

Reinvigorating Islamic Renaissance through *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*: A Content Analysis Approach

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Keywords : Ahmad Sanusi, exegesis, Islamic renaissance, <i>Tamshiyyah al-</i> <i>Muslimin</i> .	Abstract This study explored the concept of Islamic revival proposed by KH. Ahmad Sanusi, a traditional Islamic scholar, in his Quranic exegesis <i>Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin</i> in the early 20th century. Moreover, this research investigated the narratives of Islamic revival, and the decline of Muslims explained in the exegesis. The study employed a qualitative approach based on library research to achieve its objectives. Additionally, content analysis was utilized to enhance the depth of the research analysis. The findings reveal that Sanusi's Islamic revival concept is rooted in the Qur'an, social life, and spirituality. Regarding the Qur'an, Sanusi emphasized the importance of understanding the Quran as a source of guidance for Muslims in all aspects of life. He criticized both traditional and modernist scholars for their misinterpretation of the Quran. Concerning social life, Sanusi highlighted the significance of mastering various fields of knowledge, promoting unity among Muslims, and engaging in deliberation based on equality. In terms of spirituality, Sanusi responded to the Sufi concepts and practices that some scholars considered deviant at that time. He argued that Sufism did not hinder Muslims from achieving progress in life. Sanusi's thoughts on Sufism were influenced by al-Ghazali's concepts, which were widely spread in the Indonesian Muslim community. This study contributes to the understanding of Islamic revival from the perspective of a traditional scholar who accommodates local culture and traditions without compromising the fundamental message of Islam.
Kata Kunci : Ahmad Sanusi, penafsiran, kebangkitan Islam, <i>Tamshiyyah al-</i> <i>Muslimin</i> .	Abstrak Studi ini mengeksplorasi konsep kebangkitan Islam yang diusulkan oleh KH. Ahmad Sanusi, seorang ulama Islam tradisional, dalam tafsir al-Qur'an <i>Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin</i> pada awal abad ke-20. Selain itu, penelitian ini menyelidiki narasi kebangkitan Islam dan kemunduran umat Islam yang dijelaskan dalam tafsir. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka untuk mencapai tujuannya. Selain itu, analisis konten digunakan untuk memperdalam analisis penelitian. Temuan tersebut mengungkapkan bahwa konsep kebangkitan Islam yang ditawarkan Sanusi berakar pada tiga aspek: al-Qur'an, kehidupan sosial, dan spiritualitas. Mengenai al-Qur'an, Sanusi menekankan pentingnya memahami al-Qur'an sebagai sumber petunjuk bagi umat Muslim dalam semua aspek kehidupan. Dia mengkritik ulama tradisional maupun modernis karena salah dalam menafsirkan dan memahami Al-Qur'an. Dalam hal kehidupan sosial, Sanusi menekankan pentingnya menguasai berbagai bidang pengetahuan, mempromosikan persatuan di antara umat Muslim, dan terlibat dalam musyawarah berdasarkan kesetaraan. Mengenai spiritualitas, Sanusi menanggapi konsep dan praktik Sufi yang dianggap menyimpang yang dilakukan oleh beberapa ulama pada waktu itu. Dia berpendapat bahwa tasawuf tidak menghalangi umat Islam untuk mencapai kemajuan dalam hidup. Pemikiran Sanusi tentang tasawuf dipengaruhi oleh konsep-konsep al-Ghazali, yang telah tersebar luas di komunitas Muslim Indonesia. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman kebangkitan Islam dari perspektif seorang ulama tradisional yang mengakomodasi budaya dan tradisi lokal tanpa mengorbankan pesan fundamental Islam.
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Introduction

The phenomenon of the Muslim revival is an undeniable fact.¹ Muslims' encounters with Western imperialism, along with their struggles against ignorance and backwardness, prompted modernists to galvanize Muslims by invoking their golden age. The narrative of expansion, military glory, and imperial power during the Abbasid era became an idealized image of Muslim progress.² This, in turn, influenced Muslims' political, social, economic, and cultural life.³ Islam was seen as the only force that could overcome the decline of the ummah amid the pressures of Western colonialism. Therefore, modernist figures viewed the reinterpretation of Islamic texts, especially the Qur'an and Hadith, as fundamental to ensuring that Islamic values remained present in every aspect of Muslim life.⁴

The discourse on Islamic revival in the early 20th century was shaped by both modernist and traditionalist scholars. As stated by one of the pioneers of modernism, Muhammad Abduh, the existing tafsir had not adequately addressed the needs of Muslims, necessitating new methods of Qur'anic interpretation. Therefore, his student, Rasyid Ridha, developed a method that integrated *turath* (Islamic intellectual heritage) with contemporary thought that produced a new understanding following the development and needs of the society of that time.⁵ Abduh and Ridha's ideas were further spread in Indonesia through the *Tafsir al-Manār*. The emergence of Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah, Persis, Syarikat Islam, and others marked the arrival of modernist ideology. However, the discourse on ummah awakening and modernization was not only embraced by modernists but also elicited responses from traditionalists. For instance, KH. Ahmad Sanusi (hereafter referred to as 'Sanusi'), in his tafsir, *Tamshiyah al-Muslimin*, analyzed both the setbacks and advancements of the *ummah*.

Sanusi's perspective on the rise and decline of the ummah presented both similarities and contrasts with modernist thought. *Firstly*, although Sanusi was a traditionalist scholar, he shared the modernist view that one of the urgent needs of Muslim society was to revive the people's relationship with the Qur'an. *Secondly*, Sanusi's interpretative methodology remained rooted in pre-modern interpretations and did not introduce new methods. However, he realized that Muslims must engage with modern science and contemporary developments. *Third*, a defining characteristic of modernists is their advocacy for *ijtihad* and rejection of *taklid*.⁶ However, Sanusi argued the opposite. Nonetheless, Sanusi often called for Muslims to use a portion of their intellect to understand the Qur'an. The latter point

¹ Mustapha Kamal Pasha, Halil M. Guven, and B. N. Ghosh, eds., "Globalization, Cultural Conflicts, and Islamic Resurgence," in *Globalization and the Third World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230502567>.

² *Belajar Dari ZAMAN KEEMASAN ISLAM Ft. Ismail Fajrie Alatas*, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-Fp1R_Hss.

³ Pasha, Guven, and Ghosh, "Globalization, Cultural Conflicts, and Islamic Resurgence."

⁴ Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Islamic Resurgence An Overview of Causal Factors, a Review of 'Ummatic' Linkage," *Jurnal IKIM* 9, no. 1 (n.d.): 15–48.

⁵ Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Hakim," *Majalah Al-Manar*, 1947; Khairul Hamim and M. Masykur Abdillah, "Renaissance of Islam: A Content Analysis of Muhammad Rashid Ridā's Exegesis," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13, no. 2 (2023): 104–19, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.132.07>.

⁶ Taklid is acting on the opinion of others without knowing the evidence. Abdulah Safe'i, "Redefinisi Ijtihad dan Taqlid: Upaya Reaktualisasi dan Revitalisasi Perspektif Sosio-Historis," *Adliya: Jurnal Hukum dan Kemanusiaan* 11, no. 1 (June 2019): 25–40, <https://doi.org/10.15575/adliya.v11i1.4850>.

illustrates a clear difference with the modernists. Sanusi's idea is interesting because he identified the factors of the ummah's decline and offered ways to revive Muslims with his distinctive and genuinely traditionalist views. In addition, as a scholar from a peripheral Islamic region with a traditionalist mindset, he responded to efforts to revive Islam by accommodating culture and tradition without destroying the fundamental message of Islam. Thus, what Sanusi envisioned through accommodation rather than oppression or suppression. This is evident in his observation that one of the major setbacks of the *ummah* is that many educated individuals often engage in slander.

Sanusi's response to the main issue raised by the modernists regarding the revival of Islam demonstrates that categorizing *ulama* into rigid groups of modernists and traditionalists creates ambiguity. This ambiguity becomes apparent when the traditionalist *ulama* experiences a tragicomic dilemma. This group faces the tragicomic of weakening their authority in the Islamic world. This is the result of modernist resistance. On the other hand, they must navigate and engage with the global modernist movement. Conversely, this ambiguity also affects Indonesian modernists who are genealogically inseparable from the roots of traditionalist Islamic thought through the legacy of books written by traditionalist scholars.⁷ This fact shows the phenomenon of mutual influence both in terms of developing religious issues and genealogy making it difficult to compartmentalize *ulama* into rigid categories.⁸ Based on the phenomenon described above, this paper aims to critique that the grouping in the rigid group needs to be criticized by deepening Sanusi's thoughts on the main issue echoed by the modernists, namely the revival of Islam in the early 20th century.⁹

Currently, research on Sanusi and his thoughts on the issue of the rise and decline of Islam remains largely unexplored. Some researchers, such as Maryati,¹⁰ R. Ferlina,¹¹ A. Santika,¹² and A. Furqon¹³ had focused more on examining Sanusi's role, profile, and

⁷ Jajang A Rohmana, "The Roots of Traditional Islam in Modernist Muslim Works: K.H. Aceng Zakaria and the Intellectual Tradition of Pesantren," *Ulul Albab* 22, no. 2 (December 2021): 264–91, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v22i2.12031>.

⁸ Moh Mufid Muwaffaq, "Modernisme dalam Tafsir Tradisional: (Nuansa Tafsir 'Ilmi dalam Tafsir Al-Ibriz Karya Bisri Musthafa)," *QOF: Jurnal Studi al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 4, no. 1 (June 2020): 75–90, <https://doi.org/10.30762/qof.v4i1.1812>.

⁹ The Islamic revival and its relation to the context of exegesis are two things that cannot be separated. Proven by the popular slogans of Islamic revivalist figures, namely returning to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which serve as a cornerstone of awareness for every Muslim to reconsider and position the Qur'an as a scientific discipline that must be prioritized. Therefore, both modernist and revivalist figures focused their movements in the religious field, characterized by the proliferation of new tafsir products with new approaches such as adopting modern sciences, reopening the door to ijtihad, being more critical of hadith, school of thought opinions, and so on. The explanation of the concept of Islamic revival in the context of exegesis is elaborated in more detail in the next subsection on Exegesis and Islam Resurgence Narration. see., Hakan Çoruh, "The Qur'an and Interpretation in the Classical Modernism: Tafsir Centric Approach of Muhammad 'Abduh" 4, no. 2 (2019).

¹⁰ Maya Maryati, "Peran K.H Ahmad Sanusi Dalam Pendidikan Islam" (Skripsi, Jakarta, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2014).

¹¹ Rina Ferlina, "Biografi K.H.Ahmad Sanusi Tahun 1888-1950" (Skripsi, Banten, UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin, 2019).

¹² Agus Santika, "K.H Ahmad Sanusi: Pemikiran dan Perannya dalam Mendirikan Organisasi Al Ittihadijatoel Islamijah di Sukabumi (1931-1952)" (Skripsi, Cirebon, IAIN Syekh Nurjati, 2022).

¹³ Abdul Furqon, "Peranan K.H. Ahmad Sanusi dalam Pendidikan Islam dan Dakwah di Sukabumi Tahun 1889-1950" (Skripsi, Bandung, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, 2017).

contribution to society. Likewise, other researchers such as M. Shaleh,¹⁴ Kuswandi and Maskur,¹⁵ Salsabila,¹⁶ and A. Anwar¹⁷ analyzed his works and tafsir methodology. However, these studies provided information about Sanusi's role, contribution, and work, while these studies provide extensive information, they also open opportunities to make it an object of research from various perspectives. This has also led to a diversity of studies on Sanusi. For example, studies on Sanusi's thoughts from the aspects of politics, law, fiqh, and Sufism have attracted the interest of researchers such as A.Q. Aini,¹⁸ and Y. Suryana¹⁹ Another interesting study is about Sanusi's response to religious phenomena that developed when his tafsir works were written as examined by Jajang A. Rohmana,²⁰ S.M. Yusuf,²¹ Saadah,²² Ulvah Nur'aeni,²³ and L. Lutfi²⁴. These studies highlight how Sanusi's tafsir is deeply intertwined with the social context of his time. However, from the many studies mentioned, no study has specifically examined his interpretation of Islamic revival. So far, the proponents of modern life have always been attributed to modernist scholars. Sanusi has a view of modern life and the progress of Muslims in the fields of religion, society, economy, etc. Therefore, this paper addresses the unexplored gap related to the rise of Islam in his tafsir work.

To achieve the research objectives, this study employed a qualitative approach based on library research and content analysis to examine Sanusi's interpretation of Islamic revival in *Tafsir Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*. Content analysis was utilized to enhance the depth of the research. This analysis required examining Sanusi's primary works, as well as other books authored by him, comparing them with other literature written by modernist scholars such as Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Ridha, Thantawi Jauhari, and others, and analyzing other additional relevant literature. To maintain the validity of the research findings, rechecking primary sources was essential. Through this content analysis approach, the exploration of

¹⁴ Munandi Saleh, "KH. Ahmad Sanusi dan Karya-Karyanya: Khasanah Literasi Ilmu-Ilmu Ajaran Islam di Nusantara," *Jurnal At-Tadbir: Media Hukum dan Pendidikan* 29, no. 2 (July 2019): 74–114, <https://doi.org/10.52030/attadbir.v29i02.16>.

¹⁵ Dedi Kuswandi and Abu Maskur, "Metodologi Tafsir Ulama Nusantara Di Tanah Pasundan (Telaah Atas Kitab Tafsir Rawdhat Al-'Irfân Dan Malja' At-Thâlibîn Karya KH. Ahmad Sanusi)," *Al-Fahmu: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 1, no. 1 (September 2022): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.58363/alfahmu.v1i1.6>.

¹⁶ Salsabila Salsabila, "Kesejarahan Karya Tafsir Ahmad Sanusi (Telaah Terhadap Kitab Malja'al-Thalibin, Tamsiyyah al Muslimin, dan Raudhah al-'Irfan)" (Skripsi, Jakarta, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2024).

¹⁷ H. Anwar, Maslani Maslani, and Ratu Suntiah, "Kyai Haji Ahmad Sanusi (1888-1950): Karya-Karya dan Pemikiran Ulama Sukabumi," *Atthulab: Islamic Religion Teaching and Learning Journal* 3, no. 2 (November 2018): 199–209, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ath.v3i2.4300>.

¹⁸ Andini Qurrotul Aini, "Tafsir Fikih KH. Ahmad Sanusi" (Skripsi, Jakarta, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2024).

¹⁹ Yayan Suryana, *Fiqih Moderat: Pemikiran Hukum Islam KH. Ahmad Sanusi (1889-1950)*, ed. Didi Didi (Depok: Shuhuf, 2009).

²⁰ Jajang A Rohmana, "Polemik Keagamaan dalam Tafsir Malja' at-Ṭālibîn Karya K.H. Ahmad Sanusi," *Suhuf* 10, no. 1 (2017): 25–57, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v10i1.207>.

²¹ Sunandi Maulana Yusuf, "Pemikiran Dakwah K.H Ahmad Sanusi Dalam Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam Di Sukabumi" (Skripsi, Bandung, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, 2013).

²² Rifa Tsamrotus Saadah and Zaky Mumtaz Ali, "The Urgency of Sunni Tasawuf of KH Ahmad Sanusi in Tatar Sunda: A Study of Sirāj Al-Azkiyā'fi Tarjamah al-Azkiyā'," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 20, no. 2 (2022): 479–500, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v20i2.1086>.

²³ Ulvah Nur'aeni, *Sosiologi Tafsir: Kritik Fenomena Bid'ah Dalam Tafsir Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimin Karya KH. Ahmad Sanusi* (Jakarta: Publica Institute, 2020).

²⁴ Lutfi Lutfi and Tahmina Rashid, "Tafsir and Social Political Context in Indonesia: A Case Study on Ahmad Sanusi's Interpretation as A Medium of Struggle in Colonial Era," *Journal of Education and Social Sciences* 13, no. 1 (June 2019): 1–8.

the theme of the rise of Islam and the narrative of its decline in *Tafsir Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* not only presents the concept initiated by Sanusi but also provides insights into the socio-religious context in which this tafsir was written.

A Brief Sketch of Sanusi's Biography and His Work (*Tafsir Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*)

KH. Ahmad Sanusi (1888–1950) was a prominent Islamic scholar in early 20th-century Priangan, known for his contributions to religious education, Quranic interpretation, and national movements. As a kyai, he had established a *pesantren* after his education in Haramain. He later established another pesantren, *Syamsul 'Ulum*, in the Gunung Puyuh area of Sukabumi. This pesantren was founded during his house arrest, which prevented him from returning to his original pesantren.²⁵ Furthermore, in his work as an interpreter, he authored 14 books related to Quranic exegesis (*tafsir*). He also produced other religious books such as fiqh, Sufism, aqidah, ushul fiqh, nahwu, sharaf, and others.²⁶ Due to his prolific writing, Bruinessen recognized him as one of the three most influential authors in the Sundanese region.²⁷ Sanusi was also known for his role as a nationalist figure. His contribution can be seen from his participation in national organizations and movements. Some sources mention that he was actively involved in Al-Ittihadīyyah Al-Islāmiyyah (AIL), Peta (Defenders of the Fatherland), and served as a member of BPUPKI (Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence).²⁸ Sanusi's works and contributions demonstrated that he was deeply engaged with the challenges faced by his local community and broader societal issues. He not only focused on religious matters—which formed the foundation of his activities, education, and thought—but also expanded his concerns to the realm of the national movement.²⁹

Sanusi was also recognized as a cosmopolitan religious figure. His education and intellectual journey in Haramain shaped him into a scholar open to various developments, insights, and the progress of the Muslim world.³⁰ As Gellens explained, scholars who studied in Haramain generally had a more cosmopolitan outlook than those who studied in other cities.³¹ This is evident from Sanusi's broad perspectives on issues concerning the *ummah*. In *tafsir Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*, he not only addressed the challenges faced by Muslims in Indonesia but also compared the development of Muslim communities in various other countries.³² This ability reflects the internalization of his education and the experiences he encountered while in Mecca. This is also described by him in his tafsir:

²⁵ Saleh, "KH. Ahmad Sanusi dan Karya-Karyanya."

²⁶ Saleh.

²⁷ Hasan Husain Umar, "Al-Turath al-'Ilmi Li al-Islam Bi Indunisiyya: Dirasah Fi Tafsir Malja'al-Talibin Wa Tamassiyah al-Muslimin Li al-Shaikh al-Hajj Ahmad Sanusi," *Studia Islamika* 8, no. 1 (2001): 153–80.

²⁸ Zainul Milal Bizawie, *Masterpiece Islam Nusantara: Sanad Dan Jejaring Ulama-Santri, 1830-1945* (Tangerang Selatan: Pustaka Compass, 2016).

²⁹ Çoruh, "The Qur'an and Interpretation in the Classical Modernism: Tafsir Centric Approach of Muhammad 'Abduh."

³⁰ Nur'aeni, *Sosiologi Tafsir: Kritik Fenomena Bid'ah Dalam Tafsir Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimin Karya KH. Ahmad Sanusi*.

³¹ Sam I. Gellens, "The Search for Knowledge in Medieval Muslim Societies: A Comparative Approach," in *Muslim Travellers* (Routledge, 2013), 50–65.

³² Nur'aeni, *Sosiologi Tafsir: Kritik Fenomena Bid'ah Dalam Tafsir Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimin Karya KH. Ahmad Sanusi*.

Maka dengan berkoempoelnja oemat Islam dari segala bangsa dan dari segala pendjoeroe 'Alam di dalam satoe tempat jaitoe tanah Mekkah. Moemkinlah bagai tiap-tiap bangsa, mengetahoei akan segala perkara jang ada pada bangsa laen, dari pada hal ihwal perdagangan, pekerdjaan-pakerdjaan tangan, dan pertanian dan laen-laennya dari pada segala perkara jang bergoena dan jang berpaidah dan jang mengangkatkan akan deradatnya oemat Islam, dan kemoeljaannya dan kesempoernaannya di doenia dan di acherat.³³

[With Muslims from all nations and corners of the world gathering in one place—Mecca—each nation had the opportunity to learn from others about various aspects, including trade, labor, and agriculture. These exchanges encompassed all beneficial and valuable knowledge that contributed to the advancement, honor, and perfection of Muslims, both in this world and the Hereafter.]

As a kyai, he also possessed characteristics commonly associated with Islamic scholars. According to Mansur, kyai typically exhibits diligence, sharp perception, sensitivity to surrounding issues, broad and profound insight, trustworthiness, and respect. In general, these traits and values are shaped by the responsibilities a kyai must fulfill in shaping, managing, and overseeing the pesantren system.³⁴

Bruinessen noted that kyai who studied in Mecca were generally highly productive in writing books.³⁵ This aligns with Sanusi's scholarly work. Despite being imprisoned, he continued to produce numerous books. One of them is *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*. The full title of this tafsir is *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-Ālamīn*, which Sanusi interpreted as 'guiding all Muslims in interpreting the words of God, the Lord of all worlds'.³⁶ This tafsir was published monthly from October 1934 to June 1939, with 53 editions, covering Surah *al-Fātiḥah* to *al-Mā'idah* (5:35).

Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin stands out from Sanusi's other works due to its language choice, wide distribution, and the circumstances under which it was written. *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin* was written in the Malay language using the Latin script. The language used in this tafsir differs from Sanusi's other works, which were often written in Sundanese. This linguistic difference is believed to be an effort to expand the reach of Sanusi's ideas to a wider audience. Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that this tafsir was sold beyond Java and even outside Indonesia.³⁷ Another assumption is that writing this tafsir also served as a means for Sanusi to sustain himself during his detention in Sukabumi City, which prevented him from returning to his original pesantren. This is further supported by the fact that the tafsir was published in magazine format, printed regularly, and produced using modern printing technology. Additionally, within the tafsir itself, Sanusi acknowledged that the cost

³³ Ahmad Sanusi, *Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimin Fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-Ālamīn*, vol. 1 (Sukabumi: Type, Masdoeki, 1934).

³⁴ Fadlil Munawwar Manshur, "Ajaran Tasawuf Dalam Raudatul-Irfani Fima-Rifatil-Qur'an: Karya Kiai Haji Ahmad Sanusi; Analisis Semiotik Dan Resepsi" (Yogyakarta, Universitas Gadjah Mada, 1992).

³⁵ A. Ginanjar Sya'ban, *Mahakarya Islam Nusantara; Kitab, Naskah, Manuskrip Dan Korespondensi Ulama Nusantara* (Tangerang Selatan: Pustaka Compass, 2017).

³⁶ Sanusi, *Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimin Fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-Ālamīn*, 1934.

³⁷ Umar, "Al-Turath al-'Ilmi Li al-Islam Bi Indunisiyya."

of producing and publishing such works was relatively high at the time.³⁸

Beyond fulfilling his personal needs, Sanusi was driven by a strong motivation to serve his community through his tafsir. His social sensitivity is evident in several ways. Firstly, his choice of diction for the title of this tafsir, *Tamshiyyah*, reflects this motivation. *Sanusi himself interpreted Tamshiyyah as meaning 'acting.'*³⁹ This word was intended to signify that the tafsir he authored could serve as a guiding light for readers, helping them understand the Qur'an with explanations derived from other sources such as hadith, historical narratives, and arguments from the four madhabs. Thus, his tafsir aimed to provide solutions to the challenges faced by the Muslim community.

Secondly, Sanusi's sense of responsibility to remind fellow Muslims stemmed from both his spiritual devotion and his lived experiences. This awareness was certainly not only based on his relationship with God but also on the internalization factors he experienced and faced. Therefore, Koyre stated that an idea is born through a complex process, namely the accumulation of cultural changes, the interpreter's involvement and concern with his social world, and the interpreter's relationship with his God.⁴⁰

Third, Sanusi adopted a unique approach in his tafsir by incorporating Latin-script transliteration of the Qur'an, making it accessible to a broader audience. According to his admission, this transliteration was intended for those who were just beginning to study, read, and memorize the Qur'an.⁴¹ Sanusi's method of presenting tafsir was designed to be inclusive, addressing the needs of different groups. He sought to engage both children and adults. For adults proficient in reading and understanding the Qur'an, he provided extensive explanations, sometimes even digressing from the verse's immediate relevance. Meanwhile, for lay readers, he offered special guidance through transliteration and concise explanations in the form of *tafsiriyah* translation.⁴² This approach demonstrates that the interpreter's primary motivation was to ensure that the Qur'an could be understood by all segments of society—children and adults, laypeople and scholars alike. The three things above indicate that the motivation behind this tafsir product is related to the phenomenon faced by Sanusi. In other words, this tafsir is not distant from the lives of Muslims and can offer solutions to religious problems.

Tafsir and Islam Resurgence Narration

Fundamentally, the narrative of Islamic revival is both a response to a prolonged crisis and a catalyst for change. This phenomenon is not solely driven by global issues but also shaped by local dynamics. The causes of this revival can be categorized into three main factors. Firstly, the Islamic world has experienced a three-century-long crisis. According to Hamid, the *ummah* has reached its lowest point, plagued by poverty, economic inequality,

³⁸ This assumption was conveyed by Prof. Jajang A. Rohmana in the Lingkar Baca Nun #18 forum, organized by AIAT se-Indonesia, while discussing the book titled *Sociology of Tafsir (Critique of the Phenomenon of Bid'ah in Tafsir Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin by KH. Ahmad Sanusi)* on Friday, November 8, 2024.

³⁹ Sanusi, *Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimin Fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-'Ālāmīn*, 1934.

⁴⁰ Yehuda Elkana, "Alexandre Koyré: Between the History of Ideas and Sociology of Disembodied Knowledge," *History and Technology* 4, no. 1–4 (October 1987): 115–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07341518708581694>.

⁴¹ Sanusi, *Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimin Fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-'Ālāmīn*, 1934.

⁴² Sanusi.

political corruption, dictatorship, spiritual decline, moral degradation, and ignorance. This crisis, in essence, continues to persist today. Moreover, the Islamic world has yet to achieve dominance in science, economics, social affairs, and politics. Most Muslim-majority countries remain dependent on Western economic supremacy.⁴³

Second, the impact of 17th-century colonialism was profound, shaping the economic and political landscape of the Islamic world and ultimately sparking intellectual efforts toward revival. Eastern countries under Mamluk and Ottoman Turkish rule experienced tremendous upheaval. This upheaval resulted from the strong influence of Western countries and the persistent struggle to overcome stagnation and decline. Western imperialism weakened Islamic rule in multiple areas.⁴⁴ The Ottoman Empire, Egypt, India, and Iran faced severe economic struggles, forcing them into debt repayment to Western nations. Similarly, the Mughal Empire declined as Western powers established schools focused on translating and spreading their ideologies.⁴⁵ Consequently, it is not surprising that this period witnessed exegetes proposing concepts of Islamic revival, as exemplified by Shaykh Walī Allāh ad-Dihlawī in *Fauz al-Kabīr*.⁴⁶

Thirdly The emergence of modernism in the 19th and 20th centuries brought significant intellectual and social shifts, redefining traditional beliefs and positioning the West as the dominant force in global history. This phenomenon appeared to contradict itself, challenging traditional, old, and archaic ideas. This Western mental transformation that occurred alongside the Age of Enlightenment sought a new alignment with modern industrial experiences and values. The development of contemporary trinity (humanism, secularism, and democracy), along with changes in various fields such as science, politics, architecture, morals, art, and aesthetics, as well as the intellectual transformation of modernism in economic and social categories, contributed to social and political stability. Additionally, administrative imperialism and colonialism strengthened the West's position at the center of history. It was also characterized by the freedom to seek salvation in science and not in religion. Therefore, according to Albayrak, religion is the most eroded aspect of this era. The privileges of religion are being lost in society and knowledge and human rationality are replacing it. Modernism also led individuals to behave like "little gods," exploiting and depleting natural resources for economic gain and power. In fact, the Western world encountered this problem earlier than the Islamic world.⁴⁷

Based on the causal factors above, it can be said that the Muslim world is in a critical condition, heavily dependent on Western social, economic, and political systems. The stagnation of scientific progress, coupled with the dominance of Western knowledge that suppresses intellectual diversity, has left the Islamic world far behind. The ongoing crisis,

⁴³ Hamid, "Islamic Resurgence An Overview of Causal Factors, a Review of 'Ummatic' Linkage."

⁴⁴ Hamim and Abdillah, "Renaissance of Islam."

⁴⁵ Ismail Albayrak, "Modernity, Its Impact on Muslim World and General Characteristics of 19–20th-Century Revivalist–Reformists' Re-Reading of the Qur'an," *Religions* 13, no. 5 (May 2022): 424, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050424>.

⁴⁶ Vasileios Syros, "An Early Modern South Asian Thinker on the Rise and Decline of Empires: Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi, the Mughals, and the Byzantines," *Journal of World History* 23, no. 4 (December 2012): 793–840, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2012.0138>.

⁴⁷ Albayrak, "Modernity, Its Impact on Muslim World and General Characteristics of 19–20th-Century Revivalist–Reformists' Re-Reading of the Qur'an."

along with colonial domination, has heightened the urgency to break free from Western imperialism. This pressing need for revival gave rise to various Islamic movements. This movement later evolved into religious reform initiatives across various countries. For instance, Jamāluddīn al-Afghani advocated for political reform. Hasan al-Banna introduced the concept of Islamic universality in all aspects of life. Meanwhile, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha emphasized the necessity of returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah.⁴⁸

The agenda of returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah is a response to the reformers' belief that the two sources of Islamic law can guide and revive the ummah if interpreted by the spirit of the times. These pioneering reformers aimed to build a generation that understood Islam with the right understanding and recognized that the Qur'an and Sunnah provide guidance for various aspects of human life, including education, social, economic, and political. Therefore, a new approach to rereading the Qur'an is necessary to establish its relevance to the current reality. According to Abduh, the existence of a new approach to interpreting the Qur'an does not mean negating the interpretations written previously. However, the previous interpretations were considered to have failed to present the essence of the Qur'an as a book of guidance.⁴⁹

The reformers' recognition of a new approach to understanding the Qur'an was influenced by Western thought and modernism.⁵⁰ Some of the main characteristics of the reading of the Qur'an in this modern period include: First, the Qur'an as the highest scientific discipline. Abduh realized that the classical period relied more on the disciplines of fiqh and kalam. These two disciplines did not have much effect on changing the situation of Muslims. He believes that change requires something deeper and must be in the mind of every Muslim. According to him, the Qur'an deserves a position more than any other scholarly discipline.⁵¹ Therefore, this period placed more emphasis on the scientific discipline of tafsir. In addition, efforts to interpret the Qur'an are not limited to certain individuals or groups. Modernist exegetes emphasize that anyone has the right to understand the Qur'an because the interpretation of the Qur'an cannot be monopolized by scholars or religious figures.

Second, scholars interpret the Qur'an by using reason and modern science to gain a deeper understanding. The relationship between religion and science has played an important role for modern Muslim thinkers such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Abduh, and Said Nursi. For example, Abduh emphasized the importance of reason and a positive approach to science in Islam. This is because the Qur'an calls on Muslims to contemplate Allah's power in the creation of the universe. From this perspective, Abduh believed that Muslims should be proficient in the sciences developed in Western countries to compete with them. He also asserted that Allah created two books for human beings; the nature He created and the Qur'an He revealed. In this way, one could say that the Qur'an and science

⁴⁸ Haziyah Hussin and Sohirin M Solihin, "Manhaj Haraki in the Revival of Quranic Exegesis," *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 16, no. 1 (2013): 9–17, <https://doi.org/10.5829/idosi.mejsr.2013.16.01.11652>.

⁴⁹ Norbani B. Ismail, "The Quranic Exegesis, Reformism, and Women in Twentieth Century Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 24, no. 3 (2017): 469–501, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v24i3.5187>.

⁵⁰ Çoruh, "The Qur'ān and Interpretation in the Classical Modernism: Tafsir Centric Approach of Muhammad 'Abduh."

⁵¹ Hakan Çoruh, *Modern Interpretation of the Qur'an: The Contribution of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15349-6>.

are complementary. Abduh further stated that he believed the true spirit of Islam is tolerant of scientific inquiry. As a result, he sought to integrate the discoveries of modern science into his interpretation of the Qur'an.⁵²

Third, some scholars adopted a skeptical approach to hadith to critically assess its authenticity. The emergence of classical orientalist criticism of hadith has influenced modernist figures such as Ahmaduddin, Cheragh Ali, Parwiz, Mashriqi, and others, who hold negative views of hadith. For instance, Mashriqi believed that the role of hadith in interpreting the Qur'an was either incompatible or unbalanced. This skeptical attitude was also shared by Abduh, who accepted only mutawatir (consecutive) hadith in interpreting and deriving legal rulings (istinbat). Similarly, Ahmad Amin was more critical of hadith due to the proliferation of narrations, which led many scholars to question their authenticity. His criticisms of hadith issues were numerous, such as his objection to research that focused solely on the reputation of narrators, treated companions equally regardless of their role, and involved theological controversies, like Sunnis rejecting hadith from Shi'a supporters and vice versa. Therefore, Ahmad Amin argued that traditional hadith criticism was insufficient and that modern textual analysis was necessary to address the vast number of hadith.⁵³

Fourth, Islam relies on ijtihad (independent legal reasoning). Modernist scholars recognized that the monopoly on Qur'anic interpretation and the high standards of ijtihad contributed to the loss of Muslim creativity, leading to stagnation in intellectual thought. This stagnation prevented Muslims from effectively responding to the challenges and decline of the Islamic world.⁵⁴ The concept of *taklid* (blind imitation) upheld by orthodox Islam hindered the development of Islamic society, shari'ah, and education. Therefore, ijtihad must be accessible to everyone, as the Qur'an affirms the importance of reason and the optimization of intellectual capacity. Through ijtihad, it is hoped that religious law can serve as the foundation for various aspects of life and provide solutions to the problems that arise in society.⁵⁵

Islamic Revival Rooted in Qur'an, Social Life, and Spirituality: Lessons from Tafsir *Tamshiyah al-Muslimin*

Albayrak's description of the traditionalist ulama during a time of modernization is crucial, as it highlights the experience of the tragicomic ulama.⁵⁶ The term "tragicomic" refers to the complex relationship between the traditional ulama, the modernist movement, and the process of modernization in the Muslim world. While the modernist ulama was highly

⁵² Hakan Çoruh, "Relationship Between Religion and Science in the Muslim Modernism," *Theology and Science* 18, no. 1 (January 2020): 152–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2019.1710355>.

⁵³ Ines Peta, "Ahmad Amin's Rationalist Approach to the Qur'an and Sunnah," *Religions* 13, no. 3 (March 2022): 234, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13030234>.

⁵⁴ Ahmet T. Kuru, *Islam, Authoritarianism, and Underdevelopment (a Global and Historical Comparison)* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

⁵⁵ Said Ahmad Sarhan Lubis, "Renewal of Ijtihad in the Modern Era: Historical Background and Current Developments," *IJRS: International Journal Reglement and Society* 3, no. 2 (2022): 107–15, <https://doi.org/10.55357/ijrs.v3i2.223>.

⁵⁶ Albayrak, "Modernity, Its Impact on Muslim World and General Characteristics of 19–20th-Century Revivalist–Reformists' Re-Reading of the Qur'an."

appreciated by the public during this time, modernization simultaneously weakened the authority of the traditionalist ulama. Additionally, the traditionalist ulama faced a major dilemma: they had to navigate the challenges of modernization while preserving Islamic tradition. This tension often led to resistance. Interestingly, there exists a paradox among traditional scholars who rhetorically reject modernity but, at the same time, embrace modern technology. This phenomenon complicates the categorization of ulama into traditionalist and modernist typologies.

As someone born in a pesantren and a traditional environment, Sanusi had deep roots in traditional thought. However, due to the powerful currents of modernization, colonialism, and the revivalist movement in the Sundanese region, along with the exposure to renewal thinking during his studies in Mecca, Sanusi developed a unique blend of movement and thought. Although his foundation was grounded in strong traditionalist roots, it is not uncommon for researchers to categorize Sanusi as a modernist ulama. For instance, Dadang Darmawan includes Sanusi in the category of modernist scholars who wrote tafsir in the early 20th century, along with other modernist mufassirs, due to his efforts in transliterating and interpreting the Qur'an.⁵⁷ Similarly, Yayan Suryana considers Sanusi a progressive traditionalist because of his attempts to harmonize Qur'anic verses with the social realities faced by the people.⁵⁸ Upon closer examination, however, it becomes clear that Sanusi's thinking was predominantly traditional. For example, his view on jihad was limited to the teachings of the four madhhabs, he opposed the translation of the Qur'an and believed that laypeople should only follow *taklid*—key traditionalist stances.

Sanusi's thoughts on the revival of Islam are unique. As mentioned earlier, the narrative of Islamic revival was primarily promoted by revivalists. However, even as a traditionalist, Sanusi addressed the issue. While he did not directly discuss the efforts of Islamic revival, the theme of motivating the ummah emerges in his tafsir. This study analyzes Sanusi's perspective on Islamic revival, which is linked to three key aspects: the Qur'an, social issues, and spiritual matters. These themes are evident in Sanusi's explanation of QS. Al-Baqarah: 2/134.

a. Qur'an

Sanusi emphasized that one of the most powerful elements in awakening the ummah is to be guided by the Qur'an. The Qur'an can provide direction to Muslims regarding the source of happiness and accident, advice, explanation of the law, and guidance to the right path so that it can raise humans to a perfect degree.⁵⁹ However, according to Sanusi, Muslims at that time turned away from the demands of Islam itself, namely the Qur'an. As he stated:

Sekali-kali mereka itoe tiada ada kepanasaran akan kebenarannja, malah

⁵⁷ Dadang Darmawan, "Pengaruh Pembaharuan Terhadap Perkembangan Tafsir Di Indonesia Tahun 1900-1945," *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 7, no. 2 (2022): 111–26, <https://doi.org/10.15575/al-bayan.v7i2.25193>.

⁵⁸ Yayan Suryana, "Dialektika Modernis Dan Tradisionalis Pemikiran Hukum Islam Di Indonesia (Pemikiran Hukum Islam KH. Ahmad Sanusi 1888-1950)," *Al-Qanun: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pembaharuan Hukum Islam* 11, no. 1 Juni (2008): 44–71, <https://doi.org/10.15642/alqanun.2008.11.1>.

⁵⁹ Ahmad Sanusi, *Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimin Fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-'Ālamīn*, vol. 13 (Sukabumi: Druk/Type al-Ittihad, 1935).

sebahagian besar dari pada goeroe2 atau kiai2 di Indonesia haramkan akan artikan Qoer'an dan Hadits, dan sangat inkar, dan bentji jang hampir koefoerkan atas orang2 jang fahamkan Qoer'an dan Hadits, dan djalankan atas segala jang tertoejoe dengan dia, sebab mereka itoe tetapkan bahoesanja fahamkan Qoer'an dan Hadits dan djalankannja itoe kelakoean moedjtahid, maka inilah jang mendjadi pongkol kesesatan dan kekeliroean dan ketjilakaan kerana patwa2 goeroe2 itoe, sekali-kali keloeear dari pada alesan Qoer'an dan Hadits dan patwa2 oelama, adapoen keloeearnja dari pada Qoer'an jang menoedjoekan atas bahoesanja Qoer'an itu wadajib diartikan, dan difahamkan dan dipakai oleh sekalian oemmat Islam.⁶⁰

[They are not curious about the truth. Most of the teachers and clerics in Indonesia forbid interpreting the Qur'an and Hadith, and are very averse to, and almost disbelieving of, those who understand the Qur'an and Hadith and do things about them, because they have decided that understanding the Qur'an and Hadith and doing things about them is the behavior of mujtahids. So this is the center of misguidance, error, and misfortune because the fatwas of these teachers have been taken away from the basis of the Qur'an and Hadith and the fatwas of the scholars. As for the Qur'an, it indicates that it must be interpreted, understood, and put into practice by every Muslim.]

Sanusi added that Muslims in general are obliged to understand the Qur'an, whether they are ordinary people, mujtahids, or others. Without being understood, the Qur'an will not show anything. By relying on QS. Ali Imrān/3: 110 and 139, Sanusi realized that Muslims were in a concerning condition because they did not understand the instructions of the Qur'an, which ordered them to excel in all fields of both religion and worldly life. Therefore, Sanusi ventured to produce several tafsirs based on his religious knowledge, Arabic language, tafsir tools, and the phenomena he faced at that time.⁶¹

Sanusi's view regarding the necessity of understanding the Qur'an was unique. On the one hand, he criticized the understanding of traditionalist scholars who considered that people who interpreted the Qur'an claim to be mujtahids.⁶² Sanusi's criticism also differentiated him from other traditionalist scholars. In general, traditionalist scholars view translating and even interpreting as taboo. They saw that the strict scientific standards and credibility that must be mastered and owned by an exegete make it impossible for anyone to translate and interpret the Qur'an. Sanusi's effort to interpret the Qur'an received diverse feedback and criticism from traditionalists because he was considered to have dared to do ijtihad through his tafsir. As quipped by KH. Uyek Abdullah stated that he was surprised by Sanusi, who claimed to be an alim but dared to interpret and transliterate the Qur'an.⁶³

It is this view of the traditional scholars that makes the ummah show the opposite of

⁶⁰ Sanusi.

⁶¹ Sanusi.

⁶² Ahmad Sanusi, *Tamshiyah Al-Muslimin Fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-Ālamīn*, vol. 13 (Sukabumi: Druk/Typ. Al-Ittihad, 1935).

⁶³ Dadang Darmawan, "Ortodoksi Tafsir: Respons Ulama Terhadap Tafsir Tamsijjatoel-Moeslimien Karya KH Ahmad Sanoesi" (Disertasi, Jakarta, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2009), <https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/6968>.

what the Qur'an describes regarding the best of the ummah.⁶⁴ Sanusi stated that what causes people to be the opposite picture is because they do not make the Qur'an the basis of life learning. Whereas in many verses, the Qur'an encourages its people to learn all the sciences. Therefore, in interpreting the Qur'an, he explained many aspects such as tarikh, fiqh, social science, geography, medicine, and so on. Thus, Sanusi had a different choice from other traditionalist scholars.

On the other hand, Sanusi also seemed to respond positively to the idea of returning to the Qur'an, which was used as jargon by reformers. Similar to what Federspiel said, efforts to interpret and translate the Qur'an can be a bridge for modernists and traditionalists who do not master Arabic to understand the verses of the Qur'an.⁶⁵ Sanusi presented an interpretation of the Qur'an that can be understood by various groups both from the Sundanese region through his tafsir works *Rauḍah al-'Irfān*, *Maljā al-Ṭālibīn*, and other tafsir works in Sundanese, as well as targeting a wider audience using Malay with *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimīn* tafsir.

Another positive response was Sanusi's effort to interpret the Qur'an in his era. This can be seen from his views on the need for Muslims to make the Qur'an the center of human contemplation, the basis of Muslim life in society, the solver of people's problems, the basis of human relations with others and their times, the basis for using reason so that humans can live safely and happily in this world and the hereafter, and as a guide to advancing the ummah in politics, economics, education, and so on.⁶⁶

Sanusi's approach in interpreting the Qur'an which considered the spirit of the times was similar to that initiated by Muhammad 'Abduh. Muhammad 'Abduh endeavored to create harmonization between the Qur'an and modernism through a tafsir approach that emphasized rational analysis. He believed that Islam could be in harmony with modernity as long as there was an effort to revitalize Islamic teachings to make them relevant to the challenges of the times, including the dominance of Western civilization. In his tafsir, especially through *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 'Abduh showed how reason could act as a partner to revelation in understanding the message of the Qur'an. This approach not only aimed to harmonize Islamic teachings with modern science but also to encourage Muslims to benefit from the positive elements of Western civilization if they did not contradict Islamic principles. By emphasizing the relevance of the Qur'an in everyday life, 'Abduh sought to establish Islam as a progressive religion capable of providing solutions to modern challenges.⁶⁷

Sanusi's approach to renewal was reflected in the teaching of the Qur'an at the pesantren he founded. This was evident in Syamsul Ulum pesantren, where Qur'anic studies

⁶⁴ QS. Ali Imran/3: 110.

⁶⁵ Howard M. Federspiel, "An Introduction to Qur'anic Commentaries in Contemporary Southeast Asia," *The Muslim World* 81, no. 2 (1991): 149–61, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.1991.tb03519.x>.

⁶⁶ Nur'aeni, *Sosiologi Tafsir: Kritik Fenomena Bid'ah Dalam Tafsir Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimīn Karya KH. Ahmad Sanusi*.

⁶⁷ Ibrahim Ilyasu Adam, "Islamic Modernism and Tafsir in Nineteenth Century Egypt: A Critical Analysis of Muhammad Abduh's Exegesis," *Journal of Quranic Sciences and Research* 4, no. 1 (2023): 39–49, <https://doi.org/10.30880/jqsr.2023.04.01.006>.

were introduced at all levels, from beginner to advanced.⁶⁸ In contrast, most traditional pesantren reserved Qur'anic and tafsir studies exclusively for senior students. Furthermore, according to Bruinessen, Sanusi's decision to interpret the Qur'an in Indonesian was influenced by modernist thought. Traditionalist scholars, on the other hand, typically used Arabic in their interpretations to maintain the perceived honor and prestige of the text.⁶⁹

Sanusi's engagement with reformist ideas serves as evidence of the significant contribution of the Middle Eastern intellectual network to Islamic civilization and thought in Nusantara.⁷⁰ With a background of studying in Haramain, Sanusi was directly exposed to concepts of renewal. This is further demonstrated by his brief membership in the Sarikat Islam organization.⁷¹ While he embraced some modernist ideas, he also criticized them, particularly regarding Qur'anic interpretation.

Kerana keadaannya pengatjau agama itoe, lantaran ia membawa Qoer'an dan Hadits jang memahmnya tidak menoeroet sebagaimana jg dimaksoedkan oleh Allah Rosoeloelloh, maka mendjadi ratjoenlah kepada orang-orang awam di dalam zaman achir ini, berhati-hati dari tertipoe atau tertarik dengan perkataan-perkataan pengatjau dan penjesat di dalam agama jg ia selaloe membawa Qoer'an dan Hadits dengan mema'nakan dengan ma'na jang berselisihan dari ma'na jg didatangkan oleh oelama.⁷²

[This is because they interpret the Qur'an in a way that does not align with the intentions of Allah and His Messenger. Be cautious of being misled or deceived by religious disruptors and misguiders who frequently cite the Qur'an and Hadith with interpretations that contradict those of the scholars].

Sanusi criticized modernists for their unrestricted approach to interpreting the Qur'an without sufficient scholarly tools, particularly their lack of Arabic proficiency. As Bruinessen explained, reformers often relied on translations when interpreting the Qur'an.⁷³ According to Sanusi, this was what makes reformers often wrong and violate previous scholars. According to Sanusi, this was the reason reformers frequently misinterpreted the text and disregarded the views of earlier scholars. He also argued that modernists distorted Islamic law, forbidding what was halal and permitting what was haram. Sanusi believed that proficiency in Arabic was an essential prerequisite for understanding Islamic teachings, as Arabic is the language of the Qur'an and Hadith, without which comprehending Shari'ah is impossible.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Nur'aeni, *Sosiologi Tafsir: Kritik Fenomena Bid'ah Dalam Tafsir Tamshiyah Al-Muslimin Karya KH. Ahmad Sanusi*.

⁶⁹ Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren Dan Tarekat* (Yogyakarta: Gading Publishing, 2012).

⁷⁰ Ahmad Nabil Amir, "The Influence of Muhammad Abduh in The Nusantara: From Qur'anic Exegesis to Islamic Reform Movement," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 2 (December 2022): 260–78, <https://doi.org/10.18196/afkaruna.v18i2.10282>.

⁷¹ Sulasman Sulasman, "Kyai Haji Ahmad Sanusi: Berjuang Dari Pesantren Hingga Parlemen," *Jurnal Sejarah Lontar* Vol 5, no. 2 (2008), <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/304722232.pdf>.

⁷² Ahmad Sanusi, *Tamshiyah Al-Muslimin Fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-Ālamīn*, vol. 42 (Sukabumi: Druk/Type al-Ittihad, 1937).

⁷³ Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren Dan Tarekat*.

⁷⁴ Sanusi, *Tamshiyah Al-Muslimin Fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-Ālamīn*, 1935.

Sanusi's criticism appeared reasonable, as Abduh's conception of reason about revelation is quite problematic. As Adam explains, the unrestricted use of human reasoning in interpreting the Qur'an can lead to extreme logical conclusions. Therefore, integrating classical interpretations with modern issues allows for a more holistic understanding, as neither can be fully comprehended in isolation.⁷⁵ This aligns with Sanusi's approach, as he considered the classical works of earlier scholars to be the most authoritative references. A closer look at Sanusi's interpretation reveals numerous explicit references to various works of tafsir, fiqh, tasawuf, sirah, and other Islamic disciplines.⁷⁶

Sanusi himself emphasized that he was not a mujtahid with the right to interpret the Qur'an, as only mujtahids possess that authority. He admitted that he had not yet met the qualifications to become a mujtahid. Therefore, the interpretation he presented was his attempt to convey the meaning of the Qur'an by incorporating the opinions of earlier scholars, as stated in his book *Maljā al-Ṭālibīn*:

Ari ieu tafsir Qur'an kalawan basa Sunda dipindahkeun ku jisim kuring tina tafsir-tafsir anu mu'tamad, mudah-mudahan jadi panungtun ka jalma-jalma anu sapertos jisim kuring bodona.⁷⁷

[This Qur'an interpretation was in Sundanese, transcribed by myself from recognized interpretations, hopefully serving as a guide for people like me who are foolish.]

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that Sanusi had his own standards regarding who can understand and interpret the Qur'an. For Sanusi, understanding and interpreting the Qur'an are two distinct processes. While understanding and reflecting on the Qur'an are obligatory for every believer, interpretation requires the use of tafsir tools, proficiency in Arabic, and other qualifications that must be met by a mufassir. According to Sanusi, only four categories truly understand the meaning and interpretation of the Qur'an: Allah, the Messenger, the mujtahids, and those who understand the Arabic language.⁷⁸

b. Social Life

Sanusi addressed several key issues concerning the social progress of Muslims. These included the study of social interaction, the unity of Muslims, and deliberation based on equality. Like other interpreters attuned to modernization, Sanusi observed that Muslims were in a state of weakness, inferiority, and humiliation. Based on his explanation in *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimīn*, one of the causes of that weakness was

Terboekti keadaan oemmat Islam di dalam zaman achir ini, terbahagi atas doea bahagia, satoe bahagian toekang agama, dan pemimpin2, seoempama kiai2, dan goeroe2, dan santri2, maka mereka itoe sekali-kali tiada memperhatikan tentang pergaulan hidoep oemmat Islam, dan tiada memikirkan akan kemadjoeannja, hanja mereka itoe memadai dengan doedoek di atas koelit domba atau di atas tiker atau sedjadah, sekali-kali mereka itoe tiada memeriksa akan keadaan

⁷⁵ Adam, "Islamic Modernism and Tafsir in Nineteenth Century Egypt."

⁷⁶ Ahmad Sanusi, *Malja' At-Ṭālibīn Fī Tafsīr Kalām Rabb al-Ālamīn*, vol. 1 (Batavia: Maṭba'ah Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah Hārūn bin 'Alī Ibrāhīm, 1931).

⁷⁷ Sanusi.

⁷⁸ Sanusi.

djoendjoengan Islam jaitoe N. Moehammad serta sekalian Shohabatnja, padahal beliau selaloe bekerdja memadjoekan dan meninggikan agama dan pergaulan hidoep dengan berdjalan ke timoer, ke barat, ke oetara, ke selatan.⁷⁹

[The state of the Muslim Ummah in these latter days is divided into two parts. One section comprises religious leaders, such as clerics teachers, and students. They ignore the Muslim community and do not think about its progress. They only sit on sheepskins or mats or prayer mats. They do not pay attention to the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, even though he was always working to promote and elevate religion and social life by traveling to the East, West, North, and South.]

Building on this phenomenon, Sanusi argued that Muslims, particularly religious scholars, should be aware of societal challenges and actively contribute to both religious and worldly progress by addressing religious and economic issues more broadly. As demonstrated by Prophet Muhammad and the caliphs, Islam expanded to one-third of the world within half a century. Through economic expansion, the Arabic language became widespread and was adopted in various regions, including Morocco, Tunisia, the Maghreb, the Levant, Hindustan, Mongolia, and beyond.⁸⁰

Sanusi's awareness of the decline of the Muslim community was not solely based on his personal experiences but also on historical sources he studied. He believed that this decline began in the 8th century AH due to an imbalance in knowledge. The community focused primarily on worship while neglecting other fields, such as the social sciences, which are essential for a well-rounded society. Therefore, Sanusi frequently emphasized that Muslims should master the science of social interaction, an area in which they lagged significantly behind non-Islamic nations at the time.

Sanusi's assertion that Muslims must equip themselves with knowledge of social interactions was a response to the dominance of Western imperialism at the time. The modernization era of the 19th and early 20th centuries brought significant revolutions in various fields, including technological advancements, global capitalism—marked by the rise of banks and major international companies—a surge in scientific knowledge in medicine, physics, and chemistry, as well as innovations in electricity. Additionally, political transformations, Western colonial expansion, global dominance, and the spread of education across Islamic countries further solidified the West's central position in civilization, leading to the decline of the Muslim community. Furthermore, the colonial rule over Indonesia severely restricted the movement of Muslims and reinforced Western dominance in social, economic, political, and religious aspects.⁸¹

Although Western progress is evident in all fields, none of it would have been possible without scientific modernization. As Sanusi highlighted in his interpretation, Muslims should actively pursue knowledge in various disciplines, including engineering (such as structural

⁷⁹ Sanusi, *Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimīn Fī Tafsīr Kalām Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 1935.

⁸⁰ Sanusi.

⁸¹ Albayrak, "Modernity, Its Impact on Muslim World and General Characteristics of 19–20th-Century Revivalist–Reformists' Re-Reading of the Qur'an."

design, warehouse construction, factories, shipbuilding, and railways), textile production (weaving and sewing), agriculture, aerodynamics, astronomy, electrical engineering, mining, marine science, chemistry, mechanics, and trade. He also emphasized the importance of acquiring other sciences that contribute to societal well-being. Through that knowledge, Sanusi stated:

Maka apabila oemmat Islam telah mempoenjai ilmoe² yang terseboet itoe, maka di sitoelah oemmat Islam menjadi "Chojro oemmatin" (sebaik-baiknya oemmat) di doenia, dan oemmat Islam sekarang itoe memang soenji dari pada ilmoe² itoe, maka tentoe oemmat Islam boekan "Chojro Oemmatin", akan tetapi "Sjarro oemmatin" tegasnja sedjelek²nja oemmat, sehina²nja, serendah²nja dan semelarat²nja oeammat. Dan mereka itoe djaoeh dari pada oendang²nja dan dari pada wetnja, jalah dari Qoer'an.⁸²

[If Muslims had the sciences mentioned, then of course Muslims would be "khaira ummatin" (the best of the people in the world), and Muslims today are indeed devoid of these sciences. So of course, Muslims are not "khaira ummatin", but "syarra ummatin", that is, the worst of the ummah, the lowest of the ummah. The lowest of the ummah. And they are far from its laws and the Qur'an].

Based on the explanation above, Sanusi had a clear understanding of the root causes behind the crisis that led to the decline of the Muslim community. His views share similarities with those of Tantawi Jauhari (1862–1940), a modernist exegete from Egypt. Both emphasized the importance of modernizing knowledge to help Muslims adapt to the realities of modernization.

Similar to Sanusi, Tantawi Jauhari's idea of interpreting the Qur'an through a scientific approach was driven by the decline of the Muslim community, the West's advancement following direct contact with Muslims during the Crusades, and his admiration for the scientific discoveries in the Qur'an made by non-Muslims. The basis of Jauhari's ideas regarding the Qur'an and science is⁸³

1. Muslims are commanded to understand knowledge to recognize the power and grace of Allah.
2. The Qur'an contains everything to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter. Thus, the Qur'an can serve as a guide for the revival of the community.
3. Nature is the best tool to know God.
4. The failure of legal experts and interpreters to capture the scientific and modern aspects of the verses of the Qur'an.
5. The failure of scholars to explain verses from a legal/fiqh perspective that neglects psychological and/or sociological aspects.

Therefore, Jauhari frequently highlights the causes of the Muslim community's decline and proposes ways to develop their skills through his interpretations. He also

⁸² Sanusi, *Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimin Fī Tafṣīr Kalām Rabb al-Ālamīn*, 1937.

⁸³ Majid Daneshgar, *Tanṭāwī Jawharī and the Qur'ān: Tafṣīr and Social Concerns in the Twentieth Century*, Routledge Studies in the Qur'ān (London New York: Routledge, 2018).

stresses that acquiring knowledge is a fundamental duty of Muslims to elevate the status of the Islamic world. The shared perspectives of Sanusi and Jauhari stem from their direct encounters with colonialism and the scientific advancements in their respective countries.⁸⁴

In the context of Indonesia, Sanusi realized that the knowledge that must be mastered by Muslims must also be supported by unity among themselves. Without unity, the Muslim community will remain in weakness, misery, and disgrace.⁸⁵ He also realized that the cause of the decline of the ummah is the division and hatred among fellow Muslims. The phenomenon of conflicts among Muslims was indeed quite turbulent at that time. For example, the conflict between modernist and traditionalist groups is depicted by Federspiel⁸⁶ and De Beer⁸⁷ both Muhammadiyah and Persis, as representatives of the modernist group, share similar views in *Ijtihad*. For both organizations, the obligation to engage in *ijtihad* is not restricted to scholars or those proficient in interpreting religious texts; even laypeople are encouraged to practice *ijtihad*. In contrast, traditionalists believe that only scholars can serve as religious authorities, while laypeople must follow their guidance without requiring further justification.

The phenomenon of *ijtihad*, as discussed by Eliraz⁸⁸ extends beyond religious issues to encompass social and political matters. According to Eliraz, *ijtihad* involves both knowledge and power. Traditionalists have long controlled religious authority in society, so the modernist doctrine, which allows anyone to seek the truth, poses a direct challenge to their authority.

Conflicts, as Sanusi acknowledged, are a natural part of human interaction. In his interpretation of QS. Hūd/11: 118-119, he explained that humans often experience conflict, making differences inevitable. Allah has designed diversity in religion, and humans are not meant to be the same in all beliefs. Appreciating the diversity of tendencies, interests, and social needs among people is essential for Muslims, as every individual has unique characteristics. Sanusi emphasized the importance of fostering unity and respecting differences among religions. Unfortunately, these differences often lead to mutual hatred and division. As stated by Sanusi, recorded in his commentary:

Dan keadaan oemmat Islam dari pada bahagian golongan jang menoentoet pengetahoean pergaoelan hidoep tiada soeka akoer serta bahagian kaom agama malahan seling bentji satoe sama lain, sehingga kaom agama tergelintjir dari pada pergaoelan hidoep jang sedjoedojernya, dan kaom pergaoelan hidoep tergelintjir dari pada agama islam achirnya roegi dan tjilaka, melarat, hina, lemah kedoeanja.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Daneshgar.

⁸⁵ Sanusi, *Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimin Fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 1937.

⁸⁶ Howard M. Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology in the Emerging Indonesian State: The Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), 1923 to 1957*, vol. 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

⁸⁷ Peter Riddell, "Schools of Islamic Thought in Southeast Asia," July 17, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.31124/advance.8868515.v1>.

⁸⁸ Giora Eliraz, "The Islamic Reformist Movement in the Malay-Indonesia World in the First Four Decades of the 20th Century: Insights Gained from a Comparative Look at Egypt," *Studia Islamika* 9, no. 2 (2002), <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v9i2.666>.

⁸⁹ Sanusi, *Tamshiyyah Al-Muslimin Fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 1935.

[And the state of the Muslim Ummah requires knowledge of social life not getting along and even hating each other so that the religious people slip from the real social life and the social life slips from the religion of Islam. In the end, both are lost and wretched, poor, despised, and weak.]

Building on this understanding, Sanusi emphasized that Muslims should not harbor hatred, grudges, or envy, and must submit to Allah in all matters. He stressed the importance of prioritizing deliberation, mutual respect, and cooperation, ensuring that Muslims avoid insulting one another. Fundamentally, all humans are equal in the eyes of Allah, with their knowledge, deeds, and character serving as the only distinctions.⁹⁰

c. Spirituality

Sufism has played a significant role in the Islamization process in Indonesia, deeply influencing the consciousness and behaviors of Indonesian Muslims. It has had a particularly strong impact on traditionalist communities, who have embraced it through various practices. As Johns and Woodward⁹¹ noted, Sufi teachings and practices are closely linked to the pesantren tradition. From these pesantren, Sufi concepts—such as self-awareness of divine matters, striving for personal perfection, and respect for saints—spread to rural areas, where they blended with local forms of Islam, adapting to different times and places.⁹²

The spread of various Sufi practices and concepts within pesantren and village communities often led to teachings deemed deviant by some scholars. For instance, Sanusi observed that some religious teachers were promoting misguided Sufi concepts to their students. This was exemplified in the misinterpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah/2:29, which some scholars understood as a command to seek happiness, glory, and wealth in both this world and the hereafter.⁹³

Sanusi was confronted with a context in which religious teachers of his time imparted teachings he considered deviant. These included: (1) obligatory asceticism through the renunciation of worldly matters, (2) the requirement of contentment, patience, and trust in God, which entailed accepting sustenance as it comes without striving for improvement, (3) the view that one should not desire worldly things, as they are considered despicable and sinful, and (4) the belief that one must become poor and destitute to attain spiritual purity. It is based on the evidence:

الدنيا سجن المؤمنين وجنة الكافرين

"The world is a prison for the believers and a paradise for the disbelievers."⁹⁴

In Sanusi's interpretation, he argued that the religious teachers who advocated these values were destroyers and deceivers of religion, contributing to the community's decline.

⁹⁰ Sanusi, *Tamshiyah Al-Muslimin Fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 1935.

⁹¹ Julia Day Howell, "Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 3 (2001).

⁹² Ulvah Nur'aeni, *Sosiologi Tafsir; Kritik Fenomena Bid'ah Dalam Tafsir Tamshiyah Al-Muslimin Karya KH. Ahmad Sanusi* (Publica Institute Jakarta, 2020).

⁹³ Ahmad Sanusi, *Tamshiyah Al-Muslimin Fi Tafsir Kalām Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, vol. 4 (Sukabumi: Druk/Typ. Al-Ittihad, 1935).

⁹⁴ Sanusi.

According to him, these teachings were often used to cover up their own laziness and unwillingness to engage in productive work. Sanusi clarified that *zuhud* (asceticism) does not mean completely abandoning the world, but rather not allowing one's heart to become attached to worldly matters in a way that hinders worshipping God. As for *qana'ah* (contentment), it means being satisfied with what one has achieved and not envying others' possessions. Patience, in Sanusi's view, does not imply weakness or neglect of the world, but rather the restraint of one's desires for unpleasant things and the elimination of complaints. Finally, *tawakkal* (reliance on God) involves placing one's trust fully in Allah, while still fulfilling one's worldly duties.⁹⁵

In *Tafsir Tamshiyyah al-Muslimin*, two significant interpretations are offered regarding the world for believers and disbelievers. First, even if a believer is rich and noble in this world, their happiness cannot compare to the grace and rewards they will receive in heaven. The world feels like a prison to believers because it is filled with hardship and pain. On the other hand, for disbelievers, even though they may suffer pain and poverty, their lives may seem like paradise because they are unaware of the severe punishment awaiting them in hell. Second, believers do not experience perfect freedom in their worldly life; they are burdened by the commands and prohibitions of religion. In contrast, disbelievers face no such burdens, and their lives seem easy as if they are living in paradise.⁹⁶

Another concept criticized by Sanusi was the matter of tarekat. As emphasized in his interpretation:

Teroetama dari pada goeroe-goeroe tarekat, jang bodo itoelah jang meroeksakkan agama Islam, dan 'alam Islam dan oemmat Islam. Maka berhati-hatilah! kaom Islam di dalam mengambil 'ilmoe agama Islam, djanganlah mengambil 'ilmoe itoe, dari pada goeroe Islam jang tiada benar kelakoeannja. Atau saoempama boenglon tobi'atnja, lebih-lebih wadjib berhati-hati di dalam mengambil tarekat, maka lebih dahoeleoe wadjib diketahoei bagaimana keadaan goeroe itoe, ia tabahhoer dengan 'ilmoe sjara', saoempama Tafsier, Hadits, Faqieh dan perabot-perabotnya, dan bagaimana tobi'at goeroe itoe, gemer dari pada pengasih orang atau dari pada sidkah-sidkahnja. Maka apabila terdapat goeroe itoe, memang bodo atau saorang jang ingin oleh-oleh atau sidkah dari pada anak moeridnja, maka djanganlah mengambil torekatek dari padanja, kerna itoelah soeatoe ratjoen di dalam agama Islam.⁹⁷

[It is especially the ignorant Tariqah teachers who are corrupting the religion of Islam, the Islamic world, and Muslims. So, Muslims should be careful in taking Islamic knowledge. Do not take religious knowledge from religious teachers who are not right in their behavior. It is like the behavior of a chameleon. One must be especially careful in taking tariqah. It is obligatory to find out about the teacher's knowledge of Shari'ah, such as tafseer, hadith, fiqh, and other tools, and how the teacher behaves, whether he is compassionate to people or likes to give charity. So if there is a teacher who is ignorant or who wants charity from his students,

⁹⁵ Sanusi.

⁹⁶ Sanusi.

⁹⁷ Sanusi.

then do not take *tariqah* from him, because that is poison in Islam].

Based on the two phenomena criticized by Sanusi, it can be concluded that the fundamental reason behind such criticism was the lack of a strong work ethic among *tarekat* teachers. According to Sanusi, the *kyai* or religious teachers were proficient in prayer but lacked diligence in labor. Consequently, in *Tamsyiyah al-Muslimin*, Sanusi frequently addressed issues related to work. To him, working and acquiring knowledge about it constituted a worldly virtue that led to perfection and benefit. In contrast, neglecting work results in harm, disgrace, and divine punishment both in this world and the hereafter. This was because Islamic teachings emphasize the pursuit of worldly adornments through lawful means.

If we examine the historical literature of Priangan, Iskandar explains that *pesantren* in the Priangan region were divided into two distinct types: those focused on Qur'anic teachings and those centered on *tarekat* practices. Similarly, in his own writings, Sanusi mentioned that his criticism of deviant teachers stemmed from widespread societal concerns about the number of *pesantren* teachers who encouraged their students to abandon worldly affairs.⁹⁸

It appears that the phenomenon observed by Sanusi was also recognized by the reformists. Total surrender to the afterlife led Muslims to withdraw from worldly affairs, even perceiving the material world as something to be avoided and abandoned. This belief drove reformists to criticize Sufism, viewing it as one of the factors contributing to the decline of the Muslim community. In other words, the modernists' criticism of the relationship between religion and social life aligned with Sanusi's perspective.

However, it is important to note that while the views of the modernists and Sanusi may appear aligned, they ultimately lead to contrasting conclusions. On one hand, the modernists' rejection and criticism of Sufism seem justified, as some religious groups and teachers promoted complete renunciation of worldly life. On the other hand, Sanusi's perspective on Sufism must also be considered. His views demonstrated that Sufism did not necessarily hinder Muslim progress. It is well known that Sanusi was a scholar with strong traditionalist roots, and his understanding of Sufism differed from the deviant practices he criticized. He presented an entirely different reality.

Sanusi's views on Sufism reflected the influence of al-Ghazālī's Sufi concepts, which had long shaped Indonesian Muslim society. This phenomenon was closely linked to the contributions of archipelagic scholars during the early Islamization process in the 17th and 18th centuries. Azra noted that al-Palimbani (d. 1789) played a key role in popularizing al-Ghazālī's Sufism across the archipelago. Not only was he deeply knowledgeable about al-Ghazālī's works, but he also actively encouraged his students to study and practice his teachings. Al-Palimbani surpassed his predecessors—such as al-Rānirī, al-Sinkilī, and al-Makassarī—in referencing al-Ghazālī's works. Two of al-Palimbani's widely circulated Malay-language writings contain concepts closely aligned with al-Ghazālī's teachings,

⁹⁸ Mohammad Iskandar, *Para Pengemban Amanah: Pergulatan Pemikiran Kiai Dan Ulama Di Jawa Barat, 1900-1950*, 1st ed. (Yogyakarta: Mata Bangsa, 2001).

further solidifying his influence in the Malay-Indonesian region.⁹⁹

The success of al-Palimbani in spreading al-Ghazālī's Sufism across the archipelago was deeply internalized by Sanusi. This is evident in his various interpretations, which frequently reference al-Ghazālī's Sufi concepts. On several occasions, he explicitly cited *Iḥyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn* to support his arguments. Based on his views on Sufism, it is clear that Sanusi faithfully represents al-Ghazālī's teachings—contrary to the modernists' accusations against Sufism. Sanusi asserts that the practice of Sufism does not inherently promote withdrawal (*'uzlah*) from worldly life.

Conclusion

This research concludes that compartmentalizing clerical thought into rigid groups such as traditionalists or modernists creates ambiguity. In the Indonesian context, these two groups influence each other both in terms of religious issues that develop and genealogically. Genealogically, Jajang A. Rohmana, through his research, shows the influence of the traditionalist scientific tradition in the formation of modernist thought. Likewise, this research illustrates that the issues raised by modernists are also responded to by traditionalists because of the tragicomic phenomenon where, on the one hand, these traditionalists experience the threat of religious authority and, on the other hand, are faced with the influence of modernization and religious issues that develop in their time.

Sanusi's thoughts on the rise and decline of Islam in *Tamshiyyah al-Muslimīn* show the unique and authentic thinking of Indonesian scholars. He tried to be as objective as possible in assessing the causes of the decline and revival of Islam by criticizing the phenomena, thoughts, concepts, and methodologies that developed in society, the modernists, and even the traditionalists. Regarding this revival effort, Sanusi demarcated that Muslims should make the Qur'an the basis for the progress of the ummah by understanding the Qur'an by the spirit of the times. What he also emphasized was that people who can interpret the Qur'an were certainly those who have sufficient capacity and tools. Sanusi also encouraged Muslims not to hate each other, insult each other, and experience division. He called for mastering various disciplines of both the sciences of the world and the hereafter, strengthening unity and understanding differences of opinion. Concerning the spiritual aspect, he obliged that Muslims should balance the life of the world and the hereafter.

This research was limited to Sanusi's thoughts on the revival of Islam in his tafsir in the early 21st century. This showed that there is a considerable gap between the time the tafsir was written and the present. Therefore, this research certainly cannot answer the contextualization of the revival of Islam in the present and the dynamics of the development of Muslims from the past to the present related to the decline and revival of Islam. Moreover, this issue is developing in other Muslim-majority countries. Of course, this issue is also responded to by scholars in these countries. Thus, comparative research on the issue of Islamic revival in various countries will provide information about the context and problems faced by the ummah.

⁹⁹ Azra, Azyumardi, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia, 2013).

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