

RATIONALIZING REVELATION IN THE MALAY-INDONESIAN WORLD: THE DECONSTRUCTION OF FATALISM AND *TAQLĪD* IN OEMAR BAKRY'S *TAFSIR RAHMAT*

Muhammad Dhiya'ul Umam^{1*}, Ika Yunia Fauzia², Abdul Kadir Riyadi³, Moh. Addib Amrullah⁴

¹ UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia; umam.dziya@gmail.com

² Universitas Hayam Wuruk Perbanas Surabaya, Indonesia; ika.yunia@perbanas.ac.id

³ UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia; abd.kadir@uinsa.ac.id

⁴ UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia; amrullahku97@gmail.com

Article History: Received: 27 March 2026

Revised: 23 April 2026

Accepted: 26 April 2026



© 2026 by Authors. Submitted for possible open-access publication under the terms and conditions of the Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20871/tjsq.v8i2.595>

Abstract: *The tension between theological fatalism (jabr) and modernist activism defined much of 20th-century Indonesian Islamic thought, shaping the socio-political trajectory of the post-colonial nation. Within this intellectual contestation, vernacular exegesis emerged as a crucial medium for reform, translating elite theological debates into mass pedagogy. While previous studies have predominantly highlighted the pedagogical and scientific features of Oemar Bakry's Tafsir Rahmat (1983), the specific theological mechanisms he employs to dismantle deterministic logic remain underexplored. This article investigates how Bakry's exegesis operationalizes a Theology of Progress to explicitly deconstruct traditionalist passivity and the epistemological stagnation caused by blind imitation (taqlid). Employing a qualitative history of ideas approach within an adabī ijtīmā'ī (socio-literary) framework, the study utilizes a thematic data coding system to analyze Bakry's interpretation of key verses regarding socio-historical agency, calamity, and cosmology. The findings reveal a tripartite strategy of rationalization. First, Bakry reinterprets Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 11 to frame historical change as a mechanical consequence of human effort governed by sunnatullāh (God's natural laws), unequivocally rejecting deterministic readings that paralyze social mobility. Second, he utilizes the Minangkabau reformist maxim reason before surrender (habis akal baru tawakal) to interpret Q.S. Ash-Shūrā [42]: 30, redefining natural disasters as verifiable consequences of human negligence and ecological mismanagement rather than inexplicable divine trials. Third, the exegesis purges unverifiable folklore (isrā'iliyyāt) while simultaneously integrating modern scientific terminology, notably translating al-samāwāt as space (ruang angkasa) to bridge scriptural revelation with the Space Age. The study concludes that Tafsir Rahmat serves as a critical instrument of deliberate social engineering. By translating the intellectual elitism of global Islamic modernism into*

* Corresponding Author

an accessible vernacular pedagogy, Bakry successfully deconstructs the fatalistic mindset to reconstruct the Indonesian Muslim subject from a passive recipient of fate into an active, rational agent of post-colonial history and nation-building.

Keywords: *Adabī Ijtīmā'ī, Indonesian Exegesis, Islamic Modernism, Tafsir Rahmat, Theological Fatalism (Jabr).*

Abstrak: Ketegangan antara fatalisme teologis (*jabr*) dan aktivisme modernis mendefinisikan sebagian besar pemikiran Islam Indonesia abad ke-20, yang pada gilirannya turut membentuk lintasan sosial-politik bangsa pascakolonial. Dalam konstelasi intelektual ini, tafsir vernakular muncul sebagai medium penting untuk melakukan reformasi, menerjemahkan perdebatan teologis elitis menjadi pedagogi massa. Sementara studi-studi sebelumnya secara dominan menyoroti fitur pedagogis dan ilmiah dari *Tafsir Rahmat* (1983) karya Oemar Bakry, mekanisme teologis spesifik yang digunakannya untuk membongkar logika deterministik masih kurang dieksplorasi. Artikel ini menyelidiki bagaimana penafsiran Bakry mengoperasionalkan sebuah Teologi Kemajuan untuk secara eksplisit mendekonstruksi kepasifan tradisional dan stagnasi epistemologis yang disebabkan oleh imitasi buta (*taqlid*). Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif sejarah gagasan dalam kerangka *adabī ijtīmā'ī* (socio-sastra), studi ini memanfaatkan sistem pengodean data tematik untuk menganalisis penafsiran Bakry terhadap ayat-ayat kunci mengenai agensi socio-historis, musibah, dan kosmologi. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkap strategi rasionalisasi tripartit. Pertama, Bakry menafsirkan ulang Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 11 untuk membingkai perubahan historis sebagai konsekuensi mekanis dari usaha manusia yang diatur oleh *sunnatullāh* (hukum alam Tuhan), menolak secara tegas pembacaan deterministik yang melumpuhkan mobilitas sosial. Kedua, ia menggunakan maksim reformis Minangkabau 'akal didahulukan sebelum berserah' (*habis akal baru tawakal*) untuk menafsirkan Q.S. Ash-Shūrā [42]: 30, dengan mendefinisikan ulang bencana alam sebagai konsekuensi yang dapat diverifikasi dari kelalaian manusia dan salah urus ekologi, bukan sebagai ujian ilahi yang tak dapat dijelaskan. Ketiga, penafsiran tersebut menyinkronkan folklor yang tidak dapat diverifikasi (*isrā'īliyyāt*) sekaligus mengintegrasikan terminologi ilmiah modern, khususnya dengan menerjemahkan *al-samāwāt* sebagai ruang angkasa guna menjembatani wahyu kitab suci dengan Abad Angkasa. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa *Tafsir Rahmat* berfungsi sebagai instrumen kritis dari rekayasa sosial yang disengaja. Dengan menerjemahkan elitisme intelektual modernisme Islam global ke dalam pedagogi vernakular yang mudah diakses, Bakry berhasil mendekonstruksi pola pikir fatalistik sekaligus merekonstruksi subjek muslim Indonesia dari penerima pasif takdir menjadi agen rasional yang aktif dalam sejarah pascakolonial dan pembangunan bangsa.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Adabī Ijtīmā'ī, Fatalisme Teologis (Jabr), Modernisme Islam, Tafsir Nusantara, Tafsir Rahmat.*

Introduction

The intellectual history of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian world during the twentieth century is defined by a profound theological tension between traditionalist resignation and modernist activism.¹ At the heart of this contestation lies the critique of fatalism (*jabr*). In the context of Southeast Asian Islamic reform, *jabr* is understood not merely as an abstract theological debate, but as a socio-religious pathology. While formal Islamic theology strictly differentiates between the absolute determinism of *jabr* and the orthodox Ash'arī concept of

1 Greg Barton et al., "Authoritarianism, Democracy, Islamic Movements and Contestations of Islamic Religious Ideas in Indonesia," *Religions* 12, no. 8 (2021): 641, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12080641>.

kasb (human acquisition of divine acts), modernist reformers observed that this theoretical distinction had collapsed in popular consciousness. They argued that the nuanced, static interpretation of *kasb* in the Nusantara had practically degenerated into a form of *jabr*, severely limiting the scope of human agency by overemphasizing God's absolute will over human volition.² In the pre-reformist landscape of the Nusantara, this deterministic worldview was argued to have fostered a culture of apathy and insularity in thought, functioning as a mechanism where poverty and colonial subjugation were frequently interpreted as divine decrees to be accepted with passive trust (*tawakkul*) rather than challenges to be overcome through rational effort.³

Closely intertwined with this theological fatalism was the epistemological crisis of *taqlīd* (blind imitation). While *jabr* paralyzed physical and social agency, *taqlīd* paralyzed intellectual agency. In this historical context, *taqlīd* refers to the unquestioning adherence to the religious opinions of classical scholars without critical examination of their foundational scriptural evidence (*dalīl*). While this theological posture provided psychological stability, it simultaneously entrenched a conservatism that restricted rationality and discouraged critical reading of social conditions. It fostered an environment where *ijtihād* (independent, contextual reasoning) was deemed closed or inaccessible to contemporary Muslims, rendering the ummah intellectually unequipped to face the onslaught of modernity. Together, *jabr* and *taqlīd* formed a dual impediment that modernist thinkers identified as the primary causes of societal stagnation.⁴

The emergence of Islamic modernism in Indonesia, epitomized by organizations such as Muhammadiyah and educational reform movements like the Sumatera Thawalib, arose as a direct response to this theology of stagnation. Reformist thinkers sought to reconstruct the understanding of destiny by asserting that divine will does not negate human effort; rather, it demands active engagement in social change as a manifestation of religious duty.⁵ This friction between fatalistic theology and rationalist modernism became one of the primary arenas of Islamic thought throughout the century.⁶ Within this transformative milieu, the role of vernacular exegesis (*tafsīr*) became paramount. It was not enough to merely translate the Qur'an; the text had to be interpreted in a way that mobilized the

2 Mujiburrahman Mujiburrahman, "Islamic Theological Texts and Contexts in Banjarese Society: An Overview of the Existing Studies," *Southeast Asian Studies* 3, no. 3 (n.d.): 611–41, https://doi.org/10.20495/seas.3.3_611.

3 Khairudin Aljunied, "Bringing Rationality Back: Harun Nasution and the Burden of Muslim Thought in Twentieth-Century Southeast Asia," *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 6, no. 1 (2021): 29–55.

4 Mohammad Takdir and Akhmad Sirojuddin Munir, "Genealogy and Orientation of the Islamic Modernist Movement in Indonesia: Case Study of the Muhammadiyah Renewal Movement," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 20, no. 1 (2025): 81–96, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol20no1.6>.

5 Takdir and Munir, "Genealogy and Orientation of the Islamic Modernist Movement in Indonesia: Case Study of the Muhammadiyah Renewal Movement," 81–96.

6 Barton and Yilmaz, *Contestations of Islamic Religious Ideas in Indonesia*.

ummah. Oemar Bakry (1916–1985), a scholar formed by the reformist crucible of the Thawalib and Diniyah Putra education systems,⁷ emerged as a pivotal figure in this trajectory. His magnum opus, *Tafsir Rahmat* (1981–1983), represents a critical intervention in Indonesian exegetical history, aiming to align the Qur’anic message with the demands of modernity.

Existing scholarship has extensively documented the pedagogical and linguistic contributions of *Tafsir Rahmat*. Fatah et al. categorize Bakry’s work as a representative of the Nusantara exegetical tradition with a distinct pedagogical orientation.⁸ They argue that the *tafsir* was not written exclusively for the academic elite but for the broader Muslim public—particularly students in madrasas and *pesantren*—to make the Qur’an accessible through simple language.⁹ In this view, *Tafsir Rahmat* operates as a form of educational exegesis, where scripture is articulated not merely for theological contemplation but as a practical guide for cultivating knowledgeable and ethical Muslim subjects. Howard Federspiel further notes that Indonesian local *tafsir* in this period often served as a medium for moral education and character building, deeply connected to the community’s social reality.

Furthermore, the literature highlights Bakry’s engagement with modernity and science. Hidayat et al. emphasize that the distinctiveness of *Tafsir Rahmat* lies in its use of modern Indonesian language and its effort to connect the Qur’an with technological improvisation and the space age context. This is corroborated by Mahbub Ghazali, who observes that the *tafsir* adopts a perspective that views scientific-technological development through the lens of textual meaning.¹⁰ Bakry’s interpretation tends towards a rational inclination, encouraging readers to approach the Qur’an through logical, reflective reasoning, mirroring the influence of global Islamic reformists such as Muḥammad ‘Abduh. For instance, Bakry explicitly posits that a nation mastering science will inevitably lead the world, drawing an analogy to Adam’s superiority over angels due to his knowledge of the names of things.

Beyond pedagogy and science, recent studies have also examined the socio-political dimension of Bakry’s work. Hidayat et al. argue that Bakry offers a concept of authoritative *da’wah*, interpreting Q.S. Āli ‘Imrān [3]: 104 as a mandate to establish organizations with standardized religious authority to counter radicalism,

7 M. Riyan Hidayat et al., “Virtual Da’wah Authority in Tafsir Rahmat H. Oemar Bakry: An Analysis of Intertextuality from Julia Kristeva,” *An-Nida’* 47, no. 1 (2023): 91–105, <https://doi.org/10.24014/an-nida.v47i1.23022>.

8 Nasrul Fatah et al., “The Qur’anic Exegesis as a Medium of Islamic Education in Indonesia: A Discourse Analysis of Tafsir Rahmat by H. Oemar Bakry,” *Al-Aulia: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 11, no. 2 (2025): 133–43, <https://doi.org/10.46963/aulia.v11i2.3298>.

9 Fatah et al., “The Qur’anic Exegesis as a Medium of Islamic Education in Indonesia: A Discourse Analysis of Tafsir Rahmat by H. Oemar Bakry.”

10 Mahbub Ghazali, “Dialektika Sains, Tradisi dan al-Qur’an: Representasi Modernitas dalam Tafsir Rahmat karya Oemar Bakry,” *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Hadis* 5, no. 2 (2021): 843–58, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v5i2.3394>.

extremism, and liberalism. This reflects a concern for social order and the dangers of unverified religious knowledge, a concern that extends to Bakry's critique of H.B. Jassin's poetic translation of the Qur'an, which Bakry deemed linguistically and theologically flawed.¹¹

However, despite these valuable contributions, a significant gap remains in academic literature. While scholars have identified the *pedagogical* intent and the *scientific* features of *Tafsir Rahmat*, there has been insufficient analysis of the specific *theological mechanism* by which Bakry deconstructs the doctrine of fatalism. Existing studies tend to describe Bakry as a modernist, but they rarely explain *how* his specific exegetical choices dismantle the logic of *jabr* and *taqlīd* to construct a Theology of Progress. Most analyses focus on the general characteristics of the text rather than the operationalization of his modernist reason in interpreting critical theological verses regarding causality, disaster, and agency. Furthermore, the link between his rejection of *isrā'īliyyāt* (mythological folklore) and the establishment of a rational epistemology remains under-theorized in the context of Indonesian social engineering.

This article addresses this gap by arguing that *Tafsir Rahmat* functions as more than a linguistic simplification or a moral guide; it is a calculated instrument of theological deconstruction and social engineering, designed to replace the mythical mentality of traditionalism with a rational agency compatible with the modern nation-state. In this context, social engineering is defined not as a coercive state policy, but as a deliberate pedagogical project aimed at mass cognitive restructuring. Because Bakry's exegesis was tailored for madrasas, public schools, and the vernacular reading public rather than the traditional ulama elite, the text functions as a blueprint for societal reform—systematically replacing the fatalistic cultural logic of the masses with the rationalist prerequisites needed for modern developmentalism. By utilizing the *adabī ijtimā'ī* approach, this study demonstrates how Bakry systematically reinterprets concepts of *tawakkul* and *sunnatullāh*. The central thesis asserts that Bakry operationalizes a conceptual framework that this study terms a theology of progress. While not a term used by Bakry himself, it serves as an analytical construct to describe how his exegesis reorients the believer's worldview from one of fatalistic resignation to one of causal accountability.

Through a close reading of his exegesis on Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 11 (change via effort), Q.S. Ash-Shūrā [42]: 30 (causality of disaster), and his scientific translation of cosmological terms, this research elucidates how Bakry adapts the intellectual legacy of 'Abduh and al-Afghānī to engineer a progressive Indonesian Muslim identity. These specific verses were purposively selected because they constitute the primary theological battlegrounds in the traditionalist-modernist debate: Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 11 serves as the foundational text for socio-historical agency, Q.S. Ash-Shūrā [42]: 30 represents the practical site where fatalism is most frequently deployed to explain suffering and calamity, and the cosmological verses provide

11 Muhammad Saifullah, "Kritik Oemar Bakry Terhadap Terjemahan Puitis H.B. Jassin," *SUHUF* 12, no. 2 (2019): 347–71, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v12i2.480>.

the epistemological bridge replacing folklore (*isrā'īliyyāt*) with modern empirical science. Together, Bakry's treatment of these three thematic nodes provides a robust and sufficiently representative cross-section of his overarching strategy to dismantle deterministic thinking. This investigation not only clarifies the intellectual genealogy of West Sumatran reformism but also underscores the power of vernacular exegesis in shaping the socio-religious consciousness of the Malay-Indonesian world.

To address the gaps, this study employs a qualitative research design rooted in the history of ideas approach to delineate the intellectual genealogy of Bakry's exegetical thought.¹² This framework is essential for tracing the transmission of reformist ideologies from the Cairo School—specifically the works of Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā—to the Nusantara context via educational networks.¹³ The primary data source is the complete text of *Tafsīr Rahmat*,¹⁴ employing a thematic data coding system—as is standard in qualitative library research—to categorize and extract verses related to theological agency, *sunnatullāh*, and scientific causality. To establish the traditionalist theological baseline that Bakry attempts to deconstruct, this study also utilizes canonical classical exegeses—specifically *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*—as comparative primary texts. These primary materials are then corroborated by secondary sources, including foundational texts of Egyptian modernism and contemporary scholarship on the localization of Islamic reformism in Southeast Asia.

In analyzing these primary texts, the analysis utilizes the *adabī ijtimā'ī* (socio-literary) framework, a methodological hallmark of reformist exegesis that dialectically connects textual interpretation with prevailing social realities¹⁵. The research trajectory proceeds by first identifying the conceptual parallels between Bakry's Theology of Progress and 'Abduh's rationalist reconstruction of *tawhīd*, specifically the rejection of static traditionalism. Subsequently, the analysis examines how Bakry re-articulates these global reformist concepts into the Indonesian vernacular to challenge the local hegemony of fatalism. This approach ultimately demonstrates how *ijtihād* is reformulated in Bakry's work not merely as legal reasoning, but as a specific mechanism for post-colonial development and nation-building.

12 Igor Alekseev, "Appeal to History as a Method of Islamic Reformation: Marjani, Rashid Rida, and Ibn Khaldun," *State, Religion, Church in Russia and Abroad* 41, nos. 3–4 (2025): 32–54, <https://doi.org/10.22394/2073-7203-2023-41-3-4-32-54>.

13 Mohammad Syifa Amin Widigdo and Awang Azman Awang Pawi, "Muhammad Abduh's Reformist Thoughts and Their Reception in Indonesian and Malaysian Islamic Reform Movements," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 20, no. 2 (2025): 361–74, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol20no2.25>.

14 Oemar Bakry, *Tafsīr Rahmat* (Jakarta: Mutiara, 1983).

15 Ilyas Supena, "Epistemology of Tafsīr, Ta'wil, and Hermeneutics: Towards an Integrative Approach," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 14, no. 1 (2024): 121–36, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.141.08>.

From Predestination to *Sunnatullāh*: Redefining Agency in Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 11

The theological pivot of Oemar Bakry's modernism lies in his reconstruction of *sunnatullāh* (God's Natural Law) from a mysterious divine habit into a verifiable, mechanical system of cause and effect. In the traditionalist milieu of the Malay-Indonesian world, the doctrine of *qadā* and *qadar* (divine decree) was often interpreted through a simplified Ash'arite lens. While classical Ash'arī utilized the concept of *kasb* (acquisition) to balance God's omnipotence with human responsibility, its popular interpretation in the Nusantara frequently degenerated into absolute determinism, practically mirroring the fatalism of the Jabariyah sect (*jabr*). Bakry challenges this stagnation not by rejecting the concept of destiny, but by rationalizing it through the specific exegesis of Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 11 (Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves)¹⁶. By actively centering human volition, Bakry aligns *Tafsir Rahmat* with the intellectual trajectory of Muḥammad 'Abduh—whose strong emphasis on free will and rational causality has led scholars to characterize his modernist theology as neo-Mu'tazilite. Within this framework, this verse ceases to be a mere theological statement on divine omnipotence and transforms into a sociological formula for national progress—specifically defined as the socio-economic and intellectual advancement of the post-colonial Muslim community—grounded in the certainty of natural laws.

The primary mechanism Bakry employs to dismantle the logic of fatalism is a systematic linguistic substitution in the translation and commentary themselves, specifically replacing the passive vocabulary of predetermination with the active vocabulary of human volition. Aligning with a distinct lexical shift observed in Indonesian modernist exegesis, Bakry frequently replaces or glosses traditional fatalistic terminology such as *takdīr* (fate) and *qadar* (predestination) with agent-centric vocabulary like *ikhtiyār* (choice), effort, and will.¹⁷ Bakry applies this strategy rigorously to Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 11, utilizing *dalālah lughawiyyah* (lexical analysis) to anchor the meaning of change (*taghyīr*) in human initiation.¹⁸

By framing the verse through conditional structures—where the divine act of changing a nation's fate is syntactically dependent on the human act of internal transformation—Bakry establishes a theological hierarchy that places human agency as the prerequisite for divine intervention. As noted by Wijaya and Muzammil, this framing integrates *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law) into the very grammar of the interpretation, positing that the divine intent is not to impose a pre-written script, but to establish a system of justice where outcomes

16 Bakry, *Tafsir Rahmat*, 475.

17 Zulfikri Zulkarnaini and Mohammed A. F. Badawi, "The Relevance of Muhammad Abduh's Thought in Indonesian Tafsir: Analysis of Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies* 21, no. 1 (2021): 113–48, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol21.iss1.art5>.

18 Supena, "Epistemology of Tafsir, Ta'wil, and Hermeneutics: Towards an Integrative Approach," 121–36.

are strictly correlated with human input.¹⁹

To fully appreciate the radical nature of Bakry's linguistic shift, it is instructive to contrast *Tafsir Rahmat* with the traditional commentaries that dominated the pre-reformist Nusantara landscape. Historically, early Malay-Indonesian exegesis was characterized by the mere transmission of classical Middle Eastern texts with little novelty or contextual social critique, relying heavily on standard references like *Tafsir al-Jalālayn*.²⁰ The popularity of these early commentaries was often driven by their elaboration on metaphysical narratives that appealed to local pre-Islamic animist traditions, rather than addressing active social issues. In these orthodox commentaries, the concept of change (*taghyīr*) in Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 11 is predominantly interpreted within a defensive, negative context. For instance, *Tafsir al-Jalālayn* interprets the verse to mean that Allah will not withdraw His existing blessings (*nikmat*) from a community unless they commit acts of disobedience, while also emphasizing a metaphysical preoccupation with guardian angels protecting humans from the interference of jinn.²¹ Similarly, Nawawī al-Bantanī's in *Marāḥ Labīd* asserts that Allah does not alter conditions of security and prosperity unless the people abandon their gratitude. The traditional focus, therefore, is primarily on moral preservation to avoid divine retribution and supernatural threats.²²

Bakry, however, employing the *adabī ijtīmā'ī*—which specifically emerged to bridge scriptural texts with contemporary societal problems—flips this theological paradigm into a positive, proactive framework.²³ Rather than viewing the verse as a defensive boundary meant to preserve existing comforts from divine retraction, Bakry interprets the necessary change (*taghyīr*) as an obligatory pursuit of collective advancement. In this modernist reading, change is not merely the avoidance of sin to maintain the status quo, but the active acquisition of progress through structured human effort, educational reform, and rational planning. By stripping away the metaphysical anxieties found in classical texts, Bakry democratizes the meaning of *ikhtiyār* (effort), shifting the believer's focus from invisible spiritual threats to visible societal challenges. This stark comparative contrast illuminates how Bakry transforms the verse from a passive warning about moral decay into

19 Aksin Wijaya and Shofiyullah Muzammil, "Maqāshidi Tafsir: Uncovering and Presenting Maqāshid Ilāhī-Qur'anī into Contemporary Context," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 59, no. 2 (2021): 449–78, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2021.592.449-478>.

20 Islah Gusmian and Mustaffa Abdullah, "Criticism of Social, Political, and Religious Problems in Indonesia: A Study on Al-Iklīl Fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl by Mīsbah Bin Zainil Mustafa (1917-1994)," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 18, no. 1 (2023): 215–30, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol18no1.18>.

21 Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Maḥallī and Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* (Jakarta: Al-Haramayn Jaya Indonesia, 2007).

22 Muḥammad ibn 'Umar Nawawī al-Jāwī al-Bantanī, *Marāḥ Labīd li-Kashf Ma'nā al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, ed. Muḥammad Amīn al-Dunnāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.).

23 Idil Hamzah, "The Development of Exegesis in Indonesia," *The International Journal of Pegon: Islam Nusantara Civilization* 9, no. 01 (2023): 51–68, <https://doi.org/10.51925/inc.v9i01.77>.

an active manifesto for socio-economic development, implicitly positing that overcoming poverty, ignorance, and post-colonial subjugation is the ultimate fulfillment of God's command.

This sociological shift is explicitly articulated in Bakry's direct commentary on the verse. Translating the theological imperative into a civilizational metric, Bakry writes: "The change in the condition of a people, a nation, and every individual, will occur when they change it themselves. A backward people will advance when they strive diligently and honestly. Advanced people will be destroyed when their morals are corrupted, and their solidarity and unity are lost."²⁴ Through this textual framing, Bakry transposes the locus of the verse from individual spiritual fate to the historical trajectory of societies. By identifying moral corruption and the loss of solidarity as the exact variables of civilizational destruction, Bakry's exegesis mirrors the Khaldunian socio-historical concept of *'asabiyyah* (social cohesion), synthesized with Islamic modernism. As highlighted by recent studies on the sociology of history, the cyclical collapse of civilizations and governments is fundamentally triggered by the generational decline of *'asabiyyah*, which inevitably gives way to individualism, political corruption, and severe moral decay.²⁵ In *Tafsir Rahmat*, this historical mechanism is not merely a secular sociological theory but the very manifestation of divine law (*sunnatullāh*).

Furthermore, Bakry's emphasis on diligent effort (*berusaha dengan giat*) responds directly to the post-colonial socio-economic stagnation of the Muslim *ummah*. His reading aligns perfectly with the diagnosis of global modernist pioneers like Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, who argued that Muslim nations grew weak and decayed because the rational truth of Islam was corrupted by successive waves of falsity and passivity. The humiliating condition of underdeveloped nations, living at the mercy of other powers, is driven by a diminishment of intellectual vigor and the abandonment of Qur'anic principles.²⁶ Bakry addresses this exact malaise by asserting that progress lies entirely in the condition of the people themselves. Yet, to guard his argument against accusations of theological secularization, Bakry carefully concludes his commentary by affirming divine sovereignty: "To Allah do the creatures He created pray and glorify Him. He is the one who holds all power. The universe inevitably bows to Him."²⁷ This concluding caveat ensures that human agency is maximized as a religious duty without usurping the ultimate omnipotence of God.

This slight linguistic shift is reinforced by a broader oppositional structure characteristic of the *adabī ijtimā'ī* (socio-literary) style. Bakry creates a binary contrast between the passive believer who awaits a miracle and the active believer

24 Bakry, *Tafsir Rahmat*, 475.

25 Demokan Demirel, "Sociological and Political Origins in Ibn Khaldun's State Theory," *Sociology Lens* 37, no. 3 (2024): 468–79, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12473>.

26 Asyiqin Abdul Halim et al., "Ibn Khaldun's Theory of 'Asabiyyah and Its Application in Modern Muslim Society," *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 11, no. 9 (2012): 1232–37.

27 Bakry, *Tafsir Rahmat*, 475.

who operates within the laws of causality.²⁸ The commentary does not merely encourage effort; it ontologically redefines faith itself. In this framework, surrender (*tawakkul*) is invalid without prior exhaustion of all material means. The change mentioned in the verse is interpreted not as a mystical alteration of the soul, but as a tangible improvement in knowledge, work ethics, and social organization. Consequently, the theological concept of *sunnatullāh* is stripped of its metaphysical ambiguity and presented as a set of immutable laws governing sociology just as they govern physics.

Bakry's insistence on the certainty of these laws reveals a direct intellectual genealogy with the Cairo School, specifically the hermeneutics of Aḥmad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī. Just as al-Marāghī utilized *ra'yī* (reason) to filter out *da'if* (weak) narrations that contradicted logic or scientific evidence.²⁹ Bakry employs empirical science as a yardstick to verify the wisdom of Qur'anic commands. The correspondence between the two exegetes is striking in their shared methodology of verification. Nazhifah highlights that al-Marāghī's motivation was to present a simplified, rational exegesis that avoided the difficult-to-accept elements of traditional commentaries. Bakry mirrors this by using scientific rationality to validate theological claims. Haririe notes that for Bakry, prohibitions (such as dietary laws) are not merely dogmatic tests of obedience but are scientifically verifiable mandates that can be proven through laboratory research and psychological evidence.³⁰

This scientific verification of *sunnatullāh* serves a dual function in Bakry's argumentation. First, it acts as an apologetic tool, proving to a skepticism-prone modern generation that the Qur'an does not contradict science and technology.³¹ Second, and more critically, it solidifies the link between natural law and historical law. If the physical world operates according to fixed, discoverable laws (verified by science), then the historical world of nations must also operate according to fixed laws (verified by Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 11). By treating the rise and fall of nations as a scientific certainty based on their adherence to *sunnatullāh*, Bakry effectively demystifies the mechanism of history while sanctifying the act of progress. It is crucial to note that this demystification does not equate to secularization in the sense of removing God's sovereignty—a concept Bakry explicitly opposed in his other writings, such as *Islam Menentang Sekularisasi*. Rather, it is a rejection of mystical arbitrariness; God's will be absolute, but it is executed through rational, empirical laws rather than spontaneous miracles. The power of God is thus

28 Zulkarnaini and Badawi, "The Relevance of Muhammad Abduh's Thought in Indonesian Tafsir: Analysis of Tafsir Al-Azhar," 113–48.

29 Dinni Nazhifah, "Tafsir-Tafsir Modern dan Kontemporer Abad Ke-19-21 M," *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas* 1, no. 2 (2021): 211–18, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v1i2.12302>.

30 Muhammad Ruhayat Haririe, "Resonance of Reformist-Modernist Islamic Thought in Interpretation and Its Influence on The Development of Interpretation in Indonesia," *Madinah: Jurnal Studi Islam* 11, no. 2 (2024): 313–36, <https://doi.org/10.58518/madinah.v11i2.3079>.

31 Haririe, "Resonance of Reformist-Modernist Islamic Thought in Interpretation and Its Influence on The Development of Interpretation in Indonesia," 313–36.

reimagined not as the ability to break natural laws (miracles), but as the very authority behind the laws themselves, which exceed human technology yet remain accessible to human reason.³²

Ultimately, Bakry's interpretation of Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 11 constitutes a decisive break from the theology of *jabr*. By integrating the linguistic emphasis on *ikhtiyār* with a scientifically validated understanding of *sunnatullāh*, *Tafsir Rahmat* successfully operationalizes the modernist agenda. The fatalistic acceptance of the status quo is exposed not as piety, but as a violation of the laws of God. In this reconstructed worldview, the true believer understands the mechanics of cause and effect—whether in the laboratory or in society—and utilizes this understanding to engineer a better future.

The Logic of Calamity: Rationalizing *Tawakkul* through Causal Theology

If the interpretation of Q.S. Ar-Ra'd [13]: 11 established the mechanism of progress, Oemar Bakry's exegesis of Q.S. Ash-Shūrā [42]: 30 (And whatever strikes you of disaster—it is for what your hands have earned) establishes the logic of accountability. In the prevailing religious psychology of the Malay-Indonesian world, natural and social calamities were frequently categorized under the theological rubric of *ibtīlā* (divine trial) or pure *taqdīr* (fate). This traditional framing often cultivated what Faqihuddin et al. describe as cultural resignation, a passive acceptance of suffering where the locus of control is externalized to the divine, thereby absolving human actors of responsibility for mitigation or preparedness.³³ Bakry disrupts this comfort of powerlessness by constructing a strict liability theology. By rigorously linking disaster (*muṣībah*) to human acquisition (*kasb*), *Tafsir Rahmat* redefines calamity not as an inscrutable mystery of God's will, but as a verifiable feedback mechanism for human error, negligence, and ethical failure.

The cornerstone of this theological reconstruction is Bakry's specific deployment of the Minangkabau reformist maxim: "*habis akal baru tawakal*."³⁴ While this phrase appears colloquial, within the context of *Tafsir Rahmat*, it functions as a precise methodological algorithm for religious conduct, a strict, step-by-step sequential formula dictating that human rational effort must be fully exhausted before divine surrender can be invoked. Bakry argues that the spiritual act of *tawakkul* is theoretically invalid unless it is preceded by the exhaustion of *'aql* (reason/effort). In his commentary on Q.S. Ash-Shūrā [42]: 30, Bakry asserts that every calamity that befalls humans is due to their own mistakes; Allah has given reason/mind to weigh all actions, so humans cannot act arbitrarily.³⁵ This

32 Haririe, "Resonance of Reformist-Modernist Islamic Thought in Interpretation and Its Influence on The Development of Interpretation in Indonesia," 313–36.

33 Achmad Faqihuddin et al., "The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Transforming the Culture of Resignation Towards Natural Disasters in Indonesia," *E3S Web of Conferences* 600 (2024): 02008, <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202460002008>.

34 Bakry, *Tafsir Rahmat*, 1129.

35 Bakry, *Tafsir Rahmat*, 959.

interpretation fundamentally reorders the timeline of faith. In the traditional fatalistic view, one begins with surrender; in Bakry's modernist view, surrender is the terminal point of a rational process. By positing *'aql* as the prerequisite for *tawakkul*, Bakry argues that neglecting intellectual preparation or safety measures is not an act of piety, but a transgression against the divine gift of reason.

This Logic of Priority—placing reason before resignation—relies heavily on the linguistic analysis of the Qur'anic phrase *bimā kasabat aydikum* (because of what your hands have earned). To appreciate Bakry's modernist intervention, it is necessary to contrast his approach with classical exegesis. In traditional commentaries such as *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, this phrase was overwhelmingly interpreted through a framework of spiritual transgression and otherworldly compensation. Ibn Kathir argued that any calamity—even a minor physical scratch or forgetting memorized Qur'anic verses—is a direct punishment for past ritual sins, serving as an expiation (*kaffārah*) so that God does not punish the believer twice in the afterlife.³⁶

Bakry radically shifts this paradigm by rescuing the concept of *kasb* from its metaphysical abstraction. Aligning with contemporary modernist thought, which redefines sin not merely as ritual disobedience but as an evil act that ignores facts and does not use knowledge to reduce disaster risk, Bakry interprets the work of human hands as tangible, empirical negligence.³⁷ In the broader context of Islamic modernism, disasters are no longer seen as supernatural punishments or the anger of unseen spirits, but as outcomes of the law of causality; earthquakes and floods do not kill by themselves; rather, it is human ignorance and poor preparation that cause fatalities.³⁸ When a disaster strikes, Bakry's exegesis directs the believer's gaze downward to their own construction standards, ecological management, and policy failures, transforming the event from a test of patience into a critique of competence.

This shift from the metaphysical to the empirical is vividly illustrated in Bakry's broader commentary on human-induced calamities. Expanding on this theme in Q.S. Ar-Rūm [30]: 41, which addresses corruption on earth, Bakry explicitly points to modern geopolitical and technological crises rather than abstract spiritual decay. He notes: "*Allah created space and earth perfectly, but alongside the prosperity built, much destruction is caused by humans themselves. In this modern world, there is an arms race, nuclear weapons, guided missiles, nuclear submarines, and other terrifying advanced weapons. The world is unsafe; that is the fault of humans themselves.*"³⁹

36 Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'il ibn 'Umar, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, ed. Muḥammad Amīn al-Dunnāwī (Beirūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.).

37 Furqan I. Aksa, "Islamic Perspectives in Disaster: An Alternative to Changing Fatalistic Attitudes," *Jambā: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 12, no. 1 (2020): 4, <https://doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v12i1.942>.

38 Agung Danarta, "The Implementation of Disaster Mitigation Based on Qur'anic Interpretation: Muhammadiyah Case Study," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 23, no. 1 (2022): 125–44, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2022.2301-07>.

39 Bakry, *Tafsīr Rahmat*, 795.

By grounding the Qur'anic warning in the tangible realities of the Cold War era and technological overreach, Bakry demonstrates that ecological and global crises are highly correlated with an existential spiritual crisis.⁴⁰ The destruction of the earth is a mechanical consequence of human arrogance, not a divine punishment detached from physical reality.

The intellectual genealogy of this stance in *Tafsir Rahmat* is deeply rooted in the synthesis of Minangkabau Adat (custom) and the *Kaum Muda* reformism inspired by the Cairo School. The maxim *habis akal baru tawakal* is not merely an isolated aphorism but the product of a specific cultural history where nature (*'alam*) is viewed as a teacher (*alam takambang jadi guru*). As Yazan and Arwemi observe, traditional Adat philosophy encouraged observation and practical problem-solving before invoking the supernatural.⁴¹ The reformist movement, led by figures like Haji Rasul and channeled through institutions like Thawalib, integrated this local pragmatism with the rationalist theology of Muḥammad 'Abduh's in *al-Manār*.⁴² 'Abduh explicitly criticized the corruption of the doctrine of *qadā* and *qadar* into a justification for laziness. By adopting this lineage, Bakry's exegesis operates as a critique of mystical escapism. He challenges the ritual-only response to disaster—where communities might resort to collective prayer without addressing systemic root causes—arguing instead that the primary religious obligation is corrective action.⁴³

Furthermore, Bakry's approach anticipates the contemporary integration of theology with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) found in organizations like Muhammadiyah. His reading of Q.S. Ash-Shūrā [42]: 30 resonates with the *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah* (objectives of Islamic law), specifically the preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) and environment (*ḥifẓ al-bi'ah*). By framing negligence as a theological violation, Bakry elevates safety protocols and scientific mitigation to the status of religious duty. Ichsan notes that this modernist shift allows for calamities—even pandemics like COVID-19—to be understood as consequences of global imbalance requiring scientific intervention rather than mere spiritual endurance.⁴⁴ In *Tafsir Rahmat*, the refusal to use reason to avert disaster is portrayed as a betrayal of the *Sunnatullāh*.

Ultimately, the Logic of Calamity in *Tafsir Rahmat* serves to demystify the

40 Hendy Setiawan et al., "The Ecotheological Movement of the Muhammadiyah Environmental Council in Response to the Environmental Governance Crisis," *Millab: Journal of Religious Studies*, October 13, 2022, 639–70, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millab.vol21.iss3.art2>.

41 S. Yazan and A. Arwemi, "Land-Use Guidelines in Tambo Minangkabau Oral Literature," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 145, no. 1 (2018): 012029, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/145/1/012029>.

42 Jeffrey Hadler, *Muslims and Matriarchs* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2008).

43 Julian Millie and Dede Syarif, "The Public Politics of Supplication in a Time of Disaster," *Indonesia* 113, no. 1 (2022): 111–24.

44 Muchammad Ichsan, "Handling Natural Hazards in Indonesia Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: Muhammadiyah's Response and Strategy," *Jambā: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 14, no. 1 (2022): 11, <https://doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v14i1.1254>.

cause of disaster while sanctifying the *responsibility* for it. Bakry strips away the superstitious encumbrances that view every misfortune as a supernatural curse, replacing them with a rational causal chain verifiable by human experience. In doing so, he empowers the Indonesian Muslim subject to take ownership of their material conditions. If the hands cause the disaster, then the hands, guided by an enlightened mind, can also prevent it. This transition from cultural resignation to proactive stewardship marks a critical evolution in Nusantara Islamic thought, where the pious individual is defined not by how well they endure suffering, but by how effectively they use their God-given rationality to prevent it.

Purging the Mythological: The Rejection of *Isrā'iliyyāt* and the Integration of Science

The final mechanism in Oemar Bakry's operationalization of modernist reason is the systematic cleansing of the exegetical text from non-rational elements. In the genealogy of Nusantara exegesis, traditional commentaries were often replete with *isrā'iliyyāt*—Judeo-Christian narratives and folklore used to fill the narrative gaps of the Qur'an. These stories, ranging from the specific names of the Companions of the Cave to the precise dimensions of Noah's Ark, functioned to satisfy the curiosity of pre-modern audiences but often lacked verifiable chains of transmission (*isnad*) or logical coherence. Bakry's *Tafsir Rahmat* executes a deliberate dual strategy of rational purification: it simultaneously excises these unverifiable myths while injecting modern scientific terminology into the vacuum. This approach fundamentally repositions the Qur'an from a repository of ancient lore to a validated partner of modern empirical science, asserting that the authority of revelation is compatible with the rigors of the laboratory and the observatory.

This strategic silence is most evident in Bakry's treatment of narrative verses, particularly the story of the *Aṣḥāb al-Kahf* (Companions of the Cave) in Q.S. Al-Kahfi. Bakry explicitly refuses to entertain such details. In his commentary, he issues a stern epistemological warning: "No one knows their actual number. The stories in the Qur'an generally do not explain an event in detail... Therefore, it is inappropriate for Qur'anic stories to be spiced up with various fairy tales (or *isrā'iliyyāt*), beware of slipping."⁴⁵ By adhering to what might be called a hermeneutics of silence regarding these details, Bakry disciplines the reader's focus, redirecting it from the entertainment value of the story to its moral and theological core.

Bakry, conversely, dismisses these elaborations entirely. He bluntly states that the jinn belong to the unseen world, "which does not need to be investigated," arguing that such long-winded stories cannot be empirically proven by the storyteller, concluding simply: "The unseen world is the unseen world" (*alam gaib, ya alam gaib*).⁴⁶ As noted by Avivy et al., modernists view these *isrā'iliyyāt* as possessing epistemological weakness.⁴⁷ More broadly, Bakry's exegetical purification aligns

45 Bakry, *Tafsir Rahmat*, 567.

46 Bakry, *Tafsir Rahmat*, 741.

47 Ahmad Levi Fachrul Avivy et al., "Isra'iliyyat in Interpretive Literature of Indonesia: A Comparison between Tafsir Marah Labid and Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Mediterranean Journal of Social*

with the foundational goals of Indonesian Islamic modernism—epitomized by movements like Muhammadiyah—which sought to cleanse religious teachings from syncretism, *bid'ah* and *khurāfāt* (superstitions).⁴⁸ By aggressively eliminating these mythical embellishments, Bakry aims to cure the cultural illiteracy and old thinking that kept traditional Muslims backward, asserting that social transformation requires a rationalized belief system.⁴⁹

However, Bakry's modernism is not merely subtractive; it is aggressively additive when it comes to science. While he silences folklore, he amplifies scientific discourse. This is strikingly visible in his translation of cosmological terms. To grasp the magnitude of this epistemological shift, one must contrast it with classical spatial imaginaries. Interpreting cosmological verses, Ibn Kathir describes the sky (*al-samāwāt*) as a robust, elevated building (*binā'an*) or a physical canopy purposefully designed to shelter the earth and facilitate the atmospheric descent of provisions. *Jalālayn* envisions the sky simply as a roof for human habitation. While these classical interpretations successfully instill awe for God's providential care, they inadvertently enclose the traditional Muslim imagination within a closed, static, and unexplorable dome.

Bakry shatters this pre-modern dome. By translating *al-samāwāt* as *ruang angkasa* (outer space), he explicitly links the Qur'anic creation narrative with modern astronomy. His commentary actively replaces the archaic vocabulary of canopies with the precise, dynamic lexicon of the Space Age. For instance, in his exegesis of celestial orbits, Bakry describes the sun, moon, planets (*planit-planit*), and satellites moving along specific trajectories like a train on its tracks, preventing collisions. He even integrates contemporary astronomical data, noting the sun's orbital speed within its galaxy at approximately 200 miles per second.⁵⁰ This lexical and conceptual shift is not trivial; it transforms the cosmos from a mystical ceiling into an observable laboratory. As Purwanto regarding Indonesian reformism, comprehending *kawniyyah* (cosmic) verses through physics and astronomy is a necessary directive to reactivate human logic, prioritizing knowledge inquiry over passive wonder.⁵¹

This demystification of the cosmos is deeply tied to the socio-economic and political resurrection of the colonized ummah. Historically, Islamic modernist-apologetics emerged as a direct response to the decline of Muslim societies in

Sciences 6, no. 3 (2015): 401.

48 Abdul Rasyad et al., "Islamic Education in the Transitional Era: The Educational System of Nahdlatul Wathan in Lombok, Indonesia, 1936–1960," *Multidisciplinary Science Journal* 8, no. 4 (2026): 2026272–2026272, <https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2026272>.

49 Takdir and Munir, "Genealogy and Orientation of the Islamic Modernist Movement in Indonesia: Case Study of the Muhammadiyah Renewal Movement," 81–96.

50 Bakry, *Tafsir Rabmat*, 15.

51 Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi et al., "Scientific Qur'anic Exegesis in Indonesia: Contributions by Scholars, Institutions, and the Government," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 4 (2021): 25–46, <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v6i4.401>.

the face of Western imperial powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁵² Following the intellectual trajectory of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī—whom Bakry explicitly quotes to argue that modern scientific discoveries continually validate the Qur’an—reformers realized that surviving Western hegemony required the assimilation of European science to revive Islamic intellectual life.⁵³ In this context, Bakry diagnoses that the fundamental difference between modern Muslims and non-Muslims is no longer just theological but is rooted entirely in their respective mastery of science and technology.⁵⁴ Therefore, he does not view science as a secularizing cultural intrusion, but rather as a vital defensive mechanism to catch up with advanced nations and guard against secularization itself.

In his commentary on Q.S. Yūnus [10]: 5, he argues that the Qur’an provides an explicit signal for humans to study astronomy, asserting that exploring the universe cultivates a scientifically grounded piety rather than blind faith. More aggressively, in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 29, he correlates technological mastery with civilizational leadership: “*Science and technology to utilize the blessings on earth must be improved. The Islamic ummah must pioneer progress in this world... They were once the teachers of the West. Now is the time for the Islamic ummah to rise again.*”⁵⁵ By deliberately linking scriptural exegesis with the pursuit of modern fields of knowledge, Bakry frames the integration of science and Islam as a vital attempt to reconcile human logic with divine revelation.⁵⁶

This methodological shift has significant implications for the authority of the interpreter. By rejecting traditional *isrā’iliyyāt*, Bakry effectively bypasses the authority of medieval compendiums that served as the standard references for centuries. In their place, he installs a new authority: the rational consistency of the text and its compatibility with modern knowledge. Hurnawijaya et al. observe that this comparative scriptural critique positions the Qur’an as epistemologically corrective, freeing the Muslim intellect from dependence on external narrative traditions.⁵⁷ For Bakry, the truth of the *Ashāb al-Kahf* story does not lie in the number of years they slept—a factoid that cannot be proven and offers no moral guidance—but in the rational possibility of God’s power over time, a concept he defends against materialist skepticism without resorting to fairy tales.

In conclusion, the purging of the mythology in *Tafsir Rahmat* is integral to

52 Uriya Shavit, *Scientific and Political Freedom in Islam: A Critical Reading of the Modernist-Apologetic School* (London: Routledge, 2017).

53 Taner Edis, “Modern Science and Conservative Islam: An Uneasy Relationship,” *Science & Education* 18, no. 6 (2009): 885–903, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11191-008-9165-3>.

54 Ghozali, “Dialektika Sains, Tradisi dan al-Qur’an: Representasi Modernitas dalam Tafsir Rahmat karya Oemar Bakry,” 843–58.

55 Bakry, *Tafsir Rahmat*, 13.

56 Nor Syamimi Mohd et al., “Scientific Exegesis in Malay Qur’anic Commentary,” *Asian Social Science* 10, no. 10 (2014): 236, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n10p236>.

57 Hurnawijaya et al., “Dialectical Engagement with Biblical Narratives in Ibn ‘Ashur’s Tafsir Al-Tahrir Wa Al-Tanwir: Study of Aaron, Jesus, and Noah’s Wife Narratives,” *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 6, no. 3 (n.d.): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.58256/84c1wd64>.

Bakry's broader project of social engineering. By removing the clutter of folklore and replacing it with the clarity of science, he seeks to construct a religion that is lean, rational, and defensible in the modern world. The translation of *al-samāwāt* as *ruang angkasa* encapsulates this ambition: it invites the Indonesian Muslim to look up at the sky not as a mystic contemplating a celestial ceiling, but as a modern observer contemplating a universe governed by laws that are waiting to be understood and mastered. This is the ultimate expression of Bakry's anti-*taqlīd* stance. Crucially, Bakry expands the concept of *taqlīd* beyond its traditional boundaries in Islamic jurisprudence—where it merely opposes legal *ijtihād*—to encompass a broader epistemological stagnation. In this context, his anti-*taqlīd* posture is a refusal to blindly follow unverified ancient stories, advocating instead for an active, rational engagement with the empirical reality of God's creation.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Oemar Bakry's *Tafsir Rahmat* functions not merely as a vernacular translation but as a deliberate instrument of theological deconstruction designed to dismantle the paralyzed mindset of fatalism (*jabr*) and blind imitation (*taqlīd*) in Indonesian society. By analyzing his exegetical choices through the *adabī ijtīmā'ī* framework, the research reveals a consistent operational strategy: the replacement of mystical resignation with rational agency. Bakry achieves this by redefining historical progress in Q.S. Ar-Ra'ḍ [13]: 11 as a mechanical outcome of human *ikhtiyār* rather than divine mystery, and by reordering the logic of faith in Q.S. Ash-Shūrā [42]: 30 to establish that intellectual effort (*'aql*) is a prerequisite for valid spiritual surrender (*tawakkul*). Furthermore, his systematic purging of unverifiable *isrā'īliyyāt* in favor of scientific terminology—such as translating *al-samāwāt* as *ruang angkasa*—repositions the Qur'an as a partner to modern science, thereby validating the Theology of Progress.

These findings contribute to the intellectual history of Southeast Asian Islam by elucidating the specific mechanism of localization. Bakry did not simply import the Cairo School's rationalism; he adapted it into a pedagogical tool for the Indonesian post-colonial context, effectively secularizing the *means* of progress (causality/science) while sanctifying the *duty* to pursue it. However, this study is limited by its focus on a single exegetical work and the *ijmālī* (concise) nature of Bakry's method, which precludes extensive theological elaboration. Future research should examine how this rationalist theology compares with contemporary Salafist trends in Indonesia, which may offer a different resistance to traditionalism. Ultimately, *Tafsir Rahmat* stands as a testament to the power of vernacular exegesis to engineer a modern, active, and responsible Muslim subject.

REFERENCES

- Aksa, Furqan I. “Islamic Perspectives in Disaster: An Alternative to Changing Fatalistic Attitudes.” *Jambá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 12, no. 1 (2020): 4. <https://doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v12i1.942>.
- Alekseev, Igor. “Appeal to History as a Method of Islamic Reformation: Marjani, Rashid Rida, and Ibn Khaldun.” *State, Religion, Church in Russia and Abroad* 41, nos. 3–4 (2025): 32–54. <https://doi.org/10.22394/2073-7203-2023-41-3-4-32-54>.
- Aljunied, Khairudin. “Bringing Rationality Back: Harun Nasution and the Burden of Muslim Thought in Twentieth-Century Southeast Asia.” *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 6, no. 1 (2021): 29–55.
- Asnawi, Aqdi Rofiq, Syukron Affani, and Zaenatul Hakamah. “Scientific Qur’anic Exegesis in Indonesia: Contributions by Scholars, Institutions, and the Government.” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 4 (2021): 25–46. <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v6i4.401>.
- Avivy, Ahmad Levi Fachrul, Jawiah Dakir, and Mazlan Ibrahim. “Isra’iliyyat in Interpretive Literature of Indonesia: A Comparison between Tafsir Marah Labid and Tafsir Al-Azhar.” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 3 S2 (2015): 401.
- Bakry, Oemar. *Tafsir Rahmat*. Jakarta: Mutiara, 1983.
- Bantanī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar Nawawī al-Jāwī al-. *Marāḥ Labīd li-Kashf Ma‘nā al-Qur‘ān al-Majīd*. Edited by Muḥammad Amīn al-Dunnāwī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d.
- Barton, Greg, Ihsan Yilmaz, and Nicholas Morieson. “Authoritarianism, Democracy, Islamic Movements and Contestations of Islamic Religious Ideas in Indonesia.” *Religions* 12, no. 8 (2021): 641. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12080641>.
- Danarta, Agung. “The Implementation of Disaster Mitigation Based on Qur’anic Interpretation: Muhammadiyah Case Study.” *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur‘an dan Hadis* 23, no. 1 (2022): 125–44. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2022.2301-07>.
- Demirel, Demokaan. “Sociological and Political Origins in Ibn Khaldun’s State Theory.” *Sociology Lens* 37, no. 3 (2024): 468–79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12473>.
- Edis, Taner. “Modern Science and Conservative Islam: An Uneasy Relationship.”

Science & Education 18, no. 6 (2009): 885–903. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11191-008-9165-3>.

Faqihuddin, Achmad, Faisal Fauzan Ilyasa, Lu'lu' Husniah, et al. "The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Transforming the Culture of Resignation Towards Natural Disasters in Indonesia." *E3S Web of Conferences* 600 (2024): 02008. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202460002008>.

Fatah, Nasrul, Syarifah Laili, Muhammad Hafiz Saleh, and Hidayatullah Ismail. "The Qur'anic Exegesis as a Medium of Islamic Education in Indonesia: A Discourse Analysis of Tafsir Rahmat by H. Oemar Bakry." *Al-Aulia: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 11, no. 2 (2025): 133–43. <https://doi.org/10.46963/aulia.v11i2.3298>.

Ghozali, Mahbub. "Dialektika Sains, Tradisi dan al-Qur'an: Representasi Modernitas dalam Tafsir Rahmat karya Oemar Bakry." *AL QUDDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Hadis* 5, no. 2 (2021): 843–58. <https://doi.org/10.29240/alqudds.v5i2.3394>.

Gusmian, Islah, and Mustaffa Abdullah. "Criticism of Social, Political, and Religious Problems in Indonesia: A Study on Al-Iklil Fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl by Misbah Bin Zainil Mustafa (1917-1994)." *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 18, no. 1 (2023): 215–30. <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol18no1.18>.

Hadler, Jeffrey. *Muslims and Matriarchs*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Halim, Asyiqin Abdul, Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, Ahmad Zaki Berahim Ibrahim, and Faisal Ahmad Faisal Abdul Hamid. "Ibn Khaldun's Theory of 'Asabiyyah and Its Application in Modern Muslim Society." *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 11, no. 9 (2012): 1232–37.

Hamzah, Idil. "The Development of Exegesis in Indonesia." *The International Journal of Pegon: Islam Nusantara Civilization* 9, no. 01 (2023): 51–68. <https://doi.org/10.51925/inc.v9i01.77>.

Haririe, Muhammad Ruhiyat. "Resonance of Reformist-Modernist Islamic Thought in Interpretation and Its Influence on The Development of Interpretation in Indonesia." *Madinah: Jurnal Studi Islam* 11, no. 2 (2024): 313–36. <https://doi.org/10.58518/madinah.v11i2.3079>.

Hidayat, M. Riyan, Roma Wijaya, Muhafizah el-Feyza, Muh Alwi Hs, Muhammad Akmaluddin, and Nazarmanto Nazarmanto. "Virtual Da'wah Authority in Tafsir Rahmat H. Oemar Bakry: An Analysis of Intertextuality from Julia Kristeva." *An-Nida'* 47, no. 1 (2023): 91–105. <https://doi.org/10.24014/an-nida.v47i1.23022>.

- Hurnawijaya, Auladi Auladi, Nur Fitriana, et al. "Dialectical Engagement with Biblical Narratives in Ibn 'Ashur's Tafsīr Al-Taḥrīr Wa Al-Tanwīr: Study of Aaron, Jesus, and Noah's Wife Narratives." *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 6, no. 3 (n.d.): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.58256/84c1wd64>.
- Ichsan, Muchammad. "Handling Natural Hazards in Indonesia Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: Muhammadiyah's Response and Strategy." *Jàm-bá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 14, no. 1 (2022): 11. <https://doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v14i1.1254>.
- Maḥallī, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-, and Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*. Jakarta: Al-Haramayn Jaya Indonesia, 2007.
- Millie, Julian, and Dede Syarif. "The Public Politics of Supplication in a Time of Disaster." *Indonesia* 113, no. 1 (2022): 111–24.
- Mohd, Nor Syamimi, Haziyah Hussin, and Wan Nasyrudin Wan Abdullah. "Scientific Exegesis in Malay Qur'anic Commentary." *Asian Social Science* 10, no. 10 (2014): 236–42. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n10p236>.
- Mujiburrahman, Mujiburrahman. "Islamic Theological Texts and Contexts in Banjarese Society: An Overview of the Existing Studies." *Southeast Asian Studies* 3, no. 3 (n.d.): 611–41. https://doi.org/10.20495/seas.3.3_611.
- Nazhifah, Dinni. "Tafsir-Tafsir Modern dan Kontemporer Abad Ke-19–21 M." *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas* 1, no. 2 (2021): 211–18. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v1i2.12302>.
- Rasyad, Abdul, Ahmad Tohri, Hasan Basri, and Hasanuddin Chaer. "Islamic Education in the Transitional Era: The Educational System of Nahdlatul Wathan in Lombok, Indonesia, 1936–1960." *Multidisciplinary Science Journal* 8, no. 4 (2026): 2026272–2026272. <https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2026272>.
- Saifullah, Muhammad. "Kritik Oemar Bakry Terhadap Terjemahan Puitis H.B. Jassin." *SUHUF* 12, no. 2 (2019): 347–71. <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v12i2.480>.
- Setiawan, Hendy, Nanang Indra Kurniawan, and Purwo Santoso. "The Ecotheological Movement of the Muhammadiyah Environmental Council in Response to the Environmental Governance Crisis." *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, October 13, 2022, 639–70. <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol21.iss3.art2>.
- Shavit, Uriya. *Scientific and Political Freedom in Islam: A Critical Reading of the*

Modernist-Apologetic School. London: Routledge, 2017.

- Supena, Ilyas. "Epistemology of Tafsīr, Ta'wīl, and Hermeneutics: Towards an Integrative Approach." *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 14, no. 1 (2024): 121–36. <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.141.08>.
- Takdir, Mohammad, and Akhmad Sirojuddin Munir. "Genealogy and Orientation of the Islamic Modernist Movement in Indonesia: Case Study of the Muhammadiyah Renewal Movement." *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 20, no. 1 (2025): 81–96. <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol20no1.6>.
- 'Umar, Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*. Edited by Muḥammad Amīn al-Dunnāwī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.
- Widigdo, Mohammad Syifa Amin, and Awang Azman Awang Pawi. "Muhammad Abduh's Reformist Thoughts and Their Reception in Indonesian and Malaysian Islamic Reform Movements." *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 20, no. 2 (2025): 361–74. <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol20no2.25>.
- Wijaya, Aksin, and Shofiyullah Muzammil. "Maqāṣidi Tafsir: Uncovering and Presenting Maqāṣid Ilāhī-Qur'anī into Contemporary Context." *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 59, no. 2 (2021): 449–78. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2021.592.449-478>.
- Yazan, S., and A. Arwemi. "Land-Use Guidelines in Tambo Minangkabau Oral Literature." *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 145, no. 1 (2018): 012029. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/145/1/012029>.
- Zulkarnaini, Zulfikri, and Mohammed A. F. Badawi. "The Relevance of Muhammad Abduh's Thought in Indonesian Tafsir: Analysis of Tafsir Al-Azhar." *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies* 21, no. 1 (2021): 113–48. <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol21.iss1.art5>.

This Page is Intentionally Left, Blank