

CONTRIBUTIONS OF MAHMUD YUNUS TO THE INTERPRETATION OF THE *QURAN*: A STUDY OF *TAFSIR QUR'AN KARIM*

Khadher Ahmad & Khairuddin Mawardi

Abstract

Mahmud Yunus was a scholar in the field of *Quranic* translation. His book, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, was a simple translation reference book first written in the modern Malay era and is widely used until today. This article is meant to highlight his ability against his background and his effort in writing the book. His simple yet robust approach with translation notes and explanations in the footnotes, made his approach different from others. However, he still practiced the same translation methods as that of other translation scholars. Analysis shows that Mahmud Yunus applied eight methods in his translation works: translation from one *Quranic* verse to another, translation of *Quranic* verses against supporting *Hadith*, translation of *Quranic* verses based on opinions of the companions of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), translation of *Quranic* verses based on the opinion of *tabi'in*, translation of *Quranic* verses based on logical thinking, translation of *Quranic* verses based on their meaning, presentation of proverbial sayings, and interpretation through stories.

Keywords: Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, interpretation, Malay Archipelago, Nusantara.



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**Khadher Ahmad,
PhD**

Department of al-Quran
and al-Hadith,
Academy of Islamic
Studies,
University of Malaya,
Kuala Lumpur,
MALAYSIA.

khadher82@um.edu.my

Khairuddin Marardi

Department of al-Quran
and al-Hadith,
Academy of Islamic
Studies,
University of Malaya,
Kuala Lumpur,
MALAYSIA.

Introduction

Islamic scholars play a significantly important role in human capital development. Early scholars in the Malay Archipelago contributed their energy and knowledge towards the development of human capital. Knowledge writings had been the mainstream in spreading knowledge among the early scholars to the communities through teachings and learning.

Mahmud Yunus was one of the famous scholars in the Archipelago who used the writing method in his effort to contribute to the community. *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* is one of his writings that provide a simple and easy way to understand translation for the benefit of the community. At a glance, the book does not look any different from other translation works of the *Quran* but a closer look at it shows that it contains interpretations of *Quranic* verses with simple yet interesting explanations presented by the writer.

This article is written in recognition of the credibility of Mahmud Yunus in the writing of his book entitled *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*. This article will present his biography, his background, academic background, teachings, his involvement in social work as well as his many contributions to the community. The following is an account and discussion of the book *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, and its background and methodology of interpretation as well as the difference between this particular book and other similar books.

Scope and Methodology

The main scope of this article is to reveal the stature and authority figure named Mahmud Yunus through his books entitled *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*. This article will briefly highlight his profile and other related background information to show his credibility as a great Muslim scholar. The focus is to recommend the book as a reference, and proof of Mahmud Yunus as a credible scholar among *Quranic* interpretation scholars in the Archipelago.

This article uses the deductive analytical method to analyse the data and information collected. Using this method, from the general and limited data, the analysis will be detailed with comprehensive explanations. Apart from the comparative methodology, this article also uses the interpretation made by scholars in comparison with the *Quranic* interpretation of Mahmud Yunus to determine if his method contradicts the works of other *Quranic* interpretation scholars.

Tafsir Qur'an Karim

Tafsir Qur'an Karim is a simple book on the interpretation of *Quranic* verses written in *rumi* (Romanised Malay). However, it looks more like a translation of the *Quran*. After a closer look, one will realize that it is actually a simple yet comprehensive interpretation of the *Quran* written by Mahmud Yunus.

In reviewing this book by Mahmud Yunus, it is found that he began his effort in writing the interpretation of the *Quran* in the Indonesian language in November 1922.¹ However, his early approach was to write for magazines and newspapers. Since then, he started to publish his work periodically in *rumi*. His first magazine was *Majalah Tafsir Qur'an*.

The earliest attempt of Mahmud Yunus in writing the book *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* was in November 1922. It began with his effort to write a translation of the *Quran*.² It resulted in a series of writings in magazines and newspapers for the public. Thus, this book was published in a series in Jawi in the Indonesian language.

¹ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* (Selangor, Malaysia : Klang Book Centre, 1998), III.

² Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*.

He stopped writing for 11 years after going to Egypt in 1924 to pursue his studies. He returned to Indonesia in December 1936 and continued his writing. In the early stages, he wrote the translation of the *Quran* in sections and in a series. For the first until the third section, he wrote by himself, while the fourth section was written by H. Ilyas Muhammad Ali under his guidance and supervision. After returning from Egypt, he started to write the fifth section. In this fifth section, he tried to implement some changes by adding an interpretation of certain *Quranic* verses together with the supporting conclusion instead of focusing on only translation.³ H.M.K Bakry contributed to sections seven to eighteen. Overall, this book was written by three interpreters, namely, H. Mahmud Yunus, H. Ilyas Mohamad Ali and H.M.K Bakry.⁴

Thus, for the first time in history, a book on the translation and interpretation of the *Quran* was finally completed in April 1938, and was published for the first time on 21 Rabi'ul Awal 1357H (May 21, 1938).⁵

The Writer's Background

Mahmud Yunus was born in a village in Sungayang, Batusangkar, Western Sumatra, on Saturday, February 10, 1899 (30 Ramadhan 1361H).⁶ He came from a modest family. However, his father, who was a farmer, was also a knowledgeable Islamic scholar in his village. His father's name was Yunus bin Incek, from the Maidailing clan. His mother was Hafsa binti M Thahir from the Chaniago clan. On the side of his mother's ancestry was a very knowledgeable Islamic scholar in Sungayang, Batusangkar, by the name of Muhammad Ali, or famously known as Tuangku Kolok.⁷

He acquired his Islamic knowledge from an early age as he had a keen interest in Islamic teachings. He studied recitation of the *Quran* at the age of seven under the

³ Khairuddin Mawardi, "Metodologi pentafsiran Mahmud Yunus dalam *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*", (M.A. diss., University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 2008) 83.

⁴ Khairuddin, "Metodologi pentafsiran Mahmud Yunus."

⁵ Khairuddin, "Metodologi pentafsiran Mahmud Yunus," 84.

⁶ Team Penulis IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, *Ensiklopedi Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1992), 592; Shalahuddin Hamid, *et al., Seratus Tokoh Yang Paling Berpengaruh di Indonesia* (Jakarta: P.T. Intimedia Cipta Nusantara, 2003), 3891.

⁷ Mestika, *et al., Riwayat Hidup Ulama Sumatera Barat dan Perjuangannya* (Padang: Angkasa Raya, 2001), 146; Arpandi bin Ismail, "Tafsir al-Qur'an di Sumatera, Indonesia: Kajian Terhadap Metodologi Kitab Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Karim oleh Abdul Halim Hassan, Zainal Arifin Abbas dan Abdul Rahim Haitami" (PhD diss., University of Malaya, 2008), 103-104.

supervision of his grandfather, M. Thahir (Engki Gadang). He looked for another teacher after his grandfather passed away. In 1908, Mahmud Yunus entered the Sekolah Rakyat and he studied there for three years. However, he became bored in his fourth year as he felt that the syllabus was a repetition of lessons from the previous year. He decided to shift to a *madrasah*, known as the *Madras School*, in Surau Tanjung Pauh, which was established on November 4, 1910. H. Muhammad Thaib, the *Madras School* headmaster, was a modern Islamic scholar in Minangkabau.⁸

In 1913, the Madras School was closed due to insufficient allocation of fund to accommodate the increasing number of students. Mahmud Yunus was already a teacher in that school. In 1918, he strived to reopen the school, and he was successful. In 1923, the *Madras School* changed its name to *Diniyah School*. In 1931, the name of the school was changed again to *al-Jami'ah Islamiyah*.⁹

Mahmud Yunus had been active since his schooldays. In the Madras School, he was appointed to represent H. Muhammad Thaib Umar, the school headmaster, to attend a gathering of all the high ranking Islamic scholars from all over Minangkabau in 1919, and was appointed as a member of the Islamic Teachers' Association (*Persatuan Guru-Guru Agama Islam*, PGAI). He was also active in writing as he was involved in the publication of the Islam *al-Basyir* magazine.

In March 1923, Mahmud Yunus performed pilgrimage via Penang, Malaya. After the pilgrimage, he went to Egypt to pursue his passion in Islamic studies. He began his studies at the al-Azhar in 1924, and in Darul Ulum Ulya in Kaherah until 1930.¹⁰ In al-Azhar, Mahmud Yunus studied *usul fiqh*, *Quranic* interpretation, the Hanafi *fiqh*, and others. Mahmud Yunus was a very bright student, and it only took him a year to finish his degree and obtain *Syahadah Alimiyah'* from al-Azhar, making him the second Indonesian to receive this qualification.¹¹

⁸ Republika, <http://www.Republika.co.id/>, October 1, 2004.

⁹ Mahmud Yunus, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: P.T. Hidakarya Agung, 1996), 66.

¹⁰ Shalahuddin Hamid, *et al.*, *Seratus Tokoh*, 389-340.

¹¹ Republika; Personal blog, <http://luluvikar.wordpress.com/2005/08/23/biografi-mahmud-yunus/>, June 27, 2008.

H.M Thaib Umar played a significant role in the way of thinking of Mahmud Yunus.¹² He was a teacher to Mahmud Yunus and also a great contributor to bring about significant changes to Islamic teachings in Minangkabau together with the other teachers, locally and internationally.

Being a distinguished leader and politician, Mahmud Yunus was very active along with the other politicians and leaders in the struggle for the independence of the Republic of Indonesia. In 1943, he was appointed as the Resident Advisor representing the Islamic High Council, and, in the same year, he joined Chu Sang Kai, who was also a Resident Advisor.¹³

Mahmud Yunus was also known as a proactive writer. According to Shalahuddin Hamid and Iskandar Ahza in their book, *Seratos Tokoh Islam Paling Berpengaruh di Indonesia*, it was mentioned that Mahmud Yunus had written at least 49 Islamic books in the Indonesian language and 26 Islamic books in Arabic.¹⁴ Some of which were not published in *jawi*. His masterpiece *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* was acknowledged by scholars, such as Muhammad Nur Lubis,¹⁵ as the first comprehensive interpretation of the 30 sections of the *Quran*. According to Muhammad Nur Lubis, the writings of Mahmud Yunus included various fields of Islamic studies, such as *tafsir*, Arabic language, *fiqh* and *usul*

¹² H.M. Thaib Umar was born on 8 Shawwal 1291H, i.e. in 1847, at Sungayang Batusangkar. From the age of seven, he learned the *Quran* from his father Umar Abd. Kadir for about six months. Then he moved to his grandfather's *surau* (place of prayer) H. M. Yusuf (Engku Labai). In 1300 AH, he studied the *Quran* with H. Muhd. Yasin at Surau Tengah Sawah, Sungayang until he finished the whole *Quran*. He also managed to finish his education by studying the scriptures (*kitab*) at places such as Surau Talao Padang Ganting, Batusangkar, the mosque belonging to Syeikh H. Abd. Mannan, which was popular for studying *fiqh*, and at Padang Kandis, Suliki, one of the prayer houses that belonged to Syeikh M. Salih (father of Syeikh Abd. Wahid Tabat Gadang). After finishing his studies at Minangkabau, he went to Mecca for future studies and spent not less than five years. In Mecca, he studied theology and the Arabic language from Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Minangkabau and other scholars. After returning to Sungayang, he opened a *pondok* for studying the scriptures (*kitab*), starting from his father's *surau* (prayer house) at Batu Bayang. Then, he built his own *surau* at Tanjung Pauh Sungayang. Many students come to his *surau* from several states across the Minangkabau for studies. After three years of suffering from a disease, he died on the afternoon of Wednesday, 6 Zulkaidah 1338H (July 22, 1920) at the age of 47 years. He made a huge contribution to the world of education, both the world of journalism as well as classical. See: Shalahuddin Hamid, *et al.*, *Seratus Tokoh*, 428-429; Khairuddin, "Metodologi Pentafsiran Mahmud Yunus," 68.

¹³ Khairuddin, "Metodologi Pentafsiran Mahmud Yunus," 69.

¹⁴ Shalahuddin Hamid, *et al.*, *Seratus Tokoh*, 392.

¹⁵ Muhammad Nur Lubis, *Data-Data Terbitan Awal Penterjemahan dan Pentafsiran al-Qur'an* (Kuala Lumpur: al-Hidayah Publisher, 2001), 21.

fiqh, akidah, and, lastly, education. However, his most famous work was *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*.

During his lifetime, he was involved in promoting Islamic studies in the government schools. In 1945, he was appointed as a Religious Examiner by the West Sumatra Resident. The appointment led to the inclusion of Islamic studies in the government public school education system. When Indonesia gained its independence, he was still holding the same position and he made full use of the opportunity to make Islamic Studies official, and ensure that the teachers in this area enjoyed the same salary scale as the other teachers in the public schools. His efforts were successful and received the full recognition of the Indonesian ruler as well as the Ministry of Religion.

On January 1, 1951, he was appointed as the Head of Relations for Islamic Education in Jakarta by KH Abdul Wahid Hasyim, who was the Minister of Religion. After Pengajian Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (PTAIN) was established in Yogyakarta, Mahmud Yunus was invited to become a lecturer but he declined the offer because he wanted to concentrate on his work to centralise higher education in Jakarta. He tried to bring PTAIN to Jakarta, but failed.¹⁶

In 1970, the health of Mahmud Yunus began to deteriorate and he started to receive treatment in hospital. However, he managed to survive and contribute further to the community and spread knowledge until he passed away on January 16, 1983 at his residence, Kelurahan Kebon Kosong Jakarta Pusat, at the age of 84. He was buried the following day in IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta.¹⁷

Research Findings: Interpretation Methodology in *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*

This study found that Mahmud Yunus had his own technique and approach to interpreting the verses in the *Quran*. He applied the methods used by other scholars in his interpretations. This meant that he was not just interpreting the verses of *Quran* based on his own understanding and knowledge but also according to the *manhaj* of

¹⁶ Khairuddin, "Metodologi Pentafsiran Mahmud Yunus," 71-72.

¹⁷ Khairuddin, "Metodologi Pentafsiran Mahmud Yunus," 77.

interpretation scholars. Thus, it appears that Mahmud Yunus had also applied eight other interpretation methodologies to interpret the verses of the *Quran* in *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*.

[First]: Interpreting the verses of *Quran* using other verses of *Quran* (*al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an*). For example, when he was interpreting 2:228 which explains about a woman who was *talaq* (divorced) by her husband.¹⁸

Meaning: *Divorced women remain in waiting for three periods, and it is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs if they believe in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have more right to take them back in this [period] if they want reconciliation. And due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.*

When interpreting the above verse, it mentioned that the 'iddah' of a women whose husband had died was four months and ten days by mentioning verse 2:234 in which Allah says:

Meaning: *And those who are taken in death among you and leave their wives behind – they, [the wives, shall wait four months and ten days]. And, when they have fulfilled their term, then there is no blame upon you for what they do with themselves in an acceptable manner. And Allah is [fully] acquainted with what you do.*

[Second]: Interpreting the verse of the *Quran* with *al-Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). An example of this method was when he was interpreting and explaining 9:17-18 where Allah says:¹⁹

Meaning: *It is not for the polytheists to maintain the mosques of Allah [while] witnessing against themselves with disbelieve. [For] those, their deeds have become worthless, and in the Fire they will abide eternally. The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakah and do not fear anyone except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided.*

¹⁸ Khairuddin, "Metodologi Pentafsiran Mahmud Yunus," 49-50.

¹⁹ Khairuddin, "Metodologi Pentafsiran Mahmud Yunus," 263.

Mahmud Yunus mentioned that non-Muslims should not and have no right to prosper the mosques of Allah, and even if they do, their effort would be meaningless and unrewarded in the eyes of Allah. The same goes to those who prospering the mosque by thinking of luck and worldly reward and not because of Allah, their effort will also be meaningless and unrewarded. What is meant by prospering the mosque is praying in the mosque, repairing the mosque, cleaning the mosque, and all sorts of action related directly to the mosque. Similarly performing pilgrimage to Masjid al-Haram (during *haji* or *'umrah*) in Mecca. He then brought a supporting proof by the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), which means: "*Whoever built the mosque in the name of Allah SWT, Allah will build the same for him in heaven.*"²⁰

[Third]: Interpreting the verse of the *Quran* based on the opinion of the companions. This approach can be seen in verse 4:71 in which Allah says:²¹

Meaning: *The believer, be prepared and alert (before you face the enemy), and (when required) step forward (to the battlefield) clan by clan, or (when required) move forward all of you.*

While explaining this matter, Mahmud Yunus brought one of the companions from Abu Bakr al-Siddiq who said: "*...Fight your enemy with the similar weapon as has been used by the opponent to fight against you, sword with sword, spear with spear.*"

[Fourth]: Interpret the verse of *Quran* according to the opinions of the *tabi'in*. The application of this method can be referred to 7:32-33 when Allah says:²²

Meaning: *Say, 'Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision.' Say, 'They are for those who believe during the worldly life [but] exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection.' This We detail the verses for a people who know?' Say, 'My Lord has only forbidden immoralities – what is apparent of them and what is concealed – and sin, and oppression without right, and that you*

²⁰ *Hadith* narrated by Muslim [Bab *Kitab al-Masajid wa Mawadi' al-Salah*, Bab *Fadl Bina' al-Masjid wa Hathth 'alayha*, *Hadith* No. 829]. Muslim bin al-Hajjaj Abu Husain al-Qusyairi al-Naisaburi, *Sahih Muslim* Vol. 3, ed. Ahmad Muhammad Syakir (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1987), 130.

²¹ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, 121.

²² Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, 213.

associate with Allah and that for which He has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allah that which you do not know.'

In his explanation, Mahmud Yunus brought the opinion of Yahya bin Jabir. Yahya bin Jabir said: "*It is presented upon me, that somewhat is evil, forbidden by Allah in his Kitab, is to marry a man and a woman, the man declined her after she gave birth without a good reason.*"²³

[Fifth]: To interpret the verses in the *Quran* using logical thinking. Apart from using the interpretation method, Mahmud Yunus also gave his own opinion in his interpretation. This is proven in his interpretation of 8:17, in which Allah says:²⁴

Meaning: And you did not kill them, but it was Allah who killed them. And you threw not, [O Muhammad], when you threw, but it was Allah who threw that He might test the believers with a good test. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

After mentioning the help from Allah in the Battle of Badar that was fought by 300 Muslims against 1,000 enemy soldiers, as has been explained by Allah in this particular verse, Mahmud Yunus presented his opinion on this verse in his writings in 1945-1950. Mahmud Yunus mentioned that Muslims should not to be proud with the victory, stating that they have done a great deed by killing so many enemies, and so forth. However, he strongly believed that it was all with the help of Allah. On this matter, he wrote:

In this verse, there is a lesson for all of us, when we achieved victory in a battle, especially when we were outnumbered, we were not equipped with great weapons whereas our enemy did as what has happened in the Battle of Badar, we must not for any particular reason boast about our victory by saying we have done a great deed and killed so many enemies. But be reminded that it was all with the help of Allah, because it was He who had made us brave and made the enemy scared.²⁵

²³ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*.

²⁴ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, 248.

²⁵ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*.

[Sixth]: Interpretation of the meaning of the wording. Mahmud Yunus interpreted the verse of the *Quran* by explaining the difficulty of the words that are not easy to understand. For example, the word *qulub* in verse 18:57 where Allah says:²⁶

Meaning: *Those whom they invoke seek means of access to their Lord. [Striving as to] which of them would be nearest, and they hope for His mercy and fear His punishment. Indeed, the punishment of your Lord is ever feared.*

Mahmud Yunus explained that:

Qulub is the plural of the word *qalb*. *Qalb* is singular and *qulub* is plural, like heart, soul, knowledge, the understanding, and ability of common sense. We shall use the word accordingly in any appropriate sentence when explaining the verses of the *Quran*.

[Seventh]: Presenting sayings on the interpretation of verses of the *Quran*. Mahmud Yunus presented suitable sayings in his interpretation, which was a popular trend within the local Malay environment. For example in 42:23, Allah says:²⁷

Meaning: *It is that of which Allah gives tidings to His servants who believe and do righteous deeds. Say, [O Muhammad], 'I do not ask you for this message any payment [but] only good through kinship.' And whoever commits a good deed – We will increase for him good therein. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Appreciative.*

From this verse, he mentioned that Islam emphasizes that every human should love each other, not talk bad about others or insult each other. Muslims are encouraged to cherish and preserve their relationship. That is why he said, that we like to see the fault of each other to make sure it can be rectified. One of the sayings, says, “*We are not able to see the big elephant right in front of our eyes, but however we are able to see the far away germs across the ocean.*”²⁸

[Eight]: Interpretation based on the history of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) (*Qasas al-Anbiya*) and the stories of people before us. This approach can be seen in the interpretation of 7:73-79. He presented the stories of Prophet Salih, and how Muslims are encouraged to cherish and preserve the relationship among themselves. Therefore, he

²⁶ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, 428.

²⁷ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, 716-717

²⁸ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*.

mentioned that we are likely to see the faults of others rather than our own faults. He said this similar to the “Stories of Salih” who was sent to the Thamud.²⁹ Similarly, in 7:80-84, was a short summary of the “Stories of Luth,” which refer to Prophet Luth who was sent to his people.³⁰ While in 7:85, he mentioned Prophet Syu’aib in a short recap of the “Stories of Syu’aib.”³¹ In 18:60-82, he mentioned about the “Stories of Musa and Khidir”.³²

Proof of the Status and Credibility of Mahmud Yunus with the book *Tafsir Qur’an Karim*

Based on the descriptions and explanations highlighting the credibility and ability of Mahmud Yunus in the field of interpretation of the *Quran*, the authors are able to conclude that the credibility of Mahmud Yunus in the interpretation of the *Quran* is shown through his works or books.

First: His ability to interpret selected verses of the *Quran*. Mahmud Yunus was an interesting figure who had the ability and knowledge to interpret verses in the *Quran*. In this book, he did not interpret the *Quran* verse by verse, but picked any suitable verse based on the relevant value, and which he thought suitable. However, the interpretation was not only about the meanings and translations of the *Quranic* verses, but also all aspects related to the interpretation that require other verses of the *Quran*, *Hadith*, companions as well the opinion of the *tabi’in*. Apart from that, the interpretation also emphasized the meanings and explanations of certain words that relate to other stories and verses. This ability showed that he was a very knowledgeable man.

Second: The application of the *tafsir bi ma’tthur* method in simple interpretation. Even though the interpretation of the *Quran* in this book *Tafsir Qur’an Karim* was done in a simple manner, Mahmud Yunus still applied the method of *Tafsir bi al-Ma’tthur*. This can be proven in that Mahmud Yunus, used several books on *Tafsir bi al-Ma’tthur* like *Tafsir al-Tabari* and *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* as his references. Therefore, this makes this work one of the best interpretations of the *Quran* even though it is just a simple interpretation of the *Quranic* verses.

²⁹ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur’an Karim*, 221.

³⁰ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur’an Karim*, 223.

³¹ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur’an Karim*.

³² Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur’an Karim*, 429-432.

Third: He referred to other *tafsir* books in the interpretation of the *Quran*. Mahmud Yunus included other versions of *Quranic* interpretation when interpreting the verses of the *Quran*. Some of the other *Quranic* interpretations used were *Tafsir al-Tabari*, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, *Tafsir al-Qasimi*, *Tafsir Fajrul Islam*, and *Tafsir Zuhr al-Islam*.³³ This shows that Mahmud Yunus was not interpreting the verses in the *Quran* based on his own opinion and judgement alone, but, in fact, he was referring to other *mu'tabar* interpretations together with his knowledge on the *Quranic* verses. This could only be done with the required knowledge and ability.

Fourth: Simple and accurate explanations. The language in this book is simple yet accurate. The arguments for the interpretations were placed in the footnote section, which make his writing short and precise, thus avoiding the need to write lengthy explanations. The author also made an overall conclusion to a particular interpretation by mentioning the main topic together with the related verses of the *Quran*. This is called "The conclusion of *Qur'an*" and it is a *mawdu'* (topic-based) approach that compiles all the co-related verses of the *Quran* in a particular argument.³⁴

Fifth: Started a new evolution in the *Quranic* interpretation approach with the application of a descriptive footnote system. This is what makes *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* different from other versions of interpretation. All the descriptions and explanations were included in the footnote section, instead of the main page making this book looks more like a translation of the *Quran*.

Sixth: Relating interpretations to stories about the Prophets' and people in the older days. Indirectly, Mahmud Yunus did not just mean for this book to become another version of *Quranic* interpretation but also as a reference to stories about Prophets and people in older days:³⁵

In this book of *Qur'anic* interpretation, there are also the stories of prophets, *rasuls* and people in the older days as had been mentioned in the *Qur'an* without any unnecessary stories of '*ahli kisah*' or *Israiliyyat* so that this piece of *Qur'an* interpretation is pure. What is written in the *Qur'an* is no ordinary story, but it is meant to be taken as lessons from the history of the people

³³ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, VI.

³⁴ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, I.

³⁵ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*, VI-VII.

beforehand." Allah SWT says in 12:111; "*There was certainly in their stories a lesson for those of understanding.*"

Seventh: Conclusion consists of essential interpretation content. Finally, Mahmud Yunus wrote the conclusion of his arguments using related topics of argument in the *Quran*. His approach was to highlight one main topic followed by subtopics together with the reference of the verses in the *Quran*. This is called "The conclusion of the *Qur'an*." This approach enables readers to use this book as a reference. Even this is an interesting approach compared to the lengthy explanations and arguments as in the *mawdu'i* (topic-based) approach.

Conclusion

In concluding about Mahmud Yunus himself, we note that he was indeed a very prestigious and knowledgeable scholar in the field of *tafsir* of the *Quran*. *Tafsir al-Qur'an Karim* is a significant proof that he was able to interpret like any other *tafsir* scholar by applying the *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* method, although it is only a simple interpretation of the *Quran*. In addition, the interpretation of the overall conclusion of the *Quranic* verses is in the form of *mawdu'i* (topic-based). Therefore, this work enables the readers to easily understand the verses of the *Quran* that are interconnected. All the titles were mentioned together with complete references to the verses and pages.

This masterpiece is a good testimony to the credibility of Mahmud Yunus in the field of *tafsir al-Quran*. It is hoped that this work will be an important reference to the interpretations and arguments of the *Quranic* verses for the Malaysian community of Muslim scholars.

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