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## **Early 20th Century Children's Interpretation: Strategies for Interpreting the Qur'an in *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin***

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### **Abstract**

This research focuses on examining the strategy of interpreting the Qur'an for children in the early 20th century in the tafsir *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*. The study of children's interpretation in the early 20th century is often missed. This is because the children's tafsir by KH Ahmad Sanusi (1888-1950) is presented in the interpretation of adult readers in the tafsir *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*. The scarcity of children's tafsir studies in the early 20th century is because the production of tafsir at that time was still considered taboo and rarely studied in various pesantren. Although taught in some pesantren, tafsir material experienced exclusivity of readers. Bruinessen's research shows that tafsir can only be studied at the tsanawi to ulya level. This shows that the understanding of the Qur'an for children to beginner level is very limited. Whereas understanding religion

through the teaching of the Qur'an for children is quite important to instill Islamic education since childhood. Another factor that causes children's interpretations to be quite rare is the limitations of printing technology and graphic design in children's interpretations in the early 20th century. At that time, most attractive graphic designs were only used for advertisements, packaging, and so on so that books or interpretive writings did not use such things. These limitations make early 20th century children's interpretations a unique and rare study. Therefore, this study aims to explore the strategies used by Sanusi in presenting the learning and meaning of the Qur'an for children at that time amid the lack of tafsir production, the exclusivity of children's tafsir readers, and the limitations of printing technology and graphic design for children's tafsir readers. The findings of this study conclude that the strategy used by Sanusi in interpreting the Qur'an for children is by using verbal illustrations, transliteration of the Qur'an, local language adaptation and verse grouping. Comparative approach and content analysis are used to explore the findings.

**Keywords:** 20th century, KH. Ahmad Sanusi, Strategy, Children Tafsir, Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin,

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini fokus mengkaji strategi penafsiran al-Qur'an untuk anak di awal abad 20 dalam tafsir Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin. Kajian tafsir anak di awal abad 20 seringkali terlewat. Ini karena tafsir anak karya KH. Ahmad Sanusi (1888-1950) disajikan dalam tafsir pembaca dewasa dalam tafsir Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin. Kebanyakan tafsir anak yang menjadi objek penelitian selama ini adalah tafsir anak yang terbit abad 21. Langkanya kajian tafsir anak awal abad 20 ini dikarenakan produksi tafsir di masa itu masih dianggap tabu dan jarang dipelajari di berbagai pesantren. Meskipun diajarkan di beberapa pesantren, materi tafsir mengalami eksklusivitas pembaca. Penelitian Bruinessen tafsir hanya boleh dipelajari pada level tsanawi hingga ulya. Ini menunjukkan pemahaman al-Qur'an bagi tingkat anak-anak hingga pemula sangat terbatas. Padahal pemahaman agama melalui pengajaran al-Qur'an bagi anak cukup penting untuk menanamkan pendidikan Islam sejak kecil. Faktor lainnya yang menyebabkan tafsir anak cukup langka adalah keterbatasan teknologi percetakan dan desain grafis pada tafsir anak di awal abad 20. Pada masa itu, kebanyakan desain grafis yang menarik hanya digunakan untuk iklan, kemasan, dan sebagainya sehingga buku atau karya tulis yang bersifat interpretatif tidak menggunakan hal yang demikian. Beberapa faktor keterbatasan ini yang menjadikan tafsir anak awal abad 20 merupakan penelitian yang unik dan langka dikaji. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali strategi yang digunakan oleh Sanusi dalam menghadirkan pembelajaran dan pemaknaan al-Qur'an bagi anak di masa itu di tengah minimnya produksi tafsir, eksklusivitas pembaca tafsir anak, serta keterbatasan teknologi percetakan dan desain grafis untuk tafsir pembaca anak. Temuan penelitian ini menyimpulkan strategi yang digunakan oleh Sanusi dalam penafsiran al-Qur'an untuk anak yaitu dengan menggunakan ilustrasi verbal, transliterasi al-Qur'an, adaptasi bahasa lokal dan peneglomponan ayat. Pendekatan komparatif dan analisis konten digunakan untuk menggali temuan tersebut.

**Keywords:** 20th Century, KH. Ahmad Sanusi, Strategy, Child Interpretation, Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin,

## Introduction

The discovery of children's interpretation in the book Tafsir *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* written by Indonesian scholars in the early 20th century, namely KH. Ahmad Sanusi (1888-1950) is a unique and quite rare thing. This is based on at least four things. First, attempts to interpret or translate the Qur'an in the past until the 20th century are taboo. The strict standards of credibility of mufassir and the doctrine held by traditionalist scholars that only mujtahid have the right to interpret the Qur'an made scholars at that time hesitate to write tafsir. Second, as explained by Bruinessen that the study of the Qur'an and interpretation in Indonesia at the end of the 19th century AD was still relatively rare in various Islamic boarding schools directly. In fact, students often learn religious material from processed fiqh books. As the classification of material made by Bruinessen based on 900 books in Indonesia from the end of the 19th century to the end of the 20th century: (Saleh, 2016, 2019) (Duncan, 2009) (From Browns , 1990)

Figure 1. Percentage of Books Spread in Islamic Boarding Schools

These works can be roughly classified into categories according to subject matter. The major categories are:

|                                                                                                  |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| jurisprudence ( <i>fiqh</i> )                                                                    | 20% |
| doctrine ( <i>'aqīda, uṣūl ad-dīn</i> )                                                          | 17% |
| traditional Arabic grammar<br>( <i>naḥw, ṣarf, balāgha</i> )                                     | 12% |
| <i>ḥadīth</i> collections                                                                        | 8%  |
| mysticism ( <i>taṣawwuf, ṭarīqa</i> )                                                            | 7%  |
| morality ( <i>akhlāq</i> )                                                                       | 6%  |
| collections of prayers and invocations,<br>Islamic magic ( <i>du'ā, wīrd, mujarrabāt</i> )       | 5%  |
| texts in praise of the prophets and saints<br>( <i>qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā', mawlid, manāqib, etc.</i> ) | 6%  |

The above information shows that tafsir did not have a strategic position in the curriculum of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia at that time. In fact, only one tafsir is quite popular among Islamic boarding schools, namely Tafsir Jalalain. Third, at that time, the study of the Qur'an and tafsir was only consumed for senior students or at the lowest level of tsanawi or intermediate. The need for Arabic language skills and other adequate knowledge in understanding the Qur'an makes the Qur'an untouched by

beginners, especially children. The exclusivity of senior students is what makes the study of the Qur'an available only to a limited group. (Nurtawab, n.d.) (From Browns, 1990)

Fourth, the limitations of printing technology at that time. Although in the early 20th century picture printing technology already existed. However, it is only available at certain printing presses. This book of *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* most likely still used a simple printing system such as lithography. (Miftahuddin, 2020)

Figure 2. Special Tafsir of Children in *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*



The picture above shows that children's interpretation writing at that time did not rely on graphic design or illustrations that attracted children's interest. In contrast to the interpretation of children that are spread today. Through modern technology and design, it is possible for the authors to include illustrations that make it easier for children to understand the interpretation of the Qur'an with attractive visual support. (Saifunnuha & Hasan, 2022a)

Based on the four factors above, the existence of a special interpretation of children in the context of the study of the Qur'an and the interpretation that received a lot of opposition from traditionalists, is very rarely studied, quite exclusive and the limitations of printing technology show that the author of the book is KH. Ahmad Sanusi has a visionary and innovative outlook. He tried to make the people at that time aware that the teaching of the Qur'an and its understanding needed to be taught from an early age. Therefore, this study aims to examine the strategies used to provide understanding to children in the early 20th century where printing technology is still very limited and image illustrations have not been touched by many printing companies.

This research is also motivated by a study of the tafsir of *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* which has not highlighted much of children's interpretation. In the last ten years, several studies of the tafsir of *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* have highlighted this interpretation methodologically. Several researchers, such as Roifa, et al, Rohman, et al. concluded that KH Ahmad Sanusi used the tahlili method with an adabi ijtima'i approach. This approach emphasizes the relevance of the verses of the Qur'an to the context of the social and cultural life of the Sundanese people during the Dutch colonial period. Other research such as Rohman examines the thought of Ahmad Sanusi in Tafsir (Roifa, Anwar, & Darmawan, 2017) (Rahman, Yunus, & Zulaeha, 2020) *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*. Rohman, et al. stated that Sanusi's thinking was greatly influenced by the Sufism tradition which prioritized the development of morals and spirituality. Interestingly, the research of Ulvah Nur'aeni and Dadang Darmawan focuses more on religious phenomena that occurred at the time the tafsir (2020) (2020a) (2012) of *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* was written. If Darwaman traces how the efforts to transliterate the Qur'an contained in the tafsir encourage debate and upheaval of traditionalist scholars in Sundanese Tatar to disbelieve each other and legalize blood. Thus, Ulvah's research focuses on his upheaval in the case of bid'ah.

Although many studies have examined the interpretation of *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* from various perspectives, there has been no study that specifically examines the book from the point of view of interpretation for child readers. With the development of children's interpretation studies becoming increasingly popular in Islamic education, a new approach to analyzing the tafsir of *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* may offer new insights into how a 20th-century interpreter produced a child's interpretation. In addition, the tracing of children's interpretation in the tafsir of *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* is a very interesting study because the interpretation of children in the transition period to the modern era written by Ahmad Sanusi will certainly be much different from the interpretation of children developed in the contemporary period with various illustrations such as research by Zahro', Teza, et al, Aes and Ursa. (2017) (2024) (S. Aes & São Paulo, T, 2024)

## Theoretical Studies

Children's interpretation has been developing since the beginning of the 21st century. Although it existed before, namely in the early 20th century, the interpretation is hidden in adult interpretation so it is often overlooked. Since the 21st century, children's interpretations have begun to be arranged more in accordance with the development of children's language. Children's interpretation is written with a language approach such as the selection of appropriate diction, the use of metaphors, imaginative language styles, and similes. In addition, the peculiarity of this century's tafsir is the presentation of tafsir with interesting interpretations.

This approach and method of interpretation is certainly very different from adult readers. Moreover, the Qur'an is revealed in Arabic with a context that is much different from the socio-cultural in Indonesia. Therefore, an interpretation of the Qur'an is needed that provides an introduction to religious understanding through interpretation products that are in accordance with the development of children's language, interests, imagination styles, and children's social and emotional development (Kabakci, 2023). This is done so that interpretation can be accepted effectively and imprint on children's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities. In other words, children's interpretation is a product of interpretation that is arranged according to the child's abilities and needs. ( Nur'aeni , Nuraini, Wifda , & Solihah , 2025)

## Method

The approaches used in this study are comparative approaches and content analysis. This approach is used to analyze the differences between Sanusi as an interpreter in presenting interpretations for children and adults. It should be explained here that this interpretation is basically not only for children. However, this interpretation has a very wide market segmentation of readers from children, laypeople, and the educated. Therefore, it is necessary to compare and analyze the language, methods and content presented by Sanusi for children and adults in the interpretation he wrote. In addition, efforts to compare children's interpretations in the book of *Tamshiyah al-Muslimin* with the interpretation of the current context also need to be

made to explain Sanusi's contribution or strategy in order to offer a method that is relevant to children's interpretation today.

## Result and Discussion

### *Portrait of Children's Tafsir in Tafsir Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin by KH.*

*Ahmad Sanusi*

Generally, children's interpretation in Indonesia is presented in the form of interpretation that attracts children's attention both in terms of cover and content. This effort is carried out in various ways. The mufassir of the 21st century tries to involve various media such as comics, illustrations, the use of metaphorical language, and other language techniques that attract children's attention and interest to understand the Qur'an from an early age. Children's interpretations are also produced specifically for children's segmentation so that it is easy to recognize children's interpretations even though they are only seen from the cover. (Abdul Mustaqim, 2010) (Rustandi, 20204)

In contrast to the children's interpretation written by KH. Ahmad Sanusi. The child's interpretation presented by him is part of the book of tafsir *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*. The children's interpretation section is made a special sub-chapter "Brief Interpretation" with an explanation that the interpretation is intended for children. As the title of the sub-chapter suggests, children's tafsir is made in a concise translation of the tafsiriyah of words. This interpretation does not involve illustrations as found in the interpretation of 21st-century children. Likewise with the cover, because it is part of an interpretation with segmentation of adult readers, this cover of the interpretation does not seem to fit the child's imagination. (Sanusi, 1934a)

In general, the tafsir of *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* was published periodically in Malay from October 1934 to June 1939. This commentary consists of 53 editions published once a month from October 1934 to November 1936. Then from January 1937-November 1938 it was published twice a month because of the large number of readers who were waiting for the interpretation at that time. Like the Indonesian tafsirs that appeared in the early 20th century, the tafsir (Nur'aeni, 2020a) of *Tamshiyyah al-*

*Muslimin* is also compiled based on tartib mushafi. Interestingly, Sanusi presents this interpretation also in the form of relevant themes.

The interpretation of children in the book *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* is also arranged in a mushafi order starting from surah al-Fatihah to Al-Baqarah/2: 281. It can be said that children's interpretation stops until the 26th edition. This is different from the verses that are interpreted for adult readers, namely up to surah al-Ma'idah/5:35. This difference in the number of verses interpreted is most likely motivated by the main purpose of teaching the Qur'an to children which is fading. If at the beginning of the interpretation for the child, Sanusi is very enthusiastic to present in a detailed way such as presenting the transliteration of the Qur'an, presenting pieces of verses that are interpreted in an easy-to-understand discussion, and grouping verses in content that are appropriate to the context of the verse. So, when Sanusi interprets surah al-Baqarah/2: 282, there is no distinction between verse pieces for child and adult readers, and there are no more verse groups. Nevertheless, transliteration is still presented in verse fragments for the interpretation of the Qur'an. (Sanusi, 1935)

### *Children's Tafseer vis a vis Adult Tafseer: A Study of Tafsir Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*

Sanusi wrote the tafsir and translated the Qur'an for adult and children's readers separately so that the verses contained in this tafsir were written twice. The verses interpreted for children will be titled "brief tafsir". Unfortunately, the naming of these subtitles is inconsistent. Some interpretations of verses for children are not given subheadings so that they confuse the readers. However, the difference is the transliteration of the interpretation of the verse for children. As explained by Sanusi, transliteration is used to make it easier for children who cannot read the Qur'an. (Sanusi, 1934a)

In contrast to the transliteration that is developing today, the transliteration for children in the tafsir of *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* still uses the old spelling. The following is the transliteration used by Sanusi:

Table 1. Transliteration of children's interpretations in the book of tafsir *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*

1. Consonant

| Arabic | Latin | Arabic | Latin | Arabic | Latin |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| ء      | `     | ر      | R     | ف      | f     |
| ب      | b     | ز      | Z     | ق      | q     |
| ت      | t     | س      | S     | ك      | k     |
| ث      | Ts    | ش      | Sj    | ل      | l     |
| ج      | Dj    | ص      | Sh    | م      | m     |
| ح      | h     | ض      | Dl    | ن      | n     |
| خ      | Ch    | ط      | Th    | و      | w     |
| د      | d     | ظ      | Dh    | ه      | h     |
| ذ      | Dz    | ع      | '     | ي      | y     |
|        |       | غ      | G     |        |       |

## 2. Vowels

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| اَ                             | a |
| اَabove the letter خ ر ص ض ط ظ | o |
| اِ                             | i |
| اِbelow the letter             | u |

## 3. Diphthongs

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| اَي                             | Ai |
| اَيabove the letter خ ر ص ض ط ظ | Oi |
| اُو                             | Au |

## 4. Mad

|     |    |
|-----|----|
| اَا | à  |
| اِا | ie |
| اِو | òe |

## 5. Tasydid

| Arabic | Latin             | Example      |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| اَا    | double consonants | هَنَّ hoenna |

## 6. Alif Lam

| Arabic   | Latin             | Example         |
|----------|-------------------|-----------------|
| ال قمرية | Al                | الحمد Al-Hamdu  |
| ال شمسية | A+letter in front | الزكاة az-zakàt |

The above transliteration still uses the old spelling. If compared to other old spelling transliterations, you will see a lot of similarities. For example, the transliteration contained in the *Qur'an and Terdjemahnja of the Ministry of Religion* of the Republic of Indonesia published in 1965 uses an old spelling that has similarities with Sanusi transliterations such as in the letters *ts, dj, h, ch, dz, sj, sh, sl, and th*. However, the vowel 'u' already has a new spelling. (Faizin, 2021)

In the context of the early 20th century, the transliteration formulated by Sanusi corroborates a historical fact that at that time the effort to transliterate the Arabic alphabet into the Roman or Latin alphabet was a necessity. Since the inauguration of Indonesian as a unifying language, Indonesian has used the Roman or Latin alphabet as the official text or script. Therefore, it is important to adapt Arabic phonemes for characters or groups that are in an environment that is popular with Arabic such as *kyai, santri, or Islamic groups*.

This effort to present children's interpretation using transliteration shows Sanusi's creativity in presenting children's interpretation. Sanusi's creativity is not enough to stop there, he also tries to present a concise but still understandable children's interpretation. This can be seen from the way Sanusi presents tafsiriyah translations for adult and children's readers.

Table 2. Example of comparison of word interpretation for adult and child readers

| Verse No. | Adult Reader's Verse Snippets | Tafsir                                                                                                                                   | Children's Reading Verse Pieces       | Tafsir                                                                                                              |
|-----------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1         | بِسْمِ اللَّهِ                | Moehoen perteloengan menjeboet nama Allah                                                                                                | بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ | Moehoenkan toeloeng kepada Allah dengan menjeboet namanja jang memberi ni'mat besar dan jang memberi ni'mat ketjil. |
|           | الرَّحْمَنِ                   | Jang memberi ni'mat besar, kepada sekalian hambanja                                                                                      |                                       |                                                                                                                     |
|           | الرَّحِيمِ                    | Jang memberi ni'mat ketjil                                                                                                               |                                       |                                                                                                                     |
| 2         | الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ             | Bermoela segala poedji, itoe bagi Allah. Dan hambanja memoedji kepadanja dengan dia. Sebabnja memoedji itoe, jaitoe karena Allah Ta'ala. | الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ | Bermoela segala poedji itoe bagi Allah jang mengoeroes sekalian 'alam.                                              |
|           | رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ           | Jang mengoeroes sekalian alam.                                                                                                           |                                       |                                                                                                                     |
| 3         | الرَّحْمَنِ                   | Jang memberini'mat besar,                                                                                                                | الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ                | Jang memberi                                                                                                        |

|   |                                |                                                                                    |                                                   |                                                                                                                           |
|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   |                                | kepada sekalian hambanja.                                                          |                                                   | ni'mat besar lagi<br>jang memberi<br>ni'mat ketjil.                                                                       |
|   | الرَّحِيمِ                     | Jang memberi ni'mat ketjil                                                         |                                                   |                                                                                                                           |
| 4 | مَلِكِ يَوْمِ<br>الدِّينِ      | Jang semata-mata memegang<br>keradjaan di hari Qiamat.                             | مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ                            | Jang mempoenjai<br>keradjaan di bari<br>Qiamat.                                                                           |
| 5 | إِيَّاكَ                       | Hanja kepada engkau, tiada<br>sekali-kali kepada lainnja                           | إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ          | Hanja kepada<br>angkau kami<br>menjembah, dan<br>hanja kepada<br>angkau kami minta<br>toeloeng.                           |
|   | نَعْبُدُ                       | Kami beribadah                                                                     |                                                   |                                                                                                                           |
|   | وَإِيَّاكَ                     | Dan hanja kepada engkau,<br>tiada sekali-kali kepada<br>lainnja                    |                                                   |                                                                                                                           |
|   | نَسْتَعِينُ                    | Kami moehoen<br>pertoeloengan                                                      |                                                   |                                                                                                                           |
| 6 | إِهْدِنَا                      | Moedah-moedahan engkau<br>menoendjoekkan kami                                      | إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ               | Toendjoekkanlah<br>kami oleh angkau,<br>akan agama Islam<br>jang benar.                                                   |
|   | الصِّرَاطَ<br>الْمُسْتَقِيمَ   | Kepada agama Islam jang<br>benar                                                   |                                                   |                                                                                                                           |
| 7 | صِرَاطَ<br>الَّذِينَ           | Ialah agama sekalian Rasoe<br>Anbija dan Sholihien                                 | صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ           | Ialah agama<br>sekalian Nabi dan<br>Solihin, jang<br>angkau telah<br>koersiakan ni'mat<br>Iman Islam atas<br>mareka itoe. |
|   | أَنْعَمْتَ<br>عَلَيْهِمْ       | Jang engkau telah berikan<br>ni'mat dengan hidajah dan<br>taufieq atas mereka itoe |                                                   |                                                                                                                           |
|   | غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ | Jang tiada dimoerkai atas<br>mareka itoe                                           | غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ | Jang tiada<br>dimoerkai atas<br>marela itoe dan<br>tiada sesat mareka<br>itoe.                                            |
|   | وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ             | Dan tiada sekali-kali sesat<br>mareka itoe.                                        |                                                   |                                                                                                                           |

The example of a comparison of interpretation above shows that the fragments of the verse translated by Sanusi for adult readers intend to provide information on the meaning of the word. This is different from the interpretation of verse fragments for children's readers. Sanusi not only presents the fragment of the verse to explain the meaning of the word but he also provides a translation of the tafsiriyah in the context of the fragment of the verse. This presentation strategy provides an understanding of the meaning of the verse and the meaning of the word at the same time. Therefore, as the title gives "concise tafsir", this child's interpretation is used to understand the Qur'an according to the way of thinking of children who do not have complex vocabulary such as adult readers.

In addition, the existence of shorter translations of verse pieces for adult readers than for child readers aims to provide a very detailed and in-depth explanation in the interpretation section. Thus, he does not need to discuss in detail in the translation of the verse fragment. However, on several occasions Sanusi also explained the verse in enough detail to distinguish the concept of translation and interpretation because after all Sanusi like other traditional people rejected translation. For him, the meaning of the verse he interpreted was an interpretation, not a translation.

What is even more interesting is that Sanusi presents an interpretation for this child based on a group of verses of the Qur'an. If in the interpretation for adult readers Sanusi presents certain themes in his interpretation such as the law of reading bismillah, the law of reading surah al-Fatihah, and so on, then when interpreting verses for children, Sanusi makes a group of verses that contain certain themes. This is stated directly in the brief interpretation of the second part which explains:

*Soepaja bisa di ketahoei samboengan2 dan tartib ajat2 Qoerän jang di tafsierkan dari pada ajat2 Qoerän jang dihoeboengkan dari pada jang laen, dan soepaja bisa dipakai mengadjar anak2 jang baroe beladjar mengapalkan akan Qoerän.*

The above statement shows that the existence of this group of verses aims to make children's readers understand the connections and relationships between verses. Thus, children's readers will know the conversation or the context of the verse presented in their interpretation. Unfortunately, this group of verses is not included in a specific theme, so it is the reader who needs to determine what the theme of the verse group is. Some of these groups of verses include Qs. al-Fatihah/1: 1-8-Qs. al-Baqarah/2: 1-5 concerning matters related to the knowledge of Allah and the way of the believer, Qs. al-Baqarah/2: 6-20 concerning the characteristics of disbelievers and hypocrites, and other groups of verses.

The strategy of conveying the understanding of the Qur'an in *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* by KH. Ahmad Sanusi cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and technological context in the early 20th century. This interpretation was compiled in conditions of limited printing technology, where print media still uses simple lithography without illustration facilities or supporting visual design. In this situation, Sanusi seeks to bridge the gap between the holy text of the Qur'an and the

understanding of ordinary people, including children, through the use of local language, figurative narratives, and verbal cultural symbols (Sanusi, 1934b) (Romans, 2013).

Although not explicitly aimed at children, the presentation structure in *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* shows a strategy of simplifying religious concepts that allows children to understand the moral values contained in the Qur'an. The use of local idioms, as well as communicative narrative styles are one of the important features in its delivery strategy. (Zahro' et al., 2015; Saifunnuha & Hasan, 2022)

In contrast to contemporary children's interpretations that rely on a visual-interactive approach through color illustrations and modular formats. Sanusi chooses a traditional narrative-oral strategy that prioritizes the verblity of the text and the power of the story. This strategy is relevant in societies with strong oral cultures, but demands the role of adult companions to help explain symbolic meaning and narrative in interpretation (Zahro' et al., 2015) (Nur'aeni, U. 2020).

The strategy of conveying the understanding of the Qur'an in *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* by KH. Ahmad Sanusi showed creative efforts in answering the limitations of print media and the absence of image illustrations at that time. Without visual support, Sanusi maximized the power of narratives, cultural symbols, and simplification of language as a medium of transmission of Qur'anic values to lay readers, including children. (S., Aes & São Paulo, T, 2024). Sanusi developed a strategy that was adaptive to the cultural conditions and printing technology in the early 20th century, relying on oral narratives, verbal symbols, and language simplification. (Sanusi, 1934).

### *Print Culture Strategy in the Context of Lithography*

*Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin's prints* use black and white lithography without illustrations with a simple design and minimal text margins This reflects the condition of (Miftahudin, 2020). *Indonesian print culture* in the early 20th century, where printing technology was not yet able to facilitate complex drawings or designs In the context of Indonesia in the 1930s, lithography became the main choice due to the limitations of metal letterpress at some big Printing (Browns, 1990).) that supports the Arabic script. With lithography, Arabic handwriting can be reproduced

without the need for metal letter prints). This made the printing process of (Miftahudin, 2020) *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* limited to black-and-white texts without illustrations or visual decorations, as seen in the 1934 edition of the tafsir that was the source of this research.

The limitations of lithography technology have a direct impact on the strategy of conveying understanding in this interpretation. Because it does not allow the inclusion of visual illustrations, Sanusi utilizes verbal narratives, vernacular with local culture, and idiomatic symbols to replace the function of illustration in making it easier for readers, including children, to understand. In other words, narratives and verbal symbols function as "verbal illustrations" that evoke the imagination, adapting to the oral culture of the Sundanese people at that time. (Sanusi, 1934b)

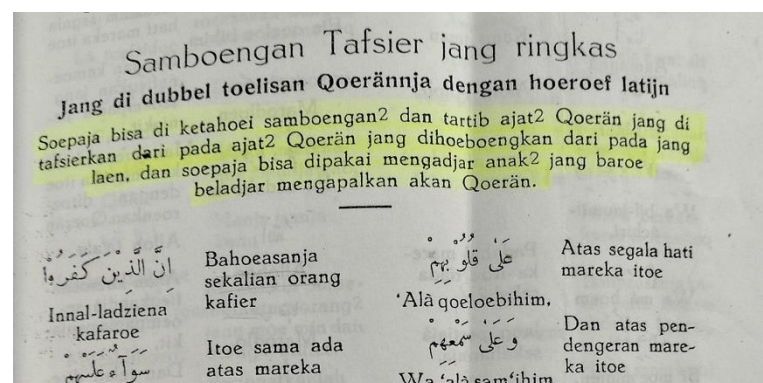
In addition, the use of lithography also influenced the layout of the pages, which tended to be simple, with Arabic text and Latin translations placed side by side manually without the support of modular design or interactive illustrations as in contemporary children's interpretations. This confirms that the delivery of the message of the Qur'an to children at that time relied more on the assistance of oral learning by teachers or parents, not through visual media-based independent reading. (Alawiyah, 2024).

On the other hand, contemporary children's interpretations such as *the Comic Tafsir Al-Qur'an Anak Saleh*, *I Love My Quran*, *Tafsir Juz 'Amma for Kids* by Abdul Mustaqim, and *Tafsir Juz 'Amma Anak* by Muhammad Muslih show a shift in *print culture* from a purely textual model to a multimodal. Visual media (illustrations, drawings, comics) are the main characteristics that distinguish them from adult interpretations. The presence of illustrators as an important part of the production team also reflects the collaborative culture that is typical of children's interpretation. This visualization is not only aesthetic, but also educational to help children understand the message of the Qur'an more easily. Some works even integrate elements of games, interactive activities, and thematic explanations that are close to children's daily lives, such as (Mustaqim, 2018). (Zahro' et al., 2015; Muslih, 2015; Dr. H Sabaruddin, 2019) *Tafsir Anak Saleh* and *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Pictures for Children* published by local publishers in Indonesia (Dr. H Sabaruddin, 2019).

### *Language Strategy and Presentation: Simplification and Transliteration as a Means of Learning for Children*

The language used by Sanusi in *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* shows a strategy of simplifying understanding through the presentation of double texts: Arabic text of the Qur'an, transliteration of Latin letters, and translation into Malay. This is evident in the section entitled "Samboengan Tafsier jang ringkas", where each word or phrase of the Qur'an verse is written sequentially in the three forms. This strategy is intended to make it easier for readers, especially children who are just learning to read and memorize the Qur'an, so that they can recognize the sound of reading, the shape of Arabic letters, and the meaning of words at the same time (D Darmawan, 2009). (Sanusi, 1934b) .

Figure 3. Explicit evidence of this purpose is written in the introduction to the page



"Soepaja bisa dipakai mengadjar anak<sup>2</sup> jang baroe beladjar mengapalkan akan Qoer'an". This sentence shows the existence of pedagogical awareness in language preparation, with priority on readability, clarity, and ease of memorization. (Sanusi, 1934b)

In addition, the presentation in linear and parallel formats (where each piece of Arabic verse is directly followed by Latin transliteration and literal translation) demonstrates Sanusi's efforts in providing gradual and systematic access to understanding. This strategy allows novice readers to understand the relationship between Arabic pronunciation, reading sounds, and word-for-word meanings without having to look elsewhere. This approach is in line with the principle of scaffolding in pedagogy, which introduces new concepts through temporary assistance in the form of

transliteration and translation, thus supporting gradual learning for children who are still limited in Arabic literacy skills (Sanusi, 1934). (Mustofa et al., 2021).

In the presentation of children's tafsir in the tafsir of *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*, no illustrations of images or supporting visual elements in this tafsir are found to encourage the use of narratives, similes, and verbal symbols as a strategy to replace illustrations. This presentation requires the involvement of teachers or parents as learning companions, in line with the oral teaching tradition in Islamic boarding schools at that time.

In contrast to the traditional approach as applied by Sanusi in *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*, contemporary children's interpretation uses a language strategy that is more popular, communicative, and close to the child's world. The language used tends to be simple, with direct sentences that are easy to understand, and often accompanied by familiar greetings such as "younger siblings," "friends," or "let's learn together." It aims to create an interactive atmosphere, reduce the hierarchical distance between the author and the reader, and increase the child's emotional attraction to the text of interpretation. In addition to language, the main strength of contemporary children's interpretation lies in the support of colored visual illustrations that are thematically and educationally designed. The existence of visual illustrations and popular language makes it easier for children to understand the concept of the Qur'an without the need for intensive assistance from adults. Children can access meaning independently through a combination of text and images, which supports the strengthening of visual (Muslih, 2015). (Muslih, 2015; Dr. H Sabaruddin, 2019). *literacy* as well as *textual literacy*. This approach also encourages the process of internalizing values in a more fun and creative way, which is important for the child's cognitive and moral development stages (Alawiyah, 2024).

### *Symbol Strategy: Local Language as a Symbol of Accessibility and Inclusivity*

In the tafsir of *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*, especially in the section "Samboengan Tafsir jang ringkas" for children, it can be seen that this tafsir is presented concisely without similitudes, metaphors, or idioms of the local culture in explaining the meaning

of the verse. The presentation consists only of Arabic texts, transliterations, and literal translations in old Malay. This format is designed to make it easier for children or novice readers to get to know Arabic readings, Latin transliterations, and the meaning of words directly. (Alawiyah, k, 2017).

The use of the old Malay language and Latin transliteration in this section can be understood as a symbol of accessibility and inclusivity. The choice of local language shows Sanusi's efforts to bring the understanding of the Qur'an closer to ordinary readers, especially children, through a more familiar colloquial language. This presentation is a form of vernacularization, which is the translation of religious teachings into local languages to increase public acceptance. Although this part of the commentary is presented literally and concisely, the verbal symbols and idioms of the local culture are still found in other parts (Ghofur & Fatkhiyati, 2023; Romans, 2013) of the *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* commentary aimed at adult readers. This shows that Sanusi adapts the delivery approach to the level of ability and needs of his readers. For children's readers, the presentation is made simple and direct to focus on supporting the mastery of reading and memorization, while for more advanced readers, interpretation enriches the explanation with cultural symbols and idioms (Rahman et al., 2020). (Nur'aeni, U, 2020).

Meanwhile, contemporary children's interpretation uses visual symbols to make it easier for children to understand the message of the Qur'an. For example, in the commentary of Qs. al-Fil, the elephant is depicted as a symbol of pride, while the bird of Ababil depicts the help of Allah. Other symbols can be found in the commentary of Qs. al-'Ashr, where the illustration of an hourglass or children learning symbolizes the importance of time and righteous deeds, as well as in Qs. al-Mā'ūn, which features an image of a child sharing as a symbol of social solidarity. These illustrations help children capture abstract meanings in concrete terms and create emotional closeness through simple language, familiar greetings, and reflective stories. However, even though they are designed to be easy to understand, the use of symbols still requires adult assistance in some contexts. This is because not all children have the same experiences or backgrounds of understanding; Without guidance, there is a risk that the meaning of symbols will be misunderstood or interpreted superficially, such as just looking at an image without grasping the moral value behind it. Thus, the role of mentoring is not an

absolute obligation in all situations, but it becomes important to ensure that the meaning of the symbol is fully embedded appropriately. ( Afif , 2003). ( São Paulo , 2015) ( Afif , 2021). (Adib, 2018).

## Conclusion

This study explores the strategies used by KH. Ahmad Sanusi in his commentary on the Qur'an for children in the early 20th century, *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*. Despite the limitations of printing technology and the absence of illustrations, Sanusi creatively uses verbal narratives, local cultural symbols, and simplification of language to convey the values of the Quran to young readers. This tafsir presents a dual text format, featuring Arabic script, Latin transliteration, and Malay translations, which aims to facilitate comprehension and memorization for children learning to read the Quran. This approach reflects pedagogical awareness and scaffolding principles in introducing new concepts. The use of local Malay and transliteration symbolizes accessibility and inclusivity, bringing the understanding of the Quran closer to the general reader. Although the children's section is presented concisely, verbal symbols and local idioms can be found in other sections of the commentary aimed at today's readers, which show Sanusi's adaptation to the abilities and needs of his readers. In contrast, contemporary children's interpretations use interactive visual symbols, illustrations, and language to aid understanding and emotional engagement. However, although designed to facilitate understanding, the use of symbols in traditional and contemporary works still requires adult guidance in some contexts to ensure the moral values in question can be fully understood.

This study emphasizes that in the midst of the phenomenon of exclusivity of interpretation that is only studied by middle and upper level students, the challenge of traditionalists who prohibit the interpretation of the Qur'an, as well as printing technology and graphic design that is limited in most local printing houses, Sanusi actually dares to present a special interpretation for child readers. This courage is a manifestation of his awareness and commitment in disseminating the meaning of the Qur'an so that it can be accepted by various circles. This product also offers a new study in the context of 20th-century children's interpretation because so far the study of

children's interpretation has only focused on interpretations that are born and developed in the 21st century.

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