



# Methodology of the Book of the Holy Qur'an and The Massage of Qur'an: A Comparative Study of the Book of Tafsir by A. Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Asad

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## ABSTRACT

The study of the methodology of interpreting the Qur'an is one of the disciplinary studies in the field of Qur'anic Science and Tafsir. His studies have always been literature that animates the discourse of interpretation. The more mushrooming the development of scientific Tafsir of Tafsir among the public, the more widespread the products of this interpretation are developing. Even not only in the original language—namely Arabic, but the development of the science of interpretation of the Qur'an has met its new reality, where variants of the interpretation of books from various languages have begun to appear. One of them is an English commentary, such as the one initiated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Asad. This study aims to analyze the methodology of the book of Tafsir The Holy Qur'an by A. Yusuf Ali and The Massage of the Qur'an by Muhammad Asad. This research is a qualitative research with descriptive analysis approach. The results of this study show that the interpretation methods of Ali and Asad have similarities, including in: first, sources based on ra'i; second, methods of interpretation of ijmal and third, display of interpretations using footnotes. The difference between the two lies in the style of interpretation, then the features of the template in the interpretation.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian tentang metodologi penafsiran al-Qur'an merupakan salah satu kajian disiplin ilmu dalam bidang Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Tafsir. Kajiannya selalu menjadi literatur yang menjawai wacana tafsir. Semakin menjamurnya perkembangan keilmuan tafsir di kalangan masyarakat, maka semakin meluas pula produk tafsir ini berkembang. Bahkan tidak hanya dalam bahasa aslinya saja—yakni bahasa Arab, namun perkembangan ilmu tafsir al-Qur'an telah menemui realitas barunya, dimana mulai bermunculan varian-varian kitab tafsir dari berbagai bahasa. Salah satunya adalah tafsir berbahasa Inggris, seperti yang digagas oleh Abdullah Yusuf Ali dan Muhammad Asad. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis metodologi kitab Tafsir The Holy Qur'an karya A. Yusuf Ali dan The Massage of the Qur'an karya Muhammad Asad. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis deskriptif. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa metode penafsiran Ali dan Asad memiliki kesamaan, antara lain pada: pertama, sumber yang berdasarkan ra'i; kedua, metode penafsiran ijmal dan ketiga, tampilan penafsiran dengan menggunakan catatan kaki. Perbedaan keduanya terletak pada corak penafsiran, kemudian corak yang digunakan dalam penafsiran.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The research method is taken from the words method and research. The method or methodology obtained from the Greek civilization was originally introduced by the term '*methodologia*' which has the meaning of the procedure, procedure or technique itself. Methodology can also be described as a technical series to find out a

general or holistic line of thought from theoretical ideas (Amaliya, 2018). Then the research obtained from the word 'research' which is an idiom consisting of two words, namely "re" which has the meaning of returning, then "search" which means to seek (Mardhatillah, 2018). So research can be interpreted literally as an effort to search further by being mediated by outsiders. see the evidence is still very long achievement here. and pay attention to all aspects of life (Setia, 2022). It can also be understood as an activity of investigating something systematic, planned, thorough and critical of a certain phenomenon in order to obtain a fact, a new theory, or a hypothesis (Jauharin, 2014).

The existence of a methodology is certainly a medium for science to develop in such a way. Without it knowledge will be difficult to be developed in such a way (Al Refaai, n.d.). The science of interpretation is one of those that occupies a position for science that also demands its development. As has been summarized in the treasures of classical scholars, at least this knowledge is summarized in the four classification methods of interpretation, namely Tahlili. Maudu'i, Muqaran and Ijmali (Al-Farmawi, 1977).

However, attention to the Qur'anic method currently only focuses on the science of interpretation in the Arab region. There is little attention from reviewers and researchers in exploring the treasures outside the discourse of Arabic interpretation in general (Arifin, 2015). In fact, if you look at the map of Islamic thought that is developing today, there are also many pioneers of interpretation from non-Arab circles who write interpretations in their local language (Al-Hitari, 2022).

The blue continent, for example, is one of them, the development of science there marks a new commitment to Islam. Since the emergence of eastern discourse (oriental studies) which was pioneered by orientalism (Nugroho et al., 2020). The study of the Qur'an also developed. Therefore, it is important to enrich a study of the variety and methodological techniques of interpretation proposed by the commentators from the West. Of the many scholars who have succeeded in incising the product of the interpretation of the Qur'an, A. Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Asad are the most popular among researchers (Iraqi, 2018).

Therefore, this study intends to examine the interpretations of Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Asad in their commentaries, especially regarding the study of the methodology used by the two Western commentators. After briefly looking at the background of the scientific biography of each interpreter along with their interpretation. In this section, the researcher will show the differences and similarities in terms of the methodology of interpretation. The researcher will review several different starting points between Abdullah Yusuf Ali's The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an and Muhammad Asad's The Message of Qur'an in terms of sources, methods of interpretation, tendencies or styles, then comparisons in the way the interpretation is presented.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a type of qualitative research (Rosyad et al., 2022; Silverman, 2015), with a descriptive analysis approach that focuses on qualitative comparisons. The source of this research is library research, with documentation data collection techniques. Furthermore, this study uses content analysis to look for differences in the methodologies of A. Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Asad. Buku-buku dari kedua tokoh digunakan sebagai referensi utama dalam penelitian ini. In addition, the author also used secondary references obtained from journals and internet sources. After the references were collected, then, categorization and reduction processes were carried out so that the data could be presented in this paper.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Intellectual Biography

Before the author shows a comparison between the interpretations of Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Assad (Asad, 2001). It is important to look at the intellectual background of each interpreter in order to see the nuances of his interpretation based on the socio-historical context of the two interpreters. Abdullah Yusuf Ali is a commentator who was born April 4, 1874 in the city of Gujarat, West India (Sherif, 1994). Born in a middle-class family and does not have a family background that has strong knowledge. His father, Khan Bahadur Yusuf Ali, a Shia from the Dawoodi Bohra tradition, who later became an Inspector of the government police, was even known by the nickname Khan Bahadur for a public servant.

His famous works include Muslim Educational Ideal (1930) The Making of India: A Brief History (1923), Personality of Man in Islam (1931) and The Fundamental of Islam (1929), Moral Education: Aim and Methods

(1930), *The Masseur of Islam* (1940). And his monumental work is his book of commentary entitled *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an: Text, Translations and Commentary* (1940).

His commentary work was born from the turmoil of Ali's life which was reaped by personal tragedies in an uncertain time and economic problems. It was his personal life that was filled with tragedy that made Ali try to find a cure for solace by devoting his life to writing the Qur'an (Setia & Syarif, 2022). His life in India and England made him understand a lot about the culture and civilization of the two countries. In this book of commentaries, there are 6311 footnotes, 300 comments in prose. Written without verse and has four appendices. The writing of this work was carried out in a period of nine years, namely from 1928-1937.

### 3.2. Muhammad Asad Intellectual Biography

Muhammad Asad is a commentator who was born July 2, 1900 in Lwow, Austria—now the country of Ukraine (Asad, 1980a). Born with the surname Leopold Weiss, he was born into a family of orthodox Jewish rabbis and scientists in Czermowitz, the capital of the Austrian province of Bukovina. Asad was not an admirer of mathematics and astronomy which at that time became a science that was very interested in his uncle. Some of Asad's well-known works are the book *Unromantisches Morgenland* (the Unromantic Orient, 1924) *Islam at the Cross Roads* (1934) *The Road to Mecca* (1954) *Principles of State and Government in Islam* (1961) and his commentary entitled, *The Message of The Qur'an* (1980).

Initially, his book of commentary entitled *The Message of The Qur'an* was published in the first edition of Surah al-Fatihah to Surah al-Taubah, published by the Muslim World League, Mecca. Then twenty-five years later, this work was published in a complete edition by Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar. There are about 5,371 foot notes and four appendixes. Asad enriched his interpretation by taking sources of classical interpretation such as al-Tabari, al-Zamakhshari, al-Razi and Rasyid Rida (Asad, 2021).

### 3.3. Comparative Methodology on The Holy Qur'an and The Message of Qur'an

#### 1. Source of Tafsir

Both Ali and Asad mention the primary references they use in separate chapters—although Ali only mentions them in other terms. In some places they also quote ideas outside the disciplines of Islam. Asad mentions the references he uses in a separate sub-chapter which he calls Works of Reference.

The sources of reference used by Asad can be categorized as follows:

- a. Books of interpretation, such as the *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil al-Qur'an* by Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *al-Kasysyaf'an Haqiq al-Tanzil* by Abu al-Qasim al-Zamakhshari, *Tafsir Kabir* by Fakhru al-Din al-Razi, *Anwar al-Tanzil* by Qadi Nasira al-Din Abu Sa'id Baidawi, *Tafsir al-Qur'an* by Abu 'l-Fida Isma'il ibn Kasir, *Tafsir Jalaothar* by Jalal al-Din Suyuti and *Jall al-Din al-Mahalli*, some Urdu and Persian commentaries and *Tafsir al-Manar* by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida
- b. *Ulumul Qur'an* such as the book *Itqan* by Jall din Al-Suyuti, *al-Murfradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an* by Raghīb,
- c. Hadith and *ulum al-hadis* such as the *Book of Sunan al-Kubra* by Baihaqi, *al-Jami' al-Sahih* by Bukhari, *Sahih Muslim* by Muslim al-Naisaburi, *al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihain* by al-Hakim, *Muwatta* by Imam Malik, *Kitab al-Sunan* by Darimi and *Darqutini*, *Nasa'i* and *Ibn Majah*, *Fa'iq fi Gharib al-Hadith* by Umar al-Zamakhshari, *Mustadrak* by Hakim, *Fath al-Bari* by Ibn Hajar al-Asqala this, *al-Musnad* by Ibn Hanbal, *al-Taqaqim wa al-Anwa* by Ibn Hibban, *al-Nihaya fi Gharib al-Hadith* by Ibn al-'Atir
- d. *Sirah Nabawi* such as *Wafayat al-'Ayan wa Anba' Abna al-Zaman* by Ibn Khallikan, *Sirat al-Nabi* by Ibn Hisyam, *al-Maghazi* by Waqidi
- e. Arabic such as *Taj al-Lughah wa Sihah al-Arabiyyah* by Hammad al-Jawhari, *Lisan al-'Arab* by al-Ifriqi, *Mughni al-Labib 'an Kutub al-'Arabi* by Yusuf al-Ansari and *Qamus* by Firuzabadi and *Asas al-Balaghah* by Zamakhshari.
- f. *Fiqh* such as the work of *Bidayatul al-Mujtahid wa-Nihayat al-Muqtasid* by Ibn Rushd, *al-Muhalla* by Ibn Hazm, *al-Tabaqat al-Kabir* by Ibn Sa'd and *Nasyil al-Awtar* by Syaokani.
- g. Others such as the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, *Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon*, and Asad's own book *State and Government* (Asad, 1980b).

Meanwhile, Ali reviews it in *Abbreviation Used*, which is a chart that explains the abbreviations used in his commentary. In this chapter, we add several quotations which indirectly become the source of the reference, including the abbreviations:

- a. Deut. Which means deuteronomy, which is one of the Old Testament (Old Testament)
- b. E. B. means Encyclopedia Britannica
- c. Exod. means Exodus in the Old Testament

- d. Gene. means Genesis in the Old Testament
- e. H.G.S means Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar's Translation of the Qur'an
- f. Johs means John in the Old Testament
- g. Matt. means Matthew in the New Testament
- h. M.M.A. means Maulvi Translation Ali
- i. M.P. means Mr. Pithcall

The following also serve as reference sources used by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Ali, 1983). Even though there are other references, however, it is these abbreviations that are used more by Ali. Asad uses many Islamic literature quotes, but what is unique about Asad is that he often displays the original sides of his thoughts. While Ali tends to focus on the meaning of language, some of the references he uses are an attempt to identify his linguistic aspects. So a conclusion can be drawn regarding the reference sources from The Holy Qur'an and The Message of Qur'an as the criteria for interpretation of *bil al-ra'yi* (Al Refaai, n.d.).

Iqbal emphasizes the difference between Ali and Asad in the strong use of the sources used. Asad, in this position, uses more reference sources than Ali (Ali, 2003). In another position, namely in articulating the meaning of the Qur'an, Ali was more influenced by Romantic English. In contrast to Asad who actually tried to provide a translation using modern English. Then in the selection of vocabulary (vocabulary), Ali chooses a vocabulary that is closer to the poetic meaning. In contrast, Asad avoids overly archaic vocabulary, because Asad prioritizes contemporary readers (Mardhatillah, 2018).

## 2. Interpretation Method

Ali and Asad presented their interpretations in a distinctive form. This can be seen from the characteristics of a researcher and a journalist. Both use the method of interpretation that is described through short and concise messages conveyed in the footnotes. Of course, as a statement of interpretation, this is very unique, because instead of being explained in thick volumes, Ali and Asad consistently apply a referential system by referring to the culture of scientific writing in all explanations of the verses that need to be interpreted (Al-Tufayl & Karam, 2022).

This model of interpretation using concise and concise information is what Qur'an scholars have called the *ijmali* method (Maududi et al., n.d.). The *ijmali* method can be interpreted as an interpretive method that seeks to reveal the content of the Qur'anic verses globally. This method is arranged in *tartib mushafi* with the intention of being able to be caught by even stupid people (*jahil*) so that in the use of language they tend to use language that is easy to understand. Among the advantages are as follows: First, practical and very easy to understand due to the direct explanation (go to the point). Second, free from the influence of *israiliyyat*, due to the intervention of a more dominant thought.

## 3. Style of Interpretation

This style of interpretation discusses the tendency of a commentator to give nuances of his thoughts when interpreting a certain verse or letter. In this section, Abdullah Yusuf Ali as also mentioned by Iqbal that his interpretation is strongly influenced by the English romantic language. Not to mention, with the pedigree of education that Ali took, namely English literature. So it is very clear that the tendency of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's interpretation is a linguistic style (*lughawi*).

As for Muhammad Asad on the other hand, choosing a tendency that puts forward his philosophical aspects, this is emphasized in his *muqaddimah* in describing the Qur'an itself, Asad said:

*The position of individual word in a sentence, the rhythm and sound of its phrases and their syntactic construction, the manner in which its a metaphor flows almost imperceability into a pragmatic statement the use of acoustic stress is not merely in the service of rhetorical but as a means of alluding to unspoken but implied ideas* (Asad, 1980b, p. v).

Asad emphasized the position of the Qur'an which contains ideas that are implied in meanings that are not stated. This explanation is very strong how the position of the Qur'an for Asad which contains various kinds of deep meanings.

## 4. Features in The Holy Quran and The Message of Quran

In order to make it easier to see the differences in these two interpretations, the researcher will present this section using a chart.

**Table 1. Features in The Holy Quran and The Message of Quran**

No.	Feature	The Holy Quran	The Message of Quran	Similarities and Differences
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1. Cover			-
2. Content	<p>In the table of contents, Muhammad Ali is very detailed in outlining the main points of discussion in his commentary, as in the prefix Ali always begins his interpretation with a summary of the contents of the letter globally (Introduction and Summary), then in each letter (short letter) and Ali's verses provide information and notes (text and notes). In addition, Ali also named the themes of the discussion in a certain letter. Bagian-bagian tambahan lainnya seperti ucapan pembuka (Preface) dari Ali sendiri, kemudian penjelasan term-term arab (arabic word explain), transliterasi (<i>transliteration of Arabic word</i>) dan beberapa singkatan yang dipakai Asad (<i>abbreviation used</i>). Pada bagian lainnya ialah dalam 1/15 Alquran, Ali menambahkan tambahan berupa lampiran yang berisikan tema besar (<i>appendix</i>) serta indeks Quran.</p>	<p>Asad is actually more concise in providing descriptions on the table of contents. Asad only explains the face (<i>muqadimmah</i>) and source (work of reference). Another addition that he included in his discussion was errata (a mention or synonym of the word he chose) these terms would be used by Asad in his commentary. Finally, Asad closed his commentary with an appendix and an index of the Quran.</p>	<p>Difference: Ali's presentation of contents is more detailed whereas Asad's is general. Ali displays attachments (appendices) in every 1/15 discussion in the Qur'an while Asad only reviews them globally at the end. There are other features that are not included in Ali and vice versa. Similarity: both Ali and Asad's content presentation uses the beginning of the verse (intro) in each of their interpretations along with notes or footnotes explaining their interpretation (text and notes).</p>
3. Template	<p>Ali displays each letter intro on a separate sheet. Then in the naming of the letter located in the upper left corner accompanied by its meaning, such as</p>	<p>Asad displays each letter's intro along with the letter's discussion. In naming a letter, Asad put it in the middle under the description of the</p>	<p>Difference: Ali displays the intro of the verse on a separate page, unlike Asad who displays the intro</p>



		<p>Sura II Al-Baqara, or The Heifer. Below are translations of related verses.</p> <p>Then on the right there is the name of the letter in Arabic writing. Added with the number of verses and the descending order of the verses. Then there is also information about the prefix of juz in the right corner of the verse, as a sign of new juz.</p> <p>Finally, Ali added small numbers as a description for the footnote which contains an explanation of Ali's interpretation</p>	<p>order of the letter and above the group of letters. Then proceed with the intro verse after that saying basmallah in English, right on the right is the verse of the Qur'an, while on the left is the translation.</p> <p>Finally, Asad added small numbers in his translation as an explanation and interpretation of it.</p>	<p>of the verse along with the interpretation of the verse.</p> <p>Asad put the name of the letter in the middle while Ali in each right and left corner.</p> <p>Similarity: The placement of the verse and its translation are placed opposite each other.</p> <p>How to explain a verse as part of its interpretation using a footnote model.</p>
4.	Footnote	<p>The numbering of Ali's footnotes is continuous, the total number of footnotes made by Ali is 6310 pieces.</p>	<p>The numbering of Asad's footnotes is limited in each letter, so that when entering the next verse it will start with a new number.</p>	<p>Difference: It is in the footnote numbering technique and the number</p>
5.	Appendices	<p>Ali added as many as 17 appendices which he placed in every 1/15 part of the Qur'an.</p> <p>Among the themes are, Abbreviations in Letters (On the Abbreviated Letters), Torah (On the Taurat), Injeel (On the Gospel), Egypt and Israel Chronology (Egyptian Chronology and Israel), Egyptian Religion and the steps towards Islam (Egyptian Religion and its steps towards Islam) Allegorical interpretation of the story of Joseph Who is Zulkarnaen? (Who was Zul-Qarnain?) Thamud's translation in the letter al-Hijr (Thamud inscription at al-Hijr), The first contact of Islam with the world movement (First contact of Islam with the World</p>	<p>Meanwhile, Asad added 4 appendices at the end, which included several topics such as Symbols and Allegory in the Qur'an (Symbolism and Allegory in the Quran), Muqata'ah, Concepts of the Jinn (On the Term and Concept of Jin later on). The Isra Mi'raj event closes with an index of the Quran at the end.</p>	<p>Difference: the themes discussed by Ali are more historical and social. While Asad is more on a theme that contains religious concepts.: -</p>

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Movement), Comparative Chronology in the beginning of Islam (Comparative Chronology of the Early Years of Islam), Muslim Heaven (The Muslim Heaven), Ancient form of Paganism and Promises and Prayers in the Quran (Oaths and Adjuration in the Qur'an).

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#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The similarities and differences of these two interpretations can be reviewed in two respects. The first is the methodological side of interpretation, where Ali and Asad have many main similarities in presenting their interpretations. On the source of interpretation, Ali and Asad discussed many of their authentic ideas rather than digging them out from classical narrations. They also have similarities in the aspect of methods that use the ijmalī method. Another uniqueness is how to explain the interpretation by using footnotes. This shows that Ali and Asad had a similar writing tradition. As for the difference, Ali in his commentary has a language style (*lughawi*) while Asad has a philosophical style (*falsafi*) (Zulaiha, 2016). Another difference from the features of the presentation of the interpretation, there are several substances that distinguish them both, such as in the intro, general template, appendix, and numbering of footnotes.

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