

SOCIO-POLITICAL CRITICISM OF THE NEW ORDER IN THE INTERPRETATION OF SYU'BAH ASA

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Abstract

In this study, the author explains the contribution of Syu'bah Asa in the Qur'an interpretation in Indonesia through his work, *Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Ayat-ayat Sosial Politik*, a contextual socio-politics interpreting of the New Order government. The discourse in this interpretation was developed in a critical, straightforward, and bold content, aiming at a critique of various misappropriations during the New Order. This research is a literature study with descriptive analysis methods, which helps the author see Syu'bah Asa's knowledge metamorphosis, approach, socio-political criticism, and interpretations' contribution to the intellectual development of Islam in Indonesia. The results of this study confirm that the text of the Qur'an should be read in a social context when the Qur'an is derived, which helps us to find the moral legality of a verse that can be applied in socio-political dynamics that are constantly changing. The critical interpretation carried out by Syu'bah Asa is one of the slick examples of various contextual interpretations. Syu'bah Asa's work has contributed to an understanding of socio-political dynamics in Indonesia, which at that time was not much explored.

Keywords: Syu'bah Asa; Contextual; Socio-Political; New Order; Qur'an interpretation.

Abstrak

Dalam kajian ini, penulis menjelaskan kontribusi Syu'bah Asa dalam penafsiran Al-Qur'an di Indonesia, dengan karya tafsirnya yang berjudul Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Ayat-ayat Sosial Politik, sebuah penafsiran kontekstual yang terhubung dengan sosio-politik pemerintahan Orde Baru. Wacana dalam tafsir ini dikembangkan dalam muatan kritis, lugas dan berani, yang bertujuan sebagai kritik untuk beragam penyelewengan pada masa Orde Baru. Penelitian ini merupakan studi kepustakaan dengan metode analisis deskriptif, yang membantu penulis melihat metamorfosis pengetahuan Syu'bah Asa, pendekatan yang ia gunakan, kritik sosio-politik, dan kontribusi tafsirnya terhadap perkembangan intelektual Islam di Indonesia. Hasil penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa teks al-Qur'an sepatutnya dibaca dalam konteks sosial ketika al-Qur'an diturunkan. Pembacaan ini berguna untuk menemukan legal moral suatu ayat agar dapat diaplikasikan dalam dinamika sosio-politik yang secara terus menerus mengalami perubahan. Penafsiran kritis yang dilakukan Syu'bah Asa adalah salah satu contoh apik dari beragam interpretasi kontekstual. Tafsir tersebut merupakan sebuah sumbangsih terhadap dinamika penafsiran di Indonesia, di mana Syu'bah Asa bergerak dalam ruang sosio-politik yang mana belum banyak digeluti oleh mufassir-mufassir sezamannya.

Kata Kunci: Syu'bah Asa; Kontekstual; Sosio-Politik; Orde Baru; Penafsiran al-Qur'an.

INTRODUCTION

Methodologically, interpretation has evolved by offering a contextual reading of the Qur'an, an approach that pays attention to the linguistic and socio-historical aspects of the revelatory period and the context of the verse interpretation¹. According to Saed, mufassir needs to look at the relationship between the text, the reader, and the context (reality) instead of thinking that the Qur'an is only a static. Thus, it is appropriate if mufassir continually reconstructs their interpretation with a relevant reality following the times or society within the scope of the interpreter's life². In addition, it is impossible for an interpretation not to start from situations and conditions of reality that require solutions by looking at various cases to find conclusions³. In line with the previous explanation, this study offers a reading of the interpretation and social criticism carried out by Syu'bah Asa during the New Order.. Solutive interpretation and criticism based on the Qur'an can only be presented by studying and reflecting on the social conditions of the main message of the Qur'anic verses. If we understand how the Qur'an descent is related to local culture and the social dynamics of society at that time, then we can actualize the main message of the Qur'an in the social changes to date.

As a response to the 1990s social and political dynamics in Indonesia, various works have been published by Indonesian Muslim scholars, especially in the realm of interpretation of the Qur'an. At that time, the Indonesian government or commonly referred to as the New Order, had dictated its people be obedient and submissive to all policies made by

the government. It helped shape political stability, as well as launching a development plan that became the main slogan of the government at that time. With an authoritative policy, the New Order not only succeeded in dictating the people to be submissive and disciplined in the name of being good citizens but also regulating privacy and controlling ideologies and ideas that must be in line with the government⁴.

In the socio-political situation controlled by the New Order at the time, the existence of Syu'bah Asa's work under the title *Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Ayat-ayat Sosial Politik* became the subject of reflection and criticism of the socio-political reality that existed at the time. In line with Kuntowijoyo, the existence of this interpretive work is evidence and a sign that the Qur'an is alive and valuable for reforming consciousness. He explained that it would be possible to see the work of Syu'bah Asa as a form of politicization of religion. Still, all social criticism based on religious texts is considered a form of politicization of religion. In that case, all canonical texts will only become dead documents, and cannot make a concrete contribution to the times' behavior, social dynamics, and development⁵. The interpretation that Syu'bah Asa has carried out becomes necessary to be studied comprehensively to examine how an interpreter of the Qur'an perceives the sociopolitical reality that occurs around him and how the process of dialectical between the primary meaning of the Qur'an and the changing reality.

The study of social interpretation has so far focused on three typologies. First, discussing

¹M.K. Ridwan, "Metodologi Penafsiran Kontekstual; Analisis Gagasan Dan Prinsip Kunci Penafsiran Kontekstual Abdullah Saed," *Millati: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (June 15, 2016): 4, <https://doi.org/10.18326/mlt.v1i1.1-22>.

²Abdullah Saed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.

³Subur Wijaya, "Perkembangan Kajian Teoritis Tafsir Sosial," *Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Dan Pengembangan Budaya Al-Qur'an* 17, no. 1 (2017): 60,

<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.53828/alburhan.v17i1.84>.

⁴Himmatul Aliyah, "Epistimologi Tafsir Syu'bah Asa," *Hermeneutik: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 9, no. 2 (2015): 357, <https://doi.org/10.21043/hermeneutik.v9i2.876>.

⁵Syubah Asa, *Dalam Cahaya Al-Quran: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial-Politik* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2000), x-xxi.

the dynamics of socio-political interpretation in general, namely looking at how the involvement of the Qur'an after the death of the Messenger of Allah, where the Qur'an is no longer a dialogue, but needs to be invited to dialogue⁶. According to Sunarto, the existence of social interpretation is progress that needs to be appreciated, because a mufassir will be tested to analyze and actualize the values of the Qur'an in a developing social context⁷. Second, a socio-political interpretation that focuses on a particular reign, Ihsan Nursidik sees that the government has a hand in infiltrating discourse in the form of interpretation of the Qur'an to perpetuate the political stage, can be called authoritarianism interpretation⁸, or at least exert an influence on the pattern of interpretation at some point in time⁹. Third, namely comparing social thinking between two different interpretations, which is helpful in seeing the characteristics of mufassir¹⁰, both in terms of writing interpretations, conveying opinions, and the position of mufassir in responding to the socio-politics around them¹¹. Based on the typology above, it can be seen that there is a lack of socio-political interpretation studies that focus on one mufassir figure by looking at the context of specific interpretations, such as interpretations that are connected to the experience of the moral degradation of government in Indonesia.

This article aims to add to the treasures and overwrite the pre-existing study of socio-

political interpretation. Specifically, this article will focus on three discussions. First, observe the systematics and approach used by Syu'bah Asa in writing down his interpretation. Second, contextualization the reality of the times. Third, it shows the contribution of Syu'bah Asa's work to the intellectual development of Islam in Indonesia. The interpretation of Syu'bah Asa always departs from contextual, actual, and factual isolation that occurred in Indonesia during the New Order period. With his various experiences and backgrounds, it can be seen how straightforward, bold, and critical Syu'bah Asa is in writing his thoughts in interpretation. The socio-political circumstances during the interpretation period will affect the reasoning of a mufassir. Likewise, the ever-changing reality of life may be outside the main messages of the Qur'an. Because basically, religious arguments will always be needed in any situation to respond to destructive things.

SYU'BAH ASA AND THE ORIGIN OF TAFSIR DALAM CAHAYA AL-QUR'AN

Syu'bah Asa, a Mufassir with his bold and critical ideas, was born to a religious family in Pekalongan on December 21, 1941.¹² His childhood was spent in the neighborhood of memorizers of the Qur'an (*huffadz*) in Keradenan village, Pekalongan. In addition to attending formal schooling at the Sekolah Rakyat in the morning, Syu'bah also attended non-formal school at his own family in

⁶Ahmad Ari Masyhuri, "Tafsir Sosial Dalam Perspektif Al Qur'an," *TAJDID: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman Dan Kemanusiaan* 2, no. 2 (October 31, 2018): 468–82, <https://doi.org/10.52266/tadjid.v2i2.175>.

⁷Sunarto Sunarto, "Dinamika Tafsir Sosial Indonesia," *Mumtaẓ: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Keislaman* 3, no. 1 (October 21, 2019): 83–95, <https://doi.org/10.36671/mumtaẓ.v3i1.34>.

⁸Ihsan Nursidik, "Tafsir Indonesia Di Rezim Otoritarianisme," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 1, no. 2 (May 5, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v1i2.12072>.

⁹Eni Zulaiha, Kartini Fujiyanti Agustin, and Nida Al Rahman, "Pengaruh Sosial Politik Pada Metodologi Penafsiran Di Indonesia (Orde Lama, Orde Baru Dan Reformasi)," *Hanifiya: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 5, no. 1

(2022), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15575/hanifiya.v5i1.15538>.

¹⁰Maolana Nopiansah, "Penafsiran Sosio-Politik Terhadap Al-Qur'an (Sebuah Kajian Komparasi Antara Pendapat Hamka Dengan Syu'bah Asa)," *Jurnal AKRAB JUARA* 5, no. 1 (2021): 38–58.

¹¹Dara Humaira and Puji Astuti, "Kritik Sosial-Politik Dalam Qs. Yusuf Ayat 54-57 (Telaah Terhadap Tafsir Al-Azhar Karya Hamka Dan Tafsir Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an Karya Sayyid Quthb)," *MAGHZA: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 2 (December 14, 2017): 10, <https://doi.org/10.24090/maghza.v2i2.1571>.

¹²"Rubrik 'Tamu Kita,'" in *Majalah Kiblat*, No. 59, 1991, 11.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nahdhlatul Ulama, which is housed on the mosque grounds. In fifth grade, Syu'bah was transferred by his father to a secondary school in Muallimin Muhammadiyah, which his grandfather's younger brother supported. From this school, he got to know many sciences, such as Sirah Nabawiyah, Manfaluthi short stories, *Al-Hilal* magazine containing Egyptian Coptic culture, Arabic novels by Ivan Turgenev, and Hamka's novel *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah*. Syu'bah itself once received a "gold star one gram" prize from the 2nd place in MTQ one subdistrict¹³.

Young Syu'bah spent his teenage education at PGAA Negeri Yogyakarta, disambiguated from studying the yellow book privately to a noble ulama in the Lempuyangan area, and became a *kalong* student at Pesantren Krapyak. Then he continued to study at IAIN Sunan Kalijaga from 1960-1967, at the Ushuluddin faculty with a concentration in philosophy. In addition to working as a student or student, Syu'bah was also asked to become a substitute teacher for *Ilmul Balaghah* for Djarnawi Hadikusumo (chairman of the Indonesian Muslim Party and member of the DPRD) at PGGA Negeri Yogyakarta. In his teens, Syu'bah produced a work published in *Batik* magazine in 1957. He also wrote a youth novel, *Cerita di Pagi Cerah*, published by *Balai Pustaka* in 1960. In addition, he also wrote rhymes, short stories, musical criticism, and serious song compositions in his teens.¹⁴

During his studies, Syu'bah was the director of the Islamic Student Theater (HMI), a radio announcer, and a conductor of the student choir. In addition, he has also been the chairman of the Organization of Young Islamic Literati Association (ISMI). In 1963, he once translated the verses of maulud, which attracted Rendra's attention to be staged by him in the

Bengkel Teater. In 1966, the Syu'bah plunged into demonstrations as a "raging provocateur." He has also been a young lecturer in drama extracurricular courses for two years in two faculties of IKIP Negeri.¹⁵ In 1970, Syu'bah became involved with a small project of poeticization of translations of the Qur'an with Taufik Ismail and Ali Audah. In the same year, he became a journalist, a music editor at *Ekspress* magazine (the forerunner of *Tempo*), and the most avid critic writer in *Tempo*. Then, he left *Tempo* in 1987 due to differences in the principles he believed in. He was chairman of the editorial board at *Editor* magazine and editor-in-chief of the *Pelita* daily. In 1997, *Panji Masyarakat* magazine recruited Syu'bah into the editorial kitchen. In this magazine, he received a particular rubric for writing contextual interpretations criticizing the New Order government. Syu'bah died on Sunday, July 24, 2011, from diabetes and Parkinson's disease¹⁶.

Tafsir Dalam Cabaya Al-Qur'an, Tafsir Ayat-ayat Sosial Politik was originally articles written by Syu'bah Asa in a special rubric in the weekly *Panji Masyarakat*. In 2000, *PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama* collected these contextual interpretation articles and published them in one printed green-bound book. Kuntowijoyo, as his sidekick, was asked to write a preface entitled *Tafsir Kontekstual, Al-Qur'an sebagai Kritik Sosial*. Each article's respective titles are written, with a concise and concise form of writing helpful in adjusting the space on the pages of mass media. Various themes written by Syu'bah Asa, which whole is actual, factual, and contextual, will adapt the socio-political reality of the New Order, relating to the events that occurred when this interpretation was written and also based on the personal experience of the author. The book "*Dalam Cabaya Al-Qur'an*" is the title rubric provided in the *Panji Masyarakat* Magazine,

¹³Asa, *Dalam Cabaya Al-Quran: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial-Politik*, 479.

¹⁴Asa, 477-479.

¹⁵Asa, 447-478.

¹⁶Arif Fadillah, "Jenazah Wartawan Senior Syu'bah Asa Dimakamkan," *Tempo*, 2011, <https://nasional.tempco.co/read/348228/jenazah-wartawan-senior-syubah-asa-dimakamkan>.

1997-1999¹⁷. The 57 themes written in this work and have been grouped into seven chapters, which overall present contextual matters in the New Order period, such as violence, corruption, human rights violations, the enforcement of justice, and religious morals.

INTERPRETATION OF POLITICAL VERSES: APPROACH AND SYSTEMATICS

The tradition of writing interpretation has two contexts: the context of the text and the context of the interpreter. First, the context of the text is connected to the Qur'an canonical formation, which concerns socio-historical and anthropological aspects from when the Qur'an was derived. *Second*, the interpreter context, which is a context that is directly related to the experience of the reader of the text, that is, the interpreter or mufassir who carries out interpretation activities from the audience field, which is far from the time of the Qur'an's descent¹⁸. In line with Syu'bah Asa's contextual interpretation, he wrote in his author's note that everything he wrote in his interpretation, was the result of his experience when serving a mosque in the Jakarta suburbs. He collaborated on a variety of religious books from across different ideologies and generations to provide a broad understanding to his audience, and the method helps give a harmony of knowledge between the audience's experience and the main message of the Qur'an.¹⁹ This is also in line with the hermeneutics offered by Hasan Hanafi, that the process of interpretation should depart from within the reality, experiences, and problems of human beings who live in time, then refer to the text of the Qur'an to obtain

theoretical answers, and apply them in the realm of praxis.²⁰

According to Islah Gusmian, the contextual interpretation of the Qur'an with a hermeneutic approach and the adaptation of its Indonesian aspects was only discovered in the 1990s. One of these interpretations belongs to Syu'bah Asa. As for its preparation, the Tafsir Syu'bah Asa does not continue to be paradigmatically based on the central foundation of hermeneutics. Nevertheless, the interpretation has paved the way for interpretation with a specific Indonesian context, Syu'bah clearly writes, "*terkadang sebuah sumber dicantumkan dengan jelas, tetapi banyak kali pendapat orang, yang sudah lama lampau, ditelan begitu saja- misalnya oleh kitab-kitab epigon.*"²¹ The quote, clearly shows, Syu'bah wanted a dynamic nature in the work of interpretation, which could adjust the reality of life around it, without leaving aside the earlier books as a reference source. What has been done by Syu'bah Asa can be said to be similar to the paradigm formulated by Hasan Hanafi in the context of Egyptian Muslim society or Farid Esack with African Muslim society.²²

In addition to being thick with its contextual atmosphere, Kontowijoyo found that Syu'bah's interpretation uses two other approaches, namely semantics and comparative. Because the interpreters presents verses relevant to the topic of discussion, they will elaborate on several keywords from the works of previous mufassir, both classical or modern, Sunni or Shia, Indonesian or vice versa, and some cases even refer to the Lahore Ahmadiyah mufassir. Kuntowijoyo also

¹⁷Islah Gusmian, "Tafsir Al-Quran Dan Kritik Sosial: Syubah Asa Dalam Dinamika Tafsir Al-Quran Di Indonesia," *MAGHZA: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 1, no. 2 (November 14, 2016): 67-80, <https://doi.org/10.24090/maghza.v1i2.741>.

¹⁸Islah Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Hermeneutika Hingga Ideologi*, 1st ed. (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2013), 297.

¹⁹Asa, *Dalam Cabaya Al-Quran: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial-Politik*, xviii.

²⁰Hasan Hanafi, *Dirasah Islamiyah* (Kairo: Hasan Hanafi, Dirasah Islamiyah (Kairo: Mkatabah al-Anjilu al-Mishriyyah, 1981), 69.

²¹Asa, *Dalam Cabaya Al-Quran: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial-Politik*, xviii.

²²Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Hermeneutika Hingga Ideologi*, 297-298.

commented on the study's profit and loss using socio-historical approaches. The advantage lies in the factual and actual theme. As for the disadvantages, this interpretation will be eroded by the times. If a person's memory of context is lost, then this kind of interpretation will only be a witness to history and dead documents. Interpreters who use this method should be able to capture the eternal meaning and universal value of an interpreted verse.²³

WRITING SYSTEMATICS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL INTERPRETATION LANGUAGE

The systematics of presenting this interpretation uses a thematic method structure of the presentation is focused on a certain theme with certain verses; Mufassir will collect verses related to the theme discussed to explore the vision of the Qur'an in the study. This technical presentation has a specific and narrow scope, and the interpretation model influences of the methodological interpretation process. The advantage of this method is that the interpretation will be more focused and allow for holistic and comprehensive cross-interpretation between verses.²⁴ This interpretation also uses plural thematic systematics. In it, there are themes with wide varieties. Syu'bah wrote down 57 themes grouped into seven sections: Among them, To the Nations, The Mandate to All, Shock after Shock, The Rope of God and the Rope of Man, From the Impurities of History, Justice, and Testimony of God, and Entering a New Context.

The technique of writing Syu'bah in its interpretation has its characteristics. First, the writing space in mass media is generally concise and limited. But it is not an obstacle for Syu'bah to name the reference source, complete with the

name of the book and its author, the *juḡ* number, and even the referenced page. It certainly makes it easier for the reader to distinguish the opinions of the author and the opinions of quotes from other works. Secondly, Syu'bah's background as a journalist can be seen in his interpretation, and he uses a column writing model that is concise, straightforward, and firm in his selection of diction. This model usually avoids the presence of unneeded sentences and requires carefulness in the choice of diction.²⁵

The use of language in interpreting, Syu'bah merely explains the moral value of the Qur'an and falls within a complex discursive sphere. The language here is useful as a social activity that doubles as part of the process of knowledge, politics, and culture. Socially, language is tied to specific conditions, situations, and specific social settings,²⁶ as Syu'bah wrote in "Ferocity and the Parties (*Keganasan dan Partai-partai*)" with an excerpt of surah al-An'am: 65. This verse describes the power of God who can send doom from various sides. In the form of a situation of division of society into several groups, some of which are hostile. In his interpretation, the Syu'bah attributed it to the atrocities of the New Order that resulted in the loss of human lives, but the law did not touch their abominations. He wrote:

"Dan bagaimana dengan keganasan pembantaian, yang dikatakan sampai 3.000 orang, dan perkosaan, seperti dituduhkan, yang dialami oleh rakyat Aceh selama periode penerapan status DOM (Daerah Operasi Militer) sampai 1998, yang lebih besar dibanding perkosaan yang konon menimpa 150-an wanita muda keturunan Cina—kalau memang betul—dalam revolusi pertengahan Mei 1998, yang sedang dicari bukti-bukti kebenarannya (hasil

²³Asa, *Dalam Cabaya Al-Quran: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial-Politik*.

²⁴Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Hermeneutika Hingga Ideologi*, 130.

²⁵Gusmian, "Tafsir Al-Quran Dan Kritik Sosial: Syubah Asa Dalam Dinamika Tafsir Al-Quran Di Indonesia," 71.

²⁶Gusmian, 76.

*penyeledikan yang paling meyakinkan yang diungkapkan kemudian menyatakan bahwa dalam aksi-aksi penjarahan di sekitar tumbangnya Soeharto lebih seratus perempuan keturunan Cina mengalami pelecehan seksual, di antaranya sekitar 16 orang diperkosa). Bagaimana pula dengan keganasan yang diterima penduduk Irian Jaya, dan Timor Timur, di bawah status yang sama? Berapa jumlah korban di antara mereka?*²⁷

[“And what about the massacre ferocity, which is said to be up to 3,000 people, and the alleged rape experienced by Aceh people during the DOM (Military Operations Area) status was implemented until 1998, which is bigger than the rapes to around 150 young Chinese women—if it is true—in the mid-May 1998 revolution, the truth of which is being sought (the most convincing results of the investigation which were disclosed later stated that in the acts of looting around the fall of Suharto, more than a hundred women of Chinese descent experienced sexual harassment, of whom around 16 people were raped). What about the brutality that the people of Irian Jaya and East Timor received under the same status? How many victims were among them?”]

From the selection of diction in his interpretation, Syu'bah not only conveyed the meaning of interpretation in general, but he involved himself in discussing cases in Aceh. The words “*pembantaian/massacre* and *keganasan/violence*” reflect the events that occurred, and they became a form of communication strategy to reconstruct the idea of how tragic and brutal the murder case in Aceh was at that time. Critical Syu'bah thinking

is one of the strong foundations in constructing the above narratives. Where he is not caught up in the construction of the New Order government discourse game.²⁸ Quoting verses from the Qur'an shows that in a state and religion, there is a symbiotic paradigm, meaning that the existence of religious texts can be helpful to as a device of ethical and moral values for social and state life.²⁹

SOCIOPOLITICAL CRITICISM IN TAFSIR SYU'BAH ASA

The seven sections contained in the interpretation of Syu'bah, can be grouped into four themes that are most dominantly discussed, namely related to atrocities and violations of human rights, KKN practices, the enforcement of justice, and religious teachings that are limited to covers. These themes are the most inherent problems with the New Order regime. Of the four themes, Syu'bah Asa channeled his social criticism by providing contextualization of what was happening in the public sphere at that time and directly the criticism that faced the domination and hegemonic power of the New Order regime.³⁰

1. *Violations of Human Rights and Power*

On this topic, Syu'bah lists surat al-Maidah: 32, with the entry title “*Killed, Kidnapped, Persecuted.*”

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا
بِعَٰدِرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا
وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رُسُلُنَا
بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ إِن كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لُمْسِرُونَ

²⁷Asa, *Dalam Cabaya Al-Quran: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial-Politik*, 174.

²⁸Gusmian, “Tafsir Al-Quran dan Kritik Sosial: Syubah Asa Dalam Dinamika Tafsir Al-Quran Di Indonesia,” 77.

²⁹Jufri Suyuthi Pulungan, “Relasi Islam Dan Negara: Studi Pemikiran Politik Islam Dalam Perspektif Al-

Qur'an,” *Intizar* 24, no. 1 (January 1, 1970): 186, <https://doi.org/10.19109/intizar.v24i1.2187>.

³⁰Gusmian, “Tafsir Al-Quran Dan Kritik Sosial: Syubah Asa Dalam Dinamika Tafsir Al-Quran Di Indonesia.”

Therefore *We write on the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul, not because of a soul or destruction on the face of the earth, as if killing all of them; and whoever lives it as if to support all mankind.*³¹

The moral teachings of the above verse indicate the command to guard life and distance themselves from heinous acts by maintaining the lives of others. Maintaining one life is likened to guarding the lives of all human beings and vice versa. The Indonesian context brought by Syu'bah in this interpretation is the Tragedy of Tanjung Priok.

“Dan berapa, sebenarnya, jumlah para pemuda yang tidak pernah lagi pulang ke rumah. Setelah peristiwa Priok, demonstrasi besar kalangan Islam yang menolak pemaksaan Pancasila sebagai asas tunggal, yang banyak terdiri dari para buruh dan jelata, yang begitu saja diguyur peluru dan “diangkut.””³²

[“And what, in fact, is the number of young men who never return home. After the Priok incident, large demonstrations by Islamic circles who rejected the imposition of Pancasila as a single principle, which consisted of many workers and commoners, were showered with bullets and “carried away.”]

The contextualization carried out by Syu'bah is an attempt to increase the community, which means that this regime will carry out contrary to human rights to maintain the stability of its ruler's power. This event began with implementing Pancasila as a single principle that was echoed since the early 1980s, so all organizations and groups in Indonesia must implement Pancasila as its basis. That is, anyone who is not in the same direction and line

with the ideology of the New Order regime will be accused of being anti-Pancasila.³³

This event seems that Suharto has never been regretted this event. In his book that published a few years after the incident, *Subarto: Pikiran, Ucapan, dan Tindakan Saya*, he wrote:

“The events of Tanjung Priok are the result of the incitement of several leaders there. Carrying out religious beliefs and sharia is, of course, possible. But in reality, he messed up and incited the people to rebel, demanding the release of the detained. Against those who break the law, of course, action must be taken.”³⁴

Thus to close this topic, it is appropriate to cite Syu'bah's explanation in the same sub-chapter as the final statement:

*“Tetapi, memang, konsep mengenai nyawa pada para pembunuh tidaklah sama dengan dalam al-Qur'an. Pada mereka, masalahnya selalu: nyawa siapa. Nyawa “kita”, atau nyawa “mereka”. Mereka tidak mengenal nyawa manusia. Seperti mereka sendiri bukan manusia.”*³⁵

[“However, indeed, the concept of the lives of murderers is not the same as in the Qur'an. For them, the problem is always: whose life. “Our” lives, or “their” lives. They do not know human life. Like they are not human beings.]

2. Corruption, Collusion, Nepotism Practices (KKN) in the Bureaucratic Body

In the entry of the title “*Fasting, Mandate, and Labor*”, an introductory study on Surat al-Baqarah: 182. Syu'bah explained that religious activity that can give birth to a trusted nature is fasting. Because fasting is like a mandate

³¹Asa, *Dalam Cahaya Al-Quran: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial-Politik*, 45.

³²Asa, 46.

³³Iswara N Raditya, “Sejarah Tragedi Tanjung Priok: Kala Orde Baru Menghabisi Umat Islam,” *tirto.id*, 2019, <https://tirto.id/sejarah-tragedi-tanjung-priok-kala-orde-baru-menghabisi-umat-islam-cwpi>.

³⁴Muhammad Zulian Alfarizi, *Tragedi-Tragedi Paling Memilukan Dalam Sejarah Islam* (Yogyakarta: Laksana, 2021), 165.

³⁵Asa, *Dalam Cahaya Al-Quran: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial-Politik*, 46.

entrusted and entrusted by God to us, honesty is the basic benchmark of this teaching. Syu'bah then associated it with the practice of KKN, which has become a culture in the body of bureaucracy in any sector. With sarcastic nuances, he wrote in his interpretation:

“Lihatlah: untuk bisa mendapat pekerjaan di instansi mana pun, termasuk menjadi guru, juga guru agama, diperlukan sogok! Juga untuk naik pangkat atau jabatan! Juga untuk menyelesaikan kasus anak yang ditabrak lari! Untuk “mengimbangi” pihak yang merampas harta kita, yang sudah lebih dulu memberi sogok! Untuk bisa mendapat KTP tepat waktu, atau surat izin yang menyangkut suatu usaha, atau keterangan bebas! Bahkan untuk bisa mendapat tiket kereta api kelas “eksekutif”, di sebuah kota kabupaten, kebususnya di hari-hari libur, yang selalu sudah disediakan untuk orang-orang kaya “langganan”! Bahkan untuk dilayani dengan baik ketika membayar pajak pun harus nyogok! Bahkan bantuan pembangunan masjid dipotong dengan “persetujuan” panitia. Bahkan di sekitar pemberangkatan jamaah haji mulai tercium aroma sogok. Sementara itu kasus-kasus menipu dan perampasan tanah, dengan korban selalu mereka yang lemah, atau yang tak tahu “syarat permainan” (surat-surat dan sogok), terjadi dengan si perampas hak, yang dirampas bakunya, calo tanahnya, lurahnya, camatnya, notarisnya, semuanya haji! Sogok, sogok, sogok.”³⁶”

["Look: to get a job in any institution, including being a teacher and a religious teacher, a bribe is needed! Also, for promotion or position! Also, to solve the case of the child who was hit and run! To "compensate" for those who robbed our assets, who had already given bribes! Get a KTP on time, a license related to a business, or free information! Even to get an "executive" class train ticket, in a

regency city, especially on holidays, which are always reserved for rich people "subscribe"!

Even to be served well when paying taxes, one has to bribe! Even aid for the mosque's construction was cut with the "approval" of the committee. Even around the departure of the pilgrims began to smell bribes. Meanwhile, cases of manipulation and land grabbing, where the victims were always the weak or who did not know the "conditions of the game" (certificates and kickbacks), occurred with the usurper, the land broker, the village head, the camat, the notary, all hajj! Bribe, bribe, bribe!]

Syu'bah also affirmed the threat of this practice with the Prophet's hadith *"The Briber and the recipient of the bribe went to hell!"* What Syu'bah wants to underline, he deeply regrets that this anomalous activity has become a culture; because everyone has to get involved and play in it. A person who wants to be a businessman is not enough to only be tenacious, honest, and hard work. Without the proximity of bureaucracy, collusion, and bribery, his efforts would not have flourished³⁷.

According to Islah, the practice of KKN is closely related to the economic system created by the New Order. Economic growth in Indonesia is more often displayed in figures, but the figures do not equally represent the welfare and economic growth in each region. It is because, because economic growth does not include economic equality, while the centralized monetary system is more inclined to monopolistic practices with kinship or reconciliation systems, which are plurally found in the New Order regime.³⁸

3. Justice Enforcement

The third topic that became Syu'bah's wiggle room in criticizing the government was

³⁶Asa, 83.

³⁷Asa, 84.

³⁸Gusmian, "Tafsir Al-Quran dan Kritik Sosial: Syubah Asa Dalam Dinamika Tafsir Al-Quran Di Indonesia," 74.

the affirmation of justice. At the end of Suharto's reign, there was a movement of activists, journalists, scholars, and religious people who led to the reform of the government system, the enforcement of justice became one of the issues that continued to be discussed during the crisis at that time. In its interpretation, justice has a special discussion in one passage entitled "Justice and the Testimony of God."

Syu'bah not only discusses justice in terms of theology with many narrations, but he also describes the just state, referring to Plato's thought that a proper state has three elements: Politicians, the military, and the general people. At the same time, the perfect country has four goodies: the preservation of the people from the spectacle, the good of the soldiers, the wisdom of the statesmen, and justice for all. According to him, a leader must be able to control the establishment of justice with various conditions specified. Because they are the ones who will manage the government, they are the ones who keep the light of reason.³⁹

In a sub-chapter entitled "Justice and the Former President", Syu'bah gives a contextualization of Surat an-Nisa: 135.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ
عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا

³⁹Asa, *Dalam Cabaya Al-Quran: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial-Politik*, 358.

⁴⁰Asa, 368.

⁴¹Asa, 369.

⁴²Petrik Matanasi, "Tragedi H.R. Dharsono: Kala Soeharto Menistakan Pengkritiknya," [tirto.id](https://tirto.id/fDBa), 2020, <https://tirto.id/fDBa> (Known as the Commander of KODAM Siliwangi, who brushed communists and helped pave the way for the New Order government, but did not get rations in strategic seats in the military during Suharto's time, he was ambassador to Cambodia and Thailand. In addition, he expressed his disappointment at the role of ABRI during the regime, saying: "The role of ABRI at the beginning of Orba and now it is another. Now the ABRI seems to be insensitive to the aspirations

فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِمِمَّا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىَٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا وَإِنْ تَلْوُوا أَوْ
تُغْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

*O believers, be your enforcer of justice as a witness because of God, even against yourself or to both parents and relatives. If he is rich or poor, God is closer to both. So do not obey lust so that you deviate. If you twist or dodge, God knows what you are doing. (Q. 4:135).*⁴⁰

One of the moral values of this verse lies in the so-called kinship relationship. Syu'bah compares this verse with verses that emphasize the existence of friendship with relatives, which led to the emergence of the assumption of Islam as a religion "family-centered" with the existence of verse 135 above, it is clear that the sweet relationship of kinship is one thing and the enforcement of justice is another. Then this meaning should be able to shift the culture of nepotism and other social diseases that are closely related to the word "relative".⁴¹

Then Syu'bah drove his interpretation by contextualizing a case contained in his criticism:

"Itulah yang terjadi pada hari-hari ketika "kepentingan negara" (yang sebenarnya adalah kepentingan kekuasaan) memaksa hakim mengerahkan semua pelajaran sekolahnya untuk memvonis berat para oposan demi memenuhi pesanan majikan. (Bagaimana bisa tokoh seperti H.R. Dharsono,⁴² misalnya, meringkuk di bui demikian lama? Seperti juga Muhammad Natsir, pada masa Bung Karno? Sementara Eddy Tansil dengan nyaman melenggang keluar penjara?)⁴³

of the people" and co-signed Petition 50, which is an expression of the concern of the figures to Suharto. Because he was considered dangerous to the regime, Dharsono was jailed for five years on the grounds of having links to the 1984 detonation of bca pacenongan offices and accused of participating in meetings after the Priok events).

⁴³Petrik Matanasi, "Siapa Eddy Tansil Dan Mengapa Ia Menghilang?," [tirto.id](https://tirto.id/cACI), 2017, <https://tirto.id/cACI> (Having his real name Tan Tjoe Hong, proven to harm the country with a corruption case of 1.3 trillion rupiah by utilizing a magic letter written by Sudomo [Admiral of the Navy of the regime at that time, who served as Minister of Police] and the influence of Tommy Suharto, received a sentence from pn Jakarta, imprisonment of 20

Itulah pula yang terjadi di hampir semua negara yang mengalami perubahan politik yang drastis.⁴⁴

[“That is what happened in the days when the “interest of the state” (which was the interest of power) forced the judge to devote all his school studies to severely sentence dissidents for fulfilling the employer's orders. (How could a character like H.R. Dharsono, for example, stay in jail for so long? Like Muhammad Natsir during Bung Karno's time? Meanwhile, Eddy Tansil walked comfortably out of prison?) That's what happened in almost all countries that experienced drastic political changes.”]

4. *Islam is Seen Only as A Cover*

One of the topics that Syu'bah consensual in this regard was he questioned the existence of religious people and their voices. In sociopolitical situations that are not in line with humanitarian morality, their voices should be as loud as humanitarian activists in fighting for justice, as previously discussed. In religious practices in the Suharto regime, the essence of Islam seemed to be trapped in the space of symbolism that was far from moral teachings.

Quoting Surat Ali Imran: 25, Syu'bah wrote his contextualization with the title “Disaster and Predictive Ability.” He wrote:

“Sama dengan, mestinya, usaha menghalangi Soeharto dari berbagai kebijakan serupa, idealnya oleh para ulama yang dalam kasus kita kemarin malahan lebih memilih “cap Islam” yang diperagakan Presiden daripada keadilan sosial dan kebenaran. Padahal, bukan ism, kata orang, tapi musammaa. Bukan nama, yang mestinya dicari, tapi hakikat yang diberi nama. (Tetapi seorang tokoh, yang kemudian menjadi menteri sebentar dalam kabinet terakhir Soeharto,

menyarankan kepada penulis ini: silakan “menyerang” siapa saja, asal bukan Pak Harto, keluarganya, dan “orang kesayangan”-nya. Sebab, katanya, yang sekarang ini sudah bagus. Jadi jangan sampai kita “diseimbangkan” lagi dengan “mereka” –seperti di zaman Benny Moerdani”). Dan terjadilah semua yang terjadi. Wallahul Musta'aa⁴⁵”

[“Similar to, supposedly, efforts to block Suharto from various ideal-like policies by the ulemas who prefer the “Islamic stamp” exhibited by the President rather than social justice and truth. In fact, not ism but musammaa. It is not the name that should be sought, but the meaning has been given. (But a figure who served as a minister briefly in Suharto's last cabinet suggested to this writer: feel free to “attack” anyone, as long as it's not Pak Harto, his family, and his “favorites.” Because he said, the current ones are good. So don't let us be “balanced” again with “them” –as in Benny Moerdani's era). And so happened everything that happened. Wallahul Musta'aa.”]

Contextualization of Syu'bah also received support from Kuntowijoyo, written in the introduction to this interpretation, “In 1996 – close to the death of Mrs. Tien Subarto who was “enlivened” by religious rituals – PB HMI held a seminar and concluded that the religious style of the Indonesian nation is all symbolic, and not substantive.”⁴⁶

CONTRIBUTION OF TAFSIR SYU'BAH ASA

Tafsir *Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an*'s distinctive characteristics, namely interpretations following the Indonesian context, especially related to the socio-politics of the New Order, make this interpretation a reading that offers a new

years and a fine of 30 million. Paid a replacement amount of 500 billion. But Eddy escaped from LP Cipinang after languishing for a year and a half on May 4, 1996. Since then, it has not known its existence.)

⁴⁴Asa, *Dalam Cahaya Al-Quran: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial-Politik*, 204.

⁴⁵Asa, 204.

⁴⁶Ibid. Kuntowijoyo dalam Pengantarnya. Hal. xi.

perspective. The mainstream interpretation will be in the Arabic style, but Syu'bah projects his interpretation to focus on socio-politics in Indonesia; in a sense, the intellectual development of Islam in other regions or other countries is only additional data, not the main study. It is to the pre-understanding offered by Farid Essack that the historical understanding of mufassir will predominantly affect their understanding of the Qur'an.⁴⁷ It is not surprising, then, that inter-generations will have their shades of interpretation. It proves that the differences in the socio-historical conditions in which the mufassir lived, and the political situation surrounding the interpreters, more or less shaped the complexion of their interpretation. There are three contributing aspects to the existence of this contextual interpretation:

Development of Substance

The development of substance is the progressivity in studying religious sciences, human sciences, and arts. Advances in the science of interpretation, including this contextual interpretation, are within the scope of the advancement of religious science. While the Islamization of Science is not included in this development because the development is not authentic, it means that science is not born and developed from within religion but universal science wrapped in religious clothes.

Tafsir *Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an* and other social interpretations, such as *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Sosial Berdasarkan Konsep-konsep Kunci* by M. Dawam Rahardjo, have contributed and enriched the treasures of existing interpretations, specifically in the context of indonesianness, because the models and patterns of interpretation carried out by Syu'bah

Asa were not found much in that era. The verse's essential value will be actualized in the experience that occurs when the interpretation is born. Tafsir Syu'bah is an interpretation with socio-political nuances, which aims to criticize the many deviations made by the government at that time.⁴⁸

Demographic Development

The demographic development is the development of geographical spread, population growth, and institutional (non-political) growth. This can be characterized by the attachment of da'wah activities to demographic development. The attachment of da'wah activities to demographic development can characterize it. The rise of Islamic activities in secular places, the proliferation of Islamic labeling in various objects, Colleges, hospitals, and others; and the expansion of worshippers in mosques, are examples of demographic development.⁴⁹

Tafsir is one of Islam's means of preaching. So the interpretation of Syu'bah with the value of his criticism of the moral crisis in Indonesia, and also *Tafsir Wawasan Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Maudhu'i atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat* by M. Quraish Shihab. It can be said to be an effort to awaken people to become better people and provide essential lessons in religion to be applied in everyday life, which of course, will affect demographic development, both geographically and population.⁵⁰

Eventuality

In everyday life, political events such as ideologization, marginalization of Islam, and the dynamics of life are the likeness of eventuality. The dynamics of Islam are in three sectors, not only in the eventuality sector. Kuntowijoyo illustrates this when Islamic

⁴⁷Muhammad Hasbiyallah, "Paradigma Tafsir Kontekstual: Upaya Membumikan Nilai-Nilai Al-Qur'an," *Al-Dzikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Al-Hadits* 12, no. 1 (August 30, 2018): 375, <https://doi.org/10.24042/al-dzikra.v12i1.2924>.

⁴⁸Aliyah, "Epistimologi Tafsir Syu'bah Asa," 375.

⁴⁹Aliyah, 375.

⁵⁰Asa, *Dalam Cahaya Al-Quran: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial-Politik*, xv.

politics is at the bottom, precisely the substance and demographics experience growth. It can be seen in the emergence of Islamic parties that seem from the outside as progress. However, instead of exerting influence on Islam, it is as if the phenomenon is considered to cause concerns that lead to division.⁵¹

In the context presented in this interpretation, many criticized the opaqueness of the regime's government at that time. From the interpretation of Syu'bah, many valuable lessons can be learned to be applied in the future. By by Kuntowijoyo this contextual interpretation is referred to as the light of the road in eventuality. For example, regarding Syu'bah's criticism of the fatness of the bureaucracy that is directly proportional to the various cases of KKN that occur in Indonesia, it should be able to provide improvements towards a lean, clean and honest bureaucracy, which later Slowly Indonesia can realize ideals as a civil society, and there are still many criticisms that should be cited as general conclusions from the various specific contexts contained in this interpretation.

CONCLUSION

Contextual interpretations based on socio-political phenomena written by Syu'bah Asa, "*Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an, Tafsir Ayat-ayat Sosial-Politik*", are examples and answers to the qur'anic text to the understanding that regards the Qur'an as a static canonical text. The Qur'an is not understood textually but contextually and through experience. It prevails in the middle of the interpretation of the Qur'an. In fact, verses that intersect with social dynamics are ethical-legal verses that have diverse main messages. Mufassir needs accuracy in looking at the context in which the verses of the Qur'an are handed down so as not to be later be mistaken in actualizing moral values that are universally

projected in social life. Furthermore, contextualizing the interpretation of the Qur'an as a socio-political critique shows that the Qur'an can provide ethical and moral postulates and guidelines to society in socio-political dynamics at any time. It's necessary for readers of contextual interpretation to be good at taking universal values from a particular context and to be able to read abstract things from factual statements.

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⁵¹Aliyah, "EPISTIMOLOGI TAFSIR SYU'BAH ASA," 376.

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