



**THE REFLECTIVE-ACCOMMODATIVE APPROACH
TO THE QURAN:
Ahmad Syafii Maarif's Contribution towards
Contemporary Approach to the Quran**

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Abstract: This paper aims to examine Ahmad Syafii Maarif's inclusive thought and reveal the epistemological basis of interpreting the Qur'an. It further explores to what extent Maarif's thought has contributed to the development of contemporary Quranic studies. Although Maarif is not an expert of Quranic commentator (mufassir) and does not author works related to the Qur'an, he is well-known as an inclusive-pluralist Muslim scholar who is concerned with promoting the moral-ethical values of the Qur'an. In formulating the ideas of the Quranic epistemology, Maarif consistently embarks from an in-depth exploration of historical knowledge and then refers to the Qur'an to examine a contemporary reality. This approach was connected by forming the world-view of the Qur'an in order to propose the spirit of moral ethics and the principle of justice as a theological lens which he then use to generate creative-alternative solutions dealing with the nation's problems through a process of contextualization. Maarif's Quranic epistemology affirms his project to achieve an idealistic Islam, namely the realization of a Muslim community that is consistently guided by the spirit of the moral ethics of the Qur'an.

Keywords: Ahmad Syafii Maarif, Quranic Epistemology, Reflective Accommodative Approach

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Introduction

ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL contemporary Muslim scholars in Indonesia is Ahmad Syafii Maarif. Along with the late KH. Abdurrahman Wahid, the forth Indonesian president, Maarif is well known for Muslim intellectuals who consistently promote universal humanistic values and democracy. What many may have been unaware is that Maarif often uses the fundamental values of the Qur'an to support his thoughts. Even though there

have been a number of studies discussing Maarif's thoughts, his epistemological approach to the Qur'an has been hardly studied. This might be caused by the fact that he never authors a work of Qur'anic exegesis or related topic on this scripture, unlike M. Quraish Shihab with his '*Tafsir al-Misbah*', Hamka (Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah) with his *Tafsir al-Azhar*, or at least M. Dawam Rahardjo with his phenomenal work '*Ensiklopedi Al-Quran: Tafsir Sosial Berdasarkan Konsep-Konsep Kunci*' (Encyclopaedia of the Quran: Commentaries on Social Issues Based on Key Concepts). Maarif only writes a few fundamental themes of the Qur'an in some of his works separately which have relevance to social needs.¹

When discussing the commentaries (*tafsir*) and the definition of the interpreters (*mufassir*) in the 21st-century, the conventional perspective of the necessity of producing completed verses of commentaries is no longer adequate. It is mainly because the Muslim community today is not possible to read a super thick and rambling commentary. The tendency of Muslims today, especially in Indonesia, requires more practical and straightforward but in-depth guidelines on the principles of life based on the Quran.²

This reality then encourages 21st-century Muslim thinkers to transform this conception towards a thematic interpretation. In addition to its advantages in seizing moral messages or the world-view of the Quran regarding aspects of life, such as social, economic, political, and educational aspects of life, the thematic interpretation is also easier for the scholars and society to comprehend. As it presents a guide containing verses that have the same topic and is given a comprehensive contextual analysis.³ As a result, Muslim intellectual works were produced which explicitly implied the Quranic epistemology but were not based on the general interpretation book model such as the classical and

¹ Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Transmission of Islamic Reform from The United States to Indonesia: Studying Fazlur Rahman's Legacy through the Works of Ahmad Syafii Maarif," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 41, no. 119 (2013): 36.

² See Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), vi.

³ Abdullah Saeed, *Reading the Qur'an in the Twenty-First Century: A Contextualist Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

medieval Muslim generations. In this area, this paper seeks to carry out an in-depth study of Maarif's works in the context of reconstructing and restructuring his thought to locate the epistemological basis of interpreting the Quran.

Maarif is a figure who is always restless but without losing his spirit of optimism. In dealing with the real problems of its nation, Maarif has never shown the slightest bit of pessimism, let alone apathy. While Maarif is a modest religious figure as he has sophisticated thought and he tirelessly seeks valuable solutions in order to contribute more to the problems of Indonesia. Maarif consistently stands for the Quranic values, while does not comprehend Quranic verses literal-textually but takes the elan vital or moral principles of the Quran combined with historical knowledge as a reflection and generalizes the universal principles therein. In this context, Maarif has made the Quran as a 'privilege source'.⁴

Maarif's thought in interpreting the Quran should be reconstructed and restructured methodologically since the methods and theories in interpreting the Quran are still diffused in his works. To do so, this paper intends to collect, compile, and reconstruct scientifically and systematically to generate a new approach to the interpretation of the Quran based on Maarif's thoughts so that it would be easier to understand, access, and apply. In principle, this paper seeks to offer both the conceptual-theoretical and operational-applicative sides of Maarif's thought on the interpretation of the Quran.

Academic Backgrounds and Culture

Ahmad Syafii Maarif, familiarly called '*Buya Syafii*', was born in Sumpur Kudus, West Sumatra on May 31, 1935. His mother's name is Fatiyah, a descendant of the Chaniago tribe, who died when Maarif was 18 months old. His father's name is Datuk Rajo Melayu, a Nagari official from the Malay tribe.

⁴ Minim A. Sirry, "Ahmad Syafii Maarif dan Rekonfigurasi Pembacaan al-Qur'an," in *Muazin Bangsa dari Makkah Darat: Biografi Intelektual Ahmad Syafii Maarif*, ed. Ahmad Najib Burhani et. al., Ahmad Fuad Fanani, and Muhd. Abdullah Darraz (Jakarta: Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2015), 44.

The birthplace of Maarif is a Minang culture which influences his character and attitude. The Minang community is characterized by two characters, i.e; first, a dynamism (activism), which indicates that the Minang people like wandering or journey; second, anti-parochialism, which symbolizes a cosmopolitan free spirit. Deliar Noer states that Minangkabau was the hometown for the birth of modernist ideas in Indonesia because of the large number of modernist ulama who came from there.⁵ Geographically, even though Maarif was born in a rural area, ideologically, he was raised in a dynamic and independent atmosphere. Maarif was growth amid deep cultural intersections and Islamic dynamics. A rich cultural background, a strong Islamic culture, and high community dynamics are values attached for the development of a religious, egalitarian, and independent character. This character will later pour the ideas he developed. Furthermore, Maarif himself emphasizes that his youth life made an impression on his personality development.

In terms of education, Maarif childhood was a tirelessly diligent student. His education background started from the elementary school in Sumpur Kudus, while in the afternoon he attended *Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah* (Islamic Elementary School) to study reciting the Quran. He graduated in 1947. Then, he continued to take Junior High School at Madrasah Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah in Balai Tangah, Lintau, West Sumatra (1950-1953). At a relatively young age (18 years old), Maarif decided to move to Yogyakarta to continue his education at the Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah (graduated in 1956).⁶

After completing secondary education, Maarif then moved to Solo to take a Bachelor's degree in Cultural History at the University of Cokroaminoto, and graduated in 1964. In the time of studies, Maarif was active as an activist in the Islamic Association of University Students (HMI) for the period 1963-1964, which was the starting point of his social activism. His involvement in HMI

⁵ Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942* (London: Oxford, 1978).

⁶ Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Titik-titik Kisar di Perjalananku: Autobiografi Ahmad Syafii Maarif* (Bandung: Mizan, 2009).

further strengthened his thoughts on Islam and the Indonesian identity.⁷

After the completion, Maarif returned to Yogyakarta to gain a Completed Bachelor's Degree in History at IKIP Yogyakarta (now Yogyakarta State University) and graduated in 1968. His passion for education and his interest in the field of Historical thought allowed him to take the Master's program at the Ohio University Department of History, Athens, the United States, in 1976 with the support of a Fullbright Scholarship, and got a Master's degree in 1980. His educational activities continued by taking a Ph.D. program at the University of Chicago, United States, and successfully defended his Ph.D. thesis entitled "Islam as the Basis of State: A Study of the Islamic Political Ideas as Reflected in the Constituent Assembly Debates in Indonesia", holding a doctorate in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations in 1983.⁸

In between his educational careers, Maarif was actively involved in academic activities, including teaching at PGA Muhammadiyah in East Lombok for one year (1956-1957), being a lecturer assistant for the course of Ancient Indonesian History at FKIS IKIP Yogyakarta, and assistant of Islamic History at the Indonesian Islamic University (UII) Yogyakarta in 1967. In 1986, Maarif was a visiting professor at Iowa University, United States. In the midst of 1993-1994, he also was a visiting associate professor at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University. In adition, he has also been recorded as a visiting lecturer to teach the subjects of the History of Crusades, and Islam and Social Change in Southeast Asia at the National University of Malaysia (1990-1992). Finally, he was confirmed as a Professor of Historical Philosophy at Yogyakarta State University in 1997.⁹

In terms of social activities, Maarif, for example, was a member of the Religious Affairs Thinking Group of the Ministry of Religion in 1984. Then he was successfully elected as President of Muhammadiyah for the 1998-2005 period. On February 28, 2003, in

⁷ See Ahmad Syafii Maarif's review about HMI's Indonesian perspective in Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Peta Bumi Intelektualisme Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1993), 155-158.

⁸ Ma'arif, *Titik-titik Kisar di Perjalananku*, 188.

⁹ Ibid., 220.

Jakarta, Maarif with his colleagues founded the MAARIF Institute for Culture and Humanity, as the locomotive of the Islamic movement which persistently campaigns on issues of democracy, tolerance, justice, peace, and humanity. Equipped his personality with a low profile and inclusive, he was once trusted to be the president of the International of World Conference on Religion for Peace, an international religious institution whose members consist of various interfaith figures who are concerning and passionate about promoting peace.

Maarif has been honored with many awards, including granting the 2008 Magsaysay Award from The Board of Trustees of the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation (RMAF). He also received the Magsaysay Award in the category of Peace and International Understanding for his services in guiding Muslims to believe in and accept the practice of tolerance and pluralism as the basis of justice and harmony in Indonesia as well as the world. The other awards for Maarif's achievements and his contributions to Indonesia are Hamengkubuwono IX Award (2000), Habibie Award (2010), UPN Award, Nabil Award (2013), and Kompas Daily Dedicated Scholars (2013).¹⁰

In general, Maarif's involvement both in academic and in socio-religious movements has a significant contribution. This achievement later established him as a national figure who earned the title '*Buya*' or '*Guru Bangsa* (Nation's Great Teacher)'. Maarif has succeeded in presenting a positive and beautiful image of Indonesian Islam. Some important issues related to Islam and Indonesia are coined in special terms that are straightforward, critical, and poetical ways. His extensive insight can be seen in his concern for national to global issues, such as; history, religion, culture, politics, and the Muslim world.¹¹

¹⁰ Ahmad Najib Burhani, Ahmad Fuad Fanani, and Muhd. Abdullah Darraz, eds., *Muazin Bangsa dari Makkah Darat: Biografi Intelektual Ahmad Syafii Maarif* (Jakarta: Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2015), 11.

¹¹ Damanhuri, "Islam, Keindonesiaan, dan Kemanusiaan (Telaah Pemikiran Ahmad Syafii Maarif)," *Al-Banjari: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 14, no. 1 (2015): 76.

Life Phase and Intellectual Evolution

To understand Maarif's thought, there are at least three stages of thought evolution that must be analyzed. This evolution by Maarif itself is referred to as range of points which he wrote in his book *Titik-titik Kisar di Perjalananku* (Points of Gyration in My Life).

The first stage of Maarif's intellectual journey embarked from education at the Madrasah Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah (Secondary Muhammadiyah Educational Institution) in Balai Tangah, Lintau, West Sumatra. Well-equipped with a Muhammadiyah educational background had shaped a brave intellectual personality. This stage allowed Maarif to learn rational Islamic approaches that challenged various traditions through Muhammadiyah. This is the basic capital for Maarif in developing its intellectualism locus at a later date. This has also driven its affiliation to Muhammadiyah to be so strong.¹²

In the second stage, departed at the age of 18 in 1953, young Maarif began his journey outside Minang to Yogyakarta (1953-1956), Lombok (1957), and Surakarta (1958-1962). Then returned to Yogyakarta (1962-1964) to continue his study at the IKIP (now, Yogyakarta State University) Yogyakarta. There were two factors that drove Maarif to move to Yogyakarta, first, the process of interacting with Sanusi Latief, a young man who became one of the early waves of Sumpur Kudus educated figure, who later encouraged Maarif's vertical mobilization in education; the second, the Maarif's movement was also encouraged by the Muhammadiyah network based in Yogyakarta.¹³ This city is one of the diaspora centers for Indonesian educated groups which strengthens his intellectual dialogue to become increasingly varied and complex. Even though Maarif had a fairly broad horizon, due to the influence of education and local culture, Maarif's perspective was still characterized by a "fundamentalist" who aspired to make Indonesia as an Islamic State. Maarif was even a sympathizer for Masyumi Party who was active in various

¹² Ma'arif, *Titik-titik Kisar di Perjalananku*, 76.

¹³ Arie Putra, "Potret Intelektual Muslim: Sebuah Tinjauan Sosiologi Pengetahuan terhadap Pemikiran Ahmad Syafii Maarif," *Jurnal Sosiologi Masyarakat* 18, no. 1 (2013): 55.

winning campaigns for the party. This phase is greatly fundamental in his intellectual career struggle, peculiarly when he studied at Ohio University (Athens), the United States, his obsession with establishing an Islamic State actually increased.¹⁴ This was due to Maarif's disappointment with the Indonesian government which disbanded Masyumi and did not provide room for the political struggle of Muslims. This was the peak phase of Maarif's belief in the idea of an Islamic State. In this context, Maarif transformed into an intellectual with a Western educational background who supported the formation of an Islamic State.¹⁵

The third was the most crucial evolutionary phase in the stages of Maarif's journey when he successfully held a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, the USA, in 1983. In this phase, Maarif's thought was challenged by Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988), the most influential modernist thinker in the 20th-century, who taught him pertaining to Islamic discourses. Maarif actively discussed with Rahman, and boldly began to criticize his previous views on the idea of an Islamic State. Maarif grew up under Rahman's guidance that radically changed his views from utopian-ideological to realistic-rational, especially his projection of the Islamic State. By this interaction, Maarif experienced what was then called a 'significantly intellectual turning point'. This intellectual leap influenced his perspective on the relational relationship among Islam, humanity, and the Indonesian identity. So Yudi Latif called him a figure who was persistently active in promoting liberalism and began to be more sympathetic towards renewal ideas.¹⁶

After passing through a long process of intellectual evolution, Maarif began consistently campaigning for the importance of understanding Islam, humanity, and the Indonesian identity in one frame and single breath. Maarif believes that the relationship among Islam, humanity, and the Indonesian identity cannot be divorced. Islam permanently encourages the principle of harmonious relations amongst human beings, which means that

¹⁴ Maarif, *Titik-titik Kisar*, 66.

¹⁵ Putra, "Potret Intelektual Muslim, 59.

¹⁶ Yudi Latif, *Inteligensia Muslim Dan Kuasa; Genealogi Inteligensia Muslim Indonesia Abad Ke-20*, Digital Edition. (Jakarta: Demokrasi Project Yayasan Abad Demokrasi, 2012), 609.

every citizen of Indonesia and also the world with various religions and ethnic backgrounds has the same rights and obligations. The Quran states that plurality is a given which is an inspiration for mankind to know each other, cooperate and help in kindness.¹⁷ Maarif argues that religious authenticity, the doctrine of *rahmatan lil alamīn*, and principles in constructing interfaith relations can be derived to propose foundations of religious ethics.¹⁸ Thus, an extensive intellectual shifting has made Maarif becoming more humanist, inclusive, and critical in every view of the nation's problems.¹⁹

The Islamic thought of Maarif was academically influenced by Fazlur Rahman, but in the extensive process of intellectual dialectics, Maarif had also been inspired by Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), a great poet, politician, and philosopher of the 20th century with his magnum opus, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1934), where Maarif frequently quoted Iqbal's thoughts in his works. It could be said that Maarif is one of Iqbal's admirers. Another figure who influenced Maarif a lot is A.J Toynbee (1889-1975), a British historian who is well-known for his monumental work entitled *A Study of History*, which contains historical investigations about the origin, development, and destruction of major world civilization. Through Toynbee, Maarif developed extensively his historical horizon.²⁰

Meanwhile, for the context of Indonesia, Maarif has been heavily influenced by Mohammad Hatta. In fact, in many of his writings, Maarif repeatedly refers to Hatta's thoughts when

¹⁷ Mohamad Ali, "The Discourse of Transformative-Critical Pedagogy Among Modernist Muslims," *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1, no. 1 (November 12, 2017): 14.

¹⁸ Muhammad Qorib, "Ahmad Syafii Maarif: Kajian Sosial-Intelektual dan Model Gagasan Keislamannya," *Intiqad Jurnal Agama dan Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (2017): 63-82.

¹⁹ Muthoifin, Sudarno Shobron, and Suhaimi Ab Rahman, "Humanist Islam in Indonesia Ahmad Syafii Maarif Perspective," *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews* 7, no. 6 (2019): 782.

²⁰ Hilman Latief, "Ahmad Syafii Maarif: Pengarustamaan Moderasi Islam Indonesia," in *Para Pembaharu Pemikiran dan Gerakan Islam Asia Tenggara*, by Ahmad Suaedy and Raja Juli Antonio (Jakarta: Southeast Asian Muslim (SEAMUS) for Freedom and Enlightenment, 2009), 241-249.

explaining national issues, especially those relates to the interpretation of Pancasila (the Five Principles of Indonesia). The most vital intellectualism of Hatta is how it influences Maarif's thought pertaining to the importance of promoting substantive Islam. Hatta inevitably emphasized that the substance of Islamic values practiced in everyday life is far more significant than formalism and religious symbolism.²¹ In this case, Maarif said repeatedly that;

“...if people want to fight for Islamic teachings in Indonesia, use “the science of salt, not the science of lipstick.” When salt dissolves into food, it leaves no visible trace, but its effect in the taste is certainly decisive. In contrast, the lipstick worn by women is eye-catching red, but it is tasteless. Hatta was very sharp in perceiving the connection between Islam and the Indonesian soul”²²

Maarif also highly praises Hatta's thoughts and activism. Mohammad Hatta is the first Indonesian vice president who is a true moralist and an authentic Pancasilaist leader in theory and practice with a strong character as coral. Hatta is a truly teacher who had taught the spirit where moral values must be upheld even when dealing with the authorities.²³ Perhaps this is where we could simply understand Maarif's critical and courageousness while with a low profile character.

To this day, the public has appraised Maarif as an organic intellectual who passionately campaigns for the need to foster Islam, humanity, and the Indonesian identity in every aspect of life. Maarif is a distinguished figure with inclusive and critical thought. He continuously spreads his pluralism idea to promote a dialogue within diversity and simultaneously leads them to grow and interact fairly and prosperously.²⁴ Maarif on every occasion highlights the urgency of implementing the principles of the Quranic moral ethics in dealing with various problems in

²¹ Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Islam dan Pancasila sebagai Dasar Negara: Studi tentang Perdebatan dalam Konstituante* (Bandung: Mizan, 2017), 209–210.

²² Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Islam, Humanity, and the Indonesian Identity*, trans. George A. Fowler (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2018), 200.

²³ Ibid., 201.

²⁴ Muhammad Wahdini, “Paradigma Simbiotik Agama dan Negara (Studi Pemikiran Ahmad Syafi'i Maarif),” *Journal of Islamic Law and Studies* 4, no. 1 (2020): 17–32.

Indonesian. Maarif is a figure loved by the Indonesian people, not only among the elder but also in the eyes of the youth generation. Some of his works are invariably referred to and employed as references for various studies and solutions to humanitarian problems.²⁵

The Views of the Quran and Its Position

To begin with, Maarif is actually a pious Muslim. His educational background and organization proves that Maarif frequently interacts with the Quran both in terms of practical worship and interpreting the verses. Maarif claims that the Quran occupies a practically central position as a moral source of guidance, a source of inspiration, and a source of the spirit. Maarif's perspective on the Quran can be described as follows in its notion:

“...For me, the Quran is the highest and eternal reference in formulating religious attitudes. This is me when I ultimately grew up after studying the Quran under Fazlur Rahman for several years in Chicago, where my last education was, even though my age was nearly half a century, it is certainly the life phase that must be taken.”²⁶

Even though well-equipped with Western education, Maarif's view on the Quran could be categorized as a normative-traditionalist thinker. It is mainly because he has not moved from the traditional perspective of the orthodox theological doctrine of the Quran yet. Maarif still stands for the idea that the Quran is the word of God which is revealed literally to Muhammad without any doubt historically and sociologically in the process of transmission. According to Farid Esack, this point of view can be referred to as “The Scholarly Lover”, that is, someone who loves the Quran and is able to provide an explanation for why they love him but without criticizing it. Esack explains that “The Scholarly Lover” can also be referred to as “Confessional Muslim

²⁵ Wikandono, Muchrom, and Aman, “The Development of Contemporary Islamic Thought in Indonesia in the 2013 Curriculum (Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif's Thoughts),” in *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, vol. 398, 2019, 82.

²⁶ This translation is the author's own from Ma'arif, *Titik-titik Kisar di Perjalananku*, 61.

Scholarship" which takes the viewpoint that the Quran is the absolute word of God.²⁷

Maarif's traditional-conventional view of the Quran might be influenced by at least two possible reasons in the history of his life phase. First and foremost, Maarif is not a person who puts heavily concern in the discourses and debates of Quranic studies which requires him to question and criticize the basic aspects of the revelation of the Quran in the theological area. However, as he states that he is a historian enthusiast "with a mission" so that the domain of his thought is at the sociological and not theological field.²⁸ Maarif seemingly prefers to rely on the methods elaborated by Fazlur Rahman, specifically his 'double movement theory', rather than being stuck in the discourse of hermeneutics or debate of the methods of interpretation.²⁹ Then, the rest is a possibility that Maarif has not completely been able to abandon his theological viewpoint while being a 'fundamentalist' in some basic aspects of Islamic teachings.

In spite of having a traditional-conventional theological view of the Quran, Maarif's concern on the values and spirit embodied in the Quran is quite encouraging and can be positioned him as a contextualist thinker. This means that although Maarif in its theological view of the Quran is located in the group of "The Scholarly Lover", his ideas and interpretation models of the Quran can be included in the group of "The Critical Lover", namely someone who critically examines the fundamental aspects and the sociological-theological impacts in the process of revelation of the Quran. Some of the Muslim thinkers who belong to this group include, Fazlur Rahman, Mohammed Arkoun, and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd.³⁰ It seems that this is what makes Maarif unique as a contemporary Muslim thinker.

On the other hand, Fazlur Rahman has come to his speculative interpretation of Muhammad's active role as a recipient of revelations, which is contrary to the ideas of Muslim orthodoxy

²⁷ Farid Esack, *The Qur'an; A User's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007), 3.

²⁸ Ma'arif, *Islam, Humanity*, 25.

²⁹ Burhani, "Transmission of Islamic Reform," 36.

³⁰ Esack, *The Qur'an*, 5–6.

who emphasize Muhammad's passivity in the process of revelations. Muslim orthodoxy has persistently believed that Muhammad played no role in shaping the content (both text and idea) of the Quranic revelations due to the Quran as God's Word dictated to Muhammad through the mediation of the Angel Gabriel.³¹ Conversely, Rahman argues that the Quran came from God in the form of "word ideas", not in the form of "sound words". The Quran thus was sent down to the heart through revelation (inspiration), not into the ear through sound. Muhammad was both a reader and an author who emphasized that psychologically Muhammad was mentally and intellectually in the process of revelation. Rahman put forward a thesis that the early Muslim community did not have the intellectual capacity to say that the Quran is on the one hand *kalamullah* (the word of God) and on the other, it is entirely the word of Muhammad.³² Rahman realized that the Quran was not born in a cultural vacuum and Muhammad was not a 'blank out CD' without cultural intervention. Rahman's idea of the Quran could be said to be a remarkable intellectual leap in the 20th century and categorized as liberal thinking in the world of interpretation. This perspective later became a controversy and polemics throughout Pakistan and the entire Islamic world, leading Rahman to exile from Pakistan to the United States to accommodate an academic culture that supports his ideas.³³

The process of academic struggles with Rahman enriched with Iqbal, Toynbee, and Hatta, have led Maarif to develop a perspective of historical criticism. Maarif invariably examines the ability of normative Islam to guard the deviant behavior of the authorities. The powerlessness of Islam in correcting and guiding

³¹ Ali Akbar, "Towards a Humanistic Approach to the Quran: New Direction in Contemporary Islamic Thought," *Culture and Religion* 20, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 82–103.

³² Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979).

³³ See Ebrahim Moosa, "Introduction" in Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam; A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003).

an ideal society indicates a problem in understanding the Quran.³⁴ So we need a fair and honest attitude towards any reading of history and Islamic heroism in the past. For Maarif, because the Quran is an open book, Muslims logically must also appear as an inclusive community, namely an attitude that dares to challenge history regardless of its form and must always be acknowledged and dismantled even though they must expose the dark-age history of the Muslims themselves.³⁵ So that it is no longer possible to locate economics and political interests behind the holy verses.

Maarif stresses that in historical studies, humans are inevitably entangled with the laws of relativism, yielding in a relatively (limited) historical perspective. History itself is generated by humans (historians), which means that every history is relative and subjective.³⁶ A human being can never obtain a piece of perfect and comprehensive knowledge. Humans are not omnipotent (power without limits), nor omniscient (knowledge without end). Because humans have many limitations such as age, ability, and experience, while human curiosity is unlimited. Therefore, understanding history must be dynamic and requires a new horizon from each generation. There prevails here a creative tension between curiosity and limitation, which continues from one generation to another without stopping. This process then forms what is called historical criticism.³⁷

Based on this framework of thought, Maarif's criticism is highly relevant in constructing his views on the plurality of Quranic interpretations. Maarif draws heavily attention that any interpretation of the form, even the interpretation of the Quran, will certainly be relative and limited to some extent. There is no single commentary or human understanding of the Quran which is entirely absolute and sacred (holy). Maarif asserts that no matter how great human reasoning is, he would never be in the position

³⁴ Ahmad Syafii Maarif "Al-Qur'an dan Tantangan Modernitas: Sebuah Pengantar" in Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif and Said Tuhuleley, eds., *Al-Qur'an dan Tantangan Modernitas* (Yogyakarta: SIRPRESS, 1990), viii.

³⁵ Ma'arif, *Islam, Humanity*, 193.

³⁶ Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Al-Qur'an, Realitas Sosial dan Limbo Sejarah (Sebuah Refleksi)* (Bandung: Pustaka, 1985), 112–113.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

of Almighty or Omniscient. So, claiming the absolute and sacred towards a commentary is another part of distortion and intellectual shirk.³⁸ Various myths that glorify interpretations and legitimize authorities, must constantly be reviewed, criticized, or even deconstructed. In this way, we need to devise a critical distance that allows us to open up a new horizon of history as well as a breakthrough in approaching the future, wherein it is automatically kept away from being caught up in stagnant and apologetic interpretations.³⁹ Herein declares the unique and independent Islamic integrity from Maarif, where it has been able to elaborate Islamic neo-modernism paradigm and critical approaches to become more sophisticated as well as functional. The reshaping of the form of Islam that is contextual and substantive and has extraordinary accommodative power in dealing with a constellation of changes.⁴⁰

As the eternal guidance for humankind, the Quran provides the basic principles of moral ethics as a solid foundation for life. The Quran manages human life as an organic and integral, all parts of which must be guided by moral ethics and commands derived from this Holy Book.⁴¹ Therefore, Maarif reminds that if the Quran is not understood correctly and intelligently, it would cause Muslims being marginalized from the mainstream civilization, and automatically becoming oppressed, ignorant, and impoverished.⁴²

In short, Maarif's mind framework on the Quran is completely reflected in his point of view that the Quran is a Holy Book of guidance that steadfastly prioritizes practice (deeds) rather than ideas.⁴³ The Quran is definitely neither a historical document nor a

³⁸ Ma'arif, *Islam, Humanity*, 186.

³⁹ Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, "Agama dan Permasalahannya di Abad XXI (sebuah perspektif dalam Islam)," in *Permasalahan Abad XXI: Sebuah Agenda*, ed. Said Tuhuleley (Yogyakarta: SIRPRESS, 1993), 141.

⁴⁰ Herman L. Beck "An Introduction to Ahmad Syafii Maarif: The Man and This Book" in Ma'arif, *Islam, Humanity*, 16.

⁴¹ Ma'arif, *Islam dan Pancasila*, 14–15.

⁴² Ma'arif, *Islam, Humanity*, 192.

⁴³ This perspective might be inspired by Muhammad Iqbal in his book *The Reconstructions of Religious Thought in Islam* which elaborated in-depth explanation related to the role of the ego in the principle of motion. In principle, the Quran

scientific book that could be employed as a source of scientific investigation. Instead, the Quran is a trustworthy guidance, and also a book of inspiration for disclosing the history of humanity, a religious and ethical document that has a practical purpose for the creation of a virtuous society.⁴⁴

The Principles of Quranic Epistemology

Based on the aforementioned, Maarif's way of thinking is heavily influenced by Fazlur Rahman, particularly the Islamic neo-modernism approach. In most of his works, Rahman's name is repeatedly mentioned or some of the key terms from Rahman are purposefully utilized to explain some issues. It is not a coincidence that Maarif being Rahman's student, since the hermeneutic method of the Quran by Rahman relies heavily on the studying of the historical exploration process, both the theological history of Muslims (*asbab al-nuzul* micro) and the socio-political-economic history of the people of the Arabian Peninsula and its surroundings (*asbab al-nuzul* macro). There would be significant difficulties if someone who intends to apply the Rahman method does not have the basic expertise of a historian or at least has an expertise in the field of historical studies. Thus, it is likely impossible to locate comprehensively Maarif's Quranic epistemology without taking into consideration first Rahman's hermeneutic method.⁴⁵

Rahman explains that his process of interpretation involves a double movement: from the present situation to the Quranic period, then back to the present. The first movement is trying to understand the whole content of the Quran through commands and prohibitions that are revealed specifically in response to certain situations. The first movements mentioned, then, proceeds in two steps. First, before examining the Quranic text in special situations, one must draw attention to the implicit meaning of a

emphasizes that faith will be meaningful if it is accompanied by charity (positive and constructive good deeds). See Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstructions of Religious Thought in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).

⁴⁴ Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Islam, Kekuatan Doktrin dan Kegamangan Umat* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1997), 8.

⁴⁵ Burhani, "Transmission of Islamic Reform," 29–47.

given statement by studying the historical situation or problem to which it was the answer. Second, generalizing the specific answers (conclusions) and framing them as statements of universal moral-social objectives. This is obtained from specific texts by looking at their socio-historical background, as well as the reasons that emerge behind the enforcement of the law. The second movement is applying universal values obtained from the first movement into the concrete socio-historical context of the present. This application requires a study of exploration of the contemporary situation to change it and implement the values of the Quran in a more concrete direction.⁴⁶

Basically, Maarif's Quranic epistemology is quite identic to the methodology developed by Rahman to some extent. Maarif like Rahman carries the principle of objectivity in the Quranic interpretation and the importance of exploring the general principles of moral ethics in the Quran. Maarif passionately speaks for the urgency of the establishment of 'Islamic ideals', namely Islam as expressed and implied in the authentic Quran and Sunnah.⁴⁷ This form is purely different from historical Islam which reflects all the socio-political behavior of Muslims in historical reality. Due to this view, Maarif has been categorized as an idealistic thinker, which is a thought that emphasizes the fundamental view of the struggle of Muslims towards Ideal Islam.⁴⁸

The basic difference between Rahman and Maarif lies in the aspect of accentuating the ethical values of the Quran. If Rahman deals more with discursive areas,⁴⁹ Maarif is more practical in

⁴⁶ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), 5–10.

⁴⁷ Ma'arif, *Islam dan Pancasila*, 6.

⁴⁸ Beck "An Introduction to Ma'arif, *Islam, Humanity*, 15.

⁴⁹ Esack criticizes Rahman by stating that Rahman is not appreciative of the complexity of the hermeneutic task and the intellectual pluralism that is intrinsic in it. Rahman overemphasizes the criteria for cognition and ignores the relationship between cognition and praxis. When Rahman, for example, claims the basic moral elan of the Qur'an —awareness of God, and social justice— Rahman forgets the structural causes of this injustice, where it comes from, and where it originates. As Moosa's critique, Rahman does not try to capture the aesthetics of the whole but instead is immersed in historical cognition that

expressing the ethical values of the Quran towards social activism.⁵⁰ For instance, his engagements in social activities, being the President of Muhammadiyah and founding the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) like MAARIF Institute attests that Maarif has stepped into the practical domain. Maarif becomes a central figure who employs extensively some of the ethical terms of the Quran to actively campaign for the urgency of interfaith dialogue and often raises his voice to stand for minority groups.⁵¹ Maarif has also tried to construe the ethical principles of the Quran into practical aspects as a solution to injustice, corruption, exploitation and greedy, religious discrimination, and religious extremism in Indonesia.⁵²

Methodologically, Maarif in developing his thought attaches at least three main principles. These principles are the basis of the Quranic epistemology employed by Maarif in interpreting the Quranic verses and simultaneously responding to socio-political phenomena.

First, Maarif employs history as a starting point in understanding and producing thoughts. This affirms him as a historian who consistently looks at the critical aspects for historical content, both heroic and antagonistic.⁵³ In order to reconstruct the past, Maarif augments, one requires theoretically two pillars that cannot be separated from one another, namely critical logic and knowledge. By the critical logic, historians would be able to intelligently and critically refine and separate clearly amongst facts, myths or legends. Meanwhile, broad knowledge can support

focuses on moral values. This flaw was later refined by Farid Esack and Ahmad Syafii Maarif through their ideas of praxism. Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation, and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1997), 67–68.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 36.

⁵¹ Hilman Latief and Haedar Nashir, "Local Dynamics and Global Engagements of the Islamic Modernist Movement in Contemporary Indonesia: The Case of Muhammadiyah (2000-2020)," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 39, no. 2 (2020): 296–297.

⁵² Burhani, "Transmission of Islamic Reform," 36.

⁵³ Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif, "Islam and the Challenge of Managing Globalisation: The Case of Islam in Southeast Asia," *Millah* 2, no. 1 (2002): 73.

historians to reconstruct and arrange historical facts in a more systematic and logical way.⁵⁴

As a historian enthusiast, Maarif frequently reflects the situation and conditions of the community development with this disciplinary approach. Maarif assumes that history is a guide for the people who will come later. History records the growth, development, progress, and the decline of civilization.⁵⁵ There are two important things that could be learned from the historical paradigm; first, some matters in the past would substantially recur in the future. History thus is like a laboratory of wisdom where the guidelines for life can be extracted. Second, the future is essentially a consequence of the past and the present. That's why historical perspective plays a significant role.⁵⁶

Maarif understands well that history could be extracted for shaping Muslim traditions. Since history is essentially fundamental for the practice of religious communities, ultimately there are various doctrines and guidance of religion that have been generated by history. That's why history plays a significant role in constructing culture and even Muslim civilization. In fact, a religious community does not hesitate to reject new religious teachings and practices if they contradict historical knowledge. While in many cases, history may consist of mystification that glorifies or even legitimates a status quo and vested interest. Mystification typically causes history to be anti-critics and immune to corrective argumentation. The tendency to set up history being sacred leads to a fundamental problem in studying history.⁵⁷ So Maarif proposes an objectively and fairly reading towards history. To do so, one should apply a process of 'demystification', namely a concept that strips the history from mystical fantasy and political libido.

To connect with historical criticism, Maarif gives an example of comprehension in the context of Islam politics in term of Islamic Caliphate (*Khilafah Islamiyyah*). Some Muslims today who are

⁵⁴ Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Tuhan Menyapa Kita* (Jakarta: Grafindo, 2006), 88.

⁵⁵ Ma'arif, *Peta Bumi Intelektualisme*, 66.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ma'arif, *Tuhan Menyapa Kita*, 88.

struggling for the political system of the Caliphate have read the history of the Caliphate with partial and arbitrary approaches. Those who fight for the Caliphate perceive that the Caliphate system is an ideal order in the succession of the leadership of the Ummah in the Islamic tradition. They consider that the various achievements of the golden age of Muslims are the services of the Caliphate system. The Caliphate system is perfectly ideal order and without any flaws, even sacred to be criticized. This tendency has encouraged them to strive desperately in various ways for the sake of upholding the caliphate. They completely believe that reviving the Caliphate order in the modern era is the only way to against Western civilization.⁵⁸

This view is obviously reductionism for the fact of the Caliphate in history. Maarif argues that after the era of the four guided Caliphs (*al-Khulafa' al-Rashidūn*), the Islamic Caliphate completely deviated from the ideals of political Islam characterized by egalitarianism. The Islamic Caliphate was nothing more than a wreck of civilization (*rongoskan peradaban*), and it was merely a system of totalitarian rule shrouded by religion. The Caliphate system which adopts an absolute monarchy would only bring tyrannical (despotism) and authoritarian rules that directly will inhibit freedom and justice. Creative ideas automatically will be lost as the authorities emphasize uniformity of views and reject all forms of the plurality of interpretations. All of the creation, notion, and teachings must be in line with the preference of the authorities. Therefore, Islam and Islamism (Islamic Caliphate) must be split up, because what often emerges from the history of Islamic politics are antithetical to the spirit of Islam. The Islamic Caliphate thus can be discussed, criticized, and declined if it contradicts human rights, freedom, justice, and democracy.⁵⁹

Maarif states that although the Quran is theologically and sociologically an ethical guide for mankind, the Quran is not a political book.⁶⁰ The Quran, either explicitly or implicitly, does not

⁵⁸ Ibid., 90.

⁵⁹ Ma'arif, *Al-Qur'an*, 55–56.

⁶⁰ Ma'arif, *Islam dan Pancasila*, 21.

provide an exact theoretical pattern, system, or signal regarding the form of Islamic political order.⁶¹ This is perhaps what often leads perplexity to some Muslims, whether to implement a democratic system or imitate the Islamic imperial system of the past.⁶² Besides, there is a different milieu of each period indicating that socio-political institutions and human organizations are constantly changing. This means that the absence of the Quran giving a political form of Islamic governance provides justification and guarantees that the Quran allows leeway to humans to take advantage of their intellect to observe and implement an appropriate system.⁶³ The Quran, Maarif notes, simply poses as a theological lens that provides specific criteria for the moral ethics of the socio-political circumstances. Islam only emphasizes the importance of implementing moral-ethical values in the nation's life. This way guides us to simply grasp that human values are integral to the principles of justice, equality, and freedom, all of which occupy a central position in the moral teachings of the Quran.⁶⁴

Second, Maarif personates the Quran as a theological lens, a guide and moral system that has a wide range of meanings and can be drawn as basic life guidance. As a moral principle, the Quran is not elitist and ambiguous, or a book that literally contains *ratio legis*. Instead, the Quran is more of a moral source for humans to perform justice and goodness.⁶⁵ At this step, the model of the Maarif's Quranic epistemology holds a key to succeed in the interpretation.

The Quran as a theological lens engages two main aspects, namely the Quran as a source of justice and the Quran as a source of the spirit of moral ethics. The Quran as a source of justice means that the Quran provides a source of inspiration, formulation, and

⁶¹ Wahdini, "Paradigma Simbiotik Agama," 17.

⁶² Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, "Hubungan Agama dan Negara dalam Konteks Ketahanan Nasional (Tinjauan Konseptual)," *Jurnal Ketahanan Nasional* 7, no. 2 (2002): 10.

⁶³ Ma'arif, *Islam dan Pancasila*, 21–22.

⁶⁴ Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, "Agama dan Pembangunan: Corak Masyarakat Islam Masa Depan," *Ullumul Qur'an* 3, no. 1 (1992): 100–101.

⁶⁵ Ma'arif, *Al-Qur'an*, 12–12.

methodology in realizing justice, for example, the principle of economic justice in QS al-Hasyr [59]: 7, legal justice in QS An-Nisa [4]: 58, 135; al-Maidah [5]: 8, gender justice in QS al-Hujurat [49]: 13, and so on. While the Quran as a moral source means that the Quran serves a universal value that guides human for a better life, such as QS al-Maidah [5]: 13, al-Ahzab [33]: 119.

These two aspects are actually a unity that cannot be divorced. As the concept of *tawhid* (oneness) cannot be excluded from the principle of justice. For instance, these theological lens are practically reflected in the *Pancasila* (the Five Principles of Indonesia), whereby acknowledging the 'Belief in the one and only God' (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*) at the first stage (read: the highest), the 'Social Justice' (*Keadilan Sosial*) must be realized and contextualized into real life.⁶⁶ Therefore, through these two fundamental aspects, the Quran becomes the commander in chief who regulates and guides humans for a better life.

Third, when interpreting the Quran there is definitely a huge gap between the ideal and the reality, text and context. Hence, interpreting the Quranic verses requires a contextualization process, namely an effort to transform the principles, methodologies, and formulations of the Quran into a systematic, comprehensive, contextual, and practical. In the contextualization process, Maarif applies some of the Quranic ethical terms in his discussion on national life, humanitarian problems, and Islamic issues. Ahmad Najib Burhani mentions some of them are, *al-mutrafiūn* (those who live luxuriously), *al-takāthur* (rivalry in accruing worldly things), *sidq* (honesty, truthfulness), *kidhb* (lying), *tawhīd* (monotheism or oneness of God); *shirk* (polytheism); *ma'rūfāt* and *munkarāt* (good and evil), *al-fasād* (evil-doing), and *al-mā'iin* (kindnesses).⁶⁷ Maarif also uses these terms to criticize any political deviations that are often carried out by the government and some politicians in Indonesia. Through these key terms, Maarif constructs his thought on the need to come together

⁶⁶ Muhammad Iqbal Rahman, "Identitas Sosial dalam Konsep Multi-Identitas di Indonesia Perspektif Ahmad Syafii Maarif," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 3, no. 1 (2020): 7.

⁶⁷ Burhani, "Transmission of Islamic Reform," 37.

amongst Islam, humanity, and the Indonesian identity in one single frame.

The contextualization process carried out by Maarif, for example, can be seen in his endeavor when reinterpreting the role of women in the public sphere. Maarif considers that the context of Arab women, both the present and the Quranic period, has typical space and its own dynamics, which are definitely different from women in Indonesia so that this context influences the process of interpreting the Quran.⁶⁸ Maarif acknowledges that women have the same rights to become public leaders, even a leader of state owing to its equality as stated by the QS an-Nahl [16]: 97; al-Hujurat [49]: 13. Either women or men should equally possess the morality, integrity, and intellectuality if they are eager to be a leader.⁶⁹

Furthermore, Maarif's concern the most for human values (humanism), such as justice, welfare, and freedom, indicates his consistency in the contextualization process. Maarif reflects that the emergence of injustice is partly caused by some people who have a greedy as well as exploitative mentality (*al-takāthur*) and depend heavily on luxurious lifestyles (*al-mutrafun*). This reality is often practically backed up by a bad system of government (*al-munkar*) and full of fraudulent political practices (*kidhb*). Even, these practices sometimes are deliberately covered up by religious elements in order to camouflage the various pragmatic interests in social, economic, and politics. Maarif conclusively regards that the universal meaning of the Quran (world-view) must be able to "subdue" the pragmatic interests.⁷⁰ The Quran must be read, understood, and practiced with a peaceful, pure heart and full of love, namely the quality of '*aqlun sāhīh wa qalbun salīm* (sound

⁶⁸ Muhammad Alwi, "Intrepretasi Kontekstual Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif Atas Peran Perempuan di Ruang Publik dalam QS. An-Nisa: 34," *Musāwa Jurnal Studi Gender dan Islam* 18, no. 2 (July 30, 2019): 105.

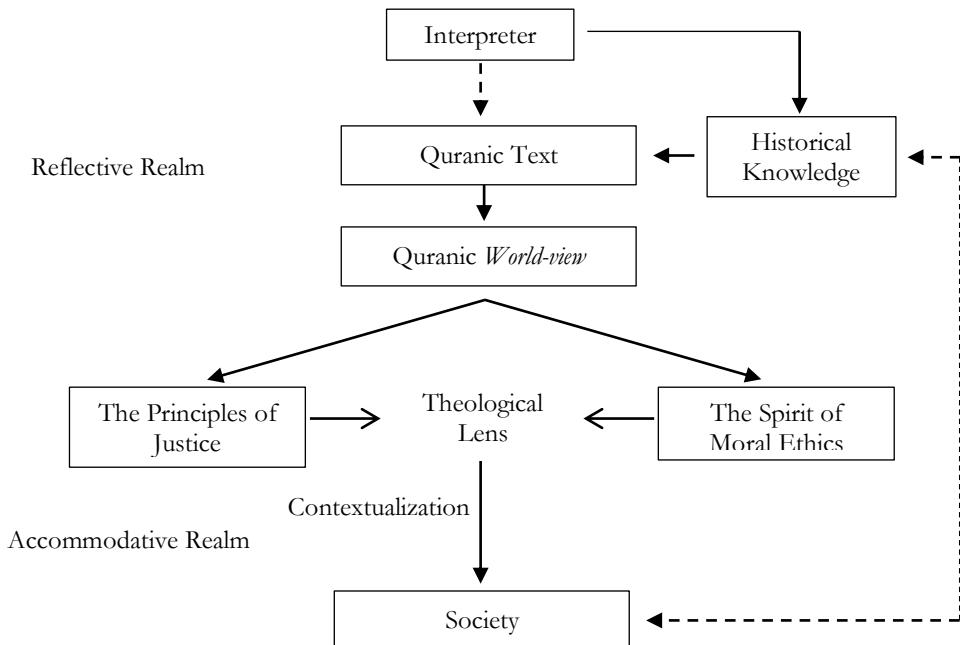
⁶⁹ Fatmawati and Latifah Anwar, "Pemikiran Ahmad Syafii Maarif terhadap Kedudukan Perempuan dalam Politik," *Al-Muaddib: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial dan Keislaman* 5, no. 2 (2020): 191.

⁷⁰ Suhaimi and Raudhonah, "Moderate Islam in Indonesia: Islamic Da'wah Activities of Ahmad Syafii Maarif," *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies* 14, no. 1 (2020): 102.

mind and sincere heart) then step into the world of reality to make changes.⁷¹

The Maarif's Quranic epistemology in interpreting the Quran can be diagrammatically illustrated below;

Figure 1. Quranic Epistemology of Maarif



Principally, the ideas constructed by Maarif in interpreting the Quran constantly depart from historical realities. His seriousness in reflecting on history has made the epistemological basis for understanding the principles of moral ethics of the Quran. This confirms the significance of Maarif's commitment to the attempt to dismantle the relation of text and culture in the reach for implied meaning. Through its reflective-accommodative approach, Maarif attempts to offer a liberalization process in which Muslims must have an adaptive view on the progress of the era without abandoning a critical attitude towards some negative aspects of the modernization process itself. In short, Maarif yearns for the

⁷¹ Ma'arif, *Al-Qur'an*, 7.

Islamic teaching that remains grounded in the text but must be sensitive to the context. An Islamic perspective that can apply objectivity and honesty within interpreting history. So that the Muslim community does not worship 'a history' that sporadically offers a weathered framework.⁷² Mun'im Sirry notes that Maarif at this stage has tried to develop a 'creative reading' to explore the implicit meaning of the Quran which was revealed in the structure and culture of a certain period in human history.⁷³

Maarif propitiously strives to construct the Quranic world-view to yield objective values that can be implemented in the real life.⁷⁴ This idea affirms that Maarif has repeatedly aspires to an ideal Islam based on the principle that an Islamic society is purely illuminated by the principles of justice and the spirit of the moral ethics of the Quran. It is the model of Islam that represents a total view of the Islamic world based on a pure and authentic interpretation of the Quran.⁷⁵ Mun'im Sirry praises Maarif's ability in building solid argumentation and methodology in framing ideas developed with a commitment that is consistently Quranic oriented, making Maarif's ideas widely accepted and not (too) controversial.⁷⁶ Ahmad Najib Burhani also refers that the ability to connect historical knowledge and the Quran with contemporary social science and tries to connect them with real problems in society leads Maarif's ideas extensively approved by the Indonesian people.⁷⁷

Conclusion

History has recorded how Ahmad Syafii Maarif embarks on his intellectual career. He now appears to be the most pluralist figure with his reflective-accommodative thought to combine and converge Islam, humanity, and the Indonesian Identity into one mutually reinforcing value. Through the reflective-accommodative approach, Maarif strives to encourage Muslims to have an

⁷² Ma'arif, *Islam, Kekuatan Doktrin*, 5.

⁷³ Sirry, "Ahmad Syafii Maarif," 53.

⁷⁴ Ma'arif, *Islam dan Pancasila*, 5.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 273.

⁷⁶ Sirry, "Ahmad Syafii Maarif," 73.

⁷⁷ Burhani, "Transmission of Islamic Reform," 36.

inclusive and adaptive attitude simultaneously and well equipped with the character of progressivity. Even though Maarif heavily emphasizes the practical application, not the theory, the Quranic epistemology of Maarif at least can be traced from three stages. First, employing historical knowledge as the basis of interpretation, second, personating the Quranic world-view as a theological lens, and third, contextualizing the Qur'an. Ultimately, Maarif has not only contributed to the construction of peace and justice in Indonesia but also developing a more contextual and inclusive approach to the Quran.

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