

# PRESUPPOSITIONS AND LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING IN SCIENTIFIC EXEGESIS: Insights from Indonesian Quranic Scholars

Muhammad Iqbal

Al Mustafa Internasional University  
Moalem St. 3719697867, Qom, Republik Islam of Iran  
e-mail: huseinlubismuhammad@gmail.com

Mohammad Ali Rezaei Asfahani & Hamid Reza Tousi

Al Mustafa Internasional University  
Moalem St. 3719697867, Qom, Republik Islam of Iran  
e-mail: Rezaee.Qur'an@gmail.com, e-mail: hamidreza\_tusi@miu.ac.ir

**Abstract:** This study explores the presuppositions underlying scientific exegesis as discussed by Indonesian Quranic scholars. Focusing on horizontal gradations of understanding, it examines their role in shaping the necessity for scientific interpretation. Since the 1960s, Indonesia has witnessed significant growth in scientific exegesis, leading to the emergence of three distinct generations of exegetical thought. These developments are rooted in foundational presuppositions (*mabna*), which drive the evolution of interpretive approaches. Using a literature review method, the research analyzes documents and applies content analysis to identify key insights. The study concludes that the horizontal gradation of understanding, reflecting the Qur'an's comprehensiveness and its numerous scientific verses, serves as the foundational presupposition for Indonesian scientific exegetes in employing scientific methodologies for Quranic interpretation. This approach underscores the dynamic interplay between scientific perspectives and Quranic understanding within the Indonesian context.

**Keywords:** Indonesia, presuppositions of exegesis, Kauni verses, gradation of understanding, scientific exegesis

Corresponding Author	Muhammad Iqbal
Articel history	Submitted : August 16, 2024   Accepted : September 25, 2024   Published : December 31, 2024
How to cite article	Iqbal, Muhammad, Mohammad Ali Rezaei Asfahani, and Hamid Reza Tousi. "PRESUPPOSITIONS AND LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING IN SCIENTIFIC EXEGESIS: Insights from Indonesian Quranic Scholars." MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman 48, no. 2 (2024): 246-61. <a href="https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v48i2.1262">https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v48i2.1262</a>

## Introduction

Indonesia, as a country with a large Muslim population, has experienced significant developments in scientific exegesis. Numerous scholars and Islamic organizations in Indonesia<sup>1</sup> (such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah) have played a significant role in preserving and advancing the study of Quranic exegesis.<sup>2</sup> Indonesian exegetes are not lagging behind scholars from countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran. Generally, three generations of scientific exegesis can be seen in Indonesia.<sup>3</sup> The first generation is characterized by scientific interpretation being particular; in the sense that scientific interpretation was not yet the main goal of the exegetes. At this stage, the exegetes, in addition to interpreting verses of scientific content, also interpret all forms of Qur'anic verses such as jurisprudence (Fiqh), creed (Aqidah), ethics (Akhlaq), and so on. Therefore, it can be concluded that scientific interpretation is just one tendency among various other tendencies or methods of interpretation.

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<sup>1</sup> Ja'far Ja'far and Muhammad Iqbal, "Bayani Epistemologies in Modern Indonesia: The Contribution of Al Washliyah Ulama to Quranic Exegesis Studies," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 47, no. 1 (2023), <http://dx.doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v47i1.1079>.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see: Syah Wardi and Mohd. Yusri bin Jusoh, "Mandailing Ulama in Modern Malaysia: The Intellectual Network and Works of Shaykh 'Abd Al-Qâdir Al-Mandîli," *Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage* 1, no. 1 (2023): 84–105, <https://doi.org/10.47766/nahrasiyah.v1i1.1906>; Zuhri Arif, Habib Zarbaliyev, and Ja'far Ja'far, "Ulama and Knowledge in Modern Aceh: Abu Teupin Raya on Religious Sciences," *Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage* 1, no. 1 (2023): 69–83, <https://doi.org/10.47766/nahrasiyah.v1i1.2502>; Maisyaroh Maisyaroh and Muhammad Iqbal, "Malay Ulama in Deli Land: The Life, Manuscripts, and Intellectual Networks of Shaykh Hasan Ma'sum (d. 1936)," *Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage* 1, no. 1 (2023): 39–68, <https://doi.org/10.47766/nahrasiyah.v1i1.2038>; Mhd. Syahnan and Azmi Ahmad, "East Sumatra and South Tapanuli Ulama on Religious Sciences at the Turn of the 20th Century," *Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage* 1, no. 1 (2023): 18–38, <https://doi.org/10.47766/nahrasiyah.v1i1.1859>; Asrul Asrul, Mohammad Ajmal, and Harun Alrasyid, "Mandailing Ulama in the Early 20th Century: The Meaning and Typology," *Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage* 1, no. 1 (2023): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.47766/nahrasiyah.v1i1.1860>; Mhd. Syahnan, Muhammad Iqbal, and Ja'far Ja'far, "Al Washliyah Fatwa Council's Response to Contemporary Islamic Issues," *Journal of Indonesian Ulama* 01, no. 01 (2023): 1–19; Imam Yazid, "Current Development on Al Washliyah Ulama: The Problem of Ulama Tradition and Its Revitalization," *Journal of Indonesian Ulama* 1, no. 1 (2023): 20–35, <https://doi.org/10.30821/jiu.v1i1.5>; Radinal Mukhtar Harahap, Aidilfithrah Aidilfithrah, and Ihsan Sa'dudin, "Ulama and Authority in the Deli Kingdom: A Brief History of Shaykh Hasan Ma'sum," *Journal of Indonesian Ulama* 1, no. 1 (2023): 51–62, <https://doi.org/10.30821/jiu.v1i1.2>; S Ritonga, "Ulama, Social Action, and Power Domination: The Role of Yusuf Ahmad Lubis in Socio-Religious Movements," *Journal of Indonesian Ulama* 01, no. 01 (2023): 63–79, <https://journal.cas.or.id/index.php/jiu/article/view/4%0Ahttps://journal.cas.or.id/index.php/jiu/article/download/4/5>; Irwansyah Irwansyah, "Ulama and Islamic Philanthropy in Contemporary Indonesia: Al Washliyah Fatwas on Zakat and Sadaqah," *Journal of Indonesian Ulama* 1, no. 1 (2023): 36–50, <https://doi.org/10.30821/jiu.v1i1.6>.

<sup>3</sup> Annas Rolli Muchlisin and Khairun Nisa, "Geliat Tafsir 'Ilmi Di Indonesia Dari Tafsir Al-Nur Hingga Tafsir Salman," *Millati: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 2, no. 2 (2017): 239, <https://doi.org/10.18326/mlt.v2i2.239-257>.

The tafsir books from the first generation are such as *al-Nur* by Tengku Muhammad Hasbi Ash Shiddieqy, *al-Ibriz* by Bisri Mustofa, *al-Azhar* by Buya Hamka, and *al-Mishbah* by Muhammad Quraish Shihab. The second generation is the generation of independent scientific exegesis written by exegetes individually. The most distinctive feature of the second generation is that, in addition to focusing on the interpretation of *Kauni* (cosmic) verses, the authors of these works are mostly scholars and scientists, which is in contrast to the first generation. Books such as *The Qur'an, Science and Technology*, *The Qur'an and Natural Sciences*, *Verses of the Universe: The Forgotten Aspects of the Qur'an*, and *The Reasoning of the Verses of the Universe: The Forgotten Aspects of the Qur'an*, are works produced by this generation.

The third generation, similar to the second generation, represents independent scientific exegesis, but one step further. The works of this generation were studied and produced in groups or teams consisting of scholars and scientific experts using the method of collective *ijtihad*. This characteristic has been able to address the weaknesses of the first and second generations. In the first generation, the *Kauni* verses (the verses of the universe) were interpreted by exegetes without expertise in science, and in the second generation, these verses were interpreted by exegetes who did not have specialization in religious and linguistic fields, even though both skills are required for an exegete.<sup>4</sup>

However, in the third generation, the gaps, weaknesses, and voids have been addressed by the presence of a team of exegetes consisting of scientists and scholars who form the method of *ijtihad jamai*. Thus, scientific exegesis is legitimate because the process was carried out by capable exegetes who meet the requirements in both religious or linguistic aspects and scientific aspects.<sup>5</sup> With the emergence of this third generation of exegesis, the form of group interpretation that was previously just a grand idea of Hasbi Ash Shiddieqy has been realized.<sup>6</sup>

Qur'anic researchers have conducted many studies on the development of scientific exegesis in Indonesia. However, studies on the foundations or presuppositions of exegesis are still relatively rare among researchers in this field.

Based on the research conducted, several Qur'anic researchers from Indonesia have studied exegesis in Indonesia. Among the contemporary studies, some discuss the general

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<sup>4</sup> Mohammad Ali Rezaei Asfahani, *Daramadi Bar Tafsir\_e Ilmi\_e Qoran* (Tehran: Entesyarat\_e Uswe, 1435), 53.

<sup>5</sup> Mohammad Ali Rezaei Asfahani, *Manteq\_e Tafsir\_e Tafasir\_e Quran\_e 2* (Qom: Markaz\_e Baina Milali Terjume wa Nasyr\_e al-Mushtafa, 1435), 232.

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Hasbi Ash Shiddieqy, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Majid an-Nur* (Semarang: PT Pustaka Rizki Putra, 2000); Muhammad Syahril Razali Ibrahim, "Moderate Islam Revisits: A Lesson from T.M. Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy's Interpretation of Wasathiyah in Tafsir An-Nuur," *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 6, no. 1 (2022): 1–29, <https://doi.org/DOI/10.30821/jcims.v6i1.9058>.

development of Indonesian exegesis, such as the works of Islah Gusmian,<sup>7</sup> Iqbal and Ja'far,<sup>8</sup> and Rifa Roifa et al.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, some researchers discussed the development of scientific exegesis in Indonesia in a general sense, as illustrated in the reviews by Annas Rolli Muchlisin and Khoirunnisa.<sup>10</sup> In an even more specific context, some researchers have studied particular scientific exegesis works, such as those by Bisri Musthafa,<sup>11</sup> Agus Purwanto,<sup>12</sup> the scientific exegesis team of the Ministry of Religious Affairs,<sup>13</sup> and the scientific exegesis team of Salman.<sup>14</sup> However, there has been no study on the foundations or presuppositions of scientific exegesis held by Indonesian exegetes. Therefore, it is urgent to carry out studies related to this theme, so that the presuppositions underlying the birth and development of scientific interpretation in the archipelago can be understood.

This study will discuss the presuppositions of scientific exegesis (*tafsir ilmi*) put forward by Indonesian scientific exegetes (*mufassir ilmi*). The study aims to answer two main research questions: (1) What is the definition of the presuppositions of scientific exegesis? (2) What is the correlation between the gradation of understanding levels and scientific exegesis according to Indonesian scientific exegetes? These two questions are the issues that this study seeks to address.

Considering that scientific exegesis has become a trend and phenomenon inseparable from the world of exegesis in Indonesia, conducting research related to the presuppositions of exegesis becomes an urgent topic. This is because the emergence and development of scientific exegesis are greatly influenced by its presuppositions. Additionally, given that the presuppositions of exegesis are various beliefs related to the Qur'an, examining their substance and validity is, of course, very important.

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<sup>7</sup> Tim Penulis, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Di Indonesia: Sejarah Dan Dinamika* (Surakarta: Fakultas Ushuluddin IAIN Surakarta, n.d.).

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Iqbal and Ja'far Ja'far, "Contemporary Development of Qur'anic Exegesis in Indonesia and Iran," *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 3, no. 1 (2019): 83–103, <https://doi.org/DOI/ : 10.30821/jcims.v3i1.4144>.

<sup>9</sup> Rifa Roifa, Rosihon Anwar, and Dadang Darmawan, "Perkembangan Tafsir Di Indonesia Prakemerdekaan," *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (2017): 21–36, <https://doi.org/DOI/ :10.15575/al-bayan.v2i1.1806>.

<sup>10</sup> Muchlisin and Nisa, "Geliat Tafsir 'Ilmi Di Indonesia Dari Tafsir Al-Nur Hingga Tafsir Salman."

<sup>11</sup> Muhammad Mufid Muwaffaq, "Indikasi Tafsir Ilmi Dalam Tafsir Al-Ibriz Karya Bisri Musthafa," *Diya' Al-Afkar: Jurnal Studi Al-Quran Dan Al-Hadits* 8, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.24235/diyaafkar.v8i1.5882>.

<sup>12</sup> Mohamad Yasin Yusuf, Sutrisno, and Karwadi, "Epistemologi Sains Islam Perspektif Agus Purwanto," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 17, no. 1 (2017): 65–90, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v17i1.898>.

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Barmawi, "Aktualisasi Dakwah Islam (Kajian Analisis Formulasi Dakwah Rasulullah)," *Ad-Dakwah* 19, no. 2 (2016).

## Methodology

This study was carried out through library research. Data were obtained through document studies, both printed and online. During the data collection process, a survey was conducted on works of scientific exegesis (*tafsir ilmi*) in Indonesia. In this context, the scientific exegesis was discussed in partial form, individual works, or group works. The data obtained was analyzed using content analysis methods, and the data were systematized and interpreted so that conclusions could be easily drawn. The focus of the study is on the presuppositions of scientific exegesis, which play a role in the emergence and development of scientific exegesis in Indonesia.

## Definition of Presuppositions (Mabna) of Interpretation

Etymologically, *mabani* comes from the singular word *mabna*, which means the foundation<sup>15</sup> or basis of something.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the letters that form the basis of writing are called “*mabani*”<sup>17</sup>; *ziyad al-Mabani tadullu ala ziyadat al-maani*<sup>18</sup> (the abundance of letter structures indicates additional meaning).

In line with the above etymological meaning, scholars of *ulum al-Qur'an* have also presented a terminological definition related to this. Fakir Meybodi, in his work *Mabani\_e Tafsir\_e Riwai*, defines *mabani* as something chosen by the researcher as the foundation of their discussion, where they strengthen the related topics with it.<sup>19</sup>

Fathullah Najjar Zadegan describes it as the presuppositions of the interpreter, whether scientific or religious beliefs when faced with the text to be interpreted.<sup>20</sup> Syakir Muhammad Kadzim explains that the presuppositions of exegesis are the principles initially accepted by the exegete or the beliefs initially held by the interpreter, whether religious or scientific, in interpreting the Qur'an.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, Muhammad Bahrami defines it as a set of beliefs that form the basis of

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<sup>14</sup> Abdul Basid, *Tafsir Ilmiah Salaman ITB: Telaah Kritis Perspektif Uloom Al-Quran*, Terateks, *Jurnal Keislaman*, vol. 2, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Muhammad Muin, “Farhang\_e Farsi\_e Muin,” (Tehran: Muassase Entesyarat\_e Amir Kabi, 1337H), 3777.

<sup>16</sup> Abul Husain Ahmad bin Faris, *Mu'jam Maqayis Al-Lughah* (Qom: Maktab al-'lam al-Islami, 1404 H).

<sup>17</sup> Abu ali Fadhl bin Hasan Thabarsi, “Majma' Al-Bayan,” 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar Ihya' Turats al-Arabi, 1992), 113.

<sup>18</sup> Abu Ali Fadhl bin Hasan Thabarsi, “Jawami' Al-Jami,” trans. Abdul Ali Shahibi, vol. 6 (Masyhad: Muassese\_ye cop wa Entesyarat\_e Quds\_e Radhawi, 1377 H), 514.

<sup>19</sup> Muhammad Fakir Moybadi, “Mabani\_e Tafsir\_e Riwai” (Tehran: Sazman\_e Entesyarat\_e Pedzuhesyegah\_e Farhang wa Andisye\_ye Islami, 1393), 26.

<sup>20</sup> Fathullah Najjar Zadegan, “Barresi\_e Tathbiqi Mabani\_e Tafsir\_e Quran Dar Didghah\_e Fariqain” (Qom: Pedzuhesyegah\_e Hauze wa Danesyegah, 1391), 5.

<sup>21</sup> Syakir Muhammad Kadzim, “Mabani Wa Raweshha\_ye Tafsiri” (Qom: Markaz\_e Jahani\_e Uloom\_e Islami, 1382), 40.

Qur'anic interpretation, where the interpretation of the Qur'an can be realized based on these beliefs, and the absence of these beliefs affects the realization of an interpretation.<sup>22</sup>

In the introduction of the book *Rawesy Syenasi Tafsir\_e Qoran*, it is explained that in the discussion of the presuppositions of exegesis, fundamental foundations are mentioned, where the stance taken on these will influence the existence of exegesis or the principles of interpretation methods.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, there are many other definitions presented by scholars related to the definition of presuppositions or *mabani*<sup>24</sup>, but they are not mentioned here. Based on the above definitions, the following points can be drawn: First, *mabna* means belief. Although the first definition presented by Fakir Maibadi is not clearly stated, the statements he made on the following pages of the book<sup>25</sup> clearly explain what is meant by "something" in the first definition is belief.

In some of the definitions above, the terms presupposition (*Pisy Fardh*) or previously accepted principles (*ushul\_e Maudhue*) and beliefs are sometimes used. From this, it can be understood that all these expressions refer to beliefs; beliefs that precede activity. Second, *mabna* or *mabani* is introduced as the foundation upon which an activity, or in this case, interpretation, is based. By combining the first point with this one, it can be understood that presupposition means a fundamental, essential, and primary belief, not just any belief.

Third, the emergence and development of an activity, or in this study, the activity of scientific exegesis, fully depends on these presuppositions, without which the activity of exegesis would not be realized. Unlike the rules of interpretation that must be applied by the exegete during the act of interpretation, the presuppositions of interpretation are beliefs that the exegete must hold before beginning the act of interpretation. In short, the presuppositions of interpretation are the source of the rules of interpretation.

The above definition discusses the general understanding of the presuppositions of exegesis. However, in line with the title of the article, this writing will only present one of the many presuppositions of exegesis, specifically those related to scientific exegesis (*tafsir ilmi*) rather than general exegesis; the gradation of understanding levels concerning the necessity of scientific or *ilmiah* exegesis.

## Gradation of Understanding Levels

In general, human understanding can be viewed from two perspectives. First,

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<sup>22</sup> Muhammad Bahrami, *Mabani\_e Tafsir\_e Quran* (Qom: Quran Pedzuhesyagh\_e Ulum wa Farhang\_e Islami, 1398). 40-41

<sup>23</sup> Ali Akbar Babai, *Rawesy Syenasi\_e Tafsir\_e Quran* (Qom: Pedzuhesyagh\_e Hauze wa Danesyagh, 1391).

<sup>24</sup> Muhammad Bahrami, *Mabani\_e Tafsir\_e Quran*. 37-40

<sup>25</sup> Kadzim, *Mabani Wa Raweshha\_ye Tafsiri*. 41

horizontal understanding refers to the diversity of intelligence across different skills and disciplines. Second, vertical understanding refers to the levels of intelligence ranging from the most genius to the intelligence level of the average person.

The level of horizontal understanding is confirmed by the discovery of various skills within the community. There are experts in mathematics, philosophy, history, law, exegesis, biology, construction, electronics, and so on. Meanwhile, the level of vertical intelligence can be proven by the discovery of different analytical sharpness and depth of knowledge among people, even within the same field of expertise. This is evident in the different and graded understandings of two exegetes in interpreting a verse or in the grouping of society into genius, intermediate, and layman.

The topic of discussion and the entry point for scientific exegetes to engage in scientific exegesis activities is the presupposition related to the horizontal gradation of understanding depicted in various skills. Many exegetes and scholars of Qur'anic sciences discuss this view in their works. One of them is Thabathabai, who touches on the relationship between various skills and the guidance aspect of the Qur'an.

For writers and orators, the Qur'an is proof of divinity in eloquence; for a philosopher, it is a sign of divinity in thought; for scientists, it is a sign of divinity in knowledge; for sociologists, it is proof of divinity in social science; for jurists, it is proof of divinity in legislation; for politicians, it is in politics; for leaders, it is a sign of divinity in governance; and for all inhabitants of the universe, it is a divine sign in all things beyond their reach, such as news of the unseen, the absence of confusion in law, knowledge, and explanation. This is why the Qur'an claims the universality of miracles and its non-exclusivity in certain dimensions; because the Qur'an is a miracle for everyone, whether human or jinn, commoners or elites, scholars or the uneducated, men or women, from the upper class to the average, and for every person of intellect.<sup>26</sup>

Muhammad Husain Thabathabai's explanation above generally leans more towards the issue of horizontal gradation of understanding, which is exemplified by the various skills and specializations possessed by humans.

However, at the end of his explanation, he also briefly touches on the vertical gradation of understanding by mentioning the groups of common and elite society, as well as the upper and average classes. In other works, a verse of the Qur'an (*He sends down rain from the sky, causing the valleys to flow, each according to its capacity.*) which contains the parable of truth and falsehood, he explains his views on the vertical gradation of society's understanding of the Qur'an more clearly.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Muhammad Husain Thabathabai, *Al-Mizan Fi Tafsir Al-Quran*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Muassasah al-'Alami li al-Mathbuat, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> Muhammad Husain Thabathabai, *Quran Dar Islam* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Islamiyah, 1376). 25

In addition to presenting verses as evidence of the vertical gradation of human understanding of the Qur'an, he also cites a narration to support this by saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated in his famous hadith: "We, the prophets, speak to people according to the capacity of their intellect."<sup>28</sup>

Quraishy Shihab, like Allamah Thabathabai, in his commentary al-Misbah, generally and without targeting any specific group, states that people's understanding varies. Therefore, what exegetes derive from the content of the Qur'an also varies.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, in the book *Membumikan al-Qur'an*, Quraish Shihab believes that the text used by the Qur'an in its descriptions of the universe and its phenomena is concise, precise, and dense. Therefore, the understanding or interpretation of these texts varies greatly according to each individual's level of intelligence and knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

In the statement above, it is evident that Quraish Shihab also explains both forms of understanding; vertical and horizontal. However, in this context, the focus is on the horizontal gradation, which relates to the expertise and disciplines possessed by different individuals, rather than the vertical gradation, which pertains to layers of meaning.<sup>31</sup>

The view on the existence of horizontal gradation of understanding is specifically presented in the scientific commentary by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in its introduction, which states that everyone can have different understandings of the Qur'an according to their abilities and expertise. In this sense, a literary scholar and a scientist in experimental sciences will not have the same understanding of the Qur'an.<sup>32</sup>

Based on the various statements above, it can be understood that scientific commentators in Indonesia believe that humans have diverse levels of understanding in comprehending the contents of the Qur'an. These levels are vertically tiered and horizontally varied. Therefore, in line with the belief in the existence of horizontal gradation of understanding, literary scholars, legal experts, theologians, and scientists will all benefit from the Qur'an according to their respective expertise.

Furthermore, experimental scientists, as one of the representations of horizontal gradation of understanding, can benefit from the Qur'an according to their specific understanding. With this capability, some groups conduct scientific interpretations of the verses related to the universe.

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<sup>28</sup> Muhammad Husain Thabathabai.

<sup>29</sup> Muhammad Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, vol. 1 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Muhammad Quraish Syihab, *Membumikan Al-Quran* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992), 102.

<sup>31</sup> Mohammad Ali Rezaei Asfahani, *Dars Name\_ye Mabani Wa Qawaid\_e Tafsir* (Qom: Markaz\_e Bainal Milali Terjume wa Nasyr\_e al-Mushtafa, 1392), 175–204.

<sup>32</sup> Tim Tafsir Ilmi, *Fenomena Kejiwaan Manusia Dalam Perspektif Al-Quran Dan Sains* (Jakarta: Perpustakaan Nasional RI, 2016).



## Comprehensiveness of the Qur'an

The belief in the existence of a horizontal gradation of understanding is also in line with the fact that the content of the Qur'an is comprehensive and all-encompassing, thus aligning with the horizontal gradation of human understanding.

As a book of guidance, the Qur'an is filled with the information needed to guide the way of life for humanity. Therefore, the Qur'an provides all the guidance that humanity needs to achieve its happiness. Many verses in the Qur'an inform about this, such as Surah Al-Maidah verse 3, Surah An-Nahl verse 89, and Surah Yusuf verse 111.

In confirming this, Hamka believes that the Qur'an contains various branches of Islamic knowledge such as theology (*tauhid*), mysticism (*tasawuf*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), history, psychology, ethics, and natural sciences with their respective branches.<sup>33</sup> Another scientific commentator, Agus Purwanto, also expressed a similar view:

We believe Islam to be a comprehensive and perfect teaching, but so far we have also reduced it to one or two specific aspects, making Islam's mission as a mercy exist only in the form of jargon. The perfection of Islam, including in the aspect of science, must be immediately brought back. The Qur'an has provided a fairly complete message about this issue.<sup>34</sup>

Recognition of the comprehensiveness of the Qur'an is essentially an entry point for proving the existence of scientific indications and references in the Qur'an. By acknowledging this characteristic, it will foster the belief that the Qur'an also contains scientific aspects. This is because the scientific dimension is one of the various aspects of the Qur'an.

Believing in the comprehensiveness of the Qur'an should not be equated with the belief that all knowledge is contained within the Qur'an. This view is rejected by Indonesian exegetes and is not accepted as a basis in Qur'anic interpretation. Similarly, Hamka, after stating the comprehensiveness of Islamic teachings in the Qur'an, also rejects the theory that all knowledge is present in the Qur'an.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, the intended meaning of the comprehensiveness of the Qur'an, which is believed as a presupposition, is its completeness based on the horizontal gradation of each individual's understanding, which varies. In other words, considering that human understanding in following the path of guidance varies according to their background, intellectual development, or knowledge, the content of the Qur'an also accommodates this, thus encompassing all the necessary aspects.

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<sup>33</sup> Haji Abdulmalik Abdulkarim Amrullah, *Tafsir Al Azhar*, vol. 5 (Singapura: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> Agus Purwanto, *Ayat-Ayat Semesta* (Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> Amrullah, *Tafsir Al Azhar*.

This aligns with what Quraish Shihab stated, that a person's presence in a cultural environment or social condition, and the development of knowledge, also has a significant influence on capturing the messages of the Qur'an. However, the greatness of Allah's words can accommodate all abilities, levels, tendencies, and different conditions.<sup>36</sup>

For this reason, the message of the Qur'an has many dimensions; dimensions for laypersons, artists, writers, lawmakers, and scientists, so this book is not only a guide for certain groups of society but a guide for all.

## Science Verses in the Qur'an

As a derivative of the above presupposition, the next presupposition emerged in the form of the belief that there are verses containing scientific reports in the Qur'an. Based on this premise, it is believed that the Qur'an contains scientific verses that speak about the universe and physical phenomena, just as it contains verses on law, creed, and ethics.

Generally, scholars of Qur'anic sciences (*ulum al-Qur'an*) and exegetes (*mufasssir*) can be classified into two groups in viewing this issue. First, the perspective of the Ghazali group<sup>37</sup> Those who believe that all knowledge is contained in the Qur'an, including natural and experimental sciences. Conversely, the second view holds that not all knowledge is found in the Qur'an, but still believes in the existence of many verses that discuss topics of experimental science within it.

Ghazali was the first scientist and the initiator of the theory that all knowledge is contained in the Qur'an.<sup>38</sup> Afterward, some exegetes followed this view, and based on this presupposition, they conducted scientific interpretations of certain verses of the Qur'an.

Indonesian scientific exegetes, whether from the first, second, or third generation, fall into the second group that firmly rejects and criticizes the above-mentioned thought. Hamka, in one of his explanations, stated:

When reading this verse, we have been guided to the existence of something smaller than an atom. The Qur'an only states its existence and does not elaborate in detail on what is smaller than an atom. To understand this, it is no longer within the Qur'an's domain. This has been entrusted to humans themselves. Therefore, if someone says that all knowledge is sufficient in the Qur'an, that statement is not true. What is true is the Qur'an's encouragement to investigate all branches of knowledge.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*.

<sup>37</sup> Muhammad bin Muhammad Ghazali, *Jawahir Al-Quran Wa Dauruhu* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Ulum, 1990).

<sup>38</sup> Nashir Rafii Muhammadi, *Tafsir Ilmi\_e Quran (Barresi\_e Sair\_e Tadwin Wa Tathawwur)*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Farhangg\_e Gastar, n.d.).

<sup>39</sup> Amrullah, *Tafsir Al Azhar*.

On the other hand, Quraish Shihab explains that the meaning of the verse “*ma farrathna fi al-kitabi min syayi*” (QS 6:38) and the verse: “*wa nazzalna ‘alaika al-kitab tibyanan li kulli syay*” (QS 16:89) is that the Qur’an does not omit or neglect to provide explanations regarding everything related to the main objectives of the Qur’an, namely matters of creed, sharia, and ethics, not as understood by some scholars that it encompasses all kinds of knowledge.<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, Achmad Baiquni stated that it is true the Qur’an contains information related to the creation of the universe, living beings, humans, and other creatures, but this book is not a textbook of biology, cosmology, or science in general. Therefore, it only contains some of the issues of these sciences, not all of them.<sup>41</sup> Ajar Permono criticized this view in his article by stating that while it is true there are verses about science in the Qur’an, it is an exaggeration to say that all scientific phenomena are in the Qur’an, making it seem as if the holy book is then considered a scientific encyclopedia.<sup>42</sup>

Although Indonesian scientific exegetes do not believe in and criticize the hypothesis that all knowledge can be found in the Qur’an, at the same time, they believe in the existence of verses that contain scientific references, or in other words, *Kauni* verses in the Qur’an.

They believe there are many such verses, although there are differing opinions on the exact number. Without specifying the number of verses explicitly, Hamka considers them to be far more numerous than legal verses.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Quraish Shihab, without specifying an exact number, stated that the Qur’an reveals many scientific facts, and according to him, these verses number no less than 750.<sup>44</sup> Agus Purwanto also explains the existence of 800 *Kauni* verses in the Qur’an.<sup>45</sup> And in the scientific interpretation by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, citing an interview with Zaghlul al-Najjar, it is stated that the number of cosmic verses in the Qur’an ranges from 750 to 1000 verses,<sup>46</sup> And in the scientific interpretation by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, citing an interview with Zaghlul al-Najjar, it is stated that the number of cosmic verses in the Qur’an ranges from 750 to 1000 verses<sup>47</sup> And the Salman interpretation team refers to them as thousands.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*.

<sup>41</sup> Achmad Baiquni, *Al-Qur’an, Ilmu Pengetahuan Dan Teknologi* (Jakarta: Dana Bhakti Wakaf, 1994).

<sup>42</sup> Ajar Permono, “Bucaille Ayat-Ayat Sains: Sebuah Kritik Metodologi,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam* 5, no. 1 (2019): 31–50, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3550540>.

<sup>43</sup> Amrullah, *Tafsir Al Azhar*.

<sup>44</sup> Muhammad Quraish Syihab, *Membumikan Al-Quran*.

<sup>45</sup> Purwanto, *Ayat-Ayat Semesta*.

<sup>46</sup> Ilmi, *Fenomena Kejiwaan Manusia Dalam Perspektif Al-Quran Dan Sains*.

<sup>47</sup> Thanthawi Jauhari, *Al-Jawahir Fi Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Karim* (Qom: Mushtafa al-Babi Halabi wa Awladuh, 1350).

<sup>48</sup> Tim Tafsir Salman, *Tafsir Ilmiah Juz ‘amma* (Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2014).

Additionally, it seems that the main reason they conduct scientific interpretations is the belief in the existence of such verses in the Qur'an. Moreover, they also express this by lamenting the lack of attention from exegetes in commenting on the *Kauni* verses. Therefore, it is understandable that these exegetes use the existence of such verses and the factual conditions as reasons to engage in scientific interpretation. Agus Purwanto, in one of his complaints, stated that legal verses amount to only one-fifth of the *Kauni* verses, yet they have absorbed almost all the energy of scholars and Muslims. Conversely, the very numerous *Kauni* verses are neglected. Science, as the normative manifestation of the *Kauni* verses, seems unrelated and does not lead Muslims to heaven or hell, so it is never discussed, either in academic fields or religious studies.<sup>49</sup> In line with this statement, the authors of the scientific interpretation (*tafsir ilmi*) from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (KEMENAG) also expressed similar concerns: Although there are quite a few verses containing scientific indications, the reality is that books containing jurisprudence (*fiqh*) are still dominant. Yet, God never differentiated His command to understand the verses of the Qur'an.<sup>50</sup>

The complaints or concerns expressed by these exegetes (*mufassir*) indicate that they believe conducting scientific interpretations of these verses is a necessity. Just as the existence of jurisprudential (*fiqh*) verses has led many scholars to write *fiqh*-oriented interpretations, resulting in numerous works of this nature, the existence of cosmic verses should also be a serious concern for exegetes, leading to the creation of scientific interpretations. The treatment displayed by exegetes so far is considered as double standards towards the verses of the Qur'an, both of which are equally sourced from Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*. Therefore, this attitude is considered wrong and must be corrected with theoretical criticism and practical scientific interpretation. As stated by Syadi Nafisi, these complaints and concerns are not only felt by Indonesian scientific exegetes but also by many other scholars such as Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Iskandarani, Ghamrawi, Taufiq Shidqi, Abdul Aziz Ismail, Mohandis Bazargan, Dr. Pak Nedzad, and so on.<sup>51</sup>

From this explanation, it is understood that Indonesian scientific exegetes (*mufassir ilmi*) view scientific interpretation of cosmic verses as a necessity, just as the *fiqh*-oriented interpretation of legal verses is a requirement. Of course, besides Indonesian scientific exegetes, other scholars also believe in the validity of interpreting cosmic verses using valid scientific discoveries.<sup>52</sup> Because in their view, ignoring these findings when conducting interpretation activities can cause some of the meanings of these verses to become unclear.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Purwanto, *Ayat-Ayat Semesta*.

<sup>50</sup> Ilmi, *Fenomena Kejiwaan Manusia Dalam Perspektif Al-Quran Dan Sains*.

<sup>51</sup> Syadi Nafisi, *Jaryan Syenasi\_e Tafsir\_e Ilmi* (Qom: Pedzuhesyghah\_e Hauze wa Danesyghah, 1397).

<sup>52</sup> Ali Akbar Babai, *Qwaid\_e Tafsir\_e Qoran, Ke Lima* (Qom: Pedzuhesyghah\_e Hauze wa Danesyghah, 1401).

<sup>53</sup> Asfahani, *Manteq\_e Tafsir\_e Tafasir\_e Quran\_e 2*.

## Conclusion

Preconceptions of interpretation are fundamental, essential, and primary beliefs held by exegetes (*mufassir*) before the activity of interpretation, where their existence and continuity depend on these beliefs. Indonesian scientific exegetes (*mufassir ilmi*) believe that humans have a horizontally graded perceptive ability as a preconception of interpretation. Therefore, the existence of a comprehensive Qur'an is required, which is then proven by the presence of many scientific verses in the Qur'an as an answer to the needs of humans with a scientific background. The preconception that believes in the existence of verses containing science in the Qur'an necessitates the existence of scientific interpretation, just as the existence of jurisprudential (*fiqh*) verses necessitates the existence of fiqh interpretation. Believing in the comprehensiveness of the Qur'an and the presence of many scientific verses in it does not mean believing that all knowledge is contained in the Qur'an, as understood by Ghazali and his followers.

Rejecting Ghazali's theory about the existence of all knowledge in the Qur'an does not mean rejecting scientific interpretation. This means that alongside the rejection of Ghazali's thoughts, one can still believe in the presence of scientific explanations in the Qur'an. Based on this belief, an interpreter (*mufassir*) can conduct scientific interpretation activities.

With this research, it is expected that there will be real implications for the development of scientific interpretation; Especially in Nusantara. Because it has been explained that the activity of interpretation with this approach was done by Presuppositions that can be scientifically answered.

This article limits the discussion topic to the perspective of Indonesian scientific exegetes (*mufassir ilmi*) regarding one of the preconceptions of scientific interpretation along with its derivatives. Therefore, there are certainly other preconceptions of scientific interpretation that can be studied by researchers. These studies will strengthen, complement, or critique the results of this research and can be conducted in line with this article or as a critical study of the preconceptions of Indonesian scientific interpretation.

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