this article. Firdaws al-Na'im *bi Tawdih Ma'ani Ayat al-Qur'an al-Karim*, a complete thirty-juz Arabic-language *tafsir* by Kiai Thaifur 'Ali Wafa of Sumenep, completed in 2013, is among the most thoroughly studied pesantren commentaries of its generation. No fewer than fifteen prior studies have examined it, and these fall into six broad categories: methodology,⁵ epistemology,⁶ ideology,⁷ fiqh paradigm,⁸ Sufi nuance,⁹ and a range of specific issues that include the interpretation

v10i2.194; Abu Sufyan, "Tafsir Pesantren: Menakar Unsur Lokalitas Tafsir Jami' al-Bayān Min Khulāṣat Suwar al-Qur'an Karya Muḥammad b. Sulaymān (1911–1991)," *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 10, no. 2 (December 2020): 342–64, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2020.10.2.342-364>.

- 4 A partial exception is Nurtawab's study of *Jalālayn* pedagogy across pesantren, school, and competitive settings, which treats tafsir pedagogy as a social practice and develops the notion of a "spectrum of pedagogical values" produced through the reading community's engagement with an inherited commentary. The present article extends that line of analysis from the *reception* of an existing tafsir to the *composition* of a new one. Adjacent work on pesantren tafsir as a genre includes Asif on *al-Ibriz* as the materialization of pesantren tradition in tafsir form, and Baidowi and Ma'rufah on the orientations of Arabization, Islamization, and localization through which Javanese pesantren tafsir negotiates its dual obligation to scriptural source and vernacular audience. See Ervan Nurtawab, "Jalalayn Pedagogical Practice: Styles of Qur'an and Tafsir Learning in Contemporary Indonesia" (PhD diss., Monash University, 2018), 1, 13; Muhammad Asif, "Tafsir Dan Tradisi Pesantren: Karakteristik Tafsir al-Ibriz Karya Bisri Mustofa," *SUHUF* 9, no. 2 (June 2017): 241–64, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v9i2.154>; Ahmad Baidowi and Yuni Ma'rufah, "Dinamika Karya Tafsir Al-Qur'an Pesantren Jawa," *AL ITQAN: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 8, no. 2 (December 2022): 251–74, <https://doi.org/10.47454/alitqan.v8i2.814>; Ahmad Baidowi and Yuni Ma'rufah, "Localizing The Qur'an in Javanese Pesantren: A Socio-Cultural Interpretation of Al-Ibriz and Al-Ikhlil," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 26, no. 2 (July 2025): 302–26, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v26i2.5842>.
- 5 Moh Azwar Hairul, "Telaah Kitab Tafsir Firdaus al-Na'im Karya Thaifur Ali Wafa Al-Maduri," *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Tafsir Di Nusantara* 3, no. 2 (June 2019): 39–58, <https://doi.org/10.32495/nun.v3i2.44>; Moh. Rozin, "Ortodoksi Tafsir Indonesia: Telaah Tekstualitas Dan Intertekstualitas Tafsir Firdaws al-Na'im Karya Kiai Thaifur Ali Wafa" (Thesis, UIN Sunan Ampel, 2022).
- 6 Jamaluddin Akbar, "Epistemologi Kitab Tafsir Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tawdih Ma'ani Ayat al-Qur'an al-Karim Karya Thaifur Ali Wafa" (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Sunan Ampel, 2018).
- 7 Ahmad Qusyairi, "Ideologi Tafsir: Studi Atas Penafsiran Ayat-Ayat Teologi Dalam Tafsir Firdaus al-Na'im Bi Tawdih Ma'ani Ayat al-Qur'an al-Karim Karya Thaifur Ali Wafa" (Thesis, UIN Sunan Ampel, 2022).
- 8 Vina Umdatun Najakhah, "Paradigma Fiqh KH Thaifur Ali Wafa Al-Maduri (Studi Analisis Terhadap Ayat-Ayat Ahkam Dalam Tafsir Firdaus al-Na'im Bi Tawdih Ma'ani Ayat al-Qur'an al-Karim Karya Thaifur Ali Wafa)" (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Sunan Ampel, 2023).
- 9 Ismegawati Ismegawati, "Nuansa Sufistik Tafsir Firdaus al-Na'im Karya KH Taifur Ali Wafa," *Ushuluna: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 4, no. 1 (June 2018): 48–61, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ushuluna.v1i1.15285>.

of *qīṣaṣ*,¹⁰ women's rights,¹¹ polygamy,¹² gender relations,¹³ locality,¹⁴ the character of the virtuous woman,¹⁵ the quality of the hadith on the merit of *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*,¹⁶ the protection of non-combatants and the limits of warfare,¹⁷ and the shift from Pegon to Arabic among contemporary Madurese exegetes, with Firdaws included among four cases.¹⁸ Despite the substantial diversity of their angles, these fifteen studies share a common point of departure. Each treats Firdaws al-Na'im as a finished document whose features can be classified, whether as method, as school affiliation, or as ideological orientation, rather than as a text shaped by and operating within the pedagogical milieu in which it was written and continues to be taught.

This article examines how the pedagogical milieu of the *pesantren* shapes Qur'anic interpretation in *Firdaws al-Na'im* and how its interpretive strategies function as instructional material. A familiar objection arises from the nature of the *tafsir* genre: a comprehensive commentary will inevitably discuss law, theology, Sufism, and language, and the mere presence of these subjects does not constitute an analytical finding. Any commentary of comparable scope addresses them as part of the genre's encyclopedic ambition. What must therefore be demonstrated is that the manner in which these materials are handled, what is elaborated and what is omitted, bears the imprint of a pedagogical purpose.

- 10 Nurin Hazrina, "Penafsiran Qishash Dalam *Tafsir* Firdaws al-Na'im Karya Thaifur Ali Wafa (Surah Al-Baqarah 178–179)" (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Sunan Ampel, 2019).
- 11 Uswatun Hasanah, "Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam *Tafsir* Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tawḍīḥ Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm Karya KH. Thoifur 'Ali Wafa," *Islamika Inside: Jurnal Keislaman Dan Humaniora* 5, no. 1 (June 2019): 72–95, <https://doi.org/10.35719/islamikainside.v5i1.37>.
- 12 Fatimah Al Zahrah, "Poligami Dalam *Tafsir* Firdaus al-Na'im Karya KH. Thaifur Ali Wafa (Pendekatan Sosiologi Pengetahuan)" (Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2022).
- 13 Ali Hisyam, "Relasi Gender Dalam Al-Qur'an Menurut Penafsiran Thaifur Ali Wafa (Studi Atas Kitab *Tafsir* Firdaus al-Na'im Bi Tawḍīḥ Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'an al-Karīm)" (Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2022).
- 14 Ni'matul Hidayah, "*Tafsir* Firdaws al-Na'im Karya Thaifur Ali Wafa Dan Pertautan Terhadap Budaya Lokal Sumenep Madura" (Undergraduate Thesis, UIN Sunan Ampel, 2019).
- 15 Elliyatul Masruroh and Ihwan Amalih, "Karakteristik Wanita Ṣāliḥah Dalam Al-Qur'an (Studi Komparatif *Tafsir* al-Sha'rāwī Karya Syaikh Mutawalli Al Sha'rāwī Dan *Tafsir* Firdaus al-Na'im Karya Kyai Thaifur Ali Wafa)," *El-Warqoh: Jurnal Ushuluddin Dan Filsafat* 6, no. 2 (2022): 103–31, <https://doi.org/10.28944/el-warqoh.v6i2.704>.
- 16 Mohammad Nabil Iklil Mubarak, "Melacak Kualitas Hadis Keutamaan Surah al-Ikhlāṣ Dalam *Tafsir* Firdaus al-Na'im Karya KH. Toifur Ali Wafa" (Undergraduate Thesis, STAI Al-Anwar, 2023), <https://repo.staianwar.ac.id/395/>.
- 17 Ulya Fikriyati and Ah. Fawaid, "Saving Lives and Limiting the Means and Methods of Warfare: Five Indonesian *Tafsir* Views," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 60, no. 1 (June 2022): 167–98, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2022.601.167-198>.
- 18 The study reads *Firdaws* as text-oriented, attending to script and language while leaving the pedagogical-milieu dimension of its commentarial choices unread. See Saichul Anam and Muhammad Nabil Iklil Mubarak, "From Pegon to Arabic: The New Tafsir of Indonesian Pesantren," *Aqwal: Journal of Qur'an and Hadis Studies* 6, no. 1 (October 2025): 90–114, <https://doi.org/10.28918/aqwal.v6i1.12298>.

The existence of such an imprint is rooted in the nature of the *pesantren* itself. The *pesantren* is a religious educational institution whose primary function is to provide guidance to its students in intellectual, emotional, and spiritual domains. The *kiai* fulfills this role in several ways: transmitting classical Islamic texts to the *santri*, modeling exemplary character in everyday life, and composing scholarly works that address the needs of the *santri* and the study traditions prevailing within the *pesantren*. It is within this context that *pesantren* commentaries, including Firdaws al-Na'im, are composed. Accordingly, from the initial stages of composition, the *kiai* conceives of his *tafsir* as a pedagogical instrument, one designed to be taught to the *santri* and to be institutionalized as a formal instructional text within the *pesantren* milieu. The contribution this article seeks to make lies less in the identification of new content in Firdaws al-Na'im than in the adoption of a different analytical angle, namely a shift from reading the commentary as a finished text whose features can be inventoried to reading it as a text shaped by its function within this living pedagogical milieu. The patterned orientation that answers the foregoing question is what this article designates as the *tarba'wī* spectrum.

This claim is tested within a corpus defined by three considerations. The *tafsir* is written in Arabic, was completed after Indonesia's 1998 Reformasi, and takes the form of a complete thirty-*juz* commentary rather than a thematic one.¹⁹ Each consideration corresponds to a distinct dimension of *pesantren tafsir* production. The first concerns the audience, since composition in Arabic enables the work to address both the internal scholarly elite of the *pesantren* and Muslim readers beyond Indonesia.²⁰

19 Several Arabic-language *pesantren tafsir* are excluded by the corpus criteria adopted here. Excluded by the temporal criterion (works appearing before Indonesia's 1998 Reformasi, regardless of form) are *al-Tafsir al-Madrasī* by H. Oemar Bakry, *Jāmi' al-Bayān min Khulāṣat Suwar al-Qur'an* by *Kiai* Muhammad bin Sulaiman, *Tafsir Āyāt al-Aḥkām min al-Qur'an al-Karīm* by *Kiai* Abil Fadhol Senori, and the thematic interpretations by *Kiai* Yasin Asymuni. Excluded by the form criterion (post-Reformasi works that are thematic rather than complete thirty-*juz*) is *al-Tafsir al-Mawḍū'ī* by Abdul Mustaqim. For scholarship on these commentaries, see Rusmana, Amalia Kamal, and Yusuf Alamsyah, "Karakteristik Tafsir Madrasa Karya H. Oemar Bakri Dan Penggunaannya Pada Kurikulum KMI Darussalam Gontor Putri"; Wahyudi Wahyudi, Eka Prasetiawati, and Muhyidin Thohir, "Teologi Ash'ariyyah Dalam Tafsir Ulama Nusantara (Studi Ittījāh I'tiqādī dalam Tafsir Jāmi' al-Bayān min Khulāṣat Suwar al-Qur'an Karya Muhammad Bin Sulaimān)," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 28, no. 1 (June 2020): 71–80, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v28i1.6571>; Muhammad Dikron and Dindin Moh Saepudin, "Simplifitas Tafsir Jami' Al-Bayan Min Khulashat Suwar Al-Qur'an Karya KH. Muhammad Bin Sulaiman," *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 1 (June 2019): 42–56, <https://doi.org/10.15575/al-bayan.v4i1.5227>; Muhammad Asif and Mochammad Arifin, "Tafsir Ayat Aḥkām Dari Pesantren: Telaah Awal Atas Tafsir Ayāt al-Aḥkām min al-Qur'an al-Karīm Karya Abil Fadhol as-Senory," *SUHUF* 10, no. 2 (January 2018): 327–48, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v10i2.194>; Moh Hasan Fauzi, "Analisis Hermeneutika *Kiai* Ahmad Yasin Asmuni: Studi Q.S. Al-Nisa' Dalam Tafsir Ma Asabak," *Al-Adabiya: Jurnal Kebudayaan Dan Keagamaan* 13, no. 02 (December 2018): 185–200, <https://doi.org/10.37680/adabiya.v13i02.22>; Fithriyawan Husni, "Tipologi Tafsir Alquran Di Indonesia Pasca Reformasi: Telaah Pribumisasi Al-Qur'an Karya M. Nur Kholis Setiawan," *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 9, no. 2 (September 2019): 323–51, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2019.9.2.323-351>.

20 Gusmian, "Bahasa Dan Aksara *Tafsir* Al-Qur'an Di Indonesia Dari Tradisi, Hierarki Hingga Kepentingan

The second concerns curriculum, since post-Reformasi Arabic commentaries mark a shift in pesantren teaching materials traditionally dominated by *al-Jalālayn*, a shift particularly evident in the *Jalālayn*-centric pesantren landscape of Madura, where Firdaws al-Na‘īm now stands as a competing or complementary primary reference.²¹ The third concerns form, since a complete thirty-*juz* commentary functions as a systematic instructional resource for the entire Qur’an, whereas thematic exegesis serves only as a topical intervention.²² Firdaws al-Na‘īm exemplifies this systematic form and, in doing so, runs counter to the dominant post-Reformasi trend toward thematic exegesis (*al-tafsīr al-mawdū‘ī*), demonstrating that analytical exegesis (*al-tafsīr al-tahlīlī*) remains a viable mode within pesantren *tafsīr* production.²³

The analysis pursued in this study is interpretive rather than explanatory in orientation, proceeding²⁴ through a close reading of the commentary against the baseline of *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and a supplementary engagement with Thaifur’s autobiographical writings. This methodological commitment is grounded in the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer,²⁵ employed here not as a substitute for the classical interpretive apparatus of *tafsīr*, but as a philosophical framework for examining how Qur’anic meaning is pedagogically mediated within the pesantren milieu. Four of Gadamer’s central concepts structure the analysis. The first, understanding as event, holds that interpretation does not recover an inert meaning already lodged within the text; rather, understanding occurs when a situated reader encounters the text. In this study, that event is the daily teaching circle at Pesantren Assadad. The second, *Vorurteil* or prejudice, refers to the pre-understandings formed through tradition that the interpreter brings to any act of reading and that condition the range of interpretations he is capable of producing.

Pembaca,” 17.

21 Fawaid’s study shows that *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* remains part of the pesantren *tafsīr* curriculum in the Tapal Kuda region, including Jember, for three reasons: the preservation of tradition, the pursuit of barakah, and the work’s concise (*ijmālī*) character, which also leaves room for the kiai to elaborate during instruction. Ahmad Fawaid, “Kontra Narasi Ekstremisme Terhadap *Tafsīr* Ayat-Ayat Qitāl Dalam *Tafsīr* Al-Jalālayn Karya Jalāl Al-Dīn Al-Maḥallī Dan Jalāl Al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī (Kajian Atas Pemahaman Kiai Pesantren Di Daerah Tapal Kuda Jawa Timur)” (Dissertation, UIN Sunan Ampel, 2019), 136–55.

22 Fithriyawan Husni, “Tipologi *Tafsīr* Alquran Di Indonesia Pasca Reformasi: Telaah Pribumisasi Al-Qur’an Karya M. Nur Kholis Setiawan,” *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsīr Hadith* 9, no. 2 (September 2019): 323–51, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2019.9.2.323-351>.

23 A second commentary, *al-Mu‘taṣamfi Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Mu‘aẓẓam* by Kiai Ahmad Zamroji Halim of Jember, also satisfies the three criteria. The present article does not take it up because it is not situated within the Madurese *pesantren* landscape that frames this analysis, and its scarcity of prior scholarship represents an opening for future work rather than a reason for inclusion here.

24 Sahiron Samsudin, “Pendekatan Dan Analisis Dalam Penelitian Teks *Tafsīr*: Sebuah Overview,” *SUHUF* 12, no. 1 (June 2019): 131–49, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v12i1.409>.

25 F. Budi Hardiman, *Seni Memahami: Hermeneutik Dari Schleiermacher Sampai Derrida* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2015), 155–202.

The third, effective history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), names the accumulated history of reception that has already shaped both the text itself and the interpreter's manner of receiving it. The fourth, the fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*), denotes the encounter between the horizon of the text and the horizon of the interpreter that constitutes the very event of understanding.

From Tarbawī Interpretation to Tarbawī Reading

The Discourse of Tarbawī Tafsīr

The category of *tarbawī* interpretation has emerged in contemporary Qur'anic studies as a distinct orientation within *tafsīr* scholarship. Where classical exegetical traditions developed around the legal, theological, linguistic, and Sufi dimensions of the Qur'anic text, the *tarbawī* orientation foregrounds what tradition has long known but rarely systematized. The Qur'an addresses itself to the formation of the human person, and an exegesis attentive to this dimension constitutes a distinct mode of reading. The category is recent in its explicit articulation but ancient in its substance. Classical Islamic scholarship has long taken the cultivation of the human being as one of revelation's central purposes, even where it has lacked the modern terminology of *tarbawī tafsīr* to name this purpose as such.

Etymologically, the term *tarbawī* derives from *al-tarbiyah*, a noun whose linguistic origins have been traced to three Arabic roots. The first, *rababa*, contracted into *rabba*, means to possess, to control, to add, and to improve.²⁶ The second, *rabawa*, means to increase.²⁷ The third, *rabaya*, means to grow.²⁸ All three converge in the semantic range of *al-tarbiyah*, which Khālid al-Hāzimī summarizes in five meanings, namely improvement (*al-iṣlāḥ*), growth and increase (*al-namā' wa al-ziyādah*), maturation and development (*nasha'a wa tara'ra'a*), management and care (*sāṣahu wa tawallā amrah*), and teaching.²⁹ Terminologically, al-Bayḍawī defines *al-tarbiyah* as the bringing of a thing to its perfect state by gradual stages,³⁰ a definition echoed by al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī in his *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*.³¹ Al-Hāzimī extends

26 Ismā'īl Ibn 'Abbād, *al-Muḥīṭ fī al-Lughah*, ed. Muhammad Hasan Ālu Yāsīn (Beirut: Ālam al-Kutub, 1994), 10:211–13.

27 Abū 'Abd Allāh Muhammad Ibn Abī Bakr al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, ed. Yūsuf al-Shaykh Muhammad (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Aṣriyah, 1999), 117.

28 Abū al-Husayn Ahmad Ibn Fāris, *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muhammad Hārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 2:483.

29 Khālid Ibn Hāmid al-Hāzimī, *Uṣūl al-Tarbiyah al-Islāmiyah* (Madinah: Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub, 2000), 17–18.

30 Abū Sa'īd 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Umar Ibn Muhammad al-Shirāzī al-Bayḍawī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl*, ed. Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mar'ashlī (Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d.), 1:28.

31 Abī al-Qāsim al-Husayn Ibn Muhammad al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 2012), 204.

these definitions to the formation of human beings specifically, characterizing *al-tarbiyah* as the gradual cultivation of human beings in all dimensions, oriented toward felicity in this world and the next, by methods consistent with the Islamic way.³²

Tarbaʿwī interpretation, as it appears in contemporary scholarship, admits two distinct positions, and the distinction matters for the present argument. The first treats *tarbaʿwī tafsīr* as a method of interpretation in its own right, where the exegete adopts an explicitly *tarbaʿwī* framework from the outset, and every interpretive choice is shaped by this framework. The second treats the *tarbaʿwī* as a style or orientation that may surface within a work whose explicit method lies elsewhere. This distinction is reflected in the standard usage of *uṣūl al-tafsīr* (the principles of Qurʾanic exegesis), where works of the second type are not classified as *tarbaʿwī tafsīr* but as exegesis bearing *al-ittijāh al-tarbaʿwī* (the pedagogical orientation). The phrase marks the *tarbaʿwī* element as a tendency embedded within a work rather than as the work's defining method. The distinction is summarized below.

Table 1. Types of *Tarbaʿwī* Interpretation

Aspect	Type 1	Type 2
Position	Method of interpretation	Style or orientation (<i>al-ittijāh al-tarbaʿwī</i>)
Characteristics	<i>Tarbaʿwī</i> framework adopted from the outset; every interpretive choice framed within it	<i>Tarbaʿwī</i> orientation surfaces alongside other interpretive characteristics; no systematic <i>tarbaʿwī</i> framework
Literature examples	<i>Al-Tafsīr al-Tarbaʿwī li al-Qurʾān al-Karīm</i> by Anwar al-Bāz	<i>Al-Asās fī al-Tafsīr</i> by Saʿīd Ḥawā; <i>Zahrat al-Tafāsīr</i> by Abū Zahrah; <i>al-Sahl al-Mufīd</i> by al-Farmawī

From Text to Milieu

In the contemporary literature on *tarbaʿwī tafsīr*, three writing models have been distinguished, each carrying its own framework. The first, exemplified by Anwar al-Bāz's *Al-Tafsīr al-Tarbaʿwī li al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, follows a *tahlīlī-muṣḥafī* pattern, grouping verses page by page according to the *muṣḥaf* in a five-stage progression that moves from the explanation of words and sentences, through the identification of the educational orientation and elaboration with reference to previous *tarbaʿwī*-oriented commentaries, to a closing summary of educational guidelines. The second, exemplified by Salman Harun's *Tafsīr Tarbaʿwī: Nilai-nilai Pendidikan dalam al-*

32 al-Ḥāzīmī, *Uṣūl al-Tarbiyah al-Islāmīyah*, 19–20.

Qur'ān, adopts a semi-thematic *tahlili-mawḍū'i* pattern, beginning from a chosen topic, collecting the verses relevant to it, and elaborating the *tarbawī* content across three layers comprising verse interpretation, educational values, and implementation in education. The third, exemplified by Rosidin's *Metodologi Tafsīr Tarbawī*, follows the fully thematic framework derived from al-Farmawī, proceeding through seven stages from topic selection through chronological arrangement, the examination of *munāsabah*, the supplementation of *ḥadīth*, and a final thematic synthesis.³³

These three models, for all their formal differences, share a common analytical limitation. Each treats *tarbawī* content as a property of the text that can be read off the page, whether by surveying verses in *muṣḥaf* order, by grouping them thematically, or by following a procedural sequence of stages. None of the three engages the conditions under which the text was written, taught, or received. The pedagogical purpose that gives a *tafsīr* its *tarbawī* character is treated as a feature of the words on the page rather than as an emergent property of the encounter between text, exegete, student, and institution. A parallel limitation can be observed in the broader scholarship on pesantren *tafsīr* surveyed in the introduction, where attention has accumulated around methodological features, contextual elements, and ideological orientations without engaging the *tarbawī* as an analytical category in its own right.

The present article makes a different analytical move, building on a line of work that has begun to read *tafsīr* pedagogy as a social practice rather than as the unfolding of a text. Nurtawab's study of Jalālayn pedagogy across pesantren, school, and competition settings shows that, when read within different institutional milieus, the same commentary yields what he terms a spectrum of pedagogical values, and that the frames within which *tafsīr* is studied carry greater analytical weight than texts considered in isolation.³⁴ The present article extends this line in two directions, namely from the reception of an existing commentary to the composition of a new one, and from the spectrum of values produced by readers of an inherited text to the spectrum produced by an exegete whose interpretive horizon is itself constituted by the pesantren practices that Nurtawab documents. In this approach, the *tarbawī* is not content located in the text but a property that emerges when the text is read within a pedagogical milieu. The question is not which verses an exegete classifies as *tarbawī*, but how the exegete's pedagogical horizon shapes the verses he selects,

33 Anwar al-Bāz, *Al-Tafsīr al-Tarbawī li-l-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Nashr li-l-Jāmi'āt, 2007); Salman Harun, *Tafsīr Tarbawī: Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan dalam Al-Qur'an* (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2019); Rosidin, *Metodologi Tafsīr Tarbawī* (Jakarta: Amzah, 2015); and 'Abd al-Hayy al-Farmawī, *Al-Bidāyah fi al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'i: Dirāsah Manhajīyah Mawḍū'iyah*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ḥadārah al-'Arabīyah, 1977).

34 Eryan Nurtawab, "Jalalayn Pedagogical Practice: Styles of Qur'an and Tafsir Learning in Contemporary Indonesia" (PhD diss., Monash University, 2018), 188–89.

The Pedagogical Milieu of Firdaws al-Na'im

Every afternoon at Pesantren Assaad, between the ‘Aṣr prayer and sunset, a circle of *santri* gathers around Kiai Thaifur for the daily reading of Firdaws al-Na‘īm. The lesson is held every day except Fridays and is open to *santri* from within the pesantren as well as members of the wider community who wish to attend. The instructional model follows the method known as qirā’at *al-ṭullāb ‘alā al-shaykh* (literally, the students’ reading before the *shaykh*), in which students read the *tafsīr* text aloud before the teacher, who corrects misreadings and offers further explanation when the passage proves *mushkil* (difficult or obscure) or when an exegetical point requires elaboration.³⁵

The daily reading at Pesantren Assadad falls within a broader pedagogical tradition that distinguishes the Madurese pesantren from other institutional sites of Islamic learning. *Bandongan* (collective reading sessions led by the *kiai*) and *sorogan* (individual reading by the student before the teacher) circles around the *kitab kuning* (classical Arabic religious texts) have for centuries supplied the dominant pattern

37 Ervan Nurtawab, "Jalalayn Pedagogical Practice: Styles of Qur'an and Tafsir Learning in Contemporary Indonesia" (PhD diss., Monash University, 2018), 188–89.

of textual instruction. The use of Pegon script (Javanese or Madurese written in Arabic letters) for the vernacular elaboration of these texts has long provided a principal material medium of the kitab kuning tradition. Pegon has functioned as a pedagogical and identitarian medium of pesantren life rather than as a neutral instrument of communication.³⁸ Firdaws al-Na'im enters this inheritance from a particular angle. Its composition in Arabic rather than in *Pegon* signals an aspiration to address both the internal elite of the pesantren and an audience beyond it, while its use as the primary text for the daily *tafsir* circle at Assadad keeps it firmly within the *bandongan*-style oral pedagogy through which Madurese pesantren tradition has long transmitted exegetical knowledge.

The pedagogical force of Firdaws al-Na'im does not derive from the text alone. The pesantren is a twenty-four-hour environment in which the *kiai* serves as a living curriculum, modeling in daily conduct what the texts teach, and Firdaws al-Na'im enters the formation of the *santri* alongside Thaifur's other instructional works, his daily example, and the broader devotional rhythm of pesantren life. The result is that the commentary cannot be detached from the teacher who composed it and who continues to teach it, nor from the institutional milieu within which both teacher and text are situated. Whatever pedagogical orientation can be read in the pages of Firdaws al-Na'im must be read against this background, in which the page is one element within a larger formative ecology.

The Milieu as an Interpretive Event

What this milieu enables, in Gadamerian terms, is *Verstehen als Ereignis*: understanding does not consist of retrieving a meaning already lodged within the text but occurs as an event when a situated reader encounters the text under specific conditions. The daily *tafsir* circle at Assadad is precisely such an event. Each session brings together the Qur'anic verse under consideration, the gloss provided by *Firdaws al-Na'im*, the situated horizon of the *santri* who reads aloud, Thaifur's corrective and explanatory horizon, and the institutional rhythm of *pesantren* life within which both reader and teacher are formed. To read *Firdaws al-Na'im* solely as a textual artifact is therefore to read against the grain of the way the commentary actually produces meaning.

Within this event, a second Gadamerian concept becomes operative. The *Horizontverschmelzung*, or fusion of horizons, describes the encounter in which the horizon of the text meets the horizon of the reader, and understanding actually takes

38 Ahmad Baidowi, "Pegon Script in the Tradition of Pesantren Qur'anic Commentary Writing," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 21, no. 2 (July 2020): 486–88, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2020.2102-12>.

place. At Assadad, the horizon of Firdaws al-Na'im meets the horizon of the *santri*. The horizon of the text is itself the product of Thaifur's prior horizon, shaped by his pesantren training under his father, 'Ali Wafa; his studies under multiple masters in Java, Madura, and Mecca; and his immersion in the Shāfi'ī scholarly tradition. The following section examines these dimensions more closely. The horizon of the *santri*, by contrast, derives from their own formation through *bandongan* and *sorogan* sessions on other texts, their embeddedness in Madurese pesantren culture, and their developing competence in the Arabic of *kitab kuning*. What emerges from this meeting is not the meaning of Firdaws al-Na'im as such, but the meaning Firdaws al-Na'im takes on within this specific milieu.

The present article reads Firdaws al-Na'im from precisely this perspective. The interpretive event at Assadad is not an external context to be set aside before the text is engaged, but the very condition under which the text means what it means. On this view, the *tarbawī* character of the commentary emerges from this event and from this fusion, not from features of the text that could be classified in isolation from them. The analysis turns next to the horizon Thaifur brings to the composition of Firdaws al-Na'im and the form the commentary therefore takes.

The Formation of the Interpreter and the Form of the Commentary

The horizon Thaifur brings to Firdaws al-Na'im was formed within the dense pedagogical genealogy of Madurese pesantren tradition. His earliest and most decisive teacher was his father, Kiai 'Ali Wafa, a prominent religious scholar and *murshid* (spiritual guide) of the Naqshbandīyah *ṭarīqah* (Sufi order) in Sumenep,³⁹ under whose guidance the foundations of his intellectual and spiritual formation were laid. Beyond his father, Thaifur pursued study across various regions of Java and Madura before continuing to Mecca, where he sat before no fewer than sixteen *mashāyikh* (teachers), whose names and texts he records in his autobiography.⁴⁰ This breadth of formation, pursued through the customary pesantren mode of qirā'at al-ṭullāb 'alā al-shaykh under successive masters, supplied him with both the methodological tools and the intellectual habits characteristic of Madurese pesantren scholarship in his generation.

Among these sixteen teachers, Thaifur singles out two as the most consequential for his formation: his father, 'Ali Wafa, and Shaykh Ismā'il 'Uthmān Zayn, whom he openly describes as his *shaykh al-futūḥ* (the master who opened him to spiritual and

39 Wafa, Manār al-Wafā fi Nubdhah min Tarjamāt al-Faqīrīlā 'Afīw Allāh Thaifur 'Ali Wafa al-Madūri, 8–9.

40 Wafa, Manār al-Wafā fi Nubdhah min Tarjamāt al-Faqīrīlā 'Afīw Allāh Thaifur 'Ali Wafa al-Madūri, 155–56, 212–26.

intellectual illumination).⁴¹ The acknowledgment is not an honorific embellishment but a precise hermeneutic disclosure. To name a teacher as *shaykh al-futūḥ* is to identify the horizon under which one's understanding came to be possible, the figure in whose presence the previously closed text became readable. Thaifur's learning also remained situated within the Shāfi'ī school, a tradition that has long shaped Madurese religious life from worship to transactions and that he inherited through both his teachers and the texts that mediated his intellectual development.

What this formation supplied to Thaifur is precisely what Gadamer terms *Vorurteil*, the pre-understandings that a situated reader brings to a text and that pattern the interpretations the reader is then capable of producing. The Naqshbandī Sufi inheritance, the Shāfi'ī jurisprudential commitment, the network of Madurese teachers, and the spiritual aperture opened by Ismā'īl 'Uthmān Zayn are not biographical decorations to be set aside before reading Firdaws al-Na'im. They are constitutive of the horizon from within which Thaifur reads the Qur'an, selects what to elaborate and what to compress, and decides which of his own *qultu* (I say) interventions to leave on the page. A reading that bypasses this horizon, as text-oriented analyses of *Firdaws* have tended to do,⁴² risks classifying the commentary's features without recognizing the formative conditions from which those features emerge.

The horizon at work in the composition takes visible form in the commentary itself. Firdaws al-Na'im was completed by Thaifur on 21 Rabī' al-Awwal 1434 AH, corresponding to 2 February 2013, and published in six volumes covering all thirty juz of the Qur'an in *al-tartīb al-muṣḥafī*, the canonical order of the muṣḥaf rather than a thematic arrangement.^{43,44} Each *sūrah* opens with a brief profile that includes its classification as *makkiyyah* (revealed in Mecca) or *madaniyyah* (revealed in Medina), the number of its verses, words, and letters, and, in some instances, alternative names, thematic content, *faḍā'il* (the merits of the *sūrah*), *asbāb al-nuzūl* (the occasions of revelation), and notes on verses whose classificatory status is exceptional.⁴⁵ Within

41 Wafa, Manār al-Wafā fi Nubdhah min Tarjamāt al-Faqīrīlā 'Afw Allāh Thaifur 'Ali Wafa al-Madūri, 155–56, 212–26.

42 Saichul Anam and Muhammad Nabil Iklil Mubarak, "From Pegon to Arabic: The New Tafsir of Indonesian Pesantren," *Aqwal: Journal of Qur'an and Hadis Studies* 6, no. 1 (October 2025): 95–96, <https://doi.org/10.28918/aqwal.v6i1.12298>.

43 Thaifur 'Ali Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'ānīĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm (Sumenep: Rembulan, 2018), 6:455.

44 Thaifur 'Ali Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'ānīĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm (Sumenep: Rembulan, 2018), 1:597.

45 For example, see the profile of Sūrat al-Fātiḥah, al-An'am, Yūsuf, al-Nūr, Yā Sin, al-Wāqī'ah, al-Mulk, al-Zalzalah, and al-Ikhlās. Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'ānīĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 1:5; Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'ānīĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 2:150–51; Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih

the body of each *sūrah*, Qur'anic excerpts are placed in parentheses to distinguish them from the explanatory text, in a layout and exegetical mode that closely resembles *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and, in the Nusantara tradition, *Marāḥ Labīd* by al-Nawawī al-Bantani, both of which are widely taught across Java and Madura.⁴⁶

The form taken by Firdaws al-Na'im is therefore not neutral; it represents a deliberate placement within a *Wirkungsgeschichte* (history of effects) already at work in Madurese pesantren. *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* has been the dominant text in the *tafsīr* curriculum of these pesantren for generations, supplying the atomistic exegetical method, the parenthetical layout, and the brevity that Thaifur reproduces. His decision to compose in Arabic rather than in *Pegon*, to complete the entire thirty-*juz* commentary rather than a thematic intervention, and to mark his own pedagogical interventions with the *qultu* formula all situate Firdaws al-Na'im both within and beyond this inherited form. The work is recognizably part of the *Jalālayn* lineage in its method and layout, but it claims a new authorial voice and a new institutional position by addressing both the *santri* of Pesantren Assadad and the wider Arabic-reading audience that the language permits.⁴⁷ To read Firdaws al-Na'im as a text-oriented artifact, without attention to this formative and effective history that shaped the horizons of both its composition and its reading, is to miss the very conditions under which the commentary takes on the *tarbawī* character that the analysis traces next.

The *Tarbawī* Spectrum of Firdaws al-Na'im

Across all thirty *juz* of *Firdaws al-Na'im*, the choices that set the commentary apart from *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, together with the *qultu* interventions in which Thaifur speaks in his own voice, fall into five recurring patterns. Each is a register in which the commentary's pedagogical commitment is exercised, and together they form what this article calls its *tarbawī* spectrum. A register here is not a variety of language but a range in which a single teaching voice operates: the same *kiai*, addressing the same *santri*, pitched differently as the occasion requires. The five differ not in what they discuss, but in what they train the *santri* to become. They ascend from the language

Ma'āniĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 3:141–42; Wafa, *Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'āniĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 4:246; Wafa, *Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'āniĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 5:200–201; Wafa, *Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'āniĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 6:144, 263, 423, 447.

46 For example, see Kiai Thaifur's interpretation of *Sūrat al-Shu'arā'* [26]: 38–40, *Yāsīn* [36]: 31–32, and *al-Humazah* [104]: 2–7. Wafa, *Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'āniĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 4:363–64; Wafa, *Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'āniĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 5:212–13; Wafa, *Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'āniĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 6:433.

47 Muhammad Asif, "Tafsir Dan Tradisi Pesantren: Karakteristik Tafsir al-Ibriz Karya Bisri Mustofa," *SUHUF* 9, no. 2 (June 2017): 257–58, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v9i2.154>.

in which the Qur'an is given toward the spiritual opening that the *kiai-as-murshid* treats as the end of all study.

Al-Tarbiyah al-Lughawīyah: Cultivating Linguistic Sensitivity

The first register addresses the linguistic foundations through which any reading of the Qur'an becomes possible. In Firdaws al-Na'im, Thaifur repeatedly returns to the operations of Arabic grammar (*nahw*), morphology (*ṣarf*), and rhetoric (*balāghah*), not as a display of philological expertise but as tools that *santri* must acquire if the Qur'anic text is to yield more than its surface sense. His treatment of al-Baqarah 2:208 illustrates the pattern. The verse turns on the function of the term *kāffah*, which Thaifur analyzes as either the *ḥāl* (adverbial accusative) of *udkhublū*, yielding "enter, all of you, into Islam," or as the *ḥāl* of *al-silm*, yielding "enter all branches of obedience and Islamic law." He further traces *kāffah* to *al-kuff* (to restrain), drawing from this etymological note the implication that the believers are forbidden to be divided and must hold ranks as one community.⁴⁸ A single verse, on this treatment, opens onto a range of meanings to which the linguistically untrained reader would have no access.

The pedagogical force of this approach becomes clearer when Thaifur turns from grammar to rhetoric. In his interpretation of al-Kahf 18:77, the phrase *jidāran yurīd* (a wall that wants) is identified as figurative because the verb *yurīd* (to want) is predicated of an inanimate object (*jidār*, wall).⁴⁹ In his interpretation of Yūnus 10:22, the verse is shown to exhibit *iltifāt*, the rhetorical shift from the second-person *kuntum* to the third-person *jaraynā bihim*.⁵⁰ To notice such features is not a learned indulgence but a precondition for reading the text in a manner adequate to its construction. By repeatedly modeling this attentiveness, Firdaws al-Na'im trains *santri* in a disposition that is itself the substance of the *tarba'wī* claim at this register, namely the cultivation of a reader for whom linguistic surface and Qur'anic meaning are not separable.

Al-Tarbiyah al-Kalāmīyah: Cultivating Doctrinal Conviction

The second register concerns the doctrinal commitments through which the Qur'anic text is to be received. As a *kiai* responsible for the doctrinal formation of his *santri*, Thaifur situates Firdaws al-Na'im within the Ash'arī theological school, the tradition that has long defined the doctrinal mainstream of Indonesian Sunnism

48 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im *bi Tawḍīḥ Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 1:203–4.

49 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im *bi Tawḍīḥ Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 3:494.

50 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im *bi Tawḍīḥ Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 3:17.

and that is institutionally associated with the Nahdlatul Ulama community in which Thaifur is embedded. His doctrinal trajectory was established early through texts he studied directly under his father, ‘Ali Wafa, including ‘Aqīdat al-‘Awwām by al-Marzūqī and Risālat al-Tawhīd by al-Bājūrī, both foundational references in the Ash‘arī tradition.⁵¹

The pedagogical character of this register becomes particularly visible where doctrinal sensitivities surface. Thaifur’s treatment of al-Baqarah 2:37, *fatalaqqā Ādam min rabbihī kalimāt*, addresses what he describes as the enigma of Adam’s apparent sin. If Adam was a prophet, how could he transgress, given the doctrinal consensus on ‘iṣmah (the prophetic protection from sin)? Thaifur first establishes the consensus position that prophets are protected from minor as well as major sins, citing the principle that “*the good deeds of the righteous (al-abrār) are the evil deeds of those who are close (al-muqarrabīn)*.”⁵² He then surveys the scholarly positions on Adam’s case and discloses, through the *qīla* formula that linguistically signals weakly transmitted opinion, his own inclination toward the view that the incident occurred before Adam’s prophetic appointment and therefore before his entry into the state of ‘iṣmah.⁵³ What is at stake is not merely an exegetical decision but doctrinal training in how to read Qur’anic narratives concerning the prophets in a manner that preserves, rather than compromises, the foundations the santri will carry into their own future teaching.

Beyond the doctrinal substance, Thaifur transmits an ethics of discussion. He quotes al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī, who warns that one should not initiate discussion of Adam’s mistake on one’s own authority, since doing so would be inappropriate even with respect to one’s own forebears, let alone a prophet whom Allah has forgiven and pardoned.⁵⁴ The lesson at this register is therefore dual. It supplies the *santri* with a doctrinal commitment that is properly Ash‘arī, and it supplies them with the disposition of caution and reverence by which that doctrinal commitment is to be transmitted in turn.

Al-Tarbiyah al-Fiqhiyah: Cultivating Jurisprudential Discernment

The third register concerns the formation of jurisprudential reasoning. Thaifur’s competence in *fiqh* is documented across more than a dozen of his own treatises on subjects ranging from ritual prayer to inheritance, marriage, and collective *dhikr*, and Firdaws al-Na‘īm both draws on and transmits that competence to *santri* at Pesantren

51 Wafa, Manār al-Wafā fi Nubdhah min Tarjamat al-Faqīr al-‘Afw Allāh Thaifur ‘Ali Wafa al-Madūri, 24–25.

52 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na‘īm bi Tawḍīḥ Ma‘āni Āyāt al-Qur‘ān al-Karīm, 1:44.

53 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na‘īm bi Tawḍīḥ Ma‘āni Āyāt al-Qur‘ān al-Karīm, 1:45.

54 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na‘īm bi Tawḍīḥ Ma‘āni Āyāt al-Qur‘ān al-Karīm, 1:45–46.

Assadad. His general orientation is Shāfi'ī, in keeping with the dominant *madhhab* affiliation of the Madurese pesantren milieu and with the scholarly genealogy through which he himself was trained. The more revealing feature of the register, for the present argument, is what happens when Thaifur departs from his default school.

Such a departure surfaces in his interpretation of al-Nūr 24:31, specifically the phrase *wa lā yubdīna zīnatahunna illā mā zahara minhā* (and let them not display their adornments except what is apparent thereof). Thaifur reads the exemption clause as “except for body parts that are normally visible according to custom” (*illā mā jarat al-‘ādah ‘alā żuhūrih*), and identifies these as the face, the palms of the hands, and the soles of the feet (*al-wajh wa al-kaffān wa al-qadamān*). This is the official position of the Mālikī and Ḥanafī schools, not of the Shāfi'ī school under which Thaifur conducts most of his other legal expositions; the Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī positions treat all of a woman's body as ‘awrah and admit no such exemption. Thaifur's preference for the Mālikī–Ḥanafī ruling,⁵⁵ despite his usual *madhhab* commitment, is intelligible only when read against the social customs of his milieu, in which Madurese Muslim women uncover the face, palms, and soles in ordinary daily activity and where a strict Shāfi'ī ruling would generate difficulties that Thaifur's pastoral position cannot ignore.⁵⁶

The pedagogical work of this register extends beyond the law-bearing verses. Thaifur derives legal implications from narrative passages as well, as in his treatment of Yūsuf 12:55 and al-Anbiyā' 21:78–79, where the deeds of prophets are read for the legal principles they embody.⁵⁷ What the *santri* learn in this register, then, is not the memorization of *madhhab* rulings but the practice of jurisprudential discernment, namely a disposition to read the Qur'an as a source of legal guidance across both its prescriptive and its narrative materials, and to weigh *madhhab* positions against the social texture of the community to be served. The register thereby transmits both the content of *fiqh* and the manner of judgment by which *fiqh* meets the demands of a particular pesantren landscape.

Al-Tarbiyah al-Ijtimā'iyah: Cultivating Social Sensibility

The fourth register concerns the social dimension of the commentary's pedagogical work. As a *kiai* consulted by the surrounding community and as the leader of Pesantren Assadad, Thaifur composes *Firdaws al-Na'im* with sustained

55 Wafa, *Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'āniĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 4:275–79.

56 Muḥammad 'Alī al-Sābūnī, *Rawā'i' al-Bayān: Tafṣir Āyāt al-Aḥkām min al-Qur'ān* (Damaskus: Maktabah al-Ghazālī, 1981), 2:154–56.

57 Wafa, *Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'āniĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 3:181; Wafa, *Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tarwḍih Ma'āniĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 4:130–33.

attention to the social roles served by exegetical knowledge. Many of his elaborative interventions take the form of advice, guidance, or direction. Their implied addressees include the sons of religious leaders, students of the Islamic sciences, and, more generally, scholars and pious figures.

A characteristic example surfaces in Thaifur's reading of al-Baqarah 2:124, the verse that recounts Allah's promise of leadership to Ibrāhīm and his descendants, with the qualification that "*My promise does not apply to the wicked.*" Thaifur attaches a *qultu* intervention that draws an explicit lesson for the descendants of the pious: "*Among the lessons that can be drawn from this verse is that it is not appropriate for descendants to sit idly by and rely on the piety of their ancestors if they do not do good deeds and do not strive as hard as their ancestors did.*"⁵⁸ The addressee is left implicit but unmistakable to any reader within the Madurese pesantren milieu, where the *gus* and *lora*, the sons of *kiai*, occupy a recognized social category whose conduct is publicly scrutinized. Thaifur extends the same line in verse 128 of the same *sūrah*, where Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl's prayer for their descendants becomes the basis for an exhortation to 'ulamā' and pious figures to pray specifically for their descendants as those who will preserve the noble values they have transmitted.⁵⁹

A second cluster of socially attuned interventions appears in Thaifur's treatment of Sūrat al-Kahf 18:60, 62, 70, and 82, the verses that narrate the encounter between Mūsā and Khidr. At each of these four points, Thaifur directs *qultu* interventions to the *ṭālib al-ʿilm* (the student of Islamic knowledge), counseling students to purify their intentions, exert themselves physically and spiritually in the pursuit of learning, maintain proper etiquette toward teachers, abandon bad habits, and remain willing to learn from anyone in order to obtain useful knowledge and attain mature understanding.⁶⁰ On this treatment, the Mūsā–Khidr narrative is read as a sequence of pedagogical lessons in pesantren etiquette, embedded within the Qur'anic text. The *tarbawī* claim at this register is therefore not that Thaifur happens to discuss social matters, but that he composes the commentary as a sustained address to the social roles his *santri* will assume and as a deliberate training in the dispositions that those roles require.

58 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tawḍīḥ Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 1:127.

59 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tawḍīḥ Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 1:131.

60 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im bi Tawḍīḥ Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 3:480–81, 486–87, 492, 500.

Al-Tarbiyah al-Şufiyyah: Cultivating Spiritual Refinement

The fifth register reaches the spiritual aperture that the *kiai-as-murshid* takes as the final aim of pesantren study. As a *murshid* of the Naqshbandiyyah *ṭarīqah*, Thaifur is positioned to read the Qur'an with the inheritance of *ishārī* (allusive-spiritual) exegesis at his disposal, and Firdaws al-Na'im draws on this inheritance selectively where the verse and the pedagogical occasion warrant it. He does not impose a Sufi reading on every verse that might support one. His interpretation of al-Jinn 72:16, often invoked in support of *ṭarīqah* practice, contains no Sufi gloss at all, on the grounds that the verse's *al-ṭarīqah* is not directly related to the practice of Sufism and the connection between the two is indirect.⁶¹ The selectivity is itself a pedagogical signal. *Ishārī* reading is to be used where the text and the moment call for it, not as a default mode that displaces other modes.

Where the register does operate, it does so in two recognizable forms. The first is the explicit citation of Sufi authorities. Thaifur's treatment of Yūnus 10:62–64, the series of verses on the *awliyā'*, draws on al-Qushayrī's principle that "*the condition of a walī is mahfūz just as the condition of a prophet is ma'şūm*," from which it follows that anyone whose conduct contradicts the Sharī'ah is in fact deceived and deceiving.⁶² Thaifur further parses *walī* as both *fā'il* (the servant who actively dedicates himself to his Lord) and *maf'ul* (the servant whom Allah nurtures and honors by reserving His care to Himself alone), and identifies a practical sign of the *walī* through a Prophetic report describing the *awliyā'* as "those who, when seen, cause Allah to be remembered."⁶³ The Sufi character of the reading becomes clearer in comparison with the major Indonesian commentaries that decline to draw out the spiritual dimension at all, including the renderings of A. Hassan,⁶⁴ Hamidy and Fachruddin,⁶⁵ and Mahmud Yunus.⁶⁶

61 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im *bi Tawdīh Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 6:307.

62 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im *bi Tawdīh Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 3:41; 'Abd al-Karīm Ibn Hawāzin Ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, ed. 'Abdal-Halīm Mahmūd and Mahmud Ibn al-Sharīf (Kairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 2:416.

63 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im *bi Tawdīh Ma'ānī Āyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 3:40. The hadith qudsi referred to is a well-known hadith narrated by al-Bukhari. One of its passages reads, "If I love him (a servant), I will be his hearing with which he hears." See the full text in Abū 'AbdAllāh Muhammad Ibn Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muṣṭafā Dīb al-Bughā (Damaskus: Dār Ibn Kathīr & Dār al-Yamāmah, 1993), 5:2384. Meanwhile, the Prophet's words quoted above were narrated by Ibn Abi al-Dunya in his *al-Awliyā'*. Abū Bakr 'AbdAllāh Ibn Muhammad al-Ma'rūf bi Ibn Abi al-Dunyā, *Al-Awliyā'*, ed. Muhammad al-Sa'īd Ibn Basyūnī Zaghālūl (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, n.d.), 18.

64 A. Hassan, *Al-Furqan: Tafsīr Qur'an* (Surabaya: AL IKHWAN, n.d.), 404.

65 Zainuddin Hamidy and Fachruddin Hs., *Tafsīr Quran* (Selangor: Klang Book Centre, 1988), 301.

66 Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsīr Quran Karim* (Selangor: Klang Book Centre, 2003), 300.

The second form is the explicit use of *ishārī* terminology to signal a spiritual register without external citation. In Thaifur's reading of Ṭāhā 20:12, the divine command to Mūsā to remove his sandals because he stands in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā is glossed with the diction *ahl al-ishārah min 'ulamā' al-bāṭin* (the people of allusive reading from among the scholars of inner knowledge), who interpret the two sandals as the two realms (inner and outer) that the heart must turn away from in order to be wholly immersed in Allah's ma'rifah (gnosis); the sacred valley itself becomes the sanctity of God's glory and majesty.⁶⁷ What the *santri* are trained in at this register is the disposition to recognize when the Qur'anic text invites a spiritual reading, the patience to refrain from imposing one where it does not, and the inner refinement that *ishārī* exegesis is intended to cultivate as the culminating fruit of the entire study.

The Five Registers as a Fusion of Horizons

The five registers should not be read as five independent classifications applied to a single corpus. They are five aspects of a single pedagogical orientation that Firdaws al-Na'im enacts across all thirty juz, and the order in which they have been presented here, from the linguistic foundations through the doctrinal, jurisprudential, and social dimensions to the spiritual culmination, traces an internal logic supplied by the commentary itself. Each register prepares the conditions under which the next becomes possible. The linguistic sensitivity cultivated in the first is the precondition for the doctrinal precision required in the second. The doctrinal precision, in turn, underwrites the jurisprudential judgment of the third, which is then exercised within the social roles addressed in the fourth, and the entire arc reaches its final aim in the spiritual refinement that the fifth cultivates as the proper end of study.

Each register also corresponds to one element of Thaifur's interpretive horizon, the *Vorurteil* reconstructed in the preceding analysis. The linguistic register reflects the textual-philological discipline of the *kitab kuning* tradition under which Thaifur was trained. The doctrinal register reflects the Ash'arī commitment that he inherited through his father and through the foundational texts of his early formation. The jurisprudential register reflects the Shāfi'ī *madhhab* affiliation that defines the Madurese pesantren milieu, although the al-Nūr 24:31 case shows that this affiliation is itself responsive to the social conditions in which the *madhhab* is to be applied. The social register reflects Thaifur's position as a *kiai* embedded in a community whose advice he is called to give and whose descendants he is responsible to form.

67 Wafa, Firdaws al-Na'im *bi Tawdīh Ma'āniĀyāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 4:47.

The spiritual register reflects his standing as a *murshid* of the Naqshbandīyah *ṭarīqah* and his recognition of *al-futūḥ* as the final aim of the entire pedagogical enterprise. The five registers, therefore, are not interpretive choices that Thaifur happens to make. They are the visible operations of the horizon that condition his reading of the Qur'an.

What distinguishes these registers from projections of a single interpreter's horizon is that they are constituted through encounter. The *qultu* interventions addressed to the *ṭālib al-ʿilm*, the selections and emphases that diverge from the *Jalālayn* baseline, and the use of *Firdaws al-Naʿim* as the daily teaching text at Pesantren Assadad situate the commentary at the meeting point between Thaifur's horizon and that of the *santri* who receive his teaching. This is the *Horizontverschmelzung* established by the milieu analysis, made operational in the patterned interpretive event constituted by the five registers. The registers are not simply Thaifur's imprint on a passive text; they are the patterned outcome of an event in which text, interpreter, and institutional milieu all participate. The commentary's *tarbaʿwī* character is therefore not a property carried by the words on the page but one generated by the encounter that the commentary both anticipates and convenes.

The preceding analysis answers the objection raised in the introduction: a comprehensive *tafsīr* may discuss law, theology, Sufism, and language as part of the genre's encyclopedic ambition, but the mere presence of these subjects does not establish a *tarbaʿwī* character. That the five registers correspond broadly to orientations long recognized in *ʿulūm al-tafsīr* is not incidental; what is claimed here is not a new inventory of domains but a pedagogical account of their arrangement, their addressivity, and their divergence from the *Jalālayn* baseline. *Firdaws al-Naʿim* does more than discuss them. It arranges them in a sequence that begins with the linguistic foundations of Qur'anic reading and culminates in the spiritual aperture that the *pesantren* tradition treats as the final aim of study. It addresses them through interventions directed to a specific audience, the *ṭālib al-ʿilm*; through selections and emphases that diverge from the *Jalālayn* baseline where pedagogical formation requires intervention; and within an institutional life that makes the text continuous with the daily formation of the *santri*. These features arise not from the genre's encyclopedic ambition but from the fusion of horizons performed and constituted by the commentary in its composition and use. The *tarbaʿwī* spectrum is, on this account, what that fusion of horizons looks like when *Firdaws al-Naʿim* is read within its proper milieu.

Conclusion

This article has read *Firdaws al-Na'im* not as a text whose features can be classified apart from their conditions of production, but as the patterned outcome of an interpretive event situated within the pedagogical milieu of Pesantren Assaad. Using the four Gadamerian concepts of understanding as event, prejudice, effective history, and fusion of horizons, the analysis reconstructed the milieu in which the commentary functions, the horizon its author brings to it, the form it consequently takes, and the five registers through which its *tarbawī* character is exercised. These concepts serve throughout not as a substitute for the classical apparatus of *uṣūl al-tafsīr* but as a lens that renders its pedagogical mediation of Qur'anic meaning tractable. These registers are not an inventory of doctrinal content; together, they constitute a single pedagogical orientation enacted across all thirty *juz*. That orientation is the visible operation of a fusion of horizons among the text, the interpreter, and the *pesantren* milieu in which both are read.

This analysis contributes at three intersecting points. First, it offers scholarship on *tafsīr tarbawī* a category that is no longer confined to textual content. Whereas existing literature often treats the *tarbawī* as material that can be inventoried within a commentary's pages, this article understands it as a property of the interpretive event in which a commentary is composed, taught, and received. Second, it introduces into scholarship on *pesantren tafsīr* an analytical category absent from its established catalog of methodological, ideological, and contextual concerns. The proposed *tarbawī* spectrum brings into focus a dimension that studies of *pesantren tafsīr* have not yet engaged in its own right. Third, it demonstrates that Gadamer's framework can be productively applied to pesantren exegetical materials—not as a substitute for the classical apparatus of *uṣūl al-tafsīr*, but as a philosophical lens that renders the pedagogical mediation of Qur'anic meaning theoretically tractable.

Beyond Indonesian Islamic studies, the argument speaks to international conversations on the hermeneutics of scriptural pedagogy, the ethnography of religious education, and the comparative study of vernacular and classical-language exegesis. The pesantren reading of *Firdaws al-Na'im* is not merely an Indonesian phenomenon to be reported as local data but a site from which conceptual contributions to these wider conversations can be made. The fusion of horizons that the analysis has identified in Pesantren Assaad has structural parallels in other religious-educational milieus where scriptural commentary functions as both authoritative text and pedagogical instrument, and the analytical move from text to milieu may have applications beyond the Islamic case.

The analysis has three limitations. It examines a single *tafsīr* within a single *pesantren*, so the transferability of its findings to other Arabic-language *pesantren* commentaries and institutional settings requires further study. It does not compare *Firdaws al-Na'im* with *al-Mu'tasam fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Mu'azzam*, the other commentary that satisfies the corpus criteria adopted here, although such a comparison could clarify variation within contemporary Arabic-language *pesantren tafsīr*. Finally, it engages the commentary primarily through the textual artifact and Thaifur's autobiographical writings, without the sustained ethnographic observation of the daily teaching circle that a more fully developed milieu analysis would require.

Three lines of research follow from these limitations. First, a comparative reading of *Firdaws al-Na'im* alongside *al-Mu'tasam* and major *pesantren* commentaries from other regions, including the Javanese *al-Ibriz* and *al-Iklil*, would test the extent to which the *tarbawī* spectrum identified here applies across Indonesian *pesantren tafsīr*. Second, an ethnographic study of the daily teaching circle, attending to the speech events and pedagogical exchanges through which a *pesantren* commentary constitutes meaning, would deepen the milieu analysis begun here. Third, the *tarbawī* spectrum could be operationalized in studies that apply *tafsīr tarbawī* to substantive social and ethical questions, particularly the formation of legal-ethical character in *pesantren* education. The future of *tafsīr tarbawī* scholarship lies neither in inventorying pedagogical content nor in defining the category abstractly, but in analyzing how *tarbawī* meaning is constituted, taught, and lived within particular pedagogical milieus.

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