

The Dynamics of *Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur* and *Tafsir bi al-Ra'y* in the *Mutaakhhirin* Period: A Methodological and Epistemological Study

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Article Info

Article History:

Received: 15 December 2025

Revised: 18 January 2026

Accepted: 23 March 2026

Published: 28 March 2026

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Keywords

Abstract

The development of Qur'anic exegesis reflects the dynamic interaction between revelation and the evolving intellectual, social, and political contexts of Muslim societies. The *mutaakhhirin* (post-classical) period, spanning approximately the 4th to 12th centuries Hijri, represents a critical phase in this trajectory, marked by increasing methodological complexity and epistemological expansion. This study aims to analyze the historical dynamics, methodological transformation, and epistemological configuration of tafsir during this period. Employing a qualitative library research approach, the study draws on primary exegetical works and relevant secondary literature, analyzed through historical, methodological, and epistemological frameworks. The findings demonstrate that the development of tafsir in the *mutaakhhirin* period cannot be adequately understood as a linear shift from *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* to *tafsir bi al-ra'y*. Rather, it reflects an integrative process in which transmitted knowledge and rational inquiry are systematically combined. This integration is further reinforced by the incorporation of linguistic, philosophical, and scientific disciplines, resulting in more analytical, structured, and context-sensitive interpretations. The study argues that this period represents a maturity in the evolution of tafsir, characterized by the reconfiguration of epistemic authority and the emergence of a synthetic interpretive framework. These findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of post-classical exegesis and highlight its relevance for modern Qur'anic interpretation.

Mutaakhhirin, Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur, Tafsir bi al-Ra'yi, Methodology of Tafsir.

Abstract

Perkembangan tafsir Al-Qur'an mencerminkan interaksi dinamis antara wahyu dan konteks intelektual, sosial, serta politik masyarakat Muslim. Periode *mutaakhhirin* (abad ke-4 hingga ke-12 Hijriah) merupakan fase penting dalam perkembangan tersebut, yang ditandai oleh meningkatnya kompleksitas metodologis dan perluasan epistemologis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dinamika historis, transformasi metodologis, serta konfigurasi epistemologis tafsir pada periode ini. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui studi kepustakaan, penelitian ini mengkaji sumber-sumber primer tafsir dan literatur sekunder yang relevan, kemudian dianalisis melalui pendekatan historis, metodologis, dan epistemologis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perkembangan tafsir pada periode *mutaakhhirin* tidak dapat dipahami sebagai pergeseran linear dari *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* ke *tafsir bi al-ra'y*, melainkan sebagai proses integratif antara riwayat dan rasionalitas. Integrasi ini diperkuat dengan masuknya disiplin linguistik, filsafat, dan sains, sehingga menghasilkan tafsir yang lebih sistematis, analitis, dan kontekstual. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa periode *mutaakhhirin* merupakan fase kematangan dalam perkembangan tafsir, yang ditandai oleh rekonfigurasi otoritas epistemik dan lahirnya kerangka interpretasi yang sintesis. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi bagi pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif terhadap tafsir klasik serta relevansinya bagi kajian era modern.

Kata Kunci: *Mutaakhhirin, Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur, Tafsir bi al-Ra'yi, Metodologi Tafsir.*

INTRODUCTION

Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir) occupies a central and foundational position within Islamic intellectual tradition, serving as the primary means through which divine revelation is understood and applied in human life. The Qur'an, as a sacred text, requires interpretation to bridge the gap between its revealed message and the changing contexts of society (Jauhari, 2025). Without interpretive engagement, its theological, legal, and ethical meanings remain only partially accessible (Shihab, 2019). Consequently, tafsir developed not merely as a textual discipline but as an epistemological framework that integrates linguistic analysis, theological reasoning, and socio-historical awareness. This centrality explains why tafsir has continuously evolved, reflecting the dynamic interaction between revelation and the intellectual, cultural, and historical conditions of Muslim societies across different periods (Mahardhika et al., 2024).

The origins of Qur'anic interpretation can be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad, who functioned as the first authoritative interpreter by explaining verses to his companions. After his death, interpretive authority was continued by the Companions, the Successors (*tabi'in*), and subsequent generations, forming a tradition rooted in transmitted knowledge (*riwayah*) (Al-Qattan, 2018). Over time, this tradition expanded as Muslim societies encountered new intellectual and socio-political challenges. The development of tafsir thus reflects both continuity and transformation, as scholars preserved earlier interpretations while adapting them to new realities (Jahira & Yardho, 2025). This process demonstrates that tafsir is not a static body of knowledge, but a dynamic and evolving discipline shaped by the ongoing interaction between inherited authority and emerging interpretive needs.

A crucial turning point in the history of tafsir occurred during the post-classical (*mutaakhhirin*) period, generally spanning the 4th to 12th centuries Hijri (Jahira & Yardho, 2025). This era was marked by significant intellectual transformations, including the expansion of scientific knowledge, the influence of Greek philosophy, and the diversification of theological schools (Al-Dhahabi, 1976). These developments profoundly influenced interpretive practices, encouraging scholars to adopt more analytical and interdisciplinary approaches. Tafsir during this period increasingly incorporated tools from linguistics, logic, and philosophy, reflecting a broader epistemological shift (Hifni, 2023). As a result, interpretation became more systematic and complex, moving beyond purely narrative-based explanations toward approaches that engaged both textual authority and rational inquiry in understanding the Qur'an.

This transformation is particularly evident in the emergence and development of two major interpretive approaches: *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* and *tafsir bi al-ra'y*. The former emphasizes transmitted sources such as the Qur'an, hadith, and the opinions of early generations, while the latter prioritizes rational reasoning and intellectual *ijtihad* within established linguistic and theological frameworks (Al-Qattan, 2018; Al-Dhahabi, 1976). In the post-classical period, these approaches were not merely juxtaposed but increasingly intertwined. For example, al-Zamakhshari's *al-Kashshaf* integrates Mu'tazilite theological perspectives, while Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's *Mafatih al-Ghayb* employs philosophical and logical analysis (Azmi, 2022). These works illustrate how exegetes combined tradition and rationality, producing interpretations that were both textually grounded and intellectually expansive.

Existing scholarship on the development of Qur'anic exegesis has largely focused on historical periodization and typological classification of interpretive methods. Such studies have successfully mapped the transition from narration-based to rational approaches and highlighted the increasing contextualization of tafsir (Fajri, 2021). However, they often treat *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* and *tafsir bi al-ra'y* as distinct and even opposing categories, thereby overlooking their integrative and dialectical relationship. Moreover, the methodological contributions of the post-classical period are frequently discussed in descriptive rather than analytical terms. This tendency results in an underdeveloped understanding of how these two approaches interact at the epistemological level, particularly in shaping a coherent and adaptive framework of Qur'anic interpretation.

In response to this gap, the present study examines the methodological and epistemological integration of *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* and *tafsir bi al-ra'y* during the post-classical period. It seeks to move beyond dichotomous frameworks by analyzing how these approaches functioned in a complementary and interconnected manner within specific historical contexts. The study addresses three main questions: how methodological transformations occurred in this period, how the integration of transmitted knowledge and rational reasoning was constructed, and how this integration influenced the epistemological foundations of tafsir. By focusing on these issues, this research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of post-classical exegesis and to demonstrate its relevance for contemporary Qur'anic interpretation in addressing modern intellectual challenges.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design based on a library research approach, as its primary objective is to analyze the intellectual development of Qur'anic exegesis in the post-classical (*muta'akhhirin*) period. This approach is appropriate because the object of inquiry consists of texts, ideas, and interpretive frameworks rather than empirical or statistical data. Through this method, the study systematically examines the evolution of *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* and *tafsir bi al-ra'y* by engaging with relevant scholarly works. The qualitative framework enables an in-depth exploration of interpretive patterns, conceptual structures, and methodological tendencies among exegetes. It also allows for a critical reading of how historical context and intellectual developments shaped the integration of transmitted knowledge and rational reasoning in Qur'anic interpretation.

The data sources in this study are divided into primary and secondary materials. Primary sources consist of major works of tafsir representing the post-classical tradition, including al-Zamakhshari's *al-Kashshaf*, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, and later reform-oriented exegesis such as *Tafsir al-Manar* by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. These texts are selected due to their methodological significance and their representation of both narration-based and rational approaches. Secondary sources include scholarly books, journal articles, and studies on the history and methodology of tafsir, which provide critical context and analytical support. Data collection is conducted through documentation techniques, involving systematic identification, reading, and classification of relevant literature, with particular attention to historical background, interpretive methods, and epistemological frameworks.

Data analysis is carried out using three interrelated approaches: historical, methodological, and epistemological analysis. The historical approach is used to trace the socio-political and intellectual contexts that influenced exegetical developments in the post-classical period. The methodological approach focuses on examining the structures, patterns, and transformations of interpretive methods, particularly the interaction between *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* and *tafsir bi al-ra'y*. Meanwhile, the epistemological approach investigates the foundations of knowledge, sources of authority, and the relationship between revelation, reason, and scientific inquiry in the interpretive process. To ensure validity, this study applies source triangulation by comparing multiple texts and scholarly perspectives, thereby enhancing analytical consistency, accuracy, and critical rigor in understanding the development of Qur'anic exegesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The *Mutaakhhirin* Period in the History of Qur'anic Interpretation

The *mutaakhhirin* (post-classical) period represents a crucial phase in the history of Qur'anic exegesis, characterized by significant social, political, and intellectual transformations that reshaped interpretive practices. During this period, tafsir evolved into a more complex and diversified discipline, reflecting the changing conditions of Muslim societies (Hifni, 2023). However, there is no single agreed-upon definition regarding the chronological boundaries or defining characteristics of this period. Scholars differ in their periodization due to varying historiographical approaches and methodological perspectives in understanding the development of tafsir (Baidan, 2017; Al-Dhahabi, 1976). As a result, the *mutaakhhirin* period should not be viewed as a rigid temporal category, but rather as a conceptual phase marked by methodological expansion and epistemological transformation in Qur'anic interpretation.

Several scholars have proposed differing frameworks to define this period. Ahmad Izzan, for instance, divides the history of tafsir into three broad phases: the *mutaqaddimin* (1st-4th century AH), the *mutaakhhirin* (4th-12th century AH), and the modern-contemporary period (from the 12th century AH onward). He argues that the *mutaakhhirin* era marks a phase of rapid intellectual development, driven by the expansion of Islamic territories and increasing scholarly activity (Izzan, 2018). In contrast, al-Maraghi proposes a more detailed classification consisting of seven stages, emphasizing a gradual shift from narration-based interpretation toward systematic and analytical approaches (Al-Maraghi, 2019). Meanwhile, al-Dzahabi focuses on the codification of tafsir as a defining moment in its development, highlighting the emergence of structured exegetical methodologies (Al-Dhahabi, 1976). These differing models illustrate that periodization is shaped by analytical priorities rather than purely chronological considerations.

The emergence of the *mutaakhhirin* period is closely linked to broader historical processes, particularly the geographical expansion of Islam and its encounter with diverse civilizations. As Muslim societies spread across regions such as Persia, India, and parts of Africa, they engaged with various intellectual traditions, including Greek philosophy, Persian political thought, and Indian sciences (Lapidus, 2017). These interactions significantly influenced the development of Islamic scholarship, including tafsir. The incorporation of disciplines such as logic, philosophy, and linguistics enriched interpretive methodologies and expanded the scope of Qur'anic analysis (Hallaq, 2019). Consequently, tafsir in this period became increasingly interdisciplinary, reflecting

a synthesis between inherited religious knowledge and external intellectual influences (Al-Qattan, 2018; Salim, 2021).

At the same time, the *mutaakhhirin* period was marked by major political transformations, including the decline of Abbasid authority and the fall of Baghdad in 656 AH due to the Mongol invasion (Kennedy, 2018). While this event symbolized political fragmentation, it did not necessarily lead to intellectual stagnation. On the contrary, new political entities such as the Ottoman and Safavid empires contributed to the continuity of scholarly traditions and facilitated the institutionalization of knowledge production (Hodgson, 2017). Within this context, tafsir continued to develop, albeit in new forms that reflected changing institutional and intellectual environments. This indicates that political decline and intellectual productivity do not always correlate in a linear manner, a nuance often overlooked in earlier historiography (Al hashas et al., 2025).

Another defining feature of this period is the increasing integration of rational and scientific approaches into Qur'anic interpretation. The translation movement, particularly during the Abbasid era, played a significant role in introducing Greek philosophical and scientific works into the Islamic intellectual sphere (Gutas, 2018). This intellectual influx encouraged exegetes to engage with the Qur'an through analytical and rational frameworks, giving rise to new interpretive models that sought to harmonize revelation with reason (Saliba, 2017). As a result, tafsir in the *mutaakhhirin* period cannot be adequately understood through a simple dichotomy between tradition and rationality; rather, it reflects a dynamic process of integration that produced diverse methodological innovations (Rohman, 2021).

Based on these considerations, this study adopts Nashruddin Baidan's periodization, which situates the *mutaakhhirin* period between the 4th and 12th centuries AH, as it provides a more analytically relevant framework for examining methodological transformation in tafsir (Baidan, 2017). This period is particularly significant because it marks a transition from classical interpretive models toward more systematic and integrative approaches that incorporate both transmitted and rational elements (Mulyaden et al., 2022). Furthermore, the interaction between Islamic intellectual heritage and broader scientific developments constitutes a defining characteristic of this era (Shihab, 2019). By situating the analysis within this framework, the study aims to capture the complexity of exegetical developments and to highlight the epistemological significance of this period in the broader history of Qur'anic interpretation.

Historical Dynamics and Development

The development of Qur'anic exegesis reflects a dynamic intellectual process shaped by the interaction between revelation and the evolving socio-historical context of Muslim societies. From its earliest phase, tafsir functioned not only as an explanatory tool but also as a means of mediating between the divine text and human understanding. Initially, interpretation was directly guided by the Prophet Muhammad, whose explanations provided authoritative clarification of Qur'anic meanings. This interpretive role was later continued by the Companions and subsequent generations, gradually transforming tafsir into a structured scholarly discipline (Shihab, 2019; Al-Qattan, 2018). Over time, this process generated diverse interpretive approaches, demonstrating that tafsir is inherently adaptive and responsive to intellectual, cultural, and historical developments rather than a fixed or monolithic tradition (Ismail, 2020).

Within this evolving tradition, two major methodological orientations emerged as foundational frameworks: *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* and *tafsir bi al-ra'y*. The former is grounded in transmitted sources, including the Qur'an itself, Prophetic hadith, and the interpretations of early authoritative generations, emphasizing continuity and textual fidelity (Al-Qattan, 2018; Shihab, 2019). In contrast, *tafsir bi al-ra'y* prioritizes rational analysis, *ijtihad*, and the application of linguistic and intellectual tools to derive meaning, while remaining within the boundaries of Islamic legal and theological principles (Al-Dhahabi, 1976). Although often presented as distinct categories, these approaches are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they represent complementary epistemological orientations that together form a comprehensive interpretive framework, balancing the authority of tradition with the flexibility of reason (Kerwanto et al., 2024).

During the *mutaakhhirin* (post-classical) period, this relationship underwent a significant transformation, driven by broader intellectual and historical developments. The expansion of scientific knowledge, engagement with philosophical traditions, and increasing complexity of social realities encouraged exegetes to move beyond strictly narration-based approaches toward more analytical and rational modes of interpretation (Baidan, 2017; Ismail, 2020). However, characterizing this shift as a simple transition from *bi al-ma'thur* to *bi al-ra'y* is analytically insufficient. Instead, the period is better understood as one of methodological integration, in which transmitted knowledge and rational inquiry were systematically combined to address new interpretive challenges (Rahayu & Alwizar, 2024). This transformation reflects not only a change in method but also a reconfiguration of the epistemological foundations of *tafsir*, enabling it to remain relevant within increasingly complex intellectual contexts (Shihab, 2019).

1. *Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur*: Transmission and the Authority of Tradition

Tafsir bi al-ma'thur represents an interpretive approach grounded in transmitted knowledge, including the Qur'an itself, Prophetic traditions (*hadith*), and the explanations of the Companions and early generations (Al-Qattan, 2018). In the formative (*mutaqaddimin*) period, this method functioned as the dominant epistemological framework, emphasizing textual fidelity and the authority of early interpretive communities (Al-Dhahabi, 1976). Rather than merely privileging narration, this approach sought to preserve the authenticity of meaning by anchoring interpretation in verified sources of revelation (Shihab, 2019). However, reducing *bi al-ma'thur* to a purely non-rational method is analytically misleading, as early exegetes still employed linguistic reasoning and contextual judgment within the limits of transmitted authority.

In the *mutaakhhirin* period, *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* did not disappear but underwent functional transformation. Exegetes continued to rely on classical authorities, yet increasingly engaged with them through commentary (*sharh*) and marginal glosses (*bāshiyah*), indicating a shift from transmission to reinterpretation (Baidan, 2017). This development reflects a transition from preservation toward critical engagement, where inherited knowledge served as a foundation rather than a constraint. As a result, *bi al-ma'thur* became integrated into broader interpretive frameworks, allowing scholars to maintain continuity with tradition while responding to new intellectual and social challenges (Rohman, 2021).

2. Tafsir bi al-Ra'y: Rationalization and Intellectual Expansion

The development of *tafsir bi al-ra'y* marks a significant expansion of interpretive methodology through the incorporation of rational analysis, linguistic inquiry, and philosophical reflection. This approach emphasizes *ijtihad* as a legitimate epistemic tool, enabling exegetes to derive meanings that address new intellectual and social contexts while remaining within the boundaries of Islamic principles (Al-Dhahabi, 1976). Its emergence was closely linked to the encounter between Muslim scholars and external intellectual traditions, particularly Greek philosophy and Persian thought, which enriched the analytical tools available for interpretation (Gutas, 2018; Saliba, 2017).

Prominent exegetes such as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi exemplify this development through works like *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, which integrates theology, philosophy, and logic into Qur'anic interpretation (Rahayu & Alwizar, 2024). Similarly, al-Baydawi's *Anwar al-Tanzil* demonstrates a synthesis of linguistic precision and rational analysis, illustrating that *bi al-ra'y* does not reject tradition but reinterprets it through systematic reasoning (Kerwanto et al., 2024). Thus, *tafsir bi al-ra'y* should not be understood as a departure from authoritative sources, but as an expansion of interpretive possibilities that enables the Qur'an to engage with broader intellectual discourses.

3. Integration of Methods: Toward an Epistemological Synthesis

A defining feature of the *mutaakhhirin* period is not the dominance of one method over another, but the increasing integration of *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* and *tafsir bi al-ra'y*. As exegetical challenges became more complex, reliance on a single methodological framework proved insufficient. Scholars began to combine transmitted knowledge with rational analysis, producing a more flexible and context-sensitive mode of interpretation (Baidan, 2017; Ismail, 2020). This integrative approach, often conceptualized as *izdimaj* (methodological duality), reflects an awareness that revelation and reason operate in a complementary rather than oppositional relationship (Rohman, 2021).

The works of Rashid Rida illustrate this synthesis, particularly in *Tafsir al-Manar*, where he critically evaluates classical narrations while employing rational reasoning to address contemporary issues (Shihab, 2019). His method demonstrates selective acceptance of transmitted reports, combined with analytical interpretation grounded in broader socio-political realities (Al-Dhahabi, 1976). This integration signifies a mature epistemological stance in which authority is neither absolutized nor dismissed, but reconfigured through critical engagement, allowing tafsir to remain both authentic and relevant (Kerwanto et al., 2024).

4. Impact of Methodological Transformation

The integration of interpretive methods during the *mutaakhhirin* period had far-reaching implications for the development of Islamic thought. By combining textual authority with rational inquiry, exegetes were able to produce interpretations that were both normatively grounded and intellectually adaptive. This transformation extended beyond theology into legal, social, and ethical domains, enabling the Qur'an to address increasingly complex societal realities (Shihab, 2019). *Tafsir bi al-ma'thur* continued to ensure the preservation of doctrinal authenticity, while *tafsir bi al-ra'y* facilitated engagement with new intellectual challenges.

Importantly, this development reflects a shift from rigid dichotomies toward methodological pluralism. Exegetes were no longer confined to a single interpretive paradigm, but instead employed multiple approaches in a proportional and context-dependent manner. This flexibility contributed to the expansion of Islamic intellectual horizons and reinforced the role of the Qur'an as a dynamic source of guidance (Kaltsum & Amin, 2024). Consequently, tafsir in this period demonstrates a high level of epistemological maturity, characterized by the ability to reconcile continuity with innovation in a coherent interpretive framework.

5. Constraints on the Production of New Exegetical Works

Despite these methodological advances, the *mutaakhhirin* period also witnessed a relative decline in the production of independent, comprehensive tafsir works. This phenomenon is often attributed to the extensive corpus of earlier exegesis, which provided highly developed interpretive resources that later scholars tended to preserve and elaborate rather than replace (Baidan, 2017). As a result, many exegetical efforts took the form of commentaries, super-commentaries, and marginal annotations, reflecting a shift from original composition to intellectual refinement.

However, interpreting this trend as intellectual stagnation is problematic. The reduced quantity of new works does not necessarily indicate a decline in scholarly quality. Instead, it reflects changes in scholarly orientation, including increased specialization and the diversification of academic disciplines. Political instability and shifting institutional structures also influenced patterns of knowledge production (Kennedy, 2018). Thus, the apparent decline in exegetical output should be understood as a transformation in the modes of scholarship rather than a regression in intellectual vitality.

6. The Rise of Thematic Interpretation and Disciplinary Specialization

Alongside the decline in comprehensive exegesis, the *mutaakhhirin* period was marked by the emergence of thematic and specialized approaches to Qur'anic interpretation. Scholars increasingly focused on specific dimensions of the Qur'an, producing works that addressed particular legal, theological, linguistic, or ethical themes. This development gave rise to diverse exegetical genres, including juridical (*fiqh*), theological (*i'tiqadi*), mystical (*sufi*), and scientific (*'ilmi*) interpretations, reflecting the growing complexity of Muslim intellectual life.

Notable examples include al-Jassas's *Ahkam al-Qur'an*, which emphasizes legal interpretation, and Abu Ja'far al-Nuhas's works on abrogation, which focus on specific juridical issues. Similarly, thematic writings such as Ibn al-Qayyim's discussions on Qur'anic concepts demonstrate a move toward focused analytical inquiry. This specialization indicates a shift from generalist to problem-oriented exegesis, allowing scholars to engage more deeply with particular aspects of the text. Consequently, tafsir evolved into a more differentiated and context-responsive discipline, capable of addressing diverse intellectual and societal needs.

Methodological and Epistemological Transformation

The *mutaakhhirin* period marks a decisive shift in the epistemological structure of Qur'anic exegesis, moving from a predominantly transmission-centered model toward a more integrative and reflective framework of knowledge production. In the earlier (*mutaqaddimin*) period, epistemic

authority was largely grounded in proximity to revelation, privileging transmitted reports (*riwāyah*) as the primary source of meaning. By contrast, the post-classical period reconfigured this hierarchy by maintaining the authority of foundational sources the Qur'an, hadith, and early interpretations while simultaneously subjecting them to critical engagement and contextual reinterpretation (Al-Qattan, 2018; Al-Dhahabi, 1976). This shift indicates a transition from epistemic closure toward epistemic openness, where meaning is no longer treated as fixed but as dynamically constructed through disciplined interpretive activity (Baidan, 2017; Ismail, 2020).

At the methodological level, this transformation is reflected in the increasing formalization and systematization of interpretive tools. Linguistic sciences such as *nahw*, *ṣarf*, and *balāghah* were no longer auxiliary disciplines but became integral components of exegetical reasoning, enabling a more precise engagement with textual structures (Shihab, 2019). This methodological rigor also extended to the evaluation of sources, including the selective use of *isrā'iliyyāt*, which were incorporated under strict epistemic controls to ensure consistency with core Islamic teachings (Al-Qattan, 2018). Such developments demonstrate a shift from reliance on authority alone toward a model that combines authority with method, where interpretive validity is increasingly determined by analytical coherence and methodological transparency (Asnawi et al., 2026).

More fundamentally, the *mutaakhhirin* period introduced an expanded epistemological horizon through sustained engagement with rational and scientific disciplines. The integration of philosophy, logic, and natural sciences into tafsir reflects a redefinition of the sources of knowledge, in which reason (*'aql*) and empirical observation are recognized as legitimate, though subordinate, partners to revelation (Sativara & Dahliana, 2026). This resulted in a synthetic epistemology that differs significantly from earlier models by positioning knowledge as the outcome of interaction between multiple epistemic authorities rather than a single hierarchical source. Consequently, interpretive competence became increasingly tied to intellectual skills such as *ijtihad* and *istinbat*, indicating a shift toward a more demanding and reflexive conception of scholarly authority (Kerwanto et al., 2024).

These epistemological changes were accompanied by a transformation in the structure and self-consciousness of tafsir as a scholarly genre. While traditional methods such as *tablili* and *muqaran* remained operative, they were applied within more systematically organized and theoretically aware frameworks (Marwati & Hamzah, 2024). Exegetical works began to exhibit clearer argumentative structures, methodological consistency, and an explicit awareness of interpretive strategies (Rahayu & Alwizar, 2024). This indicates not merely technical refinement, but the emergence of tafsir as a mature intellectual discipline characterized by methodological self-reflection and epistemological integration. In this sense, the *mutaakhhirin* period represents not simply a stage of development, but a phase of epistemic reconfiguration, in which the relationship between revelation, reason, and knowledge was fundamentally rearticulated (Fillaili et al., 2026).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the *mutaakhhirin* (post-classical) period, approximately spanning the 4th to 12th centuries Hijri, represents a critical phase in the development of Qur'anic exegesis. Rather than merely a chronological stage, this period reflects a profound transformation shaped by complex intellectual, social, and political dynamics within the Islamic world. The

findings indicate that the evolution of tafsir during this era cannot be adequately explained as a linear shift from *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* to *tafsir bi al-ra'y*. Instead, it is characterized by an increasing interaction between these two approaches as exegetes responded to expanding intellectual horizons and changing socio-historical conditions.

More specifically, this study shows that the defining feature of the *mutaakhhirin* period lies in the integration of transmitted knowledge and rational inquiry into a coherent interpretive framework. This integration reflects a significant epistemological transformation in which authority is no longer derived solely from transmitted sources but also from critical reasoning and methodological rigor. The incorporation of disciplines such as linguistics, philosophy, and the natural sciences further expanded the scope of tafsir, enabling it to engage with broader intellectual developments. As a result, Qur'anic interpretation became more systematic, analytical, and context-sensitive while maintaining continuity with earlier exegetical traditions.

In light of these findings, this study argues that the *mutaakhhirin* period made a substantial contribution to the maturation of tafsir as an intellectual discipline. Its integrative methodological model provides an important framework for contemporary Qur'anic interpretation, particularly in addressing modern intellectual challenges that require both textual fidelity and analytical flexibility. Therefore, future research should move beyond descriptive historical analysis and focus on the theoretical application of post-classical interpretive principles in contemporary contexts, in order to further demonstrate the ongoing relevance of tafsir within modern Islamic scholarship.

DECLARATION OF USING AI

The author used ChatGPT to improve language and readability. The author reviewed and edited the output and take full responsibility for the content.

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