

# TAFSĪR AL-JALĀLAYN AT THE CROSSROADS: INTERPRETING THE QURĀN IN MODERN INDONESIA

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# **TAFSĪR AL-JALĀLAYN AT THE CROSSROADS: INTERPRETING THE QUR'AN IN MODERN INDONESIA<sup>1</sup>**

**Ervan Nurtawab<sup>2</sup>**

## **Abstract**

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

## **Keywords**

*Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*; Mahmud Yunus; *Tafsīr Qurān Karīm*; *Isrā'īliyyāt*; Dhū 'l-Qarnayn; Modern Qur'anic interpretation

## **I. Introduction**

Arabic commentaries produced from the classical and medieval Islamic periods such as those authored by *al-Baghawī*,<sup>3</sup> *al-Khāzin*,<sup>4</sup> *al-Bayḍāwī*<sup>5</sup> and *al-Jalālayn*<sup>6</sup> enjoyed privileged positions

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<sup>3</sup> His complete name is Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas'ūd al-Baghawī (d. 1122). His work I refer to in this article is titled *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl* [The Places of Revelation].

<sup>4</sup> His complete name is 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm, known as al-Khāzin (d. 1340). His work being reviewed in this article is *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl* [The Core of Interpretation in the Meanings of Revelation].

<sup>5</sup> His complete name is 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar al-Bayḍāwī (d. 1286). His work being studied here is *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Ta'wīl* [The Lights of Revelation and the Secrets of Interpretation].

in the list of main references in the Qur'anic exegetical activities in the Southeast Asia region from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> A special attention goes to *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (henceforth, the *Jalālayn*). Following its sample role for the compilation of the *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* (henceforth, the *Tarjumān*) in late 17<sup>th</sup>-century Aceh, this Arabic commentary had become dominant as the main reference in the local Qur'anic *tafsīr* production of the region, especially in Banten and Mindanao.<sup>8</sup>

In the coming of modernisation to early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Indonesia, the *Jalālayn* has been widely circulated and has still been regularly reprinted to serve the purpose of Islamic pedagogy in the Indonesian *pesantrens*.<sup>9</sup> This work remains collectible in the students' bookshelves in the modernist-reformist Islamic educational institutions such as those affiliated with the *Persatuan Islam* organisation.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the ways in which this commentary was *suddenly* positioned in the Indonesian modernist *tafsīr* literature has been overlooked. The fact is that the *Jalālayn* has been for centuries playing a vital role in bridging the meaning of the Qur'anic text to the non-Arabic speaking communities in the Southeast Asian region.

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<sup>6</sup> The word *al-Jalālayn* here refers to the Qur'anic commentary titled *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* [The Interpretation of the Almighty Qur'an]. Known as *al-Jalālayn* which means two Jalals because this commentary was authored by two Islamic scholars who have the same name Jalāl al-Dīn, that is Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī (d. 1459) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505).

<sup>7</sup> Peter G. Riddell, "'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Sinkili's Tarjumān al-Mustafid: A Critical Study of His Treatment of Juz' 16. Ph.D. Thesis at the Australian National University (1984); Peter G. Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses* (Singapore: Horizon Books, 2001); Peter G. Riddell, *Malay Court Religion, Culture and Language: Interpreting the Qur'an in 17th Century Aceh* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); R. Michael Feener, "Notes towards the History of Qur'anic Exegesis in Southeast Asia." *Studia Islamika* 5, no. 3 (1998): 47-76.

<sup>8</sup> Ervan Nurtawab, "The Malay *Tafsīr* in the Sheik Muhammad Said Collection in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, Philippines." In Oman Fathurahman et al (Eds.), *The Library of an Islamic Scholar of Mindanao: The Collection of Sheik Muhammad Said bin Imam sa Bayang at the al-Imam As-Sadiq (AS) Library, Marawi City, Philippines: An Annotated Catalogue with Essays* (Tokyo: Institute of Asian, African, and Middle Eastern Studies, Sophia University, 2019a), 129-154; Ervan Nurtawab, "Qur'anic Readings and Malay Translations in 18th-Century Banten Qur'ans A.51 and W.277." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 48, no.141 (2020): 169-189.

<sup>9</sup> For the circulation of Arabic Islamic works, including the *Jalālayn*, in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Java and Madura, see L.W.C. Van den Berg, "Het Mohammedaansche Godsdienstonderwijs op Java en Madoera en de Daarbij Gebruikte Arabische Boeken [The Mohammedan Religious Education in Java and Madura and the Arabic Books Used]." *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* [Journal of Indian Language, Land and Ethnology] 31 (1886): 519-555; For the wide circulation of the *Jalālayn* itself during 20<sup>th</sup>-century Indonesia, see Martin Van Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the Pesantren Milieu: Comments on a New Collection in the KITLV Library." *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* [Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia] 146 (1990): 226-269; Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World*, 49; Nashruddin Baidan, *Perkembangan Tafsir al-Qur'an di Indonesia* [The Development of Qur'anic Exegesis in Indonesia] (Yogyakarta: Tiga Serangkai, 2003), 96-98; Ervan Nurtawab, *Jalālayn Pedagogical Practice: Styles of Qur'an and Tafsir Learning in Contemporary Indonesia*. Ph.D. thesis at Monash University (2018), 30-50.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

The existing scholarship has confirmed how modern Muslim thinkers and societies have challenged many aspects typically discussed in works of the Islamic scholars produced from the classical and medieval Islamic periods. For example, it is useful to quote Jansen's statement in the Egyptian context on how modern Muslims have perceived classical Arabic commentaries in connection to their needs in having a direct approach to the Qur'an. In this regard, Jansen states: "In the condensed form in which commentaries like those by *al-Bayḍāwī* and *al-Jalālayn* present such grammatical and syntactical explanations, they often appear unnecessary and beside the point."<sup>11</sup> Jansen based this statement on thoughts sought by an Egyptian Islamic reformer, Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905), who encouraged Muslims not to let the works of interpretation a hindrance for them in directly seeking a guidance from the Qur'an.

In the Southeast Asian context, Anthony Johns identified a dynamic situation of the ways in which reformist-modernist groups encouraged Muslims not to just rely on the interpretation of texts from classical or medieval Islamic scholars.<sup>12</sup> Instead, Muslims should embark on the interpretation of their scripture by using more reason and should consider advances in current scientific developments and technologies. Consequently, they raised an objection on the use of *Isrā'īliyyāt* narratives, especially from the Judeo-Christian traditions, for interpreting the Qur'an. However, Feener notes that the genre of such narratives is not completely eliminated in the modern Indonesian Islamic literature. Even, it has shifted into an independent field of interest, but separated from the genre of Qur'anic commentary.<sup>13</sup>

In this article, I examine *Tafsir Qurān Karim*<sup>14</sup> by an Azhari-trained scholar, Mahmud Yunus (d. 1982), as among the first complete Indonesian commentaries in the modern period.<sup>15</sup> As Yunus himself mentioned in his introduction to the work, he began writing the commentary in November 1922. The writing continued in that way until he completed the commentary of *juz* ' 3. Then, he received assistance from his colleagues to continue the project. In 1935, he was able

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<sup>11</sup> J.J.G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 64.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay World: In Search of a Profile." In Andrew Rippin (Ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 273-274.

<sup>13</sup> Feener, "Notes towards the History of Qur'anic Exegesis," 53-54.

<sup>14</sup> In this article, Indonesian publications in Roman script do not receive transliteration although the titles are in Arabic. Instead, they are spelled according to those appear in the title pages.

<sup>15</sup> Some complete Indonesian commentaries coming from the same period are [1] *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* by Abdul Halim Hasan, Zain al-Arifin Abbas and Abdurrahim, [2] *Tafsir al-Furqan* by A. Hassan and [3] *Tafsir Quran* by Zainuddin Hamidy and Fachruddin HS.

to finish the commentary until *juz* ' 18. Then, Yunus himself decided to continue, and that the project was successfully completed in 1938.<sup>16</sup>

By taking Yunus' *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* as the sample of study, I question the positions of classical Arabic commentaries, especially the *Jalālayn*, in the modern *tafsir* literature, given that the translated text is usually presented so briefly that prevents the authors of *tafsir* from giving extra-explanations as glosses. Meanwhile, there was an increasing trend in the modern *tafsir* literature to expand commentaries from various disciplines and contemporary scientific developments. For the purpose of this study, I select some commentaries of the verses from Yunus' *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* for the basis of my analysis and then study his treatment of *Sūrat al-Kahfī* 83-101 on the story of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn.

In this article, I argue that the *Jalālayn* was positioned at the crossroads for being marginalised from the mainstream Indonesian modernist *tafsir* literature. In fact, the *Jalālayn* constitutes the most important source for the production of many Southeast Asian commentaries from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Southeast Asian commentaries produced during these centuries that are proven to have used the *Jalālayn* as their sample role are the *Tarjumān* in Malay from late 17<sup>th</sup>-century Aceh,<sup>17</sup> Banten Qur'ans A.51 and W.277 with interlinear translations in Malay from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>18</sup> Banten Qur'an A.54 with interlinear translation in Javanese from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>19</sup> the *Sheikh Muhammad Sa'id (SMS) Malay Tafsir* probably from late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Mindanao,<sup>20</sup> and the *Ahmad Bashier (AB) Malay Tafsir* probably from late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Mindanao<sup>21</sup>.

The early 20<sup>th</sup>-century witnessed the *Jalālayn*'s position that has shifted to periphery where this work has been excluded from the list of the Indonesian modern *tafsir* references. While the absence of *Jalālayn*'s role in the modern Indonesian commentaries is obvious, modernist commentators do not entirely neglect some legendary elements as usually found in the classical and medieval Arabic commentaries. One example is the Qur'anic episode of Dhū 'l-

<sup>16</sup> Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim Bahasa Indonesia* [The Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an], 31<sup>st</sup> edition. (Jakarta: Hidakarya Agung, 1993), iii-vii.

<sup>17</sup> Riddell, "'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Sinkili's Tarjumān al-Mustafid."

<sup>18</sup> Nurtawab, "Qur'anic Readings and Malay Translations," 169-189.

<sup>19</sup> Ervan Nurtawab & Fasjud Syukroni, "Qur'anic Arabic, *Tafsir al-Jalālayn* and Javanese: Javanese translations in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Banten Qur'an A.54." Forthcoming.

<sup>20</sup> Nurtawab, "The Malay *Tafsir* in the Sheik Muhammad Said Collection," 129-154.

<sup>21</sup> Ervan Nurtawab, "Qur'anic Translations in Malay, Javanese and Sundanese: A Commentary or Substitution?" In M. Daneshgar, P. G. Riddell & Andrew Rippin (Eds.). *The Qur'an in the Malay-Indonesian World: Context and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2016), 39-57.

Qarnayn. Despite being placed in the category of modernist *tafsīr*, Yunus' commentary cannot escape from borrowing some elements of the *Isrā'iliyyāt* narratives, some of them being found in the commentary of *al-Baghawī*. As will be elaborated, Yunus quoted this narrative when he seemed to feel the necessity in providing certain details regarding the identities of who Dhū 'l-Qarnayn is. He also presented certain details on the origin of Gog and Magog (Arabic: Ya'jūj wa-Ma'jūj).

## II. Modernist Qur'anic interpretation: The Case of *Tafsīr Qur'ān Karīm's* Mahmud Yunus

Johns states that the modernist-reformist movement in Egypt that spread throughout the Muslim world received wide-range responses. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, students from the Southeast Asian countries who studied in the Middle East, especially at the Egyptian al-Azhar University, had been influenced by the movement, and that they then initiated the Islamic reform movements once they returned to their homeland.<sup>22</sup> They in some ways adopted some elements of Westernised-educational styles in the modernisation of Islamic schools. Indonesian Islamic education has experienced objectification where students' achievements are measured based on their academic performances.<sup>23</sup>

The modernist-reformist groups attempted at making the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions as the foundations for legal judgements. As Steenbrink<sup>24</sup> and Van Bruinessen<sup>25</sup> note, modernisation in some ways successfully made Muslims to be braver in approaching the Qur'an more directly. In this connection, Johns also notes that the reformist Muslims also attempted at isolating common parts in classical commentaries that in their opinion are considered unnecessary like grammatical explanations. It includes the ways in which they significantly reduced the presentation of variant Qur'anic readings in their commentaries. This is in line with the fact that since the late 1920s Muslims have been accepting Ḥafṣ' reading following the worldwide distribution of the printed Qur'an with the Egyptian official standard. The

<sup>22</sup> Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay World, 274.

<sup>23</sup> Karel Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam dalam Kurun Modern* [*Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Islamic Education in the Modern Period*] (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1986); Yudi Latif, *Indonesian Muslim Intelligentsia and Power* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008); Deliar Noer, *Administration of Islam in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2010); Ervan Nurtawab, "The Decline of Traditional Learning Methods in Changing Indonesia: Trends of *Bandongan-Kitab* Readings in *Pesantrens*." *Studia Islamika* 26, no. 3 (2019b): 511-541.

<sup>24</sup> Karel A Steenbrink, *Beberapa Aspek tentang Islam di Indonesia Abad ke-19* [Some Aspects on Islam in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Indonesia] (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1984), 157.

<sup>25</sup> Van Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the *Pesantren* Milieu," 229.

presentation of the *Isrā'īliyyāt* legendary tales to interpret the narrative elements found in the Qur'an also received strong critiques. This coincides with their preferences to promote the use of reason and scientific proofs in their attempts at re-making Islam more rational in the modern Islamic public sphere.

The Southeast Asian commentaries produced prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century do not necessarily differentiate translation and *tafsīr* genres in separate columns. The development of Western printing press significantly contributed to the shifting in the presentation of Qur'anic translations with their commentaries. Physically, the printed Qur'anic translations then looked more similar to the printed Bibles in respect to the aspects of settings and layouts because both scriptures were printed using the same technologies. This constitutes a big change especially where Qur'anic translation then received the state standardisation in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Indonesian government also produced the official commentary. The latter nevertheless remains more flexible where more Indonesian commentators better dedicate themselves in producing *tafsīr* while they seemed to be satisfied with the official Qur'anic translation, that is *Alquran dan Terjemahannya* (The Qur'an and Its Translation).

It is worth responding Johns statements above on the absence of grammatical and *qirā'āt* aspects in the Southeast Asian modern commentaries. I argue that the absence of both aspects is, *but* not always, related to modernisation. Southeast Asian commentaries produced prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century already excluded grammatical explanations. This is also the case with the *qirā'āt* although the *Tarjumān* by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī (d. 1693) is among the Malay *tafsīr* that intensively presented this explanation. However, Riddell notes that this part was actually added by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī's main disciple, Dā'ūd Rūmī, under his direct supervision.<sup>26</sup>

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

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<sup>26</sup> Riddell. "'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Sinkilī's *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*," 51-54.

The early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Indonesia witnessed a significant development of the ways in which works of Qur'anic commentaries adopted Western printing styles in respect of the formatting and lay-outing processes. Yusuf note that during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some Qur'anic commentaries were produced, one of them being *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* of Mahmud Yunus.<sup>27</sup> Federspiel has classified Yunus' commentary as among seminal works of Qur'anic commentaries in Southeast Asia, together with *al-Furqan* of Ahmad Hassan (d. 1958), *Tafsir Al-Qur'anul Karim* of A. Halim Hasan, and *Tafsir Qur'an* of Zainuddin Hamidy. Their works are considered seminal because—for Federspiel—the authors became pioneers in the production of modern commentaries for the Malay-Indonesian readers. Not only did they have difficulties in presenting modern translations for the difficult Arabic words, but they also faced the problems of providing acceptable and friendly-user formats. It includes the ways in which modern commentaries are Romanised, written from right-to-left compared to the pre-modern works that used modified Arabic-Persian scripts from left-to-right and were placed as interlinear or phrase-by-phrase translations.<sup>28</sup>

Yunan Yusuf notes that *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* is among the first modern work of this kind in the sense that the author bravely worked on Qur'anic translation while the traditional Muslim groups saw this attempt as forbidden.<sup>29</sup> Yusuf sees that Yunus' original decision in providing Qur'an translation in a modified Arabic script was to minimise the objections from those who argue against the production of Qur'anic meanings in non-Arabic languages. I argue that Yusuf's opinion is incorrect for two reasons. First, the Qur'anic exegetical tradition in Southeast Asia in the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century already witnessed conflicts among the Islamic scholars around this issue although the Arabic-modified script was the main scripts for writing the Islamic works. Second, objections raised by a certain Islamic scholar in Jatinegara-Jakarta appeared in the years of the completion of Yunus' commentary. By this, it means that his objection had nothing to do with the script choice in which Yunus' Qur'anic commentary was written. In this regard, this objection looked like entering Islamic theological discourses where disputes over the possibility of the Qur'an to be translated have its roots in the classical Islamic period.

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<sup>27</sup> M. Yunan Yusuf, "Karakteristik Tafsir al-Qur'an di Indonesia Abad Keduapuluh [The Characteristics of Qur'anic Exegesis in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Indonesia]." *Jurnal Ulumul Qur'an* 3, no. 4 (1992): 51.

<sup>28</sup> Howard M. Federspiel, "An Introduction to Qur'anic Commentaries in Contemporary Southeast Asia." *The Muslim World* LXXXI, no. 2 (1991): 157; cf. Johanna Pink, "Form Follows Function: Notes on the Arrangement of Texts in Printed Qur'an Translations." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 19, no. 1 (2017): 143.

<sup>29</sup> Yusuf, "Karakteristik Tafsir al-Qur'an di Indonesia," 52-53.



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

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

Johns states that the tendencies among the modern and rational readers who need instant, fast-track access to the Qur'an and its meanings contributed to reduction of some explanations commonly found in classical commentaries. These aspects are *qirā'āt*, grammar, and narratives.<sup>30</sup> Here, I would like to focus on the latter aspect, that is narrative elements in the Qur'an. The earliest evidence we have regarding this issue from the exegetical activities in Southeast Asia is the Cambridge Manuscript Or. Ii.6.45 that Erpenius bought from others who travelled to Southeast Asia in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Peter Riddell finds that this commentary greatly drew upon *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, and other parts were taken from other Arabic commentaries such as *Tafsīr al-Khāzin* and *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*.<sup>31</sup>

Feener notes that these three classical commentaries contain narrative elements from the Judeo-Christian traditions. Some scholars have rejected the use of such elements to interpret the Qur'anic narratives. Nevertheless, narratives from the Judeo-Christian traditions seemed to have spread easily among the Southeast Asian Muslim communities. This genre has been developed in the Malay and Javanese literature, and that these works are classified separately outside the genre

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<sup>30</sup> Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay world."

<sup>31</sup> Peter G. Riddell, "Earliest Quranic Exegetical Activity in the Malay-Speaking States." *Archipel* 38 (1989): 107-124; Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World*; Riddell, *Malay Court Religion, Culture and Language*.

of Qur'anic exegesis.<sup>32</sup> Feener gives one example of the published work in this genre that has been printed several times, that is *Rangkaian Tjerita dalam al-Qur'an* by Bey Arifin. This work explores narratives in the Qur'an and combines such narrative elements with those rooted in the Judeo-Christian traditions and those happened in the prophet's lifetime. In looking at the narrative elements in the modern *tafsir* literature, Feener seemed not to realise that some *Isrā'īlyyāt* narratives has been penetrated into the modern *tafsir* literature like Yunus' commentary that will be elaborated later on.

Up to the edition I use for the purpose of this study, Mahmud Yunus' *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* has been re-printed thirty first times until 1993. Riddell states that this fact confirms a strong evidence regarding its seminal role in the modern Qur'anic exegetical discourse in Southeast Asia.<sup>33</sup> Yunus' contribution however is more closely related to the aspect of modern Qur'anic rendering on the grounds that he did not go into details for some aspects in Qur'anic interpretation that require expertise in specific fields of Qur'anic studies. Regarding his presentation of Qur'anic commentaries, it is worth mentioning that Yunus made a *tafsir* in footnotes, confirming that in some ways he took advantages of flexibilities in formatting process provided by the modern printing technology.<sup>34</sup>

In this connection, Pink has stressed the significance of looking at typesetting and layout to identify a close connection between the Arabic Qur'an and either translation or commentary text in the target language. Aspects of layout and typesetting in printing seems to be simply technical matters and have more something to do with aspects of readability, cost production and aesthetics. In fact, the choices in layout and settings in the printing of the Qur'anic translations and commentaries are closely related to the target group of the author and publisher, and that this is also closely related to the context where those publications are used.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, significant changes have occurred following the development of printing technology, particularly in Non-Arabic speaking communities who stopped using the Arabic-modified scripts and, instead, adopted the Roman script in which text is presented from left-to-right. This corresponds to the

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<sup>32</sup> Feener, "Notes towards the History of Qur'anic Exegesis," 53.

<sup>33</sup> Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian world*, 267.

<sup>34</sup> It is worth mentioning that other Indonesian commentaries from the same period also include their commentaries in footnotes. Two examples of the works are *Tafsir al-Furqan* by A. Hassan and *Tafsir Quran* by Zainuddin Hamidy & Fachruddin Hs.

<sup>35</sup> Pink, "Form Follows Function," 143.

context when Mahmud Yunus worked on *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* that spent almost two decades to complete.

It is worth noting that when discussing discourses on the translation of the Qur'an, this genre cannot always be clearly distinguished from the commentary works in Non-Arabic languages. This genre includes the wide ranging from the use of Non-Arabic languages for the composition of the literal translation of the Qur'an until the composition of voluminous Qur'anic commentaries. Pink notes that modern Qur'anic interpretation typically no longer plays the role of transmitting explanations that have existed in classical commentaries.<sup>36</sup> Instead, modern commentators take a braver position to embark on Qur'anic interpretation more independently. By putting more emphasis on reason, Johns states that modern commentators reduced the portions of *Isrā'iliyyāt* narrative elements, or even raised objections toward tales that contain irrationality.<sup>37</sup> Instead, as can be seen in *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* of Mahmud Yunus modern commentators were more interested in giving responses to the contemporary social problems and to the advances of knowledge and technology in European societies.

In line with Johns' and Pink's arguments above, it is useful to pay our attention to Yunus' statements that were clearly inspired by 'Abduh's reform thoughts. In his forward to his *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, Yunus states: "Here I should emphasise that this commentary, together with the summary of the Qur'anic content as a whole, was not taken from Arabic commentaries, but was the result of the author's investigation since he was about twenty years old until now he is seventy-three years old."<sup>38</sup>

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

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<sup>36</sup> Johanna Pink, "Tradition, Authority and Innovation in Contemporary *Sunnī tafsīr*: Towards a Typology of Qur'an Commentaries from the Arab World, Indonesia and Turkey." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12 (2010): 72.

<sup>37</sup> Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay World."

<sup>38</sup> Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, v.

as grammatical aspects, as well as hard to understand in the modern people's mind such as legendary tales.

### III. Common quotable *Jalālayn* parts absent in Yunus' *Tafsir Qurān Karim*

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

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

In this section, I would like to provide examples of interpretive additions found in the pre-modern commentaries that were clearly taken from the *Jalālayn*. These examples were randomly taken based on the consideration that they represent the reception of the *Jalālayn* in the Southeast Asian commentaries. As far as this research is concerned, the manuscripts of the Southeast Asian commentaries are not always found complete, and that in a varying degree the authors or translators did not reproduce the same amount of information taken from the *Jalālayn* commentary. I owe to the selection of verses from my previous study on the analysis of Malay translations found in the manuscript that I have identified as "The Sheik Muhammad Said (SMS) Malay Tafsir" as part of the collection in the Mindanao Islamic scholar's private library in

Marawi City, the Southern Philippines.<sup>39</sup> The presentation of the selected verses with their translations and commentaries will be compared with those taken from *Tafsir Qur'an Karim's* Mahmud Yunus.

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

The second example is the explanation of the word “*al-kitāb* (the Book)” in *Sūrat al-Baqarah* verse 2. The *Jalālayn* explains this word by giving an additional information “*al-ladhī yaqra’uhu Muḥammad* (which Muhammad recites).” Both *Tarjumān* and *SMS Malay Tafsir* give similar explanation to that in the *Jalālayn*, but the latter work presents an addition: “*yang disandarkan kepada malaikat Jibrail* (which is received through the Angel Gabriel).” This quoted *Jalālayn* commentary is also absent in *Tafsir Qur'an Karim's* Mahmud Yunus. Here, Yunus keeps using the word “*kitab* (the book)” and gives in-text explanation, confirming that the book here means the Qur’an.

The next example is the explanation of the word “*lil-muttaqīn*,” still in *Sūrat al-Baqarah* verse 2. The *Jalālayn* provides the explanation of this word as follows: “*al-ṣā’irīn ilā al-taqwā bi-imtithāl al-awāmir wa-ijtināb al-nawāhī li-itqā’ihim bi-dhālika al-nār* (those that tend towards piety by adhering to commands and avoiding things prohibited, thereby guarding themselves from the Fire).” The *Tarjumān* and *SMS Malay Tafsir* differently provide the relevant explanation. *Tarjumān* simply explains that the word means “those who have fear”. *SMS Malay Tafsir*, on the other hand, seemed to have given the explanation taken from the *Jalālayn* and modified it. The explanation is as follows: “*bagi segala yang takut akan Allah dan malu akan Muhammad rasul Allah dengan menjunjung segala titah-Nya dan menjauhi segala larangan-Nya*

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<sup>39</sup> Nurtawab, “The Malay *Tafsīr* in the Sheik Muhammad Said Collection,” 129-154.

(For those who fear God and are respectful to Muhammad, Messenger of God, by carrying out all His commands and avoiding all His prohibitions).” Unlike the explanation provided in the *Jalālayn*, Yunus chose to explain this phrase by referring to other Qur’anic verses (*tafsir al-Qur’ān bi-’l-Qur’ān*). He seemed to realise that the following two verses (3 & 4) of this chapter explain the characteristics of those who have fear.

The fourth example is the explanation of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* verse 5. The following table contains the presentation of translations and commentaries in the *Jalālayn* and three Malay/Indonesian commentaries:

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

The above table shows that both *Tarjumān* and *SMS Malay Tafsir* provide similar explanation of the word *al-mufliḥūn* to that in the *Jalālayn*. This explanation cannot be found any longer in the commentary of Mahmud Yunus. In this regard, Yunus embarked on explanation of this word by referring to other relevant Qur’anic verses. Here, he went back to the verse 7 of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, stating that those who have fear are those who win and are successful in both the earthly life and hereafter. It is within this category, Yunus says, that we are able to understand “the way of those on whom thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray (*Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* [1]: 7).”

The fifth example connects to the ways in which the *Jalālayn* and the Southeast Asian commentaries explain the identity of those who reject faith (*al-ladhīna kafarū*) in the verse 6 of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*. Here, the phrase *al-ladhīna kafarū* received the explanation in the *Jalālayn* as follows: “*ka Abī Jahal wa-Abī Lahab wa-naḥwihimā* (the likes of Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab and such).” *Tarjumān* does not give a specific information about it. *SMS Malay Tafsir* nevertheless

comes up with similar explanation to that in the *Jalālayn*. I collect all the explanations from relevant commentaries to be compared with that of Mahmud Yunus' *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* as follow:

**Translation of Sūrat al-Baqarah verse 6**

*Jalālayn* As for the disbelievers, the likes of Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab and such

*SMS Malay Tafsir* As for those who disbelieve such as Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab

*Tafsir Qur'an Karim* Verily, those who disbelieve (refuse).

As presented in the table, Yunus just translated the word *al-ladhīna kafarū* as those who denied (Indonesian: *ingkar*), and that there is no additional explanations for this translation. He might be confident that for him there is no need to give further description of the word *ingkar* in the footnotes as its commentary. What he chose to translate this phrase clearly shows an evidence that the genre of translation has growth more independently in the modern period separated from commentary. As a result, modern readers of the printed Qur'anic translations would certainly receive a broader meaning of the Qur'anic text. Meanwhile, the pre-modern Southeast Asian commentaries tended to provide the readers with translations of the Qur'anic words with further explications that in some ways limited the scope of the meanings to the 7<sup>th</sup>-century Arabian contexts.

The sixth example is the explanation of the verse 30 of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*. The *Jalālayn* provides some information on what—according to the *Jalālayn* authors—happened in connection with the conversation between God and the angels pertaining to God's plan to create human and make them a vicegerent on earth. The complete excerpt of this *Jalālayn* narration for the explanation of this verse is absent in *Tarjumān* and *SMS Malay Tafsir*. Banten Qur'an A.54<sup>40</sup> nevertheless provides a more complete narrative (minus grammatical explanation) as found in the *Jalālayn*. The following is the commentary of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* verse 30 provided by the *Jalālayn* and translation of the same verse found in Yunus' *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*:

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<sup>40</sup> The Qur'an manuscript with interlinear translation in Javanese language from 18<sup>th</sup>-century Banten that is now part of the collection of the National Library of Indonesia.

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

*Jalālayn*

1 And, mention, O Muhammad (s), when your Lord said to the angels, ‘I am appointing on earth a vicegerent,’ who shall act as My deputy, by implementing My rulings therein—and this [vicegerent] was Adam; They said, ‘What, will You appoint therein one who will do corruption therein, through disobedience, and shed blood, spilling it through killing, just as the progeny of the jinn did, for they used to inhabit it, but when they became corrupted God sent down the angels against them and they were driven away to islands and into the mountains; while we glorify, continuously, You with praise, that is, “We say Glory and Praise be to you”, and sanctify You?’ that is, ‘We exalt You as transcendent above what does not befit You?’; the *lām* [of *laka*, ‘You’] is extra, and the sentence [wa-*nuqaddisu laka*, ‘We sanctify You’] is a circumstantial qualifier, the import being, ‘thus, we are more entitled to be Your vicegerents’); He, exalted be He, said, ‘Assuredly, I know what you know not’, of the benefits of making Adam a vicegerent and of the fact that among his progeny will be the obedient and the transgressor, and justice will prevail between them. They said, ‘God will never create anything more noble in His eyes than us nor more knowledgeable, since we have been created before it and have seen what it has not seen. God then created Adam from the surface of the earth (*adīm al-arḍ* [*adīm* literally means ‘skin’]), taking a handful of all its colours and mixing it with different waters, then made him upright and breathed into him the Spirit and he thus became a living being with sense, after having been inanimate”’<sup>41</sup>

*Tafsir Qurān Karim*

(Remember) when Your Lord said to the angels: Verily I will make a caliph on the earth (Adam). They then respond: Is it proper for You to make on earth someone who will harm and shed blood, while we always praise You and purify You? God says: Verily, I know what you do not know.<sup>42</sup>

The table shows that Mahmud Yunus provides a brief translation of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* verse 30 into Indonesian, showing the nature of modern Qur’anic translation where the translated text is more concise and consequently broadens the scope of the meaning. In the modern exegetical tradition, it is the task of commentary to make the translation text more specific in contexts where the commentators typically bring these texts to responding contemporary social problems. If it is deemed necessary in addition to the explanation of the translated text, the modern translator will apply an intra-text explanation in bracket (...). However, if they feel the need for a longer commentary, they will then elaborate on it in another section. In the context of Mahmud Yunus’ *Tafsir Qurān Karim*, the commentary on certain clusters of verses are placed as

<sup>41</sup> English translation was made by Feras Hamza. See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī & Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī. *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. English translation by Feras Hamza (Amman: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007), 7.

<sup>42</sup> Yunus, *Tafsir Qurān Karim*, 8. English translation is mine.



footnotes, and that one verse does not always have its own commentary. As for the explanation of the above verse, it seems that Yunus has considered the provided translation of the verse 30 clear enough, and that a detailed narrative as found in the *Jalālayn* is unnecessary.

The last example of the ways in which styles of the verse rendering as found in the *Jalālayn* no longer appears in the modern translation of the Qur'an as represented in Yunus's work is on translation that contains a vocative (*munādā*). One example is the translation of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* verse 21 as follows:

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

*Jalālayn* O people, of Mecca, worship, profess the oneness of, Your Lord Who created you, made you when you were nothing, and created those that were before you; so that you may be fearful, of His punishment by worshipping Him (la'alla, 'so that,' is essentially an optative, but when spoken by God it denotes an affirmative.<sup>43</sup>

*Tafsir Qurān Karim* O people! <sup>1</sup>worship your Lord Who created You and people before you so that you have fear.<sup>44</sup>

Here, the *Jalālayn* clearly wanted to bring the readers to understanding the verse in the context of the 7<sup>th</sup>-century Arabia where the Qur'anic word *ayyuhā al-nās* received a specific identification (*ahl Makkah*/people of Mecca). The modern translators on the other hand no longer bring both words to be understood in specific contexts. Instead, they prefer to render them in general understandings (*Hai manusia*/O people).

#### **IV. The Story of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn**

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

<sup>43</sup> al-Suyūṭī & al-Maḥallī. *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. English translation by Feras Hamza, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Yunus, *Tafsīr Qurān Karim*, 6. English translation is mine.

As Jansen notes, ‘Abduh encouraged Muslims to embark on Qur’anic interpretation more directly and be responsive to the contemporary social problems, and not to simply rely on interpretations found in the classical commentaries. His thoughts to put forward reason to keep up with the changing societies have greatly influenced Muslim thinkers in many parts of the Muslim world. Their interpretations should be applicable to a particular situation. In this regard, the commentaries should be instantly easy to understand and address the contemporary realities of the Muslim societies.

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

“It is worthy for me to stress that this commentary together with the summary of the whole Qur’an is not translated from Arabic sources. Instead, <this is> the result of the author’s investigation since he was twenty years old until now he was seventy-three years old. For this reason, this commentary is unique compared to other commentaries. In this commentary, what is taken more important is that <this work> explains and explicates guidance mentioned in the Qur’an make them practicable by Muslims, specifically, and all the people, generally, as a universal guidance.”<sup>45</sup>

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

Here, my focus is on the examination of the story of Dhū ‘l-Qarnayn mentioned in *Sūrat al-Kahfī* verses 83-101. This is the story that in classical *tafsīr* literature was attributed to the tale of Iskandar the Two-Horned.<sup>46</sup> He is Alexander the Great (365-323), the son of King Phillip II

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., v. English Translation is mine.

<sup>46</sup> Majid Daneshgar, “Dhū l-Qarnayn in Modern Malay Commentaries and Other Literature on Qur’anic Themes.” In M. Daneshgar, P. G. Riddell & Andrew Rippin (Eds.). *The Qur’an in the Malay-Indonesian World: Context and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2016).

from Macedonia.<sup>47</sup> What is in Yunus' commentary regarding the story of Alexander the Great is very important although it has been overlooked in Daneshgar (2016)'s study. While the detailed presentation of this story is absent in the *Jalālayn* commentary, Yunus presents this story with additional information placed as the footnotes as his commentary of *Sūrat al-Kahfi* verses 83-101. The detail of this story in Mahmud Yunus's *Tafsir Qurān Karim* is attached as follows:

“The explanation of the verses 83-97. Dhū 'l-Qarnayn is Alexander of Macedonia (Iskandar Makdunia) whose story is well-known in the books of world history. God blessed him with knowledge, skills and incredibly smart that he was able to conquer and to reign over the countries from the east to the west (Greece, Rome, Egypt and Persia), even he conquered India. It was his dream to unite the east and the west in order to prevent wars between these two superpowers, because wars frequently happened between Greek and Persian. Once Alexander reigned over the Persian country, he ordered his troops to marry the Persian women that they would have offspring from the east and the west. The hope is that this marriage practice can eliminate hostilities between the two warring nations and the beloved peace and unity can be realised. But, his dream could not be realised because he died. His vast kingdom was then inherited to his followers. In these verses, God narrates the story of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn to be a lesson to us, stressing that he only fights those who persecute against God on the one hand. On the other, Dhū 'l-Qarnayn rewarded the faithful people and believers with virtue, and to them he did not give a burden. He travelled to the West and the East that he reached a country located between two mountains (Armenia). The people of this country asked for help to him because they and their homelands were always destroyed and oppressed by two tribes named Gog and Magog. Both are the descendants of Yafith son of Noah. Then he help the people of the country for free by building a wall between these two mountains. This wall was made by some bars of iron that were burned as the blacksmiths did it. Once the iron became red, then he pour the melted copper to it that the wall became so solid and strong. Accordingly, Gog and Magog no longer entered the country anymore because they could not climb it, nor dig a hole.”<sup>48</sup>

Daneshgar has listed attempts of both classical and modern commentaries at providing the identity of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn as mentioned in the Qur'an. He states that the *Tarjumān* clearly identifies Dhū 'l-Qarnayn as Alexander the Great. This is also the case with some classical commentaries, that he has identified as stating the name of Alexander the Great, Iskandar al-

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<sup>47</sup> Vladimir Braginsky, *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature: A Historical Survey of Genres, Writings and Literary Views* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004), 176-178; Liaw Yock Fang, *Sejarah Kesusastraan Melayu Klasik* [The History of Classical Malay Literature] (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2011), 303-312.

<sup>48</sup> Yunus, *Tafsir Qurān Karim*, 433. English Translation is mine.

Maqdūnī or Rūmī.<sup>49</sup> After the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, as Daneshgar notes, some commentators proposed to reconsider the identification of this figure based on other evidence and scientific data.<sup>50</sup>

By stating the name of Alexander of Macedonia to identify Dhū 'l-Qarnayn mentioned in the Qur'anic story, it is confirmed that Yunus still holds the identity of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn as proposed by classical commentaries. In fact, he positioned himself as the modern commentator. Unlike Mahmud Yunus, as Daneshgar notes, the modern Islamic scholar like Hamka (d. 1981) states that Muslims basically believe in Dhū 'l-Qarnayn in the world history because his existence is mentioned in the Qur'an. Nevertheless, the Qur'an and the authentic Prophetic traditions do not provide any clarifications regarding his exact identities. All information about the identity of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn in *tafsīr* literature and other sources should be regarded as the products of interpretation proposed by the commentators. For this reason, these explanations cannot be treated as the truth.<sup>51</sup>

Likewise, with the origin of Gog and Magog that accompanies the story of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn in the Qur'an, Yunus' attention seemed to have been attracted by the popularity of this tale with some additional information mentioned in classical commentaries. He then added this additional information on the origin of Gog and Magog to his commentary. Meanwhile, such an information and its detailed narrative are absent in the *Jalālayn* commentary.<sup>52</sup>

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

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

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Peter G. Riddell, “Classical *Tafsīr* in the Malay World: Emerging Trends in Seventeenth-Century Malay Exegetical Writing.” In Majid Daneshgar, Peter G. Riddell & Andrew Rippin (Eds.), *The Qur'an in the Malay-Indonesian World: Context and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2016), 32-38.

<sup>50</sup> Daneshgar, “Dhū l-Qarnayn in Modern Malay Commentaries,” 214.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>52</sup> For the detailed discussion on the identity of Gog and Magog in Malay-Indonesian Qur'anic commentaries, see Majid Daneshgar, “Gog and Magog in Malay-Indonesian Islamic Exegetical Works.” In Georges Tamer, Lutz Greisiger and Andrew Mein (Eds.), *Gog and Magog: Contributions toward the World History of an Apocalyptic Motif*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, Forthcoming.

The historians report that the offspring of Noah were three in number: one was named Sam, the second Ham, the third Yafith. Sam was the ancestor of all the Arabs, the Persians and the Romans. Ham was the ancestor of the Habshih and the Zanj. [Yafith was the ancestor of the Turks, the Hazar...] and Gog and Magog.”<sup>53</sup>

Riddell confirms that the Cambridge MS Or. Ii.6.45 used *Tafsīr al-Baghawī* as the main source for the compilation of the commentary, plus some explanations taken from *Tafsīr al-Khāzin* and *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*.<sup>54</sup> At the outset, Yunus states that the elements of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* narratives cannot be used as the source of Qurʾanic interpretation.<sup>55</sup> The existence of quoted narratives in Yunus’ *Tafsīr Qurʾān Karīm* from classical commentaries nevertheless might show the fact that Mahmud Yunus, to a certain extent, was less critical in terms of presenting additional narratives to explain the Qurʾanic stories.

## V. Conclusion

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

The authors of Qurʾanic commentaries in early modern Indonesia were generally Muslim scholars who were influenced by the Egyptian Islamic reform movement. This movement has influenced the way Muslims think about their religion and scripture. Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍā, as the leaders of the Islamic reform movement in Egypt, have encouraged Muslims to embark on Qurʾanic interpretation more independently, to put forward reason in understanding and to make the results of understanding the Qurʾanic text a practical guide in the public sphere. This new way of thinking has undeniably changed styles of presenting the Qurʾanic interpretation that in many ways eliminated aspects that are considered unnecessary and

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<sup>53</sup> English edition is made by Peter Riddell. See Riddell, *Malay Court Religion, Culture and Language*, 241.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>55</sup> Yunus, *Tafsīr Qurʾān Karīm*, vi.

irrelevant for modern readers, such as grammatical aspects, *qirā'āt*, and narrative elements of foreign import (*Isrā'īliyyāt*).

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

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

The examination of selected Qur'anic verses with their translations and commentaries reveals that *Tafsīr Qurān Karīm*, the first complete modern Indonesian commentary, no longer uses the *Jalālayn* as a guide for the author to translate and interpret the Qur'an. This is in line with the emerging modern style where the translation of the Qur'anic verses is made briefer and, grammatically speaking, more user-friendly. As for the latter, modern translation has developed to adapt to the grammatical aspects and syntactic structures of the target language. When necessary, modern commentators will provide a detailed explanation in a separate section. In the case of Yunus' work, the explanation is placed as the footnotes, and that he added the summary of the whole Qur'anic verses with indexed themes in the end of his commentary.

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