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## **The Source of *Al-Israiliyyat* Stories in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*: An Intertextuality Study**

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### **Abstract**

*Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is the second interpretation after *Tarjuman al-Mustafid* written in the Malay language in the 19th century AD by Omar (1970). The main objective of this study is to identify the influence of the external source in the text of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* about the stories of *al-Isra'iliyyat*. Intertextual reading method is used in the process of analyzing *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* founded by Bakhtin and descriptions developed and analyzed by Krestiva (1980). This study employs literature review and field work using the subjective approach which are descriptive and qualitative in nature. The study found seven works which have influenced the essence of *al-Isra'iliyyat*, which are *Tafsir al-Jalalyn*, *Tafsir al-Jamal*, *Tafsir al-Baydawi*, *Tafsir al-Khazin*, *Tafsir al-Baghawi*, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* and *Tafsir al-Tha'labi*. The finding analysis also shows that *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is mostly influenced by *Tafsir al-Jamal*.

**Keywords:** Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan, Stories Of Al-Israiliyyat, Intertextuality Study, Intertextuality, Principle.

### **Introduction**

The writings of Islamic works and translations into Malay language have grown tremendously since the coming of Islam to *Nusantara* regions (Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei and Indonesia), which have covered various fields and branches of knowledge such as *fiqh*, *aqidah*, *tafsir*, *hadith* and sufism, among others. The writings and translations by previous Islamic scholars remain as important sources of reference and are still used by contemporary scholars for academic purposes. It proves the success of previous scholars who produced writings which have not only attracted the interest of the public but also have benefited them. One of the scholars is Omar, M. S. who produced a book in the field of *tafsir* in Malay language entitled *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* in 1970.

*Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* has been a reference in understanding Qur'anic verses not only by public but also contemporary scholars who have used it as a teaching material. This invaluable piece of work have given contribution to knowledge of the public at large so much so that scholars are attracted to study and examine this work from various aspects such as history, language, the influence and stature of the author.

*Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is also one of the books on *tafsir al-Qur'an* which is still being used as a teaching material and reference today especially at pondok institutions, mosques and musollas. Pondok institutions such as Pondok Tuan Guru Haji Bakar at Parit Panjang, Baling, Kedah and Pondok Tuan Guru Haji Soleh Musa at Sik, Kedah have been using the book as the teaching material for their weekly teaching. However, there have been criticisms on the content of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* by certain sections of the public. Some of them opined that this book has its shortcomings because in the writing of this book, the author does not mention any citation and uses many unjustified opinion in his *tafsir* (Zaim, 2010), so much so that Muhammad Ismi stressed that the public should be careful when reading *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* (Taib, 2003).

Since *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* has been used as a teaching material in the *tafsir al-Qur'an* and a reference by public at large in understanding verses of *al-Qur'an*, then efforts to refine this piece of work should be made. This study is one of the efforts which attempts to refine sources of reference and interconnections between the original text and other *tafsir* texts using intertextual reading. This will answer the aforementioned problem statement. The objective of this study is to examine *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* in order to examine whether there exists influence of other texts on the text of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* using intertextual reading. This study focuses on the stories of *al-Isra'iliyyat* on the text of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* as an early effort towards refinement of the text which contributes to improve the invaluable work. Since the author of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* mentioned that he referred to works in the field of *tafsir* while in the proces of writing (Omar, 1970), this study focuses only on *tafsir* works. This study employs library research and field study using subjective approach to examine data descriptively and qualitatively.

### **Intertextual Reading Method**

Intertextual reading method was originally known as dialogic which was introduced by Bakhtin in the year 1926 because there were voluminous Russian art literatures which were difficult to comprehend at that time. As a consequence, this theory was introduced by Bakhtin in order to facilitate readers to understand the difficult literatures. This theory pictured that all literatures which were written were based on dialogues between one text and another. In other words, this theory states that any text is influenced by other texts. This is supported by Harari (1979), who mentioned that "every text, being itself the intertext of another text, belong to the intertextual, which must not be confused with a text's origins".

The basis of this dialogic theory is used to understand Dostoyevsky's literatures such as *The Gambler*, *The Idiot* and *The Brother's Karamazov* which were considered as difficult to be understood by public using theories of literature such as formalisme which were dominant during that time (Dostoyevsky, 1975). The Russian formalism approach which was on the rise during that time did not help the public to understand approach of Dostoyevsky's literature. Bakhtin's dialogisme emphasized external aspect which influenced reading or how an author approached

art literatures and in turn would flow naturally into his own literature writing. However, Bakhtin did not deny the importance of internal elements such as theme, thought, plot, characters and other elements.

In the theory of dialogism, an author would have a dialogue with the text itself, himself and readers. This would create dialogues between a text and another text and as a consequence, it would trigger changes, conflicts and expansion in the literature which was being written by the author in terms of theme and problems, plot or characters and characterization. Therefore, connection between external and internal structures in a literature is important in this approach. According to Schmitz (2007), sentences used by someone in speech or writing interconnects among them and if there is no dependency among them, then any sentence or speech becomes gloomy and inexplicable. Schmitz (2007) mentioned;

“Language always works within certain situations, and utterances produce their significance within this context. The linguistic material alone is not enough to determine whether a word or a sound is enthusiastic, gloomy, ironical, threatening, or deferential; rather, this depends on a number of factors such as intonation, volume, the interlocutor, and prior utterances in the dialogue” (Schmitz 2007, 66-67).

This theory was later discussed by Kristeva (1980) who did not name this theory as dialogic, instead, she termed it as intertextuality. Hawthorn (2000) mentioned that every text written is influenced by other texts and this influence is discussed in intertextual theory. Therefore, readers should not be confused with the original text which is the hypogram of a given text. Jeremy Hawthorn (2000) stated that “*Kristeva defines the text as a permutation of texts, an intertext in the space of a given text...*”.

The development of this theory not only have taken place in Europe but also in the whole worldwide. In Southeast Asia, it has been discussed as one of modern literary theory in which one scholar in the field of literature named Partini Sardjono has developed this theory. He has not only stood on the principles of Kristeva, but has also introduced another principle termed as excerpt. This principle applies when a text incarnated in another text in an abstract form. Subsequently, there was the birth of new names in Indonesia such as Teeuw and Omar. Meanwhile, in Malaysia and Singapore, it became known after Napiah (1989) discussed in several books, particularly in his PhD thesis entitled “*Tuah Jebat in Malay Drama: A Study of intertextuality*”. In this thesis, he not only discussed this theory at length, but also applied it to the book entitled *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (Wan Nasyrudin, 2008).

### **Principles in Intertextual Reading Method**

Based on Kristeva (1980) and Sardjono (1986), there are 10 intertextual principles which have often appeared in literature and manifestation reflected in a person’s style of writing, namely:

i. Transformation

Transformation refers to either a formal or abstract transfer, transformation or conversion of a text to another text (Kristeva, 1980, 80).

ii. Modification principle

Modification principle occurs when the author makes adjustments, changes or amendments on certain text in a given text. This principle occurs due to the desire of the author to retrieve or replicate a text into another text and adjusts it according to the wants of society, culture, politics and readers' minds (Kristeva, 1980, 90).

iii. Expansion

Expansion occurs when an author expands or develops a text. For example, a short story is developed by an author until it becomes a complete novel (Kristeva 1980, 90).

iv. Demitefication.

Demitefication is a contradiction to the meaning of a text which appeared in earlier work. The author questioned the text before making contradiction (Kristeva, 1980, 103).

v. Haplology

Haplology occurs when there are omissions upon the presence of texts into other texts. This process occurs during selection and editing process for the purpose of making text adjustments in order to harmonize the work (Kristeva 1980, 25).

vi. Excerpt

Excerpt happens when the text is the same as or perhaps similar to some essence, a quote, an episode or aspect of hipogram or the original text (Sardjono 1986, 63).

vii.Parallel

Parallel occurs when there similarities or parallels between a text and other text(s) in terms of theme, idea or form of the text itself. Parallel Principles shows elements of parallelism and alignment of text within a text. However, the author should cite the source of the text so that it is not considered as plagiarism (Kristeva 1980, 91).

viii.Conversion

Conversion happens when there is a distortion of the original text or hipogram or contradiction to the taken text. This resistance element is not the same as those in the demitefication principle. In fact, it is not so radical and does not undergo aggressive or drastic changes (Kristeva 1980, 107).

ix. Existence

Existence occurs when elements created or organized in a work is distinctly different from its hypogram text. This process occurs when the author conducts a renewal of major works that form the basis of his/her writing (Kristeva 1980, 106-107).



x. Defamiliarization

Defamiliarization is an extraordinary element in a certain piece of work. It means the effort of an author to bring extraordinary elements by making changes to the text such as changes in terms of meaning or role played by a particular character in the piece of work (Kristeva 1980, 131).

Each of these principles does not have to appear separately in a certain work, which means that some of them could appear simultaneously. For example, when a particular text goes through a transformation process, it could also pass through modification process, expansion or any other intertextual principles at the same time.

### **Tafsir Nur Al-Ihsan: An Introduction**

*Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is a well-known works that have been produced by Omar, M. S. Writing this work was time consuming for it took two years nine months to complete, and it was successfully completed on 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1927 (Muhammad Sa id, 1970). This work is one of the works in the fields of *tafsir al-Quran* of the earliest produced in the Malay world after *Tarjuman al-Mustafid* by Sheikh Abdul Rauf al-Singkeli in the 17th century (Nasyrudin, 2008).

*Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* began to be printed by the first print in 1934 in Mecca by Maktabah wa Matbaah Muhammad al-Nahdi wa Awladih and second print was in the year of 1936 in Penang. The third printing of the work was in the year 1391 Hijrah equivalent to 1970 by al-Muarif Sdn. Bhd, Matba'ah bin Halabi in Fathani and Matbaah Muhammad al-Nahdi wa Awladih in Bangkok, Thailand. Meanwhile, there is also a print published by Dar al-Ihya' al-Kutub al-Arabiyyah, Egypt in the year 1349 Hijrah. Each print of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* must first obtained the consent of the heirs of Omar and signature of the permission can be seen on each page (i) per volume (Othman, 2012).

*Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* produced by Omar (1970) came in four volumes and each volume is sorted according to the chapters (*surah*) of *al-Quran*. The first volume covers the *Surah al-Fatihah* to *al-Maidah*, the second volume covers *al-An'am* to *Surah Hud*, third volume includes *Surah al-Kahf* to *al-ZOmar*, and the fourth volume covers *al-Mukmin* to *Surah al-Nas*. *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is quite difficult to be obtained on the market and it is only sold in certain bookstores only. Most of the works circulating in the market these days is printed by the company from Bangkok measuring 26.5 cm x 20 cm.

This work is widely spread particularly in the State of Kedah, and even in Northern Perak, Penang and Seberang Prai, also in southern Thailand (Abdul Rahman, 2010). *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is a work in the fields of *tafsir al-Quran* in the Malay language written using *Jawi* which has given many benefits to the Muslims, especially in Malaysia, while it is also a best-effort made by Omar (1970) that has been passed on to the community until today. The content of this work is complete and comprehensive accounting for description of the contexts and occasions of the revelation of the Quran, the virtues of *surah* and verse, problems of *Fiqh*, *al-Mutashabihat*, *al-Nasikh* and *al-Mansukh* plus stories of previous generations.

### **Al-Israiliyyat Stories in Tafsir Nur Al-Ihsan**

*Al-Israiliyyat* means the data cited by scholars of *tafsir* from the wizard of Jews who had converted to Islam, as is *al-Nasraniyyat* obtained from the wizard of the Christians. Some companions of the Prophet (PBUH) only took some of the information associated with the previous generations of the stories, but only during the *tabiin*, gathering of information was widely spread in the Scriptures *tafsir* (al-Dhahabi, 1977). Ibn Khaldun (2000, 326) explained that the sources are mostly coming from Himyar wizard like Ka'ab al-Ahbar, Wahab bin Munabbih and Abd Allah bin Salam.

Similarly, the work of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, this study provides evidence that there exists *al-Israiliyyat* stories told by Omar (1970) in his work. This article divides the stories into three parts. First, the data about the total number of such as number of *Bani Israil* out of their villages because of attacks of cholera which accounts to a total of four thousand or eight thousand to ten thousand or 30 thousand or 70 thousand, age of prophet Nuh when granted to be a Messenger is 40 years or 50 years or 100 years or 250 years. Second is about certain names such as names of people who are turned alive again by Jesus to prove prophethood namely Azir, Ibn al-Ajuz and Ibnat al-Ashir, and full name for the Queen of Sheba, namely Sheba bint Sharahil and his mother named Rihanah bint al-Sakin, one taste of genie. The third is about the story of previous generations before Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) have become messengers such as the story of the Prophet Musa when match with Pharaoh, his rod was transformed to be a snake that with a colour of mixed yellow and gray. The appearance of the snakes shocked the Pharaoh and resulted in serious diarrhea afterwards (Omar, 1970).

While explaining the information about the *Al-Israiliyyat* and *al-Nasraniyyat* stories, the author uses 32 phrases and after those phrases, he continued to tell the stories; words of Abdullah bin Salam, is told, qala, said, according to a half qil, words of Sheikh Khamisi, Hasan al-Dabighi quoted in Syawq al-Nufus, words of half of scholars, according to Kalbi, according to scholars of *tafsir*, according to scholars, according to Wahab, according to *mufassirin*, according to *mufassirun*, according to Kaab, and a half, one *qawl*, then when, according to Razi, according to Abu al-Su'ud, said Hasan Basri, said Ibn Abbas, from Ibn Abbas, said Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, according to Qatadah and Muqatil, Suddi said, according to Urwah bin al-Zubayr and narrated by Wahab bin Munabbih from Abdullah bin Qulabah (Omar, 1970). For example, the author tells about the State of Iram occupied by ethnic of Ad as stated by Wahab bin Munabbih, who is the former Jewish Wizard that Abd Allah bin Qulabah have ever come across the State;

“As told by Wahab bin Munabbih from Abd Allah bin Qulabah: he was sightseeing in Uduh because finding a lost camel, suddenly he finds a village contained within it houses...” (Omar, 1970).

Even so, there is a slight disadvantage concerning *Al-Israiliyyat* stories specified by the Omar (190). This is due to his narration of the story about Satan who disguised as Prophet Sulaiman and then seized his government for 40 days and the story of the devil which had entered the body of a snake. The snake sneaked into heaven with the aim of inciting Adam and Eve to eat the khuldi fruit. Based on the opinion of Islamic scholars, they have agreed that the stories were contrary to Islamic faith and were considered as a fairy tale. However, after careful deliberation,

it was found that the author of the work, had willfully dropped two important statements from the original text which he referred to. *Tafsir al-Jamal*, which is the original works referred to for the first story pointed out that this stories were not true because scholars have agreed that the devil was totally unable to resemble the prophets (al-Jamal, n.d), but Omar (1970) had dropped the statement. While the second story, al-Khazin (1979, 216) commented that the story is a fairy tale among Arabs that remained popular during the age of *jahiliyah*.

### The Analysis of Intertextual on The Al-Isra'iliyyat Stories in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*

Table 1 is obtained as a result of review content of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* as a whole pertaining to *Al-Israiliyyat* stories. Results analysis found that the works that have been referred by the author when telling about *Al-Israiliyyat* stories in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is *Tafsir al-Jalalyn*, *Tafsir al-Jamal*, *Tafsir al-Baydawi*, *Tafsir al-Khazin*, *Tafsir al-Baghawi*, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* and *Tafsir al-Tha'labi*. In addition, the principle of the intertextual principles used comprised of parallel, excerpt, haplology, expansion and existence principles.

**Table 1: The List of Reference Works of *Al-Israiliyyat* Stories in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* and Intertextual**

Principles							
No.	Works	Parallel	Excerpt	Haplology	Expansion	Existence	Total
1	<i>Tafsir al-Jalalyn</i>	18	7	2	11	-	<b>38</b>
2	<i>Tafsir al-Jamal</i>	28	76	70	13	7	<b>194</b>
3	<i>Tafsir al-Baydawi</i>	1	10	4	4	1	<b>20</b>
4	<i>Tafsir al-Khazin</i>	3	23	19	3	1	<b>49</b>
5	<i>Tafsir al-Baghawi</i>	1	3	2	2	1	<b>9</b>
6	<i>Tafsir al-Qurtubi</i>	2	2	3	1	-	<b>8</b>
7	<i>Tafsir al-Tha'labi</i>	1	2	3	-	-	<b>6</b>
		<b>54</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>324</b>

### The Works Influencing the *Al-Israiliyyat* Stories

Table 2 indicates that text from *Tafsir al-Jalalyn* has influenced *Al-Israiliyyat* stories in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* 25 times (14%), *Tafsir al-Jamal* 106 times (59%) *Tafsir al-Baydawi* 11 times (6%), *Tafsir al-Khazin* 26 times (15%), *Tafsir al-Baghawi* four times (2%), *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* four times (2%) and *Tafsir al-Tha'labi* three times (1.6%), respectively. Therefore, this study provides evidence that the work most widely referred to by Omar (1970) relevant of *Al-Israiliyyat* stories while writing *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is *Tafsir al-Jamal*.



**Table 2: Works referred to on the *Al-Israiliyyat* Stories in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan***

No.	Title of works	frequency	Percentage
1	<i>Tafsir al-Jalalyn</i>	25	14%
2	<i>Tafsir al-Jamal</i>	106	59%
3	<i>Tafsir al-Baydawi</i>	11	6%
4	<i>Tafsir al-Khazin</i>	26	15%
5	<i>Tafsir al-Baghawi</i>	4	2%
6	<i>Tafsir al-Qurtubi</i>	4	2%
7	<i>Tafsir al-Tha'labi</i>	3	1.6%
		<b>179</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Principles in Intertextual Used

Table 3 shows that there are five principles of intertextual approach used when the author narrates the *Al-Israiliyyat* stories in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, which indicates 54 times of parallel (16%), 123 times of excerpt (38%), 103 times of haplology (31%), 34 times of expansion (11%), and 10 times of existence (3%), which makes the principles most frequently used the author is the excerpt principle.

**Table 3: Principles in Intertextual Used**

No.	Analysis	Parallel	Excerpt	Haplology	Expansion	Existence	Total
1	<i>Al-Israiliyyat</i> Stories	54	123	103	34	10	
	Percentage	16%	38%	31%	11%	3%	100%

### Conclusion

Based on the study, this article concludes the following:

1. Intertextual approach has its own method. This method combines the process of processing, construction and digestion of two aspects, namely, the internal and external aspects that build a masterpiece. Internal aspect occurs when the author set a style of interpretation in itself, while the external aspect is when other works exist that affect the text.
2. *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* is a work in the field of *tafsir al-Quran* produced by Omar (1970). This work received widespread recognition not only in Malaysia but also in Indonesia, Egypt and Thailand on par with other contemporary exegesis. What is interesting about this work is its simple style which easily understood by society and also provide of a variety of knowledge. In language style that's easy to the needs of all levels of society and appropriate use by modern civil society such as Malaysia.
3. Omar (1970) has referred seven of recognized works i.e. *Tafsir al-Jalalyn*, *Tafsir al-Jamal*, *Tafsir al-Baydawi*, *Tafsir al-Khazin*, *Tafsir al-Baghawi*, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* and *Tafsir al-Thalabi* when debating 179 of *al-Israiliyyat* stories which are very interesting for society to learn. Throughout this study, sources of references for all the *al-Israiliyyat* stories are able to be identified. Therefore, this study finds that Omar (1970) not only used the unfounded facts but also his own opinions in the writing of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*.
4. This study provides evidence that the main reference work of the author concerning the *al-*

*Israiliyyat* stories in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* was *Tafsir al-Jamal* based on the percentage of frequency used by Omar (1970) which indicates that *Tafsir al-Jamal* was the work which he referred to the most. While the *Tafsir al-Jalalyn*, *Tafsir al-Baydawi*, *Tafsir al-Khazin*, *Tafsir al-Baghawi*, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* and *Tafsir al-Tha'labi* were its ancillary reference works. In addition, the principle of intertextual which was the most widely used was excerpt principle.

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