



**THE CONCEPT OF WOMEN'S DRESS
IN TAFSIR NUSANTARA:
A Comparative Study of Four Indonesian Exegeses**

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Abstract: This research aims to compare four Qur'anic commentaries on the verses regarding women's dress code. They are taken from the Indonesian Quranic commentaries representing different time i.e the classical era, medieval era and contemporary era. They are *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*, *Tafsīr Qur'ān Karīm*, *Tafsīr Al-Azhar*, and *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ*. The purpose of this research is to explain how the verse regarding women's dressing are interpreted in these four works and how such interpretation influence the concept of women's dressing. This library research relies its data mainly on Indonesian Quranic commentaries and on other related literatures as the secondary supporting data. This uses language approachment to find the meaning of the main words on each verses. They are then understood comparatively to reveal different interpretation and the factors that cause such differences. This study shows that there are three concept of woman's dressing based on each interpretation, (1) the clothes that cover whole body including the face and the palm of hand, (2) the clothes that cover whole body except the face and palm of hand, (3) the respectfull clothes that do not cover the part of the head.

Keywords: Comparison, Indonesian Qur'anic Commentaries, Woman's clothes, Interpretation, Influence.

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Introduction

ONE OF THE CONTROVERSIAL issues in Islam is concerned with the dress code for women. In Islam, the function of clothe is to cover the body which is part of *awrah* (part of the body that must be

concealed). However, if we look at the Qur'anic verses deeply, the function of the clothes are not only to cover the aura, but also as a symbol of beauty, protection from extreme weather, and an identifier showing the social status of the wearer that distinguish from other groups or classes.¹ Of the most debated topic in this respect is the concept of women's clothing.² The debate revolves around the limit and the border of the part from the body that must be covered. Let us start discussing this issue from the historical perspective, referring to the symbol and discourse of women's dress in Indonesia.

The scientists argued that the clothes are known by the human approximately 72.000 years ago. According to them, *homo sapiens* came from a steamy Africa, some of whom migrated to cooler area. Here they started to use animal skin as clothe for the sake of keeping warmth of the body. About 47.000 years afterward, humans found a way to sew the cloth, and from here the development of clothing began.³ Historical evidence show that before 17th century, women in the regions of what is now known to be Indonesia had not yet dressed in clothes that covered their bodies wholly, but only used cloth to cover their lower bodies. This is an illustration that found in Borobudur temple.⁴ The temple is believed to depict an illustration from human life in the past.⁵

¹ M. Quraish Shihab, *Secercah Cahaya Ilahi* (Bandung: Mizan, 2007), 214.

² On the debate of this topic in different context, see for example Hollie Koop, "Dress and Diversity: Muslim Women and Islamic Dress in an Immigrant/Minority Context," *The Muslim World* 92, no. 1-2 (2002): 59-78; Heather Marie Akou, "Interpreting Islam through the Internet: Making Sense of Hijab," *Contemporary Islam* 4, no. 3 (2010): 331-346; On general overview of hijab in Islam, see Katherine Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical and Modern Stereotype* (London: IIIT, 2010); Fadwa El-Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).

³ M. Quraish Shihab, *Jilbab: Pakaian Wanita Muslimah* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2014), 33.

⁴ A theory which is accepted widely states that Borobudur was built around the 8th century or the 9th century. There is no historian or archaeologist who deny or refute this theory. Why so? Because there is strong evidence that supports the theory. The strongest evidence is the inscription carved in hidden reliefs hidden at the temple feet. There is no written document concerning Borobudur temple built that survived, and also there is no reference who built it and what is the purpose of construction. However, the inscription carved above

In the 7th century, Muslim traders from Arabia, Persia, and India began to explore Nusantara archipelago mainly for trading.⁶ But gradually commerce and trading became a means of spreading Islam (*da'wah*) to the end of the 13th century, until the 14th century and 15th. From there onward, Islam started growing rapidly when many kingdoms embraced this religion. It was said that around the 15th century women in the archipelago used *kebaya*, a sort of dress that was influenced by Islamic culture.⁷ The 19th century showed a different pattern where the wearing of *jilbab* or veil was introduced, as this was seen in the *Paderi* Movement in Minangkabau. This revolutionary movement also struggled to promote wearing *jilbab* in the public sphere.⁸

The Qur'an has mentioned about women's dress code in various verses. These include QS: al-Ahzāb [35]: 59 and QS: an-Nūr [24]: 31. However, there is no single, unified perception about the commandment of wearing the veil in the Qur'an. One sort of the interpretation is advanced by Muhammad Shahrur. He argues that the Qur'anic verses on hijab are not fixed but interpretable. He says that women's dressing is adapted to the situation and local conditions. As a result, women may not dress like their fellows in Arabian Peninsula because there are differences between Arab countries with other countries. Furthermore, he maintains that there is a limit of dressing; minimum and maximum limit for the

the relief at the 'hidden feet' foot monument has graphic characteristic similar to writing that is commonly used in kingdom epigraphy between the end of the 8th century and early 9th century. The obvious conclusion is that Borobudur temple most likely founded around the year 800. Seno Panyadewa, *Misteri Borobudur: Candi Borobudur Bukan Peninggalan Nabi Sulaiman* (Jakarta: Dolphin, 2014), 25.

⁵ Ima Kusumawati Hidayat, Priyanto Sunarto, and Triyadi Guntur, "Mengenal Relief, Mudra dan Stupa Candi Borobudur untuk Anak-Anak Usia 9-12 Tahun melalui Edugame," *Journal of Visual Art and Design* 6, no. 1 (January 2014): 5.

⁶ Badri Yatim, *Sejarah Peradaban Islam* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2013), 191.

⁷ Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005), 318.

⁸ Ali Tantowi, "The Quest of Indonesian Muslim Identity: Debates on Veiling from the 1920s to 1940s," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 4, no. 1 (June 1, 2010): 69.

part of the body to cover.⁹ This approach differs significantly from those of the medieval exegesis. The Muslim scholars in the medieval periods suggest that Muslim women cover their whole body except for the face and palm. Even some others required a full coverage, except for the eyes. This explanation can be found in such Qur'anic exegesis as *Tafsīr al-Miqbās* by al-Fayrūzābādī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* by al-Imām al-Jalālayn, *Ṣafwah al-Tafāsīr* by 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* by al-Imām Ibn Kathīr.¹⁰ Such different interpretation happens because of the different method of interpretation, the academic background, the school of thought and the context of time and place where Muslim scholars of Qur'anic exegesis (*mufassir*) live. This same phenomenon applies in Indonesia.

There are a number of Qur'anic exegeses by Muslim scholars from Nusantara archipelago. These include *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*, *Tafsīr Munīr li Ma'alim al-Tanzīl*, *Tafsīr Qur'ān Karīm*, *Tafsīr al-Nūr*, *Tafsīr*, *Tafsīr al-Bayān*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya*, *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ* and *Tafsīr al-Lubāb*. These works are quite different in terms of writing style, method of interpretation, and argument. Some are written with a thematic approach, where the verses that address the same issue or topic are classified under one grand topic. Others follow the most common pattern, where interpretation is made on every single verse consecutively from the first chapter until the end. This study will look at this rich method and genre by focusing on the chapter on women's dressing in the Qur'an. Four works are selected for this purpose: This study compare the exegesis on women's dress outlined in those four works. It attempts to reveal the method of the Qur'anic interpretation adopted by the Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis. Are

⁹ Muhammad Alim Khoiri, "Rekonstruksi Konsep Aurat: Analisis Pemikiran Syahrur," *Universum* 9, no. 2 (2015): 115, accessed March 12, 2016, <https://jurnal.stainke.diri.ac.id/index.php/universum/article/view/82>.

¹⁰ See the interpretations of al-Qur'ān Sūrah Al-Ahzāb [35]: 59 in Fairūzābādī, *Tafsīr al-Miqbās* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2001), 426; Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Abī Bakr Al-Suyūṭī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Mahallī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1999. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1999), 307; 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī, *Ṣafwah al-Tafāsīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2001), 493–494; Al-Imām Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2009), 1511.

the interpretations by Indonesian *mufassir* similar to those by Arabian commentators? How is the concept of the women's clothes according to those four interpretation work? And how does this concept influence the interpretation on the woman's dressing in Indonesia?

The Four Indonesian Commentaries

Based on our investigation, there are about 11 works of Quranic commentaries written extensively by Indonesian commentators. They are *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*, *Tafsīr Munīr li Ma'alim al-Tanzīl*, *Tafsīr Qur'ān Karim*, *Fayd al-Rahmān*, *Tafsīr al-Nūr*, *Tafsīr*, *Tafsīr al-Bayān*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya*, *Tafsir al-Miṣbāh* and *Tafsīr al-Lubāb*. These works were written in a different period. We will focus on the interpretation work written only in Arabic, Indonesia language and Indonesian written in Arabic characters. Each of the four represents such different epoch where each was composed.

Tarjumān al-Mustafid

Tarjumān al-Mustafid is a Malay earliest work in the field of religion. This is even an earliest complete interpretation work in the Malay world.¹¹ This book is written by 'Abd Al-Ra'ūf Al-Singkilī. He was born in Singkel in 1035 H/1615 M. His original name was ' 'Abd Al-Ra'ūf Al-Fansurī. He is a theologian from Aceh who first brought the *Sattāriyā* sufi order (*tarekat*) into Nusantara. Around 1064 H/1643 M, Al-Singkilī went to Middle East to study the Islamic science such as *al-Qur'ān*, *Hadīts*, *Fiqh*, *Tafsīr* dan *Tasāwuf*. Al-Singkilī also learned *Sattāriyā* from Ahmad Qusairī (1583-1650 M) and Ibrāhīm al-Qurānī. Then Al-Singkilī returned to Aceh in 1662 M to developed this sufi order.¹²

Tarjumān al-Mustafid was written using Arabic Malay. It is a complete exegesis of the whole verses and chapters of the Qur'an. This book is not purely composed by Al-Singkilī himself, but has

¹¹ Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff and Wan Nasyrudin Wan Abdullah, "Tarjuman Al-Mustafid: Satu Analisis Terhadap Karya Terjemahan," *Jurnal Pengajian Melayu* 16 (2005): 156.

¹² Taufikurrahman, "Kajian Tafsir Di Indonesia," *Mutawatir* 2, no. 1 (June 1, 2012): 9.

additional explanation by his disciple named Dawūd Rūmī in the form of stories and Qirā'āt difference with those of 'Abd Al-Ra'ūf Al-Singkilī as his teacher. Some argue that the book is a translation from, or combination with, *Tafsīr al-Baydāwī*. Peter Riddel and Salman Harun state that in general this book is a translation of *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, with additional reference to *Tafsīr al-Baydāwī*, *Tafsīr al-Khāzin* and a few other exegeses books.¹³

When Al-Singkilī explains a *sura* (chapter) of the Qur'an, he begins by explaining chronology of the verse. He explains the name of *sura*, amount of the *sura's* verses, the place where the verse was revealed. He then explains the verse by using some references such as *Tafsīr al-Baydāwī*, *Tafsīr al-Khāzin*, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, etc.¹⁴ When discussing a verse, al-Singkilī always begins by *basmallah*, followed by the explication of the meaning of the verse. In giving explanation of the verses, Al-Singkilī explains sequentially then discovering the meaning of the verse literally. His explanation does not use *Hadith* or *Munāsabah al-āyah*.¹⁵

Generally, al-Singkilī does not mention directly about the method of writing of his exegesis work. However, his *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* reveal his other method of interpretation. In this work, he seemed to apply the method of *tahlīlī*. The *mufasssīr* explained verse by verse using some aspects, such as *qirā'at* and *al-asbāb al-nuzūl*. But his work can be called also as a exegesis work that use the method of *ijmālī*. The strength of this method lies on the fact that the interpretation is very concise and easy to be understood.

In his explaining Quranic verses, al-Singkilī does not focus on one pattern only such as *fiqh*, philosophy or *adāb bi al-Ijtimā'i*. His interpretation includes some patterns which are adjusted to the content of the verse. If a verse talks about *fiqh*, he will discover the verse by the laws of *fiqh*, and if a verse talks about theology, he will explain more enough about *aqīdah* until there is no misunderstanding of the verse. Likewise, if a verse is concerned with *qislah*, he will explain its historical background. In other

¹³ Ibid., 9–10.

¹⁴ A. H. Johns, "The Qur'ān in the Malay World: Reflections on 'Abd Al-Ra'ūf of Singkel (1615-1693)," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 2 (July 1, 1998): 125.

¹⁵ Suarni, "Karakteristik Tafsir Tarjuman Al-Mustafid," *Substantia* 17, no. 2 (2015): 16.

words, he explicates the verses of the Qur'an in accordance to the discipline or field of the verses. It because Al-Singkilī is expert in many fields of sciences such as *fiqh*, philosophy, logic, theology, history, *'ilm al-Falaq*, and politics.¹⁶

Tafsīr al-Qur'ān Karīm

This work was written by Mahmūd Yūnus who was born on Ramadhan 30th in 1316 M/10th Feb 1899 M in Sunggayang, Batusangkar, West Sumatra. Mahmūd Yūnus grew up among the devout religious family. His father's name is Yūnus b. Incek, a teacher at a small prayer place (*surau*). His mother, Hafsa bint Imam Samiun, was the son of Engku Gadang M. Tahir bin Ali, a founder and a *surau* nanny in that region.¹⁷

In 1923 Mahmūd Yūnus went to Mecca to perform pilgrimage (*hajj*). He then went straight to Egypt to study Islam at al-Azhar University and the Dār al-'Ulūm Ulyā Cairo until 1930. Mahmūd Yūnus started writing this work in November, 1922, and was completed in 1938.¹⁸ The work is in *bahasa* different for that of the previous work, which was written in *Arabic Malay*.¹⁹ Based on the *mufassir* history of this book, then note that the book is presented at the beginning of the 20th century in which Indonesia is currently in the Netherland colonial time.

Tafseer Qur'an Karim structure and composition is simple. Yūnus begins his work with an introduction about the background of it. He also provides information about the revision of his work. This section is not the same with another tafseer which are explaining about the history of al-Qur'an revelation, the history of codification, how to read the verse *qirā'ah*, and the virtue of the verse as usual.²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid., 163.

¹⁷ Herry Mohammad, *Tokoh-tokoh Islam yang Berpengaruh Abad 20* (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2006), 85–86.

¹⁸ Iskandar, "Tafsir Qur'an Karim Karya Mahmud Yunus Kajian Atas Karya Tafsir Nusantara," *SUHUF Jurnal Pengkajian Al-Qur'an dan Budaya* 3, no. 1 (2010): 2.

¹⁹ Taufikurrahman, "Kajian Tafsir," 12–13.

²⁰ Iskandar, "Tafsir Qur'an," 6–7.

Mahmud Yunus's *Tafseer Qur'an Karim* use relatively rare *ijmālī* of the previous commentators. In addition to an explanation of the meaning of paragraph briefly, this interpretation also presents a description of the occasion of the revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) that characterize the formal interpretation of the Qur'an. Yunus also used mixed materials or source of his interpretation and combined method of exegesis from the texts (*bi al-ma'thūr*) or from the reason (*bi al-ra'y*).²¹

The pattern or method of interpretation of this work is *'ilmī*. It is based on the way of mufassir interprets the Quranic verses on the basis of rationality and science. The last part of this work presents the index of the verses relating to sciences and technology. Nasrudin Baidan gives credit to this work because it promotes a different approach that distinguishes itself from other works of exegesis.²²

Tafsīr al-Azhār

This work is authored by Hamka. His full name is Haji Abd al-Mālik bin 'Abd al-Karīm (Amrullah) and was born on 13 Muharram 1362 H/ February 16, 1908 M, in a small village of Tanah Sirah, on the shores of lake Kinanjau. He began his education at home and went to further study Islam at an Islamic school (*diniyah* or *madrasa*) and *surau* (a small mosque). The strong commitment of his father, Syekh 'Abd al-Karīm Amrullah, gave a profound impact on his education. His father envisioned Hamka to be a scholar so that he gave full attention to his son nocturnal learning activities. As a child, he studied Islamic science and language, such as grammatical sciences (*nahwu*), morphology (*ṣarf*), Islamic law (*fiqh*) and Quranic interpretation (*tafsīr*) at *Tawalib* School. The first work of the Quranic exegesis that he learnt was *Tafsir Jalālayn*, where he immersed on studying tafsir. At age of 17 years, he met Ki Bagus Hadikusuma, a figure who once lodged in Wonokomo Islamic Boarding School Yogyakarta.²³

²¹ M. Anwar Syarifuddin and Jauhar Azizy, "Mahmud Yunus: Pelopor Pola Baru Penulisan Tafsir Al-Qur'an Indonesia," *Ilmu Ushuluddin* 2, no. 1 (2015): 328.

²² Taufikurrahman, "Kajian Tafsir," 14–15.

²³ Ratnah Umar, "Tafsir al-Azhar Karya Hamka: Metode dan Corak Penafsirannya," *Journal Al-Asas* 3, no. 1 (April 2015): 20.

Hamka emerged as one important scholar of Islam. He tries to acquire other sciences or knowledge of Islam, all of which consumed most of his life, roughly from the beginning of the twentieth century until his death. He paved a new way in his career in Jakarta in 1949 as Free Newspaper Correspondent and Landscape Magazine. From here onward, he entered the world of politics, where he was elected as member of house through general election in 1955. Despite his political activism, he remained committed to Islam and continued to publish his work, such as *Tafsīr al-Azhār*.²⁴ He wrote it in Indonesia, hoping that this would help ordinary Muslims to read and understand the Qur'an easily since many did not have a good command in Arabic.²⁵

This work was originally composed from a series of studies submitted at the Islamic lecture at dawn by Hamka in the al-Azhar mosque located in Kebayoran Baru, beginning from 1959. The name of al-Azhar of the mosque was given by Syeikh Mahmūd Saltut, the Rector of al-Azhar University during his visit to Indonesia in December 1960 with a hope that it would become the real al-Azhar of Jakarta. Hamkas' work was named as *Tafsīr al-Azhār* because it was closely related to the birthplace of the interpreter from al-Azhar.²⁶

Hamka did not use a specific method of interpretation but a combination of various method of the Qur'anic exegesis such as *al-ma'thūr* (report), *al-ra'y* (reason) and *al-ishārī* (metaphor). However, the method of *al-ma'tsur* was the strongest amongst the two others. Furthermore, he used simple language and explanation in order to be understood easily. He also included his life experience in his

²⁴ Ibid., 20–21.

²⁵ Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 2005), in introduction.

²⁶ Sharifah Norshah Bani bint Syed Bidina et al., "The Approach of Interpretation Implemented by Hamka in Tafsir Al-Azhar Based on Scientific Exegesis," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 7, no. 4 (April 2017): 194.

interpretation, and also included lot of historical stories of the Prophet, his companions and modern history, and many others.²⁷

Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ

The author of *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ* is Muhammad Quraish Shihab, born in Rampang, South Sulawesi in 1944. Quraish received his academic title of M.A for his specialization field of the exegesis of the Qur'an from al-Azhar University Cairo, Egypt in 1969. In 1982, he earned a doctorate in the field of the science of the Qur'an with *Cum Laude*, the first degree appreciation at the university.²⁸

Prior to the completion of this work, Shihab had written a book of exegesis with a thematic approach that covers thirty chapters (*juz'*) namely *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ*.²⁹ This work is often claimed to be his most monumental work. This work consists of 15 volumes. It adopts *taḥlilī* method of interpretation. The author interprets verse by verse in great detail. The first volume of this work was printed in 2000, and the last volume of this tafseer is printed on 2003. Shihab admits that he finished this work during 4 years started in Egypt on Friday 4th *Rabī'ulawāl* 1420 H/ 18th June 1999 then finished in Jakarta on Friday 5th September.³⁰

There are some principal methods of interpretation that Shihab adopts. For example, he holds that the Qur'an is united revelation that cannot be understand separately from one verse into another. He always emphasizes *munāsaba al-ayat* (correspondence/relevance amongst the verses) in his interpretation. There six principles of this: *munāsaba* in one verse, *munāsaba* between the content and the closing of the verse, *munāsaba* of one verse to the next verse, *munāsaba* of the initial description of verse with its ending, *munāsaba* of the closing verse with the initial description of the next verse and *munāsaba* of the theme of chapter with its name.

²⁷ Mazlan Ibrahim, Muhd Najib Abdul Kadir, and Latifah Abdul Majid, "The Concept of Leadership from the Perspective of Hamka," *Journal of Applied Sciences Research* 8, no. 8 (2012): 4331.

²⁸ Shihab, *Secercah Cahaya*.

²⁹ Taufikurrahman, "Kajian Tafsir," 22–23.

³⁰ Muhammad Iqbal, "Metode Penafsiran Al-Qur'an M. Quraish Shihab," *Tsaqafah* 6, no. 2 (November 30, 2010): 258.

Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ is certainly not purely the result of Shihab's work, independent from the influence of other scholars. He openly admits that he cites opinions of both classical and contemporary Qur'an interpreters. One of the influential works in *Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ* is *Tafsir Nazm al-Durar* by Ibrāhīm ibn 'Umar al-Biqā'i (885/1480), where Shihab mostly dealt with when completing his study at al-Azhar. Another influential source is *Tafsir al-Mizān*, authored by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'i, a modern Shiite cleric. These are amongst the two most referred sources in *Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ*. Besides, al-Biqā'i and Ṭabāṭabā'i, Shihab has cited Muḥammad al-Ṭanṭāwī, Mutawalli al-Ṣa'rawī, Sayyid Quṭb and Muḥammad Ṭahir ibn al-Shirīya.³¹

Woman's Clothes on the Four Exegeses

This section compares those four work, discussed earlier, on the concept of women's dress in the Qur'an, focusing mainly on verses in two chapters: al-Aḥzāb and al-Nūr. The first is concerned with the commandment of wearing outer long garment (*jilbab*) while the latter deals with the injunction to adopt shawl to cover the head and chest (*khumur*).

The first verse is Sura al-Aḥzāb [35]: 59

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِرُؤُوسِكُمْ وَبَنَاتِكُمْ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَمَهُنَّ مِنْ جَلْبَابِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ
أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ٥٩

O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when out of doors): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is The most forgiven, Most Merciful.

In the *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*, 'Abd Al-Ra'ūf al-Singkilī explained that the Prophet Muhammad was ordered to instruct wives, daughters, and the Muslim women to extend their cloth to all over the body because that will make it easier to be recognized that they are independent women (not slaves) and would not be bothered because they cover their body.³²

³¹ Ibid., 260.

³² Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fansūrī al-Jāwī, *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1990), 427.

Referring to *al-Khāzin*, Al-Singkilī added his explanation stating that people (men) who committed sin in Madina walked in every corner of the city to molest women who were uncovered. There was a story relating to the verse that a woman went out at night for some sort of fulfilling her need. She was uncovered and passed a route where there were men who seduced her because he thought she was a female slave or prostitute since she did not wear a proper dress. The verse was a response to this incident.³³

Commenting on the verse, Mahmūd Yūnus explained that this verse tells about women's habit in pre-Islamic Arab time. They liked wearing clothes that were not honored and resembled an outfit of slave that expose their body. It was common that at the time, naughty men liked to play around the street and seduced women wearing dress that reveal part of their body. Independent women might also become the object of seduction if they did not dress properly but donning the ones that was similar of that of slave. Therefore, through this verse, Yunus continues to argue, Allah told the independent women to cover their chest, head with clothes to make themselves recognized and different from female slaves. Yunus concludes that this, covering independent women's body, is the central message of the verse.³⁴

In his work, Hamka offers a similar view with the two previous interpreters. He explains that Muslim society have a particular identity, reflecting in distinguished social conduct, including dress code to differ it from the pre-Islamic era. Islamic society is asked to be different from the other (*Jāhiliyya*), especially dressing tradition for women. It was because prior to the revelation of this verse, the dressing tradition of Muslim women and others at that time was similar; their status or social standing were not distinguishable each other from their dress.³⁵

That is, according to Hamka, the reason why the verse is revealed. Allah asks to Prophet Muhammad to ordain his wives, daughters, and the wives of the believers to wear *jilbāb* when they

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qurān Karim* (Jakarta: Hidakarya Agung, 2004), 625.

³⁵ Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 93.

were out of the house. The *jilbāb* marks their identity as Muslim people. By wearing *jilbāb*, they are identified themselves as Muslims.³⁶

Hamka explained that *jilbāb* is a special piece of dress. Quoting commentators such as al-Qurṭhubī, he said that *jilbāb* is a wider than a scarf. But he also referred to Ibnu Abbas and Ibnu Mas'ūd, who said that *jilbāb* is *riḍā'*, a sort of big blanket. Al-Qurṭūbī explained again that *jilbāb* is a piece of cloth that covers the entire body. And then Ibn Kathīr explained that *jilbāb* is used to cover the body that is wider than a scarf.³⁷

Based on those opinions, Hamka underscores that the meaning of *jilbāb* is close to a sarong to cover all over the body and the face is visible.³⁸ Quraish Shihab in his *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ* explains that the story behind this verse is tantamount with stories that have been described by those *mufasssirs*. Shihab describes that in this verse the Prophet was ordered to instruct his wives, his daughters, and believing women to don a *jilbāb* over their whole body. The word '*alayhinna* (over them) impresses that entire their body covered by clothing. The exception, according to this view, is the face and palms or some other parts of the woman's body.³⁹

The context of the verse implies that at the time, women had already dressed to cover their body. However, the way they cover it did not include most of their body. Therefore, this verse ordains that they should cast their outer garments. It means they have been wearing *jilbāb* but not yet to pay it out.⁴⁰

The second verse on the women's dress is mentioned in the Sura al-Nūr [24]: 31.

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصُرِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ بِنَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنَاتِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّبَعِينَ غَيْرَ أُولِي إِلْحَاقٍ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ

³⁶ Ibid., 94–96.

³⁷ Ibid., 96.

³⁸ Ibid., 97.

³⁹ M. Quraish Shihab, "Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ" (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2012), 533.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 534.

أَوِ الْوَالِدِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُظْهَرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَتِ الْنِسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ٣١

Meaning: And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not play their beauty and ornaments except what (ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's father, their sons, their husband's sons, their brothers or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, of their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male attendants free of sexual desires. Or small children who no carnal knowledge of women; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! Turn ye all together towards Allah in repentance that ye may be successful.

According to al-Singkili in his *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*, this verse informed the Prophet Muhammad to explain to Muslims that they must keep their sight, conceal their genitals and not to commit adultery. And they are forbidden to reveal their ornaments except what appears so, like the face and palm, or when due to an emergency situation. Believing woman are required to cover head and neck up to the chest by wearing a shawl, and do not exhibit ornaments except to the husband, father, parent in law, children, stepchildren, brothers, child from brother or child from sister, Islam women, or the slaves they owned, or servants who have not desire (to women) or children who do not understand about the woman genital. They are also restricted from stamping their feet so that known about their ornaments on foot.⁴¹

According to Mahmūd Yūnus in *Tafsīr Qur'ān Karim*, this verse tells the Muslim women to keep their view from forbidden things, because it could be the first step toward crime, especially in the Eastern country with heat weather. Muslim women are also forbidden to open their ornaments or their body and expose them to men who are not their close family, except the part that is usually open, such as face, palm up to the wrist, and soles to ankles. This is the Hanafite school's opinion. Even there were said to be seen half of palms and soles of feet because those all very

⁴¹ al-Jāwī, *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*, 354.

commonly seen while working.⁴² Yūnus also explains that the woman should close the head, occipital, and her chest with shawl (*kerudung*). But he understood the verse from the other side that the instruction to close the head is telling about the woman's clothing in the context of civilization in the Arab land.⁴³

In this verse, Hamka explains that women are told to keep their views and genitals from bad things and also demanded them for not showing their jewelry except the real ones like ring on fingers, face and hands because that is what is meant by real jewelry. It means simplest and inconspicuous and encouraging. Then it is also explained that women should adopt scarf to cover head and chest.⁴⁴ The commandment to close the scarf to *juyūb* means a hole opening the chest so that the base of the breast appears, which may cause problems and lust. It is by concealing the part of the body that the modesty is established and that control over sexual arousal is strictly realized.⁴⁵

In the philosophy of the modern worldview it is said that a highly restricted relationship between men and women will create some kind of inner pressure on a person. Therefore in a free association, just looking at each other, talking freely, hanging out and joking that is not outrageous among men and women should be allowed, so that the pressure lust can be slightly released. This philosophy was put forward by scholars like Sigmund Freud. But Hamka denied this presumption, arguing that if so then the free association will be more rampant. If the chest is opened, the back is opened, thighs opened or association between men and women are not bounded in a secure union, then people may go uncontrolled sexually. Therefore, there must be a regulation for modest human's performance, decency and politeness.⁴⁶

Hamka explained that women have to cover all of their body *except what (ordinary) appear*, he mentioned it that the meaning of that is they may be able to show ring on their fingers, face, and hands because that is what is meant by real jewelry. But it seems

⁴² Yunus, *Tafsir Qurān*, 515.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 516–517.

⁴⁴ Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 179.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 181.

like there is not harmony with the interpretation of the verse before that women have to wear *jilbab* (clothes that used to cover their bodies included face and palm of the hand).

Quraish Shihab proposes reasoning in this case based on the argument cited from the Tunisian noted theologian M. Tāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, stating that one tradition derived from a nation cannot simply be manifested to other nations.

Ibn 'Āshūr sets an example from al-Aḥzāb [35]: 59 which told Muslim women to wear a veil over their head. He comments that this is a doctrine of the Arabs so it does not play out to other nations that do not make veil obligatory. Commenting on the verse, he further said that "the ways in which veil is used vary largely on the different situation that women have and the tradition or custom that they ascribe. But, the purpose of this command is to avoid inconvenience and that the principle is *that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested*.⁴⁷

Based on the argument above, Shihab concludes that we can say that cover the whole of body except the face and the palm is the main principal of the verse. However, at the same time, we are not natural states to them who do not wear the veil or reveals some from her hand, that they are certainly has violated religious instruction.⁴⁸

The Context of the Interpretation and It's Influence on the Concept of Woman's Dress

Basically the Quran only gives general information related to the concept of women's clothes with the objective to cover the body and its part. This section will analyze the interpretation development of the Qur'anic verses which talk about woman's clothing, such as al-Aḥzāb [35]: 59 and al-Nūr [24]: 31.

That became the main sentence from the first verse "*That they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when out of doors): that is most convenient.*" *Jalābīb* word is plural from *jilbāb* which mean assortment. 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Singkili defined it with as fabric (*kain*). Maḥmūd Yūnus defined *jilbāb* as outer garment (*baju*

⁴⁷ Shihab, "Tafsīr al-Miṣbāh," 533.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 534.

mantel), while Hasbī Ash-Shiddieqy said that jilbab is kind of shawl (*selendang*), and Quraish Shihab calls it *jilbab*.

All the meanings above, let's see definition of words and connect with the related verse. *First*: Fabric is translated as the material to make clothe or anything else.⁴⁹ Based on the meaning then is meant fabric by Al-Singkilī is a width fabric used to cover the whole of the body including face and palm. *Second*: Coat is translated as the thick long clothe to cover the entire body (not include the head).⁵⁰ In other words, *jilbāb* here is meant the command to cover the body so that this will not become visible. *Third*: the shawl is translated as the fabric used to cover part of the neck. It means the shawl must be used on head and expanded throughout so to cover the chest.

On the second verse is said “*That they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (ordinary) appear thereof.*” On this verse Al-Singkilī did not mention what it meant by ornaments. But his perspective based on his interpretation from the first verse is that the meaning of ornaments here is the beautiful ornaments of women’s body. Al-Singkilī interpreted that women prohibited exposing part of their body except what usually appears such as face and palm. Probably al-Singkilī understands *illā* word or in terms of *but*. Or he means it in term of Arabic is *istisna’ munqaṭi’*. This means that they should not display their beauty and ornaments; but what appear (perforce or unintentionally as the blow of wind and other things), is excusable.

On the main sentence, Yūnus interpreted that women were forbidden to reveal their jewelry that is body part except what usually appears to work or in activity as face and palm up to the wrist, and soles of the feet until the ankles. By this reason this is usual case when doing some activities. In other words, Yūnus understands this verse textually i.e. *except what (ordinary) appear thereof*. In the context of the community life, especially Indonesia, that parts of body must be opened that will be difficult when do not open as previously mentioned. Yūnus applied this verse by

⁴⁹ Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2001), 489.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 713.

adjusting Indonesia community situation because thinking that message to cover head is a message about women clothing civilization which are in commonplace in the Arabic land.

He mentioned it that the meaning of that commandment is they may be able to show ring on their fingers, face, and hands because that is what is meant by real jewelry. But it seems like there is conflict with the interpretation of the previous verse regarding women wearing *jilbab* (clothes that is used to cover their bodies including the face and palm of the hand). We perceive generally that Hamka wants women to wear *jilbab*, but on the second verse he interpreted by adapting the verse with the condition in Indonesia where the face and hand are commonly exposed. However, on the first verse, he seems to have been influenced by his reference in writing his interpretation work. It means there is no mistakes for every woman to wear *jilbab* like in Arabic women but for Indonesian woman to cover whole bodies are not an obligatory because face and hand are commonly not concealed in Indonesia. Since both countries have different tradition and geographical context, then the commandment regarding the order of wearing *jilbab* covering the whole body cannot be applied in Indonesia.

Shihab understands the main sentence from this verse, where he argue that the verse's objective of wearing *jilbab* seems to reflect culture and social context of a society. His understanding that the meaning by *except what (ordinary) appear thereof* is part of head, and palm up to the elbow because it is so commonly not covered in Indonesian society.

Based on the analysis above, we have found the explanation on woman's dressing in the Quran. This shows three patterns of women's dressing: Clothes that cover the whole body including the face and palm of the hand, Clothes that cover the whole body except face and palm of hand and Clothes that cover whole body except part of head, palm of hand and soles of the feet.

Conclusion

The tradition of women clothing in Indonesia in the past is that they only use a sheet of cloth, as this this has been evidenced through the illustration from reliefs of Majapahit Temple. But

slowly, the tradition has developed, where it receives influence from other countries, especially from the Middle East during the close contact for business and then for spreading Islam.

Islam basically has given guidance about the principle of decent and proper dress in the Qur'an. However, the verses regarding the dress code in this scripture still need more explanation to gain appropriate comprehension. One way to do so is to elucidate the Indonesian Muslim scholars' interpretation of the verses on dress code in their exegetical work, such as *Tarjumān al-Mustafid*, *Tafsīr Munīr Li Ma'alim al-Tanzīl*, *Tafsīr Qur'ān Karīm*, *Fayd al-Raḥmān*, *Tafsīr al-Nūr*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, *al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya*, and *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ*.

We have showed that every interpreter in their respective period and work show that although they have a common view on women's dress in the Qur'an, but they also hold different view, ranging from strict to flexible perspective on how women dress properly. Mostly, they agree that there are parts of the women's body that must be concealed. Such differences suggest that every interpretation is contingent upon many factors and such factor finally shape the main idea of each interpreters' understanding of the Quranic verses on women's clothe.

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